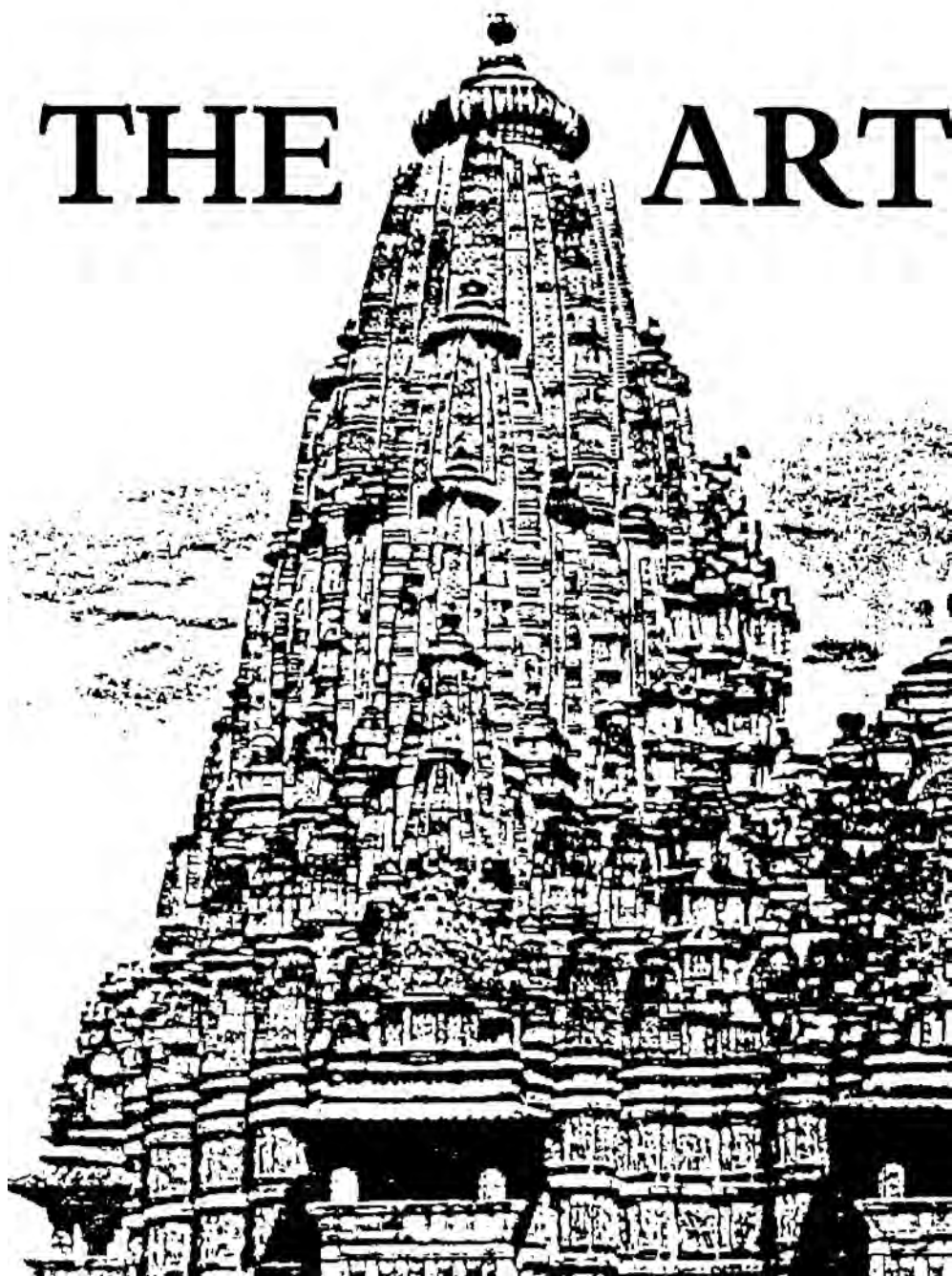


THE

ART

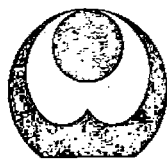
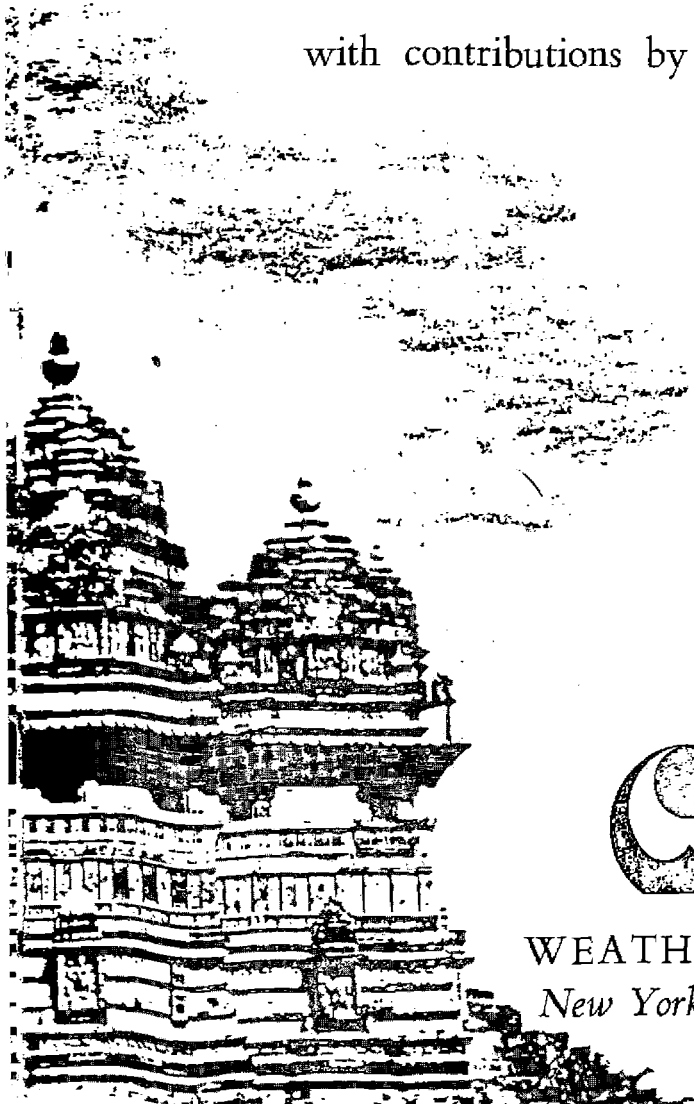


ANCIENT INDIA

Buddhist, Hindu, Jain

by Susan L. Huntington

with contributions by John C. Huntington



WEATHERHILL
New York · Tokyo

Contents

Preface	xi
Acknowledgments and Credits	xiii
A Note on Pronunciation and Transliteration of Sanskrit	xix
Introduction	xxiii
Geographical Considerations, xxiii • The Problem of Dating, xxv • Art and Culture, xxvi	

PART ONE. Foundations of Indic Civilization: The Prehistoric and Protohistoric Periods

1 Antecedents of Indic Civilization	3
Stone Age Painting and Sculpture, 3 • Early Neolithic Art, 5 • Conclusion, 8	
2 The Indus (or Harappā) Civilization (ca. 2300 to 1750 B.C.)	9
The Cities and Towns, 10 • Sculpture, 12 • Seals, 18 • Pottery, 24 • The Eclipse of the Indus Civilization, 25	
3 The Vedic and Upaniṣadic Periods (ca. 1500 to 450 B.C.)	26
The Indo-Āryans, 26 • Literary Evidence: The Vedas (ca. 1500 to 800 B.C.), 27 • Literary Evidence: The Upaniṣads (ca. 800 to 450 B.C.), 28 • Other Literary Evidence: The Purāṇas and Epics, 30 • Mahāvira, Śākyamuni Buddha, and the Rise of Magadha, 31 • Archaeological Evidence, 33 • Other Indigenous Trends: Megalithic Remains of Southern India, 34 • Conclusion, 36	

PART TWO. Period of the Early Dynasties

4 The Maurya Period (ca. 323 to 185 B.C.)	41
Edicts and Pillars, 43 • Rock-cut Architecture, 48 • Other Aśokan Monuments, 50 •	

- Mauṛya-period Sculpture from Pāṭaliputra, 51 • Mauṛya-period Terra-cotta Sculpture, 54 • Conclusion, 55
- 5 The Śuṅga Period and Related Developments (ca. Second Century to First Century B.C.) 56
 Vidiṣā in the Śuṅga Period, 57 • The Mathurā Region During the Śuṅga Period, 60 • Buddhist Art of the Śuṅga Period: Free-standing Architectural Monuments, 61 • Rock-cut Architecture of the Śuṅga Period: The Western Deccan, 74 • The Eastern Deccan: The Āndhra Pradesh Region, 85 • Śuṅga-period Terra Cottas, 88 • Conclusion, 89
- 6 Regional Developments (ca. Late First Century B.C. Through First Century A.D.) 90
 The Vidiṣā Region: Sāñci, 91 • Buddhist Rock-cut Architecture of the Western Deccan: Bedsā, 100 • Eastern India: Khaṇḍagiri/Udayagiri, 105 • Conclusion, 108
- 7 The Śaka and Parthian Kingdoms in the Indic Sphere (ca. First Century B.C. to Mid-First Century A.D.) 109
 Introduction to the Bactro-Gandhāra Region, 109 • The Kapiṣa Region, 110 • The Gandhāra Region, 116 • The Swāt Valley (Ancient Uḍḍiyāna), 119 • Northern India (The Mathurā Region), 122 • Conclusion, 123
- 8 The Northwest and Northern Regions Under the Kuṣāṇas (ca. Late First Century to Third Century A.D.) 125
 Royal Shrines, 126 • The Bactro-Gandhāra Region: Architecture, 130 • The Bactro-Gandhāra Region: Sculpture, 133 • Northern India: Mathurā and Related Sites, 150 • Non-Buddhist Sculpture at Mathurā, 159 • Conclusion, 162
- 9 Regional Developments in the Deccan (ca. Second and Third Centuries) 163
 The Western Deccan Caves, 163 • The Eastern Deccan: The Āndhra Pradesh Region Under the Later Śātavāhanas and Ikṣvākus, 174 • Conclusion, 183-

PART THREE. Dynasties of the Middle Period

- 10 The Gupta Period (Fourth to Sixth Centuries) 187
 Hindu Art of the Early Gupta Period, 188 • Buddhist Art of the Fifth Century: North-Central India (Sāñci), 196 • Buddhist Art of the Fifth Century: North India (Mathurā and Sārnāth), 200 • Buddhist Art in the Northwest, 205 • Hindu Temple Architecture, 206 • Brick Temples and Terra-cotta Art, 213 • Metal Images, 218 • Conclusion, 218
- 11 The Gupta Aftermath 220
 The Disintegration of the Empire, 220 • Outgrowths of the Gupta Idioms (ca. 550 to

- 700), 222 • Eastern India, 223 • Buddhist Art in the East, 223 • Hindu Art in the East, 227 • Western Indian Developments, 229 • Conclusion, 236
- 12 Buddhist Cave Architecture (Fifth Through Seventh Centuries) 239
Ajanṭā, 239 • Bāgh, 260 • Kānheri, 262 • Aurangabad, 265 • Ellora, 268 • Conclusion, 274
- 13 Hindu Rock-cut Architecture of the Deccan (Kalacuri and Early Western Calukya Phases) 275
The Early Kalacuri Period, 275 • Caves of the Early Western Calukyās, 282 • Conclusion, 290
- 14 Southern Developments Under the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas 291
The Pallavas, 291 • The Early Pāṇḍyas, 319 • Conclusion, 321
- 15 The Early Western Calukya and Related Schools of the Deccan 322
Structural Temples of the Early Western Calukyās, 322 • The Eastern Calukyās, 337 • The Nolambas, 338 • Conclusion, 340
- 16 Hindu Rock-cut Architecture of the Western Deccan 341
Ellora (Rāṣṭrakūṭa Phase), 341 • Conclusion, 350

PART FOUR. Later Northern Schools

- 17 Kaśmir and Related Schools 353
Pre-Kārkoṭa Remains, 354 • The Kārkoṭa Period (ca. 625 to 855), 357 • The Utpala Dynasty (ca. 855 to 939), 365 • The Two Lohara Dynasties and the Last Hindu Kings (Tenth to Fourteenth Centuries), 368 • Kaśmiri Ivories and Metal Images, 368 • The Art of Adjacent Regions: Western Himālayan Foothills and Western Tibetan Cultural Region, 374 • Conclusion, 385
- 18 Bihār and Bengal Under the Pāla and Sena Kings 387
Buddhist Art, 389 • Hindu Art, 407 • Conclusion, 413
- 19 Orissa and Related Regions 415
Śrīpura (Sirpur) and Rājim: Madhya Pradesh, 415 • Hindu Art and Architecture of Orissa, 421 • Buddhist Art of Orissa, 444 • Conclusion, 448
- 20 North-Central and Northwestern India: The Art of the Rājput Clans 449
The Gurjara-Pratihāras of Kanauj (ca. 730 to 1027), 452 • The Haihayas (or Kalacuris) of Tripurī, 462 • The Candellas of Bundelkhand, 466 • The Paramāras of Mālwā, 480 •

x CONTENTS

The Solāṅkis of Gujarāt (ca. 950 to 1304 [961–1244?]), 483 • The Gāhaḍvālas of Vārāṇasī (ca. 1075 to 1200), 499 • Manuscript Painting, 500 • Conclusion, 502

PART FIVE. Later Schools of the Deccan and the South

21	The Cōḷa and Related Schools of the Tamil South (Mid-Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries)	509
	Conclusion, 538	
22	Later Deccan Schools	540
	The Western Gaṅgas of Talakād (Tenth Century), 541 • The Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī (973 to ca. 1189), 543 • The Yādavas of Devagiri (1191 to 1311), 548 • The Kākatiyas of Hanamkoṇḍa and Wārangal (ca. Mid-Eleventh Century to ca. 1325), 549 • The Hoysaḷas of Southern Karṇāṭaka (ca. 1006 to 1346), 555 • Conclusion, 572	
23	The Vijayanagar Period (ca. 1336 to 1565)	573
	Conclusion, 586	
24	The Nāyak Period	587
	Conclusion, 600	
25	The Keraḷa Region	601
	Conclusion, 615	
	Afterword	617
	Notes	619
	Select Bibliography	659
	Glossary	715
	List of Maps	733
	Illustration Index	735
	Index	747

Color Plates appear following pages 162, 402, and 594.

A Note on Pronunciation and Transliteration of Sanskrit

For the sake of simplicity and consistency, wherever appropriate, deity names, religious concepts, and other technical terms have been given in the Sanskrit (*Saṃskṛta*) language in this book. A Sanskrit transliteration and pronunciation guide is given below. Transliteration for all other Sanskritic languages (Hindi, Pañjābī, etc.) follows the same system; Dravidian languages (Tamil, Malayāḷam, etc.), are transliterated according to this system whenever possible. Pronunciation of these languages varies considerably and no attempt has been made to provide a pronunciation guide for them. Other languages (Persian, Tibetan, etc.), are transliterated according to standard systems. Chinese words have been given according to the Wade-Giles system in the text, but the *pinyin* romanization is provided in parenthesis following the word in the index.

Originally described in a systematized manner more than 2,500 years ago by ancient Indic grammarians, including the well known Pāṇini (ca. fourth century B.C.), Sanskrit is the first language known to have been analyzed linguistically and to have been given a method of writing strictly based on a scientific description of actual pronunciation. Careful description of pronunciation was desirable, for, if prayers were to be effective, the pronunciation of deity names and ritual incantations, including *bijas* and *mantras*, had to be correct. From a religious and artistic point of view, it is interesting to note that the sounds of the Sanskrit system are enumerated as the “fifty sounds” which comprise the “garland of skulls” (*kapālamālā*) worn by



Detail of 18.13.

some figures of the Tantric tradition in both Buddhism and Hinduism (see Fig. 18.13, a detail of which appears above). Although the pronunciation system was intended to provide a uniformity to the spoken language, it never really extended beyond the true Sanskritic speakers and was probably not wholly consistent even among them.

The Sanskrit grammarians recognized that there were five places of articulation of sound, and classified the sounds used in the language,

and thereby the characters which represent these sounds, accordingly. The Sanskrit system thus groups sounds into the following categories: guttural, palatal, labial, lingual (retroflex/cere-

bral), and dental. Today, Sanskrit is most commonly written in the Devanāgarī script and the characters are arranged and transliterated in this order:

Table 1

<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>	“true” vowels
<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṝ</i>	<i>ḷ</i>	<i>ḹ</i>			
<i>e</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>au</i>			“mixed vowels”
		<i>m/ṁ</i>				nasal “modifier” (<i>anusvāra</i>)
		<i>ḥ</i>				aspirate “modifier” (<i>visarga</i>)
<i>ka</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>gha</i>	<i>ṅa</i>		guttural consonants
<i>ca</i>	<i>cha</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>jha</i>	<i>ña</i>		palatal consonants
<i>ṭa</i>	<i>ṭha</i>	<i>ḍa</i>	<i>ḍha</i>	<i>ṇa</i>		lingual consonants
<i>ta</i>	<i>tha</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>dha</i>	<i>na</i>		dental consonants
<i>pa</i>	<i>pha</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>bha</i>	<i>ma</i>		labial consonants
	<i>ya</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>va</i>		semivowels
	<i>śa</i>	<i>ṣa</i>	<i>sa</i>			spirants
		<i>ha</i>				aspirate
		<i>[ḥ]</i>				[aspirate “modifier” (<i>upadhmaniya</i>)]

A fuller classification of the sounds of the language is usually given thus:

Table 2

	unvoiced unaspirated	unvoiced aspirated	voiced unaspirated	voiced aspirated	voiced nasals	voiced semivowels	unvoiced spirants	short	long	soft	diphthongs
Gutturals	<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>ṅ</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>ḥ¹</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ai³</i>
Palatals	<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>jh</i>	<i>ñ</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>ś</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>		
Linguals	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ṭh</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḍh</i>	<i>ṇ</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>ṣ</i>	<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṝ</i>		
Dentals	<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>dh</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>ḷ</i>	<i>ḹ</i>		
Labials	<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>[ḥ²]</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>au⁴</i>

Note: The *anusvāra* (*ṁ*) is not traditionally included in this classification system.

1. *Visarga*
2. *Upadhmaniya*
3. “E” and “ai” are guttural and palatal.
4. “O” and “au” are labial and guttural.

The characters for the consonants, semivowels, spirants, and aspirate *h* are pronounced as syllables containing the inherent vowel sound of *a*, and, as in the first table above, are properly transliterated with an *a* following them. The inherent vowel is transcribed following these characters in the transliteration of whole words unless otherwise indicated.

The vowels *ā*, *i*, *ī*, *u*, *ū*, *e*, *ai*, *o*, and *au*, are pronounced as in either German or Italian. The short *a* is a neutral vowel and is pronounced as the *u* in *but*. Thus, *sattva* is pronounced "suttvu." In traditional Sanskrit phonetics, both *e* and *o* are considered diphthongs, and, regardless of the form written, are pronounced as long vowels.

There is evidence that the vowel *ṛ* was at one time pronounced as the *er* in *butter*, but at least as early as the beginning of the Christian era it came to be pronounced as "ri" (as in *river*). Thus, *Kṛṣṇa* is pronounced "Krishna." The vowel *ḷ* was originally pronounced as the *le* in *bottle* but is now pronounced as "lri" (as in *axle-rim*). It is rarely met with and the long vowel, *ḹ* is actually a grammarian's artifact, invented for symmetry, and does not exist in the language.

The modifiers include the *anusvāra* (*ṁ* or *ṃ*) and the *visarga* (*ḥ*). Rather than representing independent sounds, these symbols indicate some modification in the realization of the character with which they are written. The *anusvāra* indicates a nasalization of a preceding vowel so that, for example, *samsāra* is pronounced "sun-saru." The *anusvāra* is also often used, though incorrectly, to replace any of the five nasals (*ñ*, *ṅ*, *ṇ*, *n*, *m*) when they are followed by consonants of their own class. The *visarga* (*ḥ*), occurring at the end of a word or syllable, is a noticeable exhalation of breath, frequently followed with a slight echo of the preceding vowel, much like a very soft grace note at the close of a musical phrase. Another aspirate, also transcribed as *ḥ*, is known as the *upadhmanīya*; since it is a variant of the *visarga*, it is often omitted from the list of characters and has been placed in brackets in these tables. (A third variant, the *jihvāmūḷīya*, is not usually included in charts of the script.)

Most of the consonants are pronounced much

as they are in English. However, *kh*, *gh*, *th*, and *ph* are given a noticeable aspiration, in contrast to English. *Th* is not pronounced as in the English word *think* but rather as in *goat-herd*. *Ph* is not as in *phone* but is pronounced as in *stop-hin*. *C* is pronounced almost exactly as is the *ch* in *church*, while Sanskrit *ch* is given an even stronger aspiration. In early transliterations, this led to *ch* and *chh* being used to represent the two letters. However, the desire for parallelism in transliteration has superseded the attempt to suggest pronunciation through English spelling. Accordingly, *candra* is pronounced "chundru" and Sanskrit words with *ch*, such as *chattra*, are given even more aspiration.

The distinction between the retroflexes and dentals is extremely difficult for the untrained ear to hear, and, for all practical purposes, may be overlooked in pronouncing words. The retroflex *ṣ* and *ḍ* resemble *t* and *d* in English, while the dental *t* and *d* are essentially similar to the *t* and *d* in Italian. Technically, in the pronunciation of the retroflex, the tongue touches the gums just above the teeth, while for the dental, as its name implies, the tongue squarely hits the back of the teeth.

The nasals of each category, *ṅ*, *ṅ̄*, *ṇ*, *n*, and *m*, offer no special problems. *ṅ* is pronounced as *ng* in *song* and *ṅ̄* is pronounced as *ny* in *canyon*.

Two spirants, *ś* and *ṣ*, were originally distinct sounds, but merged in later times. The written symbols for them are sometimes used interchangeably in inscriptions. Both are pronounced *sh*. Thus, *Seṣa* is pronounced "Shesha."

Due, in large part, to extensive publication in English on the Indic religions, many South Asian words have made their way into English-language dictionaries. For example, *abhiṣeka* occurs as "abhiseka" and, although the pronunciation guide suggests how it be spoken correctly, the likelihood is that the English reader, seeing the word in context, will pronounce it without the *sh* sound; a more readable English spelling might have been "abhisheka." Because of problems of this sort, it was decided, for the most part, to ignore the English-language dictionaries with regard to South Asian words in this book. Thus, technical terms in Sanskrit and other South Asian languages will be treated

as foreign words. As there are many more such words in this volume than occur in the English-language dictionaries, this also allows for consistency of usage. "Karuna and *upāya* as components of bodhi," is jarringly inconsistent and, "*karuṇā* and *upāya* as components of *bodhi*," has been preferred. Moreover, this allows an emphasis on the technical words that are a necessary part of the study of South Asian art and permits usage of these words according to their meanings in the Indic context, and not as popularized or limited by English practices. The notable exceptions have been the use of Buddha (not *buddha*) and bodhisattva (not *bo-dhisattva*). Normally, we have chosen to split compound Sanskrit terms into separate words. However, when the joined version is more commonly seen in English, we have followed

that pattern (hence, *dharmacakra* has been preferred to *dharmacakra*). When the first of two Sanskrit words ends in an *a* or *ā* and the second in the series begins with *a* or *ā*, we have joined the words to deter pronunciation of the final and initial vowels as distinct sounds. Thus, we have given *padmāsana* instead of *padma āsana*, but *dharmacakra mudrā* remains split. In the case of place names and other geographic terms, diacritics have been used whenever possible, with the exception of Pradesh (not Pradeśa), which appears in several modern state names. When authoritative spellings could not be found, the terms have been given without diacritics. No diacritics were used on the map names, nor was it possible to standardize the spellings of map words which reflect the many languages of South Asia, according to a single system.

Introduction

For millennia, the peoples of South Asia have produced works of art in seemingly endless quantity and of virtually infinite diversity. Such objects were frequently materializations of their creators' highest religious and philosophical ideals, yet they could be interpreted on many levels by individuals at various stages of their spiritual development. On one level, the art expresses concepts so abstract that the most complex philosophical language of the world, Sanskrit, had to be developed to give them full verbal expression; at another level, the art conveys the simplest devotionism, indicative of the belief that an offering and pure faith could

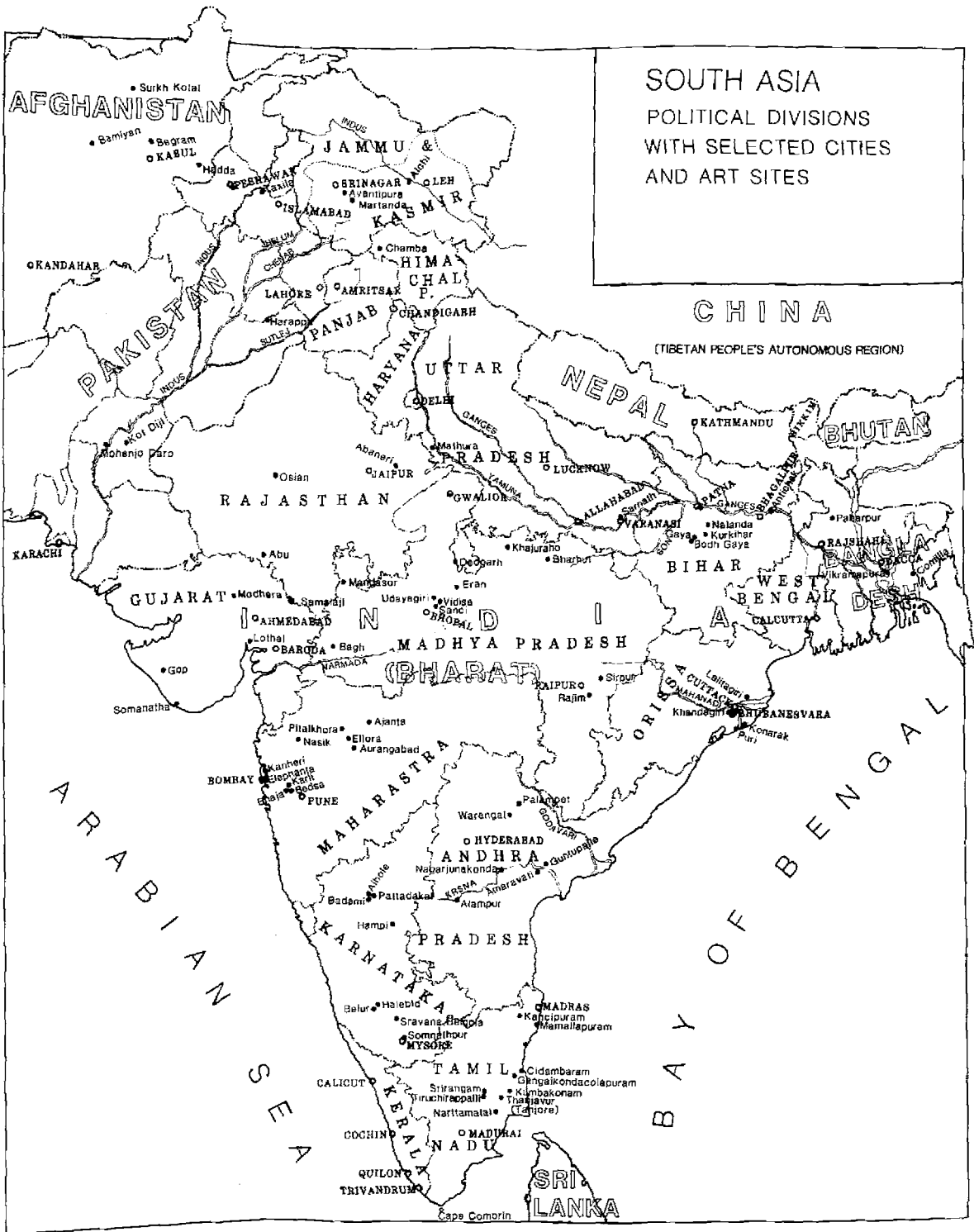
assure the material well-being of humankind. Through the creation of religious buildings and images showing beings who personified aspects of the universe and its irrevocable truths, the peoples of South Asia were able to interact daily with celestial beings as if they were near neighbors. The art works, then, are not just aesthetic expressions or exercises in color or form but are visualizations of the transcendent, brought into the range of human understanding. By studying the art of South Asia, it is possible to gain insight into the philosophical and humanistic ideals that this great civilization has held for millennia and continues to hold to the present day.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The South Asian subcontinent, roughly corresponding to the area occupied by the modern nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh,¹ comprises what may be called "ancient India." Although the influence of the Indic² culture extended far beyond these limits, outlying regions form the subject of what would have to be another, more extensive, survey. Within its boundaries developed one of the world's most ancient civilizations, which, unlike others of its day, still flourishes. Although it was open to contact with other cultures, such as those of China, Western Asia, Inner (or Central) Asia, and Southeast Asia, the Indic civilization also had an insularity that nurtured the development of its unique features. This insularity was due in part to the region's natural barriers—the rugged mountains of the high Himālayas and other ranges in the north, and the Arabian Sea, Indian

Ocean, and Bay of Bengal in the south. Nonetheless, the role of these features as "filters" of Indic culture should not be overestimated; mountain passes and sea routes easily linked the region to the world beyond throughout history. Therefore, the history of Indic art is a continual dialectic of indigenous and imported elements.

Although it was unified by broad cultural patterns, the South Asian region is by no means homogeneous. Archaeologists have noted that cultural patterns visible as early as prehistoric times and continuing to the modern period closely follow the natural geographic divisions of the subcontinent. These regions are broadly defined by mountain ranges and river systems and are characterized by a variety of climatic conditions. The resulting geographic units usually are defined as the northern, central, and southern regions. The northern region extends



from the northwestern lands watered by the Indus River in Pakistan and across northern India to include the northeastern region of the subcontinent watered by the Ganges River in Bangladesh. The central region, commonly known generically as the Deccan, is in India alone and includes the hill and forest zones further south, extending into the peninsula and including the Deccan plateau. The southern region includes the southernmost regions of the nation of India, primarily the lower peninsular portion of the subcontinent. Each of these divisions is notable for its variety, both physical and cultural, yet each is unified by broad linguistic, racial, and cultural associations.

While these lateral geographic zones broadly define cultural patterns within the subcontinent,

they are not inviolable. For example, along the eastern and western coasts, associations exist that transcend arbitrary divisions between the northern, central, and southern regions. Thus, "eastern" and "western" traits may be observed in Indic culture in addition to those of the three lateral zones. The story of South Asian art, then, is one of regional or local developments set against the broader spectrum of the culture as a whole. Regional forms may share general features with contemporaneous developments elsewhere while bearing distinctive features that unmistakably link them to the site of their production. This is even true of what have been called "pan-Indic" phases, such as the Maurya and Gupta periods covered in chapters four and ten.

THE PROBLEM OF DATING

Although the Indic civilization has developed almost uninterruptedly from its inception to the present, it is difficult to reconstruct a detailed history and chronology of events in every period. This difficulty is due to several factors. Archaeological fieldwork at prehistoric and proto-historic sites has not yet revealed a complete picture of early patterns and developments. For historical times, there exists an abundance of documentation such as inscriptions, texts, and coins, but this evidence is frequently ambiguous, contradictory, or misleading. Further, many systems of calculating time were used throughout the subcontinent's history. Most of these dating systems were based on the accession of individual kings and thus applied to a limited region or time span. Many such eras have not been correlated to the Christian era. Thus, even when art works or written documents were given specific dates by their makers, the dates do not always inform us of the time of production in relation to our calendrical system.

Because of the difficulties of reconstructing the chronology of Indic history and culture, it is not easy to find a format for the presentation

of Indic art which provides clarity, coherency, and accuracy while reflecting the vast panoply of South Asian art. This volume uses a chronological approach whenever possible, interweaving regional, religious, and cultural trends. The chronological arrangement is expressed largely in terms of political dynasties, the most common scheme for the periodization of South Asian history. This scheme has inherent limitations, for it seems to imply that art styles rose and fell with the fortunes of specific ruling families or that the dynasty that lends its name to a phase of Indic art supported or encouraged its development. While these situations did occur, they are not to be inferred automatically from the political designations. Instead, the dynastic names used in this volume reflect the fact that beginning in the historic period, primarily with the Maurya dynasty, the South Asian region consisted of numerous interrelated but separate kingdoms. These kingdoms and their interaction left a legacy of complicated linguistic, racial, and cultural patterns that are in turn reflected in the important artistic schools of the South Asian subcontinent.

Religion was the major force stimulating the creation of art and architecture in ancient India. According to most systems of Indic thought, the phenomenal world is illusory, perceived and interpreted by the senses, which yield data of a personal rather than of a universal nature. The primary illusion is the belief in a separate, egoic existence. Most Indic religions seek to eliminate this illusion and to foster the realization of universal unity and of the understanding that each seemingly separate entity is but a manifestation of the One. Ultimate Truth is considered to be transcendent, intrinsically beyond our limited means of acquiring knowledge. However, a number of symbolic devices (which indicate the Truth not by revealing it but by referring to it) may point toward the goal of realizing the undifferentiated state. Among these are *mantras* (verbal formulæ or incantations), *yantras* (mechanical devices such as geometric diagrams), and *mūrtis* (images, icons, or sculptures).

These latter two devices, *yantras* and *mūrtis*, comprise the main subject of this book. What we call the art of ancient India is, in fact, the reification of certain metaphysical concepts, the purpose of which is to enable the religious devotee to more easily internalize the ultimate Truth. Many Indic plans of buildings and other architectural forms created for religious use are based upon *yantras*, which makes them materializations of complicated abstract ideas. The images (*mūrtis*) which adorn such structures or occur in other religious contexts also express religious concepts. To those unfamiliar with the Indic world, it might be surprising to learn that the use of such images is thought to be least appropriate to the Truth itself since images have form and Truth is formless. Nonetheless, to the worshiper, an image is a useful tool that renders the abstract, transcendent realm more comprehensible and approachable. An image, then, is a kind of metaphor for something that can only be understood directly but cannot be truly translated into any form, be it visual, verbal, or other. In spite of the fact that an image is not the same as that which it represents, images

are believed to embody tremendous religious energy. Through the process of viewing an image, the devotee gains spiritual power. Indeed, the emphasis on *darśana* (viewing) in the Indic culture, which requires only seeing and being in the presence of something or someone great to gain merit, has lent the visual arts an importance never exceeded elsewhere in the world.

In light of these religious views, it can be easily understood why the principal aim of Indic art has never been to capture the likeness of the physical world or its inhabitants. Systems of perspective, concern with detailed anatomical correctness, and use of naturalistic coloration, as well as other artistic devices that convey the appearance of the phenomenal world, are noticeably lacking in South Asian art. Individual portraiture aimed at physical likeness is rarely encountered in ancient Indian sculptures and painting. And subject matter does not generally aim to record the daily life or customs of the Indic peoples. Often, works of art specifically contradict the "facts" of the physical world. For example, figures are frequently shown in hierarchical scale, measured on the basis of their religious achievement, not their physical size.

This lack of emphasis on naturalism does not indicate that the Indic artist did not possess skill, talent, or creativity. Rather, his immense ability was channeled into the expression of concepts beyond the limits of the phenomenal world. Such representations might incorporate the artist's individual beliefs or perceptions, but they were not meant to reflect his personality or to serve as monuments to his individuality. Few names of individual artists have survived to the present, but this is not particularly important in the Indic context, since works of art were meant to serve in the communication of universal religious ideals and not as vehicles of egoistic expression. Nonetheless, many artists, while working in what today can only be recognized as part of a "collective" rather than "individual" style, were great masters and innovators who deserve the same honor accorded to those whose names and artistic contributions are known elsewhere in the world.

For the most part, the Indic artist based his visualizations on the human form—its ornamentation, poses, and shapes—and the translation of its familiar characteristics into the multiheaded, multilimbed beings who inhabit realms beyond human existence. Visual formulations sometimes reflected nascent religious concepts that had yet to be expressed fully in words, while at other times they were based on textually elaborated doctrines. In the Indic context, where words and visual forms were both considered to be symbols of the Truth and not the Truth itself, neither had any special primacy.

Although religion was the single most important factor affecting art production in ancient India, it was not the sole determinant. Secular events exerted a major influence on the creation of art. A great deal of art patronage resulted from wealth gained through military and political conquests. Ancient Indic kings commonly sought to extend their domains by annexing neighboring regions. Booty obtained from expansionist campaigns was often spent on construction of religious architecture or on the enhancement of an already existing shrine. A victorious king could thereby legitimize the wealth and position he had recently acquired. Secular events also affected the transmission of art styles and iconographic patterns. Marriage alliances, brought about by attempts to consolidate empires or check an enemy's power, at times infused new life into regional art forms. Victorious monarchs returning to their capitals after military campaigns sometimes emulated and competed with the building achievements they had seen during military ventures in enemy territory.

Works of art that at first appear to be solely religious in purpose sometimes also glorify a king or embody double meanings that incorporate events or persons from the secular sphere into the religious symbolism. In turn, kings or other secular figures sometimes reborrowed from religious imagery, seeing their own actions and attributes as reflections of the divine. In many cases, religious ideals are expressed in military terms. The achievement of the transcendent state—the goal of many Indic religions—is frequently described as a victory. In both

Buddhism and Jainism, someone who has attained that state is described as a *jina* (victor). Religious attainment is often expressed in terms of the defeat of an enemy, that is, a personification of ignorance or another obstacle to the realization of Truth. Accordingly, many religious personages and deities are shown in art trampling upon a defeated foe or in combat with the obstacle-as-enemy. Many religious figures bear weapons such as the discus, bow and arrow, or sword, indicating the power at their disposal and the vigor with which they pursue their goals.

The materialism of human society was also incorporated into religious symbology. Jewelry, for example, is worn by nearly all figures depicted in the art, and sometimes such adornment signifies spiritual achievement. In Buddhism, transcendent knowledge is described as a gem; the five classes of ornaments (crown, gorget, anklet, bracelet, and girdle) frequently represent the five highest meditational attainments. Further, in each of the major South Asian religions, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, personifications of wealth or gods of wealth offer material rewards along with the wealth of spiritual achievement to their propitians.

Transmission of artistic styles and iconographic patterns probably was effected primarily by pilgrims and merchants traveling along well established routes to different parts of the subcontinent, helping to create what sometimes became widespread artistic styles. These travelers may have purchased works of art in the course of their travels, which could then be seen by potential patrons or artists in other locales. In particular, religious pilgrims who visited temples, shrines, holy sites, and famous teachers were instrumental in the dissemination of art forms throughout the subcontinent, for they brought back paintings, small sculptures, manuscripts, and iconographic texts to aid in their religious devotions. Craftsmen, too, may have moved along trade and pilgrimage routes to places where their services were needed to carry out the grand schemes devised by wealthy patrons. In these ways and others, ideas and art were disseminated widely, contributing to a

congruity in art styles and forms from region to region in many periods of South Asian art, while never obliterating the distinctive local characteristics that typify the various artistic schools.

The treatment of South Asian art in this volume reflects the current state of knowledge in the field, and hence, certain inequities of coverage are necessarily present. Many crucial art-yielding sites have never been excavated or studied from an art historical point of view because continuous inhabitation or use over the centuries has prevented the usual methods of scholarly research while others remain to be discovered by the archaeologist. If studied, the information such sites could reveal would undoubtedly necessitate a revision of aspects of the current overview of South Asian artistic developments. Similarly, whole periods and regional stylistic complexes have yet to be studied and contextualized within Indic art history. When this occurs, it is likely that some of the subjects that have been emphasized traditionally because of the availability of materials might recede to their appropriate position in the overall picture. Because of the often provisional nature of the state of knowledge in the field, it has been necessary to distinguish clearly what is known from what is surmised in the text.

Even if all of the extant art works from the South Asian subcontinent could be studied and placed in their chronological and cultural contexts, these works must be seen as only a small portion of the corpus that once existed. Thus, a specific example may or may not truly reflect the period of its production and the general cultural trends of its milieu. The often repeated cliché, that works of art made in easily perishable materials must have constituted an enormous proportion of the total art produced in any given period, is not just a facile excuse fabricated by art historians to help them prove or disprove certain theories. Instead, this statement is a bold reminder to anyone who hopes to study the material products of any civilization that he has at his disposal only a few clues, which may or may not be representative, to the complex subject before him. Even

the fact of survival itself is often misleading. While it is sometimes true that the most important sites were preserved because the greatest care was lavished upon them, equally important sites were the targets of destruction by enemies. The choice of materials might often have been based on availability, cost, or aesthetic appeal rather than durability, which would preserve them for future generations.

Although the extant art monuments from South Asia may represent only a fraction of the total once produced, the actual quantity of monuments is truly staggering. Those presented here have been selected in an attempt to provide a balance between those works that are most characteristic of the period in which they were produced and those that were most distinctive; between those that demonstrate the continuation of earlier formulations and those that represent the vanguard of their time; between those that were mundane but highly favored and those that were the most exalted and ambitious of their time; and between those that are best preserved and those that are the only known examples of their type. It is hoped that together they will provide the beginnings of understanding of the art of a civilization whose roots are as ancient as any known and yet that is still vital today.

The art to be considered in this volume is essentially that of the aristocracy of both religious and secular spheres. A major portion of the Indic culture throughout history has consisted of what might be called the folk element, and many of the objects produced in ancient India were simple articles for daily use. Although great progress has been made in studying the folk art of the Indic regions, it remains a subject separate from the present concern, which is an attempt to portray the artistic dimension of ancient India's highest intellectual and technical achievements. Throughout the world, the production of art, generally religious art, has accounted for many of the greatest expenditures of manpower, money, and creative ability. The culture of ancient India was no exception to this practice. Many of the architectural and artistic creations intended to honor an important individual, place, or concept were part of schemes beyond what one person could produce

or pay for and required a pooling of creative and monetary resources. Thus, while expressing *universal themes and truths*, the art works of concern here are not the objects of daily life

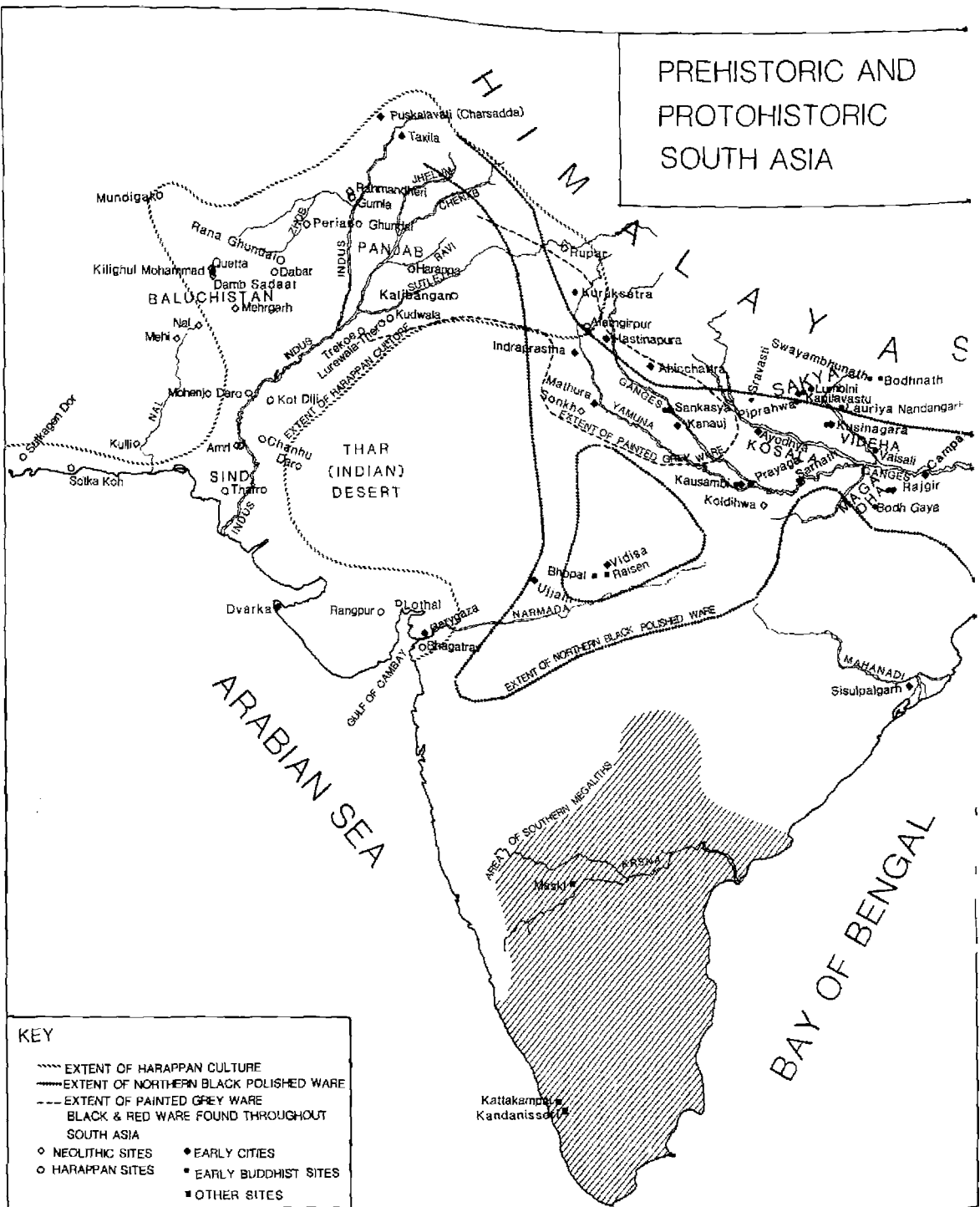
created by and for the majority of the populace; they are the products of the skilled craftsmen, the learned intellectuals, and the princely purses of their time.

PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIC CIVILIZATION

The Prehistoric and Protohistoric Periods

PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC SOUTH ASIA



KEY

- EXTENT OF HARAPPAN CULTURE
- EXTENT OF NORTHERN BLACK POLISHED WARE
- EXTENT OF PAINTED GREY WARE
- BLACK & RED WARE FOUND THROUGHOUT SOUTH ASIA
- NEOLITHIC SITES
- HARAPPAN SITES
- EARLY CITIES
- EARLY BUDDHIST SITES
- OTHER SITES



Detail of 1.4c.

CHAPTER ONE

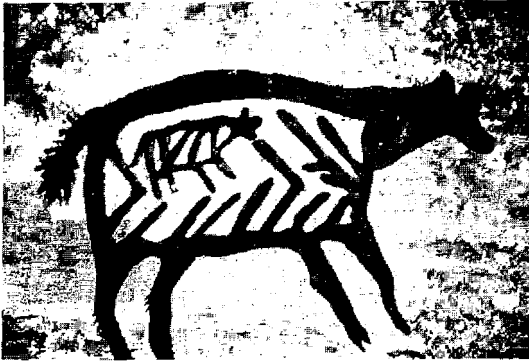
Antecedents of Indic Civilization

STONE AGE PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

Although human beings have lived on the South Asian subcontinent for hundreds of thousands of years, very little is known about the material culture of the early inhabitants. The earliest preserved man-made objects in South Asia, as in other regions of the world, are the multitudes of stone tools by which archaeologists define the Early, Middle, and Late Stone Ages of the subcontinent.¹ These, however, represent only one type of product created by early humans. Prior to the development of stoneworking technology, and alongside it, the early inhabitants of South Asia must have created vast quantities of material goods made of bones, branches, animal skins, grasses, and other easily perishable materials. While the full range of such ephemeral objects will probably never be known, the abundant stone tools themselves serve as a haunting prefiguration of several millennia of artistic developments in the Indic regions, for it was stone that served as the

artistic medium for so many of the gigantic temples, excavated caves, and sculptures of later centuries.

Some stone tools, mainly from the Middle and Late Stone Ages, suggest that aesthetic consideration was given to aspects of their creation, such as selection of stone and precision of carving facets. The survival of a few early carvings made of shell and bone also suggests that these early humans were concerned with more than pure utility in their carving efforts. However, it is in the rock shelters associated with peoples of the Middle and Late Stone Ages that the earliest significant corpora of Indic art may be found. More than a thousand rock shelters containing paintings have been identified in India proper, over half of which are in the north-central region, within about a 150-kilometer radius of Bhopal. Not all of the paintings in these shelters belong to an early period, since the creation of rock art has been continuous in Indic culture



1.1. Pregnant cow. (Enhanced photograph.) Rock painting at Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. 8000–2500 B.C.



1.2. Zebu. (Enhanced photograph.) Rock painting at Kharvai, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. 2500–300 B.C.

even to the present day.² But the archaeological contexts of some of the paintings suggests that they, and others executed in similar styles, were made as long as ten thousand years ago. Clues to the sequence of styles, and hence to their chronology, are provided by the paintings themselves, for in many of the cave shelters new compositions were continually superimposed over older ones throughout the centuries, thus preserving the order of their production. In paintings from Neolithic times³ and later, comparisons with contemporaneous pottery designs are also useful for dating purposes.

At least twenty styles of rock paintings have been identified on the basis of technique, pigment, and subject matter.⁴ Many of these pictures were made by “crayoning”⁵ rather than a true painting technique, since lumps of pigment were probably used to draw directly on the rock surface, although painting with water and a brushlike tool may also have been done. The principal minerals identified in extant pictures include hematite and iron oxides to produce yellow, orange, red, and brown; calcium and kaolin, white; manganese, purple; and copper, black and blue-green. Most of the compositions consist of animals, or sometimes humans, alone or grouped. The animals in the repertoire of these early artists include elephants, antelopes, lions, monkeys, and especially bulls and cows, to name just a few. One example, from Raisen, near Bhopal, may be among the

oldest of the surviving rock paintings, possibly dating from the period ca. 8000–2500 B.C.⁶ (Fig. 1.1).⁷ The animal is a pregnant cow, shown in an outline form that becomes a solid, silhouetted shape in the depiction of the head, legs, and tail. A series of lines indicates the bone structure of the creature. This so-called “X-ray style”⁸ thus provides a view into the animal, revealing its skeleton and, in this case and others where pregnancy is being depicted, an unborn animal within. The calf is drawn in a similar combination of solid and linear forms, although the arrangement of bones differs from that of its mother. The meaning of the pregnant cow can only be surmised in this context: some relationship to concepts of multiplication and fertility must be implicit. However, whether such notions had any significant bearing on the later development of Indic religious ideas about birth and rebirth or related concepts is unknown.

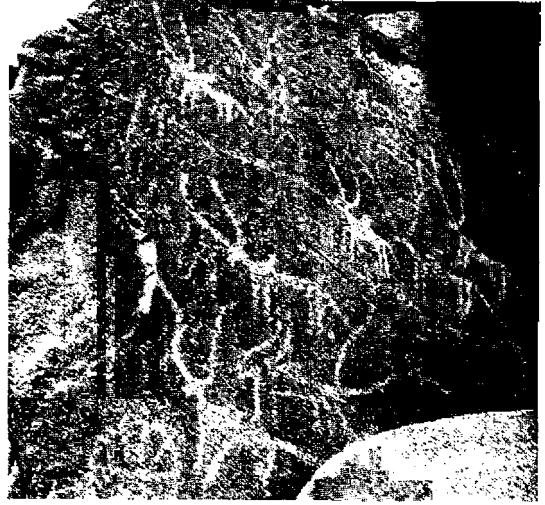
A completely different style may be seen in a representation of a zebu (*Bos indicus*) bull at Kharvai, also near Bhopal (Fig. 1.2), which has been dated to the period ca. 2500–300 B.C.⁹ In this case, the form has been created by the use of white kaolin to define the silhouetted shape of the animal against the darker color of the rock wall. The suggestion of naturalism is greater here than in pictures in the X-ray style, since the silhouette technique lends solidity to the form. In addition, the roundness of the animal’s body and the swelling hump indicate a type of ob-

ervation that anticipates later naturalistic representations of animals in South Asia.

The popularity of cows and bulls as subjects in early rock paintings, such as the two examples just discussed, suggests that the later emphasis on bovine creatures in Indic culture had its beginning in the Stone Ages. However, it is difficult to determine if these paintings were meant simply to record life or if they served religious or magical purposes as well. Thus, while it may be suggested that the relationship between the early depictions and later emphasis on the subject is more than merely coincidental, the special significance of cows and bulls at an early date remains speculative.

Although paintings in caves and rock shelters are found throughout the world as records of early human artistic activity, in South Asia such works might be said to have special significance. One of the major art forms of the Indic world—rock-cut architecture and its decoration—may be an outgrowth of aspects of this early practice. While the actual history of rock-cut architecture in ancient India may have had a foreign impetus during the Maurya period, perhaps the practice suited the needs of an already existing and very strong predilection.

Sculpture was also produced by the Stone Age dwellers of ancient India, as evidenced by surviving examples in bone, shell, stone, and other materials. One characteristic type of sculpture is the so-called "rock-bruising,"¹⁰ which is produced by chipping the surface of a rock so that a pattern is created due to the changing color of the surface. While the technique is essentially sculptural, the results are mainly two-dimensional and therefore related to painting. As in rock-shelter paintings, both animals and humans are shown in rock-bruisings, but the most common subject is cattle. An example from Maski in northern Karnāṭaka depicts horned cattle in both silhouette and outline



1.3. Animals. "Rock-bruising" at Maski, Karnāṭaka, India. Various dates.

form, suggesting relationships to early rock-shelter paintings (Fig. 1.3). As in the case of most rock-shelter paintings, the specific species are clearly distinguished and therefore identifiable, despite the somewhat schematic rendering of the forms. The separate subjects in this panel, including both animal and human forms, were not executed as a single unified composition. Instead, the arrangement as it appears today is the result of many separate incidents of carving and the cumulative efforts of a number of individuals. As in the case of rock-shelter paintings, it is difficult to assess the date of any specific example;¹¹ some of the carvings in this group may be extremely old, while others may have been made only a few centuries ago. Like Stone Age paintings, such examples reflect the persistence of Stone Age patterns of life alongside the mainstream of Indic civilization throughout the centuries while at the same time providing some insight into possible sources for Indic culture itself.

EARLY NEOLITHIC ART

In spite of the wide-ranging evidence of Stone Age populations throughout the South Asian subcontinent for tens of thousands of years,

the origins of what archaeologists define as true "civilization" are somewhat elusive, as is the definition of civilization itself.¹² By most ac-

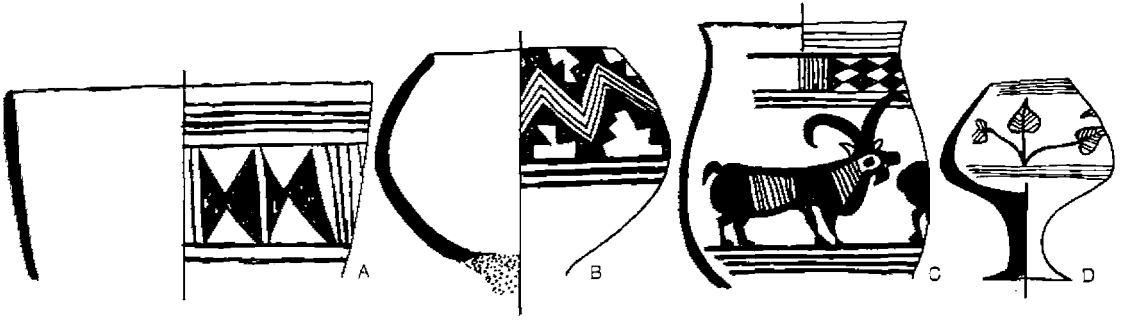
counts, the term implies the use of agriculture, domestication of animals, urbanized patterns of existence, the evolution of a political structure and, important for our purposes, the development of specialized crafts. Because of the concentrated archaeological research in this region, most of the known settlements that are a prelude to the complex patterns of life that characterize the civilized state have been found in the far northwest of the subcontinent, such as at Mundigak in southeast Afghanistan and in northern Balūchistān in Pakistan. The recent excavations at Mehrgarh in northern Balūchistān in particular have revealed Neolithic patterns of life as early as the sixth or even seventh millennium B.C., that is, contemporary with the Stone Age patterns that were flourishing elsewhere in the subcontinent. Later settlements have been identified further south, in southern Balūchistān and Sind, again in Pakistan, and even later in the Pañjāb region of Pakistan and in Rājasthān, India. The geographic distribution of these early settlements has led to the supposition that stimulus toward a settled existence was provided by contact with the western Asiatic world and gradually spread southward and eastward. However, this viewpoint is not tenable in light of recent discoveries in the central Ganges region of northern India, where, at sites such as Koldihwa near Allahābad, settled patterns of existence have been traced to the seventh millennium B.C.¹³ This suggests that further archaeological work will greatly alter our understanding of early settlement patterns and of the "origins" of civilization in South Asia.

No single excavated site provides a complete profile of the emerging patterns of life or the artifacts produced by these early peoples. Since they created and used pottery, however, a fuller range of their material culture is known than survives for their Stone Age counterparts.

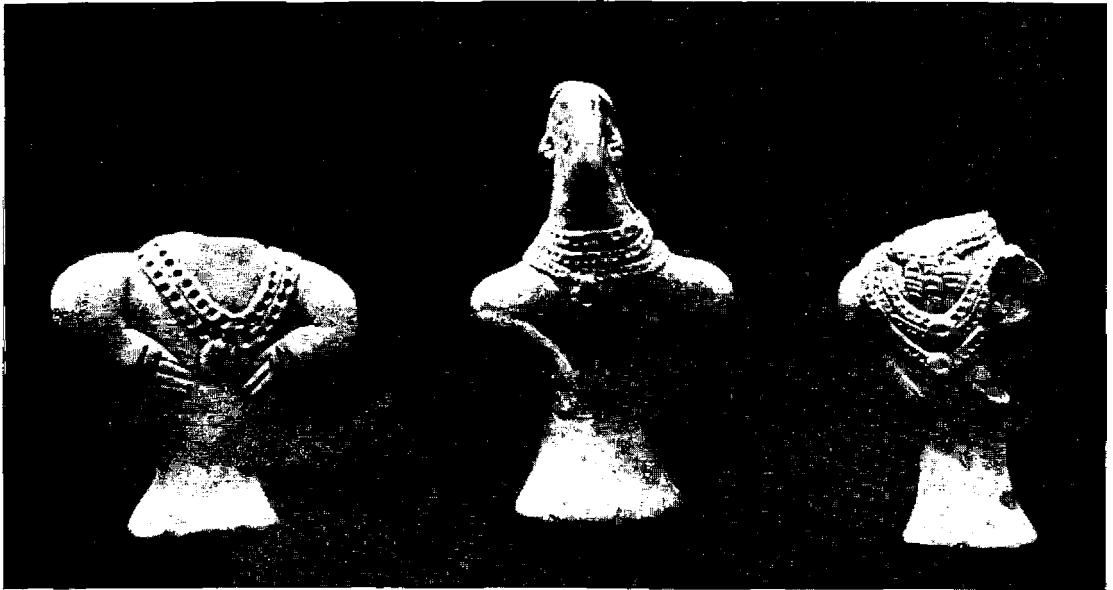
The pottery unearthed at the northwestern sites reveals a variety of vessel shapes and color schemes, along with a well-defined vocabulary of abstract and geometric designs. In general, greater refinement in technique and design developed over the course of centuries so that the earlier, hand-built pots were gradually superseded by wheel-formed vessels. The wares

range from simple monochrome or bichrome compositions to complex polychrome designs. Some levels and sites have yielded pots with geometric and abstract motifs, while others show the popularity of more naturalistic motifs, such as vegetal and animal forms. In some cases, geometric forms such as zigzags, triangles, ovals, and bands create abstract patterns like that seen on a shard from the Quetta Valley of northern Balūchistān, Pakistan (Fig. 1.4a). The arrangement of such motifs sometimes suggests a scene. For example, step-pyramid forms and a band of chevrons combine to create the effect of a landscape with mountains and a river on a pot from Mundigak in southern Afghanistan (Fig. 1.4b). Animals, such as the ibex (Fig. 1.4c), and vegetal motifs, such as the *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) (Fig. 1.4d), have been recovered from later levels at Mundigak. These latter two motifs are noteworthy, for both have been identified in the same level at Mundigak and are therefore presumed to be contemporaneous, yet the ibex is associated with the western Asiatic pottery cultures, while the *pipal* later became a major symbol in South Asian Buddhist art. Thus, their joint occurrence seems to document the coexistence of ties to western Asia and strongly indigenous developments. The meaning of these and other motifs employed on early pottery can only be surmised. However, it is likely that some symbolism, whether conscious or unconscious, was present.

A very fine example of a painted pot comes from Damb Sadaat (Pl. 1). Dating from around 2700–2300 B.C., the vessel represents the final stage of the prehistoric period in the Quetta Valley. The shape of the pot, with its narrow foot, rounded bowl, and gently flaring rim, suggests both the technical skill of the potter and the highly developed aesthetic principles governing the creation of pottery during this period. The painted design, which consists of bands of black encircling the bowl and bulls with wide arching horns, combines both abstract and naturalistic elements. While the animals are clearly identifiable and have counterparts in the natural world, the painter has embellished their forms by exaggerating the contours and adding geometric patterns to the surfaces of their bodies.



1.4. Pottery motifs. A) from Quetta Valley, Northern Balūchistān, Pakistan; B) from Mundigak III, Afghanistan; C, D) from Mundigak IV, Afghanistan. Pre-Harappā phase.



1.5. Figurines. From Mehi, Pakistan. Kulli Culture association. Ca. 2500–1900 B.C. Terra cotta. H: ca. 5–7 cm. Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

Terra-cotta figurines have also been unearthed alongside the painted pottery in early levels of sites in the northwest. Three small male figurines from Mehi display the abstracted and simplified body forms often characteristic of such pieces (Fig. 1.5). Recognizable as humans more because of the upright postures and jewelled ornaments than due to verisimilitude in depicting body parts, the figures have a lively if somewhat illogical appearance. Hand-formed

and often very crude, the figurines may some day provide valuable clues to the development of cultural and religious concepts that eventually manifested in later Indic civilization. Both animal forms (most commonly the bull) and humans (most often the female) are found widespread throughout the region, although they are notably absent from at least two complexes.¹⁴ The female figurines suggest some type of female cult, often identified as mother-



1.6. Bull sculpture. From Periano Ghunḡai, Zhob district, Northern Balūchistān, Pakistan. Ca. third millennium B.C. Clay. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

goddess worship. While the popularity of the female and the later importance of female and goddess imagery in Indic art might suggest such a concept, the term "mother goddess" is perhaps too strong, since we know neither how these sculptures were used nor what they represented; we cannot say whether the female is a goddess, nor even a mother. Bull sculptures, too, provide a link with later Indic culture, since, as will be shown, the bull came to have important economic, symbolic, and religious meaning in the Indic world. Bull imagery also indicates a possible link with the Stone Age dwellers for whom bovine creatures apparently had great importance. An example may be seen in a representation from the Zhob Valley (Fig. 1.6).

CONCLUSION

The study of the prehistoric period of the South Asian subcontinent is still in an early stage, and yet these phases must not be overlooked in reconstructing the region's artistic past. While the creation of rock art, terra-cotta figurines, and painted pottery are in no way unique to the Indic world but are common signs of the earliest beginnings of civilization throughout the world, they may be said to have a particular importance in this region due to their persistence. Rock art perhaps provides evidence of an early predilection which culminated in the monumental and elaborate rock-cut caves of the Buddhists, Hindus, and Jains. The subjects that appear in such compositions as well as in terra-cotta sculpture

and on painted pottery of Neolithic peoples are possible links with later Indic thought. Bulls, females, certain plant forms, and other motifs that appear in early Indic art not only persisted but became prominent, recurring themes in later periods. One might even say that the abstract motifs so commonly represented on early pottery find their counterparts later in *yantras* and other abstract or geometric contrivances used in Indic art and religion. Such ties are further suggested by the fact that important religious sites of historic times may often be identified as important prehistoric tool sites, indicating strong continuity between the traditions.



Detail of 2.13.

CHAPTER TWO

The Indus (or Harappā) Civilization*

(ca. 2300 to 1750 B.C.)

Distinctive settlement patterns accompanied by cultural and technological developments are well documented from an early date in the north-western regions of the South Asian subcontinent and have recently been identified in the Ganges Valley. However, the earliest known Indic complex which can be termed "civilization"¹ in the strictest sense of the word is the Indus, or, as it is also called, the Harappā civilization. Since early investigators originally thought that the cities and towns of the culture were clustered only in the Indus River Valley of Pakistan, it was called the Indus civilization, a name which is no longer considered truly descriptive. For subsequent discoveries of sites belonging to this culture have expanded its known geographic domain to include a region approximately the size of western Europe, reaching from northern Afghanistan and the border between Pakistan and Iran on the west, south along India's western coast to the Gulf of

Cambay, east into the Gangetic headwaters, and north to the foothills of the Himālayas. It is fully expected that future research will extend the boundaries and definitions of this culture even further. The city of Harappā, where the civilization was first discovered, has lent its name to the alternate designation for this culture. However, this name also has limitations since over one hundred fifty sites from this civilization have been found, five of which may be called cities in the proper sense of the term. Thus, the city of Harappā is not to be considered a unique example, nor necessarily even one typical of the civilization as a whole.

Although extensive archaeological exploration and study has been carried out at Harappā sites for much of this century,² information about this ancient culture is still limited; many basic questions about the people, their beliefs, and patterns of life remain unanswered. Much of what is surmised about the civilization is

derived from our understanding of what occurs later in South Asia (we thus "read into" Indus phenomena) or from cross-cultural analogies, primarily with the flourishing civilizations of contemporaneous Mesopotamia, with which the Indus peoples were in contact. This latter, while comprising an important analytic tool, should not automatically suggest an indebtedness of the Indus civilization to those of Mesopotamia.

Because sites showing experimental or formative stages of development for the Indus culture have been difficult to identify, the antecedents of the civilization remain elusive. In some cases, flooding and the rise of the water table have obscured the lowest levels of Indus sites and the early stages, which may have been the formative ones, are inaccessible. For example,

it has been estimated that at Mohenjo-Daro, one of the great metropolises of the Indus civilization, the lower third of the site is unavailable for study because of ground water. It is possible that some sites will eventually reveal developmental stages of the civilization while other sites that do not might reflect the spread of the civilization at an advanced stage and its superimposition on other modes of life.³

Indus-type artifacts have been found in reliably dated Mesopotamian strata ranging from approximately 2300 B.C. to about 1800 B.C.⁴ However, based on radiocarbon dates⁵ and other archaeological evidence, the culture's main period of florescence, its mature or urban phase, is now believed to have taken place between about 2100 B.C. and 1750 B.C.

THE CITIES AND TOWNS

Many cities and towns of the Indus civilization were laid out on rectilinear grids, with streets oriented on north-south and east-west axes (Fig. 2.1). Such standardization implies a great degree of civic planning and organization, as would be necessary in an urban environment where large populations lived in relatively small areas. The common building material at Harappā sites was baked brick.⁶ A remarkable aspect of the bricks is that they conform to specific standards of size and quality throughout the known geographical and chronological extent of the culture. This uniformity indicates a high degree of centralization, as well as continuous contact between various sites. Houses varied in size. Some were probably several stories high. Most display a similar plan with a square courtyard surrounded by a number of rooms, a format which persists throughout South Asian history and was later incorporated into both domestic and religious architecture. The walls closing off the houses from the streets were often high and apparently plain, broken only by doorways, insuring the residents' privacy and protection. It is interesting to note that doorways leading into domestic compounds invariably occur along small lanes or byways and are never

located along the main streets or thoroughfares. It is possible that the monotony of the walls was relieved by painting or by other decoration which has not survived. Houses had bathrooms, and the cities had sophisticated methods of drainage. Apparently, the urban citizen of the Harappā culture led a comfortable life, even by modern standards.

In addition to private dwellings and shops, a number of large, apparently public, structures, including granaries and citadels, have been identified at various Harappā sites. At Mohenjo-Daro, a tank, generally called the Great Bath, has been unearthed (Fig. 2.1, left). Because we know that in later Indic life and religion, bathing is essential for ritual cleansing, it has often been suggested that the Great Bath had religious significance, but there is no direct internal evidence of this. At Lothal, on the western seaboard of India, a large structure often identified as a constant-water-level dock has been excavated. If this intriguing but controversial⁷ structure is a dock, it would represent an engineering feat of great sophistication. Further, it would provide concrete evidence of a means of sea trade between the Indus and other civilizations.⁸ That Lothal might have



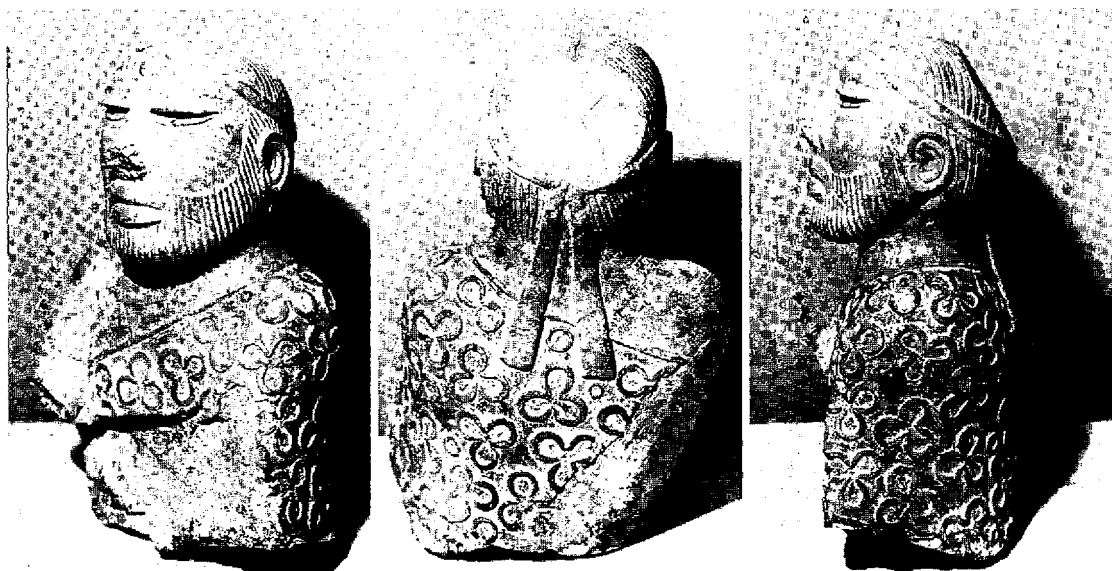
2.1. View of site showing Great Bath. Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Harappā period.

been a trading port city is further evidenced by the location of the shops of metalsmiths, bead-makers, shell and ivory workers, and other workers in crafts there.

Judging from the archaeological evidence, the peoples of the Indus civilization have been said to have enjoyed a peaceful existence, with few threats posed from the outside. Scholars have discussed the extent of city fortifications and the nature and strength of the weapons that have been found, but, lacking any historical texts, it is impossible to make an accurate statement regarding the relative peacefulness of Harappā life. The marked homogeneity of many of the artifacts does seem to suggest that the society remained stable over a long period of time, a phenomenon that may indicate a high degree of insularity and the ability to quickly absorb new or different elements into the society, or both. While many distinctions can be made, it can also be noted that in nine excavated levels at Mohenjo-Daro, for example, no significant changes in the type and character of many artifacts, such as brick size, occurs, indicating great constancy for several centuries. Since this lack of change almost seems to go against human nature itself, future research may hold some important answers. It is possible that many of the embellishments that could demon-

strate the personality of the culture and indicate greater differences were made in easily perishable materials and have been lost. Measurements on excavated skeletal remains have shown that at least four different racial types lived at Mohenjo-Daro,⁹ and thus complete homogeneity in the society is not to be expected. In fact, archaeologists are increasingly able to make distinctions from site to site and over the course of time. Yet, the overwhelming impression given by the buildings and structures of the Harappā sites is that of a controlled, conservative, well-ordered, homogeneous society with a centralized government.

Although the Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro may have had some ritual purpose, and the existence of religious ceremonies is also suggested by the discovery of a few fire altars at Harappā sites, the lack of a major Harappā structure that can be identified positively with religious ceremonies, such as a temple, is puzzling. Since most of later Indic thought, art, and life is dominated by religious concerns, and since most other civilizations in comparable stages of development yield documentation of religious beliefs, this is surprising. Clues to some of the concepts fundamental to the Indus people do exist, however, in the sculptures and seals that have been found.



2.2. Bearded man. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Limestone. H: 19 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

SCULPTURE

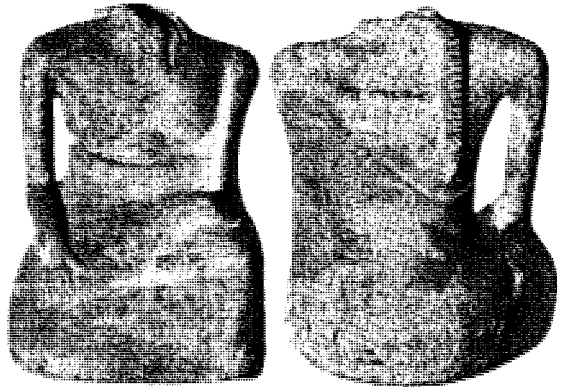
The sophistication and technological advancement evidenced in the organization and structure of the cities of the Harappā civilization are also seen in sculptural works. Aside from seals and terra-cotta sculptures, so few stone and metal sculptures have come to light in excavations (less than two dozen are known) that the surviving examples must represent only a tiny fraction of the objects once produced. A sculptural tradition using more ephemeral materials, such as wood, must have existed alongside of, and certainly prior to, the use of stone and metal. All of the sculptures found thus far are small (the largest is only about forty centimeters high), and even those that are broken would not have been sizable when complete. Interestingly, there is considerable variety in the types of stone used even among the few surviving examples, suggesting that the materials were selected because of their intrinsic beauty, not because they were widely available in the region. In fact, the stones used generally were not local to northwest India and Pakistan. It is likely that small pieces of different stones were imported through trade, perhaps as highly coveted raw materials.

The purposes of these small sculptures are as unclear as their stylistic origins. It is not known whether they were made for secular or religious needs, nor can their stylistic origins and precedents be determined at present. In general, they do not appear to be the tentative formulations one would expect in a beginning art tradition. Rather, they reflect a mature stage of artistic development in which problems of proportion, scale, relation of forms, and surface enhancement are all carefully worked out. While the formative stages remain undetermined, these works can be contextualized by comparison to Mesopotamian examples as well as to later Indic art.

One sculpture revealing some affinities to Mesopotamian imagery is a carved limestone fragment showing the head and shoulders of a bearded man. It was found in one of the later Harappā-period levels at Mohenjo-Daro (Fig. 2.2). Some scholars have suggested that the individual depicted might be a foreigner, perhaps a Mesopotamian, since the high, straight nose which blends almost imperceptibly into the forehead, the full lips, and the narrow, slitlike eyes (one of which was still inlaid with

shell when it was found) do not seem to reflect facial types characteristic of the South Asian subcontinent or that occur in later Indic art. The treatment of the beard (itself not a typically Indic fashion) and hair also differs from any extant examples in South Asian art in the strictly controlled striated patterns that reveal a propensity for linear rather than sculptural forms. This linearity and abstraction is evident also in the treatment of the ear as a whorlike configuration on the side of the head. The costume worn by the figure may betray further associations with western Asiatic culture. For example, the garment that covers only the left shoulder is a type commonly seen in Mesopotamian art, though the popularity of a similar one-shouldered garment in later Buddhist costume suggests that it may reflect a purely Indic style of clothing. The trefoil design on the garment reinforces the suggestion of western Asiatic contact, for this pattern is found occasionally in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Minoan art, but not in later India, although it does appear elsewhere as a motif in Harappā art.¹⁰ In this case, the trefoil pattern, which is slightly raised from the surface of the sculpture, was filled with a red paste when the piece was found, so that it contributed to a polychrome effect for the sculpture. The headband worn by the figure, with its ends hanging down the back of the head, is a type seen in later Indic art, but usually reserved only for "foreign" types. Together, these features, which have no known precedent on the South Asian subcontinent and do not seem to persist as Indic characteristics, suggest some western Asiatic associations. However, direct contact between the cultures at this time is not the only possible explanation for the shared characteristics. Similarities may illustrate a common debt to an underlying or preexisting continuum of ideas¹¹ that was important in the formulation of both the Indus and Mesopotamian civilizations.

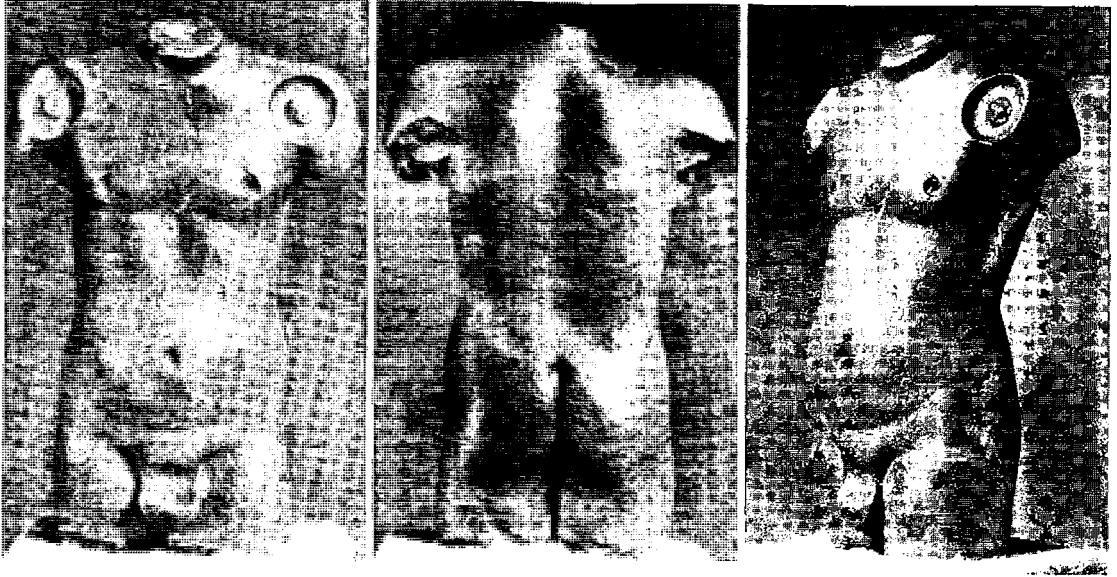
The individual portrayed in this sculpture has often been called a priest, an assertion based on various factors. The presence of headgear, in this case a headband, suggests that he may be a person of rank, for in later Indic art, the wearing of turbans, crowns, and even simpler



2.3. Seated figure. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Alabaster. H: 29.2 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

headgear is generally associated with high-ranking individuals. The meaning of his one-shouldered garment is unclear in the Indus context, but it may have had religious associations as suggested by its popularity in later Buddhism. Further, the half-closed appearance of the slitlike eyes has led to the suggestion that the individual is practicing meditation, perhaps of a type known in later Indic religious traditions. But such an identification must remain speculative until a fuller picture of the Harappā culture emerges.

Another sculpture from Mohenjo-Daro, made of alabaster, shows further associations with Mesopotamian art (Fig. 2.3). This male figure wears a garment that completely masks the lower portion of his body. His seated posture, obscured by the garment, seems to be a cross-legged pose with the left knee slightly raised or held high by the left hand. The body is quite thin, and the arms and hands in particular lack substance and solidity. While the head is missing, a strand falling behind the right shoulder suggests long hair or a wig. At first glance, the figure indeed seems to resemble a number of sculptures from Mesopotamia. Closer examination reveals that the rounded forms, the posture, and the treatment of drapery and hair, while possibly based on similar or common aesthetic predispositions, cannot be mistaken for Mesopotamian



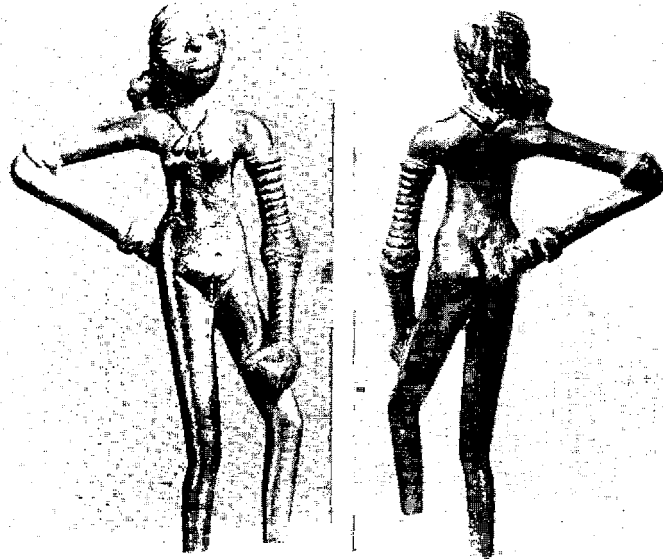
2.4. Male figure, three views. From Harappā, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Red stone. H: 9.3 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

types. Yet, like the previous sculpture, this carving does not suggest the forms of later Indic art, either. Thus, while apparently related to western Asiatic traditions, both seem to express an aspect of the Harappā civilization.

In striking contrast, other sculptures have been found at Harappā sites that bear no resemblance whatsoever to western Asiatic forms. These works, along with the vast majority of Harappā artifacts, clearly document the cultural independence of the civilization. Furthermore, many of these objects offer intriguing evidence of continuities between Harappā sculpture and later Indic art. Perhaps the best figurative example showing both the independent tradition of the Harappāns and its ties to later Indic art is a small red stone statue of a nude male figure that was found at Harappā (Fig. 2.4). Unfortunately, because the piece was not excavated under controlled conditions, there is no archaeological proof of its early date. Some have claimed that it dates from a later period.¹² However, several cogent arguments for a Harappā-period date have been put forth, including the fact that the sculpture has drilled sockets to receive dowels for the attachment of

the head and limbs. This feature is not seen in later Indic stone sculpture, but is a common Harappā terra-cotta technique. The carving relates stylistically to some later Indic works, but distinctions are also present. Thus, the work may be accepted with some certainty as a product of the Harappā civilization. Hopefully, future scientific excavations will unearth similar pieces to verify this.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this small statue is its naturalism. The body is subtly modeled and softly contoured. Gentle transitions between one part of the body and another are created through sculptural means, rather than with the use of line. For example, the abdominal and pectoral regions swell in a three-dimensional manner and are not defined by any outline or linear demarcation. In contrast to the preceding examples of Harappā sculpture, there is a total absence of linear design, abstract patterns, and other surface enhancement. In much of later Indic sculpture, while some linear patterns might be present, such as in drapery depictions, a major emphasis is on the forms of the body, achieved, as here, through sculptural means.



2.5. Female figure, front and back views. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Bronze. H: 11.5 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

Although from the front the figure seems static and frontal, the asymmetry of the back suggests that the figure was meant to be shown as if the weight of the body was more heavily resting on one leg than on the other. This creates a feeling of implicit movement through imbalance and thus provides a sense of animation that reinforces the overall naturalism of the piece.

The unadorned nudity of this figure has generated a great deal of discussion. The mere fact of the nudity and the depiction of the male genitals does not necessarily indicate sexuality or fertility. The same would be true of female figures whose hips and breasts might be apparent. To not depict the sexual features of the human body would signify a deliberate artistic choice and a negation. To represent them is simply to describe the human form, unless, of course, undue attention is placed on their depiction. In any case, the reason for the nudity remains a mystery, for in both Harappā art and later Indic art, total nudity is by far the exception rather than the normal manner of presenting the human form, although the clinging garments characteristic of many styles of South

Asian art almost suggest nudity. It is perhaps because of the nudity, as well as the accident of having lost the limbs and head in both cases, that this figure is so often discussed in relation to the Lohānīpur torso of the Maurya period, around the third century B.C. (Fig. 4.11). This comparison has been emphasized by those who favor the view that the piece from Harappā is not a product of the Harappā civilization. The points of comparison are superficial, however, for in technique (the Maurya piece has a characteristic highly-polished surface), the method of depicting body transitions, and the presence of the sockets in the Harappā piece, the sculptures differ. The nudity of the Maurya sculpture might be related to a specific religious cult. Whether this is true for the Harappā piece can only remain speculative at this time, for we do not know who the sculpture represents or what purpose it served. In later Indic contexts, when a figure is shown without clothing, as in the case of Digambara or "Sky-clad" Jain figures, it is generally not for the purpose of glorifying the human body, but rather as a symbol of world renunciation and victory over the usual needs of the physical body. It is possible that

a similar reason explains this figure's nudity.

A well-preserved statue of a female figure provides a rare example of metal sculpture¹³ from the Harappā civilization. Quite different in style from the red stone torso, it also shows links to later Indic art (Fig. 2.5). Found at Mohenjo-Daro in one of the later strata, this small image is probably of a date late in the history of the site. The piece is stylistically quite unlike either the western Asiatic-type forms or the more typically Indic forms thus far described in Harappā art. It may represent still another strand in this early art tradition. Like the red stone figure, the body is nude, but here the bodily forms are abstracted into long, thin, pipe-like elements and have none of the softly modeled fleshiness of the red statue. The elongated, lanky limbs seem to show a disregard for naturalistic proportions, yet the overall effect is one of liveliness and animation. This effect is largely achieved through the jaunty posture, with both legs bent and the left leg placed slightly forward while the bent right arm rests on the right hip. This vitality has led to the common assumption that this figure represents a dancer, a suggestion colored by attempts to interpret early Indic works in light of later Indic civilization. It would be of great interest if this figure is a dancer, for this would demonstrate a precedent for the later emphasis on dance in South Asia. However, such an assertion is strictly speculative, for it is impossible to determine whether the implied movement of the figure is that of a dance.

Although the girl is nude, she is not unadorned. She wears a necklace and has numerous bangles on her arms. While it is most unusual to find an unclothed female in the whole range of Indic art, jewelry is almost universally worn by figures—both female and male—throughout the many centuries of traceable Indic art. In general, it is the absence, not presence, of jewelry that is the more notable condition. A lack of jewelry is often a deliberately chosen means of making a statement about an individual, such as, for example, the fact that he or she is a religious mendicant. (The absence of jewelry may thus provide a clue to the meaning of the red torso from Harappā.) Jewelry eventually

came to serve both decorative and symbolic functions in Indic art, but whether anything more than simple adornment is intended here is unknown. As in the preceding sculpture, the nudity does not necessarily imply sexuality or fertility, since there is no emphasis on sexual characteristics. (Perhaps because of her adolescentlike lankiness, no one has suggested that this girl is a "mother goddess.") Other features of interest include the hair, which is tied into a bun at the nape of the neck in a style similar to that worn by many South Asian women even today, and the facial characteristics, including the heavy lips and high forehead. These physical features are often said to be typical of the Dravidians, the people who are prevalent today in south India and who may have been the principal inhabitants of the Harappā civilization. Thus, this sculpture documents different forms and trends than do the stone sculptures and further suggests the breadth of Harappā art.

Numerous terra-cotta figures have been recovered from Harappā sites, but these differ considerably in style and decoration from the stone and metal pieces. The terra cottas are usually more crudely executed and, since they are far more common, may represent a popular art form. If, as has been suggested, stone for sculpture was often imported, the use of that more precious material, and of metal (which would require a relatively sophisticated technology), may have been associated with the elite of the society, while the ubiquitous terra cotta could have served the artistic needs of the people as a whole.

A common subject in terra-cotta figures is the female. These sculptures bear little resemblance to the metal girl just described, but it is important to remember that any apparent differences have not yet been correlated to possible artistic developments over time and from place to place within the Harappā civilization. The most common type of female has wide hips, pelletlike breasts, tubular limbs, and abundant jewelry adornments including necklace, girdle, earrings, and frequently an elaborate headdress (Fig. 2.6). Terra-cotta figures are generally small and schematically rendered. Like their pre-Harappā counterparts, these are often

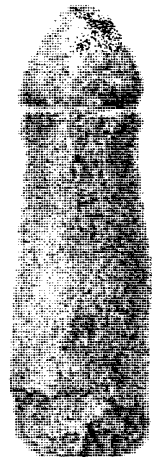


2.6. Female figure. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Terra cotta. H: ca. 15 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

called “mother goddesses,” though the aptness of this designation is questionable. When, as occasionally occurs, a small child appears on the hip or at the breast, or a bulging abdomen suggests pregnancy, at least the concept of motherhood may be verified. One might even go so far as to say that implicit in every female figure is the concept of motherhood, whether it is actual or potential. However, the assessment of the divine nature—the goddess aspect—is insupportable at this date. Perhaps it is best to assume that the popularity of the female as a subject in terra-cotta art from pre-Harappā and Harappā times is associated with the ideas of motherhood and hence fertility, procreation, and the continuity of life, although the presence of any divine status is unknown. It is true that this early emphasis on the feminine aspect might be a strong basis for the later importance placed on women in the major Indic religions, and consequently their prominence in Indic art. Nonetheless, the meanings associated with female imagery at this early date remain uncertain.

A potential emphasis on the sexuality of the females depicted in the terra cottas is reinforced by other objects recovered from Harappā

sites. A definite reference to procreation seems to be intended in a number of carvings that represent the phallus (*liṅga*). While some of these are abstract and may only be inferred to represent the phallus, others are quite naturalistic (Fig. 2.7). Ring stones believed to represent the female generative organ (*yoni*) also have been found. Since few have been unearthed in specific association with a *liṅga*, some scholars have discredited the interpretation of these objects as *liṅgas* and *yonis*. However, a convincing alternative hypothesis has not been offered, and because *liṅgas* and *yonis* are common in later Indic art, these objects may be accepted as early examples. A religious emphasis on procreation is a phenomenon associated with early agricultural societies dependent upon the bounty of nature for their well-being and survival. Judging from later Indic iconography, it is also possible that “eternal” or “universal” symbolism is intended by such objects. The *yoni* might represent the door through which one is “born again,” thereby relating to the concept of countless rounds of rebirths (*samsāra*), which figures in later Indic thought. The *liṅga* would represent the procreative aspect of the universe (later, of the Hindu god Śiva) and the means by which the endless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth occur. The realization of nonduality, symbolized by the combination of male and female principles, represents one of the essential goals of later Buddhist and Hindu thought.



2.7. *Liṅga*. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Harappā period. Ca. 2300–1750 B.C. Stone. Whereabouts of original unknown.



2.8. Bull. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Terra cotta. H: ca. 7 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

Perhaps such symbolism grew out of beliefs distinguishable as early as the Harappā civilization.

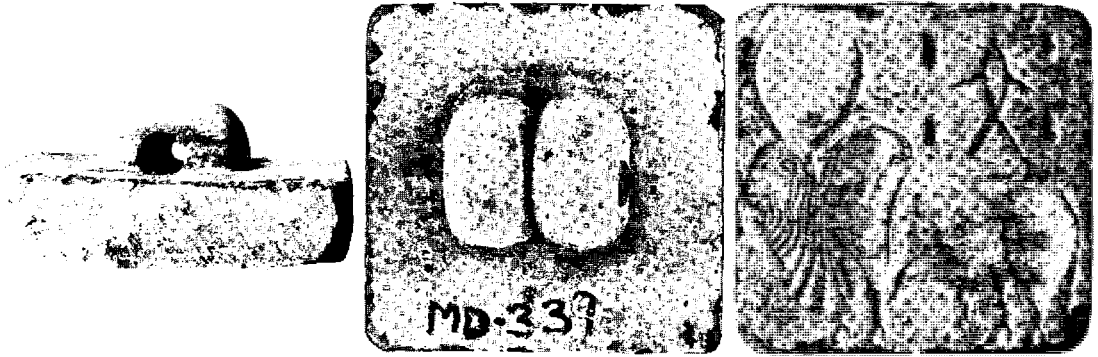
SEALS

Over two thousand seals and seal impressions have been found at Harappā sites. The majority of seals are made of steatite that has been coated with an alkali and then fired to produce a white lustrous surface.¹⁴ Usually, the seals are square in shape and have a perforated boss at the back for handling and suspension (Fig. 2.9). They are generally small, averaging only a few centimeters across. Despite their small size, seals sometimes have elaborate intaglio designs showing animals, plants, geometric forms, and even scenes with humans or humanoids, as well as writing. The decipherment of the writing on the Indus seals is perhaps the most vexing problem for the interpreter of this ancient civilization, for its decipherment could summarily prove or disprove the numerous theories that have been put forth about the culture. Approximately four hundred different signs have been catalogued for this apparently pictographic script. To date, there has been no confirmed decipherment, although many announcements to that effect have been made.¹⁵ The analysis of the script and language is important because it may confirm the identity of at least some of the Harappā people. For example, if it relates to the Dravidian languages, it would support the commonly

Another aspect of fertility symbolism in the Harappā culture seems to exist in the many representations of bulls. On Indus seals, bulls outnumber all other motifs. Bulls are commonly found as isolated sculptures as well (Fig. 2.8). Often, the representations are highly naturalistic. Several different varieties of bovine animals are easily distinguishable. These may represent some of the domesticated animals that were highly valued in society and that came to have great economic importance to their owners. The bull, as potential sire of generations of offspring, might have come to have a symbolism associated with both wealth and fertility. The importance of this animal may best be explained by examining some of the seals that have been recovered from various Harappā sites.

held view about an important Dravidian component of the civilization, though this would not preclude the existence of other linguistic and ethnic groups among the Harappā peoples. The decoded language might also provide a key to the interpretation of the seals and their designs. However, the seals may have been used as the personal marks of identification of their owners and may contain only proper names or titles of individuals rather than explanatory material. As far as can be determined, the script as it survives did not develop over the centuries in which the Harappā culture flourished. Its origins and developments are therefore as enigmatic as the words it records.¹⁶

Elephants, rhinoceroses, and other animals appear on the seals, but the predominant zoomorphic motif is a profile representation of an animal standing in front of what has been called a manger (Fig. 2.10). Since the animal appearing on such seals is depicted with only one horn, it has often been identified as a unicorn. Although the Indic context does provide some validity to the identification, for a one-horned creature (*ekaśrīṅga*) is known in the later Jain religion,¹⁷ the fact that the head of the animal is invariably depicted in a strict profile, suggests that the two



2.9. Seal with bull design, three views. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Steatite. 2.8 × 2.8 × 1.3 cm. Department of Archaeology of Pakistan, Karachi.

horns of the animal simply overlap, and that a unicorn is not being shown at all. Indeed, the form of the animal's body indicates that it is a bovine creature, regardless of any peculiarity in the number of horns.

The “manger” is also difficult to interpret, for objects of this type have not yet been found in the excavations of Harappā sites. It may have been used in religious ceremonies or sacrifices or may simply have been a feeding trough. The implications of the double-ribbed pad or harness frequently shown across the shoulders of the animal are also unclear.

In this seal, the subtlety of modeling and the anatomical precision evidenced in the best seals are clearly visible. Interestingly, naturalism seems to be reserved for the carvings of animals in the seals, while humans are normally depicted in a schematic and abstracted fashion. Yet, as was evident from the small red male statue, naturalism could also be a characteristic of the human figure, at least in some Harappā contexts. Observation of natural forms is further seen in the differentiation of various bovine animals on Indus seals, for at least three other specifically defined types appear. The first is a zebu (Fig. 2.9), an animal common in pre-Harappā cave painting as well (Fig. 1.2); the second is a bisonlike creature commonly shown as if feeding from a trough, though not in the example shown (Fig. 2.11); the third is a seldom represented type with widespread, arching



2.10. Seal with horned animal. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Steatite. H: 5.7 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.



2.11. Seal showing bull. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Steatite. H: ca. 4 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

horns, perhaps a water buffalo. These tiny carvings are often executed with great verisimilitude, indicating the artists' intimate visual knowledge of the anatomy of the animals and their possession of sophisticated artistic methods of modeling their forms.

The emphasis on bovine animals in the Harappā civilization may partly be explained in economic terms. An agricultural society would have depended heavily on such animals as a source of milk, possibly meat and leather, and as beasts of burden. The females of the species would be important as propagators of future generations and as insurers of wealth's abundance. Nonetheless, bulls rather than cows are invariably depicted on the seals and in free-standing Harappā sculpture. We know from later Hindu iconography that the bull became the vehicle (*vāhana*) of Śiva and also a symbol of sexual enjoyment. Therefore, perhaps the prowess of the bull is also used in the Harappā context to symbolize procreative and progenitive powers and the resultant abundance of the herds.

The possible association between early depictions of bulls and later Śiva forms is strengthened by the occurrence of *liṅgas* in the Harappā context, for the *liṅga* eventually became an almost universal sign of the god Śiva. Also, a number of male figures on several Harappā seals have characteristics that suggest associations with later Śiva imagery. Thus, it is possible that some of the beliefs and practices of the Harappā civilization served as a foundation for aspects of later Indic religion. The best example of what has been called the "proto-Śiva" on Indus seals shows a male figure seated in a posture with the soles of his feet pressed together, his legs splayed to each side (Fig. 2.12). The arms extend away from the body and the thumbs rest on his knees while the fingers point downward. Neither the leg position nor the arm position is one that someone would casually assume. Rather, these are highly formal gestures and may represent a specific *āsana* and *mudrā*. The term *āsana* (literally "seat") refers to the different leg positions or sitting postures usually assumed by a person performing meditation or other religious practices in later Indic culture. The term *mudrā* refers to the hand



2.12. Seal showing a *yogin*. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Steatite. H: 3.4 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

gestures used within the same context. While individual *āsanas* and *mudrās* came to have specific communicative content, it is difficult to go beyond the simple observation that this and other figures on seals in similar or related configurations may be performing a religious exercise or ritual. Meditation and the use of *āsanas* and *mudrās* are usually associated with yoga and yogic practices. Yoga, which means literally "to yoke," refers in the broadest sense to beliefs and practices by which a practitioner attempts to "yoke" or unify himself with the divine or universal. It is a pan-sectarian concept associated with virtually every major Indic religion, including Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. Thus, the apparent reference to yogic practices in the Harappā civilization does not necessarily signify the roots of any one specific sect; it might represent a common source for all. It is important to note that the yogic concepts, as well as the use of *āsanas* and *mudrās*, probably reflect indigenous developments in Harappā art, rather than any that can be traced to western Asiatic sources. Because these seem to occur in a well-developed stage when first encountered in Harappā art, it must be assumed that a lengthy period of evolution preceded them.

In contrast, a few elements of this seal suggest affinities to concepts and forms found throughout western Asia. For example, the figure is

shown either having horns (in which case, he might be a composite, part-human, part-animal creature) or wearing a headdress, which is comprised of horns, implying the adoption of some of the beast's characteristics. The figure might be a "bull-man" in concept, if not in actuality. In Mesopotamia, the wearing of a horned headdress by a ruler was believed to impart power or divinity to him; the horns shown here may thus indicate still another tie, even if indirect, between the Indus culture and ancient Mesopotamia. The tripartite form seen here seems to be distinctively Harappān, and, as has already been indicated, horned creatures clearly had great importance in Indic culture, even in pre-Harappā times, in contexts like the Stone Age rock shelter paintings, which do not necessarily suggest western Asiatic contacts. Thus, it is important not to overstress such possible connections, or to infer from them an indebtedness of one culture to the other.

Since the later Hindu god Śiva is strongly associated with the bull, the horned headdress has lent support to interpretations of this figure as a prototype of Śiva. In addition, while it is difficult to discern these features on such a tiny sculpture, it is possible that the figure has three faces, is ithyphallic, and either wears a tiger skin or has a tigerlike upper torso.¹⁸ Each of these features again can be related to later Śiva iconography, as can the fact that the figure seems to be involved in yogic practices. Further, the four animals surrounding the central figure, an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros, and a buffalo, have been related to Śiva's Paśupati aspect, in which he is Lord of Beasts.

While many of these features seem to provide compelling arguments for relating the seal to Śiva iconography—and indeed it probably does—it is important to remember that many of these characteristics are not exclusive to the god Śiva. At this early date, they might indicate a common pool of religious ideas from which many of the Indic systems developed. For example, the arrangement of the four animals around the central figure suggests a *maṇḍala*, a cosmological diagram known in Śaivism and other Indic religions.¹⁹ The specific placement of a pair of antelopes (one of which has broken off) beneath

the dais upon which the figure sits is primarily associated with later Buddhist iconography. The seat itself, and its more elaborate counterpart, the throne, is used in later Indic religions to signify the high rank of the person who sits upon it. It is probably most accurate to assume that the "bull-man" and the accompanying elements of this famous seal relate to many concepts found in later Indic religious systems, including Śaivism, but that these ideas are not yet exclusive to any one of them. As such, the seal is an important document of a whole range of concepts fundamental to the religious outlook of a number of Indic sects. What is especially important about this seal is that, in contrast to the individual sculptures found at Harappā sites, whose meanings could only be discussed in the most speculative terms, in this small composition, we have definite proof of Harappā religious practices, involving perhaps an early form of yoga and possibly identity transferral in which a human takes on certain, probably symbolic, characteristics of other creatures.

It is notable that while the designs of some of the bull seals, or those showing other animals, repeat among the corpus of Indus seals, this example and others showing human-type figures in which religious activity is definitely portrayed, seem to have been unique. As a group, such seals comprise only a handful of the thousands of seals that have been unearthed at Harappā sites. Perhaps these were the personal property of a few high-ranking individuals in the society, while the others may have been a generic type common to whole classes of people.

Another seal shows a figure with a similar headdress standing in a U-shaped tree (Fig. 2.13). The leaves are those of a *pīpal* tree, which occurs on pottery as a motif as early as the pre-Harappā period. However, while the meaning of this tree in earlier contexts is unknown—it may have been depicted only because of the beauty and symmetry of its leaves—it might be assumed that its depiction here is more significant. The *pīpal* tree is one of the few identifiable plant species on Harappā seals. Its persistence as a symbol in South Asia, particularly in Buddhism, wherein it became Śākyamuni Buddha's tree of enlightenment, may not be merely accidental.



2.13. Seal showing ceremony with figures and bull. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Steatite. H: ca. 3–4 cm. National Museum, Karachi.



2.14. Seal showing serpents and figures honoring a *yogin*. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100–1750 B.C. Faience. H: ca. 1–2 cm? Present whereabouts unknown.

When used on seals, the *pipal* seems to appear in religious contexts.²⁰ In this seal, for example, a complex ceremony is taking place, in which a kneeling devotee propitiates the horned figure in the tree. The kneeling figure also wears a horned headdress, which suggests that he may be assuming some of the characteristics of the figure in the tree—perhaps a deity—by means of identity transferral. Behind the kneeling figure is a bull, whose role here is unknown, but the bull's presence reinforces a religious association for bulls (as do the horned headdresses) in the Indus context. The row of standing figures along the bottom of the seal may also be participants in the events and they too wear elaborate headdresses. If identity transferral, by which the devotee seeks unification with a divine essence, is truly indicated by a composition such as this, this would indicate a very early source for the concept of union between the individual and the universal that permeates later Indic thinking. In fact, this concept so strongly relates to the philosophical thinking expressed in a body of texts known as the Upaniṣads, believed to have been composed around 800–450 B.C., that it might be suggested that the Upaniṣads could reflect the finalization of concepts that had been extant since Harappā times.²¹

A small faience seal is also startling for its apparent relationship to later Indic concepts

(Fig. 2.14). In this case, the seated central figure appears without headdress but in the same yogic posture described in Figure 2.12. He is being propitiated by two kneeling figures, one to either side, both of whom are backed by serpents rising up from the ground like cobras about to strike. The obvious resemblance of this group to later Buddhist votive scenes in which serpent deities (*nāgas*) pay homage to the Buddha has been noted.²² Indeed, the parallel is so close that the iconographic format must have continued from this early date to later periods, although the specific meanings might have changed.

Another seal that poses many questions and offers intriguing possibilities depicts an anthropomorph and a zoomorph, each of which is a composite of several forms (Fig. 2.15). The zoomorph is essentially a horned tiger with clearly defined facial features, feline paws and ears, as well as stripes and a tail, while the anthropomorph seems human because of its upright posture and the use of its forelimbs like arms rather than like the legs of a quadruped. The lower half of the body, including the cloven hoofs, the tail, and the horns on the head, all appear to be bovine, resembling those features of many bulls on other seals. Because its gestures might be interpreted as an attack upon the zoomorph, it has been suggested that this scene represents an event in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh*

epic, in which the bull-man Enkidu attacks a beast. However, since the precise form differs from the motif as found in Mesopotamian art, this interpretation is unverified. Further, breast-like forms on the chest suggest that the figure is female, which would make the identification as Enkidu impossible. In any case, the tree at the side, along with the two composite animals, was undoubtedly carefully selected to communicate an event outside the normal scope of everyday experience, though its meaning is still enigmatic.

Two other seals further demonstrate the complexities of Harappā iconography. The first shows three tigers interlinked in a circular form (Fig. 2.16), with the central shoulder mass of the three animals developed into a complex pattern. That a specific diagram was intended may be inferred by comparing this seal with one of a number bearing abstract designs. The example chosen shows a *svastika* (Fig. 2.17), but other patterns are also found in which forms radiate from a center, like that formed by the tigers' shoulders. In later Indic art and architecture, directional and cosmic significance is attached to such forms. The presence of the *svastika* is in itself noteworthy, since it is a symbol commonly used by the Āryan peoples usually associated with post-Harappā times in South Asia. Yet its appearance in a context prior to the presumed date of the Indo-Āryan migrations into ancient India suggests that the motif may have been borrowed by the Āryans from Harappān usage, or more probably, that contacts between the Indo-Āryans and the Harappāns commenced much earlier than the demise of the latter's civilization. Indeed, it is possible that Indo-Āryans were among the people populating the Indus civilization.

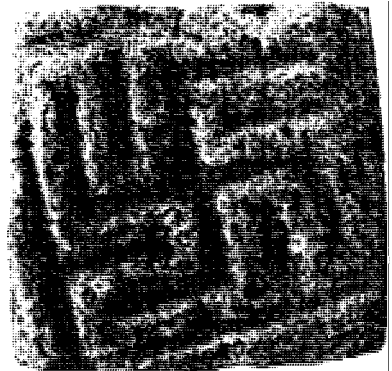
Regardless of how plausible some of the interpretations of Harappā seals and art in general might seem, without written verification or other substantial proof of the continuity between the Indus civilization and later Indic culture, all of these interpretations must remain in the realm of possibility only. In this discussion, it has not been possible to take into account the relative chronological position of the objects, developmental aspects of the Indus religion and



2.15. Seal showing composite creatures and tree. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Steatite. H: ca. 2-4 cm? National Museum, New Delhi.



2.16. Seal with interlinked tigers. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Steatite. H: ca. 2-4 cm? National Museum, New Delhi.



2.17. Seal with *svastika* design. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Mature Harappā period. Ca. 2100-1750 B.C. Faience. 1.5 × 1.6 cm. Department of Archaeology of Pakistan, Karachi.

culture, nor even interregional ramifications of the developments. The range in style of the seal sculptures alone suggests chronological and/or geographical variations.

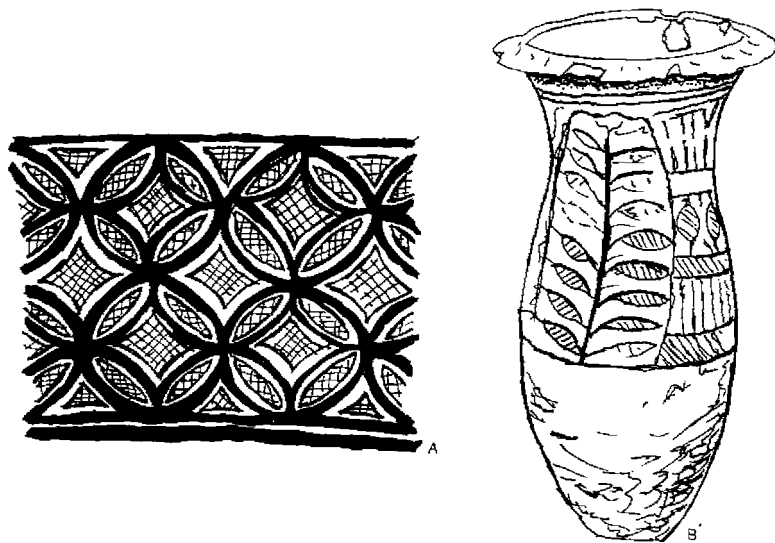
In some cases, such as the representations of the bulls (Figs. 2.9, 2.11), Harappā seals show a remarkable degree of naturalism that reflects close observation of the physical world. Other seals, such as those depicting composite animals (Fig. 2.15), demonstrate that the Harappā

people were concerned with ideas that go beyond everyday experience even though they may have borrowed heavily from it. These two predispositions similarly coexist in the fabric of later Indic thought. While they might now appear to be contradictory, it will be shown that they are not. In fact, their reconciliation is one of the hallmarks of ancient India's artistic and philosophic creativity.

POTTERY

The same complexity and multiplicity of interpretation seen in the sculpture and seals of the Indus civilization is encountered in the study of the painted pottery. Like the other Harappā art forms, painted pottery displays affinities to both Mesopotamia and to later Indic culture while maintaining a great deal of individuality. Most Harappā painted pottery is a black-on-red ware, although some polychrome wares are also known. Harappā painted pots generally display a varied assortment of motifs, including animal, vegetal, and geometric forms. The

designs range from simple to complex and from abstract to representational. The motifs are often crowded into an overall pattern on the surface of a vessel. An intersecting circle design (Fig. 2.18a) had great popularity. Further, the motif apparently persists, for it resurfaces in monumental architecture of the Maurya period in the third century B.C. (Fig. 4.8), suggesting the basic continuity of Indic civilization. Leaf motifs, especially the *pīpal* (Fig. 2.18b), suggest ties to both pre-Harappā and later Indic forms and may have been used symbolically.



2.18. Pottery motifs. A) Intersecting circle motif on painted pot. From Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Harappā period. B) Painted pot (black on red) with *pīpal* leaf design. Harappā period.

THE ECLIPSE OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

No one can say for certain what caused the demise of the Indus civilization. Most probably, several factors, including the natural process of cultural evolution, combined to effect its end. Some outposts of the society outlasted others, and no single fate was responsible for the demise of all settlements in this widespread civilization. While a general date of around 1750 B.C. may be cited as the end of the civilization's mature or urban phase, activity at some sites, particularly in the southern regions of the Harappā sphere, seems to have continued to about 800 B.C. It has been theorized that desiccation and deforestation of the lower Indus region made the land less habitable, possibly causing populations to migrate to the east and south. Whether climatic changes did occur and whether they were man-made or the natural result of geological changes are still highly arguable points.²³ At Mohenjo-Daro, flooding apparently had been a perennial problem; there, it is likely that the threat of continuing severe inundations heralded the gradual abandonment of the site. Archaeological evidence reveals that the last few generations of inhabitants at Mohenjo-Daro suffered from frequent flooding. Each time, the damage was repaired or the dwellings rebuilt in a shoddier manner, suggesting a decline in the urbanized civilization itself in what

has been called a "post-urban" phase.²⁴ Other sites seem to have been abruptly abandoned with no obvious signs of material decline prior to desertion. A commonly supplied explanation for this phenomenon is that increasing numbers of foreigners came into the area, causing a shift in population distribution.

Scholars have debated the exact nature of these migrating peoples, but most agree that incursions by peoples from the northwest occurred around the second quarter of the second millennium B.C., regardless of whether they contributed to the demise of the Harappā civilization or not. Most probably, these incursions did not come at once, nor did they represent a unified effort by the newcomers or one marked by violence.²⁵ Rather, it is believed that these shifts in population took place over a period of several hundred years, affecting various places unequally. Of the several ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups that may have been involved in the displacement of the Harappā peoples, at least one component was made up of Āryans who probably entered the Indic lands from the Iranian region. The heritage of these Indo-Āryans or Indo-Iranians²⁶ eventually became a dominant aspect of much of subsequent Indic civilization.

॥ श्रीगणेशायनमः ॥ ॐम् ॥ अग्निमीलेयु
रीडोनुतैरुतसुसदेवाँएहवरुति ॥ अ
रुमध्वरंविश्वतःपरिचरसि ॥ सइदेवेषु
गमत् ॥ १ ॥ यदंगादाशुषेत्वमग्नेनदंकि
॥ नमोनरंतएमसि ॥ राजतमध्वरागौं
नोनवासवस्वानःससये ॥ २ ॥ वायवा
र्जरंतेत्वामछाजरितारः सुतसौमाः प्र
तयोऽइवायूऽइमेसुताः उपप्रयो निरा

Detail of a Rig Veda manuscript (1781; courtesy British Library Board).

CHAPTER THREE

The Vedic and Upaniṣadic Periods

(ca. 1500 to 450 B.C.)

THE INDO-ĀRYANS

The Indo-Āryan newcomers did not come into the Indic lands all at once, nor did they settle in a single place. Within broad limits, the migrants had two lines of advance moving in successive waves, one to the south of the great Thar Desert, the other to the north.¹ While a few characteristics of the material culture and technology of these people may be identified, very little is known about them or the objects they produced. No evidence of civic planning, enduring architectural structures or art of the quality and complexity seen in the Harappā civilization has been discovered that can be linked to the Indo-Āryans of this period. Some scholars have suggested that their apparently semi-nomadic ways were not conducive to the construction of monumental and lasting buildings or cumber-

some objects and have concluded that even archaeological excavations should not be expected to reveal significant material remains from this period. More probably, important discoveries await the archaeologist. It is important to remember that before the accidental discovery of the Indus civilization, the existence of this vast, early culture was not even suspected. Thus, the gap in our knowledge is perhaps not permanent. Given the richness of the literature surviving from this period, affluence in material accoutrements would not be surprising. Although the contribution of the Indo-Āryans to the material culture and art of ancient India is unknown, their literature became one of the most important and enduring influences on Indic civilization.

LITERARY EVIDENCE: THE VEDAS (CA. 1500 TO 800 B.C.)

The importance of the newcomers far surpasses their identification as an intrusive element in the Indic subcontinent, for they are credited with the composition and perpetuation of one of the most important bodies of Indic literature, the four *Veda Samhitās* (Collections of Knowledge). These poetic hymns in the Sanskrit language give linguistic, religious, historical, and sociological information about the people who composed them. More importantly for our purposes, they provide a foundation for many of the religious concepts that pervade later South Asian art.

The Vedas are said to be divine in origin, revealed by Brahman, the Self-Existent and All-Knowing, to a group of inspired sages (*ṛṣis*) who were charged with transmitting this divine gift to others, also specially selected. On this presupposition, the Vedas have been passed from generation to generation until the present day, and access to reading the Vedas or to hearing them recited has remained restricted to certain classes of people in Hindu society. In spite of this belief, which implies that the Vedas were presented to the *ṛṣis* in a complete and unchanging form, analysis of the texts clearly indicates that they were not compiled all at once nor by a single author. Rather, they were composed over long periods of time and transmitted orally for many generations before they were finalized and ultimately given written form. As a result, the chronology of the hymns in each Veda, as well as the relative dates of each of the Vedas, remain quite problematic. As a group, the Vedas are generally ascribed to the period between 1500 and 800 B.C.,² with the *R̥g Veda* usually accepted as the oldest of the four.

The earliest concepts contained in the Vedas must have been formulated before the advent of the Indo-Āryans into the Indic sphere. However, some verses in the Vedas clearly recount events that took place on Indian soil. For example, victories over a people called the Dāsas are frequently mentioned. Described as "not-sacrificing," devoid of rites, addicted to strange vows, god-hating, and those "whose god is a

phallus,"³ the Dāsas are generally identified as the earlier inhabitants of the regions accessioned by the Indo-Āryans—in short, the Harappāns.⁴

Further insight into the possible interactions between the Indo-Āryan newcomers and the earlier inhabitants of the Indic regions is suggested by verses in the Vedas which describe the Āryan perception of two separate primeval worlds and their subsequent confluence. These ideas are central to the Vedic cosmogony, that is, the Vedic perceptions concerning the creation of the universe.⁵ Vedic texts describe a sacred, primordial world of potentiality, one that was not created but simply existed. In this realm was the germ of life, characterized by complete, undifferentiated unity. Associated with this phase was a group of gods, the *asuras*. A second stage in this development was marked by the birth of the god Indra outside this primeval world. Indra acted as a catalyst on the primeval world toward the creation of the world of individual forms,⁶ that is, the world as we know it, with all of the identifiably distinct categories of objects and beings within it. Along with Indra came a host of new gods, the *devas*—in essence, the Vedic pantheon. During repeated struggles between the *devas* and the *asuras*, some *asuras* joined the ranks of the *devas*, while others "continued to exist beyond the pale, as a constant menace to the existence and coherence of the ordered world."⁷ This description seems to refer to the superimposition of the Indo-Āryan religion upon that of the indigenous inhabitants of the northwest Indic lands. The opposition of *devas* and *asuras* is a popular theme in later Hindu religion and art. Indeed, in later Indic religious texts, such as the Purāṇas, the term *asura* is used invariably to describe a demonlike creature who personifies a negative characteristic, such as ignorance, but who is vanquished by a *deva*. Thus, one of the essential themes of later Hinduism, the adversarial roles of *devas* and *asuras*, may have arisen from an early interpretation of the historical interaction between two groups of early peoples.

Aside from providing interesting information about the possible interminglings of the Indo-

Āryans and earlier populations of the subcontinent during this period, the Vedas set forth the basic religious beliefs of the Vedic people, which have little in common with the religious ideas assumed to have been prevalent in the Indic regions prior to their advent. Since the Vedas do not develop a single narrative line when read sequentially, it is not possible to understand many of the basic presuppositions of Vedic thought without extrapolation and analysis. Further, Vedic ideas were not fixed, but developed over the centuries and thus any true understanding of Vedic thought must eventually take chronological factors into account.

The Vedas present a pantheon of "thirty-three"⁸ gods belonging to the terrestrial, aerial, and celestial realms. Some of these deities are prototypes of gods or aspects of gods who are known in later Hinduism. The nature and purpose of worship is to ask boons from the gods for primarily material blessings, such as prosperity. Therefore, Vedic worship has been characterized as worldly and mercenary rather than penitent and ascetic. An emphasis on the material world is a logical extension of the concept of the world created by Indra, which is, after all, a world of forms and objects, a world of differentiation, not unity. Eventually, materialism became an extremely important aspect of some of the Indic religions.⁹ Many of the Vedic gods represent aspects of nature and their personification, such as the sky, thunder, moon, sun, fire, wind, water, mountains, and rivers. Others represent ethical concepts, such as truth, and some manifest a combination of nature-based and ethical ideas. Vedic deities were worshiped through sacrifice, prayer, and offerings. Ceremonies took place in an altar area which, in con-

cept, ultimately served as a source for later Hindu temple architecture. Animals, such as goats, oxen, cows, rams, horses, and even humans, were sacrificed to the gods. Fire, personified as the god Agni, was the vehicle of transmission of the offerings to the gods, and was to be "fed" with grain, milk, butter, flesh, and other materials. Through fire (Agni), the sacrifice (*yajña*) was transported to the gods. During the course of a sacrifice, an elaborate ritual meal to which the gods were invited might be served and hymns of praise would be sung. Such ceremonies were undoubtedly a source for *pūjā*, a later Hindu method of worship, which in some ways might be described as a hospitality ritual involving the offering of foods, water, and flowers to a deity.¹⁰

The final codification of Vedic rituals and ceremonies is found in the Brāhmaṇas, a group of texts composed later than the Vedas. The Brāhmaṇas served as textbooks of ritual for the priests (*brāhmins*)¹¹ who were the transmitters of the Vedas. Priests were believed to have the capacity to influence the gods directly and visibly through the performance of sacrifices and ceremonies. Thus, they began to assume influential positions in society as important individuals, including chieftains and other leaders, must have sought, through the priests, to win the gods' favor. Because of the importance of the *brāhmins* in the Vedic religion, it is often referred to as Brahmanism. Individual priests and their sons, whose future patronage depended on the effectiveness of the hymns and ceremonies they performed, developed their own ritual technologies, which they jealously guarded from other priest groups.

LITERARY EVIDENCE: THE UPANIṢADS (CA. 800 TO 450 B.C.)

Vedic beliefs were not universally accepted in ancient India. In the Vedas, there are hints of dissent among people who questioned their authority, denied the existence of the gods, and felt that religion served the priestly *brāhmins* more than anyone else. These individuals, the

nāstikas, or deniers, are contrasted to the *āstikas*, or asserters, who accepted the Vedas and all they entailed. The *nāstikas* paved the way for much of the thought found in Buddhism, Jainism, and other Indic schools that rejected the Vedic presuppositions. It might even be said

that from a very early date, these two divergent viewpoints, Vedic and anti- or non-Vedic, characterized the fabric of Indic religious thought, becoming the orthodox schools, which based their authority on the Vedas, and the heterodoxy, which questioned or disregarded the Vedas as a source of knowledge.

In spite of the fact that Vedic thought, or Brahmanism, came to be a very important aspect of the later Hindu religion, its dominance was eclipsed for a thousand years or more, an eclipse heralded in during the early centuries of the first millennium B.C., when another group of texts, the Upaniṣads, was composed. These texts represent a reaction against the sacrificial religion dominated by the increasingly powerful priest group. They emphasize philosophical, speculative questions. It is likely that many of the ideas that were formulated, and perhaps first preserved, in the Upaniṣads, were not new at this time. Some may represent the resurfacing of ideas current in pre-Vedic times, while others may reflect alternative views of people living during Vedic times. The heartland of Upaniṣadic thought seems to have been the Gangetic Valley, an area which was not dominated by Vedic culture. Eventually, in later Hinduism, the Upaniṣads, despite their anti-Brahmanical thought, came to be considered the philosophical portion of the Vedas. Both the Vedas and Upaniṣads, in spite of their apparent contradictions, were melded into part of the textual basis of the Hindu religion. In addition, the Upaniṣads were the fountainhead for the non-Vedic, that is, heterodox, thinking of other Indic religions, including Buddhism and Jainism.

As in the case of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads do not present a unified, cohesive view, nor do they have a single date. They represent several centuries of philosophical speculation. One of the main concerns of Upaniṣadic thinking is the relationship between the individual being and the Universal Being, between the particular and the comprehensive. Two famous and often repeated expressions characterize the Upaniṣadic theoretical dilemma: *Ātman = ātman* and *Tat tvam asi*. In the former, *Ātman*, or Brahman,* the Universal Principle, is equated with *ātman*,

the individual being. Specifically, *Ātman*, or Brahman, is the supreme essence of the universe, which manifests itself in the various creations of the physical world, or the individual *ātman*s. In the second phrase, *Tat tvam asi*, literally "that thou art," an identical meaning is implied. That is, the individual *is* the Universal. The individual's reintegration with the Universal—realization of oneness with the Universal—became the major concern of most Indic religions, including Hinduism, wherein it is called *mokṣa* (release), and Buddhism, wherein it is called *nirvāṇa* (extinguishing). Unity had to be realized and implemented, not merely intellectualized. In Indic religions, the goal of unity is often pursued through yoga practices, suggesting an underlying relationship between Upaniṣadic thought and the Harappā civilization. It is also interesting to speculate on the relationship between this line of thought and the cosmogonic accounts of the Vedas, for the Upaniṣads seem to seek a departure from the material world of the Vedas (Indra's world of differentiated form) and a return to the undifferentiated, nondualistic world described in the Vedas as existing before Indra's advent.

This suggestion seems justified by examining other Upaniṣadic concepts, particularly that of *māyā*, the illusionary nature of the phenomenal world. This concept theoretically negates Indra's world of individual forms by asserting that the differentiation perceivable in the physical world is contradictory to the real, ultimate truth—the realization of the *Ātman = ātman* equation—and thus the universality of all things. Perception of the differentiated forms of the physical world, then, is an impediment to the true understanding of the undifferentiated state.

Of the many concepts found in the Upaniṣads, two others are also important to an understanding of later Indic religions and religious art. These are the concepts of *karma* and *saṃsāra*. The doctrine of *karma* is explained in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: "As he has acted, as he has lived, so he becomes; he who has done

*The impersonal world-essence, not to be confused with Brahman, the Vedic and Hindu god.

good is born again as a good one, he who has done evil, is born again as an evil one. He becomes good through good action, bad through bad action."¹² *Karma* is predicated on the belief in *samsāra*, often translated as transmigration, but referring to the metempsychosis or countless rounds of rebirths that an individual being experiences upon each death in a potentially endless sequence of lives. *Karma*, often translated as retribution, is more correctly the action an individual might take, especially in hope of recompense in a future life. Thus, *karma* determines the form in which the individual being will be reborn. All actions and thoughts of an individual being—a term not necessarily restricted to humans—whether punished or rewarded during a particular lifetime, are taken into account in this system of justice. Thus, responsibility for one's thoughts and actions are thrust upon each being.

Through the realization of the *Ātman* = *ātman* equation, an individual would cease to be

subject to finite existences and the cycle of *samsāra*. The desire to know, and thereby to become unified with, Brahman (*Ātman*) became more important than improving one's material position or physical enjoyment for Upaniṣadic philosophers. Reintegration with the Universal became the highest and perhaps sole purpose of life. In Buddhist thought in particular, *māyā* (illusion) was seen as an obstacle to this understanding of the oneness between the individual and the Universal.

In general terms, one can say that the story of Indic thought, art, and life, whether orthodox or heterodox, from Upaniṣadic times onward, is dominated by the goal of unity and release from the realm of *samsāra*. In fact, the nexus of shared concern among the seemingly disparate Indic religions is the theme of extinction through reintegration. Sectarian differences within and among the Indic religions consist to a large degree of the different methods and ideas applied toward seeking this end.

OTHER LITERARY EVIDENCE: THE PURĀṆAS AND EPICS

In addition to the Vedic and Upaniṣadic traditions, which provide some record of the history and thought of the period from about 1500 to 450 B.C., other literary works survive that illuminate aspects of the early periods of Indic history. These texts, mainly the early Purāṇas and the two major epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, survive in forms that were finalized many centuries after the events they record. They are being considered here as documents that provide insight into the early history of the Indic world and not as literary texts. As in the similar case of the Vedas, it is sometimes difficult to assess the historicity of the events as they are recorded.

Most early Purāṇas did not take their present forms until the fourth or fifth century A.D. or later. Although imperfect as historical records, they provide a great deal of information about the history of the Indic world, including the prehistoric periods. They record a catastrophic flood as well as a king, Manu, who alone was

saved from the inundation and thus became the progenitor of the human race.¹³ From Manu issued the solar and lunar dynasties, as well as some of the royal lineages of ancient India, whose genealogies are given in the Purāṇas. The Purāṇas preserve what may be important historical data about early Indic heroes, including Kṛṣṇa (Krishna), the cowherd who later became one of the most popular Hindu deities. Further, they describe and relate numerous stories about many other Hindu gods, whether historical or not, and thus serve as vital sources of iconographic information that aid in the interpretation of art. The Purāṇas seem to record a non-Brahmanical view of history, which may reflect some of the religious beliefs current among indigenous, non-Vedic peoples.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* also provide glimmerings of historical information about this meagerly documented period. Like the Vedas, Upaniṣads, and Purāṇas, these texts are compilations assembled over long periods of

time and are known from a number of different recensions. Though the events recorded in the *Rāmāyaṇa* took place after those of the *Mahābhārata*, the surviving texts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were finalized before those of the *Mahābhārata*. The central event of the *Mahābhārata* is a great war which probably occurred between 900 and 650 B.C. The war, for which little archaeological evidence has been found as of yet and which forms the background of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, was fought between the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava clans, who, though once believed to have been pure Āryans, are now thought to have been non-Āryans, or perhaps mixed Āryans. The events of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, mainly the story of Rāma, the abduction of his wife Sītā by the evil Rāvaṇa, and the war that ensued, also seem to reflect the history of non-Āryan populations. Both epics are popularly illustrated in later Hindu art.

The early Purāṇas, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Mahābhārata* are therefore important to the understanding of the early periods of Indic

history for which we have only a very incomplete picture based on archaeological evidence. It is, of course, often difficult to discern historical fact from embellishment in these texts, as is the case when studying the Vedic materials. Nevertheless, they are vital in providing a more balanced view of this period, since they seem to record history from the non-Indo-Āryan, non-Vedic point of view. (It is notable in this regard that the Purāṇas often place the Vedic gods in positions subordinate to other gods.) Further, the Purāṇas and the epics, along with the Vedas and Upaniṣads, became part of the central core of textual materials of the Hindu religion and provide important iconographic information for the interpretation of Hindu art. It is difficult to say just when these various and often conflicting traditions merged into what is now called "Hinduism" (a date around the beginning of the Christian era is often suggested), but together they form the basis of the conglomerate known as Hinduism.

MAHĀVĪRA, ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA, AND THE RISE OF MAGADHA

Thus far, in the discussions of the developing Indic civilization, it has not been possible to provide the name of even a single individual whose historicity can be verified with any accuracy. Not one of the religious concepts expressed in the early religious literature can be ascribed to the authorship of a specific individual, nor are the names and personalities of any of the political leaders known in any way that can relate them to a concrete context. However, for the late Upaniṣadic period, available historical information is comparatively accurate and specific. The names of kings and other persons living within the society, including a few important religious leaders, are preserved. As in the case of other early literature, many of the textual records that refer to this period were either compiled after the events they record or have come down to us in a version that was finalized long after the period of their concern. However, there is considerable concordance

about many of the developments during this period from texts. Therefore, the texts may supply a relatively reliable overview. The major sources dealing with the history of this period belong to the Buddhist and Jain canons, for it was during this period that Śākyamuni Buddha (ca. 563-483 B.C.) and Mahāvīra (ca. 540-468 B.C.), two important "perfected beings" of their respective religions, lived.

Since both Śākyamuni Buddha and Mahāvīra practiced their religions in Magadha, an ancient region in the Gangetic valley equivalent to portions of the modern Bihār state, information is most complete for this region. We learn, for example, that Magadha was one of sixteen Great Communities (*Mahājanapadas*) and that it quickly assumed a leading role in the political and economic spheres of the subcontinent. The stimulus for developing these centralized Great Communities may have come from contact with the Achaemenid Persians, who had annexed

portions of the northwest region of the Indic lands in the sixth century B.C. and who had already developed a complex system of kingship and statecraft. The rise of the Magadha kingdom in particular is also linked to economic developments resulting from demands for metal, for the region was rich with iron and copper. A network of trade routes leading to and from Magadha, including the famous *uttarapāṭha* (northern route) that linked the region with western Asia, began to develop. The Ganges River became a major artery unifying Magadha with other north Indic regions from west to east. The result was that Magadha became the major economic and political center of ancient India for many centuries, particularly during the Maurya period in the third century B.C. (Chap. 4), when Magadha dominated the subcontinent.

The foremost historical personages of this period are Mahāvira (Great Hero) and Śākyamuni (Sage of the Śākya [Clan]) Buddha (Enlightened One), both born in *kṣatriya* (warrior-caste) families in Magadha, the heartland of Upaniṣadic thought. While they are often mistakenly believed to have founded their respective religions, Mahāvira is accepted by Jains as the twenty-fourth in a line of *jinas* (victors), and Śākyamuni is numbered by Buddhists as the fourth or seventh (depending upon the tradition) of eight *mānuṣi* (mortal) Buddhas (*buddhas*). The ideas they propounded were not solely their individual and original creations, but rather reflect concepts that had been circulating in Upaniṣadic society, some of which may have originated in pre-Vedic times. The striking parallels between Jainism and Buddhism reflect the common intellectual milieu in which they both flourished.

Mahāvira and Śākyamuni are generally characterized as Upaniṣadic thinkers. Indeed, many Upaniṣadic concepts, such as *karma*, *saṃsāra*, and *māyā*, are central to Jain and Buddhist beliefs. The goal of Buddhism, *nirvāṇa*, is release from the cycles of *saṃsāra*, a goal which can be reached when the individual fully realizes his own Universal nature. The Jains also seek a similar end, although the Jains define their pursuit as the desire to free the individual soul

from matter so that it may become pure and enjoy eternal bliss. Both religions are heterodox, since they do not accept the authority of the Vedas. Both religions opposed the Vedic caste system and meaningless rituals and propounded ethical systems in which nonviolence (*ahimsā*) was a major element. They are both nontheistic, in contrast to Vedic beliefs. Thus, Buddhists and Jains do not propitiate the gods for material boons in the Vedic sense. While it is true that later images of Śākyamuni Buddha, Mahāvira, and other individuals, both historical and conceptual, important to the two religions are depicted in art, these are not representations of "gods" in the literal sense. Instead, these images serve a variety of purposes. For example, they often represent personifications of religious principles that are to be meditated upon or provide examples of persons or ideas to be emulated.

Although Buddhism and Jainism share many features, each has a distinct history. Jainism seems to have changed comparatively little during its long history, while Buddhism underwent numerous significant developments, marked in the early stages by a series of four Buddhist councils,¹⁴ which were attempts to unify schisms. In general, Buddhism is described as having three major divisions: Hinayāna (Smaller Vehicle), Mahāyāna (Greater Vehicle), and Vajrayāna (Adamantine Vehicle). None of these terms is truly descriptive of the many variant forms of Buddhism usually grouped into these three broad categories. The term "Hinayāna" in particular, used to refer to a number of important types of Buddhism, such as Theravāda, is much criticized, for it was invented by Mahāyānists and has pejorative connotations. These forms of Buddhism and accounts of the lives of Śākyamuni Buddha and Mahāvira will be discussed in relation to artistic developments. In this volume, greater attention will be given to Buddhist art than to Jain art, for it was not only the more dominant and popular of the two religions in South Asia, but it was widely adopted throughout Asia and became a religion of important international scope, in contrast to Jainism, which remained confined to the Indic region.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The limited information about Indic society during Vedic and Upaniṣadic times thus far discussed has been largely gleaned from textual sources. This is because archaeological evidence for this period is scanty and incomplete. However, some verification of the patterns discerned is preserved in these meager archaeological materials. For example, two apparently distinct but parallel cultures existing in ancient India during this approximate period have been identified through pottery types. The first, characterized by a pottery known as Painted Grey Ware, seems to be associated with a late wave of Indo-Āryans. Some Painted Grey Ware sites are found in northern Rājasthān, but the pottery is mainly known from sites in the Pañjāb region, Haryana, and especially western Uttar Pradesh, which essentially comprises the ancient Vedic heartland. Despite the lackluster name, examples of Painted Grey Ware are often extremely beautiful (Pl. 2). These fine, wheel-made vessels bear designs painted in black or brown in simple, geometric patterns such as criss-cross lines or rows of dots and dashes. These designs may be simplifications of earlier, but by this time familiar, symbols which carried specific meanings.

The second culture is identified archaeologically by a black-and-red ware that has much wider geographic distribution and a lengthier history, for it precedes, coincides with, and outlives the periods of Painted Grey Ware production. It is found as early as the Harappā context and survives in certain parts of India up to the early historical period. Its distribution is considerable for it has been found virtually all over the Indic regions, even alongside the Painted Grey Ware at most Painted Grey Ware sites. An examination of this type of pottery (Pl. 3) reveals that it is not a two-colored ware created by two colors of slip or from painting, as the name might imply. Its coloration was produced during firing in an oxygen-reduced atmosphere, creating the blackened areas, especially in the interior of the red clay pot which is inverted during firing.

The widespread distribution of black-and-red

ware in space and time, has led to alternative theories. One presumes that the ware represents a "floating" technique that was used widely and not limited to any culture. The other, perhaps the more likely, holds that it signifies an identifiable, though perhaps loosely associated, cultural unit that is distinct from that of the Indo-Āryan groups but may be tied together over space and time throughout the prehistoric period.

Though the evidence is still somewhat unclear, there is, however, archaeological support for a theory of two distinct cultures existing side by side with little interaction, one reflecting perhaps an intrusive people and the other largely indigenous or assimilated groups. It is interesting to note that Upaniṣadic thinking reached its fullest fruition in the Gangetic region and in Magadha in particular. This region is a distinctively black-and-red ware area, thereby reinforcing the view that Upaniṣadic thinking represents an essentially non-Indo-Āryan development.

The rise of the kingdom of Magadha, which occurred during the late Upaniṣadic period, is also associated with a pottery type. This ware, the Northern Black Polished ware, began to be used around 500 B.C. but was apparently discontinued after about 200 B.C. The center of dispersal of the ware seems to have been the Gangetic plains, possibly Magadha, although it is found widely, overlaying earlier pottery, throughout both the Painted Grey Ware and black-and-red ware areas. This deluxe ceramic is invariably of fine quality. Its lustrous black or blue finish (sometimes ranging to silvery brown, red, or gold) resembles metal. It is always found as a minority ceramic rather than the dominant type, suggesting that it was restricted in use or that it was not made locally but imported (from the Gangetic region?) and was possibly costly. This latter possibility may be inferred since many excavated examples had been repaired during their lifetime of use rather than discarded.

This ceramic may represent a combination of the Painted Grey Ware and the black-and-red

ware techniques, utilizing the polish of the grey and the reduction firing of the black-and-red. Since it is found at both Painted Grey Ware and black-and-red ware sites, it may represent a mingling of the two cultures during this period. This fusion suggests a broader cultural merger that is also seen in linguistics, for in this same period a massive influx of Dravidian words into

Āryan Sanskrit occurred. Further, the Āryans seem to have adopted the reduction firing technique of the Gangetic people in one of their rites.¹⁵ While the Indo-Āryan and indigenous strands remain identifiable throughout South Asian history, they had begun to mesh into the general fabric of Indic civilization.

OTHER INDIGENOUS TRENDS: MEGALITHIC REMAINS OF SOUTHERN INDIA

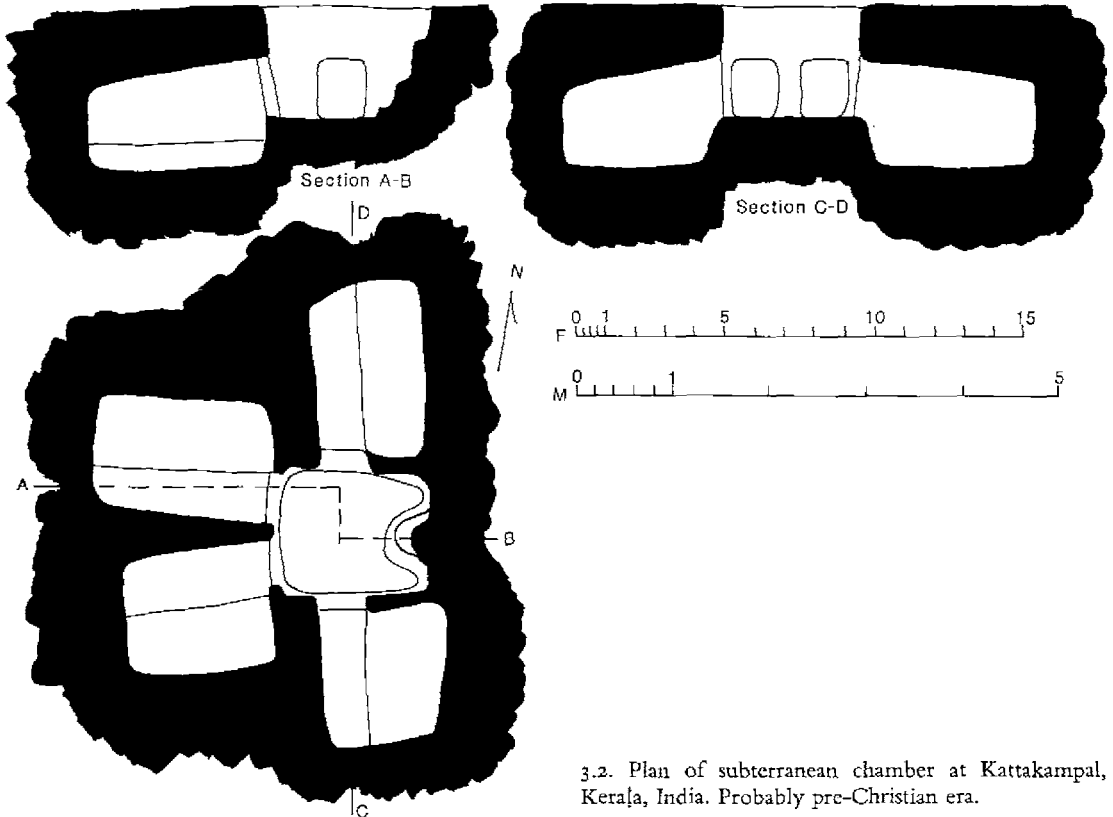
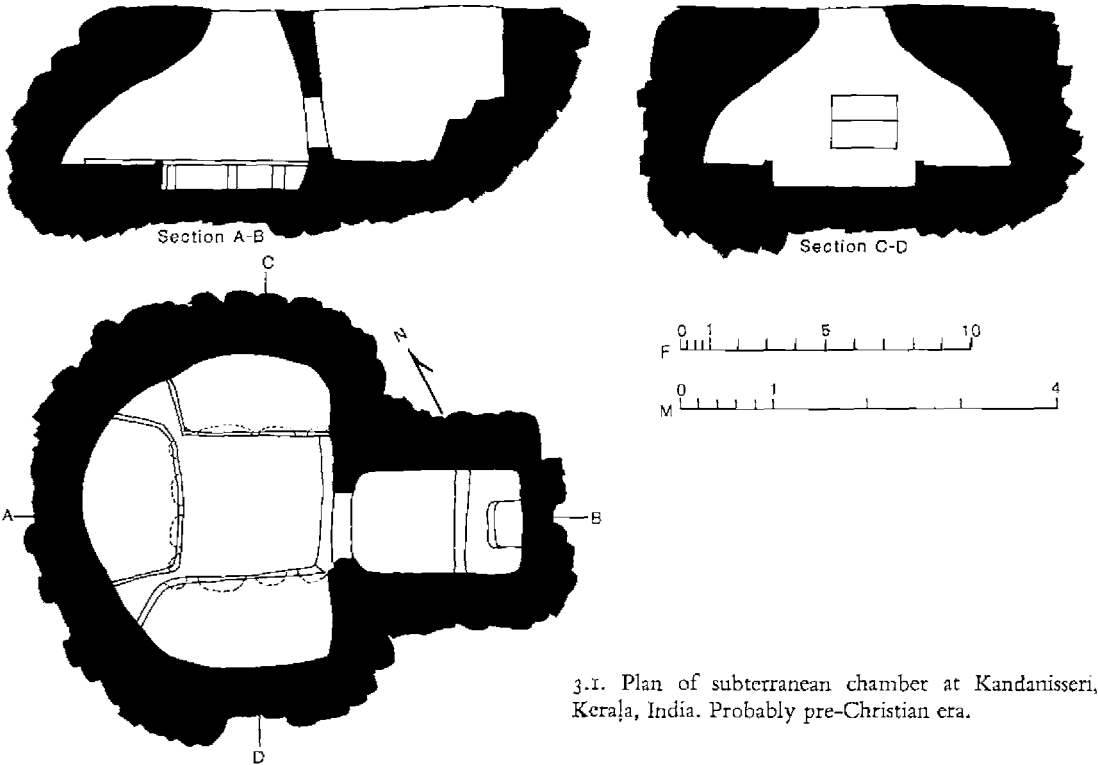
This discussion has centered primarily on northern India. However, archaeologists have identified numerous sites throughout the Deccan and southern India that have also yielded material remains from an early period, some of which may be coeval with those of the north. Others, which may be slightly later in date, are likely to reflect older traditions that had developed contemporary to those of the north. The exact relationship of these Deccan and southern traditions to those of the Stone Age cultures, the civilizations of the northwest, including the Harappā and Āryan cultures and the black-and-red ware and Gangetic peoples, is not known. They may be totally independent complexes that will be understood eventually for their unique contribution to Indic culture. However, visual and conceptual ties between some of these traditions suggest that a link does exist and that the Deccan and southern developments were an important element in the spectrum of early Indic culture.

In various parts of south India, a number of stone structures known as megaliths have been found. The simplest type of megalith, the menhir, consists of a monolith or single rock set up at or near a burial site. This practice may be the source for the *viragal*, or hero stones, and the *sati* stones that proliferate in the Deccan, and in western and southern India after around the sixth century A.D. Other types of megaliths include tumuli, moundlike burial structures that suggest a relationship to the *stūpas* erected by the Buddhists and Jains (Fig. 6.1). It is difficult at this stage of our knowledge to determine the basis of this relationship, since the relative chronologies for these developments are

not established. It could be the result of direct borrowing, a linked substratum or even the prevalence of pan-Indic concepts.

Because they bear similarities to the cave excavations of the Buddhists, Jains, and other heterodox sects, perhaps the most interesting of the southern megaliths are the subterranean chambers. In particular, two types found in Keraḷa deserve mention. The first consists of a staircase leading down into the rock to a central courtyard from which access is gained to a roughly circular chamber with one or more stone benches, as seen in the plan of a megalith at Kandanisseri (Fig. 3.1). The benches are of interest because similar ones are an important feature in Buddhist and Jain caves.¹⁶ A second type of subterranean excavation found in Keraḷa has an open court below the surface of the stone, with several chambers opening out from it, each having a stone bench, as seen in a cave at Kattakampal (Fig. 3.2). This plan is so strikingly similar to the common format of early Buddhist rock-cut *vihāras* that it is difficult to imagine that some relationship does not exist. But since the date of the Keraḷa excavations and the precedents for the Buddhist monuments are still unknown, any suggestions regarding their relationship remain speculative.

Other elements found in the megalithic caves of Keraḷa cannot be linked solely to one later Indic religious tradition. For example, some megalithic caves include a central wooden pillar which might parallel the central "axis of the Universe" symbolically or actually present in Buddhist *stūpas*. Yet pillars and a pillar cult are also associated with Vedic concepts. The plans of the excavations are generally strictly



oriented (as are most later religious buildings in South Asia). The general emphasis on the entrance in the east suggests comparisons to the eastern entrance to the Buddhist *maṇḍala* in later theory, yet the east is also the common entrance side for Hindu temples. Some of the caves face south, perhaps reflecting the subterranean excavation's funereal character, for in later Indic religion, Yama, the god of death, presides over the southern quarter.¹⁷ Again, this concept can be related to both the heterodox tradition, such as that of the Buddhists, and the orthodox, essentially Vedic strand of Hinduism.

The purpose of the southern megaliths, especially the subterranean caves, may only be surmised at this point, although their general funereal character is clear. Some may have been secondary rather than primary burial sites into which bodily remains were introduced only after initial burial, cremation, or exposure. Since, in many cases, objects originally placed within the caves were removed prior to the arrival of archaeologists, relatively little is known about the material goods placed inside. It is noteworthy, however, that the south Indian megaliths are associated with a black-and-red pottery apparently created by inverted firing.¹⁸ This suggests connections with the indigenous or assimilated cultures in other parts of India, as opposed to with the Indo-Āryans. Further, a passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* relates that the earlier inhabitants of ancient India (the "easterners") used round relic chambers while the Indo-Āryans had four-cornered, most probably square or rectangular, structures for the burial of their kings.¹⁹ Since the circular form is used in both the tumuli and subterranean chambers of the southern megalith producers, ties to non-Indo-Āryan developments are suggested. The heterodox Buddhists and Jains in their *stūpas*, which are essentially burial mounds, adopted the circular form, which seems to link

them to the megalithic peoples, not the Indo-Āryans.²⁰ Hindu temples of later periods are generally square or rectangular, suggesting the strength of the orthodox or Vedic tradition in that development. Again, however, the evidence is not without ambiguity, for many of the caves have a square form.

If these megalithic structures can be proven to be an important link to some Buddhist architectural forms, they may also provide insight into Buddhist practices. It might be suggested that in their desire to overcome attachment to life and fear of death (a main aspect of Buddhist meditation), the Buddhists developed specific architectural forms from types that were clearly funerary in nature. In Buddhism, a well-known place for meditating was in a charnel or cremation ground, where, by meditating on one's self as the deceased, one could achieve victory over the concerns of the flesh, mortality, and the realm of *saṃsāra*.

As the megaliths of southern India are increasingly understood, it is expected that they will shed important light on little known aspects of early Indic civilization. If some of the megaliths, especially the caves, are found to have been made earlier than the third century B.C., when the heterodox cave tradition of northern India became evident, a previously unrecognized, indigenous source for the cave practice might be seen. Such a conclusion would indicate that the non-Indo-Āryan peoples of the subcontinent played a much greater role in the overall development of Indic religion and art than had been thought previously. An underlying association between the black-and-red ware peoples, including the megalithic peoples, might be suggested. While these cultures were never unified or identical, each might represent a manifestation of one branch of an early indigenous or highly assimilated cultural complex.

CONCLUSION

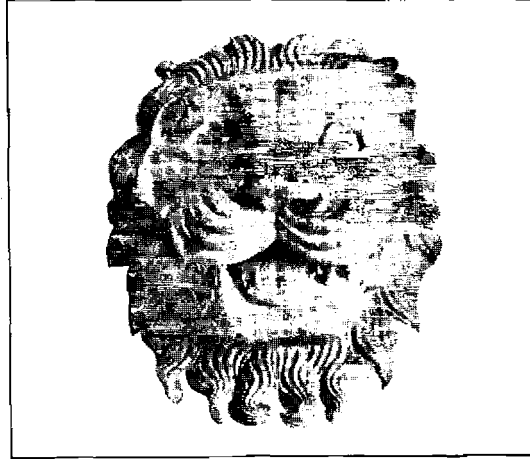
A study of the prehistoric and protohistoric cultures of the South Asian subcontinent seems to raise more questions than it answers. Inter-

pretations of regional developments, chronological data, and the evolution of important philosophical, religious, and social beliefs are

ious issues, but to a large degree they in the realm of speculation. Literary traditions, archaeological evidence, and inferences based on the study of later periods of civilization all have their places in an attempt to assess the true significance of the events of these periods, yet none of these provides the exclusive key to understanding. Different strands are reflected in the literary and archaeological materials from these early periods, revealing both a rich, indigenous complex as well as the introduction of new peoples and ideas. As these strands continued to develop, interact, and merge, the form of Indic civilization was formed. Many of the significant developments of later Indic civilization cannot be understood without an ex-

amination of the early periods. Buddhism, Jainism, and significant portions of Hinduism, particularly Śaivism, show indebtedness to the developments which grew up on Indic soil beginning in pre-Harappā times, as well as those which arose in opposition to Vedic society. Hinduism not only drew heavily upon these traditions but on Vedic culture itself for some of its gods, social structures, and religious literature. Thus, it is not surprising to find that many of the basic presuppositions and practices of the major Indic religions, whether orthodox or heterodox, are remarkably similar. Each is indebted in large measure to the still little-known cultures which flourished before ancient India's historic period.

PART TWO
PERIOD OF THE EARLY DYNASTIES



Detail of 4.5.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Maurya Period (ca. 323 to 185 B.C.)

In the fourth century B.C., the social, political, and economic developments that had been occurring in Magadha since Upaniṣadic times reached fruition when the Maurya dynasty was created. Rising to power when its founder, Candragupta Maurya, overthrew Mahāpadma, the last king of the Nanda family, which had been in control of Magadha, the Maurya imperial line established a state of a scope and unity previously unknown in ancient India. For the first time, large portions of the subcontinent were unified politically, not simply tied together by the cultural patterns or archaeological considerations by which the earlier periods seem presently best defined.¹

The emergence of Magadha as a leader among the sixteen Great Communities, visible as early as the time of Śākyamuni Buddha and Mahāvira, was the result of the natural processes of cultural evolution, accelerated by the bold personality and ideas of kingship of Candragupta. External

factors also contributed greatly to the success of the Mauryas and the eventual dominance of the subcontinent by the kingdom of Magadha. First, the Achaemenid Persians, whose empire had annexed portions of the northwest frontiers of the South Asian subcontinent, must have provided a model of sophisticated statecraft for the kings or rulers of the small monarchies, tribal republics, and autonomous states that had been formed throughout much of the northern Indic lands. Second, when Alexander of Macedon, better known as Alexander the Great, defeated the last of the Achaemenid kings, Darius III, in 330 B.C., and then set out to conquer the former Achaemenid holdings in the northwest portions of the South Asian subcontinent, his forceful personality and daring strategies must have served to stimulate the ambitions of Indic kings, especially Candragupta himself, who was around that time establishing his control of Magadha.²

Although Alexander eventually abandoned his efforts to accession the Indic lands, the effects of his advance into the Indic sphere cannot be ignored. Not only were Greek colonies, such as Taxila, established in the northwest, but Greek influence may have reached the east as well, for examples of Greek city planning from around this period have been found as far east as Orissa.³ New trade routes and other channels of communication between the Indic regions, western Asia, and even the Greek world were opened, and some that already existed were strengthened. Thus, contacts with the cultures to the west of the South Asian subcontinent, active since prehistoric times, were renewed and intensified, paving the way for the extensive artistic and cultural influences of the Śaka, Parthian, and Kuṣāṇa periods several hundred years later (Chaps. 7, 8). There is some evidence that craftsmen left unemployed at the fall of the Achaemenid empire, which resulted from Alexander's campaigns, found new patrons at the Maurya court, thus instituting apparently dramatic changes in both techniques and art styles. This is particularly to be inferred from the highly developed stoneworking methods that characterize much of Maurya period architecture and sculpture, and that seem to be partially based on Achaemenid techniques.

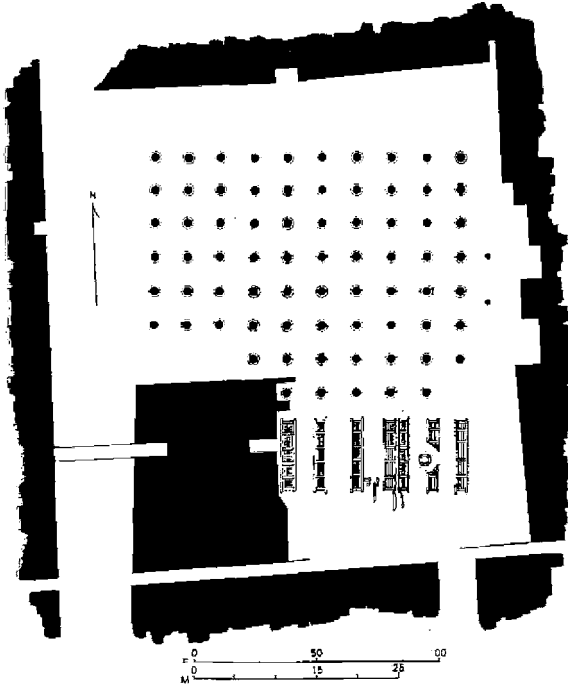
Though the effects of Alexander's campaigns were significant in helping to bring about cultural and artistic developments in ancient India, his actual control of the conquered Indic lands was short-lived. All claims by Alexander's officers in the region were extinguished by 305 B.C., when Candragupta defeated Seleucus Nicator, who had attempted to reclaim some of the Greek territories that Candragupta had recently won. By then, Candragupta's empire was well established and he had considerably increased his holdings in the Indic lands. A matrimonial agreement⁴ was effected between the Greeks and the Mauryas, appropriate gifts exchanged, and a Greek ambassador named Megasthenes was dispatched to the Maurya capital at Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna) in Magadha.

Fortunately, Megasthenes kept a record of his life at Candragupta's court. Although today it is known only from the works of other ancient

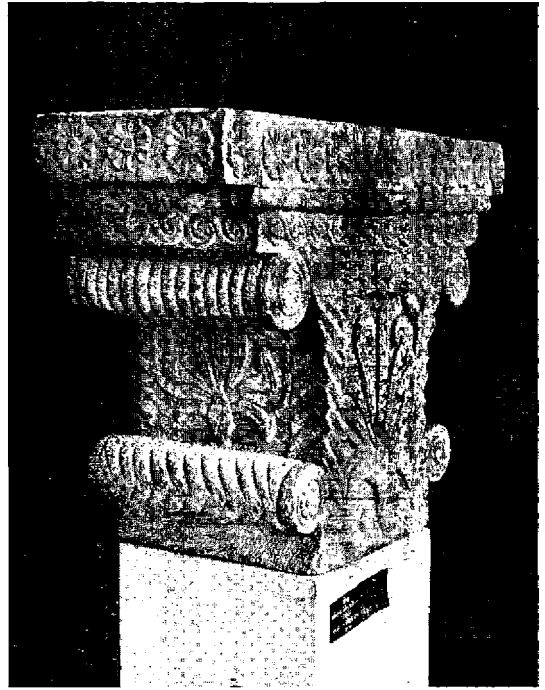
writers who had depended on Megasthenes for information rather than from an original manuscript, Megasthenes' account provides important descriptions that are useful in reconstructing the original appearance of the buildings at Pāṭaliputra. These, and the archaeological remains themselves, indicate that the Maurya kings, and perhaps their immediate predecessors, had been influenced by foreign models in their choice of forms and artistic techniques to be employed at their courts. The ambitious building schemes, seen at Pāṭaliputra, and in the large-scale stone projects carried out elsewhere in the subcontinent under the Mauryas, reflect the might of the imperial line and mark the first phase of Indic art in which patronage by the imperial line is identifiable.

According to Megasthenes, the city of Pāṭaliputra was about fifteen kilometers long, two and a half in width, and was surrounded by a moat that measured about two hundred meters wide and fifteen meters deep. The ramparts of the city had sixty-four gates and some five hundred and seventy towers. However, because the ancient site is occupied by the modern city of Patna, only portions of these descriptions have been verified by archaeological excavations. In addition, many of the structures were made of wood and were thus susceptible over time to damage wrought by fire, flooding, and decay. Thus, the city, described by Megasthenes as having gilded pillars, large artificial ponds containing fish, and extensive grounds where tame peacocks strutted, today reveals little of its original grandeur.

In the palace area, a large room has been identified as the audience hall (Fig. 4.1). Although its Maurya-period date seems certain, it is unknown whether it was a product of Candragupta's reign, or that of another king. Its grand scale is indicated by the surviving bases of eighty stone pillars, whose original heights have been estimated to have reached approximately ten meters, and which were set about five meters apart. The pillared arrangement is suggestive of Achaemenid structures, like those at Persepolis, both in scale and in the abundance of the pillars. However, if ties exist, it is unclear whether they resulted from centuries of contact between



4.1. Plan of the audience hall. Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Maurya period. Ca. fourth or third century B.C.



4.2. Capital. From Bulandibagh, Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Probably Maurya period. Ca. fourth or third century B.C. Buff sandstone. H: 86 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

ancient India and her neighbor, or whether they reflect an influence introduced only after Alexander's campaign, or perhaps a combination of both.

The format of the pillared hall is not the only feature that suggests associations between the Indic and Achaemenid spheres. The high gloss of the finish on the surface of the pillars is a characteristic of Achaemenid art, and may have been a technique introduced into the Indian regions from Persia, along with other lapidary methods.⁵ Indeed, the use of stone on so monumental a scale as visible in the Maurya period, both in architecture and in sculpture, is generally thought to have been stimulated by

direct influence with the western Asiatic world.

Associations with western Asia are further substantiated in a pillar capital found at Bulandibagh, a subsite of Pataliputra (Fig. 4.2). Although its surface bears no trace of polish,⁶ its form and motifs resemble western Asiatic types. Rectangular in shape, the capital has two main faces, each with a palmette in the main field and four horizontal bands above. From the top, these bands include a row of eight-petaled rosettes, a bead-and-reel motif, a meandering spiral, and a lotus petal design. These features, together with the volutes on the sides, betray an Achaemenid source and are themselves Achaemenid adaptations of Hellenic motifs.

EDICTS AND PILLARS

The most illustrious of the Maurya kings was Asoka, grandson of Candragupta. Asoka's reign (ca. 272–231 B.C.) is notable for many reasons,

among which are the numerous epigraphs he had inscribed in stone throughout his vast empire. Carved in caves, on rocks, and on pillars,

these records comprise the earliest intelligible corpus of written documents from the Indic regions. Furthermore, they provide important historical information about the period, glimpses of the personality of the ruler, and insights into the state of religion at the time. The inscriptions are composed in the vernacular language of Magadha, a form of Prākṛt, and reflect the actual thoughts of the emperor himself, who is called Priyadarśin (Beloved of the Gods) in the epigraphs.⁷ One of the most poignant of the inscriptions⁸ claims that Aśoka, after having seen some one hundred fifty thousand people carried away as captives, some one hundred thousand more slain, and many more dead after his conquest of Kalinga (Orissa), was struck with remorse at the suffering he had caused, underwent a conversion (to Buddhism), and spent the remainder of his life and energy carrying out what the inscriptions call the *dharma* (law).⁹

The idea of inscribing imperial edicts and decrees in stone was undoubtedly modeled after Achaemenid practices, as were the wording and epithets used in many of them. However, the thoughts expressed reflect the spirit and personality of Aśoka himself, and have earned him a reputation for benevolence and tolerance that was never again matched by any South Asian monarch. In particular, he is remembered in Buddhist literature as a great proponent of the Buddhist religion. Indeed, it was probably Aśoka's propagation of Buddhism that gave the religion its first major thrust, gaining popularity for it, and distinguishing it from the numerous other competing religious movements of the day. His *dharma*, although perhaps containing elements not exclusive to Buddhism, was clearly based on the principles of the Buddhist *dharma*. Many of the actions performed by Aśoka in the name of *dharma*, such as planting shade trees, limiting animal slaughter, or commuting prison sentences, were congruent with Buddhist theory, although the inscriptions do not propound the complex philosophical or metaphysical aspects of the Buddhist religion. Buddhist texts record that Aśoka made pilgrimages to many of the Buddhist holy sites, erected numerous shrines and memorials in honor of Buddhism, and sent his daughter to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) with

a cutting of the original *pīpal* tree under which Śākyamuni Buddha had attained his enlightenment in order to serve in the transmission of the religion, thus corroborating his Buddhist leanings.

Aśokan inscriptions are found in a wide-ranging area, extending from Afghanistan on the west, where the emperor's message was translated into Greek and Aramaic for the local populace, to Orissa on the east, from the Nepal borderland in the north, into Karṇāṭaka in the south. There is evidence that through ambassadors he also spread the *dharma* beyond the frontiers of South Asia to the courts of the kings of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, and northern Africa.¹⁰

As a group, the pillars are perhaps the most intriguing of the objects generally associated with Aśoka and his inscriptions. Approximately forty "Aśokan" pillars are mentioned in Buddhist literature of later periods, although portions of less than half this many have been identified in modern times. Of these, not all bear Aśokan inscriptions, and even some that do were probably erected prior to Aśoka's reign. Aśoka's own words confirm the pre-existence of some pillars, for in one of his edicts he records that he had erected "Pillars of Law" (*dhamma-thambāni*) to propagate his message and requested that his words also be inscribed on existing stone pillars (and slabs).¹¹ Further, the surviving examples do not present a unified picture, but vary greatly in type of stone, polish or lack of polish, proportions, treatment of sculptural details, doweling techniques, and even methods of insertion into the earth. From this, it is evident that Aśoka did not innovate the practice of erecting pillars, although he may have been the first to place inscriptions on them and may have modified their form and symbolism. His use of pillars instead represents the culmination of a period of pillar development, probably having origins in a wooden tradition. The surviving pillars and pillar fragments may thus be categorized into Aśokan and pre-Aśokan (perhaps even pre-Mauryan) monuments, in spite of the fact that all have been traditionally ascribed to Aśoka and his religious zeal.

Originally, each pillar consisted of a long

monolithic shaft, the heaviest and certainly most difficult portion to quarry and erect, and a stone capital. Scholars have traditionally studied the motifs of the capitals, believing that these held the key to the meaning and iconography of the pillars. However, John Irwin has demonstrated that the primary symbolism of these creations was in the concept of the pillar itself, the capital decoration being of secondary importance.¹²

It is likely that the pillars represent the World Axis, seen in many ancient cultures as the instrument used to separate heaven and earth during the creation of the universe. The earliest record of such a belief in ancient India occurs in the *R̥g Veda*, where it is revealed that the god Indra slew a demon, thus releasing the cosmic ocean and causing the separation of heaven and earth by "pushing them asunder" and "propping" the sky.¹³ The pillar thus conceptually rises from the cosmic ocean, emerges from the navel of the earth, and reaches toward heaven where it is touched by the sun. In light of this, it is interesting that the extant pillars appear to rise directly from the earth's core, for they do not have platforms at ground level. Furthermore, as a probable allusion to their conceptual source in the cosmic ocean, at least some of the pillars reached below the earth to the water table.

Inherent to the World Axis symbolism is a model for earthly kingship. Indra's remarkable actions earned him the position of king of all the gods. He then sanctioned the first terrestrial king by giving him a portable pole to worship. It is possible that Aśoka and his probably royal predecessors who had erected pillars, whether in wood or in stone, were symbolically re-enacting Indra's primordial deed. In this way, they may have secured their own kingship by harmonizing it with the cosmic order.¹⁴

A bull capital found at Rāmpurvā may have belonged to one of the pre-Aśokan stone pillars (Fig. 4.3). The animal is rendered naturalistically in a manner reminiscent of seal carvings from the Indus civilization, suggesting a continuity of tradition. As in the Indus seals, the species of bull, in this case the *Bos indicus*, is easily identifiable. The proportions of the animal, its bone and mus-



4.3. Bull capital. From Rāmpurvā, Bihār, India. Probably Maurya period. Ca. third century B.C. Polished sandstone. H: 205 cm. President's Palace, New Delhi.

cle structure, and other features of its anatomy have been so carefully rendered by the sculptor that the uncarved matrix beneath the body left for structural purposes does not detract from the effect of naturalism. In contrast to the Indic naturalism, however, the palmettes, "honeysuckle,"¹⁵ and rosettes on the drum of the capital speak more of stylized western Asiatic prototypes, like those presumed for the capital from Bulandibagh (Fig. 4.2). The lowermost element of the capital is the "lotus bell," a stylized rendering of a lotus that assumes a bell-like shape. This motif also shows ties to western Asiatic sources. It must be reasserted, however, that the relationship between ancient India and the western Asiatic world was ongoing and continuous, and that the appearance of western Asiatic forms in Indic art does not necessarily imply a new infusion.

The general appearance of an Aśokan pillar is visible in the still intact example at Lauriyā Nandagarh, a site on the *uttarapātha* trade route



4.4. Pillar. Lauriyā Nandangarh, Bihar, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C. Polished sandstone. H: ca. 12 m above ground.

connecting the eastern Gangetic basin with western Asia (Fig. 4.4). This pillar, which bears six of Aśoka's edicts, extends approximately twelve meters above ground and its shaft continues below to a depth of about three meters, the whole resting on a square stone platform measuring more than two meters on a side. The use of such a stone foundation may have been an innovation of Aśoka's reign, or at least, a late development in the evolution of the pillar. Apparently, earlier stone pillars were not

placed on platforms, following the older practice of erecting wooden pillars. Since the stone pillars were so heavy (some weighed as much as thirty-six thousand kilograms), the absence of a platform caused the earlier examples to sink into the ground or fall due to imbalance and lack of support.

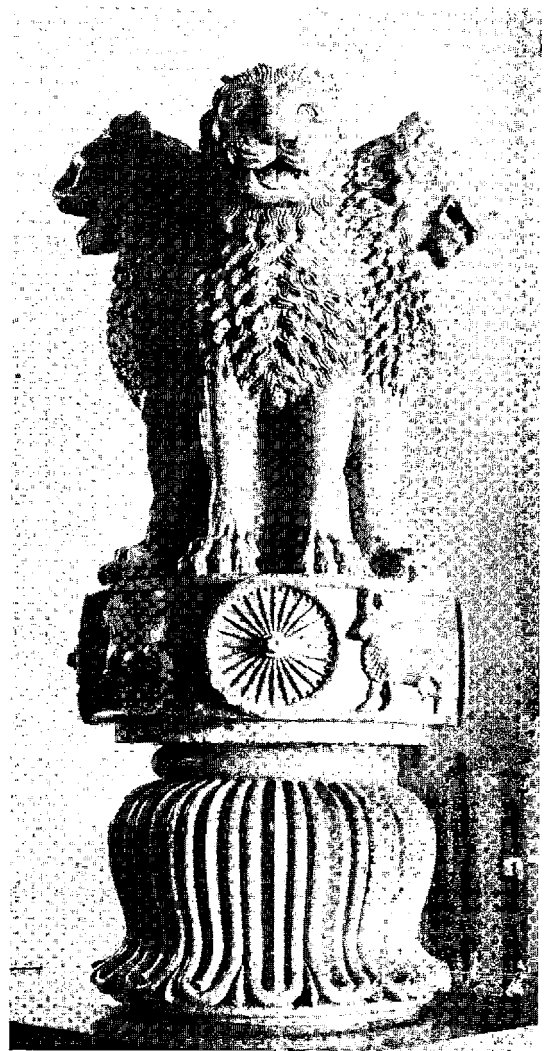
Like other imperial monuments of the Maurya period, this pillar reveals a blend of Indic and western Asiatic traditions. The lustrous surface polish and the lotus bell clearly relate to the western Asiatic, and specifically the Achaemenid, tradition. However, unlike its Iranian cousins, the Maurya pillar does not have a fluted shaft, and the pillar is free-standing rather than an engaged architectural member. A strictly Indic motif is the row of geese carved as if moving in a clockwise fashion around the axis of the pillar, on the drum directly beneath the lion. The flight of the goose (*hamsa*) is seen in ancient Indic thought as a link between the earthly and heavenly spheres, and thus the appearance of these creatures on the pillar is especially apt.

Another late addition to the pillar tradition, perhaps popularized by Aśoka, is the use of the lion as part of the sculptural program. In this case, a single lion appears as the crowning element of the capital. While other animals found on early pillars, such as the bull and elephant, are deeply rooted in the symbolic reservoir of ancient India, the lion is not. Instead, it seems to have been imported into the Indic regions as a royal symbol from western Asia, possibly along with developing ideas of kingship. As further evidence of a foreign source for lion symbolism in Maurya art, the Aśokan lions are generally depicted in a stiff, heraldic manner reminiscent of Achaemenid types more than the naturalistic animal renderings of earlier Indic art.¹⁶

Another of Aśoka's major contributions to pillar iconography may have been a conversion of this royal and Vedic symbol to a form suitable for Buddhist use. The splendid pillar at Sārnāth may have been one such example. An Aśokan inscription on the shaft of the pillar, still *in situ* at Sārnāth, makes a plea for unity within the Buddhist monastic community (*samgha*), a

message also appearing on a pillar with a nearly identical capital at the Buddhist site of Sāñcī in north-central India.¹⁷ As important as Aśoka's message, however, is the apparent symbolism of the surviving capital, which consists of a lotus-bell base surmounted by a sculpted drum, above which are four addorsed lions (Fig. 4.5). The crowning element was originally a large wheel (*cakra*) that is now lost. As a well-known solar symbol in ancient India, the wheel at the top would have been an appropriate sign of the pillar's heavenward thrust. However, the *cakra* is also an important symbol of the cosmic order in Upaniṣadic thought, which was incorporated into Buddhism at an apparently early date. In fact, a more appropriate symbol can hardly be imagined for the site of Sārnāth, where this capital stood, for it was at Sārnāth that Śākyamuni Buddha preached his first sermon, thereby "turning the wheel of the law" for the first time. The Buddhist message of this capital is also probably incorporated into the symbolism of the lions, for not only is the lion an appropriate early symbol of royalty, and thus a reference to Aśoka himself, but the Buddha's clan, the Śākyas, had the lion as its totem, so the lions may refer to him as well. The Buddha is often called a "lion," and his words, "the voice of the lion," or *simhaghoṣa*. It is tempting to suggest that the four addorsed lions, with their open mouths, may have served as a dual metaphor, referring both to Aśoka, whose words were inscribed on the pillar and were to be spread throughout the land, and to Śākyamuni and his teachings, some of which were first revealed at Sārnāth.

Buddhist symbolism may also be inferred from the four animals proceeding clockwise around the drum of the capital, between which are depictions of *cakras*. The *cakras* are probably not accidentally placed directly beneath the feet of the four lions as if again referring to the wheel of the law (of Aśoka and Śākyamuni). The animals on the drum, consecutively the bull, horse, lion, and elephant, almost appear to be pulling an invisible vehicle set into motion by the enormous *cakras* as if to perpetuate the wheel of *dharma* (*dharmacakra*). The symbolism of the four animals themselves remains unclear,



4.5. Lion capital. From Sārnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C. Polished sandstone. H: 213.5 cm. Sārnāth Site Museum, Sārnāth.

although they may have had directional significance.¹⁸

The pillar, apparently still *in situ*, was seen by the seventh-century Chinese traveller, Hsüan-tsang, who described it as "bright as jade . . . glistening and (sparkling) like light."¹⁹ Indeed, the crisp carving, smooth polish, and high quality of craftsmanship have earned this work, particularly the capital, a reputation as one of ancient India's greatest artistic achievements.

The crowning lions are somewhat stylized in contrast to the drum animals, whose naturalism suggests the Indic sensitivity to living creatures found as early as the Indus civilization. In particular, the bull relates strongly to forms seen on Harappān seals. Precious gems may

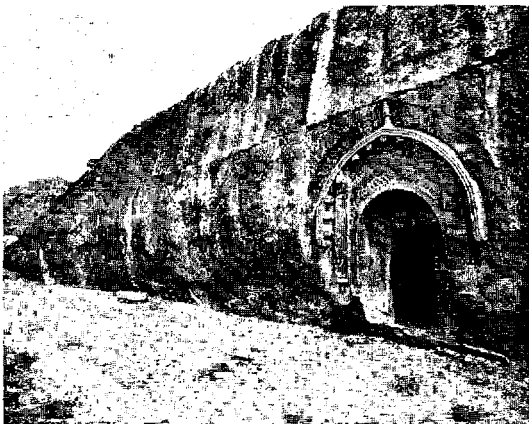
have been placed in the eyes of the four adorsed lions and the rough wheel hubs may have been capped by copper or another metal. Indeed, the pillar and its capital must have been splendid achievements of Aśokan art.

ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE

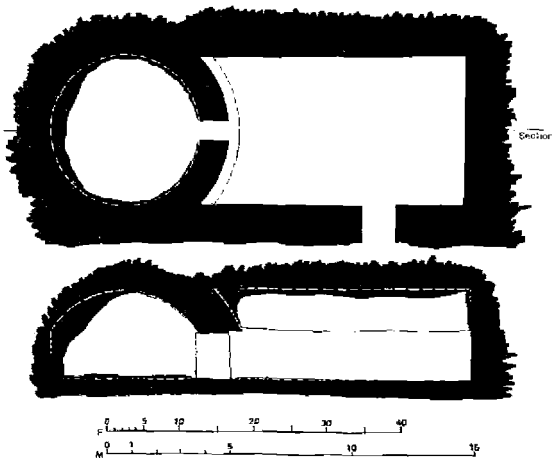
Aśoka's reign, justly famous for the pillars and other monuments that served as vehicles for transmitting the *dharma*, also saw the firm establishment of one of the most important and characteristic art traditions of South Asia—rock-cut architecture. The practice may have been the result of indigenous developments, for ancient Indian mendicants and ascetics had used natural caves for centuries as had certain other segments of the Indic populace. The man-made excavations may simply reflect the next step in a logical development. The megalithic traditions of south India (Figs. 3.1, 3.2) might also have had some bearing on the Maurya-period excavations, although the chronology of the megaliths remains uncertain. But it is also likely that the Indic predilection toward a cave and rock-cut tradition was stimulated by an Achaemenid model, such as the royal tombs at Naksh-i-Rustam.²⁰ Thus, like other aspects of Maurya culture, the cave excavations may have been the

result of both indigenous and foreign elements.

Seven caves were excavated during the Maurya period in the Barābar and Nāgārjuni hills near Gayā, in the Magadha homeland of the Mauryas. The caves date from the reign of Aśoka, and the subsequent reign of Aśoka's own grandson, Daśaratha. Of the four caves in the Barābar Hills, three were dedicated by Aśoka, who is identified in the inscriptions as Priyadarśin (Beloved of the Gods), while the three in the Nāgārjuni Hills bear inscriptions of Daśaratha. Unfortunately, the most interesting from the artistic point of view, the Lomaś Rṣi cave in the Barābar range (Fig. 4.6), does not contain a Maurya inscription. However, because of its association with the other three Barābar caves, especially the Sudāma cave, with which it is identical in form except in the treatment of the facade, the Lomaś Rṣi must be considered a monument of the Aśoka period, and not a work of a later date.²¹



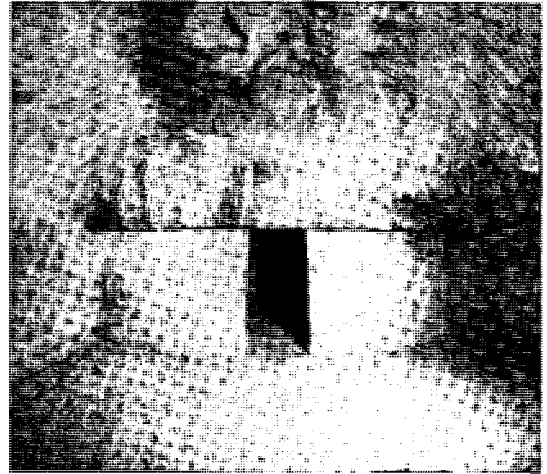
4.6. Exterior of Lomaś Rṣi cave. Barābar Hills, Bihār, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C.



4.7. Plan and elevation of Lomaś Rṣi cave. Barābar Hills, Bihār, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C.



4.8. Entrance to Lomās Ṛṣi cave. Barābar Hills, Bihār, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C.



4.9. Interior of Lomās Ṛṣi cave. Barābar Hills, Bihār, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Ca. mid-third century B.C.

No hint of its inner form is betrayed by the exterior of the Lomās Ṛṣi cave as might occur in a free-standing building, for the excavation extends laterally to the left of the entrance parallel to the face of the rock (Figs. 4.6, 4.7). The doorway leading into the massive rock is modeled after wooden architecture, translating the facade of a free-standing building into stone (Fig. 4.8). While the problem of the foreign-versus-Indic source for the concept of rock-cut architecture remains unsolved, it is evident that the form of these Maurya-period excavations is based on strictly Indic-style wooden buildings. Indeed, the sophisticated woodworking techniques recorded in the Lomās Ṛṣi cave makes it certain that ancient India had an elaborate and lengthy history of wooden architecture prior to the Maurya period, though some of its forms are only first preserved then.

Following a bent-wood prototype, the roof comes to a peak at the top—a shape seen frequently in Indic rock-cut architecture of later periods—and the frame is topped by a finial, possibly imitating a ceramic element used in

free-standing structures. Wooden beam ends, like those of a structural building, have been carefully carved, although they serve no practical purpose in a sculptured building. The pillars “supporting” the roof structure are battered so that they lean inward at a slight angle. This too is a feature that is encountered frequently in other early rock-cut examples. A rounded arch unifies the sides of the doorway within which is recessed the actual door to the cave, a modest rectangular opening. Within the arched forms above the door are two separate registers. The upper band is carved in imitation of wooden latticework, probably of a type used at the time for admitting air and light in free-standing architecture. The pattern of interlocking circles appears on Harappān pottery (Fig. 2.18a), suggesting continuity between the periods in spite of disparate dates. Below the lattice is a frieze of elephants, proceeding in pairs toward spindles that link the arches together. At each end of the register, emerging as if from the squeezed ends of the form itself is a *makara*, a mythological, crocodilian animal that is a primogeneric source

and symbol of auspiciousness, a common element in later South Asian art.²²

As intriguing as its exterior is the interior of the cave, consisting of two chambers (Figs. 4.7, 4.9), a long rectangular hall, and a smaller, nearly circular room that recreates in stone the form of a thatched hut. While this particular interior was never finished, that of the nearly identical Sūdāma cave nearby was completed. From the similarities of the two excavations, including their sizes, it may be assumed that the walls of the Lomās Ṛṣi cave would have had the high polish typical of Maurya stonework and present in the Sūdāma cave. The fact that the wall surfaces were not completed is important for another reason. It has often been stated that the artisans who created this cave were so careful to represent wooden forms that they even incised a pattern imitating wood grain on the walls of the cave, as if to precisely copy a wooden building. Careful examination of the interior shows that these grooves were merely the result of rough stonework that had not yet been finished to a fine polish.

The "room within a room" effect of the round hut in the longer chamber is problematic. Thatched huts may have been used as meeting halls, dwellings for religious persons, or shrines, and this may be simply a permanent representation of a popular form. The rounded shape appears later at Kondivte (Figs. 5.19, 5.20) where it encloses a *stūpa* that is also carved out of the living rock and where it is meant to serve as a shrine. Whether the Lomās Ṛṣi cave would have once contained a cult object cannot be determined since no trace of one has been left and

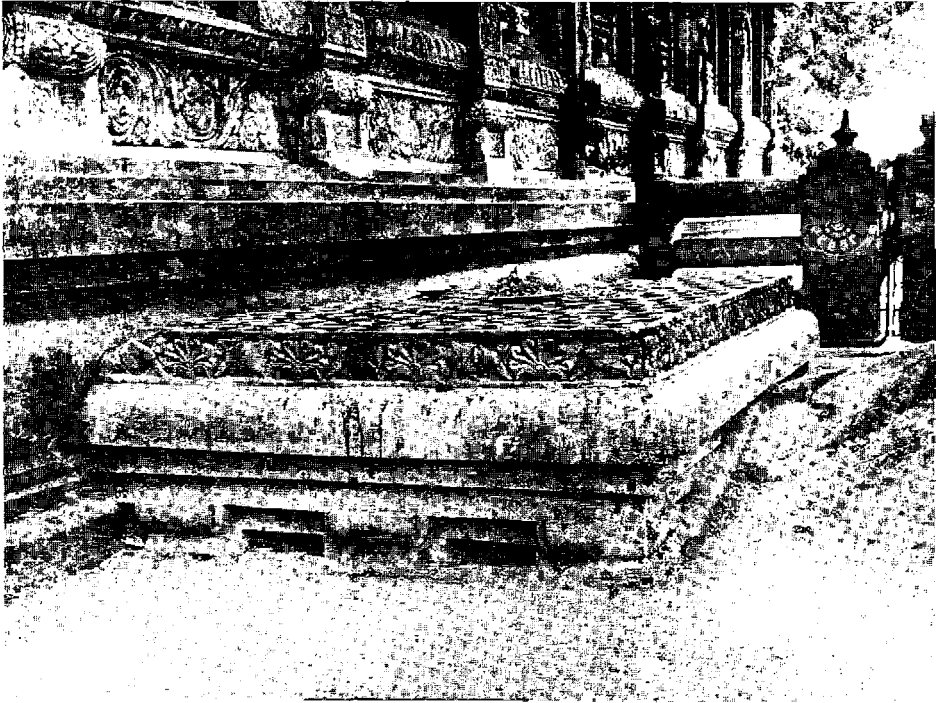
because the interior of the chamber was never completed.

What was the purpose of these caves? What does the elephant frieze on the facade of the Lomās Ṛṣi cave imply? Why were the artisans so careful in their imitation of free-standing architectural structures and why did they carve these forms into stone at all? These questions are difficult to answer, but a clue to the purpose of the caves, at least, may be derived from the contents of the six inscriptions present in them. While the inscriptions of the three Barābar caves are somewhat vague, those at the Nāgārjuni Hill site clearly state that the caves were donated so that the Ājīvikas might have an abode during the rainy season "as long as [the] moon and sun (shall endure)."²³ Clearly, these caves were meant to be permanent, or at least as permanent as the sun and the moon, and were intended as residences during the rainy season for use by the Ājīvikas, a severely ascetic religious sect of the heterodox (non-Vedic) type that came into existence out of the same intellectual and philosophical environment that fostered the growth of Buddhism and Jainism in about the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. While Buddhist monks, and apparently the Jain and Ājīvika ones as well, vowed to be homeless wanderers, they took shelter during the rainy season in natural caves in the mountains isolated from the life of the city. Later, however, caves such as the Lomās Ṛṣi apparently began to be excavated for their use. The Ājīvikas were prominent during the time of Aśoka, but apparently never had a wide following and were gradually overshadowed by the Jains and the Buddhists.

OTHER AŚOKAN MONUMENTS

Aśoka's good works for his kingdom, for Buddhism, and for humanity apparently went far beyond proclamations to his subjects and performance of the deeds mentioned in the edicts. He is said to have distributed huge amounts of gold to the poor at Buddhist sites, to have made pilgrimages, and even to have erected, with the help of geniis, eighty-four thousand *stūpas* overnight.

Aśoka is further credited with having erected a shrine at Bodh Gayā, on the spot where Śākya-muni Buddha is believed to have attained his enlightenment. Although the present temple at Bodh Gayā, the Mahābodhi (Fig. 10.41), is clearly a monument of a much later period, credence is lent to this traditional view by the large polished stone platform, the *vajrāsana* (*vajra-seat*), beneath a large *pīpal* tree at Bodh Gayā, which



4.10. *Vajrāsana*. Bodhi Gayā, Bihār, India. Maurya period, probably reign of Aśoka. Grey sandstone. Ca. mid-third century B.C. 240 × 141 × 16.5 cm.

is held to be the descendent of the original tree under which Śākyamuni sat (Fig. 4.10). Found in 1880 during the course of renovations and repairs to the temple, the platform is only 16.5 cm thick and today rests upon a more recent base. Its original context and use are unknown; recently, it has been suggested that the slab was an altar-top, originally contained within the temple itself.²⁴ The Maurya slab bears a now illegible inscription on the side in

early Brāhmī characters (the script used in most Aśokan inscriptions), which may record its donation. The letter forms, along with the polish of the stone and the geese and palmette motif, suggest formal associations with Maurya art and seem to verify a Maurya-period date for the work. Its relationship to any Maurya-period temple, however, remains unclear. On the upper surface of the platform is a design composed of circles and squares.

MAURYA-PERIOD SCULPTURE FROM PĀṬALIPUTRA

Several stone sculptures of human figures demonstrating characteristics of Maurya-period art have been found. Unfortunately, these carvings lack significant inscriptions or meaningful archaeological contexts, and thus, whether they were made in the Maurya period remains a subject of controversy. However, since they share technical and stylistic features seen in Maurya pillars, capitals, and caves, and have

been found at sites within the limits of the ancient city of Pāṭaliputra, it may be argued that they were products of ateliers serving the Maurya regime. These sculptures are impressive in scale, generally made life-size or larger, and suggest that monumental art was produced under the Mauryas for reasons other than Aśoka's propagation of *dharma*. Generally, it is assumed that these figures must have had religious con-



4.11. Male figure. From Lohānīpur, Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Maurya period. Ca. third century B.C. Polished sandstone. H: 67.3 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

texts but nothing more specific is known about their original purposes. Technically, each sculpture was executed with the same care and skill evidenced generally in Maurya monuments. While certain of their features do not seem to persist into later artistic styles, such as the high polish of the surface, others serve as a basis for the art of later periods. These include aspects of the costumes, attributes held in the hands, and treatment of the human body. Since the human figure as a motif becomes the single major theme of Indic art through the centuries, these early examples of monumental figures are vital to an understanding of the art of later periods.

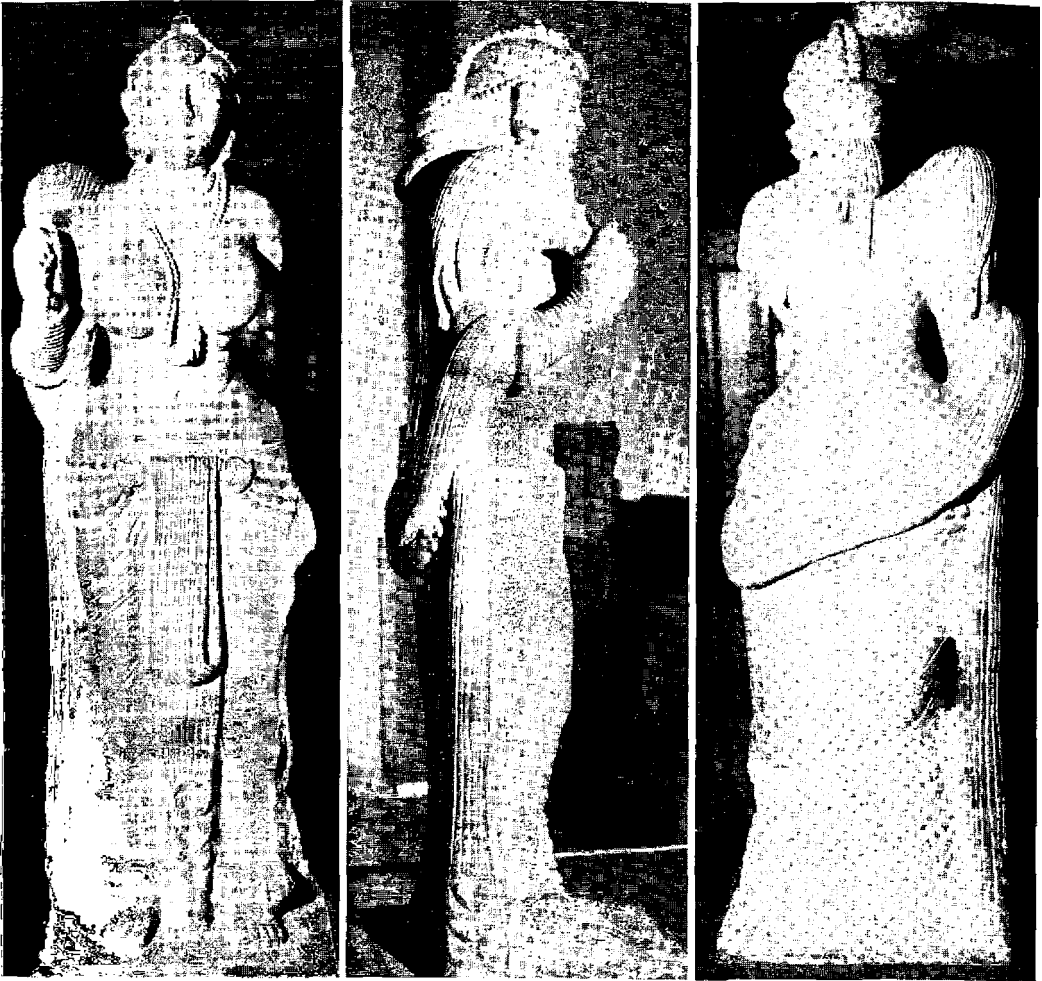
A torso of a nude male (Fig. 4.11) found at the section of Pāṭaliputra known as Lohānīpur is carved out of the Chunār sandstone frequently used in Maurya works; its glossy polish is comparable to that found in the Aśokan pillars and the Barābar and Nāgārjunī hills caves. Also excavated near the findspot of the sculpture were bricks of the Maurya type, an early type of

silver coin, a second similar but smaller sculpture, and the foundations of a small shrine.²⁵ These, along with two polished sandstone pillar fragments recovered from Lohānīpur, seem to corroborate a Maurya date for the torso. But they tell little about its original context and purpose.

It is possible that this nude figure represents a member of the Digambara or "Sky Clad" sect of Jains who wear no clothes, in contrast to the Śvetāmbaras ("White Dressed").²⁶ The naturalism and sensitivity to the living form recalls the animal sculpture of the Maurya period (excluding the lion), such as those on the drum of the Sāmāth capital; the soft, fleshy forms of the body almost seem to contradict the nature of stone itself. Each side of the sculpture has been carefully rendered so that from every view it is a convincing entity, although it was probably intended to be seen from the front. The nudity of this figure and that of the small torso recovered from Harappā (Fig. 2.4) is striking. However, the conception of the body, the polished surface of the Maurya piece, and other features indicate that the resemblance is probably the result of artistic continuity over the centuries rather than any similarity in date.

The records of the Patna Museum relate that the well-preserved statue of a female *caurī* (fly whisk) bearer was found when villagers at Didār-gaṅj, Pāṭaliputra, chased a snake into a hole. Upon starting to dig for the snake, the villagers instead came upon this approximately life-size statue (Fig. 4.12). Because the technique, surface refinement, and high polish relate it to Maurya-period works, some scholars contend that the sculpture belongs to the Maurya phase; others, noting the voluptuous forms of the body, the distinctive clump of hair in the center of the forehead, and the heavy anklets relate the image to second century A.D. sculptures, such as the rail figures from Bhūteśvara (Figs. 8.35, 8.36) or the veranda figures at Kārli (Fig. 9.4). The Maurya features, however, seem to override the other considerations, especially since the work relates so closely to others of the Maurya atelier at Pāṭaliputra, and it may be accepted as a product of that period.

The figure wears a hip-hugging garment over her lower body; its diaphanous folds are depicted



4.12. *Cauri* bearer. From Didārgaṅj, Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Maurya period. Ca. third century B.C. Polished sandstone. H: 162.5 cm, not including base. Patna Museum, Patna.

Double-incised lines across her legs. Heavy ornaments, including a jeweled or beaded anklets, armbands, necklaces, and earrings adorn the figure. This type of feminine attire can be seen throughout the development of art with some variation, but essentially, consisting of lower garment, bare torso, and heavy jewelry become the norm. The figure is completely freed from the matrix of the stone, except around the legs, where stone is left for support has been camouflaged by the folds of drapery falling between the legs. Although carved in the round, the figure

is most advantageously viewed from the front.

Her right hand holds the *cauri*, a whisk used to keep flies away from distinguished persons, and is thus a symbol of her subservient role in the presence of a highly respected individual who might have been a religious or secular leader. In later Indic iconography, such attendants occur in pairs, and it may be suggested that a similar sculpture once served as her mate, the two possibly flanking a doorway or another, probably larger image. The usual identification of this figure as a *yakṣi*, or female nature spirit, is untenable since she has none of



4.13. Male figure. From Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Maurya period. Ca. third century B.C. Polished brownish sandstone. H: 162 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

the usual accoutrements of a *yakṣi* and clearly is an attendant.

Two male statues have been found at Pāṭaliputra and, on evidence similar to that cited for the female from *Didārgaṅj*, may be ascribed to the Maurya period. Since the two male statues share many characteristics, only one need be discussed in detail (Fig. 4.13). With the weight of his rigid body firmly planted on his two feet, the figure is in a strictly frontal attitude. As seen in the *Didārgaṅj* *cauri* bearer, the stone matrix is most noticeable in the area of the feet, and is a concession to structural concerns. The drapery over the lower body resembles that of the *Didārgaṅj* female, in technique if not arrangement, as the double-incised lines parallel the direction of the folds of the garment, and again, the costume sets the norm for later male garb in Indic art, although certain features will vary. The quietude and stillness of the forms work together with the size and volume to create an imposing, powerful effect. Like typical Maurya-period stone carvings, this sculpture was highly polished, although a brownish-red sandstone has been used, in contrast to the more popular *Chunār*-type stone. The corpulence of this figure, which may connote abundance, has led to the assumption that he is a *yakṣa*, or male nature spirit. However, the remains of a *cauri* in his right hand suggest that he, like the *Didārgaṅj* female, must also have been an attendant figure and presumably would also have been one of a pair.

MAURYA-PERIOD TERRA-COTTA SCULPTURE

Alongside the imperial Maurya stone-carving tradition, which must have touched only a minority of the inhabitants of ancient India, items of daily use and objects in more ephemeral materials were widely manufactured. It is likely that wood, bone, ivory, cloth, terra cotta, and possibly metal and other media had never ceased to be used since Harappā times; perhaps objects in these materials served as precedents for works in stone. As far as archaeologists can determine, terra cotta has been a medium for sculpture, pottery, ornaments, and toys in

South Asia from the time of its earliest use to the present without interruption. Apparently, both hand-modeling and molding techniques were used simultaneously over the course of centuries. The wares were generally of a low-fire type, which is unfortunately fragile. Thus, in spite of the continuity of the tradition, the history and development of terra-cotta art in ancient India has not been well established. Further, Indic terra cottas are rarely inscribed and their technology changed little over the centuries, further compounding the problems of

identification and chronology. When molds were used, a design could have persisted over long periods of time. Even careful recording of the circumstances of the archaeological find has not proved useful in establishing the developments of Indic terra cotta. Therefore, at present, the most reliable indices of this art are found in the history of a given site, its main periods of occupation, and the correlation to stylistic and iconographic details of works in other media, such as stone.

Of the terra-cotta figurines excavated at Bulandibagh, Pāṭaliputra, a number of female statues are outstanding. One example shows a rather naturalistically depicted woman garbed in an elaborate dress and headdress (Fig. 4.14). The vitality and naturalism of the figure, especially visible in the facial structure, slight turn of the head, and naturalistic pose, rank this work among the finest of ancient Indian terra cotta, and demonstrate its aesthetic and formal associations with the hieratic stone conceptions of the Maurya period. The full skirt, which bulges out at the hips as if supported by hoops, and the complicated headdress, with its two lobes jutting out from the sides of the head as if to repeat the form of the skirt below, may document a contemporary costume type. The clothing contrasts sharply with the garments of the *Didārgaṅj sauri* bearer, though at present such discrepancies cannot be explained.

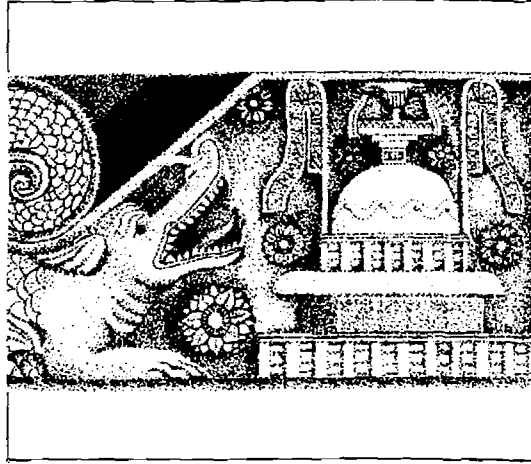


4.14. Female figure. From Bulandibagh, Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Bihār, India. Maurya period. Ca. third century B.C. Terra cotta, with traces of slip. H: 27.3 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

CONCLUSION

The Maurya period marks the initiation of a continuous, traceable history of works of art in stone from the South Asian region. While the present state of knowledge indicates that Maurya stone productions were largely the result of royal patronage, the artistic evidence itself demonstrates that the Maurya works

reflect what must have been an active, long-standing tradition of art and architecture using wood or other easily perishable materials. Perhaps stimulated by foreign models, the Maurya kings have thus preserved some information about ancient India's early material culture.



Detail of 5.8.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Śuṅga Period and Related Developments (ca. Second Century to First Century B.C.)

In approximately 185 B.C., violent upheaval struck the Maurya empire. Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, the principal military officer of the last Maurya king, Bṛhadratha, assassinated the king and assumed his imperial prerogatives. Ruling until 151 B.C., Puṣyamitra probably maintained much of the empire of the Mauryas although his authority was contested. It is believed that Puṣyamitra performed the Vedic horse sacrifice (*āsvamedha*) twice during his reign, thus indicating his political strength, for the ceremony is a demonstration of the king's domination over neighboring kingdoms. Besides the obvious political implications of Puṣyamitra's *āsvamedhas*, the performance of the rituals suggests a renewal of Brahmanism that may have been related to the persecution of Buddhists sometimes said to characterize the Śuṅga period. The last Śuṅga

king was deposed in 73 B.C. in a turbulent manner reminiscent of the initial accession of the dynasty.

Because the Śuṅgas were the successors to the Mauryas, the period following Maurya rule is often called the Śuṅga period. However, the Śuṅga empire (except perhaps at the beginning), was not nearly as extensive as that of the Mauryas. Therefore, while works of art produced in various regions of South Asia during the second and first centuries B.C. may be said to belong to the "Śuṅga period," the use of this designation does not always imply Śuṅga domination of a region or patronage by the dynasty. Indeed, if we knew the names of ruling families in the various regions of South Asia during this period, their names might more appropriately be associated with the artistic remains.

5.1. "Heliodorus" pillar. Vidiśā (Besnagar), Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 120–100 B.C. Sandstone. H: about 6.5 m.

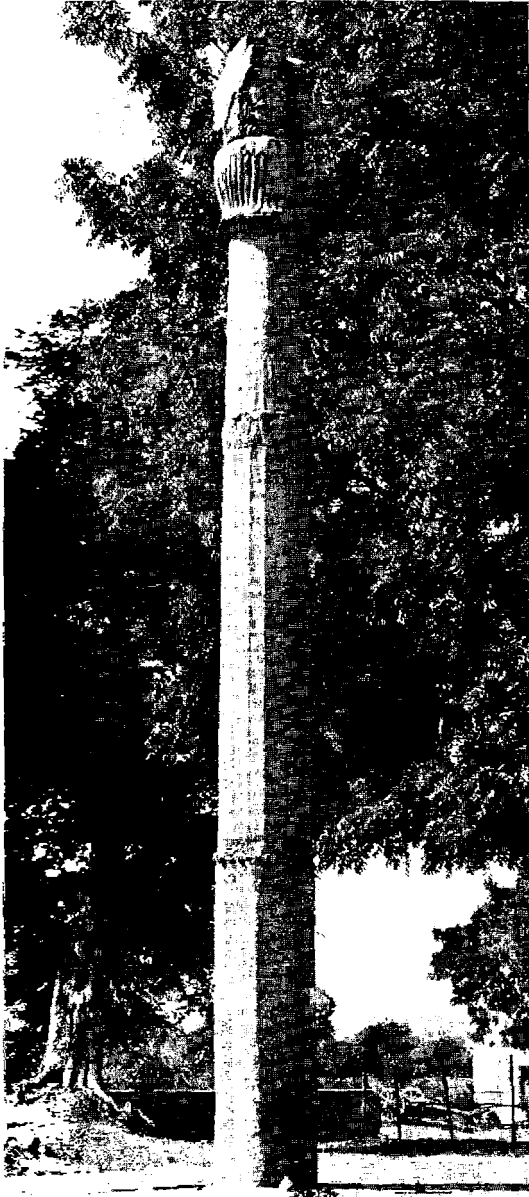
VIDIŚĀ IN THE ŚUNGA PERIOD

Although Pāṭaliputra was the principal administrative center of the Mauryas and the home of much Maurya art, other cities gained considerable importance during the Śunga period. Vidiśā (modern Besnagar) in north-central India, for example, had been an important mercantile center on the southern trade route (*dakṣiṇapāṭha*) connect-

ing the western coast of India with the Gangetic plain, at least since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha. Its influence grew with the Aśoka regime and, under the later Śungas, it became a capital city, a great religious center, and the seat of a school of monumental art. Numerous archaeological remains have been discovered in its vicinity, but systematic and comprehensive exploration remains to be done.

Included among the discoveries at Vidiśā is a large stone pillar bearing a seven-line Brāhmī inscription stating that the pillar was a Garuḍa *dhvaja* (standard) set up in honor of Vāsudeva by a man from Taxila named Heliodorus, the ambassador of the Graeco-Bactrian king Antialkidas to King Bhāgabhadra, in the fourteenth year of the latter's reign (Fig. 5.1).¹ Several important facts may be gleaned from these words: first, the northwest region of ancient India, or at least Taxila, was still occupied by Greeks; second, contact was maintained between the courts of the northwest and central India; and third, an Indic cult was apparently strong enough to attract foreign converts, such as Heliodorus, who is described as a *bhāgavata* (devotee) in the inscription. The specific cult is usually considered to be a type of proto-Vaiṣṇavism, for one of the names of the later popular Hindu god Viṣṇu (Vishnu) is Vāsudeva. Further, Viṣṇu has as his vehicle (*vāhana*) the bird Garuḍa, who was probably represented in the now-missing crowning element of this Garuḍa standard. The date of the dedication is given in the inscription, but is problematic, since the probable dates of the Graeco-Bactrian king Antialkidas, the identification of King Bhāgabhadra (who is thought to be the ninth Śunga king), and paleographic evidence have not yet been brought into agreement. However, the range of 120–100 B.C. seems reasonable for the dedication of this pillar, and it may be seen as an important link between the art of the Maurya period and that of the first century B.C.

The pillar displays superficial ties to Maurya and pre-Maurya precedents, particularly in the capital, but it is barely half the size of a typical Aśokan pillar. Further, the unpolished stone



surface and increased articulation of the shaft indicate a significant departure from Maurya-period works. The present platform surrounding the base of the pillar is not original; as in earlier examples, the shaft would have appeared to rise directly from the interior of the earth.

The decoration of the shaft strongly contrasts with earlier examples. Instead of the smooth, round form of earlier pillars, the Heliodorus shaft is divided into four unequal sections: starting at the bottom, the lower three are faceted into eight, sixteen, and thirty-two sides respectively, while the top section is round. A garland in low relief is carved between the second and third sections, perhaps in imitation of a fresh garland that may have been used to adorn such pillars. The lotus-bell capital is decorated with lotus leaves at the top, while above is a cable necking and a square form carved with the "honeysuckle" motif and geese. If indeed, the pillar supported the man-bird Garuḍa, it would indicate the continuation of the practice of using an animal as a crowning element, although the Garuḍa is apparently not included in the earlier repertoire. In later Indic and Nepali art, Garuḍa standards (*dhvajās*) are crowned by such figures; they are often placed before a Vaiṣṇavite temple. Excavations around the pillar did reveal the foundations of an elliptical structure, although little information about the building besides its plan and the nature of the enclosure walls was determined. Possibly, it was a Vāsudeva (proto-Vaiṣṇavite) temple.

Evidence of other stone pillars having been erected at Vidiśā is found in a pillar capital carved in the form of a banyan tree, easily recognized by the shape of the leaves and roots, which have been set down by the limbs (Fig. 5.2). Although it bears no inscription, it may be dated to the Śuṅga period on the basis of its style. Below, a basketlike form rests on a sacred railing, or *vedikā*, of a type known to have been constructed around sacred trees, mounds, or other sacred spots known as *caityas* in ancient India. A series of objects, including bags of riches, coins, flowers, a conch shell, and a lotus occur around the tree. These may represent the *nidhis* (treasures) particularly characteristic of Kubera, an Indic god of wealth. Further, the tree is probably



5.2. Banyan tree capital. From Vidiśā (Besnagar), Mādhyā Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100 B.C. Brownish sandstone. H: about 150 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

a wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpadruma* or *kalpariṣka*), which serves as a general symbol of the bountifulness of nature.² In style, the sculpture contrasts with the meticulously executed Maurya examples, but the more freely conceived forms are characteristic of Śuṅga monuments and give them a lively and spontaneous effect.

Stone representations of human figures on a monumental scale are also known from this period at Vidiśā. None were found under controlled archaeological conditions, nor do they bear revealing inscriptions, and therefore they must be dated by stylistic means. Although these works are sometimes ascribed to the Maurya period, their strong stylistic and technical associations with carvings of the Śuṅga period suggest that they were products of that period, perhaps having been made around 100 B.C.

Most impressive among the Vidiśā figures is a standing male identified by the bag of riches he holds in his left hand as Kubera, lord of the north, god of wealth, and king of the *yakṣas* (Fig. 5.3). Such *yakṣa* statues are believed to have



5.3. Kubera. From Vidiṣā (Besnagar), Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100 B.C. Brownish sandstone. H: 243 cm (plus base). Archaeological Museum, Vidiṣā.

been erected at village sacred spots throughout India and represent devotion to a cult of nature spirits (*yakṣas*), usually connoting wealth and abundance of nature. Unlike the *caurī* bearers from Pāṭaliputra (Figs. 4.12, 4.13), which were probably attendant figures, Kubera must have been the main object of devotion. This is suggested by the size and monumentality of the figure, which reaches a height of over three meters and is carved from a single piece of stone. In contrast to Maurya-period examples, the surface of this and other Śuṅga carvings



5.4. Female figure. From Vidiṣā (Besnagar), Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100 B.C. Brownish sandstone. H: 208.5 cm. Archaeological Museum, Vidiṣā.

bears no trace of a polish. However, the corpulency, rigid stance, and frontality are characteristics that persist from the earlier epoch. As befits a lord of wealth, Kubera is heavily adorned with jewelry. The presence of jewelry on both male and female figures in Indic art is the rule rather than the exception, and in itself is not a symbol of a *yakṣa*, however. Typical of the male dress commonly seen over the next several centuries is Kubera's pleated *dhoti*-like lower garment and heavy sash at the waist. His torso is nude except for a piece of cloth placed diagonally across the chest. In early Indic sculpture, the turban is an important feature of the costume, for, almost without exception, the presence of male headgear connotes an individual of rank, and numerous stylistic variations on the turban will be seen.

A female figure, much smaller in scale, is

approximately life-size (Fig. 5.4). Carved out of the same brownish sandstone as many other objects from Vidiśā, the figure must also have been a local product. Although their meanings are still unclear, the two attributes held in her hands probably provide important clues to her identification. In the left hand is a bunch of flowers or fruits hanging downward with the stems grasped in her hand; in her right is a stiff object of uncertain nature. In style, the figure is similar to the Kubera image but reveals a decided attempt by the carver to break away from the confines of the block of stone, unfortunately to disadvantage, for the legs and arms of the figure

were weakened by the removal of the matrix and eventually collapsed. Apparently, the space between the legs was pierced through and the legs and small amount of remaining matrix were not enough to support the figure. A rather generous space between the left arm and the body further indicates the freeing of this figure from the matrix. The rounded contours of the body typify the voluptuous female figure that became a standard in many phases of Indic art. The forms of her body are highlighted by the minimal dress and abundant jewelry, including a beaded girdle, heavy anklets, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings.

THE MATHURĀ REGION DURING THE ŚUNGA PERIOD

Besides Vidiśā, other centers of Śunga-period art included Pāṭaliputra, Mathurā, Ahicchatrā, Ayodhya, and Kauśāmbi. Sculptures recovered from these sites as well as many others in northern India indicate considerable artistic activity from that period. Some of the remains from the Mathurā area are especially interesting. A colossal statue of a standing male figure was found at Parkham, twenty-two kilometers south of Mathurā (Fig. 5.5). Nearly three meters in height, the figure presents a monumental appearance because of its size, frontality, and the heaviness of the body forms. The date and identification of the figure are controversial. At one time, its much worn inscription was read to include the name of a king of the Śai-sunāga dynasty, which preceded the Nandas in Magadha, and the image was given an extremely early date. But stylistically, the figure shows a number of advanced features that indicate that it is a product of the Śunga period. The full form of the body is, without doubt, partially an iconographic feature, perhaps suggesting wealth and abundance, as in the case of *yakṣa* images, although the identification of the figure is not certain (he is usually called a *yakṣa*).³ However, a striking difference between this statue and earlier examples is the slight relaxation of the left leg, best seen in a side view of the figure. This suggestion of ease of movement, while hardly negating the effect of stiffness and front-



5.5. Male figure. From Parkham, Uttar Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. second-first century B.C. Pinkish beige sandstone. H: 264 cm. Mathurā Museum, Mathurā.

ality, indeed demonstrates some of the freedom and animation characteristic of Śuṅga carvings, and contrasts with the more formal conceptions of the Maurya period. Unlike the thick garments depicted in Maurya art, this figure wears nearly diaphanous drapery that is primarily visible in

the zigzag folds between the legs and along the sides of the legs in a typically Śuṅga convention. Since the arms have been broken off, their original positions are not known, and any identifying attributes have been lost.

BUDDHIST ART OF THE ŚUNGA PERIOD: FREE-STANDING ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS

Śākyamuni Buddha founded the Buddhist monkhood (*saṃgha*) and, according to some Buddhist texts, accepted property and other donations from the laity on its behalf. While it might seem incongruous for the leader of a mendicant order to accept property, the sentiment behind this sanction was not to acquire wealth. Instead, it may have been partly a means of setting aside a special reserve where the monks (*bhikṣus*) could attend to their daily activities, undisturbed by the concerns of the material world, and a way of providing a residence and means of sustenance during the rainy season, when it was difficult for them to live as homeless wanderers. Thus, Śākyamuni himself is credited with justifying the establishment of settled communities of monks, although perhaps only in a limited season.

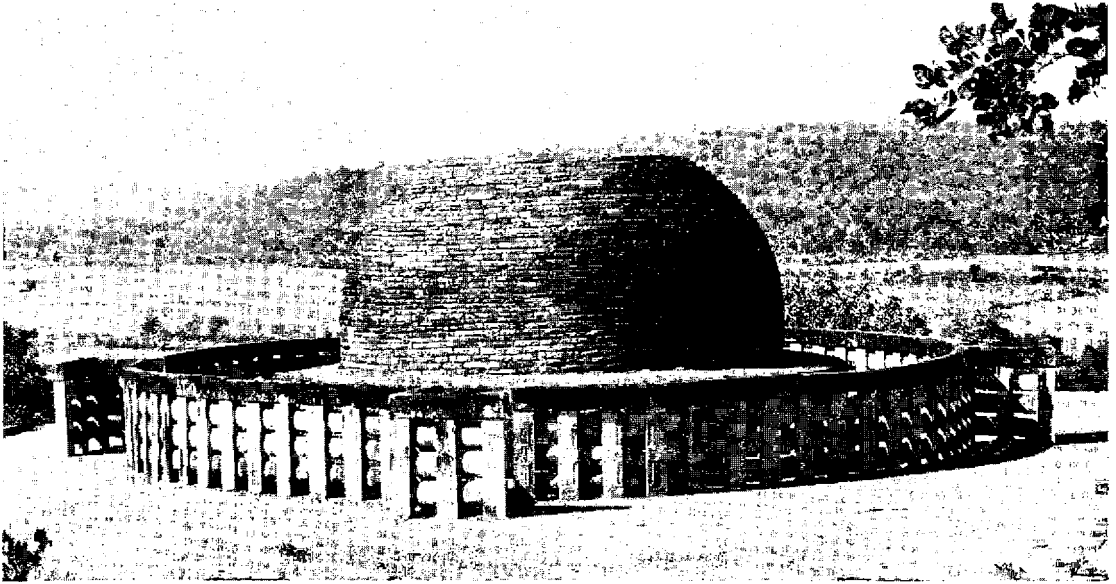
Sometimes sites for such communities were selected because they were related to an important event in the life of Śākyamuni. But often they were chosen because of their proximity to secular capitals and trade routes. This is not surprising, since the monks, although they did not pursue the business and agricultural activities of the laity, needed to reside where they could avail themselves of the generosity of the lay people. In this way, a symbiotic relationship could exist: the lay person could gain religious merit (*puṇya*) without joining the monastic order while at the same time the monks gained their sustenance. This vital relationship is the crux of the creation of much Buddhist art and architecture, since the idea of sustaining the monkhood soon began to exceed the minimum necessities of food, shelter, a cloth robe, and a begging bowl, and elaborate monasteries were built and decorated. These monasteries and

their contents are the principal subject of the history of Buddhist art.

Several architectural forms were apparently already in use by the *saṃgha* not long after the time of Śākyamuni. However, very little remains of early Buddhist monuments⁴ until the Śuṅga period, from which a number of extremely impressive monuments has survived. These constitute the first significant body of art that has been preserved and that can be tied to the Buddhist religion.

One of the most important of the remaining Śuṅga-period Buddhist communities is Sāñcī, a hilltop monastic complex near ancient Vidiśā. Although it is not associated with an event in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha, it grew to great prominence, as suggested by the physical remains at the site. Its history almost exactly parallels that of Buddhism itself in the Indic regions, for it became important during the reign of Aśoka and continued to flourish almost continuously for about thirteen centuries until the virtual demise of the religion in South Asia.

One of the oldest significant structures at Sāñcī is Stūpa II (Fig. 5.6). A *stūpa* is a type of reliquary mound, and is a form of *caitya*. Originally, the term *caitya* denoted either a mound of earth or a sacred tree, generally enclosed within a wooden railing, which designated the spot where there had been a funeral pyre and consecration. In Buddhism, *stūpas* contained relics and came to serve as symbols of a Buddha and his *parinirvāṇa*, or final extinction. According to Buddhist texts, Śākyamuni Buddha's relics were divided into eight portions and distributed to different kingdoms where *stūpas* were erected over them. These were later redistributed by Aśoka, who may have enshrined a portion in the



5.6. Stūpa II. Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100 B.C.

Great Stūpa at Sāñcī (Fig. 6.1). Eventually, thousands of other *stūpas* were raised in the name of Buddhism, as a direct reference to Śākyamuni himself, as well as to all past and future Buddhas, including the individual whose remains might be enshrined in any particular example.

Inscriptions found on reliquaries contained in Sāñcī Stūpa II indicate that the bone relics within them belonged to famous Buddhist saints and teachers who had lived during the Maurya period, some of whom apparently participated in Aśoka's Third Buddhist Council and others who traveled to the Himālayas to preach. However, the *stūpa* as we see it today does not date from the Maurya period, but rather, the relics were collected at a later time and a *stūpa* built for them. On paleographic and stylistic grounds, Stūpa II, as seen today, may be dated to the Śuṅga period, ca. 100 B.C.

The form of the *stūpa* and its function as a Buddhist object of devotion are inextricably related, for the solid, circular mass enclosed within a railing (*vedikā*) is meant to be circumambulated by Buddhist devotees, not merely viewed. Circumambulation (*parikramā*) remains throughout the centuries one of the most important means of performing worship in the

Indic religions. At Sāñcī Stūpa II, it is believed that the worshiper would circumambulate the exterior of the railing a prescribed number of times, keeping the monument to his right (*pradakṣiṇa*), thus moving in a clockwise direction, and then would enter one of the four openings in the railing. In this case, although not with every *stūpa*, it is presumed that the devotee would enter on the east so that at least one full revolution could be completed within the enclosure railing before mounting the stairs on that side of the *stūpa* to continue the procession on a low terrace surrounding the central dome. Although conceptually the railing should be a perfect circle, here it is elliptical so that the bulge created by the staircase on the east was accommodated by increasing the east-west axis of the enclosure. The four entrances in the railing are aligned to the cardinal directions and the pattern of entrances thus produced creates a cosmological diagram in the form of a *svastika*.

Both the interior and exterior surfaces of the railing are carved with shallow reliefs and medallions to be viewed by the worshiper performing the *pradakṣiṇa* rites. In later Buddhist monuments, a complete and systematic icono-



57. *Vedikā* pillar, north gate, Stūpa II, Sāncī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100 B.C.

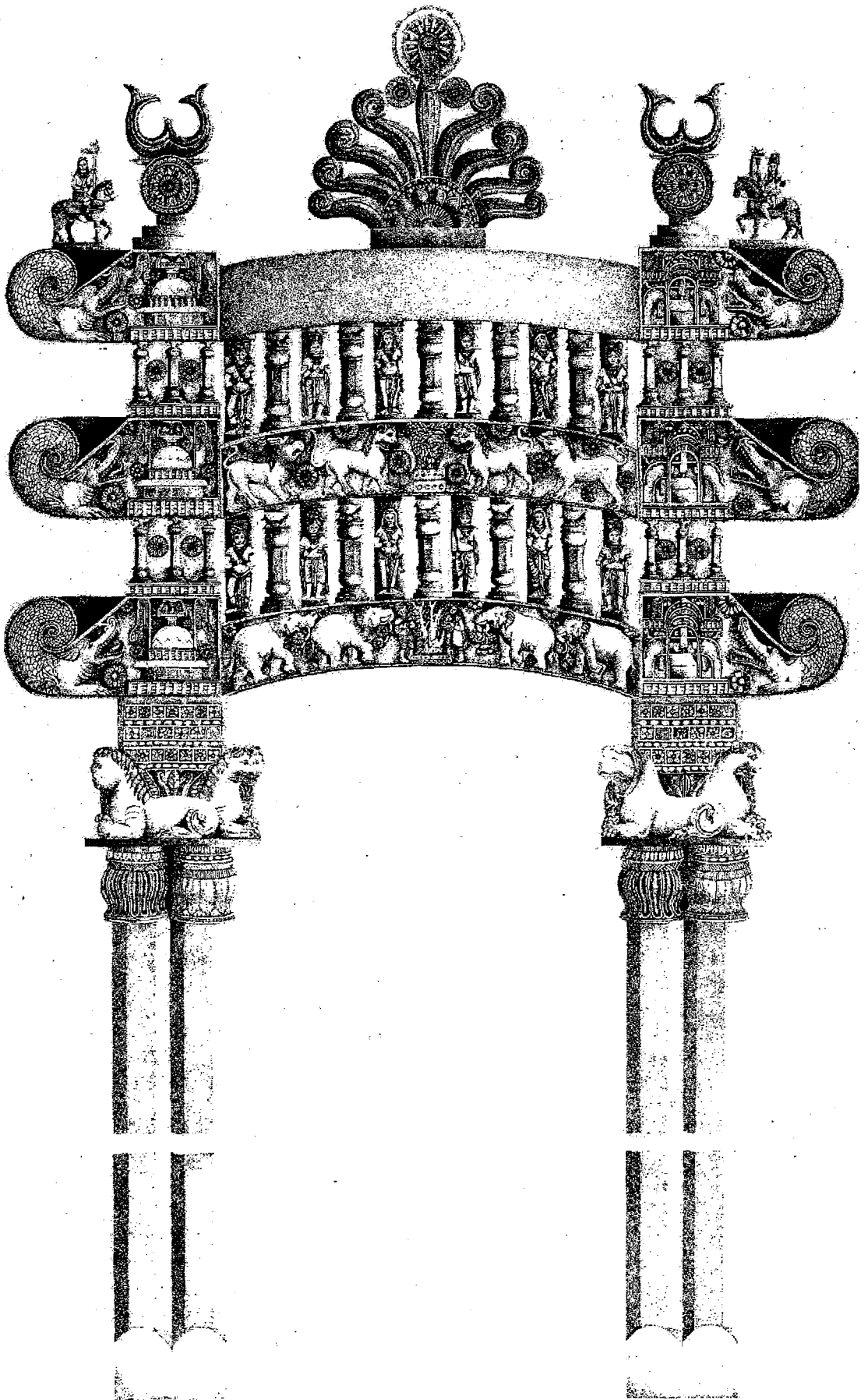
graphic program is often visible, but here, the individual depictions do not seem to form a coherent pattern. The *vedikā* appears to be a direct imitation in stone of a wooden prototype, and it is probable that its form and decorations had a long tradition in woodcarving prior to their translation into stone.

Especially elaborate carvings appear on the pillars flanking the entrances. At the north gate, on the inner face, an Aśokan-type pillar is depicted with addorsed lions that support a large *cakra* surmounting a lotus capital and around shaft, the whole enclosed in a sacred railing (Fig. 5.7). On the adjacent face, a *pipal* tree is enclosed within a similar railing and above, *śiṣya* *śharas* (bearers of wisdom) bring garlands, symbols of transcendent success, to decorate the sacred tree. Below, dwarflike figures support the railing, and an elaborate vine, perhaps a kalpa-fulfilling vine (*kalpalatā*), adorned with

more garlands, gems, and other riches, is held in the trunk of an elephant. The majority of pillars on the Sāncī Stūpa II *vedikā* are not so elaborately decorated. Most simply have a carved half-roundel at the top, another at the bottom, and a full medallion in the center (Fig. 5.7, right). These roundels are filled with an enormous array of motifs, however, including the popular lotus, and other Buddhist and related subjects.

In style, the reliefs of Stūpa II typify much of Śunga-period art in their flatness and in the way that the figures and other carved elements seem to be set against a two-dimensional background, with little suggestion of naturalistic space or progression into depth being implied from the raised level to the more recessed one. The figures generally lack individualizing characteristics based on physiognomy; instead, they are types, either male or female, sharing essential features of body forms, facial features, costumes, and jewelry. A similar use of stylized human forms occurs throughout the spectrum of South Asian art; frequently, these serve as a major means of identifying one school of art from another. At Stūpa II, the figures are rather awkwardly conceived, having angular contours to their bodies, oversized feet that are often posed in anatomically impossible positions, bulging shoulders, and roughly carved facial features. They wear large, bulky earrings, necklaces, elaborate headgear (turbans, in the case of the males), and clinging garments that cover the lower parts of their bodies while the upper parts are generally bare. Their lively poses provide a sense of animation and spontaneity that had been lacking in the more formal art remaining from the Maurya period. Spatial relations are unsystematic and are created more as a by-product of the juxtaposition of elements in the composition than by deliberate intent on the part of the artists.

At Bhārhut, also in north-central India, the remains of a large *stūpa* (*mahāstūpa*) were found. Its location along a major trade route of ancient India enabled it to benefit from the apparent wealth of the region, as indicated by the numerous inscriptions on the *vedikā* that reveal that various portions were the gifts of lay



persons who hoped to obtain religious merit for their contributions. Alexander Cunningham, who discovered the monument in 1873, estimated that the original diameter of this once impressive structure was more than twenty meters, although it was in a ruined condition at the time.

Built of bricks, it was surrounded by a stone *vedikā* approximately three meters in height. In contrast to Stūpa II at Sāñcī, where simple openings in the *vedikā* served as entrances to the sacred compound, the *vedikā* at Bhārhut was adorned with monumental stone gateways (*torāṇas*). Only the eastern *torāṇa* has been found (Fig. 5.8), but two other pillars with fragmentary inscriptions containing the word *torāṇam* led Cunningham to conclude that there were originally others at the site, probably four, oriented to the cardinal directions.⁵ An inscription on the eastern *torāṇa* states that it was made during the dominion of the Śuṅgas,⁶ although precisely when during their one hundred and twelve year rule is not indicated. The paleography of the inscription is later than that of the Heliodorus pillar, and generally, the Bhārhut *vedikā* and *torāṇa* are dated around 100–80 B.C. However, the *stūpa* itself may have been founded at a much earlier date since it was common for a small *stūpa* of one period of construction to be enlarged and have additions made to it (including *vedikās* and *torāṇas*) during subsequent times.

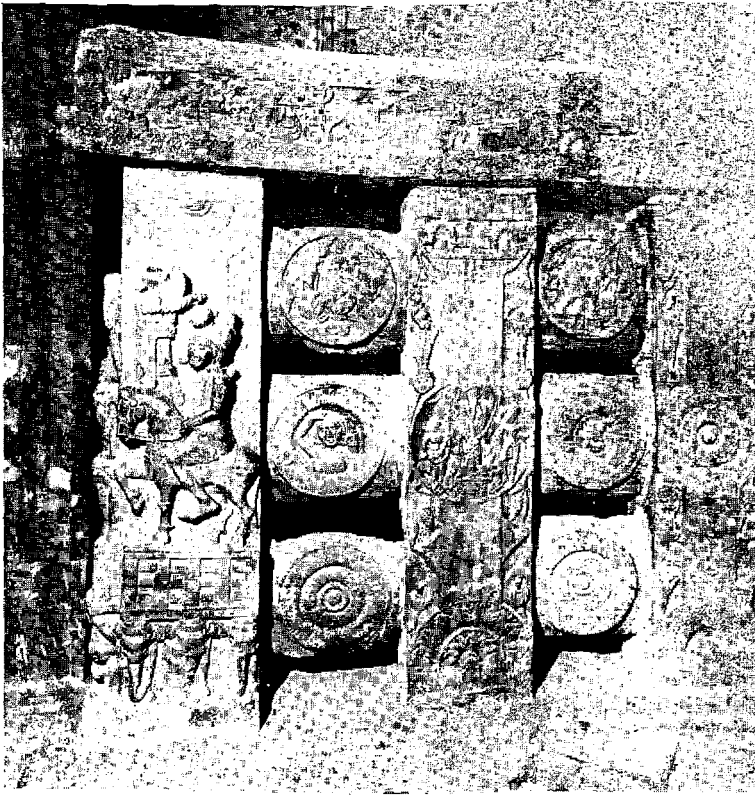
Like the *vedikā*, the *torāṇa* is a copy in stone of a wooden architectural form, even to the methods of joinery used (Fig. 5.8).⁷ It consists of two upright pillars supporting three architraves that frame an entry space through which the devotee gained access to the *stūpa* compound. Although the *torāṇa* is badly damaged, an apparent iconographic program can be discerned. Carved on both the exterior and interior faces, the motifs of the *torāṇa* consist of figures and animal, plant, abstract, and architectural elements.

The end beams of the cross-bars take the form of *makaras*, symbolizing auspiciousness and the primal life source. Their bodies seem to unfurl from the spiral tails while the wide open mouths appear to disgorge the forms represented on the architraves. Crowning the *torāṇa*, plant forms reminiscent of those seen in Maurya art emerge from a lotus disc, and the whole was topped by a *cakra*, symbolizing the Buddhist teachings. The quadruple pillar uprights of the *torāṇa* are indebted to Maurya art in their lotus capitals and adorsed lions, although the surfaces are not polished and they lack the refinement of many Maurya works.

The general appearance of the richly sculpted pillars, crossbars, and coping stones of the Bhārhut *vedikā* is more lavish than the railing of Stūpa II at Sāñcī, for the Bhārhut *vedikā* bears a carved design on every element of its structure (Fig. 5.9). Each horizontal bar bears a carved roundel, some containing human forms emerging half-length from the centers of lotuses and others showing popularly represented subjects such as Gajalakṣmī, a goddess being lustrated by a pair of elephants (top left roundel in Fig. 5.9). The majority of pillars have roundel and half-roundel motifs (Figs. 5.9, 5.15, 5.16), while corner or terminal uprights bear rectangular (Fig. 5.17) or single-figure designs (Figs. 5.10–14). A continuous motif, the so-called *kalpalatā*, or wish-fulfilling vine, extends the length of the coping, issuing strings of gems, flowers, and fruits, and carrying depictions of narrative subjects. In spite of the fact that the format of the *vedikā* is strictly controlled, the diversity of forms is extensive, and it is therefore fortunate that many of the subjects are identified by accompanying inscriptions.

Ingenuously arranged on two sides of the rectangular pillar to the side of the east *torāṇa* is a royal procession bringing relics to the *stūpa* (Figs. 5.9, 5.10). An equestrian figure depicted in profile on one side of the pillar seems to fall in step with the royal entourage atop elephants emerging full front from the adjacent face. The figure riding the central elephant carries a goad in his right hand while steadying the reliquary casket with his left. Alongside him and his

5.8. Reconstruction drawing of eastern *torāṇa*. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. H: about 6 m. Original *torāṇa* now in Indian Museum, Calcutta.



5.9. Section of *vedikā*. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. H: about 300 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

companions, the rider of the horse holds a portable pillar-standard (*dhvaja stambha*) related to the stationary type seen since Maurya and pre-Maurya times, here probably intended as a royal insignia. It is interesting to note the resemblance between this standard with its square abacus, lotus capital, and bird-man creature called a *kinnara* and what was probably the original concept of the Heliiodorus Garuḍa pillar at Vidiśā (Fig. 5.1). Since this particular sculpture of the Bhārhut *vedikā* was dedicated by an individual from Vidiśā, as indicated by an inscription,⁸ this resemblance is even more remarkable and may indicate that the Bhārhut form was based specifically on the Vidiśā pillar, or a common prototype. Beneath the procession, a miniature *vedikā* is supported by a plinth of elephants on one side and potbellied dwarves on the other. In a literal and figurative sense, these powerful beings seem to bear aloft the superstructure of this religious edifice. The purpose of this sculpted procession may have

been to record a ceremony in which a king participated, perhaps even the consecration of the Bhārhut *stūpa* and the burial of its relics; it may, however, be a reference to the original distribution of Śakyamuni Buddha's relics.

Compared to the renderings at Sāñcī Stūpa II, the Bhārhut formulation appears remarkably sophisticated and refined. Whether this is due to chronological, regional, or other factors is not known. The Bhārhut sculptures are more deeply carved than their Sāñcī counterparts, imparting a greater sense of presence and three-dimensionality to them. However, compared to later Indic forms, a relative flatness pervades the Bhārhut reliefs. The line used to define the forms of drapery, jewelry, and other features in the Bhārhut carvings is crisper than that visible at Stūpa II at Sāñcī, although this may be a partial result of the more weathered condition of the Sāñcī reliefs.

Apparent discrepancies in scale may be hierarchic in purpose. In the procession composi-



5.10. *Vedikā* pillar with elephant procession. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.



5.11. *Vedikā* pillar with Greek warrior. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.



5.12. *Vedikā* pillar with *nāgarāja*. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

tion, for example (Fig. 5.10), the two side figures atop elephants are strikingly small in comparison to the central figure. While this may suggest that the flanking figures are young princes riding atop their youthful elephants, the fact that the animals appear too small in relation to their riders suggests that the artists deliberately intended to emphasize certain portions of their compositions by manipulating scale.

Several different categories of beings appear on pillars from the Bhārhut *vedikā*, each in a

distinctive posture and characterized by individualizing attributes (Figs. 5.11–14). A warrior in Greek dress may be a representative of the western outposts of the Buddhist world (Fig. 5.11); his costume is complete with boots, an item rarely seen in Indic art where bare feet are the norm. Also an exception in a country where male figures are generally depicted wearing loincloths or garments covering only their lower bodies, the tunic further betrays a western fashion. The hair style of short curls encircled by a headband, the tails of which fly outward,

strongly contrasts with the heavily turbaned high-ranking men of ancient India. A double-handed sword is held at the side by the left hand of the figure as a guard might stand while on duty. But slipped into the ties around this weapon is a needlelike form surmounted by a circle and trident—the Buddhist wheel and triple gem (*triratna*) signifying the Buddha, Buddhist law (*dharma*), and the entire Buddhist community (*saṅgha*). Its presence suggests the role of this warrior as a protector of the Buddhist faith (*dharmapāla*). The plant, possibly a grape leaf and cluster, held in his right hand may be an offering or a means of identifying the figure and his role. In Indic iconography, attributes held in the hands of various figures usually provide important clues to their meaning and identification and are meant to be “read.” Their presence at this early date heralds developments that eventually culminate in the codified iconography of figures such as door guardians, attendants, and bodhisattvas. If this object is indeed part of a grape plant, this might indicate further the western associations of the figure. The figure is frontally conceived, although his feet are splayed to the sides and his head is turned to his left. As in most Bhārhut sculptures, the carver has achieved a delicate balance between the three-dimensional form, half-released from the pillar, and the linear surface details, such as the drapery. Thus, the cascading folds of the garment visible between his legs form a lively but restrained pattern against the smooth volumes of the legs.

From another realm comes a serpent king (*nāgarāja*; Fig. 5.12). His hands are joined with palms together across his chest in a variant of *añjali mudrā* (two-handfuls pose), a gesture of respect and devotion. Although human in form, he is identified as a *nāga* by his serpent hood. An inscription specifically refers to him as Cakavāka, King of the *Nāgas*. *Nāgas* are serpent deities whose realm is the waters. Like *yakṣas*, they carry connotations of wealth, fertility, and the abundance of nature. In Buddhism, they serve as protectors of the “treasure” of the religion, that is, the Buddhist teachings. Early Indic cults, apparently pre-Vedic in date, grew up around serpents who appear, for example,

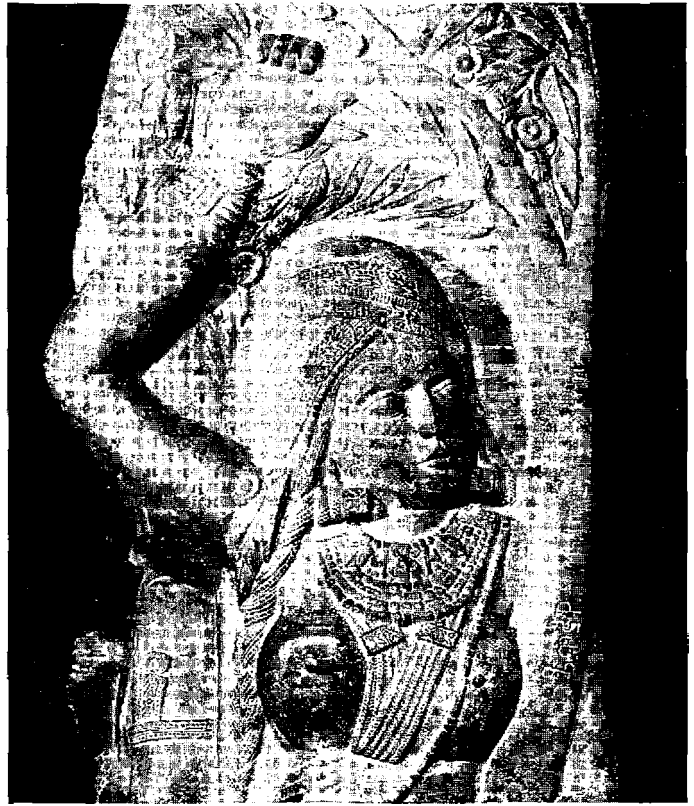
on Harappān seals (Fig. 2.14). At an apparently early date, the *nāgas* were considered to have been converted to Buddhism and *nāgas* became important elements in many Buddhist parables as devotees and protectors of the religion.

This figure, like the preceding one, is subtly rendered in three-dimensional as well as linear form and smooth surfaces are played against linear patterns such as that of the *dharma*. The figure wears an elaborate turban, large square-shaped earrings, and neck and arm ornaments, including a triple feather armband shared with his neighbor on the adjacent face of the pillar. Originally, the *nāgarāja* stood atop sculpted rock forms that had faces peering out of caves and a lotus pond below, as known from early photographs, but there has been defacement in recent times. The wide-open eyes, slight smile on the lips, and flat contour to the face and body typify the figure style of Bhārhut.

Another pillar shows a gracefully posed female figure, standing atop a horse-headed *makara*-tailed animal, while she grasps the trunk and branch of an *aśoka* tree (Figs. 5.13–14). In Indic iconography, there are two main explanations for representations of figures “standing atop” animals or other creatures. The first is as a vehicle (*vāhana*), as in the case of Viṣṇu mounted on Garuḍa. The second is in the manner of a victor trampling his enemy or standing atop the defeated foe. It is unclear which meaning is intended here. The woman is identified in an inscription as the *Yakṣiṇī* Candra. *Yakṣiṇīs* (or *yakṣiṇīs*), like their male counterparts, the *yakṣas*, and like *nāgas*, were part of early Indic cults that were eventually incorporated into the fold of Buddhism. Such figures are clearly associated with fertility and abundance and may connote both their own procreativity and that of nature in general. In this case, the *yakṣiṇī* is in the form of a *vrkṣa devatā* (tree goddess), and specifically, an *aśoka dohada*, that is, a *dohada* who grasps the branch of an *aśoka* tree. (When grasping the *śāl* tree such figures are called *śālabhañjikās*.) *Dohada* is a Prākṛt word that means “two-hearted one” and refers specifically to the longings of a pregnant woman, whose body contains her own



5.13. *Vedikā* pillar with *Yakṣiṇī* Candra. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.



5.14. Detail of *Yakṣiṇī* Candra. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

and that of her unborn child. The term *dohada* is used to refer to plants at budding time, and trees are said to long for the touch of a beautiful woman, as this causes them to bloom. In this relief, the *dohada* might be said to embrace herself around the tree like a creeping vine, or to embrace a tree or as a wife meets her husband.⁹ A double reference to fruit being brought forth occurs in the blossoming tree and the gesture of the *dohada's* left hand, which points to her genital area while holding a flowering branch from the *aśoka* tree as if it emerges from her womb.

Naturally, there is very little "dead space" in this relief, in contrast to the previous examples, and the figures seem to stand against the flat background of the pillar. This figure has a greater sense of

rhythm and sway to the position of her body, less stiffness, and greater overtones of sensuality than seen in other examples of female figures from Bhārhut, suggesting that it was created by a master hand. In her hair is a scarflike form. Her long, thick braid falls across her shoulder and behind her hip in a sinuous manner that echoes the form of the tree trunk weaving in and out of the embrace of her limbs. Two leaves resembling those of the *pīpal* tree and a central medallion with *triratna*-like forms in her necklace suggest Buddhist symbolism. The exquisite carving of details of the tree, the features of the face, and other elements of the surface mark this sculpture as one of the masterpieces of Bhārhut. The facial decoration may represent tattooing or face painting, practices that are

still current in some areas of South Asia today. As in other figures from Bhārhut, her eyes have an almond shape and appear wide open, although it is possible that they, along with those of other figures at Bhārhut, were once painted.

A variety of subjects is depicted within the numerous roundels and rectangular panels on the *vedikā*. Some scenes seem to refer directly to Śākyamuni Buddha, although he is not shown in anthropomorphic form in the reliefs. The apparent absence of such images of Śākyamuni, or of any other Buddha, for that matter, in the extant early Buddhist monuments of ancient India has long been assumed to reflect religious restrictions applying to such depictions, and arguments for an aniconic phase in the art have been put forth and widely accepted.¹⁰ This belief has been based to a great extent on the assumptions that the early surviving Buddhist monuments of India were made by Hīnayāna Buddhists, that the Hīnayāna tradition of Buddhism preceded the Mahāyāna developments, and that Hīnayānists did not employ images in their worship while Mahāyānists did. Recent research into the nature of early Buddhism has demonstrated that this sequential arrangement of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna developments is inaccurate and that the two traditions of Buddhism developed in a parallel manner from an early date.¹¹ Thus, it is not necessarily true that any early Buddhist monument from India belongs to the Hīnayāna type of Buddhism. Furthermore, a survey of the Pāli canon, the religious texts of the Theravādins, a leading Hīnayāna sect, does not reveal even a single specific textual prohibition against image-making, so that even if such early Indic monuments were Hīnayānist, it does not follow that the absence of extant Buddha images was due to religious interdictions.¹²

It is therefore evident that the reasons often cited to explain the lack of Buddha images in early Buddhist art are faulty, and that others must be sought to explain the paucity of remains.¹³ In the case of *stūpa* decoration, it may have been unnecessary to use Buddha images because of the emphasis on the relic inherent in such monuments in the early phases of Buddhism.¹⁴ Or, if Buddha images were deemed



5-15. *Vedikā* roundel showing *Mahākapi jāataka*. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

desirable, their use may have been reserved for certain portions of the monument, perhaps not the railing or gateways, which are generally what remain. It may also be suggested that the subject matter depicted in the early reliefs emphasizes aspects of the Buddhist religion other than the persons of Śākyamuni and other Buddhas.¹⁵ Thus, the absence of Buddha images in the reliefs may not have been due to a purposeful avoidance or a restrictive aniconism but may reflect simply the prevailing emphases within the religion. For example, the emphasis on the perfection of virtues is evident from the popularity of depictions of *jāataka* stories. Śākyamuni, like other enlightened beings, could remember his previous existences, during which he was a potential Buddha (*bodhisattva*). These stories, which recount both his animal and human incarnations, are known as *jātakas* (birth stories), and were supposedly revealed by Śākyamuni to his disciples to teach them certain lessons by his example.

The *Mahākapi jāataka* (Fig. 5.15) demonstrates the performance of good works toward one's relatives. Since the story concerns an animal in-



Fig. 16. *Vedikā* roundel showing purchase of Jetavanārāma at Śrāvastī. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

incarnation, there is no reason to expect an anthropomorphic depiction of the Buddha. Once, when he was king of eighty thousand monkeys, the monkey-bodhisattva stretched his body from one tree to another across a river so that the other monkeys could use it as a bridge and escape attack from a human king and his entourage who had come to find a famous mango tree that bore extraordinarily luscious fruit. The last monkey, who was the incarnation of the Buddha's evil cousin, Devadatta, stomped on the bodhisattva's back and broke it. Impressed by the generosity of the monkey king's sacrifice, the humans cared for him, and the monkey king then taught the human king the virtue and meaning of his own actions.

Several incidents, skillfully arranged, summarize this *jātaka* in the Bhārhut roundel, notably the monkeys escaping across the outstretched body of the monkey king, the servants of the king holding a cloth in which to catch the monkey king, and the monkey and human king seated on small stools while the monkey king teaches. The arrangement of several mon-

keys along the rim of the roundel, all facing left, leads the viewer's eye around the circumference, while an inner circle is formed by the monkey king's outstretched form and the figures represented below. The total effect is a lively display of forms well suited to the circular format. Emphasis is on key events in the narrative rather than logic in terms of time, space, or scale, the latter of which is adjusted so that the trees and the river appear small compared to the figures and monkeys. The river is summarized by a narrow strip with fish and waves, providing a backdrop for the scene without upstaging the main characters.

This emphasis on the communication of the religious message at the expense of what might be called realism is one of the most important characteristics of the relief sculptures at Bhārhut and other sites of the Śunga period. Furthermore, it remains one of the dominant features of Indic art throughout its development. Such an artistic choice must reflect the civilization's basic approach to art, which was not apparently aimed at capturing the likeness of the physical world with all its permutations in a systematic, coherent, and comprehensive fashion.

Often, a consistent viewpoint and pictorial logic are freely adjusted to suit the needs of the narrative or composition, as seen in a relief depicting the purchase of the Jetavanārāma grove at Śrāvastī from Bhārhut (Fig. 5.16). Here, the elements of the composition are shown almost as if in defiance of spatial logic and the laws of gravity. Instead, the buildings, people, and trees are set askew and are arranged more to suit the demands of the circular format than the characteristics of the physical world. Further, as in the case of the *Mahākapi jātaka*, more than one moment in time is depicted within the single composition. For example, the label below the roundel indicates that the relief illustrates the story of the purchase of a grove by Anāthapiṇḍada, who wanted to donate it to Śākyamuni Buddha and the Buddhist community. This event is depicted in the right half of the composition by the workers who are covering the ground with pieces of gold in order to meet the outrageous price requested by Prince Jeta, owner of the grove. However, the two buildings

in the left half of the composition, identified by inscriptions as a *gandhakuṭi* (fragrant hall) and a *koṣambakuṭi* (treasure hall),¹⁶ were built after the purchase of the land, and therefore must represent a different time frame.

Other inconsistencies with the laws of the physical world include the fact that scale is used to emphasize certain aspects of the narrative, not to create the illusion of pictorial depth. The figure in the center of the composition holding a ewer is probably Anāthapiṇḍada, who is emphasized not only because of his position in the relief but because of his large size compared to most of the other figures. The smaller sizes of the figures at the left rear of the composition and the workers at the right were determined not by their positions in space but because they are of lesser importance than Anāthapiṇḍada. This is suggested because the worker at the front right of the scene is as small as the two at the right rear. (The large figure at the right center and the other below Anāthapiṇḍada are unidentified, but are apparently also given emphasis through scale.) In addition, the buildings and the bullock and cart in the lower center are small in relationship to the figures while the square coins being spread on the ground are large. Such use of a hierarchic and selective scaling remains an essential feature of most schools of South Asian art.

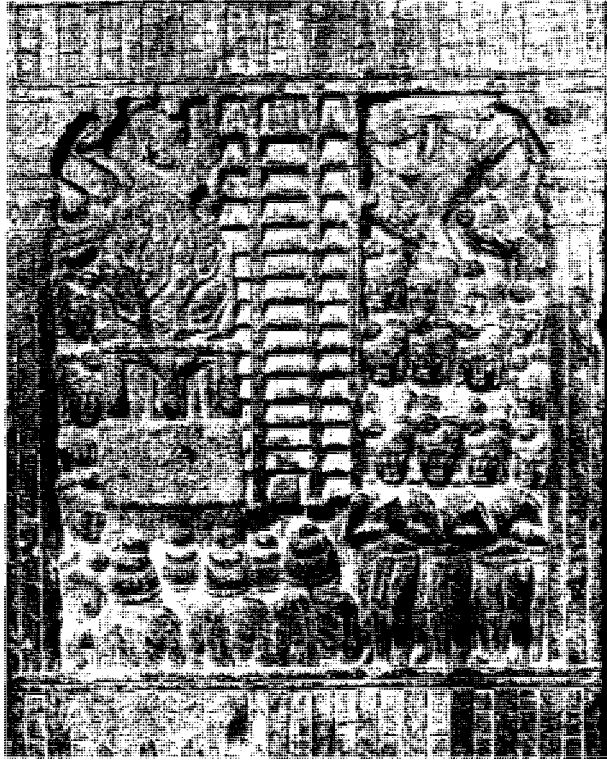
The lack of individuality accorded to human figures in the art is another characteristic present during the Śuṅga period at Bhārhut and other sites. Again, it is one that becomes one of the basic features of Indic art. In general, the figures from a particular school of Indic art are characterized by broad stylistic traits that include the manner of depicting facial features, body types, and many aspects of costume and ornamentation. Such characteristics are often central to the definition of the school of art itself, for it is rare that a wide variety of physiognomies occurs in a given art school or that figures are consistently shown with portraitlike individuality. Instead, figures are depicted as types, a fact that reinforces the suggestion that the principal aim of Indic art was not to capture the likeness of the physical world or its permutations. In this relief, only male figures appear. Each wears a turban with a prominent knotlike element, though the

workers at the right do not wear the princely costumes of the other figures. The faces are virtually indistinguishable from one another, all being essentially of the "Bhārhut type," though both a full front and profile view are used.

In this relief, as in others at Bhārhut, it is necessary to explain the absence of a depiction of Śākyamuni Buddha by a theory of aniconism for he was not a participant in the events being recorded. As in the case of *jātaka* tales that emphasize virtue and unselfish behavior, the primary meaning of this relief is undoubtedly related to the generosity of Anāthapiṇḍada, not an event in the life of the Buddha.

Similarly, there is no reason to assume the relief usually identified as Śākyamuni Buddha's descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven, when he preached to his deceased mother, would be a representation of him, for the subject is more likely a depiction of the site where the event occurred and devotions that later took place there rather than a narration of the event itself (p. 5.17). It is well known in Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Indic religions that holy sites (*tīrthas*) are accorded a position of supreme importance related to religious devotion and pilgrimage. Emphasis on *tīrthas* may be traced to an early date and Aśoka himself is credited with having visited the sites sacred to Buddhism in the 3rd century B.C. Sāṅkāsya, where the Buddha's descent from Trāyastriṃśa is believed to have taken place, became a major pilgrimage site for Buddhists and was apparently prominent already by Maurya times, for it was one of the sites included in Aśoka's pilgrimage itinerary. Buddhist texts reveal that Śākyamuni descended from Trāyastriṃśa on a ladder, and that he was accompanied by the Vedic gods Indra and Brahma whose ladders flanked that of the Buddha. The lowest seven steps of these ladders are believed to have been preserved at Sāṅkāsya and upon them, early devout kings were believed to have erected new ladders that served as a focus of religious devotion at the site.

In the Bhārhut relief, the three sacred ladders along with a sacred tree and altar, form the main objects of devotion. Surrounding them are rows of human male figures with two



5.17. *Vedikā* panel showing worship at Sāṅkāśya. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śunga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

ing figures, probably *vidyādhara*s or other celestial beings, hovering above. The male figures are clearly devotees, as indicated by the position of their hands (when visible) in the *añjali mudrā*. All the figures are alike in costume, facial features, and expression, in keeping with the Bhārhut style, but here, none is distinguished by size, placement, or any other artistic device. The principal distinction between the figures is that some are depicted as if front-facing, others are shown from the back, and two, at the lower left of the composition, are in profile. This arrangement of the figures suggests that they may be part of a clockwise circumambulatory procession around the stairs and sacred tree and that the figures are devotees performing worship at the site, after it had already become renowned, and not witnesses to the descent of the Buddha, Indra, and Brahmā. It might be suggested that if the actual event of the descent

were being portrayed, there would be no explanation for the absence of images of Indra and Brahmā, since the presumed religious aniconism would not have extended to Brahmanic deities. The sacred tree in the relief may represent one planted at Sāṅkāśya to commemorate the Buddha's visit to Trāyastriṃśa, where he preached to his mother while seated under a tree. It is possible, then, that this relief and others often given an aniconic interpretation are not aniconic at all. Rather, it might be suggested that the Buddhological message of many of the subjects depicted in early Buddhist art was not an emphasis on Śākyamuni Buddha or his life but rather related to other aspects of the religion. The depiction of *tīrthas*, or more specifically, the devotions made at *tīrthas*, was probably associated with the concept of the merit (*puṇya*) the devotee acquires by making such pilgrimages.

In this relief, as in others at Bhārhut, the artists have not shown concern with the physical world or its characteristics for their own sake. Therefore, while the overlapping of forms suggests layers of space, the overall impression is flat and the spatial relationships are somewhat contradictory. The feet of the forward-facing figures at the front right, for example, rest on the lower edge of the composition; however, these figures seem to be further back in space than the figures seen from the back at the front left.

A common motif on the Bhārhut *vedikā* is the lotus medallion. Sometimes, the open blossom is shown alone as if from above so that a symmetrical, regular design is created (Fig. 5.9). But a number of lotus roundels also bear representations of the faces or upper halves of humans or humanlike figures (Figs. 5.9, 5.18). It is unclear whether these individuals are meant to be seen as if emerging from the lotus or have another association with the blossom. However, the lotus is a symbol of transcendence or transcendent birth from an early date in Buddhism (although it has other meanings as well), and it is possible that the beings who peek out of the centers of these flowers are individuals who have achieved a transcendent state. In general, the figures are of princely or noble rank, as may be inferred from their jewelry and headgear (Fig. 5.18). Often, they hold attributes in their hands and these may some day help to unravel the meaning of these configurations. The figures reveal many of the same stylistic features seen in other contexts at Bhārhut, although because the faces are generally larger than those in



5.18. *Vedikā* roundel. From Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. 100–80 B.C. Reddish brown sandstone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

jātakas and other narrative depictions, the style is more easily observed. The eyes are almost diamond shaped and have sharply defined double outlines. The nose is somewhat flattened but has prominent nostrils. The face is rather two-dimensionally conceived, with little attention given to the sculptural quality of the cheeks, eye sockets, chin, brow ridge, or other three-dimensional modulations. Like other figures at Bhārhut, these carvings reveal that the Śuṅga-period artists were masters of their craft.

ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE OF THE ŚUṅGA PERIOD: THE WESTERN DECCAN

The tradition of rock-cut architecture such as that seen in the Ājīvika caves in the Barābar and Nāgārjunī hills grew and developed over the centuries, gradually becoming highly elaborate in concept and execution. A number of Buddhist cave complexes were excavated in the second and first centuries B.C. in the western Ghāts (steps), a mountain chain in western India forming a nearly unbroken wall more than

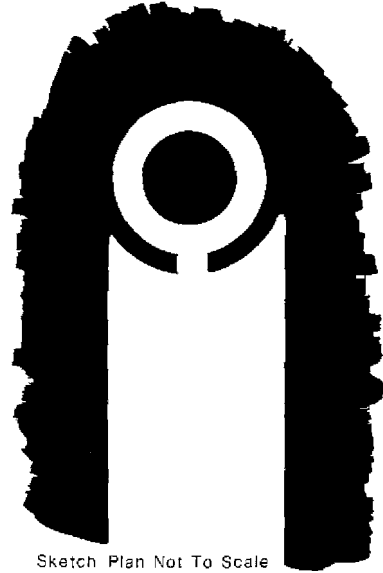
a thousand meters high and varying from about forty-five to ninety kilometers from the Arabian Sea. These Buddhist settlements generally included at least one worship hall, called a *caitya* hall because it contained a *stūpa* (*caitya*) as the main object of veneration, as well as numerous other excavated cells that comprised the living quarters for the monks, called *vihāras*. General characteristics attributable to the aesthetic and

stylistic preferences of the period as well as religious requirements account for certain similarities among the sites. But each cave complex was unique, partly because of the necessity of adapting forms to the given shape and form of the landscape out of which the caves were to be excavated, and partly, of course, because of sectarian and personal differences between the individuals who oversaw and executed the work.

Because its architectural form seems to be transitional between that seen in the Lomās R̥ṣi and related caves of the Barābar and Nāgārjunī hills and the more developed *caitya* halls in the western region of India, the *caitya* hall at Kondivte is generally dated around 100 B.C.¹⁸ The cave consists of a long entry hall and a small circular area that is nearly filled by a *stūpa* that has been carved out of the living rock (Fig. 5.19). The similarity of the ground plan to that of the Lomās R̥ṣi cave (Fig. 4.7) is obvious, but the Kondivte hall is entered on the short side rather than the long side of the hall. Therefore, the devotee enters facing along the main axis of the excavation, as in the case of all later *caitya* halls. All traces of the original facade, whether of stone or another material, have fallen away, but the round chamber containing the *stūpa* (Fig. 5.20) seems to be an imitation of a structural form with wood lattice windows. There is just enough room for a person to walk around the *stūpa* within the cell, creating a circumambulatory passage.

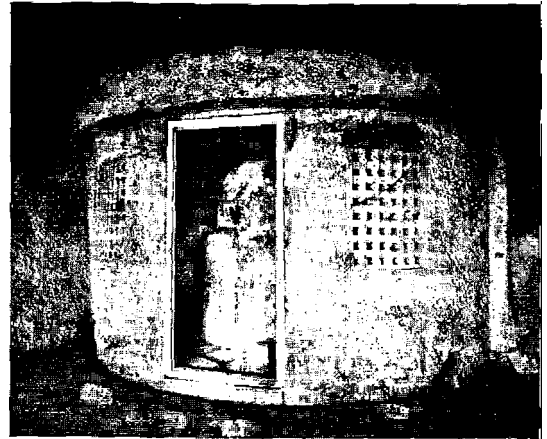
One of the best-preserved early Buddhist rock-cut monasteries is that at Bhājā, in western India. On the basis of the paleography of inscriptions found at the site and the style of the monuments, the major phase of excavation at Bhājā is believed to have taken place around 100–70 B.C. A large *caitya* hall dominates the site and was probably the worship center of the community (Fig. 5.21). Other caves, rectangular or square in shape with numerous small cells, were the *vihāras*, or monastic dwellings. Typical of Śunga-period rock-cut *caitya* halls, the Bhājā example seems to imitate a presumed free-standing wooden prototype in the detailing of the facade and interior.

The original appearance of the damaged facade is unknown, but it is possible that a



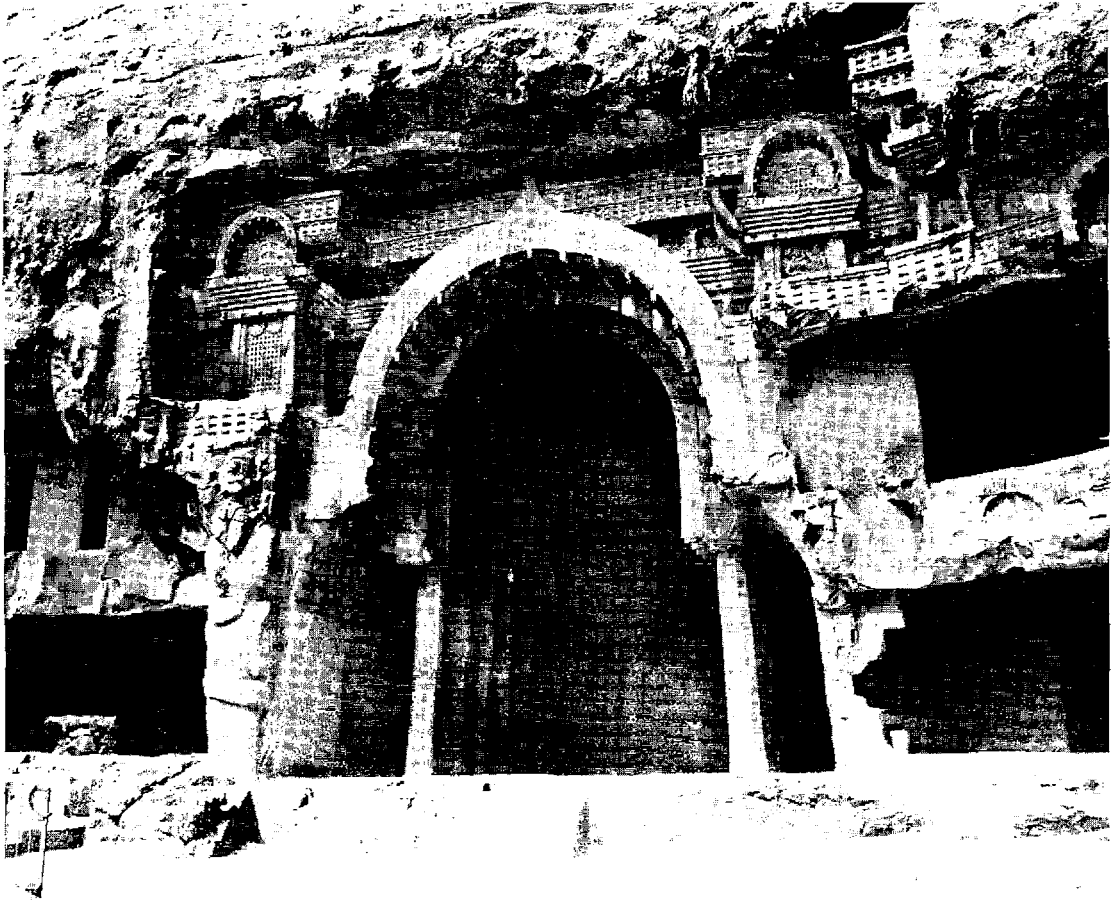
Sketch Plan Not To Scale

5.19. Plan of *caitya* hall. Kondivte, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100 B.C.

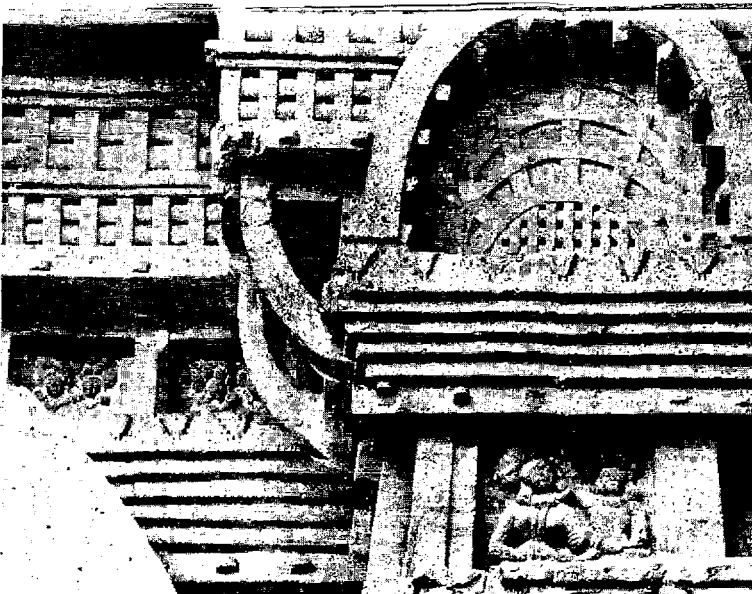


5.20. View of *stūpa* chamber in *caitya* hall. Kondivte, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100 B.C.

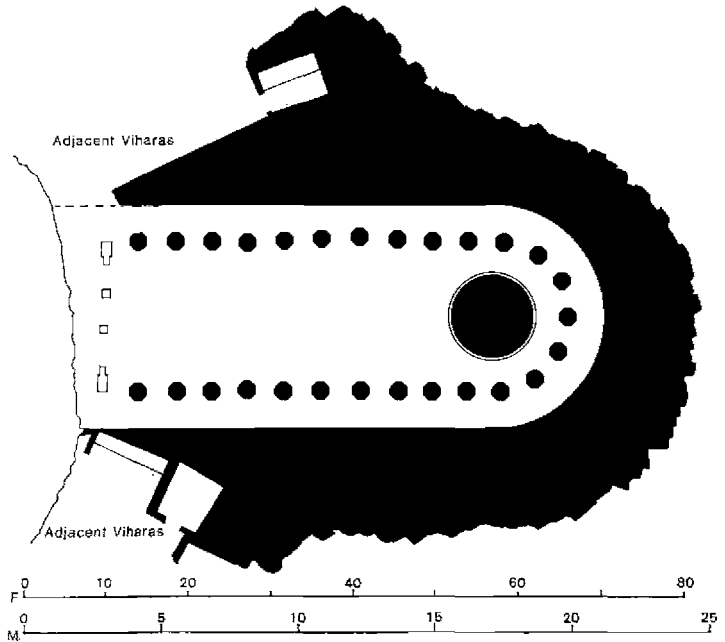
structural wooden entranceway complemented the rock-cut portions and closed off the now open view into the cave. The most dominant element of the rock-cut facade is the large horseshoe-shaped arch. Seen in an earlier form at the Lomās R̥ṣi cave, this design must have gained great currency throughout ancient India, for it appears almost ubiquitously in early Buddhist monuments, framing the main en-



5.21. *Caitya* hall. Bhāja, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.



5.22. Detail, facade of *caitya* hall. Bhāja, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.



5.23. Plan of *caitya* hall. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.

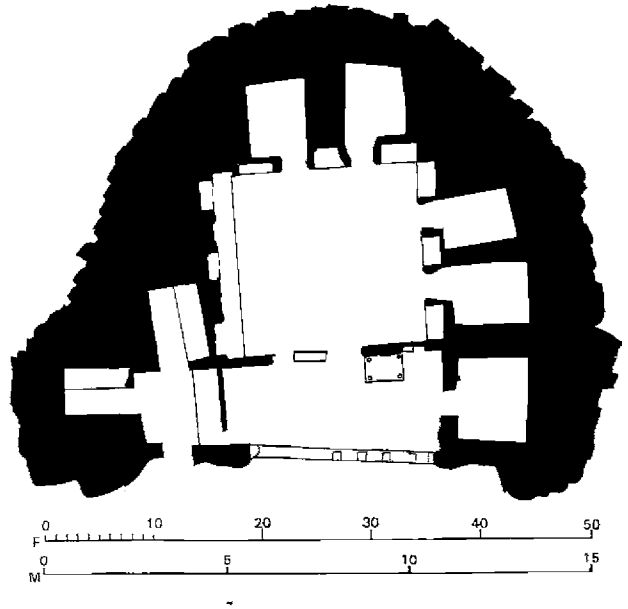
tranceways into *caitya* halls and repeating in miniature, blind arcades like those flanking the central arch at Bhājā. Care has been taken to render the rafters and beams as they would occur in wooden buildings. Human figures carved on the facade lean over mock balconies and peer through false windows (Fig. 5.22), giving a sense of actuality to the scene. In style, these figures strongly relate to terra-cotta sculptures of the Śunga period with their elaborate headdresses and jewelry and their rather awkwardly conceived bodies and poses.

In contrast to the Lomās Rṣi cave and Kondivte *caitya* hall, the Bhājā excavation consists of a single hall rather than two chambers (Fig. 5.23). Its rounded end, containing the *caitya*, is reminiscent of the circular room in the earlier examples but the enclosing wall is absent. A row of pillars, not seen in the earlier examples, extends around the perimeter of the hall, thus dividing the interior space into a central area and a U-shaped aisle surrounding it, a feature that both imitates a structural element of the wooden prototype and provides a circumambulatory passage for ritual devotion to the *stūpa*. The central hall has a high barrel-vaulted-type roof while the side aisles have

much lower, half-vaulted-type ceilings. Wooden ribs that copy the interior appearance of a free-standing wooden model have been appended to the ceilings of the central hall and side aisles, although they serve no structural purpose in rock-cut architecture. In the same way, the inward leaning pillars reflect a sound architectural principle in a wooden building but have little function here.

As is typical of this early phase of Buddhist architecture, sculptural decoration is minimal within the cave, although painting may have once completed the decorative and iconographic scheme. The octagonal pillars lack capitals or bases and the *stūpa* is devoid of embellishment other than the double railing that enclosed the *chattra* (umbrella) that once crowned it.

Bhājā is perhaps best known for one of its *vihāras*, number 19, which contains a number of sculptural scenes and an elaborate display of architectural forms. Approximately contemporaneous with the larger *caitya* hall, this cave consists of a rectangular veranda with a cell at one end and a series of chambers at the other, adjoining an inner square room off of which are two smaller cells on each of two walls (Fig. 5.24). The inner square room corresponds to



5.24. Plan of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.

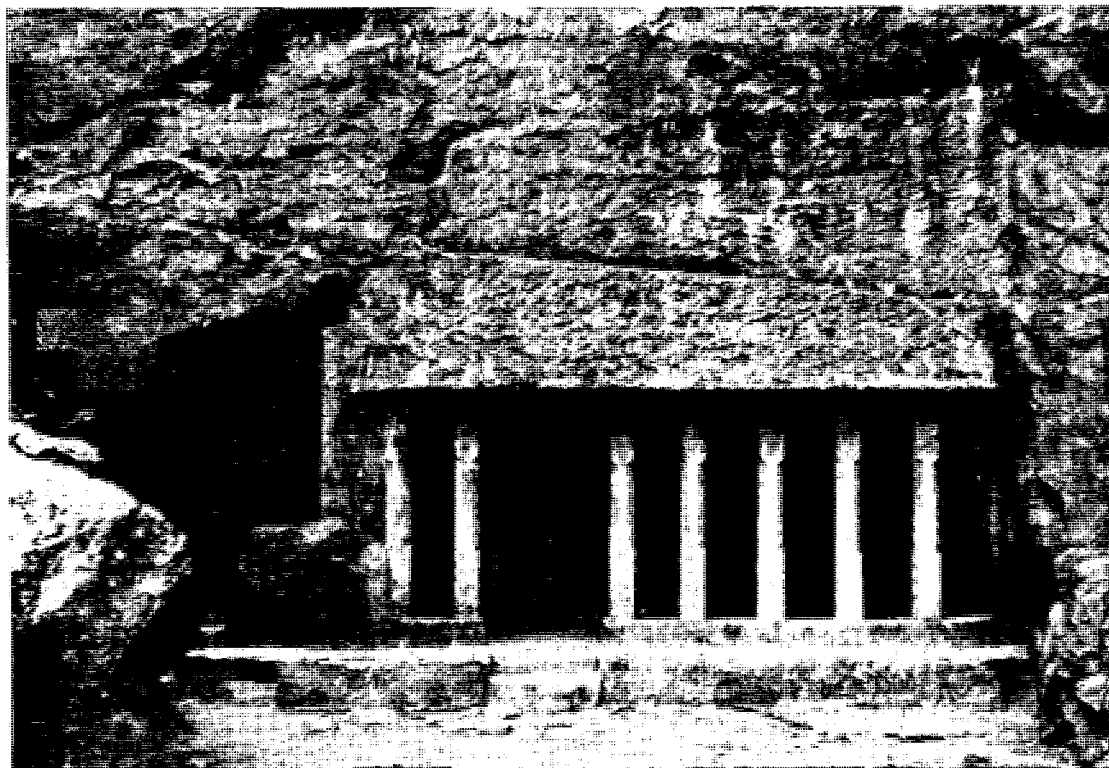
the open courtyard around which monks' cells would be grouped in free-standing *vihāra* architecture; the asymmetry of the arrangement of cells is a characteristic of the early date. On the facade as well, an asymmetrical grouping is used as two pillars are placed to the left of the entrance while five appear at the right (Fig. 5.25).

Belying the plain exterior of the *vihāra*, the interior is elaborated with sculptural forms. Simulating wooden architecture, the roof of the veranda is carved into a half-barrel vault, with curved ribs and beams (Fig. 5.26). The careful mortising copied into the stone version of wooden architecture reflects an advanced degree of technical development in wooden architecture and considerable skill in carpentry. In the soffit below, seven votive *stūpas*, interspersed with atlantid-type figures, represent the seven *mānuṣi* Buddhas, who are the earthly Buddhas of the past, including Śākyamuni.

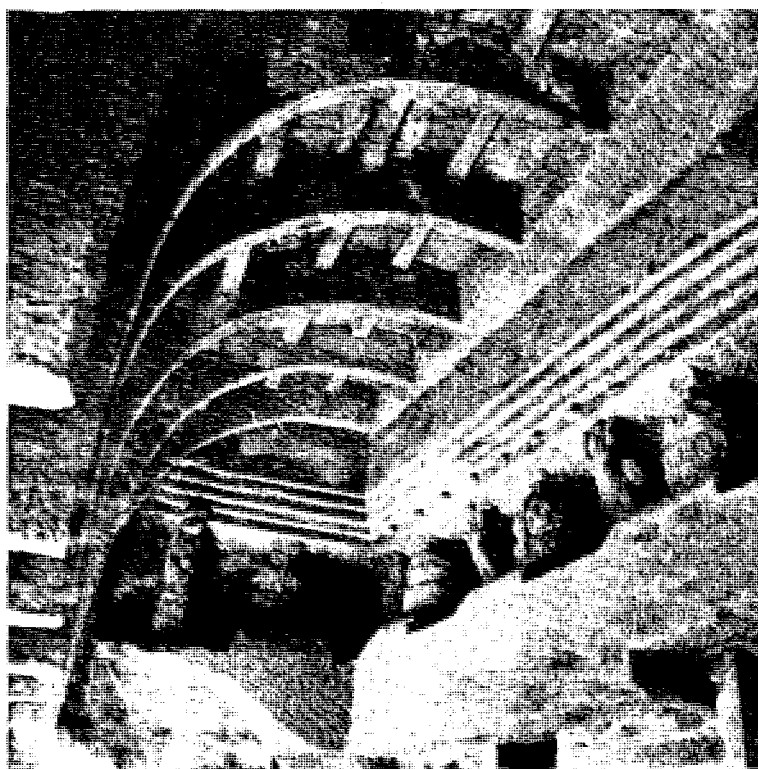
Flanking the entrance to the chamber at the right end of the veranda are two intriguing sculptures commonly identified as Sūrya, the Hindu sun god, in his celestial chariot on the left, and Indra, the Vedic god of thunder, atop his elephant mount on the right (Fig. 5.27). However, this identification raises more questions than it answers, not the least of which is

the purpose of prominently displaying Brahmanical subjects on the wall of a Buddhist cave. While Brahmanical gods, especially Indra and Brahmā, do appear in Buddhist literature and art, Sūrya is more rarely included in the Buddhist repertoire. Furthermore, when Brahmanical gods do occur in Buddhist contexts, as when Indra and Brahmā escort Śākyamuni Buddha to earth after his visit to Trāyastriṃśa, their roles are clearly subservient to the central theme. The prominence of these two reliefs in the Bhājā *vihāra* would seem to contradict this general pattern.

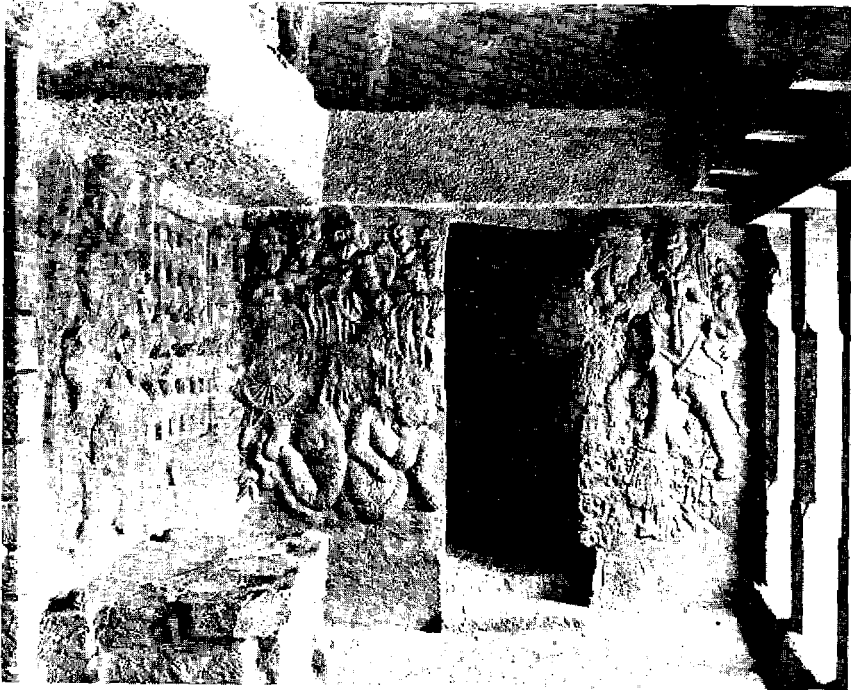
It is possible that the reliefs depict unidentified *jātakas* or other Buddhist stories, or perhaps a procession of royal figures.¹⁹ But these suggestions, too, fail to fully explain the numerous peculiarities of the reliefs. For example, the horses and chariot in the relief at the left (Fig. 5.28) ride over the body of a demon of gigantic proportions, while the melee of forms surrounding the elephant scene (Fig. 5.29) includes sacred trees enclosed by railings, one of which is hung with garlands, the other, with dangling human forms, while more humans seem to be dropping from the uprooted tree held in the trunk of the elephant. Elaborately dressed male figures seated in postures of royal ease, dancing girls, and animals such as the lion attacking his



5.25. Facade of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.



5.26. Detail, veranda roof of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.



5.27. View toward entrance to cell at right end of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.



5.28. Horse-chariot group, on veranda of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.



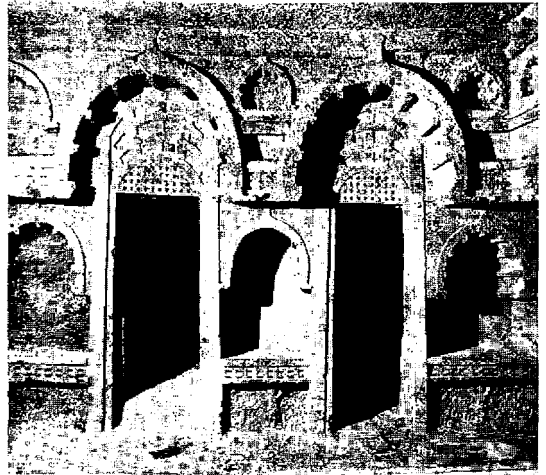
5.29. Group with elephant and rider, on veranda of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.

prey between the hind legs of the elephant are also included in this scene.

One basic similarity between the two reliefs, the depiction of trampling some type of figure, may provide a clue to their meanings. The small figure seated on the back of the elephant holds a standard that bears a symbol similar to the Buddhist *cakra* and *triratna*, possibly indicating that he and his companion are supporters of Buddhism. The personages riding in the chariot and atop the elephant may be "trampling" the enemies of Buddhism, while the uprooting of trees may relate to pre-Buddhist cults (such as that of the *yakṣas*) that the Buddhists had to overcome. Support for this suggestion is found in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, a text of the late first or second century A.D., which expresses ideas that probably had been in existence for a long time. In it, there is great concern over the Buddha's subjugation of demons, *yakṣas*, and minor divinities that had been plaguing the Buddhists.

The compositions are freely executed and have an unplanned, random appearance. Elements of the horse-and-chariot relief spill over onto the adjacent wall of the veranda; the composition actually turns the corner as if the figures were truly converging in total disregard of the definitions of the architectural form. As in other Śunga-period reliefs, the carving is fairly shallow and seems to create a texture on the surface of the rock. Naturalistic scale is not observed and a hierarchic order is imposed so that the most important elements of the composition are the largest. No consistent ground line or unified perspective is used as it is apparently not the sculptor's intention to simulate the experience of the real world. Typical of Śunga art, the figures have rather flat faces, extremely elaborate headdresses, heavy ear ornaments, garlands, and jewelry. Their similarity to the figures on the facade of the Bhājā *caitya* hall (Fig. 5.22) suggests that they were approximately contemporaneous works.

A rock-cut platform (reinforced in modern times by blocks of stone) attached to the front wall of the cave (Fig. 5.27) may have been used for an image or other object of worship or may have been a platform used by a monk during

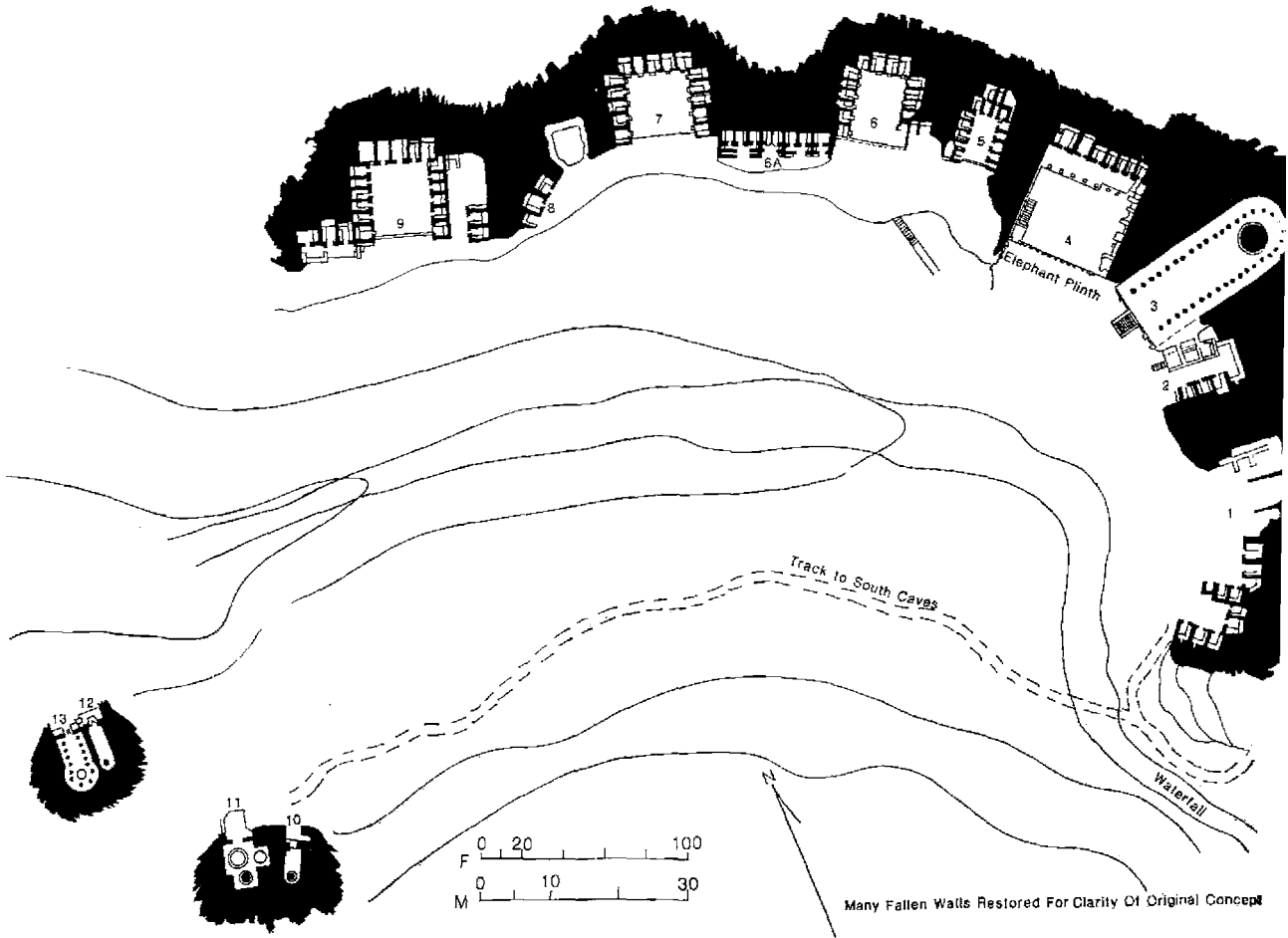


5.30. Wall of inner chamber of Vihāra 19. Bhājā, Māhārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.

meditation or teaching. Shelves carved into the walls of the inner central chamber of the cave may also have borne devotional objects, a suggestion reinforced by their nichelike appearance, created by the horseshoe-shaped arches above (Fig. 5.30). These "shrines," however, would be too small for a monk to use as a seat.

Another important group of early Buddhist caves is at Pitalkhorā, also in western India. In their original state, the caves must have presented a spectacular appearance, for they were excavated along a curved mountain wall with a river bed below and a waterfall at one end. Today, however, many of the caves are in ruined condition. Misjudgment on the part of the original excavators regarding the limitations of the stone accounts in part for their current ruined condition, for when the artisans apparently attempted to translate the forms of wooden architecture faithfully into stone, they neglected to modify features such as the thickness of the walls. The result was that some of them collapsed. This is clearly visible in Cave 6, where the wall between two narrow cells was only several centimeters thick.

Like many other cave sites in western India, Pitalkhorā underwent more than one phase of architectural and sculptural activity. On architectural grounds, Caves 12 and 13 seem to predate the large *caitya* hall, Cave 3 (Fig. 5.31),

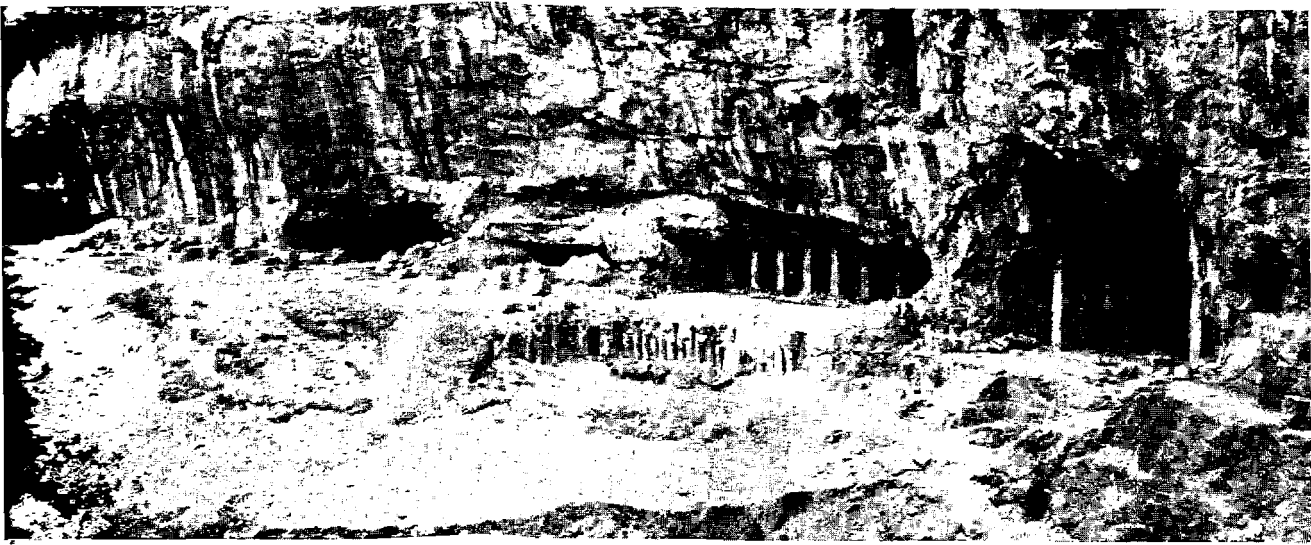


5.31. Site plan. Pitalkhorā, Mahārāṣṭra, India.
Second and first centuries B.C.

which may have been excavated around 100–70 B.C., roughly contemporaneous with the Bhājā excavations, as suggested by paleographic and stylistic evidence. Cave 12 at Pitalkhorā takes the shape of the developed *caitya* hall in its continuous contour, but is devoid of pillars. Cave 13 has pillars but its shape seems to reflect the conscious merging of two earlier forms, that is, the long hall and the round chamber, into a unit, and thus, the rounded form seems to bulge at one end. Since these caves bear features of both the earlier and later types, they may be considered to represent a transitional phase.

Originally facing a common courtyard, Caves 3, 4, and, possibly, 2 probably belonged to a

single architectural conception (Figs. 5.31, 5.32). They may be considered approximately contemporaneous, around 100–70 B.C., on the basis of stylistic and architectural form and the paleography of the inscriptions in Caves 3 and 4. The large *caitya* hall is in a much ruined condition: many pillars are missing and the *stūpa* is almost completely destroyed. Like the Bhājā hall, this cave was enhanced by wooden additions to the curved ceilings and its inward-leaning octagonal pillars are without bases and capitals. Also, half-barrel-vaulted side aisles flank the central space. The *stūpa* was found to contain crystal reliquaries set into chiseled sockets that were then plugged with fitted stone slabs, indi-



5.32. View, mainly Caves 3 and 4. Pitalkhorā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.

5.33. Entrance to Cave 4. Pitalkhorā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100-70 B.C.



ating a practice of relic enshrinement also in evidence at other cave sites and demonstrating that these monuments were not simply generalized types but were specific devotional works.

Cave 4 is entered from the large central courtyard through a rectangular doorway leading into a dim stairwell that rises to the level

of the cave (Fig. 5.33). The transition from the outer courtyard through the dark stairwell may have been intended to instill a change of mood, a quietude, in the devotee. Circular sockets inside the door jambs may have been used for attaching wooden doors. Extending to the right of this entrance is a plinth composed



5.34. Detail of *dvārapāla* flanking entrance to Cave 4. Pitalkhorā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C.

of life-size, carved elephants (Figs. 5.32, 5.33). Visually and symbolically, these seem to support the caves. Two door guardians (*dvārapālas*) flank the doorway to Cave 4. With gently smiling expressions, the figures look outward, eternally wide-eyed and awake, with their javelins and shields at their sides. More refined



5.35. Dwarf. From Pitalkhorā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. 100–70 B.C. Greyish stone. H: 106.8 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

in their carving than the rather awkward figures at Bhājā, these sculptures are also more three-dimensional, for the figures almost appear to lean back against the wall rather than form part of it. Their finely-pleated lower garments, large turbans, and earrings suggest ties to other costumes of the period but the armor they wear is unusual (Fig. 5.34). A repeating floral motif consisting mainly of lotus blossoms and “honey-suckle” frames the doorway while two elephants proceeding toward a central form that is now destroyed (undoubtedly a sculpture of Gajalakṣmī) appear above. Because of the elaborate entrance to Cave 4, it may be assumed that this was an important *vihāra*, even though its damaged state today reveals little of its original grandeur.

A number of sculptures recovered from the debris at Pitalkhorā augment our knowledge of the range of subjects and forms at the site. Among these is a corpulent, smiling dwarf standing with arms upraised in apparent support of a bowl (Fig. 5.35). His eyes are carefully

rendered and the pupils have been incised giving animation and direction to his glance. Small, three-dimensionally carved ringlets arranged in tidy rows comprise his hair. A kiltlike skirt worn over his hips, armllets, and a necklace complete his costume. The necklace is of particular interest not only for its prominence and plasticity but also because two human faces appear as part of its structure, below which are *triratnas* representing the triple gem of Buddhism. A two-line inscription on the sculpture states that it was "made by Kaṇhadāsa, a goldsmith,"²⁰ who may have been either the patron or the craftsman who executed the work. The

paleography of the inscription is similar to that of the inscriptions of Caves 3 and 4 and on this basis it may be suggested that the dwarf was made at approximately the same time. This sculpture is unusual among early South Asian stone carvings because it is free-standing and carved in the round. The function of such a work in the iconographic program at Pitalkhorā is unknown. However, dwarves bearing bowls atop their heads are depicted as if standing at the entranceways to *stūpas* in reliefs from the Āndhra Pradesh region (Fig. 9.24) and the Pitalkhorā sculpture may document a similar tradition in western India.

THE EASTERN DECCAN: THE ĀNDHRA PRADESH REGION

A number of sites in the eastern Deccan region of India, corresponding mainly to modern Āndhra Pradesh, have yielded the remains of sculptured Buddhist *stūpas*. Some of these carvings strongly resemble those in evidence at Śuṅga-period sites in other parts of India, suggesting that these works were also created in the second and first centuries B.C. Little is known about the early history of Āndhra Pradesh, but eventually, this region became one of the most renowned centers of Buddhism in South Asia, famous throughout the entire Buddhist world for its distinguished teachers and important monasteries. Introduced at an early date by Aśoka, as verified by the presence of his minor rock edict and pillar fragments in the region, Buddhism was fostered by the patronage of a wealthy laity that flourished both because of the inland trade along the Kṛṣṇa River, where many of the important Buddhist sites are located, and the sea trade. Not only was the school of art produced in this region among the most productive of the early Buddhist schools, but its works must be counted among the most beautiful as well, for the *stūpas* were faced with marvelous carvings in a distinctive pale green or whitish marble, which must have made them dazzling in the bright Indian sunlight. Unfortunately, none of the *stūpas* has survived intact, and the carvings must be studied isolated from their original contexts.

The early history of Āndhra Pradesh is poorly

understood, for there is a decided lack of specific information that sheds light on the patronage and chronology of the monuments in the region prior to the second century A.D. However, strong stylistic parallels with trends in other parts of South Asia suggest that the stone carving tradition was initiated in the first century B.C. This early sculptural style may be seen in a number of reliefs that have been recovered from the site of Jaggayyapeta, located along a tributary of the Kṛṣṇa River. Although the original form of the monuments, which included a large *stūpa*, several smaller *stūpas*, and other buildings, is not known, as the site was almost completely in ruins when it was discovered in the nineteenth century, the style of the sculptures and paleography of some of the inscriptions found there suggest that at least some portion of the establishment was built during the first century B.C.

A relief representing a *cakravartin*, or universal monarch, from Jaggayyapeta is stylistically related to Śuṅga-period sculptures from Sāñci, Bhārhut, and other sites (Fig. 5.36). The white marble slab bears shallow carvings of a standing male figure, the *cakravartin*, and his seven precious possessions: a horse, elephant, wife, minister, general, the *dharma* (represented by the *cakra* or wheel), and riches (represented by the square gem symbol supported by a pillar). The main figure probably represents the *cakravartin* Mandhātā, the main character in the



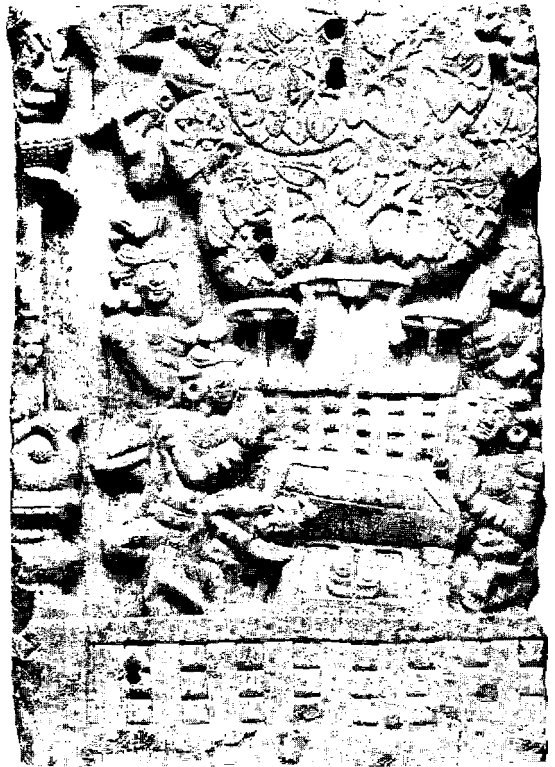
5.36. *Cakravartin* relief. From Jaggayyapeta, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Ca. first century B.C. White marble. H: 130 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.

*Mandhātā jāta*ka, who was endowed with the Seven Precious Possessions and the Four Supernatural Powers, and who could create a shower of seven kinds of gems simply by clenching his left hand and touching it with his right. The square objects falling from above in the relief may represent such a shower. Rather than glorifying the universal monarch, however, this story is an admonition against greed, which was the eventual downfall of Mandhātā.

The *cakravartin* stands in a somewhat angular pose that, along with his elongated arms and legs and oversized feet, is reminiscent of Śuṅga-period reliefs from Sāñci and Bhārhut. The flat forms of his body and the other elements in the composition are also suggestive of this early phase of sculpture. The seven treasures are arranged almost without regard for gravity or spatial logic and there is no attempt to unify all the components of the scene into a logical whole. An umbrella above the head of the main figure symbolizes his rank, but this, too, is depicted without an attempt to convey spatial

clarity. The wife is adorned with heavy anklets, a beaded girdle, square earrings, and a scarf over her head, recalling forms seen at Bhārhut. The cross-shaped mark on the navels of the figures is reminiscent of a similar convention at Bhārhut. Other features, such as the double-incised lines of the drapery and flared hems of the *dhotis* and large turbans of the male figures, are also seen elsewhere in Śuṅga-period stone art.

One of the most important Buddhist sites in Āndhra Pradesh is Amarāvati, which, in ancient times, was part of Dhānyakaṭaka, the capital of the later Sātavāhanas, who were probably responsible for much of the artistic activity there in the second century A.D. Hand tools of the Early Stone Age and evidence of megalithic burials found at Amarāvati indicate, however, that the site had long been inhabited. A fragment of a polished pillar bearing an Aśokan edict

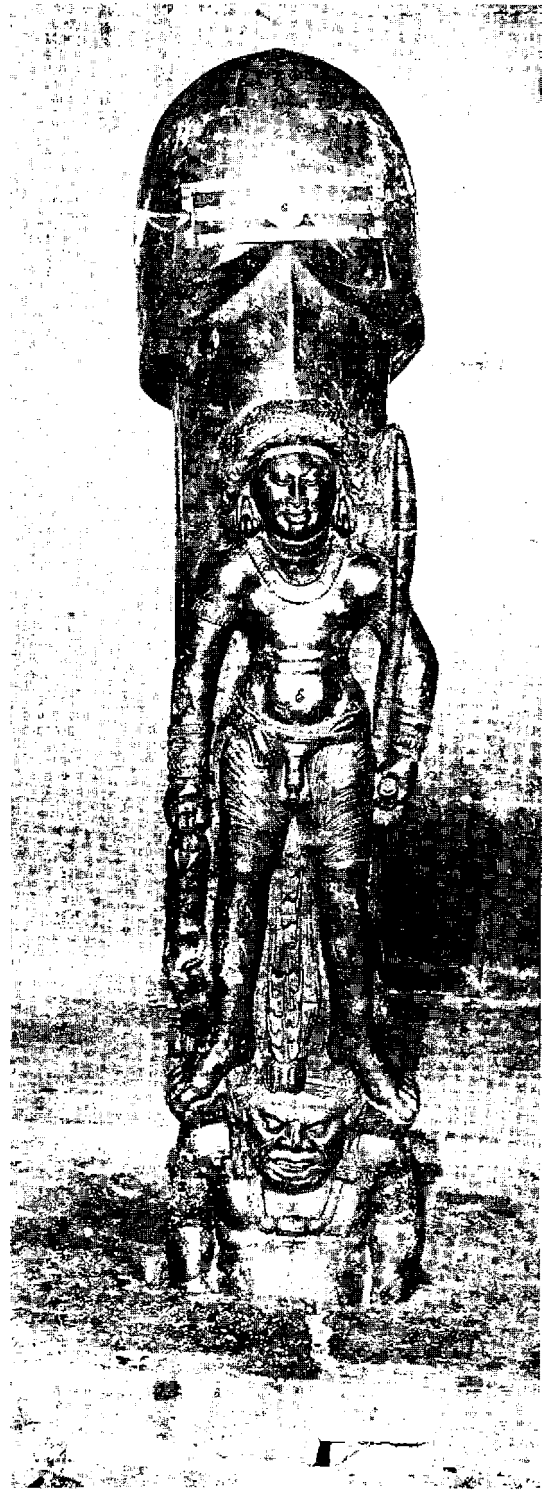


5.37. Devotion to the *bodhi* tree and *vajrasana* at Bodhi Gayā. From Amarāvati, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Ca. first century B.C. White marble. H: 126.5 cm. British Museum, London.

discovered at Amarāvati suggests a foundation for the main *stūpa* at least by Maurya times. Shortly after that time, a stone railing was erected, but most of the elements were left plain except for donative inscriptions from around the second century B.C. In succeeding periods, the *stūpa* was enlarged, and carved stone decorations were added. Some of the surviving stone fragments bear sculptures reminiscent in style to Śuṅga types. These sculpted scenes sometimes have inscribed labels suggesting a comparable date to the Śuṅga materials (an assumption supported by paleography) for the practice of labelling the subjects seems to have been lost in later art.²¹

A panel showing devotion at the *bodhi* tree at Bodh Gayā may have been made during this phase, perhaps around the first century B.C. (Fig. 5.37). Like images of this approximate date, the work is conceived with limited pictorial depth and is carved in a shallow-relief style.²² The male devotees are similar to those seen at Sāñci and Bhārhut, clothed in their turbans, bulky earrings, and heavy jewelry and with their smiling faces. This relief is sometimes identified as the enlightenment scene of Śākyamuni Buddha and the absence of the figure of Śākyamuni himself is explained by the popular, but perhaps incorrect, theory of aniconism in early Buddhist art. However, it is more likely that the scene represents the *tīrtha* of Bodh Gayā, the sacred *bodhi* tree under which the Buddha sat to achieve his enlightenment, and his seat, the *vajrāsana*, receiving devotions from lay worshippers at some time after the event itself. The *vedikā* surrounding the tree, the platform or "throne," umbrellas, and even the footprints (perhaps a carving) may have been elements installed at the site during an early period as recorded here.

While the majority of sculptures from Āndhra Pradesh during this early period may be associated with Buddhist structures, especially *stūpas*, traces of Hindu monuments are also present. One of the most important documents of early Śaivism in South Asia is the famous *liṅga* presently enshrined in a temple of a later period at the village of Guḍimallam (Fig. 5.38). While estimates of the date of this image have ranged from the first century B.C. to the seventh



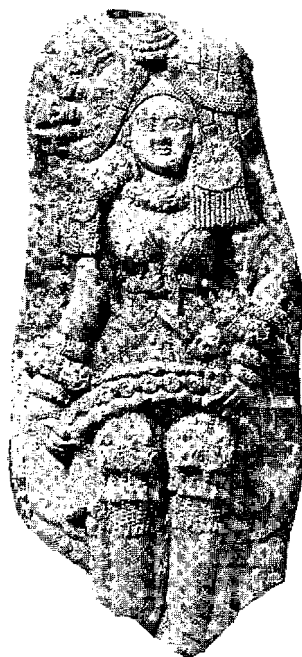
5.38. *Liṅga* with representation of Śiva. Guḍimallam, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Ca. first century B.C. Stone. H: about 150 cm.

century A.D., stylistically it relates so strongly to works of the Śuṅga period and, conversely, bears so little resemblance to later sculptures, that the earlier date seems almost certain. In particular, the treatment of drapery, especially the folds of cloth between the legs, the facial and body forms, and the method of standing atop another figurative or animal element suggest clear ties to pillar figures from Bhārhut. Although representations of the phallus are known from proto-historic South Asia (Fig. 2.7), and later, this symbol becomes the *liṅga* (literally, "sign") of Śiva, there is a gap in our knowledge as to how this identification came to take place. Since, ultimately, the single most common manner of indicating Śiva as the presiding deity of a temple is the enshrinement of a *liṅga*, this issue is one of the most central to the study of Śaivism. The Gudimallam *liṅga*, which juxtaposes the anthropomorphic and phallic forms of Śiva, may provide important clues to this problem. The *liṅga* consists of a fairly naturalistically depicted phallus bearing an image of the male figure, presumably Śiva, standing atop a demonic-appearing dwarf, who

may be Apasmāra, a dwarf later associated with Śiva. In contrast to his usual multiarmed forms of later date, Śiva here has only two arms. In his right hand, Śiva holds a ram (or an antelope) by its hind legs and in his left, a water pot, while an axe rests upon his left shoulder. These attributes, while not identical to the primary symbols of Śiva in later iconography, have generic counterparts, since in his various later forms, Śiva holds a deer and numerous weapons, including the battle axe, and various symbols associated with ritual and purification such as the water pot. The dwarf too relates to later Śaivism, for when he performs some of his cosmic dances, Śiva is sometimes shown standing upon the back of a dwarf who symbolizes the evil of ignorance (Fig. 21.34). Possibly such a meaning is intended here, although since the icon is unique among the surviving early monuments of ancient India, its full implications are not known. Yet, it remains one of the most powerful images in all of Indic art, juxtaposing the emblem of the total procreative energies of the universe with the figure of a smiling god.

ŚUNGA-PERIOD TERRA COTTAS

The sculpture of the Śuṅga period represents the first burgeoning of art production in stone in ancient India. Artists in different regions of the subcontinent may have worked in stone for the first time during this period, although they may have been trained in other media, such as wood or clay, and it is likely that such craftsmen would have drawn upon their knowledge of other art forms when confronting the new material. Numerous terra-cotta sculptures found at north Indian sites may be dated to the Śuṅga period on the basis of their stylistic relationships to more securely dated stone sculptures of the period. Thus, while we cannot be certain that



5.39. Female figure. From Tamluk, West Bengal, India. Śuṅga period. Ca. second-first century B.C. Terra cotta. H: 21 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

any given terra cotta predates a similar rock carving, it is possible to view Śunga terra cottas as a source for stone carvings that no longer were made only in the imperial ateliers, and had begun to gain currency as a valid medium for religious expression. The terra cottas may thus reflect a source of styles that appear in stone sculpture seemingly without precedent.

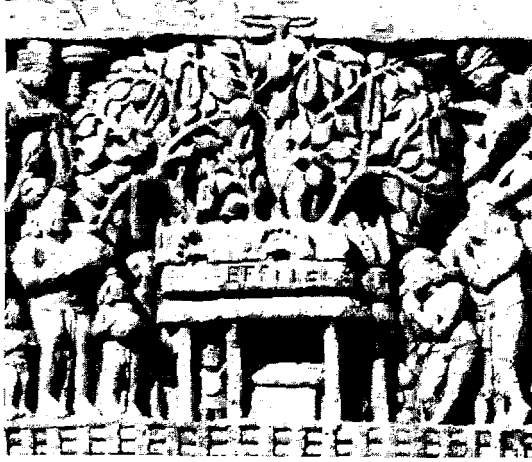
A superb example of Śunga terra-cotta art originally thought to be from Kauśāmbī but actually from Tamluk was mold-made, although certain details seem to have been executed by hand (Fig. 5.39). Elaborately ornamented and delicately executed, this female figure wears a

very thin pleated garment over her hips, left leg, and left shoulder and a heavy, jeweled girdle from which hang strings of beads or pearls, tassels, and plaques of human figures. Her bracelets are heavy and full and her earrings are large saucerlike forms with pendant beads. A full turban, also amply beaded and bejeweled, is embellished with a series of ornaments stuck into the cloth like hatpins. These include an elephant goad, an axe, and two tridentlike forms. In many respects, the sculpture is similar to figures seen at Bhājā and other Śunga-period sites, indicating close ties between works in various media at that time.

CONCLUSION

With the Śunga and related regional developments, an unbroken continuum of surviving examples of Indic art and architecture truly begins. Works from earlier periods, of course, are important because of their rarity and because they provide glimpses into the foundations of Indic culture that would otherwise be lost.

The art of this period displays a wide variety of forms and a vast repertoire of motifs, which suggests that they should not be thought of only as new inventions during this phase, but in part as surviving examples documenting concepts that undoubtedly had been developing for centuries.



CHAPTER SIX

Regional Developments

(ca. Late First Century B.C. Through First Century A.D.)

By the end of the Śuṅga period, artistic traditions in stone had emerged in various parts of the South Asian subcontinent and patterns of regional development that would prevail throughout the rest of the history of Indic art became visible. In part, this was due to the rise of local dynasties that had come to power after the collapse of the centralized Maurya government and during the more limited Śuṅga rule. These separate kingdoms were not isolated, but often interacted in such pursuits as trade, religious activities, and warfare. Thus, while this period is characterized by distinguishable local artistic traditions, these were often highly interrelated. The period following the collapse of the Śuṅga monarchs and their short-lived successors, the Kāṇvas, is often called the Āndhra-Sātavāhana period, after one of the leading

dynasties of central India. However, Sātavāhana rule was not uninterrupted, the extent of their empire is debated, and vital questions concerning their chronology are still unanswered. Thus, this name is inadequate to describe this period in its entirety and will not be used here.

In many ways, the artistic trends of the period from the late first century B.C. through the first century A.D. are continuations of those of the Śuṅga period. *Stūpas* and rock-cut caves continued to be created, but these were often larger and more ambitious than the earlier examples. Sculptural decoration became more elaborate and forms were treated in a more three-dimensional manner. Many of the same subjects seen in Śuṅga art recur during this later period, though others seem to appear in stone for the first time.

6.1. Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. third century B.C. through first century A.D. ▷

THE VIDIŚĀ REGION: SĀÑCĪ

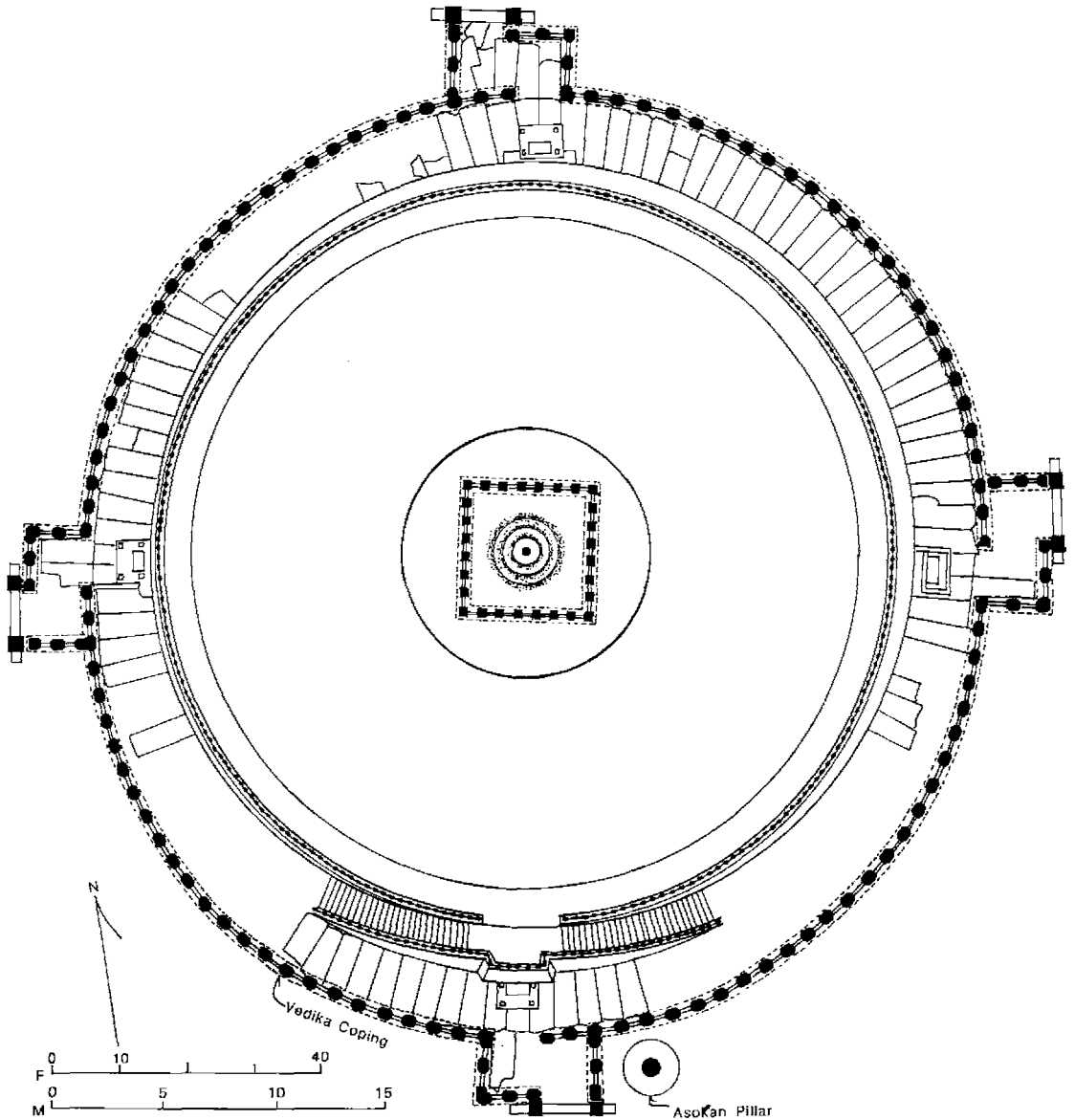
During the Śuṅga period, Vidiśā had grown into a wealthy, important trade center. Some of its residents seemed to actively patronize Buddhism, because a number of Buddhist *stūpas* that were erected or enlarged in the vicinity of the city during the Śuṅga and subsequent periods have yielded inscriptions recording gifts from lay persons of Vidiśā.¹ By the first century A.D., Sāñcī, the most illustrious of these sites, had become a flourishing monastic community. Refurbishing of older structures and building of new monuments was carried out at an active pace, supported by the lay community. Perhaps the most important surviving artistic productions of the first century A.D. at Sāñcī were the four stone gateways (*toranas*) at Stūpa I and a single stone *torana* at Stūpa III.

Stūpa I is the largest *stūpa* at Sāñcī, a fact that has rightly earned it its popular designation, the Great Stūpa (*mahāstūpa*; Fig. 6.1). Its core is believed to date from the time of Aśoka, although it was enlarged to its present diameter of approximately thirty-six meters during the

Śuṅga period, at which time it was also given its final stone casing and *vedikā*. The importance of the monument is indicated by the presence at the southern entrance of an Aśokan pillar that bears a capital of four adorsed lions and an inscription virtually identical to that of the Sārnāth pillar. Although it is not known by inscription whose relics were contained within the monument, it is highly likely that so major a monument at such an early date could only have contained a portion of the relics of Śākyamuni, which were redistributed by Aśoka after their original division into eight portions.

Except for the addition of the *toranas* and the larger scale, the Great Stūpa is similar to Stūpa II at Sāñcī (Fig. 5.6). In both cases, the *vedikā* and four entranceways form a *svastika* plan (Fig. 6.2) and there is a berm (*medhi*) level attached to the *stūpa* for circumambulation. At the Great Stūpa, however, this upper passageway is guarded by a stone railing (*vedikā*; Fig. 6.3), which was lacking in the smaller monument. In addition, the crowning elements of the

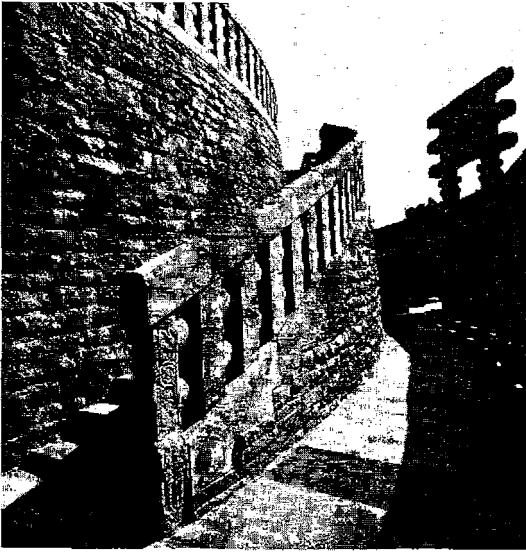




6.2. Plan of Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. third century B.C. through first century A.D.

Great Stūpa are preserved, revealing much of the basic symbolism inherent in all such monuments. Above the dome, a smaller railing (*harmikā*) encloses the most important symbolic element of the *stūpa*, the pole (*yaṣṭi*) which represents the World Axis, and is thus conceptually similar to free-standing pillars, like those of Aśoka. The use of the railing around the central axis is part of the early *caitya* tradition,

for such a device was used to enclose a sacred tree, pole, burial mound, or other *caitya* in pre-Buddhist times. Above the central axis of the *stūpa* is a series of *chattras* (umbrellas), in this case, three, that are honorific elements symbolizing protection of the object below. In Buddhist art, they appear over *stūpas*, and later, above figures, including Buddhas, with identical meaning.



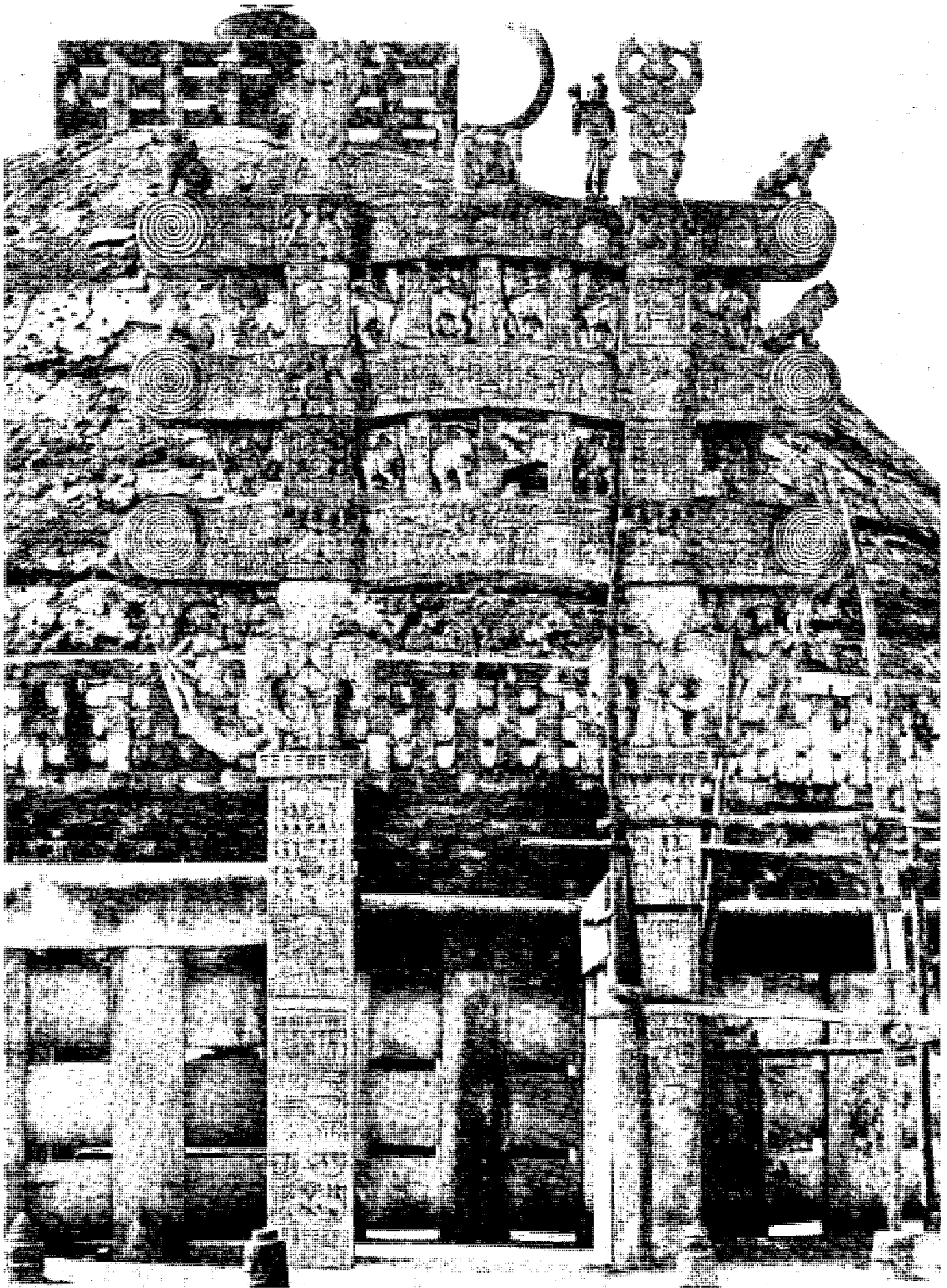
6.3. Staircase leading to berm, south side of Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India.

The south *torana* is believed to be the oldest of the four gateways of the Great Stūpa, not only on stylistic grounds, but also because it is placed at the principal entrance to the sacred compound, where both the Aśokan pillar and the staircase leading up to the berm are located. Thus, it is likely that this would have been the first entrance to be adorned with a stone gateway. This *torana* bears an inscription revealing that at least a portion of it was a gift of the foreman of the artisans of one Śrī Sātakarṇi,² who may be identified as one of the kings of the Sātavāhana line. Since several members of that family bore the name Sātakarṇi, the identification is problematic, although it is likely that the inscription refers to Sātakarṇi I, the third king of the dynasty, who is thought to have ruled from about A.D. 11 to 29.³ Therefore, it is probable that the south *torana* was erected in the second or third decade of the first century A.D., with the others being produced almost simultaneously, or shortly thereafter. The inscription is of further interest for it suggests that Sātakarṇi employed a school of artisans, although little more than this may be inferred. Possibly, the artisans were not even stone workers.⁴

Each *torana* consists of two upright pillars

that are square in shape and support a superstructure of three architraves with volute ends (Fig. 6.4). Like rolled-up picture scrolls, these volutes seem to unfurl the Buddhist subjects pictured in the architrave reliefs. Both sides of the architraves, as well as the various faces of the upright pillars, are sculpted, and it is possible that a fairly unified iconographic program was intended. In contrast to Stūpa II, however, which carried its sculptural program on the *vedikā*, or Bhārhut, which had a sculpted *vedikā* and *toranas*, the railing of the Great Stūpa is almost devoid of carving, and the *toranas* are the primary vehicle for the depiction of religious subjects. Between the upright pillars and the superstructure are capital-like elements consisting of very three-dimensionally carved elephants on both the north (Fig. 6.4) and east *toranas*; dwarves on the west gateway (Fig. 6.5); and adorsed lions, perhaps in emulation of the Aśokan pillar, on the south. The elephants seem to be part of a royal procession, with flag-bearing riders, and the concept is carried out by other riders on horses and elephants that are carved in the round and are placed between the architraves. Other animals in recumbent positions, some with riders, are carved in panels at the junctures between the vertical and horizontal members of the gateway (Fig. 6.4). The *gaṇas* or dwarves of the west gate (Fig. 6.5) hold their arms above their heads in the manner of atlantids, appearing to uphold a stylized step-pyramid design, probably symbolizing mountain forms. Dwarves, as supporters, are commonly seen in Indic art but, like other motifs, are subject to stylistic changes over time. Thus, in contrast to the Pitalkhorā example (Fig. 5.35), the Sāñci dwarves are more fleshy, with rolls of fat around the pectoral muscles and at the sides of the rib cage. Their huge bellies bulge over the tops of their *dhotis* and their legs are massive. While the treatment of the turbans and jewelry, especially the very bulky earrings, is typical of clothing and ornamentation in carvings of the Great Stūpa, each dwarf is individualized both in costume and facial expression. One (Fig. 6.5, right) wears a Greek-type headdress and necklace.

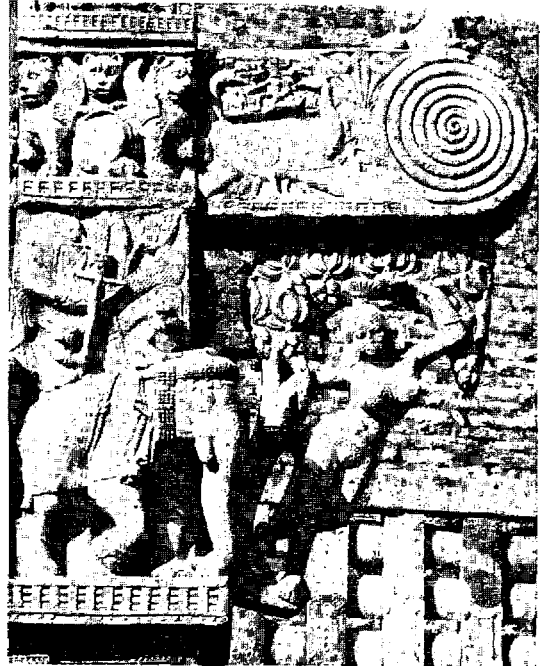
Above the top architrave, auspicious emblems



6.4. Outer face, north *torāṇa*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa), Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second–third decade first century A.D.



6.5. Dwarves on west *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.6. *Vṛkṣadevatā*, east *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

including the Buddhist *triratna* appear, along with *cauri* bearers (Fig. 6.4), while between the outer ends of the architraves and serving as brackets between the lower cross bar and the vertical pillars are representations of *vṛkṣadevatās* grasping onto different types of trees (Fig. 6.4). The most celebrated of these is a figure on the east *torana* (Fig. 6.6) shown seductively grasping a mango (*amra*) tree. A considerable stylistic change has occurred since the creations at Bhārhut (Fig. 5.13), for the suggestion of sensuousness seen in the earlier example here erupts into full voluptuousness as the scantily clad woman hangs languidly on to the tree. The depiction is more sculptural and three-dimensional than the Bhārhut example, for not only is it carved in the round (although most properly viewed from the front), but the individual forms of the body are also more deeply cut, and less emphasis is placed on linear patterns in the treatment of hair, jewelry, and other details. The figure is nude except for abundant jewelry and a scarf, again a departure

from the Bhārhut type. Although the specific *vṛkṣadevatā* is not identified, it may be inferred that her association with the fruiting mango tree suggests the notion of abundance and fruitfulness as well as general auspiciousness.⁵

An important feature of the gateways is the presence originally of pairs of male figures on the inner faces of the uprights of each *torana*. An example from the north gateway (Fig. 6.7) and one from the west (Fig. 6.8) demonstrate the variety and individuality of these depictions. The more usual type is that seen in Fig. 6.7, which shows a figure dressed in Indic garb, including a thin *dhotī*, a turban, and jewelry, in a manner similar to the numerous male figures seen throughout the reliefs on the *toranas*. The elaborate headgear and jewelry are generally interpreted as indications that the figures are of noble or royal birth. The individual stands in a rather relaxed posture, facing to the side, with his left arm at his hip and his right hand holding a fruit, as an offering or perhaps a personal identifying symbol. Behind him is a



6.7. Male attendant, north *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.8. Male attendant, west *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

mango tree. The other example (Fig. 6.8) is atypical, as it shows a figure in Greek rather than Indic dress holding a spear and shield of a foreign type. A small motif inside the lower crossed straps on the shield may well be the worn remnants of a Buddhist pin with a *triratna* motif, like that in the Bhārhut relief that also depicted a Greek (Fig. 5.11). Again, behind the figure is a mango tree. Although this individual is a foreigner, the style of the carving, including the fleshy, soft forms of the body and the diaphanous drapery, is typically Indian, and characterizes the art of the period, at least at Sāñci. It is interesting that the figure depicting a westerner appears on the western *torana*,

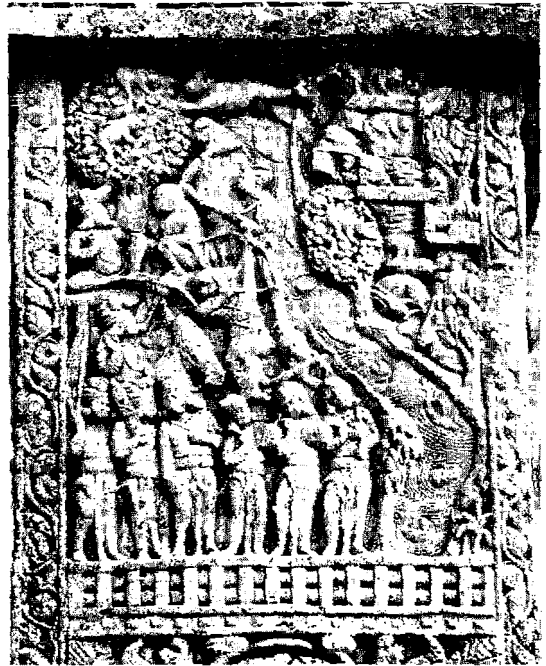
offering the tantalizing suggestion of directional significance of the type later to be seen both in Buddhist and Hindu contexts.

Usually, these pairs of figures are identified as *dvārapālas* (door guardians). Indeed, their position at the entrances to the sacred precinct is a strong argument for this. However, in contrast to the *dvārapālas* at Pitalkhora, for example (Fig. 5.33), these do not wear armor and, for the most part, they do not carry weapons. While they are probably correctly interpreted as attendant figures, their precise identification is uncertain. One possibility is that these figures are bodhisattvas, or prototypes of the bodhisattvas identifiable later in Indic

art. Bodhisattvas are future Buddhas whose role it is to help all sentient beings along their paths to Buddhahood. They are usually depicted in art as princely individuals who wear jewelry and turbans or other headgear, a convention that conforms to the representations of the attendants remaining of the original eight flanking the entrances to the Great Stūpa. Though for the most part the Sāñcī figures are not distinguished from one another by their costume, they are individualized to some extent by the objects they hold in their hands. These may be attributes comparable to those held by bodhisattvas as symbols of their iconological meaning as known from established bodhisattva imagery. Further parallels with conventional bodhisattva iconography include the arrangement of the figures in pairs and in alignment with the cardinal directions, for paired bodhisattvas often serve as attendants to the directional Buddhas (*jīnas*).⁶

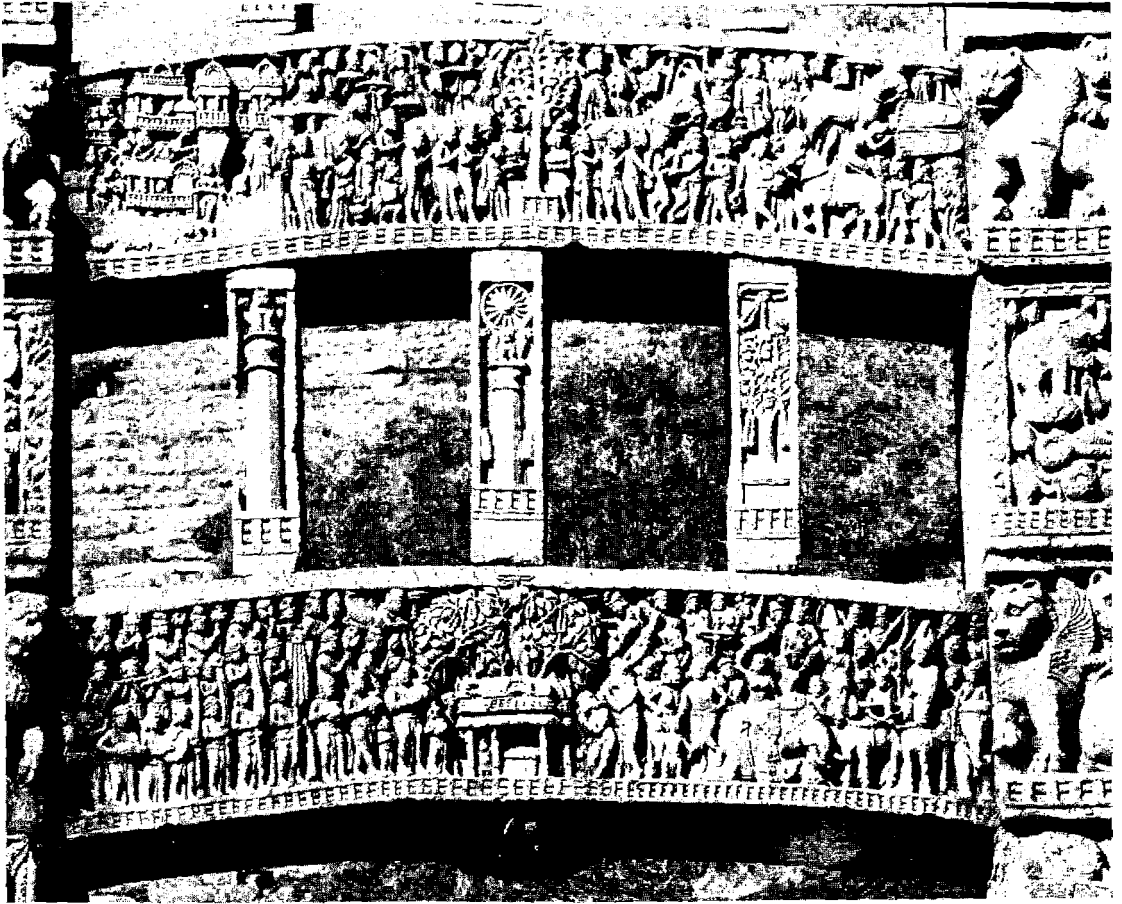
If confirmed, the identification of the Sāñcī figures as bodhisattvas would necessitate a revision of the traditional interpretation of the Great Stūpa as a Hīnayāna monument, for bodhisattvas, though known in Hīnayāna Buddhism in a limited form,⁷ are characteristic of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is likely that the concept of the bodhisattva was well developed by the time the Sāñcī *torāṇas* were created in the early part of the first century A.D., for only a few decades later, at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, such figures are popularly depicted in stone sculptures and they are well known in Mahāyāna literature of that date. Thus, there is no compelling chronological reason to preclude the presence of bodhisattva images from the *torāṇas* of the Great Stūpa.

The relief sculptures of the Sāñcī *torāṇas*, like those of the Bhārhut *vedikā*, include numerous *jātakas* as well as other Buddhist subjects. In contrast to the earlier depictions, however, these reliefs are not identified by inscription, suggesting that the subjects had become well enough known to devotees that labels were no longer needed. A representation of the *Mahākapi jātaka* (Fig. 6.9) bears comparison to the same subject seen at Bhārhut (Fig. 5.15), for along



6.9. Relief showing *Mahākapi jātaka*, west *torāṇa*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

with the development of a more deeply carved style, there is an elaboration of the narrative at Sāñcī. In contrast to the more simplified (and perhaps more easily read) example from Bhārhut, the Sāñcī relief is crowded with elements that are not always essential to the communication of the story. The king's entourage is shown at the lower left. The figures are conversing freely and seem casually involved in the scene as they approach the site of the special mango tree. The river in this later relief serves as a major visual and compositional device, for as it rises vertically with little indication of perspective, it divides the relief into two sections. Whereas in the Bhārhut roundel, the river was visually unimportant, though represented to convey the substance of the narrative, at Sāñcī, the river comprises a major center of interest and is detailed with carved waves, ducks, and fish. The rendering of a more complex landscape in the upper right portion of the Sāñcī relief diminishes the importance of the mango tree, which is depicted so prominently at Bhārhut. Such elaboration of



6.10. Detail, east *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa). Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

unessential detail diminishes the visual importance of the main incidents of the story. For example, the monkeys at the top of the Sāñcī relief have been reduced to a much more minor role than had been the case at Bhārhut. At the same time, however, a certain logic of space and time has also been introduced in that the events may be read in a consistent order, beginning at the lower left, where the king and his attendants enter, to the top right view of the wildlife, and then to the top left where the monkeys are crossing the river and the monkey and human kings converse beneath the tree.

In spite of the relatively consistent order and attention to detail, however, the relief is still governed by many of the same considerations

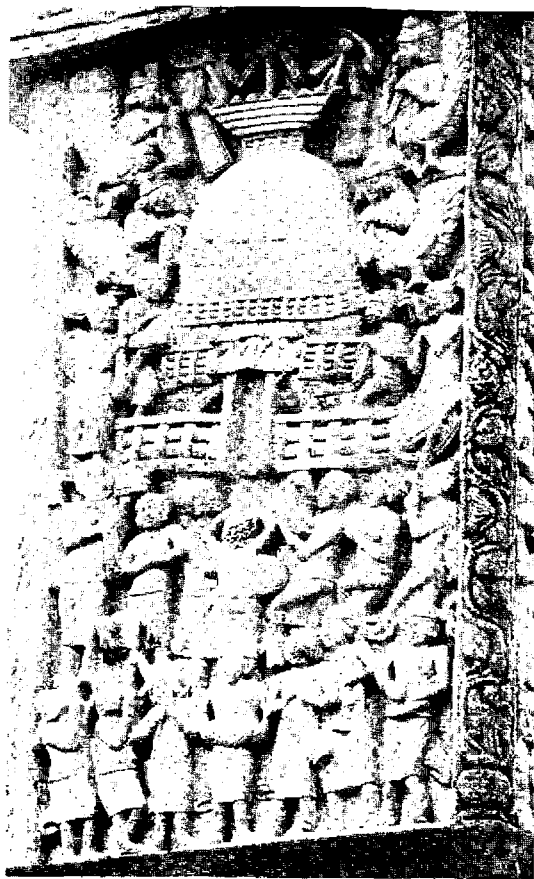
pertinent to those from the Śuṅga period. The inconsistent viewpoint in which certain elements of the composition are shown as if from above, like the river, and others, including the figures and trees, are shown in profile, still reveals the artists' lack of concern for depicting the physical world as it appears. The scale of elements in the composition is also freely adjusted to suit the needs of the narrative.

As at Bhārhut, the lack of an anthropomorphic representation of Śākyamuni in the *Mahākapi jāataka* and other *jātakas* at Sāñcī is not difficult to explain since the episodes are concerned with his existences prior to his final birth, many of which were in animal forms. Nor is his presence expected in a number of scenes at Sāñcī that

depict pilgrimages or celebrations in honor of a place or event associated with his final life, but which took place after his lifetime.

For example, the outside face of the lower architrave on the east *torāṇa* shows an assembly of figures at the left proceeding towards a shrine erected around the *bodhi* tree, where the Buddha's enlightenment took place, while at the right, more figures, horses, and elephants are gathered (Fig. 6.10, lower). It is known from the *Aśokavadāna* that Aśoka himself made offerings to the *bodhi* tree, and such a depiction might be intended to show this royal event, or another similar one. That this scene represents such a devotional subject and not the event of Śākyamuni's enlightenment itself (with the absence of the Buddha explained because of aniconic restrictions in the art) seems clear from the presence of the temple enshrining the sacred tree, for a temple was built only after the event, supposedly by Aśoka himself. The practice of visiting important holy sites (*tīrthas*), which may range from major religious centers such as Bodh Gayā to single trees or mounds enclosed within *vedikās*, was part of ancient Indic worship from a very early date. The emphasis on such pilgrimages is probably reflected by the fact that the subject is so popularly represented in early Buddhist art, as shown here.

The outside face of the middle architrave on the east *torāṇa* bears a relief that is usually identified as the Great Departure of Śākyamuni (*mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*), when he left his father's home to seek religious truth (Fig. 6.10, upper). The absence of a depiction of Śākyamuni riding the horse has usually been interpreted as a result of aniconism, wherein his presence is implied but not shown. However, several features of the relief suggest that the scene is not meant to record the actual event itself but rather a processional celebration of it at a later time, perhaps at the very site of its occurrence, the city of Kāpilavastu. A horse with an umbrella (*chattra*) above departs from the city gate at the left and appears five times in the relief, suggesting progression along a path. Part of the time, he is carried by members of the group. However, these figures are apparently not the *devas* mentioned in texts who supposedly held aloft the hoofs of the horse

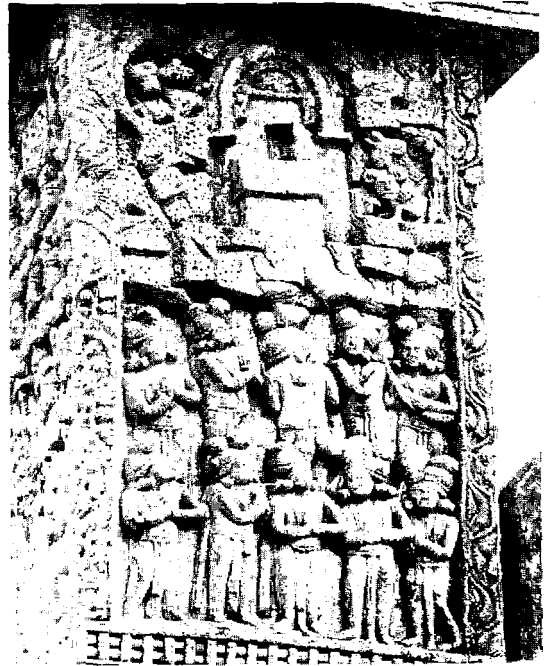


6.11. Relief on north *torāṇa*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa), showing devotion at a *stūpa*. Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

at the time of Śākyamuni's secret, nighttime departure in order to silence them and permit the Buddha-to-be to leave without detection. Instead, they are indistinguishable from the male figures generally depicted in the Sāñcī reliefs in terms of their appearance and costume and it may be suggested that these men are not *devas* but actors in a pageant which recreates aspects of the event of Śākyamuni's departure. The worship of a pair of *buddhapāda* (Buddha's footprints) at the right of the composition and the presence of a sacred tree in the center suggest that the horse is being led to sites which were already sacred, implying that the events in the relief are taking place after Śākyamuni's departure and do not represent the departure itself.

A variety of other subjects also appears on the Sāñcī *toranas*. One scene shows a group of foreigners, playing drums, flutes, and other musical instruments in front of a *stūpa* which is in fact quite similar to the Great Stūpa itself (Fig. 6.11). Heavenly beings of half-bird, half-human form (*kiñnaras*) bring garlands above, while the figures below bring offerings and play music. The tight curls on the hair of the figures and the headbands are reminiscent of Greek-type figures and the pointed caps are similar to Parthian types from western Asia, suggesting contact with the Parthians who were prominent in the northwestern part of the South Asian subcontinent around the time the *toranas* were made. Possibly, converts are paying homage at a *stūpa* in this relief.

A final example, a relief, from the north *torana* of the Great Stūpa at Sāñcī, shows two rows of male devotees at a rock-cut structure (Fig. 6.12) not unlike the Lomās Ṛṣi cave in concept. That the architecture is rock-cut rather than free-standing is clearly indicated by the rock formations to either side of the facade. The facade of the building has an ogee-type arch, a tie bar or perhaps a rolled and tied sun shade across it, a rectangular opening, and an altar in front of it. Since the Lomās Ṛṣi cave was not Buddhist but was most likely dedicated to the Ājivikas, as were the other caves in the Barābar and Nāgārjuni hills that date from the Maurya period, it is not likely to be a representa-



6.12. Relief on north *torana*, Stūpa I (Great Stūpa), showing devotion at a cave. Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

tion of that cave, but it must show a holy place (perhaps the Indrasāla cave, where Indra visited Śākyamuni Buddha). As in many of the Sāñcī reliefs, figures and other elements are arranged as if rising in vertical tiers rather than placed to suggest spatial depth.

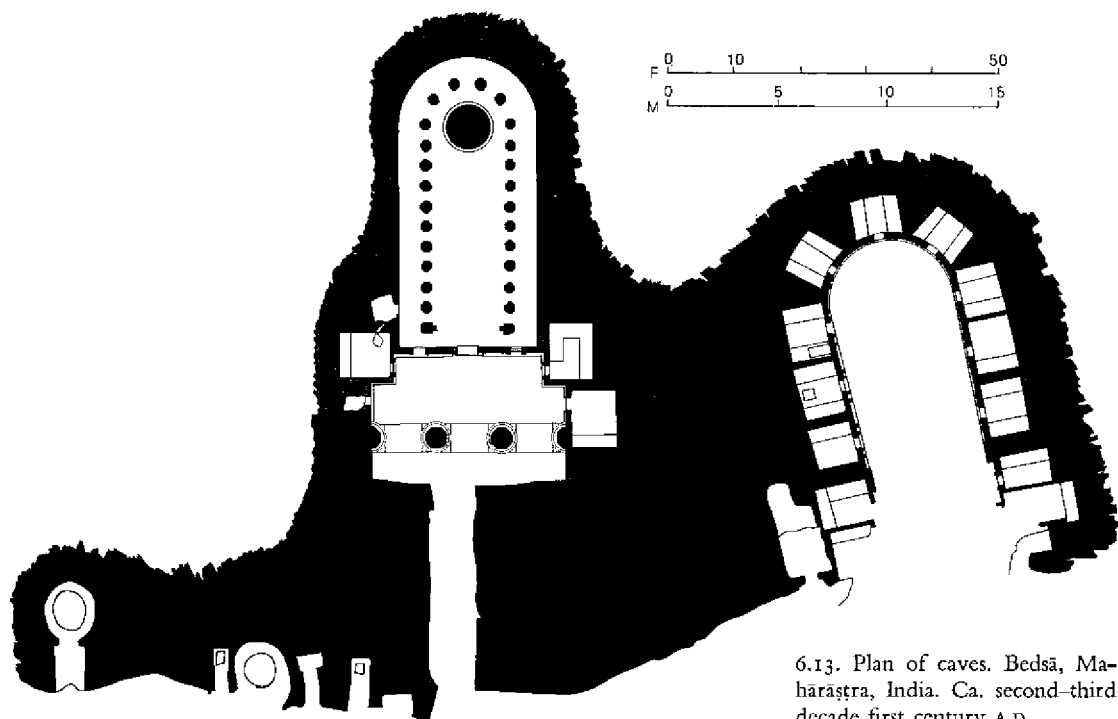
BUDDHIST ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE OF THE WESTERN DECCAN: BEDSĀ

On stylistic grounds, the two large caves at Bedsā may be dated to the same period as the carvings on the *toranas* of the Great Stūpa at Sāñcī, or approximately the second or third decade of the first century A.D. Although both caves have apsidal plans, one is clearly a *caitya* hall; the other seems to be a variant of the *vihāra* (Fig. 6.13).

Access to the *caitya* hall is gained through a passageway that has been cut into the face of the rock, leaving a wall of rock matrix that precludes a good view of the veranda and facade of the cave from outside (Figs. 6.13, 6.14). This

matrix was probably not left for religious or other symbolic purposes. Instead, the gradual slope of the hillside must have necessitated that the artists cut deeply into the rock wall before reaching an elevation suitable for the vertical facade of the cave. The matrix was probably left in place in order to save what would have been an enormous expenditure of labor to remove it.

Along the front of the veranda are four large uprights, including two central pillars and two engaged pillars at the sides. The pillars have octagonal shafts with little or no taper to them



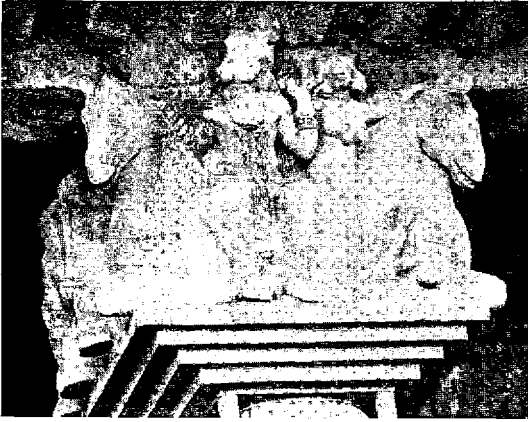
6.13. Plan of caves. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.14. Exterior of *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



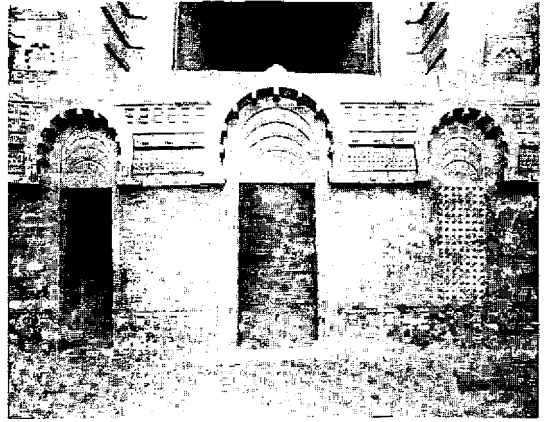
6.15. Detail, exterior of *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.16. Pillar capital, veranda of *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Māhārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second–third decade first century A.D.

and bases in the form of vases (Fig. 6.15). The two engaged pillars are not fully octagonal but otherwise resemble the free pillars. The motif of a vase as a pillar base is often said to have been copied from a free-standing architectural practice in which wooden pillars might have been set into ceramic vessels to protect them from deterioration by rotting or insects. The clay technology of this period as known from surviving examples, however, did not produce ceramic materials of such strength that they could withstand the thrust and weight factors generated by full-scale wooden buildings. Simply enough, the weight of the building would have crushed any vessel placed in such a position and any upright supports inserted in such a pot would not have had sufficient lateral strength to create a stable structure. Furthermore, if the practice was indeed widespread, it could be expected that the motif would appear commonly in the depictions of wooden buildings found so ubiquitously in early sculptural representations. Instead, it is more likely that the vase motifs served a symbolic purpose, and that they are early depictions of *pūrṇaghaṭas* (vases-of-plenty), which serve an important role in later pillar iconography.

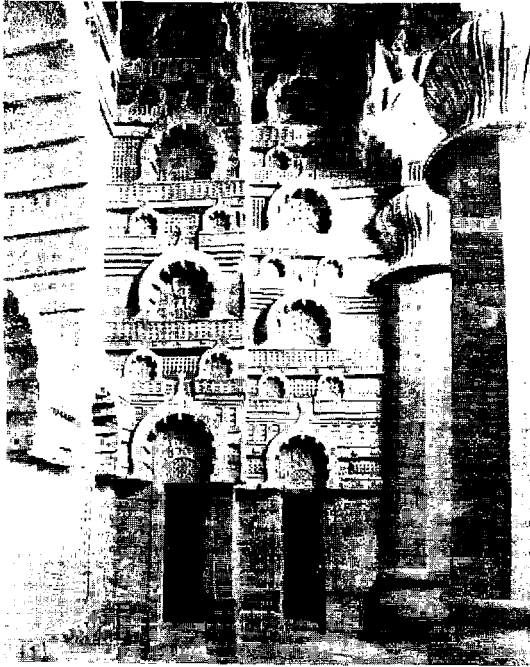
The shafts are topped by bell-shaped capitals with highly accentuated curved profiles that seem to be descended from Maurya prototypes. Above, the capitals consist of a boxed element



6.17. Entrance wall to *caitya* hall from veranda. Bedsā, Māhārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second–third decade first century A.D.

and then a series of horizontal levels atop which are recumbent animals with human riders (Fig. 6.16). These figures are almost identical to examples from the Sāñcī *toranas* in terms of costume, pose, and depiction of the body, as is the motif of adorned recumbent animals with riders itself (Fig. 6.4) and strongly support the suggestion of a similar date for the monuments.

The pillared veranda, which serves as a transition from the exterior to the inner apsidal hall, is an architectural feature not seen in the earlier *caitya* halls at Bhājā and Pītalkhorā. However, it is not certain whether the veranda was an innovation of this period or not, since the facades of the earlier *caitya* halls have been lost. At Bedsā, the lower half of the front wall of the cave serves as a screen, with a central doorway leading into the cave, another door to the left, and a window to the right (Fig. 6.17). The huge arched opening remaining in the earlier *caitya* halls is thus visible only in the upper half. However, it is clear from the architectural detailing of the uprights of this arch that the veranda wall is merely a screen and not a modification to the arched structure itself (Figs. 6.15, 6.17). Eventually, the arched opening evolves into a true window form (Fig. 12.3). This element, which commonly takes an ogee shape, is often called a *caitya* arch or *caitya* window, erroneous designations arising from the practice of calling a *caitya* hall simply a



6.18. (above left) Side wall, veranda, *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.19. (above right) Interior, *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

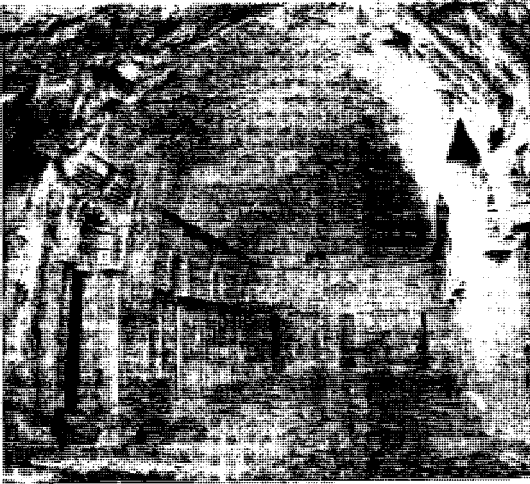


6.20. Left side aisle, interior of *caitya* hall. Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

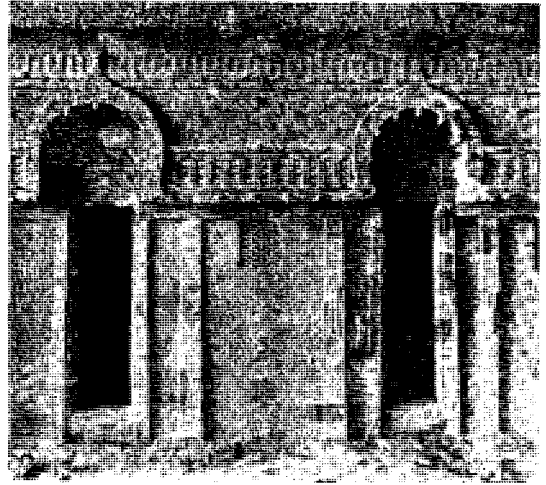
caitya. At the two ends of the veranda, the side walls are carved in a design consisting of arches above the doorways to small subsidiary cells, additional arches above, and railings imitative of wooden prototypes, giving the impression of a four-storied wooden building (Fig. 6.18). Since the use of such arches and railings is so ubiquitous as a decorative motif in early Indic rock-cut architecture, it may be assumed that a symbolic meaning was intended, although the interpretation is not clear. Except for the figures on the pillar capitals, there is no figurative sculpture on

the veranda of the cave, although it is possible that the empty spaces between the doors and windows might have been painted with figural designs at one time.

The interior of the cave is starkly simple, as it is also devoid of figurative sculpture and further lacks much of the architectural embellishment of the veranda (Fig. 6.19). Plain octagonal pillars with a slight inward lean to them separate the central part of the hall from a circumambulatory aisle around the perimeter (Fig. 6.20). Wooden beams must have originally



6.21. Apsidal "vihara." Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.



6.22. Detail, wall of apsidal "vihara." Bedsā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. second-third decade first century A.D.

been attached to the curved ceiling of the central hall, as indicated by rectangular holes in the soffit of the ceiling, although the beams have disappeared. The side aisles, with their half barrel-vaulted shape, also seem to have had arched ribs of wood as part of their original design, and the plain walls might have served as a support for paintings of Buddhist subjects. In form, the *stūpa*, which serves as the main object of veneration in the hall, is reminiscent of the *stūpas* at Sāñci, although it has a double drum. An interesting feature is the lotus pedestal, the top of which may have originally supported the *chattra*, or some other element.†

The other important cave at Bedsā, the so-called *vihāra*, is unique among the surviving examples of Indic rock-cut architecture (Figs. 6.13, 6.21). Although its façade is lost, its interior is preserved and consists of a central apsidal hall surrounded by rectangular cells. It is possible that this hall was begun as a *caitya* hall and was later converted into a *vihāra*, but this seems unlikely since there are neither side aisles nor evidence on the floor of there having been pillars.⁸ It is also possible that this cave was an experiment in form, but the sheer cost of excavating such a project as this makes it seem unlikely that a purely experimental form would be put forth so boldly. It may be suggested that

the example documents a type of wooden structure associated with early monastic sites, but otherwise lost to us archaeologically. While such buildings may have served as monastic dwelling places, the proper name of this type may not be *vihāra*, a term that perhaps should be reserved for rectangular halls. Such specificity in the classification of early Buddhist buildings is suggested from the enumerations of monastic buildings cited in early Buddhist texts.

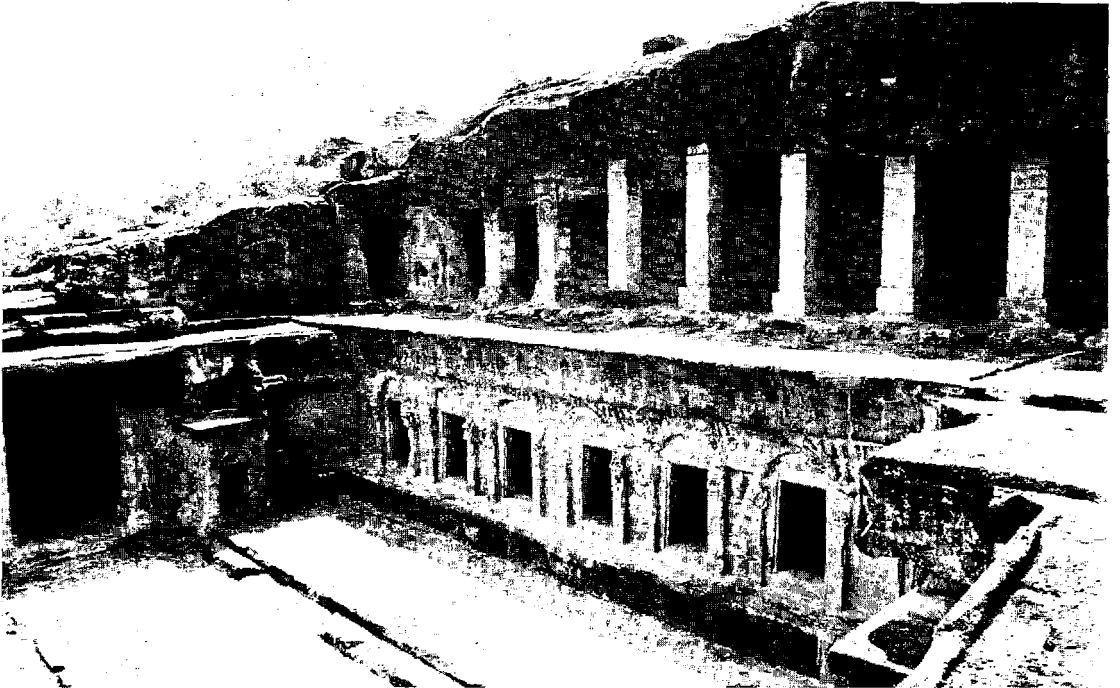
In addition to the puzzling form, there has been some argument that the detailing of the imitation wooden forms above the doorways to the cells was added at a later time, and was not part of the original work (Fig. 6.22). This supposition does not seem tenable as there is no indication that there was more than one period of carving activity at the site; and close examination shows that these conform exactly in style to similar details in the *caitya* hall. The lattice windows have interesting detail in the flowers and other forms, which may reflect woodcarving techniques of the times. The cells are somewhat unusual in plan since most of them contain two benches instead of one. Since these cells are believed to have been dwelling places for the monks, the benches were probably stone beds and this might imply double occupancy of the cells.

EASTERN INDIA: KHANĀGIRI/UDAYAGIRI

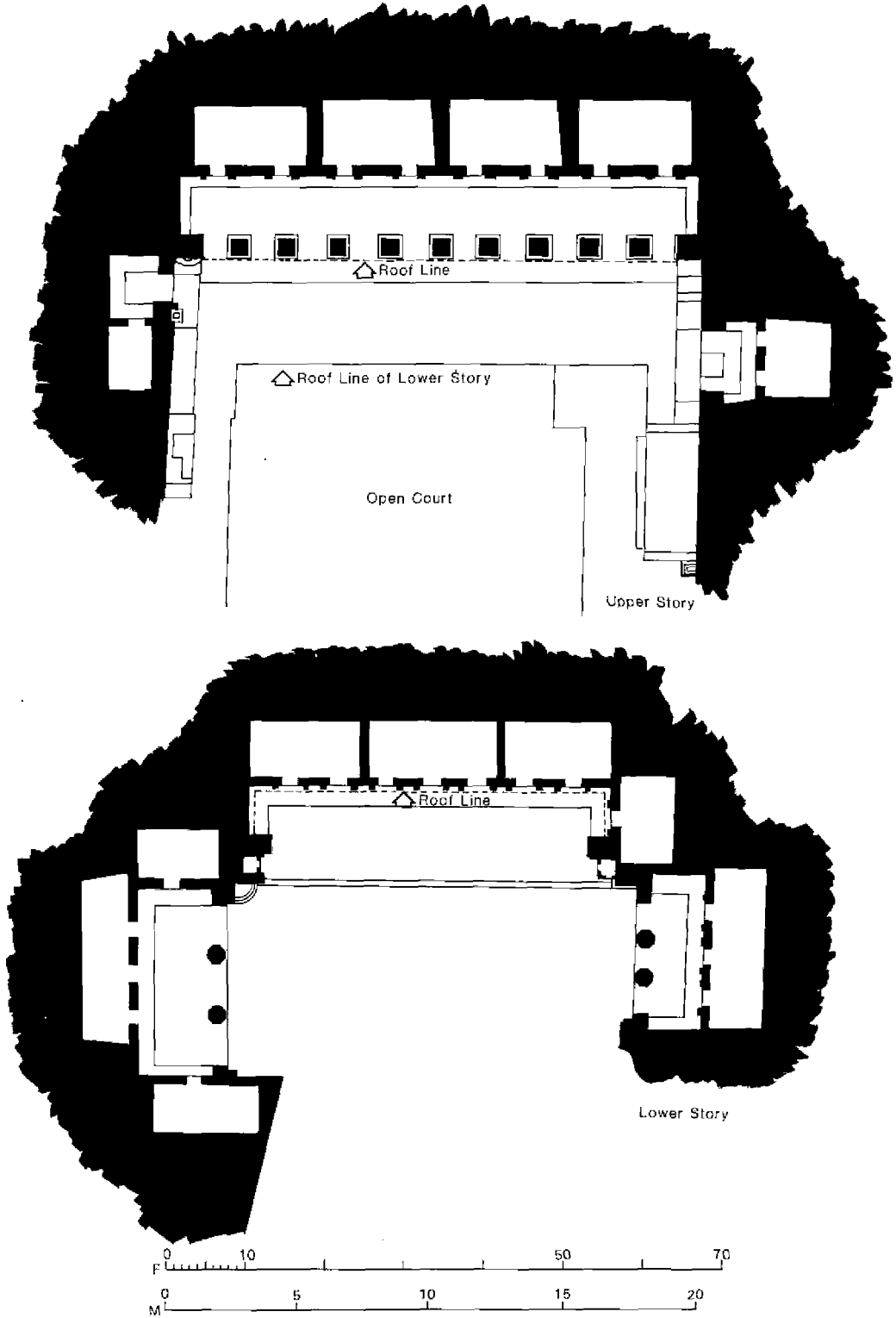
The history of ancient Kalinga (modern Orissa) is still obscure, as well as controversial, especially in the centuries following Aśoka's conquest of the region. However, one king, Khāravēla, is noted for his military strength and his public works. The principal source of information about this ruler is in a lengthy inscription in the Hāthi Gumphā (Elephant Cave) at the Khanḍagiri/Udayagiri Hills in Orissa, where more than thirty rock-cut caves were excavated. One line of the inscription reveals that Khāravēla "causes [caused] to be constructed subterranean chambers, caves, containing *Chaitya* temples and pillars."⁹ Thus it is generally assumed that many of the caves at the site are products of his reign. Among these, the Rāṇī Gumphā (Queen's Cave) at Udayagiri is the largest and best preserved (Fig. 6.23).

This two-storied cave, like other excavations at the site, is not easily compared to rock-cut examples preserved in western India, and may

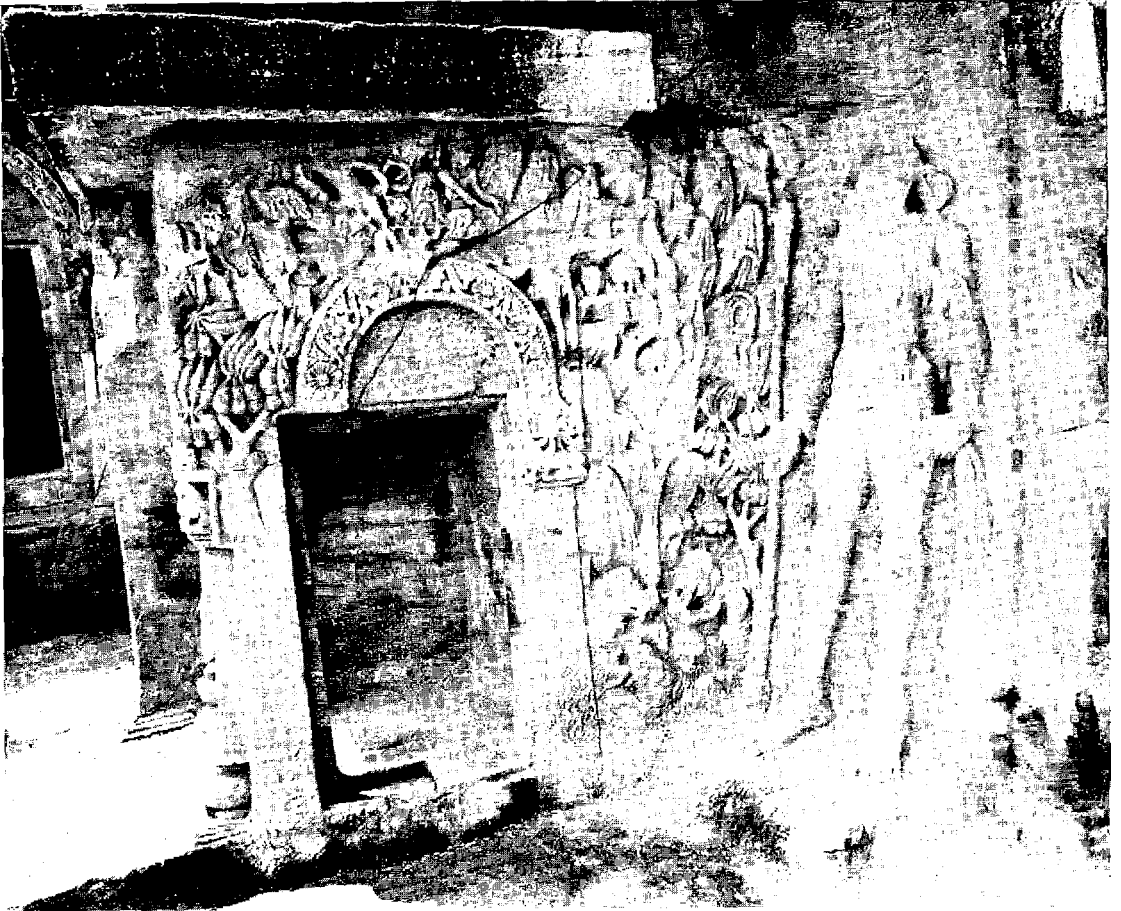
indicate regional characteristics, or even a difference in religious purpose since these caves are believed to be Jain, not Buddhist. The plan is distinguished by a large rectangular courtyard, with rectangular cells cut into the rock wall on three sides (Fig. 6.24). To either side of the open courtyard, a sculpted cell projects from the rock wall. Each is flanked by a carved guardian and bears reliefs on the exterior depicting what appear to be narrative scenes (Fig. 6.25). These small chambers may have been intended as guard stations. The carving of the reliefs is extremely lively and freely composed and there is a great sense of crowding of the surface with numerous elements such as elephants, mango trees, and figures. The guardian figures reveal the same preference for rounded, full body forms seen in many styles in ancient India, although the legs seem elongated and the feet enlarged. An archway over the door suggests a pan-Indic use of this device, undoubtedly based



6.23. Rāṇī Gumphā. Udayagiri (Khanḍagiri), Orissa, India. Ca. first few decades of first century A.D.



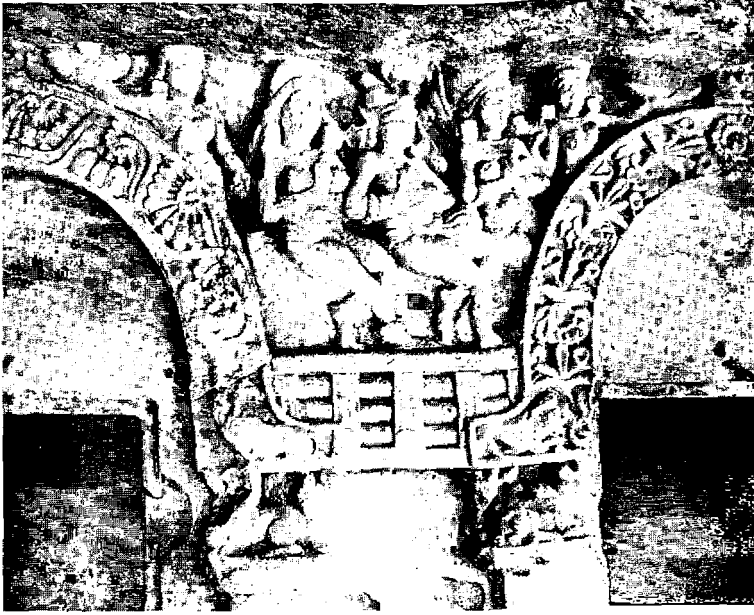
6.24. Plan of Rānī Gumpha. Udayagiri (Khaṇḍagiri), Orissa, India.
Ca. first few decades of first century A.D.



6.25. Sculpted cell and guardian, lower level, Rāṇi Gumphā. Udayagiri (Khaṇḍagiri), Orissa, India. Ca. first few decades of first century A.D.



6.26. Facade of upper level, Rāṇi Gumphā. Udayagiri (Khaṇḍagiri), Orissa, India. Ca. first few decades of first century A.D.



6.27. Detail, carving on facade of upper level, Rāñi Gumphā. Udayagiri (Khaṇḍagiri), Orissa, India. Ca. first few decades of first century A.D.

on wooden forms, although the treatment of the arch, with its flower and vine motif, is distinctive.

Another interesting feature of the cave is the sculpted friezes across the entrances to the cells on the lower and upper levels (Fig. 6.26). Their subject matter has not yet been studied, but they may illustrate events in the life of the twenty-third Jain *tīrthānkara*, Pārśvanātha. In style, they correspond closely to carvings from other parts of the subcontinent (Fig. 6.27). They are particularly suggestive of the style that appears on the Sāñcī *toraṇas*. This relationship is more than coincidental, for Khāravela is known to have been a contemporary of one

Sātakarṇi of the Sātavāhana line, who is almost certainly Sātakarṇi I, and thus it is likely that the respective monuments belong to approximately the same period, around the early first century A.D. In particular, there is a great deal of similarity in figure style and costuming, such as the large, bulky, square earrings, scarves worn as headdresses by the women, and the type of turbans worn by the men. Deeply carved details are also characteristic of both the Sāñcī *toraṇas* and the Rāñi Gumphā friezes, although slightly more irregular groupings of elements within the compositions is characteristic of the eastern style.

CONCLUSION

During the late first century B.C. and the first century A.D., many of the forms and styles developing during the earlier Śuṅga period came to fruition. Relief sculptures tended to be more deeply carved and less dependent on linear patterns, suggesting that the artists had grown increasingly comfortable in working the hard stone material. This confidence is also reflected

in the refined work done in the creation of Buddhist caves, such as those at Bedsā. Though it is difficult to assign a name to this period, as no single dynasty controlled the majority of the subcontinent at this time, it is clear that the Sātavāhanas must have played an important role in disseminating art styles in the regions of their own rule and to neighboring kingdoms.



Detail of 7.11.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Śaka and Parthian Kingdoms in the Indic Sphere (ca. First Century B.C. to Mid-First Century A.D.)

INTRODUCTION TO THE BACTRO-GANDHĀRA REGION

Following Alexander the Great's expedition to the Indic regions in the fourth century B.C., the western Asiatic lands continued to be vital arteries of trade and commerce between the Iranian plateau on the west and the Indus River region. These lands, roughly corresponding to portions of modern Afghanistan and Pakistan, were not unified politically but instead were subject to continual political upheaval as competing factions attempted to establish power in the area. Culturally, the region was also diverse, reflecting the many participants in trading activities, including Greeks, various nomadic groups from western Asia, and Indic as well as Chinese peoples. Around 130 B.C., a group of newcomers, the Śakas, entered the region and came to control considerable portions of it from Bactria to Mathurā for a significant period of time. The origin of the Śakas

is a subject of debate, but it is likely that they were a branch of the western Scythians from Transoxiana or an immediately adjacent area, such as the Black Sea, which had a strongly Hellenized Scythian population. Around the turn of the Christian era, Parthians moved into this region from their Iranian homeland and also became influential, especially in the first half of the first century A.D. Thus, the century before and the first part of the century after the beginning of the Christian era might be seen in this region as dominated by the Śaka and Parthian peoples. Each left its mark on the already heterogeneous society of the area, which during this period became a true confluence of diverse peoples, evidencing cultural, religious, and intellectual aspects of the Hellenistic world and greater western Asia, as well as South Asia. The effect of this rich

diversity on religious and artistic developments was enormous.

During the Śaka and Parthian periods, the western Asiatic region was not a coherent whole but consisted of a number of small states. Of greatest importance to the study of South Asian art were Bactria, with its capital city of Bactria (modern Balkh in Afghanistan), Kapiśa, with its capital city of Kapiśa (modern Begram in Afghanistan), and Gandhāra, with its capital at the city of Sirkap (at Taxila [Takṣaśilā] in Pakistan). An important minor state existed in the Swāt Valley of Pakistan, which was known in ancient times as the kingdom of Uḍḍiyāna. While this entire region is popularly referred to today as "Gandhāra," it is more aptly described as the Bactro-Gandhāra realm, implying the lands between, surrounding, and including Bactria and Gandhāra. The term Gandhāra is properly reserved for the kingdom centered at Taxila.

The most important of these political units was Bactria, but unfortunately, very little archaeological excavation of this region, and especially of Balkh itself, has been carried out, leaving its role in the artistic developments of western Asia largely unknown. However, the other centers are more well-known archaeologically and some of the objects and monuments found at them may be discussed, although a coherent artistic overview of the period is still lacking.

In spite of the great importance of the religious and artistic developments of the Śaka-

Parthian period, many of the basic scholarly problems in art, such as the definition of local schools, chronology, iconography, and cultural context, remain unsolved. These matters are subject to a variety of interpretations and much, sometimes heated, debate. Some of the confusion is due to the fact that the physical documents, that is, the cities, buildings, and works of art, have suffered considerable damage at various times since their creation, especially when the region was overrun by new invaders. Destruction continued even into modern times as early archaeologists often demolished the original contexts of works of art or failed to make proper records of their discoveries. In addition, the surviving monuments have often been misinterpreted. The first European investigators to study the art of this region, for example, were culturally biased in favor of the western tradition and invariably attributed too much debt to the Hellenistic heritage of the art forms. What was invariably seen by early investigators as direct Greek or Roman influence was mainly a product of the general Hellenistic milieu in western Asia during the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. This "Asian Hellenism" was in fact the result not only of a Greek and Roman heritage, periodically affected by new infusions from the Mediterranean world, but was indebted to Iranian, Scythian, and other traditions as well. Combined with forms and concepts prevalent in the Indic world, the result was a truly international synthesis, both in ideas and stylistic innovations in art.

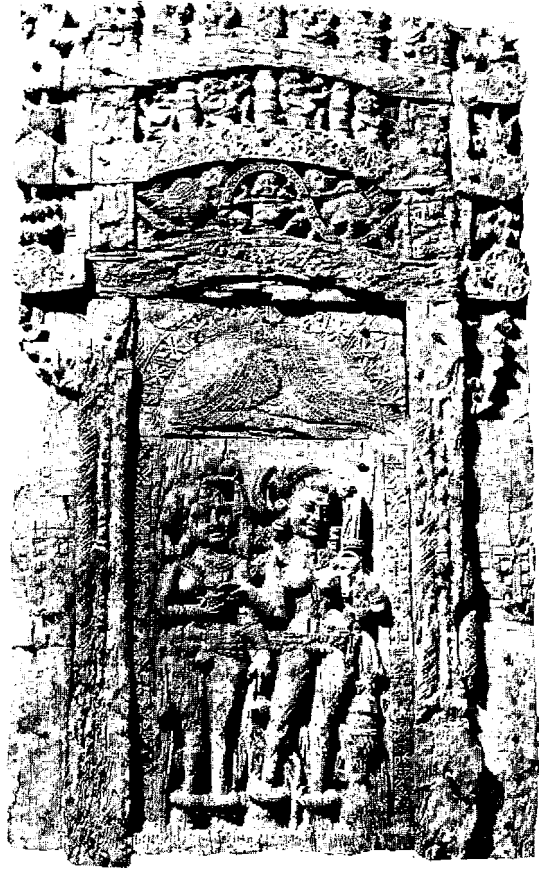
THE KAPIŚA REGION

The site of Begram, the ancient city of Kapiśa and the capital of the state of Kapiśa, has yielded important archaeological materials, some of which clearly belong to the Śaka-Parthian period. One hoard of objects, either retired from use or perhaps secreted from invaders, contained late Hellenistic plaster casts of metal-work designs, Syrian glass, Roman and Alexandrian sculptures, Chinese lacquerware, and carved Indic ivory objects, among other treasures. Although only the Indic objects will be

considered here, the others are important documents of the heterogeneous cultural milieu persisting in the region and as possible sources of stylistic and iconographic influences in South Asian art. The building housing the objects was apparently destroyed at the time of the Sassanian invasions under Shāpūr I around A.D. 241 (providing a probable terminus date for the production of the objects) and the room containing the objects was not rediscovered until modern times. The items found in this

“treasure room” are largely luxury goods of a secular nature, probably reflecting the cosmopolitan tastes and interests of a person of considerable means or rank.

The Indic ivories fall into several stylistic groups, suggesting that they were not all executed at one time. Instead, they seem to reflect a range in date from about the late first century B.C. or early first century A.D. to about the third century A.D., the presumed terminus date for all the objects in the room. A series of pieces that were once part of a large ensemble shows architectural constructs within which are pairs of beautiful women. These panels probably belong to the early group of Begram ivories because they bear a great deal of resemblance to sculptures on the Sāñcī *torāṇas*. One example shows a *torāṇa* with two women involved in what appears to be cosmetic preparations (Fig. 7.1). Architecturally, the *torāṇa* resembles the structural examples at Sāñcī for it has three horizontal cross members. The Begram depiction, however, bears figures of *gaṇas* and *kimnaras* in the spaces between the architraves. Atop the highest architrave is a series of auspicious emblems similar to those that originally adorned the top of the Sāñcī *torāṇas*. The central symbol is a *triratna*, a standard symbol of the Buddhist teachings, balanced on a lotus. The other emblems are less easily identified. What are apparently triangles poised on lotuses have no counterpart among Buddhist symbols until a much later period. However, the trefoil motif to either side of the central *triratna* is found in some of the western Indian caves that date from the second to first centuries B.C. and it must have been a well-known Buddhist symbol. Beneath the horizontal members and just above the heads of the two female figures, an engraved pattern showing strands of pearls or other gems hung in the entry that the *torāṇa* provides suggest auspiciousness. Although it has been suggested that these ivories served a secular rather than religious function, a religious purpose must not be ruled out. *Torāṇas*, while apparently not used exclusively in sacred contexts in ancient India, may imply the entrance to a religious structure. Furthermore, the theme of beautiful women



7.1. Panel with *torāṇa* design. From Begram, Afghanistan. Ca. early first century A.D. Ivory. H: 42.7 cm. Kabul Museum, Kabul.

lavishly adorned with jewelry need not be viewed as secular since such figures had been incorporated into religious symbolism at an earlier date.

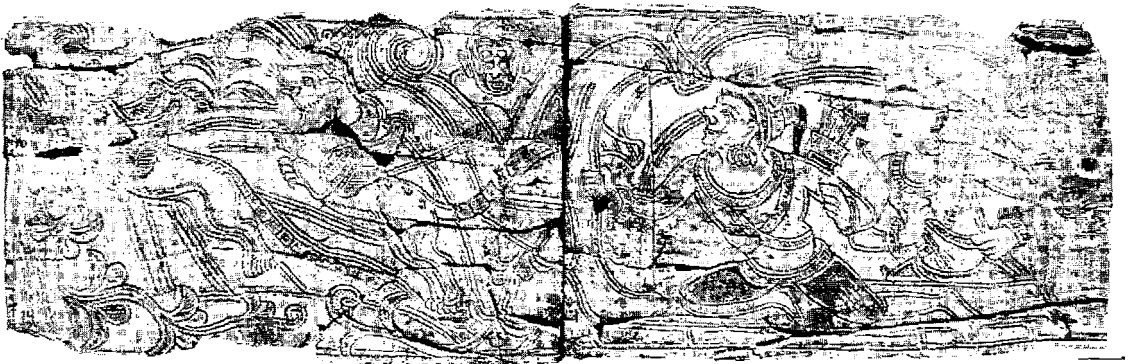
Like many of the ivories in the Begram hoard, a depiction of a female figure was probably part of the decoration of a piece of furniture (Fig. 7.2). While the piece, which is one of the largest ivories found at Begram, has been greatly restored, much of its original appearance may be determined. The woman may be the goddess, Gaṅgā, the personification of the Ganges River, whose standard *vāhana* is the *makara*, like that upon which this figure stands. She is dressed in standard Indic garb. Her lower garment is incised with parallel



double lines to suggest drapery folds; she has a thick sash and her garment has a heavy fold of material at the waist. Across her chest she wears an ornament held by cross straps and she wears ample jewelry, including heavy anklets. The figure is rather elongated and slender, perhaps partly a by-product of the original shape of the ivory tusk, out of which she is carved. A slight animation is seen in her pose as she thrusts her hip to one side and extends her arm. While the figure does not have a precise counterpart in the styles of ancient Indian art in the centuries around the beginning of the Christian era, there is little doubt that she expresses the basic notions of Indic art of that period.

In addition to ivory objects that are clearly of an Indic style, a few ivory pieces betraying foreign associations have also been recovered from Begram. For example, several pieces carved with a distinctive double-line technique found in Parthian art¹ suggest associations of style and subject matter with non-Indic traditions (Fig. 7.3). The hunt motif in particular has a western Asiatic rather than Indic source, as do the winged animals, the distinctive head-

7.2. Female, probably Gaṅgā, the River Goddess. From Begram, Afghanistan. Ca. first century A.D. Ivory. H: 47 cm. Kabul Museum, Kabul.



7.3. Hunt scene. From Begram, Afghanistan. Probably Parthian period. Ca. first half of first century A.D. Ivory. H: 7.4 cm. Kabul Museum, Kabul.

dresses, and the use of the profile view for the face. Such relationships indicate the cultural complexity of the Begram materials, for not only do they represent a crossroads where objects from widely diverse regions ranging from China to the Mediterranean were brought together, but they also suggest a blending of these traditions. Portable luxury objects like these were apparently widely transported (an ivory of Indic manufacture was found at Pompeii), although the place of manufacture of most of them remains unknown. Thus, while it is possible that these Parthian-style ivories were indeed of Parthian manufacture, they might also represent the absorption of non-Indic styles and iconography by Indic craftsmen.

While the ivories found at Begram reveal an interesting crossroads of stylistic traditions in ancient Kapiśa, other objects recovered from the region crystallize what must have been important religious trends. A gold reliquary set with rubies was found at Bimarān, in Afghanistan, by Charles Masson, one of the pioneers of South Asian archaeology in the nineteenth century (Fig. 7.4, Pl. 4). As the container for relics, it was the most important element of the *stūpa* in which it was found. Since its discovery, the reliquary has generated much debate and controversy concerning both its date and the meaning of its iconographic scheme. Four mint-condition copper coins of the Śaka king Azes II (reigned ca. 35 B.C.-A.D. 1) were found in association with it, suggesting that it was buried (and perhaps created) in the late first century B.C.² This dating is further substantiated by the paleography of the inscription on the steatite casket in which it was found, which identifies the donor as one Śivarakṣita, an otherwise unknown individual.

In spite of the evidence of the four mint-condition coins and the paleography of the inscription, the reliquary has generally been dated to a later period, about the first century A.D. or later.³ Much of the argumentation for this assertion has been based on architectural and other motifs on the reliquary itself and on the contention that the reliquary must have been buried at a later date, but with the early coins. However, a major basis for the



7.4. Detail of reliquary. From Bimarān, Afghanistan. Ca. late first century B.C. Gold with rubies. H: of figure, ca. 3 cm. British Museum, London.

hesitation to accept this work as a product of the late first century B.C. seems to be the depictions of Buddha images as part of the vessel's design. Traditional art historical scholarship on the Buddhist art of South Asia has viewed the popularity of depicting Buddha images in stone during the second and third centuries A.D. as evidence for the initiation of such an image-making tradition at that time. This phase is said to have supplanted an earlier aniconic phase during which Buddha figures were not shown in human form. However, textual evidence as well as the existence of a Chinese Buddha image dated 36 B.C. indicates that an image-making tradition occurred well prior to the second century A.D. (although it may not have been as extensive as that of later centuries).⁴

Therefore, the Bimārān reliquary need not be considered a product of a period necessarily later than the date suggested by the four coins of Azes II and the paleography of the inscription on the basis of its iconography.

The iconographic scheme of the reliquary includes eight figures contained within arched niches. A major group of three figures is repeated twice on the vessel and consists of a standing representation of a Buddha, flanked by two figures in the adjoining niches (Pl. 4). Between each group of three is a depiction of a front-facing individual who seems to be walking forward while displaying the *añjali mudrā*, a gesture of respect and devotion, with his hands (Fig. 7.4). The figures flanking the Buddhas are Brahmā, shown as a bearded ascetic, and Indra, dressed like a king. Though these figures may be among the earliest preserved examples of Buddha images, they have many of the features that characterize Buddha figures throughout the development of Buddhist art. This suggests that by the time this work was created, the iconography of the Buddha image had been well formulated. If, indeed, this reliquary was created in the late first century B.C., this would further suggest that this phase did not mark the initiation of the image-making tradition.

The Buddhas wear monastic garb, consisting of a rather heavy robe that covers both shoulders and falls nearly to the ankles. Such robes appear popularly in the Buddha images of Bactria, Gandhāra, Kapiśa, Swāt, and other regions of western Asia. It is not known whether this type of garment originated in the Indic realm or was brought to the region from the Graeco-Roman tradition, although the emphasis on the folds of the cloth seems to suggest a classicistic stylistic interpretation. The Buddhas wear no jewelry or headdresses, in keeping with their asceticism. Each has a halo behind his head. The halo, or aura of light, becomes a standard indication of transcendence in Indic art, and is never present in the depiction of ordinary mortals. It is generally called a *prabhāmaṇḍala* (circle of light), a term that may be used to describe an aura radiating from the entire body or only the head. The term *śiraścakra*, or *śiraṣprabhācakra* (head-light-wheel) is often

used to describe a halo restricted to the head.

Both Buddhas on the Bimārān reliquary display the *abhaya mudrā*, a gesture of protection, with their right hands. Though this hand posture is meant to grant the absence of fear, it is by implication a teaching gesture for it is through the understanding of a Buddha's teachings that one is granted the absence of fear (of death).

The two Buddhas do not have distinguishing features that clarify their individual identities, and it should not be automatically assumed that they (or any other Buddhas shown in art) necessarily represent Śākyamuni Buddha unless specific elements of the work indicate that this is the case.⁵ It is important to note that the overwhelming concern of the Buddhist religion in its many variant sects and forms is not with Śākyamuni, the Buddha who lived in Magadha during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. In some cases, he is seen as an example to be emulated; in others, he is considered to be only one of many Buddhas, and not even the most important. Many schools of Buddhism barely take note of his existence; indeed, it would be possible to practice some forms of Buddhism without even a significant awareness of him and his life cycle. Among the earliest surviving Buddha images is at least one whose inscription reveals that it is a depiction of a Buddha other than Śākyamuni,⁶ indicating that more than one Buddha was included in the early religious and artistic repertoire.

The belief in more than one Buddha is common to both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, Hīnayānists believe that Buddhahood can only be attained by a few beings, while Mahāyānists accept the presupposition that all sentient beings possess the seed of Buddhahood and are destined to achieve it. According to Mahāyāna theory, Śākyamuni was only one of a series of *mānuṣi* (mortal) Buddhas who represented what is known as the *rūpakāya* (form-body), or, in later Buddhism, the *nirmāṇakāya* (transformation-body). Like all sentient beings, these Buddhas, according to Mahāyāna belief, contained something beyond their human manifestations that was to be relied upon as the source of enlightenment,

which, in their cases, came to fruition. As fully enlightened beings, these Buddhas are also considered to be manifestations of the universal condition of order (*dharma*), which became known as the *dharmakāya* (*dharma-body*). By definition, all Buddhas are manifestations of the *dharmakāya*; however, not all Buddhas assume a *rūpakāya/nirmāṇakāya* existence.

It is unknown whether the Buddhas represented on the Bīmarān reliquary belong to the *rūpakāya/nirmāṇakāya* or the *dharmakāya* or a combination of the two. But a reference to a two-*kāya* system may be implicit, for this concept is already propounded in Buddhist texts dating from the Śāka-Parthian period. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (The Sūtra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law), a Buddhist text believed to have been compiled by the first century B.C., Śākyamuni is said to explain his own eternal nature, thus suggesting that this dual concept of Buddhahood was already developed by that time. It is more fully explained in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* text of around the first century A.D., which propounds the conception of the two-*kāya* system. The final development of this aspect of Mahāyāna thought is a three-body doctrine (*trikāya*) propounded in later schools of Buddhism such as Yogācāra.⁷

Some of these theories may be reflected in the figures on the Bīmarān reliquary, for it is undoubtedly a Mahāyāna creation. This is verified by the presence of the front-facing individuals placed between the two groups of three figures who may be identified as bodhisattvas (Fig. 7.4). The concept of the bodhisattva is inextricably tied to the Mahāyāna belief that every sentient being contains the germ of Buddhahood and may, by becoming a bodhisattva, a being destined to attain Buddhahood, ultimately realize his own Buddha-nature. While bodhisattvas are known in Hīnayāna Buddhism,⁸ their number and functions are limited. Like Buddhahood in Hīnayāna thought, bodhisattvahood (that is, potential Buddhahood) is possessed by only a few. In Mahāyāna, however, anyone can attain bodhisattvahood; indeed, bodhisattvahood is seen as a mandatory step in the progress towards Buddhahood.

There are many kinds of bodhisattvas who may represent many levels of Buddhist attainment in Mahāyāna Buddhism. On the simplest level, the practitioner may become a bodhisattva simply by taking the vow of a bodhisattva. However, to progress through the ranks of bodhisattvahood, the individual must take certain actions or must develop specific perfections (such as compassion). Highly advanced bodhisattvas like Śākyamuni in his pre-enlightenment existences, such as those recounted in the *jātaka* tales, serve as models of behavior for all living beings. Bodhisattvas may also act as guides to devotees in their quest to attain Buddhahood and as personifications of aspects of the nature of Buddhahood.

Bodhisattvas of this latter category are generally known as *mahāsattva* bodhisattvas (great-being, enlightenment-being). The bodhisattvas on the Bīmarān reliquary and in Mahāyāna art in general are of the *mahāsattva* category. Though such bodhisattvas have individual identities, those appearing on the Bīmarān reliquary do not bear distinguishing features that clarify which ones are being represented. The halos behind their heads indicate the transcendent nature of all *mahāsattva* bodhisattvas and the *jaṭāmukuta* (crown of matted hair) coiffure is not characteristic of one bodhisattva alone. The jewelry worn by the figures is also a feature common to *mahāsattva* bodhisattvas who are normally dressed with all the finery of secular kings, in contrast to depictions of Buddhas, which show those figures as ascetics, without jewelry, and wearing monastic garb.

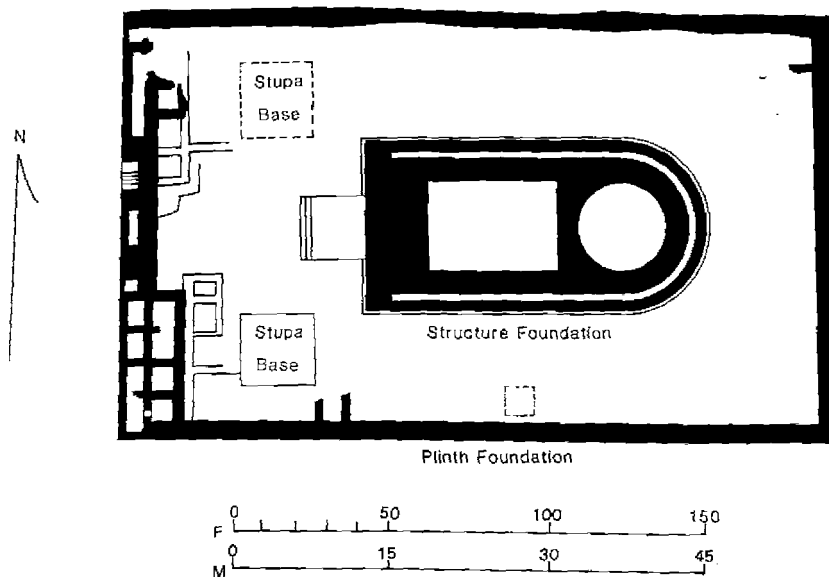
The architectural forms that appear on the Bīmarān reliquary have also generated much discussion.⁹ The pointed arched elements of each unit are based on an Indic form, seen as early as the third century B.C., for example, on the facade of the Lomaś Rṣi cave. However, the pillars that support the arches are commonly found on Hellenistic-inspired architectural constructs in western Asia and have no indigenous counterpart in the Indic peninsula. Like other objects recovered from Kapiśa, then, it reflects the complex cultural milieu in that region around the start of the Christian era.

THE GANDHĀRA REGION

To those already familiar with the art traditions of South Asia, Gandhāra is perhaps the most famous of the western Asiatic states. This is partly the result of the fact that many important and revealing archaeological excavations have taken place in Gandhāra, specifically at its capital, Taxila. The familiarity of the name, however, is also partly due to the widespread misuse of the term Gandhāra to refer to the broader Bactro-Gandhāra realm. Indeed, the term is often mistakenly used to broadly define the art styles that developed in the lands to the northwest of what is now the nation of India, that is, Pakistan and Afghanistan, in the early centuries of the Christian era. While it is true that the art traditions of Bactria, Kapiśa, Swāt, and other associated locales often share certain broad characteristics with the art of Gandhāra, they were also distinct entities with their own schools of artisans. In narrow terms, then, the term "Gandhāran" should be used only to describe the art of that specific region, while the more broadly based styles of western Asia might be called Bactro-Gandhāran.

The largest urban center of Gandhāra is more well-known by its Greek name, Taxila, than its more proper Sanskrit name, Takṣaśilā. One of its important early centers was Sirkap, a city which appears to have been built by Bactrian Greeks at the beginning of the second century B.C. The city followed the grid pattern prevalent in Greek city planning, a feature that was maintained even during the course of several occupations by various invaders, presumably including the Śakas and Parthians.

The apsidal temple on Block D, which dates from the Parthian period, is the largest single structure at the site (Fig. 7.5). Clearly a Buddhist monument,¹⁰ the plan of the apsidal temple is unusual in the screening of the *caitya* area from the assembly area, although it suggests ties to early Indic apsidal halls such as the Lomāś Rṣi cave, or early *caitya* halls such as that at Kondivte. Among the finds at the now almost totally destroyed apsidal temple were a number of sculpted heads, some of which showed Indic physiognomic types (Fig. 7.6) while others suggest strong ties to Hellenistic models (Fig.



7.5. Plan of apsidal temple on Block D. Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan. Parthian period. Ca. first half of first century A.D.



7.6. Head, possibly of a bodhisattva. From apsidal temple, Block D, Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan. Probably Parthian period. Ca. first half of first century A.D. Stucco. H: ca. 13 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

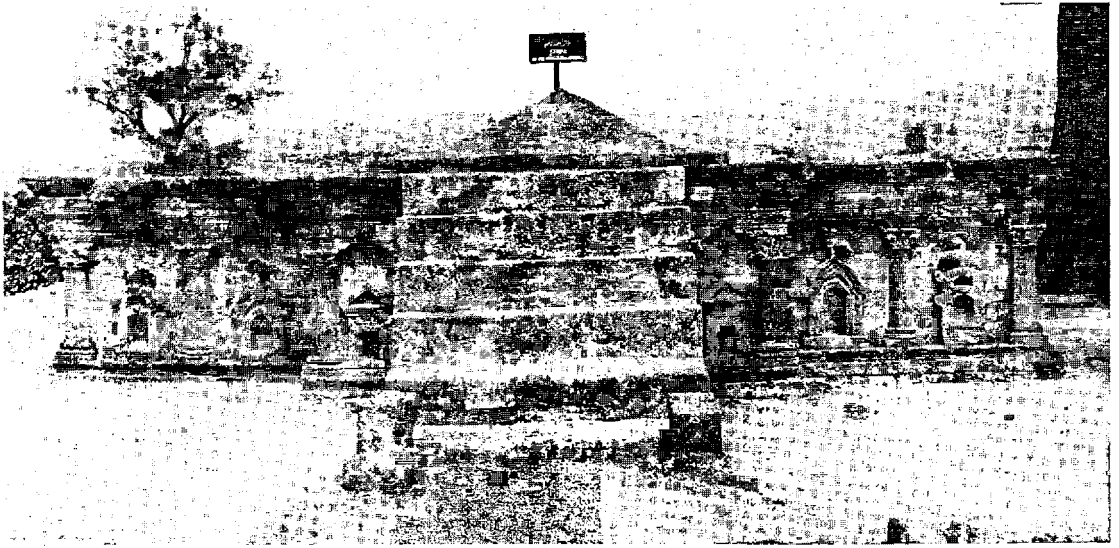


7.7. Head, possibly of a satyr. From apsidal temple, Block D, Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan. Probably Parthian period. Ca. first half of first century A.D. Stucco. H: 19.5 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

7.7). Thus, artisans at the site were apparently familiar with both Indic and non-Indic styles and forms. The Indic-type head (Fig. 7.6) may be a representation of a bodhisattva, as suggested by the *jaṭāmukha* coiffure, a standard feature of many bodhisattva images. If its date of creation was indeed during the Parthian period, as suggested by its find spot in the vicinity of the apsidal temple, this would further verify an already well-developed iconography for bodhisattva-type images by that time.

Although sometimes Hellenistic and Indic elements appear separately in distinct works of art, like the two heads from the vicinity of the apsidal temple, other monuments at Sirkap demonstrate a more thoroughgoing syncretism of Indic and Hellenistic elements. The so-called "Shrine" of the Double-headed Eagle in Block F at Sirkap (Fig. 7.8) shows just such an integration of seemingly disparate elements. Probably dating from the late first century B.C., all that remains of the structure is the basement, which

once supported a *stūpa*. (The monument is therefore probably more properly called a *stūpa* rather than a shrine.) The wall surface of the basement is ornamented with reliefs of engaged pillars and pilasters with acanthus leaf capitals between which are representations of three types of entranceways: the Indic *torana*, the Indic ogee-arched doorway, and a classicistic pedimented facade. The ogeed archways bear representations of double-headed eagles (or perhaps a more generalized carrion-eating bird); the *toranas* bear single-headed birds of a similar type, while the pedimented structures bear no bird at all. In Hellenistic mythology, eagles are often associated with death, as transporters of the dead to heaven. The origin of the double-headed eagle is unknown; however, it persists as an artistic motif in South Asia and, interestingly, appears rather frequently in late southern Indian art. In combination with the *torana* and ogee-arched entranceways, both of which imply admittance into a *stūpa* or *caitya* area, the birds



7.8. *Stūpa* basement ("Shrine" of the Double-headed Eagle) at Block F. Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan. Probably Śaka-Parthian period. Ca. late first century B.C.

suggest clear funerary associations. Such symbolism would, of course, be appropriate to the monument as a whole, since it was a *stūpa*. This type of syncretism, in which non-Indic and Indic symbols are combined, demonstrates more than simple coexistence of various cultural strands and indicates the integration and assimilation of concepts and forms arising out of distinct traditions into a new whole.

An important type of object found at Sirkap is the so-called toilet tray (Fig. 7.9). While this appellation has been used since the first excavation of these objects, there is no internal evidence that they served a purpose in the preparation of cosmetics. However, they apparently had some function in the wet mixing of substances as is determined by the presence of as many as five small wells in an easily distinguished form in many of them. The iconographic content of these small dishes suggests that they might have served a religious ceremonial function. The subject, in this case, is the drinking of wine by a woman in Parthian garb reclining in a manner frequently seen in figures on funerary representations at Palmyra, with an attendant holding a wreath near her head.¹¹ In Hellenistic mysticism, the wreath is symbolic of victory while the wine

may be associated with Dionysiac rites and the attainment of transcendence. These motifs, along with the funerary pose, may indicate a mystic victory over the powers of death (that is, the attainment of immortality). While individually, these trays may not be Buddhist, the transcendental mysticism they apparently reveal may have been a significant influence on developing Mahāyāna Buddhist beliefs about death and the afterlife.

Although the real burgeoning of the stone sculpture idiom in Gandhāra and related regions did not take place until the Kuṣāṇa period, mainly the second and third centuries A.D., a few stone images found at Taxila were made during the Śaka-Parthian periods. One intriguing example shows a standing male figure that is unfortunately broken off at the neck and ankles (Fig. 7.10). The piece was found in the vicinity of the Dharmarājikā *stūpa*, one of the oldest and most important structures at Taxila. Flattened in form and with an uncarved back, the sculpture may have once served as part of the surface decoration of the *stūpa*. However, since the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* and associated monuments underwent refurbishings and reconstructions at various times in history, the association of the



7.9. Shallow dish. From Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan. Probably Parthian period. Ca. first half of first century A.D. Steatite. D: 13.5 cm, National Museum, Karachi.



7.10. Male figure. From Dharmarajikā stūpa. Taxila, Pakistan. Śaka-Parthian period. Ca. late first century B.C.–early first century A.D. Greyish stone. H: 41.5 cm. Taxila Site Museum, Taxila.

piece with the site does not provide a firm clue to the date of the image. On stylistic grounds, the stone sculpture may be dated to the late first century B.C. or early first century A.D.¹³ The muscular torso, arms, and legs of the figure reveal artistic associations with the Hellenistic world. However, the flattened forms relate to Parthian carvings from western Iran of the first century B.C.¹³

In spite of the fact that the style of the sculpture reveals little association with Indic trends, the figure is dressed in typically Indic royal garb. His lower garment has a series of heavy folds falling between the legs and a scarflike length

of cloth is draped over his arms. He also wears jewelry, including bracelets and a necklace. The deliberate *mudrā* being displayed by the right hand along with the princely garb suggests that this figure is a bodhisattva,¹⁴ not merely a secular figure. This *mudrā*, a variant of *vyākhyāna mudrā*, persists in the art of Gandhāra and related regions and in later Buddhist art and is displayed solely by individuals of bodhisattva rank or above. This sculpture, then, seems to offer further evidence for the appearance of Mahāyāna Buddhist subjects, specifically bodhisattvas, in Indic art at a date much earlier than is usually thought.

THE SWĀT VALLEY (ANCIENT UDDIYĀNA)

Recent archaeological excavations in the Swāt Valley of Pakistan have revealed that this region was an important, flourishing center of Buddhism and Buddhist art at least since the Śaka-

Parthian period. Some of the sculptures found in Swāt are closely linked in style to the broad-based Bactro-Gandhāra idiom that became popular during the Kuṣāṇa period of the second



7.11. Buddha, with Brahmā and Indra. From Swat region, Pakistan. Parthian period. Ca. early first century A.D. Grey stone. H: 43.2 cm. Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome.

and third centuries A.D. However, a number of images from Swāt reflect what appear to be previously unidentified idioms that are more closely tied stylistically to the Parthian art of Iran than to the more Hellenized works more typical of the Bactro-Gandhāra regions. These works suggest that the Swāt Valley may have played an extremely important role in the formulation of stylistic and iconographic patterns in the Buddhist art of the Indic northwest during the pre-Kuṣāṇa period and that the debt to Parthian art was considerable.

One such example from Swāt shows an unidentified Buddha seated on a flowered pedestal flanked by Brahmā to his right and Indra to his left (Fig. 7.11). Unlike the majority of Buddhist sculptures created throughout the regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan during the first few centuries of the Christian era, this work does not reveal stylistic ties to the Graeco-Roman world. In contrast to more Hellenized examples, the musculature of the figures is not emphasized, nor even well defined, their drapery does not fall in classicistic folds, the standing figures are not in the *contrapposto* pose of many Hellenized

figures and the facial features are not the idealized form generally attributed to a Graeco-Roman source. Furthermore, although the figures of Indra and Brahmā wear Indic garb, the sculptural style is not strongly related to Indic idioms. Instead, the work displays distinctive ties to Parthian art. Significant Parthian characteristics include the large, wide-open, drilled eyes, the wrinkled forehead (of Brahmā), the rosette motif on the platform (which is ultimately based on an Achaemenid design from the Iranian region), and the evenly striated lines of the drapery and hair of the figures.¹⁵

Since Parthian political influence died out in the Indic northwest by about the mid-first century A.D., it is unlikely that such strong Parthian influence would be felt in Buddhist imagery created much after that time. It is, therefore, probable that this work was created in the first part of the first century A.D. during the period of Parthian domination of the region. Since several sculptures bearing similar stylistic traits have been found in Swāt, it may be suggested that Parthian artistic influence was especially prominent in this region.

Assuming that the dating of this sculpture is correct, its iconography becomes especially significant. For, like the Bīmarān reliquary, it displays iconographic features that are usually considered to have come into existence only after the Kuṣāṇas, and specifically King Kanīṣka, became powerful in western Asia and northern India. In particular, it depicts a representation of a Buddha in anthropomorphic form. This image, and others of this apparently early date, indicate that the initiation of the tradition of carving Buddha images in stone took place prior to the Kuṣāṇa period.¹⁶ Furthermore, since the image is not in any way a tentative formulation, it suggests that an even earlier practice of making Buddha images existed, although not necessarily in durable materials. Many of the standard elements that appear in later Buddha imagery are already present, including aspects of the pose of the Buddha, his clothing and ornamentation, the distinctive characteristics of his body, and his relationship to other figures in the composition.

In this case, the Buddha sits in *vajraparyāṅkā-sana*, that is, with his legs crossed with feet upturned while resting on the opposite thighs. This position is a formal posture that is often used during meditation. The Buddha's right hand is in a specific *mudrā*, in this case the *abhaya mudrā*. The use of *āsanas* and *mudrās* was not new in Indic art at this time; both may be traced back to Harappā times. Just when these elements were incorporated into Buddhist practices and thence into Buddhist art is unknown; however, the fact that *abhaya mudrā* and *vajraparyāṅkā-sana* are retained as two of the most important poses in Buddhist art suggests that their appearance here reflects an already well-formulated pattern. The Buddha's body is characterized by auspicious marks (*lakṣaṇa*). These include an *ūrṇā*, depicted as a circle in the center of the forehead, and an *uṣṇīṣa*. This latter is sometimes mistakenly said to be a protuberance at the top of the skull, "camouflaged" in art by a clump of hair. However, the term refers to the knot of hair itself, probably a turban knot signifying the princely heritage of the Buddha. The Buddha wears a monk's robe and an *uṣṇīṣa* tic in his hair, but no jewelry. As in later standard icons



7.12. Fragment showing devotee within a *torāṇa*. From Butkara I, Swāt region, Pakistan. Parthian period. Ca. early first century A.D. Greenish schist. H: 47.6 cm. Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome.

of a Buddha with attendants, the representations of Indra and Brahmā are executed on a smaller scale than that of the Buddha, for the Buddha, though seated, is about the same height as the other two figures. Still smaller figures, *vidyā-dharas*, are depicted flying at the two upper corners of the relief. Thus, a three-tiered hierarchy is established in which the most important figure is largest, the least important are smallest. Such features together indicate that by the time this image was created, a well-established tradition of image making already existed, or that the iconography of the Buddha image had been thoroughly formulated in Buddhist literature, or, of course, that both possibilities in fact were true.

Other sculptures discovered in the Swāt region indicate further associations with Parthian art. A relief showing a devotee standing within a *torāṇa* and carrying a small reliquary features remarkably similar elements to some of the Begram ivories (Fig. 7.12), and a similar date



7.13. Male devotee. From Butkara I, Swāt region, Pakistan. Parthian period. Ca. early first century A.D. Grey stone. H: 44.5 cm. Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome.

might be suggested, perhaps the early first century A.D. The open-petaled flower adjusted within a square that appears here as well as in

the Begram ivories is a common motif found in Parthian art (although the Parthians did not originate it). The subject matter of the *torana* is clearly Indic although ties to Parthian sculptural style are seen in the striated, incised forms of the drapery.

A representation of a devotee, also from Swāt, further suggests Parthian stylistic influence in the art of the region, though here the forms also seem indebted to the more dominant Graeco-Roman styles (Fig. 7.13). The figure is dressed in Indic garb, but the heavily incised lines of his drapery again reflect ties to Parthian art. The wide-open eyes with well-defined eyeballs are also a major characteristic of Parthian art. However, here, the torso is more muscular in its delineation and the bone structure of the face more sharply defined than is usual in Parthian-influenced works of the Indic northwest. It may be suggested, therefore, that the image reflects Graeco-Roman art as well. Furthermore, the figure stands in a classicistic *contrapposto*, suggesting ties to the Graeco-Roman tradition. The simple jewelry, compared to the more elaborate forms of the Kuṣāṇa period, suggest a pre-Kuṣāṇa date for the carving. A date in the Śāka-Parthian period is further suggested because of the relationship of this work to other pieces that in other ways suggest that they are products of this approximate period.¹⁷

NORTHERN INDIA (THE MATHURĀ REGION)

Śāka rule extended at least as far into the Indian peninsula as Mathurā. A number of sculptures found in the vicinity of Mathurā may be dated to the period of Śāka domination, though the major corpora of Mathurā works belong to the Kuṣāṇa and later periods.

One such image shows a seated Buddha (Fig. 7.14). The flattened style of the relief and princely costumes worn by the attendant figures recall works of the first century B.C. created at other Buddhist sites in ancient India. Furthermore, these characteristics differ from features normally associated with Mathurā sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period, and suggest a pre-Kuṣāṇa period date. The existence of such an image, and at

least one other Buddha figure that may be ascribed to the Śāka period from Mathurā,¹⁸ demonstrates that the practice of creating Buddha images at an early date was not limited to the northwest regions.

Iconographically, the image is quite similar to depictions from the northwest, for the Buddha sits in a prescribed pose, here the *vajraparyāṅkāsana*, and displays a specific hand gesture, here the *abhaya mudrā*. In addition, he appears to have an *uṣṇīṣa* and a halo, although it is impossible to determine whether he also had an *ūrṇā* because of the condition of the relief. The style of the work contrasts sharply to northwestern depictions, for it is strictly based on earlier Indic

modes and shows no influence from western Asiatic or Hellenistic sources. The four devotees wear the turbans and *dhotī*-like garments seen in the art of Sāñcī, Bhārhut, and other related sites, while the clinging garment of the Buddha reveals the Indic preference for emphasizing the forms of the body rather than the folds of the drapery. The garment, which is worn over the left shoulder only, is like the typical robe worn by Buddhas in Kuṣāṇa-period depictions from Mathurā and related sites. Therefore, it may be presumed to represent the specific style of garment popular in the region, as contrasted with the more usual costume of the northwest that covers both shoulders.

The iconographic similarity among the Mathurā-style Buddha images and those of an approximately similar date from the Bactro-Gandhāra region is a strong argument for the existence of widely disseminated textual descriptions of Buddhas, and perhaps even earlier images, upon which these works were modeled. For, in spite of the obvious stylistic distinctions, it is clear that an accepted, standardized account of the appearance of Buddhas was in effect.¹⁹

The Mathurā sculpture has an important but unusual feature in that the throne on which the Buddha sits is an inverted, five-stepped Mount Meru platform that rests on a base, beneath which are two reclining lions. Meru is the cosmic mountain that is located at the center of the universe, according to Buddhist cosmology. Seated on the World Axis, the Buddha becomes a symbol of the adamant nature of the universe. In this way, he expresses the universality of all Buddhas and Buddhahood, a meaning that goes beyond any mere identification of the figure as Śākyamuni or another specific Buddha.



7.14. Seated Buddha. From Iṣapur, Mathurā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Śaka period. Ca. first century B.C. Reddish sandstone. H: 48 cm. Mathurā Museum, Mathurā.

The depiction of this concept at such an early date is significant, for it is often thought to represent a late addition to the iconography of Buddha images.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether an aniconic phase of Buddhist art ever existed or when the "first" Buddha image was created, it is evident that by the Śaka-Parthian period, Buddha images were being produced, apparently in accordance with already codified iconographic requirements. While the existence of Buddha images from this

period has been noted by earlier authors,²⁰ it is still commonly believed that Buddha images were not created until the Kuṣāṇa period, primarily in the late first century A.D. or early second century A.D. Yet the burgeoning of a stonecarving tradition in the Kuṣāṇa period, which has left visible evidence of Buddha im-

agery, should not be mistaken for the inception of the practice of making such icons any more than the lack of examples of extant ancient wooden buildings should lead to the conclusion that the ancients never built in wood or that the Śuṅga-period rock-cut monasteries were the first architectural creations of the Buddhists. It might be noted, in fact, that there are no major icons of *any* Indic religion remaining in the early art of South Asia. Yet, the absence of such images of Hindu deities, for example, is not usually interpreted as being the result of the absence of an image-making tradition.

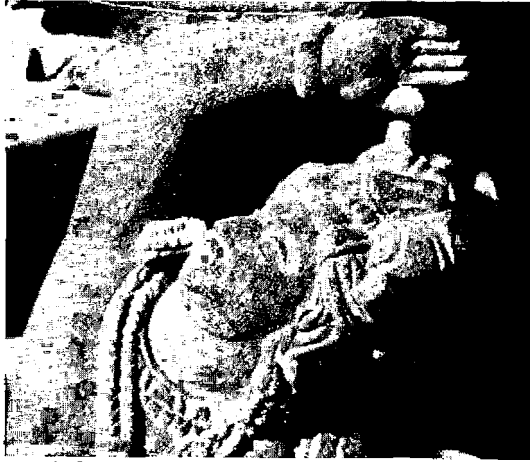
The use of Buddha images may not have been universal to all forms of Buddhism nor to all levels of religious practice. It is likely, for example, that the use of images was more common among the laity than the clergy. (Mahāyāna literature claims that an image-making tradition was in effect at least since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, though it was apparently mainly confined to the laity.)²¹

Bodhisattvas too were represented in the art of the Śaka-Parthian period. These apparently reflected well-developed notions about bodhisattvahood and the underlying concepts of Mahāyānism wherein all living beings are destined to attain Buddhahood.

Some of the ideas regarding Buddhahood, bodhisattvahood, and other aspects of Buddhism, particularly in Mahāyāna, may have grown up

in the western Asiatic and north Indian regions ruled by the Śakas and Parthians, perhaps as an outgrowth of contact with non-Indic peoples. Indeed, works of art from the Śaka-Parthian period reveal a wide range of foreign motifs, styles, and ideas and a willingness to synthesize them with Indic elements into new artistic expressions. Because of this, it is often difficult to distinguish elements that were the result of the natural processes of artistic and religious evolution within the Indic world and those that came about due to the impact of foreign traditions. Some of the concepts often said to have been influenced by non-Indic models in fact may have existed prior to this period and may have been the result of natural developments within the Buddhist religion. These include the initiation of a Buddha-image tradition, the theories of bodhisattvahood, the two-*kāya* system, and many other aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism as well.

Nonetheless, the regions ruled by the Śakas and Parthians must have served an important role in providing a setting in which religious speculation could take place. From these regions, particularly those of western Asia, the developing Buddhist ideas and art forms were transmitted along busy trade routes to China and Inner Asia, where they left distinctive marks on those cultures as well.



Detail of 8.24.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Northwest and Northern Regions Under the Kuṣāṇas (ca. Late First Century to Third Century A.D.)

According to Chinese historical sources, the Yüeh-chih, one branch of which called themselves the Kuei-shuang, or the Kuṣāṇas (Kushans), were residents of the Kan-su region of northwestern China when they were forced westward by the expansionist policies of the Chinese Former Han dynasty. Arriving in Bactria about 135 B.C., the Kuṣāṇas had little effect there until the first century A.D. when one of their rulers, Kujūla Kadphises (Kadphises I), founded the dynasty that was ultimately to dominate the lands from the Aral Sea in southern U.S.S.R. eastward through much of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India to Bangladesh. His successor, Vima Kadphises (Kadphises II), extended the Kuṣāṇa holdings into the Indus River region, while the third member of the line, Kaniṣka I, developed the empire to its fullest extent and founded an era, the Kaniṣka era, based on his accession to the throne. Estimates concerning the date of the era in relation to

modern calendric systems have ranged from A.D. 78 to 144, but probably a date of 120 approximates the actual founding of the era,¹ being an average of the reasonable dates that have been proposed and allowing for some degree of error.

Along with political expansion went the spread of Buddhism, and in fact, one of the notable achievements of the Kuṣāṇas was the nurturing and dissemination of Buddhist cults throughout their own realms and adjacent areas, including China. Kaniṣka I in particular was a great patron of the Buddhist religion, although he may not have been a practicing Buddhist. The *stūpa* built at his capital, Kaniṣkapura (near modern Peshāwar) was one of the largest ever erected, he is reputed to have convened a Fourth Buddhist Council in Kaśmīr, and he is renowned in Buddhist literature as a major patron and protector of the Buddhist faith. Under him, Buddhist art production was given

a significant stimulus and the carving of costly stone images came into special prominence during his reign. He is also known to have patronized, or at least recognized, other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, but such actions might demonstrate political expedience as much as religious tolerance or fervent belief.

Two main spheres of Kuṣāṇa art are generally recognized, the broader Bactro-Gandhāra region in the northwest where strongly Hellenized and Iranicized works were produced, and northern India, particularly the Mathurā region, the southern capital of the Kuṣāṇas, where works in the Indic style were produced. The art of the northwest is distinct from that of the northern Indian sphere, largely due to the already existing art traditions in each area prior to the advent of Kuṣāṇa rule. However, there is a strong inter-relationship in iconography, and an exchange of motifs and even stylistic features between the two areas, although the specific circumstances of this interchange are yet to be fully explored.

A number of essential problems remain to be solved before the developments of the Kuṣāṇa period can be fully defined. The most notable of these is chronology, for the virtual lack of agreement concerning the date of the era founded by Kaniṣka allows only relative stylistic sequences to be established. Even a

relative chronology is often difficult to reconstruct, especially in the northwestern regions of the empire where Kuṣāṇa-period remains were subject to many of the same destructive forces as the art of the Śaka and Parthian periods, and so have yielded little reliable archaeological data. Thus, the study of Kuṣāṇa-period sculpture and architecture still presents many unanswered questions, including whether or not there is a distinct change in art due to the accession of the Kuṣāṇas or whether the Kuṣāṇas merely carried forward, perhaps at an accelerated pace, developments of the Śaka-Parthian period.

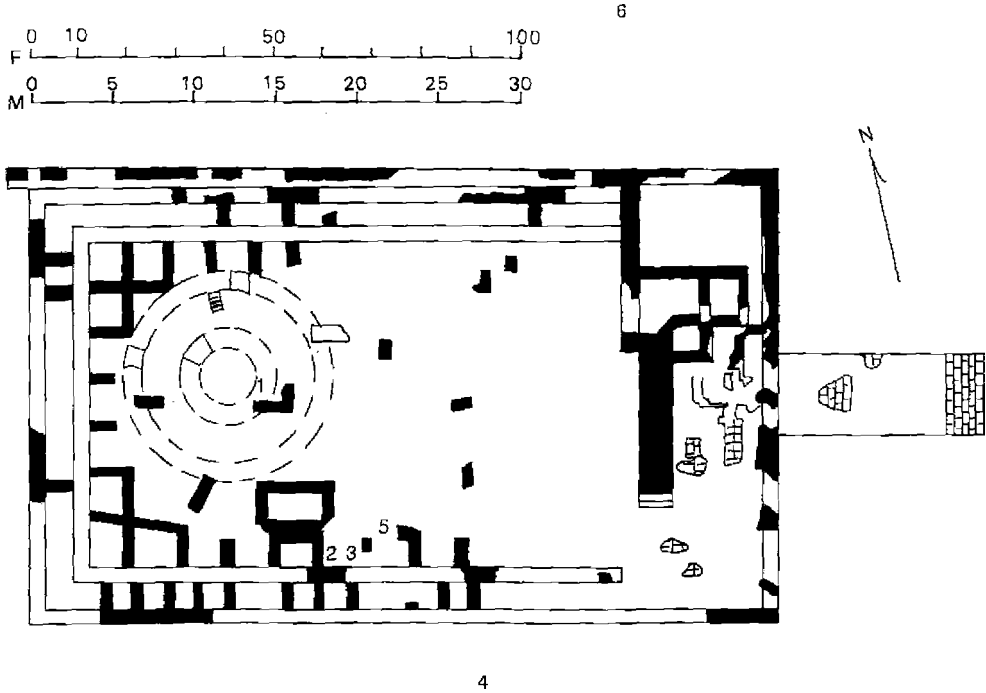
Kuṣāṇa art and patronage flourished for approximately two centuries, for Kaniṣka I's successors, Vāsiṣka, Huviṣka, and Vāsudeva I, maintained control of some Kuṣāṇa territories and continued to some extent the policies of their predecessors. However, the northwest corridor, which had allowed the Kuṣāṇas and earlier claimants into the region, also admitted challengers to Kuṣāṇa authority, including the Sassanians, Chionites, and Kidara Kuṣāṇas, and a period of turbulence in the northwest ensued. In India proper, a strong new dynasty, that of the Guptas, was established by 320, ushering in a new era of Indic unity and cultural and political florescence.

ROYAL SHRINES

An important aspect of Kuṣāṇa art is the emphasis on the emperor himself as a divine personage. This is visible in a number of contexts, including the coinage of the Kuṣāṇa rulers, which is based on Near Eastern and Greek types, in epithets in Kuṣāṇa inscriptions, and in important surviving shrines from which a cult of the divine emperor may be inferred, such as those at Māt near Mathurā and at Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan. This royal apotheosis, well developed by the period of Kuṣāṇa florescence, must have had its source in Iranian and other western Asian cultures, including those of the Hellenized peoples, the Romans, and particularly the Parthians. The Indic term, *devaputra* (Son of God), was given a new meaning by the

Kuṣāṇa kings, who used it to refer to themselves, rather than divine agents with no necessary earthly existence. This pattern, while perhaps never as flagrantly displayed by later Indic kings, may be a source for notions of divine kingship traceable in ancient India from the Gupta period onwards.

The shrine at the village of Māt, some fourteen kilometers north from Mathurā on the east bank of the Yamunā River, provides important information regarding the Kuṣāṇa cult of divine kingship. Locally known as Tōkri Tīlā, based on a variation of one of the names for the Kuṣāṇas (Tōkhāri), the shrine was probably a ceremonial site, rather than one of daily use, as suggested by its distance from the main city.



8.1. Plan of Kuṣāṇa shrine, showing findspots of statues of "Vima" (1); standing deity (2); Kaniṣka (3); standing prince (4); an inscription presumed to be from portrait of Huviṣka (5); and statue of standing female (6). Māt, near Mathurā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Kuṣāṇa period. Possibly begun during reign of Vima.

Poor documentation and less than perfect archaeological practices have led to the loss of valuable data regarding the original structure and its contents. Therefore, it is not known whether a pre-Kuṣāṇa phase existed at the site or what type of modifications the shrine might have undergone during successive periods. The large rectangular structure was built on a plinth and was oriented to the east (Fig. 8.1). At the western end, and slightly toward the northern wall, there was a sanctumlike structure consisting of two concentric, rounded walls surrounded by a number of small cells. The affinities to already popular architectural forms of ancient India, particularly *caitya* halls, can hardly be ignored. However, it is unclear whether the association is strictly formal or indicates similarities in meaning.

Only one statue was apparently undisturbed when the shrine was destroyed, perhaps at the close of the Kuṣāṇa period. Fortunately, this one

was probably the main object in the shrine as is determined by its placement near the center of the circular structure and along the longitudinal axis of the shrine, as well as its large scale (Fig. 8.2, no. 1 on the plan). The inscription on this statue has been tentatively read as giving the date of the year six of the Kaniṣka era (ca. 126) and the identification of the figure portrayed as Vemataksūmasya (who was probably Vima Kadphises), and accords him the title *mahārājo rājātīrājo devaputro Kuṣāṇapu[t]r[ō] ṣāhi*, "Great King, King of Kings, Son of God, the Kuṣāṇa Scion, the Ṣāhi."² As the central object of devotion, it is fitting that this representation shows a seated figure, while the other major statues found in the shrine depict standing persons. Nearly every element of the costume, posture, and throne must be identified as being of foreign rather than Indic type, although the workmanship and sculptural style



8.2. Vemataḥsumasya (Vima Kadphises?). From Māt shrine, Mathurā region, Uttar Pradesh, India. Kuṣāṇa period. Possibly year 6 of Kaniṣka era (ca. A.D. 126). Reddish sandstone. H: 209 cm. Mathurā Museum, Mathurā.



8.3. Kaniṣka. From Māt shrine, Mathurā region, Uttar Pradesh, India. Kuṣāṇa period. Reign of Kaniṣka or later. Ca. second century. Reddish sandstone. H: 170 cm. Mathurā Museum, Mathurā.

bespeak an Indic craftsmanship. Indic features include the treatment of the body forms in a generalized manner, the fullness of the body forms, and the use of linear detail to indicate three-dimensional elements, such as the folds on the boots. Local production is further indicated by the characteristic Sikri sandstone used in the Mathurā workshops. The figure is dressed in the Scythian rather than Indic manner, with high boots and a tuniclike garment. The seated pose with legs pendent (*pralambapādāsana*) contrasts with typical Indic poses in which the legs might be folded up in a variety of manners and instead is probably associated with western models. The throne accommodates the pendent leg posture and is again representative of a non-Indic type. Its lion supports may be royal symbols, though whether their use may be traced to earlier traditions such as Maurya art or were due to a new infusion is unknown. The figure is conceived in a frontal and stiff manner, creating an imposing effect on the viewer in

keeping with the regal status of the personage depicted.

The portrait statue of Kaniṣka (Fig. 8.3) is also identified by its inscription, which gives this Kuṣāṇa ruler the titles *mahārāja rājātirāja devaputro Kāniṣko*,³ Great King, the King of Kings, the Son of God, Kaniṣka. It was found at location number three on the diagram, but this was not its original position in the Māt shrine. Although this life-size statue is only slightly shorter than that thought to represent Vima, it is on a much smaller scale since the figure is in a standing rather than seated pose. Kaniṣka is dressed as a Scythian nobleman, with boots and a stiff tunic that creates an angular, almost geometric effect. The shape of the garment is not determined by the forms of the body beneath it but seems to have its own shape, contrasting strongly to the diaphanous and clinging styles that pervade Indic art. Most of the surface of the sculpture is plain and smooth, although some surface detail is present, such as



8.4. Head. From Mathurā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Kuṣāṇa period. Ca. second century. Reddish sandstone. H: 43.2 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

incised drapery lines or the beadlike hem of the tunic. A strict frontality pervades the statue; it seems to be almost totally two-dimensional in conception and is awkward when seen from a three-quarter or profile view, suggesting that the work would have been placed against a wall. The splayed feet further contribute to the flat effect of the image. Kaniṣka's military prowess is clearly implied by his weapon attributes, a mace resting on the ground balanced by his right hand, and a sword firmly grasped in the left. As fitting symbols of a Kuṣāṇa ruler, they suggest his power and his ability to enforce his control. Although religious or other abstract symbolism has been inferred from these items, it is yet to be determined if the presence of the weapons indicates more than a normal part of the formal dress required for state portraits. An interesting feature of the mace is the depiction of the Indic *makara* carved near the bottom.

Both the "Vima" and Kaniṣka statues were apparently willfully damaged at some time and

the original heads are now lost. However, a head of a man found at Mathurā is similar to damaged examples from Māt and demonstrates a possible head type for the figures (Fig. 8.4). The face alone is not remarkably different from those to be seen on typical Jain and Buddhist sculptures of the period from Mathurā, as may be noted in the large eyes, slightly smiling mouth, projecting eyebrows, and smooth, rounded contours of the face. The distinctive feature is the hat, a pointed variety associated with the Scythians and not native to ancient India. The strings of beads or pearls, which decorate the hat, and which also appear on the hem of Kaniṣka's garment, probably reflect actual costume styles of the period. The pearl motif eventually takes on symbolic significance in the Indic and Inner Asian context, where it occurs commonly in architectural designs and as part of halos and other elements in later art.

The Māt shrine probably underwent at least two periods of construction, although it is unclear which elements of the shrine belong to which phase. One period of construction is hinted at in the inscription on the "Vima" statue, which reveals that the shrine was built by one Bakanapati, an individual who is otherwise unknown. The inscription does not indicate whether the monument was begun during the reign of Vima, or whether the work was started later, for example, during the reign of Vima's son and successor, Kaniṣka. A refurbishing of the shrine during the lifetime of Huviṣka, the son of Kaniṣka and grandson of Vima, was related in an inscription on a now destroyed statue of Huviṣka that was also found at Māt (no. 5 on the plan).⁴ Therefore, it is likely that much of the shrine was built within a period of two generations, or less. Because the nature and purpose of the shrine is unknown, it is uncertain whether new statues were continually added during the reigns of new rulers, or whether the monument took an unchanging form after a certain time.

In spite of the apparent importance of portraits and the cult of the god-king in Kuṣāṇa art, the vast majority of architectural and artistic remains from the period were created in the service of the Buddhist religion. As in

the case of royal portraiture, certain similarities between the art of Mathurā, and other Indian sites, and that of the Bactro-Gandhāra region in the northwest may be cited. However, these are often similarities of subject matter rather than style. It is useful, therefore, to study each artistic sphere in its own context as has been done traditionally. It should be noted that aside

from any stylistic or iconographic distinctions between the two traditions, sculptures of each school are clearly identifiable in general by the stone out of which they are carved. Mathurā sculptures are characterized by their reddish pink, often mottled, sandstone, and the north-western stone pieces are notable for their greyish or bluish schist.

THE BACTRO-GANDHĀRA REGION: ARCHITECTURE

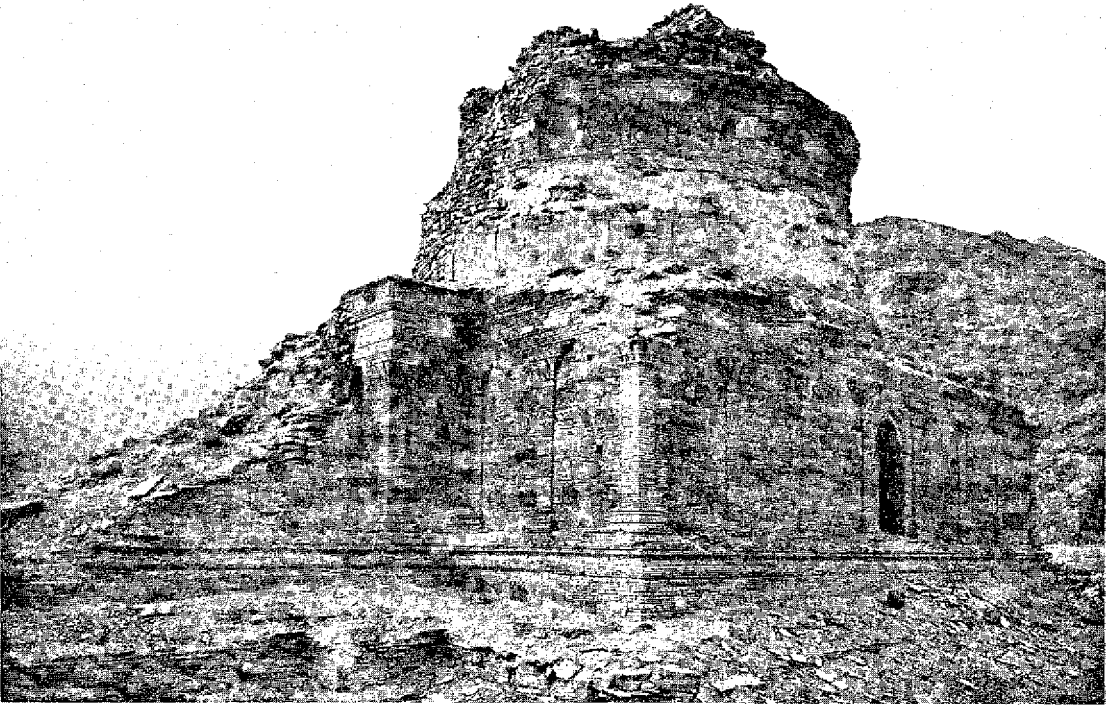
Although Śākyamuni Buddha never visited the northwestern Indic regions, the Buddhist religion was introduced into the area as early as the reign of Aśoka. By the Kuṣāṇa period, the region had many flourishing centers of Buddhism. The rich cultural mixture of the area may have greatly stimulated developments within the religion and art, though as in the case of the Śāka-Parthian period, it is difficult to assess the impact of non-Indic influences.

In spite of the fact that thousands of monks and numerous monastic establishments were spread throughout this region during the Kuṣāṇa period, little remains architecturally to tell of this former prominence. The *stūpa* and *vihāra* at Guldara, Afghanistan, were part of a small, isolated, but typical monastery of approximately the second century A.D. Largely as a result of its isolation, the *stūpa* has survived relatively intact, although the stucco that once adorned its surface has been lost (Fig. 8.5). Thus, it provides a splendid example of what must have been a fairly typical structure as well as Kuṣāṇa masonry at its best. The structure is oriented to the east, as indicated by a stairway on that side, and consists of a square base and round *stūpa* above. Pilasters, niches, and archways comprise the main surface decoration of the monument; in the center of the south, west, and north sides of the plinth there are niches framed by pilasters and capped by ogee-shaped arches (Fig. 8.6). Socket holes in the niches, and in blind arcades on the plinth, would have been used for wooden brackets to support stucco sculptures. Although none has survived, it is probable that the images would have been of considerable size, judging from the sizes of

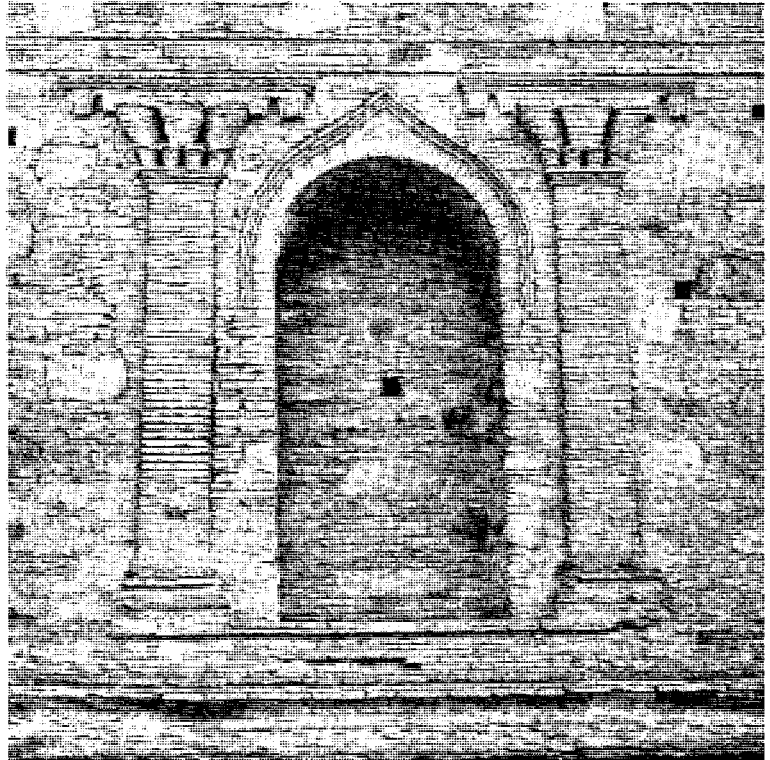
the niches. The uppermost level of the *stūpa* as it is preserved today has a design of alternating ogee and truncated triangle arches. The pilasters on the *stūpa* suggest an ultimate source in the classicistic Corinthian capital, and with the use of the Indic ogee arch, an obvious amalgam has been achieved. However, such a product is undoubtedly generations removed from a direct western source.

The diaper-masonry technique used to construct the *stūpa* was brought into the region by the Parthians. It consists of flat slabs of sedimentary rock piled in even, horizontal rows, with such elements as the pilasters and their capitals protruding just slightly from the main surface of the structure. Each element has been cut to the appropriate size and has been carefully set in position, giving the impression of a huge mosaic. The larger blocks of irregular shape give support and stability to the wall. The interior of the structure was rubble fill, and thus, the masonry served primarily as a facing.

The site of Takht-i-Bāhī in Pakistan, once a flourishing center in Gandhāra proper, revealed extensive monastic remains during archaeological excavation, including several courtyards with cells, *stūpas*, and monastic dwelling units (Fig. 8.7). Numerous sculptures have also been found at the site, but most were removed without proper documentation. Situated on the spur of a hill, the monastic complex, built on a series of levels, commands a dramatic view of the valley below. The main area consists of a *stūpa* court (courtyard A on the plan), which is connected by a considerable flight of stairs to a lower court (courtyard B) and is opposite a *vihāra* (courtyard C). Courtyards A and B are com-



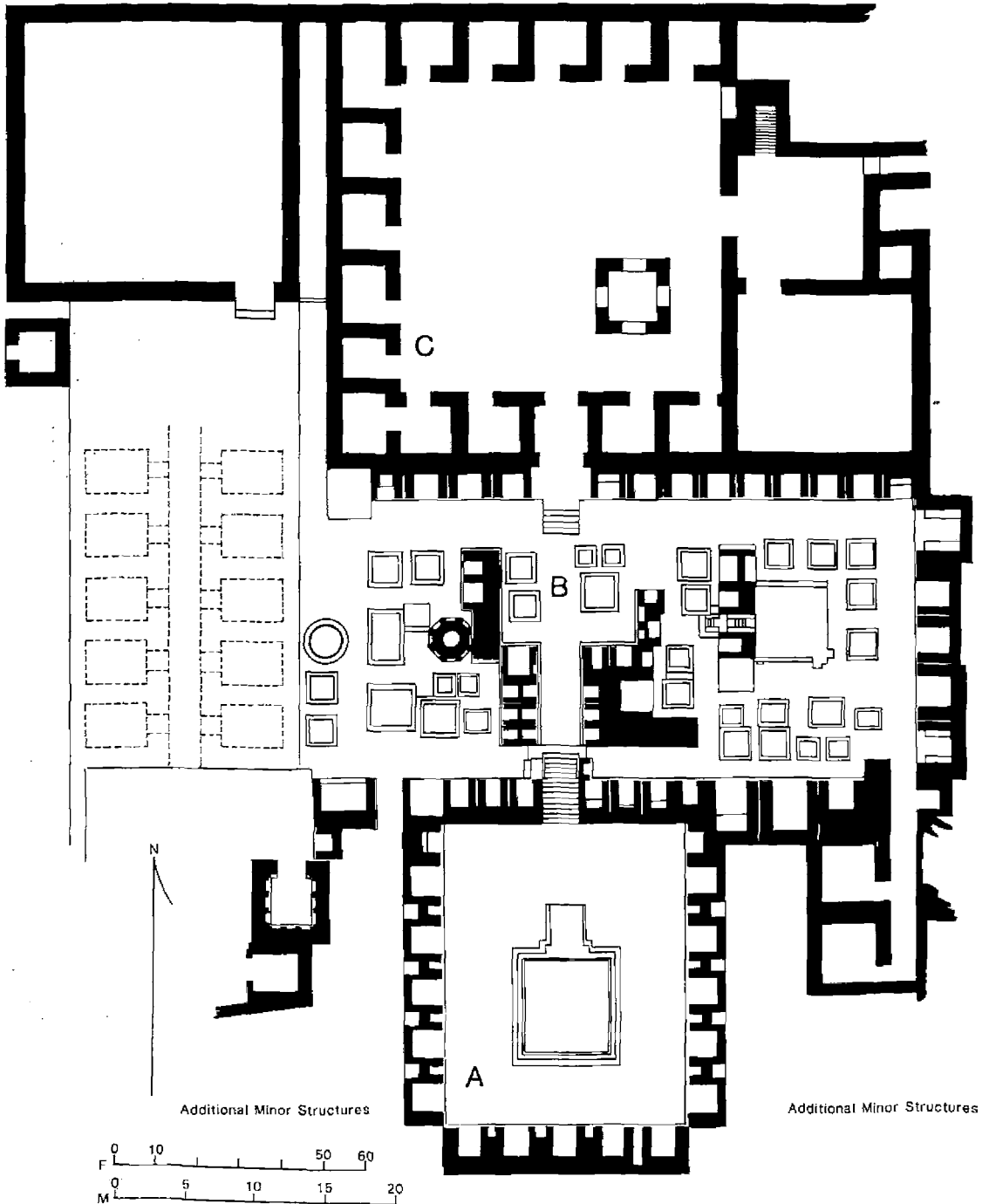
8.5. *Stūpa*, from northeast. Guldara, Afghanistan. Kuşāna period. Ca. second century.



8.6. Detail, *stūpa* exterior. Guldara, Afghanistan. Kuşāna period. Ca. second century.

pletely surrounded by niches in which images were placed. However, since virtually none of the sculptures was found *in situ*, the original

iconographic program is lost. The arrangement of the elements of the monastic complex is determined to some extent by the topography



8.7. Plan of monastery. Takht-i-Bāhī, Pakistan. Kuṣāṇa period.

of the mountain, but in any case, is distinct from the arrangements to be found in contemporary schools of Indic monastic architecture, such as those in Āndhra Pradesh (Fig. 9.27).

Although the main *stūpa* in the *stūpa* court at Takht-i-Bāhī is destroyed except for its base, it is possible to infer something of its original appearance by studying smaller votive *stūpas* that have been found in the Bactro-Gandhāra region, such as a stone example from an unknown site (Fig. 8.8). It consists of a square base upon which rests a round *stūpa* rising in several stages. The *harmikā* has five stages, each slightly larger than the one below, and the whole is topped by a series of *chattras*, apparently originally seven in number. In later Buddhist iconography, the levels of the *harmikā* and *chattras* refer to the various stages, called *bhūmis*, of the practitioner on his path to enlightenment, though whether such meaning is implicit at this date is unknown. The exterior of the *stūpa* is adorned with sculptural representations, including a series of eight scenes from the life of Śākyamuni on the base, a row of seated Buddhas on the first level of the *stūpa*, and cherublike figures and plant forms above. These are surmounted by a geometric frieze just below the rise of the *stūpa* dome, which is decorated to resemble a lotus flower. The so-called false dormer on the front of the *stūpa* contains three scenes arranged vertically, two depictions of a Buddha (probably Śākyamuni) with attendants and, at the top, a representation of the Buddha's begging bowl. The overall shape of the *stūpa* is much more



8.8. Votive *stūpa*. From Bactro-Gandhāra region, Pakistan. Kušāna period. Schist. H: ca. 140 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

elongated and vertical than earlier examples in ancient India, such as the monuments at Sāñcī, and this seems to be characteristic of the region and period.

THE BACTRO-GANDHĀRA REGION: SCULPTURE

Although most sculptures from the Bactro-Gandhāra and related regions share certain stylistic and iconographic features, a tremendous variety may be seen in these works. Not only do chronological factors and workshop traditions account for these variations, but also, the hand of the individual artist must have been responsible for differences in sculptural form. Only a few sculptures from these regions bear inscribed dates, and those that do are not easily interpreted. The archaeological contexts for works

of art have often been destroyed, further compounding the problem of delineating the chronological developments in the art. Many works have been removed from their original sites without proper recording of their findspots, and thus it is even difficult to define what must have been regional schools within the broad context of the region. It is likely that each of the major kingdoms, including Bactria, Kapiśa, and Gandharā along with others like Swāt, had distinct and recognizable schools of art, within

which may have been many subschools, though these may never be fully known. In general, sculptures are characterized by naturalism in body forms, drapery, and pictorial scale, revealing a debt to Hellenistic, Roman, and other western art modes.

Though few metal works survive from the Kuṣāṇa period, metal must have been an important medium of artistic production as suggested by the copious coinage of the Kuṣāṇa kings. One famous but highly controversial metal piece from the Kuṣāṇa period is the so-called Kaniṣka reliquary (Fig. 8.9). This small metal object was found in a chamber just off center in the now destroyed "Kaniṣka" *stūpa* at Shāh-jī-ki-Ḍherī, at ancient Kaniṣkapura, Kaniṣka's capital, just outside of modern Peshāwar. The *stūpa*, with its great tower and huge size (measuring nearly one hundred meters in diameter), must have been a significant achievement of Kuṣāṇa architecture and was famous centuries after its creation, as indicated in accounts as late as about A.D. 1000. Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese traveler who visited the site in the seventh century, described the *stūpa* and related a narrative concerning how it had come to be built.⁵ The size and importance of the structure suggest that it was built by Kaniṣka himself, a suggestion supported by the name of Kaniṣka inscribed on the reliquary once contained within and the finding of one of his coins with the reliquary.⁶ However, the relative crudeness of the reliquary, along with the fact that the kingly figure depicted on it does not resemble representations of Kaniṣka on his coinage, have led to the speculation that at least the reliquary belonged to the reign of either Kaniṣka II or Kaniṣka III.⁷ Recent detailed studies of the reliquary and the monuments at Shāh-jī-ki-Ḍherī, however, present strongly convincing arguments that these remains were products of the reign of Kaniṣka (I).⁸

On the lid of the vessel are three figures, an unidentified Buddha seated on a protruding lotus flower, and Indra and Brahmā as his attendants. Both Indra and Brahmā display *añjali mudrā* with their hands. Indra wears his distinctive crown and Brahmā is dressed in ascetic's garb with his hair arranged in a *jaṭā-*

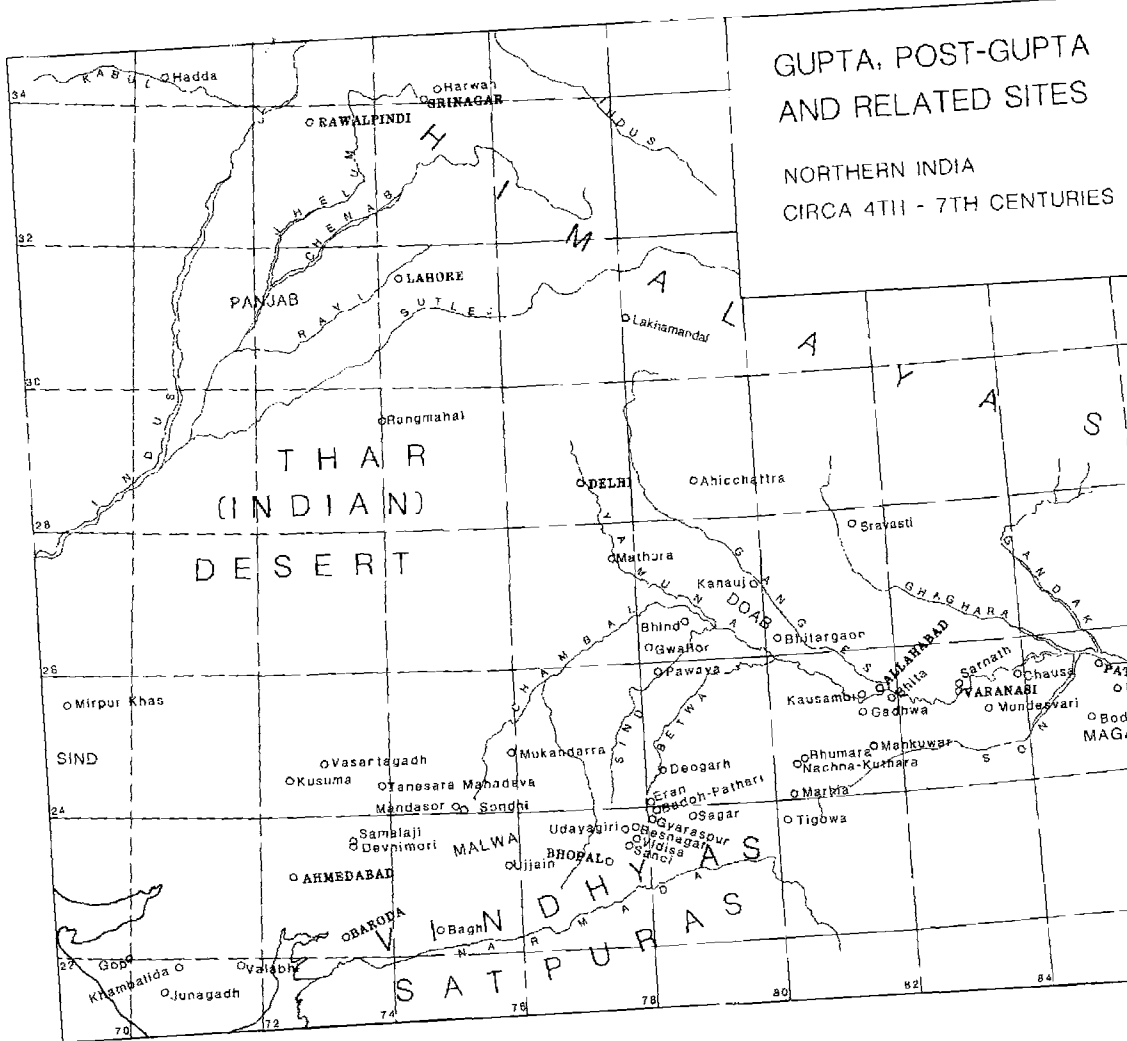


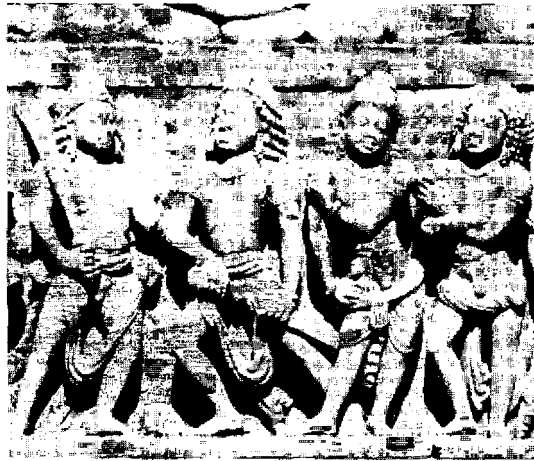
8.9. "Kaniṣka" reliquary. From *stūpa* at Shāh-jī-ki-Ḍherī (ancient Kaniṣkapura), near Peshāwar, Pakistan. Kuṣāṇa period. Reign of Kaniṣka I or later. Ca. second century. Metal. H: 19 cm. Peshāwar Museum, Peshāwar.

mukūṭa. All three figures are nimbused, although the Buddha's halo is much larger than the others, and has petal-form rays emanating from the center. The drapery worn by all three figures is heavily lined with ridges to represent the folds of the cloth in a manner typical of Kuṣāṇa-period works from the Bactro-Gandhāra region. On the body of the casket, a garland carried by erotelike *vidyādharas* bears figures of three seated Buddhas. One of them is flanked by depictions of Indra and Brahmā in postures of adoration nearly identical to the figures atop the vessel, although the positions of the two gods are reversed. Opposite this Buddha figure is a representation of a standing Kuṣāṇa prince, perhaps Kaniṣka, who also

GUPTA, POST-GUPTA AND RELATED SITES

NORTHERN INDIA
CIRCA 4TH - 7TH CENTURIES





Detail of 10.29.

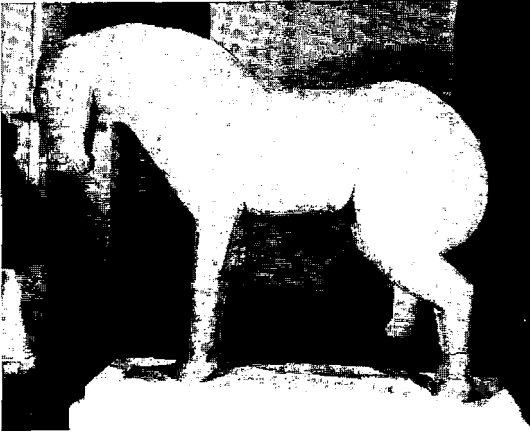
CHAPTER TEN

The Gupta Period (Fourth to Sixth Centuries)

Under the kings of the Gupta dynasty, an empire was formed that, with tributary states, dominated most of northern and north-central India for approximately two hundred years, from about A.D. 319, when the Gupta era was proclaimed,¹ until the sixth century. The political strength of the Guptas and the cultural florescence that they apparently fostered are often compared to aspects of the Maurya dynasty, and, indeed, it has been suggested that the Guptas consciously looked back to the Maurya period for a model upon which to base their own empire.² Candragupta I (ca. 319–335) was probably the first to attain significant power and fame for his line, partially achieved through a marriage alliance with the Licchavis of north-eastern India and Nepal. Under his son and successor, Samudragupta (ca. 335–376), the empire expanded to include newly conquered territories as well as numerous tributary states in northern and north-central India.

Few works of art are known that may be positively assigned to the reigns of the early

Gupta kings. However, an unusual, larger than life-size stone sculpture of a horse (Fig. 10.1) is generally thought to be of this period, and, on the tenuous basis of its very weathered inscription,³ has been said to represent a sacrificial horse used by Samudragupta for one of the *āsvamedha* rituals he performed, an event also commemorated in his *āsvamedha* coin type. The horse is carved of beige sandstone and was found at Khairigarh in Uttar Pradesh, very near the Nepal border, a region important to the early Gupta and Licchavi alliance. Its style typifies what must be considered the transitional phase between the Kuṣāṇa-period works of the Mathurā and related schools and the developed Gupta styles of the fifth century. A stiff quality pervades the work, and the articulation of joints and the transitions from one part of the body to the next seem abrupt, much like formulations of human figures at Mathurā and other related sites during the Kuṣāṇa period, and contrasting strongly with the naturalism of animal sculpture evidenced under the Mauryas. Even though it



10.1. Horse. From Khairigarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period (reign of Samudragupta?). Ca. fourth century. Beige sandstone. H: about 200 cm. State Museum, Lucknow.



is entirely free-standing, the horse is properly viewed in profile. Its lack of implicit movement in space or torsion relates it to the earlier Kuṣāṇa formulations as well as other fourth-century examples.

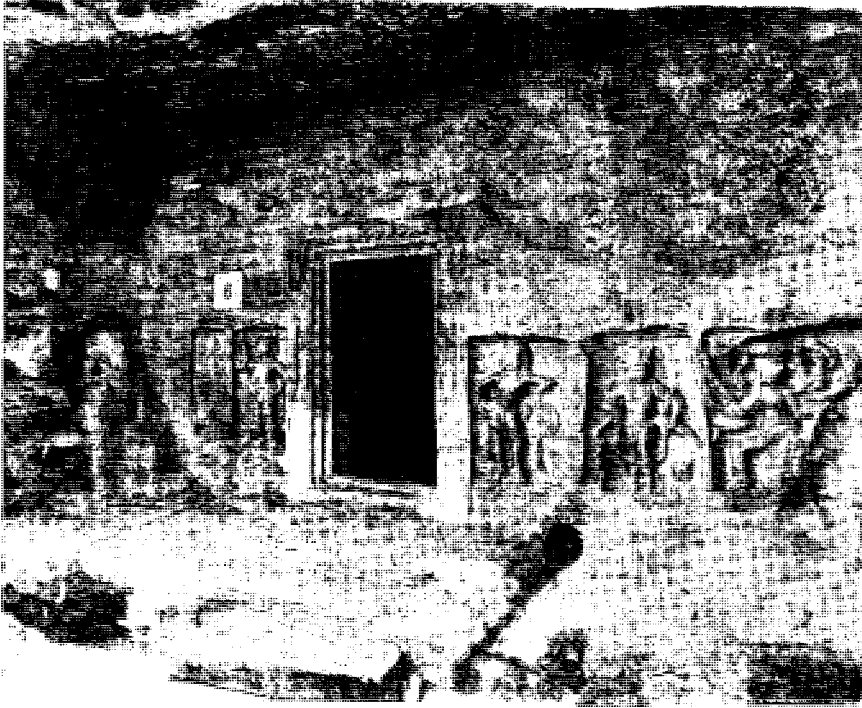
Three Jain images found at Durjanpura, near Vidiṣā in north-central India, provide further important information about art under the early Guptas. They are dated by their inscriptions to the reign of a previously little known Gupta king, Rāmagupta (ca. 376–380),⁴ and thus constitute an important document of Gupta history as well. All three sculptures were nearly identical in their original state, although each is partially damaged. The best preserved (Fig. 10.2) shows a central figure sitting in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* with his hands in *dhyāna mudrā*, attended by two *caurī* bearers. A halo comprised of a scalloped flame motif around the perimeter reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa formulations of the Mathurā school and containing an open lotus blossom, appears behind his head. The pedestal includes a wheel in the center and lions at the corners. In all, the configuration is strikingly similar to that of Buddhist and Jain images of the Kuṣāṇa period. But like the preceding horse sculpture, these late fourth-century images represent a transitional stage between the Kuṣāṇa works of Mathurā and related sites and the mature Gupta idiom. Abrupt, angular contours to the bodies and rather squat proportions recall the Kuṣāṇa idiom and yet, a movement toward what is considered the Gupta ideal is suggested in the ornamentation of the halo.

10.2. *Tirthāṅkara*. From Durjanpura, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period, reign of Rāmagupta (ca. A.D. 376–80). Beige sandstone. H: 66 cm. Archaeological Museum, Vidiṣā.

HINDU ART OF THE EARLY GUPTA PERIOD

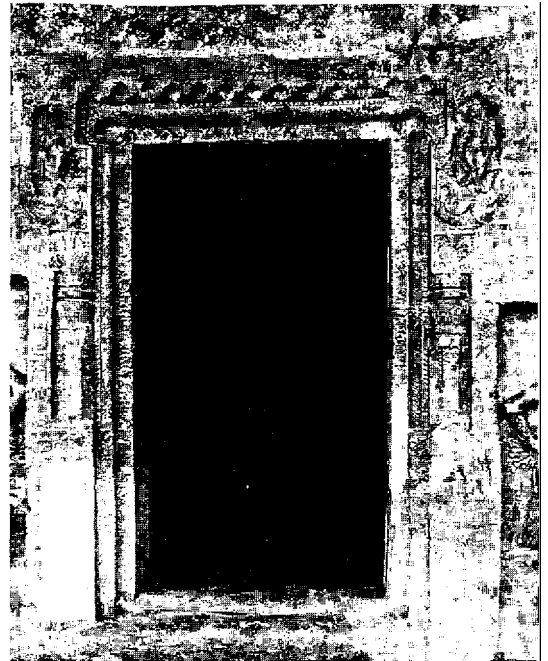
The Vidiṣā region was an important early Gupta art center, for in addition to the three pieces from Rāmagupta's reign, numerous other remains have been located in the area. In particular, art seems to have flourished there during

the reign of Candragupta II (ca. 380–415), the successor of Rāmagupta, who made important military campaigns in the region. At Udayagiri, only a few kilometers from Vidiṣā, twenty rock-cut chambers were excavated during the



10.3. Facade of Cave 6. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Gupta era 82 (A.D. 401).

Gupta period, two of which bear inscriptions from the reign of Candragupta II. These caves are vital documents since they constitute the earliest intact body of Hindu art in India, and demonstrate that by the early fifth century many Hindu iconographic formulae were already well established. Securely dated because an inscription on the facade mentions Candragupta II and the year 82 (Gupta era), equivalent to A.D. 401,⁵ Cave 6 (Fig. 10.3) consists of a small chamber preceded by a rock-cut veranda. The off-center doorway has decorated jambs and lintel, half-length pilasters at the sides, and representations of two goddesses standing atop *makaras* above (Fig. 10.4). These figures are precursors to the depictions of the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, who stand atop the *makara* and tortoise respectively. Here, however, the *vāhanas* are identical, although the apparent individuality of the two goddesses is suggested by the use of the trees above the figures, for the one to the left is associated with a mango tree, the other with an *aśoka* tree. Two guardian



10.4. Doorway of Cave 6. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Gupta era 82 (A.D. 401).



10.5. *Dvārapāla* to right of Cave 6 entrance. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Gupta era 82 (A.D. 401).



10.6. *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* on facade of Cave 6. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Gupta era 82 (A.D. 401).

figures (*dvārapālas*) flank the door, each standing in a slightly accentuated posture with the arm nearest the door held at the hip, the other leaning upon his weapon (Fig. 10.5). The husky bodies and diaphanous lower garments typify the early Gupta style and demonstrate a stylistic progression from the images of the reign of Rāmagupta some twenty-five years earlier. In spite of the muscular physiques reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa precedents, the figures show a new smoothness to the forms of their bodies, foreshadowing the more graceful depictions of the late fifth century. The elaborate coiffures are also characteristic of developed Gupta forms, emphasizing delicate locks of hair arranged in luxuriant profusion atop the head.

Other figures sculpted into the front wall of the cave represent various Hindu deities and provide perhaps the earliest surviving example of a unified iconographic program in Hindu art (Fig. 10.3). A representation of Gaṇeśa, the

elephant-headed deity, is carved into the left wall adjacent to the facade of the cave and an image of *Durgā* in her *Mahiṣāsūramardīnī* form appears at the right (Fig. 10.6). Between Gaṇeśa and the guardian to the left of the door is a representation of Viṣṇu, and there is another image of this god between *Durgā* and the right guardian. Thus, in spite of the spatial imbalance between the reliefs to the left and right of the off-center door, and the placement of Gaṇeśa on the adjacent wall, the arrangement itself is symmetrical.

Gaṇeśa, who is the son of Pārvatī (Śiva's wife), is easily recognized by his corpulency and elephant head, the latter supposedly acquired when Śiva mistakenly chopped off Gaṇeśa's head and replaced it with the head of the first creature he happened upon after the unfortunate incident. As the "Overcomer of Obstacles" in Hindu thought, Gaṇeśa is invariably invoked at the beginning of worship to help the devotee



10.7. Viṣṇu on facade of Cave 6. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Gupta era 82 (A.D. 401).

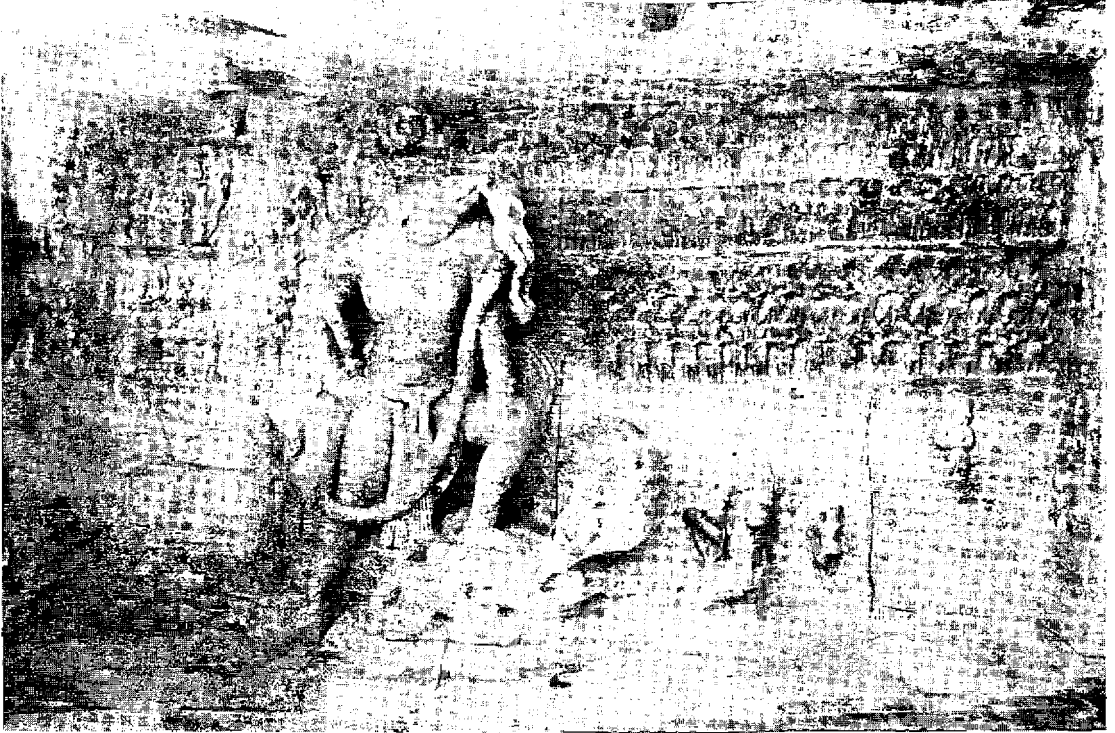
along his spiritual path. As such, his image usually occurs at the entrance to a shrine or temple, on the side where the devotee begins the circumambulation rite. It is likely, then, that the worshiper at this cave was to begin his devotions at the left of the facade.

In contrast, Durgā in her Mahiṣāsura-mardini form symbolizes the concept of religious attainment or victory and normally appears on the side of a temple that the viewer encounters after worship is complete, that is, after the "victory" is achieved. In the Mahiṣāsura-mardini story, an *asura*, a type of demon, named Mahiṣa was destroyed many times but kept reappearing in new forms until he was finally defeated by Durgā while he was a buffalo. The buffalo is a symbol associated with death in Hindu thought, for Yama, the god of death, rides a buffalo. It may be suggested that Mahiṣa's numerous incarnations symbolize the realm of *samsāra*, the cycle of rebirths from which the devotee

seeks release. Durgā's defeat of the *asura*, then, in the buffalo form, might indicate the victory over *samsāra* and the defeat of death, that is, the achievement of immortality. Her placement opposite Gaṇeśa, whose worship enables the devotee to begin this process, is therefore fitting. Indeed, the pairing of these two deities at the beginning and end of the circumambulatory path in later Hindu temple architecture is common. That this symbolism was apparently already present in the earliest extant corpus of Hindu art suggests that, as in the case of Buddha and bodhisattva imagery, a lengthy period of development occurred prior to its appearance in stone.

The Udayagiri image shows Durgā in a twelve-armed form, indicative of the trend toward increased use of multiple body parts in representations of divinities during this period. In her hands she holds weapons provided by various Hindu gods, who separately had been unable to defeat the buffalo *asura*, who is shown in this relief being upended by Durgā. Her emergence as the supreme goddess, greater than the sum of all the male gods whose borrowed weapons she holds, prefigures the growing emphasis on female goddesses and personifications that is prominent in much of post-Gupta art and perhaps indicates a continuity with the prehistoric emphasis on the female. In style, the rather stocky forms of her body and the details of her costume agree with the early fifth-century date provided by the inscription placed nearly directly above her head.

The two representations of Viṣṇu on the facade are similar but not identical. Both stand frontally posed with all four arms placed in a lowered position, as is commonly seen in Viṣṇu representations prior to the eighth century. In the case of the representation to the right of the door, his two rear hands are placed on the personified figures of two of his attributes (*āyudhapuruṣa*) the *gadā* (Gadādevī) and *cakṛa* (Cakrapuruṣa) (Fig. 10.7). The *gadā* (mace) symbolizes the power of knowledge, which destroys all that opposes it, while the *cakṛa* (discus) connotes the universal mind. In both sculptures, Viṣṇu wears a high crown and a *vanamālā* (garland of the forest) that reaches



10.8. General view of Cave 5 ("Varaha cave"). Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. early fifth century.

his knees, both of which are standard elements of Vaiṣṇavite iconography. In style, the heritage of Kuṣāṇa forms is still present in the stocky, muscular treatment of the bodies. Each figure on the facade is set into a recess, rectilinear, except in the case of Gaṇeśa, and suggestive of the later practice of placing major icons on the exterior of temples in niches. In later temples, these niches sometimes became miniature versions of the whole temple, but here, only the concept of the separation of each figure is present.

The right wall adjacent to the cave facade bears a niche with images of the "seven mothers" (*saptamātṛkās*), consorts of several principal Hindu gods, who helped Śiva destroy multiple representations of the *asura* Andhaka. They are fittingly located opposite Gaṇeśa for, like Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, they symbolize victory, in this case that of spiritual wisdom (*vidyā*) over ignorance (*avidyā*). The placement of these figures, while quite standard in later Hindu art,

is unprecedented in extant monuments. However, the religious concepts seem well developed by this time and it must be assumed that the inclusion of the *mātṛkās* and their relationship to the Gaṇeśa and Durgā images documents an already established iconographic pattern of the pre-Gupta period.

One of the most important caves at Udayagiri is Cave 5. Its proximity to Cave 6, which was excavated during the reign of Candragupta II, and to Cave 7, which bears an inscription suggesting that it also was excavated during the reign of Candragupta II,⁶ is strong evidence that Cave 5, the Varaha cave, was created at the same approximate time, since the three seem to form a cluster. Properly speaking, this excavation is more a niche than a cave, its main feature being a large-scale representation of Varaha, the boar form of Viṣṇu, with accompanying scenes (Fig. 10.8). Eventually, Varaha came to be worshiped as one of the ten major incarnations of Viṣṇu, each of which had the purpose

of carrying out the god's role as the preserver of the universe. Here, Varāha appears in his Nṛ-Varāha form, with the body of a man but the head of a boar. He lifts the earth (personified as the female goddess, Pṛthvī) with his tusks, thus saving her from submersion under the ocean. The precariousness of her position as sculpted in this example reinforces the dramatic aspects of the moment. Beneath Varāha's left foot is a *nāga* whose submission to the deity is shown by his *añjali mudrā*, a gesture of respect. The body of Varāha shows the same husky muscularity that may be traced to Kuṣāṇa precedents of northern India, especially of the Mathurā school, and yet correlates fairly closely with textual sources (which may be later in date) that describe Varāha's broad shoulders and smooth, beautiful body. Varāha wears the *vanamālā* characteristic of Viṣṇu, and a lotus appears above his head. The iconographic scheme is completed on the back and side walls of the niche, although Varāha remains dominant due to his large size and three-dimensionality in relation to the others. Water, that is, the ocean, is portrayed by a series of wavy lines on the three walls, and the sages who praised Varāha and acknowledged him as the supreme deity appear in rows on the back wall. The river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, are depicted on both side walls.

This impressive relief may be read on a number of levels, as is generally the case in religious art of South Asia. In one sense, it might be taken literally as the story of the timely rescue of the earth by Varāha. However, Varāha is also the name of a type of Vedic ritual. Thus, the sculptural representation might be an allusion to the performance of the Varāha rite as a means of extricating the world from a "deluge of iniquity"⁷ as opposed to an actual flood. The supplication of the earth goddess, Pṛthvī, to Varāha upon his descent into the ocean, as given in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, resembles the words an individual devotee might say in worship, such as "elevate me now from this place, as thou hast upraised me in days of old,"⁸ further suggesting such a parallel.

On still another level, the Varāha composition may be seen to have associations with the secular realm. The Gaṅgā and Yamunā figures on the

right wall of the niche are shown on their respective vehicles against representations of the two streams that meet in a confluence. It has been suggested⁹ that this may be a graphic representation of the region of Madhyadeśa, the heartland of the rising Gupta empire, through which the two rivers flow. In their role as protectors of their lands, symbolized by the Gaṅgā-Yamunā relief, the Gupta kings are similar to Varāha, the rescuer of the earth, and it is possible that such a concept is inherent in the popularly shown Varāha images of the Gupta period. Perhaps Varāha here symbolizes Candragupta himself.

These various interpretations of the Varāha relief should not be viewed as contradictory or mutually exclusive. Multiple levels are often intended by the creators of South Asian art, who use this type of allegory not only to distinguish the exoteric from the esoteric, but also because each individual worshiper is at his own stage of progress toward the religious goal and, as such, a single meaning might not be appropriate to all. Parallel constructions on multiple levels exist in Sanskrit literature and are used in religious texts and dramas with an identical purpose.

A one-faced *liṅga* (*ekamukhaliṅga*) is the main object of worship in Cave 4 at Udayagiri (Fig. 10.9), obviously a Śaivite cave, but the date of this work is not easily fixed, as there is no inscription associated with it. However, the simplicity of the treatment of the face, the careful depiction of the separate locks of hair, and the relatively modest amount of jewelry suggest that it was made in the first quarter of the fifth century. The round face with rather heavy features is reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa types rather than suggestive of the more fluid, subtly modeled forms of the late fifth century. There is perhaps no more dramatic symbol of the power of Śiva than the image of the *liṅga*, or phallus, juxtaposed with a representation of one or more human heads, for it implies the unification of the sexual energy, representative of the entire creative energy of the universe, with the intellect. It becomes, in a variety of different forms, one of the most expressive symbols in Hindu art.

The varieties of Hindu subjects seen at Udaya-



10.9. One-faced *linga* in Cave 4. Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. first quarter fifth century.



10.10. Hari-Hara. From Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. early fifth century. Beige sandstone. H: 157.7 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

giri are unusual among the early Gupta remains because their contexts are preserved. However, isolated Gupta-period finds at a number of other sites reveal a vast repertoire of Hindu deities widespread by the fifth century. Most of these conceptions reveal little of their formative phases, appearing as fully developed icons when they were first preserved in stone examples. This suggests that, like the Udayagiri sculptures, these works represent religious concepts that had been developing for a long time, and perhaps had been depicted in works of art that have not survived.

An approximately human-size representation of the god Hari-Hara, the syncretic union of Śiva and Viṣṇu, from Madhya Pradesh may be dated to the first part of the fifth century on the basis of its resemblance to the more securely dated Udayagiri sculptures (Fig. 10.10). The muscular but smooth body, full face, and rather simple ornamentation are indications of this

early Gupta-period date. Iconographically, the image is of interest as it shows the god who is half Śiva (proper right side) and half Viṣṇu (proper left side). Not only are the two halves of the headdress differentiated but presumably the attributes originally held in the hands would have been appropriate to each of the deities. The erect *linga* characteristic of Śiva is represented on the proper right side only. Such an image indicates not only a well-developed iconography for each of the gods, but a stage of religious development in which both had been reconciled into a syncretic statement—that of ultimate unity in spite of apparent duality.

Kṛṣṇa, best known later as the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu, also appears in sculptures from the early fifth century. A representation of him from Varāṇasī depicts him as Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhara, or Bearer of Govardhana, in which the deity is shown holding Mount Govardhana with his left hand, like a canopy to protect the inhabitants of



10.11. Kṛṣṇa Lifting Mount Govardhana. From Arra, Vārānasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. early fifth century. Beige sandstone. H: 212 cm. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Vārānasi.

Vṛindāvana from a deluge sent by Indra, who had been angered by the community's inattention to him in their devotions (Fig. 10.11). Kṛṣṇa's name (The Black One) is a probable reference to his Dravidian origin. His role as cowherd and protector of the pastoral people suggests further affinities to the cow-worshipping people of pre-Vedic Indic society. His emergence during the Gupta period as a popular god reflects the resurfacing of an ancient concept rather than an innovation. In form, the relationship of this figure to early fifth-century images and Kuṣāṇa-period precedents, like those from Mathurā, is clear, especially in the body forms and details of the costume.¹⁰

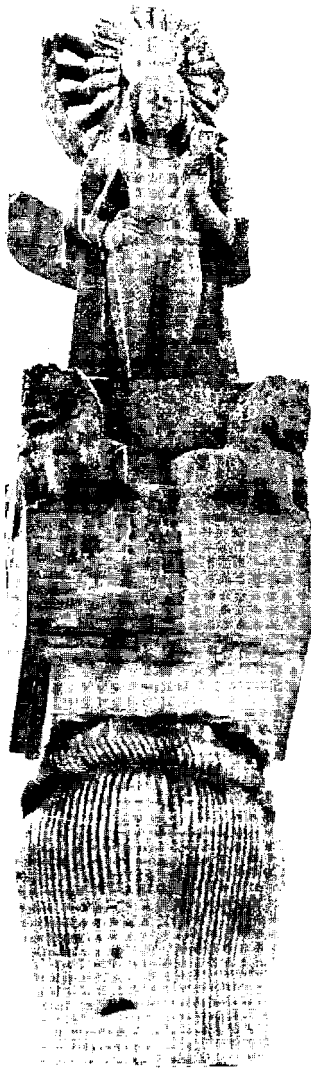
At Eran, a Vaiṣṇavite site approximately eighty kilometers from Vidiśā, a great complex of temples and accompanying sculptures was produced during the Gupta period. Inscriptions found at Eran (ancient Erakaina) document artistic activity there from the reign of Samudra-



10.12. Nṛ-Varāha. From Eran, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. early fifth century. Beige sandstone. H: 186 cm. Śāgar University Museum, Śāgar.

gupta to the period of the Hūṇa invasion around the beginning of the sixth century.¹¹ A large sculpture of Varāha from Eran suggests sculptural ties to artistic developments at nearby Udayagiri during the early fifth century (Fig. 10.12). The power of the deity is expressed in the full, heavy forms of the body and the solidity of his pose, which must have easily earned him the confidence of his human devotees.

Later in date is a pillar from Eran bearing a double-sided image of Garuḍa dated in the year 165 (Gupta era, equivalent to A.D. 484 (Fig. 10.13)).¹² The specific date, given as the twelfth day of the light fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha (June-July), indicates that astrological considerations were taken into account in selecting the time of the dedication, since Āṣāḍha is associated with the summer solstice and the lengthening days, which are considered to be auspicious, as is the bright half of the lunar month. Although this aspect of the dedication



of temples and religious sculptures has been virtually ignored, since scholars are often more concerned with the year (and hence the chronological implications) than with the actual date (and thus religious and astrological implications), it is well known that such considerations were a major part of religious dedications, apparently from a very early time. The inscription further reveals that the pillar was dedicated to a form of Viṣṇu. It is interesting to note—in light of the date of the inscription—that both Viṣṇu and Garuḍa are considered to be solar deities. Two front views of Garuḍa are adorsed atop the pillar, one facing west toward a row of temples, the other facing east. Each representation holds a snake, a symbol of Garuḍa, who is said to be the natural enemy of snakes. Such Garuḍa *stambhas* must have been commonly placed before Vaiṣṇavite temples from an early date as suggested by the Heliodorus pillar of the Śuṅga period (Fig. 5.1), a practice continued to the present day in India and Nepal. In style, the husky forms of the body reveal close ties to much earlier carvings from north-central India, contrasting strongly with the slender, delicate figures of the late fifth century at a number of other sites (Fig. 10.19) and possibly indicating a regional stylistic preference.

10.13. Upper portion of Garuḍa pillar. At Eran, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period (reign of Budhagupta). Gupta era 165 (A.D. 484). Pinkish sandstone. H: (of capital) ca. 150 cm.

BUDDHIST ART OF THE FIFTH CENTURY: NORTH-CENTRAL INDIA (SĀNCĪ)

An inscription added to the eastern *torāṇa* of the Great Stūpa at Sāncī refers to Candragupta II and the year 93 (Gupta era, equivalent to A.D. 412) and records a grant in favor of the Buddhist community by an individual who was apparently an officer of Candragupta II's.¹³ Although the grant does not specify artistic patronage (it simply provides for the feeding of the mendicants and maintenance of oil lamps), its dedication coincides with a resurgence of artistic activity in stone at the site. The new burst

in part might have been due to renewed imperial power and wealth in the region (which must have also stimulated the development of the nearby Hindu monuments at Udayagiri and other sites as well). Apparently, after the Sātavāhana period, artistic activity in durable materials came to a virtual halt at Sāncī since the only works that seem to date from the period of Kuṣāṇa rule in the north are a few sculptures obviously imported from Mathurā workshops.¹⁴ The renewed effort at Sāncī during the fifth

century involved both the creation of new monuments and the refurbishing of old.

Certain additions, for example, were made to Stūpa I that considerably altered the iconographic program to more typical Mahāyāna forms. Since there is evidence of Mahāyāna practices at the site from earlier periods, these modifications may not reflect a real change in thought but only in form. A pillar crowned by a representation of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi was set up near the northern gateway of the ancient *stūpa*. Now detached from the pillar, the figure is broken off at the knees (Fig. 10.14). The main portions of the arms are also lost but the damaged right hand holds a *vajra*, still visible at the right hip. Clad in a *dhotī* that is carved with somewhat irregular but delicate grooves representing the folds of the garment, the body is smooth and reflects a development toward the mature Gupta formulations of the mid-fifth century, although still reflecting Kuṣāṇa-period precedents. The figure, though carved in the round, strongly relates to the depictions of the *dvārapālas* at Cave 6, Udayagiri, and a date in the early fifth century, perhaps slightly later than the Udayagiri materials, may be suggested for this work. An interesting feature of this sculpture is the halo behind the head with its twelve evenly spaced holes piercing the rim. These may have been intended to hold metal tenons for the attachment of a larger, more grandiose halo whose metal spokes might have suggested rays of light emanating from the figure. Tiny holes in the necklace (which is strikingly similar to that on the *liṅga* at Cave 4, Udayagiri, Fig. 10.9) and on the belt also indicate that metal or jewels had been added to enhance the sculpture. Vajrapāṇi signifies the power of Buddha-knowledge. His location at the north entrance to the *stūpa* is significant, for it is through the north side of a cosmological diagram known as a *maṇḍala*, in this case, the *stūpa* compound itself, that access to enlightenment is gained.

As part of the refurbishing of Sāñcī during the fifth century, four Buddha images were placed at the entrances of the Great Stūpa, one facing each of the four directions. An inscription added to a crossbar of the ground balustrade of the *stūpa* records an endowment by a female



10.14. Vajrapāṇi. Capital of pillar set up near north gateway, Stūpa I. Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. early fifth century. Sāñcī Site Museum, Sāñcī. Beige sandstone. H: 155 cm.

lay worshiper named Harisvāminī to a Buddhist community (at Sāñcī) for keeping lamps at the jewel house as well as at the "place of the four Buddhas." This inscription may refer to the four Buddha images located at the entranceways to the *stūpa*, providing proof that they were in existence by A.D. 450 (Gupta era 131), the date given in the epigraph.¹⁵ The best preserved of these images (Fig. 10.15) demonstrates the delicacy, grace, and tranquility of the sculptural style, which is often said to characterize the art of the mature Gupta period. With eyes cast downward and a gently smiling expression on his face, the Buddha embodies the introspection and harmony of Buddhist thought. An intricately carved halo, almost lacelike in effect, is centered behind the head. Its design consists of a rim of triangular rays reminiscent of Mathurā or Kuṣāṇa precedents (although not scalloped),



10.15. Buddha panel on east side, Stūpa I. Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. mid-fifth century. Beige sandstone. H: 162.5 cm.

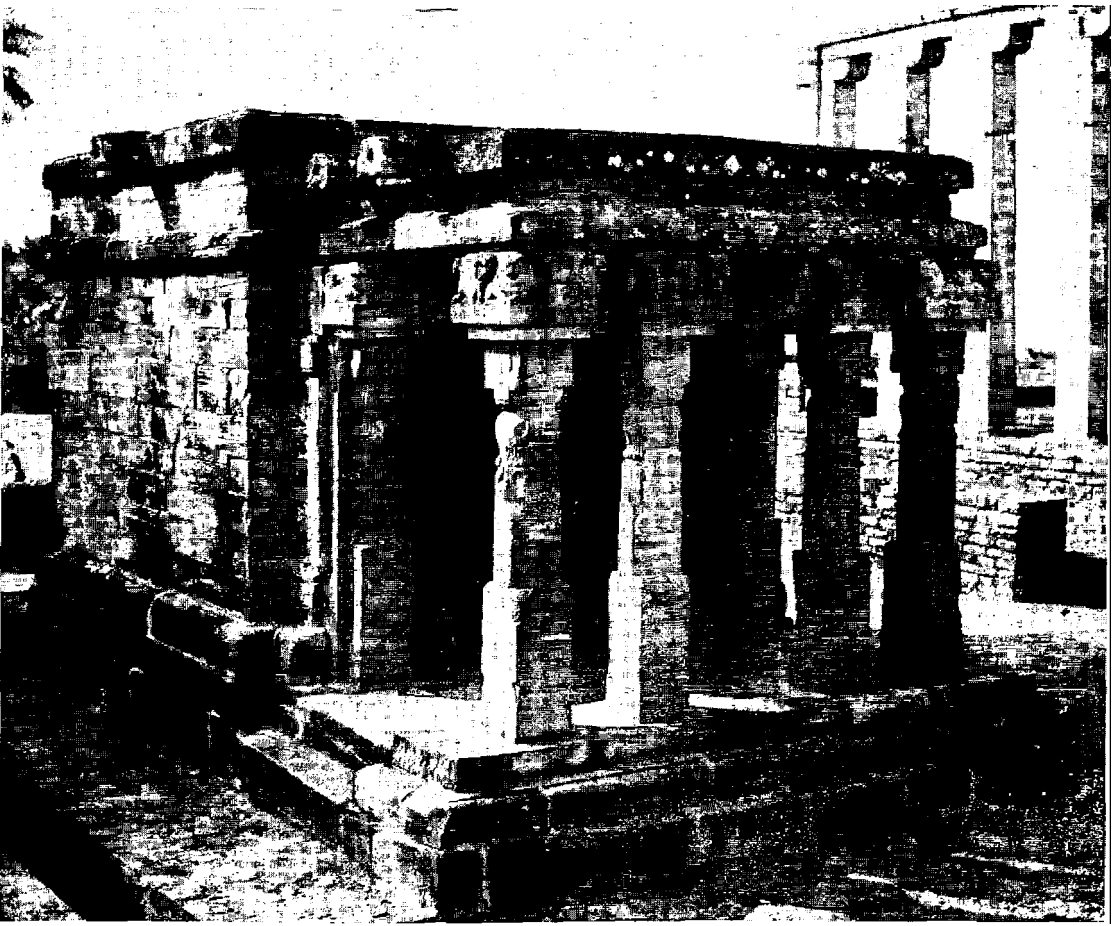
but the interior is filled with deeply undercut foliate and scroll designs, exemplifying the exquisite work emerging from Gupta-period sites throughout northern and north-central India at that time. The smooth contours of the Buddha's body, with its gracefully modulated transitions, also mark the development away from the more angular forms of earlier Gupta formulations.

Iconographically, the four sculptures are also of interest for they may be early representations of Buddhas having directional significance. While the directional Buddhas or *jinas* (literally, "victors," referring to their spiritual achievement) popularized in later Buddhist art are generally recognizable by their distinctive *mudrās* and the bodhisattvas who often accompany them, the Sāñci stelae are comparatively standardized.¹⁶ In each case, the Buddha is seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* and displays *dhyāna mudrā* with his hands, indicating a state of deep meditation. The figures sit upon cushions that rest on rectangular bases and, in two of the carvings,

these bear depictions of lotus petals. Flanking each Buddha is a pair of attendant figures and above are *vidyādharas* bearing offerings. In three of the stelae, the attendants appear to be *cauri*-bearing bodhisattvas. (The figure to the proper left of the central Buddha in Fig. 10.15, for example, may be identified as Vajrapāṇi because he holds a *vajra* at his left hip.) The fourth sculpture, that at the south gate, bears representations of Indra and Brahmā instead. Thus, the early link between bodhisattva and Indra and Brahmā imagery seen in the Kuṣāṇa period seems to have persisted.

Renewal of art production at Sāñci during the fifth century did not only include sculpture. Several new temples were added and earlier architectural structures were remodeled or refurbished, although the Great Stūpa remained by far the most dominating feature of the community and the esteem in which it was held does not seem to have diminished throughout the centuries. By the fifth century, the site had a complex plan including numerous *stūpas* from early periods, *vihāras* with identical cells surrounding a central space, and other buildings.

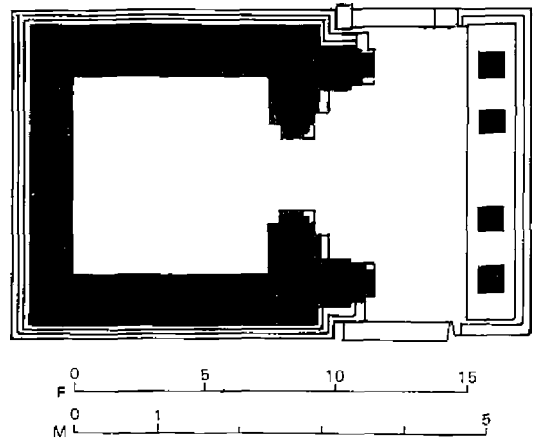
One of the most important as well as perfectly preserved of the Gupta-period structures at Sāñci is the small shrine known as Temple 17 (Figs. 10.16, 10.17), which is generally thought to date from the first quarter of the fifth century. Its small size, unpretentious form, and simplicity are characteristic of early Gupta-period architecture. The temple consists of two units, a pillared porch (*maṇḍapa*) and a shrine (*garbhagrha*). Each of the two sections is articulated clearly and there is no attempt to disguise the joint between them. This clarity of parts characterizes this and other early Gupta-period temples. The structure rests on a low plinth with steps at either end of the porch. However, a wider intercolumniation between the two central pillars of the porch suggests that the temple was properly approached along its longitudinal axis, as is the case generally in later temples, and not from the sides. Massive slabs of stone, some as much as twenty-five centimeters thick, placed side to side across the sanctum and porch comprise the roof of the structure and create cornices



10.16. Temple 17. Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. first quarter fifth century.

that relieve the plain ashlar exterior of the building.¹⁷

Although this temple appears to be solidly built, several features imply that the craft of building in stone was still in its infant stage; the structure totally lacks foundations, which resulted in buckling of the walls and partial collapse of the roof (both corrected by modern restoration). Further, the walls are made of rubble that has been faced with stone, both inside and out, giving the appearance of weight and solidity but not the stability of solid stone. It is almost as though the practice of erecting solid structures like *stūpas* with rubble that was then faced with stone was being adopted for use in buildings such as this. Eventually, solid



10.17. Plan of Temple 17. Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. first quarter fifth century.

stone structures without the rubble core came to be used in Indic architecture.

Simplicity and understatement characterize the decoration of Sāñcī Temple 17, for sculptural ornamentation is confined to the doorway and to the pillars, which have square bases that change into an eight- and then sixteen-sided form surmounted by bell-shaped lotus capitals. Certain features of the pillars, such as the adorsed reclining lions, which form the decoration of the capitals, and the lotus bells recall Maurya-period precedents.

No image was found in the small cubical shrine, nor has any other clue come to light that can reveal the original dedication of the

structure. Furthermore, the simple form of the building, with its *maṇḍapa* and *garbhagrha*, is general enough to relate to both Buddhist and Hindu monuments. Its shrine and antechamber format, for example, is found in Buddhist architecture in the rear worship area of caves such as at Ajañtā, and a similar plan is also used in Gupta-period (and later) Hindu structures. These factors have led some authorities to claim that the building was in fact a Hindu temple.¹⁸ It is likely, however, that the structure was erected to serve the needs of the Buddhist community. Its form, however, may be seen as containing certain essential features of both Buddhist and Hindu architecture.

BUDDHIST ART OF THE FIFTH CENTURY: NORTH INDIA (MATHURĀ AND SĀRNĀTH)

The florescence of Kuṣāṇa art in the Mathurā region seems to have ended by the late third century A.D. when the Kuṣāṇas lost their hold and were replaced by the Yaudheyas, Nāgas, and other minor dynasties. When Samudragupta defeated the Nāgas, the Mathurā region was incorporated into the Gupta domain. The extent of Nāga influence is little understood, although their coinage suggests that some contribution to the mainstream of Indic art might have been made by them. In addition, the heritage of Kuṣāṇa art of both the Mathurā and the Bactro-Gandhāra regions remains visible in the Mathurā Gupta style.

On the basis of its strong similarities to a recently discovered Buddha sculpture from Mathurā dated to A.D. 434,¹⁹ a standing Buddha image from Mathurā may be used to define the Mathurā Gupta style of about the mid-fifth century (Fig. 10.18). An inscription on the pedestal states that the image was dedicated by a monk named Yaśadinna.²⁰ Carved in the red sandstone typical of the Mathurā region, the figure of the Buddha stands approximately human-size, although the total height of the sculpture including halo and base imparts a sense of monumentality to it. Compared with Kuṣāṇa-period sculptures of the Mathurā style (Fig. 8.29), the contours of the body are more fluid and graceful and the body is slenderer. The



10.18. Buddha. From Jamālpur, Mathurā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. mid-fifth century. Reddish sandstone. H: 220 cm. Mathurā Museum, Mathurā.

relaxation of the pose, seen in the slight bending of the right leg, and the great delicacy of treatment, for example, of the halo, reveal that a Gupta-period aesthetic had developed and unified the art at distant Buddhist sites like Sāñcī (Fig. 10.15) and Mathurā. The drapery is depicted in a series of regular folds shown as ridges on the surface of the body. Such folds were absent from the typical drapery of Kuṣāṇa-period Mathurā sculptures, although an emphasis on drapery folds prevailed in the Kuṣāṇa art of the Bactro-Gandhāra region. The style of the garment too is reminiscent of the western Asiatic, not Mathurā, fashion. However, the Buddha's body is clearly revealed through the drapery that clings between the ridges of the folds in a characteristically Indic manner. Thus, the Gupta-period artists of Mathurā seem to have unified the two traditions into a harmonious synthesis, reconciling the classicistic style of the northwest, emphasizing garment depiction, with the Indic love of the human form.

Mathurā's cultural dominance in northern India was virtually unchallenged during the Kuṣāṇa period. But under the Guptas, other sites rose to prominence and eclipsed the former Kuṣāṇa capital's preeminence. In particular, Sārnāth, the site where Śākyamuni Buddha performed his first preaching, emerged as one of the leading Buddhist centers of India. The Chinese traveler Fa-hsien, who visited Sārnāth in the fifth century, noted only two large *stūpas* and two monasteries (*saṅghārāmas*) at the site,²¹ but by the seventh century, when Hsüan-tsang arrived, the establishment had expanded considerably, for he described a vast complex in which a community of 1,500 monks of the Sammitiya school lived.²²

The developed style for which Sārnāth is so justly famous apparently emerged around the third quarter of the fifth century, as documented by a series of three dated images, one of which is shown here (Fig. 10.19). All were dedicated by a monk named Abhayamitra, but one of the sculptures was given during the reign of Kumāragupta II in the Gupta year 154 (ca. A.D. 473) while the other two, dedicated in the Gupta year 157 (ca. A.D. 476), fell within the reign of Budhagupta as indicated in the inscriptions.²³

In each of the three inscriptions, Abhayamitra expressed the wish that the merit accrued by the good deed of this gift should go toward the obtaining of extinction of worldly existence (the goal of Buddhism) for all sentient beings, including his mother, father, and teachers. Such wishes were, by this time, common in Mahāyāna Buddhist dedications, for they reflect the basic doctrine of the transfer of merit from one individual to another.

The elongated, slender, graceful bodies and the refined execution of the details of the halos, robes, and faces of these images have long been considered a measure of Gupta art. Even in the period of their creation, the two images dated to about A.D. 476 must have been considered masterful works, since their identical inscriptions state that they were made beautiful through the science of *citra*. In this context, *citra* seems to refer to the technical achievements of the artist as well as the artistic expression itself. Thus, the acclaim that modern art historians lavish on these works is perhaps reflective of the renown they achieved in their own time. Part of the beauty to the contemporary eye lies in the pale buff-colored Chumār sandstone out of which they (and most other Sārnāth sculptures) are carved, although it is likely that originally they were painted, like most other ancient Indian images.

The sculptures pinpoint a moment in the stylistic continuum between the stiffer Kuṣāṇa-Mathurā-type formulations and the more dynamic representations of the post-Gupta periods. Each central Buddha stands in the *ābhaya* posture with a slight flexion to the body, as indicated by the bent position of one leg and the gentle thrust of the hip to one side. The forms appear to be rhythmic and natural. (This general sense of relaxation is also seen in the position of the right hand of the Buddha figure dating from about A.D. 473, as the *abhaya mudrā* is considerably lowered in position from the shoulder height of Kuṣāṇa-period examples, thus effecting a less rigid, less commanding position.²⁴) A significant feature of the late fifth-century Sārnāth Gupta style is the treatment of the drapery. Though fully dressed, the figures are clad in drapery so clinging that it reveals



10.19. Buddha. From Sarnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period (reign of Budhagupta). Gupta era 157 (A.D. 476). Buff sandstone. H: 193 cm. Sarnāth Site Museum, Sarnāth.

virtually all of the forms of the bodies beneath, almost as if the figures were unclothed. The drapery is most visible at the neck, sides, and hem. However, assuming that the images were originally painted, with the robes in a color contrasting with that of the skin, the present "invisibility" of the garments may have been

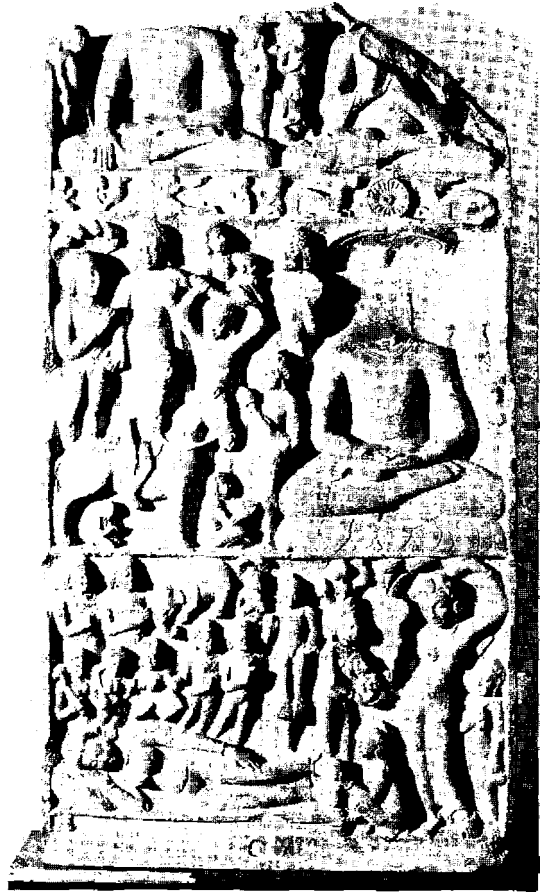
obviated. The garment itself has two layers, at least from the waist down, as may be seen by the two hems, and might reflect the specific costume of a particular Buddhist sect at Sarnāth. The facial features of these figures represent what must have been an ideal type in this sculptural school, characterized by the downcast eyes, gently smiling expression, and refinement of the treatment of the individual elements of the face. A feeling of quiescence and introspection is conveyed by the face, expressive of the peace and inner tranquility possessed by all Buddhas.

Although the formats of the two images dated to about 476 are virtually identical, they differ from that of the slightly earlier image of 473, but this should not suggest a chronological development. The 473 figure stands atop a plain ledge of stone that is incised with a lengthy inscription and has a large round halo, derived from Kuṣāṇa types, centered directly behind his head, similar to that of the images placed at the four entranceways to Sāñcī Stūpa I (Fig. 10.15). The halo contains the scalloped ray motif around the rim, within which are pearls, a garland, and floral motifs that according to Buddhist textual sources are part of the radiant splendor of the Buddha. The pieces dating from 476 do not have round halos, but instead each has an elongated aura that is rounded at the top (Fig. 10.19). These Buddhas stand atop very three-dimensional lotuses, and are attended by figures on each side, flying *vidyādhara*s above, and small devotees below. All figures subsidiary to the main Buddha in each sculpture are depicted in hierarchic scale relative not only to the Buddha but to each other, reflecting textual descriptions of the sizes of beings according to their relative spiritual achievement, not their physiques. Such hierarchic scaling pervades the art of South Asia, and is characteristic of most Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain artistic conceptions.

Undoubtedly dating from around the same time, about A.D. 475 (although uninscribed), is a representation of a seated Buddha that epitomizes both the high style of the late fifth century at Sarnāth and the Buddhological message of Sarnāth itself, that is, the First Preaching of Śākyamuni Buddha at the deer park at Sarnāth



10.20. Buddha. From Sarnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. 475. Buff sandstone. H: 160 cm. Sarnāth Site Museum, Sarnāth.



10.21. Life Events of Śākyamuni Buddha. From Sarnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. third quarter fifth century. Buff sandstone. H: 70 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

(Fig. 10.20). Although several hand postures (especially *abhaya mudrā*) were used during the Kuṣāṇa period to signify this event, by the Gupta period, variations on the *dharmacakra mudrā*, one of which is shown here, became by far the most common indicators of the event and of Buddhist teachings in general. Also characteristic of scenes depicting the First Sermon are the pair of deer flanking the wheel and the disciples to whom Śākyamuni preached in the panel beneath the main figure.²⁵ The treatment of the central figure and its halo is nearly identical to that of the 473 image. The throne bears representations of rampant winged leonine creatures (*śārdūlas*) supporting the *makara*-ends

of the crossbar, both presumably auspicious symbols.

Several stelae recovered from Sarnāth and stylistically related to works known to date from the late fifth century stress what had come to be considered the major events in the last life of Śākyamuni Buddha. One example shows a series of events, arranged in chronological order from the lower to the upper registers and from left to right (Fig. 10.21). At the bottom left, Queen Māyā reclines on a couch, attended by maidservants, while the elephant that heralds her conception of the Buddha-to-be appears to her. At the lower right, Māyā grasps the *śāl* tree while the Buddha-to-be emerges from her

right side. In the center of the lower register, the infant bodhisattva stands with his right hand in the *abhaya mudrā* while being given his first bath by two *nāgas*. The second register shows the bodhisattva atop his horse, Kaṅṭhaka, in the Great Departure episode, then cutting his hair when he takes the vow of the ascetic, and finally, at the right, he is in the final meditation



10.22. Khasarapaṇa Avalokiteśvara. From Sārnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period. Ca. 475. Buff sandstone. H: 137 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

leading to enlightenment. Here, his greatness at this stage of his life is distinguished from the earlier events by the relative increase in scale in his depiction. The upper scenes show the victory over Māra at the left and the First Preaching at the right. A fourth level may have depicted the *parinirvāṇa* at the top. The rather free arrangement of scenes with one blending into the next is characteristic of fifth-century life-scene stelae, although by about the eighth century and later it was replaced by a more ordered arrangement with separate compartments for each scene.

A particularly fine example of the Sārnāth treatment of the bodhisattva (Fig. 10.22) shows Khasarapaṇa Avalokiteśvara standing in the slightly relaxed *abhāṅga* pose. In accordance with textual descriptions, this form of Avalokiteśvara is decked with ornaments, has a smiling face, appears to be about sixteen years of age, and holds a lotus stem in his left hand, while his right displays the *varaḍa* (gift-bestowing) *mudrā*. Adorning his *jaṭānukuṭa* hair style is a representation of Amitābha/Amitāyus in his characteristic *dhyāna mudrā*, signifying the family from which the bodhisattva emanates. Beneath the right hand of Avalokiteśvara are two *preta* figures, ghosts of beings who were greedy in past lives and whose doom it is to be hungry forever. Avalokiteśvara's compassion for all creatures is demonstrated by the nectar that flows from his gift-bestowing hand to feed these ravenous beings. A somewhat parallel generosity is expressed in the donative inscription at the bottom of the sculpture, offering the merit accrued from the giving of the image for the attainment of supreme knowledge for all sentient beings. The slender, elegant body garbed in diaphanous drapery suggests ties to the three late fifth century Buddha figures, and probably indicates a similar date for this image. Like those Buddhas, the gentle countenance of this image with half-closed eyes suggests an inner calm that makes the Gupta idiom at Sārnāth one of the most appealing of Indic art styles. A relative simplicity in terms of adornment parallels the treatment in Gupta temple architecture in which a balance is struck between the main forms and surface decoration.

BUDDHIST ART IN THE NORTHWEST

Other sites in the former Kuṣāṇa territories besides Mathurā produced art during the fifth and sixth centuries, but these were not specifically part of the Gupta empire. The history of this period in the northwest regions of Gandhāra, Bactria, and associated areas is still unclear, but patronage of Buddhist establishments seems to have continued. Instead of stone, however, which had been widely used for architecture and sculpture in the second and third centuries, stucco became a major artistic medium. Perhaps the inexpensiveness of this material accounts to some degree for its popularity, although it is likely that the greater flexibility and freedom that it allowed the artist was also a factor. At Haḍḍa, in Afghanistan, stucco facings that often contained elegant sculptural compositions were put on numerous *stūpas*. One example shows a Buddha attended by male and by female devotees (Fig. 10.23). Clear evidence of the Bactro-Gandhāra heritage is seen in the depiction of the Buddha's robe, his hair style, and even in

the very classicized faces of the three figures, yet a greater softness and refinement are also present, suggesting that the Gupta style had permeated the perimeters of the empire.

At Mirpur Khas in Sind, Pakistan, a *stūpa* was found that had numerous terra-cotta representations of seated Buddha figures that, like sculptures from Haḍḍa, betray a blending of northwest Kuṣāṇa and Gupta idioms. Although the dating of these finds is uncertain, the figures suggest a date around the middle to late fifth century because of their slenderness, the diaphanous quality of the drapery (although Bactro-Gandhāra-style folds are still present), and the overall delicacy of the forms (Fig. 10.24). The style of the robe, which covers both shoulders, clearly relates this work to the classicistic Bactro-Gandhāra styles of the second and third centuries.

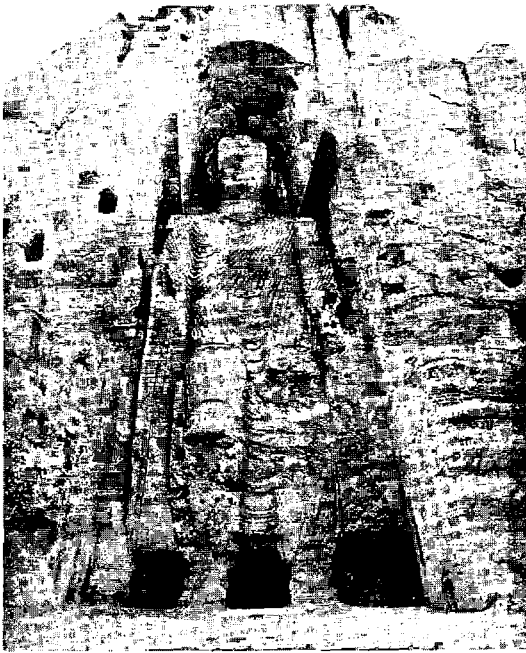
A remarkable series of caves that literally honeycomb an enormous cliffside was excavated at Bāmiyān, in Afghanistan, around the



10.23. Buddha and devotees. Haḍḍa, Afghanistan. Ca. fifth–sixth century. Stucco.



10.24. Buddha. From Mirpur Khas, Pakistan. Ca. mid-to-late fifth century. Terra cotta. H: 76 cm. Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.



10.25. Buddha (Vairocana?). Bāmiyān, Afghanistan. Ca. fifth century. H: ca. 55 m.

fifth century. One of the most impressive carvings is the enormous Buddha that stands nearly fifty-five meters tall carved at one end of the valley (Fig. 10.25). A similar figure on a slightly smaller scale is located at the other side of the group of caves about a kilometer and a half away. The colossalism seen here is not just a sign of grandiose conception but is a deliberate attempt to express in as literal a manner as possible the spiritual size of a Buddha compared to that of an ordinary human. Thus, the small size of the devotees shown accompanying

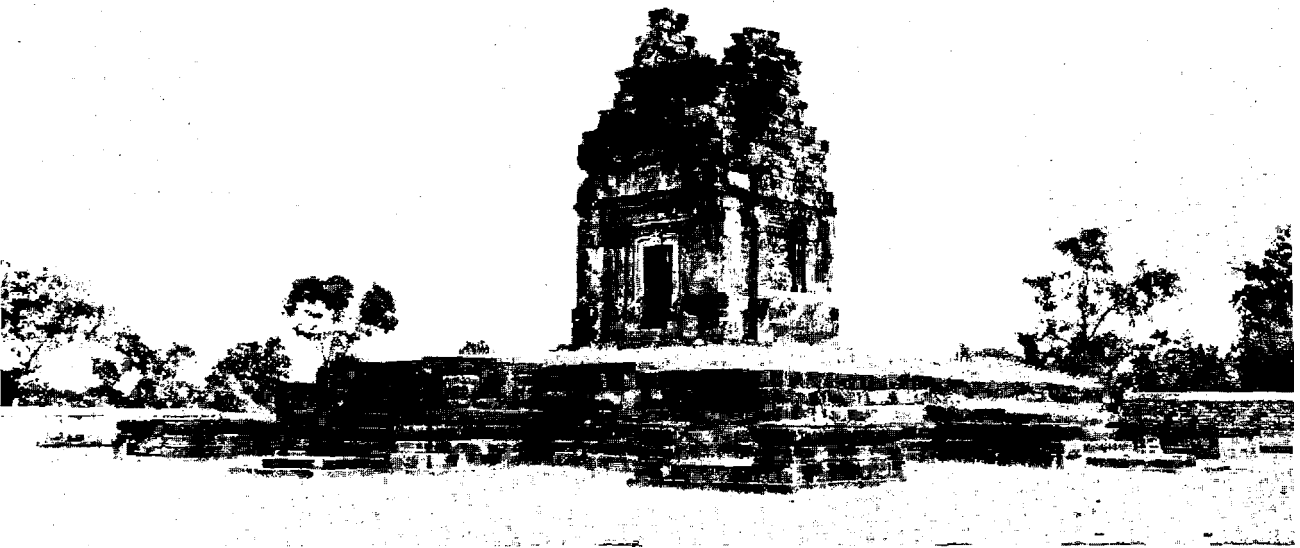
Buddhas in many smaller artistic conceptions (Fig. 10.19) is given a literalness here as the human worshiper finds himself dwarfed by the gigantic image. The creation of such enormous images is associated with the cult of the *Bṛhad* (Gigantic) Buddha, which was prevalent in South Asia as well as in other regions that were influenced by Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism.²⁶ The available evidence of the inscriptions and iconographic contexts of the surviving images indicate that this cult was specifically related to Vairocana, the Buddha in whom the totality of the universe is personified, and was expressed through the gigantic size of the figures. Only roughly carved from the soft stone matrix, the detailing of the drapery was created by molding a mud mixture on the surface of the image that was then covered with lime plaster and paint. The drapery folds were created by suspending ropes that were then covered with mud plaster to form the ridges of the garment. The clinging appearance of the garment, which reveals the form of the Buddha's body beneath, suggests ties to Gupta art in India proper, although the folds and style of the robe are clearly based upon earlier Kuṣāṇa-period models of the northwest region. A large niche creating a type of halo (*prabhāmaṇḍala*) around the head and body of the Buddha was plastered and painted to complete the iconography of the figure. Properly speaking, this image and other remains in the northwest region may be studied as part of the art of Inner Asia rather than ancient India, although they represent a logical outgrowth of what is essentially an Indic religious conception.

HINDU TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

As part of the growing popularity of Hinduism, temples dedicated to various Hindu deities were constructed throughout northern and north-central India during the Gupta period. Usually, these structures are classified according to certain physical characteristics as well as their relationship to later forms. Regional patterns may have accounted for some of the differences between temple types, but, in addition, ritual needs of

the growing Hindu religion, as well as sectarian differences, necessitated the development of individual types. Some of the forms reflect structures that must have existed prior to the fifth century but which have been lost, and others may have been completely innovative. A few selected examples suggest the richness of the developing forms.

Sāñcī Temple 17 (Figs. 10.16, 10.17) serves as



10.26. Viṣṇu temple, from southwest. Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

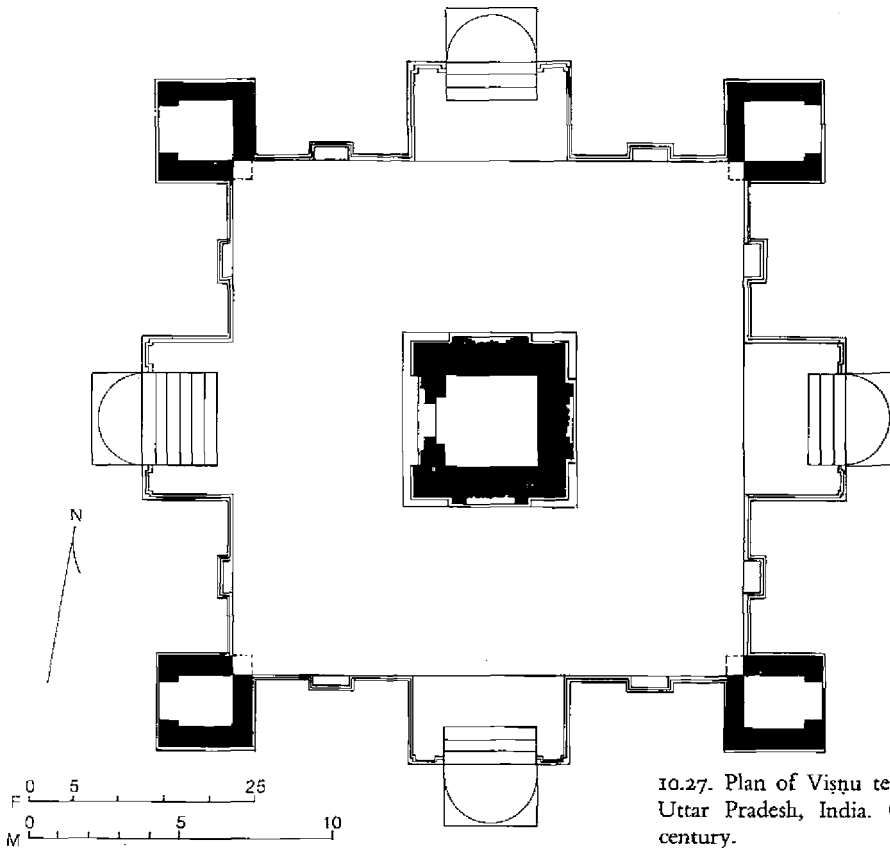
an example of one characteristic type of Gupta temple. Although its ties to Buddhism are evident, structures similar in form, size, and decoration from the Gupta period are found in a Hindu context as well.²⁷ While the issue of whether or not this type of temple originally had a superstructure of ephemeral materials or one that was planned but never executed is not settled, by the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth, a type of temple with a tower (*śikhara*) was well developed.

One such example is the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh (Fig. 10.26), commonly (and mistakenly) called the *Daśavatāra* because it was originally thought that the iconographic program referred to the ten incarnations (*daśavatāra*) of Viṣṇu. Although the patrons and donors involved in its erection are not known, on stylistic grounds, the structure may be dated to the early sixth century.²⁸ In many ways, the form of the temple shows considerable advancement in the development of Hindu temple architecture, a factor that has led some to conclude that its date is much later. The form of the tower is one of the most interesting and highly debated

features in this regard, since its tall, apparently curvilinear shape anticipates the developed northern-style *śikhara*. Its damaged state, however, precludes full analysis, and thus the place of this temple in the development of the northern-style *śikhara* may never be known.

The main shrine occupies the center of a square plinth (Fig. 10.27) that is accessible on all four sides by staircases with semicircular bases sometimes referred to as moonstones. Originally, four smaller subsidiary shrines were present, one at each corner of the plinth, so that the temple is of the *pañcāyatana* (five-shrine) variety. Each shrine was probably dedicated to a different Hindu deity, although their identities are unknown because the structures are totally destroyed except for their bases. Further, it is impossible to determine the original forms of the buildings, although they may have been miniature versions of the main temple.

The temple is oriented to the west, where the impressive, decorated doorway to the shrine is located (Fig. 10.28). In contrast to the early Gupta-type entrance seen at Udayagiri (Fig. 10.4), the Deogarh doorway is a greatly



10.27. Plan of Viṣṇu temple. Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

elaborated ensemble. The lintels and jambs have been multiplied, and these are replete with well-ordered foliate motifs, *mithunas*, guardian figures, and the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, placed respectively at the top left and right of the doorway and clearly defined by their *mākara* and *tortoise* vehicles. At the center, above the entranceway, is a panel showing Viṣṇu in an unusual form, seated atop the coiled body of a serpent with the open serpent hood behind his head while Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's consort, massages his foot, and two other forms of Viṣṇu himself appear, the man-lion (Nṛsimha) and the dwarf (Vāmana). The multiple figures in this small relief demonstrate the growing complexity of Vaiṣṇavite iconography, and perhaps provide a clue to the original dedication of the temple.

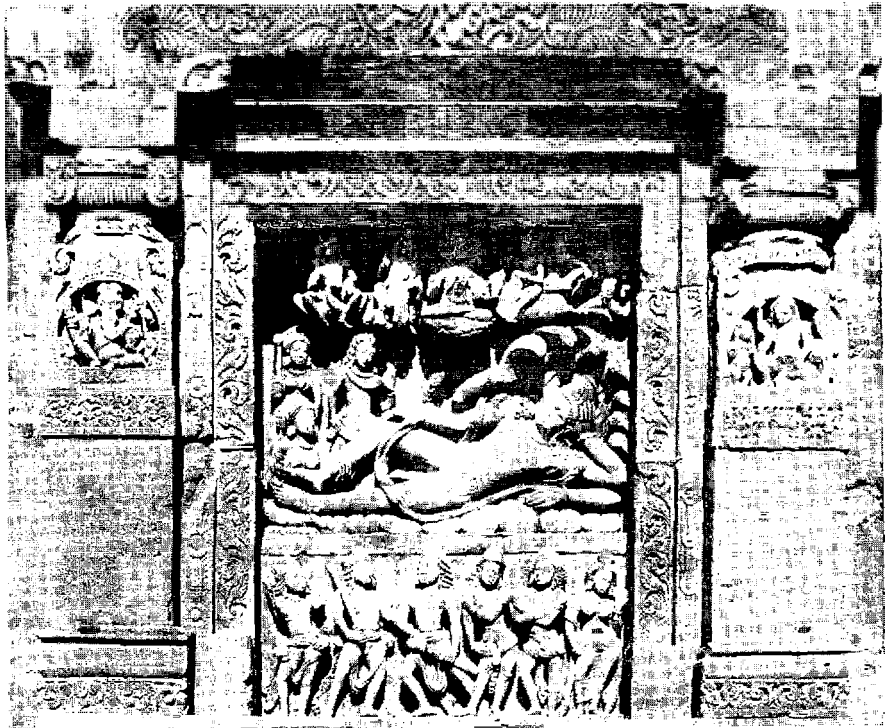
Before entering the single-celled shrine through the decorated doorway, ritual practice

probably required the devotee to circumambulate the temple to view the three major sculptural panels on the exterior. Each of the three reliefs decorating the main body of the temple is placed in a niche that consists of decorated lintels and jambs flanked by pilasters (Fig. 10.29). The subject matter of the sculptures reveals the order in which the devotee would view them. In this case, the viewing order of the major sculptures would be the relief of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa as Anantaśayana (or Śeṣaśayana) on the south (Fig. 10.29), that of Nara and Nārāyaṇa on the east (Fig. 10.30), and the sculpture of Gajendra-mokṣa on the north (Fig. 10.31), thus moving the devotee in a counterclockwise direction (*prasavyā*). This assertion, which is contrary to the commonly held belief that in Hindu worship circumambulation is always performed in a clockwise manner (*pradakṣiṇa*), is based on the internal message of the reliefs, their accompany-

10.28. Doorway, on west, Viṣṇu temple. Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.



10.29. Viṣṇu Anantaśayana relief, on south, Viṣṇu temple. Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.



ing elements, and an analysis of circumambulation practices in Hindu rituals.²⁹

An indication that the devotee began his worship on the south is clearly seen in the depiction of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god, on a pilaster to the left of the Anantaśayana relief (Fig. 10.29). As the "Overcomer of Obstacles," Gaṇeśa is invoked at the start of worship, and became a standard element in the iconographic programs of Hindu temples and painting cycles throughout South Asia. The Anantaśayana subject itself signifies the beginning, for it is concerned with the birth of Brahmā from the navel of Viṣṇu. Since Brahmā is the creator of the universe, his own birth signifies the beginning of the beginning or the creation of the creator. In this form, Viṣṇu is called Nārāyaṇa (Moving on the Waters, or Abode of Man) as he rests on the serpent Śeṣa (Remainder), who is also called Ananta (Endless), and whose hood arches behind Viṣṇu's head like a halo. The god's wife Lakṣmī massages his right leg, epitomizing the *bhakti* teaching in which the devotee seeks refuge at the feet of Nārāyaṇa. Further, Lakṣmī (Goddess of Fortune) is considered to be the mediator between the devotee and the lord. Garuḍa stands just to the viewer's right of Lakṣmī, wearing his snake ornaments. In the center, above, Brahmā (who is sometimes also called Nārāyaṇa) can be identified by his antelope-skin garment, his three faces (the fourth is implied) and his sitting atop a lotus after having just emerged from Viṣṇu's navel. He is flanked by the airborne figures of Indra and Kārtikeya to his right, respectively mounted on their *vāhanas*, the elephant and peacock, and to his left, Śiva, with his wife Pārvatī on his *vāhana* Nandi and another unidentified figure. Below, a separate slab bears deeply carved representations of five males and one female. These are Madhu and Kaiṭabha at the left with the four personified attributes of Viṣṇu at the right. Madhu and Kaiṭabha were two demons who sprang from Viṣṇu's ear while he was asleep, and were about to kill Brahmā



10.30. Nara-Nārāyaṇa relief, on east, Viṣṇu temple, Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

(who was emerging from Viṣṇu's navel) when Viṣṇu destroyed them. In this relief, the four personifications of Viṣṇu's weapons (*āyudhapuruṣas*) are juxtaposed with the two demons as if to show Viṣṇu's might against them, although the elegant positioning and grace of the figures hardly suggests an impending battle. From the right, the personified weapons are Gadādevī, (the female, recognized by the mace emerging from the top of her head), Cakrapuruṣa (recognized by his *cakra* [wheel] hair ornament), Dhanuspuruṣa³⁰ (who positions his right arm as if it were a bow), and Khaḍgapuruṣa (who prepares to draw his sword).

On the east, the major relief shows two saints, Nara (viewer's right) and Nārāyaṇa (viewer's left), who bring the message of divine love and devotion as an instrument of spiritualization to the world (Fig. 10.30). These two, who are considered to be the fourth of the twenty-two minor incarnations of Viṣṇu, were the sons of Dharma (Righteousness) and his wife Ahimsā (Nonviolence). They performed austerities as



10.31. Gajendramokṣa relief, on north, Viṣṇu temple. Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

part of their devotions, and their ascetic nature is indicated in the relief by their lack of jewelry and by the wearing of their hair in topknots (*jaṭāmukuta*). Like other ascetics who have forsaken the comforts of society, they appear in a wilderness setting suggested by the rocky landscape with deer and lions beneath and bowers of trees above. The figures hold peaceful attributes in their hands, including the rosary, as symbols of their devotion. A female figure in the center above is Urvaśī, who was created when Nārāyaṇa struck his thigh to demonstrate that he could not be tempted by celestial nymphs, and that he was steadfast in his devotions.

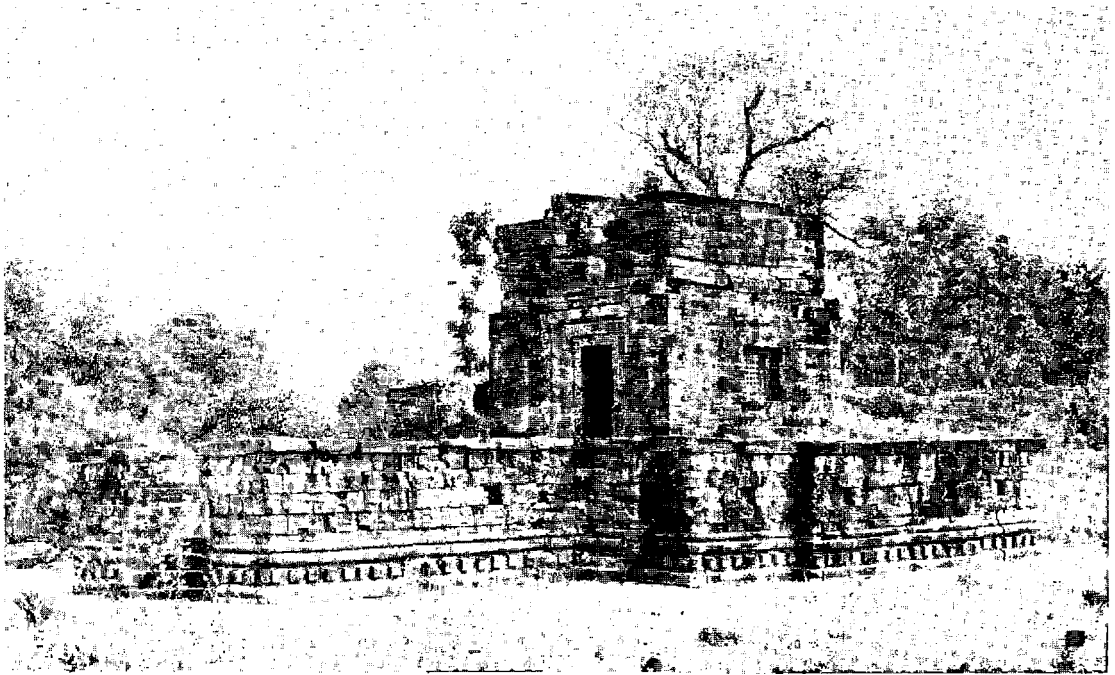
The niche on the north depicts the story of Gajendramokṣa, concerning a king who had been changed into an elephant (*Gajendra*) by a curse (Fig. 10.31). One day, while wading in a lotus pond, a water beast seized the leg of the elephant and a tug of war ensued between them that lasted for a thousand years. Finally, the elephant invoked Nārāyaṇa and was saved. The moment just after deliverance is depicted clearly

in the relief, for the water beast (here a *nāga* accompanied by his *nāgini*) is depicted in *añjali mudrā*, paying respect to the victors. Essentially, the story is a parable about a devotee who had been cursed because his untrained intellect was like an elephant's, and his subsequent deliverance through faith, which represents the attainment of *mokṣa* and serves as a model to the worshiper at the temple. A crown borne aloft by *vidyādhara*s above signifies this final achievement.

The overall message of the temple is thus clearly indicated in the sculptural program, revealed through a sequential arrangement of the reliefs, for the Anantaśayana represents the beginning, Nara and Nārāyaṇa denote the means through which *mokṣa* may be achieved, and the Gajendramokṣa story expresses the final result.

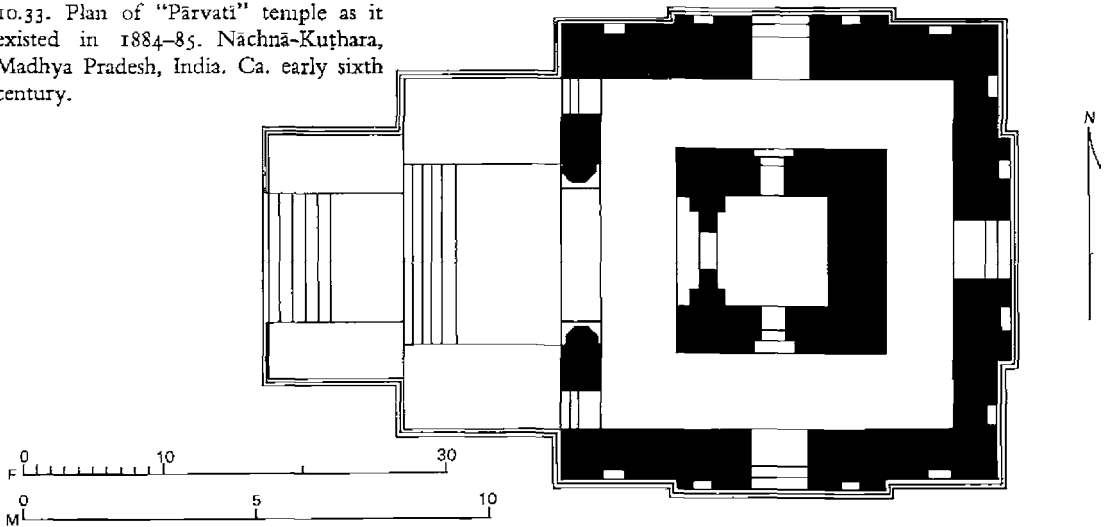
In contrast to earlier Gupta temples, sculpture has a much more important role in the overall scheme of the monument, including the major reliefs as well as the decoration of the doorway. Still, sculpture is confined to certain areas of the temple and a balance is struck between ornamentation and the simplicity of the architecture. The rather large blocks of stone used to construct the temple are easily visible, as there has been no attempt to disguise them with the temple decoration. The beauty of the monument is carried out in the grace and delicacy of the sculptures themselves, which represent a high point in the development of Indic art, reflecting what has come to be known as the Gupta ideal. Smooth body contours, relieved by moderate amounts of jewelry, peaceful facial expressions, graceful poses, and elegant hair styles characterize the figures. Each composition is carefully balanced, and seems to come alive with the deep, three-dimensional carving.

The so-called Pārvatī temple at Nāchnā-Kuṭhara is approximately contemporaneous with the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh, ca. A.D. 500 or perhaps slightly later, and like it, is a notable achievement of Gupta art. The name Pārvatī is undoubtedly a late appellation, for the temple was probably originally dedicated to Śiva. Its form offers insight into a completely different



10.32. "Pārvati" temple, from southwest. Nachnā-Kuṭhara, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

10.33. Plan of "Pārvati" temple as it existed in 1884-85. Nachnā-Kuṭhara, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.



temple format in use at the time, however, for it is a double-storied structure resting on a plinth with an enclosed circumambulatory passage, the outer walls of which are now lost (Figs. 10.32, 10.33). This building is apparently the earliest surviving example of a structural temple with an enclosed circumambulatory passage, and thus

it is the oldest known temple of the *sāndhara* class of Hindu temples that are in fact characterized by this feature. Light was admitted into the ambulatory by three windows, one on each side except that of the entrance, which was open, and some light was also admitted into the main shrine through windows in the am-



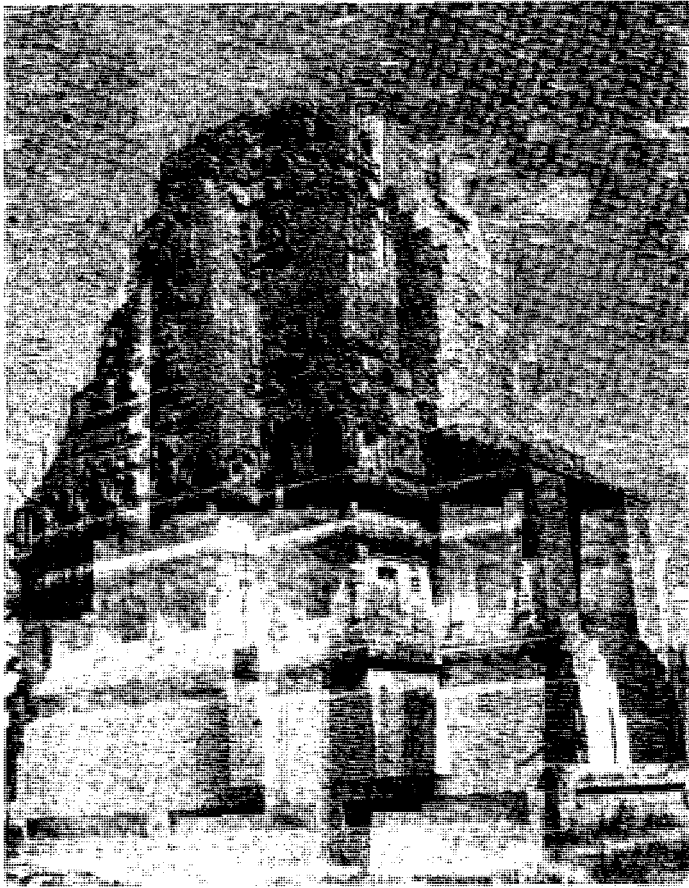
10.34. Doorway, on west, "Pārṣvati" temple. Nāchnā-Kuṭhara, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. early sixth century.

bulatory passage wall. The second story covered only the temple shrine (not the passageway) and may have contained a representation of a deity. Perhaps specific ritual needs necessitated the double-storied form. No signs of a *śikhara* or other high superstructure exist, although the original forms of the roofs of the temple are unknown. The doorway of the structure, which is oriented to the west, is among the finest in all Gupta art (Fig. 10.34), and in general, the trellislike carved windows and miscellaneous sculptures found at the site testify to a high quality of workmanship. An interesting feature of the plinth is the deliberately rusticated blocks of stone that have been carved to resemble a rocky landscape, complete with animal life (Fig. 10.32). The depiction of such stylized landscapes, although unusual in this location, is also seen in the paintings of Ajanṭā (Pl. 8) and in carved renditions of stylized landscape, for example, in the Nara-Nārāyaṇa relief at Deogarh (Fig. 10.30). Here, a reference to the temple as a replica of Kailāsa, the mountain abode of the god Śiva, seems to be implied.

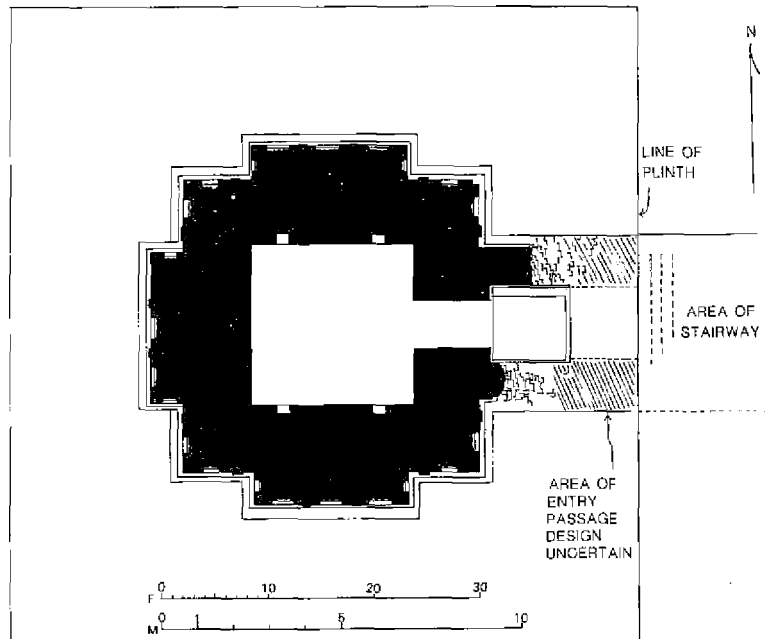
BRICK TEMPLES AND TERRA-COTTA ART

Although brick and terra cotta have been popularly used since the early discovery of pottery techniques in ancient India, the fragile nature of the material has led to the destruction of most early examples. However, during the Gupta period, interest in brick and terra cotta led to the construction of a number of important monuments, some of which have survived. The brick temple at Bhitargāon (Fig. 10.35) is one of the best preserved examples, in spite of the fact that it was damaged by lightning in the last century. Its date is difficult to fix as there is no inscriptional or other evidence of its dedication, but on stylistic grounds, a date of the first half of the fifth century might be suggested. Burnt bricks joined by mud mortar were used in the construction of the building, and the walls reached a thickness of more than two meters. The temple faces east, as may be determined by the remains of a portico on that side, and it rests upon a square plinth (*jagati*; Fig.

10.36). Each side of the temple has a projecting bay, creating what is known as a *triratha* (three *ratha*) design. The number three is obtained by counting the two sections to the left and right of the bay, which form the wall of the structure itself, as well as the outer surface of the bay, which runs parallel to them. (In five *ratha*, seven *ratha*, and other systems where additional bays extend out from the center of each preceding bay, the count expands to include the length of all new parallel wall sections formed.) Such offsetting of the walls of a temple became a standard feature in many later schools of architecture. A secondary shrine chamber is present above the main shrine, although this feature is not readily apparent from the exterior because of the rising, vertical shape of the *śikhara*, which is one of the earliest extant examples of a northern-style tower. Niches on the exterior of the body of the temple and the superstructure contained sculpted panels,



10.35. Brick temple from southeast. Bhitargāon, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. first half fifth century.



10.36. Plan of brick temple. Bhitargāon, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. first half fifth century.

some of which are missing and many of which are partially destroyed. An interesting feature of the construction in this building is the use of true arches in the shrines and the porch in preference to the usual Indic corbelled vault. From examples like this, it is evident that the ancient Indians knew of the arch at an early date but elected to use it only on certain occasions, preferring trabeated forms.

The type of sculptural decoration used in such a temple is perhaps best seen in a number of terra cottas that are better preserved from other temples, such as that at Ahicchatrā. Most impressive among them are the nearly human-size representations of the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, which originally flanked the entrance to the Śiva temple (Fig. 10.37), probably dating from the late fifth or early sixth century. Although these figures have been heavily restored, their original animation, which perhaps exceeds that seen in contemporary stone carving and may be due in part to the

nature of the terra-cotta medium, is preserved. Their positions, turning inward toward the devotee who would enter a doorway between them, provide a sense of immediacy to the viewer. The costumes, with the heavy drapery folds and tight bodices, and the very fully modeled facial features suggest a departure from the more tranquil, delicate forms of Gupta stone sculpture. Each goddess, now easily recognized by her respective *vāhana*, the *makara* and the tortoise, holds a water vessel and is attended by a diminutive figure holding a *chattra* aloft.

Other terra cottas recovered from northern India hint at what must have been the widespread and highly developed art of terra-cotta sculpture in the Gupta period. In contrast to the surviving terra cottas from the prehistoric and early historic periods (Figs. 2.6, 5.39), Gupta terra cottas are often large (though not always as large as the two river goddesses from Ahicchatrā). Many formed panels that were used



10.37. Gaṅgā (left) and Yamunā (right); much restored. From Ahicchatrā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. late fifth or early sixth century. Terra cotta. H: 170 cm (left); 175.2 cm (right). National Museum, New Delhi.





10.38. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa. From northern India, probably Uttar Pradesh region. Ca. fifth century. Terra cotta. H: 31 cm. Brooklyn Museum, New York (Gift of Dr. Bertram Schaffner).



10.39. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. From northern India, probably Uttar Pradesh region. Ca. fifth century. Terra cotta. H: 40.6 cm. Asia Society, New York (Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection).

as decoration on temples. One such architectural fragment shows the god Viṣṇu riding atop his winged vehicle, the bird-man Garuḍa (Fig. 10.38). Only Viṣṇu's two left arms are preserved; one holds a bow while the other brings his characteristic conch to his lips, as if the god is blowing it like a trumpet. The conch, whose fleeting sound sometimes serves as a symbol of the transience of the physical world, here probably indicates a war call, for the god and his companion seem to be in battle-ready positions that suggest that the relief represents an attack on an unseen adversary. Although its findspot is not known, the piece is of a type generally identified with the Uttar Pradesh region, and such works are generally attributed to the site of Alichchattrā or, alternatively, to Bhītargāon, two of the most well known and well preserved sites that have yielded Gupta-period terra cottas in northern India. But it is likely that the monuments at these two centers were not unique at the time of their creation, and that sculptures like this may document a broadly based style and art form current throughout north-central India. The curly hair style of Garuḍa suggests aesthetic associations with stone art of the Gupta period, though the techniques used by the terra-cotta artist differ considerably from those of his fellow craftsmen who worked

in stone. The outlines of the eyes and eyebrows, for example, have been created simply by using a sharp tool to incise in wet clay, creating a sense of dynamism and calligraphic line that is not apparent in works produced by the slower and more painstaking process of stone carving.

A second terra-cotta sculpture, also probably intended to be used as architectural adornment and also probably from the Uttar Pradesh region, shows Rāma, the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and his younger brother, Lakṣmaṇa, as if in conversation (Fig. 10.39). Rāma came to be considered the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu, and stories narrating events involving him are commonly included in the repertoire of subjects adorning a Vaiṣṇavite temple. However, as a cult deity, he never achieved the stature of other incarnations of Viṣṇu, such as Kṛṣṇa. When depicted in art, he is generally shown, as here, in a two-armed form that stresses his human, rather than his godly, characteristics. The panel apparently records the period narrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* when, after Rāma had been banished from the kingdom to which he was rightful heir, he lived in the forest, for the two brothers are dressed as forest dwellers, rather than princes; their earlobes, stretched from years of wearing heavy ornaments, are unadorned, and their hair is tied into simple topknots. The figures are

strikingly naturalistic and lifelike, an impression perhaps partly created by the freedom and spontaneity accorded by the terra-cotta medium.

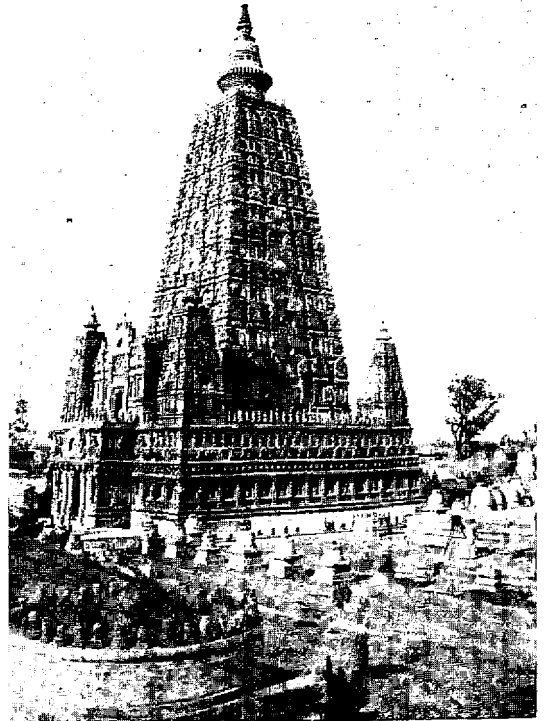
One of the most dramatic and realistic of all the terra cottas surviving from the Gupta period represents a Śaivite deity (Fig. 10.40). The relief, broken at the waist of the figure, is from Sahet̥h-Mahet̥h, Śrāvasti, Uttar Pradesh, and shows an ascetic whose divine nature is indicated by the presence of four arms. His emaciated body, matted locks, and piled-up hair style (*jaṭā*), as well as his lack of jewelry (especially noticeable due to the distended, pierced earlobes that conspicuously lack earrings), all signify his ascetic nature.

A very problematic monument that may be discussed along with terra-cotta remains of the Gupta period is the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā (Fig. 10.41). Since it is one of the most sacred of all Buddhist shrines, this brick temple has been repaired numerous times throughout history and its form is therefore difficult to assess in terms of the art of any given period. Much of its present appearance is due to renovations as recent as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although the essential elements may have been determined as early as the late-Kuṣāṇa or Gupta periods. The relationship between the present structure and the original building erected by Aśoka is unknown.

As it now stands, the temple consists of a large central shrine surmounted by a high tower, surrounded by four smaller shrines. These are thought to have been added fairly recently, although certainly, the concept of the *pañcāyātana* format was well developed by the Gupta period as demonstrated by the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh. The present tower is probably much taller than the original superstructure, and its pyramidal profile, which differs from the typical, curved, northern-style *śikhara*, is possibly also the result of later modifications. The type of brick work and use of certain vaulting techniques suggest ties to Iranian methods, possibly introduced into the Indic region by the Kuṣāṇas.



10.40. Śaivite deity. From Sahet̥h-Mahet̥h, Śrāvasti, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. fifth century. Terra cotta. H: 30 cm. State Museum, Lucknow.

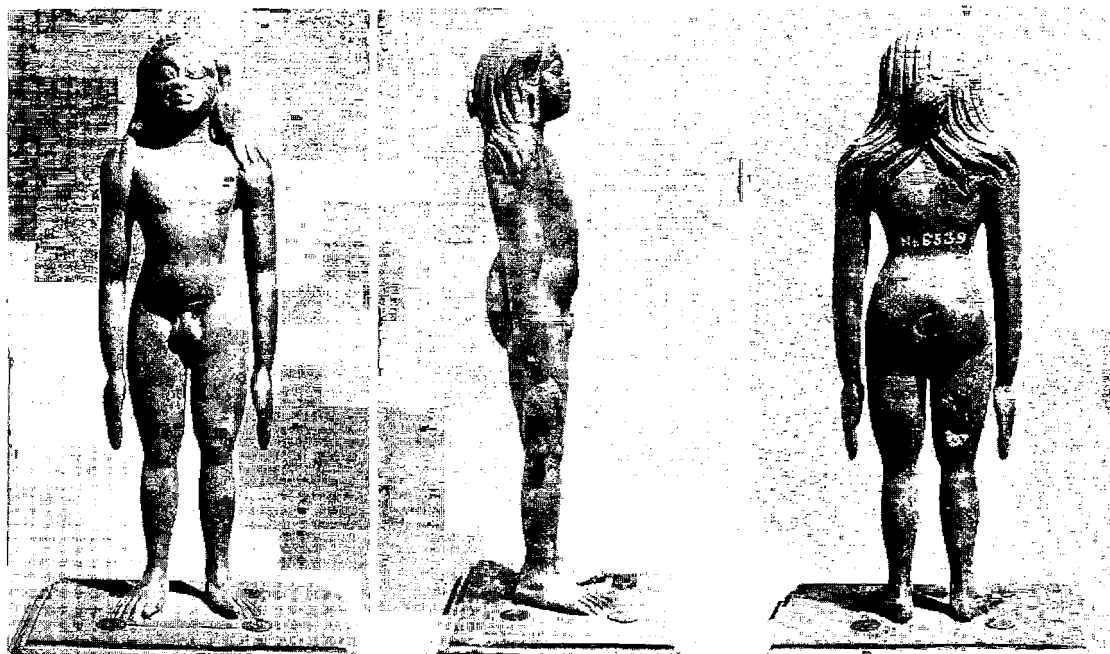


10.41. Mahābodhi temple. Bodh Gayā, Bihār, India. Various periods.

METAL IMAGES

Although some metal images are known from early periods of South Asian history, few have survived, and therefore they provide only a very incomplete picture of this art. Even Gupta-period remains are scant. However, a hoard of metal images found at Chausa, Bihār, contained examples that clearly seem to be of Gupta date. One representation of R̥ṣabhanātha, the Jain *tīrthaṅkara*, especially reveals the grace of form and naturalism associated with Gupta art (Fig. 10.42). Certain features, such as the arms that

reach to the knees, are dictated by iconographic considerations. Yet the sensitivity to the anatomical forms is remarkable, although not controlled by an adherence to rules of anatomy or a scientific approach to the human figure. Some suggestion of the later Jain preference for abstract, geometric forms is seen in the chest, which, from the front, almost anticipates the triangular form so characteristic of later Jain examples.



10.42. *Tīrthaṅkara* R̥ṣabhanātha. From Chausa, Bihār, India. Ca. fifth century. Metal. H: 21.2 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

CONCLUSION

Works of art surviving from pre-Gupta periods provide an incomplete picture of the major artistic trends in style and iconography. In contrast, the Gupta period is relatively well represented by architectural and sculptural remains. Although ephemeral materials must have continued to be used for art production

during Gupta times, the use of stone had become so widespread that it may be assumed that the surviving monuments provide a fairly detailed overview of the major artistic trends. Yet the surviving works, especially from the early Gupta period, should not necessarily be viewed as marking wholly new developments, partic-

ularly in the Hindu religion. For just as the earliest surviving Buddha and bodhisattva images of the Śaka-Parthian and Kuṣāṇa periods may not represent the initial formulations of such icons, early Gupta-period Hindu works, like the examples at Udayagiri, may reflect the crystallization of trends that had been developing for decades, if not centuries. By

the Gupta period, however, there is little doubt that all three major Indic religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, were not only flourishing but were also fostering the development of significant artistic creations, though they are perhaps unevenly reflected in the surviving art works.



Detail of 11.13.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

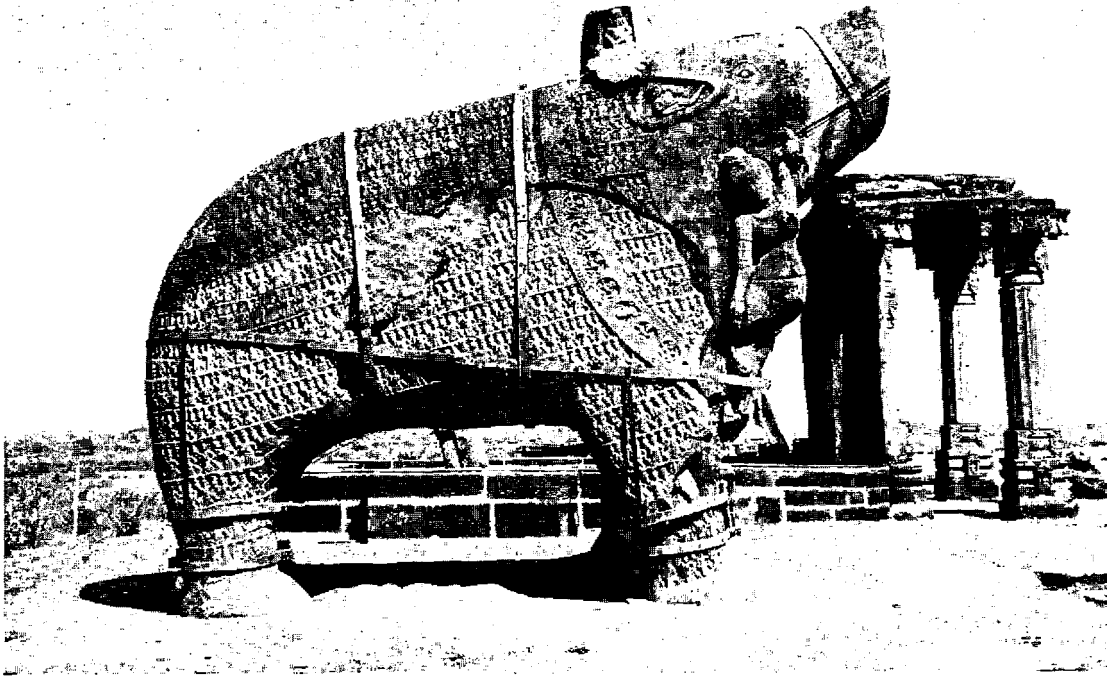
The Gupta Aftermath

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EMPIRE

The Gupta king Budhagupta probably lived until around A.D. 500. This date serves as a convenient, although not absolute, turning point in South Asian history, for it marks the beginning of the disintegration of the Gupta political state, after which northern India was fragmented into numerous principalities. The turn of the sixth century also may be seen as a kind of watershed in the history of Indic art after which regional developments became increasingly well defined, undoubtedly as a corollary of the decentralization that occurred upon the breakup of the Gupta empire. Although internal problems, especially the disputed succession after Budhagupta, may have accounted for some of the weakening of the empire, a major factor was the advent of the Epthalites, or White Hūnas (Huns), who had begun to make incursions into the Indic regions in the mid-fifth century. Skandagupta (reigned ca. 455-467) is reputed to have been victorious in holding back the Hūnas

in India, while another branch of the Hūna family, led by the famous Attila (d. 453), was wreaking havoc at the courts of Ravenna and Constantinople. But in spite of Skandagupta's defeat of the invaders, the difficult military efforts must have drained the royal treasury, as suggested by the fact that fewer gold coins were minted under him and the gold employed was less pure. Budhagupta, who ruled in the last quarter of the fifth century, also managed to hold the empire together although he faced the external threat and internal difficulties as well since feudatories and minor rulers in the eastern portions of the empire and in the west were gaining strength, and the Vākātakas were already a strong political factor. By the close of his reign, it was evident that the Gupta empire was past its glory.

Evidence of the Hūna incursion is found at Eran, where a large image of Varāha (Fig. 11.1) bears an inscription dated in the first year of



11.1. Varāha. Eran, Madhya Pradesh, India. Year 1 of reign of Toramāṇa, the Hūṇa (ca. late fifth or early sixth century). Sandstone. H: 345 cm.

Toramāṇa, the Hūṇa, who is called a Mahārājadhīrāja, indicating his rule in the region.¹ The dedication of the boar and the temple which once enshrined it was made by Dhanyaviṣṇu, who, with his elder brother Matriviṣṇu, had set up the Garuḍa pillar at Eran in the reign of Budhagupta some years earlier (Fig. 10.13). The temple, now in ruins, was a small rectangular structure preceded by a portico with a *torāṇa* on the east. Once enshrined within, the colossal representation of Varāha, shown as a four-legged theriomorph, is more than four meters in length and stands over three meters high. Rows of figures cover his body, representing the sages who sought shelter among his bristles, as described in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*² and which are comparable to the figures arranged on the rear wall of the Varāha cave at Udayagiri (Fig. 10.8). As in anthropomorphic versions of the subject, the earth goddess is borne aloft on the tusk of the boar.

Toramāṇa's first regnal year, the date given on the image, must have occurred around the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, at which time the donor Dhanyaviṣṇu's allegiance apparently transferred from Budhagupta to Toramāṇa. Such shifts are not unusual in South Asian history, and were it not for the common belief that the Hūṇā incursion had a dramatically destructive impact on the culture of ancient India, this dedication would seem perfectly normal. In addition, since the image and the temple (as much as can be determined of it) easily fall within the parameters of Indic iconography and style of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, it is not possible to suggest an influence on the art that is specifically associated with the Hūṇas. Simply, the true effect of Hūṇa rule in ancient India on artistic developments remains to be examined, but it is likely that much untruth surrounds the commonly held view that these foreigners were

intolerant of the Indic religions and that they systematically destroyed temples and images in iconoclastic fury.

Toramāṇa continued to rule until around A.D. 515, when he was succeeded by his son, Mihirakula. But around 530, an individual named Yaśodharman rose to prominence and freed the north-central Indian Mālwa region from Hūṇa control. This king's brief rule, lasting only about a decade, did not succeed totally in destroying the Hūṇas, who continued to pose threats for some time. In spite of the political difficulties after the reign of Budhagupta until the rise of Yaśodharman, the art produced in the first part of the sixth century is the logical culmination of fifth-century trends. The site of Mandasor (ancient Daśapura) in Mālwa was an important cultural center during the fifth and sixth centuries, although little remains of the glory of the temples mentioned in the several lithic records recovered from the vicinity. However, a number of sculptures and architectural fragments associated with Yaśodharman's reign clarify the artistic developments of the second quarter of the sixth century.

A colossal *dvārapāla* (Fig. 11.2), one of a pair now at Soṇḍni, a site once part of the metropolitan Daśapura area, may have flanked the entrance to a Śaivite temple in the Mandasor area. The Śaivite nature of these almost mirror-image figures is indicated by the *triśūla* each holds as well as the presence of the diminutive figure from which the *triśūla* seems to emerge (*triśūlapuruṣa*).³ In style, the figures clearly relate to examples seen at Deogarh and Nāchnā-Kuṭhara a few decades before, and the same refinement and delicacy noted in late fifth-century art is present. An increase in the height and elaboration of the headdress, however, suggests progress toward the more ornate forms of post-Gupta periods. Further, the



11.2. *Dvārapāla*. Soṇḍni, Mandasor area, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. second quarter sixth century. Beige sandstone. H: 260 cm.

relaxed but somewhat angular posture is suggestive of the exaggerated poses characteristic of figures in post-Gupta art.

OUTGROWTHS OF THE GUPTA IDIOMS (CA. 550-700)

The political unity imposed by the Guptas on much of northern and north-central India was only temporary, for upon the collapse of the em-

pire, regional patterns along linguistic, artistic, and cultural lines increasingly became the hallmark of Indic civilization. While such regional

variations have been identifiable in South Asia virtually from the earliest human remains known, the unity of the political state under the Mauryas and later the Guptas provided an apparent overlay of commonality that was quickly lost when the dynasties collapsed. This

was particularly true after the decline of the imperial Guptas in the eastern and western extremes of the empire, where different branches of the Gupta family ruled simultaneously after the death of Budhagupta, and clearly defined artistic schools quickly emerged.

EASTERN INDIA

The Gupta empire reached as far east as what are today the Indian states of Bihār and West Bengal and the nation of Bangladesh. Bihār, which includes the ancient Magadha heartland of the Buddhist and Jain religions, had long been important in the mainstream of Indic artistic and historical developments. But Bengal, further to the east, emerged as a force on the political and artistic scene only after having been brought into the Gupta sphere primarily by Budhagupta during the fifth century. After the cessation of strong imperial control by the Guptas in the east, there was a scramble for power among numerous competing dynasts, many of whose only apparent claim to fame is the presence of their names in the lists of dynasties in ancient history books. The situation became clearer during the seventh century when two notable rulers emerged, Śaśāṅka, who is reputed to be the first king of Bengal, and Harṣa (r. 606-647), of the Vardhana family, who established hegemony over much of northern India including parts of present day Uttar Pradesh, the eastern Pañjab, and western Bihār. These early seventh-century rulers are known more through literary and historical sources than through art, however, and much legend surrounds their rule. Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese monk whose travels throughout Buddhist India coincided with the period of Harṣa's rule, and whose

travel account⁴ is a main source of historical information for the period, asserted that Śaśāṅka was a hater of Buddhism (he was a known Śaivite), but that Harṣa was partial to Buddhism, and in fact may have been a practicing Buddhist himself. While Harṣa's capital was at Kanauj, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, his influence in eastern India, especially Magadha, seems to have been significant. Although archaeological evidence has not verified Harṣa's putative association with the artistic developments at numerous sites, in particular Buddhist monasteries, in Magadha during his reign, it is probable that the developments that occurred were in some ways indebted to his tolerance and encouragement. Śaśāṅka is also credited with artistic activities, as he is said to have founded the Liṅgarāja temple in Orissa, but he is also blamed for the destruction of some Buddhist remains such as the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā, which has since been restored on numerous occasions. Harṣa's association with Magadha was formalized in his assumption of the title "King of Magadha," an appellation possibly chosen because Magadha was famous outside of the Indic regions and thus such a title was perhaps useful in the formulations of his "foreign policy," especially his relations with the emperor of China.

BUDDHIST ART IN THE EAST

The Magadha region had remained a stronghold of both Buddhism and Jainism virtually since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha and Mahāvira, regardless of political situations in the region. In the case of Buddhism, the region was materi-

ally helped by Buddhists from other parts of Asia, such as China and Southeast Asia, and thus the Buddhist holy land was not dependent solely upon the fortunes of local rulers to maintain itself. During the Gupta period and



11.3. Buddha, flanking entrance to Mahābodhi temple. Bodh Gayā, Bihar, India. Ca. seventh century. Black stone. H: ca. 150 cm.

later, ancient holy places such as Bodh Gayā were refurbished or maintained and new ones were founded. By the Pāla period, beginning in the eighth century A.D., so many Buddhist establishments or *vihāras* dotted the region that its modern name, Bihār, is a memory of that phenomenon.

Most of the sculpture that must have been produced in the sixth and seventh centuries has been lost; possibly, stucco and terra cotta were commonly used but were simply not strong enough to survive the centuries and periodic destructions the region suffered. However, an image of a standing Buddha in *abhaya mudrā* presently flanking the entrance to the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā suggests something of the appearance of a typical sculpture made after the Gupta period, perhaps in the seventh century (Fig. 11.3). The debt to Sāmāth idioms of the late fifth century is clearly reflected in the stance and body type as well as the nearly invisible drapery and smiling face. The figure stands on an unusual three-dimensional pedestal

consisting of a square plinth with a rocky landscape design surmounted by a round lotus into which the figure is set, much as if it were a metal image placed into a base. Elegant, monumental, and finely carved, this image documents a little known period of Indic art tied to non-Magadhan sources but clearly of local manufacture, as indicated by the grey black stone out of which it is carved.

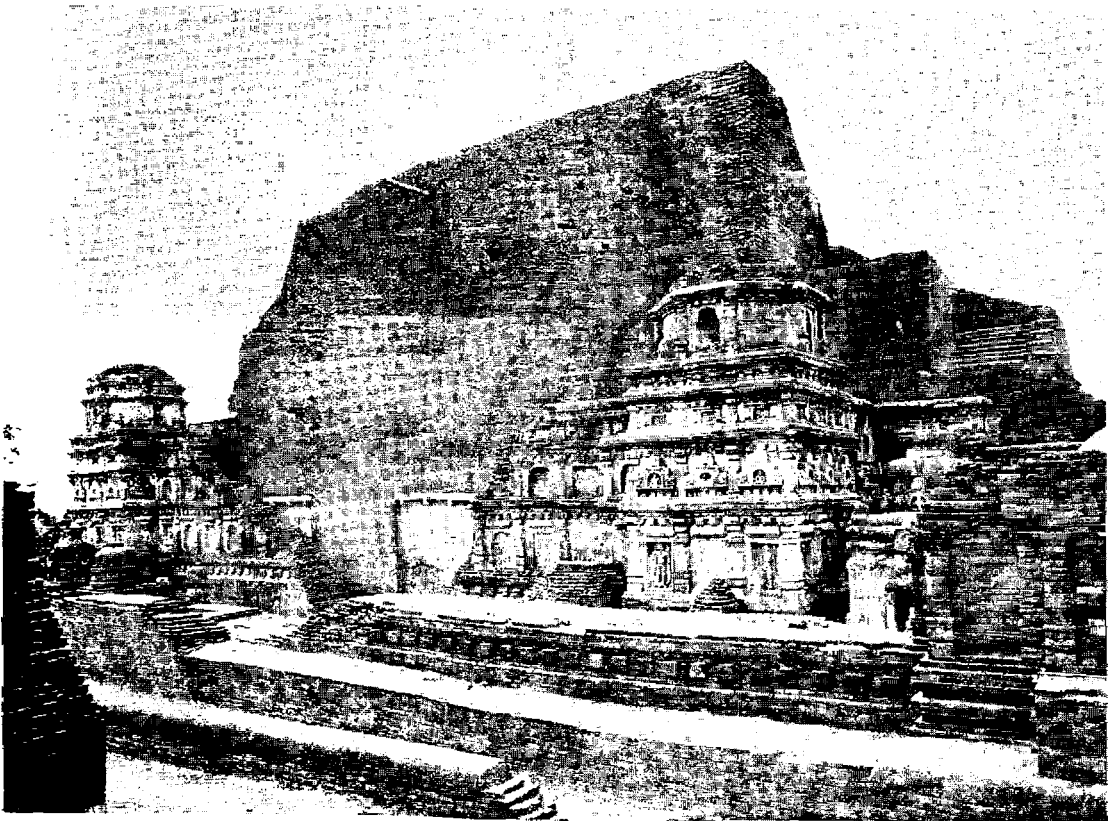
One of the most renowned Buddhist institutions in eastern India after the Gupta period was the monastic university of Nālandā. A number of modern villages presently occupy the extensive area of the ancient site, and only a small portion of the once huge monastery has been revealed by excavation. Ancient Buddhist traditions known from early canonical texts refer to Nālandā as a suburb of Rājgir and it is likely that the site, which was not historically associated with an event in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha, was not prominent until the Gupta period, although it was apparently founded earlier.

The Nālandā establishment is most properly termed a *mahāvihāra* (great *vihāra*), since it was an aggregation of several monasteries. Although precedents for this type of establishment may be found in some of the Ikṣvāku remains, in Bactro-Gandhāra and other areas, it is not until the Gupta period that *mahāvihāras*, which often came to be seats of great learning and liberal scholarship, became the norm. Hsüan-tsang tells of the founding of this *mahāvihāra*.⁵ Supposedly, a king named Śakrāditya, who has been identified as Kumāragupta I (ca. 415-455), laid the foundations and built a monastery there. This is supported in that Fa-hsien, traveling in the early fifth century, only mentions the place as the birthplace of Śāriputra, the disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha, and refers to a *stūpa* there.⁶ That greater notice is not given by Fa-hsien suggests that indeed the growth of this monastery occurred in the later Gupta period and after. However, since Fa-hsien's descriptions are frequently sketchy, this cannot be taken as a rule. Hsüan-tsang's story reveals that after the king Śakrāditya, others (some of whom are not known in other historical documents) such as Budhagupta, Tathāgata, Bālāditya, Vajra, and a

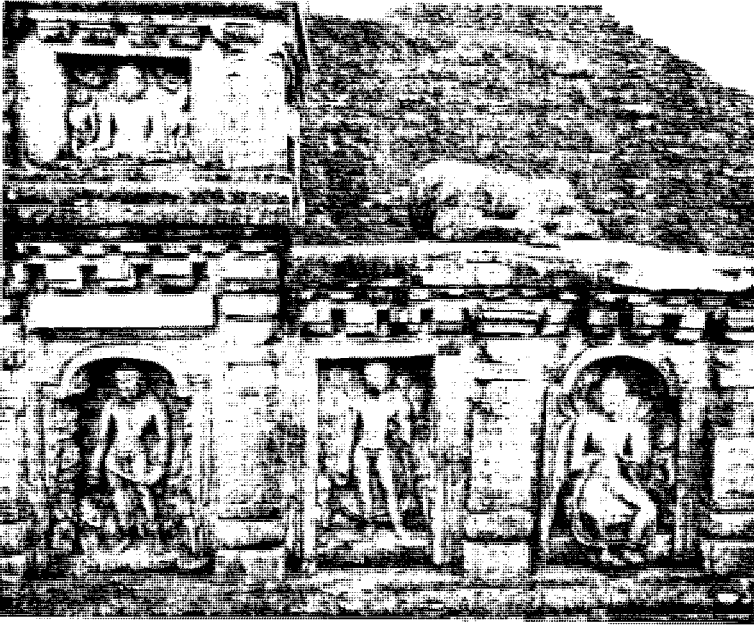
king of central India extended their patronage to the site. According to Hsüan-tsang, Budhagupta built a monastery to the south of the first one; Tathāgata erected one to the east of Budhagupta's; Bālāditya erected a three-storied pavilion; and Vajra constructed a monastery to the west of that of Bālāditya. Thus, according to tradition, within a span of about one century, at least five monastic units had been built. The king of central India later erected a high wall and gate around the earlier structures, and thus the site became a truly unified aggregate. However, if Nālandā was patronized by the Guptas, it was brought to prominence during the reign of Harṣa. Hsüan-tsang describes life in the monastery during this period, saying that rules were strictly obeyed and that rebellion simply never occurred. Strict policies of admission were followed and prospective students were screened before entering the monastery

by gatekeepers (an honorific position for highly learned monks).

The most dominant structure at Nālandā today is the one designated as Stūpa/Temple 3 at the southern end of the complex (Fig. 11.4). This monument is the product of several different phases of construction. At the core is a small *stūpa* with a square base measuring 173 centimeters on each side and a height of 137 centimeters. Its date is not known, nor is it known to whom it is dedicated, since no relic was found within, but it has been suggested, due to the obvious care and expense lavished on this monument, that it represents the *caitya* of Śāriputra over which Aśoka is reputed to have built a temple. Three more rather modest enlargements were made to this core, but in the creation of the fifth shell, the structure took on a new appearance and form. Large in size, and having four corner towers, this layer was



11.4. Stūpa / Temple 3, Nālandā, Bihār, India. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century. Brick and stucco.



11.5. Figures on Stūpa / Temple 3. Nālandā, Bihār, India. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century. Stucco.

lavishly decorated with stucco architectural mouldings and niches containing figures of Buddhas and bodhisattvas (Fig. 11.5). Bricks with Buddhist inscriptions used in this phase are believed to date from the late sixth or early seventh century, around the time of Harṣa's reign or slightly earlier, on the basis of palaeography. In style, the sculptures also fit this attribution, for while they still strongly relate to Gupta material from sites such as Sārnāth in the slender, gracefully posed figures, their clinging, near transparent drapery, and the style of their costumes, the slenderness is perhaps greater than that seen at Sārnāth. This is visible in the very thin faces especially, which anticipate the style to be seen in subsequent sculpture at Nālandā. This core, revealed by archaeologists, was not the latest addition to this monument, for two more layers were added, possibly not long after the fifth. Stucco, like terra cotta, is a highly fragile medium. Its use, as that of brick, was popularized during the Gupta period, both in the eastern and western outreaches of the former Gupta empire, possibly as an economic measure. The popularity of stucco may be related to Inner Asian practices that grew up where stone was scarce. However, its adoption at Nālandā and other sites in Magadha where



11.6. Buddha. From Sultāngāñj, Bihār, India. Ca. seventh century. Metal. H: ca. 200 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

stone was abundant must have been due to other considerations.

Metal must have also been a popular artistic medium in eastern India, although it too is barely represented among the known examples of post-Gupta art. However, an extraordinary image of a Buddha from Sultāngāñj in eastern Bihār indicates that not only was metal technology an advanced science in ancient India, but that craftsmen were able to use it to advantage (Fig. 11.6). The image, which is larger than

human-size and weighs more than a ton, was found during railway excavations in the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly, it was not a unique creation and others of similar ambitiousness must have existed, but since metal corrodes and can be melted down and reused for other purposes, many of the images presumed to have been produced have been lost. Stylistically, the figure strongly relates to the Nālandā stuccos and a seventh-century date may be suggested for its production.

HINDU ART IN THE EAST

In spite of the fact that Magadha was primarily Buddhist, other portions of the eastern regions show evidence that Hindu worship was becoming increasingly popular in post-Gupta periods. At Muṇḍeśvarī Hill in Bihār, for example, architectural and sculptural remains suggest that the site was an important Hindu center. A

controversial inscription from Muṇḍeśvarī gives the year thirty of an unspecified era,⁷ often thought to be the Harṣa era, which began in A.D. 606, thus giving a date equivalent to 636; and it is possible that some of the artistic productions found at Muṇḍeśvarī date from this period. An image of Kārttikeya (Fig. 11.7) and another



11.7. Kārttikeya. From Muṇḍeśvarī, Bihār, India. Ca. seventh century. Reddish brown stone. H: 68.5 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.



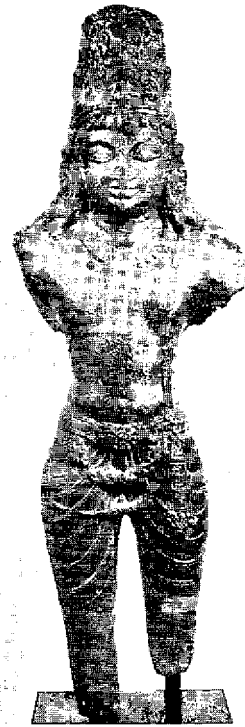
11.8. Sūrya. From Muṇḍeśvarī, Bihār, India. Ca. seventh century. Reddish brown stone. H: 48.5 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

of Sūrya (Fig. 11.8) from the vicinity of Muṇḍeśvarī demonstrate the stylistic idiom of the seventh century. These Hindu figures reveal some of the grace and delicacy of Sārnāth Gupta imagery, although the figures are more stocky and short in their proportions and perhaps more accentuated in their postures. In style, they reveal associations more with north-central Indian Gupta modes, seen, for example, at Eran and other sites, rather than the Buddhist Sārnāth ideal.

At Āpsādh, also in Bihar, an inscription was found that tells of a king Ādityasena of the Later Gupta dynasty who is thought to have ruled in the third quarter of the seventh century, around A.D. 672. A lengthy genealogy of this family, which is also known as the Gupta line of Magadha but whose relationship to the imperial Guptas is unclear, is included, and the inscription further records the building of a Viṣṇu temple by Ādityasena, the erection of a religious college or monastery by his mother, and the excavation of a tank by his wife.⁸ Although no trace of the religious college or tank have been identified in modern times, it is believed that the large mound at the site is the remains of Ādityasena's temple. The mound has not been fully excavated but one side has been cleared to reveal a number of fine stucco sculptures that have been identified as scenes from the great Hindu epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Fig. 11.9). The same free style seen in Gupta-period terra cottas such as those from Ahicchatrā is present here, and must be in some part due to the malleable nature of the material. A number of stone sculptures have also been recovered from Āpsādh that, for the most part, seem to date from the period of Ādityasena as well. One of the most beautiful of these is a standing male figure, presumably Viṣṇu, carved of the local black stone typically used in the sculpture of this region (Fig. 11.10).⁹ The refinement and delicacy of the detailing and the gentle countenance of the god owe a clear debt to Gupta art, but the increased ornamentation, and lessened degree of softness and fluidity in the transition between the parts of the body suggest a departure from the earlier idiom.



11.9. *Rāmāyaṇa* scene. Āpsādh, Bihār, India. Ca. third quarter seventh century. Stucco. H: 96 cm.



11.10. Viṣṇu. From Āpsādh, Bihār, India. Ca. third quarter seventh century. Black stone. H: 91.5 cm. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection.

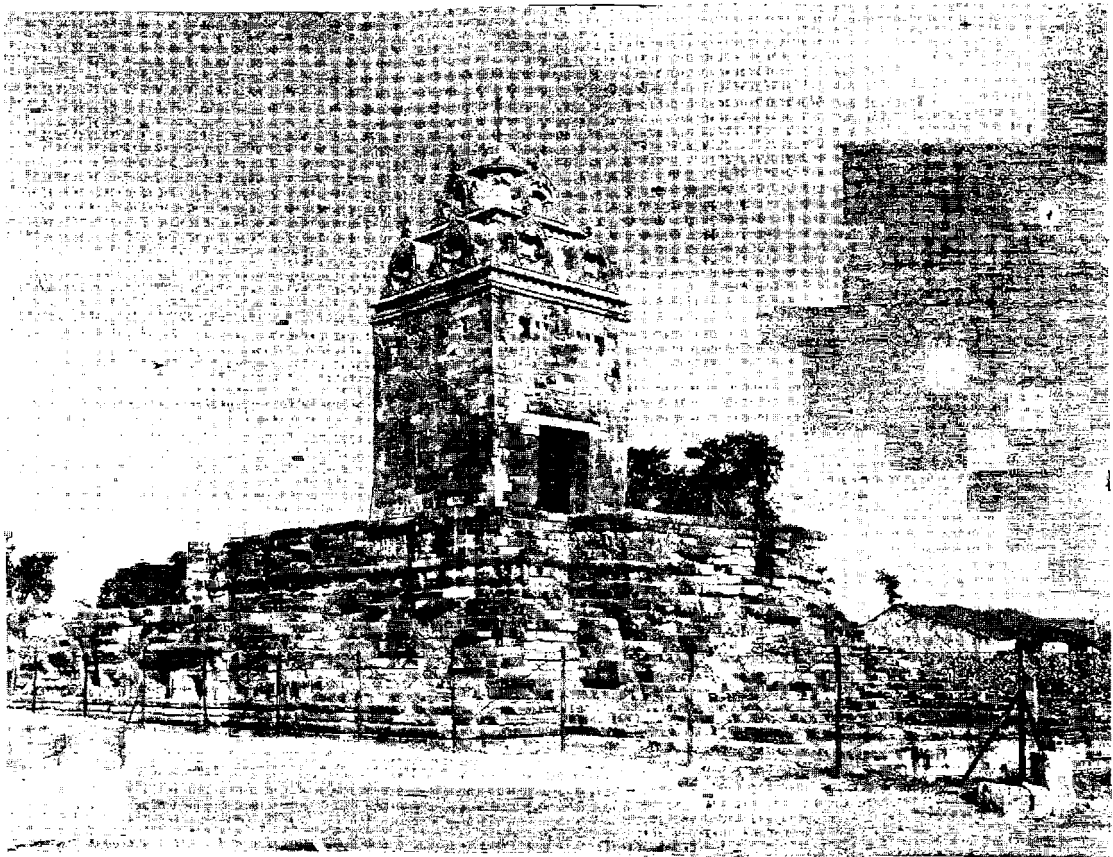
WESTERN INDIAN DEVELOPMENTS

Certain artistic developments in the western regions of ancient India that arose in the wake of the decline of the imperial Guptas provide important insights into the earlier history of the region, especially the heritage of Western classicistic styles. Probably the oldest surviving structural temple in the Saurāṣṭra peninsula of Gujarāt state is the so-called Old Temple at Gop (Fig. 11.11), which is thought to have been built between 575 and 600, when this region was under the sway of the Maitraka dynasty. Its form and style, while unusual in terms of the mainstream developments in northern temple architecture (*nāgara*), is an interesting episode in the development of western Indic styles, deriving both from earlier traditions in the west, as well as from Gupta modes. Relationships between the Gop temple and later Kāśmīri forms, as well as earlier Bactro-Gandhāra architecture, have been observed by scholars, and the temple is usually classified as belonging to the "Gandhāric" type since it preserves a number of elements from the north-western tradition of the Kuṣāṇa period. One of these is the so-called "penthouse-type" roof (actually a pyramidal roof rising from a square base), known as the *phāmsanā* type. This form is later to be seen in Kāśmīr, suggesting an early widespread dispersal of the convention.¹⁰

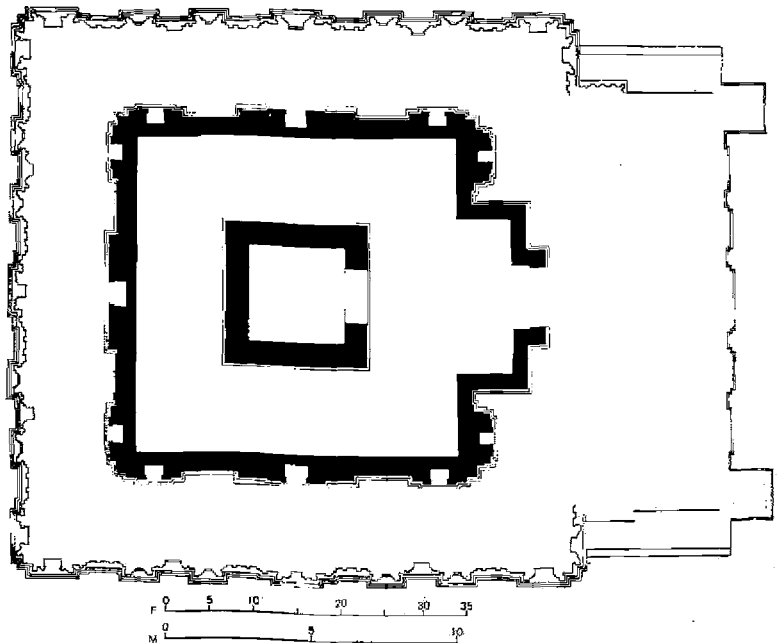
The temple at Gop sits atop a high terrace (*jagati*) that is square in plan except for a projection on the east (Fig. 11.12). Originally, steps at either side of the extension would have given the devotee access to the temple. The increased plinth height, in comparison, for example, with the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh and the "Pārvaṭī" temple at Nāchnā-Kuṭhara, anticipates later developments in northern temple architecture. The bold form of three false dormer windows (*candraśālā*) decorates each slope of the peaked roof, creating a dominant motif on the monument. In general, relative simplicity prevails, perhaps indicating the early date of the temple, although in this case caution should be exercised in making such a judgment, as numerous later temples in this region are also

rather stark and plain. Further, the use of large, heavy blocks of stone in the construction of the temple, often also seen as an "early" element reflecting associations with Gupta temple architecture, seems in this case to be a regional form, since later temples as well maintain this type of construction. It is not known to whom the temple was originally dedicated, as no image was found in the shrine and most of the exterior decoration is lost. Originally, this *sāndhara* shrine was enclosed by a circumambulatory passage, as was the "Pārvaṭī" temple at Nāchnā-Kuṭhara, although, like that of the earlier temple, this enclosure is now in ruins.

The Maitraka dynasty, which may have been ruling Saurāṣṭra at the time the Gop temple was built, forms a puzzling chapter in the history of South Asian art. One of the most durable of the new states that arose upon the ruin of the imperial Guptas, the Maitrakas seem to have been established by the late fifth century (their earliest presently known land grant is dated to around 502). Yet, in spite of a rule of over two hundred and fifty years, little is known about the art of this dynasty. Over one hundred temples in Saurāṣṭra have been identified as belonging to the Maitraka period, although none can be specifically tied to the patronage of the rulers themselves and none is datable on the basis of inscriptional evidence. This peculiarity is especially notable because the Maitrakas in general left extensive epigraphic records, many of which describe their generosity to and patronage of religious establishments. By all standards, the rulers must have been wealthy, since Valabhī, the now-ruined Maitraka capital, was at that time a seaport and a major trade center linking ancient India with the Persian and Mediterranean worlds. Records dating from between about 535 and 700 document donations made by individuals to specifically named Buddhist establishments.¹¹ Hsüan-tsang, who travelled to Valabhī in 640, spoke of the flourishing of Buddhism in the area.¹² And yet, virtually nothing has been recovered from Valabhī and its vicinity to testify to its former glory. I-tsing, another Chinese traveler, who visited India during the Maitraka



11.11. Old Temple from southeast. Gop, Gujarāt, India. Maitraka period. Ca. last quarter sixth century.



11.12. Plan of Old Temple. Gop, Gujarāt, India. Maitraka period. Ca. last quarter sixth century.

supremacy (although he did not visit Valabhī), mentions that the two prominent centers of learning in India at the time (late seventh century) were Nālandā in the east and Valabhī in the west.¹³

Thus, an important chapter in the development of Indic art as known from historical sources is a virtual blank to us. A good portion of the materials must have been plundered, for the collapse of the Maitraka empire was accelerated by a marine invasion of Arabs from Sind, and this was only a prelude to the large-scale advent of Muslims whose iconoclastic zeal is well known as one of the contributing causes of the decline and destruction of monumental art in northern India. But undoubtedly, future discoveries will help us to better understand this important phase of Indic art.

The distinctive regional character of art in western India and the merging of the earlier Bactro-Gandhāra influence with north-central Indian Gupta modes is visible in sculpture and architecture alike. A number of sites in Rājasthān and northern Gujarāt have yielded interesting sculptural remains, usually carved of the distinctive greenish blue or greyish blue schist locally known as *pārevā* stone. Several female figures found at Tancsara-Mahādeva, about fifty kilometers from Udaipur, reveal aspects of the style that was apparently current throughout southwestern Rājasthān after the Gupta period, in around the sixth century. Although they are usually identified as *mātrkās* and have been presumed to have been part of a *saptamātrkā* group, they may instead represent the six *kṛttikās* or foster mothers of Kārttikeya, also called the Skandamātās (Mothers of Skanda).¹⁴ Supposedly, Kārttikeya's six faces developed so that he could drink the milk of the six mothers, who comprise the constellation Pleiades.¹⁵ In style, the figures betray a Hellenistic flavor combined with the Gupta heritage. The depiction of one Skandamātā, for example (Fig. 11.13), shows a rather solidly built, almost muscular looking female reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa and post-Kuṣāṇa portrayals of women from the northwest. The drapery is highly naturalistic, with heavy, three-dimensional folds that recall Bactro-Gandhāra types, as does the curly hair. The child also has a Hellenized



11.13. Skandamātā. From Tancsara-Mahādeva, Rājasthān, India. Ca. sixth century. Greenish blue schist. H: 76.4 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (Nasli and Alice Heermanneck Collection).



11.14. Śaivite *kṣetrapāla*. From Śāmalāji, Gujarāt, India. Ca. second quarter sixth century. Grey schist. H: 93.5 cm. Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.

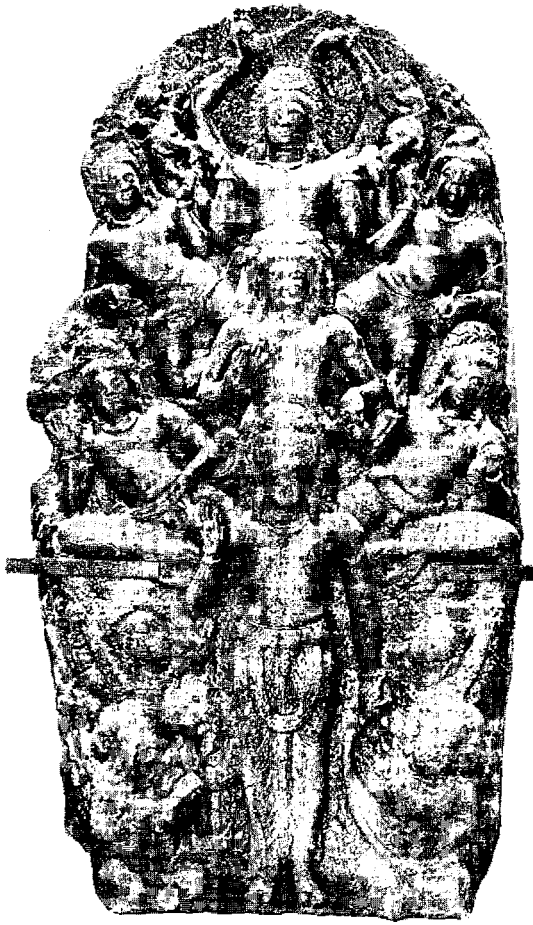


11.15. Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa. At Nilakanṭha Mahādeva temple. Śāmalāji, Gujarāt, India. Ca. second quarter sixth century. Blue-grey schist. H: 101.6 cm.

appearance, undoubtedly based on grotes and other child depictions that had been freely incorporated into the western Asiatic repertoire. Yet clearly, these forms, while indebted to Bactro-Gandhāra precedents, reveal the grace, charm, and delicacy of the Gupta tradition, as does the depiction of the clinging garments.

At Śāmalāji in Gujarāt, a number of impressive stone sculptures were found. Their date and patronage remain controversial. However, stylistically, they seem to belong to the sixth century, most probably the second quarter of that century. A Śaivite image perhaps representing a *kṣetrapāla* (a kind of protective deity)

shows the remarkably high quality of craftsmanship of the western Indian sculptor (Fig. 11.14). The heavy drapery, like that of the figures from Tanesara-Mahādeva, reveals a classicistic heritage, but the delicate carving and graceful forms derive from the Gupta tradition. The strong relationship of this figure and other similar ones to examples from the Mandasor region (Fig. 11.2) suggest broad artistic ties among sites in the western and northwestern regions. However, the pose of the main figure is even more exaggerated and the entire configuration more ornate than the Mandasor sculpture, seeming to anticipate more fully the stylistic directions of the



11.16. Stele. At Bārādeviche Deul. Parel (Bombay), Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. first half sixth century. Stone. H: 348 cm.

next centuries, particularly those to be seen in the art of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. Thus, the Śāmalāji sculpture may be slightly later, and may have been made as late as around A.D. 550.

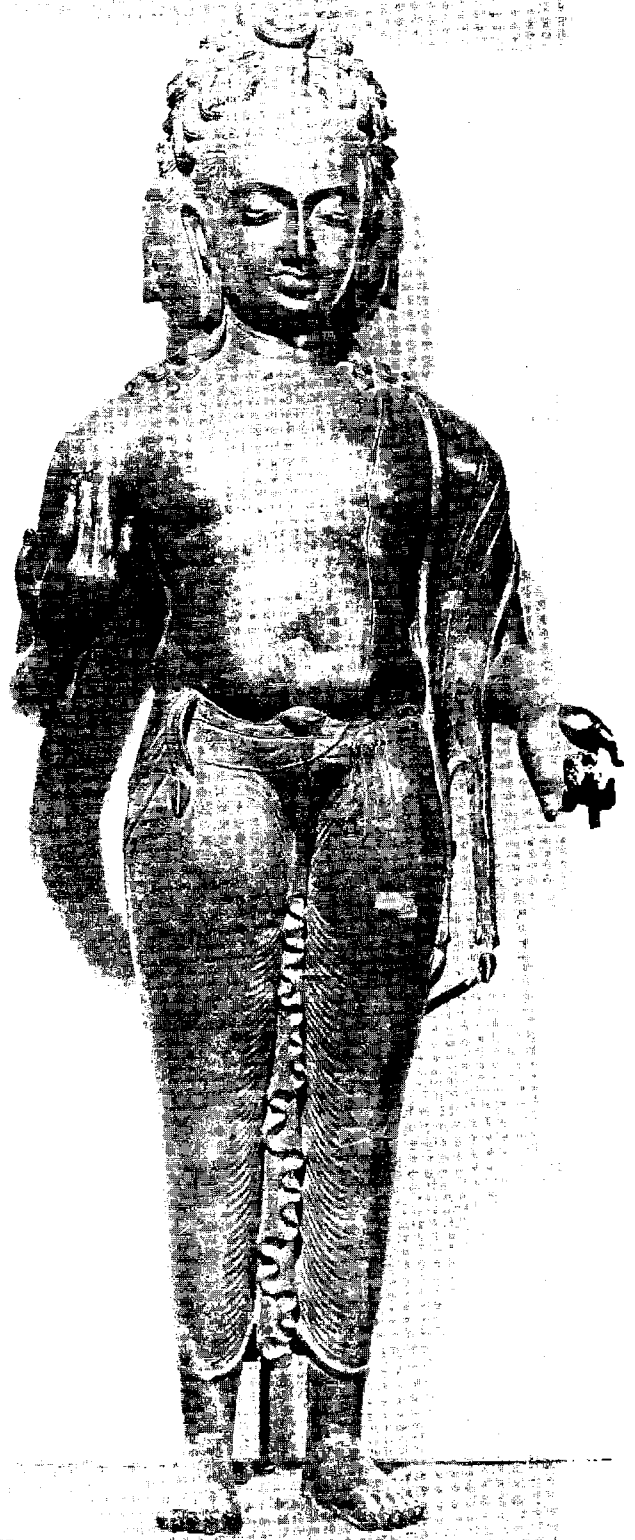
The trend towards increased elaboration is even clearer in a representation of Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa, also from Śāmalāji, which probably dates from around the same time (Fig. 11.15). Eight-armed and four-faced (the fourth implied at the rear), Viṣṇu sits atop the serpent Ananta, wears an elaborate crown, and is accompanied by a seeming multitude of figures, most of whom seem to emanate from his head. These figures include the *āyudhapuruṣas*, Śiva (at the top of the

relief in the center), Brahmā (beneath him), *avatāras* and *vyūhas* of Viṣṇu himself, and Indra and Sūrya.¹⁶ As Viśvarūpa (Having All Forms), Viṣṇu appears as the Universal in whom all things are embodied and from whom all things emanate. This form of Viṣṇu, while known in a number of Hindu texts, is described perhaps most poignantly in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a work appended to the *Mahābhārata*, which is basically a dialogue between Arjuna and his charioteer, who is none other than Viṣṇu in his Kṛṣṇa incarnation. The dialogue takes place on the eve of the great battle of Kurukṣetra, when Arjuna is overcome with doubt about the righteousness of the killing that will occur the next day and begins to question Kṛṣṇa. In response to Arjuna's request that he reveal himself, Kṛṣṇa manifests himself in a form that embodies every aspect of the universe, and thus fills Arjuna with awe. All various colors, all moving and unmoving things, many mouths, eyes, ornaments, weapons, marvelous garlands, garments, perfumes, and ointments are contained within Arjuna's vision. While such a vision would be impossible to portray in a work of art, the artists of this carving have clearly attempted to suggest the multiplicity inherent in it. The style of the figures, though somewhat difficult to discern, falls within the definitions of the sixth-century school at Śāmalāji.

The regional styles developing in various parts of western India following the breakup of the Gupta empire were highly dependent on what must have been earlier artistic traditions in each locale. Thus, while some general "post-Gupta" features might be common to works of art produced throughout the region, local peculiarities are also found, and these in turn form the basis for the highly distinctive styles that emerged in around the seventh century. A huge stele (Fig. 11.16) found at Parel in the Bombay area might appear at first glance to relate strongly to the Viśvarūpa image from Śāmalāji (Fig. 11.15), but this is largely due to the coincidence of their emanatory iconographies and the general similarities arising from the fact that both are western Indian works of about the sixth century. The Parel stele, however, finds its closest stylistic counterparts in the caves at Elephanta (Figs.



11.17. *Dvārapāla*. Lākhāmaṇḍal, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ca. sixth or seventh century. Black stone. H: 178 cm.



11.18. Brahṃā. From Brahmānabad, Pakistan. Ca. sixth century. Metal. H: 96.5 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

13.5-8) and related sites, indicating a regional style probably current around the Bombay area during the first half of the sixth century. In general, this style reflects the rather heavy, full-figured body type prevalent in the sculptural styles that evolved in the western Deccan around the fifth century, as at Ajanṭā, and contrasts with the figure types developed in Gujarāt and Rājasthān identifiable in the images from Tanesar-Mahādeva and Śāmalāji. The high headdresses and elaborate coiffures are also characteristic of this style. The identification of the subject of this relief is controversial, although most authorities agree that it is Śaivite rather than Vaiṣṇavite. The three central figures apparently represent manifestations or emanations of the main divinity.¹⁷

Evidence of Gupta aesthetics affecting art production in outlying regions is found in a life-size, black stone image of a *dvārapāla*, one of a pair,¹⁸ found at Lākhāmaṇḍal in the Siwalik Range (Lesser Himālayas) in the far north of India (Fig. 11.17). Although the images are of uncertain age, the delicate forms, graceful poses, and diaphanous drapery betray the penetration of the Gupta ideal into what may have been an isolated pocket of the Indic regions. A date of the sixth or possibly seventh century may be suggested for the figures, which are virtually identical, each showing a standing male dressed in a finely delineated *dhōṭī*, with a simple necklace and ornate crown. The articulation of the knee, the treatment and pose of the body, and the unusual type of garment do not find parallels in other styles of Indic art of post Gupta ages, but instead, find ties with Cambodian sculptures of the early seventh century.¹⁹

As in eastern India and Bangladesh, a number of metal images from the west provide further evidence of sculptural idioms and indicate the supposed popularity of metal as a medium, in spite of the paucity of remains. A very large statue of Brahmā²⁰ (Fig. 11.18) found at Brah-



11.19. *Tirthāṅkara*. From Vasantaḡadh, Rājasthān, India. Year 744 Vikrama era (A.D. 687). Metal; glass eyes and eye paint added later. H: 137 cm. In Jain temple at Pinḍavāḍā, Rājasthān, India.

mānabad in the Sind is one of the masterpieces of South Asian metal sculpture. The four-headed deity is depicted with two arms. Although his legs are not flexed and he stands frontally posed, a gentleness pervades the figure because of the slightly downcast heads and eyes, and the full, fleshy forms of the body, which give a softness and naturalness to the image. The heritage of the western tradition in the northwest regions of South Asia persists strongly in the articulation of the forms of the torso and in the fine lines of the drapery between the legs. In many respects, this image foreshadows the styles that developed in Kāśmīr from around the seventh century, for there the Western influence persisted in the art. Since this rather fleshy, softly modeled figure seems closer to Gupta modes than the developed Kāśmīri styles, an approximate date of the sixth century might be suggested for its execution.

The ancient site of Vasantaḡaḡh in Rajāsthān has yielded inscriptions of the seventh century that refer to temples at the site. Further, an important hoard of bronze images was discovered in the cellar of an old Jain temple there in the early part of this century. Two virtually identical images of Jain *tirthaṅkaras* were among the sculptures found. An inscription on one of them, illustrated here (Fig. 11.19), reveals that it

and its mate were both cast by a sculptor named Śivanāḡa in the year 744 (Vikrama era), equivalent to A.D. 687.²¹ Both images are very large, the one illustrated reaching a total height of 137 centimeters including the pedestal.

Although it is often difficult to discuss stylistic features in Jain images due to the great degree of abstraction, in this case, because the images are of the Śvetāmbara (White Dressed) type and have drapery, they are more easily treated than the nude, mainly Digambara (Sky Clad), types. The drapery here is soft and clingy, as it seems molded to the leg, and virtually transparent except for the folds on the left leg. Close ties in this respect to Gupta tradition are seen. The increased stiffness of the figure, contrasted for example with the Chausa pieces (Fig. 10.42) is an indication of advanced date; in Jain art, after the Gupta period, increased geometrization and abstraction becomes the rule. The elongated arms, whose shape resembles metaphorically the trunk of an elephant, represent one of the "lucky signs" of the *jinas*, whose arms reach down to their knees, in a concept similar to that of Buddhist figures. The smiling face appears stiff rather than natural or spontaneous, again characteristic of post-Gupta Jain imagery, and the torso has an almost triangular shape, later to be completely geometrized in western Indian Jain art.

CONCLUSION

The Gupta period and the period of fragmentation that followed it are often looked upon as a watershed in the history of Indic art, after which the character of the art traditions is said to have changed dramatically. This traditional view would seem to be supported by the surviving evidence, for indeed, after the "post-Gupta" period, South Asian artistic developments are notable for their highly distinctive regional styles, which were not so apparent prior to the Gupta period. To a great extent, the belief in this change of character is the result of the increased visibility of regional distinctions in art due to the greater survival rate after Gupta times, when the use of stone became increasingly prevalent. Simply, with more works of art

preserved, it is easier to note their natural groupings and to categorize them into clusters of styles. Many styles that seem to emerge at fully mature stages after post-Gupta times, such as the temple forms created by the Early Western Calukyas (Chap. 15) or those of the Pallavas (Chap. 14), must have had formative stages which paralleled the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. Though these can no longer be traced due to the loss of such monuments, it must be inferred that distinctive regional styles were already present at an earlier date than usually believed, although their character can only be supposed. The emergence of distinctive art styles around the seventh century in regions of South Asia where Gupta dominance was never

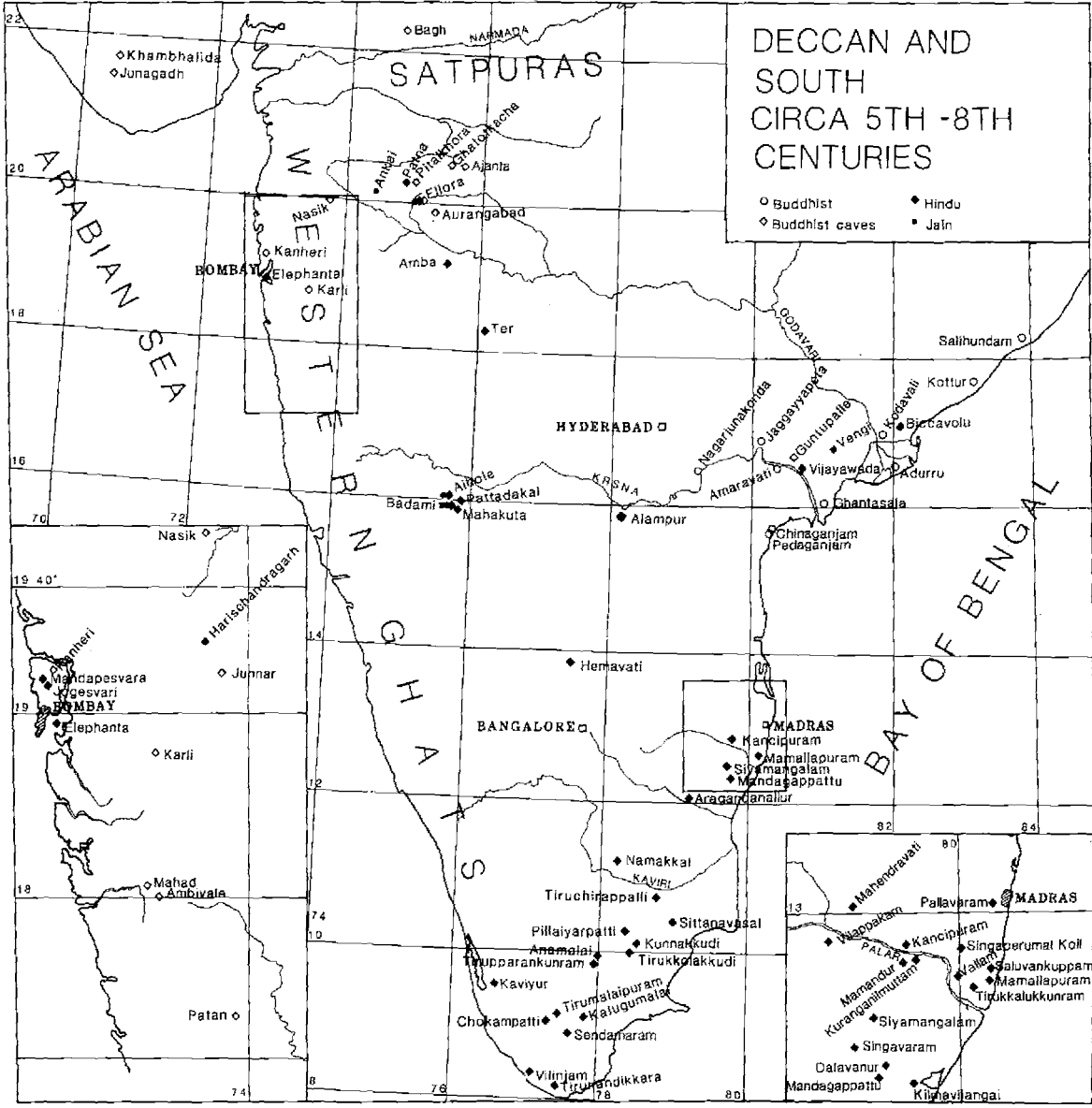
felt casts further doubt on the validity of seeing this period as universally influential in changing the character of Indic art itself.

In spite of these limitations, it does appear that the Gupta period and its aftermath represent a true, natural breakpoint in the development of Indic civilization. From a religious point of view, most of the surviving art of the pre-Gupta period is Buddhist, while most later art is Hindu. Further, although wood, brick, and other fragile

materials continued to be used in the creation of South Asian art after this time, stone became an increasingly popular building and carving material. In contrast to the comparatively timid use of stone up through the Gupta period, later works are often enormous, remarkably ambitious, and technically complex achievements that reveal the South Asian artists' virtuosity in dealing with this material.

DECCAN AND SOUTH CIRCA 5TH -8TH CENTURIES

- Buddhist
- ◇ Buddhist caves
- ◆ Hindu
- Jain





Detail of 12.31.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Buddhist Cave Architecture (Fifth Through Seventh Centuries)

AJAṆṬĀ

Concurrent with the emergence of the production of Hindu structural temples throughout the Gupta domains, Mahāyāna Buddhists entered into an extraordinarily active period of cave excavation at a number of sites, primarily in the western Ghāt mountains of the Deccan. The initial resurgence of cave monastery excavations occurred under the Vākātakas. Under their ambitious and successful king, Hariṣeṇa (r. ca. 460–478),¹ these princelings of central India became powerful contenders in the constant struggle for political supremacy. The king was probably not a Buddhist, and it is not known whether or not he actively patronized the creation of monastic establishments, but his minister and some of his feudatory princes were devoted lay followers (*upāsakas*) who lavishly provided for the *saṅgha*. Hariṣeṇa, having secured much of the western Deccan,

established a peaceful set of conditions for a brief but spectacular florescence at the site of Ajaṅṭā, where more than twenty caves, many of them major achievements of architecture, sculpture, and painting in their own right, were excavated during the Vākāṭaka period. Dramatically cut into the curved mountain wall above the Waghora River (Fig. 12.1), the caves constitute virtually complete monastic entities, including living quarters, devotional areas, and assembly halls. Although the ephemeral objects used by the monks in their daily lives are gone, the caves provide important insights into Buddhist theory, practice, and religious expression in art of the period.

Except for the few caves belonging to an early phase of activity,² all the caves belong to the Vākāṭaka period. Walter Spink, the leading authority on Ajaṅṭā's later phase, argues con-

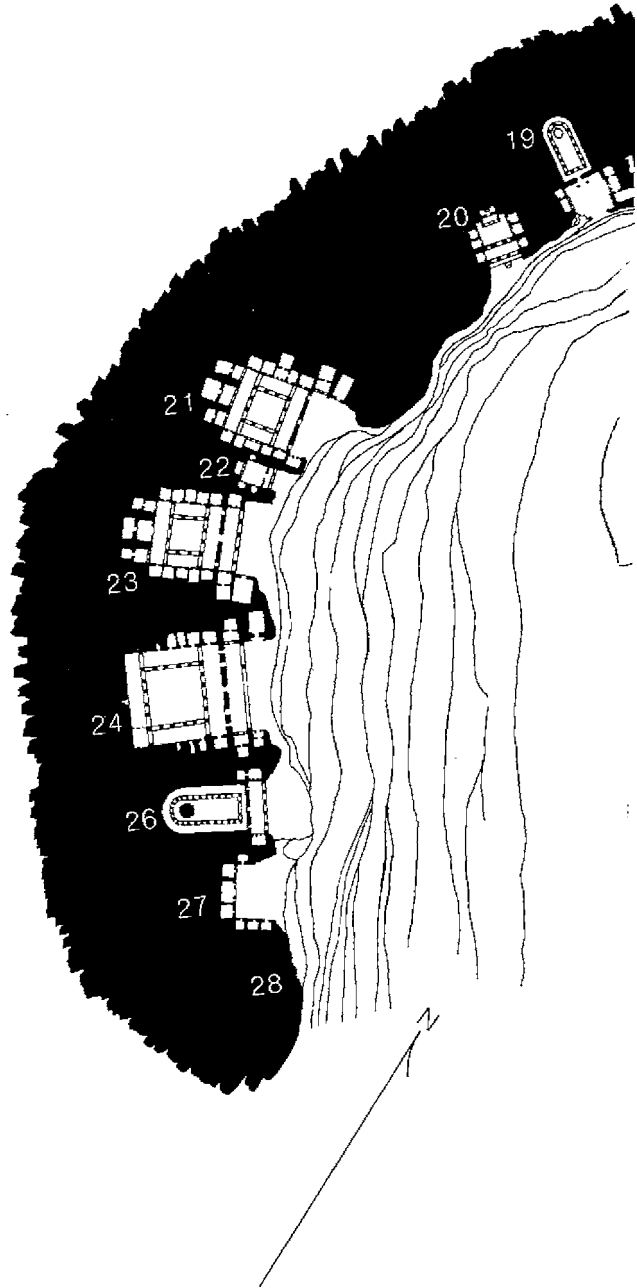


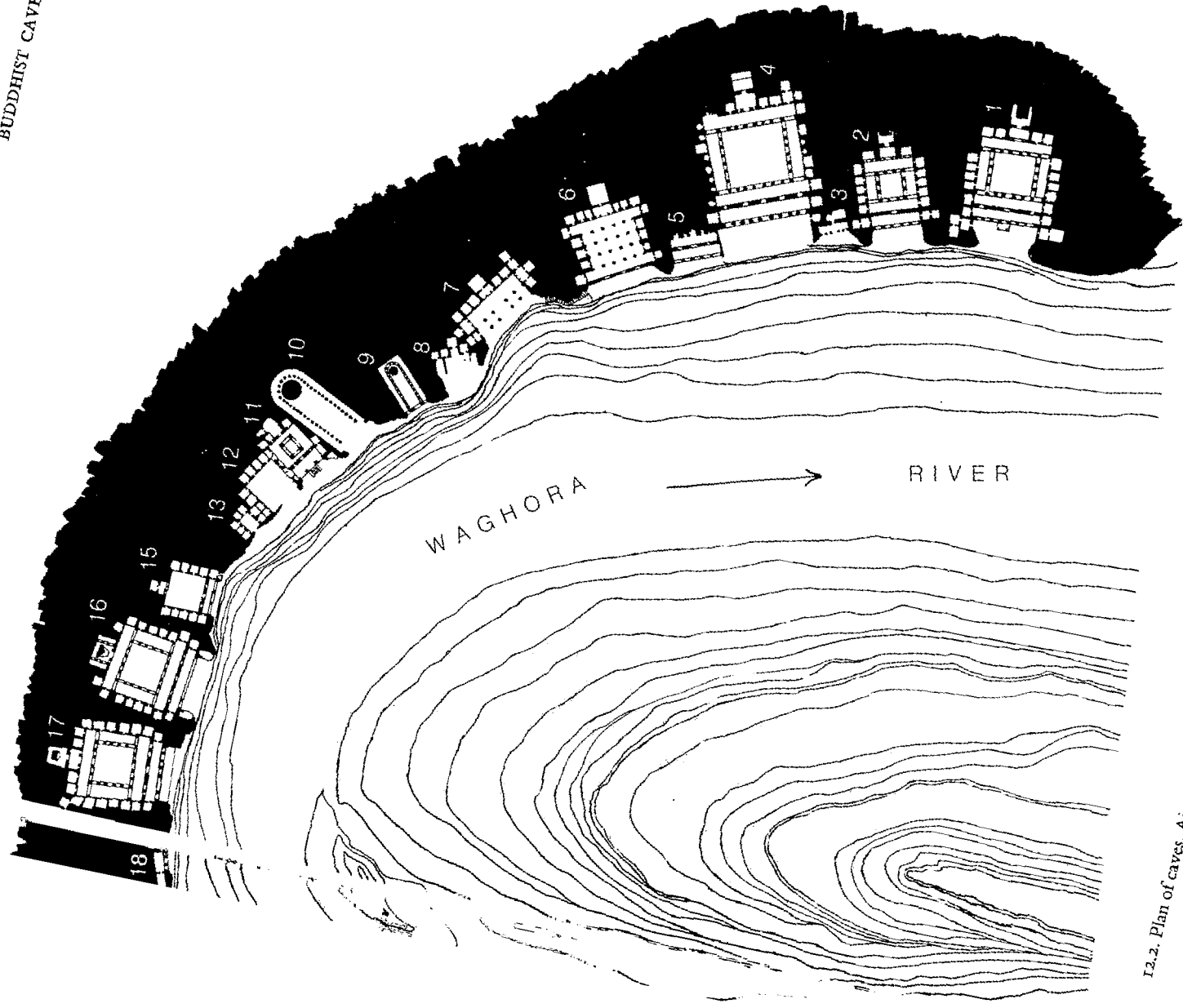


vincingly that other writers are erroneous in their contention that such extraordinary achievements must have taken many decades, if not centuries, to produce; instead, he suggests that a brief, intense period of fervent activity corresponding primarily to the relatively short span of Hariṣeṇa's reign accounted for the production of all the later caves.³ In general, the earliest Vākāṭaka artistic activity occurred near the center of the site (the pre-Vākāṭaka nucleus) and the latest activity took place towards the two extremes (Fig. 12.2).⁴

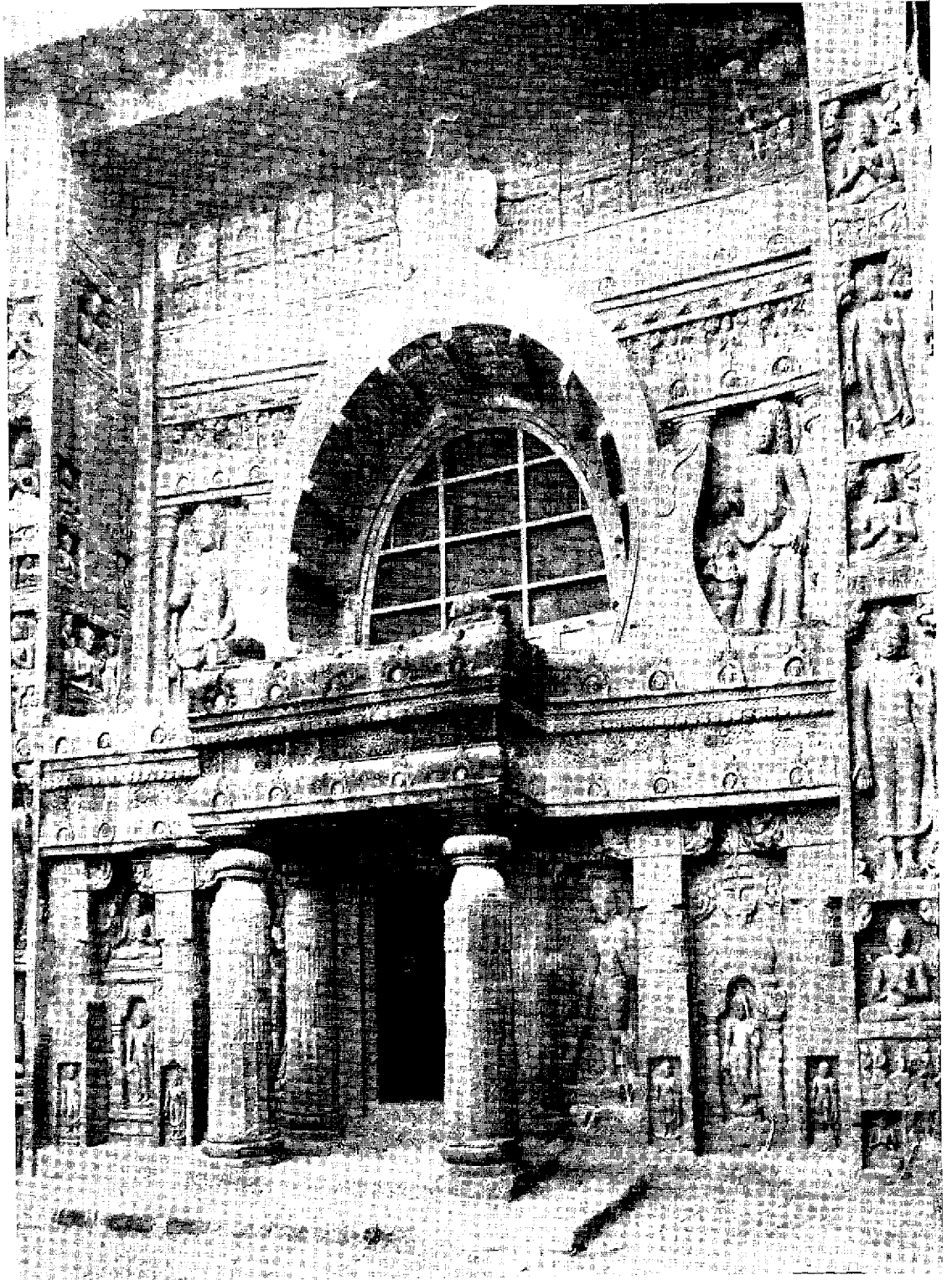
Only two *caitya* halls were excavated during the Vākāṭaka phase at Ajañtā. Since one of them, Cave 19, was primarily completed toward the beginning of the Vākāṭaka resurgence and the other, Cave 26, toward the end, they may be used to demonstrate the general artistic direction during this brief span of time. Cave 19 is fairly securely dated to the first part of the Vākāṭaka florescence⁵ on the basis of an inscription on the veranda of Cave 17⁶ that refers to a *gandhakuṭi* (fragrant hall) to the west of it, which must be Cave 19. The Cave 17 inscription also refers to Hariṣeṇa as the ruling prince, clearly indicating that the excavations were carried out while he was in full power, in contrast to the inscription in the later apsidal *caitya* hall, Cave 26, which suggests that Hariṣeṇa's position was considerably weakened.⁷ The epigraph further describes the donor's lavish expenditure on Cave 17 as "such that little-souled men [the poor?] could not even grasp in their imaginations," and indeed, this statement might be used in general to describe the munificent patronage that Ajañtā enjoyed during the latter half of the fifth century.

Cave 19 consists of a courtyard with accompanying cells as well as the *caitya* hall itself (Fig. 12.6, left). Its elaborate facade (Fig. 12.3) contains a single entrance into the cave, marked by a pillared portico that projects from the wall of rock. The large circular window above the portico with its rock-cut rafters reveals the heritage of early *caitya* halls that had been based on wooden prototypes; Cave 9 at this very site must have served as a model. However, the

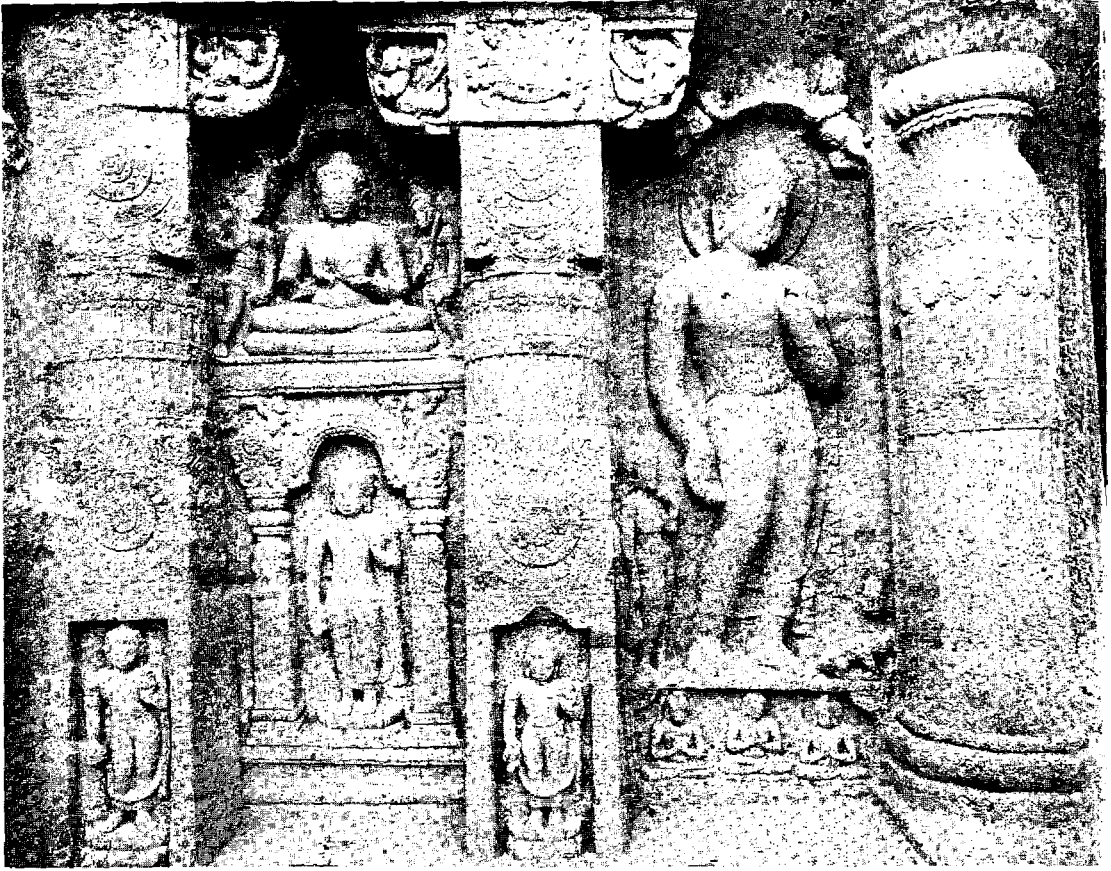




12.2. Plan of caves. Ajanta, Maharashtra, India.



12.3. Facade of Cave 19. Ajaṅṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.4. Facade detail to left of door, Cave 19. Ajanta, Maharashtra, India. Vakāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

decoration around the opening, with its ornamented crest and the “flaps” at the side, reveals that the window is in the form of the fully developed *candraśālā* seen frequently on Gupta temples.

Little trace of the earlier *cātīya* hall facade is visible on the rest of the exterior, however, for its decorated pilasters, cornices, and other architectural features create a kind of grid within which are numerous sculptures, primarily of Buddha figures. Symmetrically placed attendants flank the arched window. Delicately posed and beautifully tressed, the figures suggest the highest achievements of fifth-century art. Below, two panels to each side of the door are created by carved pilasters, the two inner compartments and two outer niches containing comparable but not identical subjects. Nearest the entrance

to the cave on the right, a large representation of Śākyamuni Buddha offers his rightful inheritance (that is, the promise of Buddhahood) to the small figure of his son, Rāhula (Fig. 12.3). To the left of the door (Fig. 12.4, right), a comparable Buddha makes a similar gesture, again offering the promise of Buddhahood. However, in this case, the identity of the scene is not certain. It may depict the Buddha’s descent from Trāyastriṃśā, and thus the promise of Buddhahood to Utpalī, the female nun turned male devotee who was the first to greet the Buddha upon his descent. Or, it might represent Dīpaṃkara Buddha, a Buddha of the remote past who predicted to the future Śākyamuni, then a youth named Sumedha, that he would attain Buddhahood in a future life. In either narrative, the underlying message is the promise



12.5. *Nāga* group on facade of Cave 19. Ajanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

of Buddhahood, a poignant message to the monk-worshiper whose life was devoted to attaining that state. In their positions flanking the door and facing inward, the figures seem to offer the same gift—the right to Buddhahood—to the devotee entering the cave. A crown held above the head of each of the two Buddhas indicates their nature as manifestations of the Universal. The figures themselves are gracefully posed in relaxed attitudes of the type seen in Gupta formulations of approximately the same date at other sites. Like Buddhas at Sarnāth and Mathurā, they wear clinging, diaphanous garments revealing the forms of the bodies beneath. Huskier and fuller bodied than their north Indian counterparts, however, these figures reflect a western Deccan convention and figure type.

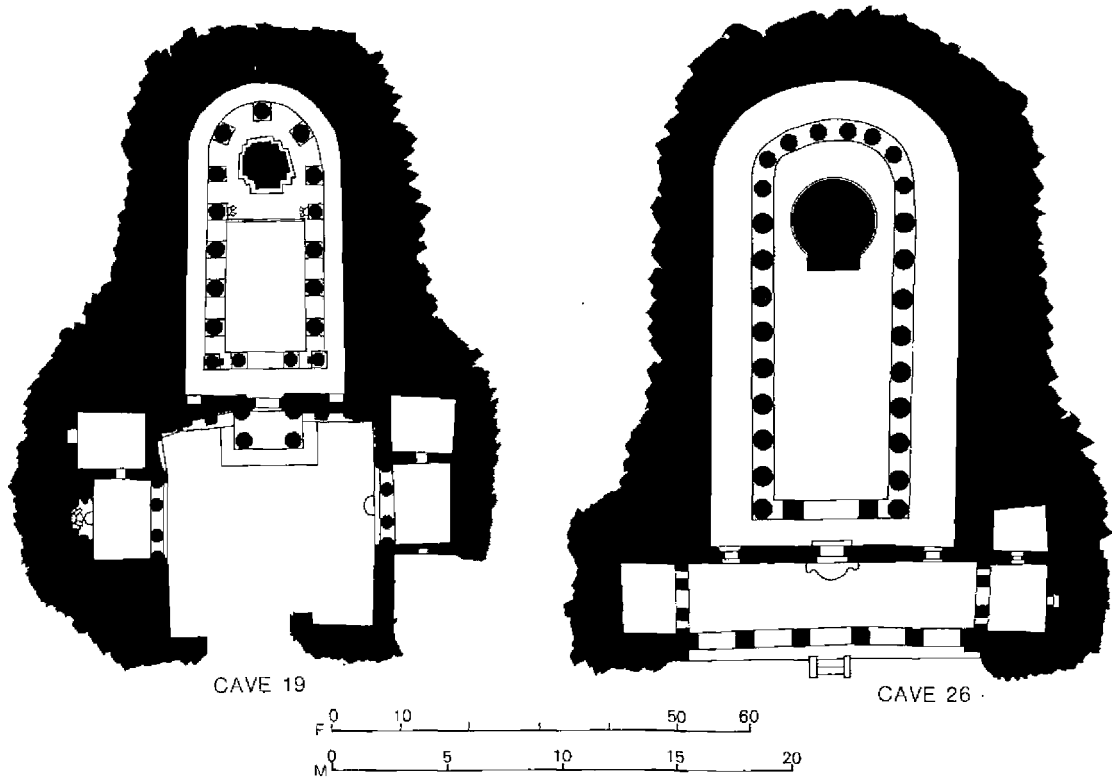
Next to these compositions are reliefs that also portray comparable although not identical subjects. The scene to the right of Rāhula's inheritance shows a standing Buddha contained within a *stūpa* (Fig. 12.3), while that to the left of the facade (Fig. 12.4, left) shows a similar architectural construct containing another standing Buddha, but in this case, instead of the rounded form of the *stūpa* above, there is a seated Buddha. This interchangeability or equivalency between the Buddha and the *stūpa* was seen in Āndhra Pradesh at Nāgarjunakoṇḍa, where paired *caitya* halls contained respectively a Buddha and a *stūpa* (Fig. 9.27). While the two inner reliefs on this facade offer the promise of enlightenment or Buddhahood, the two outer panels depict the promise fulfilled, embodied in the concept of the *stūpa* as a symbol of the final extinction, or as a Buddha figure.

Other important reliefs on the facade include the representation of a *nāgarāja* accompanied by his two *nāginī* consorts (Fig. 12.5). One of the loveliest images at Ajaṅṭā, the central figure implies by his regal pose the comfortable and elegant attitude of the Ajaṅṭā patrons and sculptors toward the stately life. Nominally charged with providing for the well-being of the *saṃgha*, and serving as an object of devotion for those in need of succor, the *nāga* king seems splendidly confident and capable of fulfilling his charge. This figure, perhaps more than others at the site, demonstrates the closeness of

the Ajaṅṭā idiom to that seen at Gupta sites such as Deogarh.

The interior of the cave (Fig. 12.6, left, 12.7) appears lavish compared to the stark interiors of early *caitya* halls. Thick pillars, closely set and carved with vertical or diagonal flutes, crowd the interior, while above, sculpted panels showing Buddha figures rim the hall. Rafters, still suggestive of the structural prototypes of the rock-cut halls, are carved in the ceiling above. The main object of veneration, the *stūpa*, differs greatly in form from those of earlier periods, which were generally simple domes atop a one- or two-stepped drum. Much more vertical in appearance and with an almost spherical dome, the *stūpa* rests on a base with offset sides. At the front, a pilastered *torāṇa* encloses a sculpted representation of a standing Buddha, while the remaining surfaces of the *stūpa* are carved into units that may have once contained painted representations. Above the dome, the *harmikā* contains a depiction of a seated Buddha and above are three *chattras* that in turn support a miniature *stūpa*. Around the hall, the Buddha figures in the frieze and in the center of the bracket capitals of the pillars may represent some of the Buddhas of the various *buddhalokas* (Buddha worlds) presumed by Mahāyānists to exist throughout the universe (Figure 12.8). Orderly in their arrangement, the figures are part of a highly decorative scheme, elaborately carved with foliate and architectural motifs. All of these were originally fully polychromed, as was the entire interior of the cave.

The decoration of Cave 26 demonstrates the final burst of exuberance at Ajaṅṭā. An inscription identifies the donor of the cave as the *Bhikṣu* Buddhahadra, who dedicated it to the deceased Bhavvirāja, a minister of the Aśmaka feudatories of the Vākātakas.⁸ The reference to the Aśmakas in the inscription and the lack of mention of the Vākātakas suggests that while these ambitious rivals had perhaps not yet overthrown the Vākātakas, they were on the brink of doing so, thus putting the date of the dedication of this cave very near to the end of Ajaṅṭā's florescence.⁹ Much larger and more elaborate than Cave 19, Cave 26 anticipates the Buddhist

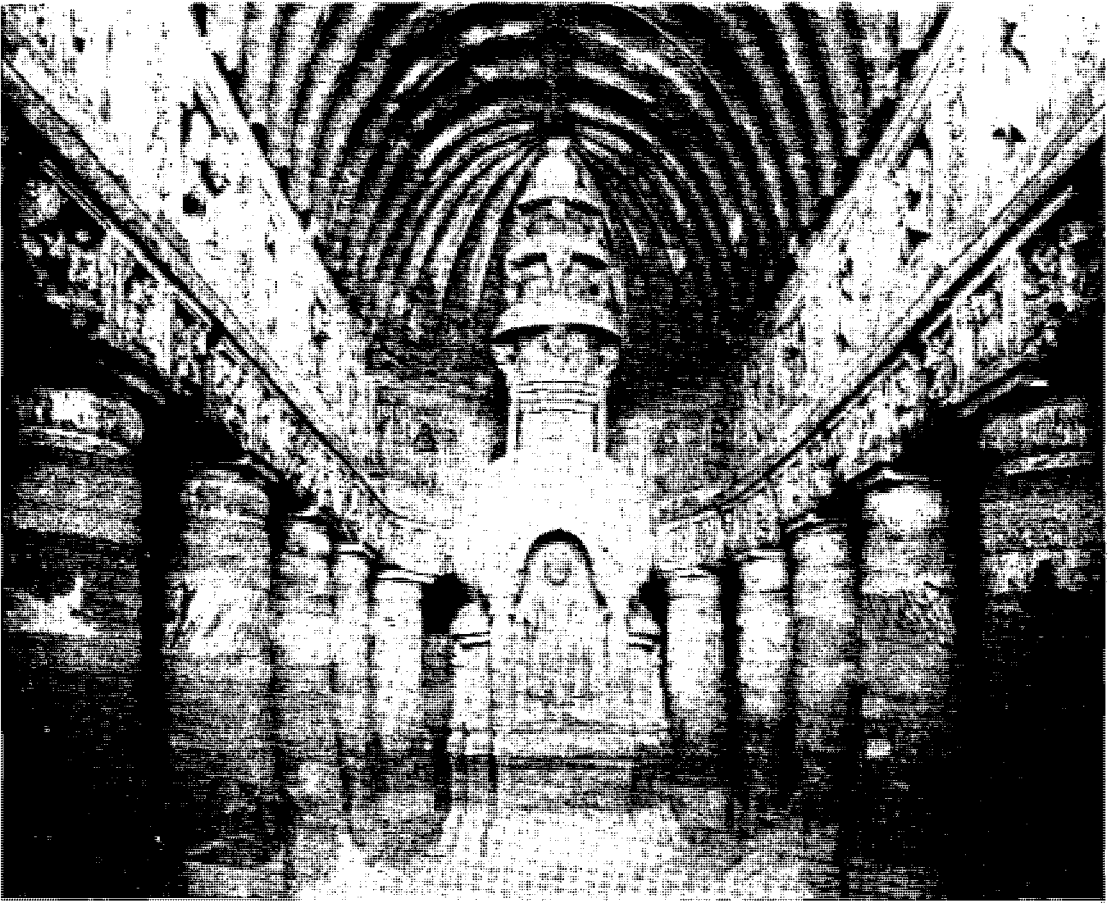


12.6. Plans of Caves 19 and 26. Ajanta, Maharashtra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

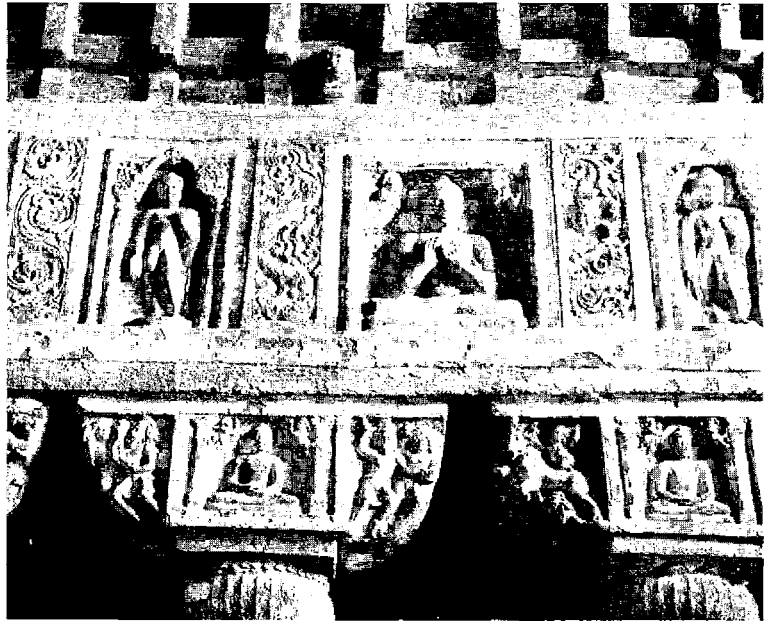
and Hindu monuments that were created later in western India during the sixth century with their colossal scale and dramatically ambitious schemes. Spink has shown that the cave itself was only part of a much grander conception, for it served as the focal point of a scheme that included two upper wings (Caves 25 and 27) and two lower wings.¹⁰

The facade of Cave 26 has suffered considerable damage, but it is still possible to reconstruct something of its original appearance (Fig. 12.9). Instead of a portico like that at Cave 19, a series of steps leads up to a low plinth and what would have been a covered veranda (now largely destroyed) serving as a transition between the courtyard preceding the cave and the *caitya* hall itself (Fig. 12.6, right). A *candraśālā* window and rows of carved figures decorate the facade and are similar to those elements of Cave 19. The interiors of the two caves also reveal major

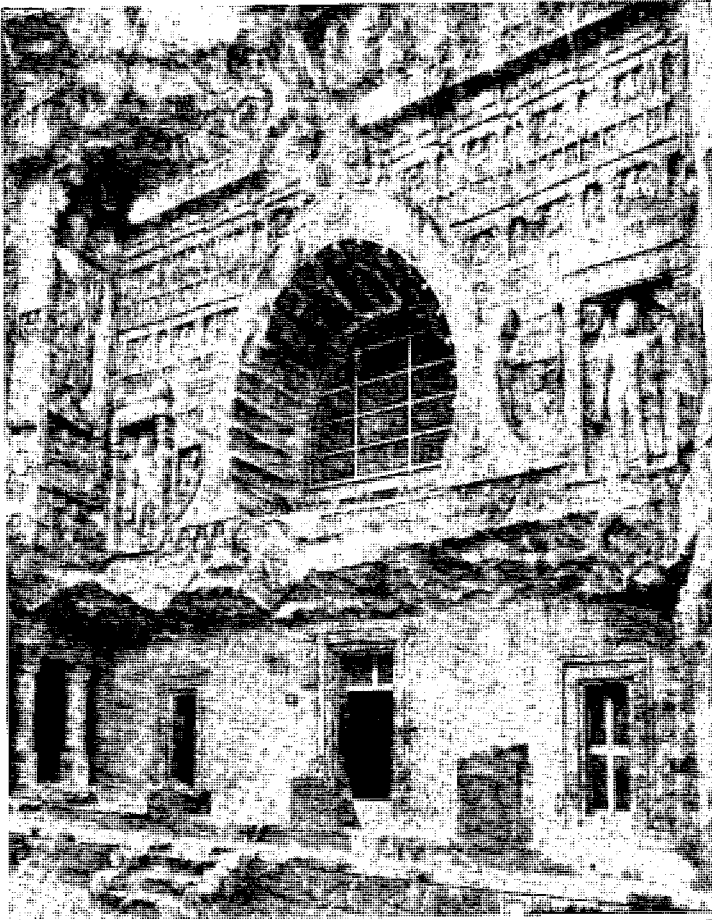
differences. Scale alone creates a vastly grander impression on the visitor to Cave 26 (Fig. 12.1b). While the treatment of the pillars, carved frieze, and beamed ceiling are highly reminiscent of similar features in Cave 19, the grander scale permitted even greater richness. Carved representations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and architectural features decorate the *stūpa*, in contrast to the plain (but perhaps once painted) surfaces of the *stūpa* in Cave 19. The Buddha on the front of the *stūpa* sits in *pralambapādāsana*, the so-called “European pose” characterized by the pendent legs (Fig. 12.11). This pose seems to be associated with figures carved toward the end of the Vākāṭaka phase at Ajanta, although the reasons behind the introduction of this form remain unclear.¹¹ It is possible that such figures are depictions of Maitreya, the future Buddha, who is characteristically shown in this pose when serving as a major icon.¹²



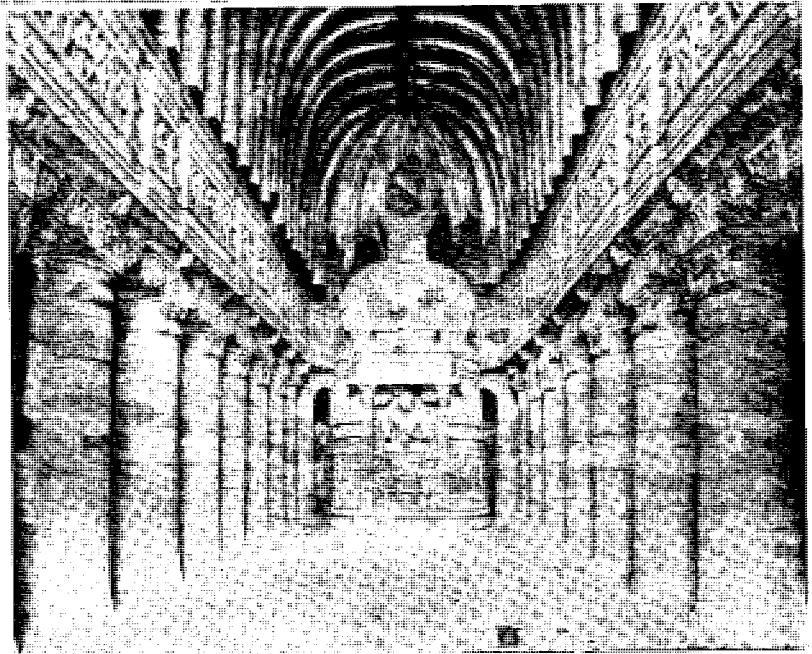
12.7. Interior of Cave 19. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



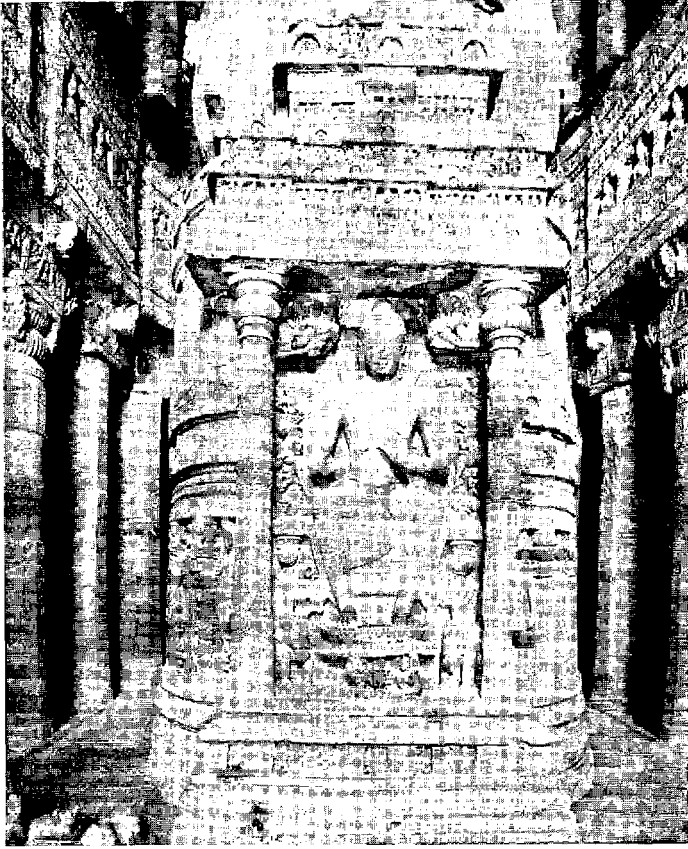
12.8. Interior of Cave 19, frieze detail. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



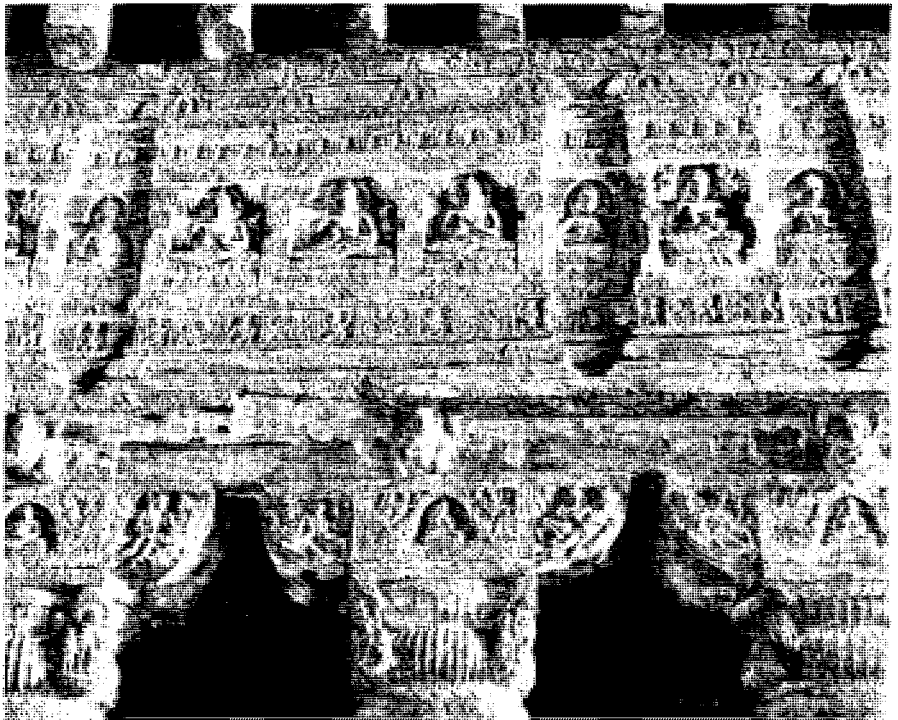
12.9. Facade of Cave 26. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



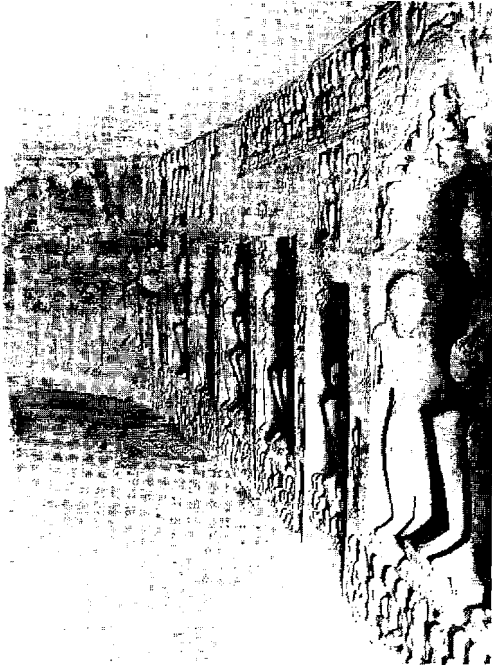
12.10. Interior of Cave 26. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.11. Interior of Cave 26, detail of *stūpa*. Ajanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

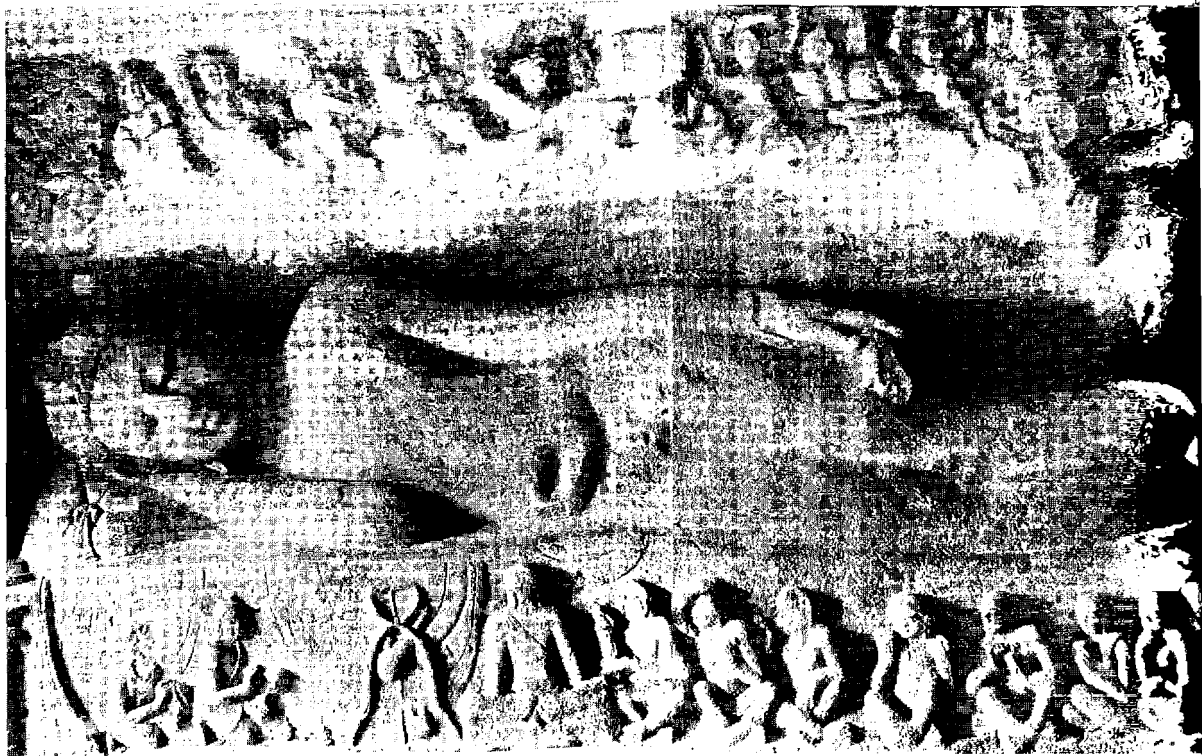


12.12. Interior of Cave 26, frieze detail. Ajanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.13. Interior of Cave 26, right aisle. Ajanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

An examination of the frieze above the pillars (Fig. 12.12) confirms the greater elaboration and detail of this cave as compared to that of Cave 19. A relative reduction in the scale of the Buddha figures and their niches allowed for greater multiplicity of the figures as well as increased ornamentation of the surrounding elements. The walls of the ambulatory passage around the perimeter of the cave are also resplendent with numerous carvings, many of which probably constitute votive offerings by individual donors (Fig. 12.13). The most impressive sculpture in the *pradakṣiṇapatha* is a reclining figure showing the Buddha's great decease (*parinirvāṇa*) extending for seven meters along the left side wall (Fig. 12.14). This colossus, surrounded by mourners, has a profound effect on the visitor to the cave and anticipates the increasingly grand scale that dominates cave architecture of subsequent centuries. Another impressive scene from the life of the Buddha in the ambulatory passage is a depiction of the *Māravijaya* (Fig. 12.15). In contrast to the more

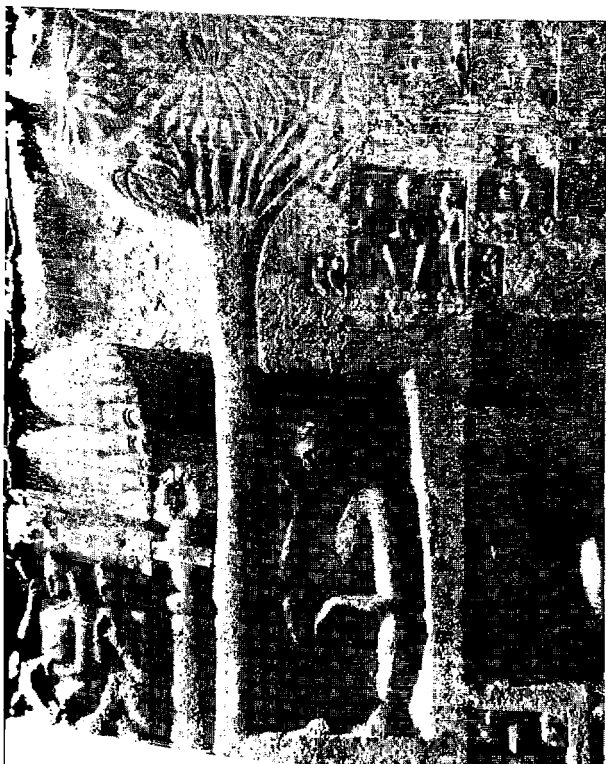




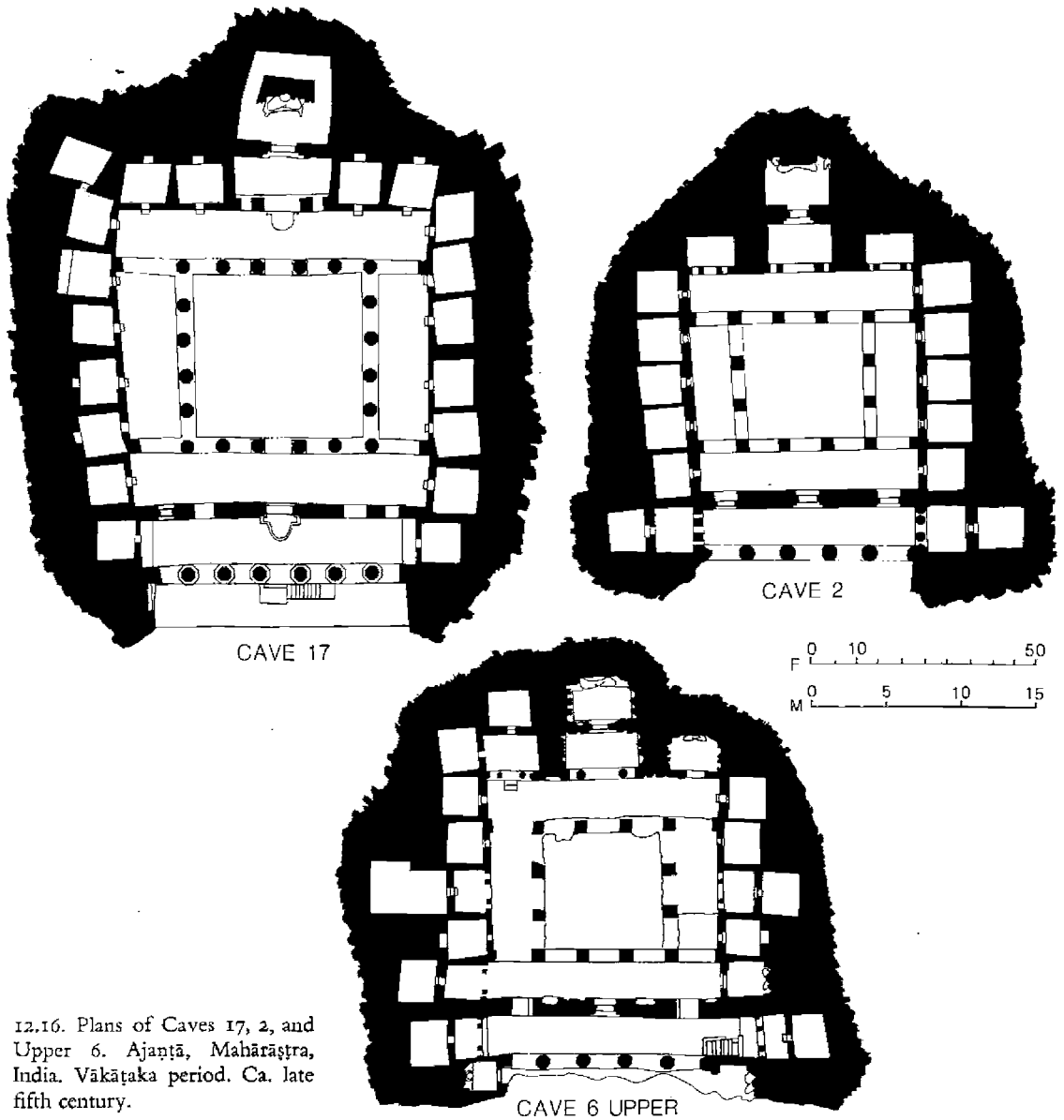
12.15. *Māravijaya*, ambulatory wall, interior, Cave 26. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

simple compositions seen at Cave 19, this scene is filled with numerous subsidiary details. Māra's hosts surround the central Buddha figure, who is, curiously, depicted with his right hand in *varada mudrā*, not the expected *bhūmiśparśa*. Undoubtedly more costly than Cave 19, Cave 26 with its ubiquitous carving and plentitude of detail is indicative of the final phase at Ajanṭā, which was brought to a close due to the declining fortunes of the Vākāṭakas and clearly not a diminution of vigor in the art.

Like the *caitya* hall, the *vihāra* was transformed during the Vākāṭaka phase at Ajanṭā. In contrast to early Buddhist *vihāras*, the later examples display a wealth of sculptural and iconic forms. The most notable addition to the *vihāra* concept is the creation of shrine areas at the rear of the *vihāras* that contain impressive images of Buddha figures. The incorporation of the Buddha shrine into the *vihāra* format transforms the excavation from a mere dwelling place for monks into a metaphor for a Buddhist paradise in which a Buddha preaches the *dharma* to the resident bodhisattvas who are in the process of attaining perfection and are awaiting their final rebirths. In Mahāyana Buddhism, monks take the vow of a bodhisattva (relinquishing their own attainment of Buddhahood until all sentient beings are saved) and progress through the various stages of bodhisattvahood. The *vihāra* is a microcosmic version of paradise wherein the monks, as bodhisattvas (which they have become through the process of taking the vows), reside, listening to the teachings of the Buddha. This interpretation is supported by certain passages in the veranda inscription of Cave 16, a *vihāra*, which states that Varahadeva, the minister of Hariṣeṇa, realizing that "life, youth, wealth and happiness are transitory . . . for the sake of his father and mother, caused to be made this excellent dwelling to be occupied by the best of ascetics . . . (the dwelling) which is adorned with windows, doors, beautiful picture-galleries,



12.14. Composite photo of *Parinirvāṇa*, left side wall, interior, Cave 26. Ajanṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century. L: 7.07 m.



12.16. Plans of Caves 17, 2, and Upper 6. Ajaṅṭā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

ledges, statues of the nymphs of Indra and the like, which is ornamented with beautiful pillars and stairs, and has a temple of the Buddha inside ... [resembles] the palaces of the lord of gods [Indra] and is similar to a cave in the lovely Mandara mountain."¹³ The comparison of the *vihāra* to a palace, especially that of Indra, which is located in Trāyāstrimśa heaven, is indeed significant, for the paradisaical metaphor of the

vihāras is carried out in their decoration, especially in the painted ceilings.

Even within the brief period of the Vākāṭaka florescence at Ajaṅṭā, the *vihāra* underwent a number of modifications. Cave 17, approximately contemporary with Cave 19 on the basis of the Cave 17 inscription and the internal evidence of style, is a standard Mahāyāna *vihāra*, having a pillared veranda as a transition between



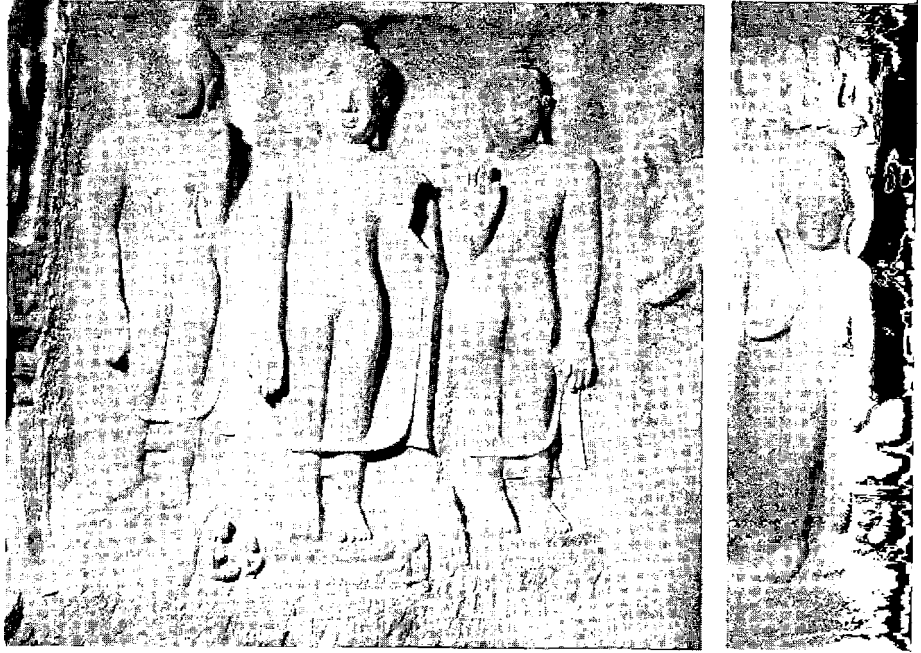
12.17. Shrine Buddha, Cave 17. Ajanta, Maharashtra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

the exterior and the interior and a squared central space surrounded by cells (Fig. 12.16, top left). The slight irregularity of the disposition of the monks' cells seems to reflect the cave's chronological position at the start of Ajanta's Vākāṭaka phase, as does the fact that the enshrined Buddha is completely detached from the walls so that it could be circumambulated (Figs. 12.16, top left, 12.17).

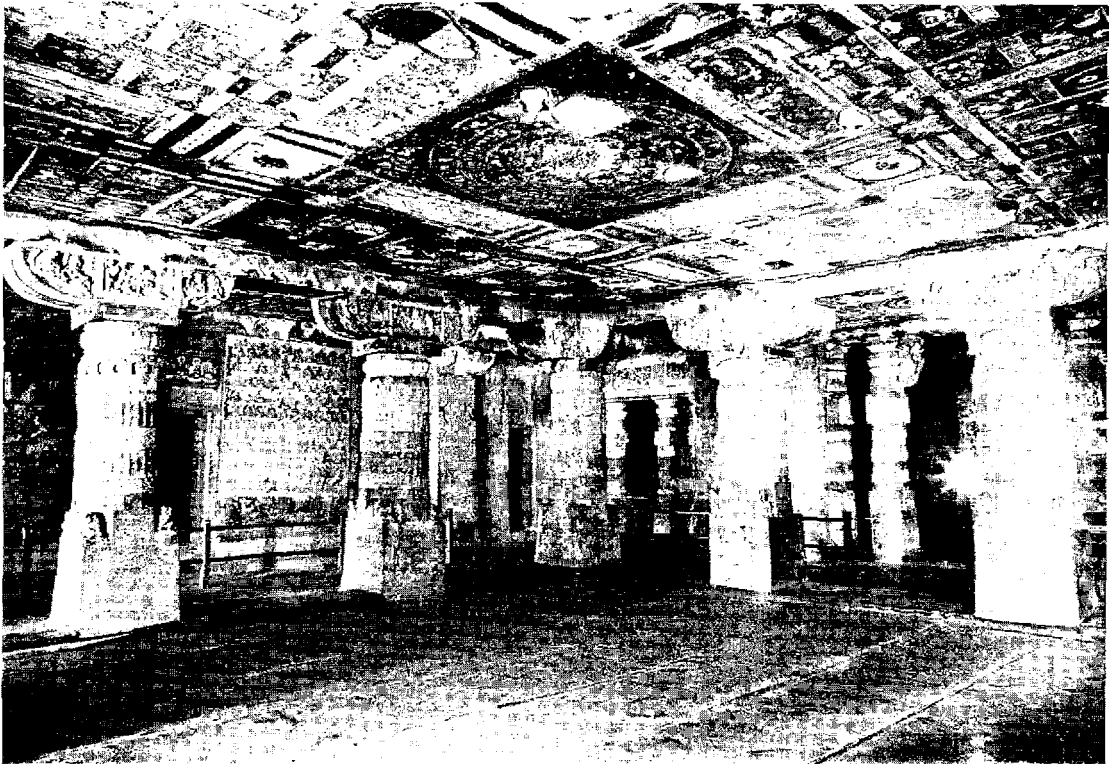
While essentially similar to Cave 17, the plan of the later Cave 2 demonstrates the modifications that took place during this brief but active period (Fig. 12.16, top right). Here, the arrangement of the cells has become standardized and the Buddha in the main shrine is now set against the rear wall of that chamber, precluding circumambulation. Growing complexity, perhaps associated with religious functions, is also seen in the multiplication of cells at the front of the cave where double-chambered shrine areas are

created in place of the single cells as in Cave 17.

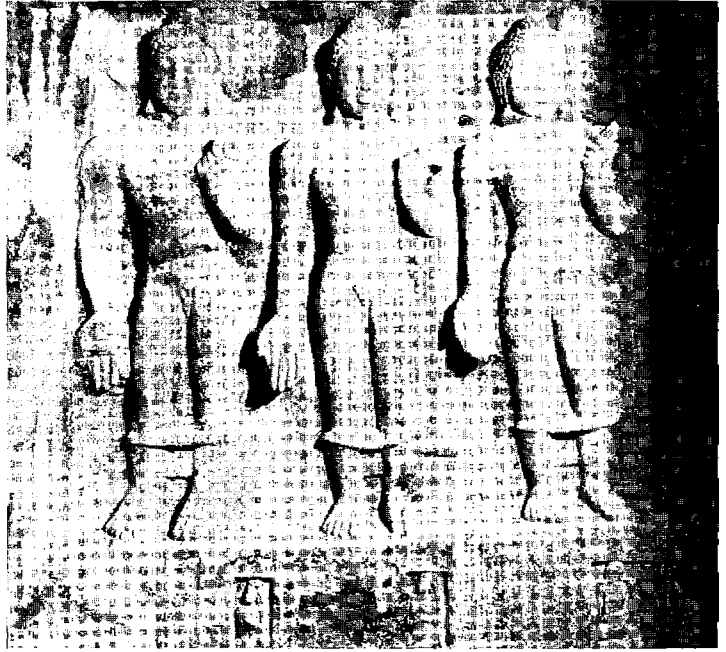
The culmination of these developments is visible in the plan of the upper story of Cave 6 (Fig. 12.16, bottom), which has the essential features of Cave 2, but the increasing ritualism in the religion had led to the creation of shrine areas, complete with antechamber and interior cell, in the center of the side walls. Other cells have also been converted into shrines, such as at the right front and right rear of the hall where sculpted Buddha groups have been added to the cells although there is no doubling up of cells. The increased complexity of the religious message is also visible in the main shrine of this cave where, in addition to the central Buddha image and his bodhisattvas and other attendants, representations of the six *mānuṣi* Buddhas who preceded Śākyamuni in his final incarnation are now placed along the side walls of the interior of the shrine so that the devotee is virtually



12.18. Composite of shrine interior, left, rear, and right walls, Cave 6, upper level. Ajaṅṭa, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.19. Interior of Cave 2, looking toward left rear. Ajaṅṭa, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.20. Shrine entrance, Cave 2. Ajañtā, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

surrounded by large Buddha figures (Fig. 12.18).

An interior view of Cave 2 (Fig. 12.19) shows the general appearance of a Mahāyāna *vihāra* at Ajañtā. Lavishly carved pillars and doorways decorate the interior and carry out the iconographic message. All architectural features, including walls, ceilings, and pillars were fully painted. The shrine doorway (Fig. 12.20), carved with panels containing *mithuna* couples, resembles in format those found on contemporary Hindu temples, even to the presence of river goddesses at the top of each jamb. The enshrined Buddha sits in *vajraparyāṅkāsa* and displays *dharmacakra mudrā*. The specific form of the *mudrā* has the thumb and forefinger of the right hand forming a circle that joins the little finger of the left hand. By analogy with *mudrās* of a slightly later date, it may be suggested that the little finger on the left hand pointing to the circle formed in the right indicates the fourth, or most esoteric, level of the teachings.¹⁴ Like other Buddhas from Ajañtā's late phase, the figure suggests ties to Gupta modes at Sārnāth, Mathura, and other sites, but has the very full, rounded body proportions typical of the central Indian and western Deccan modes.

An interesting feature of Cave 2 is the presence of sculpture groups in the shrines flanking the main Buddha shrine along the rear wall of the cave (Fig. 12.16, top right; also note pillared entrance to the one at left in Fig. 12.19). The shrine at the right rear of the cave bears large sculpted images of Pāñcika and Hārītī (Pl. 5), while that to the left contains figures of two male *yakṣas*. These small shrines demonstrate the complete integration of the architectural, sculptural, and painted realms at Ajañṭā, for not only were the carved images fully polychromed with the same paint used in the murals on the side walls, but the murals themselves depict subjects that complement the sculptured forms. In this case, the painted figures on the side walls seem to approach the central carved figures. This somewhat illusionistic use of the painted walls creates a dramatic effect on the human visitor to the shrine, who feels himself an active participant in the drama being portrayed by the painted and sculpted forms. Nowhere is it more clear that paint served a vital role in completing the iconographic programs and decorative schemes of South Asian monuments, in spite of the fact that it has rarely been preserved.

Because of the preservation of its paintings, Ajañṭā is a virtually unique document in the history of pre-Muslim Indic art. Enough painting remains in many of the caves to indicate that the iconographic program of the paintings was systematic and an integral part of the overall scheme of the cave and not simply decorative. A number of styles of painting may be discerned in the caves, demonstrating that a variety of techniques and methods were employed by the artists. Rather than indicating that the paintings were done at different periods, however, the variety of styles suggests individual hands of artists.¹⁵

In general, significant differences exist between ceiling paintings and wall paintings in format, coloration, and even technique. The central space of the *vihāra* ceilings that have survived are painted in gridlike patterns (Pl. 6) containing floral and abstract motifs as well as some animal and human scenes. The stylized format is probably a reference to the paradisaical realms, laid out in gardenlike divisions.¹⁶ White is abundantly used in the ceilings, although not on the walls,

and this may have been to help reflect light in the dim interiors. In contrast to the predominance of earth tones used in the wall paintings, the ceilings are more brightly colored. The animal and plant forms depicted on the ceilings are frequently painted in a flat manner, with little modeling or shading, and the forms thus appear almost as silhouettes against the background. Directly above important images, in antechambers, and at certain other specified locations, round *mañḍalic* patterns with concentric bands of foliated and floriated patterns are found. An especially fine example from Cave 2 bears pairs of *vidyādharas* at the four corners (Pl. 7).

The program of wall paintings includes, in various caves, scenes of Buddhas, attendants, and *jātaka* tales. In general, Buddhas are represented in or near the antechamber to the shrines, while *jātakas* occur in the main hall. A scene showing Buddhas with groups of devotees located in the antechamber to the shrine in Cave 17 (Pl. 8) suggests a strict hierarchic arrangement created by the use of three registerlike divisions. The Buddhas may be identified as forms of Maitreya: in the top register, he is shown preaching in his heavenly paradise, Tuṣita; in the center, he is depicted descending from Tuṣita and welcoming his devotees into his earthly paradise, Ketumatī; below, he is seen preaching in Ketumatī. As in other antechamber paintings, this composition appears more formal than those of the more free-flowing *jātaka* scenes of the main cave area, a feature that may relate to their greater iconic rather than narrative function. Light-colored figures are silhouetted against the dark background and a separation between the Buddha's space and that of the attendant figures is maintained. An interesting feature visible here and in numerous other paintings at Ajañṭā is the treatment of landscape, especially mountain forms, in crystalline, cubical shapes similar to those seen approximately contemporaneously in sculpture. These, however, seem to project into the viewer's space rather than recede behind the picture plane, creating a dynamic relationship between the viewer and the painted world.

In contrast to the more formal arrangement of the ceilings and antechambers, the walls of

the main halls are alive with very free-flowing compositions and figures arranged in asymmetrical, crowded groupings. Earth tones, many of which were derived from local minerals found in the region around Ajañṭā, harmonize the forms and provide the main tonality.

Several means of creating form seem to have been available to the Ajañṭā artists. For example, the body of the bodhisattva to the right of the entrance to the antechamber to the main shrine in Cave 1 (Pl. 9) is created primarily by the use of modulation of colors rather than through use of line. Highlighting of certain areas, such as the nose or brow, helps to bring forth the form from the dim interior although light and shadow are not used in what might be called a scientific manner or to elucidate three-dimensionality. That is, shading and highlighting were used at will by the artists to enhance their creations without regard for light as a phenomenon of the physical world, subject to certain empirical laws. Even the forms of the bodhisattva's body are beyond the rules of the material world, and indeed, by freeing the figures from such regulation, the artists seem to capture the essence of the Buddhist religion, with its skepticism toward phenomenal existence. While clearly human in inspiration, the parts of the bodhisattva's body are likened to other objects; his brow, for example, takes the shape of the archer's bow, his eyes are like lotus petals, and his torso is shaped like that of a lion. Such metaphors appear in textual descriptions and were often quite literally translated into visual terms. Similar metaphors are sometimes used in the creation of parts of the body of Buddha figures.

Numerous *jātaka* tales are represented on the walls of the Ajañṭā caves. Some, which must have been important in the specific sectarian beliefs of the monks in residence, are repeated a number of times in the various caves and many of them treat human rather than animal incarnations of Śākyamuni Buddha. Often, several episodes from specific stories are shown, although these are generally not arranged in sequence on the walls. A detail from the *Mahājanaka jāataka* depicted in Cave 1 (Pl. 10) shows Prince Mahājanaka surrounded by a bevy of

beautiful women, crowned and bejeweled, and thus representing the epitome of princely life and possibly reflecting contemporary patterns of dress and life during Gupta and Vakāṭaka times. However, the Buddhist message of the story is clear, since Mahājanaka relinquishes his princely life in favor of the life of a recluse. With his hands in a gesture of discourse similar to *dharmacakra mudrā*, he is depicted announcing his intention to give up his kingdom. The facial features of the figures, with the highly arched brows and elongated lotiform eyes, resembles the treatment of the bodhisattva at the rear of the cave (Pl. 9) and may reflect an ideal based on contemporaneous concepts of beauty. The forms of the body are here outlined with a darker chroma of the same hue as the body itself. The animated positions and stances of the figures lend a liveliness to the composition, typical of the *jātaka* representations at Ajañṭā in general.

Often, scenes at Ajañṭā take on an almost secular character, although all may be justified as being part of a *jātaka* or other Buddhist context. A woman on a swing in Cave 2 (Pl. 11) belongs to a depiction of the *Vidhurapañḍita jāataka* and may be identified as Irandati, the *nāga* princess central to the story. Here, the highlighting technique used freely at Ajañṭā creates the impression of a glow over the surface of her skin. The narrow waists, full breasts, and hips of the women in the composition display the same feminine ideal that is found throughout most periods and styles of Indic art. As is true throughout most of the Ajañṭā paintings, the three-quarter facial view is preferred in this composition, creating a suggestion of depth and volume for the forms. The brownish red background strewn with flowers serves as a conventionalized landscape in this and other scenes, but, as in most of South Asian art, the artist depends on the figures to tell the story, to create a sense of life, and to carry the mood; architectural and landscape elements are employed only to add a setting or structure to the scene, not to create an ambiance or to simulate the physical world.

In addition to walls and ceilings, virtually every portion of the caves was painted, including doorframes and pillars. Flat surfaces without

carving were often completed in paint, which, when lost, leads us to forget that these portions were important parts of the decorative scheme. A pillar from Cave 17 shows a pair of music-making dwarves inhabiting the square base (Pl. 12). Different in treatment from the figures already discussed, these dwarves are created by the use of a prominent black outline that defines the contours and details of their forms. Such line drawings are found throughout the Ajañṭā paintings, sometimes appearing in compositions that make use of the shading and highlighting techniques, and thus it seems that such a method

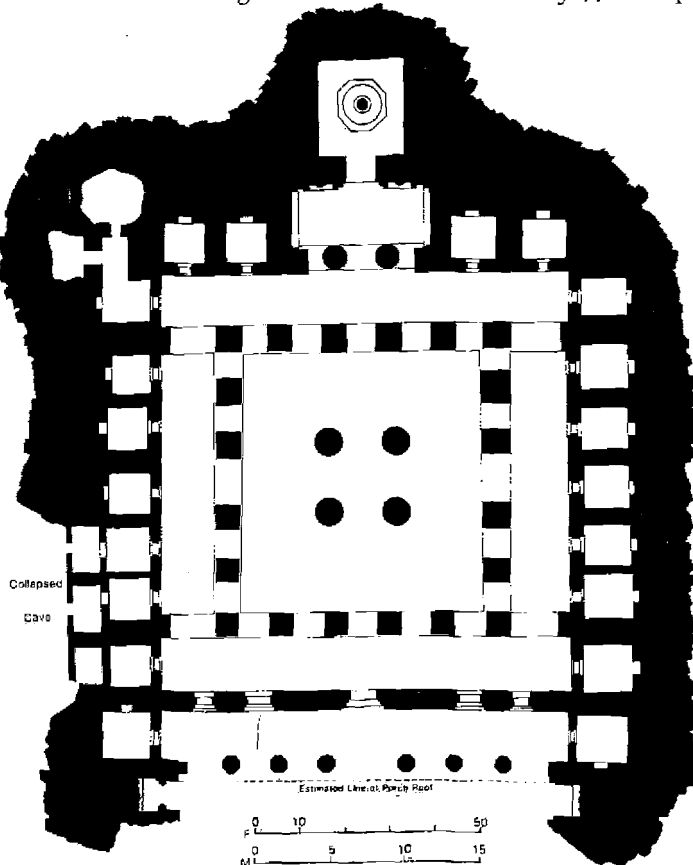
was simply one of the techniques available to artists to use as they chose. The skill of the Ajañṭā artist as draftsman is evident in compositions such as this.

As vital documents of Buddhist art, the Ajañṭā caves can hardly be overestimated. In a short burst of incredible artistic activity, the patrons, together with the sculptors, painters, and iconographers, provided a concise illustration of the general tendency in Indic art towards embellishment and elaboration of the highest quality.

BĀGH

A closely related and contemporaneous group of caves at Bāgh provides further evidence of Mahāyāna cave architecture. Although some

distance away in the Narmada Valley, architectural, sculptural, and painting affinities with the caves at Ajañṭā are probably much more



12.21. Plan of Cave 2. Bāgh, Madhya Pradesh, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

than purely coincidental since, according to the *Daśakumāracarita* (The Ten Princes) written by Daṇḍin in the seventh century, the Vākāṭaka king Hariṣeṇa had a son who ruled over the Bāgh region. Spink claims that this son must have ruled prior to 486,¹⁷ for by that time, one Mahārāja Subandhu, who is known from a copperplate inscription found at Bāgh,¹⁸ was ruling the region and the Vākāṭaka line had collapsed. Spink estimates the period of florescence at Bāgh to have occurred between 470 and 480.

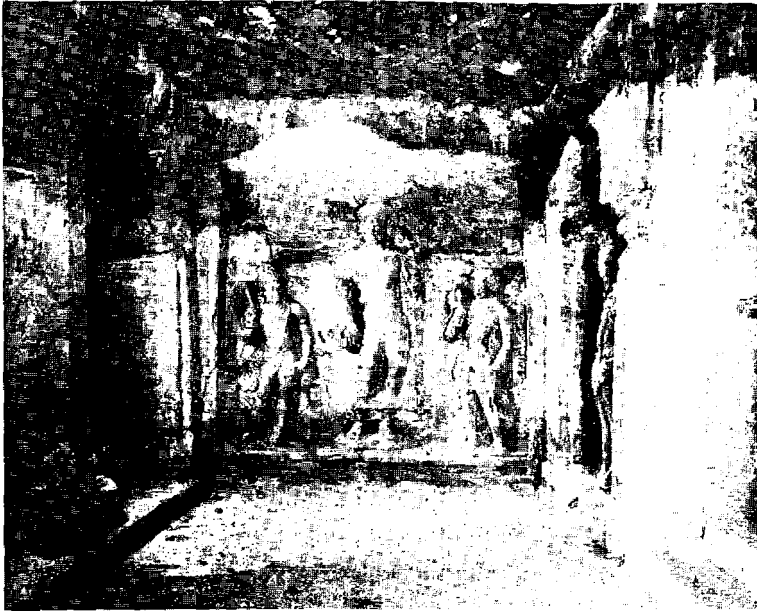
Much ruined due to water seepage and rock falls affecting the soft, friable sandstone, the caves preserve little of their former beauty. In plan, Cave 2 greatly resembles Mahāyāna *vihāras* at Ajaṅṭā, although four central pillars are present, undoubtedly included for structural purposes due to the weakness of the rock (Fig. 12.21). The central pillars, much more massive

appearing than pillars at Ajaṅṭā, are treated differently from others in the cave, having a spiraled fluting and being round rather than being square or consisting of square and round sections (Fig. 12.22). The spacious antechamber to the shrine bears sculptures of Buddhas and bodhisattvas on the side and rear walls (Fig. 12.23). In style, these figures are part of the broadly defined Gupta mode, but differ from their Ajaṅṭā counterparts in their more slender bodies and more attenuated appearance. Instead, they seem more closely allied to northern and north-central Indian styles of the Gupta period. This is not surprising considering Bāgh's location nearer to the epicenter of the Gupta art traditions.

A very important characteristic of this, and other caves at Bāgh, is the presence of a *stūpa* rather than a Buddha image as the main object of veneration in the shrine. This feature has led some scholars to conclude that the Bāgh



12.22. Interior of Cave 2, view from front left corner. Bāgh, Madhya Pradesh, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.



12.23. Shrine antechamber, left wall, Cave 2. Bāgh, Madhya Pradesh, India. Vākāṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

excavations predated those at Ajaṅṭā and that they represent a stage of transition between the use of a *stūpa* and that of a Buddha image as an object of veneration. However, it is clear from images such as that in the shrine of Cave 11 at Ajaṅṭā, where the rear of the image becomes a *stūpa*, or those of Caves 19 and 26 at Ajaṅṭā, where a representation of the Buddha is part of a *stūpa*, that the symbols are identical and interchangeable and do not necessarily have chrono-

logical implications, at least by this date, when both Buddhas and *stūpas* abundantly survive as part of the standard artistic vocabulary.

The paintings at Bāgh, known today only in fragments and from copies, bear a great deal of resemblance to their contemporary counterparts at Ajaṅṭā. Indeed, Subandhu's inscription found in the debris of Cave 2 calls the monastery Kalāyana (Abode of Art), suggesting something of the original splendor of the site.

KĀNHERI

During the late fifth and sixth centuries, artistic activity at Kānheri was resumed. A number of older caves were modified and many new excavations were begun, bringing the total number of caves at the site to over one hundred and making Kānheri the most extensive cave site in India. It is likely that the resurgence of artistic activity was initiated due to patronage by the Traikūṭakas, who came into control of the region upon the collapse of their former overlords, the Vākāṭakas, as a copperplate inscription found in front of Cave 3 and datable to around 494 suggests.¹⁹ A pair of colossal Buddhas, one at either end of

the veranda of this great second-century *caitya* hall, was part of the refurbishing of that cave during the late fifth century, a date suggested by the style of the images as well as the paleography of an associated inscription referring to one such dedication. More than seven meters in height, each figure stands in an arch with *vidyādhara*s bearing garlands above, and each displays *varada mudrā*, the gesture of gift-bestowal or offering, which may be interpreted as an invitation to enlightenment (Fig. 12.24). Stylistically, the figures reflect the massive, full form of the Ajaṅṭā representations and it is



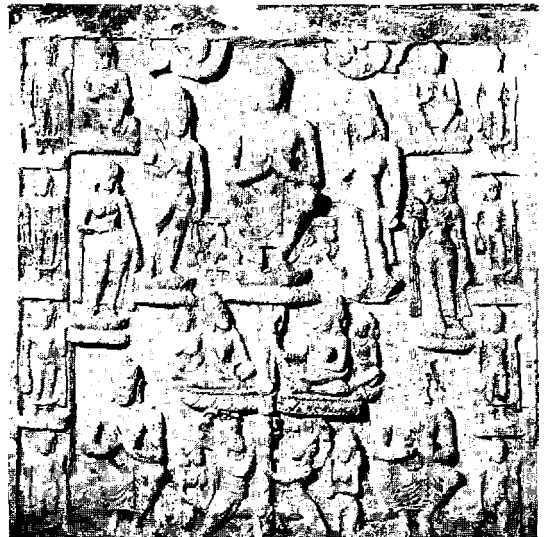
12.24. Colossal Buddha, left end of veranda, Cave 3. Kānheri, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Traikūṭaka period. Ca. late fifth century.

possible that artists who had worked at Ajañṭā, or their descendants, had moved to Kānheri to begin work there.

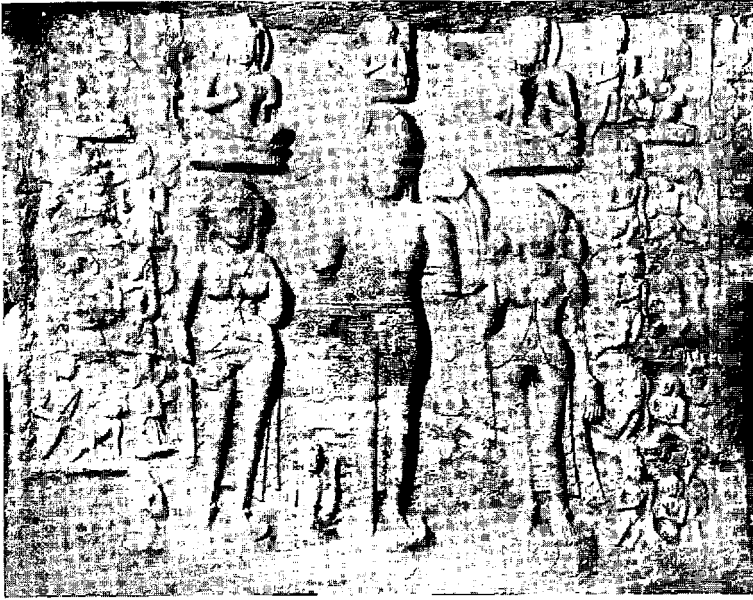
While architecturally many of the new caves excavated during this phase at Kānheri are rather plain, a number of extremely important images was produced, serving as vital documents of developments in the Buddhist religion. Cave 90, a monument of perhaps the early to middle sixth century is a simple, single chamber with only a small veranda, but its interior walls are abundantly carved with sculptures; the disordered arrangement indicates that the cave's purpose was to serve as a place where sculptures could be donated for merit rather than as a hall for initiations or rituals. The original shrine images are lost, but on the side walls two important sculptures show in graphic form the complex hierarchical iconographic arrangements that had been developing for a long time. On the viewer's left wall is a Buddha scene (Fig. 12.25), while on the right wall is a depiction of Avalokiteśvara as protector of the faithful

(Fig. 12.26). As an iconographic statement, each marks a significant departure from earlier examples.

Properly speaking, the composition of the Buddha scene is a *maṇḍala*, a specific schematization through which the religious practitioner achieves both understanding and reintegration with the Universal. In this case, the central figure demonstrates the *dharmakāya* aspect of Buddhahood, the Universal, and is perhaps properly called Sarvavid (Universal Knowledge) Vairocana. This identification does not negate the interpretation of this figure as the historical Buddha Śākyamuni as well, since the two are identical in the ultimate sense. In the four corners of the composition, four smaller images identical to that in the center represent the four *jinas* who, together with the central Buddha, comprise the five *jinas* of the five *jina* (*pañcajina*) *maṇḍala*. These Buddhas are the personifications of the knowledge (*jñāna*) essence of the Universal who emerge from the four quarters (that is, all directions) to impart knowledge to the initiate. They represent the so-called *sambhogakāya* (Bliss Body), which together with the *nirmāṇakāya* and the *dharmakāya* comprise the three *kāyas* of the Buddhist *trikāya* system. As imparters of knowledge, they represent the teaching modality



12.25. Buddha *maṇḍala* on left wall, Cave 90. Kānheri, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. early-to-mid sixth century.



12.26. Litany of Avalokiteśvara as Protector of the Faithful, right wall, Cave 90. Kānheri, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. early-to-mid sixth century.

12.27. Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara in Cave 41. Kānheri, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late fifth-early sixth century. ▷

of Buddhism. These Buddhas, in later art differentiated by specific *mudrās* and *vāhanas*, are Akṣobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amitābha (west), and Amoghasiddhi (north), each shown here in *dharmacakra mudrā* and *pralambapādāsana*.

Along each vertical side of the composition is a row of four Buddhas, together representing the eight *mānuṣi* Buddhas, the *nirmāṇakāya*, who are charged with the responsibility of teaching the Buddhist religion to the beings of the mundane world. Beneath the central figure, attending the stalk upon which his lotus pedestal rests, are depictions of Indra and Brahmā with female consorts, and *nāgas* and *nāginīs* below, both groups shown as essentially subordinates of the main figure. Flanking the Buddha is a pair of bodhisattvas, each also having a female companion. By the sixth century, female images had emerged as an important part of Buddhist Mahāyāna iconographic conceptions, at Kānheri as well as at numerous other sites in South Asia. In Buddhist theory, the female personifies the concept of *prajñā*, or transcendental knowledge, while the male denotes *upāya*, the practice necessary to lead the practitioner to the attainment of that knowledge. The combination of the two is the Buddhist enlightenment, sym-

bolized in later Buddhism by *yuganaddha* (sexually joined) couples. Thus, the concept of *mīthuna*, which had long been a motif in Buddhist art, is integrated into an expression of one of the most essential and fundamental beliefs in the religion.

The icon of Avalokiteśvara as protector of the faithful (Fig. 12.26) is of a type that occurs widely in the western caves in a similar format. However, this version is unique in that it depicts Avalokiteśvara as protector against ten perils (rather than the usual eight) and includes numerous subsidiary figures. Above the head of the central figure is the primogeneric source of the entire icon, the *dharmakāya*, in this case Vairocana, attended by two bodhisattvas. Avalokiteśvara is flanked by his two female consorts, Tārā (to his right) and Bhṛkuṭī (to his left). Tārā, whose name means "Star," and the North Star implicitly, represents the fixed point of universality towards which the devotee progresses, while Bhṛkuṭī's name, "[Abundantly] Full Hall," refers to the achievement of the fully enlightened mind. In this litany, Avalokiteśvara offers the devotee promise of salvation from the various perils depicted on the sides of the composition, including attack by elephants, lions, robbers, and similar disasters. While the lay worshiper



might accept these perils in a literal sense and invoke Avalokiteśvara for protection against the specific threat, an advanced practitioner would understand these on a metaphorical level, each

danger representing a potential hindrance on his path to Buddhahood. The wild elephant, for example, would be seen as the wild mind in need of taming, that is, the mental discipline necessary to achieve the Buddhist goal. Such litany scenes served as prototypes for examples found in Inner Asia, China, Japan, and the Himalayan regions.

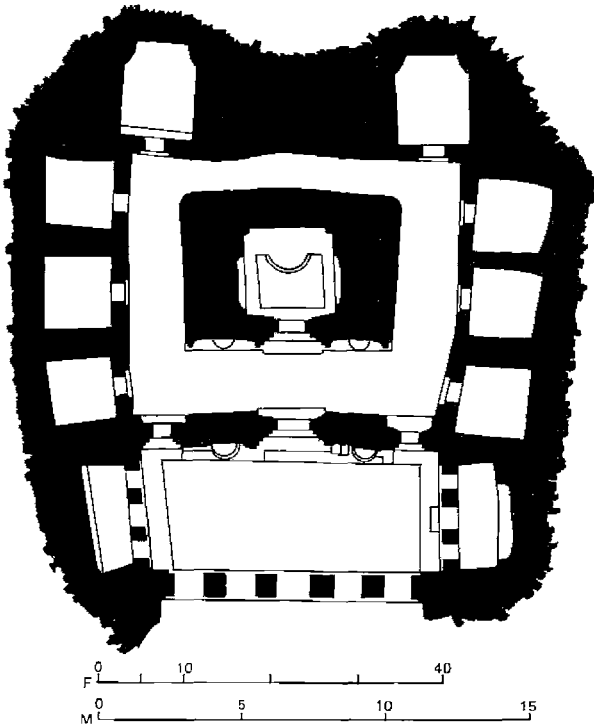
A representation of a highly unusual form of Avalokiteśvara attending a seated Buddha in Cave 41 indicates advanced and esoteric Buddhist practices at Kānheri (Fig. 12.27). Dating from approximately the late fifth or early sixth century, the image shows the bodhisattva in an eleven-headed (*ekādaśamukha*) form which, while found frequently in later Buddhist art outside of South Asia as in Nepal, Tibet, China, and Japan, is not known in the Indic realm except at a rather late date in Kaśmīr and the eastern regions. This image is thus the only artistic documentation for the view that this iconographic type originated in India. It may be inferred from art as well as literature that the eleven heads, consisting of ten bodhisattva heads topped by a Buddha head, represent the *daśabhūmikas*, or the ten stages of achievement of the bodhisattva along with the final attainment of Buddhahood.

AURANGABAD

Not far from Ajañṭā, at Aurangabad, a number of Buddhist caves were carved during several different periods. While two of these caves (1 and 3) belong to the Vākāṭaka period and were excavated contemporaneously with the late Mahāyāna phase at Ajañṭā, others were created in the latter half of the sixth century and thus represent a stylistic and iconographic advancement from the earlier monuments. Spink suggests that these caves (6, 7, and 9) were carved when the region had come under the control of the Kalacuris, whom, he believes, were also responsible for the major Hindu excavations at Jogeśvari, Mañḍapeśvara and Elephanta.²⁰ Cave 7, dating from around 560, seems to combine the ritual need for circumambulation seen in the early Vākāṭaka phase at Ajañṭā with

the preference for placing the shrine Buddha against the rear wall of the chamber by creating an ambulatory passage around the entire shrine (Fig. 12.28).²¹ The side walls of the passageway open into a series of cells while the rear wall contains two subsidiary shrines. The ground plan suggests that the principal shrine had simply been moved forward into the main hall of a typical Mahāyāna *vihāra*, although this may not in fact be the way in which this form evolved. The shrines at the rear of the *pradakṣiṇapatha*, as well as the primary shrine, each contain a sculpture of a Buddha seated in *pralanibapādāsana* and displaying *dharmacakra mudrā*.²²

The caves of the post-Vākāṭaka phase show an increased use of sculptural panels to carry



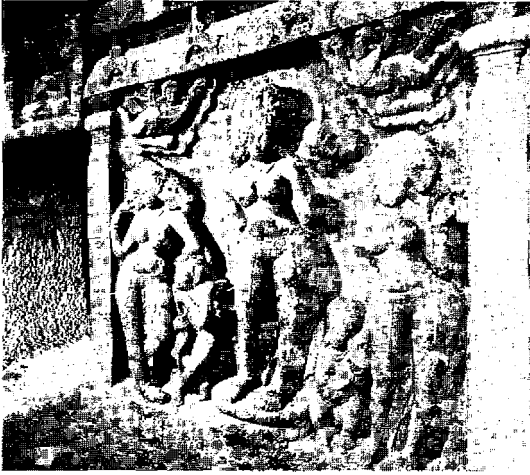
12.28. Plan of Cave 7. Aurangabad, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. mid-sixth century.



12.29. Litany of Avalokiteśvara to left of central door on veranda, Cave 7. Aurangabad, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. mid-sixth century.

out the iconographic program and larger, more monumental figures. The front wall leading into the circumambulatory passage from the veranda, for example, bears a sizable panel of a litany of Avalokiteśvara to the left of the central door (Fig. 12.29) and of another bodhisattva to the right. These figures demonstrate a stylistic departure from the earlier Vākāṭaka style, having a new tautness to the contours of their bodies, fuller shoulders, and swelling hips. They are best compared to figures such as the *dvārapālas* from Mandasor (Fig. 11.2), the sculptures at Elephanta (Figs. 13.5–8) or others of the sixth century. The hair style of Avalokiteśvara, with its tendrillike curls and high, piled-up appearance, is characteristic of sixth-century conventions, further showing departure from Gupta and Vākāṭaka trends. In addition, the treatment of the lintel of the doorway with its multitude of miniature shrines anticipates the architectural elaboration seen in several later north Indian regional styles.

Similar stylistic development may also be seen in the treatment of female figures, as in the important panel to the left of the door to the central shrine (Fig. 12.30) or the figure group inside the shrine, along the left wall (Fig. 12.31). The voluptuous figures are full breasted, round hipped, and have swelling thighs. In the group inside the shrine, the figures seem lifelike, a feeling enhanced by the suggested movement and animation of their poses, which marks a departure from the quietude of figures in the Gupta and Vākāṭaka periods and anticipates the active, dynamic figures of subsequent centuries. The elaborate coiffures are again characteristic of the sixth century. It may be noted that the *vidyādharas* (Fig. 12.30) are set against clouds that are indicated by a scalloped form that is seen widely throughout the Deccan in the sixth century and is especially characteristic of Early Western Calukya sculptures. In some respects the female figures are also very close to those seen in Early Western Calukya art.



12.30. Female group to left of central shrine door, Cave 7. Aurangabad, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. mid-sixth century.



12.31. Dancer and musicians, along left wall, inside shrine, Cave 7. Aurangabad, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. mid-sixth century.

The presence of prominent female imagery, especially females as attendants to bodhisattvas or Buddhas, demonstrates the growing importance of sexual symbolism in Buddhism, associated with Tantric or Vajrayānic sects. The group to the left of the central shrine door (Fig. 12.30) shows Tārā, the principal consort of Avalokiteśvara, accompanied by two female reflections or aspects of herself who are in turn accompanied by dwarves. The dwarf at the left is very similar to the Śaivite dwarves attending the Maheśvara image at Elephanta (Figs. 13.5–8), reinforcing the suggestion of the approximate contemporaneity of the two monuments. This figure, the only male in the entire composition, has a hair arrangement consisting of five topknots that represent the five *bijas* (sound essences) of the *pañcājina maṇḍala* (the *maṇḍala* of the five *jina* Buddhas).²³ In both his maleness and his ascetic quality, he represents *upāya*, the action necessary to attain Buddhahood, and the corollary of compassion (*karuṇā*). The other dwarf, a female to Tārā's left, personifies *prajñā* (wisdom), which is part of *jñāna*, the knowledge needed for Buddhahood. The image thus reiterates the basic Mahāyāna concept, but it is one step further removed, since the practitioner must unite Tārā with Avalokiteśvara to achieve *karuṇā*, and only then can he integrate Avalo-

kiteśvara with Vajrapāṇi to reach *bodhi*. In another sense, the central figure of Tārā is not different from a Buddha, with garland-bearing *vidyādharas* above and personifications of knowledge and compassion at her side.

The spectacular female group consisting of a dancing woman accompanied by six female musicians on the left wall of the main shrine is dramatic evidence for female and sexual symbolism in Buddhism (Fig. 12.31). The shrine is based on the type that developed in the last phase at Ajaṅṭā with the central Buddha figure accompanied by sculpted depictions of the six *mānuṣi* Buddhas, but goes beyond the earlier formulation with the addition of this important panel and the figures on the opposite wall consisting of a bodhisattva, his female companion, and a dwarf. If one accepts the musicians in the group on the left wall at face value, as accompanists to the dancer, the main figure that needs interpretation is the dancer herself. Bharatanāṭyam, the classical form of Indian dance, was in advanced stages of development by the sixth century and already included an extensive vocabulary of gestures, each with a relatively explicit meaning to be interpreted by the audience. According to Bharatanāṭyam literature, the gesture made by the left hand of the Aurangabad dancer is *ardha patākā*, "half

flag," with the palm upwards, a sign that has a dual meaning: at one level, it represents two, both, or any sort of duality, but on another, it symbolizes a long or tall, slender object that would be known from the context of the story line being portrayed in the dance. Since the gesture is directed toward the genital area, it may be intended to suggest the male member and perhaps the sexual act itself. In light of this and other evidence at the site, it is clear that esoteric, Tantric forms of Buddhism were in practice at Aurangabad in the sixth century.

Sexual imagery, which eventually culminates in the representation of figures in intercourse (*yuganaddha*) was long misunderstood by scholars as a "degeneration" of Buddhist ideals. However, the total emotional and physical involvement of the individual with the partner during sexual activity is a metaphor in Indic religious thought for the mystical union with the Universal; the combining of the male and female into a totally integrated unity was seen to symbolize the active path to enlightenment.

In practice, sexual activities did become part of the religious rituals of certain Buddhist and Hindu sects, but these were kept secret and were restricted to esoteric practices since it was feared that noninitiates would lack understanding and might misinterpret the activities as simple orgiastic pleasure seeking. Indeed, it was recognized that one of the pitfalls of the path of *yuganaddha* was to sink into a lustful quest for pleasure.

It is appropriate that the female figure is dancing, since, in Indic thought, dancing is one of the arts necessary for the accomplished sexual partner and constitutes one aspect of sexual foreplay. The full-figured forms of the females suggest their desirability, the intensity of desire being likened to the fervor with which the religious goal should be pursued. In texts, the female partners are described as being sixteen years of age and in the full bloom of youth. It is evident that the artists attempted to convey such a notion in their sculptures.

ELLORA

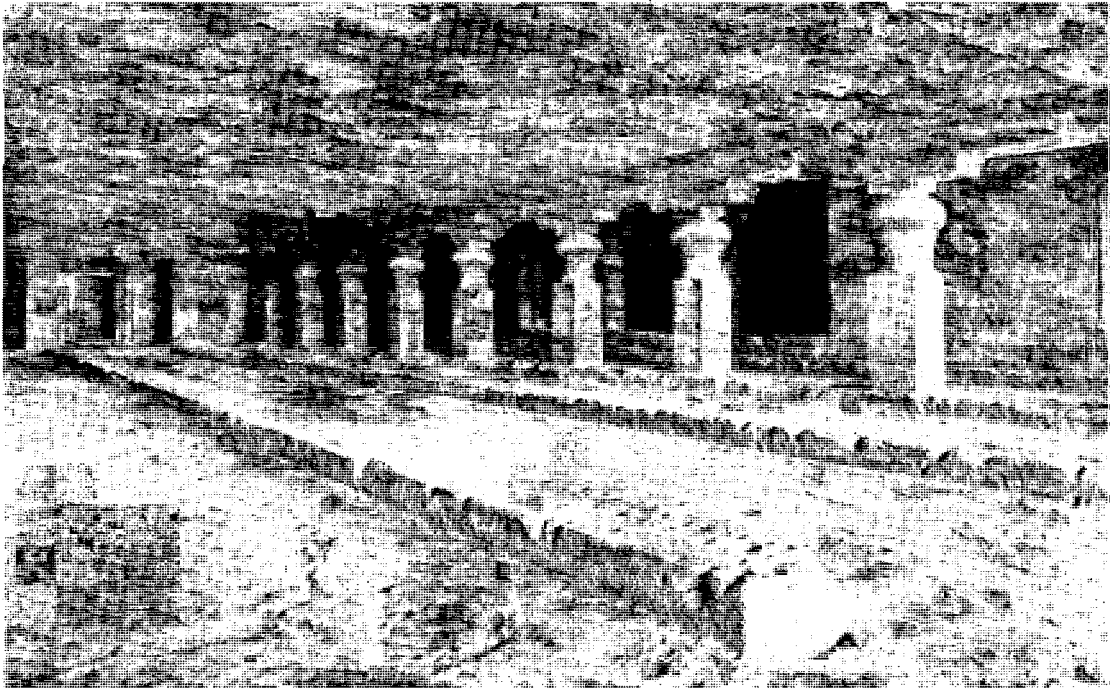
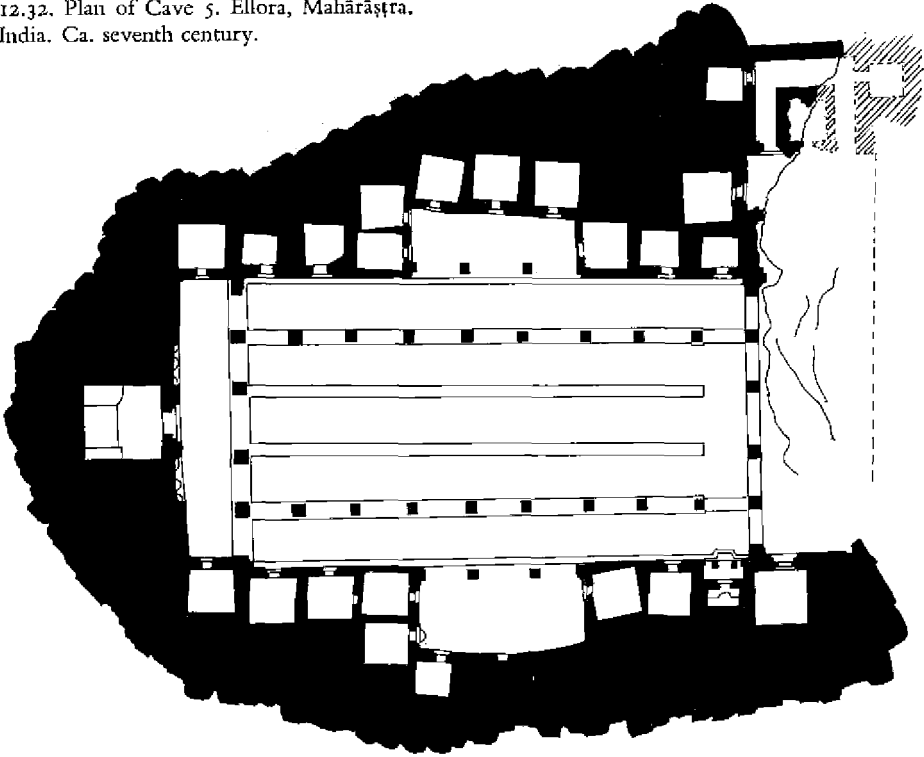
The final phase of development of Buddhist caves in western India is seen at Ellora, a site near Ajañtā and Aurangabad that had already become an important Hindu center in the last half of the sixth century. Although the specific patronage of the Buddhist caves is not known, they were probably excavated during the seventh century, when the Early Western Calukyas had achieved supremacy in the Deccan (Chapters 13 and 15), though not necessarily in this region.

A number of the Buddhist caves at Ellora seem to recapitulate some of the basic architectural and iconographic formats found at other sites, but others suggest innovative and advanced Buddhist thinking. Cave 5, the earliest Buddhist cave at Ellora, is a large rectangular hall, about thirty-five meters in length, with surrounding small cells, a shrine in the center of the rear wall, and two other shrine areas in the centers of the side walls (Figs. 12.32, 12.33). The expansion of the two side-shrine areas may be

seen as a further development of the plan of Cave 6 (upper) at Ajañtā (Fig. 12.16, bottom) although here, the main hall has become elongated. Both the rectangular, axial format and the addition of cross-axis shrines are features that developed in Hindu monuments of the preceding century, such as the Śiva cave at Elephanta (Fig. 13.1). The treatment of the pillars with their cushion capitals further suggests such a connection (compare Figs. 12.33, 13.3).

A key feature in this cave (found also in a similar cave at Kānheri, but preserved nowhere else in South Asia) is the double row of stone benches extending almost the full length of the hall, within the rectangle of pillars. Such benches are typical of the seating pattern used in ritual recitation in later Tantrism and Zen Buddhism outside of India and suggest that benches made of ephemeral materials might possibly have been used in *vihāra* and *caitya* type caves or free-standing buildings for centuries, but that their

12.32. Plan of Cave 5. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra.
India. Ca. seventh century.



12.33. Interior of Cave 5. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. seventh century.



12.34. Facade of Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India.
Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.

memory is preserved only in the rock-cut examples at Ellora and Kānheri.

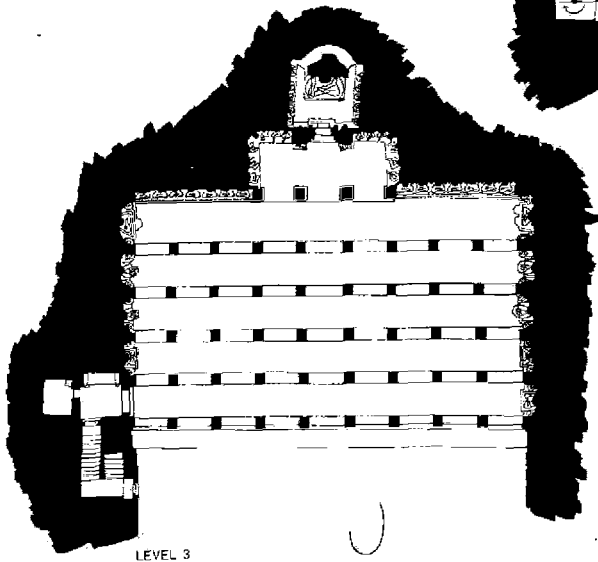
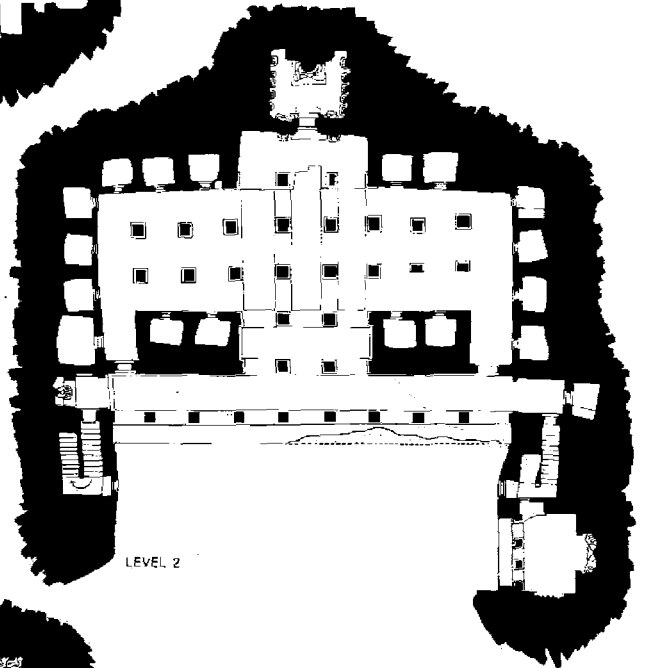
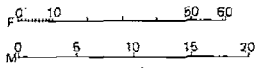
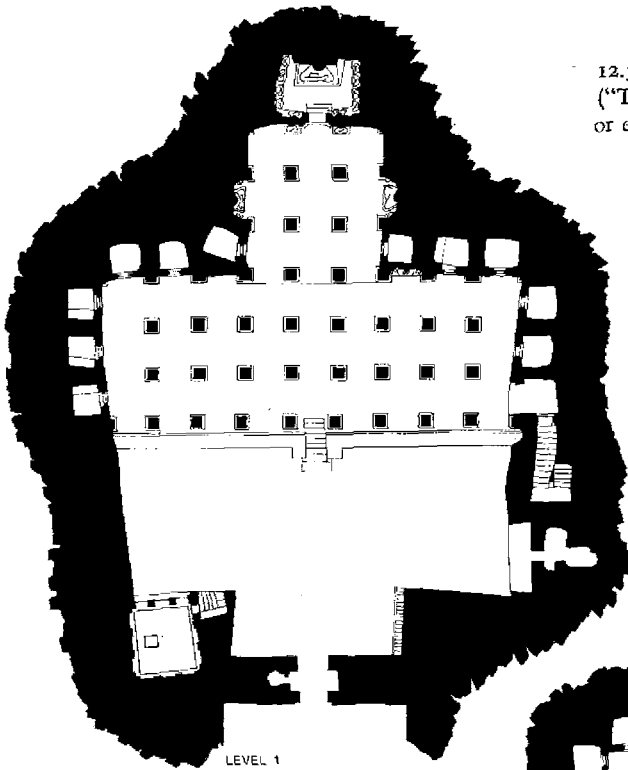
The vast scale and ambitiousness of the later Buddhist caves is seen in Cave 12, the so-called Tin Thal, a three-story excavation, each floor of which is larger than any single cave at Ajañṭā. Its plain and austere facade (Fig. 12.34) belies the richness of sculptural decoration within. This cave complex, one of the last Buddhist excavations to be carried out at Ellora, may have been created in the late seventh or even the early eighth century. It is entered through a rock-cut gateway that leads to a spacious courtyard preceding the cave (Fig. 12.35, level 1).

Each floor of the cave is different in plan and format. The first floor (Fig. 12.35, level 1) consists of a rectangular pillared hall entered on the long side with a large pillared antechamber and shrine extending on axis with the entrance to the rear. Small cells are placed at the sides and rear of the main hall. While the second story

is essentially similar in concept (although not in details such as the number of pillars or cells), the cross-axis leading from the front center of the cave to the shrine at the rear is emphasized by the treatment of pillars and the addition of an extension of that axis towards the facade side of the cave (Fig. 12.35, level 2). A veranda has also been included along the front of the cave to provide access from the staircase at the front left to the center of the cave for proper entrance. The top floor (Fig. 12.35, level 3) has pillars arranged in a transverse manner, lacks subsidiary cells, and has a relatively small antechamber preceding the shrine.

The main shrine on each floor contains the now familiar set of images: a Buddha attended by two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara on his right and Vajrapāṇi or Mañjuvājra, a form of Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who personifies wisdom, who carries a *vajra* on a lotus, on his left). But in addition, the eight bodhisattvas often grouped

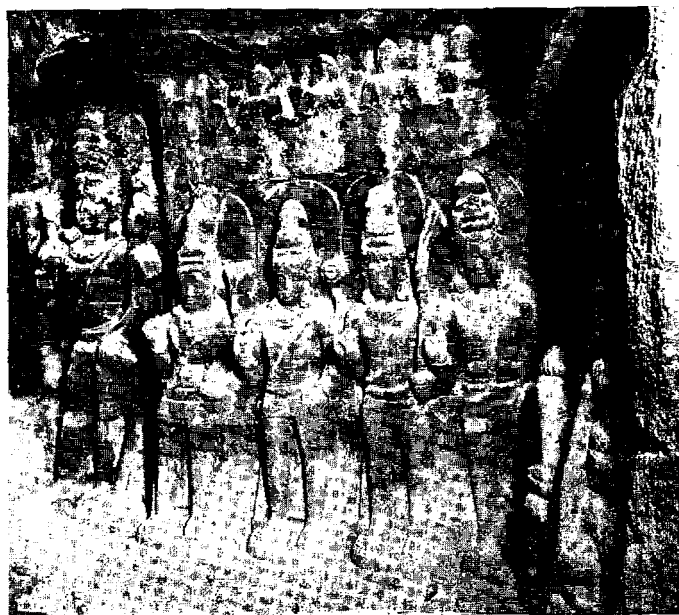
12.35. Plans of first, second, and third levels, Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.



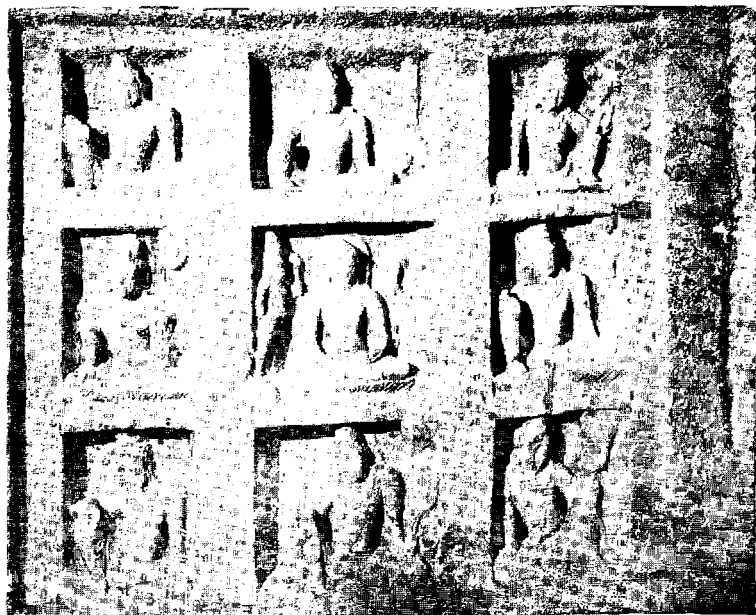
together in a configuration known as the eight-bodhisattva *maṇḍala* (*aṣṭabodhisattva maṇḍala*) also appear in the shrines, four on each side of the central Buddha (Fig. 12.36). Each bodhisattva is clearly identified by the attribute held in his left hand.²⁴ Other representations of the eight bodhisattvas, identical in meaning, but taking

on a much more *maṇḍalic* appearance, are found in other locations in the cave (Fig. 12.37). In these, the eight bodhisattvas surround a central Buddha in a nine-square diagram.

The presence of three stories or levels is one of the most significant features of this cave. While earlier excavations in the western Deccan might



12.36. Four bodhisattvas of the *aṣṭabodhisattva maṇḍala*, second level, right shrine wall, Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.



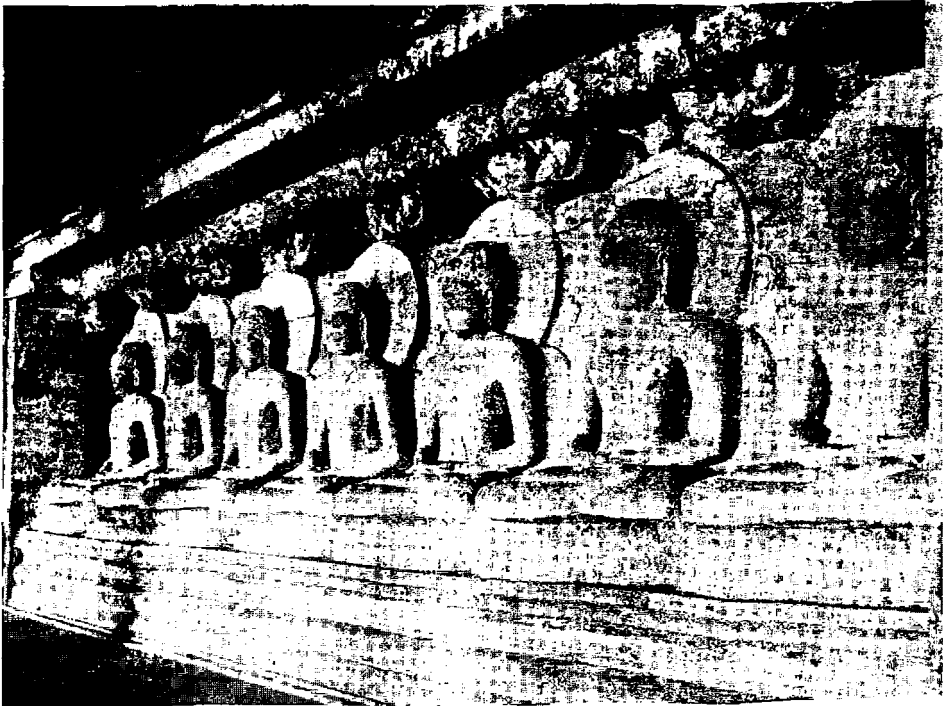
12.37. *Aṣṭabodhisattva maṇḍala*, ground level to left of entrance to antechamber of central shrine, Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.

have had multiple stories, these were not necessarily harmonized into a single scheme. Cave 6 at Ajanṭā, for example, consists of two separate excavations that are different in date and may have had little inherent unity. Ellora Cave 12, and its neighbor, Cave 11, are the result of single, unified, pre-planned arrangements, possibly related to Buddhist practices in which three stages might be identified: an initiation or introductory phase, a more advanced practice, and finally, the stage for the true *ācāryas*, or highly developed spiritual masters. Such use of levels in architecture is found in Nepali Buddhism, and it is probable that the Nepali practice was based on an Indic precedent such as this.

The full range of the iconographic program that is richly carved on all three levels of the cave can only be sampled in a brief survey such as this; the complexity and richness is an indication of the late phase of Mahāyāna cave architecture and developments that had been occurring in the Buddhist religion. For example, the upper story of Cave 12 has large images of Buddhas



12.38. Buddha, in upper level, Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.



12.39. *Mānuṣī* Buddhas, upper level, left rear wall, Cave 12 ("Tin Thal"). Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Ca. late seventh or early eighth century.

along the side walls representing the Buddhas of the ten directions (four cardinal directions, zenith, nadir, and the four intermediate points)—a standard reference in Buddhist literature to the universality of Buddhahood—who come to an initiate during *abhiṣeka* ("head sprinkling," or initiation) to confer *jñāna* (knowledge) on him.²⁵ One example (Fig. 12.38) shows a typical figure, deeply carved so that it is almost in the round, surrounded by a tableau of figures including bodhisattvas and *vidyādhara*s. Increasingly, after the painted caves at Ajañtā, sculpture was used to create a greater effect on the devotee who was

literally surrounded by human-size and much larger religious images as he moved through such caves.

To either side of the entrance to the shrine antechamber are representations of the *mānuṣi* Buddhas (Fig. 12.39). In contrast to the earlier Vākāṭaka depictions, these figures have a stiff, dry, inanimate quality characteristic of much of the later Mahāyāna sculpture at Ellora, thus representing the crystallization of form that characterizes many post-Gupta artistic idioms, and indicating that perhaps something had been sacrificed in the fervor to achieve gigantic scale.

CONCLUSION

With Cave 12 at Ellora, Buddhist artistic activity in the western Deccan came to a virtual halt. The developments over the period of about two hundred and fifty years from the Vākāṭaka resurgence to the creation of Cave 12 at Ellora were rapid and dramatic. In the shrine area alone, the format changed from a simple image in the center of a shrine, to one where the central image was moved to the rear wall of the cell, additional Buddhas were brought into the shrine, the shrine itself was surrounded by a *pradakṣiṇapatha*, secondary shrines appeared, female imagery became prominent, and, finally, a series of caves was arranged vertically and a new group of bodhisattvas was introduced into the shrine. If these changes were spread out in a linear fashion, it might be seen that on an average, a significant modification occurred about once every thirty years. Responsibility for the decision to make such changes must have resided with the presiding *ācārya* of the monasteries, and it may be suggested that as one generation became familiar with the esotericisms of its preceptors, it became possible or even desirable to make the esoteric traditions visible in the fabric of the monastic

structure itself. Clearly, the developments in Buddhism as documented in these caves must have been extremely rich, fostered perhaps by an active lay patronage and nurtured by the suitable environment and context created in the monasteries themselves. The tendency over time was to include greater and greater specificity in communicating Buddhist doctrines and beliefs, thus leaving less and less to the interpretation of the practitioner.

Buddhism itself did not die out at this time, for in other parts of South Asia, such as the eastern region of Bihār, a major tradition was just beginning. But something in the west, possibly political shifts, such as the rise of the staunchly Hindu Rāṣṭrakūṭas, had a great and lasting effect on patronage and even practices within the religion itself. Some of the monasteries were undoubtedly still inhabited although new excavations were not begun, at least for the Buddhists. The rock-cut tradition itself, however, was hardly over, for some of the most impressive of all rock-cut monuments were yet to be created in the service of the Hindu religion.



Detail of 13.7.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Hindu Rock-cut Architecture of the Deccan (Kalacuri and Early Western Calukya Phases)

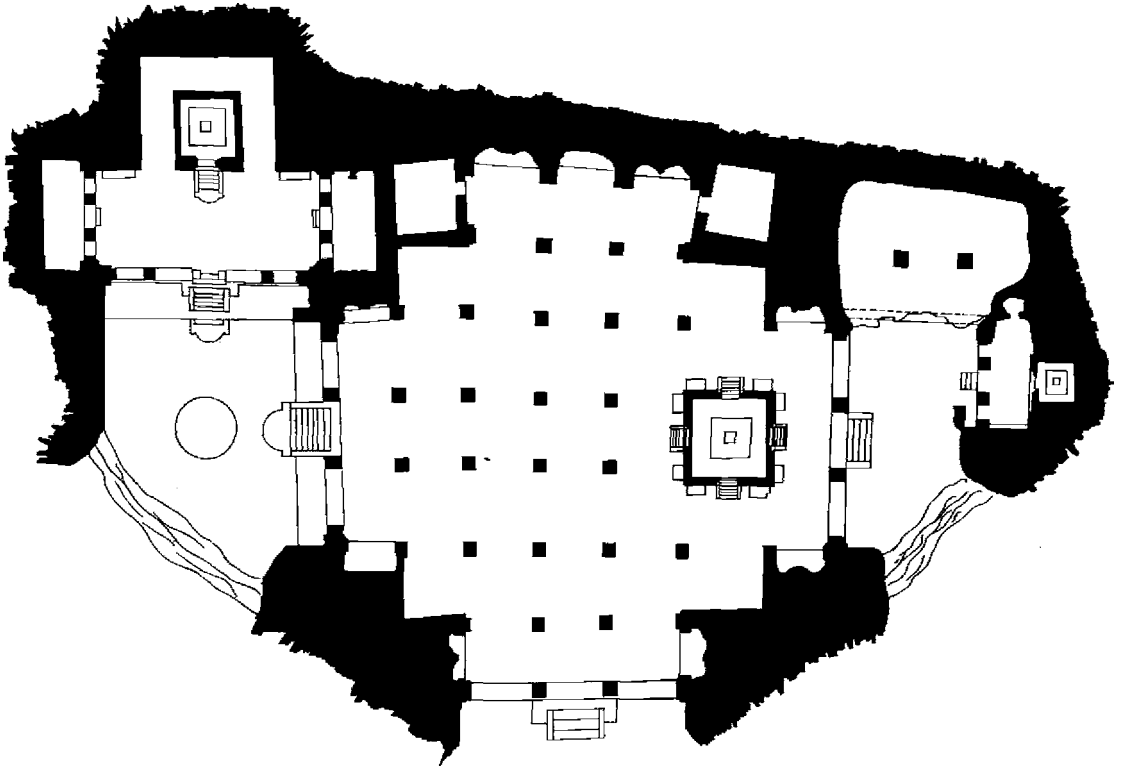
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, the distinguished historian of South Asian art, noted that "of over twelve hundred 'cave' temples in India not many more than a hundred are Brāhmanical, while nine hundred are Buddhist and the remainder Jaina."¹ Although these numbers are approximate, it is evident that cave architecture was especially appropriate to the needs of the Buddhist *saṅgha*, and considerably less so to the Hindus and Jains. The reasons for this are im-

perfectly understood. However, the fact remains that many bold experiments in rock-cut forms were carried out by the Hindus before their eventual abandonment of the medium, ranging from the early Gupta excavations at Udayagiri (Figs. 10.3-9) to the highly ambitious temples created under the Early Kalacuri and Early Western Calukya dynasties to be considered here, and under the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas (Chap. 14), and the Raṣṭrakūṭas (Chap. 16).

THE EARLY KALACURI PERIOD

The Early Kalacuri dynasty, which rose in Mahārāṣṭra upon the collapse of the Vākāṭaka line, is more understood for its place in history and for its religious development than for its art. Becoming prominent around 520 and remaining a major force in the Deccan until around 600, when the expanding dynasty of the

Early Western Calukyās of Karṇāṭaka eclipsed their power, the Kalacuris fostered religious movements, primarily Pāśupata Śaivism, which had lasting effects in the Deccan as well as other regions of South Asia. Although no inscrip-tional or other documentary evidence has yet been found that ties the Kalacuris to monumental



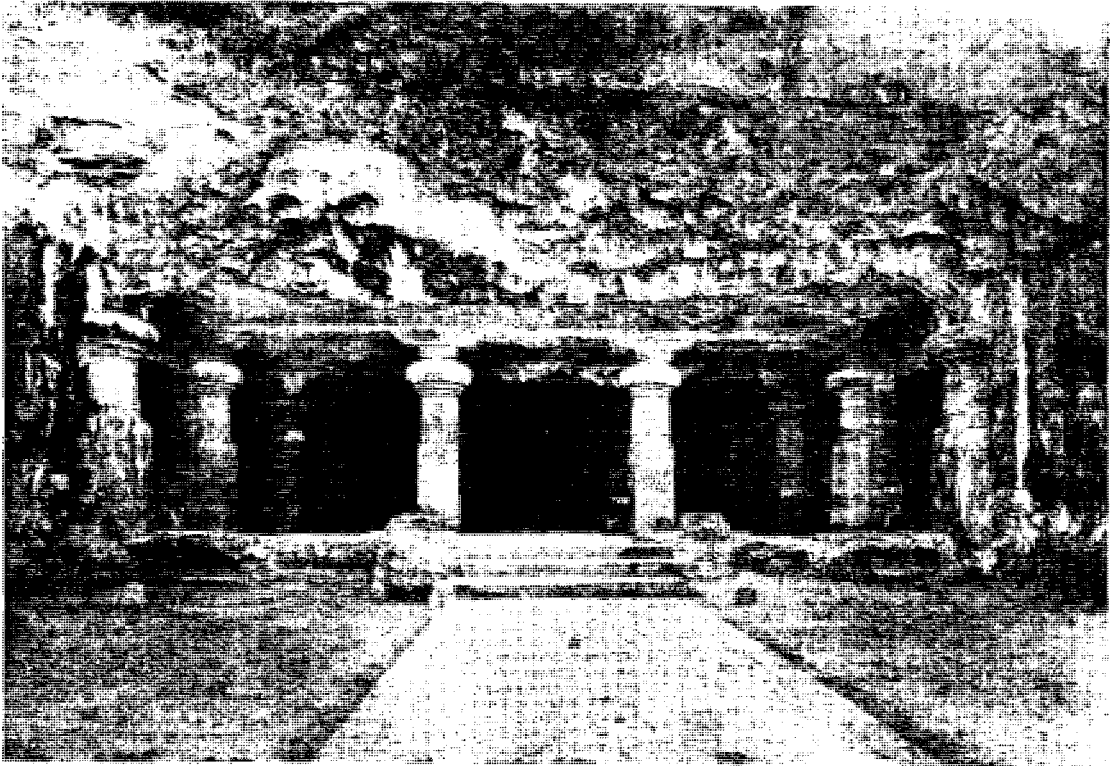
13.1. Plan of Siva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

architecture, it is clear that a number of major caves were excavated during the period of their control of the western Deccan. For example, the Buddhist caves 6 and 7 at Aurangabad were probably created during this period (Figs. 12.28–31). In addition, several Brahmanical caves that reveal certain essential similarities in concept, plan, and style were probably excavated during the Kalacuri period, namely, the caves of Jogeśvari, Maṅḍapeśvara, Elephanta, and the Dhumar Lenā (Cave 29) at Ellora, which were created in the order listed. Of these, the great cave at Elephanta is the finest and may be used to demonstrate the general characteristics of Kalacuri-period Hindu caves.

A small island off the coast of Bombay, Elephanta was named in fairly recent times by the Portuguese because of a large, carved, stone elephant that was once there. Although there are several caves on the island, the most notable is the Great Cave (Cave 1), the grandeur of

whose size, scale, and sculptural and architectural conception rank it among the most impressive of South Asian art monuments. An inscribed stone found on the island that might have shed light on the dedication, date, and patronage of the cave was removed by the Portuguese and subsequently lost. However, the cave may be dated on a stylistic basis from around 540 to 555.²

Its plan (Fig. 13.1) reveals the magnitude and complication of the excavation, which measures nearly forty meters from north to south and from east to west. In addition, there are side chapels and courtyards, making the full scheme rather elaborate. In actuality, the main entrance to the cave is on the north, although conceptually, it is on the east. This discrepancy may have resulted from difficulties in adjusting the preconceived eastward-oriented plan to the existing peculiarities of the rock itself, a problem of the type that may have led to the eventual abandonment of the rock-cut method by



13.2. North entrance to Śiva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

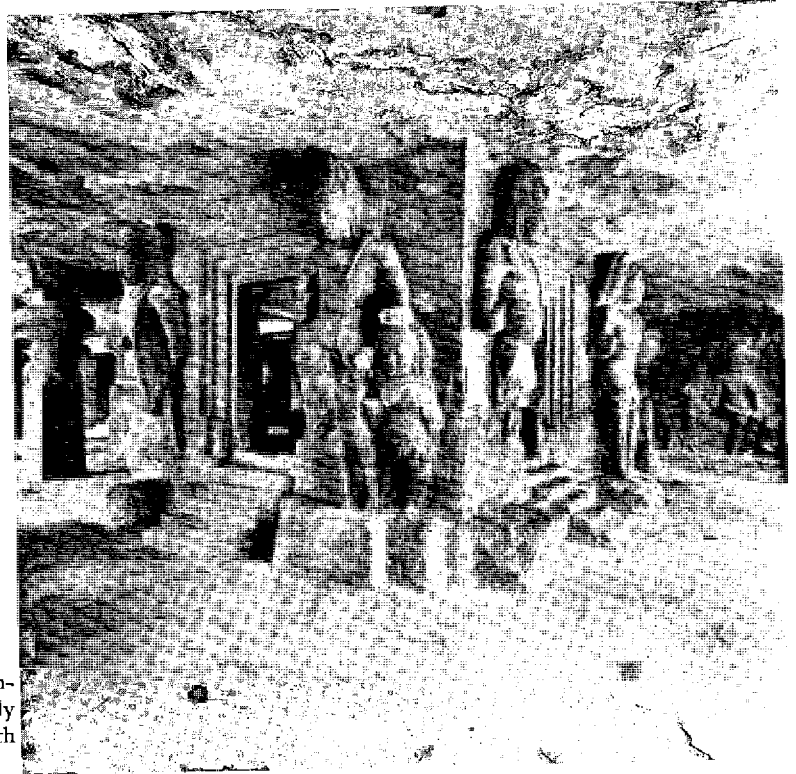
Hindus. If one accepts the east as the main entrance (a normal orientation for a Śaivite temple, which this is), the organization of the scheme is not at all unusual. The open courtyard on the east with a side chapel to its south thus comprises the conceptual entrance to the monument. At the west, another courtyard with subsidiary chambers parallels that on the east. The main temple consists of a large, pillared *maṇḍapa* and a free-standing square shrine at the west end of the hall. Though not defined, the space surrounding the shrine is meant to serve as a circumambulatory passageway. The north-south axis of the temple, while perhaps mainly due to geological rather than religious considerations, is not only acknowledged but is emphasized by three gigantic niches along the south wall of the *maṇḍapa* that contain some of the most compelling images in all of South Asia. The incorporation of a lateral axis into the temple plan, however, was probably not an innovation here;

it was seen in nascent form in Cave 6 (upper) at Ajaṅṭā during the preceding century (Fig. 12.16, bottom).

The unprepossessing exterior of the cave (Fig. 13.2) scarcely prepares the visitor for the spacious and majestic interior. The pillars and reliefs in the cave are gigantic in scale, but they are comfortably enough spaced to allow an airy, open feeling (Fig. 13.3). The pillars have bulbous "cushion" capitals (*āmlā*) of a type seen as early as the Ajaṅṭā caves but mainly associated with the Early Kalacuri and Early Western Calukya excavations. The cubical shrine (Fig. 13.4), which contains a *liṅga* and a *yoni* symbolizing the ultimate unity, has an entrance on each of its four sides and two colossal *dvārapālas* attending each of the doors. Gracefully posed and full-figured, the forms of these attendants clearly derive from earlier styles of the western Deccan, such as those of the Buddhist caves of the Vākāṭakas. Although the guardians wear elaborate crowns



13.3. Interior view looking west, Śiva cave. Elephanta, Maharashtra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.



13.4. Shrine in Śiva cave. Elephanta, Maharashtra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

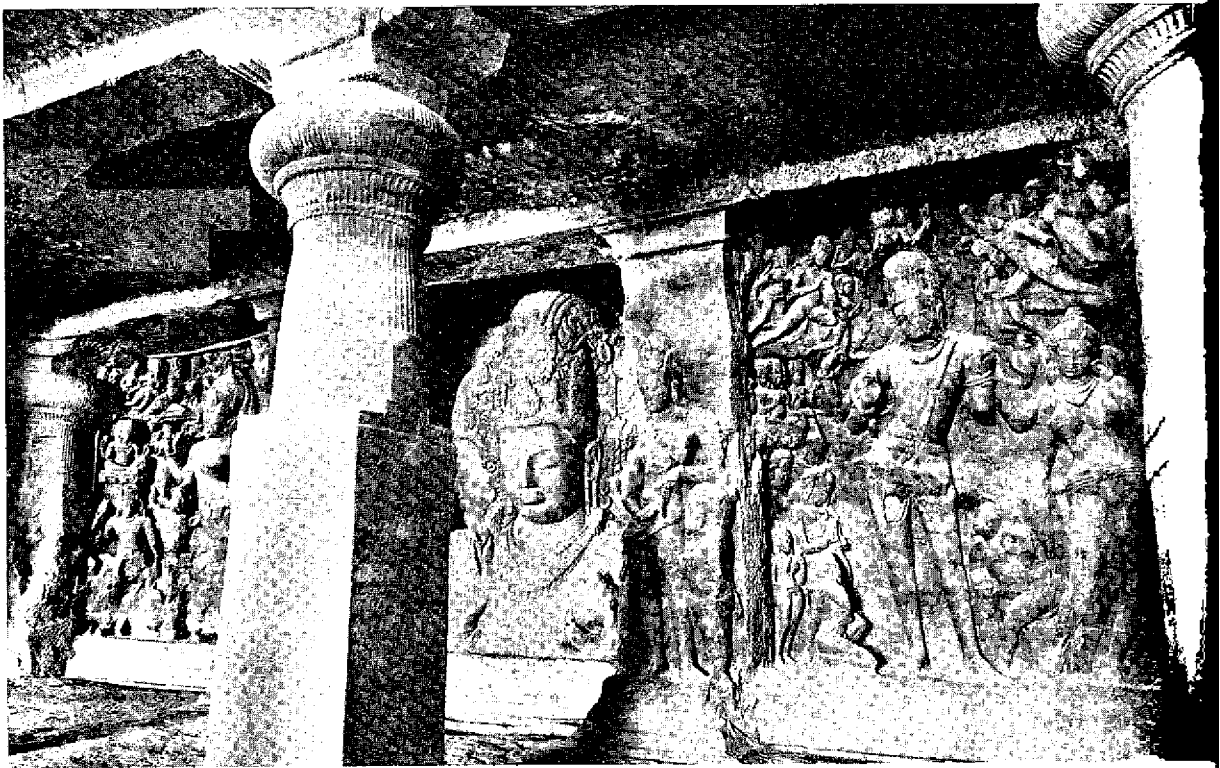
and jewelry, anticipating the sculptural richness of later centuries, the figures still reflect the simplicity seen throughout the Gupta and early post-Gupta periods. A heavy lower lip and seemingly downcast eyes characterize the faces of these and other figures at Elephanta.

Around the perimeter of the cave, set in various niches, are a number of large reliefs depicting aspects of Śaivite iconography. Undoubtedly, a unified scheme exists, although this has yet to be fully established. One niche shows a representation of Lakuliśa, the original teacher of the Pāśupata Śaivites whose cult was favored by the Early Kalacuris, and it is likely that the key to the iconographic program is tied to Pāśupata practices and beliefs. Many of the reliefs, for example, illustrate the monistic view of the Pāśupatas, as given in the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, in which seemingly disparate aspects of creation are viewed as ultimately unified in Śiva. This theme is obvious in the major sculptural group of the cave, that along the south wall on an axis with the entrance on the north. The primary image is the famous Maheśvara flanked by similarly sized niches with depictions of Śiva Ardhanārīśvara to the viewer's left and Śiva Gaṅgādhara to the right (Figs. 13.5-8). Śaivite guardians accompanied by dwarves on the pilasters separating the three reliefs serve as guardians for the central image, the dwarf to the left being reminiscent of one at Aurangabad Cave 7 of approximately the same period (Fig. 12.30). More than five meters in height and set on an approximately one meter high base, the central multiheaded image (Fig. 13.7) overwhelms the visitor to the Elephanta cave, and its meaning has generated a great deal of discussion among scholars.

Some have contended that although only three faces are shown in this carving, a fourth (at the rear) is implied, and even a fifth (facing upwards) might have been implicit in accordance with the five faces of Śiva described in a text known as the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. Each of the three faces differs in expression and/or ornamentation. That on the left shows an angry countenance complete with bulging eyes and flaming mustache, and those in the center and on the right are both tranquil. However, that on the right is feminine

(in contrast to the other two) as deduced from the curls of the hair and details of the jewelry and crown. It is likely that the three faces represent, respectively, Aghora-Bhairava (an angry form of Śiva), Śiva, and Umā (Pārvati), Śiva's consort.³ As Śiva, Aghora-Bhairava, and Umā, the three countenances might symbolize the three fundamental qualities (*guṇas*) in operation in the universe according to Hindu thought, consisting of two opposing forces and their opposition. These are *sattva*, the cohesive force implying concentration of energy and a coming together; *tamas*, the opposite of *sattva*, which is the destructive, disintegrating characteristic that prevents concentration and is symbolic of dissolution, nonbeing, or universality; and *rajas*, which implies activity, especially mental activity and its rhythmic division of the continuum of space and time.⁴ Together, these constitute the forms of power of the universal Brahman, and it is likely that the triple image at Elephanta represents just such a notion, with *sattva* depicted by the central face, *tamas* by the angry countenance, and *rajas* by the tranquil face at the right. Like the *dvārapālas* of the *liṅga* shrine nearby, the figures suggest the softly modeled forms of the Gupta and early post-Gupta periods while predicting the highly ornate jewelry and detailing characteristic of the centuries to follow.

The theme of unity that may be inferred from the main image, since it incorporates seemingly disparate tendencies into a single form, is also suggested by the accompanying reliefs. Ardhanārīśvara (Half-Female Lord), for example, to the viewer's left of it shows the half-male (proper right) and half-female (proper left) form of Śiva (Fig. 13.6) that epitomizes the concept of the unification of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, the dualistic complements present in every form of creation, according to most schools of Hindu thought. *Puruṣa*, the male half, is inactive but is manifested through *prakṛti*, the female half, and the two are thus inseparable. The Gaṅgādharamūrti panel on the opposite side of the central image (Fig. 13.8) also suggests the notion of unity since, by accepting the Ganges (Gaṅgā) River in his hair when it descended from the heavens to earth, Śiva prevented the dissolution of the earth that would have occurred otherwise



- ◁ 13.5. Sculptured panels on south wall, Śīva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

from the force of the fall, thus effecting a kind of unification of heaven and earth. This image also takes on male-female (*puruṣa-prakṛti*) symbolism since the Ganges is personified as a female goddess, Gaṅgā, who is considered to be a secondary wife of Śīva.

These reliefs, brimming with subsidiary figures in animated poses, typify post-Gupta period developments in sculpture and foreshadow the exuberant carvings on temple walls during subsequent centuries. The sculptures are clearly contained within their architectural settings and the overall effect at Elephanta is of architectural unity with reliefs in a subsidiary role, rather than dominating the architecture as occurs in a number of later schools. The growing complexity of both form and iconography typify the sixth-century developments.

- 13.6. (*below left*) Ardhanārīśvara, on south wall of Śīva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

- 13.7. (*below center*) Maheśvara, on south wall of Śīva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

- 13.8. (*below right*) Śīva as Gaṅgādhara, on south wall of Śīva cave. Elephanta, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Possibly Kalacuri period. Ca. mid-sixth century.



CAVES OF THE EARLY WESTERN CALUKYAS

After the fall of the Vākātakas, the Deccan was divided by their former feudatories, including the Early Kalacuris of Mahārāṣṭra and the Kadambas of Banavāsi in the Karṇāṭaka south. In turn, the Kadambas (who had a temple building tradition of their own) were superseded by yet another power, the Calukyas of Bādāmī, who, like the Kadambas, were Dravidian-language-speaking people. These Calukyas are known as the Early Western Calukyas to distinguish them from other branches of the family.⁵ Coming into prominence when their ruler Pulakeśin I secured the land around Bādāmī (ancient Vātāpi) and fortified it in A.D. 543, the empire was expanded by succeeding monarchs so that for the next two hundred years, from about the mid-sixth century to about the mid-eighth century, the Early Western Calukyas ruled much of the Deccan, after which they were superseded by the Raṣṭra-

kūṭas. Under the Early Western Calukyas, the Deccan became an important interface region between the north and the south, sharing some of the cultural, linguistic, and artistic traditions of each but coming to have a distinctive culture of its own. The fruition of these developments is seen in the art of later Deccan dynasties.

Early Western Calukya art has two inter-related but nonetheless distinct phases: an earlier rock-cutting tradition that will be considered here and a later, apparently more active, period in which numerous structural stone temples were built (Chap. 15). In both phases, Hindu monuments predominate. Cave temples of the Early Western Calukyas are found at Aihole and Bādāmī, which are approximately twenty-five kilometers apart.

Possibly excavated around 550, shortly after the Early Western Calukyas came to power, the Rāvaṇa Phadi cave at Aihole may be the earliest

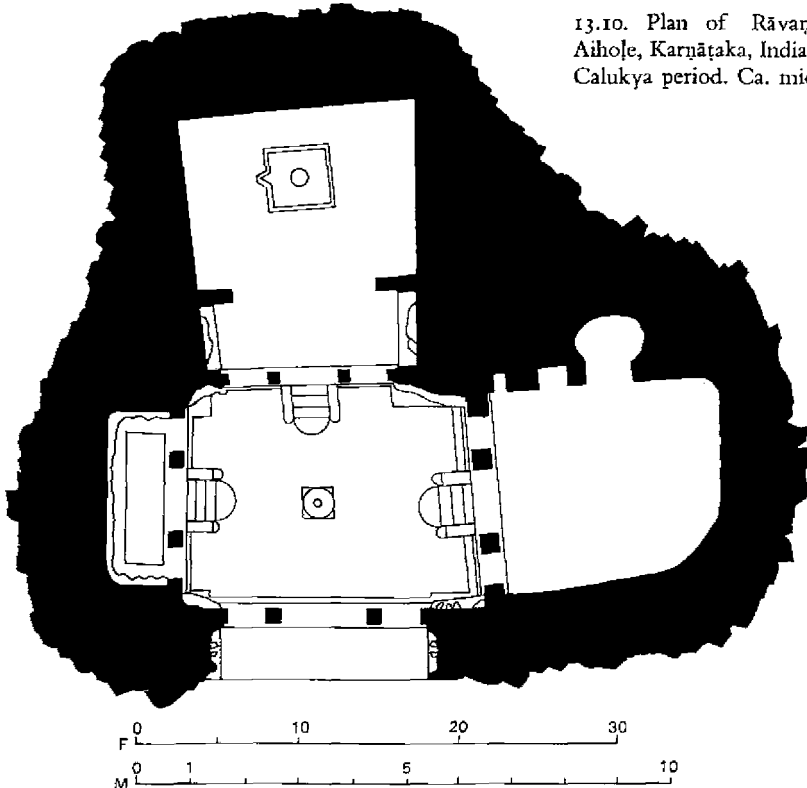


13.9. Facade of Rāvaṇa Phadi cave. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

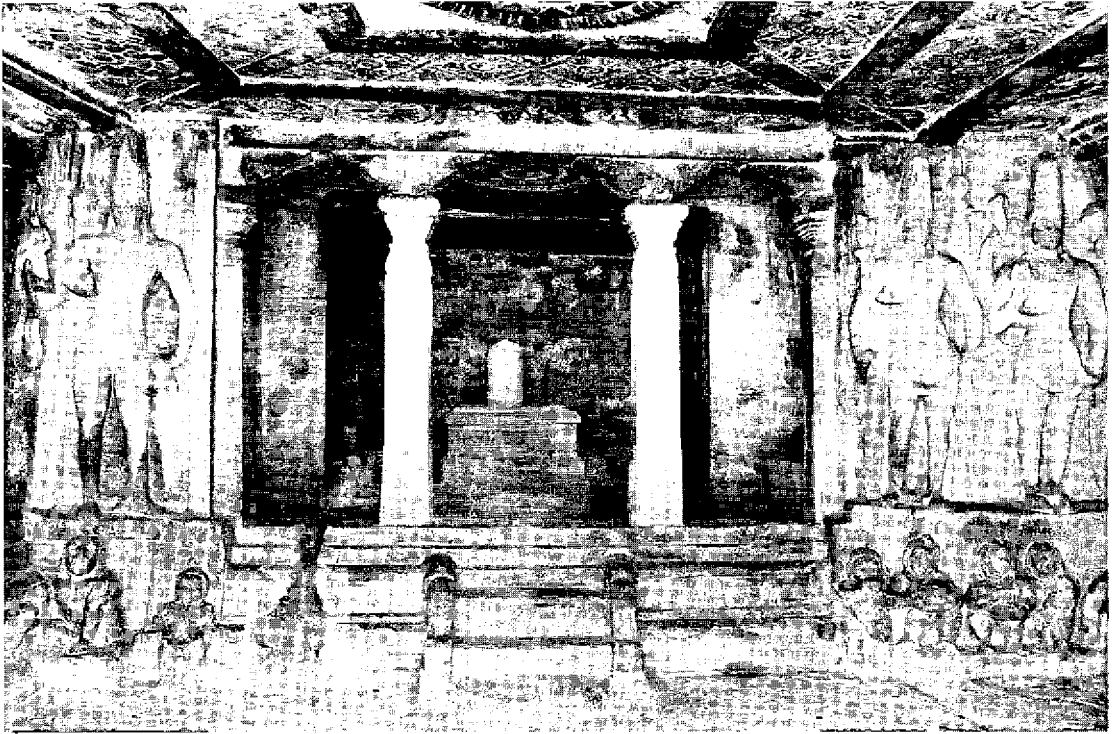
of the series.⁶ Its complicated plan and amply sculpted interior, however, indicate that the cave did not mark the inception of an artistic tradition but must have been based on earlier art forms, including the already mature schools of Deccan cave architecture. The simple facade (Fig. 13.9) has two pillars creating an entrance-way that is flanked by dwarves and by a pair of guardians who are notable because of their Scythian-type clothing. The cave consists of a central hall with two side-shrine areas and a sanctuary with a *liṅga* at the rear (Fig. 13.10). Originally, a wall may have screened the sanctuary and created an antechamber before the shrine. The central hall is on a lower level than the side and rear shrines, which are accessible by small flights of steps (Fig. 13.11). Sculptures fill the corners of the central hall and much of the wall and ceiling space of the cave. One of the most important of these compositions is that in the shrine at the left of the main hall containing a representation of a multiarmed Śiva as

Naṭarāja (Lord of the Dance) accompanied by larger than human-size representations of the *saptamātṛkās* (Seven Mothers), three to Śiva's left and four to his right (Fig. 13.12). It is likely that this scene specifically depicts the dance Śiva performed after defeating the demon Andhakāśura, for it was at that time that the *saptamātṛkās* were created to aid Śiva. The striking treatment of the garments, especially the striated incised lines and very high headdresses, as well as the slender bodies, distinguish these figures from the more full-bodied style of the western Deccan seen under the Vākātakas and Kalacuris. While the slim figures and tall hats suggest associations with southern images, or those of the adjacent region of Āndhra Pradesh, the style in fact has no apparent counterpart in other schools of South Asian art. It is possible that, from its inception, Early Western Calukya art combined features of other traditions yet was marked by a great deal of individuality.

The largest, most ornate, and most impressive



13.10. Plan of Rāvaṇa Phadi cave. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-sixth century.



13.11. Interior of Ravana Phadi cave. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-sixth century.



13.12. Detail of *māṭrkās* in Naṭarāja shrine, Ravana Phadi cave. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-sixth century.

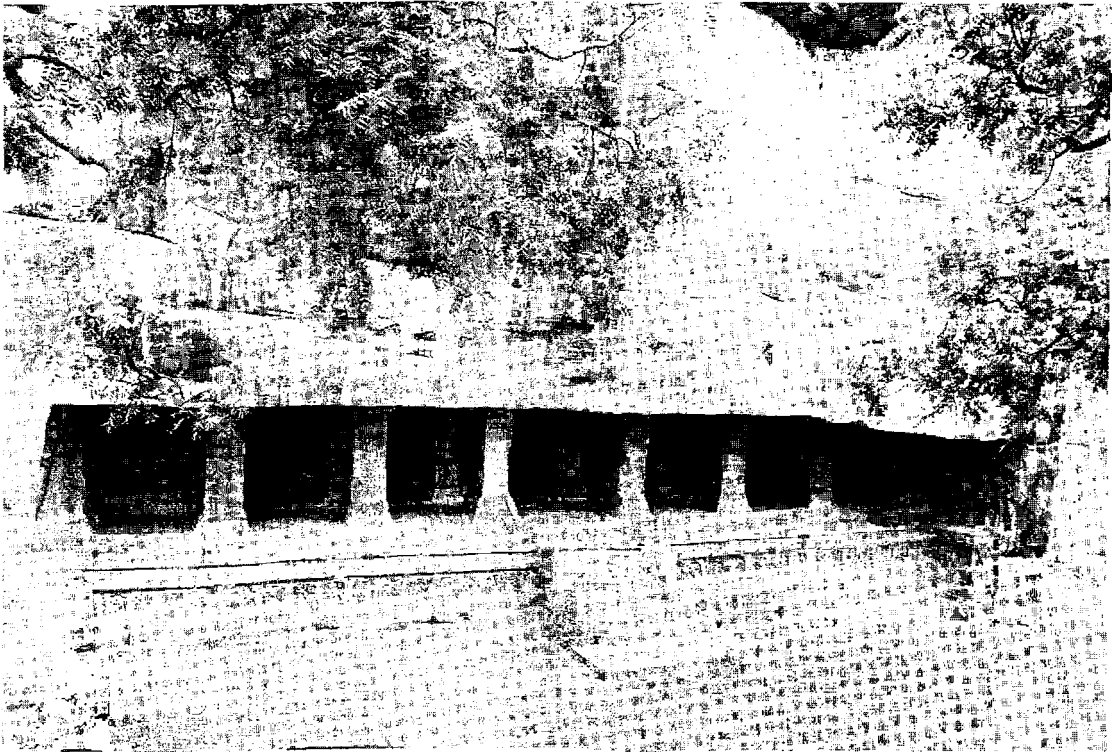
13.13. Exterior of Cave 3. Bādāmi, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Dedicated in Śaka era 500 (A.D. 578). ▷

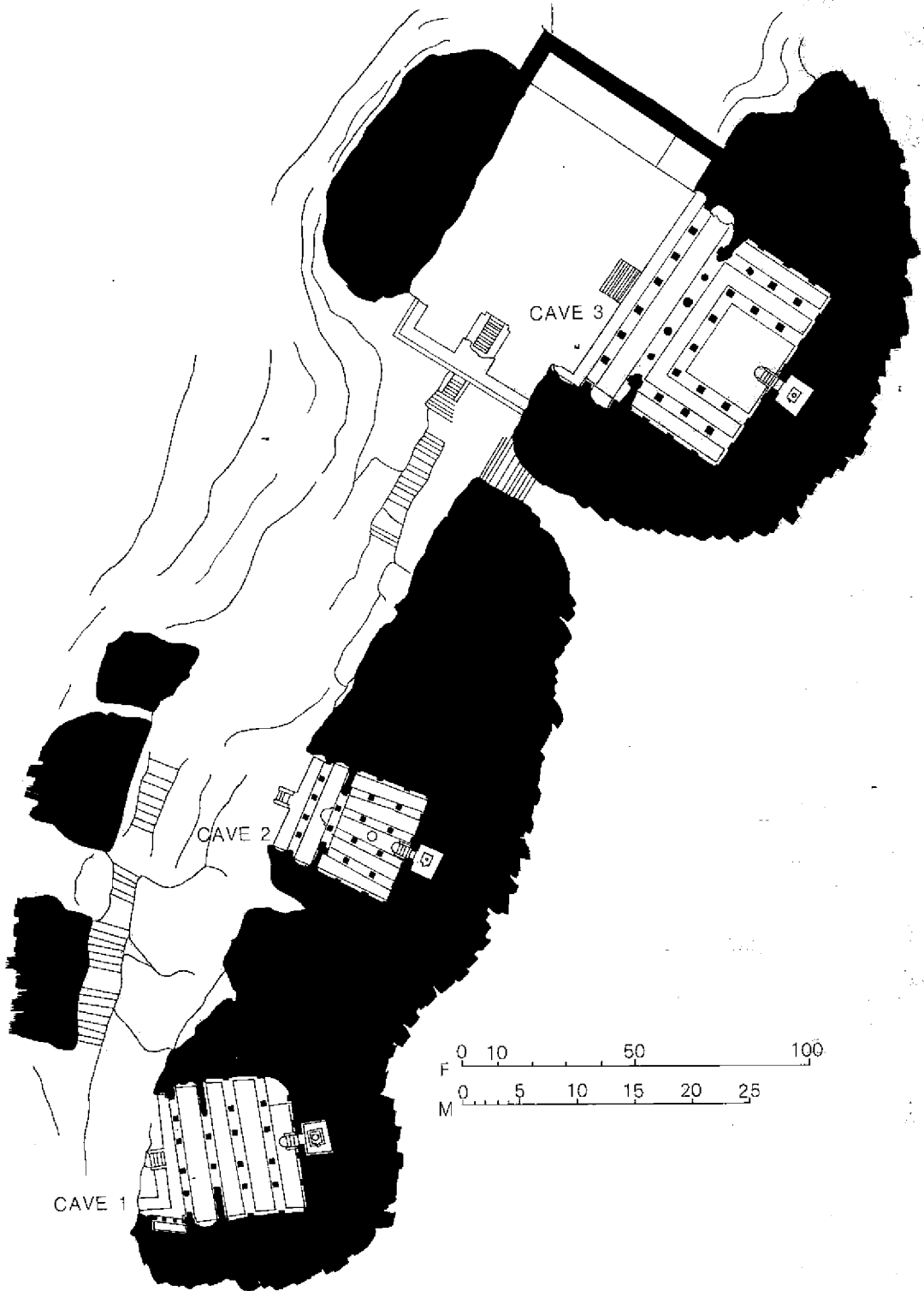
of the Early Western Calukya excavations is Cave 3 at Bādāmī (Figs. 13.13-18). Fortunately, the date of this cave is well documented by internal evidence. An inscription on a pilaster flanking a representation of Varāha (Fig. 13.18) states that this Vaiṣṇavite cave was dedicated by Maṅgaleśa, a son of Pulakeśin, for the merit of his brother, King Kirtivarman, during the year Śaka 500, equivalent to A.D. 578.⁷ This inscription refers to the brothers as victorious warriors, and indeed, Kirtivarman, with the help of his brother Maṅgaleśa, came to rule an empire comprising most of the area that now forms Karṇāṭaka state, with extensions into Mahārāṣṭra and Āndhra Pradesh. Many other Early Western Calukya monuments resulted directly from patronage by the ruling family. Such patronage distinguishes the art of this period and region from that of many others in ancient India, since, in this case, the use of a dynastic designation is more than a chronological convenience but suggests that the kings and their families had considerable effect on the art. The place-

ment of the royal inscription next to a large sculpted relief showing Varāha rescuing the earth goddess (Fig. 13.18) is probably no mere coincidence. For Varāha, the dynastic symbol that appeared on the Early Western Calukya banner, symbolized their role as protectors of the earth and may indicate that the kings viewed themselves as virtual incarnations of Viṣṇu himself.

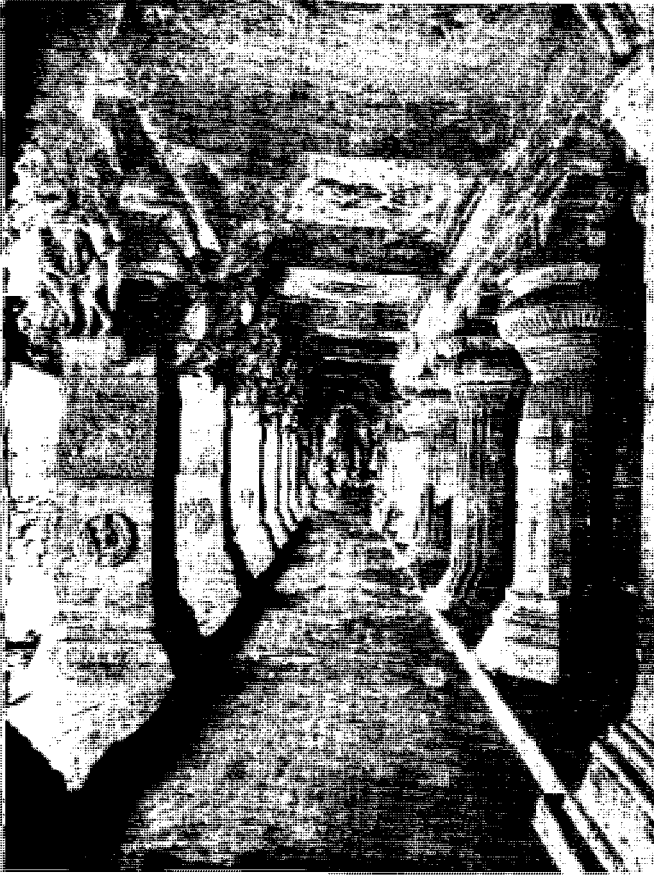
Six pillars spaced across the facade create seven bays (Figs. 13.13, 13.14), an elaboration of the modest entrance of the Rāvaṇa Phadi cave. The massive pillars are the only decoration on the front of the cave except for a frieze bearing depictions of pairs of chubby dwarves in a series of panels along the lower portion. The style of the dwarves suggests ties to the earlier art traditions of adjacent Āndhra, for related figures have been found at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa from the Ikṣvaku period.

In addition to the exterior courtyard, the cave consists of three major units, the veranda (which runs the width of the facade), a pillared hall (*maṇḍapa*), and the small shrine at the rear (Fig.





13.14. Plan of Caves 1-3. Bādāmi, Karnataka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. A.D. 575-85.



13.15. View across veranda, Cave 3. Bādāmī, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Dedicated in Śaka era 500 (A.D. 578).

13.16. *Mithuna* bracket figures, veranda, Cave 3. Bādāmī, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Dedicated in Śaka era 500 (A.D. 578)



13.14). The arrangement of pillars in the *maṇḍapa* has suggested to some that the plan is based on half of a *maṇḍapa* of the type seen at Ajanṭā, but it is actually a series of rows of pillars, four of which have been eliminated to create a more open feeling in front of the shrine.⁸ The greater breadth than depth of the cave is a feature found in some of the Hindu caves at Ellora and also in some of the Hindu excavations of the Pallavas in the south.

A view down the length of the veranda (Fig. 13.15) shows the square pillars of the facade (left) and the rounded pillars with cushion capitals and heavy vertical ridges separating the veranda from the *maṇḍapa*. These are similar to the ones at Elephanta, suggesting more clearly than in the case of the Rāvaṇa Phadi cave the Early Western Calukya ties to other Deccan traditions. Even greater elaboration of the



13.17. Viṣṇu seated on Śeṣa at left end of veranda, Cave 3. Bādāmi, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Dedicated in Śaka era 500 (A.D. 578).

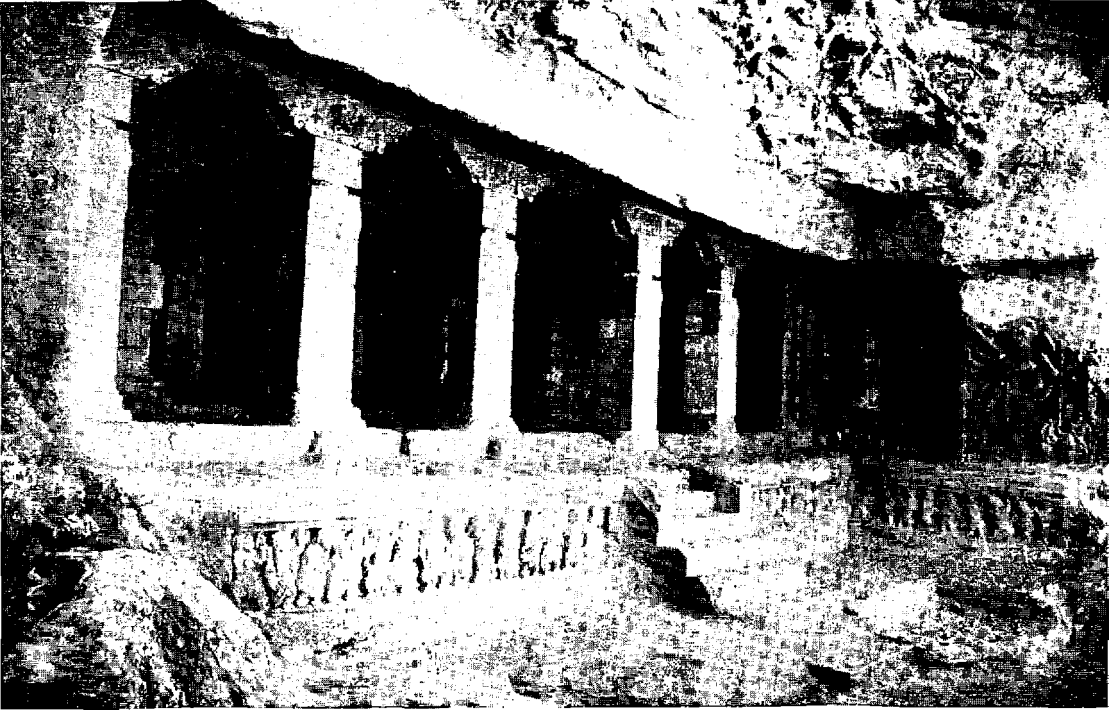


13.18. Nṛ-Varāha, on veranda of Cave 3. Bādāmi, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Dedicated in Śaka era 500 (A.D. 578).

architectural decoration than that seen in the Vākāṭaka and other earlier caves of the Deccan is present. A distinctive feature is the use of bracket figures atop the square pillars consisting primarily of *mithunas* in amorous poses (Fig. 13.16). These serve as transitions between the vertical pillars and the often elaborately carved ceiling panels of Early Western Calukya monuments (Figs. 13.15, 13.16). Ultimately, bracket figures become a main decorative motif in later Deccan styles, such as that of the Kākātīyas. The Early Western Calukya examples show stylistic ties to some Vākāṭaka carvings.

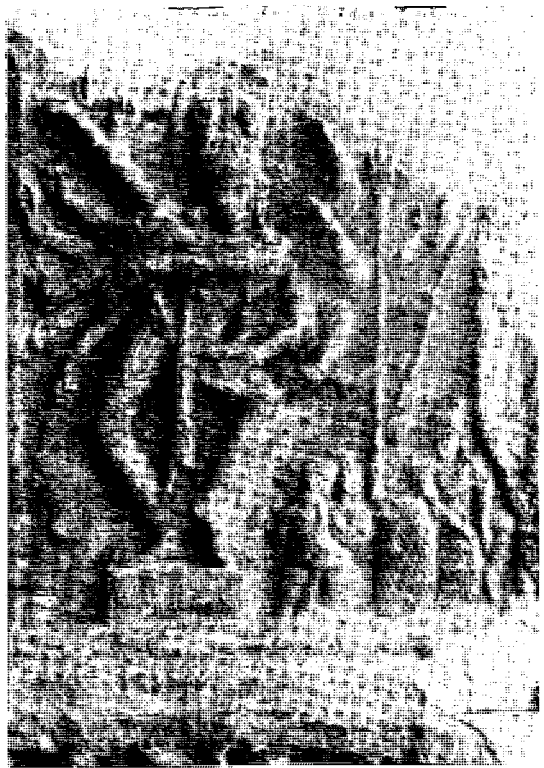
The main sculptural program of the cave consists of a number of gigantic panels set into niches showing various forms of Viṣṇu. One of the most impressive of these is the enormous representation of the god seated on Śeṣa at the left end of the veranda (Figs. 13.15, 13.17). Four-armed and seated in a posture of royal ease, the figure reflects the full, fleshy forms popular in western Deccan styles, but wears an

unusual headdress, which may be an Early Western Calukya characteristic, possibly with some southern associations. Viṣṇu is surrounded by smaller accompanying figures. On the adjacent wall, the representation of Varāha (near which the important dedicatory inscription is located), demonstrates how far the Early Western Calukya style has evolved from Gupta-period forms (Fig. 13.18). In contrast to early Gupta-period depictions of this subject, the figure of Varāha shows little of the husky, muscular body type in which the Gupta dependence on earlier Kuṣāṇa modes was so clearly revealed. Further, the jewelry and other detailed carving is much more crisply defined than that of earlier Gupta-period examples. As with many other Early Western Calukya works, however, strong ties exist to other Deccan art styles. For example, the earth goddess being upheld by Varāha is closely related in her rounded body forms to females seen at Ajaṅṭā, Aurangabad, and other western Deccan sites.



13.19. Exterior of Cave 1. Bādāmi, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. 575-85.

Cave 1 at Bādāmi, which may slightly predate Cave 3,⁹ is a Śaivite monument. It is considerably smaller than Cave 3 but is similar in a number of respects. In plan, the cave consisted of a forecourt (now mostly lost), a *maṇḍapa* with pillars arranged in a series of lateral rows, and a small shrine (Fig. 13.14). Its pillared facade with central steps and dwarf frieze (Fig. 13.19) bears close resemblance to these features of the more monumental Cave 3. At the two ends of the facade, the rock face projecting at right angles from the front of the cave is carved with sculptures, a feature that also occurs at Cave 3. The sculpture to the right is an extremely fine image of Śiva Naṭarāja accompanied by Nandi (his bull *vāhana*), Gaṇeśa, and a drummer (Fig. 13.20). The graceful pose and harmonious array of hands indicates that the refinement and proportion of Gupta art had not been lost, although the multiplicity of detail is a general indication of its later date, around the third quarter of the sixth century.



13.20. Śiva Naṭarāja, right wall, facade of Cave 1. Bādāmi, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. 575-85.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the caves at Aihole and Bādāmī, which are undisputably Early Western Calukya in origin, a few excavations at other sites located on the fringes of the Early Western Calukya empire might also belong to this period. How-

ever, inscriptional evidence tying them to the Calukya family has not been found. The final achievement of Hindu rock-cut architecture of the Deccan will take place under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (Chap. 16).



Detail of 14.18.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Southern Developments Under the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas

At the same time that petty chieftains and former feudatories of the Guptas struggled to gain power in northern India following the collapse of the Gupta dynasty, powerful families were arising in parts of India that had never been under the Gupta hegemony. In the Deccan, for example, the Early Western Calukyas began to gain control of vast territories. In the south, the major force was the Pallava family, which by the late sixth and early seventh centuries had created an empire whose renown extended beyond the Indic realm to China and Southeast Asia. The Pallavas and Early Western Calukyas were in constant contact with each other,

primarily through warfare, but this association is also reflected in certain borrowed elements in their art. Yet each evolved a highly distinctive art style, the Early Western Calukyas incorporating elements of northern, southern, and Deccan modes, while the Pallavas firmly established a southern style that visibly persisted in the art of subsequent periods. Other dynasties in the south, such as the Pāṇḍyas, also evolved significant artistic traditions during this period but the full import of these is not yet known, since they have been largely overshadowed by the Pallava creations.

THE PALLAVAS

As in the case of many other ruling families in South Asia, the Pallavas were known in history long before they rose to prominence: they may

be traced as far back as the second century A.D., but it is not until the latter half of the sixth century that the family and its history become

less enigmatic, with both inscriptions and art monuments in stone appearing to initiate a steady tradition that lasted approximately two hundred years. The Pallavas were heirs to the Āndhra region, but expanded their territories to include much of the Tamil area to the south. At times, their empire also reached into the Deccan and to the frontier of Orissa. The figure style visible in their art shows clear ties to the earlier Buddhist traditions developed under the Śātavāhanas and Ikṣvākus, although the Pallavas were Hindus, primarily Śaivite. The origins of their architectural forms, however, are more difficult to assess, since precedents in ephemeral materials are unknown and earlier stone monuments in the Pallava regions are scarce. It has been suggested that a strong, traditional use of stone as a medium for funerary monuments in the south, as seen in the long megalithic tradition, led to a reticence to employ it in temple architecture prior to the Pallava period.¹ Perhaps a study of some of the caves in the Vijayavāḍa region may some day shed light on the origins of Pallava stone monuments.²

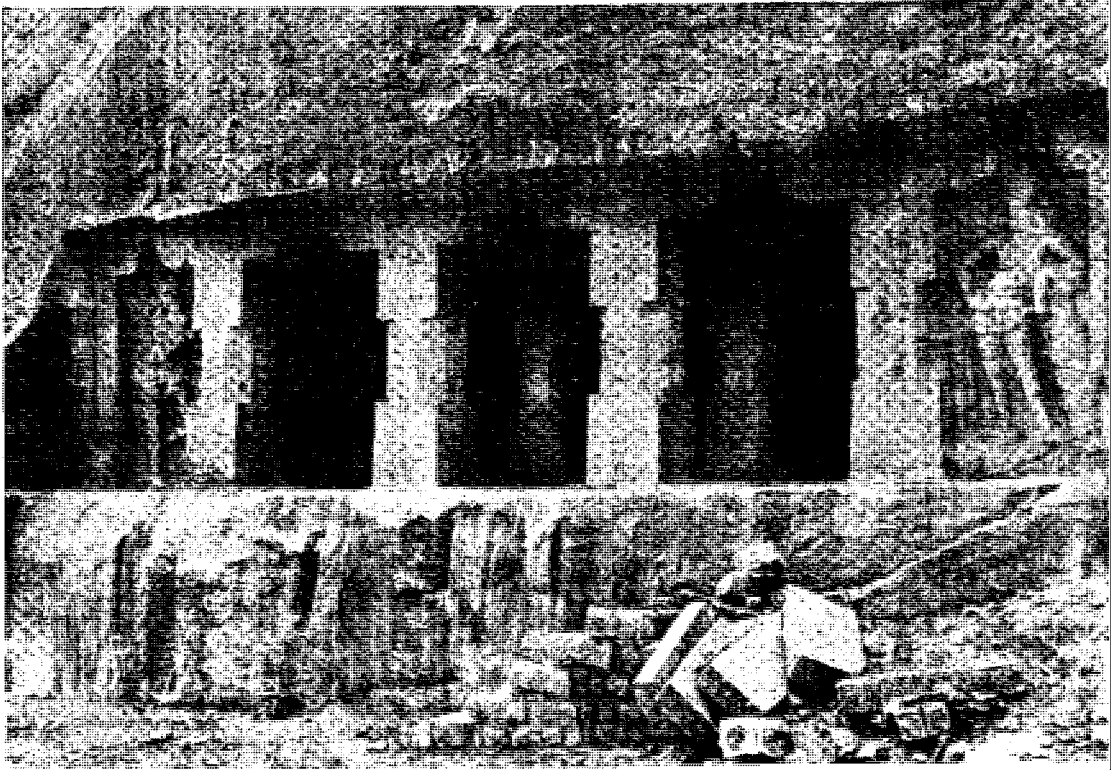
The burst of artistic energy under the Pallavas, however, cannot be understood simply in terms of precedents, for the Pallava empire was blessed with a number of strong rulers, several of whom imposed their personalities on the production of art. Religious developments, particularly *bhakti* cults, must have also played a major role in providing impetus to artistic developments. In particular, the Āḷvārs, a group of Tamil Vaiṣṇavite poet-saints, and the Śaivite Nāyaṇmārs stimulated religious thought, which may have affected the production of art and temple architecture. Four of the Āḷvārs came from the Pallava country and their devotional (*bhakti*) hymns, which were concerned with the personal experience of the deity rather than metaphysics, must have had great impact on the society.³

It is usually assumed that the early phase of Pallava architecture consisted primarily of rock-cut monuments, while the later phase is dominated by structural buildings. As a general rule, this is true, at least in terms of the surviving examples. However, there is evidence to suggest that structural monuments were produced

virtually from the inception of the Pallava tradition and perhaps the two phases should be considered shifts in emphasis rather than total abandonment of one form and the supplanting of another. Various stylistic designations of Pallava art and architecture are traditionally associated with specific rulers, who may have been responsible for the inception of certain stylistic changes. In general, the developments of the Pallava period include a progression from rather simple forms to ones of greater complexity. This progression has been attributed to the growing accumulated skill on the part of the artisans over the centuries in working the hard granitic stone native to the region. However, it is likely that the increased complexity in style and growing elaboration of detail and iconographic forms were also part of the pan-Indic developments of post-Gupta periods, which in general may be said to be characterized by such a transformation. Compared to northern developments, however, the southern style maintains a much greater simplicity and the changes are more subtle.

The earliest body of surviving architectural monuments of the Pallava period belongs to the reign of Mahendravarman I, whose rule in the first three decades of the seventh century coincided with that of Pulakeśin II of the Early Western Calukyas.⁴ Originally a Jain, Mahendravarman was converted to Śaivism by the saint Appar, and this fact is visible in the primarily Śaivite dedications of monuments associated with him.

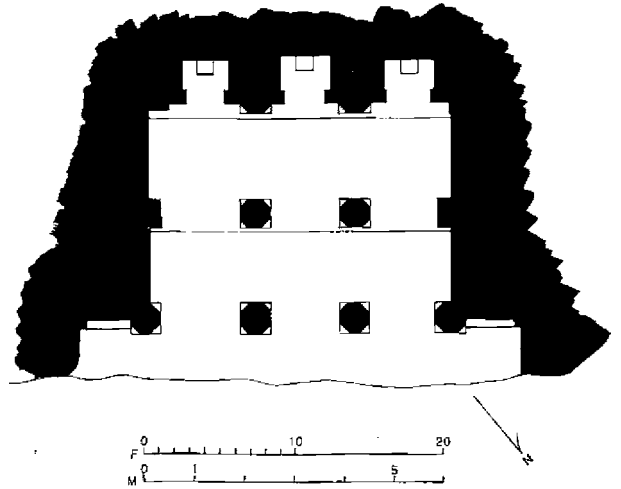
One monument of Mahendra I's reign is a cave temple at Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, which is called Lakṣitāyatana (temple of Lakṣita) in its dedicatory inscription (Fig. 14.1).⁵ The name Lakṣita is a well-known epithet (*biruda*) for Mahendra I, and thus, the royal patron, who is also called Vichitrachitta (Curious Minded) in the epigraph, may be identified. The inscription further reveals that the cave was dedicated to the Hindu trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva) and calls it a brickless, timberless, metalless, and mortarless mansion. This latter statement is generally taken to mean that the usual temple would have been a structural building, made of some of the materials enumerated in the inscription, and



14.1. Exterior of Lakṣita's cave. Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarman I. Ca. 600-630.

thus, that Mahendra I was the initiator of a new stone tradition. Whether or not this is the case, the use of stone was truly unusual at this time, judging from the lack of extant remains.

The facade of the cave has a low, wide, rectangular appearance with two central pillars and a pilaster at each side flanked by large sculpted representations of door guardians. The niches in which the guardian figures appear repeat the shape of the space between the columns of the facade with their square bottoms and tops, octagonal central portions, and bracketlike capitals. A second row of pillars and pilasters within the cave divides the interior of the main hall into two lateral sections, while three identical shrines for housing the images of the trinity (no longer present) to whom the cave is dedicated are placed along the rear wall (Fig. 14.2). The shallowness of the excavation, though not so pronounced as in other Pallava



14.2. Plan of Lakṣita's cave. Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarman I. Ca. 600-630.



14.3. *Dvārapāla* at left side of facade, Lakṣita's cave. Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarman I. Ca. 600-630.

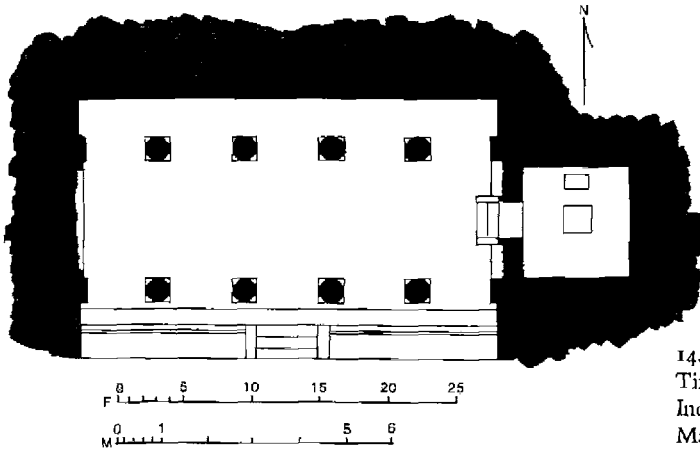
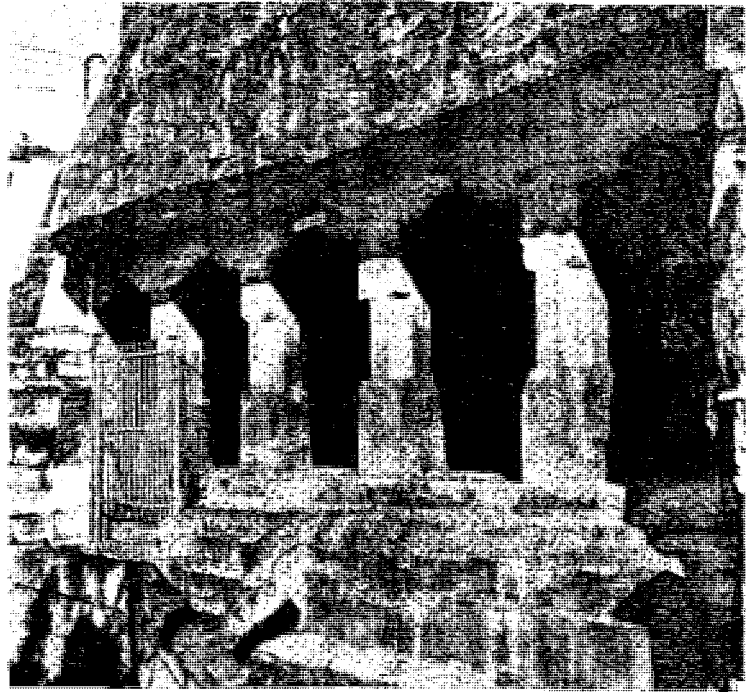
examples, and the lateral sectioning is reminiscent of Early Western Calukya examples and also suggests ties to earlier cave traditions of the east coast of India, such as the Uṇḍavalli caves or, further north, much earlier examples from Khaṇḍagiri/Udayagiri in Orissa. The simplicity of the cave and lack of decorative carving in general characterizes this early Pallava phase, for the *dvārapālas* comprise almost the sole sculptural enhancement (Fig. 14.3). These slender, animated figures show stylistic affinities to the earlier traditions of the Sātavāhanas and Ikṣvākus, demonstrating that the Pallavas were indeed the heirs to the Āndhra-region traditions. Characteristic of Pallava *dvārapāla* depictions, the difference between the left and right guardians is pronounced, for they are placed in different postures. The near profile positioning of the body of the left guardian (Fig. 14.3), possibly deriving from the highly mobile postures of Ikṣvāku representations, anticipates the still more animated and freely-

moving figures to be seen in Pallava art. Also characteristic of the Pallava *dvārapāla* type is the fierce appearance of the figures, most easily visible in the bulging eyes of the example to the left of the facade.⁶

Also safely attributable to the reign of Mahendra I on the basis of inscriptional evidence is the upper cave temple at the hill fort in the heart of the city of Tiruchirāppalli called Lalitānkura's cave after another *biruda* of Mahendra's (Fig. 14.4).⁷ Its facade, which faces south, is essentially a refinement of the Maṇḍagappaṭṭu type, with an extra pair of pillars, a broader intercolumniation (which makes the pillars appear very slender), and carved medallions decorating the facets of the pillars. Although the devotee enters the cave between the two central pillars, the main axis of the temple extends laterally. This was apparently done so that the shrine could be placed on the east, in spite of the fact that the facade was on the south. Such problems in orientation, which were often extremely complex in rock-cut architecture, may have been one of the reasons for the eventual abandonment of cave excavations by the Hindus in favor of structural temples, although not before they went on to produce some of the most remarkable achievements of South Asian art.

The plan (Fig. 14.5) shows that the cave consists of two chambers: a larger pillared hall (*maṇḍapa*) and a cubical shrine. A pair of *dvārapālas* flanks the entrance to the shrine, each figure appearing in the animated, slightly twisted posture typical of Pallava examples. At the opposite end of the hall, to the west, located where the entrance would probably have been if this were a structural example, is a relief showing Śiva as Gaṅgādhara (Bearer of the Ganges River; Fig. 14.6). As Gaṅgādhara, Śiva is shown receiving in his hair the heavenly Ganges River as it came to earth as a result of the penance performed by one Bhagiratha, who wished to use the holy water to purify the ashes of his deceased uncles. The lengthy inscription in the cave located on the pilasters adjoining the Gaṅgādhara panel suggests through the use of double entendre that the choice of this subject was deliberate and significant.⁸ In particular, a play on the word Kāvīrī, which

14.4. Exterior of Lalitānkura's cave. Tiruchirāppaḷi, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarmān I. Ca. 600–630.



14.5. Plan of Lalitānkura's cave. Tiruchirāppaḷi, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarmān I. Ca. 600–630.

refers both to the Kāvīrī River in full view of the cave and to a courtesan, suggests a parallel between Śīva and Mahendra I, for Kāvīrī is described as the beloved of the Pallava king just as Gaṅgā was the beloved of Śīva. The implied equation between Śīva and Mahendra I and their respective river goddesses is significant in light of other Pallava inscriptional and artistic evidence.⁹

The most famous phase of Pallava art was that apparently inaugurated during the reign of

King Nṛsimhavarman I, who is known most popularly by his epithet Māmalla I. This son of Mahendravarmān I succeeded his father around the fourth decade of the seventh century.¹⁰ A memorable ruler, Māmalla I sent naval expeditions to Sri Lanka, defeated the Early Western Calukyas under Pulakeśin II, and captured Bādāmī in 642 from the Calukyas (in retaliation for his father's earlier defeat by Pulakeśin II), in addition to defeating other south Indian ruling families. During his reign,



14.6. Śiva as Gaṅgādhara, Lalitānkura's cave. Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mahendravarman I. Ca. 600-630.

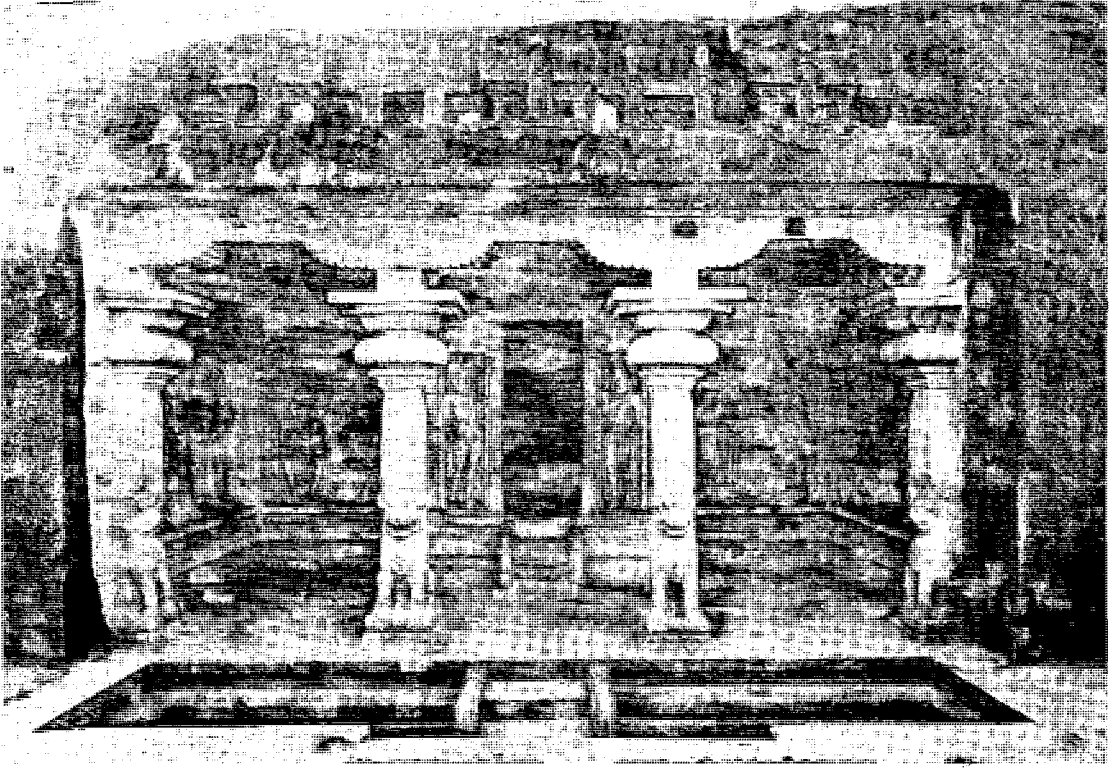
the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang visited Kāñcipuram, then a major Pallava city and capital.

Although the seaport city of Māmallapuram¹¹ was named after Māmalla I, he was not its founder, for Roman coins found in the area and descriptions by early classical writers such as Ptolemy indicate that the town had been famous as a seaport at least since the beginning of the Christian era. In addition, although it has often been assumed that the majority of monuments at the site belong to his reign, this idea has been increasingly challenged. However, he should be credited with stimulating the development of Māmallapuram (City of Māmalla) as a great seaport, vital in the dissemination of south Indian culture to Southeast Asia and commercially important in the Indian Ocean trade network. Most of the monuments at Māmallapuram are rock-cut, carved out of the boulders and cliffs that abound in the area. These include caves, monoliths, and large sculpted reliefs, although some structural buildings were also erected (these are generally later in date than the rock-cut examples). The site, which covers several square miles, is virtually a stone city in which boulders and rock faces have been carved into buildings, animals, sculpted reliefs, and other forms. In spite of the popularity of the site as a tourist resort, and its mention in virtually every general book on

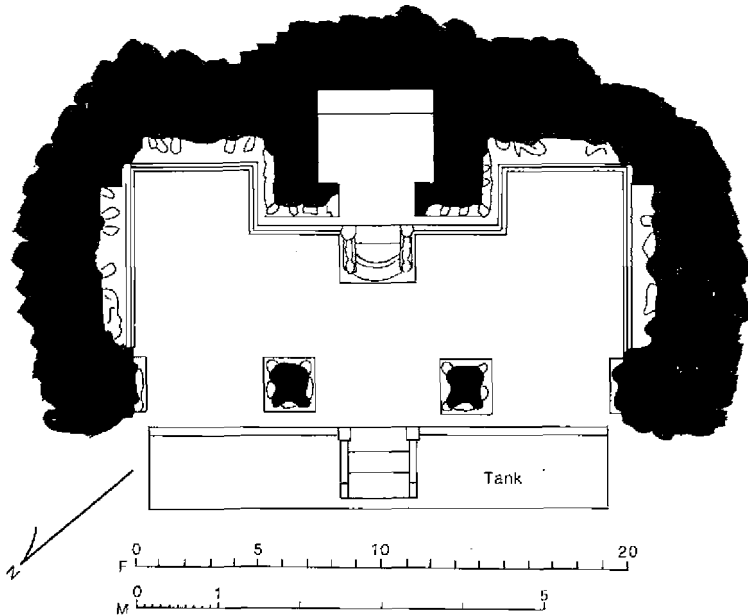
South Asian art, it has never been thoroughly studied, analyzed, and examined element by element in order to determine the sequence of monuments and their place in the development of Pallava art and architecture.

The vibrancy and animation of Pallava art is perhaps nowhere better seen than in the Varāha *maṇḍapa* at Māmallapuram. Thought to belong to the period of Māmalla I, this cave exhibits both the elaboration of sculptural and iconographic elements and the refinement of architectural features associated with his reign.

A feature of Pallava architecture seen here, and one which comes to fruition in early Cōla monuments, is the presence of a tank preceding (or later, surrounding) the monument itself (Fig. 14.7). The use of tanks or other artificial reservoirs of water and of water symbolism in general seem to have played an important role in Pallava iconographics. One aspect of such symbolism may have been a reference to one of the practical aspects of kingship, that of providing public irrigation reservoirs. Here, the tank extended across the entire front of the cave, so that when it was full of water, the devotee would have had to cross the water to reach the cave. The facade is based on earlier examples, such as those from the reign of Mahendra I, but here the pillars and pilasters are slenderer, providing a more open appearance,



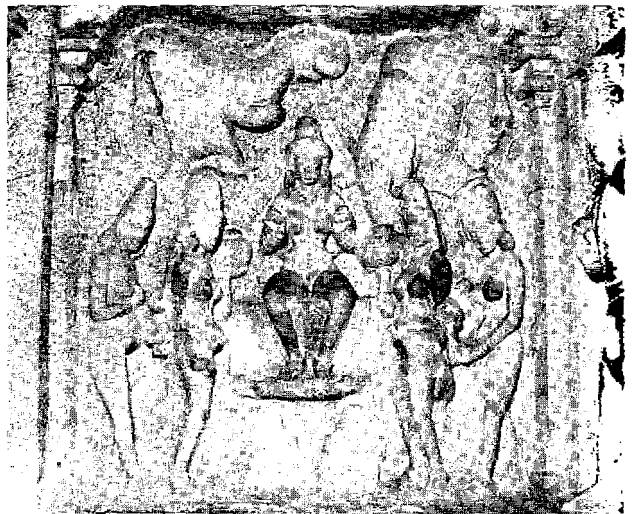
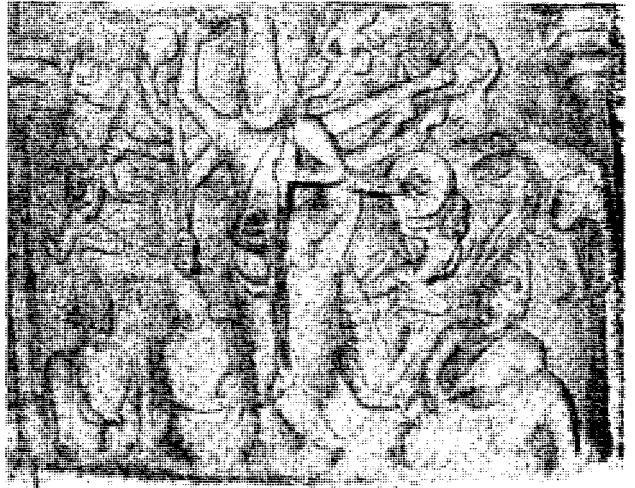
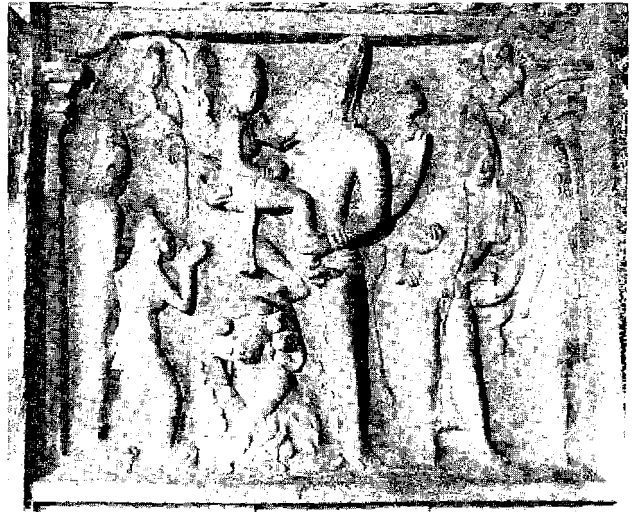
14.7. Exterior of Varaha cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.



14.8. Plan of Varāha cave. Mamallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.

and bear cushion-type capitals reminiscent of Early Western Calukya types. The seated lions at the bases are a typical Pallava characteristic, and may be seen as a precedent for the later animal pillars of south Indian temples. The cave consists of the rectangular hall and a shrine that projects forward into the space of the hall (Fig. 14.8) bearing representations of *dvārapālas* on the front surface, each of which is contained in a niche as is typical of the south Indian style. The simplicity of the architectural features, such as the plain niches with large figures, characterizes the Pallava style, which, in contrast to the usual northern and Deccan styles, is virtually devoid of subsidiary elements like vine scrolls, gem motifs, and similar designs.

Four major sculptural panels dominate the interior of the cave. Following a pattern visible in Hindu art as early as the Gupta period, the reliefs seem to have double meanings, referring both to the deities represented as well as to achievements of the king, presumably Māmalla I. The left wall of the cave bears a representation of Varāha resting the earth goddess on his upraised knee (Fig. 14.9). Viṣṇu as Trivikrama is depicted on the right wall (Fig. 14.10). Varāha as rescuer of the earth has already been discussed as a religious symbol with political overtones, and Trivikrama as conqueror of the three worlds may be seen to have similar levels of meaning. In the Trivikrama incarnation, Viṣṇu assumed the form of the dwarf Vāmana, who extracted a promise from Bali, king of the *asuras*, that he could have territorial control over the amount of space he could cover in three paces. Vāmana then assumed a gigantic form and covered the earth-world with his first stride, the mid-world between heaven and earth with his second, and with his third, stepped upon the head of Bali, thereby sending him to the nether world of the *asuras*. As metaphors, the Varāha and Trivikrama subjects, while not unique to Pallava art, might have been deliberately chosen to refer to specific achievements of the king, presumably his defeat of Pulakeśin and the avenging of the defeats to the Pallavas under his father.¹² The rear walls of the cave bear images of Gajalakṣmī on the left (Fig. 14.11) and Durgā on the right (Fig. 14.12), suggesting the notions of prosperity



- ◁ 14.9. Nṛ-Varāha, Varāha cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.
- ◁ 14.10. Trivikrama, Varāha cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.
- ◁ 14.11. Gajalakṣmī, Varāha cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.

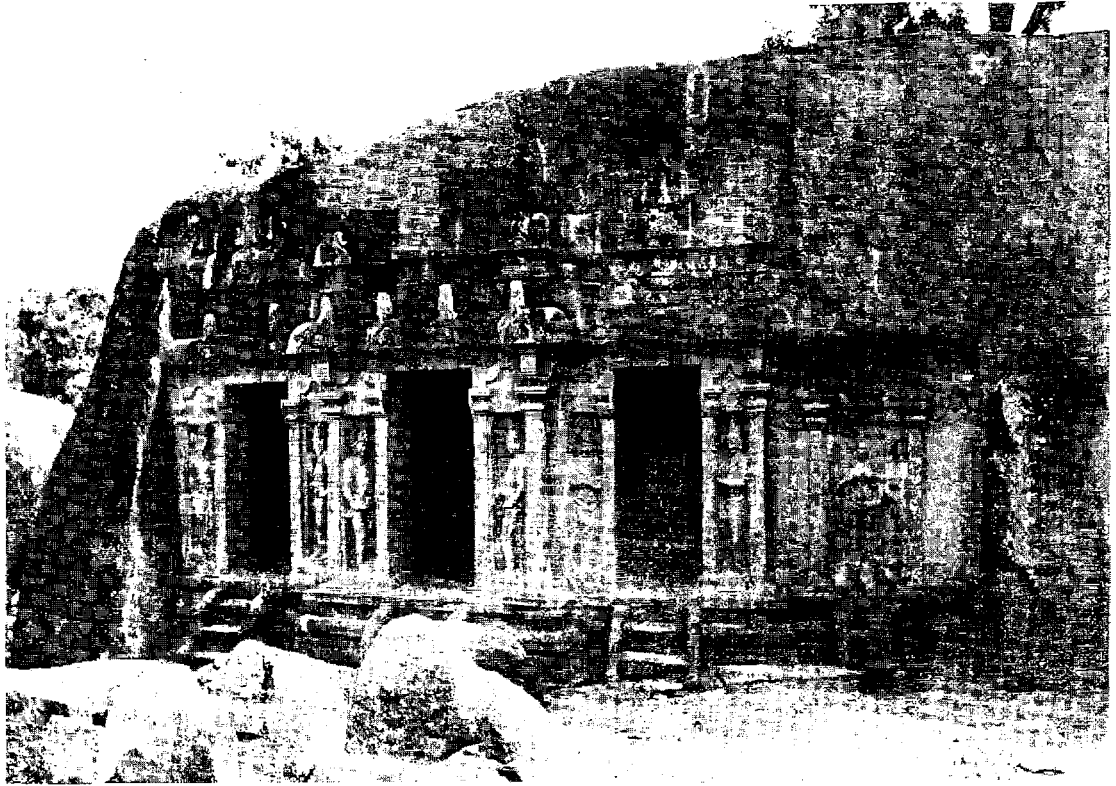
14.12. Durgā, Varāha cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.



(Gajalakṣmī) and once again victory (Durgā). An interesting aspect of the Durgā relief is the figure at the front left of the composition who is in the act of self-immolation by decapitation. Such figures are found during the Pallava period and later in south Indian art, generally in relationship to Durgā images and may be related to rituals detailed in at least one Hindu text.¹³

Each relief is characterized by essentially naturalistic scaling, in contrast to what is often seen in Indic sculptures, and by considerable spatial complexity. In this latter sense, strong ties to the Ikṣvāku tradition are suggested. This earlier Indian dynasty from the Āndhra region inherited by the Pallavas used sophisticated devices to imply illusionistic space that were perhaps originally or partially inspired by Roman art. In the Varāha relief, this complexity is seen in the two figures at the left who turn inward and are shown in a rear/profile view. In the relief of Durgā, one figure is shown from the rear while another is depicted in profile. Although arbitrary adjustments of scale to suit the hierarchic needs prevail in South Asian art, essentially naturalistic means are used here to achieve emphasis. In the Gajalakṣmī panel, for example, the central figure is emphasized by being placed above the others on a throne but is depicted in the same scale as other figures. In all the reliefs the elements are carved in a fairly three-dimensional manner; space exists around each figure and the effect is almost as if the deities and their attendants were indeed in the presence of the worshiper. The slender figures, with their narrowed, tapered limbs, betray the Āndhra heritage of Pallava art and anticipate the typical style of the south Indian Tamil area to be continued into the reign of the Coḷas and even of the still later Vijayanagar kings.

Each of the caves at Māmallapuram is unique. The variety of iconographic types represented in them indicates an already established wealth of imagery. This suggests that these excavations were modeled after structures that no longer exist but which might have revealed the formative stages of architectural development. The Trimūrti cave (Fig. 14.13), for example, consists of three similar shrines entered



14.13. Exterior of Trimūrti cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.

directly from the exterior with no porches or *maṇḍapas*, but unified by the carving of the exterior of the rock into temple facades with architectural niches containing figurative sculpture. The name Trimūrti means literally "triple form," -but here it refers to the Hindu trinity of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā. Śiva is the most prominent of the three in this conception, since his is the central shrine, flanked by those of Brahmā (viewer's left) and Viṣṇu (viewer's right). The slightly larger size of the central shrine, and its projecting form, emphasize its preeminence. A fourth worship area is designated at the right of the facade where a set of steps leads to an image of Durgā, although an excavated shrine is not present (Fig. 14.14). Durgā is shown in an eight-armed form, standing frontally and atop the buffalo head of the defeated Mahiṣa in a format typical of Pallava representations of the subject. Each door to the three shrines is flanked

by a pair of male figures who serve as *dvārapālas*. The back wall of each of the small rectangular shrines is decorated with a large relief representing the deity to whom the shrine is dedicated. In the case of the Śiva shrine, a stone *liṅga* is also placed on the floor in front of the image (Fig. 14.15). This practice of carving the rear wall of the shrine is typical of Pallava monuments and contrasts with the often bare-walled shrines found throughout northern Indian Hindu architecture. In Pallava shrines (as here) the *liṅga* is usually carved of a different stone than that of the shrine itself, and in the case of cave monuments, the *liṅga* is added rather than rock-cut.¹⁴ The facade of this excavation contrasts with that of the Varāha cave in that it is not pillared. Instead, it replicates an actual *vimāna*, that is, a shrine with its superstructures, and is better compared to the free-standing monoliths found nearby at Māmallapuram. The



14.14. Durgā on facade, Trimūrṭi cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.



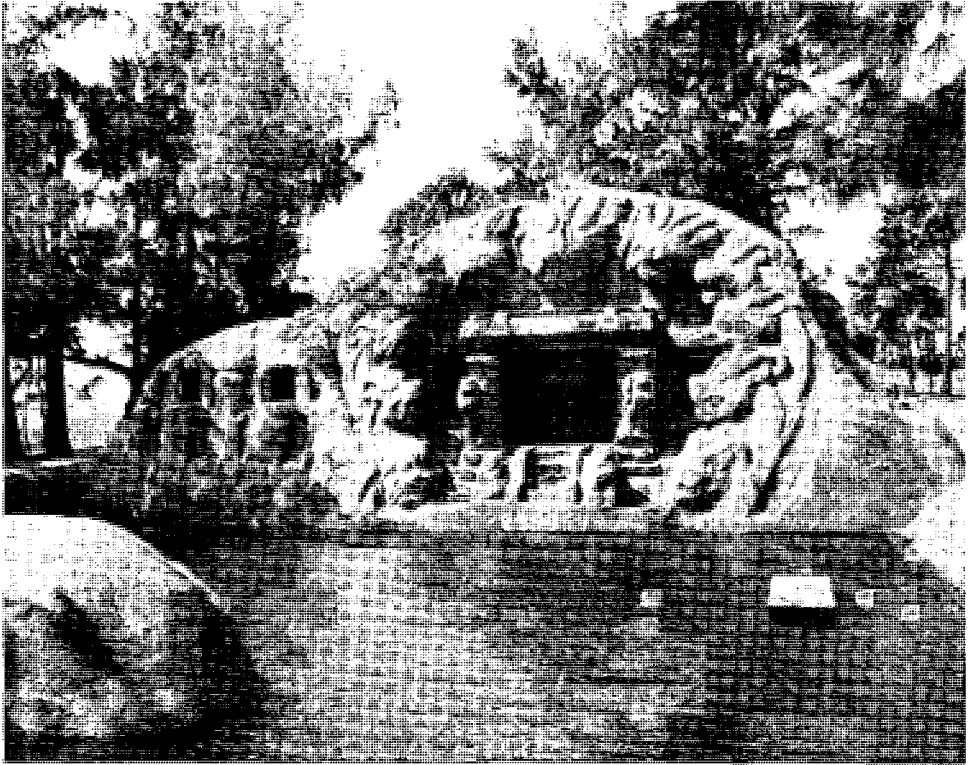
14.15. Interior, central shrine, Trimūrṭi cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.

date of this cave is unknown but its form suggests that it was excavated in the middle to late seventh century.

A highly unusual cave was excavated not far from the heart of Māmallapuram about five kilometers away at Śāḷuvankuppam, a village which certainly lies within the ancient boundaries of Māmallapuram. This excavation, the so-called *Yāli* (*Vyāla*) cave (Fig. 14.16) is distinguished by the eleven *vyāla* (horned lion) heads that form a kind of ring around the central excavated chamber and its two flanking niches. To the viewer's left of this area but also on the face of the rock are carved elephants, forward facing, and bearing small shrines atop their backs. Although the main chamber and its two adjacent niches show no trace of any original images within, these small shrines each bear a much worn depiction of a four-armed deity. The original purpose and meaning of the cave, however, remains unknown.¹⁵ Further, the date of the excavation is uncertain, although it is probably

a monument of the late seventh or early eighth century.

In addition to the variety of architectural types seen in the caves of Māmallapuram, numerous religious subjects were interpreted anew by the Pallavas in sculpture and others were introduced for the first time. A representation of Durgā battling the demon Mahiṣa in the so-called Mahiṣasuramardini cave (Fig. 14.17), for example, is unlike any other depiction of this scene known in earlier Hindu art. Durgā sits astride her lion *vāhana* while Mahiṣa, depicted as a human figure with a buffalo head, appears at the right, as if recoiling from her attack. Fallen warriors of Mahiṣa's army appear at the right and lean in the direction of retreat, while Durgā's forces advance from the left. The naturalistic rather than hierarchic scaling of the figures, including Durgā herself, who is not even as large as her opponent, heightens the sense of emotion and drama of the scene. In addition, the figures are in animated and logical



14.16. *Yāḷi* cave. Śāḷuvankuppam (Māmallapuram), Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



14.17. Durgā Mahiṣāsura-mardini, Mahiṣāsura-mardini cave. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. seventh century.



14.18. Relief showing either Descent of Gaṅgā River or Arjuna's Penance. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. early-to-mid seventh century.



14.19. Detail, Descent of Gaṅgā or Arjuna's Penance. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period. Ca. early-to-mid seventh century.

poses that further increase the sense of actuality. In compositions such as this, the Pallava sculptors achieved a striking balance between the world of nature and the realm of the divine.

The most impressive sculptural composition at Māmallapuram is the famous relief that has been alternately identified as the Descent of the Gaṅgā River or Arjuna's Penance (Figs. 14.18, 14.19).¹⁶ This striking work is believed to have been carved during the reign of either Mahendrarvarman I or that of his son Māmalla. Measuring nearly thirty meters in length and approximately fifteen meters in height, it contains a myriad of figures, animals and other subjects, all of which are carved on an approximately life-size scale. A major aspect of the composition is the central cleft of the rock, presumed to be a natural feature, which has been skillfully incorporated into the design and subject matter of the carving.

Arguments for the interpretation of this impressive scene as either the Descent of the

Gaṅgā River or Arjuna's Penance are convincing in each case.¹⁷ Both stories are found in Indian literature, although different versions appear in various texts. A strong case for the Descent interpretation is presented by the central cleft of the composition, with its *nāga* inhabitants, as a representation of the holy river, the Gaṅgā itself. In the rainy season, a now lost receptacle is believed to have filled with water, which could then fall down the cleft into a tank as a kind of living reenactment of the sacred descent. Some scholars believe that the tank, at the base of the relief, would have served as a royal bathing pool for the king himself.

The arguments for the Arjuna story are less compelling, though still substantial. In this tale, Arjuna, one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers of the *Mahābhārata*, performed severe austerities in order to enlist Śiva's aid (literally, his weapons) in achieving victory in the pending war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kurus. Since Arjuna's penance was performed on the banks of a river, the argument can be made that this subject is represented in the Māmallapuram relief.

Both the Descent and Arjuna's Penance interpretations would be served well by the figures at the top of the relief, just to the left of the cleft (Fig. 14.19). The penance-performing individual, with arms raised and balanced on one leg, could represent either Bhagīratha, whose penances brought the Gaṅgā to earth, or Arjuna, whose penances earned him the aid of Śiva's weapons. Śiva, who appears next to the ascetic in a four-armed form, attended by his dwarves (*gaṇas*), performs the *varada mudrā*, or gift-bestowal gesture, with his front left hand, a gesture that would be appropriate to either story.

In each case, too, secondary meanings relating to the Pallavas themselves, of the type inferred in other contexts for Pallava art, might be suggested. A later Pallava inscription mentions that the Pallavas resembled the Descent of the Gaṅgā as it (too) purified the whole world.¹⁸ Considering the prominence already accorded the Gaṅgādharamūrti icon in Pallava art (Fig. 14.6), considerable credibility is given to this interpretation. Alternately, Arjuna, the hero of the *Mahābhārata* and leader of the Pāṇḍavas, might serve as a symbol of the Pallavas them-

selves, for just as Arjuna sought Śiva's aid in the war against the Kurus, the Pallavas sought victory in their continuing competition with the Early Western Calukyas.¹⁹

In light of such strong but conflicting evidence, it might be argued that *both* meanings simultaneously were intended by the creators of this remarkable relief. However, this suggestion, too, would need further substantiation.

Important features of the relief include the large elephants at the lower right, the small shrine with a representation of a deity, the ascetics worshipping at the shrine to the left of the cleft, and the numerous *devas* flying through the air from both sides as if to converge at the cleft. Considerable naturalism in pose and individuality in facial features is seen in the figures, reflecting some of the concern with naturalism seen elsewhere in Pallava art. As is generally true in Indic art, the figures are the principal elements of the composition; it is the figures that create the volumes and dynamism, rather than arbitrary devices, such as systems of perspective or landscape elements, which could be used to render a context.

Other monuments at Māmallapuram include the nine free-standing monolithic buildings scattered throughout the site. A series of five concentrated in one group near the sea gives the visitor the remarkable sense of walking through a petrified city (Fig. 14.20). The origin of the idea of producing complete replicas of structural buildings is not known; the Māmallapuram monuments are the earliest surviving examples of rock-cut buildings, complete both inside and outside. But, apparently, this mode never became as popular as the cave format, which did not require the completion of exterior detail other than that of the facade. Usually, these monoliths have been called *rathas*, a complete misnomer since they are clearly not intended to represent temple carts (*rathas*), but are more properly termed *vimānas*, for each is a distinctive shrine. The major group of five monoliths (Fig. 14.20) has been traditionally named for the five Pāṇḍava brothers (two of whom have been assigned to one shrine), and their common wife, Draupadī, although this iconographic interpretation is clearly erroneous.



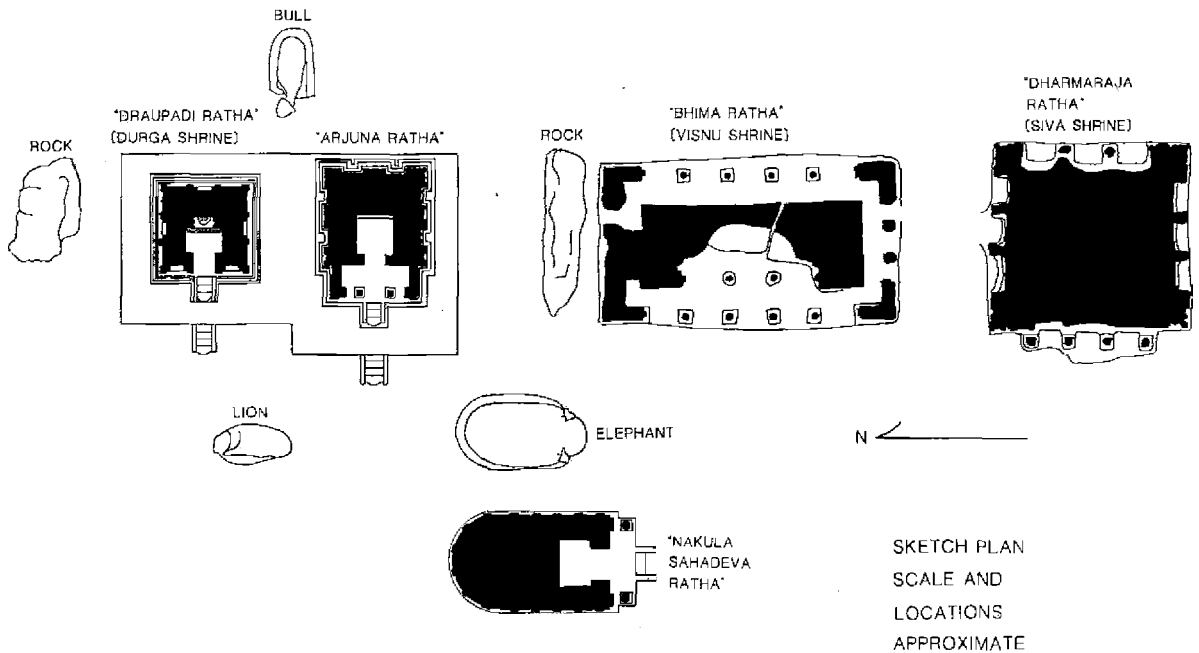
14.20. Monolithic temples from southwest. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.

Each monolith is unique, yet the five seem to form a coherent group and must have been carved at about the same time, probably during the reign of Māmalla I.²⁰ Four of the buildings were apparently carved out of what was once a single outcropping of stone, not separate boulders, as has often been stated. The fifth, which is not on a line with the others, was carved out of a smaller adjoining boulder (Fig. 14.21). Three large animal sculptures, of a lion, an elephant, and a reclining bull, are also associated with the *vimānas*. The highest part of the major boulder was at the south, where the so-called Dharmarāja *ratha* is located, and then, the form tapers to the smaller, so-called Draupadī shrine at the other end. From unfinished examples of rock-cut shrines at Māmallapuram, it may be inferred that the workmen proceeded from top to bottom, completing each section

as they went and using the uncut rock beneath as a platform upon which to work.

The buildings are important not only in their own right but as documents of what must have been the contemporary free-standing temple architecture of the Pallavas. As such, they provide vital information regarding the genesis of south Indian architectural forms and indicate that within a short time after the Gupta period, clear distinctions between northern and southern modes were already present, although all of the stages in these developments have not been traced. It should not be inferred that the Māmallapuram examples represent the beginning of the tradition; rather, they are manifestations of what must have been already widespread forms.

The smallest and simplest of the group is the "Draupadī" monolith, which is in fact a



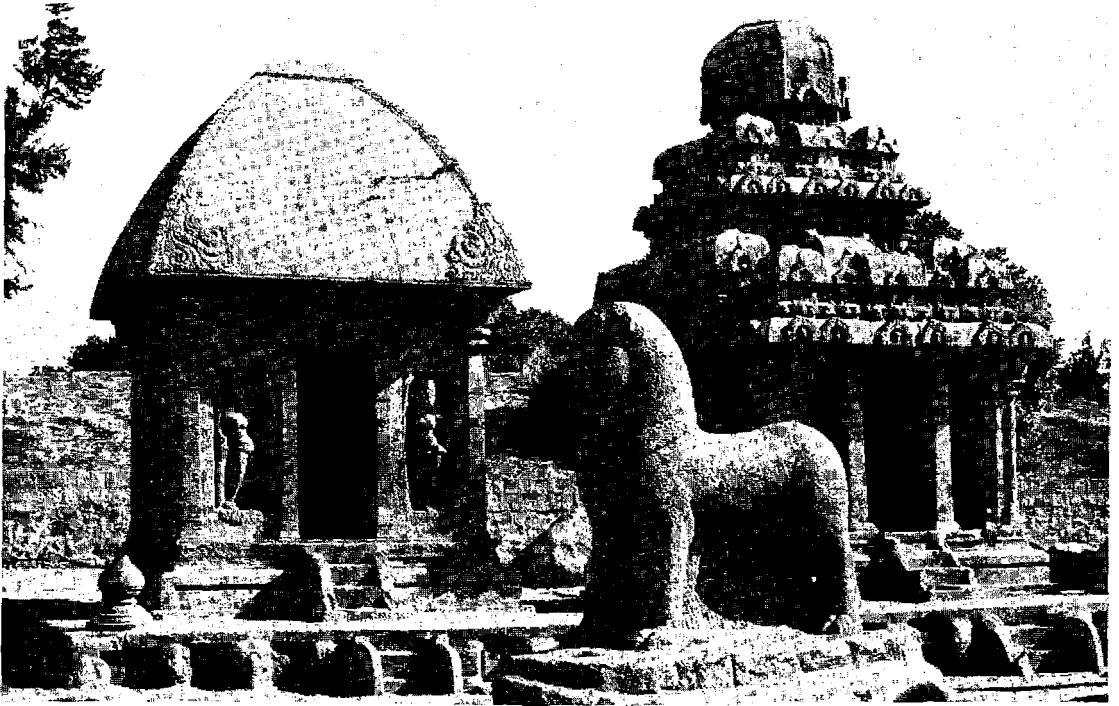
14.21. Plan of monolithic temples. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.

shrine dedicated to Durgā, distinguished by its curved roof, which is believed to have been modeled after that of a thatch prototype (Fig. 14.22, left). Square in plan, this single-celled, one-story shrine shares a low plinth with the adjacent "Arjuna ratha" (Fig. 14.22, right). The exterior wall decoration consists of pilasters at each of the four corners and niches containing images. The two niches flanking the door to the interior contain life-size female door guardians (*dvārapālikās*). The single niches on the three remaining sides each contain a representation of Durgā. The rear wall of the interior of the shrine bears a panel showing Durgā, standing, being adored by worshipers, one of whom is performing a self-decapitation like that seen in the Durgā relief in the Varāha cave.

The free-standing lion *vahāna* of Durgā is located outside the shrine (Figs. 14.21, 4.22). The distinctly feminine nature of the sculptural program of this small temple contrasts with the other monoliths, which are male-oriented, and suggests the growing emphasis on female

imagery. In the Trimūrti cave, Durgā's importance is apparent from the fact that a separate niche had been provided for her (Fig. 14.14). Here, an entire shrine is allotted to her worship. Ultimately, south Indian architects will create a separate temple dedicated to the female principle within the compound of the main temple, the so-called Amman shrine, already visible in nascent form in Pallava monuments. As in Buddhism of post-Gupta ages, Hinduism of the later periods is characterized by increasing emphasis on the female principle or female energy (*śakti*).

"Arjuna's ratha" (Fig. 14.22, right) is not much larger than the Durgā shrine sharing its plinth but it is significantly different in appearance. The pillared front of this square shrine is reminiscent of the format seen in Pallava cave architecture. However, the superstructure clearly reflects the form of a structural building. The two-tiered roof is pyramidal in shape and is capped by a domelike element called a *śikhara*, which is, in this case, octagonal. In southern



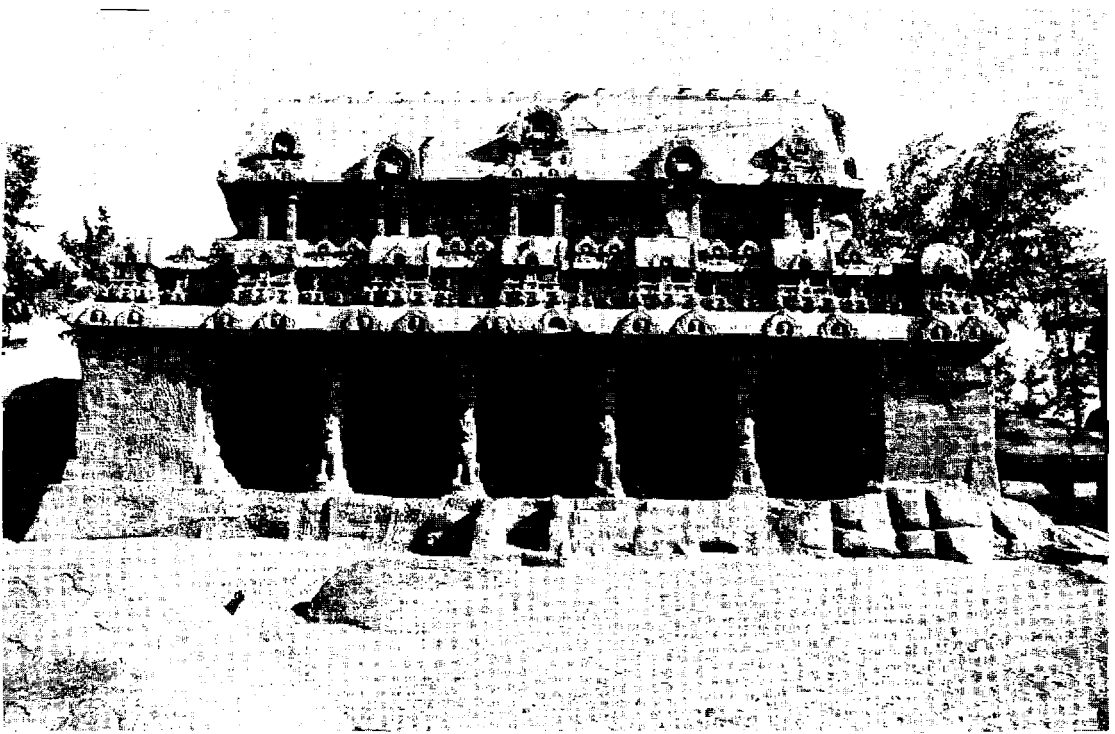
14.22. "Draupadi" (left) and "Arjuna" (right) shrines from west. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.

Indian architecture, the term *śikhara* refers only to this crowning member and not, as in northern India, to the entire tower comprising the superstructure of the *vimāna*. Each of the levels of the roof is decorated with a design of miniature barrel-vaulted roofs (*śālā*) interspersed with *candraśālās* (essentially a rounded arch of the type formed by the end of a *śālā*), as well as pilastered niches, some of which contain half-length figures. These figures (Fig. 14.23) give the impression that they are partially hidden due to the viewer's perspective from below, and like the freely moving figures in the other niches, again show the realism characteristic of Pallava art.

The two sides and rear of the lower story are carved into a series of niches containing fig-



14.23. East face, "Arjuna" shrine. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.



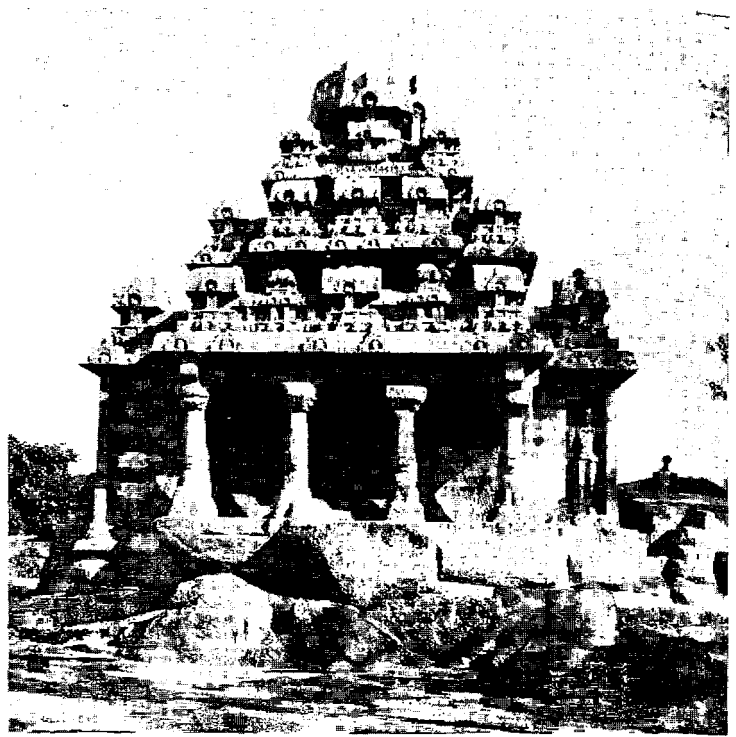
ures, each separated by pilasters with bracketed capitals. This format, of figures contained within niches separated by pilasters and, in fact, the pilastered wall in general, is typical of south Indian temple architecture from this period forward, contrasting strongly with the wall treatment that characterizes north Indian monuments of later periods. The two side walls have six niches each, although in both cases, the panel nearest the front has been left unsculpted, while the rear has only five niches (Fig. 14.23).

Male attendants appear at the corners of each side while the central niches contain images of principal deities of the iconographic program: Viṣṇu on the north, Śiva leaning on Nandi on the south, and a male figure riding an elephant on the east (Fig. 14.23). This figure has been traditionally identified as Indra on his elephant mount, or, sometimes, Subrahmaṇya (known also as Murugaṅ), son of Śiva, who is associated with the elephant in south India. While both of these interpretations bear some credibility, another suggestion is that the figure represents

Aiyaṅār-Śāstā, a hunter god who is known only in south India.²¹ Not only does Śāstā commonly ride an elephant, but the depictions of Śiva and Viṣṇu on the shrine reinforce the Śāstā interpretation since the god is believed to be the son of Śiva and Viṣṇu, a birth which occurred when Viṣṇu took the feminine form known as Mohinī. The suggestion of the union between Śiva and Viṣṇu, which led to the birth of Śāstā, is strengthened by the presence of *mithuna* couples in the niches flanking the principal niches.²² While *mithunas* are common in many other regional schools of South Asian art, their near absence in Pallava depictions suggests that their inclusion here was for the specific purpose of amplifying the iconographic program of the shrine.

“*Bhīma’s ratha*” is a two-storied, oblong building with a barrel-vaulted roof (*śālā*; Fig. 14.24). The main image within, although never finished, was intended to be a representation of the reclining Viṣṇu Anantaśayana for which such an elongated structure is appropriate. Entered on the long side rather than the short side, this

- ◁ 14.24. "Bhīma" shrine, from west. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.



- 14.25. "Dharmarāja" shrine from west. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I or later. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.

building provides a completely different effect than the barrel-roofed Buddhist pillared halls; the somewhat similar roof form may imply only a common architectural prototype rather than direct influence of one religion upon another. As in the case of the "Arjuna *ratha*," *candraśālās* and miniature barrel-vaulted shrines decorate the upper levels of the monument. The pillared facade, with seated lion bases, typifies one Pallava architectural format. Even though it is unfinished and contains virtually no sculpture, this monument provides valuable information about a rare form in Hindu architecture.²³

The "Dharmarāja *ratha*" (Figs. 14.21, 14.25) is the tallest of the group, but it too remains unfinished. The inscriptions on the shrine present conflicting evidence regarding the date of its excavation, for while the name Nṛsimha and a number of *birudas* suggest that the monument was begun during the reign of Nṛsimhavarman I (Māmalla I),²⁴ other epigraphs refer to later kings. However, it is possible that the additional names were inscribed after work

on the shrine was abandoned, for the rather unified style of the monument suggests that it was the product of a fairly concentrated effort, and thus a monument of Nṛsimhavarman I's reign.

Similar in concept to "Arjuna's *ratha*," although larger and more elaborate, this shrine also depicts in rock-cut form what must have been a popular style of free-standing monument and demonstrates what was a fully developed southern style of architecture during this period. Each of the four sides, if completed, would have had a pillared facade flanked by niches containing sculptures. The southern-style superstructure has three stories that diminish in size as they ascend, forming a pyramidal profile. Each roof is decorated with barrel-vaulted shrines (*śālā*) and *candraśālās* and the whole is capped by an octagonal *śikhara*. Like the "Arjuna *ratha*," this building is a clear replica of the *vimāna* of a southern-style structural temple, which would, in general, be preceded by a *maṇḍapa* and which might typically be enclosed in a rectangular compound. This form is the basis for what will



14.26. Portrait of Nṛsiṃhavarman (Mānalla I), on south face of "Dharmarāja" shrine. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Mā-malla I or later. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.

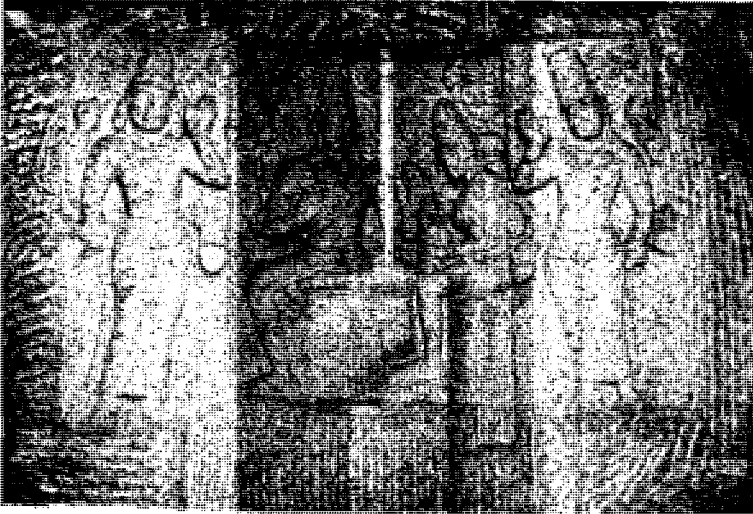
be seen in Cōḷa-, Vijayanagar-, and Nāyak-period monuments.

While decidedly Śaivite in iconography and dedication, the overall scheme of the monument has yet to be established. A variety of Hindu deities people the exterior of the various stories. One image depicts Nṛsiṃhavarman (I) himself, identified by an inscription (Fig. 14.26). It is possible that his presence is significant in determining the purpose of the building, for although the king appears in a two-armed form befitting his human nature, he stands in the stiff frontal manner appropriate for deities, with no flexion to his body (*samabhāṅga*). Other portraits of Pallava kings, sometimes even accompanied

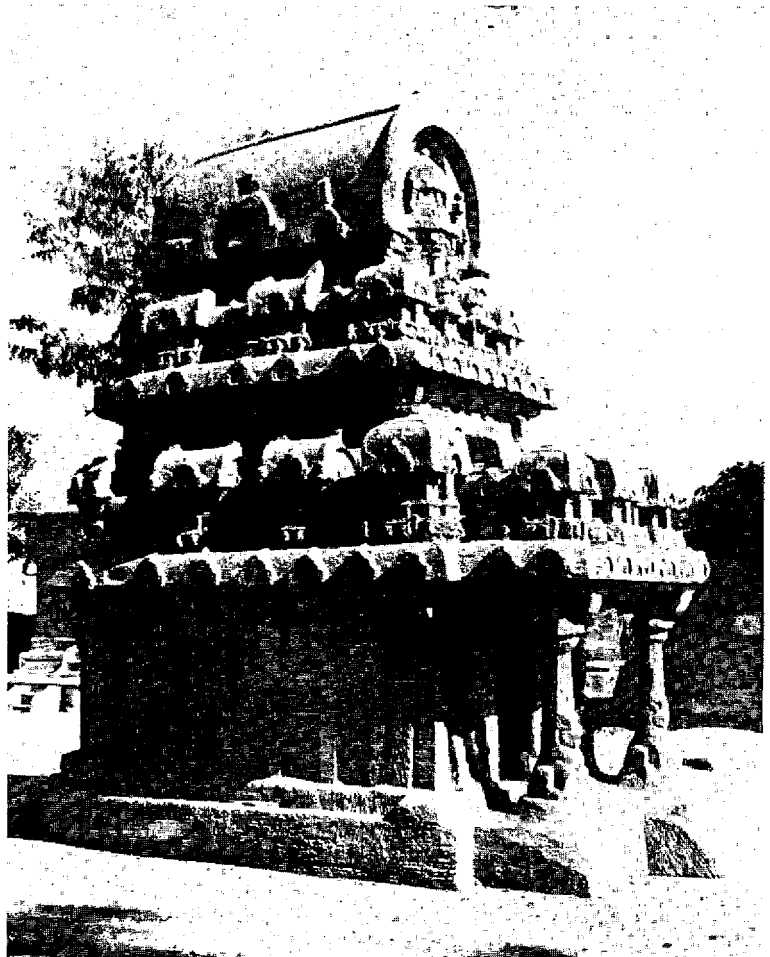
by their wives, occur in the art of Māmallapuram. But those at the Ādi-Varāha cave, for example, depict the royal personages in more relaxed postures and as accompaniments to the divine subjects carved in the other compositions of the cave. Here, Nṛsiṃhavarman is almost indistinguishable in his general demeanor from the deities carved as part of the same iconographic program. His depiction, then, must have served a role that was an integral part of the meaning of the monument as a whole. The placement of his image on the south face of the building may be revealing in this respect, for in Hinduism, south is the quadrant of Yama, the god and judge of the dead. Later south Indian inscriptions of the Cōḷas reveal that specific funerary monuments called *paḷlippaḍai* were erected for royal personages. Although conclusive evidence is lacking, this Pallava building may be an early example of just such a building.

Another important image of the "Dharmarāja ratha" is a sculpted panel in the shrine of the third story, which shows Śiva with his wife, Umā (a form of Pārvati), and their son, Skanda, in a group known as Somāskanda (Fig. 14.27). Here, the figures are also flanked by images of Brahmā and Viṣṇu. The Somāskanda subject becomes a popular Pallava icon that in later contexts served as a metaphor for the Pallava royal family.²⁵ Since this is the earliest Somāskanda image known,²⁶ it is possible that it was introduced as part of the royal symbolism associated with this monument in general. The roughly carved surfaces of this sculpture may indicate that the work would have been completed by plastering and painting.

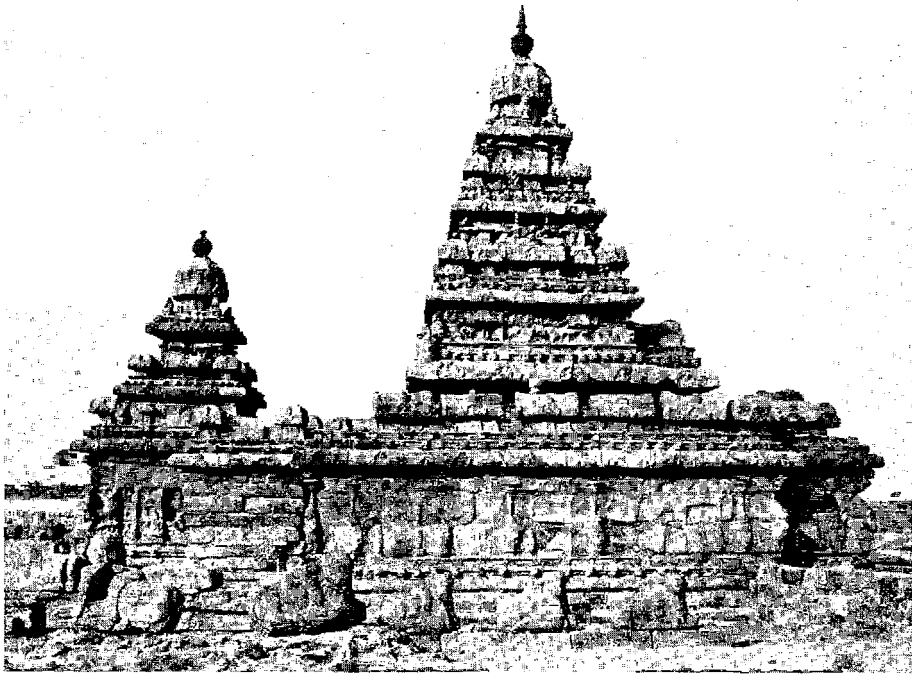
The last of the group, the "Nakula-Sahadeva ratha" (Figs. 14.21, 14.28), is not in line with the other four, and, unlike them, it faces south, not west. Because it lacks figure carving, it is not possible to determine anything about its iconography and how it relates to the other four shrines. However, its form is extremely important to the understanding of the development of south Indian architecture. Its apsidal shape documents a rare type among the surviving examples of Hindu temples, but one that is clearly related to Ikṣvāku prototypes like the



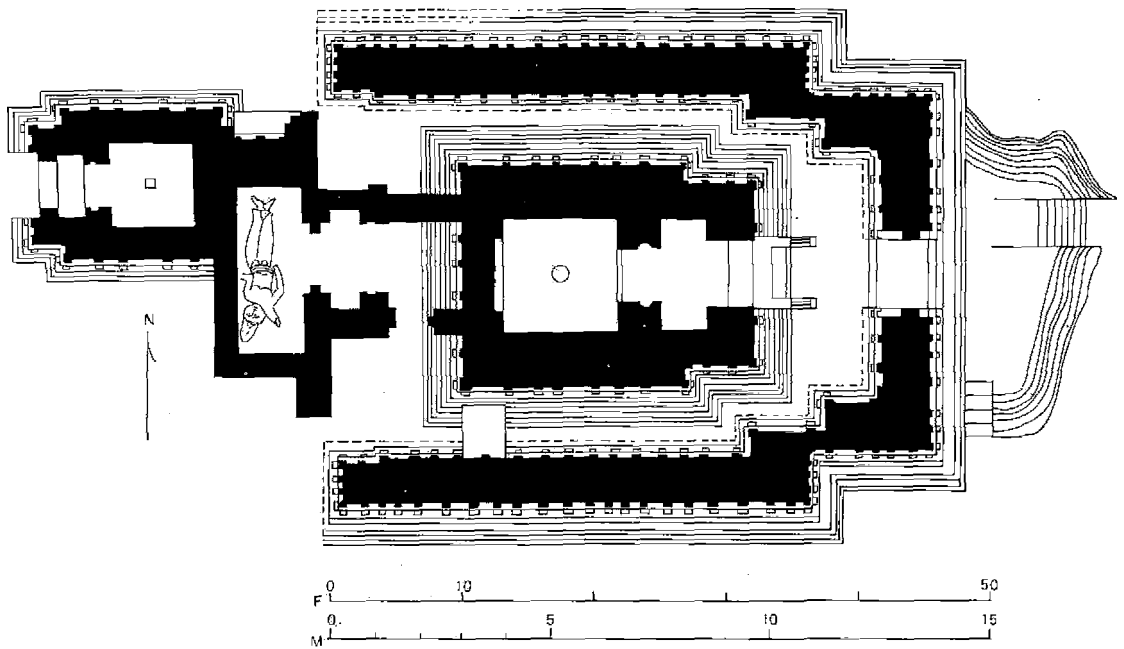
14.27. Somāskanda, in third-story shrine, "Dharmaraja" shrine. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Māmalla I or later. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century.



14.28. "Nakula-Sahadeva" shrine, from southwest. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Māmalla I. Ca. second-third quarter seventh century.



14.29. "Shore Temple," from south. Mamallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasiṃha. Ca. first third eighth century.



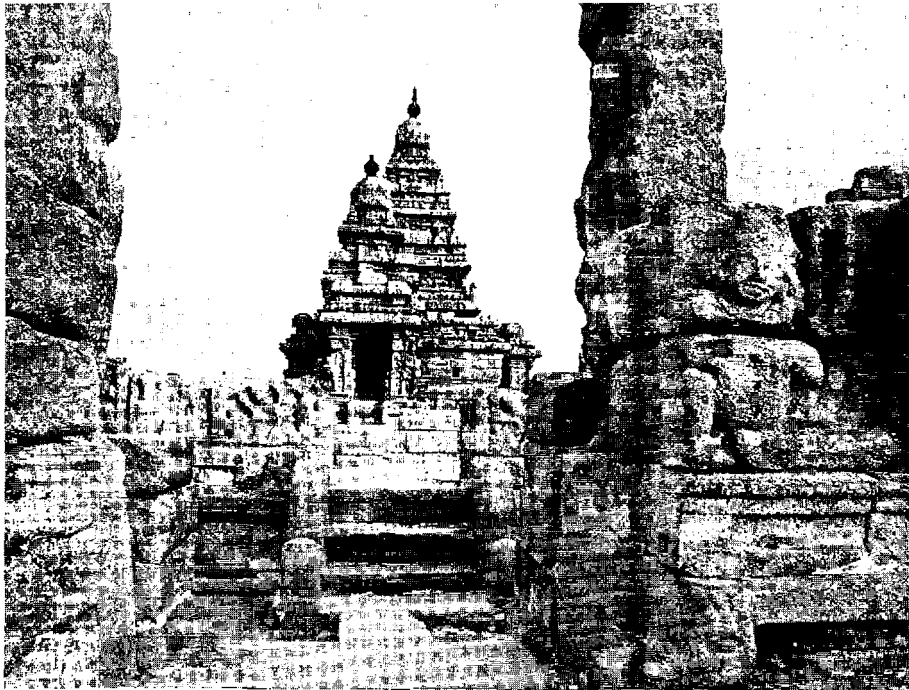
14.30. Plan of "Shore Temple." Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasiṃha. Ca. first third eighth century.

temple at Chezarla (Fig. 9.28). That this building is decidedly southern in style is seen in the pilastered walls (here, with empty niches) and in the tiered roof with *candraśālās* and barrel-vaulted *śālās*. The whole is capped by a *śālā* roof. It may be noted that although the exterior rear of the shrine is rounded, the interior cell is squared.

The rock-cut monuments of Māmallapuram, which have only been sampled here, demonstrate conclusively a well-developed architectural and iconographic vocabulary by the seventh century A.D. This implies a tradition of some long standing that must predate such remains. The variety of architectural types, seen in the different roofs, wall treatments (including pilastered walls with and without sculptures), and other features all suggest that these forms had been developing in the early Pallava period and earlier, although the complete evolution is not known. Yet, as preserved, like petrified replicas of vanished monuments, they provide an important basis

for the understanding of south Indian developments to follow.

Free-standing structural temples of the Pallava period provide further information about religious and artistic developments. The so-called Shore Temple at Māmallapuram (Fig. 14.29) is thought to be a product of the reign of Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasimha, who ruled from about 700 to 728 and who is credited with giving a major impetus to the production of structural temples. However, the aberrant plan of the temple, consisting as it does of three distinct worship areas, suggests that it was not the product of a unified scheme, but that it was modified or added to after its initial construction, although possibly still within the reign of the one king.²⁷ A plan of the temple (Fig. 14.30) shows a small square Śiva shrine, containing a *liṅga* and representation of Somāskanda, on the western side of the temple complex and slightly to the north. The main temple, also dedicated to Śiva and containing a *liṅga* and



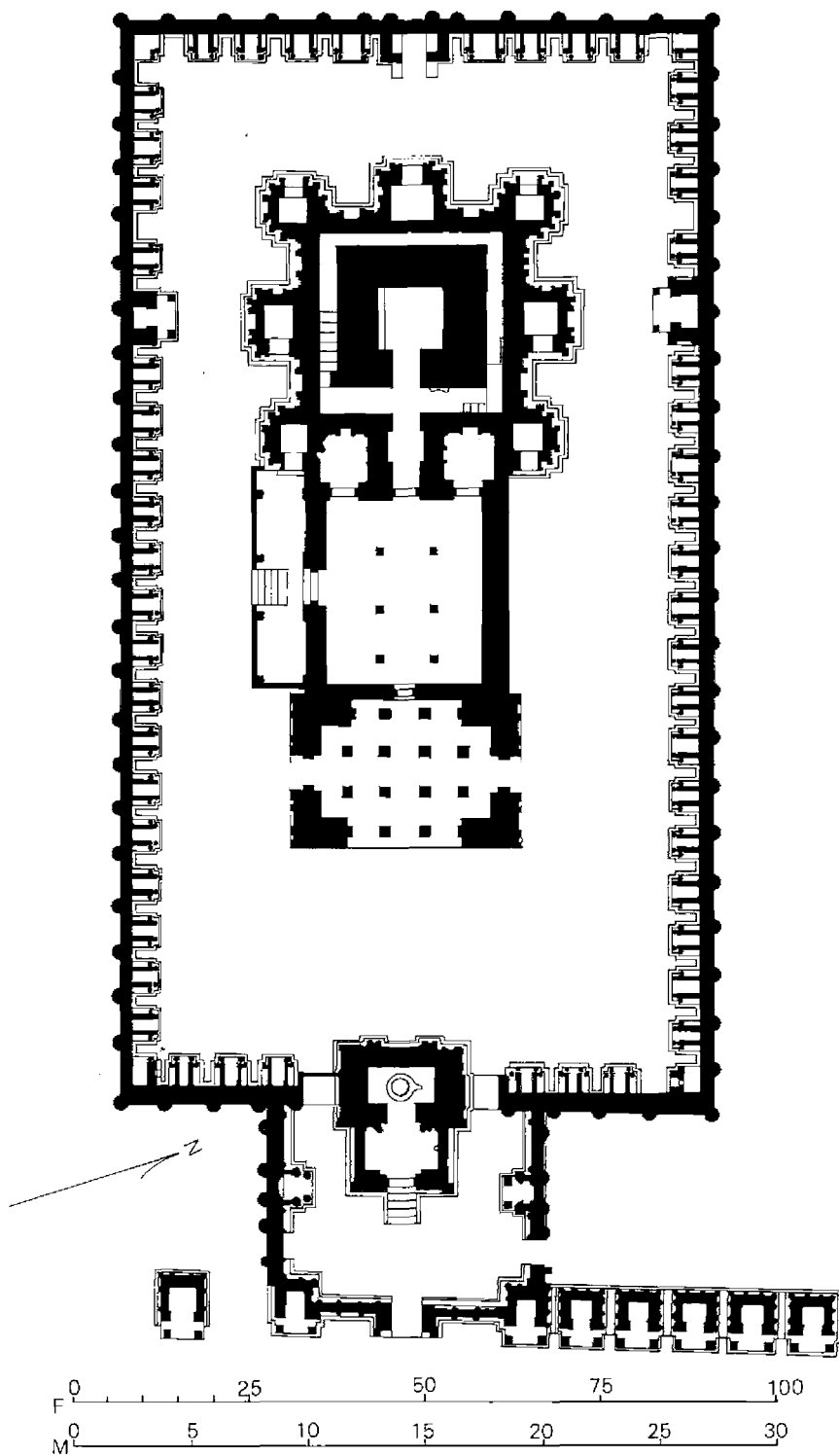
14.31. "Shore Temple," gateway on west. Māmallapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, probably reign of Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.

relief of Somāskanda in the central shrine, faces east and consists of a rectangular walled enclosure, the main shrine and its antechamber, and a circumambulatory passage between the wall and the central building. A third shrine, dedicated to Viṣṇu as Anantaśayana, is aligned with the central shrine and is located at the western end of the main temple, connecting the two Śiva shrines into a single unit. The sculpture of Anantaśayana was carved *in situ* from an existing rock and this may explain part of the peculiarity of the plan. Access to the Viṣṇu shrine is possible only from the southern side of the circumambulatory passage around the large Śiva shrine. The temple (if this term may be used to describe all three units as a whole) is thus oriented both to the east and the west and is apparently dedicated to both Śiva and Viṣṇu. Obviously, the east-facing Śiva shrine is the most important, as indicated by its size and the fact that it has the highest superstructure. A much smaller tower appears atop the western Śiva shrine while none is present over the Viṣṇu shrine. An entrance through the temple wall on the east and another leading into the rectangular temple compound on the west (Fig. 14.31) may be prototypes for the monumental gateways (*gopura*) that will characterize south Indian temples in later periods. The compound itself is much ruined due to the ocean spray and blowing sands that pose a continual threat to the monument but enough remains on the west to suggest that water had been channeled into a series of passages and pools. A related use of water was seen at the Varāha *maṇḍapa*, and both of these anticipate Cōḷa-period designs. The "Shore Temple" is decidedly southern in style, as may be seen in the pyramidal shape of the superstructure and pilastered wall treatment. The towers in this case are far taller and slenderer than the superstructure of the "Dharmarāja *ratha*," although this may not indicate a general trend of the period. Sculptures of *dvārapālas*, lions, and other figures were fairly abundant at the "Shore Temple," but the sea air has rendered all of them into virtual shadows of their original forms.

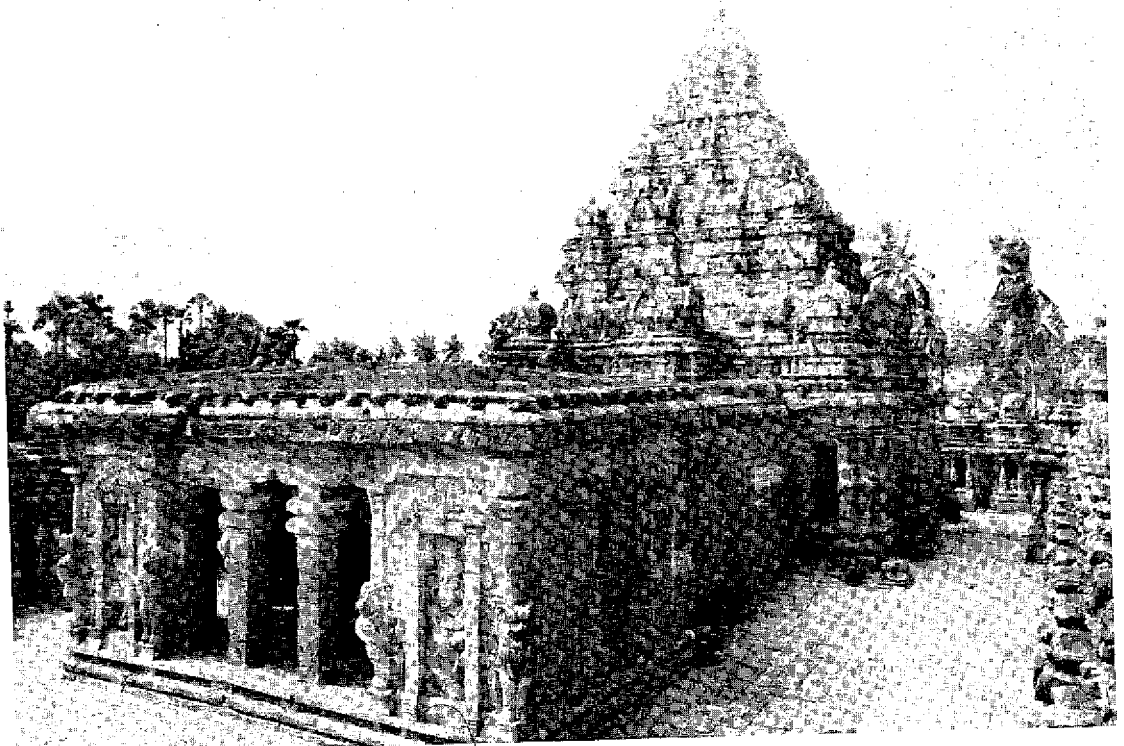
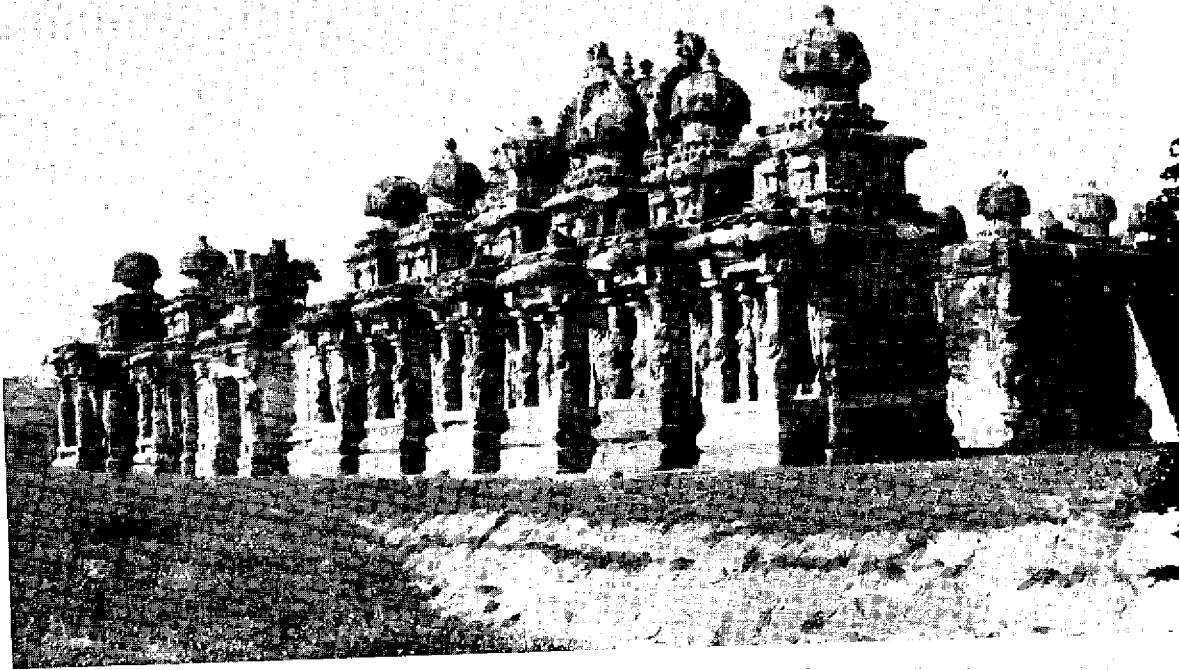
Another monument, more securely attribut-

able to Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasimha's reign, some forty kilometers away at Kāñcīpuram (Conjeevaram), is less enigmatic. Inscriptional evidence on this Śiva temple clearly indicates that Nṛsiṃhavarman II Rājasimha was the builder of the structure and that he named the deity enshrined in it (and by implication, the temple) after himself, calling it Rājasimha Pallaveśvara, in keeping with a practice that was to become very popular in south India.²⁸ Commonly called the Rājasimheśvara, it is also known as Kailāsanātha (referring to Śiva as Lord of Mount Kailāsa), a name that may have arisen from a verse in one of its inscriptions, which states that the temple "touches the cloud with its top" . . . [and] robs Kailāsa of its beauty."²⁹

The temple scheme includes a large rectangular enclosure containing more than fifty chapels surrounding the main structure (Fig. 14.32). A second row of small shrines at the east end of the temple compound suggests that at some time, perhaps after Rājasimha's initial period of construction, a second compound was to have been built, but this was never completed (Figs. 14.32, 14.33). At the eastern end, aligned with the front of the inner compound wall, a smaller shrine, also dedicated to Śiva, was built by Rājasimha's son, Mahendravarman III (Fig. 14.32). Like his father, Mahendravarman named the deity of the structure he had built for himself, and it is called Mahendreśvara (or Mahendravarmeśvara) in an inscription.³⁰ Unlike the separate elements of the "Shore Temple," this smaller shrine was probably part of the original conception of the temple, for here a clear break has been allotted for it in the wall, and it is probable that the son had the shrine built while his father was engaged in the original project.³¹ Mahendravarman's structure is topped by a *śālā* roof, but the main sanctuary, Rājasimha's dedication, bears a typically tiered southern form tower (Figs. 14.33, 14.34). The main building consists of a principal central shrine with its *liṅga* and enclosed circumambulatory passage, surrounded by nine smaller shrines, with the two at the eastern end now accessible only through a pillared hall that was added at a later date (Figs. 14.32, 14.34). A detached *maṇḍapa* to the east of the shrine area was part



14.32. Plan of Rājasimḥeṣvara ("Kailāsanātha") temple. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Nṛsimhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.



of the original conception but is now attached to the main building owing to the addition of the intermediary *mandapa*.

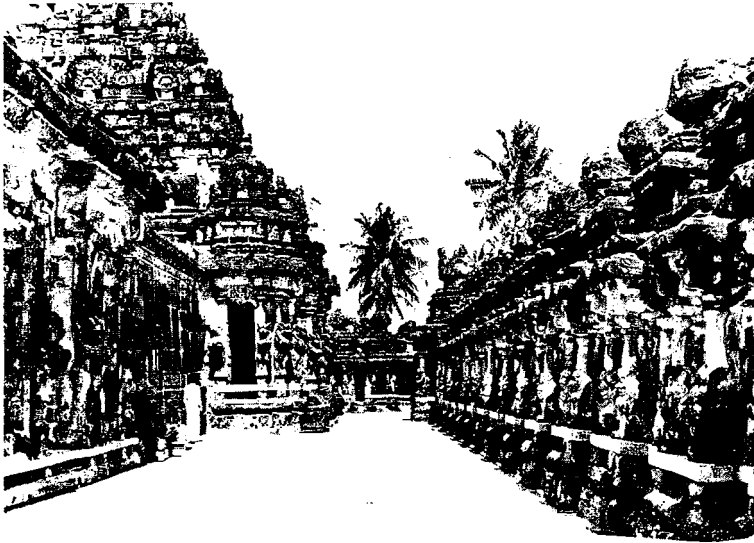
An important feature of this temple complex is the presence of *gopuras* (gateways) and proto-*gopuras* in the enclosure walls (Fig. 14.32). On the west, the central pavilion is in fact a gateway (although sealed off at present) and is distinguished from the other pavilions in the row by its decoration and *śālā* form. Directly opposite the central shrine in the walled enclosure on the south and north are chapels that are also visibly different from the others in the row in their shape, size, and the presence of the *śālā* roof. These are clearly shrines, not gateways, but serve as precedents for what will ultimately be the placement of *gopuras* in line with the main shrine and for the evolution of the *gopura* form out of shrines with *śālā* roofs.³² The largest of all the chapels aligned with the main shrine, Mahendravarman's temple on the east, also has a barrel roof and serves as the equivalent of the other three pavilions although much grander. In contrast to later *gopuras*, this structure cannot be traversed; instead, the devotee is diverted to one side or the other in order to enter the main courtyard. A small *gopura* on the east provides access to the forecourt of this shrine. The alignment of these four chapels-cum-*gopuras* is clearly with the main shrine of the temple rather than with the center of the respective walls of the rectangular compound; this practice explains the often asymmetrical appearance of the placement of *gopuras* in later monuments.

In contrast to early Pallava monuments, which are generally rather simple in their architectural and sculptural embellishment, this temple complex is rather lavishly decorated. One major sculptural motif particularly associated with Rājasimha's reign is the rampant lion, which appears almost ubiquitously as part of the facade decoration of the shrines in the compound wall (Fig. 14.35). Plaster and paint on the chapel walls in particular from post-Pallava redecorations of the temple have obscured much of the other sculptural work. However, a panel showing *gaṇas* and other creatures on the base of the temple and only thirty centimeters in



14.33. Rājasimheśvara ("Kailāsanātha") temple, compound exterior from northeast. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Nṛsimhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.

◁ 14.34. Rājasimheśvara ("Kailāsanātha") temple, view from northeast, inside compound. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Pallava period, reign of Nṛsimhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.



14.35. Rājasimheśvara (“Kailāsanātha”) temple, view along north wall of temple compound, looking west. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nadu, India. Pallava period, reign of Nṛsimhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.

14.36. *Gaṇa* panel at base of Rājasimheśvara (“Kailāsanātha”) temple. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nadu, India. Pallava period, reign of Nṛsimhavarman II Rājasimha. Ca. first third eighth century.



height demonstrates the high quality of carving that must have characterized the workmanship at the temple (Fig. 14.36). These animated figures, crisply carved and delicately modeled, may be classed with the finest of Indic sculptures.

By far the most common icon enshrined in the walls of chapels is Somāskanda. While this subject may have been introduced into Pallava art earlier (Fig. 14.27) it was certainly popularized during the reign of Rājasimha. A clue

Rājasimha’s time occurs in an inscription at the temple stating that “just as Guha [Skanda] (also called Subrahmaṇya or Kumāra) took birth from the supreme lord (Śiva) . . . thus from the supreme lord Ugradanda . . . there took birth a very pious prince (*subrahmanyah kumārah*), the illustrious Atyantakāma, the chief of the Pallavas.”³³ Thus the Pallava king Parameśvara I and his son Rājasimha, each referred to by one of his alternate names, are likened to Śiva

lava synthesis of the divine and kingly realms.

The Rājasimheśvara temple at Kāñcīpuram displays many of the essential characteristics of the evolving southern architectural style. Some of these contrast sharply with those of the developing idioms of the north and Deccan. The storied pyramidal form of the tower above the shrine, the use of a rectangular enclosure wall with *gopuras*, and the distinctive wall treatment using niches with or without figures and pilasters are all important features. These characteristics and others, form the basis of later southern styles, although their treatment will be elaborated upon and modified.

THE EARLY PĀṆḌYAS

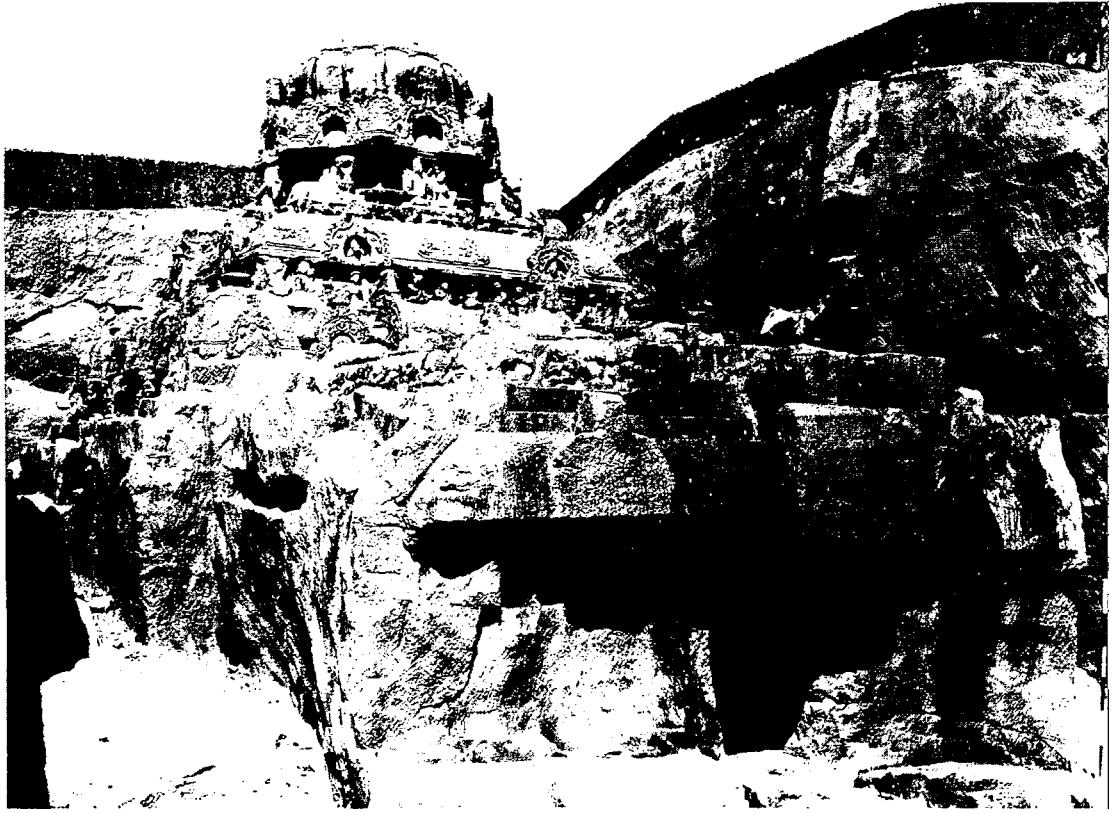
Although no one could doubt the importance of the Pāṇḍya dynasty in the history of south India, considerable controversy exists over whether or not there is a "Pāṇḍya phase" in art. According to some scholars, the Pāṇḍyas added nothing really "new" to art, merely reflecting the Pallava works when south India was under the sway of the Pallavas, and Cōḷa trends during the Cōḷa period of supremacy. This view seems to be an overstatement: the fact is, little is known of the Pāṇḍyas and their art, their productions having been largely overshadowed by the study of Pallava and Cōḷa remains. Monuments found in the Pāṇḍya territories must be thoroughly surveyed and their inscriptions studied before the true place of Pāṇḍya art in the history of Indic traditions is known.³⁵

Pāṇḍya history is generally divided into two phases, the first being roughly contemporary with the Pallava period, the Early Pāṇḍya period of concern here, and the Later Pāṇḍya period, coinciding with the late Cōḷa and post-Cōḷa periods. The Pāṇḍya name is known as early as the Aśokan edicts of the third century B.C., but it was not until the sixth century that the family, with their territories concentrated in the Madurai area, became a major force in south India.

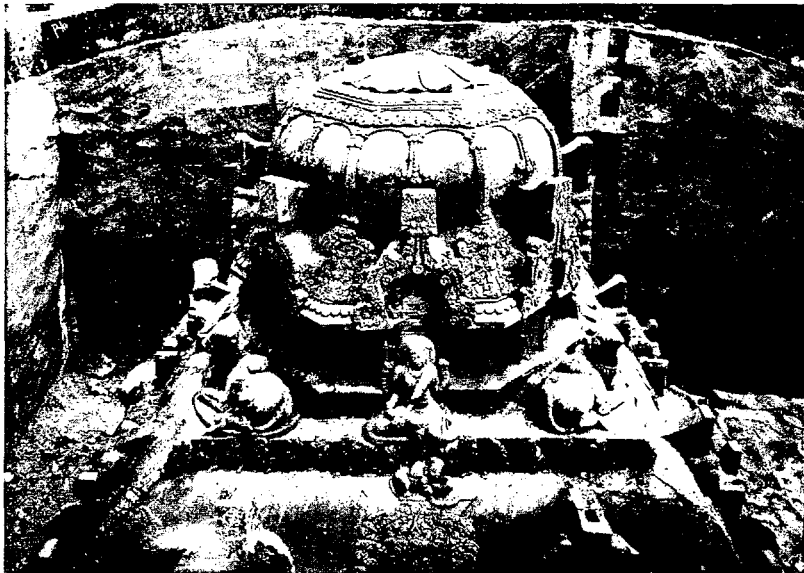
Perhaps the most impressive Early Pāṇḍya monument is the unfinished rock-cut Vaṭṭuvānkōvil temple at Kalugumalai (Fig. 14.37).

Historically, another aspect of this temple deserves mention. Inscriptions on the pillars of the detached *maṇḍapa* record that the Early Western Calukya king, Vikramaditya II (r. 733-44), visited the temple, and was apparently so impressed by it that he did not carry off its treasures as spoils of war but instead allowed them to remain at the temple.³⁴ It is likely that his notice of the temple resulted in his carrying back certain ideas concerning the structure that were eventually manifested in Early Western Calukya buildings in the Deccan. A very specific instance of a possible transmission of style is thus recorded.

Like the Pallavas, the Early Pāṇḍyas employed the rock-cut medium in addition to what must have been a flourishing brick and wooden temple tradition. However, this excavation is unlike any of the known Pallava monuments, for it is neither a cave nor a monolith. Essentially, it is a free-standing building that was liberated from the surrounding matrix of rock so that it would have stood in a kind of pit when completed. In this respect and in details of its form, it bears a striking resemblance to the celebrated Kailāsanātha temple at Ellora, with which it may be roughly contemporaneous (Fig. 16.3). Although it is not known which was created first, both monuments date from the eighth century. This east-facing Śiva temple consists of a *maṇḍapa* and sanctum, the latter surmounted by a storied southern-style superstructure elaborately decorated with figures and decorative motifs and capped by an octagonal *śikhara* (Figs. 14.37, 14.38). The figures, posed in highly naturalistic relaxed postures, almost give the impression of being live persons inhabiting the roof of the temple. Stylistically, they are closely related to Pallava figurative conventions, especially in the treatment of the torsos and details of ornamentation, although a hint of the Deccan styles of the Early Western Calukyas or Rāṣṭrakūṭas may be discerned in the somewhat fuller faces and in some of the headdresses. Many of the figures are depicted only down to the



14.37. Vaṭṭuvāṅkōvil cave temple from southeast. Kalugumalai, Tamil Nadu, India. Early Pāṇḍya period. Ca. eighth century.



14.38. Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti and roof elements of upper tier, south side, Vaṭṭuvāṅkōvil cave temple. Kalugumalai, Tamil Nadu, India. Early Pāṇḍya period. Ca. eighth century.



14.39. Śiva Viṣapraharaṇamūrti on lower tier of superstructure, north side, Vaṭṭuvāṅkōvil cave temple. Kalugumalai, Tamil Nādu, India. Early Pāṇḍya period. Ca. eighth century.

waist or hips, which seems to suggest that they are peeking out over the forms of the architecture in a manner reminiscent of the treatment on the upper stories of the "Arjuna ratha" at Māmalapuram (Fig. 14.23). The major images on the uppermost tier of the temple superstructure include Śiva and Pārvatī together in a form known as Umā-Maheśvara on the east; Śiva's "Southern Form" (Dakṣiṇāmūrti) is appropriately placed on the south (Fig. 14.38); Nṛsīmha, on the west; and Brahmā, on the north. Other deities, including additional forms of Śiva, appear on the lower tier of the superstructure. One image (Fig. 14.39) shows Śiva in his Viṣapraharaṇamūrti aspect, a gracious form of the god in which he swallowed a dreadful poison that threatened the world with destruction. Each sculpture shows the deity in a graceful posture, carved virtually in the round. At the corners of the level upon which the deities are placed are representations of reclining bulls, fully carved in a three-dimensional format.

The possible associations with Deccan art styles visible in the figure style as well as the architectural relationship to the Kailasanātha temple at Ellora strongly hint at the likelihood that Pāṇḍya art must not be viewed as a mere reflection of the more well-known Pallava tradition. The Pāṇḍyas and the Pallavas must each be recognized for their effect on the art of their own times, as well as later south Indian styles.

CONCLUSION

The southern art forms created under the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas suggest continuity with earlier southern traditions, such as the art of the Āndhra region, and presuppose what must have been a lengthy, well-developed prior architectural and sculptural development. Thus, though the early Hindu architectural forms of South India seem to appear "full blown" and without precedent, it must be asserted that this is because their forerunners, presumably made in fragile materials, do not survive. Because of this, it is difficult to be certain how much "innovation"

Pallava and Pāṇḍya art represents and how much continuity with already well established artistic developments. In spite of this, the vigorous nature of the art of this period is easily recognized from the remains. The fact that it is likely that the Pallava-Pāṇḍya traditions were based on developments centuries old emphasizes the frailty of the oft-repeated statement that regional artistic forms were firmly established only after the Gupta period, for it is clear that earlier traditions were well established, though they are not visible to us until well after Gupta times.



Detail of 15.24.

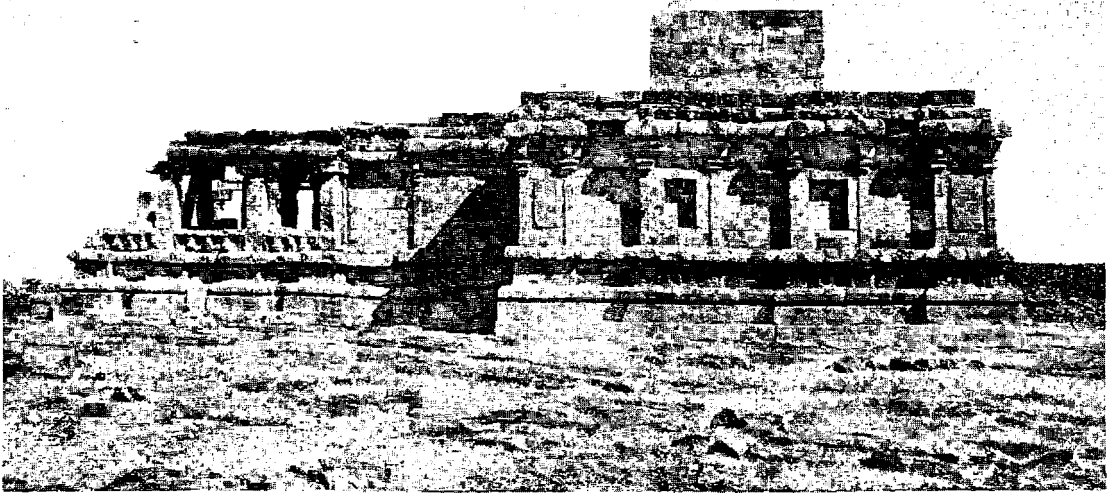
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Early Western Calukya and Related Schools of the Deccan

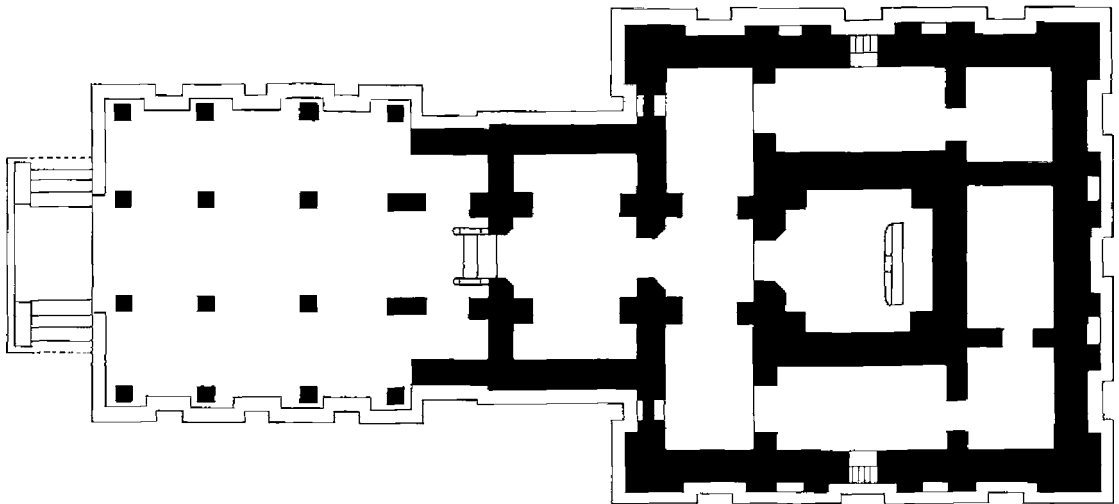
STRUCTURAL TEMPLES OF THE EARLY WESTERN CALUKYAS

Within the Deccan heartland of the Early Western Calukya empire, over one hundred structural temples have been recognized as dating from the time of this dynasty. These constitute the earliest large corpus of extant structural temples in India that are tied together by their patronage, period, and style. While some of them were built for the Jain religion, by far the majority are Hindu buildings, reflecting the Early Western Calukya dynastic religious preference. Both southern- and northern-style structures were actively built during this period, sometimes side by side at a single site. The origins of and sources for this very active phase of temple building remain somewhat a mystery since, like many other Indic stone-temple traditions, it almost seems to have emerged full blown. Undoubtedly, this is partially due to the fact that the majority of earlier Deccan

structures no longer survive, although monuments constructed by the Kadambas, predecessors to the Early Western Calukyas, have been noted. In addition, the chronological and stylistic relationships between the earlier rock-cut monuments of the Early Western Calukyas (Figs. 13.9-20), and this structural phase are still poorly understood, making the artistic debt to the earlier tradition uncertain. Some continuity, however, is indicated by an inscription on the east side of the Meguti temple, a Jain structural building at Aihole (Fig. 15.1).¹ This epigraph reveals that the temple was dedicated in the year Śaka 556, equivalent to around 634, which falls within the reign of Pulakesin II (610-42), the son of the Kirtivarman mentioned in the 578 dedicatory inscription in Cave 3 at Bādāmī. Thus, it is clear that the excavated and structural phases of Early Western



15.1. Meguti temple, from west. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Pulakeśin II. Dedicated in Śaka era 556 (A.D. 634).



15.2. Plan of Meguti temple. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Pulakeśin II. Dedicated in Śaka era 556 (A.D. 634).

Calukya architecture were separated by no more than a generation's time and it is possible that they overlapped for several decades.

An artistic debt to the earlier Bādāmī cave

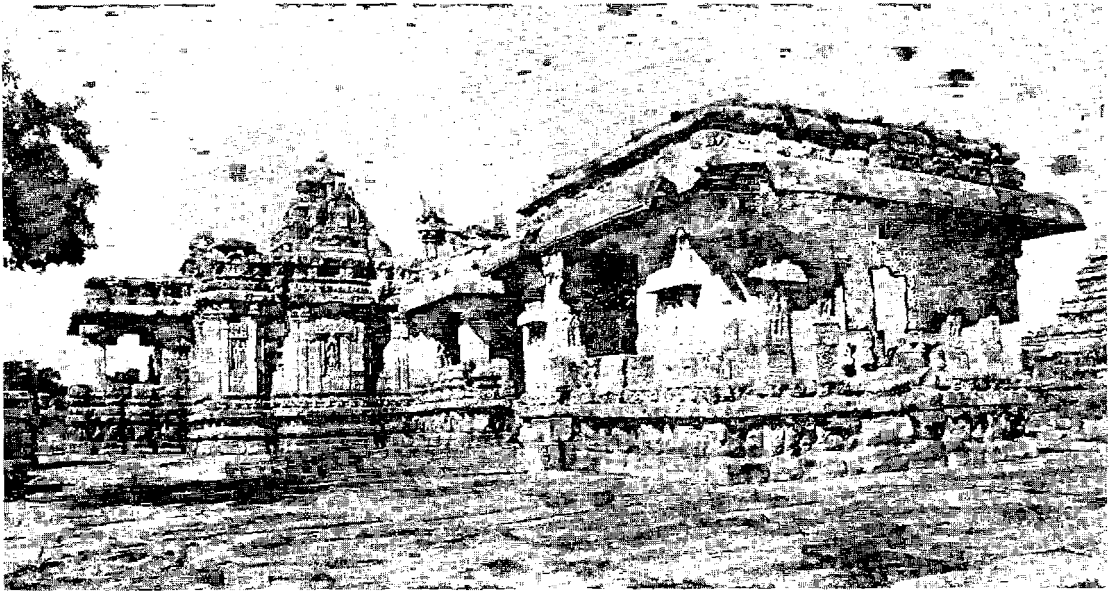
monuments of the Early Western Calukyās is visible in the panels of dwarves and animals located along the base of the Meguti temple's exterior, and perhaps, to some extent, in the

rather austere exterior of the structure. However, other features of the Meguti temple's style could not have been derived solely from earlier rock-cut prototypes. Its wall treatment is similar to that found typically in southern Indian temple styles. This indicates that at least some of the so-called southern-style characteristics were part of the Early Western Calukya architectural repertoire prior to the Pallava invasion of 642. These characteristics might have been introduced by architects familiar with early southern-style temples that are no longer extant, but it is also conceivable that some of the forms originated in the Deccan, specifically the Early Western Calukya empire, and not the deep south. It is likely that the Meguti temple had a southern-style superstructure as well (the second-story shrine above the main sanctuary may not be original).

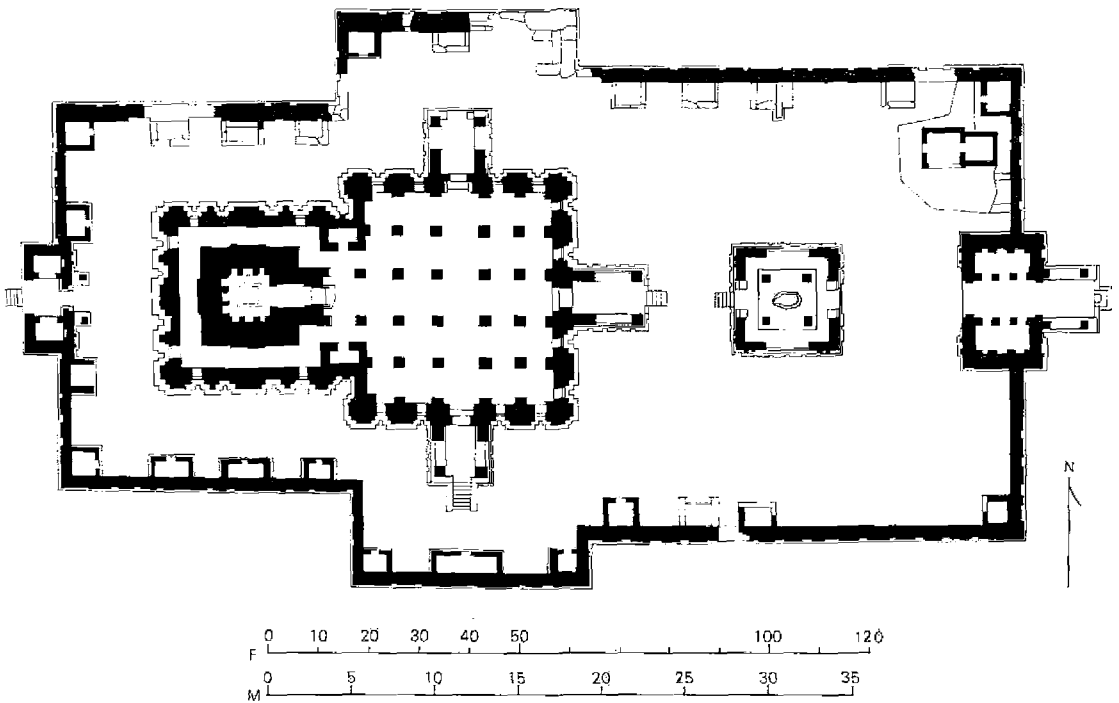
The wall treatment of the Meguti temple, pilastered but without figurative sculpture, may be contrasted with the more amply sculpted Early Western Calukya temple exteriors. Although the Meguti temple and other temples with minimal exterior ornamentation appear more closely allied with earlier monuments, such as those of the Gupta period, they were produced contemporaneously with some of the more decorated Early Western Calukya structures, and do not represent an earlier stage of development *per se*. As a stylistic mode, this simple, pilastered wall type persisted into the later Deccan styles, such as that of the Yādavas. While such austere temples continued to be produced after the Gupta period, they represent an exception to the general Indic tendency toward increasing elaboration. The method of the Meguti temple's construction, using large blocks of stone assembled without the use of mortar, further suggests ties to pre-Early Western Calukya architectural styles, but the greater articulation of architectural elements such as pilasters, niches, cornices, and details of the basement indicates a clear departure from earlier examples. A similar construction technique is common to most of the Early Western Calukya structures. In plan, the temple is of the *sāndhara* type, for it has an enclosed circumambulatory passage (Fig. 15.2). (The division of the passageway into cell-like units was probably not part of the original design of the temple.)

The most fully developed southern-style Early Western Calukya temple, and perhaps the climax of all Early Western Calukya temple construction, is the Virūpākṣa temple at Paṭṭaḍakal, a site about sixteen kilometers from Bādāmi (Fig. 15.3). Built during the reign of Vikramāditya II (733-44) by his chief queen Lōka-mahādevī,² and dedicated to Śiva Lokeśvara, the Virūpākṣa temple is not only richly decorated with sculpture and much larger than the Meguti temple, but consists of a complex of structures in typical southern Indian fashion. It is often claimed that the temple was modeled after the Rājasimheśvara temple at Kāñcīpuram (Figs. 14.32-36). However, its features should rather be seen as a logical outgrowth of architectural forms that had been developing within the Early Western Calukya area at least since the time of the construction of the Meguti temple. Therefore, while it is true that Vikramāditya II was so impressed by the sight of the Rājasimheśvara temple at Kāñcīpuram during his conquest of that city that he declined to carry off its treasures as spoils of war, an examination of the form and decoration of the two structures makes it clear that the Virūpākṣa temple is not a mere copy of the Pallava monument. Furthermore, Vikramāditya II's queen, who patronized the building of the Virūpākṣa, never saw the Rājasimheśvara temple, and thus any association has perhaps been overstressed.

The Virūpākṣa complex is set within a rectangular walled enclosure into which a series of shrines were built (Fig. 15.4). A substantial *gopura* on the east (Fig. 15.5) is balanced by a smaller one on the west. Between the eastern *gopura* and temple proper is a square building, a shrine dedicated to and containing a sculpture of Nandi, the *vāhana* of Śiva (see plan, Fig. 15.4, and front building in Fig. 15.3). Detached shrines of this type became increasingly popular in post-Gupta periods, especially in the Deccan and the south, and are related to growing elaboration within the rituals and use of the temple complex. In this case, the Nandi shrine is decorated in a fashion similar to that of the main Śiva temple, articulated with deeply carved mouldings and niches, and decorated with sculpture. The main temple building consists of a large pillared *man-*



15.3. Virūpākṣa temple, from southeast (inside compound). Paṭṭaḍakal, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.



15.4. Plan of Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭaḍakal, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.



15.5. Eastern *gopura*, from the southwest, Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭadakal, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.



15.6. Dancing Śiva on exterior, Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭadakal, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.

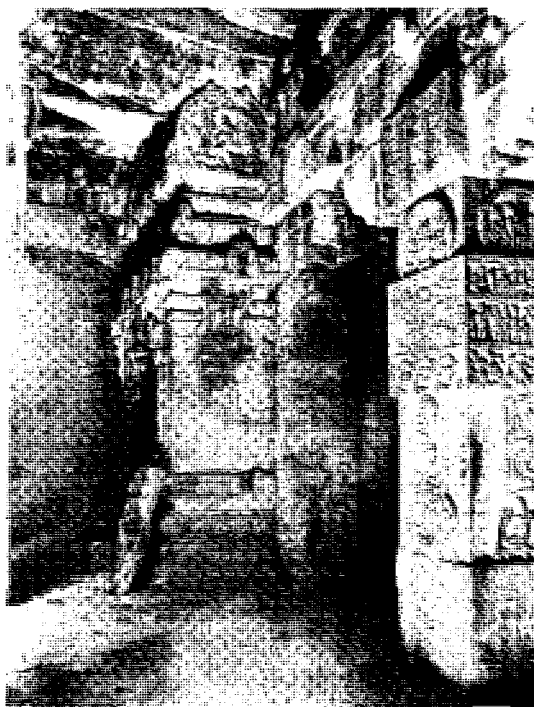
ḍapa and a smaller *vimāna*. The *vimāna* consists of an antechamber and shrine with an enclosed circumambulatory passage (Fig. 15.4), the whole topped by a southern-style superstructure (Fig. 15.3). Three porches project from the *mandapa*, one each on the sides and one at the front, a feature frequently found in later temples, especially in northern India. Possibly, these were created to admit more light into the interior. Both outside and in, the temple is lavishly sculpted, anticipating the richness of monuments of later centuries. On the exterior, deep niches set off by pilasters contain dynamically posed figures, most of them depicting various aspects of Śiva. These are finely carved, deeply cut reliefs that seem to enliven the strictly controlled divisions of the architecture. In their vitality, the figure sculptures relate to other eighth century artistic idioms in India, such as those of Orissa, Rājasthān, and the Pallava south. A figure of Śiva dancing on the back of a dwarf (Fig. 15.6) exhibits the slenderness associated with southern sculptural schools, such as that of the Pallavas, a suggestion also corroborated by the treatment of the costume. Some of the niches

are richly framed by foliate motifs carved so that the sunlight shining on the temple creates a sharply defined pattern.

The interior of the temple is richly carved, especially the pillars, ceilings, and lintels (Figs. 15.7, 15.9). Two *śālā*-type shrines, one on either side of the antechamber to the shrine, are important iconographic features. The one to the left (Fig. 15.4) is dedicated to Gaṇeśa, the overcomer of obstacles, who is invoked at the beginning of worship and thus is appropriately located at the entrance to the circumambulatory path. The other (visible in Figure 15.7), dedicated to Durgā as slayer of the buffalo demon (Mahi-śasuramardini) (Fig. 15.8), is fittingly located at the exit from the *pradakṣiṇapatha*, for in this form, the supreme goddess is victorious over the *asura* Mahiṣa, shown here as a human with buffalo horns, symbolizing the final achievement of *mokṣa*, the ultimate Hindu goal. The remarkable image inside the shrine is carved

virtually in the round and is surpassed by none in South Asian art for its dynamism and realism, the latter feature graphically indicated in the way the sword seems to enter the body of Mahiṣa and in the treatment of his face. Durgā's arms and weapons are arranged in a striking rhythmic pattern created through the use of parallel elements. Such three-dimensional, "in the round" figures are rarely encountered in the stone carvings of ancient India, especially those that are meant to be viewed from one vantage point only.

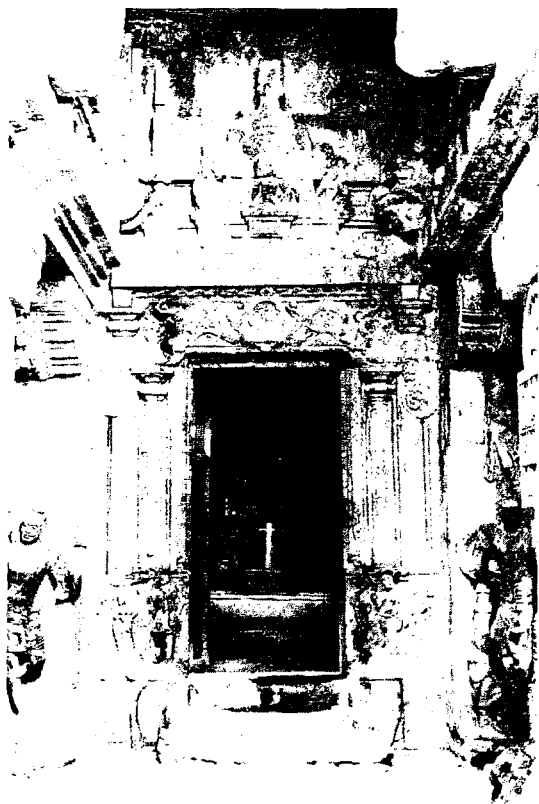
A clear difference between the style of this temple and the simpler forms of the Gupta period is seen in the treatment of the doorway to the main Śiva *liṅga* shrine (Fig. 15.9). Features of this highly elaborate doorway, with pilasters, a *torāṇa*, architectural niches, multiple side figures, and sizable southern-style *dvārapālas* outside the framework of the doorway itself, suggest the growing complication and move-



15.7. Durgā shrine in Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭaḍakal, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.



15.8. Durgā Mahiṣasuramardini (in Durgā shrine) in Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭaḍakal, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.



15.9. Entrance to main shrine, Virūpākṣa temple. Paṭṭaḍakal, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period, reign of Vikramāditya II. Ca. 733-44.

15.10. Sangameśvara temple from southwest. Mahākūta, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-eighth century.



ment toward elaborate forms that identifies most artistic developments in South Asia after the sixth century.

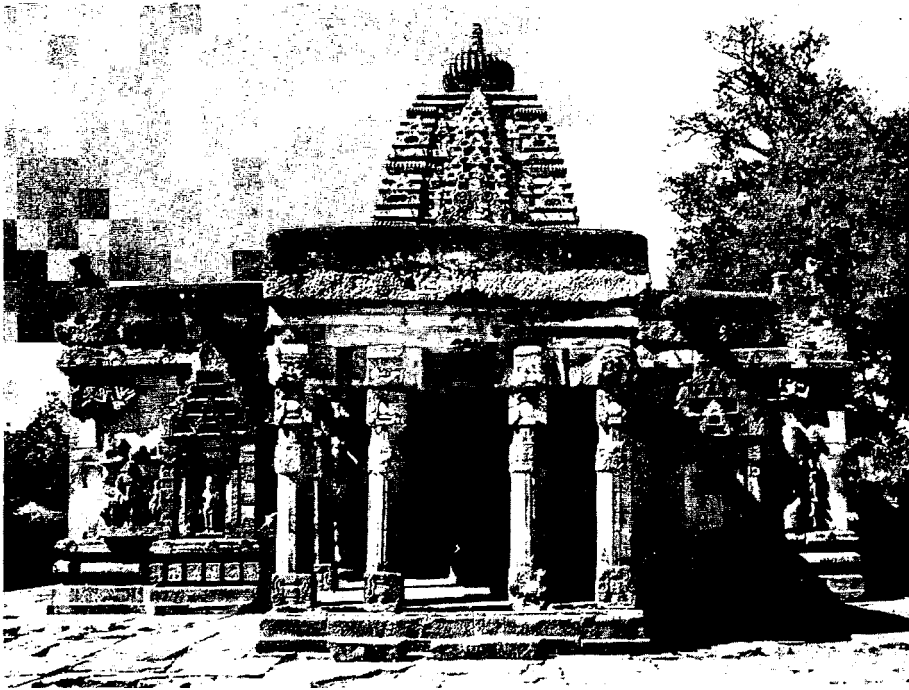
Northern-style temples produced under the Early Western Calukyas may be seen at several sites. Out of approximately twenty Early Western Calukya temples that are within the perimeters of the enclosed temple compound with the sacred tank at Mahākūṭa, a site about five kilometers from Bādāmī, all but two are in the northern style. The Sangameśvara temple (Fig. 15.10), like many other northern-style examples of approximately the mid-eighth century, such as seen in Orissa, or Rājasthān, consists of a porch and a shrine area. It is small in size and far simpler in decoration than the Virūpākṣa temple. Topped by a northern-style curvilinear *śikhara*, the shrine is visually the most important portion of the exterior of the monument. Sculptural elements, while kept to a

minimum, are as expressive as any found throughout the Early Western Calukya realms. A Pāśupata sect dedication is suggested by the representation of Lakuliśa, naked and with erect *liṅga*, contained in the central niche on the south side of the sanctuary (Fig. 15.11). Standing atop a dwarf, the figure exhibits the grace and quietude that is often mistakenly said to have died out after the Gupta period. Probably, the style of the figure reflects northern traditions, as does the form of the temple itself. The other niche images are Hari-Hara, the combined form of Śiva and Viṣṇu, on the north and Ardhanārīśvara, the combined form of Śiva and Pārvatī, on the west, also finely sculpted examples.

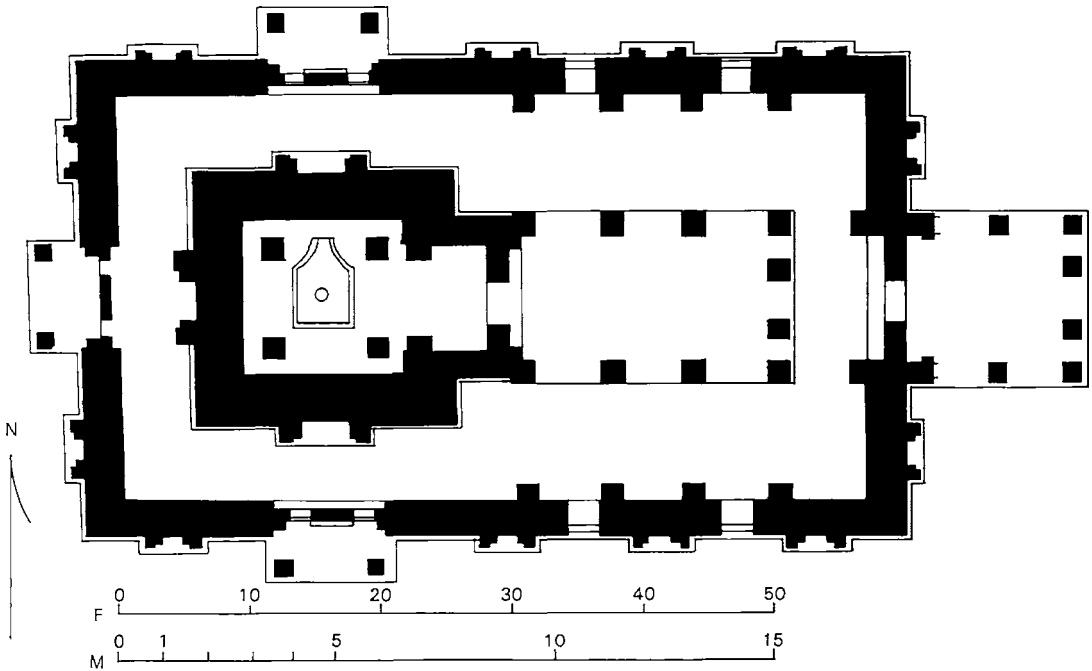
At Alamīpūr, a site in Āndhra Pradesh that had come under the control of the Early Western Calukyas during their expansion, at least nine temples were built during this period. Although these are less well known than other Early Western Calukya temples, they are among the finest monuments of this period and contain some of the best examples of Calukya sculpture. Called the Nava Brahmā (Nine Brahmā) temples in a sixteenth-century inscription from the site, the original names of the temples are unknown; however, other inscriptions as well as stylistic evidence verify the Early Western Calukya date of the monuments. All except one of the Nava Brahmā temples are in the northern style. Of these, perhaps the most beautiful is the Svarga Brahmā temple. An inscription above one of the *dvārapālas* on the temple states that the monument was constructed in honor of a queen of Vinayāditya, the Early Western Calukya king who ruled during the late seventh century (682–96), by one of her sons. Therefore, the monument may be assigned to that period, or perhaps the early eighth century, if one assumes that the queen outlived her husband.³ From the east, the entrance side, the structure has a somewhat unusual appearance (Fig. 15.12) due to the projecting porch in front of the rectangular hall that constitutes the main body of the temple. This rectangle contains the shrine area, its surrounding circumambulatory passage, and the pillared *maṇḍapa*, but in contrast to the usual northern and southern style conventions, these are not distinguished architecturally

15.11. Lakuliśa on south side of Sangameśvara temple. Mahākūṭa, Kārṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. mid-eighth century.

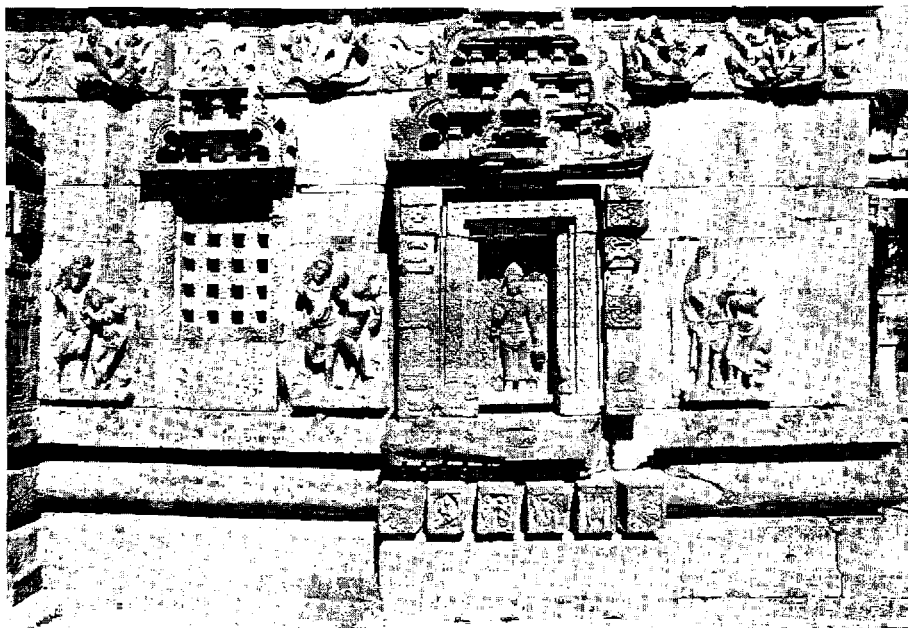




15.12. Svarga Brahmā temple from east. Alampūr, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



15.13. Plan of Svarga Brahmā temple. Alampūr, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



15.14. Section of south wall showing *dikpāla* Agni and *mithunas*. Svarga Brahmā temple. Alampūr, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.

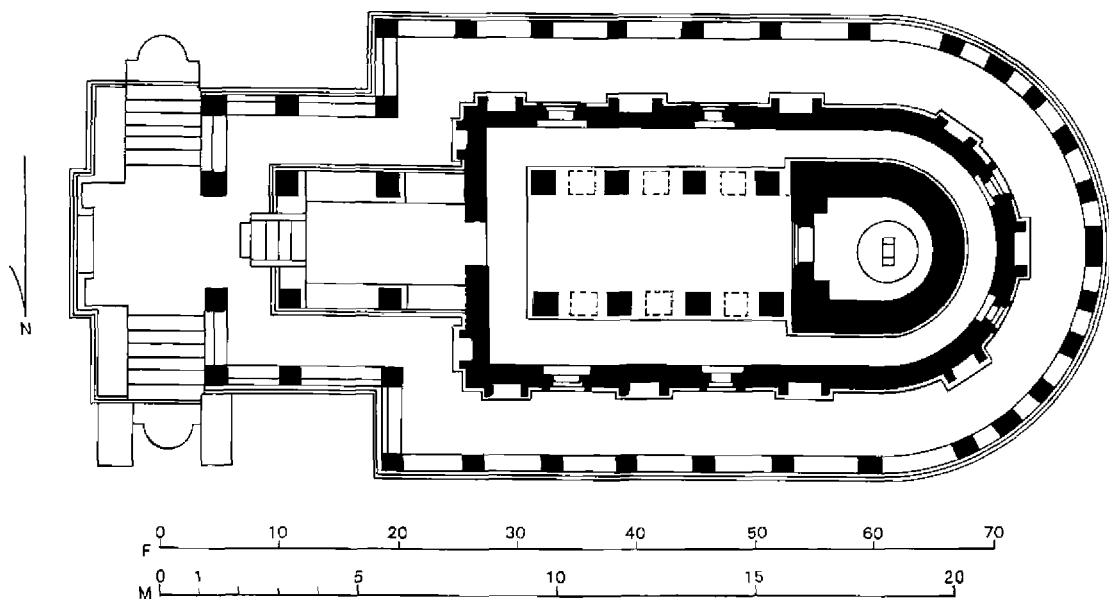
into separate units on the exterior, or, with the exception of the shrine itself, on the interior (Fig. 15.13). A northern-style *śikhara* rises above the sanctuary.

The exterior walls of the main body of the temple are articulated by niches, interspersed with latticed windows flanked by strongly modeled figure groups. These include representations of deities, such as the regents of the directions (*dikpālas*), and *mithunas* (Fig. 15.14). The decorative superstructures carved above the niches are modeled after northern-style *śikharas*, and these are interspersed with *vidyādharas*. All the carvings reflect great skill on the part of the artists, the *mithuna* couples being especially beautifully posed and softly modeled in a style derived from Gupta and post-Gupta schools. The same graceful style is seen in a representation of Śiva on the east facade of the temple that shows him as an ascetic (Fig. 15.15).

The interior of the temple is highly ornate. Pillars and ceilings are richly carved with foliate and other motifs, and the doorway to the shrine is a very complex form with multiple divisions in both jambs and lintel. A fairly open feeling



15.15. Śiva panel on east wall of Svarga Brahmā temple. Alampūr, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



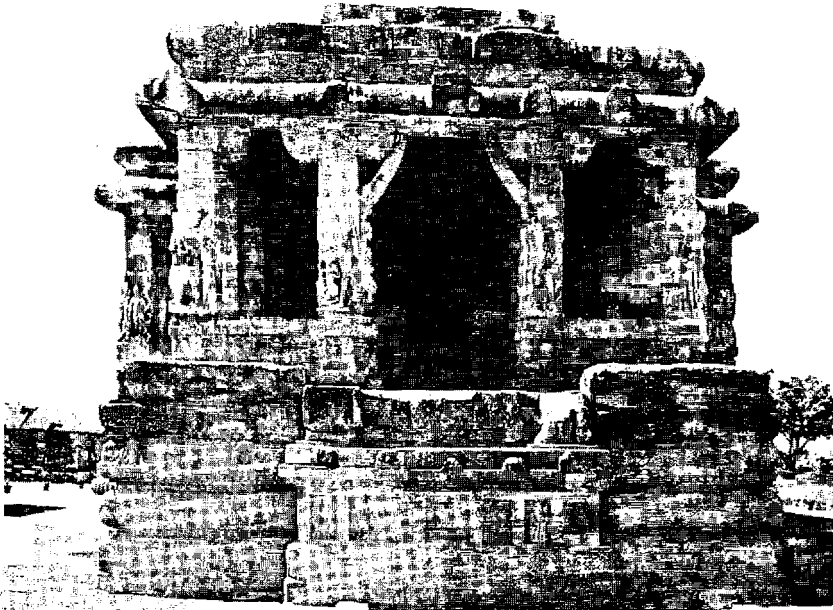
15.16. Plan of "Durgā" temple. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh-early eighth century.

exists in the temple due to the lack of articulation between the *maṇḍapa* and circumambulatory passage, which almost seems to be an extension of the *maṇḍapa* area.

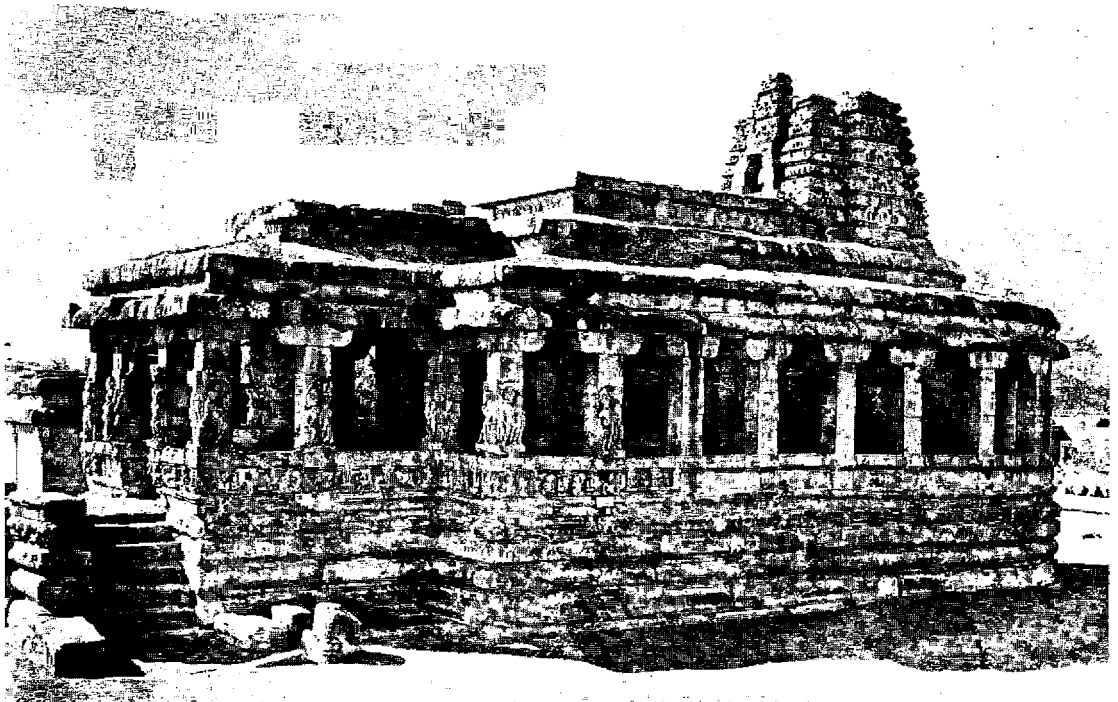
Most Early Western Calukya period temples may be considered "regular" in that they are easily categorized as being northern or southern, have conventional plans, and display a number of features that relate them to many other temples in various regional styles of South Asia. However, a few seem to be virtually unique architectural examples. Because of their aberrations, these temples have been the subject of much scholarly debate, but analysis demonstrates that these structures are well within the stylistic limits of Early Western Calukya architecture.

The so-called "Durgā" temple at Aihole (which is not dedicated to Durgā, in spite of its name, for the name refers to the nearby fort [*durgā*]), is one of the most well published of the Early Western Calukya temples. It is also one of the most enigmatic. Its apsidal shape (Fig. 15.16), while not unique (Fig. 14.28), has an unusual variation in the addition of an am-

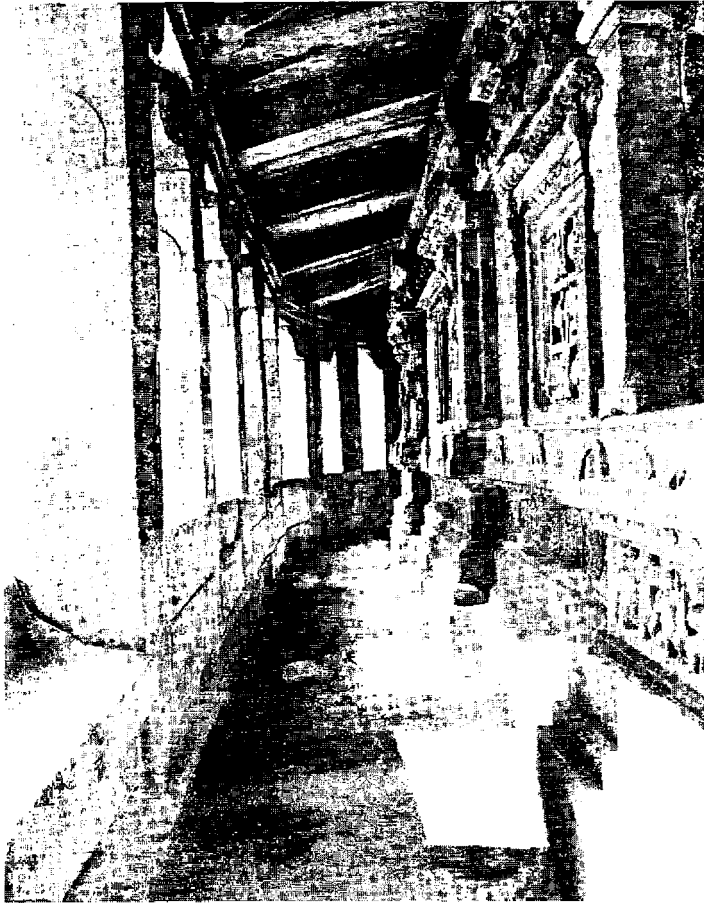
bulatory passage completely surrounding the temple. The inner form, consisting of an entrance area, a pillared hall, and a shrine with a narrow ambulatory passageway is similar to the plan of the Svarga Brahmā temple at Alampūr (Fig. 15.13). In particular, the lack of articulation between the *maṇḍapa* and circumambulatory area in both monuments is significant. The temple's east side presents a rather stunted appearance because the small scale *śikhara* is not visible from that side (Fig. 15.17). Some have contended that the present northern-style *śikhara* was not original. But its location over the shrine is similar to that of the Svarga Brahmā temple and its form is well within the stylistic limits of Early Western Calukya art. Probably, the suggestion that it was added later arose when scholars mistakenly ascribed the temple to the fifth century, a date that would have been incompatible with the *śikhara* form. The entrance porch is accessible from two staircases at the sides in the way seen earlier at Sāncī Temple 17 (Figs. 10.16, 10.17). The porch area is slightly narrower than the body of the temple itself (Fig. 15.16), although this is not particularly noticeable from the front.



15.17. "Durgā" temple from east. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh-early eighth century.



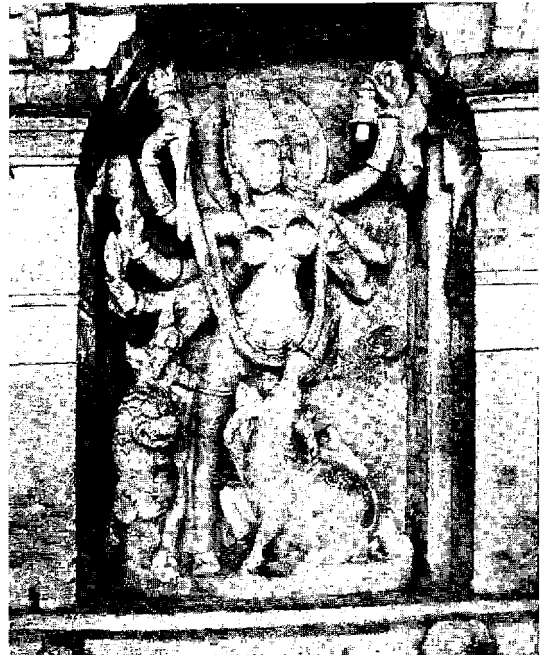
15.18. "Durgā" temple from northeast. Aihole, Karnāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh-early eighth century.



15.19. Ambulatory passage along south, "Durgā" temple. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.

15.20. Durgā Mahiṣāsura-mardini, in north section of ambulatory, "Durgā" temple. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.

Surrounding the entire temple, the ambulatory passageway has pillars around the exterior (Fig. 15.18) and from within gives the impression of being a light and airy veranda (Fig. 15.19). In niches on the solid inner wall of the ambulatory passage are placed a number of large sculptures, including both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite subjects. One image, of Durgā, in her Mahiṣāsura-mardini aspect (Fig. 15.20), shows the goddess actively posed with her lion *vāhana* beside her and her adversary, the demon Mahiṣa in the form of a buffalo. The figure of Durgā has eight arms and is deeply carved. Her full, round breasts suggest stylistic ties with earlier schools of western Deccan art. As in many other sculptures adorning Early Western Calukya monuments, a great sense of naturalism and logic pervades the work; each of the arms, for example, is posed just as an actual arm might be in nature. The date of this

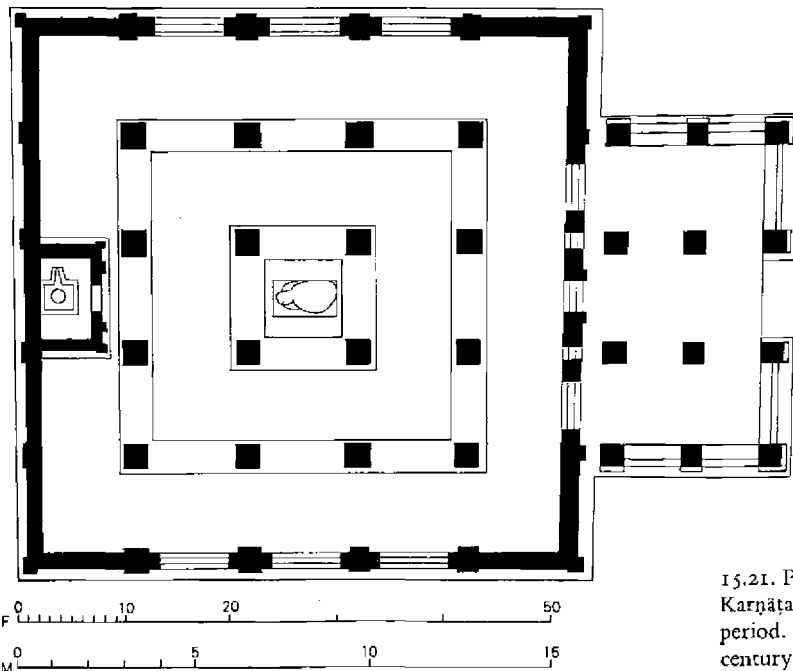


temple and its sculptures can only be surmised, but the figure style suggests affinities to late seventh and early eighth century carvings at Alampūr, as does the treatment of the *sikhara*, and a comparable date may be suggested.⁴

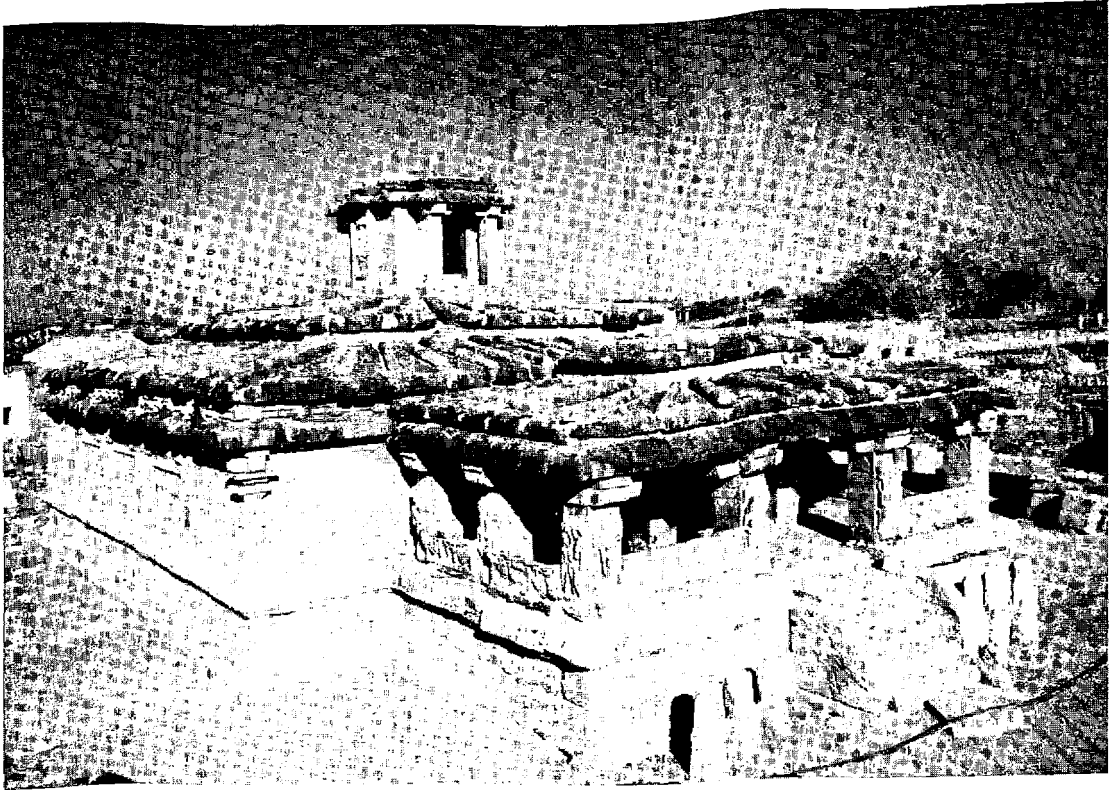
A second very famous but controversial structure is the Lād Khān temple, also at Aihole, which is unusual in both plan and form. A pillared porch precedes the large, square, pillared hall (Fig. 15.21). The two concentric squares of pillars repeat the shape of the hall itself, but the small shrine at the rear almost seems to have been added as an afterthought. Such a plan is indeed exceptional. It has been suggested that it derives from a type of village meeting hall rather than from earlier religious structures.⁵ From the front, the exterior of the temple is broader and less vertical than the Durgā temple, (Fig. 15.22). (If a *sikhara* was planned by the makers, it would have changed the appearance.) But the exterior walls of the temple are striking in their plainness, for aside from the carved pillars clustered around the entrance porch and panels above the base, the walls of the temple are relieved only by the impressive lattice windows and the thick pilasterlike forms

that are flush with the surface of the wall (Fig. 15.23). This latter feature is not unique to this temple but is seen also in a number of other monuments of the Early Western Calukya school and seems to have been one of the variants of the pilastered wall. The windows create a strikingly beautiful effect in the interior of the temple, but as a feature of Early Western Calukya art, they are also not unique since similar windows occur at Alampūr. A small second-story shrine is placed above the center of the *mandapa*.

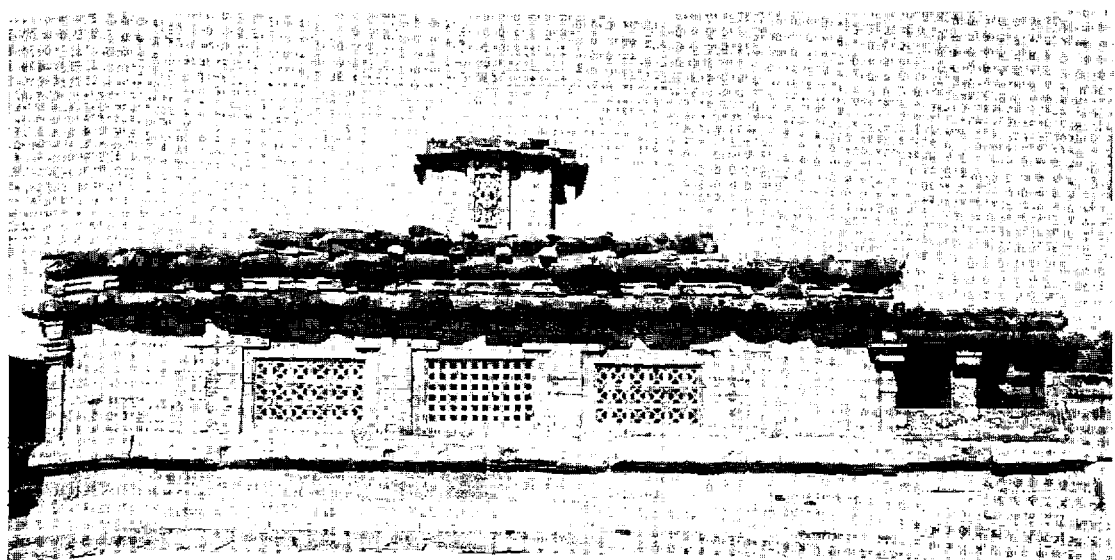
Another striking feature of this temple is the use of large stone slabs on the roof that resemble wood planks and half timbers, indicating that the ultimate model for the roof was a structural wooden building (Fig. 15.22). In this respect, as well as in the use of the central bay in the plan of the *mandapa*, the temple anticipates somewhat related structures to be found later in Kerala. It is not known to whom the temple was originally dedicated (the name Lād Khān is a much later appellation), nor has the date been agreed upon. In light of recent scholarship on Early Western Calukya architecture, however, the view that it is a monument of the fifth



15.21. Plan of Lād Khān temple. Aihole, Karnataka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



15.22. Lād Khān temple from southeast. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.



15.23. Lād Khān temple from south. Aihole, Karṇāṭaka, India. Early Western Calukya period. Ca. late seventh–early eighth century.

century cannot be supported; probably, like the "Durgā" temple, it was created in the late seventh or early eighth century.

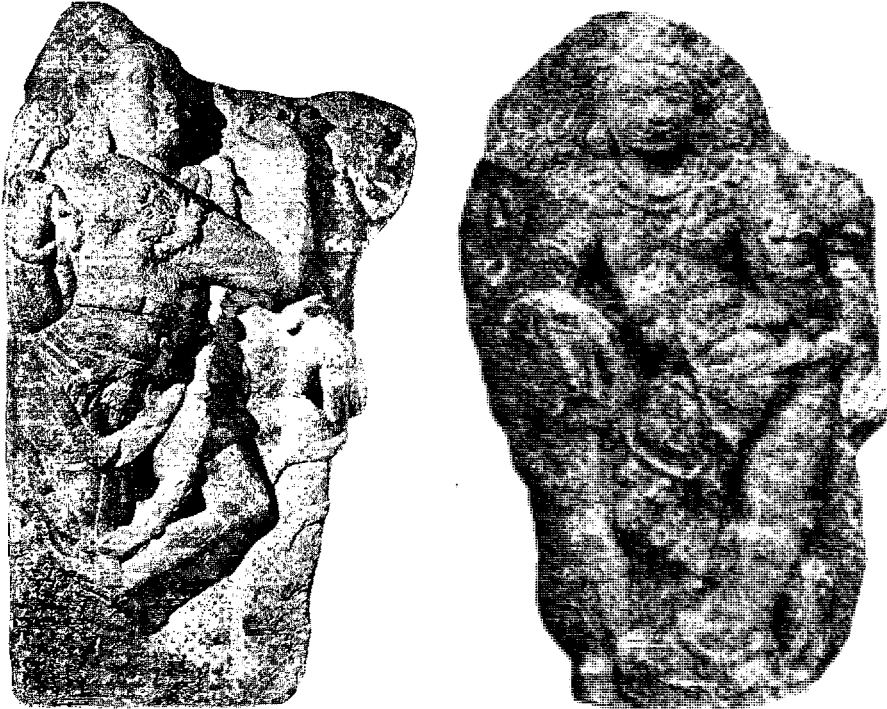
A number of features, regardless of whether they are northern, southern, or aberrant in form, seem to pervade all structural temples of the Early Western Calukya period. Most are created of rather large blocks of stone, articulated simply so that the joints are clearly visible and assembled without mortar. In proportion, most of the temples emphasize length, that is front to rear (although some are of considerable breadth as well). None creates a feeling of great height and verticality comparable to what will be seen in

later styles both in northern and southern India. Use of flat roofs over multipillared halls is also nearly universal in the larger temples; the interiors of such halls are frequently carved with ceiling panels of considerable richness. Sculptural decoration plays a much greater role in carrying out the program of the temple than it did in the Gupta and immediately post-Gupta monuments. But compared to later temples, especially those of northern India, the sculptural decoration of these structures is quite reserved, emphasizing distinctly separate important images rather than clusters of smaller ones that seem to merge together in later styles.

THE EASTERN CĀLUKYAS

Pulakeśin II of the Early Western Calukyas conquered nearly the whole of the eastern Deccan. To help him administer this large empire, he appointed his brother Viṣṇuvardhana

as viceroy of this new region, and thus, Viṣṇuvardhana, who ruled from 624 to 641, founded another line, the Eastern Cālukyas of Veṅgī, which outlived the main branch of the family



15.24. Pair of *dvārapālas*. From Vijayavāḍa, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Eastern Calukya period. Ca. seventh century. Granite. H: each ca. 200 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.

by a considerable length of time and, in fact, held the throne longer than many other more famous Indian dynasties. Pulakeśin II recognized the right of his brother to bequeath his kingdom to his descendants, and shortly after Viṣṇuvardhana had taken control of the region, his empire became independent. Although the dynasty and its history are well known through copperplate and lithic inscriptions, its art has been almost totally ignored. Yet the early phase, of concern here, shows an important blend of stylistic traditions of the Early Western Calukyas on the one hand and the indigenous heritage of Āndhra on the other. Such a link sets the stage for certain patterns that emerge in subsequent centuries spanning not only the eastern and western halves of the Deccan, but unifying features of both southern and northern art traditions into a new synthesis.

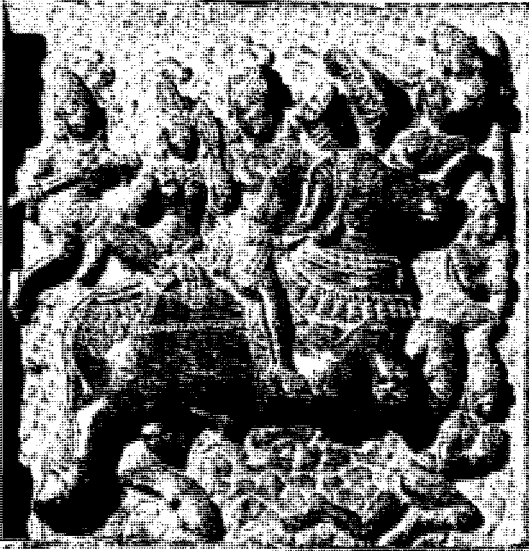
THE NOĪAMBAS

A similar blending of styles is seen in the art of another little-known ruling family, the Noīambas, whose capital was at Hemāvati in Āndhra Pradesh. Inscriptional evidence indicates that the family flourished from the eighth to the eleventh centuries.⁸ Although the Noīambas considered themselves to be a branch of the Pallavas (they called themselves the Noīamba-Pallavas), their art shows relationships not only to that of the Pallavas but also to the traditions of the Early Western Calukyas. However, the Pallava and Calukya strands are generally not visible together in any given piece; rather, separate examples reflect one style or the other.

One panel of a ceiling slab from Hemāvati shows Yama and his wife seated atop his buffalo *vāhana* moving amidst clouds and accompanied by an entourage of attendants (Fig. 15.25). The highly polished, exquisitely finished, blackish stone is characteristic of Noīamba art. The panel is part of a slab containing two other regents of the directions (*dikpālas*) that would have belonged to a set containing eight such figures in all (*aṣṭadikpālas*), probably surrounding a central panel depicting a form of Śiva. Each of the *dikpālas* is associated with a specific direction or

A pair of monolithic *dvārapālās* found at Vijayavāḍa in Āndhra Pradesh may be dated to the seventh century, probably not long after the Eastern Calukya branch was founded by Viṣṇuvardhana (Fig. 15.24). An inscription on the back of one of them (Fig. 15.24, left) mentions the sculptor Guṇḍaya of the court of the lord of Veṅgi,⁶ suggesting Eastern Calukya manufacture. In style, the figures show strong ties to strictly southern traditions, such as that of the Pallavas, especially in the animation, torsion, and differentiation of the poses. Yet the fullness of the bodies, especially seen in the right guardian, and the great degree of ornamentation are unusual among the southern modes of this and earlier times and suggest instead the heritage of the western Deccan and some of its northern stylistic sources.⁷

intermediary direction, and thus Yama, for example, is guardian of the south. Presumably, the ceiling slabs would have been arranged so that each figure was in his appropriate location, as was done when the *dikpālas* were placed on the exterior of temples. According to Vedic thought, Yama was the first man who died, reached the other world, and then became the guide of other persons to that world. The southern quarter, which he oversees, is considered to be the region of the deceased, and he is charged with evaluating the sins committed by individuals who come to his realm and dispensing appropriate punishments or rewards. Although the highly polished, close-grained stone differs from that used by the Early Western Calukyas, the treatment of the figures and their ornamentation is reminiscent of the Early Western Calukya school. The cloud motif is also seen in Early Western Calukya art, and the subject of the *dikpālas* also occurs on a number of Early Western Calukya ceilings. This carving probably dates from the ninth century, as does a representation of Śiva and his consort Umā seated side by side (*Umā-Maheśvara*), which is also from Hemāvati (Fig. 15.26). In this case, Śiva's



15.25. Ceiling panel with Yama. From Hemāvati, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Nolamba period. Ca. ninth century. Black stone. H: 77.5 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.



15.26. Uinā-Mahesvara. From Hemāvati, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Nolamba period. Ca. ninth century. Black stone. H: ca. 60 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.



15.27. Hero stone of Erega. From Hemavati, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Nolamba period. Dedicated in Śaka era 888 (A.D. 966). Black stone. H: 180.5 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.

taut torso and high headdress bespeak the southern tradition, while the full-bodied Umā is tied to western Deccan styles of the preceding centuries. In addition, this sculpture and a second nearly identical one from the same site are intriguing in their association with the format of numerous Umā-Maheśvara images from Bihār of approximately the same period (Fig. 18.26), and it is likely that the Nolambas were influenced by the Pāla-period art of that region. In particular, the rounded top of the stele and the use of a simple bead or pearl motif around the rim are typical features of eighth and ninth century Bihār images.

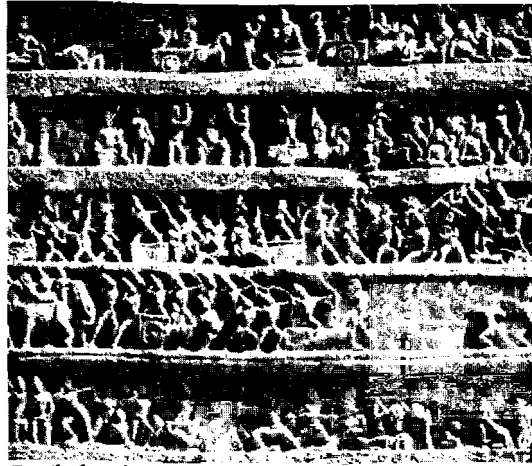
An interesting aspect of Nolamba art is the use of hero stones (*vīragals*) as memorials for warriors killed in battle. These carvings are of great interest not only because of their intrinsic meaning and form, but also because many of them bear dates that document the event being recorded and therefore serve as guideposts for the study of the development of related art works that do not bear dates. Hero stones are

known from an early time (Fig. 9.31), and seem to have been especially popular in the Deccan and the south, probably having grown up from early funerary practices. One example from Hemāvati is dated in the year Śaka 888, equivalent to 966, and shows the hero Erega, who met his death while fighting at the command of the Nolamba prince Ayyapa (Fig. 15.27).⁹ The lower panel shows the death of Erega, the middle panel depicts the hero proceeding to the hero heaven accompanied by two women, and the upper panel shows him transformed into a *deva*. A great deal of variety exists in the depictions on hero stones, although very little scholarly work has been done to make this art form understood in the broader Indic context. While on a more modest scale than the important Buddhist *stūpas* or royal funerary monuments of south India, they express a similar basic notion regarding the cause and effect relationship between how the individual lives and dies and his fate after death.

CONCLUSION

Calukya art, in all its manifestations, comprises one of the most significant corpora of South Asian art. Notable not only because of the abundance of architectural and sculptural remains, but also because of its variety of types and forms, Calukya art is also the fountainhead of a stylistic lineage traceable throughout the Deccan region from west to east and encompassing the art traditions of numerous later families. Certain characteristics popularized by the Calukyas, such as the use of "bracket figures" in

association with pillars and ceilings, remain prominent features of Deccan art throughout the centuries (Figs. 22.18, 22.28). As in the case of the Pallava art traditions, it is difficult to trace the origins and precedents of the art of the Calukyas, and therefore, to establish how much of the Calukya manifestations are their own innovations, and how much indicates a link to earlier art forms that have vanished almost without a trace.



Detail of north wall, Kailāsanātha temple.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

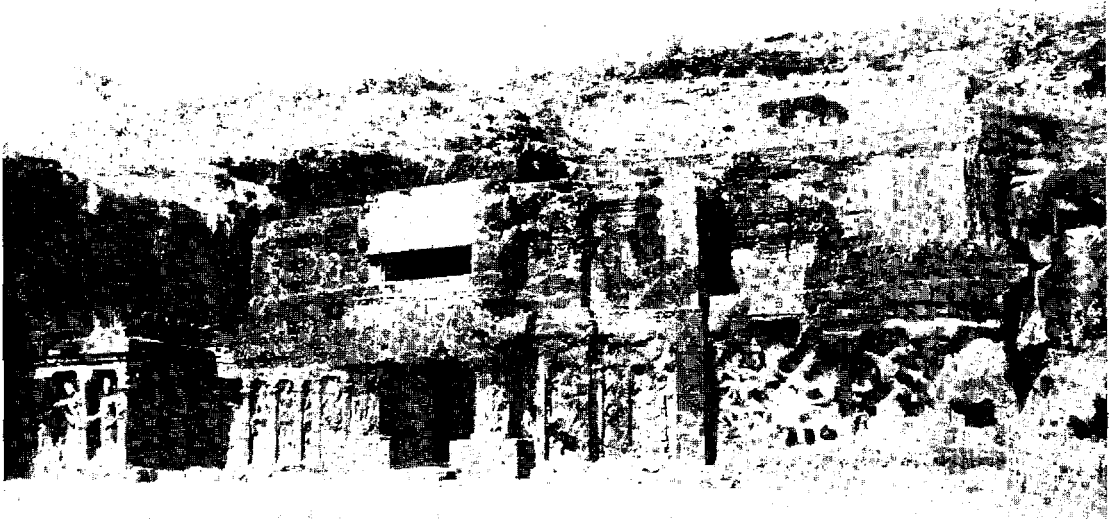
Hindu Rock-cut Architecture of the Western Deccan

ELLORA (RĀṢṬRAKŪṬA PHASE)

Control of the Deccan was taken from the Early Western Calukyas around 750¹ by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, who in this way began a hegemony that was to last more than two hundred years, until about 973. Although the political might of this family has been widely acknowledged, very little is known about the artistic developments that took place during the period of their supremacy. The principal site associated with these rulers is Ellora, where several cave excavations were carried out, apparently under their aegis. Without a doubt, the most ambitious and impressive of these—indeed, perhaps in all of South Asia—is Cave 16, the Kailāsanātha temple. One of the last important Hindu excavations, it represents not only the most striking cave temple of the more than thirty at the site, but also the culmination of rock architecture in South Asia. Its boldness suggests centuries of tradition in which carving techniques and an understanding of the rock medium were de-

veloped, enabling craftsmen to push the architectural type to its limits. The Kailāsanātha temple is more than simply a building; it is a complex with all the essential elements of contemporaneous free-standing southern-type temple units, including a main building, Nandi shrine, gateway, surrounding cloisters, and subsidiary shrines.

It is difficult to say how long it took to create the main temple and its surrounding elements or the precise sequence of the excavations. Most scholars today feel that the major portion of the monument, including the central temple and Nandi shrine, as well as perhaps the gateway, belong to the reign of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇa I, who ruled from around 757 to 773. However, it is likely that the temple was planned and begun under his predecessor, Dantidurga, since the excavation next to the Kailāsanātha, Cave 15 (the misnamed “Daś Avatār”), bears an inscription of the earlier monarch who reigned from



16.1. Kailāsanātha temple complex from west showing entrance wall and gateway. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Mainly ca. third quarter eighth century.

around 735 to 757 and the two cave monuments bear unmistakable stylistic ties to each other.² General conceptual relations between this monument and the Virūpakṣa temple at Paṭṭaḍakal (Figs. 15.3–9), which dates from approximately the fourth decade of the eighth century, further suggest a date near the middle of the eighth century for the Kailāsanātha, although the relationships between the two temples have been vastly overemphasized. Indeed, while they share certain features because they are both southern-style monuments dating from approximately the same time, the differences between them are at least as significant as those between any other two creations in the spectrum of Indic art.

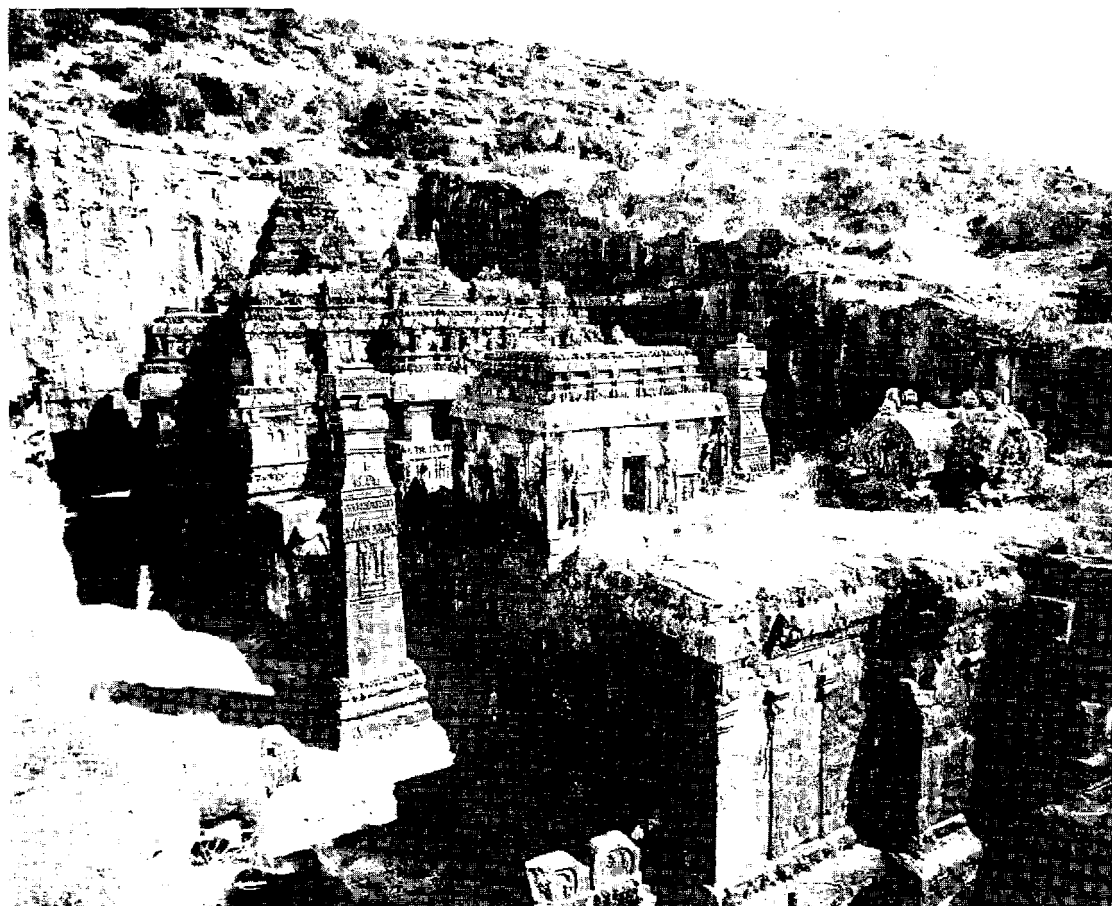
From the exterior, the temple complex is almost completely screened by a rock-cut wall with a gateway in the center (Fig. 16.1). Although now much damaged due to surface abrasion, the gateway was an important feature

here, just as it is generally in later south Indian-style temples. The southern derivation for the form is clearly seen in the pilastered niches bearing representations of various deities whose slender builds, ornamentation, pointed crowns, and facial features further indicate a southern source (Fig. 16.2). Most of the deities shown to the left of the entrance are Śaivite while those to the right are primarily Vaiṣṇavite, an arrangement also carried out in the gallery at the rear of the precinct.

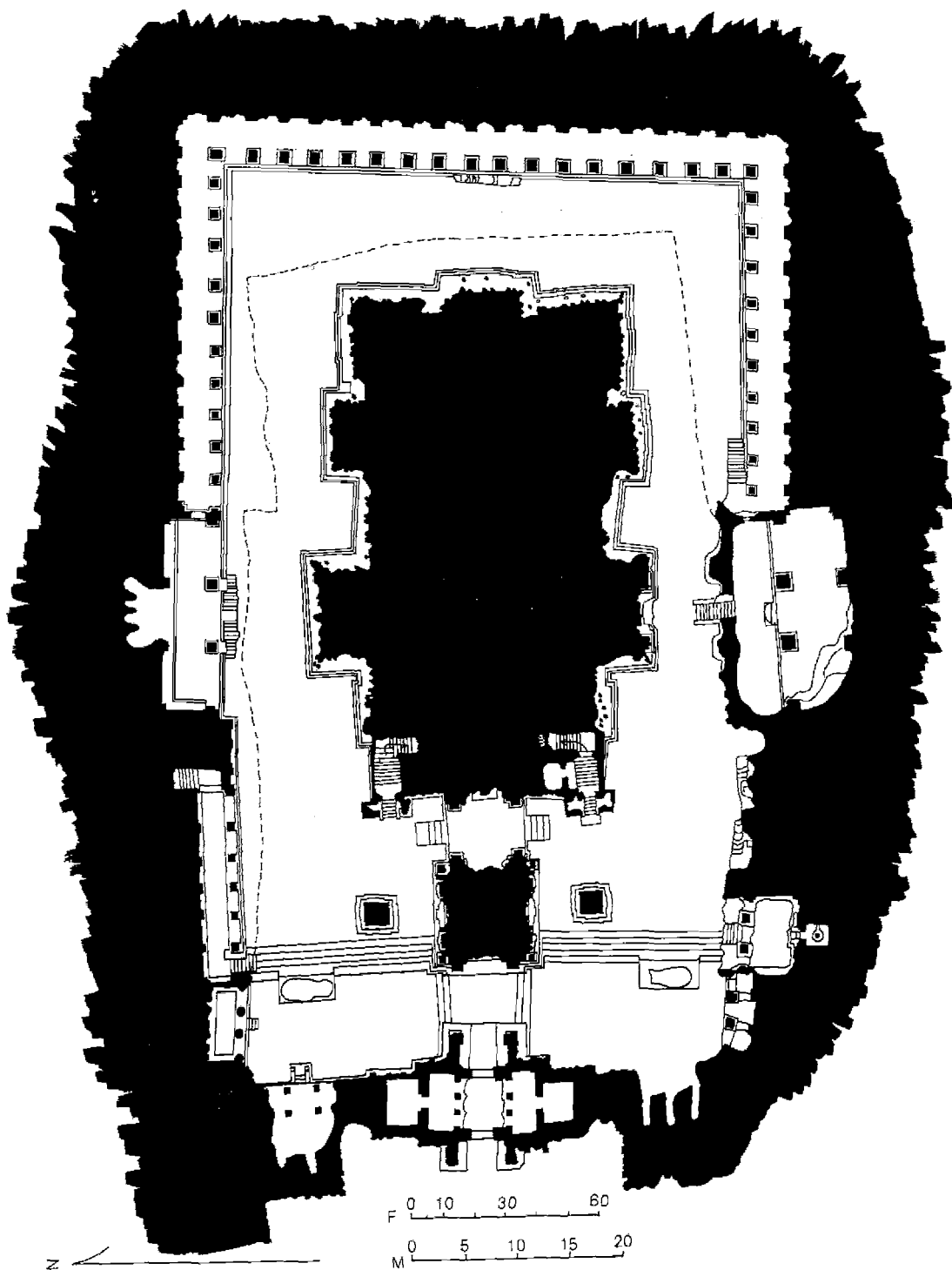
After passing through the monumental gateway in the center of the stone screen wall, the visitor enters a pit, for like the Pāṇḍya temple at Kalugumalai (Fig. 14.37), the Kailāsanātha is a totally free-standing temple within a large pit that was excavated to create a space around the central mass (Fig. 16.3). However, in contrast to the unfinished Pāṇḍya example with which the Kailāsanātha is approximately contemporaneous, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa monument is carved and



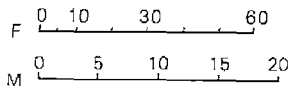
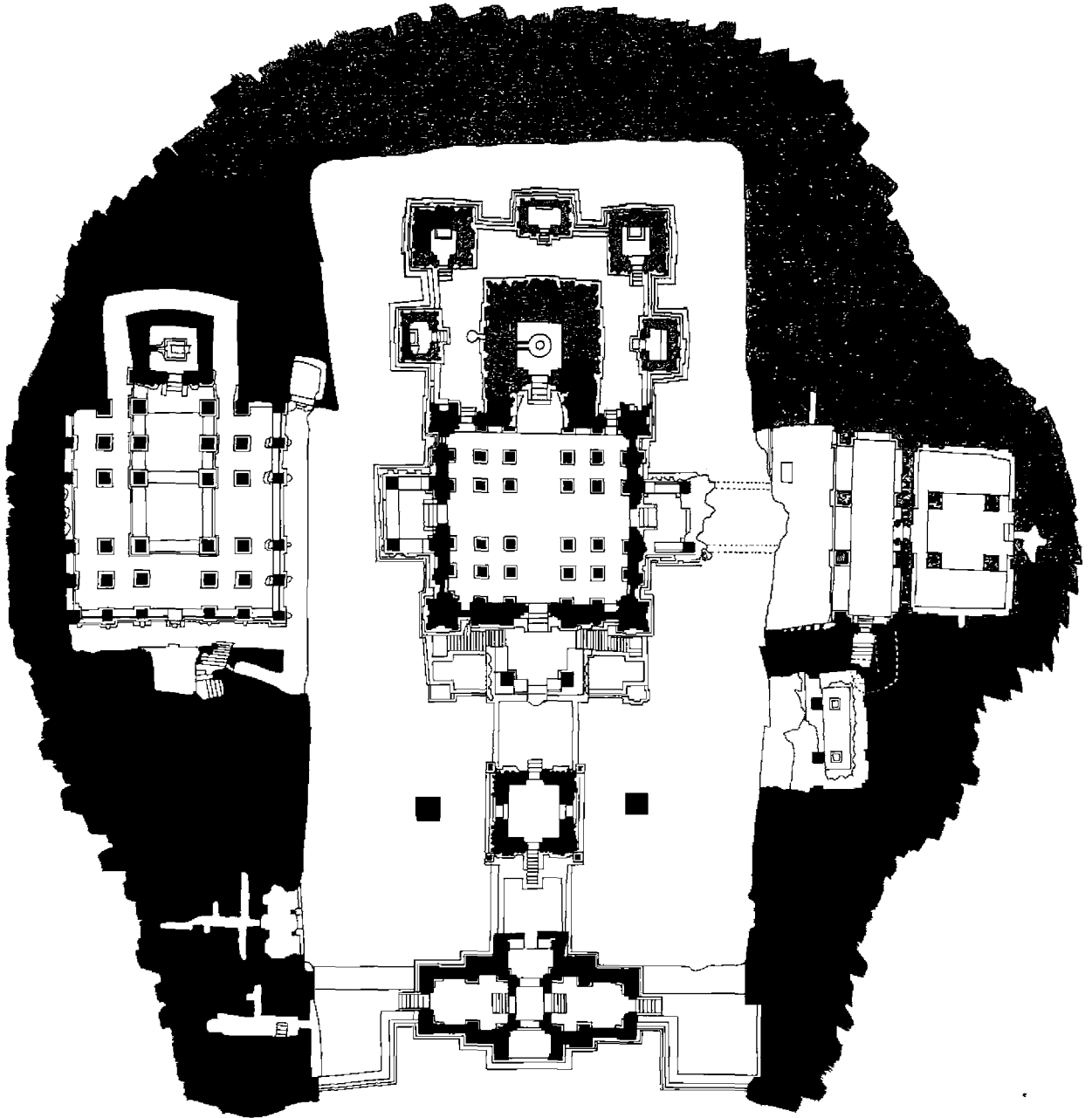
16.2. Detail, carvings to left of entrance to Kailāsanātha temple compound. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Ca. third quarter eighth century.



16.3. View of Kailāsanātha temple from northwest. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Mainly ca. third quarter eighth century.



16.4. Plans of lower story (left) and upper story (right), Kailāsanātha temple. Ellora, Māhārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Mainly ca. third quarter eighth century.



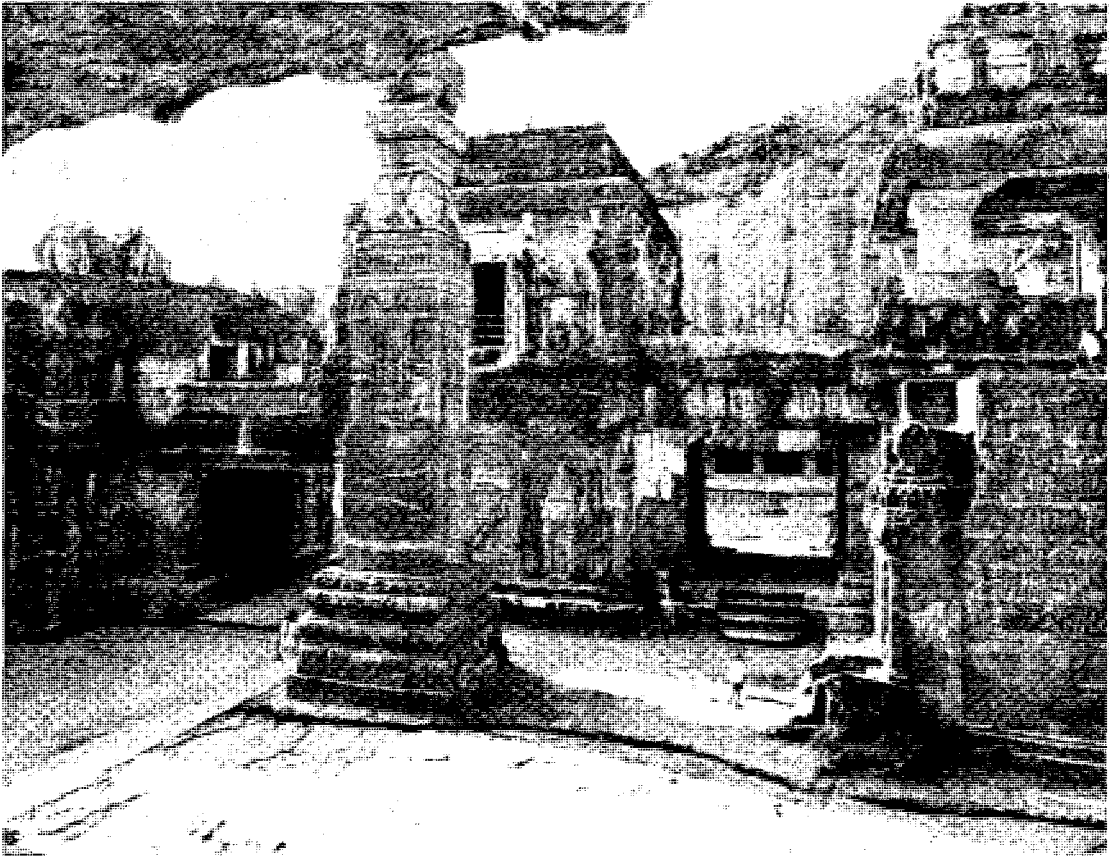
completed both inside and out. Further, subsidiary shrines, chapels, and galleries were excavated in the surrounding rock wall, creating a temple complex of overwhelming scope and ambition. Since these elements, as well as the temple parts, occur on more than one level, it is best to study the plan of the temple in two stages, the lower and upper stories (Fig. 16.4).

The lower story greatly resembles a typical south Indian temple complex in its rectangular format, yet it differs from both the Rājasimheśvara temple at Kāñcipuram and the Virūpākṣa temple at Paṭṭaḍakal in that the surrounding wall does not contain evenly spaced subsidiary shrines. Instead, it has several rather large shrines and a gallery along three sides at the rear containing huge sculpted panels. The monumental two-storied gateway providing access to the temple compound on the west is on an axis with a detached Nandi *maṇḍapa* and the temple proper. The lower stories of both the Nandi shrine and main temple are solid and cannot be entered. In plan, the lower story of the main temple seems somewhat unusual, consisting of a rectangular form with projections at the sides and rear, but the shape is clarified in the upper story, for at that level, the temple, which may be entered, breaks into its component parts: a *maṇḍapa* with sixteen pillars arranged in four groups of four to create a kind of cruciform effect for the aisles, a projecting porch at the front (west) and one on either side, and an antechamber and small cubical shrine encased in an extremely thick wall. The shrine may be circumambulated by exiting at the rear of the *maṇḍapa* and walking along an unroofed passageway that has five smaller shrines "garlanding" the central sanctum. Except for the addition of these five shrines, and the fact that the circumambulatory passage is not enclosed, the plan of the temple is quite normal and may be related to numerous monuments, both in southern and northern India. On the second level, the Nandi shrine may also be entered. The excavations in the second story of the surrounding wall do not reflect those below, a feature that is feasible in cave architecture when the relationship between the two need not be structural. Two shrines occur

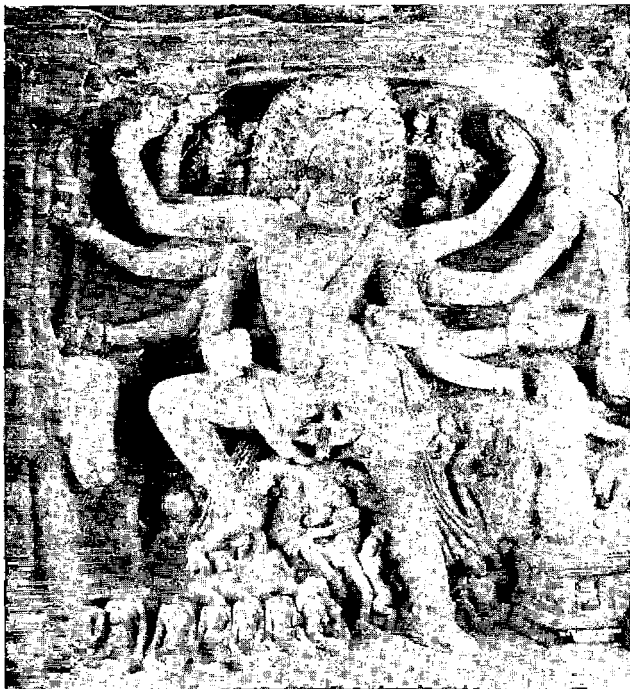
in the right wall of the pit and another temple, rivaling the Kailāsanātha itself, is located at the left. The latter excavation, called the Lañkeśvara temple, consists of a pillared *maṇḍapa* entered by stairs at the west and a shrine with an enclosed circumambulatory passageway. Like the main temple, it is dedicated to Śiva.

Stone bridges, carved from the living rock, connect the gateway, Nandi pavilion, and entrance porch of the temple so that separate stairs are not needed to visit the second story of each entity (Fig. 16.5). The main temple has a southern-style *vimāna* that is capped by a pyramidal superstructure rising in clearly defined stages and crowned by a *śikhara*. The five smaller shrines surrounding the main *vimāna* are also southern in form. The solid lower story of the Nandi temple and that of the main temple are more than seven meters high and, in the case of the main temple, has approximately life-size elephants carved around it. A pair of enormous pillars (*stambhas*) flank the Nandi pavilion; and a pair of elephants (the one at the right is badly damaged) were also rock-cut and must have been part of the original scheme since matrix had to be left for their creation.

The exterior of the temple is richly carved with niches, pilasters, windows, and cornices as well as images of deities, *mīthunas*, and other figures. Even more elaborate than the monuments of the Early Western Calukyas and Pallavas, the richness of carving suggests rapid movement toward the almost totally filled surfaces of many late Indic temples. Although the iconographic program of the temple is not fully known, most of the depictions are of Śaivite subjects, but a considerable number are Vaiṣṇavite. Interspersed with the many reliefs and figures of varying sizes on the temple surface are huge panels containing gigantic figures or tableaux. Under the stone bridge between the Nandi shrine and the temple porch, on the east side of the Nandi shrine, is a large panel showing Śiva in one of his angry aspects as destroyer of the demon, Andhakāśura (Fig. 16.6). Gracefully posed and ten-armed, Śiva holds the skin of a slain elephant behind him and is accompanied by his consort, Pārvatī (at the right), whom he fondles affectionately with one hand,



16.5. Front components of Kailāsanātha temple, from south. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Mainly ca. third quarter eighth century.



16.6. Śiva as Destroyer of Andhakāsura, Kailāsanātha temple. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Ca. third quarter eighth century.

and the *saptamātṛkās* (seven mothers), who appear as small carvings in the round at the lower left. The origin of the *saptamātṛkās* is tied into the Andhakāsura story as given in Purāṇic literature, for when Śiva attempted to slay the demon, drops of blood from the wounds of the demon created new demons as they fell to earth. The various gods sent their *śaktis* to help stop the blood, thus explaining the presence of the *saptamātṛkās*. Affinities to south Indian style carvings of the Pallavas and Early Western Calukyas are seen in the elongation of Śiva's torso with its typical roll of flesh beneath the horizontal waistband. The very full hair style is part of the iconographic convention, although the rather realistic, three-dimensional treatment of the locks of hair seems to be a tie to styles of the preceding centuries of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

Another important and huge relief shows the multiarmed, multiheaded demon Rāvaṇa shaking the sacred mountain abode of Śiva and Pārvatī, Mount Kailāsa (Fig. 16.7). Located under the porch on the south side of the *maṇḍapa* of the central temple, this relief with its approximately human-size figures and three-dimensionally carved details creates a highly dramatic effect. Its story, like many other Hindu tales, may be read on two levels. The first is a simple account of the attempt by the demon Rāvaṇa to wreak havoc on Kailāsa by shaking it and Śiva's subsequent overpowering of Rāvaṇa through the use of only his great toe. On a more sublime level, the story is an expression of faith in the unlimited power of Śiva and the reassurance that evil, no matter how strong, cannot surpass the greatness of the god. The relief shows Rāvaṇa in a cavity beneath stylized mountain forms. Śiva and Pārvatī sit atop the central cluster of rocks and Śiva's dwarves (*gaṇas*), animals, and attendants accompany them. Pārvatī, leaning toward her lord, suggests the emotional drama of the story and another female figure to Pārvatī's right seems to be running in fright into the distance. In these figures, as in most adorning the temple, clear south Indian affinities are seen in treatment of the slender body forms, high hair styles, headdresses, and ornamentation. The subject itself appears several times at Ellora in a number

of other Hindu caves. Possibly, the popular name Kailāsanātha was given to this temple because of the association with Śiva as lord of Kailāsa in this relief.⁸

The dramatic effect of the temple, enclosed within the mountain itself, is partly the result of the large and dynamic carvings, such as those discussed, at a number of key locations within the temple precinct. One of the most compelling groups is found in an excavated hall on the second level of the right wall of the temple enclosure, which is dedicated to the *saptamātṛkās* and popularly called the Hall of Sacrifice. Human-size, in the round, deeply carved representations of the *mātṛkās*, Gaṇeśa, and other figures line three walls of the shrine, virtually surrounding the devotee who might enter. Three of the best-preserved figures are on the western wall, and show Durgā at the right with her lion vehicle, a goddess seated upon a lotus pedestal in the center, and Kāla, a male skeleton with the bodies of two naked, dying men, one across his lap and another below (Fig. 16.8). In this case, the robust, fullfigured forms of the western Deccan that had been seen at sites like Ajaṇṭā and Aurangabad seem to be present, and it is evident from other portions of the Kailāsanātha complex as well that artisans of both southern and western Deccan heritage worked on the monument, although the southern style prevails. A great degree of realism, probably exploited for dramatic effect, is seen in the naked figures and especially in the depiction of Kāla. Śiva as destroyer of Andhakāsura, the story that explains the origin of the *saptamātṛkās*, is fittingly depicted to the left of this hall. The assignment of a separate shrine at a Śiva temple to the seven mothers is a feature that becomes increasingly common after this period in the Deccan and other parts of India, and is reflective of the growing importance of female imagery in Hinduism. As in Buddhism, and seen already in the rock architecture created for Buddhist establishments in the Deccan, Hinduism of the post-Gupta periods shows increasing use of female symbolism, the female essentially representing the *śakti* that is a necessary component for the achievement of release (*mokṣa*), that is, a reintegration with the Universal Principle.



16.7. Rāvaṇa Shaking Mount Kailāsa, Kailāsanātha temple. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Ca. third quarter eighth century.



16.8. *Māṭṛkās*, Kailāsanātha temple. Ellora, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. Ca. third quarter eighth century.

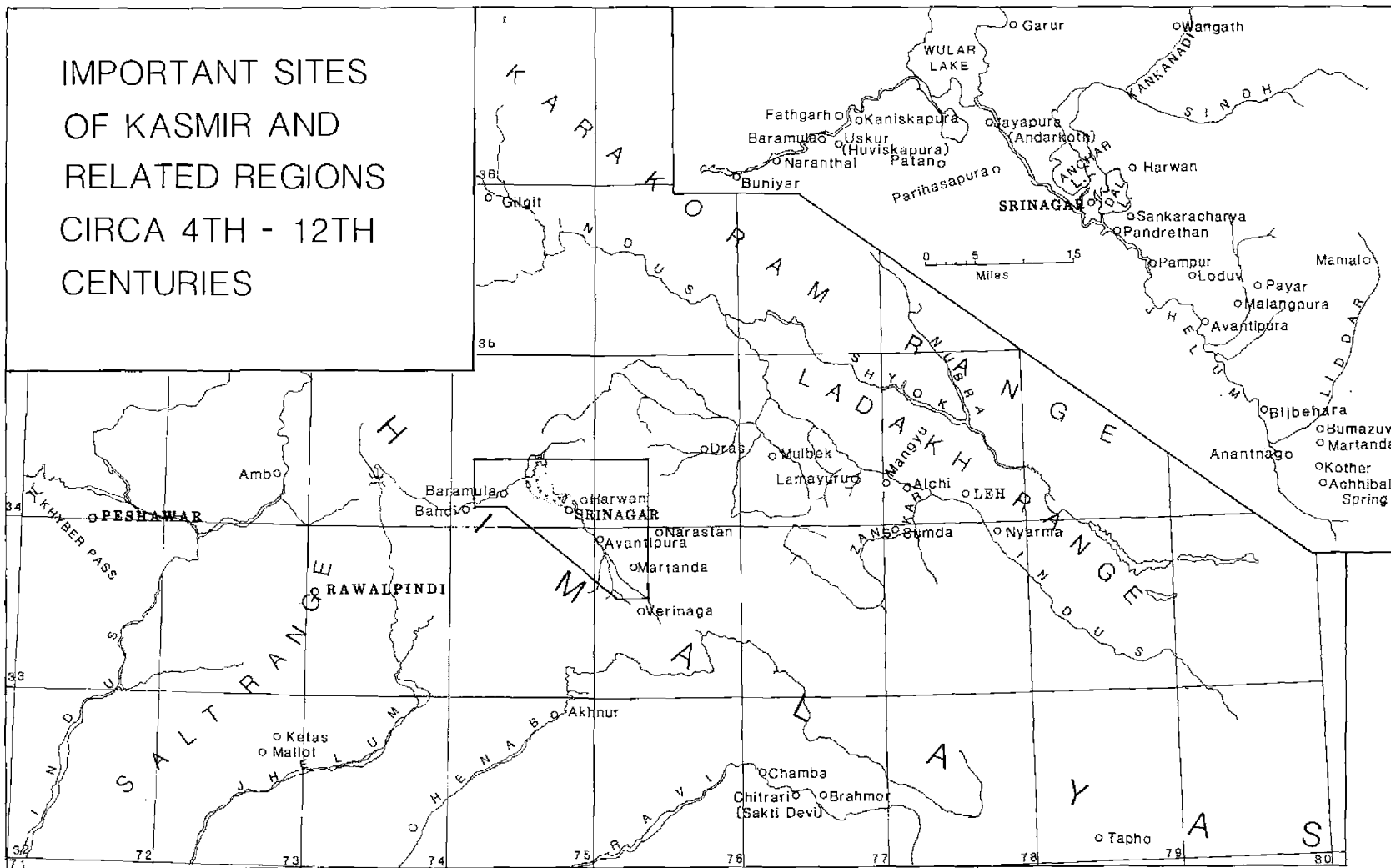
CONCLUSION

Although the Kailāsanātha temple complex is not the only monument of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty, it is certainly the most impressive. A few other caves at Ellora and some infrequently discussed structural temples throughout the Deccan are also ascribed to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period, and all of these must be thoroughly studied before the full implications of the Kailāsanātha temple are understood. The motivation behind

the creation of such an extraordinary monument is an intriguing issue, especially since a short time after it was made, Hindus virtually abandoned the rock-cut technique in favor of structural buildings. Thus, the artistic tradition ended soon after the production of one of its most remarkable achievements and never again was a rock-cut monument of such scope attempted.⁴

PART FOUR
LATER NORTHERN SCHOOLS

IMPORTANT SITES
OF KASHMIR AND
RELATED REGIONS
CIRCA 4TH - 12TH
CENTURIES





Detail of 17.23.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Kaśmīr and Related Schools

Although regional cultural variations have been discernible since the earliest beginnings of Indic civilization, they became increasingly well defined over the centuries. After the Gupta period in particular, regional art schools paralleling linguistic, cultural, and social patterns may be broadly defined according to the three major geographic divisions usually used to describe the South Asian subcontinent, that is, northern, southern, and central (Deccan). These categories should not be viewed as absolute, especially in the case of the Deccan schools, which often share characteristics of both northern and southern art, or in the case of the coastal regions, where on the east and on the west certain artistic ties may be seen from north to south, almost seeming to obviate the three divisions. Within the broad spheres of the northern, southern, and central divisions, there is a great deal of variation arising from numerous factors including strong local traditions, as seen, for example, in the case of the art of Kaśmīr, where the Bactro-Gandhāra heritage persisted

long after the art tradition of the northwest was viable. The study of the regional styles of art, then, should be based upon the premise that within each region there is some commonality, as well as upon the recognition that a great deal of variety exists within.

The Himālayan valley of Kaśmīr, although geographically secluded from the rest of South Asia, has been a part of the Indic cultural sphere since the time of Aśoka. Its geographic situation, bounded on all sides by high mountains, has led to an insularity that contributed to the development of its unique cultural characteristics. Kaśmīri art is mainly dependent on Indic idioms, modified by influences from Bactro-Gandhāra, Iran, and Inner Asia. Through these neighboring regions, influences from later western Asiatic Hellenism may also be traced. However, for all these influences, the Kaśmīri idiom was unique and earned the region a reputation throughout Asia for its sophisticated, elegant, and technically superb schools of art.

The history of Kaśmīr has been chronicled

in an important and possibly unique text relative to Indic historiography, the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. Written in about 1148¹ by Kalhaṇa, son of Caṇṇaka, a minister to King Harṣa (1089–1101) of the first Lohara dynasty, it describes the history of Kāśmīr up to the time of its writing, detailing the building of cities and temples, designating the patrons, and giving some of the underlying reasoning behind their actions. However, Kalhaṇa is mainly accurate concerning the period of his life and the immediately preceding periods, for which he seems to have been able to rely on contemporary documents. His accuracy decreases the further he extends backward in time until the chronicle becomes a jumble of legends coupled with bits of historical information for the early periods. Using this material as well as some collateral sources, however, it is possible to provide an outline of the history of Kāśmīr from the time of Aśoka to the middle of the twelfth century, against which the artistic developments may be seen.

Early traditions indicate that the Kāśmīr Valley was a part of the Maurya empire and that Aśoka himself founded the capital, Śrīnagara, at a location now known as Pāndreṭhan,² just south of modern Śrīnagar. However, no archaeological finds in Kāśmīr testify to Maurya artistic activity in the region. Only a single monarch is mentioned in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* as intervening between the Maurya and the Kuṣāṇa periods, but during Kuṣāṇa times, the history becomes more clear. Kāśmīri cities founded by the Kuṣāṇas are still known, such as Kaniṣkapura (modern Kaniṣpur) and Huiṣkapura (modern Uṣkur). Of these, Uṣkur remained an important Buddhist site for several centuries and underwent at least two major renovations, one in the late fourth century and another in the eighth. It is generally believed that Kaniṣka held the fourth Buddhist council in Kāśmīr, thereby demonstrating its importance as a Buddhist center by the second century A.D.³

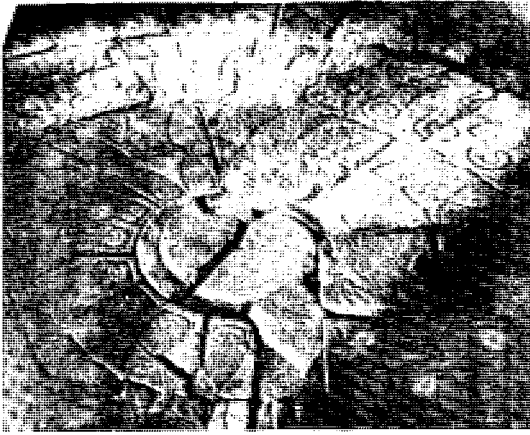
PRE-KĀRKOṬA REMAINS

The earliest site that has yielded important artistic remains is Hārwan (Hārvan), a Buddhist monastery a short distance from Śrīnagar. It is situated halfway up the slope of a mountain bordering a lateral branch of the main valley. Founded under the Kuṣāṇas, perhaps at the time of Kaniṣka's council, the monastery was apparently active for a considerable length of time. Construction techniques found at Hārwan range from carefully executed "Kuṣāṇa diaper" walls to a rather crude pebble and mud version usually assigned to the middle or late Huṇa period (mid-fifth century or later). Very little has actually survived at Hārwan, and were it not for the courtyard tiles found in association with the *caitya* hall, the site would have little to testify to its former importance. These early remains, however, already display at least two strands of the amalgam that is to become the Kāśmīri school, as they betray both western Asiatic and Gupta associations.

Of the surviving remnants at Hārwan, the *caitya* hall is the most interesting. Its plan is

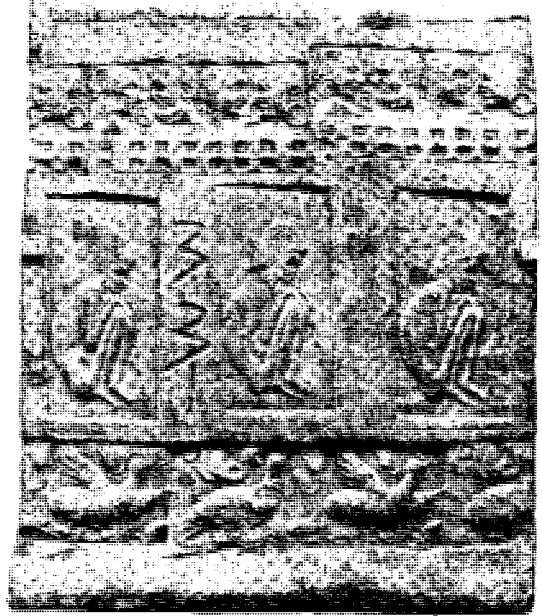
similar to that of the *caitya* hall cave at Kondivte (Fig. 5.19) except that there is no surviving evidence of the presence of the *stūpa*. What remains is a low section of the wall and original floor of the courtyard, which were faced with stamped clay tiles (Fig. 17.1). The floor tiles were arranged to suggest the form of an enormous open lotus, which may have represented the transcendent cosmic lotus, along with border and other motifs. The center of the lotus has a low raised area with a hole in the middle of it, as if it served as a stand or support.

Kāśmīr's associations with both the northern Indian art schools and those of western Inner Asia are evident from the tiles, as seen in a rather common type of Hārwan tile that shows three seated ascetics in the central band, with a row of geese (*hamsa*) below and a railing with figures above (Fig. 17.2). The geese motif was known in ancient Indic art since the Maurya period (Fig. 4.10) and the portrayal of figures conversing above a railing was well established by the Kuṣāṇa period at Mathurā. However,



17.1. Section of tile floor of *caitya* hall. Hārwan, Kaśmīr, India. Ca. fourth century. Terra cotta.

17.2. Floor tile. From Hārwan, Kaśmīr, India. Ca. fourth century. Stamped terra cotta. H: 53.4 cm. Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome.



the rather distinctive facial types of the conversing figures are probably derived from the more naturalistic renderings of the Bactro-Gandhāra regions of the northwest, here reduced to almost caricaturelike renderings, and not the Mathurā style. The ascetic type, too, might be traced to the earlier art of the northwestern portions of the subcontinent. The numerals on the tiles, which may have been used to expedite the process of correctly placing them in their original contexts, are in the Kharoṣṭhī script, which was prevalent in the northwest. The use of this script suggests that the Kidara ("Little") Kuṣāṇas, a branch of the main family, were still in power or had recently controlled the region. This would confirm the usual fourth-century dating for the tiles, a suggestion that is also supported by the treatment of the foliate motifs in the band of geese, which resembles Gupta-period examples from north and north-central India.

Other important pre-Kārkoṭa-period sites are Akhnur and Uṣkur, ancient Huviṣkapura, which was founded by the Kuṣāṇa emperor Huviṣka in the second century A.D. The surviving sculpture heads from these sites,⁴ such as the

one illustrated (Fig. 17.3), have stimulated some debate regarding their age, but their relationship stylistically to materials from Haḍḍa suggests that they were produced in the late fifth or early sixth century. Slightly fuller facial features and a softening of the details distinguish these works from Haḍḍa examples. A few pieces show a strong relationship to the Gupta idiom of the late fifth century, especially in the softly modeled facial features, although a range in styles suggests either different periods of production, or, alternatively, that artists of separate traditions worked at the site. These examples of the modeler's art may be considered representative of a major art form in Kaśmīr during the pre-Kārkoṭa period.

Very few stone sculptures have been found that belong to the pre-Kārkoṭa period, yet an isolated carving representing Kārṭtikeya, from Bijbehara, documents the existence of a mature stone sculpture idiom from that time (Fig. 17.4). The image is not a tentative experiment by a sculptor reaching for forms half-realized in the creative moment. On the contrary, it demonstrates a sense of sure completion by a master

17.3. Head. From Akhnur, Kaśmīr, India. Ca. late fifth or early sixth century. Terra cotta. H: 11.5 cm. National Museum, Karachi.



17.4. Kārttikeya. From Bijbehara, Kaśmīr, India. Ca. fifth or sixth century. Grey-black stone. H: 103.5 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.



17.5. Buddha. Provenance unknown. From northwest India or Pakistan. Ca. mid-fifth to mid-sixth century. Metal. H: 32.4 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.

skilled in his craft and confident of his technical and visual solutions. Although the date of the piece is uncertain, very late Sassano-Iranian elements in the treatment of the streamers at the sides of the head and the detailing of the girdle and dagger with their pearl ornamentation suggest that this is a work from the Hūṇa period, approximately fifth or sixth century, since these elements are emphasized on Hūṇa coins. The relatively Hellenistic treatment of the torso and rather muscular body, along with the deep folds of the garment, are reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa-period works from Gandhāra and Bactria, revealing Kaśmīr's artistic debt to that tradition. However, other features demonstrate that the Kaśmīri style was also touched by the Gupta schools of northern and north-central India. The husky, stocky body build and detailing of the anatomy, while ultimately based on the muscular body-type popularized in Kuṣāṇa-period works, along with the full form of the now badly battered face, suggest works of the fifth century like those at Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh.

A few metal images are also known from this period, including a standing Buddha displaying

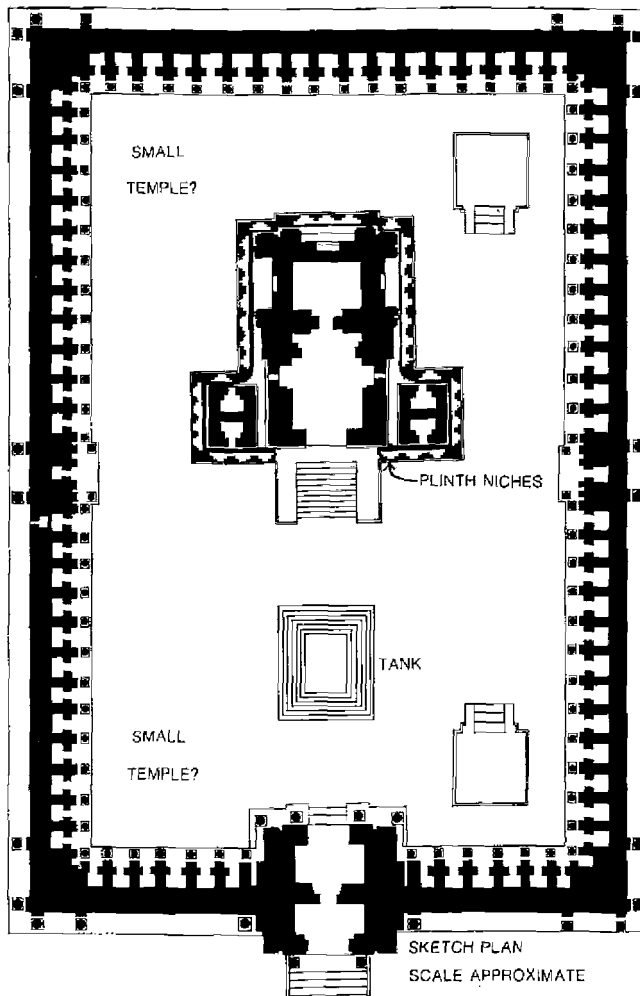
abhaya mudrā in the Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum (Fig. 17.5). Although its findspot and place of manufacture are uncertain, it was collected at a time when the museum's attention was entirely focused on the provinces of Kaśmīr, Jammu, and to some degree Ladākh, and it is reasonable to assume that it came from one of these three regions. The features of the face, treatment of the robe, and proportions of the body are related to forms widely found in Bactro-Gandhāra images. Further, the compressed stature of the figure, the heaviness of the drapery (which obscures the forms of the body), and the large size of the hands and feet all suggest the Bactro-Gandhāra style of around the fourth century. However, there is a fullness to the features of the face, especially the cheeks and lips, that is more appropriately identified as fifth or sixth century, and thus a date of 450–550 may be postulated. Although rather strictly in the Bactro-Gandhāra style, the image provides important evidence of a stylistic source for later Kaśmīri sculpture and painting, whether or not it was actually made in Kaśmīr.

THE KĀRKOṬA PERIOD (CA. 625 TO 855)

While there was undoubtedly a great deal of artistic activity during the early part of the Kārkoṭa period, it is not until the reign of Lalitāditya (ca. 724–50) that monuments may be assigned to a particular patronage. According to the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, Lalitāditya conquered most of north India to the Bay of Bengal. These military adventures were probably massive raiding and looting expeditions rather than true conquests. As a result of them, however, Lalitāditya carried back to Kaśmīr inestimable treasure, mostly in the form of gold, silver, and bronze. The vast wealth accrued by Lalitāditya must have been a major factor in stimulating large-scale art production during the eighth century in Kaśmīr. Some authors attribute virtually any eighth century monument or sculpture to the period of Lalitāditya, but two monarchs before him also had long and prosperous reigns. Both Durlabhavardhana (ca. 625–61) and Pratā-

pāditya II (ca. 661–711) could have founded the Kārkoṭa tradition of monument building prior to the reign of Lalitāditya. Further, it is possible that several of his successors followed in his footsteps by constructing temples and patronizing monasteries. The fact remains, however, that the eighth century was a major period of temple construction, using durable materials, largely attributable to the wealth and power of Lalitāditya.

The remains at Mārtāṇḍa probably date from the period of Lalitāditya. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* is quite explicit on the subject, for in the section on Lalitāditya it states that "That liberal [king] built the wonderful [shrine] of Mārtāṇḍa, with its massive walls of stone within a lofty enclosure (*prāsādāntar*)."⁵ Lalitāditya, however, was not the founder of the site, for his work there was a reconstruction of an earlier temple, perhaps of the sixth century, that is now com-



17.6. Plan of Mārtāṇḍa temple. Mārtāṇḍa, Kaśmīr, India. Kārkoṭa period, probably reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century.

17.7. Mārtāṇḍa temple from west. Mārtāṇḍa, Kaśmīr, India. Kārkoṭa period, probably reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century. ▷

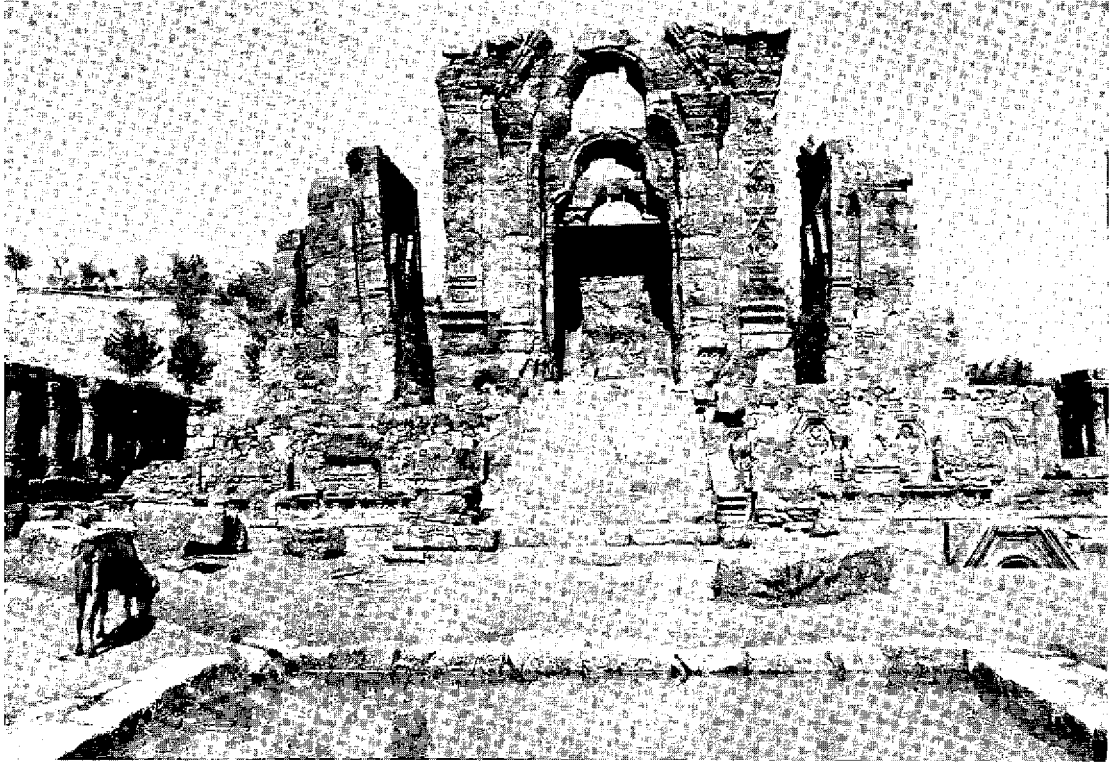
17.8. North peristyle, Mārtāṇḍa temple. Mārtāṇḍa, Kaśmīr, India. Kārkoṭa period, probably reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century. ▷

pletely lost. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* further reveals that the temple was dedicated to the deity of the sun, Sūrya, who is called Mārtāṇḍa in the text.⁶

The temple is rectangular in plan, consisting of a *maṇḍapa* and a shrine (Figs. 17.6, 17.7). Two double shrines flank the *maṇḍapa* on the western end. It is enclosed in a vast courtyard by a peristyle wall having eighty-four secondary shrines in it. The columns of this peristyle are fluted, and their bases and capitals are clearly reminiscent of Syrio-Roman types (Fig. 17.8). There is a gate to the compound on the west, and major secondary shrines in the center of each of the two side walls. Each of the eighty-four niches originally contained an image, probably of some form of Sūrya, and more depictions

of Sūrya were placed around the plinth of the temple. The iconography is Mārtāṇḍa/Sūrya as the Universal, with the temple's central image conceived of as emanating the secondary images.

Architecturally, the temple and its successors have generated much discussion regarding the source of their forms. Early writers, like Sir Alexander Cunningham, saw the Kaśmīrī style as a manifestation of Greek styles.⁷ But such relationships do not necessarily imply new infusions of influence. Hellenizing elements are obviously present in the architectural details of the temple such as the pediment motif and trilobate arches (Fig. 17.7), the surrounding peristyle, the vaulted arches, and the engaged columns. The use of these forms reflects western



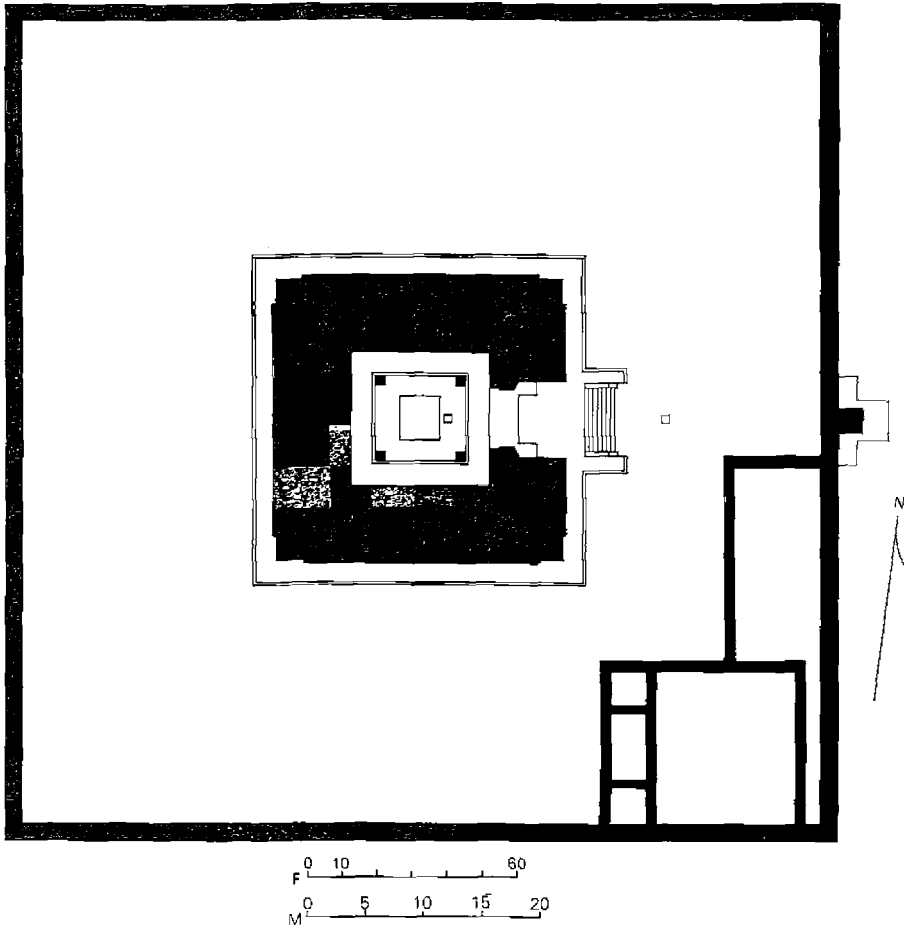
Asiatic tastes, and especially idioms that had been present in Gandhāra, Bactria, and other regions of the northwest. The peaked roof and pyramidal section of pediments were known in Bactro-Gandhāra art since the Parthian period; a good example of a monument that bears this motif is the Stūpa of the Double-headed Eagle (Fig. 7.8). These later survivals in Kaśmīr should come as no surprise, in light of the history of the region and its association with adjacent areas.

Mārtāṇḍa is one of the earliest and yet largest of the Kaśmīri stone temples known to have existed. It is likely, however, that it was not innovative in design but simply reflected established architectural traditions, probably primarily in wood. Since the Parthian-period traditions at Taxila reveal similar architectural orders, it may be assumed that the basic style had been present in the immediate vicinity since the first century of the Christian era and that it was very much the local convention by the eighth century. Thus Mārtāṇḍa is an expression of the contemporaneous trends in Kaśmīr, while at the same time it clearly displays its heritage in Bactro-Gandhāra and ultimately other western Asiatic sources.

In the eighth century, Kaśmīr was a major center of Buddhism whose influence was felt widely throughout north and eastern Asia. At the epicenter of Kaśmīri Buddhism was the site of Parihāsapura, whose monuments, though today barely known, served as models all across Asia from the Pamir Mountains to Japan. Although much destroyed, Parihāsapura still gives the visitor a sense of its former grandeur, for the scale of the remains is truly impressive. Originally, there was much more to the site than just the three surviving basements of Buddhist buildings would indicate. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* describes the town as "mocking the residence of Indra" (in Trāyastriṃśa paradise) and tells of the images made by King Lalitāditya for the various temples, including a representation of Viṣṇu as *Muktākeśava*, one of Viṣṇu as *Parihāsakeśava* (the patron of the city), and a *Bṛhad* Buddha (Great Buddha), the three made respectively of eighty-four thousand *tolakas* of gold (about five tons), eighty-four thousand *palas* of silver (about twenty-one tons) and eighty-four

thousand *prasthas* of copper (nearly three hundred tons),⁸ the number eighty-four thousand being a convention used to designate a vast quantity and not a literal measurement. Lavish expenditures of this sort, even if exaggerated, can only come when there is tremendous income to the kingdom, suggesting the veracity of the claims of Lalitāditya's conquests.

None of these images survives today, but the remains of the *caitya* built by Lalitāditya, which would have housed the *Bṛhad* Buddha, verify the claims regarding the size of the Buddha image. The plan of the structure (Fig. 17.9) is known from the surviving plinth, which had a series of eight stairs on the east side giving access to the top. A *pradakṣiṇapatha* around the massive block that originally supported the Buddha would have allowed circumambulation around the main figure. The original appearance of the building may be inferred from a painting at Alchi that is believed to depict this monument (Pl. 19),⁹ a suggestion supported by the internal evidence of the dimensions and form of the plan as determined by the foundations, the thickness of the remaining wall, and textual evidence. The height of the structure was probably between thirty and forty meters, and in style, it may have resembled contemporaneous Kaśmīri structures characterized by a peaked roof, like that shown in the Alchi painting. The enormous image of the Buddha, which may have stood thirty meters tall, reflected certain religious concepts sweeping Asia during this period in which the Universal Buddha (presumably Vairocana) was seen as a *Bṛhad* Buddha. That the type must have been common in the Indic sphere is indicated by preserved examples in stucco, as at Nālandā in eastern India, or stone, such as at Kānheri (Fig. 12.24) and Bāmiyān (Fig. 10.25). However, metal examples have survived only outside the Indic context, but a common source in India for these traditions can hardly be disputed since all of the regions in which the *Bṛhad* Buddha convention is found were in contact with ancient India as a source of Buddhological information. The image commissioned by Lalitāditya must have been incredibly impressive—a metal figure, probably gilded or of the yellowish color of

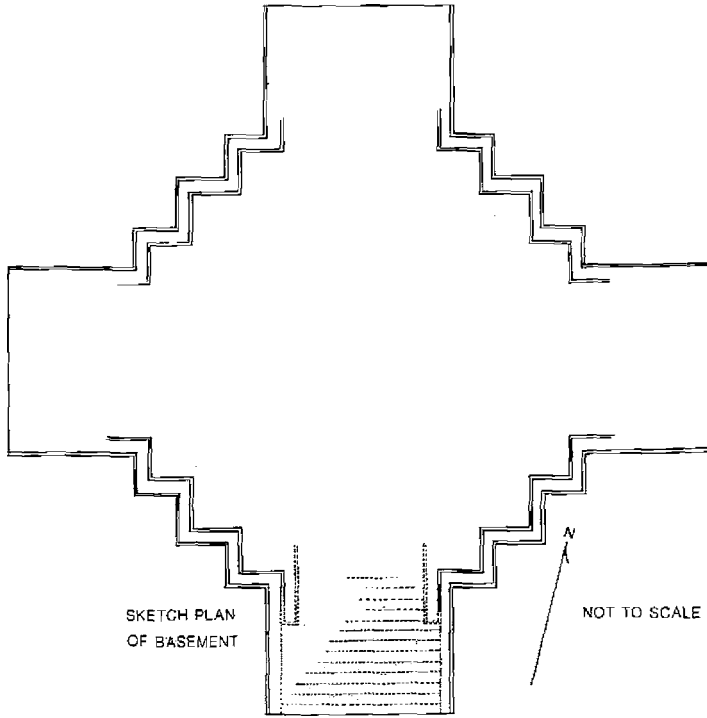


17.9. Plan of Lalitāditya's *caitya*. Parihāsapura, Kaśmīr, India. Kār-koṭa period, reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century.

most Kaśmīri metal work, larger than most people had ever seen or conceived of, resplendent as the morning sunlight reflected from it. One can scarcely imagine the awe and overwhelming sense of the majesty of the Buddha that a devotee must have felt as he stood at the feet of the Buddha and looked up to the image "which reached up to the sky."¹⁰

Another monument at Parihāsapura, the *stūpa* built by Caṅkuṇa, who was the Tokhārian minister of Lalitāditya, is also notable for its size and lavishness. In the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* it is described as "loftier even than the mind of the king."¹¹ In context, the reference to the mind of the king might actually be to the *caitya* of Lalitāditya, which would have been raised as an expression

of Lalitāditya's understanding of Buddhism. Thus, Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa* might have been both taller than the *caitya* of the king and superior to it due to Caṅkuṇa's implied understanding of Buddhism. As in the case of Lalitāditya's *caitya*, little remains of the original monument, although again, other evidence, including textual descriptions, enables us to make inferences about its form. Specifically, a second structure depicted in the Alchi composition (Pl. 19) almost certainly represents Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa*, for the two monuments at Parihāsapura must have stood as twin paragons of Kaśmīri Buddhist architecture for generations after their creation. The *stūpa* shown in the Alchi painting seems to rest on a complex base suggestive of the cruciform *pañcaratha* plan



17.10. Plan of Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa*. Parihāsapura, Kaśmīr, India. Kārkōṭa period, reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century.

revealed by the surviving foundations (Fig. 17.10).

A number of stone sculptures have been found in association with Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa*, although their original locations on the monument are not known. Several, including the one illustrated here (Fig. 17.11), are representations of crowned Buddhas. Although examples of this subject are known at least from the sixth century, the crowned Buddha had become a well-known iconographic form in Buddhist art not only in Kaśmīr but in other parts of ancient India and Asia by the eighth century. The crown, necklace, and earrings usually found on these figures do not indicate a contradiction of asceticism or an adoption of a materialistic view within the religion. Rather, these ornaments symbolize the highest achievement, Universality, and therefore, although these figures embody the principle of historical Buddhas (*nirmāṇakāya*), they are also depictions of *jinas* (*sambhogakāya*) and especially of the Ādi Buddha *svābhāvīkākāya* (self-originated). Crowned Buddha figures invariably wear the normal robe of a Buddha and thus cannot be confused with bodhisattvas in art.

Stylistically, the figure betrays the Kaśmīri artist's debt to the traditions of the Bactro-Gandhāra region, which are especially visible in the togalike garment with its emphasized folds over the torso. The rather muscular forms of the body and slight *contrapposto* pose reveal further ties to the traditions of the northwest. However, the clinging manner in which the drapery reveals the forms of the body beneath clearly demonstrates an overlay of Gupta-period aesthetics. Even the downcast eyes, albeit on a western Inner Asian facial type, are reminiscent of Gupta formulations. The crown, with its pearl designs and Sassanid-type streamers, suggests further associations between Kaśmīr and the western Asian realms.

Another important site of the Kārkōṭa period is Pāndreṭhan, where Aśoka is believed to have founded a capital, and that was often patronized by the ruling monarchs of Kaśmīr. As at many Kaśmīri sites, both Buddhist and Hindu remains have come to light at Pāndreṭhan. A small but nearly perfectly intact Hindu temple at Pāndreṭhan was probably built in the eighth or ninth century, although it is commonly

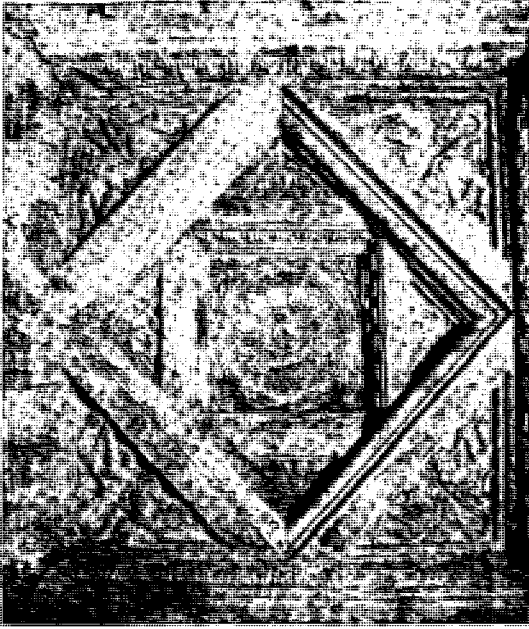


17.11. Crowned Buddha. From Parihāsapura, Kaśmīr, India. From Caṅkuna's *stūpa*. Kārkōṭa period, reign of Lalitāditya. Ca. second quarter eighth century. Stone. H. 128.2 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.



17.12. Hindu temple, from west. Pāndreṭhan, Kaśmīr, India. Possibly Kārkōṭa period. Ca. eighth–ninth century.

ascribed to the tenth through twelfth centuries (Fig. 17.12).¹² The temple illustrates in modellers simplicity the basic format of architectural orders identifiable in Kaśmīr since the eighth century, but that derived from a long-standing wooden architecture tradition. The peaked, gabled roof is especially suitable for the snowy Himālayan winters. While the specific forms are modified over time in features such as the width of the central arch or slope of the roof, it is this roof type that is especially characteristic of the Kaśmīri style. The temple rests on a plinth built in the center of a tank; the wall of the tank parallels the shape of the plinth with its offset sides. In contrast to many other temple traditions of the post-Gupta periods, the sculptural decoration of the monument is simple. A row of carved elephants at the base of the central shrine and the decoration of the doorway, pilasters, and a few features of the roof comprise the major embellishment of the structure. The figure of Lakulīṣa above the lintel of the doorway indicates that the monument was probably a Śiva temple erected for the Pāsupata sect. The interior of the temple is also simple except for



17.13. Ceiling panel, Hindu temple. Pandrethan, Kaśmīr, India. Possibly Kārkoṭa period. Ca. eighth-ninth century.

a beautifully carved ceiling panel (Fig. 17.13). Clearly based on wooden prototypes, and ultimately derived from the "lantern-roof" type of western Inner Asia, this type of ceiling becomes a standard feature in many northern Indian temple schools. In this example, *vidyādhara* couples seem to serve as atlantids, supporting the architectural beams of the recessed squares. The *vidyādhara*s supporting the central square are much smaller in scale than those at the four exterior corners of the ceiling and those around the central lotus panel are still smaller. Thus, the effect of distance, or rather implied height, is provided for the configuration. The *vidyādhara*s in particular seem to support an eighth to ninth century date for the temple, for the softly modeled, fleshy bodies, simple jewelry, and elaborate, curly coiffures suggest the imagery of this period throughout northern and north-central India.

A number of isolated stone sculptures recovered from Pāndrethan also seem to date from this period, around the late eighth or early ninth century. An image of Indrāṇī, the consort of



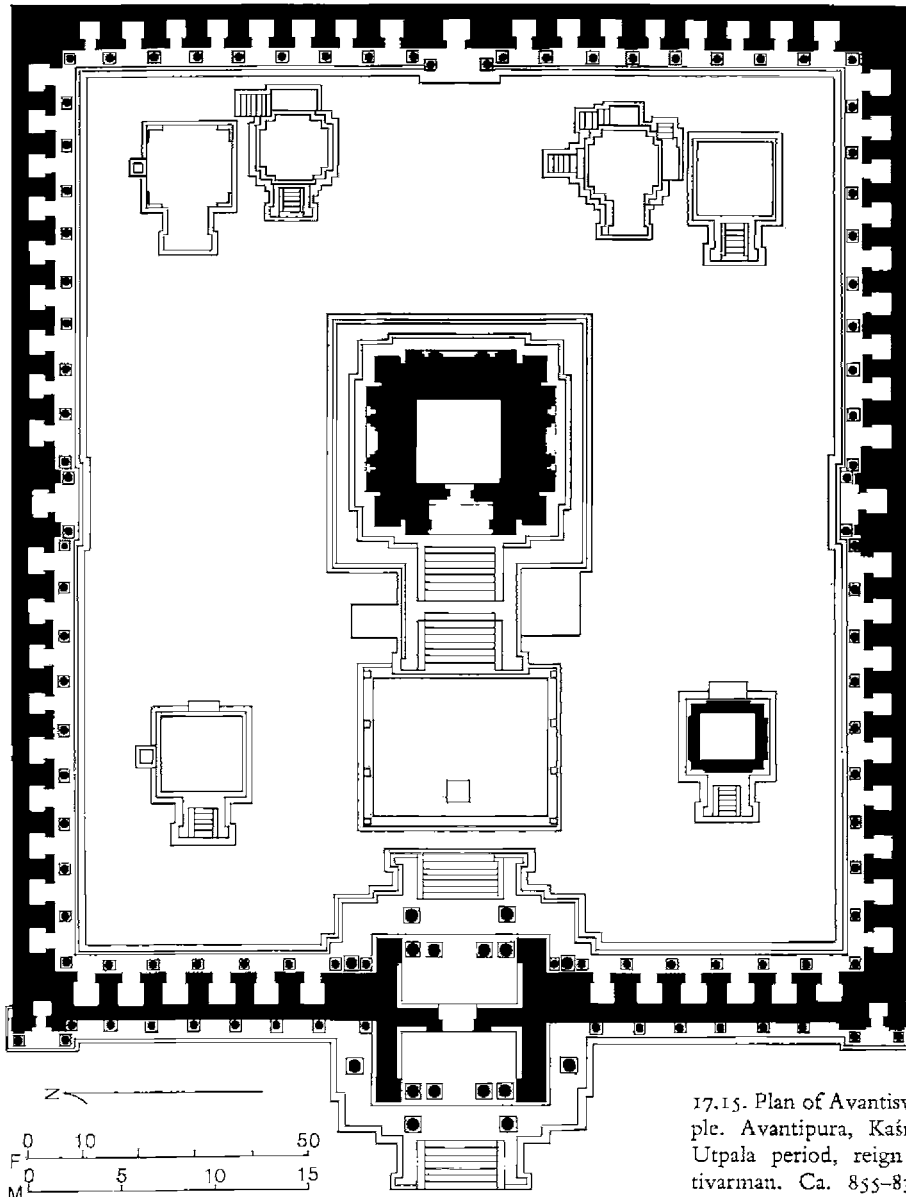
17.14. Indrāṇī. From Pāndrethan, Kaśmīr, India. Probably Kārkoṭa period. Ca. late eighth-early ninth century. Beige stone. H: ca. 150 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.

Indra, reveals the still visible amalgamatory nature of the Kaśmīri style complex (Fig. 17.14). The goddess is recognized by the *vajra* that she holds in her left hand and by the elephant, Indra's *vāhana*, that appears behind her. Her sharply delineated anatomical structure suggests stylistic associations with the Bactro-Gandhāra idiom, as does the heavy treatment of the folds of drapery across her legs. The costume, especially the tunic, is Iranian in type and the animated posture is related to north-central Indian post-Gupta modes. In particular, the figure may be compared to other stylistic idioms that combine the Hellenized northwestern and Indian modes, such as those of the post-Gupta period in Rājasthān (Fig. 11.13). Yet, like them, it is more than the sum of these associations and is representative of a distinctive local idiom.

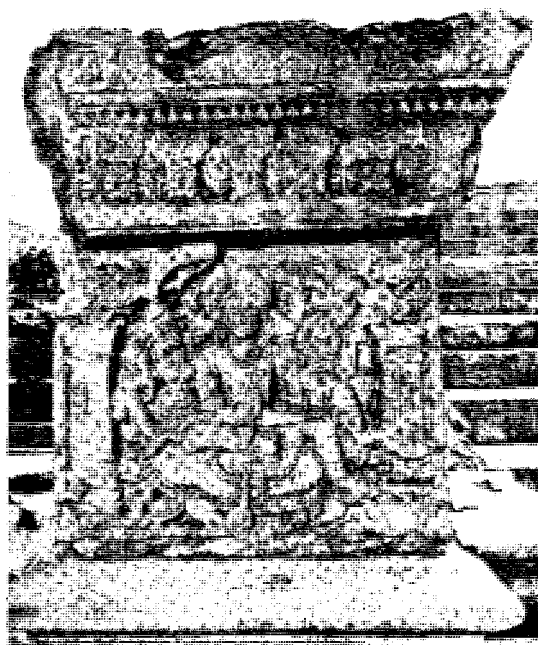
THE UTPALA DYNASTY (CA. 855 TO 939)

Avantivarman (r. ca. 855–83), founder of the Utpala dynasty, revived the moment of prosperity that Lalitāditya had brought to Kaśmīr. While still heir apparent, he founded Avantipura (modern Vantipur), and built there the temple of Avantisvāmin. Later, as monarch, he built the Avantisvara temple. The earlier of the two temples, the Avantisvāmin, dedicated to Viṣṇu,

was modeled after the Mārtāṇḍa temple, although it is on a smaller scale (Fig. 17.15). The more ruined condition of the Avantisvāmin temple makes close comparison difficult, but it is certain that the later temple was more elaborate in detailing. Its iconographic principles are identical to those of Mārtāṇḍa, except that the central shrine contained an image of Viṣṇu, there called



17.15. Plan of Avantisvāmin temple. Avantipura, Kaśmīr, India. Utpala period, reign of Avantivarman. Ca. 855–83.



17.16. Sculpture to left of stairs to shrine, Avantisvāmin temple. Avantipura, Kāśmir, India. Utpala period, reign of Avantivarman. Ca. 855–83.

Avantisvāmi, instead of Mārtāṇḍa / Sūrya. Each of the shrines around the peristyle presumably contained an image of Viṣṇu in identical form to the central figure, each considered to be an emanation and a reflection of the central deity. Neither more nor less than him but identical to him, they represented in graphic form his Universality.

The original richness of ornamentation may be seen in some of the surviving sculptures at the site. Panels on the balustrades flanking the stairs to the shrine demonstrate the exuberance of the sculptural style. The front face of the left balustrade shows a figure of Viṣṇu attended by two female consorts, presumably Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī (Fig. 17.16), while the inner face of the same stone shows a royal figure, or possibly Indra, accompanied by attendants. The opposite balustrade, to the right of the stairs, bears a similar



17.17. Viṣṇu Caturmūrti. From Avantipura, Kāśmir, India. Utpala period, possibly reign of Avantivarman. Ca. 855–83. Black stone. H: 47 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.

scheme. Above the blocks with figurative carving is a cornice of geometrized flower designs supported by imitation brackets ornamented with lions heads and interspersed with bird and plant designs. Each figural composition is completely filled by the figures, giving a crowded appearance to the panels. An overall flatness is suggested by the arrangement of figures and the sameness of the depth of carving across the entire surface. Stylistically, the figures are fuller in form than earlier examples, have shorter proportions, and reveal a new stiffness, demonstrating that the Kāśmīri idiom, like many other Indic styles of the ninth century, had abandoned the soft modeling of the Gupta and post-Gupta heritage. The male figures in particular have flattened, broad torsos with a taut, muscular appearance, still reminiscent of the Hellenized heritage of the region.



17.18. Brahmā. From Avantipura, Kaśmīr, India. Utpala period, possibly reign of Avantivarman. Ca. 855-83. Black stone. H: 51 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar.

Sculptures from Avantipura exhibit both a variety in iconographic types and a relatively wide range of stylistic conventions. A representation of Viṣṇu in a four-headed form, which may be called Caturmūrti, shows him as a composite of four aspects (Fig. 17.17).¹³ The front (east) face of the deity is human, those on the proper left and right sides (north and south) are heads of a boar and lion respectively, while that on the rear (west) is that of a demon. The lion and boar faces do not refer to the Nṛsiṃha and Varāha *avatārs* of Viṣṇu but rather to *vyūhas* (emanations) described in the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavite doctrine. The human face thus represents Vāsudeva, from whom emanate the three *vyūhas*: Saṃkarṣaṇa (represented by the lion), Pradyumna (represented by the boar), and Aniruddha (represented by the demon). Each *vyūha* has two activities, a creative

and an ethical one, and each of these is associated with one *guṇa* (quality). Thus, Saṃkarṣaṇa begins the process of creation with *bala* (power); Pradyumna continues it, at which time the duality of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* appear through the use of *aiśvarya* (sovereignty); and Aniruddha creates manifest matter with *śakti* (creative energy). The ethical activities include the teaching of monotheistic theory by Saṃkarṣaṇa, the translation of this theory into practice by Pradyumna, and the liberation achieved through the practice by Aniruddha, with the respective *guṇas* of *jñāna* (wisdom), *vīrya* (heroism), and *tejas* (spiritual power). In Kaśmīr, where the Pāñcarātra doctrine was popular, images of Caturmūrti Viṣṇu are fairly common. This example, finely carved and polished, demonstrates most clearly the sculptural style in use at Avantipura, with the facial forms associated with western Inner Asian types and the torso still revealing ties with the styles of the north-west regions.

Another figure from Avantipura may also have been a product of Avantivarman's building activity at the site (Fig. 17.18). The image depicts the god Brahmā dressed as an ascetic, wearing a simple garment, an animal skin on his left shoulder, but no jewelry. The fullness of the torso, rounder face, and less accentuated posture are part of a discernible trend in Kaśmīri sculpture of the period, and again suggest affinities to western Inner Asian art. A sleekness and refinement of the surface of the stone pervades the work, characterizing the elegance often associated with the art of the Kaśmīr region.

The Mārtāṇḍa and Avantisvāmin temples are important testaments to the power and vitality of the Kārkoṭa and Utpala periods respectively. They are among the earliest stone temples surviving in Kaśmīr, yet they are among the largest ever built in that region. They seem to have burst unprecedented on the scene at the moment in Kaśmīr's history when its rulers reached the summit of their power. While many later Kaśmīri temples are much smaller in scale and less grandiose in conception, they are often very fine examples of the architectural tradition.

THE TWO LOHARA DYNASTIES AND THE LAST HINDU KINGS
(TENTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)

In both architecture and sculpture, the art of Kaśmīr after the tenth century is primarily a tradition of rather limited variation. Small temples similar to the example at Pāndrethan were built, some of which had compound walls with numerous small cells, like those of the temples at Mārtāṇḍa and Avantipura. Many of the sculptural forms seen from the eighth century were codified into unvarying types, and, in general, the images became increasingly stiff, showing little of the former vitality of the Kaśmīri tradition.

This is clearly seen in a number of sculptures from Verināga. One example, probably of the twelfth century, shows Viṣṇu Caturmūrti (Fig. 17.19) and thus can be appropriately compared to the Viṣṇu Caturmūrti from Avantipura (Fig. 17.17). In the later example, the emphasis on musculature lessens, the posture is straighter, the figure is more columnar, and the face is much broader, with elongated eyes. A thick-legged, husky form and an overall stiffness of the figure characterize this later phase of Kaśmīri art. In this example, all four arms of the deity are preserved, providing a complete example of the iconographic type. The two upper hands hold the lotus (*padma*) and conch (*śaṅkha*) while the two lower hands rest on the heads of two *āyudhapuruṣas*: the female personification of the mace, *gadādevī* (to Viṣṇu's right), and the male personification of the wheel (*cakrapuruṣa*) to his left. The *dhotī* worn by Viṣṇu, which is shorter



17.19. Viṣṇu Caturmūrti. From Verināga, Kaśmīr, India. Ca. twelfth century. Grey stone. H: 67.5 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrinagar.

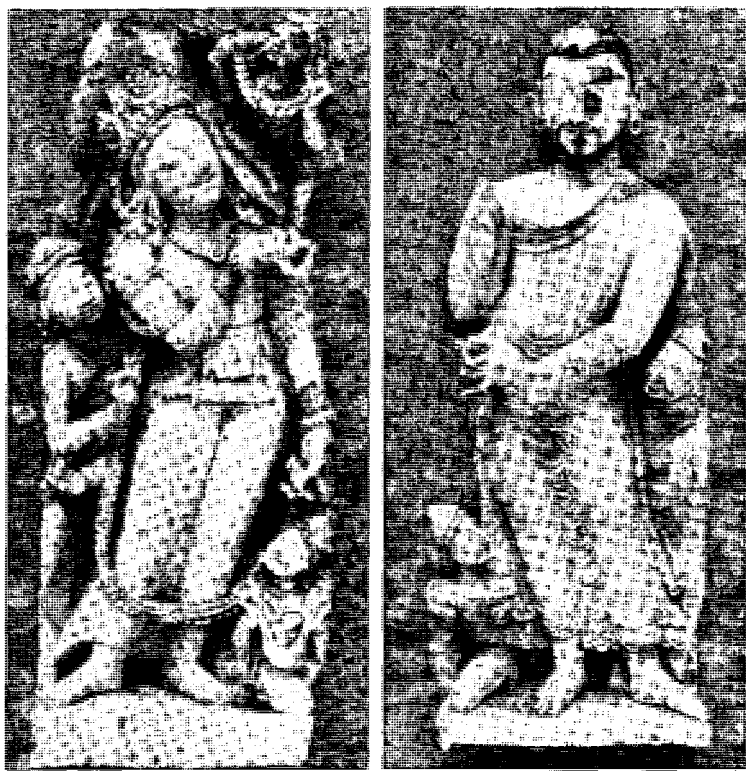
on one leg than on the other, is a feature seen in a number of other images from Verināga and seems to have been a local peculiarity.

KAŚMĪRI IVORIES AND METAL IMAGES

Although divorced from definitive association with any monument, site, or the reign of a particular monarch, the stylistic and iconographic developments of ivories and metal images from Kaśmīr may be seen to follow much the same patterns as those in stone. The survival of these objects in some cases has probably been due to their having been exported from Kaśmīr to the neighboring regions of western Tibet, where they were kept in monasteries until the

recent political disturbances, during which they were brought out by refugees.

One splendid composition consists of a central ivory depicting a seated Buddha in *dhyāna mudrā* surrounded by a host of other figures, including bodhisattvas and emaciated ascetics (Pl. 13). Flanking the central group and set into adjacent niches in the wooden architectural framework are two standing Buddhas, carved out of separate pieces of ivory. A slight



17.20. Indra (left) and Brahmā. From Kaśmīr region. Ca. eighth century. Ivory, with paint. H: 10.6 cm (left); 10 cm (right). Present whereabouts unknown.

bevel to the edge of the wooden frame and the existence of a second similar composition¹⁴ suggests that this example was part of a set of Buddhist scenes that adorned the drum of a votive *stūpa*. The delicacy and intricacy of the carving, both of the ivory pieces and the wooden frame, document the once rich carving tradition that must have existed in fragile materials alongside the more monumental arts. The architectural orders of the wooden frame, while clearly reflecting those used in Kaśmīr in the eighth century, also demonstrate some otherwise unknown features, for the stepped arches and pentafoil may reflect actual architectural types.

Two other ivory figures of the same approximate period represent Indra and Brahmā as they would have appeared in attendance of a central figure of the Buddha (Fig. 17.20). Indra is dressed in the manner of an Indic monarch while Brahmā wears a robe very much like that of a Buddha. Both are attended by figures who turn their attention to them as opposed to the location of what would have been the

central figure. The bearded Brahmā is reminiscent of the Bactro-Gandhāra artistic tradition of the Kuṣāṇa period, visible especially in the treatment of his drapery and body. Indra's distinctive crown may be traced to a Sassanian source.

The metal images of the Kārkoṭa, Utpala, and Lohara periods form a continuum of stylistic trends and iconographic innovations that has yet to be studied in depth. It is quite evident that the surviving metal pieces are only the slightest trace of a massive, complex tradition. In terms of quality, it is easy to see from extant examples that many images rank among the best metalwork produced in any culture and that there was an ease and facility of fabrication that suggests a vast and active production. Indeed, since the technology to cast the *Bṛhad* Buddha of Lalitāditya had already been achieved, there can be little doubt as to the technical ability of the artists. The particular alloy of zinc and copper popular in Kaśmīri metalwork creates a yellowish color and gives the images,



17.21. Sūrya. From Kaśmīr region. Ca. seventh century. Brass. H: 48.6 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (Gift of Katherine Holden Thayer).



17.22. Buddha. From Kaśmīr region. Ca. eighth century. Brass. H: 98 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (John L. Severance Fund).

even when unglided, an especially beautiful, soft glow. Often, inlay in pure copper or silver enriches the surface of these works. The primary evidence available indicates that the main stylistic thrust came out of the northwestern Indic regions as seen in examples of the pre-Kārkoṭa period (Fig. 17.5), as well as later pieces, which show strong affinities to the art of Gandhāra, Bactria, and associated regions.

An overlay of the Gupta style that was also visible in the Kaśmīri stone sculpture tradition fostered a distinctive series of subtle and elegant images, including an approximately seventh-century representation of Sūrya dressed in a caftan, boots, and hat of a type found in Sūrya images in Afghanistan (Fig. 17.21). Though standing in a strictly frontal pose, the Sūrya image betrays the graceful forms and subtle body transitions suggestive of a Gupta heritage.

The caftan clings to the body in a manner reminiscent of Buddhist robes of the Gupta period, and like them, the drapery assumes prominence at the hem, between the legs, and at the collar and cuffs. In this case, the linear detail of the border pattern of the garment and the design of the crown contrast sharply with the smooth surfaces of the rest of the image. On the basis of comparison to works of the seventh century in other parts of South Asia, however, the piece should be assigned to that period.

Other Kaśmīri metal pieces display a similar amalgamation of the styles of the ancient northwestern regions and the traditions of northern and north-central India after the Gupta period. Two representations of Buddhas, one standing (Fig. 17.22) and one seated (Fig. 17.23), betray this heritage, though they probably date



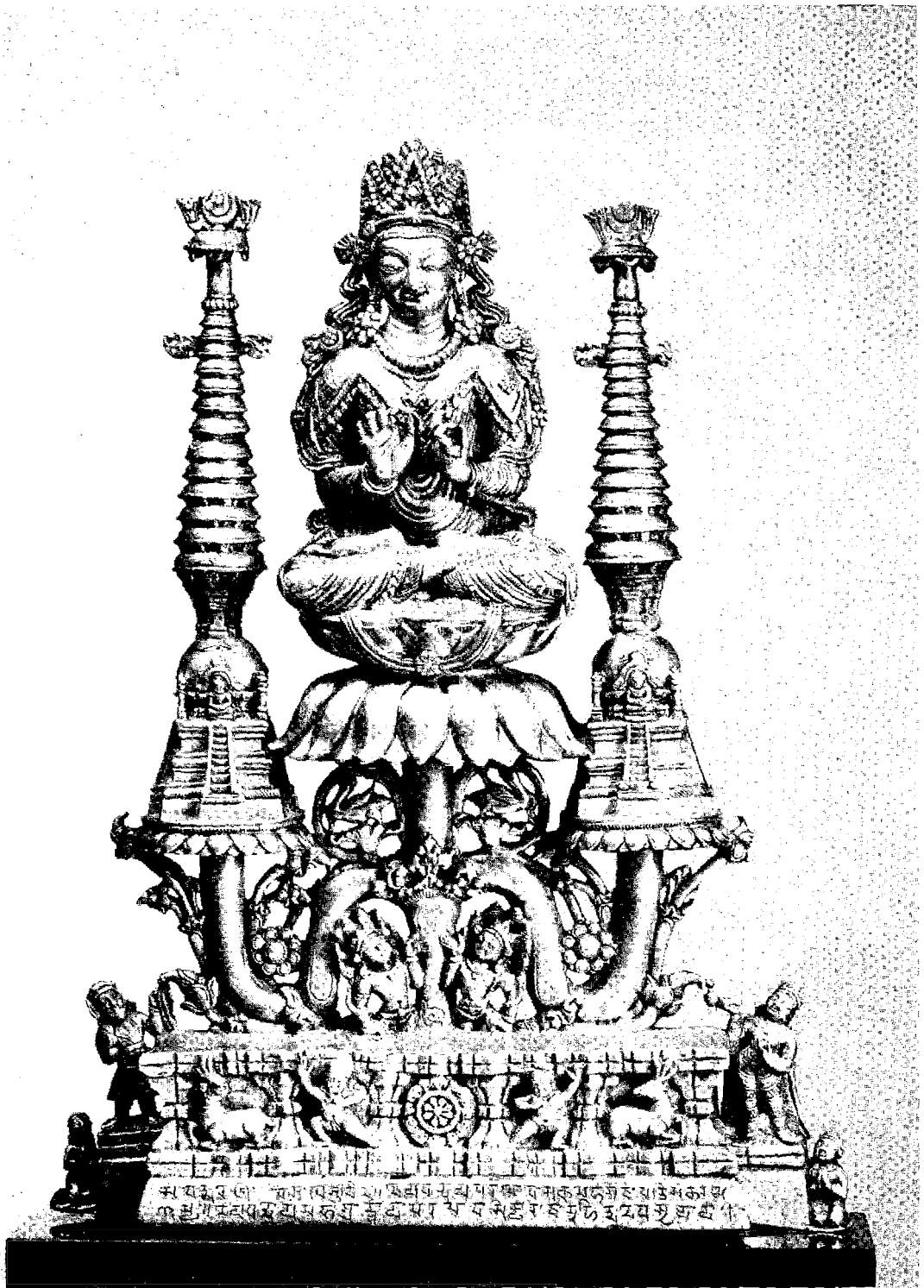
17.23. Buddha. From Kaśmīr region. Ca. eighth century. Brass with silver inlay. H: 41.2 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (Nashi and Alice Heeramanek Collection).

from the eighth century, perhaps the period of Lalitāditya, by comparison to the standing crowned Buddha figures from Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa* (Fig. 17.11). The metal figures are slightly slenderer in build, however. The standing image has an accented bend to the hips, and the weight of his body is supported firmly by his stiff left leg, while his right leg appears to be caught in motion. The left arm swings out from his body, as if helping to balance the figure. The implicit movement of the figure bears a striking similarity to the "walking" Buddhas of Thailand.¹⁵ A great deal of wear on the torso has softened the details of the drapery, although it is clearly based on the Bactro-Gandhāra heritage. A Tibetan inscription on the base of the piece calls this the "Respected image of Revered Nāgarāja." Here, the term Nāgarāja refers to Śākyamuni Buddha, in one of his rarely applied

epithets.¹⁶ The presence of a Tibetan inscription on an image of unquestionable Kaśmīri manufacture suggests that the piece may have been executed for a Tibetan patron, or that it was made in Kaśmīr, but transported at an early date to the adjacent regions of western Tibet, where the inscription was added.

The seated Buddha figure is worked in a virtually identical style (Fig. 17.23). The position of the hands has protected the drapery on the torso from wear caused by its being touched during worship and it may be suggested that the standing figure might also have had such a clearly delineated robe. The gesture is the *mudrā* of the fourth level of the teachings displayed in exactly the same manner as seen in the later western caves. Since this figure only slightly postdates the latest of those images, it may be assumed that the iconography is the same, although it is unfortunate that more information about the context of the image has not survived. The facial features are typical of Kaśmīri renderings of this date and include the characteristic high arching brows; wide, horizontal eyes; plump, curved lips; a marked delineation of the chin; and a narrow chin but broad brow. The fullness of the face and treatment of the eyes and brows suggests strong ties to seventh and eighth century Inner Asian depictions.

One of the most elaborate of the known Kaśmīri bronzes is a representation of a crowned Buddha, Vairocana, seated atop a lotus, flanked by *stūpas*, and accompanied by numerous other figures and elements (Fig. 17.24). Its inscription, which contains a date of the year 3 or 8, is of little use in determining the date of manufacture since the era is unspecified and the two donors, Śaṅkarasaṇa and Princess Devaśriya, are unknown.¹⁷ The ligatures and style of the work, however, suggest a ninth-century date. The fact that one of the donors was a princess indicates the level of patronage that the work represents, that of the nobility. The whole composition rests on a plain base that contains the inscription, above which is a highly conventionalized rock mass in which the Buddhist wheel, two deer, and two human figures may be seen. The rusticated rock mass is arranged



17.24. Vairocana Buddha. From Kaśmīr region. Ca. ninth century. Brass with silver inlay. H: 31 cm. Asia Society, New York (Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection).

in cavelike forms containing these elements, separated by pillarlike clusters of rock. Above the rock base is a water surface out of which the lotus and two *nāgas* emerge, the whole representing the cosmic ocean (that must be crossed to attain enlightenment) supported by the *gaṇas* (dwarves) who represent properties or categories of the world in which the teachings of the Buddha are present (wheel/deer). Out of this, the lotus emerges bearing aloft the Universal Buddha (*svābhāvīkākāya*) in which is embodied the essence of all Buddhas (*Tathāgatagarbha*), past, present, and future. The lotuses to either side of him bear *stūpas* of former Buddhas and symbolize the attainment of these past victors of the quest for enlightenment as part of the Universal. The Buddha is seen as both *nirmāṇakāya* and *svābhāvīkākāya* through the means of *sambhogakāya*, graphically shown in the arrangement of elements in the composition. These elements are specific references to esoteric initiations (*abhiṣeka*) that the practitioner undergoes to develop his religious ability. Thus, the crown represents the five *jñāna* and the chasuble refers to the four quarters of the universe. In short, the figure represents the Buddha as the Universal teaching the *dharma* of the fourth, esoteric level.¹⁸ This iconographic form is also closely related if not identical to votive images found throughout the western caves.¹⁹ All of this enrichment is related to the increasingly elaborate ritual aspects of Buddhism and each of the elements is symbolic of various initiations, the implication being that when the initiations are complete the practitioner has become a Buddha. Thus, the devotee sees himself in the image as the fully enlightened Buddha.

A dramatic transformation of an earlier religious concept is seen in a representation of Vajrapāṇi, the bodhisattva who embodies the concept of the mystical power of transcendent knowledge (Pl. 14). In contrast to peaceful representations, Vajrapāṇi, identified by the *vajra* in his left hand, here is shown with an angry expression on his face, created by the arched brows and bared fangs. His hair is depicted in a "flame-like" convention and the ornaments that he wears are serpents, generally regarded



17.25. Avalokiteśvara. From Kaśmīr region. Lohara period, reign of Queen Diddā. Ca. 980–1003. Bronze with silver inlay. H: 15.4 cm. Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrinagar.

as symbolizing the subjugation of the hindrances of the practitioner. His corpulency is also iconographically specified. These features determine that the figure is the angry (*krodha*) form of Vajrapāṇi. Angry forms were present in the caves of Aurangabad and in other earlier contexts, but by the eighth or ninth century, the probable date of this image, the usage had become widespread in Buddhist art. Essentially, these forms represent the intensity with which the practitioner overcomes his hindrances and the fervor with which he pursues his task.

A metal image of Avalokiteśvara dated in the reign of Queen Diddā (980–1003) serves as an important document of stylistic change in Kaśmīri sculpture (Fig. 17.25).²⁰ The six-armed bodhisattva is flanked by Tārā and Bhṛkuṭi, who appear in a much reduced scale. A greater angularity to the pose and treatment of the forms of the body of the main figure marks a

departure from the more softly modeled forms of previous centuries, yet the still muscular torso, distinctive facial features with high

arching brows and large, half closed eyes are clearly within the broad definitions of the Kāśmīri style.

THE ART OF ADJACENT REGIONS: WESTERN HIMALAYAN
FOOTHILLS AND WESTERN TIBETAN CULTURAL REGION

The metal images made by Kāśmīri craftsmen and, often, the craftsmen themselves, frequently traveled to neighboring regions, for Kāśmīr served as a cultural and artistic source for much of the surrounding area. Kāśmīri artists are known to have traveled throughout Inner Asia and even into China, and a number of works of art may be attributed to these individuals. Of more immediate interest are works found in the neighboring hill states and the Tibetan cultural areas of Himālayan India, which provide important insights into the range of artistic traditions that flourished in Kāśmīr and its neighboring states. In some cases, as in the western Himālayan foothills, distinctive local styles prevailed, while in others, as in Ladākḥ, a virtually pure Kāśmīri idiom was fostered.

The temples and sculptures of the western Himālayan foothills region have been largely overlooked in studies of South Asian art. Because of this, many of the monuments remain largely unknown, and those that have been identified have not been placed within the general historical context.²¹ However, these regions fostered art schools that were not only related to those of nearby centers, such as Kāśmīr and other parts of northern India, but that were also distinctive in their own right.

This can be seen in a large image of Durgā Maḥiṣasuramardīnī, called Lakṣaṇā in its inscription, which is in a temple named for the goddess, the Lakṣaṇā Devī *maṇḍir* at Brahmor in the Chamba Hill tracts (Fig. 17.26). Its inscription further reveals that it was dedicated in the reign of Meruvarman, a king whose capital was at Brahmor, and who is believed to have lived in the middle to late seventh century.²² This date falls in the period of general turmoil in north-central India and is just after the establishment of the new Kāśmīri dynasty of the Kārkoṭas. Thus, it forms an important missing

link in the development of Hindu sculpture and numbers among the very few surviving large-scale metal images from any early period. Although the image has not been chemically analyzed, its yellow color suggests that it is probably an alloy primarily of zinc and copper rather than tin and copper, strongly suggesting ties to the work of Kāśmīri craftsmen. Possibly, a local artist using Kāśmīri techniques produced an image of a stylistic type that was heavily dependent on the post-Gupta traditions of western India in particular. The slender waist of the figure contrasted against the full hips and thighs especially characterize the style, although the elongation of the form and the richness of the precisely rendered ornaments is a prelude to the known metal works of Kāśmīr. The facial features lack the highly emphasized arched brows and elongated eyes found in Kāśmīri sculptures that were heavily dependent upon Bactro-Gandhāra traditions, and instead, the face may be associated with the post-Gupta styles of northern and western India.

Another image in the same temple showing Nṛsīṃha has been judged by some to be of a somewhat later date (Fig. 17.27). However, in spite of its unusual appearance, especially the pose, the image probably dates from the same approximate period as the Durgā. It exhibits many of the same characteristics of quality and materials of fabrication, although it shows an entirely different anatomical structure, one which more heavily depends on the classicistic traditions of Gandhāra and related regions. The fullness of the arms and legs are part of the attempt to demonstrate graphically the power of the deity, although he is shown in a quiescent pose, simply seated on an arbitrarily defined landscape supported by two lions. Again, the high quality of craftsmanship, as well as the iconographic ingenuity of the work, suggest



17.26. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. At Lakṣaṇā Devi maṇḍir. Brahmor, Chamba Hill tracts, Himāchal Pradesh, India. Reign of Meruvarman. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century. Metal. H: 124.5 cm.



17.27. Nṛsimha. At Lakṣaṇā Devi maṇḍir. Brahmor, Chamba Hill tracts, Himāchal Pradesh, India. Ca. mid-to-late seventh century. Metal. H: 91.5 cm.

the richness of the traditions of the region.

In the western Tibetan cultural areas of mNga'-ris (Nāri), La-dwags (Ladākh), and Lāhul-Spiti to the east and southeast of Kaśmīr, Buddhist monasteries from the eleventh century and later have survived to the present day. While the original buildings have often been subjected to later alterations, they contain many objects and paintings produced by Kaśmīri artists during their original periods of construction. An approximately eleventh-century metal image of a bodhisattva from Lāhul-Spiti is such an example (Fig. 17.28). Nearly human-size, it decisively demonstrates that major metal images of a Kaśmīri idiom were in use in the region. The attenuation of the figure, relative stiffness of the pose, and harshness of the modeling, as well as the forms of the elaborate jewelry, especially the crown, characterize the later Kaśmīri and

related forms. It is especially useful to compare this figure to the bronze from the reign of Queen Diddā (Fig. 17.25) as it provides an understanding of the stylistic direction and an idea of the relative treatment of large-scale images as opposed to smaller versions. The anatomical structure of the figures is very much the same, differing only in minor details, although there is less of a feeling of flesh in the larger figure. Because of the scale it has been possible to develop the jewelry and textile design in much greater detail, although this greater complexity is also a characteristic of the later date. An interesting stylistic feature is the detailed elaboration on the navel of the later image in contrast to earlier examples, which has become a very stylized remnant of the emphasis on a muscular anatomy seen throughout Kaśmīri sculpture schools. This feature occurs in painting as well.



17.28. Bodhisattva. From Lahul-Spiti region, Himāchal Pradesh, India. Ca. eleventh century. Metal. H: ca. 120 cm. National Museum, Karachi.

Probably the most abundant evidence of the extension of Kāśmīri art styles beyond the main political centers of Kāśmīr is found in the ancient kingdom of Ladākh, now in the state of Kāśmīr in India. In recent centuries, the region has been almost completely under the cultural sway of Tibet, and indeed, Ladākh is aptly seen as essentially an outpost of Tibetan culture. However, through the eleventh century, the region was greatly influenced by the cosmopolitan culture of the capitals of Kāśmīr. Such associations and the transmission of Kāśmīri culture to Ladākh is suggested by several isolated sculptures and inscriptions.

Among these, perhaps the most impressive is an enormous rock-cut representation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya carved on the face of a solitary rock pinnacle at Mulbek, an ancient stopping point on what is now the road between Śrīnagar and Leh, the main metropolis of Ladākh (Fig. 17.29). Standing in splendid isolation, the pinnacle must have been an important beacon for ancient travellers. The monumental image may have been created around the eighth or ninth century, a date suggested by both features of the anatomy and face of the Maitreya figure. Although at first glance, the somewhat stiff posture suggests a later date, the rather full body with its fleshy appearance reveals ties to eighth-ninth-century Kāśmīri conventions. The attention to the abdominal and pectoral muscles is standard for Kāśmīri works of that time, as are the high arching brows and full cheeks of the face. The general simplicity of the ornamentation and jewelry further suggests an earlier rather than a later date.

The image is about nine meters in height and is one of the few surviving *Bṛhad* sculptures in the Indic sphere. It is likely that the creation of the sculpture was related to the Vairocana cult, which was responsible for other gigantic images in the Kāśmīr region, such as the now-lost *Bṛhad* Vairocana of Parihāsapura.

The history of Ladākh becomes increasingly clear around the eleventh century for it was at that time that the great Tibetan translator (Tib. *lo-tā-ba*), Rin-chen bZang-po (958-1055), and the Indian *paṇḍita*, Dipamkara Atiśa (982-1054), were active in the spread of Buddhism in western



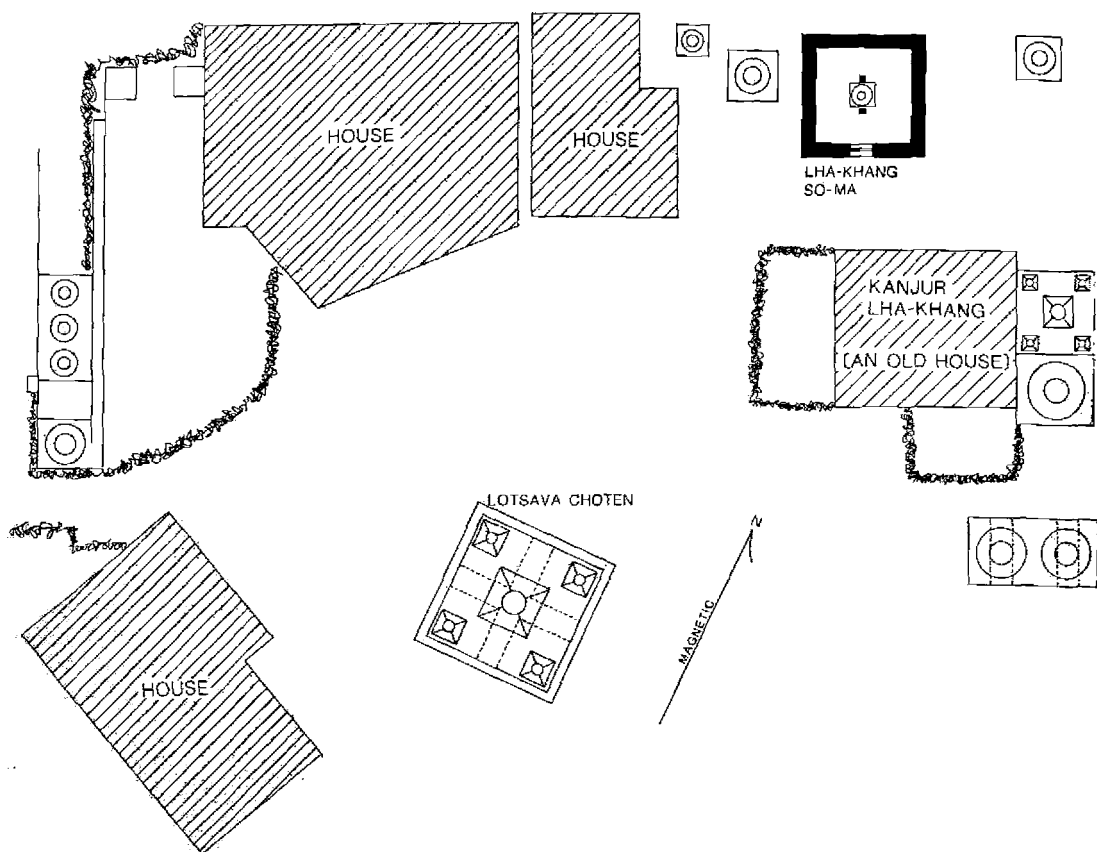
17.29. Bodhisattva Maitreya. Mulbek (Ladakh region),
Kaśmir, India. Ca. eighth–ninth century. H: ca. 9 m.

Tibet and Ladākḥ. Rin-chen bZang-po is said to have founded one hundred eight temples in Ladākḥ, Spiti, and Gu-ge, and many more building endeavors are attributed to his followers.

The five temples comprising the Chos-'khor (Skt. *dharmā maṇḍala*) at Alchi in Ladākḥ are clearly the result of such building activity, for they may be attributed to the mid-to-late eleventh century on the basis of stylistic and epigraphic evidence (Fig. 17.30). Although the exact date for the founding of Alchi is uncertain, inscriptions at the 'Du-khang, the earliest and main building of the Chos-'khor, reveals that it was built by one Alchi-pa sKal-ldan Shes-rab of the 'Bro family, who had studied at Nyar-ma in Ladākḥ under immediate followers of Rin-

chen bZang-po, and had returned to his family estates with the desire to share his Buddhist experience with those in his home village. As an expression of his understanding of the Buddhist teachings and "to instruct people in the essentiality of relativity (*sūnyatā*)," as the dedicatory inscription states,²³ he built the 'Du-khang. The iconographic program of the 'Du-khang reflects Buddhist teachings propagated by Rin-chen bZang-po prior to his conversion to forms of the religion being preached by Atīṣa, which occurred in either 1050 or 1054. This suggests that the structure was erected by the 1040s or perhaps early 1050s.

The enclosed courtyard in front of the 'Du-khang makes it difficult to photograph in its entirety, but details show that the entrance to

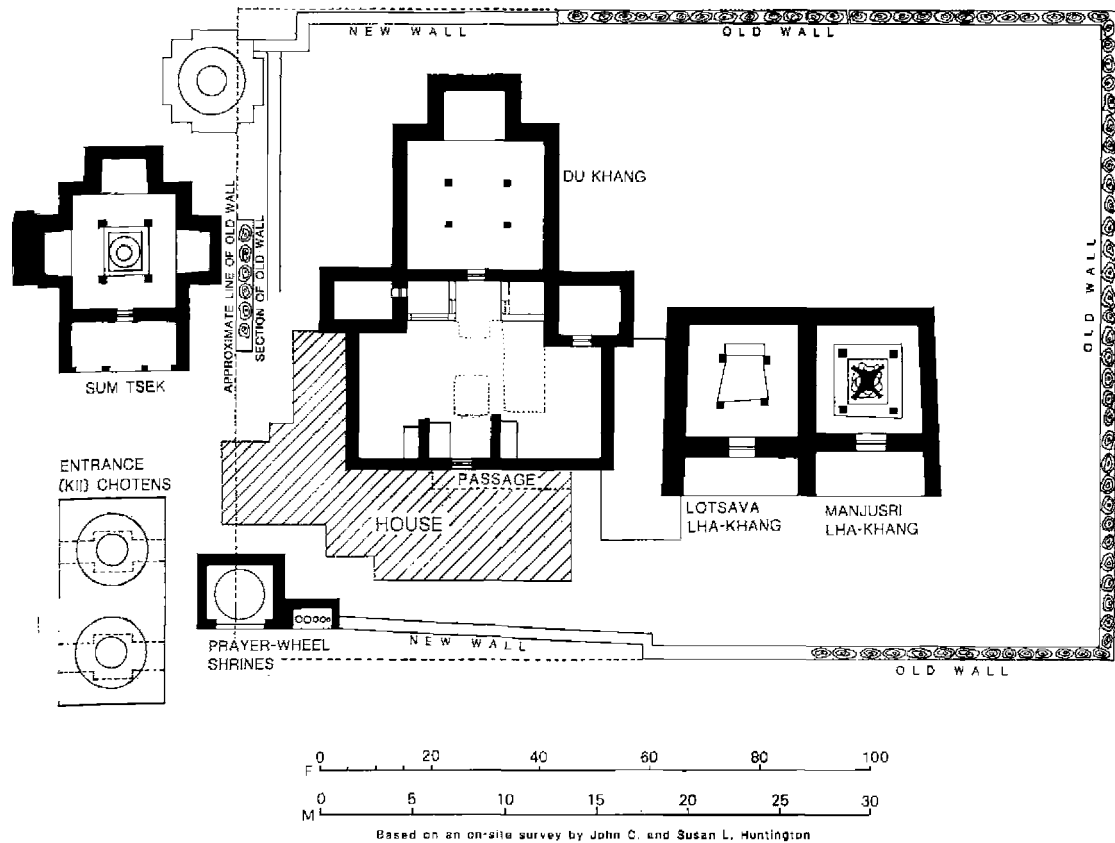


the interior of the hall is decorated with fine examples of wood carvings in the Kaśmīri style. The *torana* over the porch of the building bears rampant lions and other composite animals inhabiting semi-roundels (Fig. 17.31), suggesting the vitality of the ancient Kaśmīri woodcarving tradition. Details of the ornamentation closely resemble the stonework of surviving monuments in Kaśmīr proper. However, the woodworking is much more detailed, suggesting that the renowned Kaśmīri woodcarving tradition, celebrated for its exquisite workmanship, had ancient roots.

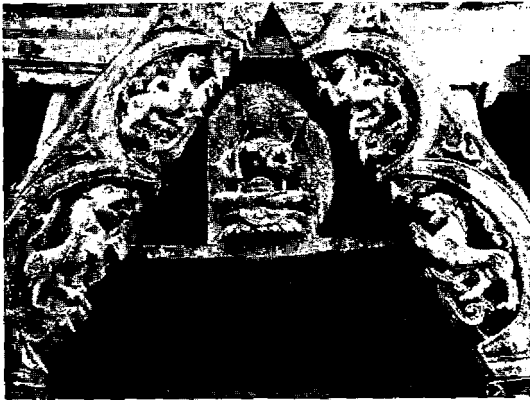
The paintings that decorate the walls of the interior of the 'Du-khang are truly remarkable, for they, along with a few other examples also in Ladākḥ and neighboring Himālayan regions,

constitute the only extant examples of complex Mahāyāna Buddhist painted *maṇḍalas* in the Indic context. This astonishingly well preserved collection of *maṇḍalas* documents both major portions of the Kaśmīri Buddhist pantheon and virtually the whole Brahmanical pantheon as perceived by the Buddhists. Intended as technical meditational devices for the use of the monks, the *maṇḍalas* represent the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* Tantra cycle, in which Vairocana, as Sarvavid (Universal Knowledge), appears in many differing manifestations. All forms, which include Sarvavid Vairocana as Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī, Prajñāpāramitā and others, are composed into these huge *maṇḍalas*, each with thirty-seven principal deities and many ancillary figures.

One of the best preserved examples (Pl. 15)



17.30. Plan of Chos-'khor, including original temples and later associated buildings. Alchi (Ladākḥ region), Kaśmīr, India.



17.31. Wood carving on facade, 'Du-khang. Alchi (Ladakh region), Kaśmīr, India. Ca. mid-eleventh century. Painted wood.

shows the hierarchic scheme of these meditative devices. In the outer ring are the exterior "*vajras*," deities of various non-Buddhist pantheons who, once converted to the Buddhist *dharma*, provide a safe haven for the practice of Buddhist meditations. The outer portion of the *maṇḍala* represents the four continents of Buddhist cosmology.²⁴ The central portion is conceived as a richly pillared and chambered hall placed directly on the center of the pinnacle of Mount Meru, the axis of the universe. In these vast halls reside the thirty-seven major deities of the *maṇḍala*, who represent the thirty-seven wings (or aspects) of enlightenment (*bodhipākṣika*).

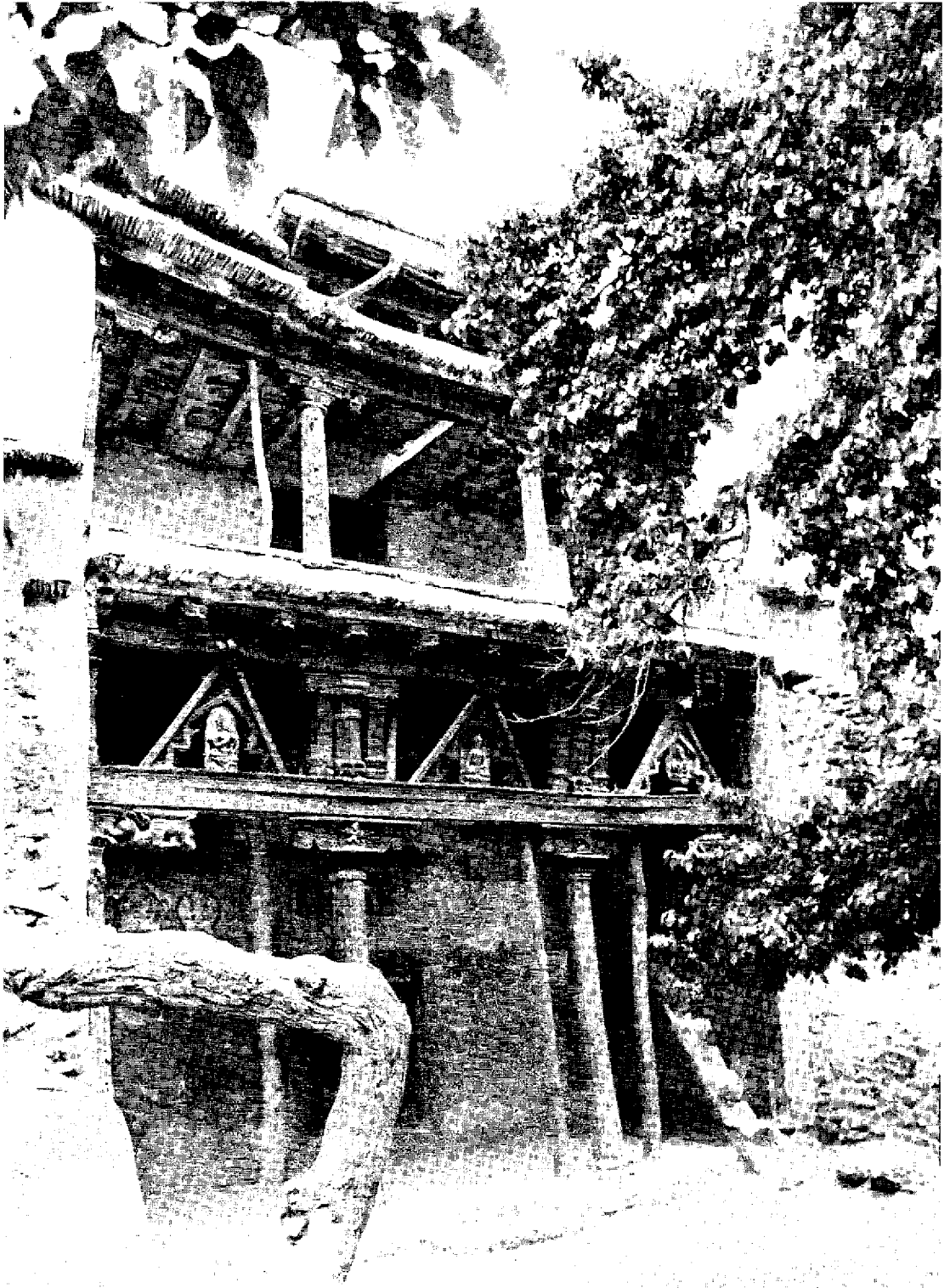
Each figure is rendered in exquisite detail and has an elegant, attenuated body with a narrow waist and the impression of musculature in the torso, characteristic of the Kaśmīri idiom (Pl. 16). Certain features, such as the practice of depicting the farther eye in a three-quarters-view face as if detached from the face, suggest ties to other regional schools of South Asia (Pl. 32). Often only about ten centimeters in height, these figures are clearly the work of miniaturist artists. In other mural traditions of South Asia, as at Ajaṅṭā (Pls. 8–11), painters worked on a larger scale, but here the elements of the compositions appear to have been literally transferred from a manuscript tradition to the mural context. Combined into extremely complex and enormous compositions, however, the

tiny figures do not seem at all inappropriate on the wall surfaces.

The colors of the 'Du-khang paintings are confined to muted hues of the primary colors plus black and white. The limited use of green and yellow and the prevalence of red and blue gives a reserved and somber tonality to the room, which was perhaps deemed suitable for meditational purposes.

The Sum-tsek (gSum-brtsegs; Fig. 17.32), a three-tiered structure next to the 'Du-khang, was, like the 'Du-khang, built by a member of the influential 'Bro family. Tshul-khrims-'od, the founder of the Sum-tsek, may have constructed this building not long after the 'Du-khang was built, as may be inferred from stylistic and epigraphic evidence. Like other structures at Alchi, the Sum-tsek reveals how the native architectural tradition of Ladakh, characterized by piled-up rock walls faced with mud plaster, had been decorated with delicate wood carvings of the Kaśmīri style. Triangular pedimentlike forms are combined with pillars, pilasters, and other architectural elements, all of which find counterparts in the stone monuments found in the Śrinagar region of Kaśmīr proper. The figures set into the architectural contexts (some of which may be later replacements)²⁵ also conform to the stylistic parameters of cosmopolitan Kaśmīri art.

The plan of the building is unusual, perhaps even unique, in Buddhist art, for the essentially square central space is extended by niches on the west, north, and east sides (Fig. 17.30). The interior of the Sum-tsek is dominated by three gigantic bodhisattva images that stand in these niches, representing respectively Avalokiteśvara (Pl. 17), Maitreya, and Mañjuśrī. The niches are two stories in height, as are the figures, whose heads are visible to visitors standing on the second-story floor. A dedicatory inscription to the left of Maitreya's feet explains that Tshul-khrims-'od set up these three "receptacles" of Body, Speech, and Mind.²⁶ The Mañjuśrī image was created in order to remove bodily impurities and to obtain a human Buddha body (*nirmāṇakāya*); the Avalokiteśvara was made to remove vocal impurities, as a Buddha-speech image, and to obtain a glorious body (*sambhogakāya*); and



17.32. South face of Sum-tsek. Alchi (Ladakh region), Kaśmīr, India. Ca. mid-eleventh century.

the Maitreya image was made to obtain an "absolute" Buddha-body (*dharmakāya*) and as a Buddha-mind image.

Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya are the three Great Bodhisattvas of the Sarvavid cycle. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, all characteristics of existence are divided into "families" (*kula*), usually given as five or six in number. These bodhisattvas represent respectively the *Vajra*, *Padma*, and Buddha families and may document a holdover from an early tradition that emphasized only three major family divisions. In contrast to the wooden sculptures on the exterior of the building, these enormous figures are made of mud plaster that has been painted with the same exquisite detail found on the walls of the building. Each bodhisattva's *dhotī* displays an array of forms, including figures and buildings, and each has its own iconographic theme.

In contrast to the paintings of the 'Du-khang, which were somber and reserved in their coloration, the paintings of the Sum-tsek virtually shimmer with warmth and color through the generous use of yellow and green, in addition to red, blue, black, and white (Pls. 17-24). It is unlikely that the difference in palette between the two buildings was due to a chronological difference since the buildings were apparently built within a short time of each other. Instead, a religious reason may have accounted for the differences, for while the 'Du-khang was apparently built for the meditations of the monkhood, the Sum-tsek was probably intended for the laity.

A small painting of Amitāyus, part of a scheme showing Sukhāvātī, the western paradise over which he presides, from the lower story of the Sum-tsek, demonstrates the full richness of the Sum-tsek coloration (Pl. 18). The crown worn by the figure clearly indicates that he is Amitāyus, and not Amitābha or Amitābha/Amitāyus. The throne configuration in this composition is less than half a meter in height, so, as in the case of the 'Du-khang, the artists essentially worked in a miniaturist style, combining tiny elements to achieve a mural design. The central figure of Amitāyus is garbed in a robe decorated with elephant-riding warriors, many of whom are shown performing the

"Parthian shot," that is, they are turned shooting backwards over their elephants in the manner characteristic of ancient Parthian horsemen. These deadly warriors would seem incongruous as ornaments on the robe of a Buddha whose very name means "Eternal Life." It may be suggested, however, that such a design, which may be traced back to much earlier Iranian sources, represents a late survival in the Kaśmīri context and is indicative of the cultural crossroads that define Kaśmīr itself. It is possible that such luxurious fabrics were the prerogative of Kaśmīri nobility, and that the clothing as worn by the Amitāyus indicates his royal prerogative as the king of Sukhāvātī.

Unlike the paintings of the 'Du-khang, where color was applied in a flat, generally unshaded manner, the Sum-tsek paintings are notable for the richness of their coloristic effects. Often, two colors are used to suggest a kind of glowing surface to the skin of figures and also to provide the impression of depth and three-dimensionality to the forms. Such "shading" may be an outgrowth of a long distant ancestry in the Hellenistic-Romanized art of the Indic northwest, for the forms of the bodies seem to be the painted equivalents of the sharply defined, often muscular physiques seen in Kaśmīri sculpture.

One of the most interesting painted compositions at Alchi shows Prajñāpāramitā, identified by the book and rosary that she holds, which is also on the lower story of the Sum-tsek (Pl. 19). She is attended by four emanations of herself and is the object of devotion of a noble woman and a priest, who are shown just below her. To either side is a depiction of a tall structure. Given the archaeological remains at Parihāsapura and the renown of that site as a Buddhist center, along with the forms depicted in the painting, it is likely that these represent Lalitāditya's *caitya* at Parihāsapura with its towering form and gigantic metal Buddha image, on the left, and Caṅkuṇa's *stūpa*, at the right. The practice of depicting important Buddhist shrines and monuments can be traced to the earliest periods of surviving Buddhist art. In the Śuṅga period, for example, depictions of the Mahābodhi temple and other shrines, were already represented. That these monuments are shown with Prajñā-

pāramitā suggests that she was the primary deity of Parihāsapura and that the site may have been an important center for her worship in Kaśmīr.

The shading of the anatomy of the central figure is done with meticulous care. As is the practice throughout the Sum-tsek paintings, each element of the shading is a single pointilistic stroke, so finely executed that this feature is observable only at great enlargement. Prajñāpāramitā's garments and those of her attendants and worshipers are also finely painted renderings of the luxurious textiles that may have been used by the Kaśmīri nobility. Her diadem, with its very linear forms, may be a descendent of the "hair net" type of crown seen occasionally in Bactro-Gandhāra sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period. Her hemispheric breasts, attenuated waist and animated posture are feminine characteristics that appear widely in South Asian art; however, the extreme narrowness of the waist and the attention to anatomical detail and musculature in the abdomen and torso typify the Kaśmīri idiom.

Although the identification of this figure as a form of Prajñāpāramitā is confirmed by the attributes she holds, her green color does not conform to the usual iconographic descriptions of her. Further, the presence of the *jīna* Buddha Amoghasiddhi at the top center in the group of five *jīnas* above her suggests that she may also represent Śyāmatārā (Green Tārā), and therefore, might be identified as Prajñāpāramitā-Tārā.

This suggestion is strengthened by the presence of a second painted figure in the Sum-tsek that more clearly combines the features of Prajñāpāramitā and Tārā (Pl. 20). Although this figure holds Prajñāpāramitā's characteristic attributes, the book and the rosary, she is surrounded by depictions of people afflicted with the eight perils and their salvation by means of devotion to Tārā. This figure is thus a dual goddess, symbolizing not only the salvationism of Tārā but the supreme salvation obtainable through the knowledge symbolized by Prajñāpāramitā.

This representation, which is on a wall of the second story of the Sum-tsek, is one of the few major scale images remaining in the Kaśmīri painting style; the figure alone stands about a

meter in height. Yet, the techniques of modeling, the coloration and extreme attention to detail are comparable to these elements of the miniatures more commonly seen at Alchi. In general, the paintings of the second and third stories of this three-tiered building are painted less finely and with more limited use of the expensive brighter pigments used on the first story. The second story was not a public area (and can only be reached by climbing a notched log ladder to the right of the veranda on the exterior of the building) and the third story is in fact totally inaccessible because it has no floor at all, and can only be viewed from below. These stories were painted for the completion of the iconographic program rather than to be seen up close, a fact which may have influenced the artists to use larger scale depictions for their walls, as in the case of the Prajñāpāramitā-Tārā.

Over the door on the south side of the Sum-tsek and visible to the viewer as he exits the building is a representation of Mahākāla, an angry, protective form of Avalokiteśvara (Pl. 21). As a *dharmapāla* or "protector of the Buddhist law," Mahākāla is charged with overcoming the enemies of the faith, namely, those who are difficult to convert, hence explaining in part his fierce appearance. His name may be translated as "The Great Time," (that is, the Great Destroyer [Death]) or "The Great Black-One." He is characteristically shown as blue in color, though can be other colors as well, depending on the specific form of Mahākāla being depicted. His position over the entrance/exit to the building befits his protective role. The triangle beneath him represents the "jail" of meteoric iron intended to imprison all evil-doers. Of particular interest among the figures who surround Mahākāla is the depiction of an angry female who may be Śrī (sometimes said to be the Buddhist hypostasis of the Hindu goddess Śrī; Pl. 22). The iconography of this figure is generalized so that it is difficult to determine which of the several manifestations of the Śrī-type goddesses she represents. She is characterized by her angry appearance, skull ornaments, and the mule (*aśvatara*) she rides. Like Mahākāla, deities of this class are also *dharmapālas*. The shading on her skin and that of the animal she rides creates

the sense of an inner glow, which, like the skin tones of the other figures as well, is striking against the flat, deep blue of the background.

The ceilings of the Sum-tsek are also painted. The design, which consists of painted replicas of lengths of cloth, accommodates the structural divisions of the ceiling with its wooden beams (Pl. 23). Today, many Ladākhis suspend lengths of cloth as false ceilings in their homes and shrines, suggesting that the Sum-tsek paintings document an early manifestation of this practice. It is likely that the cloth designs painted so carefully by the Alchi artists were close replicas of some of the luxurious textiles available during the eleventh century. Reflecting the Kaśmīri position as part of the crossroads of Asia, the textiles reveal a broad cross section of what must have been popular techniques then in use, including dying, tie-dying, printing, brocading, and embroidery. The varieties of patterns further betray the ancient heritage of the region, for designs which were current from Inner Asia to India and China are represented. One popular motif, a series of roundels rimmed with pearls, is known from Iran to Japan and is ultimately based on Sassanian designs of the sixth century (Pl. 24). The example illustrated bears a pair of dancing figures of clearly Indic origin, thus revealing the blending of traditions that is characteristic of much of Kaśmīri art.

A third building in the Chos-'khor group, a modest building known as the Lha-khang-so-ma (Fig. 17.33), bears paintings of a sharply contrasting style. Its simple construction in the typical Ladākhi mud and rock technique does not prepare the visitor for the surprise of the paintings within, which are in a style that is clearly derived from the painting idiom developed in Bihār and Bengal in the eastern portion of the subcontinent during the Pāla and Sena periods. Though the date of this structure is not fixed by inscription or historical documentation, its traditional name, Lha-khang-so-ma, literally "the new temple," suggests that it was built after at least the original buildings at the site were already in place. Yet, the strong flavor of the Pāla idiom in the paintings suggests that it might have been created not long after the great eastern Indian *paṇḍita*, Atiśa, had come to



17.33. South face of Lha-khang-so-ma from southeast. Alchi (Ladākḥ region), Kaśmīr, India. Ca. third quarter eleventh century.

Ladākḥ from the east and had exerted his influence on Rin-chen bZang-po around 1050-54. The Lha-khang-so-ma, then, and its paintings, are very probably products of about the third quarter of the eleventh century.

The style of paintings in this building is exemplified by a representation of Vairocana/Śākyamuni in the center of the north wall (Pl. 25). Though painted on a much grander scale, with the central figure almost a meter in height, the composition may be compared to examples known from Pāla-period palm leaf manuscript painting. Notable among the distinctive Pāla elements are the locked knees of the standing bodhisattva attendants, their arched backs, and bathing-suitlike *dhotis*. The use of a black outline to define the contours and forms of the elements in the composition is also typical in many Pāla paintings. Yet, while the Buddha and his attendant bodhisattvas are strongly based on Pāla types, the figures are "modeled" in a manner not seen in Bihār and Bengal paintings. Instead, the attention to anatomy and shading allies the figures to the Kaśmīri style and the painting traditions presumably derived from the northwestern traditions. In contrast to paintings strictly of the Kaśmīri mode, however, like the examples in the Sum-tsek, the shading of the skin, particularly seen in the two standing bodhisattvas, does not create the sense of a

glow or sheen but rather appears mottled, which might suggest that artists of the eastern school had come to Ladākh and had added some misunderstood "touches" of the Kaśmīri idiom to their works. Such hybridization could, of course, be the result of many factors; it is also possible, for example, that artists trained in the Kaśmīri style had modified their works because of a desire to emulate the paintings in manuscripts brought to this region from the east.

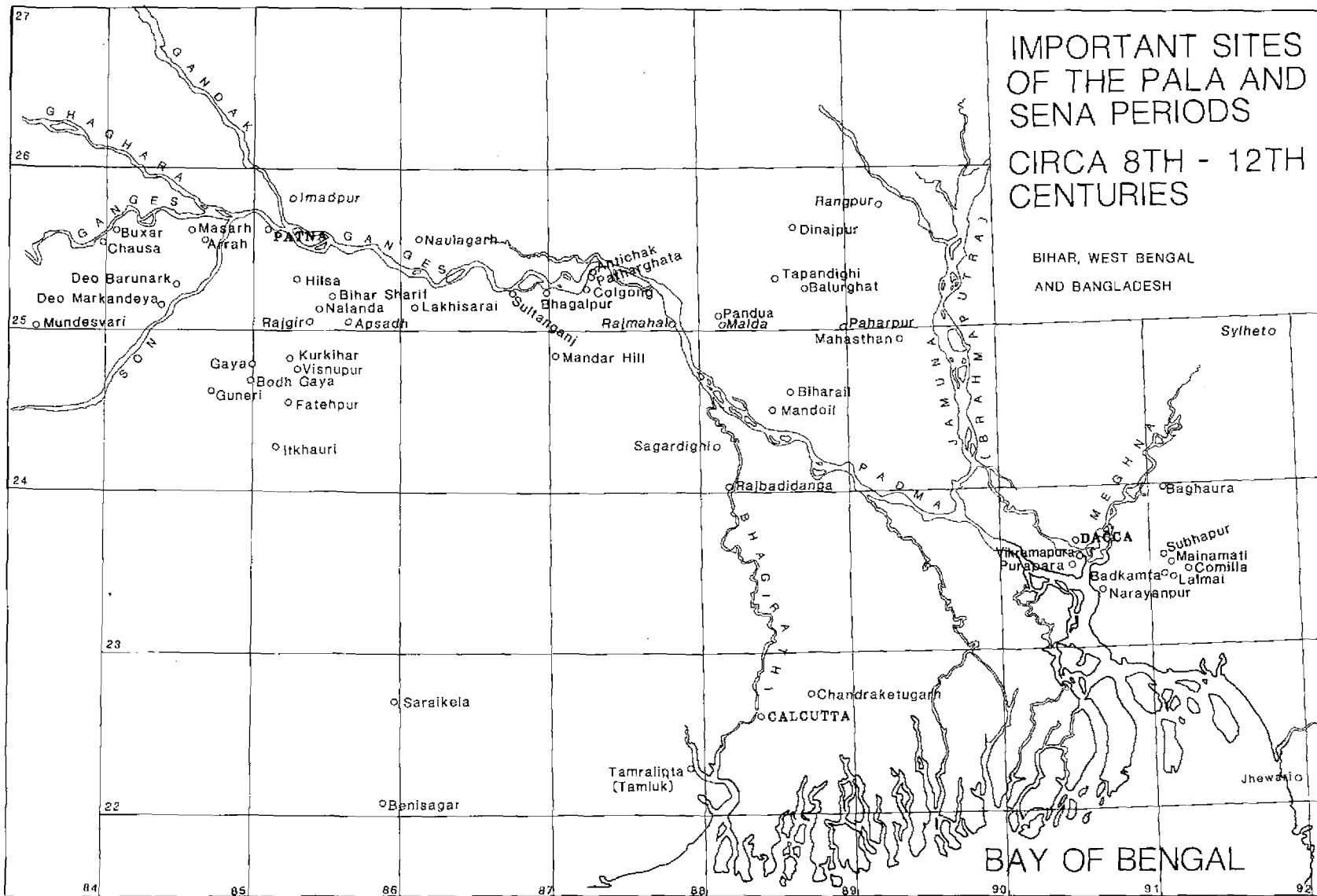
A second composition from the Lha-khang-so-ma shows Kālacakra, a tutelary deity of the Vajrayāna/Tantric Buddhist pantheon whose name literally means "time-wheel" (Pl. 26). He is shown as blue in color, multiarmed, and in the pose of sexual union (*yuganaddha*) with his female counterpart (*prajñā*) while surrounded by a *maṇḍalic* arrangement of subsidiary figures. Though the style of the painting clearly shows ties to the eastern Indic traditions, we can only infer that such complex painted compositions

were once produced in Bihār and Bengal, for large-scale wall paintings have vanished almost without a trace from the eastern regions and the extant miniatures on palm leaf do not display the intricate arrangements of forms seen here. However, later Tibetan and Nepali paintings, which are clearly based on Pāla prototypes, offer some documentation of the earlier Indic compositions, and from surviving texts and the known teachings of great religious masters, it may be inferred that such iconographic arrangements were in use during the Pāla period. The paintings of the Lha-khang-so-ma, then, are especially important, for they provide a glimpse of the eastern tradition, though modified by Kaśmīri form, at an early date and testify to the importance of the Ladākh region in transmitting the beliefs and art of the Buddhist religion from the Indic regions to those of the Himalāyan realms.

CONCLUSION

The Buddhist and Hindu art of Kaśmīr came to an abrupt end when the Muslims became the dominant political force in the region around 1339, when Shāh Mīrzā, a Muslim adventurer, overthrew the Lohara dynasty and major patronage was no longer available. However, the traditions of Kaśmīri art lived on in other regions, most notably Gu-ge in western Tibet, where it remained the dominant style for some time. There is still much to be learned about the movements within and influences upon Kaśmīri artistic traditions, as well as the impact of Kaśmīri art on other parts of Asia. Clearly, Kaśmīr served as a source of imagery and influence for the northern and eastern movements of Buddhist art. The Yun-kang caves in China, the wall paintings from

several sites in Inner Asia, especially Qizil and Tun-huang, the paintings from the cache at Tun-huang, and some iconographic manuscripts from Japan, for example, should be evaluated with Kaśmīr in mind as a possible source. Kaśmīr's position relative to the rest of South Asia and its geographic isolation allowed the Kaśmīris to maintain a kind of independence. Yet its role as a trade and cultural center between ancient India, Gandhāra and related regions, western Tibet, and Inner Asia left it subject to intercourse with a vast variety of artistic and cultural sources. A full understanding of the transmission of Buddhist art through Asia is dependent on developing a greater knowledge of Kaśmīri art.



IMPORTANT SITES
OF THE PALA AND
SENA PERIODS
CIRCA 8TH - 12TH
CENTURIES

BIHAR, WEST BENGAL
AND BANGLADESH

BAY OF BENGAL



Detail of 18.23.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Bihār and Bengal Under The Pāla and Sena Kings

From the eighth to the twelfth centuries, the eastern region of the South Asian subcontinent, roughly equivalent to the modern states of Bihār and West Bengal in India and the nation of Bangladesh (East Bengal), was host to a florescence of artistic activity.¹ Under the Pāla dynasty, which ruled large portions of this region for nearly the entire four-hundred-year span, as well as other more limited ruling families, such as the Senas, and, to a lesser extent, the Candras and Varmans, vital centers of Buddhism and Hinduism flourished. In Bihār, which derives its name from the many Buddhist *vihāras* that once dotted the land, and particularly in the region of Magadha, the homeland of Śākyamuni Buddha, Buddhism reached an apogee. During this period, Buddhist monks and pilgrims from near and distant parts of Asia, including China, Southeast Asia, Nepal, and Tibet, came to Bihār and Bengal to study Buddhism and ultimately to transmit to their homelands much

of the religious, cultural, and artistic heritage of this region. Indeed, the art of the so-called Pāla-Sena period is as notable for its influence abroad as it is for its role as a major art school in the Indic sphere. Hinduism, particularly Vaiṣṇavism, also reached a peak during this period and became especially prominent in the cultural region of Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh) during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Pāla dynasty came to power around 750, when the first king, Gopāla, is said to have ended the “reign of fishes,”² that is, the practice of the larger principalities swallowing up the smaller ones that had characterized the politics of Bengal after the collapse of Śaśānka’s empire in the seventh century. Tāranātha, the Tibetan historian writing in the seventeenth century, claimed that the school of Pāla art, however, was not founded until the reigns of Dharmapāla and Devapāla, the second and

third kings, by the father and son craftsmen, Dhimān and Bitpālo,³ none of whose works are known and whose historicity has not been verified. In spite of the fact that later historical sources, such as Tāranātha, are emphatic regarding the role of the Pālas as great patrons of Buddhism and see the early Pāla kings as presiding over a sort of golden age of Buddhist art, the art of this period is not, properly speaking, a court art produced for the ruling families. Some contemporaneous evidence of Pāla patronage is suggested by inscriptions that link these monarchs to prominent Buddhist monasteries, including Nālandā and Vikramaśīla and others. For the most part, however, the burgeoning of art production during this period reflects an active lay community in both Buddhism and Hinduism, although it is likely that the political and religious climate created by the kings helped foster the artistic developments.

The Pāla school of art first flourished in the Magadha region of southern Bihār, the homeland of the Buddhist religion. Not surprisingly, the majority of early Pāla-period remains are Buddhist. Gradually, however, artistic centers further east in Bihār and in Bengal began to supersede the important Magadhan centers so that by later Pāla times, and during the period of their successors, the Senas, who came to power around the late eleventh century and ruled until the first part of the thirteenth century, Bengal had become the major art producing area of the eastern regions. During the later Pāla and Sena periods, Buddhism, while still a vital force, was gradually overshadowed by Hindu developments. Such a transition must have been the result of complex sociological and cultural changes within the society, though these remain largely unstudied and unknown. By the end of the twelfth century, the advent of iconoclastic Muslims into Bihār and Bengal resulted in the destruction of many important Buddhist and Hindu monuments. Because of such disturbances, and the threat of still others, many Buddhists fled to neighboring countries, such as Nepal or Burma, where they could continue their religious practices. While infusing these other Buddhist lands with new vitality, this exodus caused the Buddhist homeland itself

to fall into decline. Thus, the prediction ascribed to Śākyamuni that the religion he practiced would cease to exist some fifteen hundred years after his *parinirvāṇa*⁴ came true almost to the letter, at least in the region of its origin, although Buddhism still remained a viable religion in many other parts of Asia. Hindu art and culture also suffered because of the Muslim incursions, though Hinduism in Bengal especially underwent later revivals and is still a vital force in the region.⁵

As part of the intense religious activity of the Pāla-Sena periods, many religious structures were built or refurbished. Most of these buildings have vanished, however, leaving almost no extant architecture from this period and making it virtually impossible to reconstruct a systematic overview of the architectural developments.⁶ In part, the absence of architecture may be explained by the fact that brick, not stone, was the popular building material, and other fragile materials, such as wood, bamboo, and thatch, must also have been used. Given the continual pattern of reuse of brick and the moist climate of Bengal in particular, in which organic materials decay rapidly, temples built of these materials are unlikely to survive over the centuries.

In spite of the lack of architectural examples, a huge corpus of sculpture and a few paintings survive from this period. Most of the sculptures are made of stone or metal, but a few wooden pieces remain to suggest that in the case of sculpture as well, ephemeral materials were widely used. The stone pieces were generally carved of a grey or black chloritic stone local to the region. They were normally created in the form of separate stelae that would have been set into niches when used as part of the decoration of a building, or they might have served in shrines as main objects of devotion. Most of the surviving metal images from this region are made of bronze. The specific alloy varies somewhat from workshop to workshop but in general is characterized by a high copper content. According to ancient texts, the alloy was to consist of eight metals (*aṣṭadhātu*),⁷ all of which needed to be present for ritual correctness. Other images were made of gold or silver,

and many examples made of bronze had gilded surfaces. In general, metal images from this region are hollow cast, except in the case of the smaller works, which are usually solid. Metal sculptures served alone or in groups as objects of meditation and devotion and many must have formed part of three-dimensional *maṇḍalas*. The varieties of wood sculpture in this region can only be imagined, but surviving examples suggest that wood carvings were used as part of architectural decoration, and for the creation of objects of veneration as well.

Although works of art from Bihār and Bengal of the eighth through twelfth centuries share a number of features, many distinct workshops were responsible for the vast artistic output. Some ateliers, like those at major religious centers such as Nālandā or Bodhi Gayā, were sustained over the centuries and their lengthy histories may be traced for the full four-hundred-year span of this period. These major centers served as sources of stylistic and iconographic inspiration for smaller, less prominent establishments. Thus, within the broad geographical range of Bihār and Bengal, regional subschools, largely based on the styles of the main centers, may be discerned.

Along with regional developments, very precise chronological distinctions may be made for the art of this period. Such refinements are possible because several dozen sculptures, including examples in both stone and metal, with inscribed dates, survive from this period. The basic tendency of the sculptural style over this ex-

tended period was toward increased elaboration of detail and complexity of iconography, greater stylization of form, stiffening of body postures and facial features, as well as increased emphasis on the detailing of the back-slab or surrounding elements at the expense of the prominence of the central figure of the composition. These features suggest that the developments in Bihār and Bengal were part of the overall cultural and artistic patterns of South Asia during the post-Gupta periods.⁸

As important as the regional and chronological distinctions of Pāla-period art is the fact that this corpus of images displays a tremendous richness of iconographic types. Some of the forms preserved in this artistic tradition may reflect religious concepts that had been formulated in earlier periods. Others undoubtedly indicate the vitality of the Buddhist and Hindu religions in Bihār and Bengal from the eighth through the twelfth centuries and are innovations resulting from the keen insight and advanced religious understanding of spiritual masters who lived at that time. The present discussion, while touching on some of the stylistic developments of the period, primarily focuses on the religious and iconographic developments. The Buddhist icons demonstrate the vigor of the Buddhist religion at this time and comprise a point of departure for studying the Buddhist art of many other regions of Asia. The Hindu sculptures document the intensity of Hindu belief in the eastern regions, in spite of a rather delayed advent of Brahmanism there.

BUDDHIST ART

During the Pāla period, a number of monasteries and religious sites that had been founded in earlier periods grew into prominence. At the same time, the intense religious activity and apparent wealth of the region fostered the establishment of many new centers throughout the regions of Bihār and Bengal. In spite of the paucity of architectural monuments surviving from this period, it is evident that ambitious and impressive structures were built. The large cruciform *stūpa* at Pāhārpur (ancient Somapura)

in Bengal, for example, measures more than one hundred meters from north to south (Fig. 18.1). It is set within a vast quadrangular courtyard that contains a number of smaller structures, suggesting that the main compound may have been a product of more than one building phase (Fig. 18.2). It is believed to have been founded during the reign of Dharmapāla, the second Pāla king, around the late eighth or early ninth century, though other objects from the site dating from later periods suggest that artistic



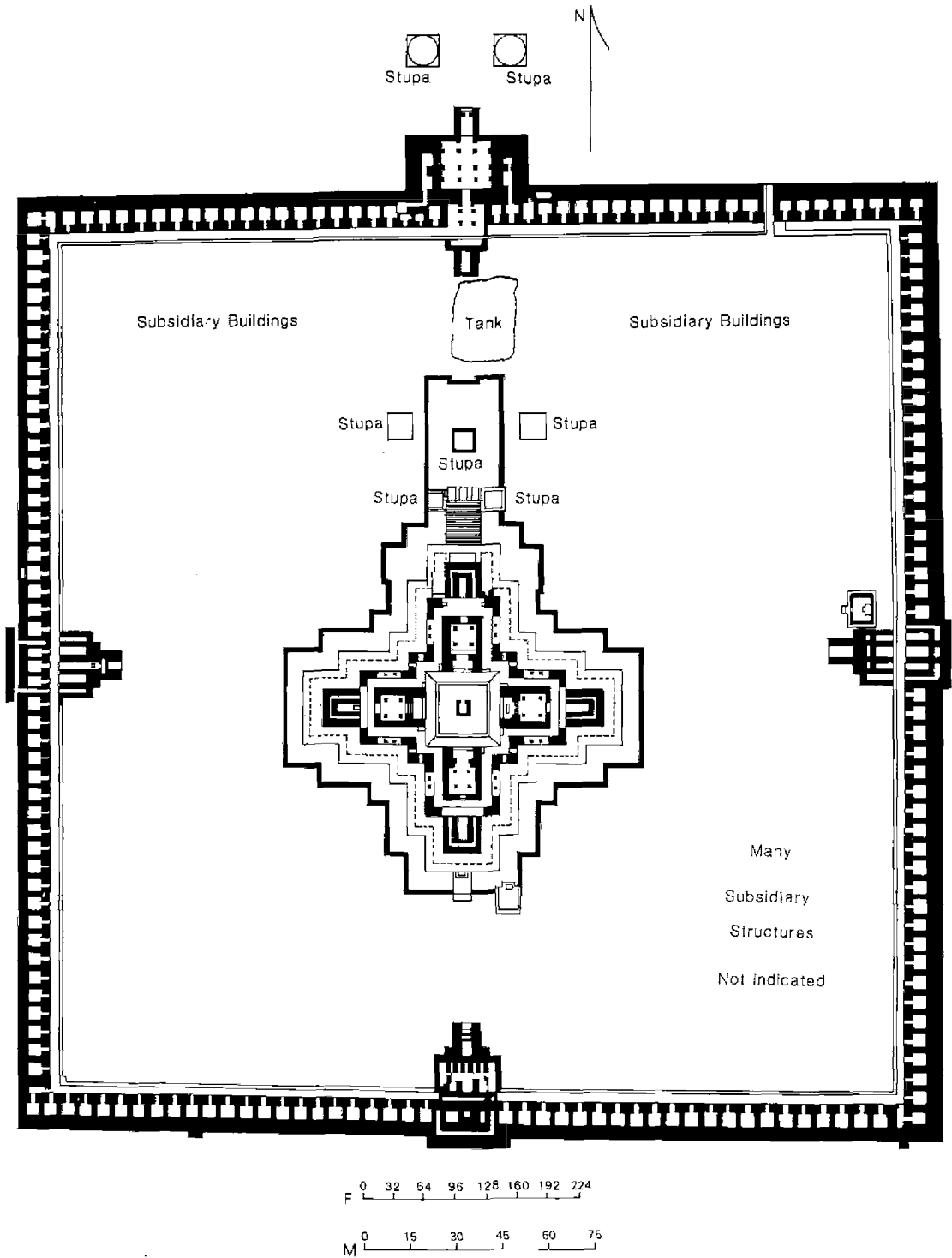
18.1. Great Stūpa from east. Pāhārpur, Bangladesh. Pāla period, probably reign of Dharmapāla. Ca. late eighth–early ninth century.

activity continued throughout the Pāla period. The walls of the courtyard contain 177 individual cells that served as shrines. In the center of the north compound wall was a monumental entrance, and enlarged cell blocks occur in the center of the south, east, and west sides, suggesting secondary gateways. This arrangement formed a huge three-dimensional *maṇḍala*, with the main temple centered within. Such a format may be directly compared with the numerous painted *maṇḍalas* that survive from Nepal and Tibet in particular, in which the central temple form is surrounded by a compound with gates. The Pāhārpur temple is cruciform in plan, with each side being offset so that it is of the *pañcaratha* (five *ratha*) variety except the north, which is *saptaratha* (seven *ratha*).

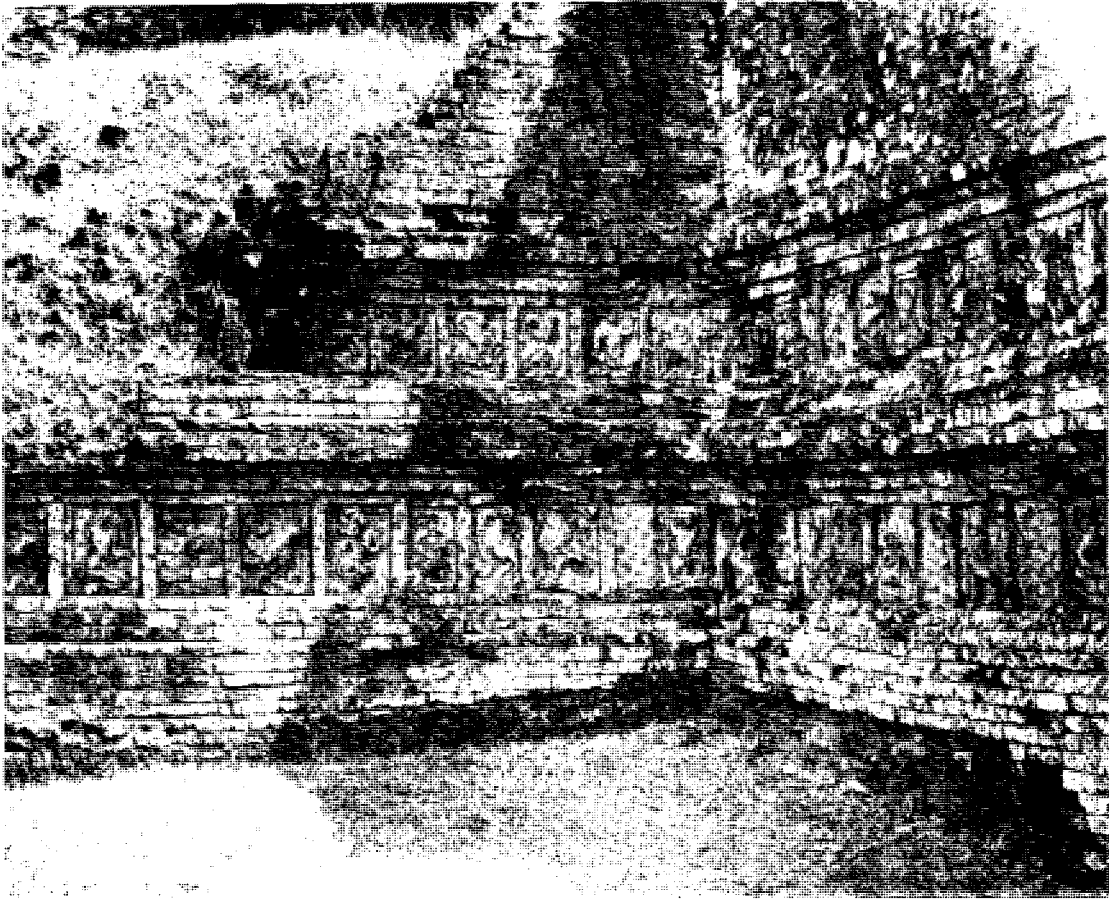
Rising in three levels, the monument was probably one of the most elaborate of the Indic terraced structures and it is often cited as a probable source for the terraced edifices of Tibet and Southeast Asia. Yet, the Pāhārpur structure is not unique in Bihār and Bengal for a similar cruciform plan *stūpa* at the site of Antichak in eastern Bihār (thought to be the ruins of the ancient Vikramaśīla monastery) suggests that such buildings may have represented a popular and characteristic architectural type.

The walls of the plinth and lower terraces of the Pāhārpur monument were decorated with terra-cotta plaques (Fig. 18.3) and a row of sixty-three stone images on the plinth further carried out the sculptural embellishment. An iconographic program for these decorations has not yet been established, though the terra cottas especially are often charming, freely executed works showing minor divinities, animals, and other subjects.

In contrast to the paucity of architectural remains from this period, the thousands of surviving sculptures present an almost overwhelming array of forms. A black stone sculpture from Nālandā (Fig. 18.4), an important Buddhist monastery and one of the principal centers of Pāla-period art, dates from approximately the seventh century and clearly demonstrates the pre-Pāla and early Pāla-period stylistic dependence on earlier Buddhist sculptural styles, such as that from Sarnath. The slender, elongated figure of this bodhisattva, who may be either Avalokiteśvara or Samantabhadra,⁹ is reminiscent of late Gupta-period carvings. The slightly relaxed posture, treatment of the hair, and overall simplicity in particular recall the earlier idiom. However, a greater crispness in the carving and the detailing of the lotus pedestal and jewelry indicate a departure from



18.2. Plan of Great Stūpa. Pahārpur, Bangladesh. Pala period, probably reign of Dharmapāla. Ca. late eighth–early ninth century.



18.3. Terra-cotta plaques on Great Stupa. Pābārpur, Bangladesh. Pāla period, probably reign of Dharmapāla. Ca. late eighth-early ninth century.

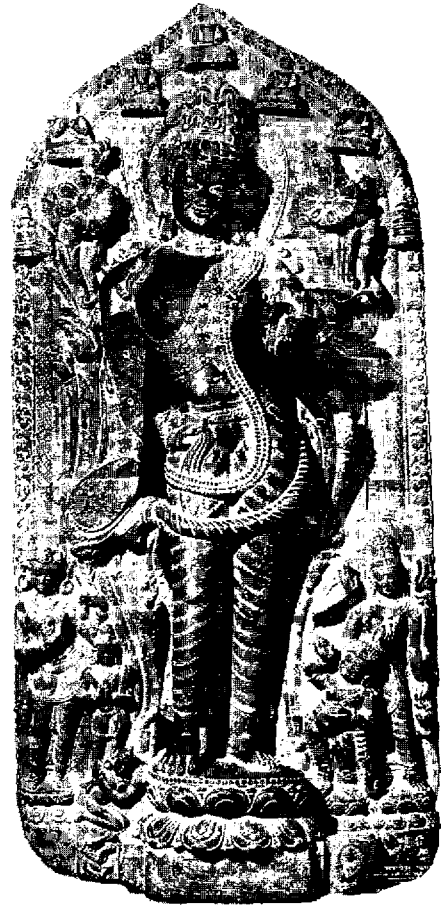
the early style. Accompanying the bodhisattva are two female figures. Three *jina* Buddhas appear on his halo and a fourth, perhaps the spiritual progenitor of the bodhisattva, appears in his headdress.

Another image from Nālandā, this time identifiable as the Bodhisattva Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara, was probably carved in the late eleventh century and shows many of the characteristics of the fully developed Pāla-Sena tradition (Fig. 18.5). The central figure and his attendants stand in the accented *tribhaṅga*, or thrice-bent posture. Not only is this position commonly seen in images from this date, but the angular transitions between the sections of the body are typical of this period as well and impart a stylized, rather

than naturalistic, effect to the figures. In contrast to the earlier image from Nālandā, the back-slab is now pointed at the top, rather than rounded, and it has been greatly elaborated upon in its decoration as well as in the iconographic additions of the various attendants and other figures. Even the clothing of the bodhisattva is more detailed than that of the earlier figure. Also typical of this later phase of Pāla art, the lotus pedestal upon which the central figure stands is highly elaborate and is carved in a series of three-dimensionally conceived layers. Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara is attended by his usual companions, Tārā and Sudhanakumāra (Very Rich Prince) to his right and Bhṛkuṭi and Hayagrīva (Horse-Neck) to his left, while above,



18.4. Bodhisattva. From Nālandā, Bihār, India. Pre-Pāla period. Ca. seventh century. Black stone. H: 200 cm. Nālandā Site Museum, Nālandā.



18.5. Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara. From Nālandā, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late eleventh century. Black stone. H: 125 cm. Nālandā Site Museum, Nālandā.

all five of the *jina* Buddhas are represented. Like many other Pāla-period sculptures, the image may have been painted in its original state, according to the iconographic precepts of the *sādhanas*, the Buddhist textual ritual guide. Thus, Khasarpaṇa might have been white; Tārā, green or white; Sudhanakumāra and Bhṛkuṭi, gold; and Hayagrīva, red. The five *jina* Buddhas might also have been painted their respective colors. The animal-headed, skeletal figure at the extreme bottom left of the stele is the *preta* Sūcīmukha. *Pretas* are a form into which beings who have been lustful and greedy are born. This *preta*, whose destiny it is to be insatiably hungry, is being saved by the bodhisattva, who lets him suck the nectar that falls from his hand. Bud-

dhologically, this is an example of the compassion exhibited by the bodhisattva of compassion. This specific aspect of Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara is known as Pretasaṃtarpita Lokeśvara, the *preta*-satisfying Lokeśvara.

Numerous other bodhisattvas and forms of bodhisattvas are also represented within the span of Pāla-period art. A representation of Ṣaḍakṣarī Avalokiteśvara found at Colgong, in eastern Bihār, was probably carved in the late eleventh or twelfth century as indicated by the elaboration of the various elements in the composition (Fig. 18.6). It is interesting to note that the foliate motifs are suggestive of the Nepali painted designs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that are based upon Pāla



18.6. Śaḍakṣarī Avalokiteśvara. From Colgong, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late eleventh or twelfth century. Black stone. H: 143.3 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.



18.7. Śimhanāda Avalokiteśvara. From Sultāngañj, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late eleventh or early twelfth century. Black stone. H: ca. 180 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

prototypes. Iconographically, this figure is yet another manifestation of the ubiquitous bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The two principal hands, now lost, would have been in *añjali mudrā*, the second right hand should have carried a rosary, and the second left, a lotus. The central figure is accompanied by Mañdhara, the male on the figure's proper right, and by Śaḍakṣarī Mahāvidyā, the female to his left. These two attendants exhibit the same attributes as the central figure, that is, the *añjali mudrā*, the rosary, and the lotus. The five *jīna* Buddhas are represented along the top of the stele and the image of Amitābha probably appeared in the headdress of Śaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara. Śaḍakṣarī (Six Syllables) refers to the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara, *Om mañi padme hūm*, which consists of six syllables. A *mantra* is a phonetic symbol that both evokes and vivifies the divinity

being propitiated, and this sculpture therefore represents a personification of the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara. The *padma* or lotus held in his hand signifies the family (*kula*) of this figure and is his principal emblem. The rosary (*mālā*) is the ritual tool used in reciting the *mantra* the necessary number of times (usually one hundred eight) in the propitiation of Avalokiteśvara. The two principal hands were in *añjali mudrā* to signify the deep respect and devotion that the practitioner is supposed to feel while performing the *mantra*. In esoteric teachings, Śaḍakṣarī holds between his two hands the gem of enlightenment that, while concealed from the casual viewer, is promised to the devotee who visualizes himself as Śaḍakṣarī.

A figure of Śimhanāda Avalokiteśvara, also found in eastern Bihār, at Sultāngañj, and probably of the same approximate date, further



18.8. Avalokiteśvara. From Tapandighi, West Bengal, India. Pala period. Ca. late eleventh–early twelfth century. Black stone. H: 105 cm. State Archaeological Museum of Bengal, Calcutta.

exemplifies the great iconographic variety of this school (Fig. 18.7). This stele was found in association with the famous, larger than human-size metal image of a Buddha (Fig. 11.6) and two elaborately carved black stone pillars that were unearthed in 1872 during the course of construction of a railroad. The nearby ruins suggest that these sculptures belonged to a monastery and might have been hidden when the establishment was attacked by Muslim invaders. The carving is again highly refined and the figure and back-slab are detailed with the precision and care found in the finest of these works. The accented posture, sharply outlined features of the face, and detailing of the back-slab indicate a date of the late eleventh or early twelfth century for this sculpture. The name *Siṃhanāda* is a direct reference to the teachings of the Buddha, the Buddha being the lion or *siṃha* and *nāda* referring

to its roar, or his teachings. Thus, Avalokiteśvara-of-the-lion's-roar reiterates the complete body of *dharma* that the Buddha promulgated. The analogue of the lion's roar stems from the fact that the Buddha was considered a lion among people as well as a member of the Śākya clan, which had the lion as its totem. The voice of the lion is, of course, a roar, as befits one of the mightiest animals known in India. The Buddha's teachings among people are thus likened to the roar of the lion among animals. There is a trident with a serpent entwined about it to the right of the bodhisattva and the remains of a lotus bearing a flaming sword aloft may be seen to his left. The sword is equated with *prajñā*, the Buddhist concept of transcendental knowledge. An unusual feature of this stele is the posture of the *jina* Buddhas above the central figure, with their legs akimbo in the manner of flying *gandharvas* or *vidyādharas* rather than their usual *vajraparyāṅkāśana*.

The full richness of the stylistic developments of Buddhist art under the Pālas or Senas may be seen in a figure of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara of about the late eleventh or early twelfth century from Tapandighi in West Bengal (Fig. 18.8). While clearly deriving from the same stylistic milieu as the Colgong Ṣaḍakṣarī, this sculpture is more elaborate and three dimensional. The flowers and jewels are not simply incised, but have become deeply carved forms rising out of the surface of the stele. The main figure occupies only a relatively small portion of the total space of the stele and the viewer's attention is captured by the variety of other features. In contrast to the Khasarapaṇa Avalokiteśvara image from Nālandā (Fig. 18.5), this bodhisattva is attended only by Hayagrīva and Sudhanakumāra; Tārā and Bhṛkuṭī are absent.

Buddha images also abound from the Pāla and Sena periods. Typically, Pāla-Sena depictions show seated Buddhas displaying *bhūmiśparśa mudrā*. Just as the prevalence of *dharmaśakra mudrā* and the prominence of Sārnāth (where Śākya-muni Buddha first preached) during the Gupta period are undoubtedly correlated, a relationship seems to exist between the popularity of the *bhūmiśparśa mudrā* and the importance of Bodh



18.9. Victory over Māra, and other Life Events of Śākyamuni Buddha. At Jagdīspur (Nālandā), Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late tenth century. Black stone. H: over 300 cm.

Gayā (the site of the Śākyamuni Buddha's enlightenment) in Magadha during the Pāla-Sena periods. The Pāla-period image within the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā shows a Buddha, undoubtedly Śākyamuni, in the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* in commemoration of the Buddha's defeat of Māra at that very site. This image must have served as a model for much of the imagery of the art of this period, not only in India but in other Buddhist lands where Bodh Gayā was looked to as a spiritual center. Often, a representation of Śākyamuni Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* served as the central image in a stele, around which were depicted seven more events from his life. A particularly fine and explicit example of such an "eight scenes" stele is enshrined at Jagdīspur (a modern village at the ancient site of the Nālandā monastery), which dates from around the late tenth century (Fig. 18.9). Not only is the

moment of calling the earth to witness depicted by the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and the presence of the *bodhi* leaves above the head of the central Buddha, but also, immediately surrounding him, the armies of Māra are shown in the act of attacking him with stones and other weapons in their attempt to sway him from his resolve.

In addition to this event in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha, seven other incidents are depicted in the stele. From the bottom left, along the perimeter, the scenes are: the offering of the monkey; the first sermon; the descent from the heaven of the thirty-three gods; the *parinirvāna*; the taming of the wild elephant; the miracle of Śrāvasti; and the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha. Each of these scenes bears at least one distinctive feature that identifies it as a specific event in the life of Śākyamuni Buddha. Thus, in the *offering of the monkey*, the Buddha is in *dhyāna mudrā* holding a bowl and is offered another bowl by a monkey. The first sermon is indicated by the two small deer flanking the wheel of the law beneath the Buddha's seat and the Buddha is shown in *dharmacakra mudrā*. The descent from Trāyastriṃśā, the heaven of the thirty-three gods, is also easily identified because of the presence of the Brahmanical deities, Indra and Brahmā, who accompanied the Buddha on his return to earth, and by the umbrella being held aloft over the Buddha's head. The reclining Buddha at the top of the stele, with the mourning attendants, the *stūpa* in the sky, and the pair of hands beating heavenly drums is a standard representation of the great decease (*parinirvāna*). The gesture of the standing Buddha in the next scene and the representation of the elephant are again specific references to a well-known subject in Buddhist literature, that is, the taming of the wild elephant, Nālāgiri, who had been released by the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta with the intention of killing the Buddha. The second representation of a preaching episode may be identified as the miracle of Śrāvasti because of the secondary Buddha figures occurring to either side of the main figure, indicating the occasion when the Buddha multiplied himself in order to confound the schismatics. The scene at the lower right represents Śākyamuni's birth, with Queen Māyā grasping the branches of the *śāl*

tree while the child is born from her right side.

Numerous other versions of these eight scenes together appear in stelae of the Pāla period. A small devotional image from Nālandā of about the tenth century offers an abbreviated, but more typical version than the Jagdiśpur relief (Fig. 18.10). The order of the scenes differs from the previous example and the wealth of specific detail has not been included. The army of Māra attacking the central figure is implied, not shown, and in each of the other scenes, the identifying characteristics have been limited to only the barest necessities. In this version, the presence of the three Buddhas beneath the main image adds a new dimension to the already complicated iconography. Indeed, the numerous stelae showing the eight scenes of the Buddha's life frequently have additions and variations that amplify their iconographic meaning. These Buddhas, together with the central figure, may represent four of the five Buddhas of the *pañca-jina maṇḍala*. The three figures alone may depict the three stages of Buddhahood: the past, present, and future. Specifically, the Buddha on the left, whose *varada mudrā* offers the gift of enlightenment, might represent the prediction of enlightenment; the central Buddha, meditating in *dhyaṇa mudrā* with a serpent, presumably Mucalinda, who protected Śākyamuni Buddha from the rains during his post-enlightenment meditations, could indicate the achievement of enlightenment; and the Buddha at the right, whose *abhaya mudrā* grants the absence of fear through knowledge of Buddhahood may indicate the teaching of the *dharma* and therefore the postenlightenment activities of a fully enlightened Buddha. As has been seen in other contexts, multiple levels of meaning are characteristic of Buddhist imagery, and during this period of increased iconographic complexity they are invariably present.

While emphasis on Śākyamuni Buddha (and thereby the *nirmāṇakāya*) remained great throughout Pāla- and Sena-period Buddhist art, growing explicitness and attention to the *jina* Buddhas (*sambhogakāya*) is also apparent. An approximately eleventh-century representation of a seated Buddha, again in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*, from Bareya, in West Bengal (Fig. 18.11), is



18.10. Victory over Māra and other Life Events of Śākyamuni Buddha. From Nālandā, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. tenth century. Brown stone. H: 47.5 cm. Nālandā Site Museum, Nālandā.

such an example, for it does not depict Śākyamuni but rather Akṣobhya, recognized by the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* as well as the elephant *vāhana* beneath his lotus seat. A lotus vine emerges from the point of the halo and issues lotus flowers upon which the five *jina* Buddhas are seated. The central figure is again Akṣobhya, indicating that he is in this case the center of the *maṇḍala* and as such is *svābhāvikakāya*. *Vajras* depicted along the sides of the stele, about halfway up, are further references to Akṣobhya since his *kula* is known as the *Vajra* family and, as such, this element symbolizes both his own existence as well as that of the beings who are his progeny.

Another stele of about the eleventh century shows the *jina* Ratnasambhava, recognized by his characteristic *varada mudrā* and his horse *vāhana* depicted beneath his lotus seat (Fig.



18.11. Akṣobhya. From Bareya, Nadia district, West Bengal, India. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Black stone. H: 70 cm. State Archaeological Museum of Bengal, Calcutta.



18.12. Ratnasambhava. From Bhāgalpur district, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Black stone. H: 67.4 cm. Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Calcutta.

18.12). Iconographically, the format is quite similar to representations of Śakyamuni found throughout Bihār and Bengal and, stylistically, it reflects features both of central Bihār (mainly Magadha) and of Bengal, as might be expected, since it was found in the Bhāgalpur district that is situated between Bengal and central Bihār. The arrangement of the stele with its centrally placed Buddha, the configuration of the throne, the treatment of the halo, and the position of the *vidyādhara*s can be traced to the earliest examples of the Pāla school in Magadha, although the elongation of the head and buoyant features of the face impart a special liveliness to the image. While the format of the stele follows ninth-century examples rather closely, the pointed top suggests an eleventh-century date and indicates that this sculpture is an intentional copy of an earlier mode of representation,

except for a few features that clearly assign it to its own time.

More typically Tantric in nature are a number of images that show angry forms of deities (*krodhakāya*). Heruka, a name given to a specific deity as well as to a class of angry deities that are emanations of Akṣobhya, was undoubtedly known in Buddhist theory long before his images became common in art. One example from Subhapur, in Bangladesh, of about the early eleventh century shows a specific form of Heruka that stands in the *ardhaparyāṅka* (half-squatting, that is, one-leg-folded) pose atop a lotus pedestal (Fig. 18.13). His bulging eyes, bared fangs, and ornamental details, including the garland of severed heads, all suggest his *krodha* nature. While frightening perhaps to the uninitiated, worship of the deity by advanced practitioners is intended to destroy



18.13. Heruka. From Subhapur, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. early eleventh century. Black stone. H: 165.2 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.



18.14. Hevajra. From Pāhārpur, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. twelfth century. Black stone. H: ca. 7.5 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

all Māras and confer Buddhahood on devotees. In his left hand, Heruka holds a now damaged *khatvāṅga* with a bell and streamers; it is not known what the right hand held as it has been destroyed. A *khatvāṅga* is a type of staff or club that symbolizes victory (over demons). While surviving representations of Heruka and Heruka-class deities are relatively rare in the Indic sphere, images such as this undoubtedly served as the basis for the many depictions of the god found in Nepali and Tibetan art of a slightly later date.

Heruka-type deities sometimes appear alone, as in the case of the example from Subhapur, but they may also be shown with a female in *yugamaddha* (sexual union). In this case, the deity is often called Hevajra. The female represents *prajñā* or knowledge and the male symbolizes the methods of achieving this knowledge

(*upāya*). When the two are combined, differentiation ceases to exist. By means of the realization of this nondifferentiation through a lengthy ritual, the Buddhist practitioner hopes to achieve *śūnyatā*, which is sometimes defined as neither being nor nonbeing. In this state, he has ceased to have desires of any kind and thus, by definition, cannot be concerned with the erotic aspects of the representation.

A very small image of Hevajra was found at Pāhārpur, indicating that advanced Tantric Buddhist theory was known and apparently practiced there (Fig. 18.14). Probably dating from the twelfth century, as suggested by the complexity of the image, and thus representing the latest phase of Buddhist art in the eastern portion of the subcontinent, the deity is shown with a profusion of arms and heads, in intercourse with his female companion. The standing

posture shown here is most commonly found in Nepali and Tibetan paintings and sculptures of a later date, although again, it is apparent that the source for those traditions was ancient India. Images such as this were reserved for those initiated to the highest level of *Anuttara-yoginī-tantra*. The proponents of *Anuttara-yoga* recognized that the initiations and their practices should be kept secret in order to avoid misrepresentation, misunderstanding, and persecution. Indeed, such images have often been misread in modern times by those who ascribe an erotic aspect to them and who viewed the sexual symbolism underlying many of the basic concepts as degenerate. Rather than being intended as erotic works, such images express the basic principle of the duality within the unity of the universal that is a basic theme of much religious symbolism in India. Sexually explicit images and the rituals associated with them were kept secret to protect from danger those individuals who might be ill-prepared to undertake these practices without proper training and initiation. The incorrect use of these practices held the very real possibility of severe psychological or moral damage and many would easily lose their way along this path if not deterred.

An image such as this would have been handed down from master to disciple, from generation to generation, as each teacher felt a new initiate was ready to accept the teachings. It is of interest that in the Buddhist context, an image that had belonged to a series of illustrious teachers is considered to be of much greater importance than one that has only aesthetic appeal. This viewpoint does not deny an interest in the visual merits of a work, for it is known that artists were sought out and praised for the quality of their creations. Yet it can be inferred from the traditional histories associated with devotional objects in countries where Buddhism is still practiced today that the importance of a religious image even at an early date in ancient India was based primarily on its spiritual worth.

Parṇasābarī, a female *krodhakāya* deity, is also an emanation of Akṣobhya. Generally, she is depicted as a stout, dwarflike figure. An image of Parṇasābarī of the eleventh century from



18.15. Parṇasābarī. From Vikramapura, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Black stone. H: 112 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.

Vikramapura, an ancient capital city and major art center near present-day Dacca (Dhaka) in Bangladesh, closely follows the textual description of the goddess given in the *Sādhanamālā* in her six arms, three faces, garment made of leaves and the attributes held in her hands, including the *vajra*, cluster of leaves, and bow (Fig. 18.15). She tramples on personifications of *vighnas* (obstacles) and holds her front left hand in *tarjani mudrā*, a threatening gesture, as if admonishing other *vighnas*. In spite of her own terrifying appearance, suggested by her bulging eyes, bared fangs, and flamelike hair, worship of Parṇasābarī is said to remove the fear of the terror stricken.

Judging from the abundant remains of metal images dating from the Pāla and Sena periods, the Bihār and Bengal regions must have been important centers of metal image production.



18.16. Buddha. From Nālandā, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. early-to-mid ninth century. Metal. H: 23.5 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.



18.17. Buddha. From Kurkihār, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century. Metal with silver inlay. H: 33 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

The widespread use of metal may have been partially due to the rich ore deposits throughout Magadha that had made the region wealthy even in early historic times. No metal coins of the Pāla kings have been found, however, suggesting that metal was reserved for certain purposes only. Two sites at which numerous metal images have been recovered are Nālandā and Kurkihār, both in Magadha. By and large, the Nālandā images predate the Kurkihār examples, and in general they are much simpler, smaller, and less complex iconographically. A typical Nālandā bronze of about the early to middle ninth century shows the Buddha seated upon a lotus throne, his hands in *dharmacakra mudrā* (Fig. 18.16). The incident may be identified as Śākyamuni's first sermon by the two deer flanking the wheel. The round *prabhāmaṇḍala* serves as both halo and body aura as typical

of examples of this date. In later images, however, especially those from Kurkihār, the halo and body aura are often distinct. The umbrella over the head of the Buddha is also typical of these images. In style, the majority of Nālandā bronzes show a relationship to Gupta-period sculptures, especially visible in the features of the face, the rather boyish proportions of the body, and the treatment of the robes. This image is inscribed on the back, as are many others from Nālandā. Most often, these inscriptions give the Buddhist creed, which acts as a vivification prayer for the image.

From a slightly later date, the late ninth or early tenth century, a figure of a Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* also seated on a lotus throne, from Kurkihār (Fig. 18.17), shows a number of stylistic advancements when compared to the preaching Buddha from Nālandā. The



18.18. Sarvavid Vairocana. From Nālandā, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Metal with gilding. H: ca. 30 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.



18.19. Buddha. From Kurkihār, Bihār, India. Pāla period. 19th year of reign of Vīgrahapāla (III). Ca. third quarter eleventh century. Metal with silver inlay. H: 112 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

residual Gupta features seen in the Nālandā bronze are now nearly lost. The Kurkihār figure is more elongated and its torso is in the form of a *gomukha* (cow's head), a metaphorical convention prescribed in the iconographic texts in use at the time that became a typical feature of the mature Pāla style. The simple, round halo and canopy seen in the Nālandā example has given way to a separated halo and throne back, each of which is elaborated with forms serving both decorative and iconographic purposes. A *kīrttimukha* at the top appears to spew the leaves of the *bodhi* tree and the rod above originally held the umbrella.

Only a few metal images from Nālandā are known from the late Pāla period, although the

decrease in apparent numbers in no way signifies a decline in quality of production. This is seen in a depiction of Sarvavid Vairocana as the Ādi-Buddha from Nālandā dating from about the eleventh century (Fig. 18.18). The figure is gilded according to a common practice of the time, but the pedestal has been left plain, clearly denoting the golden radiance of the main figure. In this form, the Ādi-Buddha embodies still another aspect of the soteriological concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism. His four faces represent both his omnipresence and his universality and yet, combined as they are into a single head, personify the undifferentiated state of all duality, that is, the true knowledge of *sūnyatā*. The *bodhyaṅgi mudrā*, in which the index finger

of the left hand is enclosed by the five fingers of the right hand, signifies the union of the five knowledges of the *jina* Buddhas into the single enlightenment. In this case, the *vajra* emerging at the top as though it was an extension of the left forefinger reemphasizes the symbolism.

Three almost identical standing Buddha images found in the Kurkihār hoard are dated in the reign of Vighrahapāla, presumably Vighrahapāla III, the Pāla king who ruled around the middle of the eleventh century,¹⁰ and thus these images help to pinpoint certain stylistic developments of the later Pāla period. The example chosen (Fig. 18.19), while slightly more elongated in the body treatment than the other two, shows the elegance and technical perfection achieved by the Magadha craftsmen. Over a meter in height, the image shows the Buddha surrounded by a *prabhāmaṇḍala* that was cast separately. Various aspects of the Buddha's body are stylized and are meant to suggest visual metaphors with other forms. The torso, for example, is conceived as a *gomukha* (cow's head) and the nose, when viewed from the side, resembles a parrot's beak. Such analogies are known in Indic art from earlier periods, but are emphasized to a greater or lesser extent in different stylistic idioms. The use of such forms in the eastern idioms may indicate a growing intellectualization of the art as iconographic theory became increasingly well defined.

One of the finest examples of sculpture from the Kurkihār hoard, indeed perhaps from all of Pāla art, is a gilt bronze image of Lokanātha, a form of Avalokiteśvara, from about the twelfth century (Pl. 27). The features of his face are sharper and more stylized, and the posture of his body is more angular, compared with earlier examples. In spite of an undulating grace and rhythm to the image, there is a quality of stiffness that has entered the sculptural mode that is easily seen in comparison with earlier works, for the rather naturalistic rendering of the facial features has been replaced with slick, stylized forms.

Nālandā and Kurkihār represent only two of the many important metal workshops of the Pāla-Sena periods. Several other sites have yielded works that generally followed the main

trends of the Pāla-Sena periods in terms of increasing elaboration and other features, but each is also characterized by certain individual stylistic traits. These separate schools are extremely important to study, especially when looking for Indic sources for Tibetan, Nepali, Southeast Asian, or other art traditions, for in many cases, it can be seen that the ties to these other regions were not merely general but were associated with particular sites.¹¹ Metal images, of course, are generally more easily transportable than stone sculptures, since they are usually smaller, and therefore the metal pieces may have played a major role in the dissemination of Indic styles to other parts of Asia.

A striking stylistic contrast, for example, may be seen by comparing the gilded Kurkihār Lokanātha (Pl. 27) to a representation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya found at the village of Fatehpur, hardly twenty kilometers from Kurkihār (Fig. 18.20). Probably also dating from the twelfth century, as suggested by the angular and accentuated posture, stylized facial features, complexity of the lotus base, and other details, this work is notable for the high platform upon which the lotus pedestal rests. Although a similar platform occurs in another sculpture found at Fatehpur, it is unlike any that have been noted on other images from Bihār or Bengal. Upon close examination, the manner of executing the piece from Fatehpur differs greatly from the Kurkihār Lokanātha in spite of their sharing general features of the twelfth-century Magadhan style. The lotuses held by Lokanātha, for example, are much more three-dimensionally conceived than the rather flat flowers flanking Maitreya. The coiled locks of the coiffures of the two bodhisattvas are also created in a different manner, though in terms of height and shape, both fall within the stylistic parameters of the period. Other aspects of the work, such as the lotuses of the pedestals, the jewelry, facial features, and drapery can also be subjected to such scrutiny, with the result that it becomes evident that the two pieces were products of related but nonetheless distinct craft traditions.

Jhewāri and other sites in the Chittagong



18.20. Bodhisattva Maitreya. From Fatehpur, Bihar, India. Pāla period. Ca. twelfth century. Metal. H: 21.8 cm. Bodh Gayā Museum, Bodh Gayā.



18.21. Buddha. From Jhewāri, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. tenth century. Metal. H: 35.5 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

district of Bangladesh have yielded a number of metal images that differ considerably from roughly contemporaneous pieces from other Bihar and Bengal sites. A particularly fine example shows a Buddha seated, with his right hand in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*, which in this respect is hardly an unusual configuration for the Pāla-Sena periods (Fig. 18.21). Probably dating from around the tenth century, the image shows a slender figure with prominent nipples, an emphasized line for the waistband of his garment, and a very diaphanous garment with almost no emphasis on pleats or folds. While the facial features seem related to types found at Nālandā (Fig. 18.16), there is an attenuation and refinement that had been lacking in other styles.

Much of the same range of iconography seen in Buddhist stone pieces of the Pāla-Sena periods is found in metal images, although since metal pieces must have been melted down at times, destroyed by fire, or simply carried away, the remaining ones do not provide as full evidence as

the stone pieces of religious developments. A small image of Samvara of about the eleventh century found at Pātharghātā in eastern Bihār demonstrates the presence of advanced Tantric iconography in metal images (Fig. 18.22). Samvara is another one of the Heruka deities and is also an emanation of Akṣobhya. Adorned with a garland of skulls and standing in *ālīḍha* posture, he tramples on Bhairava and Kālarātri and holds a variety of attributes in his many hands, including the severed head of Brahmā (Brahmā *kapāla*), the *vajra*, and *ghaṇṭā* in his two crossed hands symbolic of the permanence and transience of the universe respectively, and the elephant skin in his two upper hands, symbolic of the overcoming of hindrances.

Another small metal image, from Kurkihār, and perhaps dating from the eleventh century, shows Hayagrīva, a fierce form of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 18.23). Hayagrīva (Horse-neck) is often recognized by a horse-head ornament in his headdress. His corpulent body, serpent orna-



18.22. Samvara. From Pātharghātā, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Metal. H: 15.5 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.



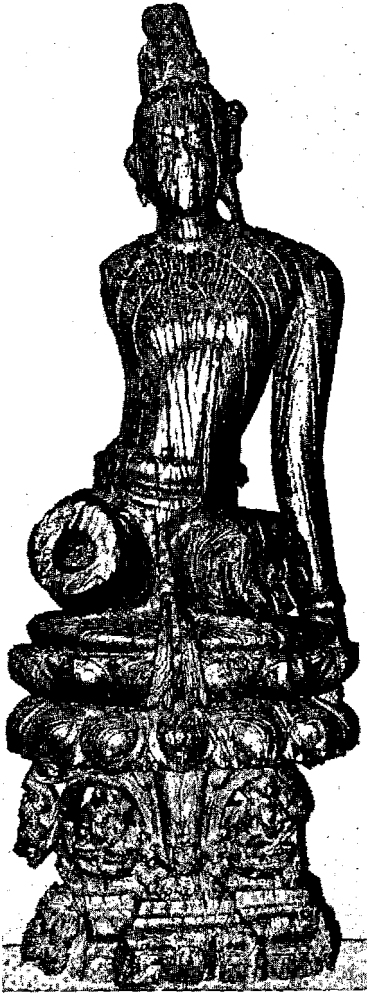
18.23. Hayagrīva. From Kurkihār, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Gilded metal. H: 10 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

ments, disheveled hair, and bulging eyes are all characteristic of his fierce nature and are not stylistically determined. This sculpture was probably part of a large group of images that together constituted a complex iconographic statement such as that of the Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara from Nālandā (Fig. 18.5) in which Hayagrīva also appears. Though isolated from its original context, the image is an important reminder of the interrelationships between images that were created separately but used together to communicate a religious message.

Although nearly all the sculptures surviving from the Pāla-Sena period are made of stone or metal, it is likely that wood was the most popular sculptural medium of the day. Not only were various types of suitable hardwoods readily available in the region, especially Bengal, but wood was especially appropriate for the intricate detail of the Pāla-Sena styles.

Among the few remaining wood pieces from Pāla-Sena times is a representation of a seated

bodhisattva from Vikramapura in Bangladesh (Fig. 18.24). The complexity of its lotus base and the three-dimensional detail of the petals suggest a date in the late Pāla period, perhaps the eleventh century. In contrast to stone images, which are invariably created out of a single piece of stone, wooden sculptures were apparently jointed when necessary. The legs of this figure, for example, were clearly added on to the main piece of wood by means of mortice and tenon joints. The large size of the image and the fact that it was jointed suggests that artists were not limited to using wood for minor images. Such carvings are a bold reminder of the fact that as we trace South Asia's artistic heritage through surviving works, primarily those made of enduring materials, we are probably viewing only a small fraction of the total output of Indic artists, whose principal media must have been wood, terra cotta, and other fragile materials. The popularity of wood was not a phenomenon limited to Bihār and Bengal,



18.24. Bodhisattva. From Vikramapura, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Wood. H: 120 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.

for it is likely that wood was the preferred medium throughout the centuries in most parts of South Asia.

Painting, too, must have been a very popular art form during the Pāla-Sena period. As in many other schools of South Asian art, mural paintings were apparently commonly executed on the walls of many religious structures. However, aside from some recently discovered and very badly damaged murals found at Nālandā, all that remains of the Pāla-Sena painting tradition are a number of fragments of palm leaf manuscripts. These, too, are hardly

representative of the vast numbers of such objects originally produced, for, aside from their inherent fragility, many were apparently willfully destroyed. At Nālandā, for example, extensive libraries that served as repositories for these illustrated texts were burned during attacks by Muslims in 1199, and similar events must have occurred at other sites.¹²

The practice of using dried palm leaves as pages for religious manuscripts was apparently widespread throughout the South Asian subcontinent and was not limited to the eastern regions. Even after the introduction of paper in the Indic sphere, palm leaves remained and continue to remain a traditional support for the writing and illustration of texts. Separate leaves, each measuring about six to eight centimeters in height and up to about fifty centimeters in breadth, were usually tied together with string and were protected by wooden covers that were slightly larger than the actual leaves. Although various texts are known to have been used in the Pāla-Sena periods, one of the most popular must have been the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, for a number of examples have survived. Frequently, the text is interspersed with illustrations of the eight major events from Śākyamuni Buddha's life that were also popularized in stone (Figs. 18.9, 18.10) and metal during this period, and some relationship may exist between the subject and the text.

Two such scenes on a single page of an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript depict the birth of the Buddha (Pl. 28) and the Miracle of Śrāvastī (Pl. 29). A representation of the Buddha's descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven also appears on the same page. Although sometimes a colophon to a manuscript identifies the place and date of its production, in this case, it can only be inferred on stylistic grounds that the work was executed in Bengal during the twelfth century. The high quality of craftsmanship seen in both stone and metal images in Bihār and Bengal is also apparent in the remarkable craftsmanship of these miniature paintings. Although a great deal of detail and vitality is found in each composition, the artist has limited his painting to the few essential elements required for the narration of the event. As is generally true in Pāla-Sena manuscripts,

the palette is confined primarily to unmixed mineral colors including red, yellow, blue, green, black, and white. Presumably, *Om maṇi padme hūm*, the Buddhist *mantra*, is associated with these six colors¹³ and apparently color plays a symbolic role, as suggested by the various colors used to represent the skin tones. Most

figures are shown with their faces in a three-quarter view, except representations of seated Buddhas, which may be shown full face. An emphasis on the eyes, depicted by very flowing, exaggerated lines, is a prelude to the exaggerated eye treatment to be found in later schools of Indic painting.

HINDU ART

Although the first two hundred or so years of Pāla-period art were dominated by Buddhist productions, Hindu remains also exist in some quantities from that phase and clearly dominate in the last two hundred years of the Pāla period. As in the case of Buddhist architecture from this region, little remains to reveal the full range of Hindu architectural forms in use over this four hundred year span, for it is mainly the sculptures that have endured. Some of the surviving buildings, though damaged, suggest that the Bengali architectural styles in particular shared many features with other northern schools, especially that of Orissa. Most of the surviving temples from Bengal date from later than the Pāla-Sena period, especially from the sixteenth century and later. Such structures display a rich variety of forms, though since they are greatly influenced by Islamic models, they fall outside the scope of the present volume.¹⁴ Thus, for an understanding of the Hindu artistic developments from the eighth through the twelfth centuries in the east, the greatest attention must be placed on the surviving sculptures.

During the pre-Pāla and early Pāla periods, Buddhist and Hindu sculptures were apparently produced in separate workshops and exhibited rather divergent stylistic characteristics. While distinctions between Buddhist and Hindu art styles are not apparent in most other regional schools of South Asian art, in Bihār and Bengal a special case seems to have been fostered because of the Buddhist strength within Magadha. In order to strengthen Hinduism in the region, *brāhmins* were specifically brought to the east, especially Bengal, for settlement and, as far as may be inferred from remaining inscriptional evidence, a north-central Indian artistic idiom was

thus introduced into the region.¹⁵ In contrast to the rather elegant Buddhist style of the seventh and eighth centuries (Fig. 18.4), Hindu images tend to show rather short, stocky figures, although some exceptions are known, such as the image of Viṣṇu from Āpsādh (Fig. 11.10).

A representation of Sūrya from Lakhisarai, in Bihār (Fig. 18.25), for example, may be dated to the late eighth century on the basis of comparison with dated works. However, the rather short proportions of the figure seem to derive from north-central Indian examples of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, not the elegant forms seen at contemporary Buddhist sites. Although it is true that many of the Hindu images from Bihār and Bengal of the early Pāla period are of lesser artistic merit than their Buddhist counterparts, undoubtedly partly because the Buddhist centers were better established and more lavishly patronized, difference in quality by no means accounts for the distinction. As can be seen in this example, the carving is crisp and expressive and in no way amateurish. The debt to north-central Indian stylistic modes may not have been due to a new infusion from that region at this time. Rather, it might reflect an evolution of an artistic tradition based on earlier Hindu models in Bihār and Bengal, as is suggested by comparing this Sūrya image to one made in the early seventh century from Muṇḍeśvarī in Bihār (Fig. 11.8). Both figures show strikingly similar body proportions, a feature that cannot be ascribed to Hindu iconographic precepts alone. The earlier work, however, still betrays much of the soft modeling of Gupta and post-Gupta period carvings.

Similarly full but squat body forms are seen in a representation of Umā-Maheśvara from



18.25. Sūrya. From Lakhisarai, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late eighth century. Black stone. H: 61 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.



18.26. Umā-Maheśvara. Possibly from Rājgir, Bihār, India. Pāla period. Ca. late eighth century. Black stone. H: 52.6 cm. Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University.

Bihār, perhaps Rājgir, also probably dating from the late eighth century (Fig. 18.26). The detailing is remarkably precise, as is evident in the treatment of the facial features, coiffures, and other elements. Yet the figures do not resemble those depicted in most Buddhist images from this region and period in their body proportions but instead relate to what appears to be a Hindu tradition based on north-central Indian modes. An important element of this sculpture is the row of beads around the rim of the stele, for this feature occurs widely in Bihār and Bengal works of the eighth and ninth centuries. The subject of Umā-Maheśvara was especially popular at several sites in Bihār during the early Pāla period. This sculpture is distinctive in the treatment of the base with its stylized craggy mountain design and the animation of the two animal *vāhanas* of the two deities, Śiva's bull and Umā's lion.

By about the ninth century, stylistic distinc-

tions between Buddhist and Hindu art seem to have disappeared. This fused style is seen in a representation of Gaṇeśa from Nārāyaṇpur, in Bangladesh, dated in the fourth year of the reign of Mahipāla (I) who ruled in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries (Fig. 18.27).¹⁶ The detailing of the lotus pedestal, the foliate motifs, the garland, and the flame edge of the stele are virtually identical to these elements in a number of both Buddhist and Hindu works found in Bihār and Bengal presumably of the same date.

Viṣṇu is by far the most common subject in the Hindu art of Bihār and Bengal during the later Pāla and Sena periods when Buddhism had been largely superseded in the region. Very often, the specific form shown is Trivikrama, one of the twenty-four icons of Viṣṇu (which should not be confused with Viṣṇu's dwarf incarnation, Trivikrama). One example of Viṣṇu Trivikrama was found at Balurghat, West Bengal (Fig. 18.28). Trivikrama is identified by the po-



18.27. Gaṇeśa. From Nārāyaṅpur, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Fourth year of reign of Mahipala (I). Ca. late tenth century. Black stone. H: 153 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.



18.28. Viṣṇu Trivikrama. From Balurghāt, West Bengal, India. Pāla period. Ca. twelfth century. Black stone. H: 133.2 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

sition of the four attributes held in his hands: the *gadā* appears in the upper right hand; the *padma*, in the lower right; the *cakra* is held in the upper left hand; and the *śankha* (now largely damaged), in the lower left. The emphasis on the Trivikrama icon in relation to Bengali Vaiṣṇavism has yet to be explored, but undoubtedly has significance. In this sculpture, the highly ornate treatment of the jewelry, costume, and subsidiary elements of the back-slab typical of twelfth-century works is present, indicating its probable date of manufacture. As in other late Pāla- or Sena-period sculptures, the central figure is virtually removed from the back-slab and stands almost as a separate figure placed in front of it.

Along with the many representations of Viṣṇu

and Sūrya, and some of other Hindu gods, many highly unusual works were produced during the Pāla and Sena periods. One such example may be unique within the entire span of Hindu art for it shows a figure of a four-armed goddess apparently either arising out of a *liṅga* or standing behind it (Fig. 18.29). Found at Kāgajipādā, Vikramapura, it is probably a product of the twelfth century, judging from the ornateness and details of the carving. The figure holds a rosary in her upper right hand, a book in her upper left, and the remaining two hands are placed in a variation of *dhyāna mudrā*. Although the name of this goddess is still subject to question,¹⁷ she is probably a form of Pārvatī, and the overall theme must certainly be the unity of the *liṅga* with the female principle.



18.29. Hindu goddess. From Vikramapura, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. twelfth century. Black stone. H: 145 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.



18.30. Ardhanariśvara. From Purapara, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. late eleventh–early twelfth century. Black stone. H: 106.8 cm. Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.

In this respect, it is similar to a depiction of Ardhanariśvara, found in the vicinity of Dacca at Purapara and of approximately the late eleventh or early twelfth century (Fig. 18.30). There is, perhaps, no more graphic description in all of South Asian art of the androgynous Śiva combined with Pārvatī, as seen not only in the presence of the female breast and male phallus, but also in the two halves of the head-dress, Śiva's divided third eye, and the distinctive treatment of the two halves of the lower garment.



18.31. Śiva Naṭarāja. From Palgiri, Comilla district, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. eleventh century. Black stone. H: 130.8 cm. Dacca Museum, Dacca.

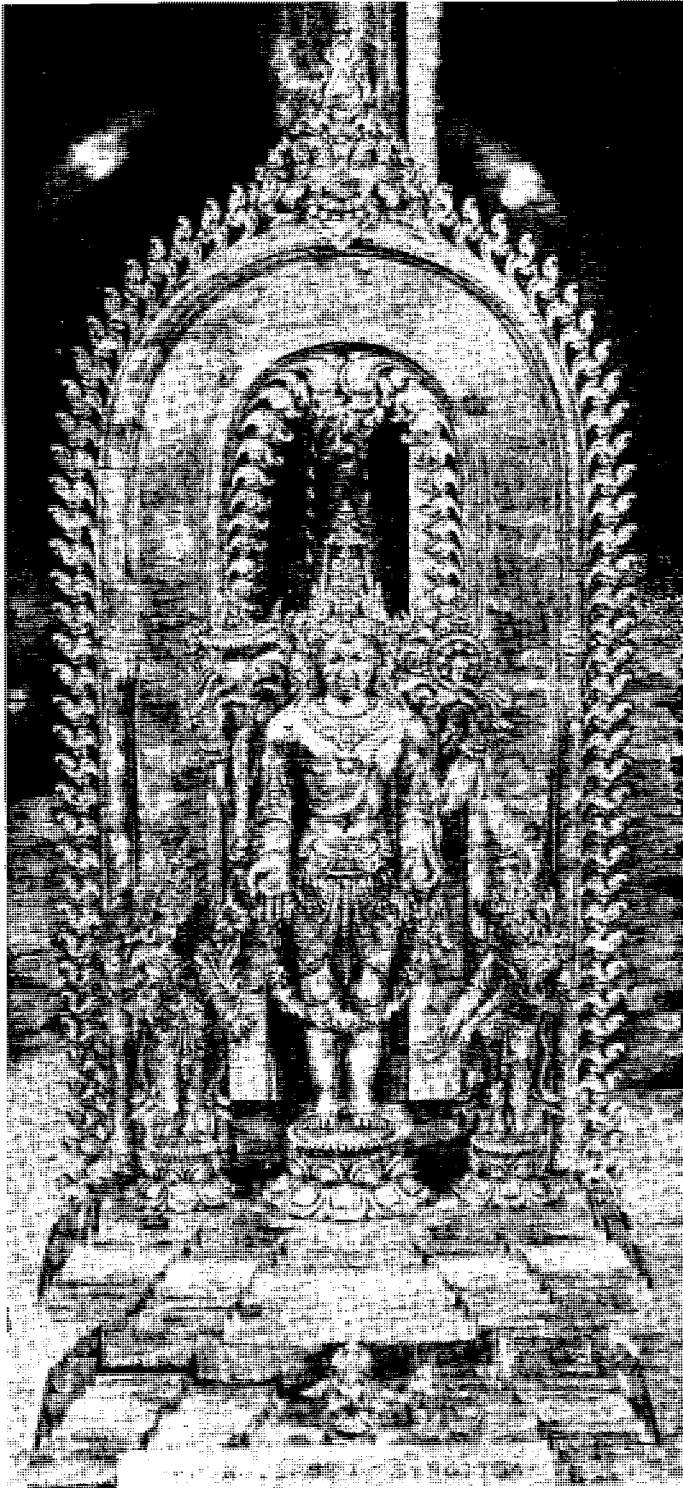
The Pāla-Sena art schools of Bengal apparently originated a unique format for images of Śiva as Naṭarāja in which Śiva dances atop the back of his bull *vāhana*, Nandi. One example of about the eleventh century from Palgiri, in Bangladesh, illustrates the type (Fig. 18.31). With *liṅga* erect and a sublime expression on his face, the ten-armed god performs his dance while Nandi looks up at his lord. Śiva is accompanied by his consorts, Pārvatī, who stands on her lion *vāhana* at the right of the composition, and Gaṅgā, atop her *makara* at the left. Although not as elaborate



18.32. Balarāma. From Kurkihar, Bihār, India. Pāla period, ninth year of reign of Devapāla. Ca. second quarter ninth century. Metal. H: 36.2 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

or as formal as many images from this date, there is little question that it belongs to the late Pāla period because of the high headdress worn by Śiva, the pointed stele top, and the accentuated postures of the attendant goddesses.

Metal images were produced in the service of the Hindu religion, as they had been for the Buddhists in Bihār and Bengal, although a less complete picture emerges for them because many Hindu images have been found as either isolated pieces or in much smaller hoards. An image of Balarāma, who is often considered to



18.33. Viṣṇu Trivikrama. From Vikramapura, Bangladesh. Pāla period. Ca. twelfth century. Silver. H: ca. 25 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

be the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu and the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, is dated by inscription to the year 9 of the reign of Devapāla, the third Pāla king, who ruled in the first half of the ninth century (Fig. 18.32). It was found at Kurkihār, and, like the more numerous Buddhist metal pieces from that site, reveals a high degree of skill on the part of its maker. Balarāma is four-armed and holds attributes associated with Viṣṇu, but he is recognized by the characteristic *nāga* hood that appears behind his head.

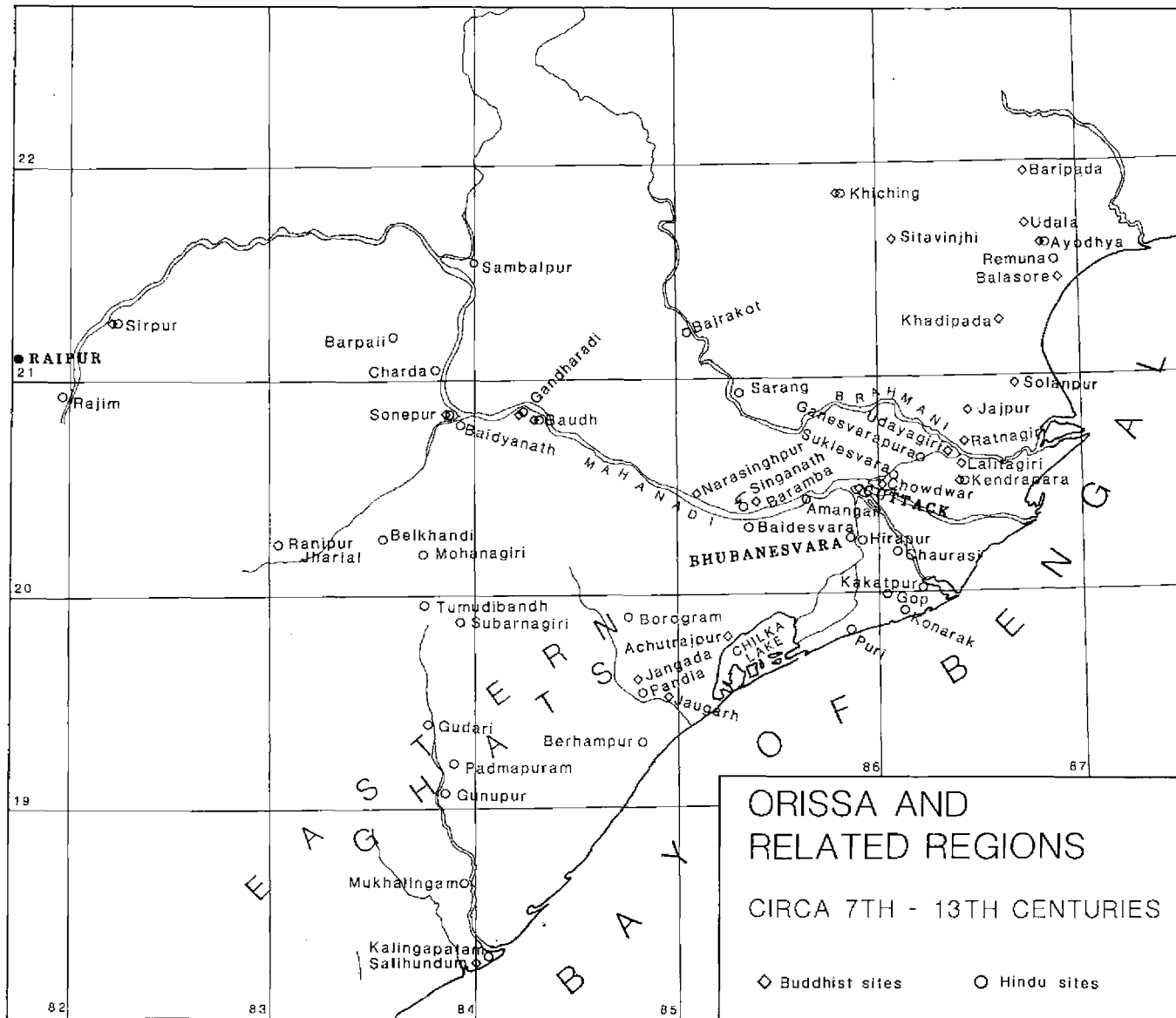
Although most of the metal images found in Bihār and Bengal are bronze, works in precious metals such as gold and silver were also produced. Because of their intrinsic value, these images

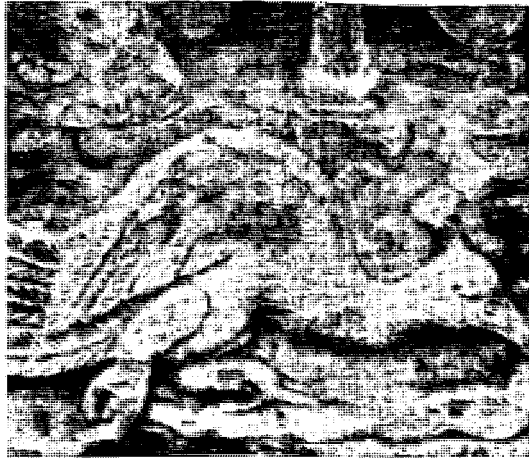
are less likely to survive the centuries, since a finder might convert the metal content to a medium of exchange rather than preserve the ancient image. However, a splendid silver sculpture of Viṣṇu, as Trivikrama attended by his consorts Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, managed to survive and was found at Vikramapura (Fig. 18.33). The superb craftsmanship may indicate that only the best artists were used when precious materials were involved, which would be expected, since the patron who could afford silver could also afford the best artists. The image probably dates from the twelfth century, as indicated by the ornate costuming and the treatment of the flame rim of the *prabhāmaṇḍala*.

CONCLUSION

The very existence of images like the silver Viṣṇu contradicts the often repeated statement that by the twelfth century, there was an artistic decline in the Pāla-Sena kingdoms, for nowhere is it more clear that both patrons and artists were enthusiastically producing religious images of great beauty at that time. The sudden cessation of patronage and the effect on the artistic tradi-

tion undoubtedly arose due to a number of political and social factors, including but not limited to the increasing Muslim control. It is evident that the tradition was halted at a high point, and it can only be speculated as to what further developments might have occurred if it had not been interrupted.





Detail of 19, 12.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Orissa and Related Regions

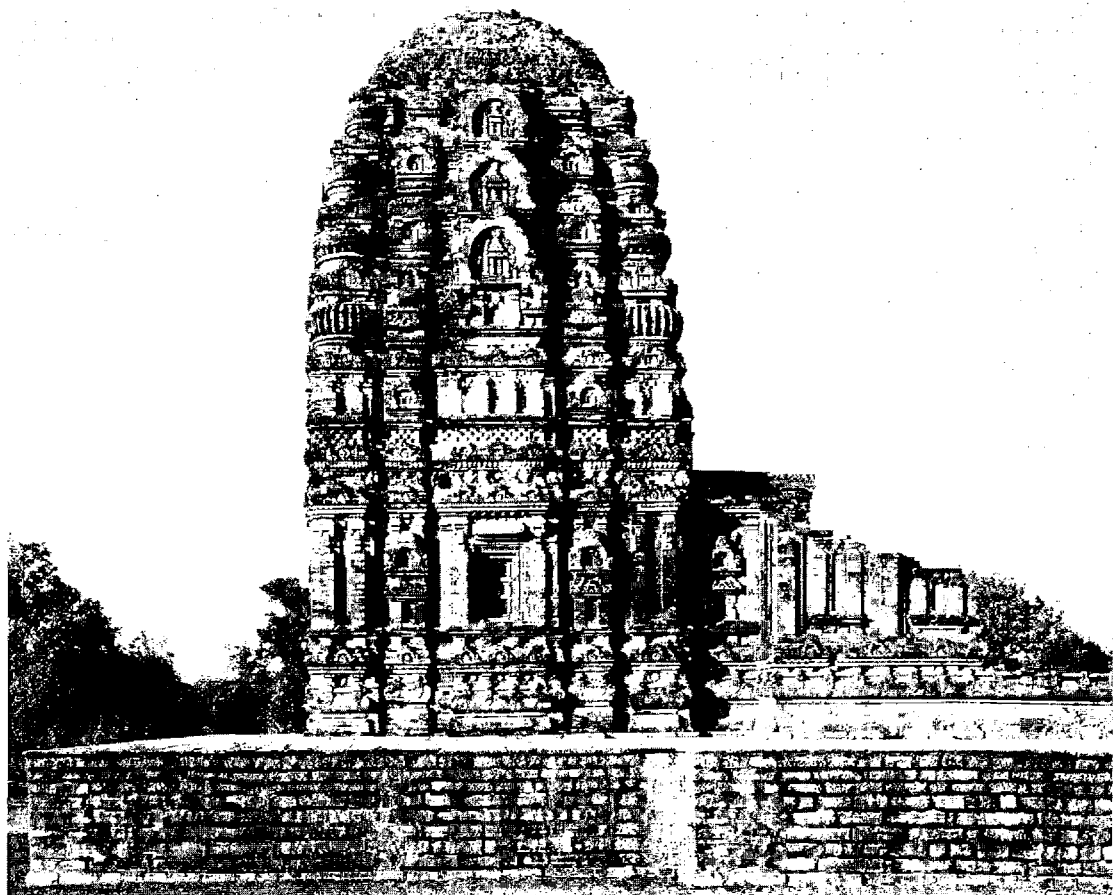
The art and architecture of Orissa forms a distinct unit, having a continuous development and numerous well-preserved examples as well as canons, texts, and a specific terminology that distinguish this tradition from those of other regions of South Asia. This eastern Indian region, important since Maurya times and Aśoka's battle of Kalinga, especially gained prominence in the post-Gupta periods when important temple complexes of the northern style, the so-called *nāgara* type, developed at religious centers. The study of the region over a period of about seven hundred years provides a microcosmic view of a single area of the complex Indic civilization. Although the Orissan developments are distinctive and form a unit by themselves,

ties with other regional developments are also strong, especially at the outset when Orissa's relations to the styles of the Early Western Calukyas and to the art of Śrīpura (Sirpur) and parts of Āndhra Pradesh are most evident. Although the post-Gupta styles of Orissa are frequently said to have arisen suddenly since almost no art remains are known between the time of Khāravēla and the later developments, the later art may have had its roots in an ephemeral art tradition. Also, the art of neighboring or other influential regions may hold clues to the origin of this idiom and should be examined in order to more fully understand the Orissan developments.

ŚRĪPURA (SIRPUR) AND RĀJIM: MADHYA PRADESH

Although properly speaking, the ancient city of Śrīpura (modern Sirpur) does not lie within the boundaries of modern Orissa state, the relation-

ship of its history and art to that of Orissa is clear. Sirpur, in the Chhattisgarh region (ancient Dakṣiṇa Kosala)¹ of Madhya Pradesh, lies along

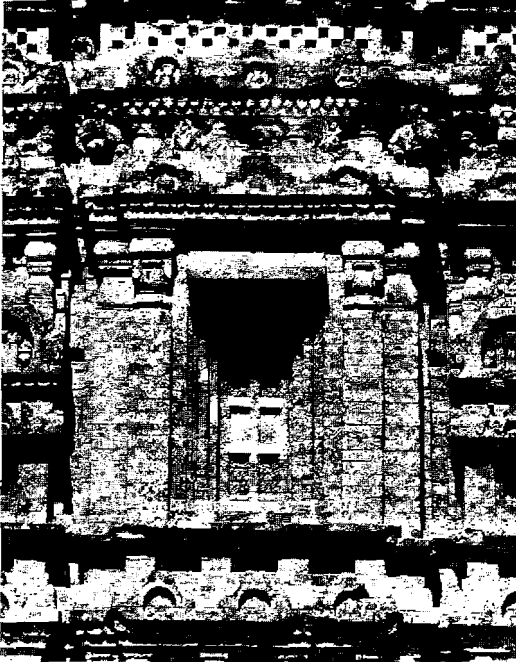


19.1. Lakṣmaṇa temple from south. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Pāṇḍuvamāśī period. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century. Brick.

the banks of the Mahānadi River, which linked it to some of the main art centers of Orissa, including Bhubaneśvara. The importance of Sirpur from the sixth through the tenth centuries is seen in the archaeological remains, largely unexcavated, that extend for several kilometers around the modern village. During the first half of the sixth century, its rulers included the kings of Śarabhapura, but no remains in Sirpur or the ancient Dakṣiṇa Kosala region in general can definitely be associated with that dynastic patronage. From the second half of the sixth century until the mid-seventh century, the Pāṇḍuvamāśīs (also called the Somavamāśīs) of Dakṣiṇa Kosala had their capital at Śrīpura. The majority of remains at Sirpur, which consist

of both Buddhist and Hindu materials, belong to the period of Pāṇḍuvamāśī rule.

The most well-preserved temple at the site is the east-facing Lakṣmaṇa temple (Fig. 19.1) built in the late sixth or early seventh century by Vāsaṭā, the mother of Mahāśīvagupta Bālārjuna (ca. 595–650), the most important and last Pāṇḍuvamāśī king.² Dedicated to Viṣṇu, this brick temple stands on a large stone platform accessible by steps at both the north and south ends of the eastern side. Stone is also used in the doorframe, and the pillars and pilasters of the *maṇḍapa*. The temple consists of a shrine and the *maṇḍapa* that lies before it. This pillared hall,³ now almost completely in ruins, extended axially to the shrine, and its roof, now lost, was



19.2. South wall, Lakṣmaṇa temple, detail of brickwork. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Pāṇḍuvamśi period. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century.



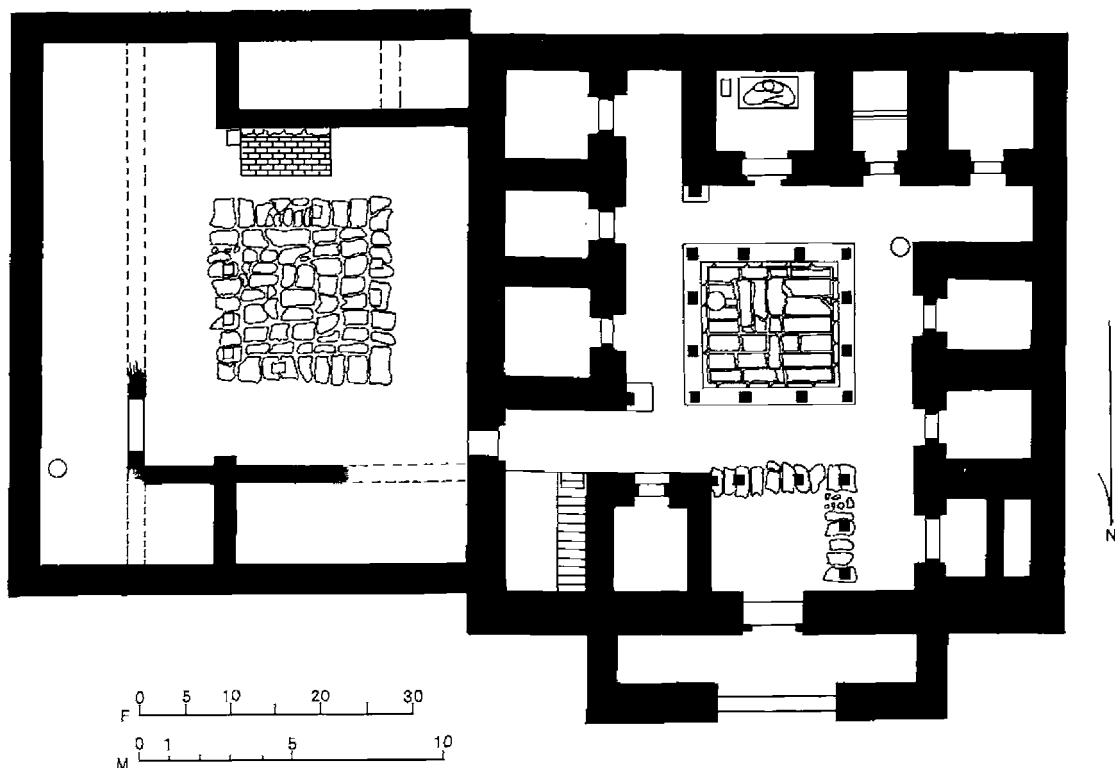
19.3. Doorway to shrine, Lakṣmaṇa temple. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Pāṇḍuvamśi period. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century.

originally upheld by stone pillars arranged in rows.

Of special interest is the shape and form of the *śikhara*, for its curvilinear shape, almost cylindrical in form, has a rather low, somewhat heavy appearance similar to examples of the typical early Orissan style. The clear division into horizontal stories (*bhūmis*) found in Orissa is also present, as is the division into vertical sections. The exterior of the *śikhara* and shrine is extensively decorated with *candraśālās* and different types of mouldings. Three niches, one on each of the sides and the rear of the shrine, bear false window motifs, skillfully executed in the brick medium (Fig. 19.2). The sanctum of the temple, now empty, is entered through a large stone doorway (Fig. 19.3) decorated with panels of *mithunas*, *vṛkṣadevatās*, and foliate motifs and bearing a representation of Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣa across the center of the lintel. The figures, as seen in a representation of a *mithuna* (Fig. 19.4), are rather full-fleshed, grace-



19.4. *Mithuna*, left jamb, doorway to shrine, Lakṣmaṇa temple. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Pāṇḍuvamśi period. Ca. late sixth–early seventh century.



19.5. Plan of "svastika" monastery. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India.
Ca. seventh century.

ful, and relaxed in their poses. Of particular note stylistically is the treatment of the halos with their detailed centers and pearl rims.

Important Buddhist remains have also been found at Sirpur, including monastic structures and metal and stone sculptures. One of the monasteries has been dubbed the "svastika" monastery in modern times because the arrangement of its cells and courtyard suggest the form of a *svastika* (Fig. 19.5). If, indeed, this was the intention of its creators, such usage is reminiscent of the practice in Āndhra Pradesh, where a *svastika* or *cakra* form was sometimes imbedded in the *stūpa* structure. A large stone image of a seated Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* (Fig. 19.6) was the main object of devotion. An important feature of this sculpture, and others discovered at the site, is the fact that it is made of several large rectangular pieces of stone in contrast with the more common monolithic form of large images

in other regions of ancient India. This characteristic is also to be noted in Orissa, especially during the Bhauma period, in both Buddhist and Hindu contexts and probably reflects a regional stylistic and technical preference. The figure of the Buddha derives from Gupta types although a greater abstraction has occurred and the torso and limbs appear to be almost hollow tubes rather than softly modeled flesh and bone.

The Buddhist remains at Sirpur are usually attributed primarily to the reign of Mahāśivagupta Balārjuna. However, while the munificence of this Śaivite king toward Buddhism is clear from inscriptional evidence, he must have been only one of the important patrons of the religion in the region, as suggested by an impressive group of metal images found at the site that probably date from the late seventh or eighth century and later.⁴ Many of the pieces show a remarkable affiliation with the style prevalent at Nālandā



19.6. Buddha at "svastika" monastery. Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. seventh century. Stone.

during the seventh through ninth centuries (Fig. 18.16). This visual tie is reinforced by the fact that Vāsata, queen dowager and mother of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna, was a daughter of a Maukhari ruler of Magadha who flourished prior to the rise of the Pālas, suggesting a possible vehicle for the transmission of style.

On the basis of style, a very complicated image of Tārā (Pl. 30) is assignable to the eighth century. This image ranks among the finest of all South Asian metal pieces because of its intricacy and perfection of detail. Its similarity to signed works by an artist named Kumāradeva, presumably of Sirpur, suggest that it may be attributed to his hand.⁵ It is thus a very rare example of South Asian art that can be associated with an artist's name.

Tārā sits on the calyx of a fully opened lotus blossom that itself rests upon a lion-supported throne. The central configuration is raised on a

dais before which there is an offering platform. The back of the lion throne is elaborately ornamented with conventionalized jewels, and its cross-bars support images of Amitābha, Vajrapāṇi/Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and Avalokiteśvara. The sides of the throne back are enriched by the presence of *vyālakas*. Tārā is attended by two female companions who are reflections of other aspects of herself; one, who is also called Tārā, appears on her proper right while the other, Bhṛkuṭī, stands to her left. The central figure exhibits *abhaya mudrā* with her left hand and holds a fruit in the palm of her right hand, which is in the *varada* gesture, thus bestowing the gift on the beholder. The secondary figure of Tārā displays *varada mudrā* in her right hand and holds the stem of a fully opened lotus in her left. Bhṛkuṭī offers the devotees a gem in her two lowered hands, which form a double *varada mudrā*. The position of the central Tārā, between Tārā and Bhṛkuṭī, makes her equal in importance to Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara. Although she is the female reflection of Avalokiteśvara in all his forms, here, she directly supplants him. Further, seated on the lion throne with her two attendants, she is identical to the Buddha and is manifestly *prajñā*, the knowledge inherent in Buddhahood. The attendants carry meanings parallel to those of the bodhisattvas, for Tārā is *karuṇā* (compassion) and Bhṛkuṭī is *prajñā*. In this icon, female symbolism reaches one of its fullest expressions.

One of the most interesting aspects of this image is its completeness as a shrine. The devotional group in front of the main image consists of two *nāgas* standing on lotuses and a devotee. The *nāgas* hold bowls containing offerings of sweets, and the devotee kneels and holds his hands in *añjali mudrā*, the gesture of devotion. Specifically, he may refer to the donor of the image, but conceptually, his presence in the scene insures perpetual adoration of the image. The offering platform in front of the lion throne holds a conch shell on the left, a covered dish containing sweets in the center, and an incense burner on the right. In Buddhist rituals, the conch is used to hold water for ablutions and ritual cleansing. The sweets contained in the central dish would be made from the five



19.7. Viṣṇu, at Rājīva-locana temple. Rājīm, Madhya Pradesh, India. Probably Nala period. Ca. early eighth century. Stone.



19.8. Trivikrama, at Rājīva-locana temple. Rājīm, Madhya Pradesh, India. Probably Nala period. Ca. early eighth century. Stone.

suitable offerings: grain, *ghee* (clarified butter), sugar, honey, and milk or milk curds. Burning incense is a common practice in Buddhist and Hindu rituals alike and is also considered an appropriate offering.

This complicated image provides an outstanding example of the quality that was achieved during the later Mahāyāna phases of Buddhist art in ancient India. It is possible that this figure was not the culmination of the developments of Buddhist art in Madhya Pradesh, but perhaps only illustrates a starting point. If Buddhism continued to be practiced in this region until about the twelfth century, as it did in north-eastern India, it is likely that examples of the last phases of Indic Buddhism could be found in the unexcavated site of Sirpur or elsewhere.

At nearby Rājīm, evidence of extensive temple building and sculptural traditions related to

others of ancient Dakṣiṇa Kosala may be found. The group of Vaiṣṇavite temples at the site, particularly the Rājīva-locana, is still actively venerated by large numbers of pilgrims who visit annually. However, the temples themselves have been little studied, partly because they have experienced numerous renovations and reconstructions throughout their history, thus making it difficult to know their original forms or the forms at any given stage. In spite of this, the abundant sculptural remains from Rājīm testify to a high quality of workmanship and a great period of florescence during the early eighth century. Following the demise of the Pāṇḍuvamśis, control of the region was assumed by a little known family called the Nalas whose sole inscriptional record in Dakṣiṇa Kosala is an undated stone inscription found in the porch of the Rājīva-locana temple, which may, there-

fore, be ascribed to the Nala period, around the eighth century.

The Rājiva-locana temple has yielded a number of important sculptures. Images in the four subsidiary shrines that were part of its possible original *pañcāyatana* plan include representations of Vāmana, Nṛsiṃha, Viṣṇu (Fig. 19.7), and Trivikrama. Also, inserted in the compound wall of the same temple, is a second, partially restored figure of Trivikrama (Fig. 19.8) that is unusual because of the bent left leg. The images are probably works of the early eighth century, for stylistically, they reveal ties to both north Indian and Early Western Calukya examples from around that date.

The Viṣṇu image (Fig. 19.7) is unusual among the representations of this god from South Asia for it shows him in meditation, with his legs folded up in *padmāsana*, instead of in his more common standing pose, and with two of his hands placed in the *dhyāna mudrā*, rather than holding two of his attributes. As in other images from this site, the forms of his body seem to swell from within, and the transitions between the parts of his body are curved rather than angular. There is a softness and roundness to his body that is reminiscent of Gupta and post-Gupta art of northern and north-central India, a relationship further suggested by the treatment of Viṣṇu's hair in long, luxuriant curls.

The Trivikrama image (Fig. 19.8) has a vitality that is conveyed largely through the animated poses of the *nāga* devotee and Trivikrama himself. Visual richness is achieved through the

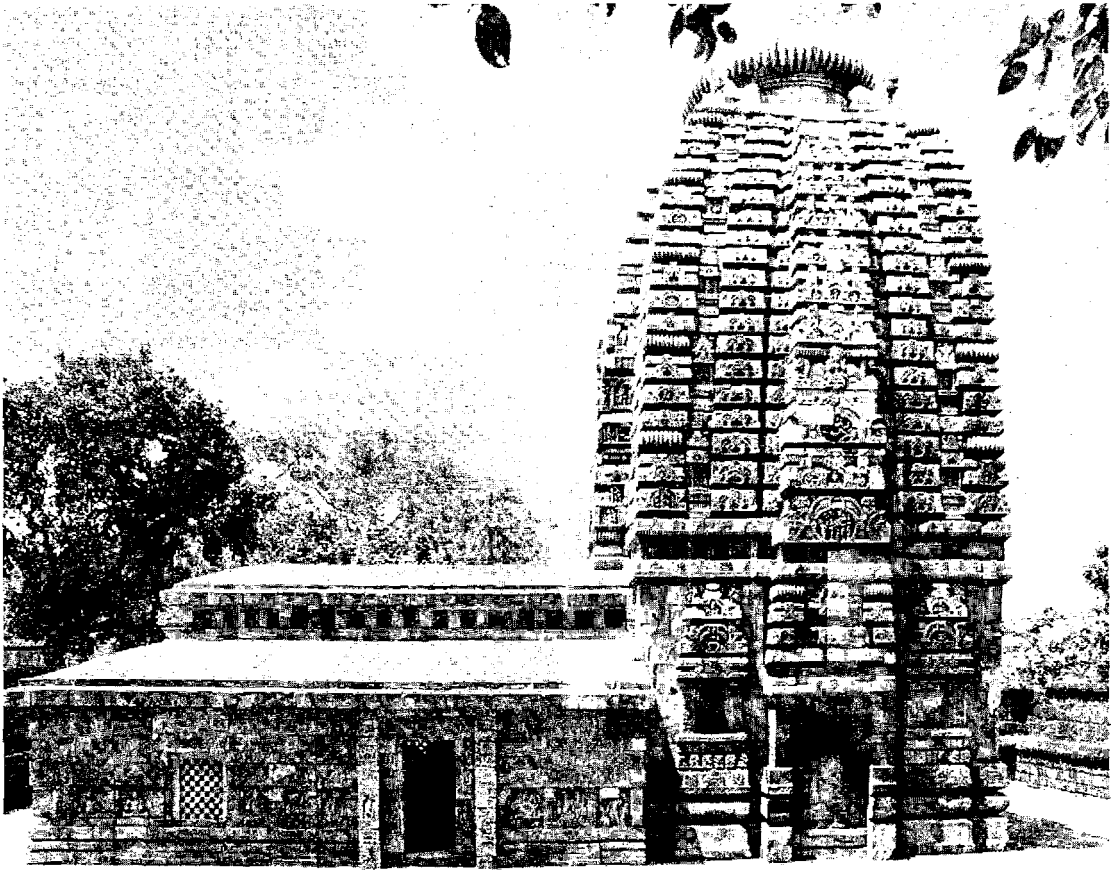
contrast between the smooth bodies and the crisply carved ornaments and garments. Like other north Indian sculptures of this approximate date, including others from the site, the soft, fleshy appearance of the bodies suggests the Gupta heritage, as does the intricate carving of Trivikrama's halo. Characteristic of what may be the Nala style, the smooth body of the figure is virtually unarticulated, and shows no emphasis on transitions between parts or even the sculptural delineation of the various surfaces of the body.

Visual comparisons support the suggestion that the art traditions of Sirpur and Rājim are somehow related to the more extensive artistic school of adjacent Orissa. However, the historical relationships are less clear. Cunningham suggested that Mahāśivagupta Balārjuna, the last king of the Pāṇḍuvaiṃśī dynasty, was identical with Śivagupta, the first prince of the Somavaiṃśī line in Orissa.⁶ Although this assertion was subsequently rejected by Fleet and others on paleographic grounds, since an inconsistency and gap exists paleographically between the documents of these kings, it is possible that there is some relationship between the two dynasties.⁷ While this connection is perhaps still somewhat vague in historical terms, its position in art history is more clear. There is little question that the monuments of Sirpur and nearby Rājim, as well as others in their vicinity, had some relationship with the developing forms of Orissan art and architecture.

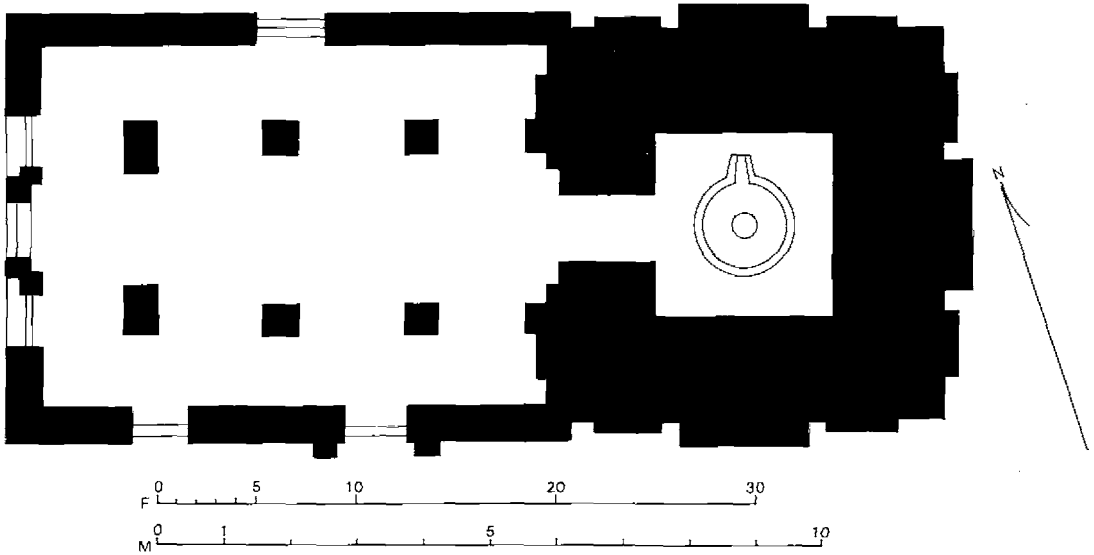
HINDU ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF ORISSA

The history of Orissa begins to become clear in the second quarter of the sixth century when a dynasty called the Śailodbhavas came into prominence. In the early seventh century, Orissa is thought to have become a source of contention between three great rival kings of northern India, Śaśāṅka of Bengal, Harṣa of Kanauj, and Pulakeśin II, the Early Western Calukya. According to tradition, Śaśāṅka, who was a devotee of Śiva, built the first Śaivite temple in Orissa, at the site of Tribhuvaneśvara

(Bhubaneśvara), thus initiating a tradition of temple building dedicated to the Pāśupata sect. Indeed, a number of temples at Bhubaneśvara are Pāśupata. However, since almost nothing is known about architecture under Śaśāṅka, the nature of his influence is not understood. It can be stated, however, that, in addition to relationships to Sirpur and related remains, definite ties in form and style to the art of the Early Western Calukyas are found in early Orissan art and architecture. (Again, since little



19.9. Paraśurāmeśvara temple from south. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. seventh century.



19.10. Plan of Paraśurāmeśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. seventh century.

is known of the art of Harṣa's time, his influence in Orissa is also an unknown factor.) Early Western Calukya impact on the eastern Deccan is verified by the establishment of the Eastern Calukya line. Further, a legend in the *Ekāmra* (Bhubaneśvara) *Purāṇa* tells of a Calukya king, who is referred to as a demon, coming into Orissa,⁸ although it is not known if the Calukyas actually gained control or how extensive that control might have ever been. However, evidence for an Early Western Calukya role in the formulation of Orissan art is preserved in the monuments themselves as can be seen in a number of ways. The Orissan relationships to neighboring or associated regions in no way implies a lack of originality on the part of the Orissan craftsmen; rather, understanding these ties serves to better place the Orissan developments within the mainstream of Indic art.

The Śailodbhavas, who continued to rule until the second half of the eighth century, probably initiated the building tradition that dominated Orissa for the next seven hundred years and that is best seen in the monuments at Bhubaneśvara. The best-preserved temple of this early phase, although not the earliest temple at the site, is the Paraśurāmeśvara (Fig. 19.9). The deity of the temple is named in one of the inscriptions as Pārāseśvara, which is taken to be a variation of the name Parāśara, an *ācārya* of the Pāśupata sect in whose name the *liṅga* of the temple would have been enshrined. A number of representations of Lakuliśa on the temple verify the Pāśupata dedication. Even though it is not tied to the Śailodbhavas by inscription, the temple was probably a product of this period. Traditionally, the temple has been dated to the eighth century on the basis of the paleography of its inscriptions as well as the form and style of the structure itself, but recently, it has been suggested that it was constructed in the seventh century, possibly even the first quarter of that century.⁹ Indeed, stylistically and historically, a seventh-century date seems reasonable, although perhaps not the first quarter, and coincides with the probable associations of the building tradition with related and contemporary styles.¹⁰

In Orissan architecture, specific names are given to every part of the temple. While this also may be true of other regional styles in India, in Orissa, it is especially fortunate that texts that define and describe these elements have been known for some time. In addition, the temple forms as known from existing monuments seem to closely follow the textual precepts. (This is not always the case in other parts of ancient India; in fact, it remains a considerable problem for art historians to collate textual descriptions with actual architectural remains throughout South Asia.)

The Paraśurāmeśvara temple consists of two parts, a *vimāna* and a *maṇḍapa* preceding it. In Orissa, a *vimāna* is commonly called a *deul*, while a *maṇḍapa* is called a *jagamohan*. The term *deul* can also be used to refer to the temple as a whole. The shrine of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple and the other Orissan examples to be discussed here is of the *rekhā* type, which is characterized by the curvilinear shape of the *śikhara*. Often, the *jagamohan* of an Orissan temple is in the form of a *piḍhā*, that is, a temple that has horizontal platforms, or *piḍhās*, for the roof. The *deul* and *jagamohan* typically consist of four vertical units, starting from the ground: the *pista* (platform), which is apparently absent in the case of the Paraśurāmeśvara; the *bāḍa* (wall); the *ganḍi* (trunk, that is, the curvilinear spire of the *rekhā deul* or the pyramidal roof of the *jagamohan*); and finally, the *mastaka*, or crowning elements (the "head," including the *āmalaka* and *kalaśa* on the *śikhara*; the *kalaśa*, or "pitcher," is missing here.) At each of the four corners is a series of projections that demarcate the form of the *śikhara* into *bhūmis* (horizontal levels), with each ribbed disc (*āmalaka*) distinguishing one *bhūmi*. In this temple, there are five *bhūmis* in the *śikhara*. The fifth *bhūmi* in this case is topped by a square element, the *vedi* or altar. As Orissan architecture developed over the centuries, along with the texts themselves and the skills and knowledge of the artisans, these features became more elaborate and complicated, but essentially their classification remained constant.

Like many Orissan temples, this monument is surrounded by a compound wall that delineates the sacred area. In this case, the wall is rectangu-

lar. Also, as is common in Orissa, the Paraśurāmeśvara temple faces west, although the orientation is slightly off axis. From the exterior, the two elements of the structure are balanced in size, but the plan (Fig. 19.10) shows that the interior of the *jagamohan* is considerably larger than the shrine, a feature found frequently in Hindu temple architecture. Although the use of pillars is unusual in later Orissan architecture, there are six pillars in the *jagamohan*, suggesting conceptual ties to Early Western Calukya architecture and to the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Sirpur. A somewhat awkward juncture exists between the *jagamohan* and *rekhā deul* of the temple. The front face of the *rekhā deul* is in fact finished and fully carved, but the joint between the two structures obliterates this detailed work. Panigrahi suggests that this peculiar juncture, visible in other Orissan temples as well, is due to a construction method of burying the structure in earth as work progressed to the top, as a kind of scaffolding, so that the inclined plane created by the surface of the surrounding mound could be used to drag up the large blocks of stone.¹¹ Hence, the pillared hall and the shrine could not be built simultaneously, thus accounting for the discrepancies in jointing the two parts. If such a process was used, and some authorities have questioned it, this earth-mound practice was probably directly tied to the process of tank excavation with the size of the temple tank being a product of the size of the temple, or rather, the size of the mound needed to construct the temple. Stylistically, however, the two parts of this temple are closely related and probably reflect a unified original plan and single execution, although possibly construction progressed serially.

The shape of the *śikhara* typifies the form found throughout Orissan architecture, having a rather straight ascent and an inward curve up to the base of the *āmalaka*. Eventually, a taller, somewhat more slender profile was achieved, and, due to the increase of *ratha* elements, the form sometimes appears almost circular. However, the basic profile remains virtually the same. The tower here is about thirteen meters in height, a length equaling approximate-



19.11. Carved window on Paraśurāmeśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. seventh century.

ly three times the inside measurement of the *garbhagr̥ha*. The exterior of the sides of the *rekhā deul* is articulated with a buttress-like form into a *triratha* plan (Fig. 19.10), essentially three vertical sections created by a central forward section amidst two receding sections. The *triratha* plan anticipates the later, more complicated *pañcaratha* (five *ratha*) configuration used in Orissa, in that each side of the exterior of the *rekhā deul* is decorated with three niches, a central one on the projecting portion flanked by two smaller niches that project only slightly from the wall, but that suggest the form of the later *pañcaratha*.

A peculiarity of the *jagamohan* is that it may be entered through doorways on both the west and the south. Light was probably admitted into the interior through these passageways, as well as by the four carved windows (one lattice window each on the north and south and two figurative windows on the west) and by the clerestory created by the double roof. This unusual arrangement of doors and windows



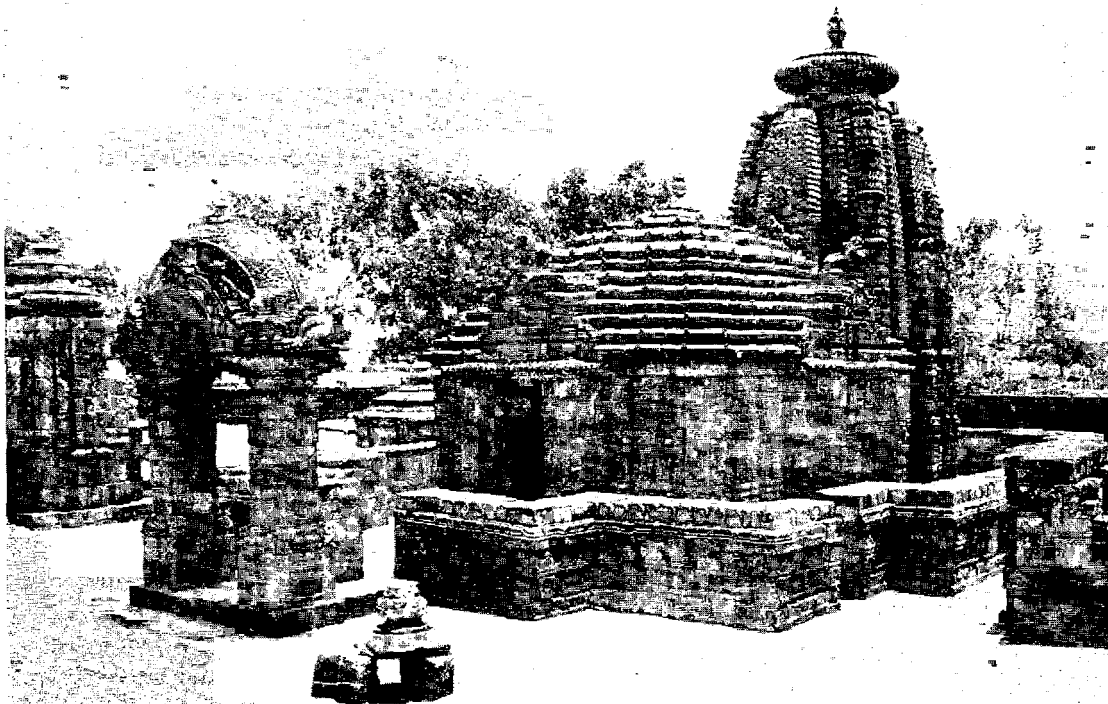
19.12. Kārttikeya, east niche, Paraśurāmeśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. seventh century.

suggests a formative stage in the architectural development, or that several modifications to the original scheme occurred during the course of its building. The double-storied roof is considered to be a prelude to the horizontal *piḍhās* or platforms of the roof of the *jagamohan* in developed Orissan architecture, but it is also somewhat similar to the roof of the Lād Khān temple at Aihole (Fig. 15.22), suggesting perhaps that both temples had a common prototype. The interior of the *jagamohan* is starkly simple, virtually devoid of sculpture, again a common feature of Orissan temples, but not other northern styles in general. The carved windows on the west, however, are remarkable works showing scenes of dancing and music making. The best preserved of these (Fig. 19.11) reveals the animation and vitality of the figures that have been cleverly posed to mask the rectilinear grid of the window. A strong argument in favor of a seventh-century date for the temple is suggested by the style of the carvings, which bears affinities to that of late sixth-century (or

slightly later) carvings of the Early Western Calukyas.

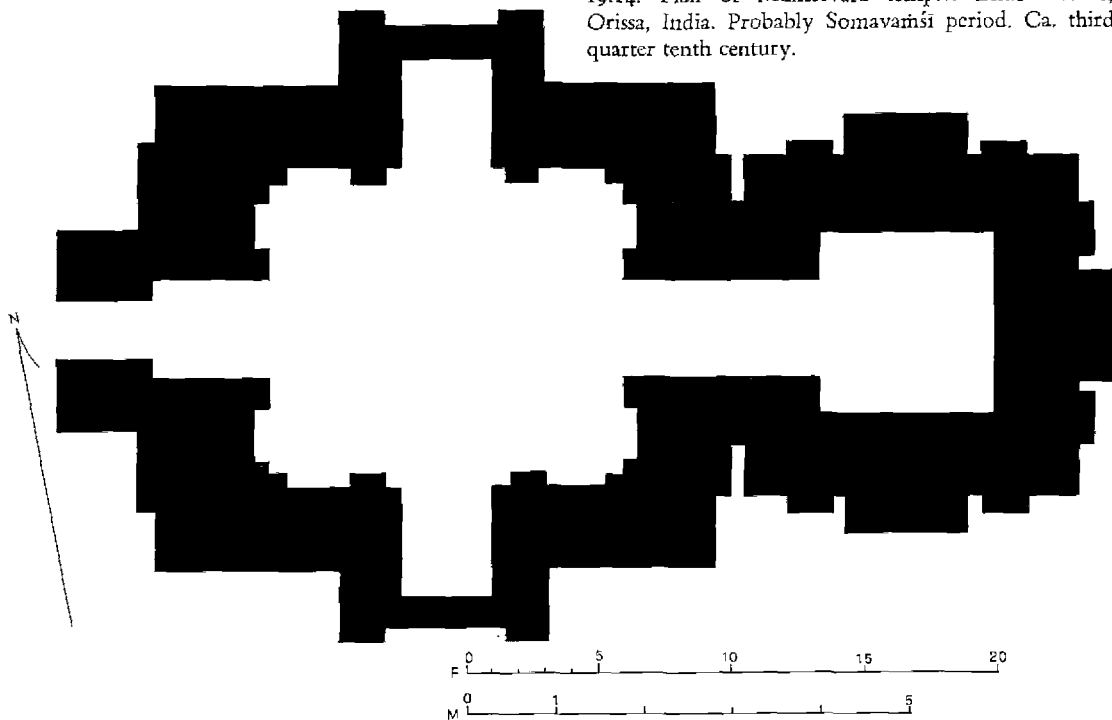
In contrast to the plain interior of the temple, the exteriors of both the *jagamohan* and *rekhā deul* are embellished with architectural and decorative designs, arranged within strict horizontal and vertical divisions. Essentially, each portion of the temple profile, including the base, wall, superstructure, and crowning elements, with their numerous subdivisions, and many of the decorative motifs serve specific symbolic purposes in the overall scheme of the monument. Prominent motifs include the *candraśālā* and the *āmalaka*, the round-fluted crowning member of the *śikhara* that also appears at intervals at the corners of each *bhūmi* of the *śikhara*. The large blocks of stone used in the construction of the building are clearly visible, especially on the *jagamohan*, in spite of all of the surface elaboration, but in later temples, the joints will be obscured by the decoration. Compartments in the walls of the *jagamohan* are created by the use of decorated pilasters, within which are representations of various members of the Hindu pantheon. An interesting feature of the sculptural program of the temple is the placement of Gaṇeśa in the principal niche on the south side of the *śikhara*, suggesting that the temple was circumambulated in a counter-clockwise fashion. (His left-pointing trunk almost seems to usher the devotee in this direction.) The niche on the east side of the *śikhara* holds an image of Kārttikeya (Fig. 19.12). In style, this figure strongly relates to a seventh-century representation of the same god from Muṇḍeśvarī in Bihār (Fig. 11.7) in the flat, broad treatment of the body, though this Orissan example is more ornate. This reinforces the suggestion of a seventh-century date for this temple. Kārttikeya is shown here in *lalitasana* holding a *śakti* (spear) in one hand and a citron in the other. His peacock *vāhana* is shown in the act of killing a serpent. Kārttikeya's position in the rear niche of the *deul*, a location generally reserved for a key icon of the temple, suggests his importance to the Pāsūpatas.

A later stage in the development of Orissan architecture may be seen in the Mukteśvara



19.13. Muktesvara temple from southwest. Bhubanesvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavamsi period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.

19.14. Plan of Muktesvara temple. Bhubanesvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavamsi period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.



temple at Bhubaneśvara, frequently called the "gem" of Orissan architecture (Fig. 19.13). In form and sculptural excellence, this temple is one of the highest achievements of the Orissan architect (*śilpin*). Although the date of the temple is not fixed by inscription, it is likely that it was erected around the third quarter of the tenth century, during the reign of Yayāti I, one of the early rulers of the Somavaṃśī dynasty. The importance of this temple lies not only in its beauty and architectural perfection, but in its position as a kind of watershed in the development of Orissan architecture, marking the transition between the "early" and "late" developments of the style. Like early structures, the temple still consists of two main parts, the *deul* and the *jagamohan* (Fig. 19.14), while later examples may have as many as four separate units. But, in contrast to the Paraśurāmeśvara temple, the roof of the *jagamohan* is fully developed into the *pidhā* form. In size, the temple is small, reaching a height of only about ten meters, again a feature often associated with the earlier phase of the building tradition, for in Orissa, as in other parts of India, the developments in complexity of iconography and structure over time inevitably led to bigger and more grandiose conceptions.

The Mukteśvara temple faces west and is located in a compound with a number of other shrines and temples. It is separated from the others by a low compound wall. On the west, the entrance into its compound is marked by a *torana* (Fig. 19.15) and on the east, the compound wall reaches just to the edge of a sacred tank (it is therefore impossible to completely circumambulate this temple outside of the temple wall). The compound wall (Fig. 19.13) is no longer a simple rectangle, as had been the case in the Paraśurāmeśvara temple, but follows instead the shape of the exterior of the building itself, having *ratha*-like projections paralleling those of the temple. The *torana*, an unusual feature in extant temples from Orissa, greatly adds to the unity and beauty of the overall conception. In appearance, the *torana* is heavy and solid, having two thick pillars separated by a width only slightly greater than the diameter of the pillars. A thick arch built of separate



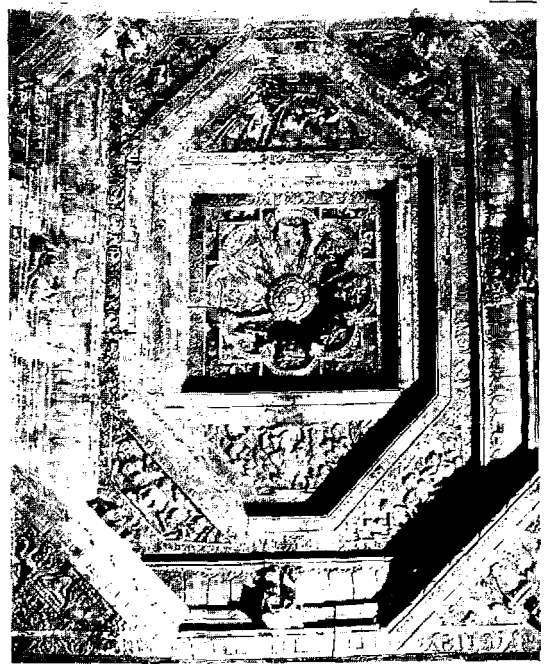
19.15. *Torana* in front of Mukteśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavaṃśī period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.

pieces of stone that have been carefully fitted together bridges the space between the two uprights. This form, while shaped like an arch, is not built at all along the principles of the true arch, but consists simply of overlapping layers of stone carved in a curved shape. The decoration of the *torana* includes carved garlands adorning the sixteen-sided pillars, elaborate capitals, *makara* ends, and a pair of female figures leaning against the arch form, as well as faces peering out of round niches along with floral and vine patterns.

A very low plinth supports the temple but its function is perhaps more symbolic and psychological than physical as is the case in some other *nāgara* styles. (The compound wall, in fact, is also minimal, serving more as a demarcation and definition of a boundary than as a physical protection.) As seen from the plan (Fig. 19.14), the *jagamohan* is essentially rectangular but has offset walls on both the interior and exterior, creating an approximately *pañcaratha* plan, while the shrine is cubical inside



19.16. Interior of *jagamohan* looking toward shrine (east), Mukteśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavaṃśī period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.

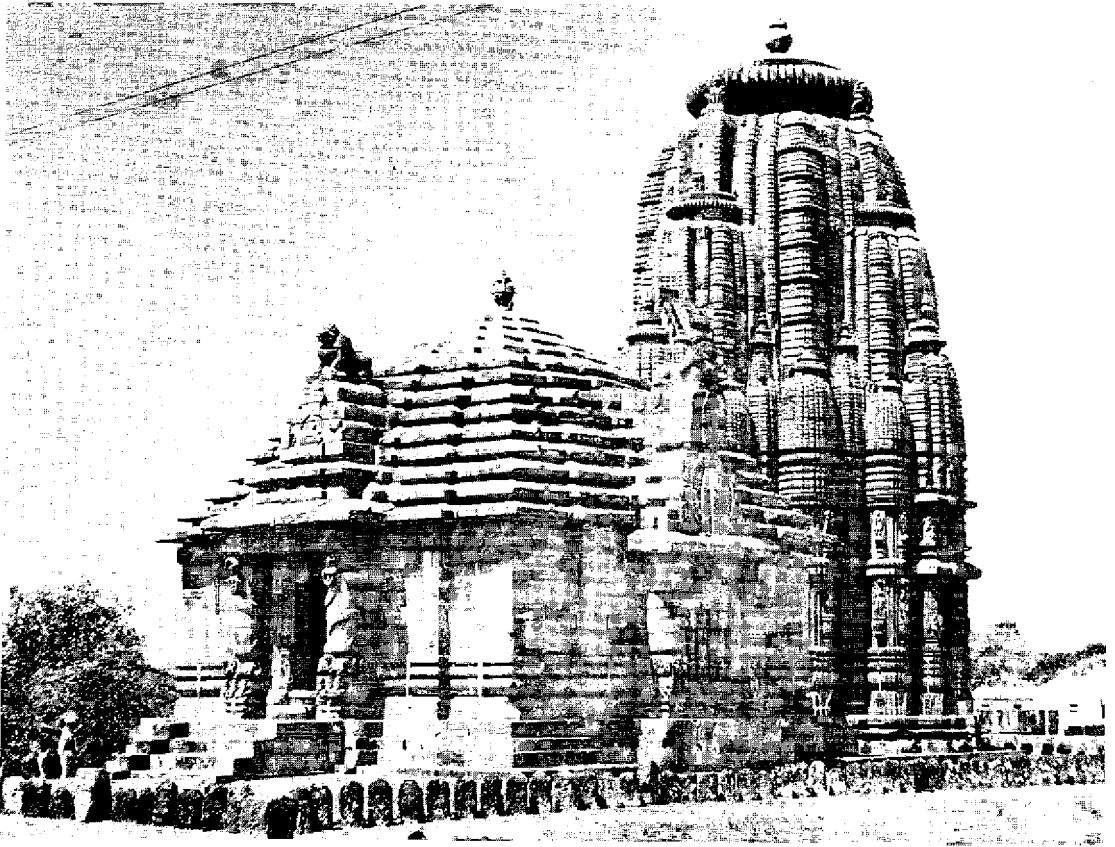


19.17. Ceiling of *jagamohan*, Mukteśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavaṃśī period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.



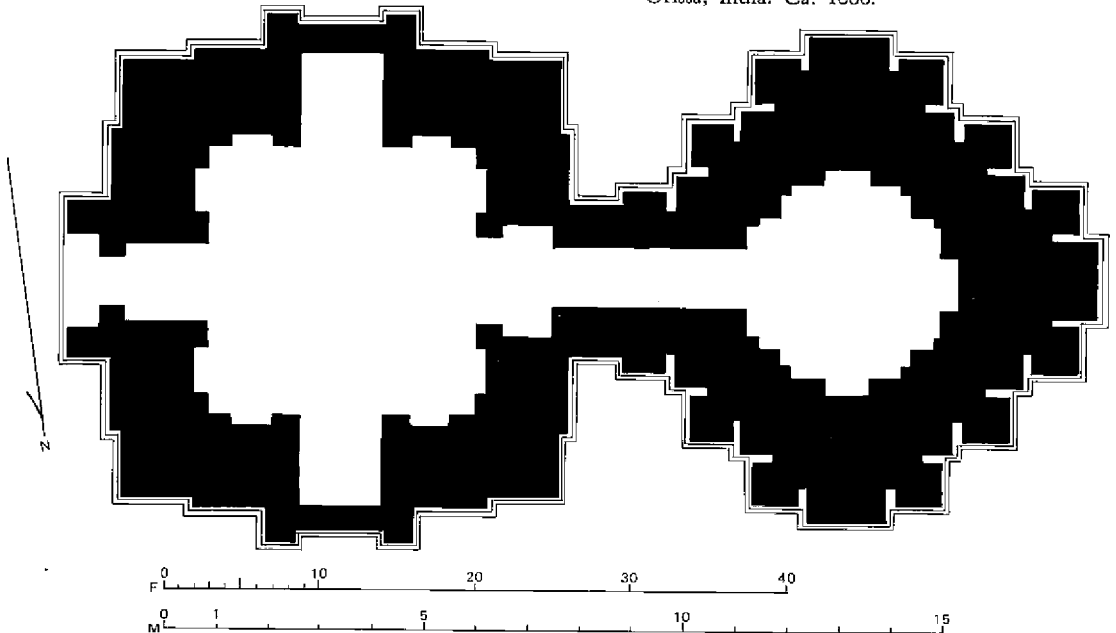
19.18. *Bho* ornament on exterior of *śikhara*, Mukteśvara temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Probably Somavaṃśī period. Ca. third quarter tenth century.

but has offset walls creating a *pañcaratha* form on the exterior. Lavishly carved with increased numbers of architectural divisions and mouldings as well as sculptured figures, the exteriors of the *jagamohan* and *rekha deul* mark a departure from the relative simplicity seen in the Paraśurāmeśvara temple. An unusual feature for Orissan architecture is the interior decoration of the *jagamohan*, which, though pillarless according to typical modes, is here richly sculpted (Figs. 19.16, 19.17). The shape of the *śikhara* is similar to that of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple but is slightly more elongated and slender. In spite of the fact that this temple is well preserved with most of its original sculptural decoration intact (except for the unfortunate absence of the niche images of the exterior), a full study of its iconography and iconographic program has never been carried out. However, one of its outstanding sculptural features is a highly elaborate ornament called a *bho*, which appears like a crest on the upper surface of the *śikhara* (Fig. 19.18). The *bho*, which consists of an arch with a *kirtimukha* above flanked by a pair of dwarflike



19.19. Rajarani temple from northeast.
Bhubanesvara, Orissa, India. Ca. 1000.

19.20. Plan of Rajarani temple. Bhubanesvara,
Orissa, India. Ca. 1000.



figures, is one of the typical elements of Orissan temple decoration.

Another important temple at Bhubaneśvara is the Rājarāṇī (Fig. 19.19). Dating from around A.D. 1000, its form shows a continuation of certain trends seen in earlier examples and also possesses a number of unusual features. This rather large temple is typical in the relationship of its *jagamohan* to the shrine area (Fig. 19.20), in the use of the *piḍhās* to form the superstructure of the *jagamohan*, and in the *pañcaratha* plan of the *jagamohan*. However, the *sikhara* has clusters of smaller *sikharas* around the central core in contrast to the usual simple form found in Orissa. Instead, it resembles the common type well developed in north-central and western India at about the same date. The complications of the *rathas* on the *rekhā deul* almost give the

impression that it is set at a diagonal to the *jagamohan*, although this is not the case. Sculpturally, the exterior of the *jagamohan* is quite simple, a dominant feature being the large columns encircled with sculpted *nāga* figures flanking the entrance to the temple, a male to the left and a female to the right. In contrast, the *rekhā deul* is lavishly carved with sculptures that have been rightly acclaimed as some of the finest in all of Orissan art. In addition to wonderful vegetative motifs, these include numerous figures of female beauties (Fig. 19.21) and gods (Fig. 19.22). By this later date, figures have become more accentuated in pose, and more elongated. As in other approximately contemporaneous styles, the carving is ornate and there is an emphasis on the treatment of surface detail in the jewelry and costume.



19.21. Sculpture of beautiful woman on Rājarāṇī temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. 1000.

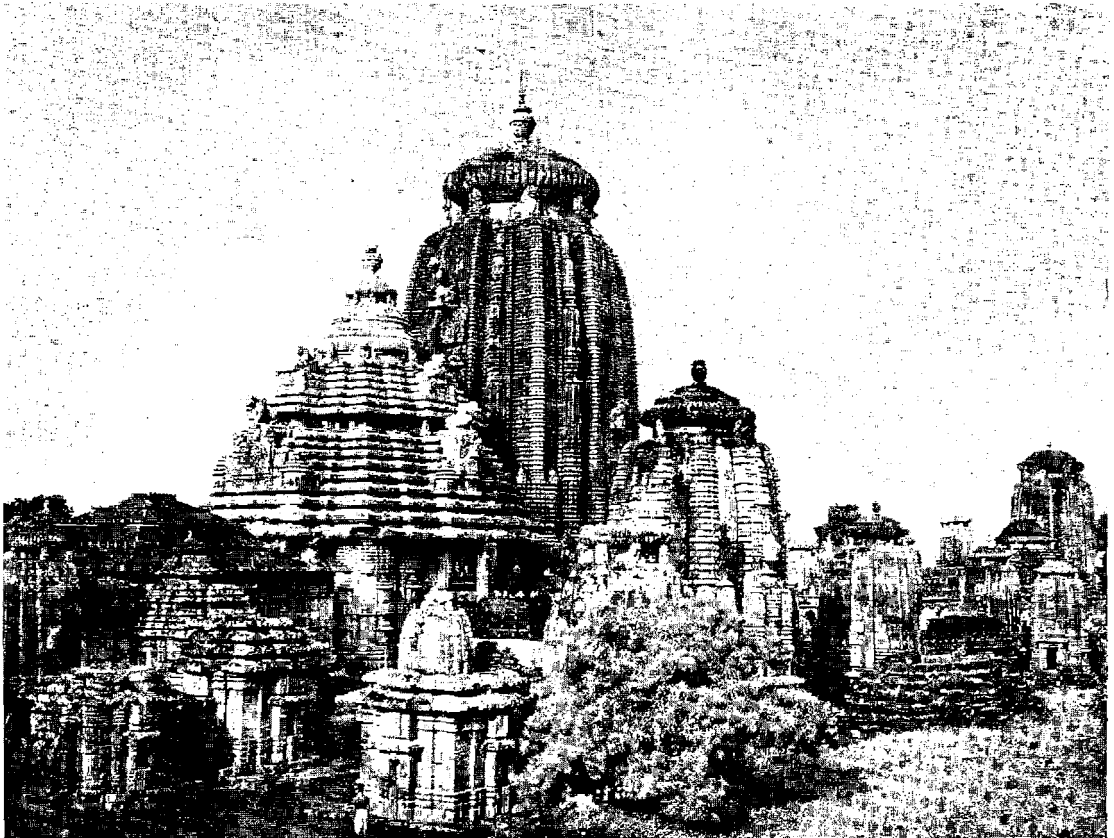


19.22. Sculpture of the god Varuṇa on Rājarāṇī temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. 1000.

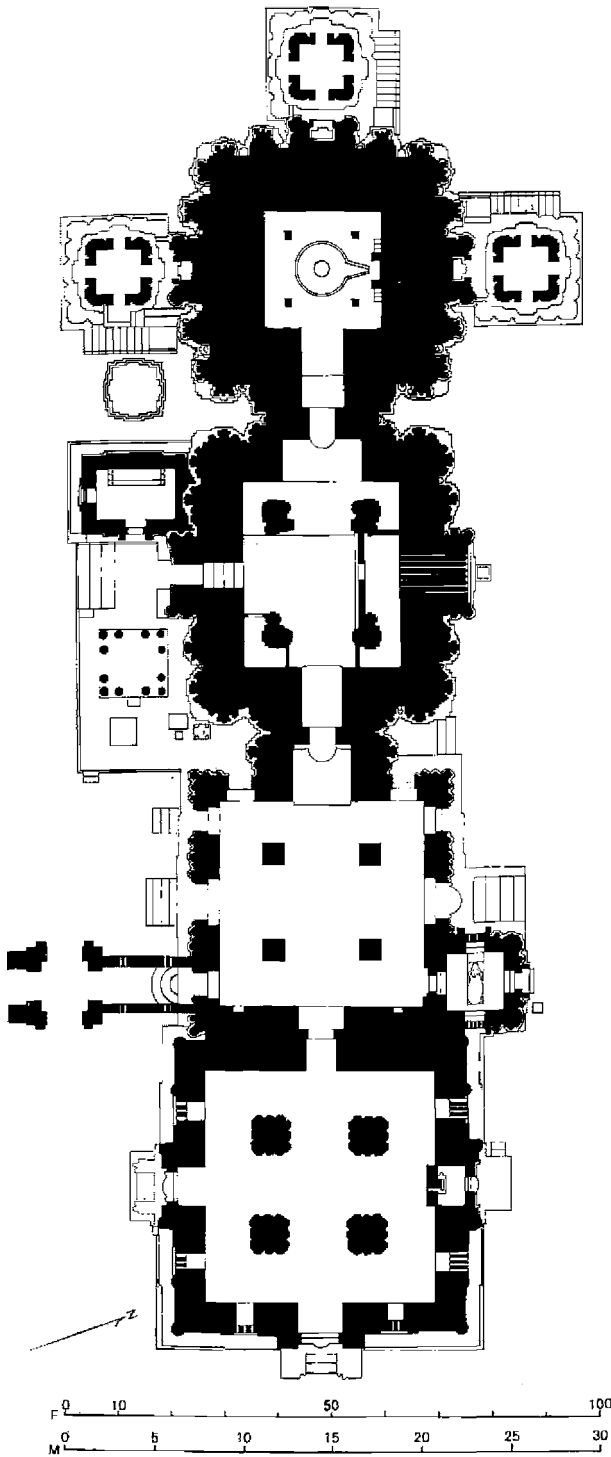
The dominating architectural feature of the Bhubanesvara landscape is the Śaivite Liṅgarāja temple, its rectangular walls enclosing numerous temples and shrines that surround the central four-part temple (Fig. 19.23). Mitra has called it a "product of the accumulated and crystallized experience of several centuries."¹² Indeed, such a monument is testimony to the collective skill of the Orissan architects. Supposedly begun at the instance of Śaśāṅka, king of Bengal, in the early seventh century, the temple bears no visible evidence to support this traditional account. Instead, the monument clearly belongs to the late phase of Orissan architecture, having been built in at least two main stages. The *rekḥā deul* and *jaḡamohan* were probably constructed during Somavāṁśī rule around the middle of the eleventh century, as suggested by

their relationship to the Brahmeśvara temple of around 1060, while two more additions, the *bhogamandapa* (hall of offerings), at the eastern end of the sequence of four structures, and *nāṭamaṅḍir* (hall of dance), between the *bhogamandapa* and the *jaḡamohan*, were built approximately a century later (Figs. 19.23, 19.24). The surrounding temples and shrines in the compound, some attached to the main temple itself, were built at different points in time and demonstrate the continually active religious role this temple has served in the history of Bhubanesvara. Since the temple is still in active worship today, it cannot be fully studied. Thus, a temple that is clearly one of the most important in the Orissan tradition is little understood by modern scholars.

The main entrance to the huge compound,



19.23. Liṅgarāja temple from northeast. Bhubanesvara, Orissa, India. Ca. mid-eleventh century, with additions in mid-twelfth century.

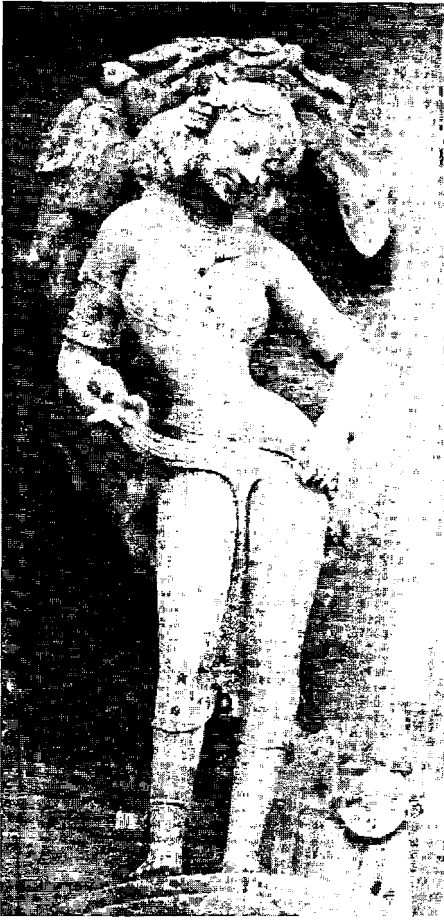


19.24. Plan of Lingaraja temple. Bhubanesvara, Orissa, India. Ca. mid-eleventh century, with additions in mid-twelfth century.

which measures more than 150 meters in length and about 140 in width, is on the east and there are two smaller gates on the north and south. However, the orientation of the compound is slightly off of true north. The addition of the *bhogamaṇḍapa* and *nāṭamaṇḍir* to the two basic temple elements reflects the growing complexity in the ritual and religious practices. From the plan, all four elements appear about equally balanced in terms of external size (Fig. 19.24) but the heights of the roofs form a series of increasing crescendos from the front elements to the peak of the *sikharā*, which reaches a height of about sixty meters. As may be noted for numerous other art traditions, possibility and probability are inextricably linked, and what the architects had hoped they could achieve became a reality only when technological advancements occurred. Thus, the construction of the massive *sikharā* of the *rekhā deul* was accomplished by the use of several successive ceilings creating a number of vertically superimposed chambers in the tower itself, effectively stabilizing the walls. In form and character, the *rekhā deul* is not unlike earlier examples, the chief distinction being its impressive size. The form of the *jagamohan*, with its layered roof, also reflects the type seen at an earlier stage of architectural development. All elements of the temple are strictly organized according to vertical and horizontal divisions. Thus, in spite of an abundance of sculptures on the exterior, the dominating effect is one of a highly ordered architectural form.

Sculptures and carved decorations lavishly adorn the exterior of the temple, including representations of beautiful women in a variety of poses, a common motif on Orissan temples. One shows a woman adjusting her garment (Fig. 19.25) and is remarkable not only for the vitality of the deeply-carved figure but because of the intricate and delicate carving of her pedestal (not visible in the photo). The angular pose and sharply defined facial features are typical characteristics of carvings of this date.

From the time of Śaśāṅka's putative influence on Orissa until the thirteenth century, Orissa was primarily Śaivite (especially Pāśupatite) as demonstrated by the fact that most of the



19.25. Sculpture of woman adjusting her garment, on Liṅgarāja temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Ca. mid-eleventh century.

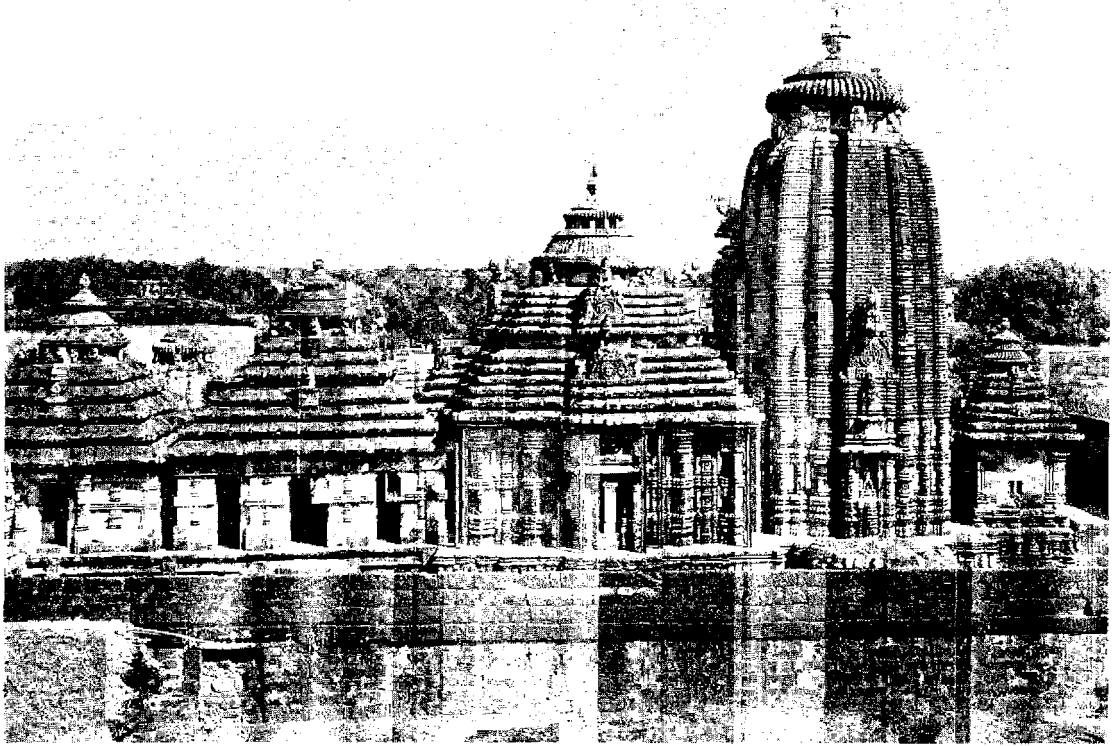
important temples of that approximately 600-year period were of that religious persuasion. However, a new phase in the religious history of Orissa was ushered in by the Gaṅgas, one of the most distinguished princely lines in ancient India, the later branch of which was Vaiṣṇavite in their religious preference. Various branches of this illustrious family had controlled portions of Orissa, especially Kalinga, for some centuries, and already had a temple building tradition at Mukhalingam in Āndhra Pradesh. In the twelfth century, Anantavarman Chodagaṅga defeated the Somavamśis, thereby considerably extending the Gaṅga territories. A number of Vaiṣṇavite monuments were erected during the

Gaṅga period, including the famous Jagannatha temple at Puri (one of the most sacred temples in Orissa, which, like the Liṅgarāja temple, is difficult to study because it is still used in active worship) and the Ananta Vāsudeva temple at Bhubaneśvara (Fig. 19.26), as well as the magnificent Sun temple at Konārak (Konārka; Figs. 19.28-40).

The Ananta Vāsudeva, the supreme example of a Vaiṣṇavite temple at Bhubaneśvara, was dedicated in 1278 (as known by inscription)¹³ by Candrādevī, a daughter of Anaṅgabhīma III during the rule of Bhānudeva (I) of the Gaṅga dynasty. In spite of the fact that the sectarian orientation is Vaiṣṇavite rather than Śaivite, the basic form of the temple seems to be simply a reduced version of the Liṅgarāja temple, following precisely the general trends visible in the development of the Orissan temple type. Consisting of four elements, again the *bhogamaṇḍapa* and *nāṭamaṇḍir* (which are later additions) and the *jagamohan* and *rekhā deul* (Fig. 19.27), the primary difference between this temple and most others at Bhubaneśvara is the sculptural decoration, which includes incarnations of Viṣṇu and shrine images of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and Subhadrā, Kṛṣṇa's sister.

However, a completely different conception, though still within the limits of the Orissan canons, is found in the renowned Sun temple at Konārak, not far from Bhubaneśvara, which is clearly one of the most ambitious and well-thought-out monuments in all of South Asia. Dedicated to Sūrya, the sun god, and built in the form of a gigantic chariot pulled by seven horses, this temple (Fig. 19.28) marks the high point in the achievements of the Orissan architects and embodies advanced astronomical and religious views of the thirteenth century as well. It is a monument that was great in its own time and long after, having been written about in eyewitness accounts and in later texts subsequent to its construction. That it does not represent the "decadence" of the Orissan style, as has so often been stated, will be clearly seen in the following discussion.

Although there is no dedicatory inscription at the temple, a later inscription¹⁴ and important textual evidence, the latter largely discovered by



19.26. Ananta Vāsudeva temple from south. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Bhānudeva (I). Dedicated in 1278.



19.27. Plan of Ananta Vāsudeva temple. Bhubaneśvara, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Bhānudeva (I). Dedicated in 1278.

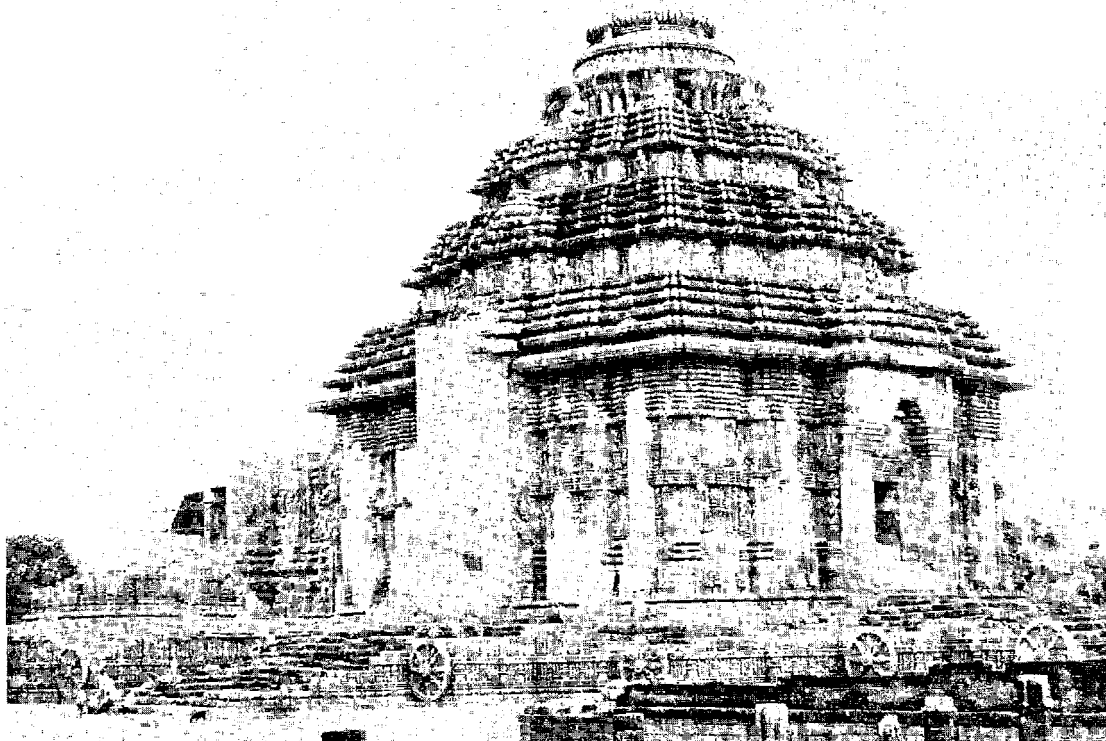
Alice Boner,¹⁵ reveal that Rāja Nṛsiṃhadeva I of the Gaṅga dynasty initiated construction of the temple at the suggestion of his mother while he was still a prince eighteen years of age. The occasion was his return from successful campaigning in the capacity of commander-in-chief of his father's army and the money to be used was the booty gained from these campaigns. However, funds from the royal treasury plus other contributions eventually went into the total cost of the building, which has been calculated to represent one thousand times Nṛsiṃhadeva's weight in gold. From its initiation, the project became the preoccupation of Nṛsiṃhadeva for nearly twenty years. Records show that it took six years and three months of planning and twelve years and ten months of building and was completed only after he had become king. A popular but unfounded view regarding the temple is that due to the grand scale of the conception and inadequate building techniques, the work was never completed. Textual sources indicate that the temple was finished and consecrated, and that the main image was installed on *Māgha Śukla saptamī*, the birthday of the sun god, which occurred on a Sunday in the Śaka year 1179, equivalent to A.D. 1258. Thus, the period of building, from conception to completion, was from about 1238 to 1258. The temple's fame apparently spread far and wide for several centuries after its completion. Caitanya, the great Vaiṣṇavite saint from Bengal (1486-1533), visited the temple, and the great sixteenth-century Mughal emperor Akbar's court chronicler, Abū'l-Faẓl, went to the place and remarked that "even those whose judgement is critical and who are difficult to please stand astonished at its sight."¹⁶ Nineteenth-century visitors, such as Stirling, Fergusson, and Kittoe also saw the temple still standing, including portions of the now lost *śikhara*, although much destruction brought about by age or malicious intent had already begun to show. For example, the *kalāśa* atop the *śikhara* was supposedly made of pure copper, and had apparently been carried off as valuable booty in the sixteenth century, along with gold and precious stones stored there. It is possible that an inscribed copper plate telling of the dedica-

tion of the temple by Nṛsiṃhadeva would have been placed there as well, according to an ancient practice.

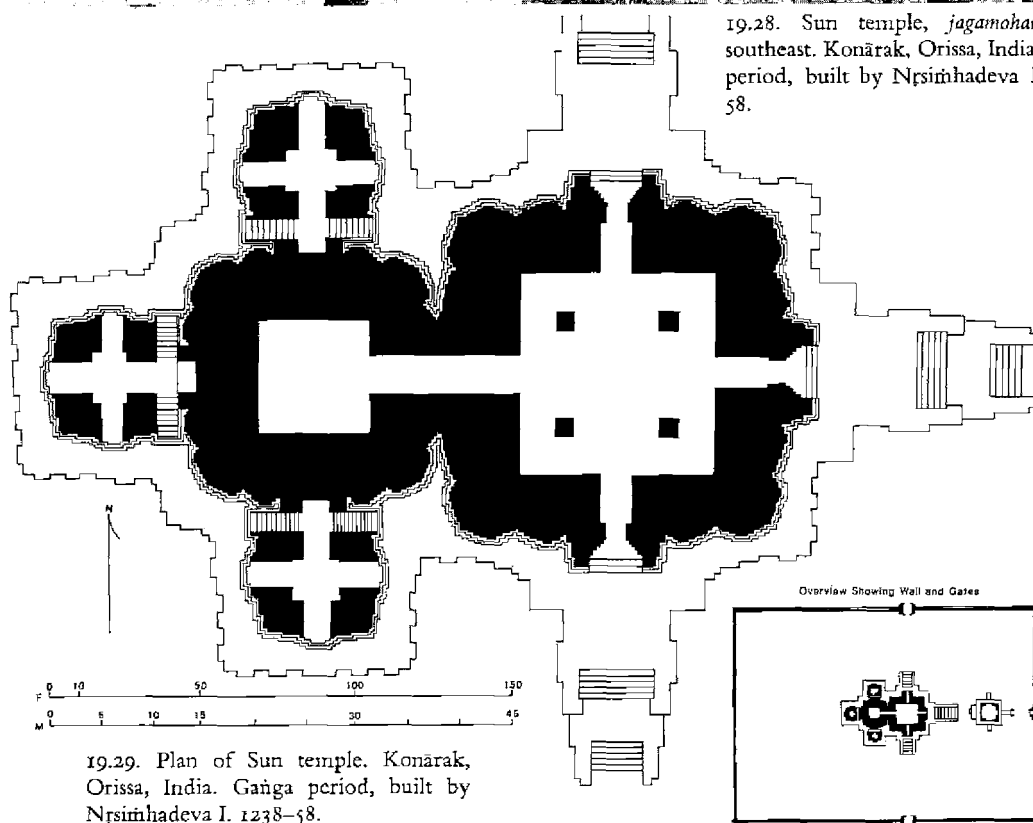
The date of consecration was not just chosen at random but was rather a target date carefully selected by the king because of its auspiciousness. (In fact, in his impatience to have the temple completed by that date, the king may have been responsible for lesser quality work by forcing construction even during the rainy season.) Astronomical evidence has corroborated that *Māgha Śukla saptamī* occurred on a Sunday in the year 1258, as it does once every seven years. The auspiciousness of this day, due to the coincidence of the sun god's birthday falling on a Sunday, was such that the merit accrued from doing good deeds was multifold.¹⁷ A main function of the Sun temple was to facilitate worship of the birthday of the sun god each year, although other forms of worship, such as daily sun rituals, monthly ceremonies celebrating the movement of the sun through the signs of the zodiac, and the celebration of equinoxes and eclipses also formed part of the basic functions of the Sun temple.¹⁸

Like typical Orissan temples, the Sun temple at Konārak is situated within the center of a large quadrangular compound (Fig. 19.29, inset). A number of smaller shrines are also within the compound wall, some possibly older than the main temple itself. At least three different types of stone were used in the construction of the temple, each of which had to be brought from some distance. A fine chlorite was used for carved doorframes and important images; laterite, for the core of the platforms and staircases; and khondalite, an easily weathered stone, for the majority of the building. Although mortar was not used, dowels were employed to hold the stones together. In contrast to early stone temples, the joints were finely disguised by surface decoration. The main structure is oriented to the east and has been built to be almost perfectly aligned with true north.

The temple sits on a high plinth and consists of a *rekhā deul* and a *jagamohan*. The *rekhā deul* has a cruciform plan on the exterior due to the addition of *nīśās* (niche temples) on the south, north, and west, although the shrine interior is



19.28. Sun temple, *jagamohan* from southeast. Konarak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, built by Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58.



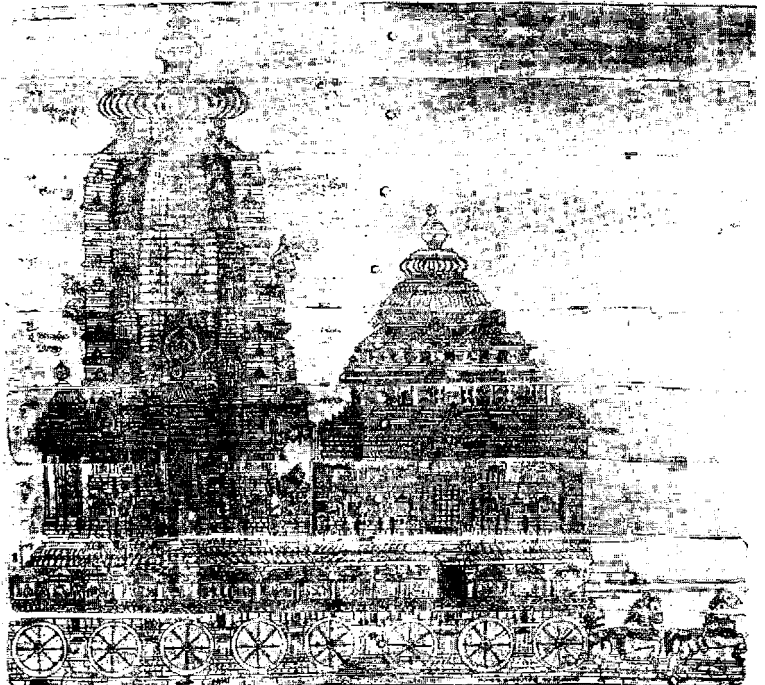
19.29. Plan of Sun temple. Konarak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, built by Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58.

square. The *jagamohan* has essentially an elaborated *pañcaratha* exterior extended conceptually by the plinth, which projects outward on the north and south sides, again creating a cruciform configuration in the plan but leaving a square interior (Fig. 19.29). Originally, the shrine was topped by a *śikhara*; the *jagamohan* is of the *piḍhā* type.¹⁹ The *niśā* temples surrounding the shrine contain *pārśva-devatās*, the secondary aspects of the main deity of the temple, in this case, three variants of *Sūrya*, which will be discussed below. A detached hall, which may be a *nāṭamaṇḍir* or a *bhogamaṇḍapa*, precedes the temple. It is square in plan and rests on a high plinth but is roofless now, although its heavy piers must once have supported a roof of some type.

At present, the temple is in a quite ruined state; its *rekhā devī* is almost totally lost and the *jagamohan* interior has been filled in and blocked off in recent years. However, the original appearance may be inferred from a drawing from a palm leaf manuscript (Fig. 19.30).²⁰ The drawing shows the temple as it might have looked, complete with *śikhara* and *piḍhā* roof, in its role serving

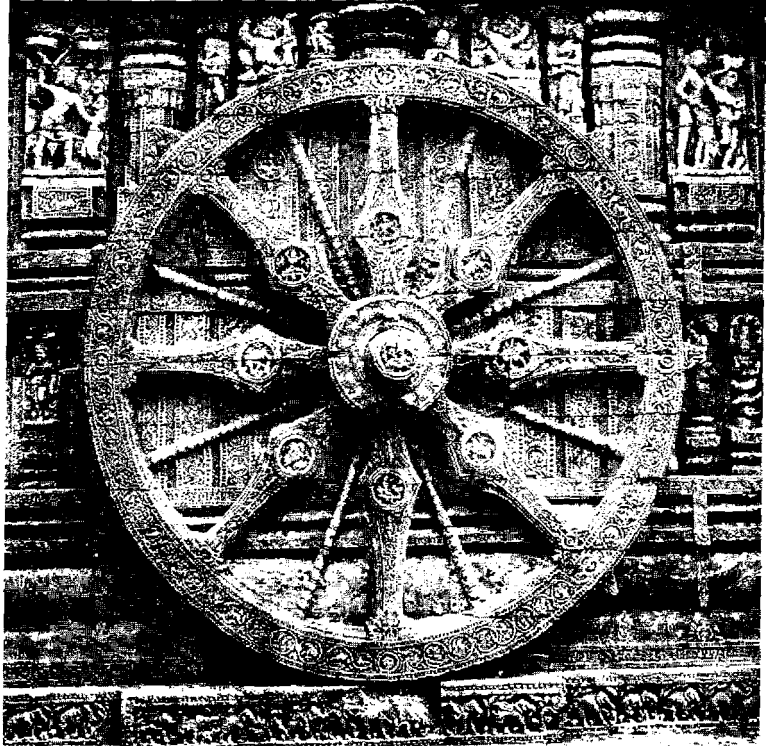
as a representation of a chariot for the sun god's daily and annual journeys through the sky. Thus, while the temple in many ways is typical of Orissan art (although more elaborate and larger than any other example), its form resembles a chariot being drawn by seven horses, with one horse for each day of the week, three on the north and four on the south. The concept of the temple as chariot may be related to the practice of using a large wooden cart (*ratha*) to parade portable images of a deity through the city streets on special occasions, which was prevalent in various parts of ancient India. The cart motif as a part of the design of a monumental stone temple, however, probably derives from southern Indian types. Since one of *Nṛsiṃhadeva's* queens was a *Pāṇḍya* and *Nṛsiṃhadeva* himself was a descendant of a *Cōla* princess who had been married into the *Gaṅga* family, such a correlation could exist.²¹

The twelve pairs of wheels carved on the plinth represent the twelve months or signs of the zodiac. Each wheel is more than three meters in diameter and has eight major and eight minor spokes (Fig. 19.31). The rims, spokes,

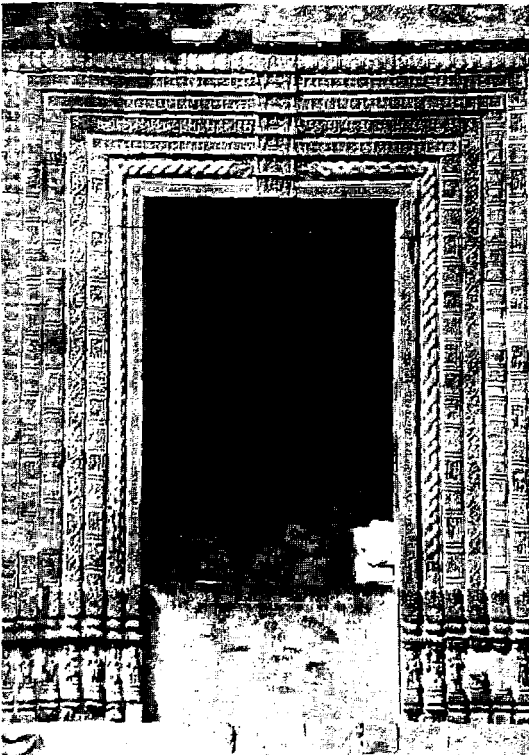


19.30. Sun temple at Konārak. Illustration on leaves of a palm leaf manuscript of 1610 from Orissa, India. Present whereabouts unknown. (After Boner and Śarmā, *New Light on the Sun Temple of Konārka*; courtesy Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.)

19.31. Wheel on plinth of Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238-58.

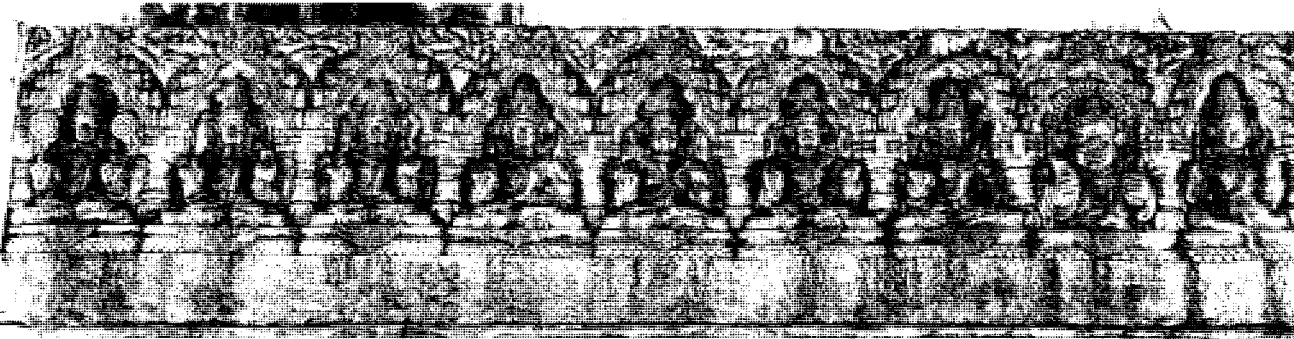


19.32. East door to jagamohan, Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238-58.



and other elements are carved in detail with decorative and foliate motifs and figures as well. A specific iconography has not been determined for each pair of wheels, but each may relate to a particular sign of the zodiac in sculptural program as well as position. One of the manuscripts dealing with the temple tells of the wheels being equal to the constellations of the zodiac while another tells of the devotions and ceremonies paid to the various pairs at the appropriate time. Beneath the wheels and running as a frieze around the plinth of the temple is a band of elephants in procession. Although tiny, they serve a function similar to that of their more grandiose counterparts, like those at the Kailāsanātha temple at Ellora.

The doorway to the jagamohan is lavish, yet it represents more an elaboration of elements that had been visible at least since the Gupta period than a new direction (Fig. 19.32). Multiplication of the elements such as jambs and lintels indicate the growing complication. The scale of individual motifs is reduced proportionate to the overall scheme and thus each element seems less



19.33. *Navagraha* panel of east door to *jaganmohan*, Sun temple. Konarak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58. Housed in shed at site. Chlorite. H: 114 cm; L: 6.095 m.

prominent. Above the doorway was placed a huge stone slab carved with representations of the *navagrahas* (nine planets; Fig. 19.33). Although particularly fitting a subject on a temple dedicated to celestial and astronomical deities, such as the sun god, the *navagrahas* are frequently part of the doorway scheme of northern Indian temples after the Gupta period. The lifting into place of this extremely heavy stone is described in one of the manuscripts associated with the temple: apparently pulleys manipulated by both elephants and humans performed the chore. From left to right, the planets are Ravi (Sun), Soma (Moon), Maṅgala (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Bṛhaspati (Jupiter), Śukra (Venus), Śani (Saturn), Rāhu (ascending node of the moon), and Ketu (descending node of the moon), although it should be noted that technically, Ravi, Soma, Rāhu and Ketu are not planets.

Each of the representations shows a seated figure contained within an architectural niche resembling a miniature temple. Carved of a close grained chloritic stone, as are other major sculptures at the temple, each figure is distinguished by certain features or attributes. The most striking representation is that of Rāhu, typically shown as a kind of demonic monster, holding the crescent moon symbolic of his supposed devouring of the moon, which is said to cause eclipses (Fig. 19.34). In style, the images resemble other major images at the temple, although they differ from the general sculptures carved as part of the walls and fabric of the temple. This is due not only to the use of a different stone, but be-



19.34. Rāhu; detail of *navagraha* panel, Sun temple. Konarak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58. Housed in shed at site. Chlorite. H: (of figure) ca. 90 cm.



19.35. Sūrya in southern *niśā*, Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58. Chlorite. H: 338 cm.



19.36. Nṛsiṃhadeva I as an archer. From Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58. Black chlorite. H: 89 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

cause the finest craftsmen were selected to work on these special images, as verified by the manuscript accounts, while less distinguished artists provided the numerous other carvings. The figures of the planets are notable for the rather swelled forms of the bodies, the broad, smiling faces and almost slitlike features (especially the eyes), the high-peaked headdresses, and the fine detailing of the jewelry.

Originally, there were at least four major images at the temple, one in each of the three *niśās* (the three *pārśva-devatās*) and the main image of the sanctum of the temple (which is now lost). The southern (Fig. 19.35) and western *niśā* figures show Sūrya in a standing posture, while that on the north shows a deity seated upon a horse. It is possible that this figure does not represent Sūrya at all but may depict Revanta, his son, who characteristically rides a horse. The southern image shows the god standing with no flex to his body in a manner befitting a major icon.

As is typical of Sūrya, he has two arms, which hold lotuses. His body is nearly completely detached from the back-slab of surrounding elements, a feature also found in sculptures of comparable date in other northern styles. A stiff smile is visible on the face, lacking the gentleness and warmth of many earlier images, but still of very fine quality sculpturally. The densely grained stone permitted great amounts of detailing on such accoutrements as the jewelry worn by the god. His seven horses are depicted being driven by his charioteer below, and he is flanked by attendant figures, with the kneeling figure in *añjali mudrā* next to Sūrya's right foot said to be a *rāja*, possibly Nṛsiṃhadeva himself.

Whether or not this is the case, a number of reliefs from the temple have been identified as representing King Nṛsiṃhadeva and events in his life. In fact, certain aspects of the iconographic program of the temple seem to



19.37. Nṛsiṃhadeva I worshipping Durgā Mahiṣāsura-mardini and Jagannātha. From Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58. Black chlorite. H: 87 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.



19.38. Sculpture of female musician atop roof of *jagamohan* of Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58.

be personal to him rather than conceived for the deity. In the *Baya Cakaḍā* manuscript it is noted that the king on returning from war ordered an image to be made showing him “in the attitude of a triumphantly returning warrior,”²² and, although this image is not known, others relating to events in his life have been identified. One sculpture shows the king as an archer (Fig. 19.36) and is apparently the carving described in the *Baya Cakaḍā* as that made by the artisan Gaṅga Mahāpātra and for which he received a pair of silk cloths, two earrings, and five *tolas* of gold. Another shows the king worshipping a shrine with an image of Durgā Mahiṣāsura-mardini at the left and Jagannātha (the main image of the temple of that name at Puri in Orissa) next to her (Fig. 19.37). While most of these images clearly refer to the king alone, one relief identified as the marriage of Rāma and Sītā from the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been interpreted as a double play on the name Sītā,

referring to both Sītā and Sītādevī, the wife of the king, and thus the king as Rāma. Carved of chlorite, these figures are again very crisp in detail, and in style they relate to the master works of the *pārśva-devatās*.

Monolithic stone sculptures in the Konārak compound include the free-standing animal colossi that “guarded” the three original stairways of the *jagamohan*, namely, two lions atop crouching elephants on the east, two war stallions on the south, and two elephants on the north. Huge free-standing sculptures also adorn the roof of the *jagamohan*, whose *piḍhās* are arranged in three terracelike main stages. The uppermost of these bears enormous representations of lions seated on their hind legs and facing outward. The lower two bear life-size and larger than life-size sculptures, primarily of female musicians (Fig. 19.38), gracefully and rhythmically posed, as well as representations of Bhairava. Originally two Bhairavas faced each



19.39. *Ugra* (Terrifying) Bhairava atop roof of *jagamohan* of Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58.



19.40. *Mithuna*, on Sun temple. Konārak, Orissa, India. Gaṅga period, reign of Nṛsiṃhadeva I. 1238–58.

direction, one being peaceful, the other terrifying (Fig. 19.39) in countenance, and represented the benign (*anugra*) and wrathful (*ugra*) protectors of the temple above the portals. Each Bhairava has four faces and six arms, and appears in a dancing posture, standing upon a boat, which is said to be the *samsāra-pota*, or world boat. Both the female musicians and the Bhairavas are extremely powerful figures, not only because of their size, but because of the monumentality with which they are represented. These figures are large, full bodied, and actively posed. Yet in spite of their heavy fleshiness, they are remarkably graceful. The ornamentation and jewelry are so fully carved that the figures actually seem to be “wearing” their decorations. Each figure is posed naturalistically, as if the artist had an understanding of anatomy and motion, as well as dance and music in India. Yet the aim was apparently not to capture the individual physiognomy of particular characters. This may be inferred from the *Baya Cakaḍā*,

which tells of an artist who carved three sculptures of female figures, one of which was rejected by the overseeing architect, who claimed that the artist had made it a likeness of his wife and therefore it could not be placed on the temple.

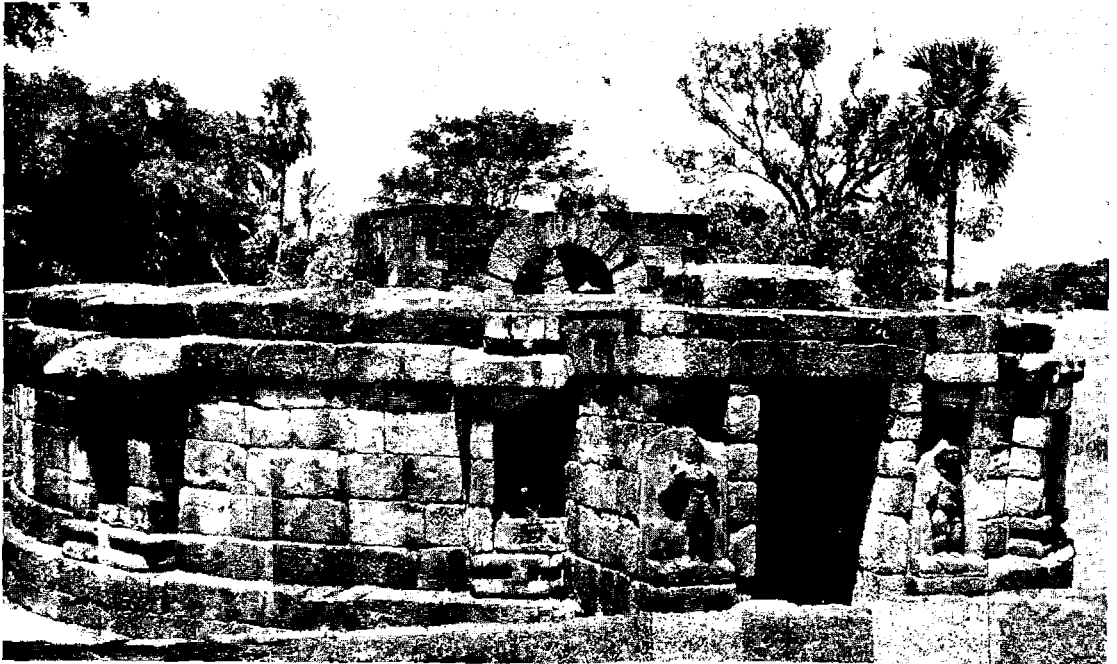
An intriguing aspect of the sculptural program of the Sun temple at Konārak is the profusion of *mithunas* and erotic sculptures decorating the walls of the buildings (Fig. 19.40). These figures have received much attention, as have those at Khajurāho and other mainly northern temple sites of the post-Gupta periods. In general, however, their purpose and meaning has been studied out of context. At Konārak, in light of the overall hugeness of the monument itself, the erotic images in fact play a rather minor role. Some interpreters have associated the erotic figures on the Sun temple with Saturn cults, but this claim has not been substantiated. An excellent explanation of eroticism in the context of these temples is given by Boner,²³ for

she says that in the search for the Truth, *kāma* (physical desire) could be transformed into *prema*, the self-surrender that cannot be achieved by denial but only through transformation and sublimation. Thus, the *mithuna* would represent both the union and the transformation.

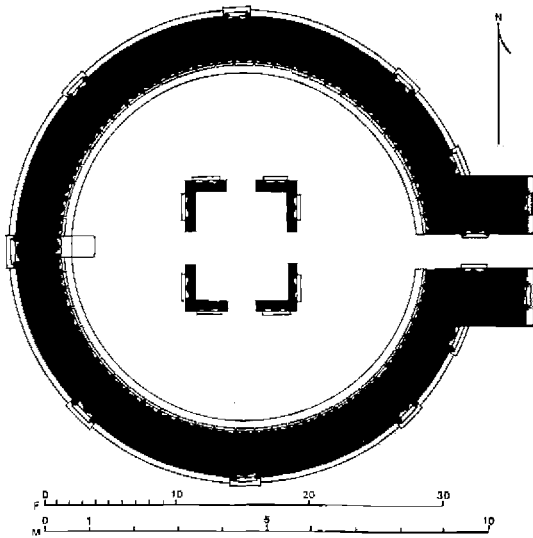
Another important aspect of the temple, revealed in the *Baya Cakaḍā*, is the use of portable images of metal. Since the main image of the Sun temple was of stone and was too large to carry out for worship and procession, two metal "surrogate" images of Sūrya "served as mediators between this image (the stone image) and the Sun God in heaven."²⁴ One such image is now preserved in the Jagannātha temple in Puri and was possibly from Konārak. Such an image would have been used in ceremonies and would have been bathed, dressed, and anointed for that purpose.

Another important aspect of the religious developments in ancient Orissa was *śakti* worship, which developed in Hinduism and paralleled the *prajñā* devotion in Buddhism. In spite of the rarity of *yoginī* temples in India,²⁵ two are

located in Orissa. Although the dates of the Orissan examples are not fixed by inscription or other known historical evidence, they seem to date from the Somavamśī period or perhaps slightly earlier. *Yoginī* temples, dedicated to the sixty-four *yoginīs* (female *yogins*) are generally circular, the form usually associated with the feminine aspect, as seen in the small temple at Hirapur (Figs. 19.41, 19.42). The entrance to the Hirapur temple extends outward from the circular enclosure; thus, the form resembles the circular *yoni* and spout into which the *liṅga* is frequently set in Śaivite shrines, undoubtedly a deliberate allusion. Originally, the temple had sixty sculptures of *yoginīs* arranged in niches around the inner circumference of the temple, as well as other female and male images in niches both inside and out. One example shows Ajai-kapāda Bhairava (Fig. 19.43), a male deity with only one leg, who is rarely encountered in the vast repertoire of Indic iconography and whose meaning is still uncertain. No indication that the central courtyard was roofed over exists in this or the other known *yoginī* temples.



19.41. *Yoginī* temple from east and slightly to south. Hirapur, Orissa, India. Ca. tenth century.



19.42. Plan of *yoginī* temple. Hirapur, Orissa, India. Ca. tenth century.



19.43. Ajaikapāda Bhairava at *yoginī* temple. Hirapur, Orissa, India. Ca. tenth century.

BUDDHIST ART OF ORISSA

The Buddhist art of Orissa is one of the least studied subjects of all South Asian art, in spite of the fact that archaeologically, the region is enormously rich in this material. In many respects, the sculptural styles parallel those seen at various stages of development of Orissan Hindu art. However, the architectural forms reflect Buddhist traditions of other regions except in their decorative elements, which are also tied to the Orissan style. Much of the architecture is in ruins and will therefore be excluded from discussion here.

The presence of Buddhism in Orissa apparently goes back to a very early date. At least by the time of Aśoka, Buddhism had been established, and it has survived there even to the present day in various forms. Buddhism was apparently encouraged in the early eighth century, when the Bhauma (Kara) kings came

into power, for the first three of their rulers were Buddhist devotees, and it continued to flourish under subsequent non-Buddhist rulers. Archaeological evidence testifies that there was considerable activity during this period, and this is verified in Chinese sources, as well as by the Tibetan historian Tāranātha, who was well aware of the importance of the Buddhist monasteries in Orissa as theological centers from the eighth through the twelfth centuries.

Very little of the early material in Orissa has survived, but the art styles were definitely related to those found in northern Āndhra Pradesh. Indeed, from the eighth through the twelfth centuries the two areas seem to have formed a single complex. Most notably, the site of Salihundam in Āndhra Pradesh has yielded stone sculpture almost identical to examples found in the Āsia Hill range in Orissa. Thus, to fully

understand the Buddhist art of Orissa, it is necessary to look not only to Orissan traditions, but to those of contemporaneous Āndhra Pradesh, which in turn greatly depend on the Ikṣvāku and other early traditions.

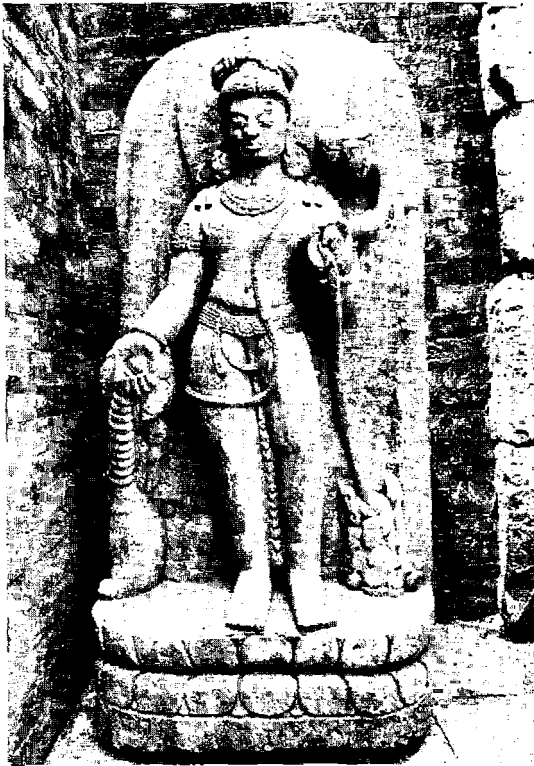
Four sites in the Āsia Hill range, near the Virūpā River, are among the best known later Buddhist sites in Orissa, namely Lalitagiri (or Nilitagiri), Udayagiri, Ratnagiri, and Vajragiri. Because so little excavation has been done at these sites, a firm chronology of the monuments and their stylistic developments cannot be established, nor have the stylistic distinctions from site to site been determined. Therefore, the presently suggested dates are based on comparative stylistic and iconographic relations with other sites in South Asia.

The excavated ruins of Ratnagiri have produced an enormous quantity of sculptures dating from the eighth through the twelfth centuries. Presently situated in the shrine of the *vihāra* is an approximately eighth-century Buddhist trinity (Fig. 19.44) consisting of Śākyamuni under

the *bodhi* tree in the center, attended by Avalokiteśvara to his right (Fig. 19.45) and by Mañjuśrī-Vajrapāṇi to his left. Each bodhisattva carries a flywhisk (*cauri*) in addition to distinguishing flowers and attributes. Technically, the figure of Śākyamuni illustrates a number of interesting features. It is pieced together from separate blocks of stone, a technique also seen at Sirpur (Fig. 19.6). The massive block from which the lower portion of the figure is carved is by far the largest, and the head is carved from a small square block surrounded by several other pieces carefully joined to form the *prabhāmaṇḍala* behind the figure. The fact that the *prabhāmaṇḍala* itself and the halo superimposed on it completely lack detail suggests that these were originally painted. The damage to the face is typical of that effected at the time of the Muslim conquest when deliberate defacement was carried out. Stylistically, the figures have a heaviness and massive quality reminiscent of Vākāṭaka art of the western Deccan, although a historical connection is not known. The bodies and heads are



19.44. Śākyamuni Buddha attended by bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī-Vajrapāṇi. Ratnagiri, Orissa, India. Ca. eighth century.



19.45. Detail of 19.44, Avalokiteśvara. Ratnagiri, Orissa, India. Ca. eighth century.



19.46. Khasarapa Avalokiteśvara, depicted as if within Mount Potalaka. Udayagiri, Orissa, India. Ca. late ninth–tenth century. Speckled beige stone. H: ca. 180 cm, as seen with bottom buried.

rounded and yet the features of the faces, the snail-shell curls of the Buddha's hair, and the outlines of the figure are very crisp. The Buddha wears such a diaphanous garment that it is barely visible except for the thin diagonal across his chest. The bodhisattvas also have a soft, fleshy quality, especially in the way that their abdomens hang over their girdles and in the fullness of their cheeks.

A four-armed figure of Khasarapa Avalokiteśvara at Udayagiri illustrates the late ninth- or tenth-century style (Fig. 19.46). The figure is more attenuated and slender, stands in *tribhaṅga* posture, and is much more highly ornamented than the earlier examples. Standing graceful and relaxed, the bodhisattva is surrounded by a carved back-slab that depicts his mountain abode, Potalaka. A host of beings inhabit a rocky landscape to the sides of the figure and

various other attendants and worshipers fill the stele. Even the halo around his head is decorated along the rim. The figures include the seven *mānuṣī* Buddhas along the top and Tārā and Bhṛkuṭī flanking his halo.

As in Bengal and Bihār, numerous Tantric sculptures have been found in Orissa. An image of Samvara found at Ratnagiri, perhaps of the eleventh century, follows the description found in the *Niṣpannayogā-valī* almost exactly (Fig. 19.47)²⁶. The deity carries the *vajra* and *ghaṅṭā* in his crossed hands (*vajrahūṅkāra mudrā*), the *ḍamaru* (drum), *paraśu* (axe), *karṭī* (knife), *triśūla* (trident), *kapāla* (skull), *vajrapāśa* (noose), Brahmā *kapāla*, and the *khatvāṅga* (staff). Instead of embracing a female companion, he carries a staff (*śakti*), which is the symbolic counterpart of the female form. Tucked into the crook of his left arm, it takes the place of the female, who



19.47. Samvara. From Ratnagiri, Orissa, India. Ca. eleventh century. Speckled beige stone. H: 118 cm. Patna Museum, Patna.

is almost without exception placed to the left of her male consort in South Asian art. The *śakti* is held to Samvara's body by the hands that display *vajrahūnkāra mudrā*, further suggesting sexual connotations since the *vajra* symbolizes the male while the *ghaṇṭā* denotes the female. Thus, the god, with the *śakti* held against his body by a pair of hands forming the *vajrahūnkāra mudrā*, symbolizes the obliteration of duality that is the Buddhist goal. Although the Buddhists must certainly have known that the Hindu term, *śakti*, which refers to the female energy, was equivalent to their own term, *prajñā*, it is uncertain whether a homonymous play on the term *śakti*, as both the spear and the female essence, was intended in the Buddhist context. The arch behind the head supported by the two uppermost hands is a schematization of the elephant skin that Samvara uses as a cape. He

wears as ornaments the *ṣaṣṭmudrā*, the six bone ornaments of Tantric *yogins*. In addition, he wears a garland, presumably of fifty heads, each one corresponding to one of the syllables of the Sanskrit phonetic system. He stands in *ālīḍha* posture on Bhairava and Kalarātri and is surrounded by the cosmic fire that consumes the universe at the end of the eon. The complexity of this figure is characteristic of the deeply involved philosophies of Vajrayāna Buddhism predominating here and elsewhere in South Asia at this time, and yet such a figure can be read easily by initiates who have learned the meaning of every element. The presence of such figures in Buddhism has given rise to a considerable number of academic arguments regarding their source of origin. Some authors see their beginnings in Śaivite cults that were assimilated by the Buddhists. Others hold that these figures are Buddhist in origin and were later accepted in Śaivism. It is curious to note in this respect that the elephant skin held aloft, the multiplicity of arms, the stance, and indeed the very character of the figure are strongly suggestive of forms like Śiva destroying Andhakāśura (Fig. 16.6). Stylistically, the figure of Samvara is columnar and in spite of his stance, static, and it lacks the lithe attenuation of earlier images.

The remains of the Āsia Hill range indicate that the most advanced forms of Tantrism were practiced in this region. Just as in the cases of Sārnāth and the Bengal/Bihār regions, travelers from China and Tibet visited these sites and carried back with them to their own countries those beliefs and practices that were to perpetuate Indic Buddhism, although not within the Indic boundaries. In addition, a strong relationship visually may be seen between many of the Buddhist works from Orissa and carvings from Java of approximately the same date,²⁷ suggesting further international implications for Orissan art. Since it is known that the royal families of Java and Orissa were linked by marriage, further investigation of each of the art traditions will undoubtedly lead to clarification of the other. Fuller study of the Orissan Buddhist remains promises to provide much information regarding an important chapter in the history of Buddhist art.

CONCLUSION

The eastern Indic artistic traditions manifested in Orissa and adjacent areas are among the most clearly perceived of the Indic developments. Temples and sculptures were produced in stone at least since the seventh century, and the tradition may be traced in observable, identifiable stages through a rather linear development to about the thirteenth century. Developments of the temple style over time include increasing size and elaboration and multiplication of units comprising the main building of the temple, among others. Orissan architecture has been looked to as a model of clarity in the evolution of the

Hindu temple because of its progress along this rather linear continuum. Within this highly ordered tradition, however, can be discerned a considerable variety. Our knowledge of Orissan architecture is supplemented by the existence of valuable texts that reveal many of the theoretical bases of the art tradition.

Because of the strength of the Hindu artistic tradition in Orissa, the Buddhist remains have often been overlooked. Yet, the abundant materials, particularly in the Āsia Hill range, indicate a vital and significant Buddhist tradition in the region.



Detail of 20.36.

CHAPTER TWENTY

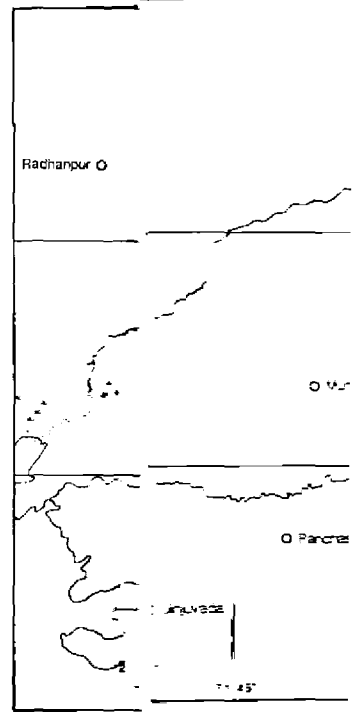
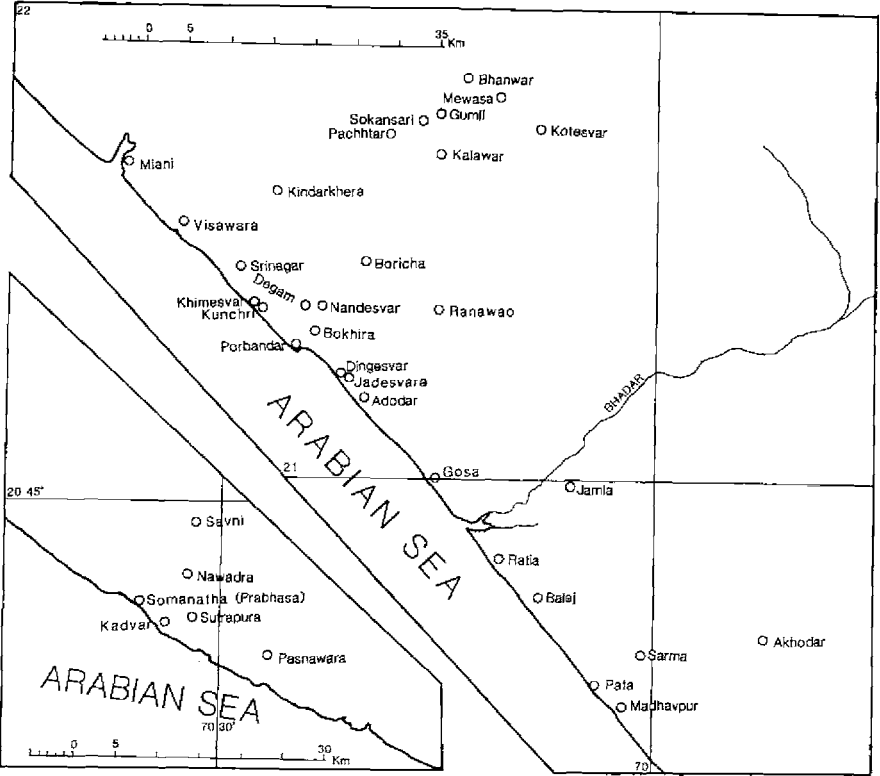
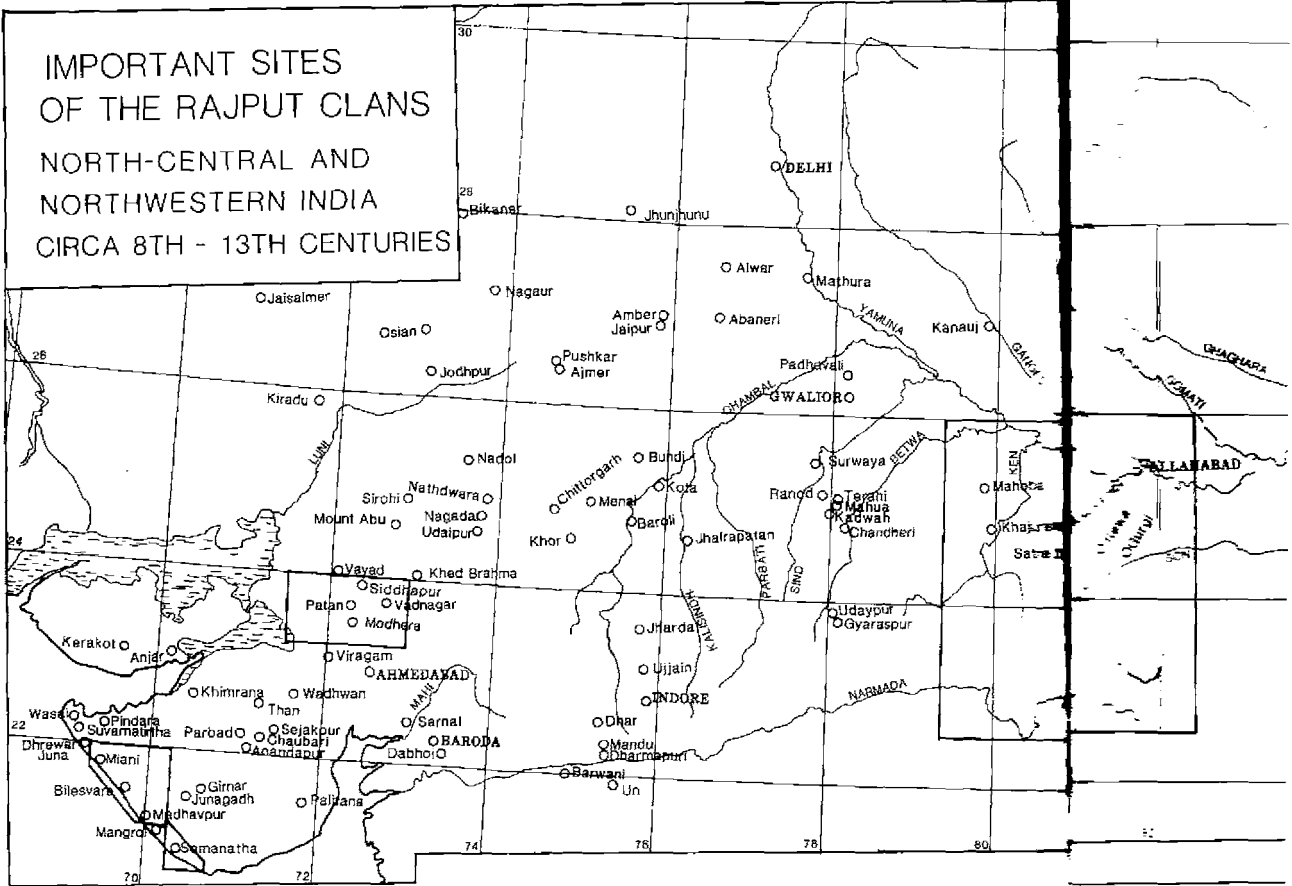
North-Central and Northwestern India: The Art of the Rājput Clans

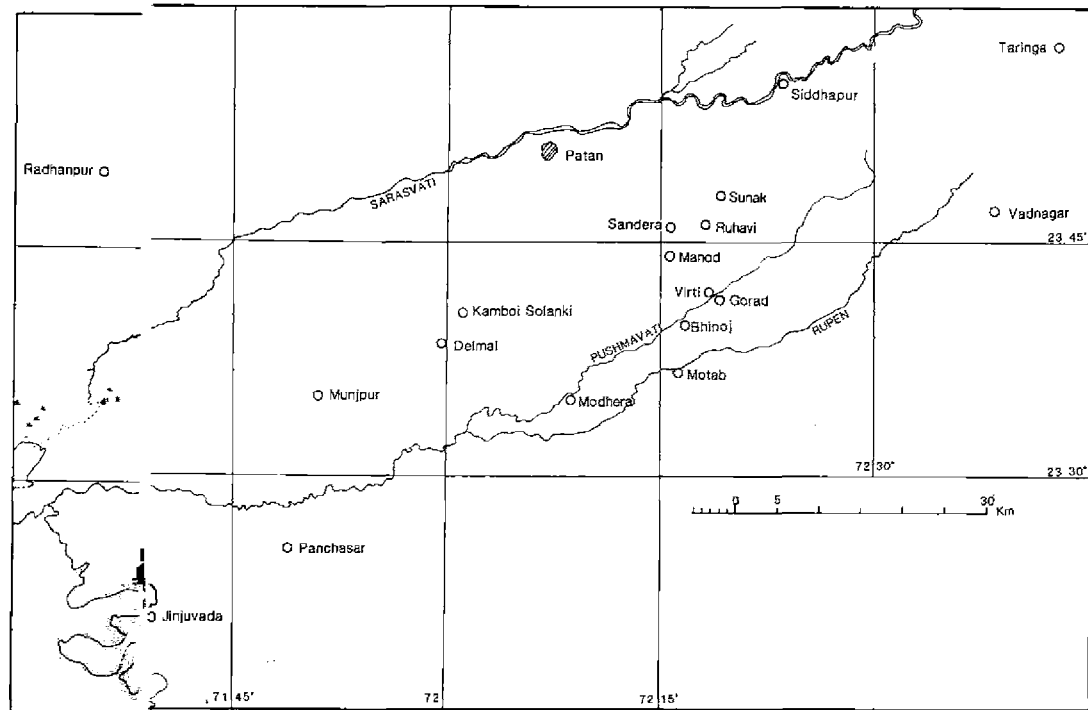
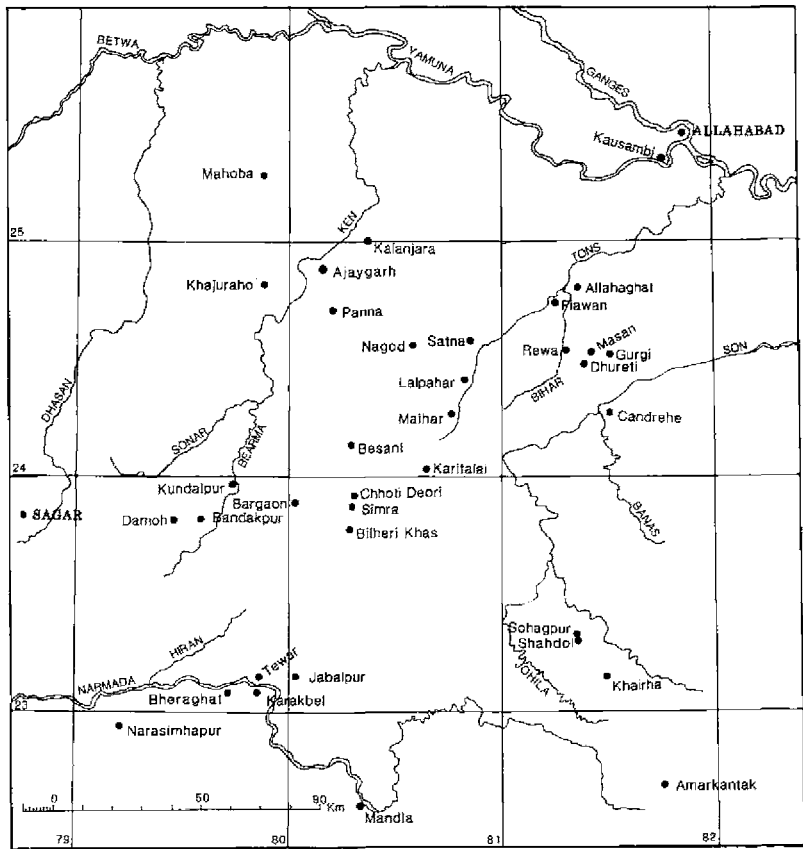
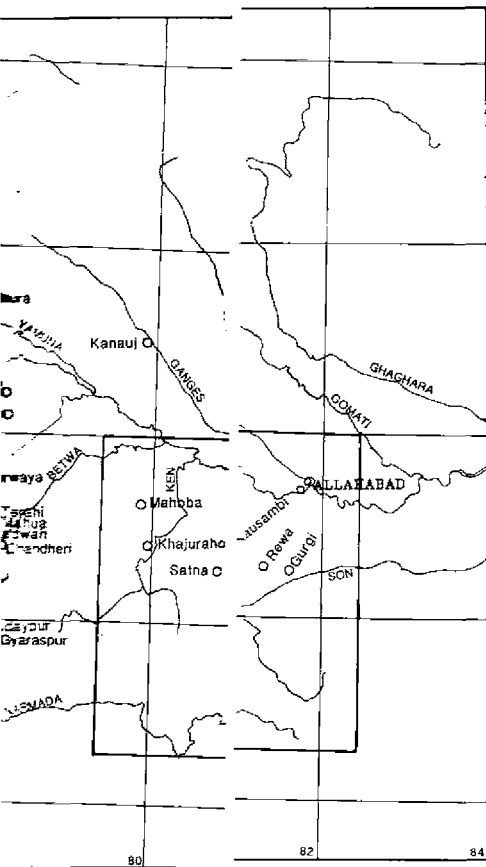
The history of northern India from the death of Harṣa in 647 until the Mughal domination brought about by the Muslim emperor Akbar in the mid-sixteenth century is flavored by the character of the numerous Rājput clans, their courts, art, legends, and social customs. While the Rājputs are commonly remembered for the miniature painting schools that flourished under them both during the Mughal period and after, the monumental religious architecture and sculpture they produced prior to the sixteenth century comprises an important chapter in the history of South Asian art. These creations are in many respects the culmination of the stone-working traditions that had been developing for centuries throughout ancient India and the fulfillment of a major northern Indian-style temple tradition.

The Rājputs themselves are believed to have been relative late comers to India; their ancestors included peoples who came into pre-Gupta

India (Parthians, Śakas, and Kuṣāṇas) as well as the Hūṇas, who helped annihilate the imperial Guptas at the end of the fifth century. By intermarriage, often with *brāhman* women, and performance of religious rites that enabled them to become part of the Hindu fold, these foreigners gained position and strength in Indic society. Ultimately, a large number of separate Rājput clans developed, coming to control at times significant portions of northwestern and north-central India, including Rājputana (modern Rājasthān), which is named for the Rājputs and was their heartland, Gujarāt, and other regions. The Rājputs, who claimed descent from the ancient Solar and Lunar *ksatriya* lines of India, or alternatively, believed themselves to have arisen from a new, pure *ksatriya* order created by the gods at the fire pit of the sage Vasīṣṭha on Mount Ābū, rarely presented a unified front, even against common enemies such as the Muslims. In their art as well as in their history, in spite of

IMPORTANT SITES
OF THE RAJPUT CLANS
NORTH-CENTRAL AND
NORTHWESTERN INDIA
CIRCA 8TH - 13TH CENTURIES





an underlying unity and commonality, distinctive characteristics are visible from clan to clan.

An examination of some of the more important art styles provides ample evidence of this.

THE GURJARA-PRATIĪHĀRAS OF KANAUJ (CA. 730-1027)

Vincent Smith has stated that all "authors who treat of Indian architecture notice, and are embarrassed by the fact, that each style when it first comes to our knowledge is full-grown and complete. . . . The extensive destruction of ancient monuments, especially those built of brick, no doubt supplies a partial, though not adequate, explanation."¹ This truism, applicable throughout ancient India, is especially relevant to a discussion of the art of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, for our knowledge of the architecture and sculpture in the regions of their control from about 550 to 750, in the period prior to their ascent, is piecemeal, making it seem as if their art arose full-blown. However, an examination of Gurjara-Pratihāra stylistic characteristics reveals what must have been a number of stylistic sources. These include the Gupta idioms of northern India, the post-Gupta western Indian trends that flourished under the Maitraka and other dynasties, and the strong influence of the full-bodied, fleshy forms seen in the art of the Vākāṭakas and other western Deccan families. Thus, while the art of the Gurjara-Pratihāras is properly viewed as part of the main continuum of developments in northern Indian art, not every step of this development is known.

The origin and homeland of the Gurjara-Pratihāras and even the meaning of their name have long been debated by scholars. The first king, Nāgabhaṭa I, established supremacy over the Gurjaras of Nāndīpurī and the Pratihāras of Jodhpur (hence the hyphenated name of the line) and successfully resisted invasions by Arabs who came to India primarily for trade purposes. His rule, approximately from 730 to 756, laid the foundation for the rise of the great Rājput clans, but also saw the seeds of destruction being planted, for the retreat of the Arabs was only temporary, and two and a half centuries later, the Muslim conquests of western and northern India led to the submission of the Rājput rulers. The Gurjara-Pratihāras were not alone among

the Indian dynasties trying to gain control of northern India, for by the time of Vatsarāja, Nāgabhaṭa's successor, a triangle between the Gurjara-Pratihāras in the west, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of the Deccan, and the Pālas of the east had emerged, each struggling for hegemony over vast territories and for control of the wealthy and famous city of Kanauj.

Kanauj, which had been built into a beautiful and renowned city by Harṣa in the seventh century, was strategically important because of its location along the major trade routes of the Ganges. It soon became an active center of the arts where Sanskrit poetry, architecture, sculpture, and probably painting flourished. Yet, in spite of the known glory of Kanauj, little remains to testify to its former splendor. Cunningham noted that most of the many Hindu temples of ancient days (and possibly some of the Buddhist monasteries noticed by Hsüan-tsang) had been dismantled for later reuse in the building of Muslim monuments.² There is no doubt that the reconstruction of the history of the art of Kanauj would be an important step in tracing the post-Gupta trends that led to the final realizations of Hindu architecture in north India. Inscriptions left by the Gurjara-Pratihāras provide extensive evidence of patronage and building by the rulers and their subjects³ but the remains are scant testimony to the epigraphic evidence. In spite of this, it is possible to establish a stylistic continuum—from the eighth to tenth centuries for the regions that formed the heartland of their empire, namely, parts of modern Rājasthān and Gujarāt, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and other regions—for sculpture, as well as for architecture.

The far reaching effects of the Deccan styles of the Vākāṭakas, Kalacuris, and other ruling families on the development of the art of northern India have been vastly underestimated: the credit is often given to Sāmāth and the late fifth-century style that developed there. By the



20.1. Female figure, upper fragment. From Gwālior, Madhya Pradesh, India. Ca. seventh century. Beige sandstone. H: 51 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.



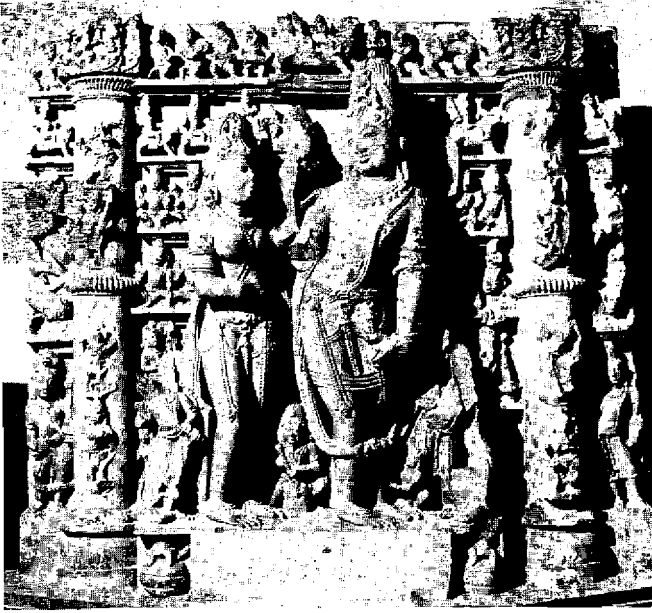
20.2. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Kalyāṇasundaramūrti). From Kama, Bharatpur, Rājasthān, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. eighth century. Beige sandstone. H: 95 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

late fifth century, the full-bodied, fleshy forms of western Deccan figure sculpture had reached as far north as Bāgh in the Gwālior region and persisted in the art of that area for several centuries.

The surviving upper portion of a female figure from Gwālior provides such an example of a work revealing the heritage of Deccan art (Fig. 20.1). Although the carving probably dates from about the seventh century, that is, prior to the advent of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, it documents an important source for the later art styles. Clear ties to the Vākāṭaka and post-Vākāṭaka art of the Deccan are seen in the rounded forms of the body, the heavy, hemispherical breasts pushed close together, and details of the hair style and ornamentation. A greater crispness to features of the face, creating a more linear and sharply defined effect, and the greater elaboration of jewelry are a prelude to the highly ornate forms to be created under the Gurjara-Pratihāras and other later dynasties.

A representation of the Marriage of Śiva of about the eighth century is a more complete example of this stylistic stage (Fig. 20.2). The figures maintain the fleshy, heavy quality, along with an emphasis on elaboration and detailing. With complex hairdos and jewelry and sharply carved facial features, as well as numerous subsidiary elements in the composition, movement away from Gupta and Gupta-related styles is evident, although the gently swaying postures are still reminiscent of earlier idioms. Clouds isolate the heads of the figures from the clusters of attendant beings above in a manner similar to that seen in sculpture of the Early Western Calukyas.

A later stage, perhaps of the tenth century, is seen in another representation of the Marriage of Śiva, from Etah in Uttar Pradesh (Fig. 20.3). Although clearly the descendent of the preceding female type and still full-bodied and fleshy, Pārvatī now stands rather stiffly and less gracefully. She is more amply bedecked with jewelry



20.3. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvati (Kalyāṇa-sundaramūrti). From Etah, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. tenth century. Beige sandstone. H: 77.5 cm. Bharat Kalā Bhavan, Vārāṇasi.



20.4. Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa. From Kanauj, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. eighth or early ninth century. Stone. Kanauj Museum, Kanauj.

and her facial features are hardened, with even more crisply delineated forms. Śiva, too, has been transformed from the gently swaying figure in the preceding example and now stands in an angular *tribhaṅga* (thrice-bent) posture with his legs turned awkwardly in the opposite direction from his head. His facial features are hardened, and his jewelry is more overpowering and more precisely and crisply depicted. A greater sense of order pervades the relief, which has also become more elaborate, for the figures are arranged in strict registers with controlled vertical and horizontal placement. This strictness, which parallels the development of an increasingly rigid organization of architectural forms, undoubtedly reflects the growing codification of many aspects of society at the time. The systematization and categorization of things and division into strict spheres may also reflect developing theories in mathematics, a discipline for which India is renowned.

A sculpture from Kanauj, probably of the eighth or early ninth century, showing Viṣṇu in his Viśvarūpa manifestation (Fig. 20.4) demonstrates a very different stylistic idiom. The image, in this case, bears clear affinities to typical Gupta and post-Gupta trends of north India, rather than to those of the Deccan, as seen in the slenderness of the figure and the very fluid and soft appearing facial features, especially the mouth. This stylistic strand was another major contributor to the synthesis that became the Gurjara-Pratihāra style and its regional variations. As difficult as it is to give form to the formless (or to the omniformed), the Kanauj sculptor has attempted to show both the conceptual unification and diversification of the form in which "The whole world there united, / And divided many-fold."⁴ The main figure has eight arms and four faces. His body is adorned with jewels befitting the highest god or king and his hands hold an array of weapons. Surrounding him and filling the perimeter of the sculpture slab are numerous other figures, both divine and demonic, representing the multiplicity of things in the universe, yet all part of a single whole. In contrast to the earlier depiction of this subject from Śāmalāji (Fig. 11.15), Viṣṇu appears to be more isolated from the myriad that surrounds him. Instead of



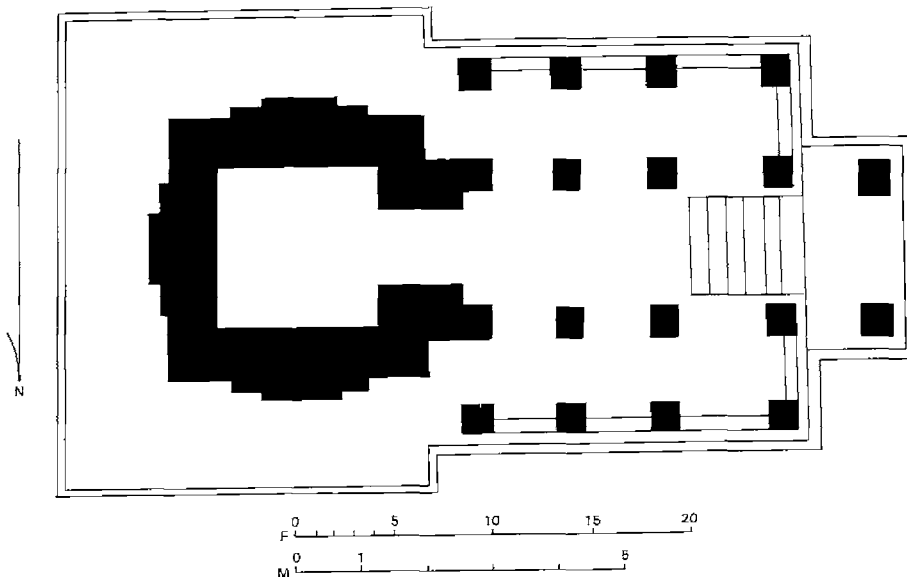
20.5. A king and his consort. At Harṣāt Mātā temple. Ābānerī, Rājasthān, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. eighth century.

appearing to emanate from Viṣṇu, as they do in the Śāmalāji image, the figures above are neatly arranged in rows and are individually reduced, as had been the subsidiary elements in the Marriage of Śiva from Etah (Fig. 20.3)

The village of Ābānerī in Rājasthān has yielded a number of spectacular and quite unusual sculptures of about the eighth century. Although the temple is quite ruined, a number of exquisite sculptures adorn the plinth of the Harṣāt Mātā temple. The subject matter of these reliefs is usually considered to be secular. Each carving is set into a niche flanked by pilasters decorated with foliate motifs and capped by repeating *candraśālā* arches, and shows figures, probably representing a king, his principal consort, and various attendants (Fig. 20.5). In this case a bare-topped and bejeweled male figure wearing a skirtlike cloth around his hips and having an elaborate curled coiffure sits in *lalitāsana*, his right hand holding a now-damaged object and his left tickling a companion under the chin. A smaller female perches atop his right leg, while two others attend the scene. The delicacy of carving and depth of expression are comparable to any of the finest works from the entire spectrum of Indic art. The figures are rounded in form, yet



20.6. Sūrya temple (Temple 7), from northwest. Osiān, Rajasthan, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-eighth century.



20.7. Plan of Sūrya temple (Temple 7). Osiān, Rajasthan, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-eighth century.

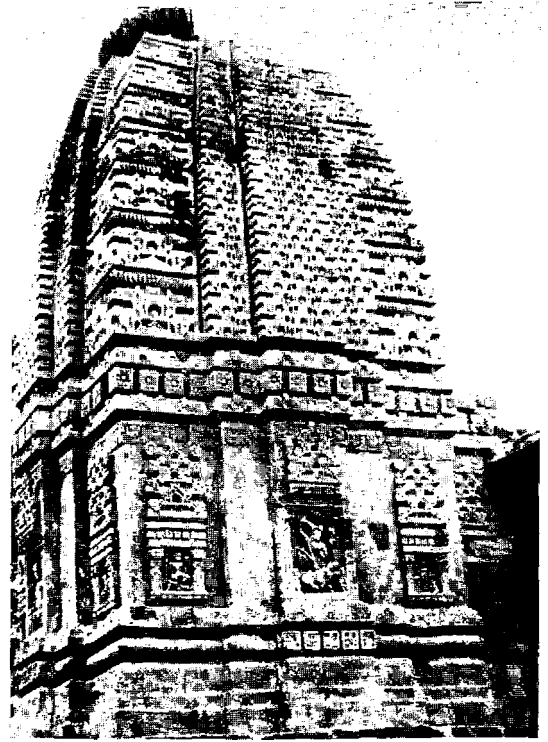
their facial features, hands, and feet are carved with extreme daintiness. The round stool provides volume to the composition and increases the sense of reality.

Architecture of this period may also be studied in Rājasthān, at Osiān, now a small village not far from Jodhpur, which apparently was controlled by the Gurjara-Pratihāras and possibly a minor ruling family known as the Ābhīras in the eighth and ninth centuries. Although largely in ruins, about sixteen remaining temples testify that it was once a flourishing cultural center. An inscription in a Jain temple at Osiān gives evidence of artistic activity during the time of Vatsarāja of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, who ruled in the last decades of the eighth century. However, the actual patrons of the temples are unknown. Stylistic comparisons to other more securely dated monuments indicate a florescence at the site in the middle to late eighth and ninth centuries.⁵

A Sūrya temple, called number seven, at Osiān, probably dating from the mid-eighth century, is a modest-sized structure consisting of a shrine, *mandapa*, and porch (Figs. 20.6, 20.7). Originally, four subsidiary shrines connected by a cloister (*śāla*) that served also as a compound wall rendered it a *pañcāyatana* structure, although these have vanished almost without a trace. The cloister is an important element, for it anticipates the later western Indian Jain temples in which the central structure is surrounded by a cloister. Although the temple consists still of the shrine and porch areas, as had typical Gupta monuments, the whole is now much more elaborate in decoration and is more readily compared to nearly contemporary monuments elsewhere in northern India.

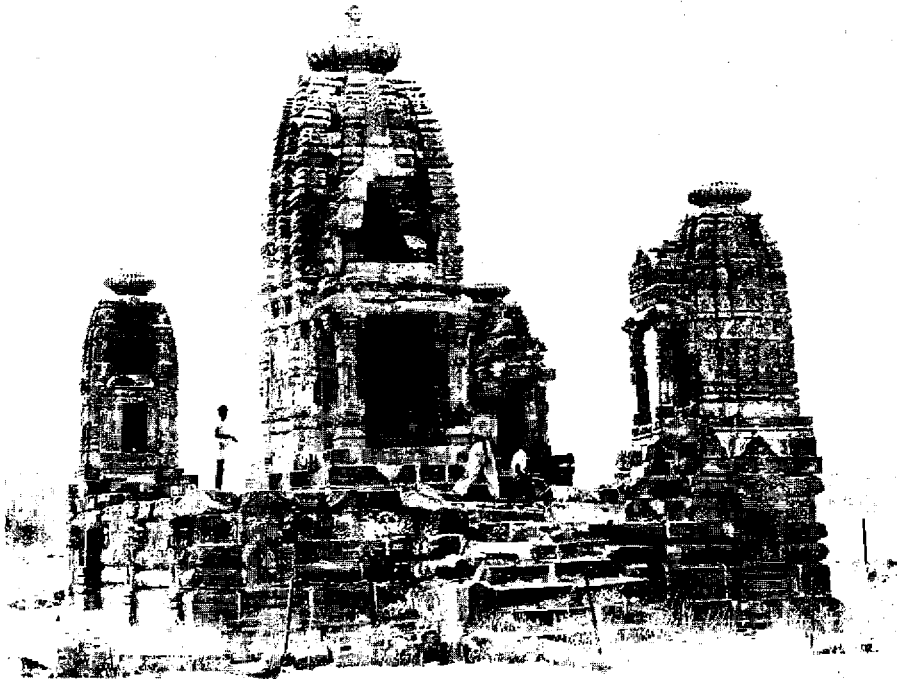
Since there is evidence of reconstruction of the temple after its original period of construction (the *śikhara*, for example, may be a product of the tenth century), the original monument is best studied in the lower half of the *vimāna*.

The exterior wall of the *vimāna* is a delicate balance between decorative moldings, foliate motifs, and modestly sized niches, each containing the figure of a deity. The central niche on each side is slightly larger than the others and is more prominent (Fig. 20.8). In contrast to



20.8. North side of *vimāna*, Sūrya temple (Temple 7). Osiān, Rājasthān, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-eighth century.

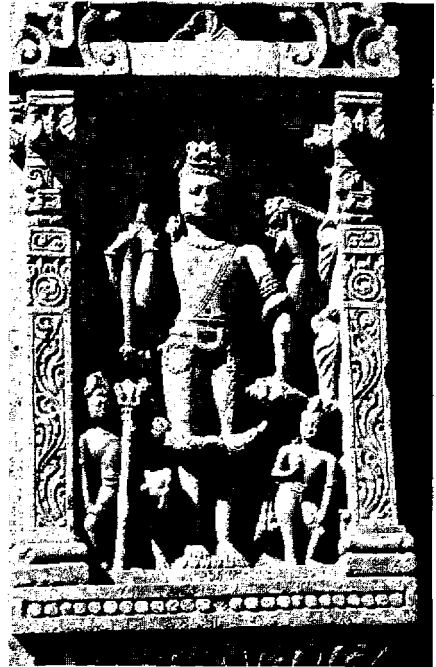
the Gupta sculptural scheme, seen at Deogarh, the increased complication and introduction of secondary elements effectively de-emphasizes any one element. Thus, the reliefs on the three sides do not dominate the decorative scheme, as had the single reliefs at Deogarh. A westward-facing temple, this monument would seem to have been circumambulated in a counterclockwise direction, as at the Deogarh temple, if the order of the exterior niche sculptures may be used as a determinant. Gaṇeśa, the overcomer of obstacles invoked at the beginning of worship, appears in the principal niche on the south; Sūrya, the main deity of the temple, appears in the principal niche on the east (rear); Durgā, as Mahiṣasuramardini, is placed in the principal niche on the north (Fig. 20.8), representative of religious victory, that is, the attainment of the goal of worship. Subsidiary niches with other deities complete the pantheon presented on this temple. The



20.9. Hari-Hara temple (Temple 1), from west. Osiān, Rājasthān, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-eighth century.



20.10. Vāmana *avatār* (Trivikrama), south side, Hari-Hara temple (Temple 1). Osiān, Rājasthān, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-eighth century.



20.11. Hari-Hara, on east side of Hari-Hara temple (Temple 2). Osiān, Rājasthān, India. Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. mid-to-late eighth century.

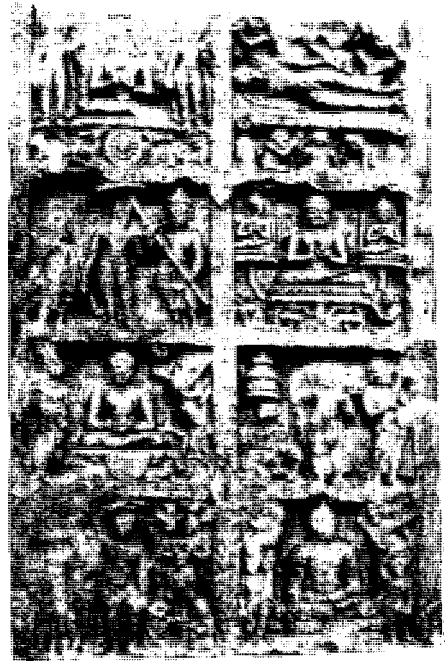
image of Durgā reveals the heavy and full forms of the body, the large round breasts pressed closely together, and the lines denoting the flesh around the ribs characteristic of Gurjara-Pratihāra representations. The increased activity of the figure predicts the style to be popularized in the following centuries, and marks a departure from the repose and calm of Gupta-period works.

A more complete version of a *pañcāyatana* temple of approximately the same date, that is, the middle of the eighth century, is the Hari-Hara temple, called number one, at Osiāñ (Fig. 20.9). The temple and its four subsidiary shrines (the northwest one is now destroyed) stand atop a terrace that unifies the separate elements. The central shrine faces west, as do the two back corner shrines, but the two at the west or front side of the terrace (*jagati*) face each other. The sculptures that adorn the temple reveal the consistently high quality of expression and execution seen at Ābāneri, Osiāñ, and other Gurjara-Pratihāra-period sites. The main niche on the south side of the principal structure shows Viṣṇu's fifth *avatār*, Vāmana (Trivikrama), the dwarf who tricked the *asuras* into granting him as much of the universe as he could cover in three steps, and then grew to gigantic size to cover it all (Fig. 20.10). The conical crown and curled hair exhibit a debt to fifth- and sixth-century forms, but the vitality and energy of the image reflect the developed Gurjara-Pratihāra idiom. A particularly fine representation of Hari-Hara, the unified form of Śiva and Viṣṇu, from another Hari-Hara temple at the site, called number two, further exemplifies the style, for even this standing, frontal icon of the god has an innate liveliness and sense of animation (Fig. 20.11). Clearly a syncretic god, Hari-Hara's importance at Osiāñ may be related to a specific cult prevalent at the site.

The ninth and tenth centuries saw the dissemination of the Gurjara-Pratihāra style complex throughout much of northern India, as well as a marked change in the sculptural style itself, for the softness and animation previously seen in the figures gave way to a harder, stiffer form. Although the tradition grew up primarily in western and northern India, it had impact

on artistic schools in regions where Gurjara-Pratihāra political sway was felt, even if the art itself may not have been specifically linked to the Gurjara-Pratihāras. In the case of artistic centers that already had longstanding traditions, the effect took the form of a new overlay, rather than complete change.

Such was the case in the Buddhist art of Sārnāth where the stylistic impact may be seen in a stele with representations of the eight major events of the Buddha's life (Fig. 20.12). Usually dated to the Gupta period, this sculpture, upon close examination, reveals ties to the Gurjara-Pratihāra style of the eighth century, although the new style was only grafted onto an existing tradition of long-standing repute. The organization of the relief, with its paired scenes placed in two vertical lines, reveals the tendency to organize and compartmentalize that is characteristic of the architectural and sculptural trends of post-Gupta times and contrasts strongly with



20.12. Eight Events from Life of Śākyamuni Buddha. From Sārnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. eighth century. Beige sandstone. H: 96.5 cm. Sārnāth Site Museum, Sārnāth.



20.13. Vajrasattva. From Sārnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably Gurjara-Pratihāra period. Ca. eighth century. Beige sandstone. H: 132 cm. Sārnāth Site Museum, Sārnāth.

a Gupta rendition of the same subject (Fig. 10.21), in which a more free-form arrangement is visible. It also contrasts with the typical Pāla-period examples in which a large central Buddha generally dominates the other scenes (Fig. 18.9). Gurjara-Pratihāra stylistic characteristics are especially visible in the treatment of the figures and facial features, particularly notable in the high-ridged eyebrows typical of the developing Rājput forms.

Another sculpture from about the same date further demonstrates later Buddhist imagery at Sārnāth (Fig. 20.13). The subject of this sculpture is Vajrasattva, who symbolizes the practitioner as the undifferentiated state of the Universal (*sūnyatā*). He is identified by the *vajra* he holds in his right hand and the remains of a *ghanṭā* (bell) in his left. The *vajra* is a symbol of *sūnyatā*

itself as well as the permanent nature of the undifferentiated reality, while the *ghanṭā*, with its transient sound, symbolizes the impermanence of existence. Although generally classified as a Buddha, Vajrasattva embodies principles that reach far beyond the idea of the enlightened Sākyamuni, for the ornaments he wears, including his crown, earrings, necklace, anklets and bracelets, armlets, and girdle signify the perfections (*pāramitās*) necessary for the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. His crown, the most elaborate of these iconographic symbols, contains small images of four of the five *jina* Buddhas (the fifth being implied at the rear of the crown) and is, in fact, a *maṇḍala* of the five *jinas*. In the case of Vajrasattva, the five figures in his crown are not the sources from which he emanates, as is usually the meaning of figures in the head-dresses in Buddhist iconographics. On the contrary, these *jinas* and the Buddha-realms over which they preside are considered to be inherent in Vajrasattva, and are the manifestations of the nature of his knowledge. Stylistically, this figure again shows the crystallization of form, especially visible in the features of the face, which characterizes the late Gurjara-Pratihāra-period style. Yet it still retains something of the softness of earlier Sārnāth carvings. The ornaments and jewels now stand in bold relief against the flesh, and are quite plastically carved. Possibly, this sculpture was intended to be completed with plaster and painted as suggested by the unfinished character of the halo and background.

Conflict with the Pāla kings of Magadha and Bengal seems to have extended Gurjara-Pratihāra influence to the eastern portions of the South Asian subcontinent, and in return brought Pāla characteristics into the art at some sites within the fold of the Gurjara-Pratihāra political sphere. A few sculptures found at Sārnāth present an interesting problem regarding the relationship of the sculptural traditions at Sārnāth to contemporaneous ones of Biḥar. One of them is a representation of a Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* (Fig. 20.14).⁶ The stylistic features of this stele, and others of the group, distinguish them from other sculptures found at Sārnāth, for while they are carved out of the Chunār sand-



20.14. Buddha. From Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably late Gurjara-Pratihara period. Ca. early eleventh century. Beige sandstone. H: 114.5 cm. Sarnath Site Museum, Sarnath.



20.15. Buddha. From Bihar Sharif vicinity, Bihar, India. Gurjara-Pratihara period, fourth year of reign of Mahendrapala (ca. A.D. 894). Black stone. H: 67.5 cm. Nalanda Site Museum, Nalanda.

stone typical of the region, they relate in style to the black stone carvings of Bihar dating from the Pala period. An examination of the Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* illustrates the similarities to images from Bihar, which include the basic format of the stele, the treatment of the throne, the floriated motif on the crossbars of the throne back, and the decorated rim of the halo. The position and rendering of the *vidyadhara*s at the top of the stele are so similar to examples from Bihar that they suggest that they were carved following the same iconographic texts or drawings. Since the Sarnath examples are unusual among the Sarnath remains in their similarity to Pala sculpture, particularly to works of the reign of King Mahipala I (late tenth–early eleventh century) it is unlikely that a whole wave of Pala influence was felt at that site. Rather, it has been suggested that a Pala sculptor may have visited Sarnath and,

while there, carved these images in his usual manner, but in the local material.⁷

Concomitantly, incontrovertible evidence of Gurjara-Pratihara impact on the art of the Pala regions is known, for Mahendrapala, the Gurjara-Pratihara king who ruled from about 890 to 908, left a number of inscriptional records that signify his prominence in Bihar and northern Bengal. Several sculptures found within the Pala-controlled areas of Bihar bear inscriptions dated in Mahendrapala's reign, signifying that at least temporary inroads were made by that king. Each of these images is Buddhist, suggesting that the popular religion of the region prevailed, as occurred at Sarnath, but that a new ruler was acknowledged. One example, which was found near Bihar Sharif and is dated in the fourth year of Mahendrapala's reign, about 894, shows a seated Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* (Fig. 20.15). The format is virtually identical to that

of many contemporary images from Bihār; however, the deeply incised, thick lines of the throne and halo seem particularly characteristic of all of the known Mahendrapāla-period pieces from the eastern region.

In spite of Mahendrapāla's apparent political successes in the east, the strength of the Pratihāras apparently began to wane during the reign of his successor, Mahīpāla, who was twice defeated by the powerful Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings Indra III and Kṛṣṇa III. At the same time that the Gurjara-Pratihāra forces were dwindling, other Rājput clans were growing more powerful. An inscription dated to 954 credits the Candellas with the defeat of the Gurjara-Pratihāras.⁸ However, several other Rājput families apparently continued to

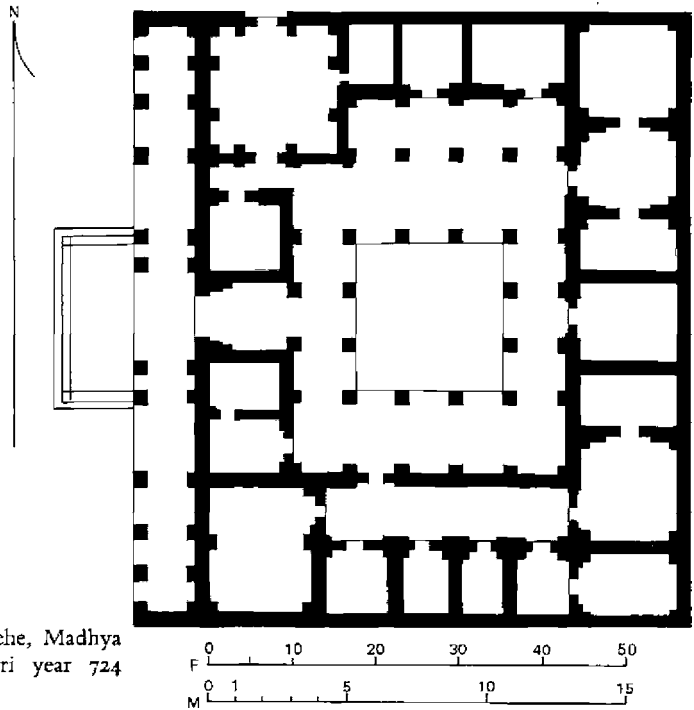
acknowledge the Gurjara-Pratihāra dominance, while maintaining independent rulers in their own territories. Among those who asserted their independence around this time were the Cāhamaṇas and the Guhilas. Newly arising clans, such as the Haihayas of north-central India, the Paramāras of Mālwa, and the Cālukyas (Solankis) of Gujārāt, also gained prominence. By about the mid-tenth century, the Gurjara-Pratihāras were weakened, controlling only Kanauj and its environs, but little else. The line continued in this debilitated state until the invasions of Mahmūd of Ghaznī, which began in 1001; the last Gurjara-Pratihāra ruler for which we have records ruled at least until 1027.

THE HAIHAYAS (OR KALACURIS) OF TRIPURĪ

One of the dynasties that came into power upon the weakening of the Gurjara-Pratihāras was that of the Haihayas of Tripurī, who came to rule the eastern portion of north-central India. Their land, usually called the Cedi country, was contiguous with portions of Bihār and Orissa and it is not surprising that the art produced during their period of rule reflects associations both with the Gurjara-Pratihāra art of the central and western regions of north India, and, to some extent, the art of the east. Technically, the Haihayas form one of the many branches of the Kalacuri family who ruled portions of north India and the Deccan at various periods. Although Haihaya-period monuments have been documented and described, work toward relating the remains to contemporary monuments in other parts of South Asia and toward understanding the works in the context of their time has only recently begun. However, a brief look at some of the major architectural types sheds extremely important light on Haihaya ties with other art styles of India, as well as a particular Śaivite development and the unusual architectural modes created for its practices and ritual needs.

This Śaivite sect, the Matta-mayūra or "Drunken Peacock" clan, is known from about half a dozen inscriptions, three of which were

found in the Cedi country.⁹ It was apparently introduced into the region by Yuvarājadeva I (ca. 915-45), king of the Haihayas, when he imported a Matta-mayūra Śaivite ascetic named Prabhāvaśiva. Yuvarājadeva I's chief queen, Nōhalā, probably belonged to the family of a small dynasty, named Calukya, whose capital, called Matta-mayūra, was centered in the Guna district of Madhya Pradesh and who were the earliest known patrons of the sect. Within two generations, as known from inscriptions, at least two more such importations occurred, and ascetics were given land and monasteries, leading to the establishment of a community belonging to this clan. A lineage for these ascetics, based on a teacher-disciple basis, since they were celibate, has been established from epigraphic evidence. One inscription reveals that the Matta-mayūra ascetic, Prabōdhaśiva, had a monastery (*maṭha*) constructed, along with a tank and a well, in the Kalacuri year 724, equivalent to 972.¹⁰ Since the inscription was built into a wall of a monastery at Candrehe, it may be assumed that this is the *maṭha* built by Prabōdhaśiva (Fig. 20.16). Further, the inscription mentions that this structure was built near a house of gods (temple) built by Prabōdhaśiva's spiritual preceptor; this is generally assumed to be the nearby Śiva temple (Figs. 20.18, 20.19). Allowing for



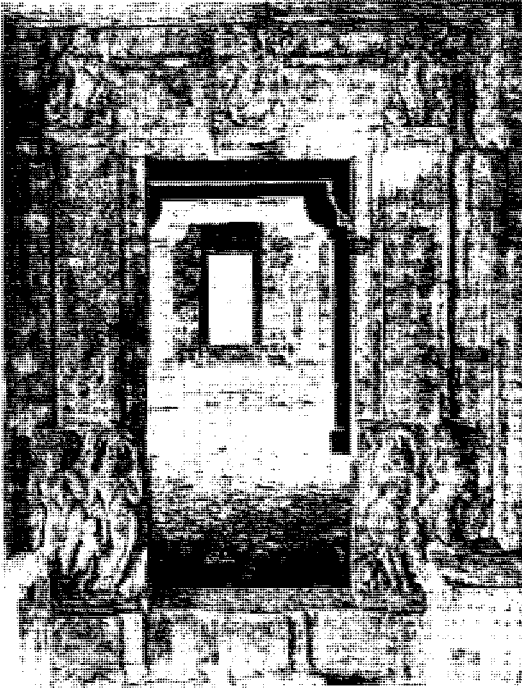
20.16. Plan of Śaivite monastery. Candrehe, Madhya Pradesh, India. Haihaya period. Kalacuri year 724 (A.D. 972).

a one generation difference in date, this temple could have been constructed about twenty to twenty-five years earlier, about 950.

Since the Matta-mayūras are known only from a handful of inscriptions, it is difficult to specify how their beliefs and practices differed from those of other Śaivite sects. A clue to the characteristics of the Matta-mayūras appears in the Candrehe inscription, which compares Prabōdhaśiva to Kumāra (Kārttikeya) and says that his “one hand was versed in pouring libations on high tongues of fire (as Kumāra’s one hand was versed in pacifying his fierce peacock)” and that he had “always abjured the company of women.”¹¹ The notion of Kumāra’s peacock (*mayūra*), alluded to in the inscription and perhaps also in the Matta-mayūra name as a symbol of passion controlled by Kumāra, seems central to the Matta-mayūra ideals. Kumāra, the son of Śiva, was, according to some traditions, conceived without female participation, since Śiva’s fiery seed could not be borne by any woman. Kumāra’s avoidance of contamination from women, even in his lack of a mother, continued throughout his life; he is chaste and

remains single (although said to be married to the “army of the gods” or, alternatively, to Kaumārī, the Virgin). One of his names, Skanda, refers to the spurt of semen that in *yoga* must rise through the inner channels of the subtle body to the mouth of fire, where it is consumed, symbolizing the mastery over the senses of the *yogin*. When mind control is not attained, Skanda is not born, but through the achievement and the “birth” of Skanda, the *yogin* “becomes” Śiva, by inference, in repeating Śiva’s act of the creation of Kumāra. This goal, to “become” Śiva, was the aim of Matta-mayūra practices. Their name, “Drunken Peacock,” may refer to the sexual excitement that is totally under control and should not be taken as an indication of sexual licentiousness. The absence of sexually explicit sculptures on the monuments of the Matta-mayūras at Candrehe seems to be a further indication of the essential beliefs of the sect.

The monastery, now ruined and best studied by its plan, is a square structure measuring approximately eighteen meters on each side (Fig. 20.16). It consisted of a central pillared courtyard



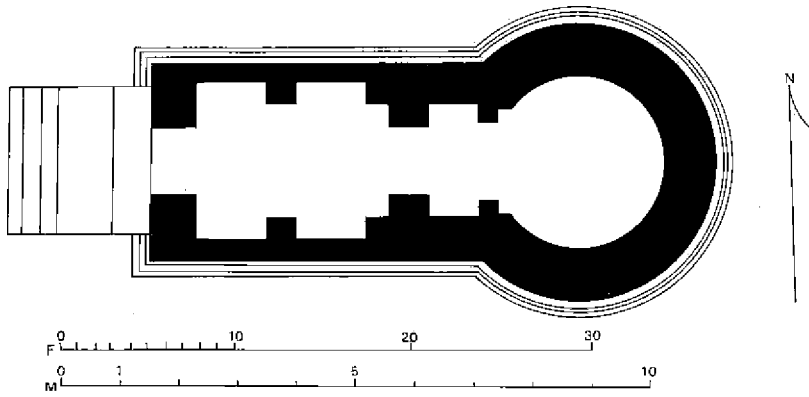
20.17. Stone doorway of northern entrance to Śaivite monastery. Candrehe, Madhya Pradesh, India. Haihaya period. Kalacuri year 724 (A.D. 972).

surrounded by a number of chambers of varying sizes and shapes, apparently designed for different purposes, such as meditation or worship. Some of the chambers open directly into the pillared courtyard, but others are more remote and accessible only through corridors or other rooms. A badly damaged second story of the building, which may not have covered the entire lower level, may have been used by the ascetics for living purposes. The plan relates strongly to Buddhist *vihāras* known in free-standing structures at Buddhist monastic institutions as well as in cave architecture. However, since so few Hindu monasteries survive from ancient India, it is difficult to determine whether the Hindu form is indebted to that of the Buddhists, or whether parallel developments, partly related to similar needs among all monastic institutions, account for the points of comparison. It is likely that Hindus built numerous religious retreats or monasteries over the centuries, though apparently stone was rarely used

and therefore few have survived. The exterior and interior of the *maṭha* are very plain. Sculptural decoration is confined to a few of the doorways, which are modestly carved (Fig. 20.17). The simplicity, which is in general uncharacteristic of post-Gupta-period art of the north, undoubtedly reflected the ascetic way of life aspired to by the *Matta-mayūras*.

The nearby Śiva temple is also of interest because of its unusual form (Figs. 20.18, 20.19), for its shrine is circular both inside and out, as is the entire *śikhara*. Further, in contrast to most other contemporaneous northern art styles, it is nearly devoid of figural sculpture. Its decoration consists primarily of mouldings and other architectural embellishments. The monument stands atop a rectangular platform, although this may be partially the product of later reconstructions. Facing west and consisting of a *maṇḍapa*, *mahāmaṇḍapa*, *antarāla* (antechamber), and *garbhagrha*, its elements are clearly discernible on the interior but are perceived only as a rectangular shape appended to a circular form on the exterior, although the temple parts are differentiated by the roofs on the exterior. Only one other specimen of a temple with a circular shrine, both inside and out, has been found, and this was near Gurgi at Masaun. The site of Gurgi is also linked to the *Matta-mayūra* sect on the basis of inscriptional evidence. The circular form is frequently associated with the concept of the female, as in *yogini* temples, one of which is found at *Bhērāghaṭ* and is tied to the Haihayas,¹² and it is possible that for the *Matta-mayūras* this form represented the notion of sexuality symbolically, as would be fitting for their austere practices. The decoration of the exterior of the *nāgara*-style *śikhara* consists of *candraśālās* of nearly identical size creating a texture on the round surface, while, below, the wall bears simple, undecorated pilasterlike projections.

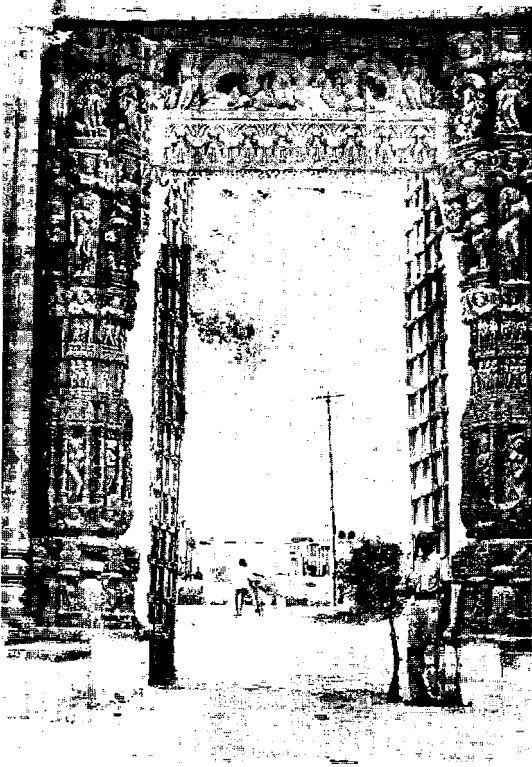
Other temples found within the Cedi territory exhibit a wide range of stylistic proclivities absorbed from the Deccan, north-central and to some extent eastern India, although it is difficult to tie these monuments specifically to the Haihayas. Some of them, including ones that can be clearly associated with the Haihayas,



20.18. Plan of Śiva temple. Candrehe, Madhya Pradesh, India. Haihaya period. Ca. mid-tenth century.



20.19. Śiva temple from southeast. Candrehe, Madhya Pradesh, India. Haihaya period. Ca. mid-tenth century.



are richly decorated with sculpture. A monumental *torana* from Gurgi that must have once adorned a Śiva temple and is now set up at Rewa suggests something of the sculptural forms of approximately the tenth century (Fig. 20.20). Its two upright jambs and three lintels are richly carved (although some portions are covered by the modern wall into which it has been placed) with female figures, deities, and architectural and foliate motifs comparable in style to late Gurjara-Pratihāra monuments and the art of their successors.

20.20. *Torana*. From Gurgi, Madhya Pradesh, India. Haihaya period. Ca. tenth century. Now at Mahārāja's Palace, Rewa.

THE CANDELLAS OF BUNDELKHAND

Originally feudatories of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the Candella family rose to power through the familiar sequence of events reenacted innumerable times in ancient India: originally owing their allegiance to the once stronger line, they capitalized on the weakening of the Gurjara-Pratihāras and, ceasing to acknowledge the latter's sovereignty, established their own principality, in this case, around the site of Khajurāho, in the region known as Bundelkhand. Eventually, as befits the pattern, the Candellas were themselves overcome in a similar manner. Like many other Indic dynasties, in spite of the realities of their rise to power, the Candellas possessed a traditional account of their origin, one version of which claims descent from the moon, Candra, hence providing the name of their dynasty.¹³ Their greatest period of ascendancy occurred in the tenth and eleventh centuries, although Candella rulers may be traced up to 1540, governing portions of their former empire.

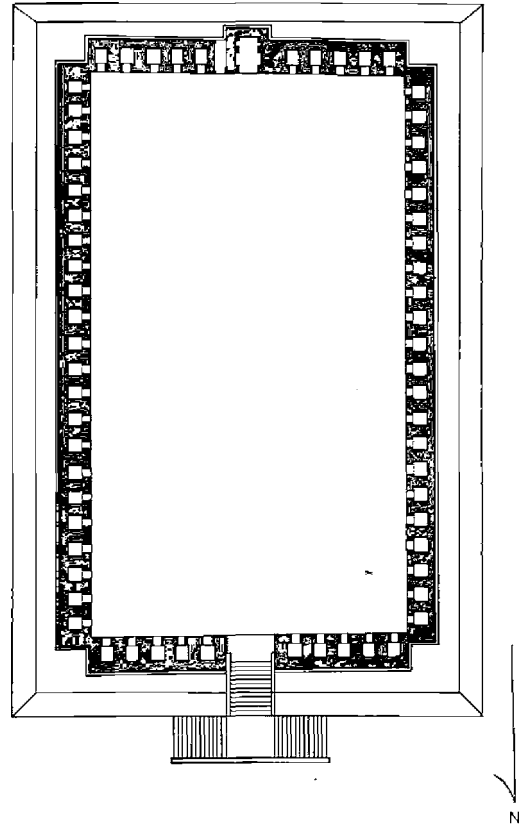
The size of the Candella realm was never really great; the main sites and capitals were concentrated within a small area and included Khajurāho (ancient Khajjūravāhaka), where the most significant architectural remains are located; Kālāñjara, one of the most impregnable ancient fortresses of India at times under Candella control; and Mahobā and Ajaygarh, two other fortresses.

Within the Candella capitals, culture flourished as the kings patronized poets and dramatists, not the least of whom was Kṛṣṇa Miśra, the celebrated author of the *Prabodhacandrodaya*. This drama, performed before the Candella king Kirtivarman, celebrated a then-recent military victory over the Kalacuris. Civil works, including the excavation of tanks, and the building of dams, fortresses, and palaces, were commissioned by the Candella kings, suggesting a full treasury providing plentiful employment for skilled craftsmen in the kingdom. Further,

numerous temples were erected during the Candella period. These works and other achievements of the Candellas are known both from their own inscriptions, over sixty-five of which provide such information, as well as from contemporary Muslim chroniclers, whose very presence in India at that time is a reminder that the Candellas ruled on the brink of the Muslim conquest of northern India, and faced the pressing problem of repelling the Muslim forces.

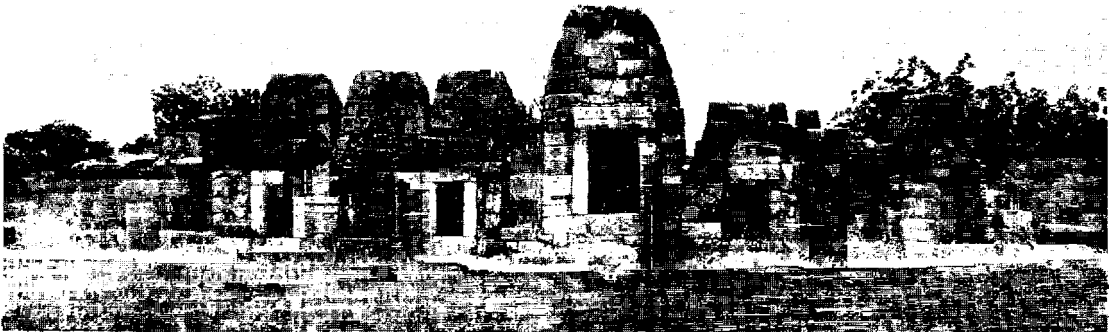
Perhaps the greatest testimony to the Candella line is the beauty of numerous temples erected at the site of Khajurāho. Traditionally, over eighty temples are ascribed to Candella construction at the site, although only about twenty-five survive today. They represent a strikingly homogeneous group and seem to be the product of a concerted and sustained effort by their creators over a period of time. Because of this, most of the temples share certain conceptual and stylistic features, regardless of whether they are Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite, or Jain. Their styles both link them together and distinguish them from temples of the northern type at other sites throughout South Asia.

It is generally assumed that the earliest extant temple at Khajurāho is the Caunṣaṭ *yoginī* temple, or, the temple of the sixty-four *yoginīs* (Figs. 20.21, 20.22), although no incontrovertible evidence verifies its presumed ninth-century date.



Sketch Plan Not To Scale

20.21. Plan of Caunṣaṭ *yoginī* temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period. Ca. ninth century or later.



20.22. View looking south inside courtyard of Caunṣaṭ *yoginī* temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period. Ca. ninth century or later.

The features often said to suggest an early construction date include its stark simplicity (it was nearly totally devoid of sculptures save for the images once contained in the niches around its perimeter); the use of granite as a building material (sandstone was the prevalent medium of the Candella temples and presumably represents a later feature); as well as the use of large, boulderlike blocks of masonry, roughly cut and boldly articulated, again a feature generally associated with formative stages of stone architecture in South Asia. Yet because of the unusual purpose and character of this temple, which not only distinguishes it from other temples at Khajurāho but places it among only a handful of similar temples in other parts of South Asia, it does not seem justifiable to base arguments for its date on what might otherwise be acceptable criteria. Its exceptional form and special subject matter, however, makes it a fitting beginning for a discussion of Candella art, regardless of its probable date.

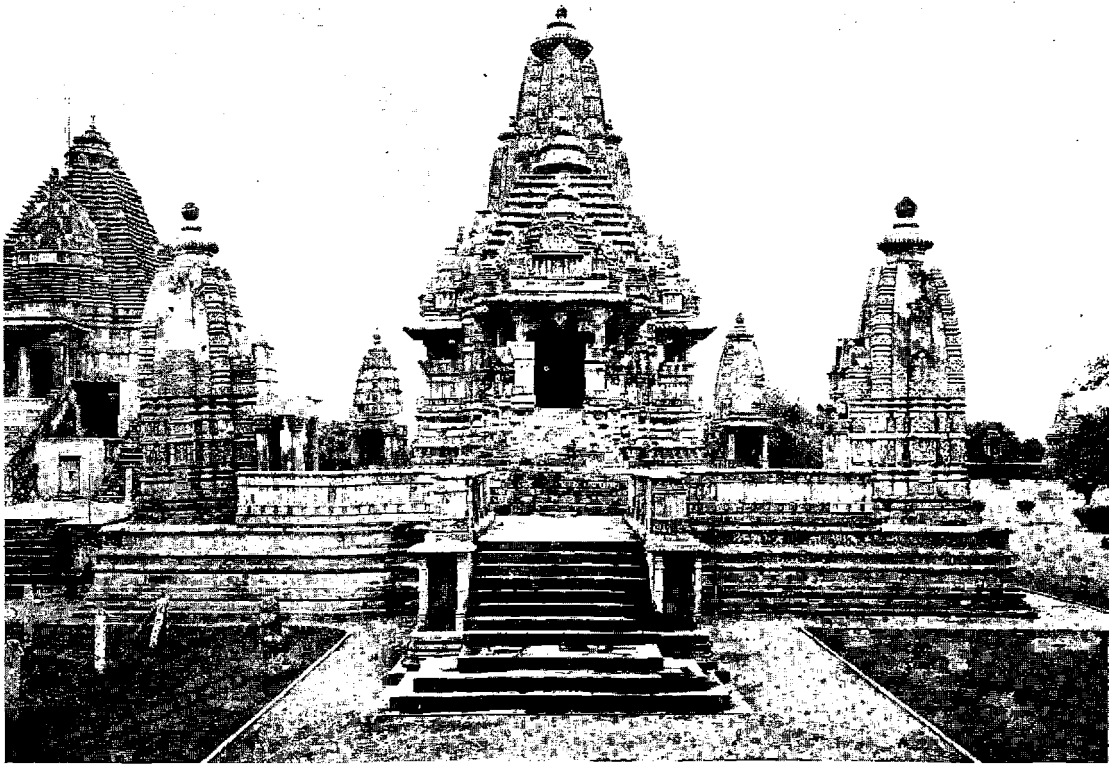
The temple is built on a rocky promontory about seven meters above a plain. In contrast to the usually circular form of *yoginī* temples, this structure consists of a large, rectangular open courtyard surrounded by a cloister of cells, sixty-four of which measure only about a meter in height and depth. Another cell, larger than the others and located directly opposite the main entrance to the complex, which is on the north, may have enshrined the main image of the temple. Each cell is like a miniature temple, having a simplified tower of the *nāgara* style (Fig. 20.22). Each would have housed a sculptural representation of a *yoginī*, only three of which have survived to modern times. Although many other architectural examples in India are characterized by an enclosure of cells, *yoginī* temples are unusual in that the perimeter, rather than a prominent central shrine, receives the greatest emphasis. It is possible that this relates to the feminine concept that *yoginī* temples portray, in which the idea of the enclosure rather than the enclosed, expressive of the female as opposed to the male reproductive organs, is stressed.

The purpose and meaning of the *yoginī* temple is related to Hindu Tantric practices,

which must have been prevalent in the region, as manifested in the sculptural programs of the majority of the Khajurāho temples. The particular type of Tantrism may have been related to Kaula or Kāpālika practices. In particular, the Kāpālikas are associated with *yoginīs* and various sexual practices in which the female was given great importance as the "seat" of the Self, and thereby the realization of Self was located in the *yonī*, or vulva.¹⁴ While the ultimate aim of the Kāpālika was to transcend the sensual, the participation in rituals in which sexual relations with women were a major aspect must have led to the downfall of many a would-be holy man.

The theory behind Tantric practices, both Buddhist and Hindu, often included not only the enjoyment of women, but also the drinking of wine, the eating of flesh, human sacrifice, and the use of the human skull as a drinking vessel. These five practices comprise the *pañca makāras*, the so-called "five m's," for their Sanskrit names all begin with the letter *m*. In short, *tantrins* often made use of things that were generally prohibited to the "right hand," or customary religious practices. The Tantric (or "left-hand") way was believed to be the fast method of achieving the religious goal, but certainly, it was the less secure. For the temptations of the senses, which were to be overcome through indulgence, frequently further ensnared the practitioners into participation in the physical world. It is not surprising that Tantric practices have been looked down upon by nonpractitioners in South Asian society at every period, forcing Tantric followers to pursue secretism and esoterism.

Typical of the developed phase of architecture at Khajurāho, and an example which may be used to define many of the major characteristics of the Candella style, is the Lakṣmaṇa temple (Fig. 20.23). Not only is this building one of the best-preserved monuments at the site, but its date may be fixed by an inscription which was found at the base of the temple. This epigraph, dated in the year 1011 of the Vikrama era, or A.D. 954, was left by Dhaṅga, the son of Yaśovarman, the seventh Candella king. It reveals that Yaśovarman, alias Lakṣavarman, erected a

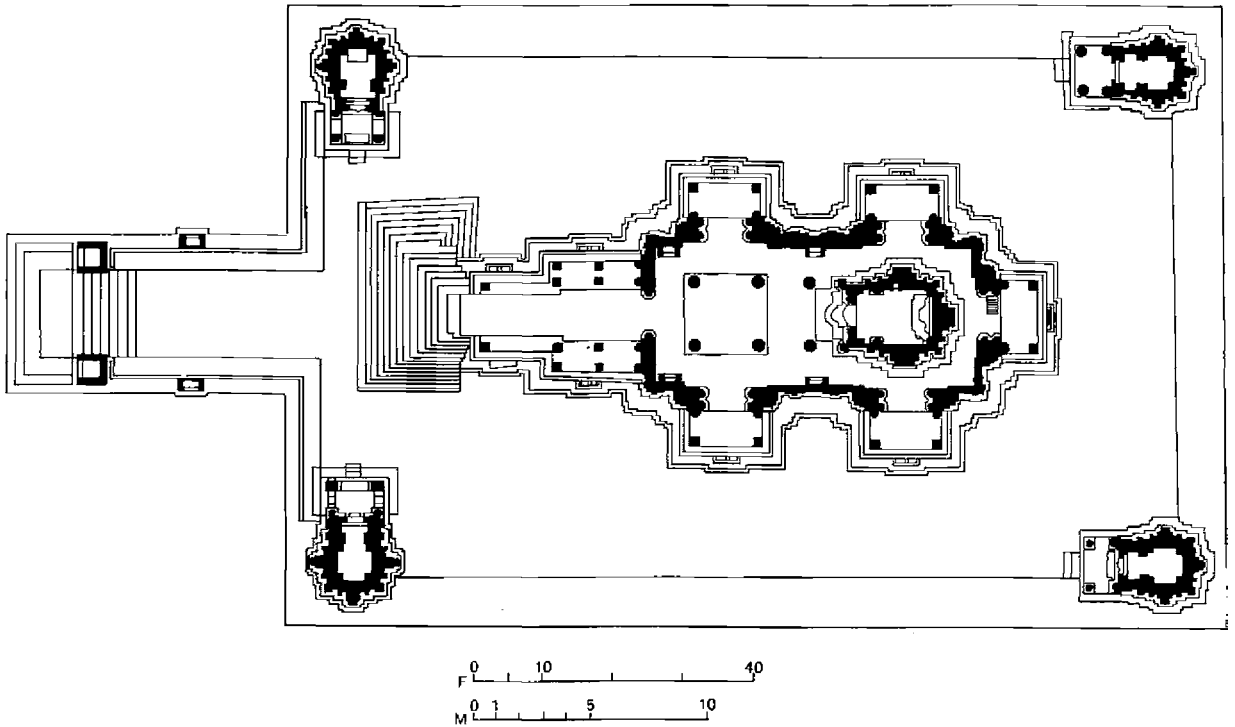


20.23. Lakṣmaṇa temple from east. Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

“charming splendid home of [Viṣṇu] . . . which rivals the peaks of the mountain of snow,”¹⁵ a description that may refer to the Lakṣmaṇa temple itself. Thus, Yaśovarman, who is credited with consolidating the Candella empire, must have had a firm hand in establishing the Candella building tradition at Khajurāho. The inscription further reveals that the main image originally enshrined within the temple, a representation of Viṣṇu Caturmūrti, had an interesting history. Its original owner was the king of Tibet (Bhoṭa), but it had passed through the hands of Sāhi, the ruler of Kira (the Kāngrā region), to Heram-bapāla and then to his son, Devapāla, perhaps a Pratihāra ruler, from whom Yaśovarman obtained it. Although the image now enshrined represents this form of Viṣṇu (Fig. 20.29), it can hardly be the one implied in the inscription since it is of stone rather than metal. Further-

more, its style is in perfect harmony with the Candella craftsmanship characteristic of the temple. The image referred to in the inscription may have been lost or stolen some time after having been enshrined, but it must have been replaced within a short period because of the style of the present image.

The history of the transferral of ownership of an icon such as this sheds light on several important issues—first, the idea of “booty” or rather, the acquisition of a valued object of one king by another as an element of war in ancient India, and second, the documentation of direct transmission of artistic influence, including both iconographic and stylistic modes. Indeed, if the term “Bhoṭa” in the inscription can refer to that portion of Kaśmīr that has generally been part of the cultural sphere of Tibet, it is possible to suggest that the great popularity of Viṣṇu



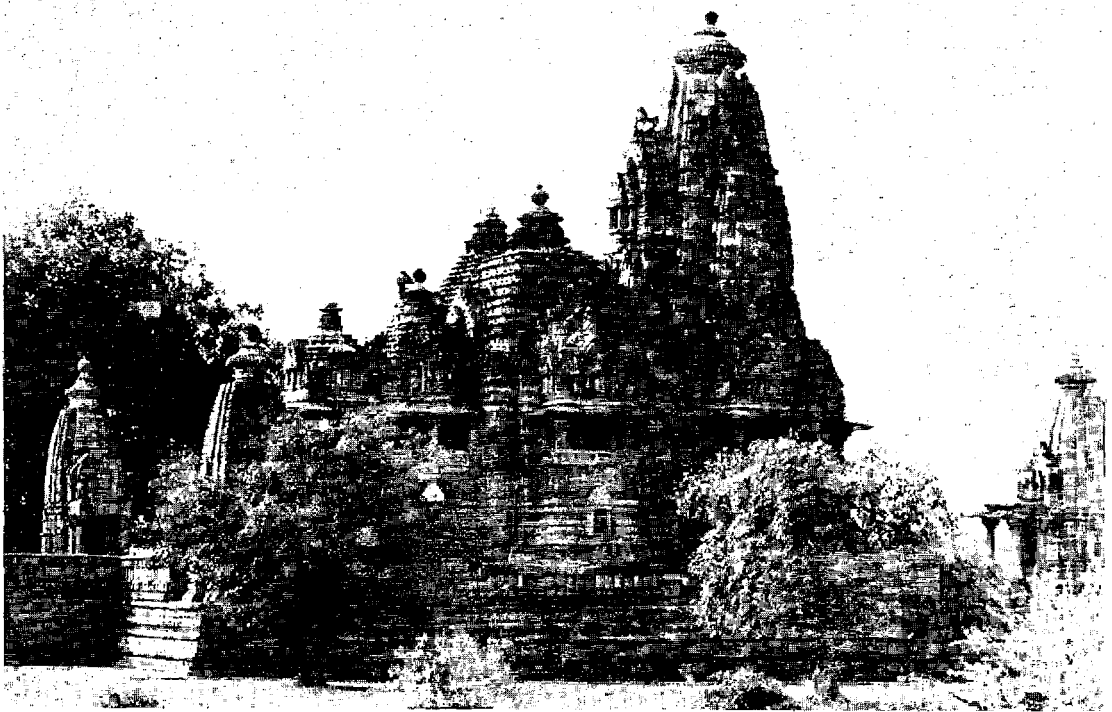
20.24. Plan of Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

Caturmūrti in Kaśmīr (Figs. 17.17, 17.19) had direct bearing on the construction of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajurāho.

Although it was apparently finished by 954, the date of Dhaṅga's inscription, it is not known how long the temple took to construct. The traditionally held view that over eighty temples were built at Khajurāho during the approximately 150-year period of Candella rule there suggests that on an average a temple would have been built approximately every two years. A large and ambitious project, such as the Lakṣmaṇa temple, would certainly have taken longer, but still, it may be assumed that work proceeded at a rapid pace with great numbers of workmen carrying out the tasks. Since the style of this and other Candella temples is the direct descendant of the styles of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, it is possible that craftsmen formerly employed by the earlier rulers now turned to the Candella patrons. Although the names of

some architects are known, and some mason marks appear on stones of the temples, little is known about the individuals who actually did the work.

Typical of the Candella style, the Lakṣmaṇa temple rests atop a plinth, to which the devotee gains access on the east (Figs. 20.23, 20.24). This feature may be contrasted with the temples of Orissa, which generally have an enclosing wall but not a plinth. The Lakṣmaṇa temple is of the *sāndhara* type, having an enclosed circumambulatory passage around the shrine, and it is of the *pañcāyatana* variety due to the presence of the four subsidiary shrines at the corners of the plinth. As had been seen at the Hari-Hara temple called number one at Osiāñ (Fig. 20.9), the two front shrines face each other rather than the direction faced by the main temple. Each of these four virtually identical shrines has a small *garbhagrha* topped by a *śikhara* preceded by a small flat-roofed pillared porch. Each would



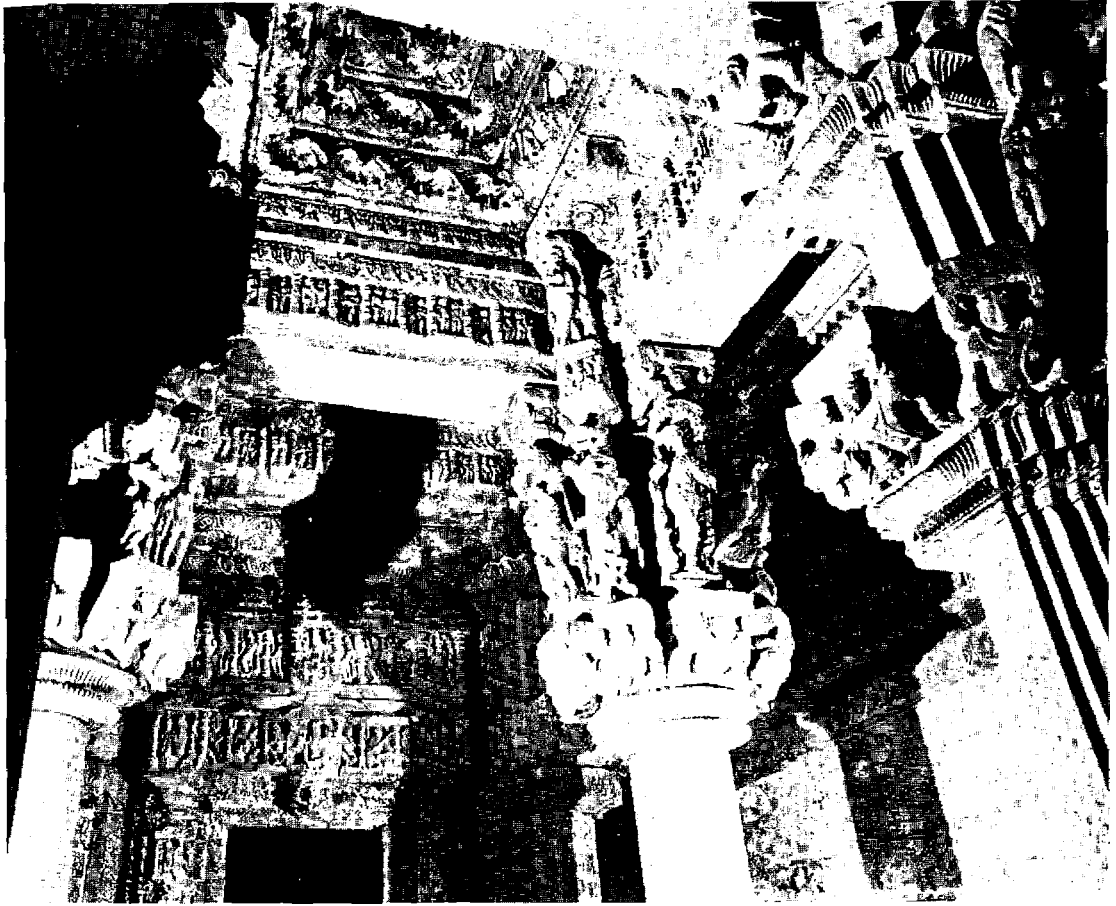
20.25. Lakṣmaṇa temple from north. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

have been dedicated to a specific deity, possibly three forms of Viṣṇu and one representation of Sūrya, as suggested by the central figures carved in the lintels over each doorway.

Examination of the profile of the temple (Fig. 20.25) as well as its plan (Fig. 20.24) reveals its main components placed on an axis from east to west: the first porch (*ardhamaṇḍapa*), the second, larger porch (*maṇḍapa*), the *mahāmaṇḍapa* (great hall), and the *vimāna*, with its characteristic *śikhara*. These elements are clearly distinguishable by their separate roofs, each successively higher from the eastern to the western end of the temple, culminating in the high *śikhara* over the *garbhagr̥ha*. The effect of these rising roofs may be a metaphor for the distant peaks of a mountain range, a frequent and deliberate allusion in Hindu temple art. In this case, it would be a particularly apt comparison, since Dhaṅga's inscription states that his father had built an abode for Viṣṇu which

rivalled the peaks of snow. The roofs over the three *maṇḍapas* are pyramidal in form, rather than domical, in contrast to later examples, and each is crowned by a bell-shaped member. A vase (*kalāśa*) tops the bell-shaped form over the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. The *śikhara* of the shrine area is rounded in outline as is normal in the northern Indian style, although it is more pointed than Orissan types, and is flanked by smaller replicas of itself, creating a clustered effect. Again, this feature may be contrasted with the *nāgara*-style temples of Orissa, which typically have simple, rather than clustered, *śikharas*.

Within, the separate elements are distinguishable as the devotee moves from the smaller porches to the wider ones, and then into the antechamber of the shrine (*antarāla*) and the shrine portion itself, with its circumambulatory passage and the *garbhagr̥ha*. Porches projecting from the sides of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and the sides and rear of the circumambulatory passageway

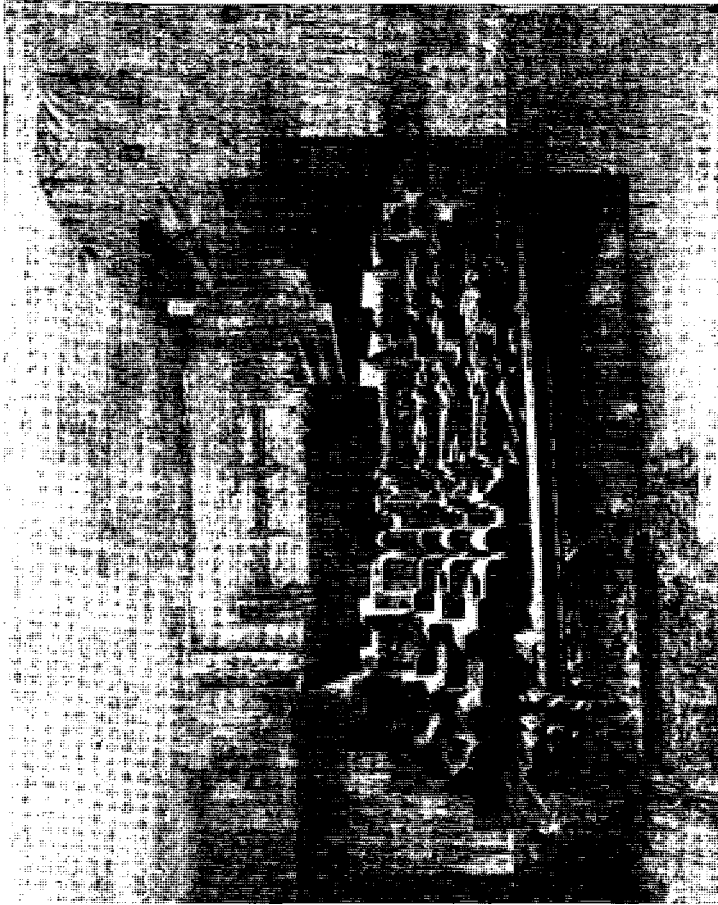


20.26. Sculpted interior of *mahāmaṇḍapa*, Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

permit subdued light to enter the temple, partially illuminating the ornately sculpted interiors. Placed high above the eye level of the devotee, the porches and their windows do not allow the worshiper to glance outward and be distracted during devotions, but merely permit light to enter. The use of pillars in the interior of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* as well as the lavishly sculpted interiors distinguish the Khajurāho temples from their northern-style counterparts in Orissa. A view into the *mahāmaṇḍapa* (Fig. 20.26) shows the four pillars that circumscribe a square within this hall, above which is a delicately carved square ceiling coffer. These pillars were not merely decorative, for although

the size of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* is rather modest (none at Khajurāho is larger than about seven meters square), it was necessary to reinforce the weight of the roofs and towers above through the use of pillars. Four stone beams, placed above the pillars as they might have been in wooden architecture, support the ceiling. Clustered around the tops of the pillars are numerous sculptures, primarily consisting of female figures in a variety of poses and activities. The ceiling panels are carved separately in such a way that when each was put into its proper place, the whole interlocked so that each course supported the one above.

Entrance to the circumambulatory passage



20.27. Circumambulatory passage to left of shrine, Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

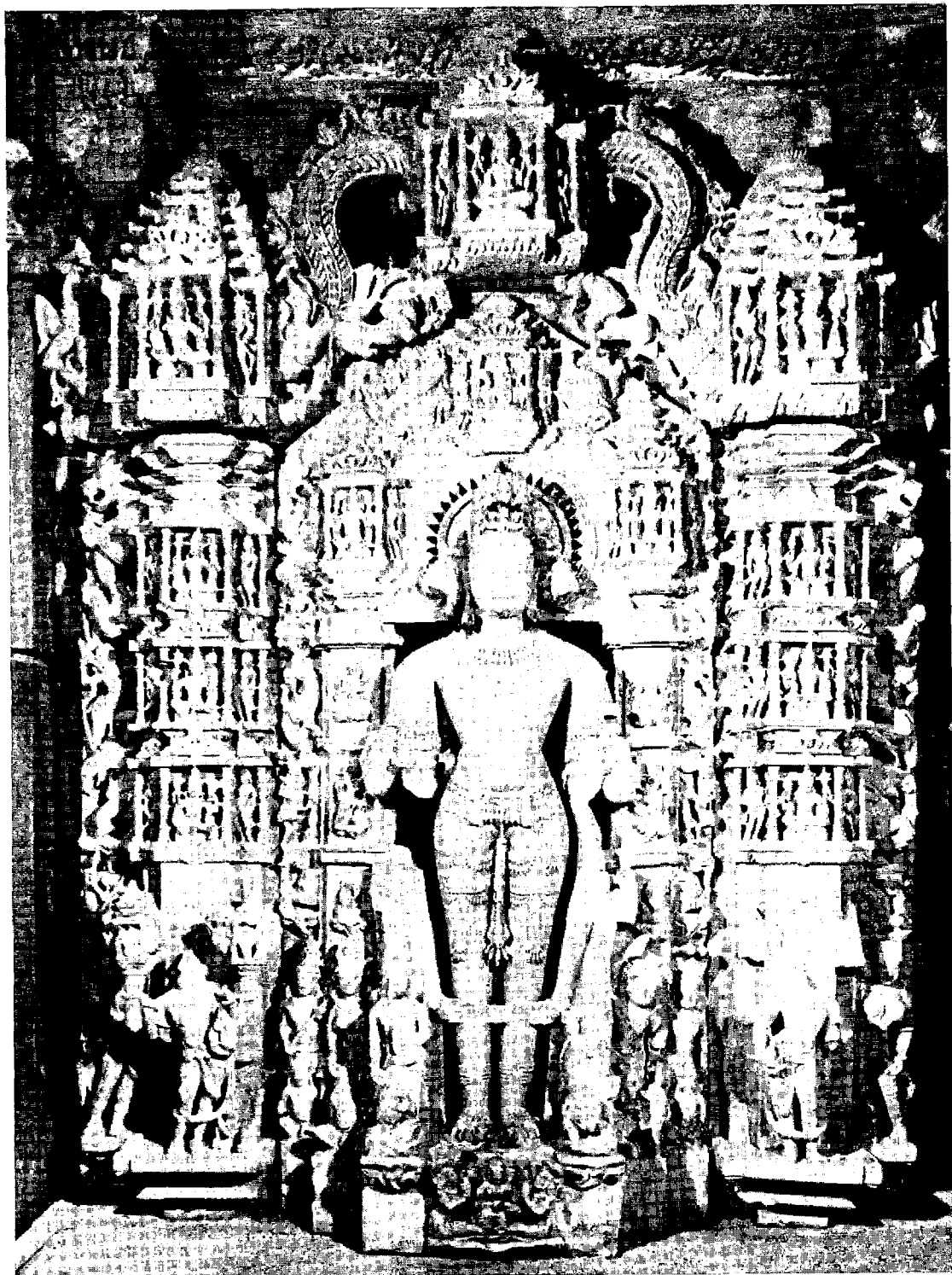
that surrounds the shrine is gained from the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. Some light enters this narrow passageway from the windows, illuminating the articulated wall of the exterior of the shrine to the devotee's right, rather than the path itself (Fig. 20.27). The shrine is entered through a heavily decorated doorway (Fig. 20.28), a descendant of the Gupta schemes seen in both Buddhist and Hindu art, although by now much more elaborate and complicated. A "moonstone" and high threshold mark the transition into the *garbhagr̥ha*, creating both a physical and psychological demarcation for the visitor. Within, the representation of Viṣṇu Caturmūrti (Fig. 20.29) has a human face on

the front or east, a lion's face on the south, a boar's face on the north, and a demon's face on the west or rear, and is iconographically comparable to Kaśmīri interpretations. The image is of the *sthānaka* (standing) type and shows the god in a frontal and unbending pose, carved so that he stands nearly free of the sculpture slab and the numerous subsidiary figures who attend him and amplify the iconographic program. A pointed, rayed halo of a type popular in a number of Rājput styles is carved behind his head.

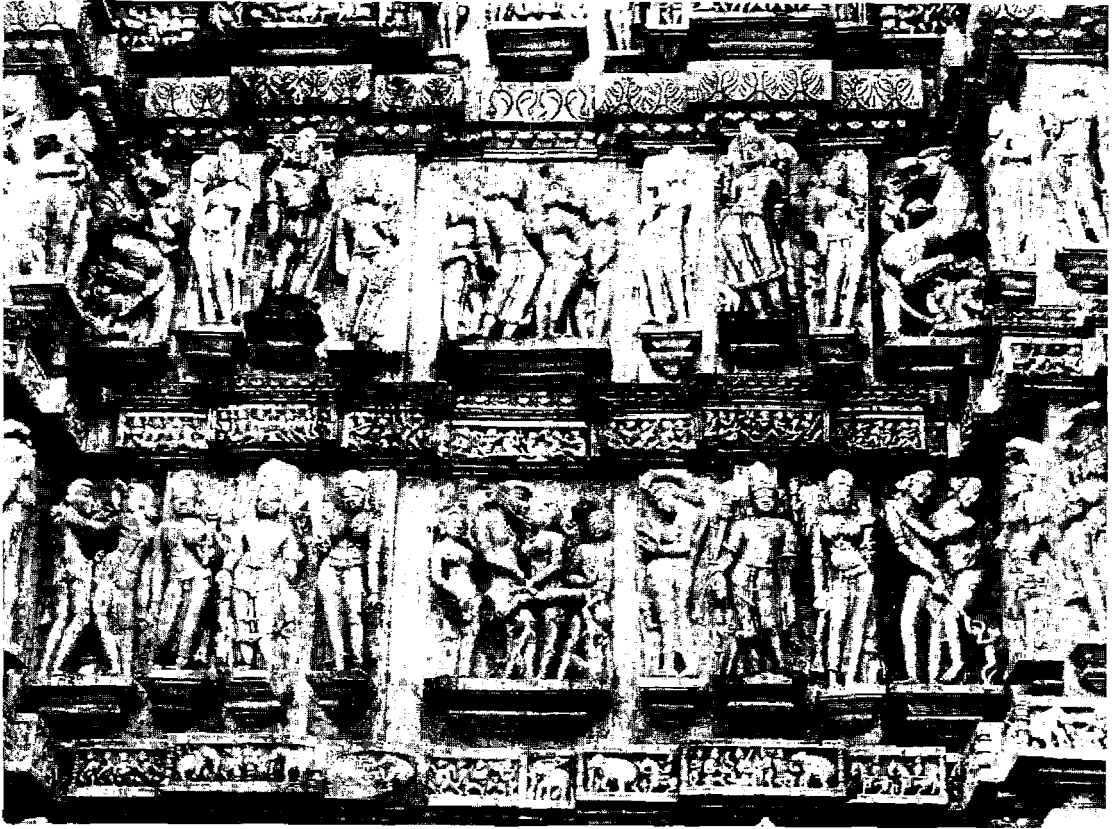
Although the image in the shrine represents the final religious expression of the Lakṣmaṇa temple, the devotee has encountered a barrage



20.28. Entrance to shrine, Lakshmana temple. Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).



20.29. Viṣṇu Caturmūrti in shrine of Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).



20.30. Sculpture on exterior of Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

of sculpted forms from his arrival at the temple to the final view of the enshrined god. For in contrast to temples of the Gupta period, Candella temples are lavishly sculpted both inside and out. A panorama unfurls before the viewer at the first circumambulation of the temple around the exterior of the plinth, where scenes of daily life, war, and love are portrayed. Representative of the external world, the world of form (*rūpa*), some of the scenes may depict actual historical events of the Candella period. Another realm greets the devotee upon climbing up onto the plinth (*jagati*), where an array of figures adorns the exterior of the temple (Fig. 20.30). The scheme is highly ordered according to vertical and horizontal divisions, with sculpted ground lines defining the positions of the individual figures. While it is more elaborate than post-

Gupta and Gurjara-Pratihāra examples, it is essentially the same in character. The quarried blocks of stone seem to blend into one another, and the sculpted forms blur their joints so that, in contrast to the Cauṣaṭ *yoginī* temple, the structural units of the building are barely visible in the finished product. Major icons are placed in niches located directly under each porch of the temple, punctuating the *ardhamandapa*, *mandapa*, *mahāmandapa*, and the sides of the shrine and emphasizing each element of the whole as the devotee circumambulates the temple. (In this case, a clockwise direction is indicated by the placement of Gaṇeśa on the south and Durgā on the north.) The very active poses of the figures on the exterior of the temple (Figs. 20.30, 20.31, 20.32) provide a feeling of movement and change, although controlled by the rigidity



20.31. Sculpture of woman removing thorn, on exterior of Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).



20.32. *Mithuna*, on exterior of Lakṣmaṇa temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, reign of Yaśovarman (Lakṣavarman). Completed by Vikrama era 1011 (A.D. 954).

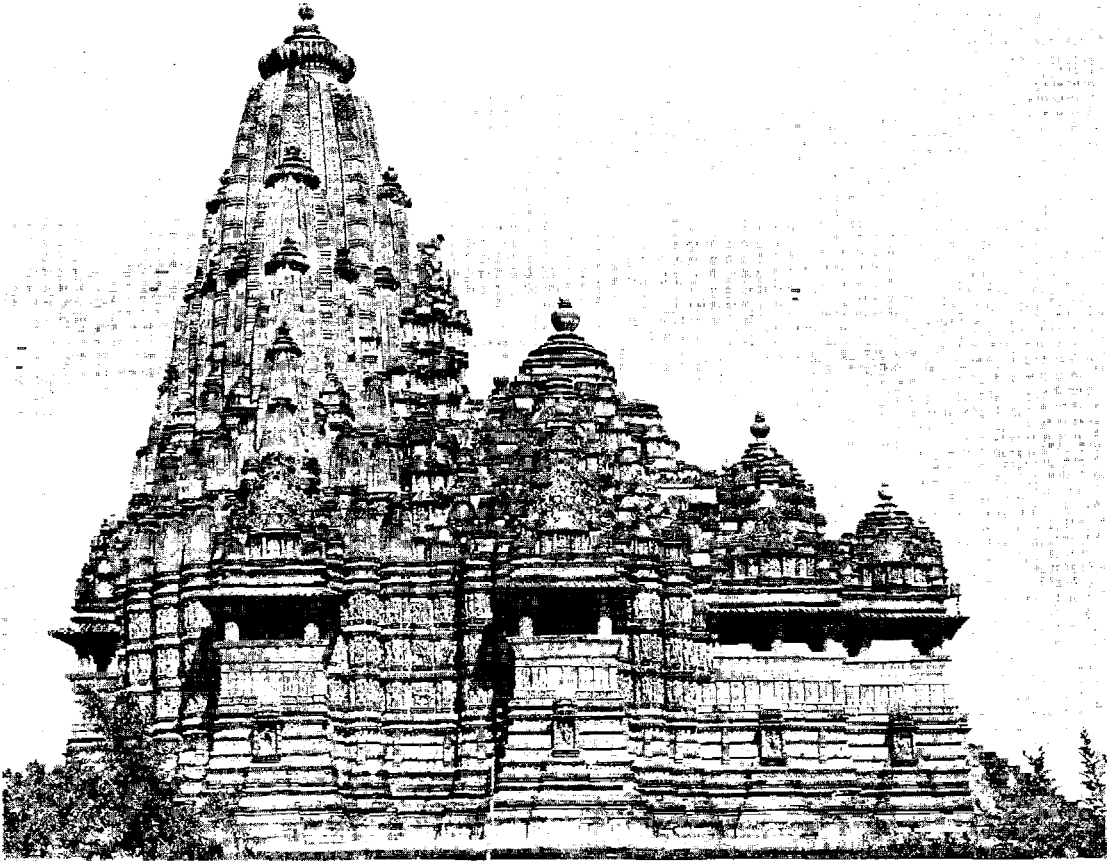
of the architectural scheme. The figures are carved very three-dimensionally and are almost freed from their backgrounds. Deep shadows and bright surfaces from the sunlight infuse the forms with vitality. These celestial beings, including beautiful women (Fig. 20.31) and *mithunas* (Fig. 20.32), with their faces in rapture, suggest the unification with the divine to be experienced by the worshiper.

The largest and most ambitious Candella temple at Khajurāho is the Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva (Fig. 20.33). It may have been erected by Vidyādhara, who ruled from around 1017 to 1029, and was, according to the Muslim chronicler, Ibn ul-Athīr, the most powerful Indic ruler of his time.¹⁶ Stylistic analysis supports a date of the first quarter of the eleventh century for the creation of the structure, which may thus represent one of the last major achievements of the Candellas. For after Vidyādhara, whose rule was threatened by other Rājput clans as well as the Muslims, especially Mahmūd of Ghaznī, with

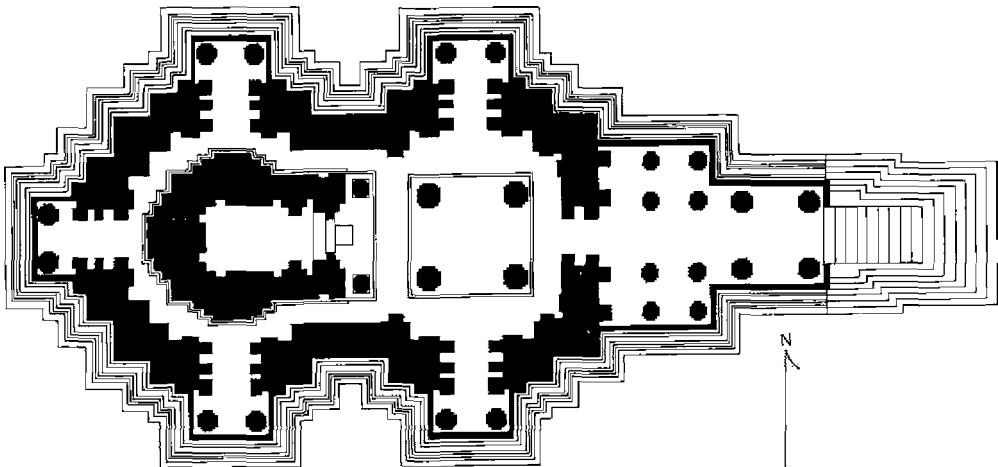
whom Vidyādhara came into conflict in 1019 and 1022, the line was weakened.

The Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple shares a high plinth with two other temples, a much ruined and heavily restored small shrine popularly called the Mahādeva temple and the so-called Devī Jagadambā temple, which originally may have been dedicated to Viṣṇu. It is possible that this temple group represents a syncretistic ideal, perhaps not unlike that of the Lakṣmaṇa temple with its main structure and four subsidiary buildings, although in this case, it is not so readily identified. That the Śaivite aspect is emphasized would be indicated by the fact that the Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple is the largest and most imposing of the three.

The emphasis on height and verticality suggested by the steep plinth, staircases, and tall *sikharas* seen in the temples of Khajurāho is nowhere more perfectly portrayed than in the Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple, whose *sikhara* rises over thirty meters above the level of the



20.33. Khandāriya Mahādeva temple from south. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, probably reign of Vidyādharma. Ca. first quarter eleventh century.



20.34. Plan of Khandāriya Mahādeva temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, probably reign of Vidyādharma. Ca. first quarter eleventh century.



20.35. Sculptures on exterior of Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, probably reign of Vidyādhara. Ca. first quarter eleventh century.



20.36. Sculpture of amorous couple, on exterior of Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple. Khajurāho, Madhya Pradesh, India. Candella period, probably reign of Vidyādhara. Ca. first quarter eleventh century.

jagati. Its profile epitomizes the symbol of the temple as mountain. Its plan, in comparison to that of the Lakṣmaṇa temple, shows a greater sense of mass, and in relationship to the overall size, less space in the interior, with the thicker walls providing a greater equalization between mass and void (Fig. 20.34). Like the Lakṣmaṇa, the Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva is cruciform in plan, the porches of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and shrine areas creating a double transept effect.

Over six hundred sculptures on the exterior and two hundred on the interior adorn the structure, and, indeed, the carved pantheon that inhabits the walls of the monument represents the culmination of a trend in Hindu temple art that is traceable from the Gupta period. Sculpture now dominates the architectural form, so that even though the carvings are strictly relegated to precise locations on the monument, the effect of the sculpture is more overwhelming than that of the architectural forms themselves. Posed in accentuated postures, twisting and turning in space, these figures (Fig. 20.35) embody the movement and dynamism merely hinted at in the repose and introspection of Gupta-period carvings. The hardening of facial features, elaboration of detailing of jewelry and head-dresses, and deeper carving than was visible in Gurjara-Pratihāra monuments here reaches its final form. As in the case of many other temples at Khajurāho, amorous couples and sexually explicit figures adorn the structure (Fig. 20.36). Many of the figures, which are in general elongated and stylized, are said to represent *nāyikās*, female personifications of the notion of human love. Voluptuous women, however, had been part of the decoration of religious structures for centuries, and it is unclear which represent *nāyikās* and which embody other symbolic meanings. Often, they are shown in very dynamic poses and seem to be actually moving, since their bodies are arranged as if in a cubistic sequence of time and space. The sharply carved features of the faces and the heavy shadows caused by the deeply carved forms emphasize the dynamism the viewer perceives while viewing the temple. Created at a time of intense, ambitious building activity throughout the Indic regions, the Khaṇḍāriya Mahādeva temple



20.37. Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara. From Mahobā, Uttar Pradesh, India. Candella period. Ca. eleventh or twelfth century. Beige sandstone. H: 81.4 cm. State Museum, Lucknow.

is approximately contemporary to other major monuments such as the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore (Figs. 21.21–26; Pl. 33), the Liṅgarāja temple at Bhubaneśvara (Figs. 19.23–25), and the Sun temple at Modhera (Figs. 20.44–48). Like them, it represents the climax of an important regional variant of Hindu architecture.

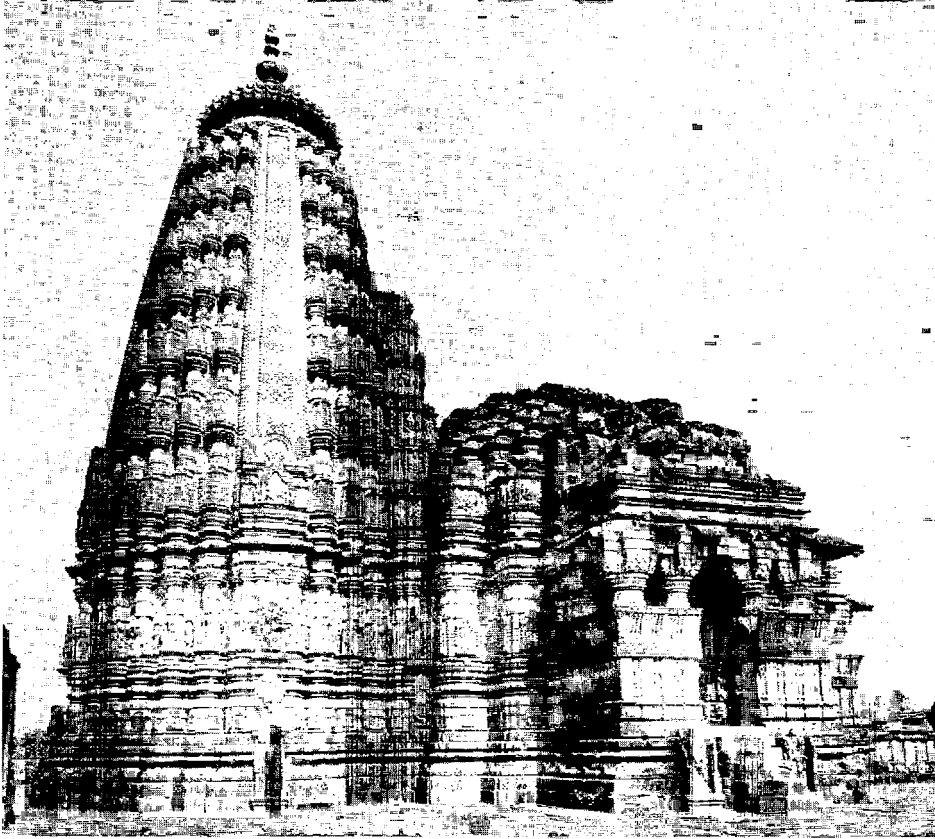
While Khajurāho is indeed the show place of Candella art, the hill fortresses controlled by the Candellas have also yielded significant remains. At Mahobā, important evidence of the late survival of Buddhism in the region is found in several stray images. That there was no loss in vitality from the art tradition is seen in a sculpture of Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara that is generally dated on the basis of the paleography of its donative inscription to the eleventh or twelfth century (Fig. 20.37). The relaxed *rājalīla* (royal-ease) pose and gentle countenance of the figure suggest ties to earlier Buddhist traditions, although the elaboration of detail in the lotus pedestal, lion, and back-slab indicate its late date.

Candella art, one of the best known of the Rājput idioms, typifies many of the northern Indic developments during this period. The art is marked by an increasing complexity of form and iconography as well as an ambitiousness of scheme that represents the culmination of trends that had been developing for centuries.

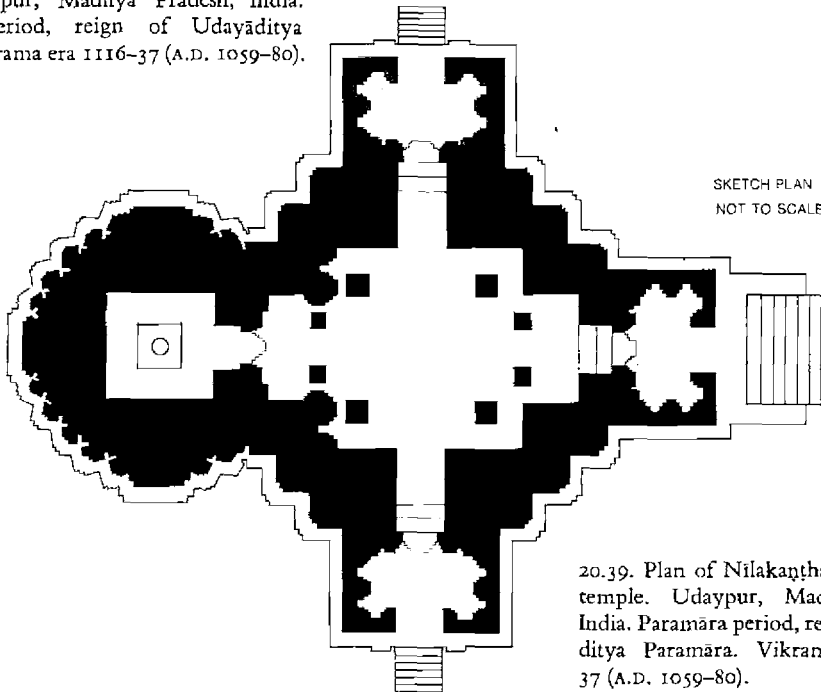
THE PARAMĀRAS OF MĀLWĀ

The Paramāras of Mālwā supposedly originated in the region around Mount Ābū in Rājasthān. For a while, they were vassals of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of the Deccan, but eventually they freed themselves from Rāṣṭrakūṭa control and came to rule much of the western part of north-central India. A number of temples of the Paramāra period are found throughout this region, extending into Rājasthān and the northern Deccan. While certain local or regional characteristics are evident in monuments throughout the Paramāra lands, a number of features may be considered typical of this dynasty's art, many of which are present in the well-preserved temple of Nīlakaṇṭha at Udaypur (Udayapura) (Fig. 20.38).

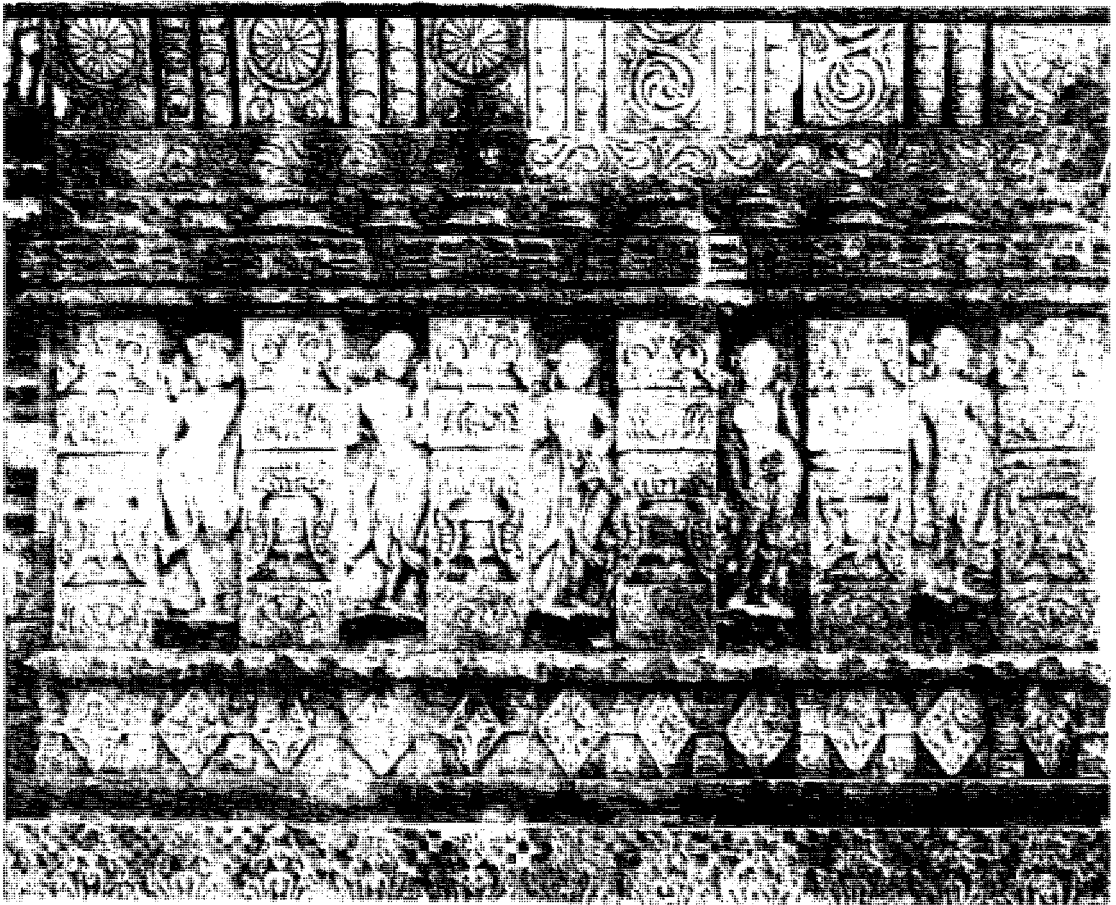
Often called the Udayeśvara temple after its founder, Udayāditya Paramāra, for whom the town is also named, inscriptional evidence indicates that this Śaivite temple was begun in Vikrama *saṃvat* 1116, equivalent to A.D. 1059, and that the flagstaff was erected in Vikrama *saṃvat* 1137, or A.D. 1080.¹⁷ Thus, the temple was constructed over a period of some twenty-one years. The structure is oriented to the east and is contained within a rectangular courtyard enclosed by a low wall, the outer face of which is carved. A line of stone seats once ran along the inner face of the wall, each of which had a back rest. The main temple is preceded by a detached square hall (possibly originally a dance pavilion



20.38. Nilakanṭha (Udayeśvara) temple from south. Udaypur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Paramāra period, reign of Udayāditya Paramāra. Vikrama era 1116-37 (A.D. 1059-80).



20.39. Plan of Nilakanṭha (Udayeśvara) temple. Udaypur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Paramāra period, reign of Udayāditya Paramāra. Vikrama era 1116-37 (A.D. 1059-80).



20.40. Sculpture on exterior of Nilakaṅṭha (Udayeśvara) temple. Udaypur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Paramāra period, reign of Udayāditya Paramāra. Vikrama era 1116-37 (A.D. 1059-80).

or Nandi shrine) and was once surrounded by eight separate smaller shrines, only six of which remain. Characteristic of the Paramāra style, the temple proper consists of a main hall having three entrance porches projecting out from it, each of which may be entered, and the shrine area itself (Fig. 20.39).

The *maṇḍapa* is crowned by a pyramidal, tiered roof while the shrine is topped by a *śikhara* of a variant form of the northern style, having a tapered shape. Typical of Paramāra monuments, the *śikhara* bears four spines decorated with *candraśālās*, creating an almost textured surface, and a distinctive grouping of miniature *śikharas* in the interspaces of the spines, all of which are

contained within the general contour of the *śikhara* itself. Also, at the base of each of the spines is a prominent sculptured medallion within a large *candraśālā* and sculptures beneath it. The sanctum, although square on the interior, is stellate and circular on the exterior.

Unlike many other variants of the Rājput style, this Paramāra monument does not have an enclosed ambulatory surrounding the sanctum. The interior of the temple is elaborately carved, reminiscent of the Khajurāho temples, as pillars, walls, and ceilings did not escape the sculptor's tool. The sculptural style, as seen in a series of female figures adorning the temple, recalls the figures at Khajurāho, although they appear less



angular and are not so unnaturally posed (Fig. 20.40).

The Paramāra sculptural style, while having regional variations, may also be seen in a representation of Sarasvatī dated in the Vikrama year 1091, equivalent to A.D. 1034 (Fig. 20.41).¹⁸ Strong ties to western Indian styles, especially Gujarātī modes of the Gurjara-Pratihāra and later periods, are visible in this example, which was executed during the reign of King Bhoja, a king of the Paramāra line. These include the slender, tubular legs, the accentuated pose, the sharply defined facial features with the straight nose, curved lips, and flattened eyes, as well as the particular form of the drapery, jewelry, and hairstyle.

20.41. Sarasvatī. From Dhār, Madhya Pradesh, India. Paramāra period, reign of Bhoja. Dated Vikrama era 1091 (A.D. 1034). White marble. H: 129.5 cm. British Museum, London.

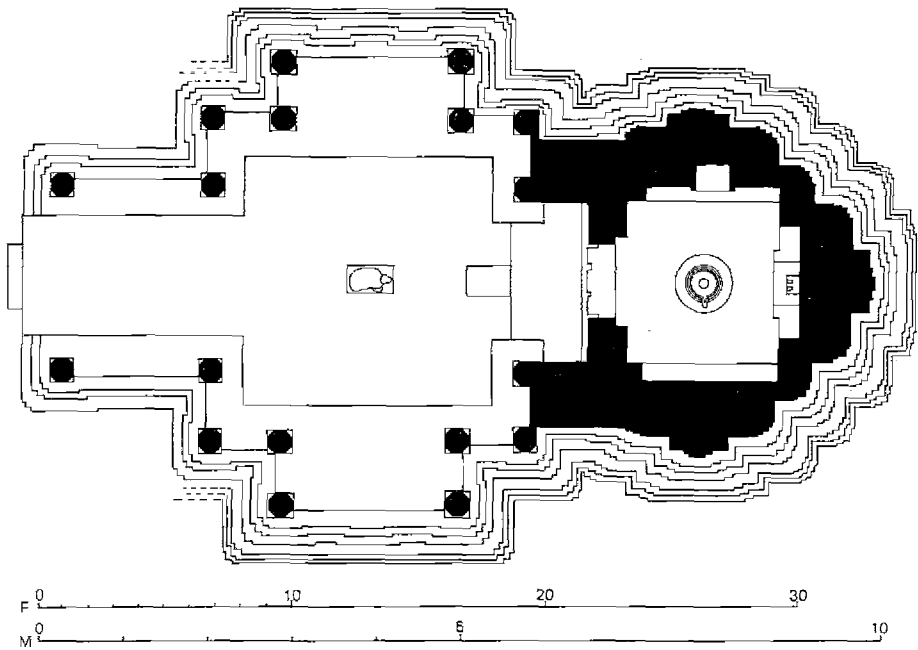
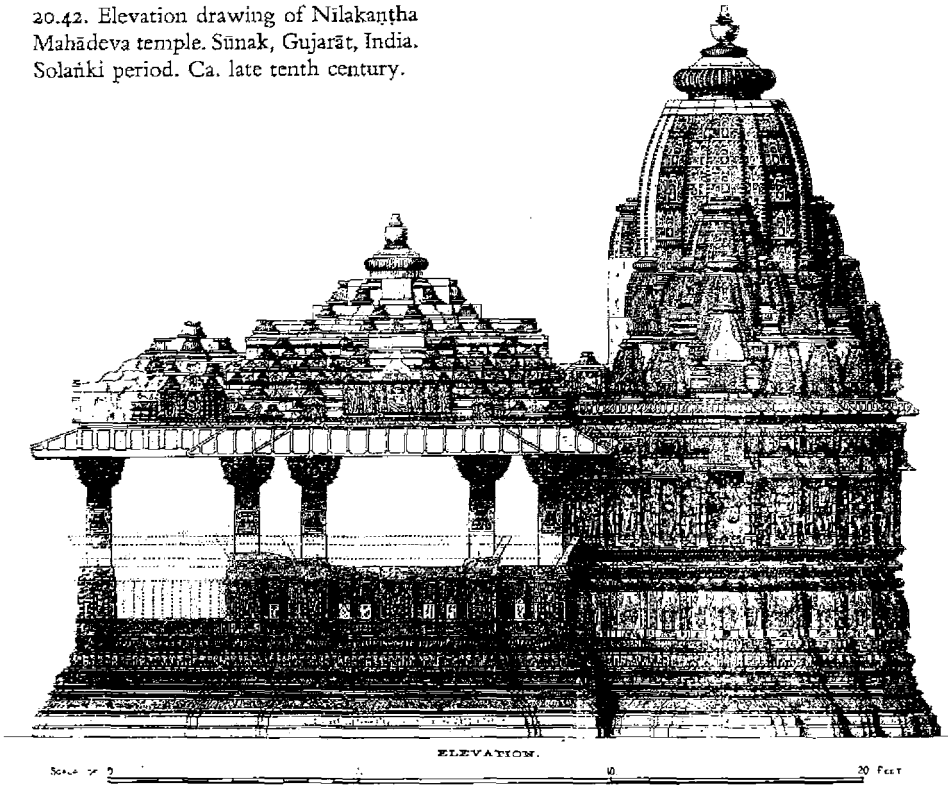
THE SOLAŅKIS OF GUJARĀT (CA. 950 TO 1304 [961–1244?])

Another Rājput clan to surface at the time of the weakening of the Gurjara-Pratihāras was the Solaᅅki line, sometimes called the Cālukyās of Gujarāt, who came to power in the last half of the tenth century. In their own inscriptions, this family referred to themselves as Cālukyās, but in order to avoid confusion between this family and the Early Western Calukyās of Bādāmī, the Cālukyās of Kalyāᅅi, and the Eastern Cālukyās of Veᅅgī, the name Solaᅅki will be used here. Abundant factual material is available for the study of the Solaᅅkis due to numerous inscriptions and precise accounts about them given in Jain chronicles. Thus, there is ample evidence of Solaᅅki patronage of religious establishments, construction of temples, and building of their capital cities. And yet, the regions of western India that they ruled, especially Gujarāt, once extraordinarily wealthy due to the numerous ports and vigorous foreign trade, have suffered from the damage of wars and various kinds of destruc-

tion. Many of their structures were dismantled by Muslims and Hindus for reuse in other buildings. Others have collapsed due to internal weaknesses or technical imperfections in the buildings themselves. Furthermore, many of the temples of Gujarāt were made of white marble, which could be calcined into lime, accounting for the probable fate of some of the most luxurious structures of ancient India.

Structures built under the Solaᅅkis continued trends that had been developing for several centuries throughout much of South Asia, including increased sculptural decoration of temples, greater size and complexity in plan and form of the temples, taller *sikharas*, growing stylization of figures including attenuation and angularity of forms, more variety in figural pose, and, of course, the ever more complicated iconographic schemes that were in large part the basis for the other developments. Specifically, however, the temples reflect certain local and

20.42. Elevation drawing of Nilakanṭha Mahādeva temple. Sūnak, Gujarāt, India. Solanki period. Ca. late tenth century.



20.43. Plan of Nilakanṭha Mahādeva temple. Sūnak, Gujarāt, India. Solanki period. Ca. late tenth century.

regional developments characteristic of north-western India. Therefore, although the temples are essentially of the *nāgara* style, they may be classified by the subtype *Lāṭī* (i.e., from *Lāṭa*, or Gujarāt).¹⁹

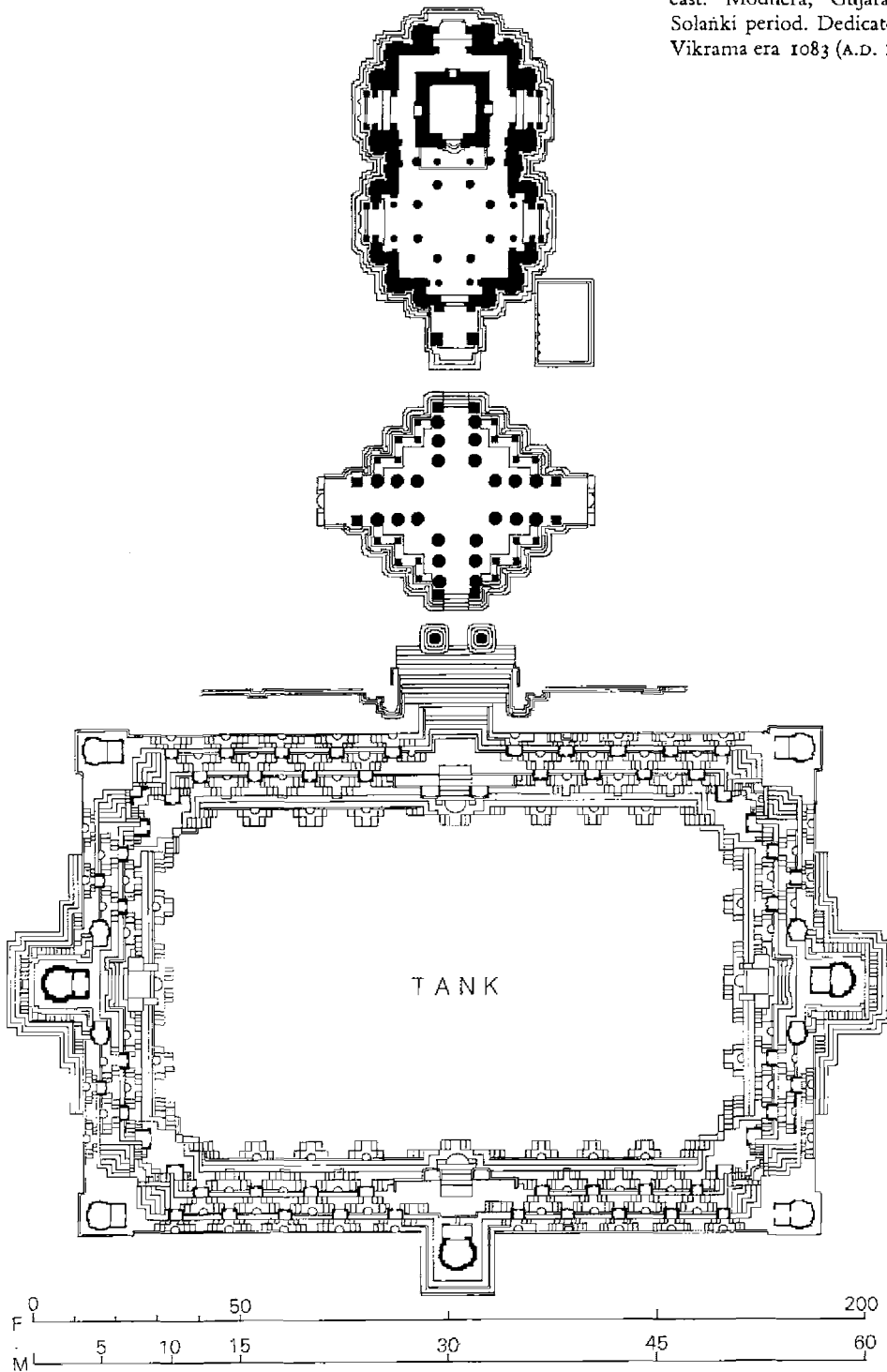
Located in the Sarasvatī Valley within about a 25-kilometer radius of Pāṭan (ancient Aṅgahilapāṭaka), the ancient home of the Solaṅkis, is a group of small temples, believed to represent the early phase of the Solaṅki style. One of these, the Nilakaṅṭha Mahādeva temple at Sūnak, is a well-preserved specimen and may be used to demonstrate the early style (Figs. 20.42, 20.43). No epigraphic information confirms a date for this temple, although an inscription dated equivalent to A.D. 1091 seems to refer to its existence and thus provides a terminus date.²⁰ However, judging from its style, it was probably created in the late tenth century. Relative to later Solaṅki temples, its simplicity and small scale are notable; yet compared to earlier monuments, such as those of the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the lavishly carved interior and exterior decorations reveal ties with other works of this approximate date such as the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajurāho, although its scale is much less grandiose. The temple consists of a porch, a *maṇḍapa*, and a shrine (which does not have an enclosed circumambulatory passage). Like its counterparts in several other northern styles, the roofs of the porch and *maṇḍapa* are pyramidal while the *śikhara* is of the clustered variety. An open feeling is provided in the porch and *maṇḍapa* by the arrangement of pillars at the corners rather than the center, creating a sense of a pavilion rather than enclosed room. This contrasts, for example, with the effect at a typical Candella temple at Khajurāho. Eight of the pillars of the *maṇḍapa* directly support the domed ceiling above. The dome, distinctive of the Solaṅki style, rests on an octagon and ascends in concentric circles using the corbel method. While the interior of the shrine is square in plan, the exterior seems to be almost rounded in form because of the number of projections. The vitality visible in the plan of the temple, both in the *maṇḍapa* in its arrangement of pillars and the shape of the shrine, is a prelude to the magnificent shapes of various

temple elements found in later Solaṅki works.

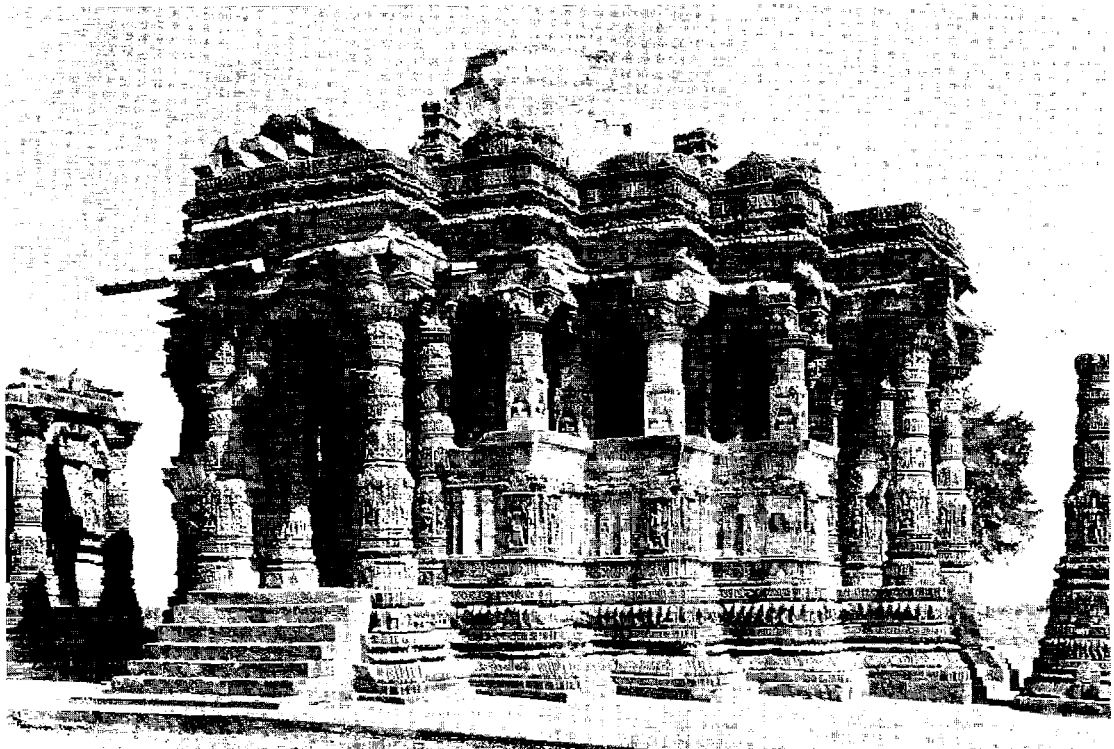
Not far from Pāṭan was the once-flourishing city of Modhera where a temple, dedicated to Sūrya, the sun god, is representative of the eleventh-century Solaṅki style, although on a grander scale than is typical (Figs. 20.44, 20.45). An inscription in the back wall of the shrine dated in the Vikrama era 1083, equivalent to A.D. 1026, indicates that the temple was already dedicated by that date. On this basis, the temple is thought to have been built during the reign of Bhīma I (1022-63). The temple complex consisting of several units is positioned facing due east so that at the equinoxes, the sun shines directly into the shrine. On the east is a large *kuṇḍa*, or reservoir, with flights of stairs leading down to it, that occupies a dominant place in the overall scheme (Figs. 20.44, 20.45). Numerous small shrines are placed at intervals on the steps leading down to the tank. Although many Hindu temples have tanks excavated in association with them, this ranks among the grandest in all of South Asia. A decorated *toraṇa* located at the western end of the *kuṇḍa* serves as a transition between the tank and the temple proper (Fig. 20.46, right).

The temple consists of three elements, each of which has a name distinctive of the architectural nomenclature used for this region of ancient India: the porch (*sabhā maṇḍapa*, or *raṅga maṇḍapa*), which is an open, cruciform pillared hall placed along the axis of the rest of the temple but is separate from it (Fig. 20.46); the assembly hall (*gūḍha maṇḍapa*); and finally the shrine (*garbhagr̥ha*) itself with its surrounding circumambulatory passage. The *sabhā maṇḍapa* has four entrances, each having an ornamental cusped archway, some of which spring from the open mouths of *makarās*. An almost stellate shape is suggested by the plan of the hall due to the numerous recesses of the walls. Inside, the exquisite carving of the pillars, cusped archways, and ceiling give a feeling of airiness and lightness not seen so extensively in the temples of other regional styles (Fig. 20.47). Possibly, the long-standing woodcarving tradition of Gujarāt, still famous today, was a model for the lavish sculptured work found in typical Solaṅki monuments that distinguishes them from those of

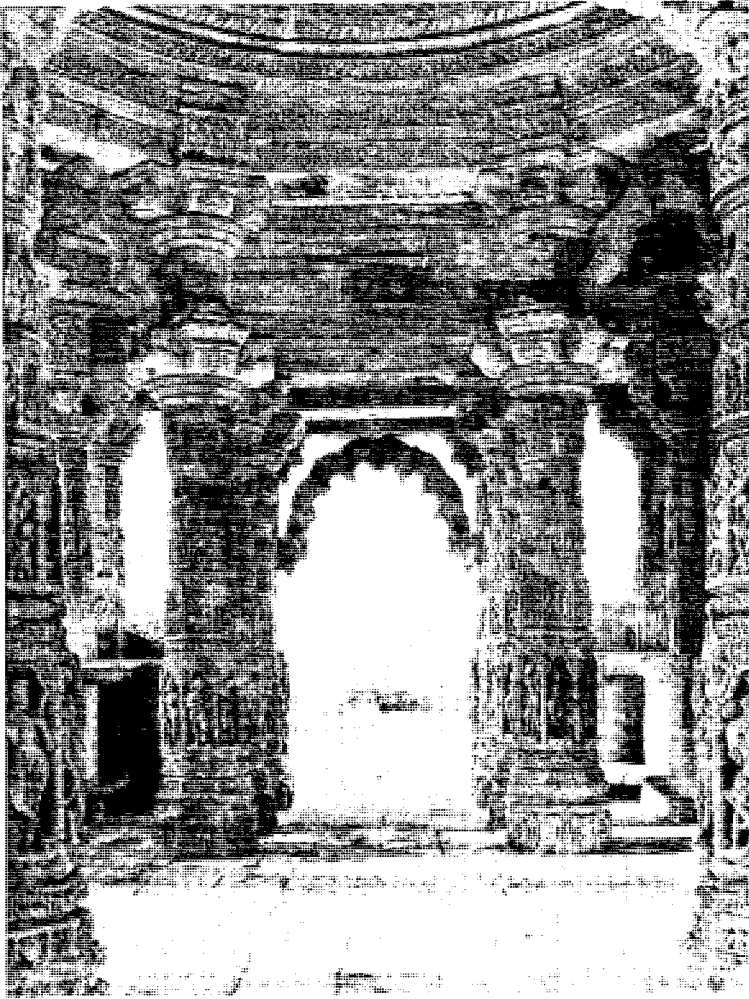
20.45. View of Sun temple from east. Modhera, Gujarāt, India. Solanki period. Dedicated before Vikrama era 1083 (A.D. 1026).



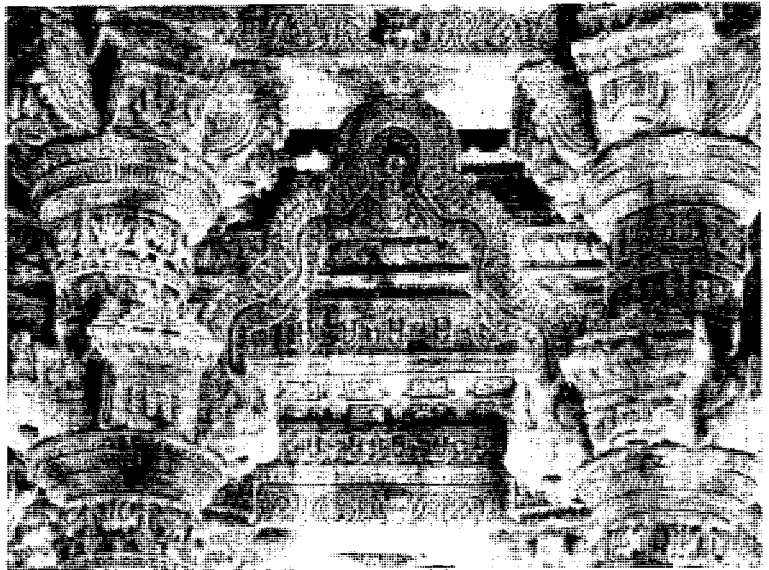
20.44. Plan of Sun temple. Modhera, Gujarāt, India. Solanki period. Dedicated before Vikrama era 1083 (A.D. 1026).



20.46. *Sabhā maṇḍapa* of Sun temple, from southeast. Modhera, Gujarāt, India. Solanki period. Dedicated before Vikrama era 1083 (A.D. 1026).



20.47. Interior of *sabhā maṇḍapa* of Sun temple. Modhera, Gujarāt, India. Solāṅki period. Dedicated before Vikrama era 1083 (A.D. 1026).



20.48. Detail of carving, interior of *sabhā maṇḍapa*, Sun temple. Modhera, Gujarāt, India. Solāṅki period. Dedicated before Vikrama era 1083 (A.D. 1026).

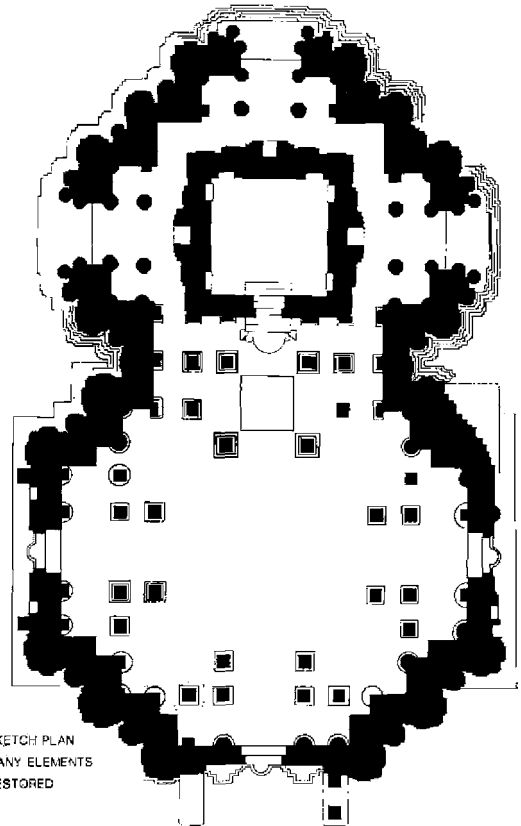
other schools of Indic architecture. Hardly a surface is left uncarved as figures, foliate motifs, and architectural devices abound (Fig. 20.48).

The assembly hall and shrine form an integral unit. Measuring just over three meters square inside, the shrine is small, especially in comparison to the overall grand scale of the temple scheme. In contrast to the rest of the temple, which is lavishly carved, the interior walls of the shrine are plain. A basement cell beneath the main shrine may have been used for storage of treasure, a practice common in the temples of western India. It may be suggested, in fact, that the Muslim destruction of Hindu temples was not always for iconoclastic purposes. Possibly, and very probably, raiders were seeking the treasure so often housed in the temple. Not only would the treasure be desirable for its own value, but its loss could help to undermine the economic basis of a ruling dynasty.

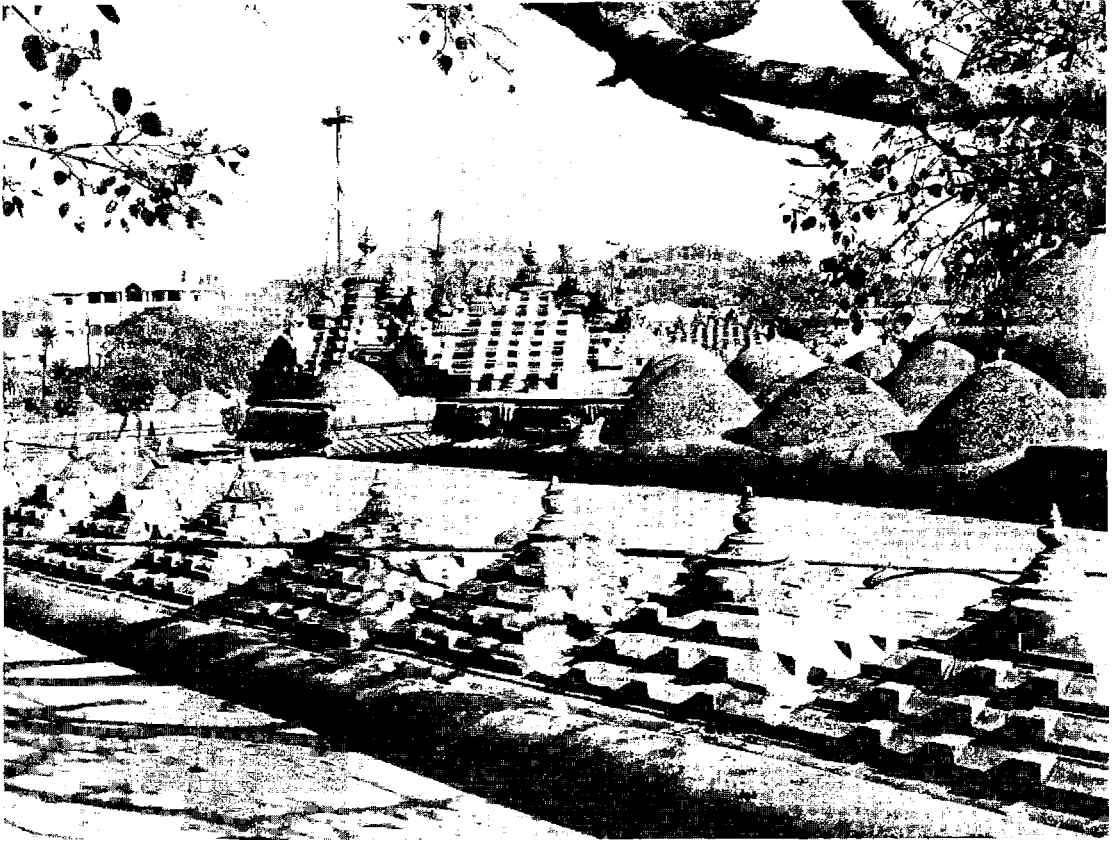
Considerable damage has been sustained by the temple, including the loss of the roof over the *sabhā maṇḍapa*, damage to the entranceway of the shrine, and the loss of the superstructure over the shrine area. Yet, its grandeur is still visible. The exterior surfaces of the temple, strictly divided horizontally into basement, wall, and superstructure, with the numerous elaborations to the plan that provide almost rounded contours to the exterior of the buildings, speak of the increasing elaboration of Solaṅki architecture.

Although very damaged, the Somanātha temple at Pāṭan cannot be eliminated from a study of Solaṅki architecture (Fig. 20.49). Not less than three temples, each built on the ruins of the former, occupy the site and testify that after each destruction (the most famous of which was by Mahmūd of Ghaznī in 1025), the sacred temple was restored and rebuilt; thus, its history is a virtual recapitulation of the history of this period and the religious and political problems that plagued western India during this time. Eventually, the temple was converted into a mosque. Although it has a legendary origin as a sacred pilgrimage site, the temple as we know it (dedicated to a form of Śiva known as "Moon Lord" or Soma Nātha) was built in the first half of the tenth century, but was

rebuilt during the eleventh century by Bhīma I and then again by Kumārapāla in the twelfth century. Supposedly, Bhīma II also added a *maṇḍapa* to the temple. Literary and archaeological evidence suggests that when complete the complex consisted of the main temple, a *toraṇa*, a kitchen, and a theater hall and was surrounded by a number of other nearby temples. The main object of worship, a *liṅga*, was partially destroyed by Mahmūd of Ghaznī (perhaps in an attempt to find the treasure buried beneath it) and was removed to his capital at Ghaznī where it was set up at the entrance to a mosque so that Muslim devotees could trample upon it as a reminder of the idol worship they abhorred. Although the much destroyed temple is difficult to study except as a pastiche of various periods and styles, the plan (Fig. 20.49), which is itself the product of several building periods, reveals a



20.49. Plan of Somanātha temple. Pāṭan, Gujarāt, India. First half of tenth century, with several later rebuildings.



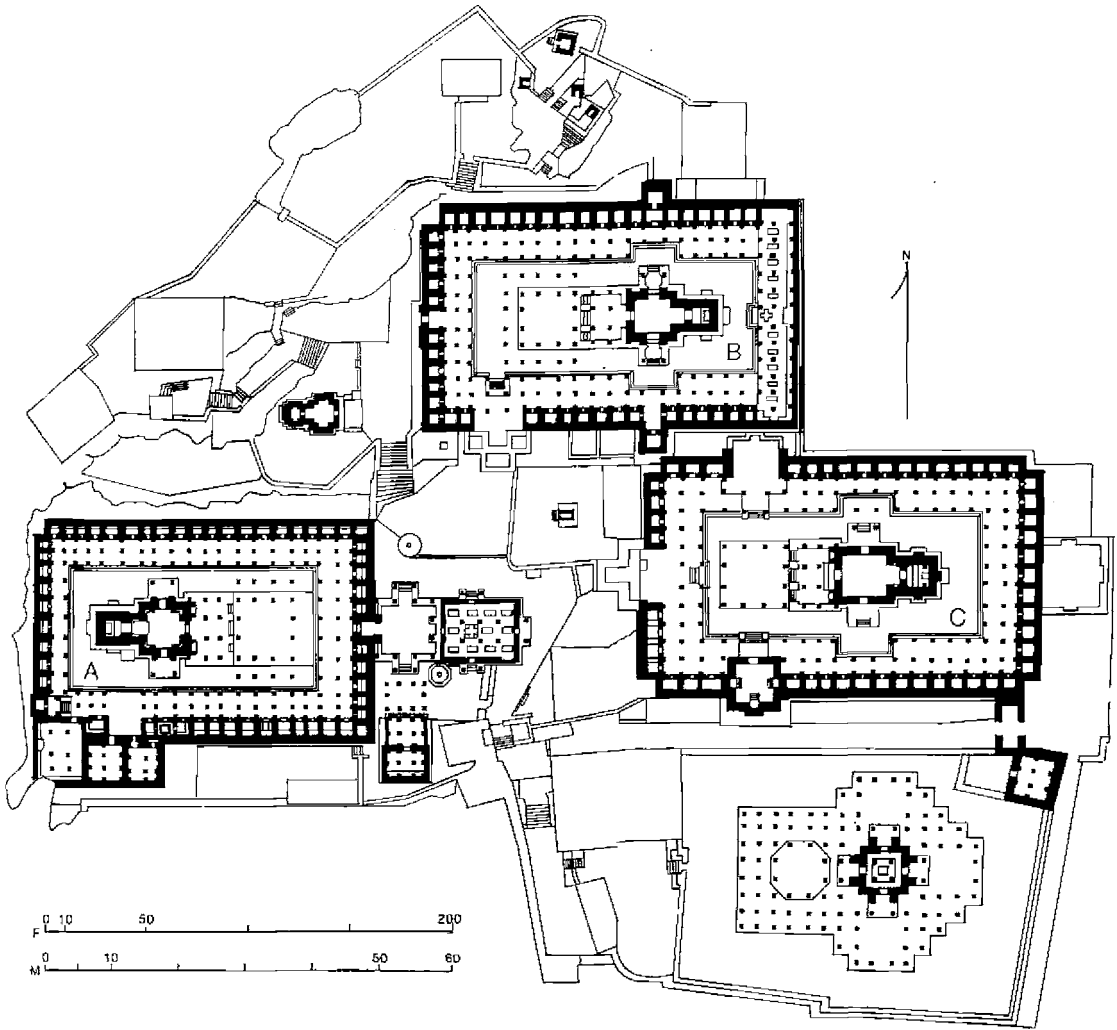
20.50. View of Jain temples, mainly Lūṇa Vasahi, from northwest. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solāṅki period and later. Eleventh century and later.

form that may be seen as a logical outgrowth of that of the Nilakaṅṭha Mahādeva temple at Sūnak. Especially important is the elaboration of the exterior wall of the temple and the increased number of pillars encircling the central space of the *maṇḍapa* supporting the ceiling above and forming a dynamic pattern within the hall itself.

Among the most notable monuments of the Solāṅki period are the Jain temples on Mount Ābū in Rājasthān (Fig. 20.50). Although Ābū, named after the sacred mountain in the Sirohi district, had been famous for centuries, it came into special prominence under the Paramāra suzerains of the Solāṅkis. Inscriptional and archaeological evidence testifies that it was holy both to Śaivites and Jains from an early period, but since Mahāvira himself is supposed to have

visited the site, it has been especially sacred to the Jains as a *tīrtha*, or place of pilgrimage. Its sacred character is further suggested by the fact that the so-called *Agni-kula* (fire-pit clan) Rājputs claim to have originated there.

As a temple city, it ranks among the finest ones of the Jains. Built over a period of time, it was added to, refurbished, and elaborated upon, reflecting the sustained patronage of wealthy Jains whose religion dictated that they acquire their means through peaceable occupations, such as banking and trading, rather than through the spoils of war. The important ports of western India, at which cloth (particularly Gujarāṭi cotton), ivory, and other items were traded with the Arab and European worlds, enabled this region to become perhaps the wealthiest in all of India during this period. As a consequence,



20.51. Plan of Jain temples: A) Vimāla's temple; B) Tejapāla's temple (Lūṅa Vasahī); C) Ādinātha temple. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solāṅki period and later. Eleventh century and later.

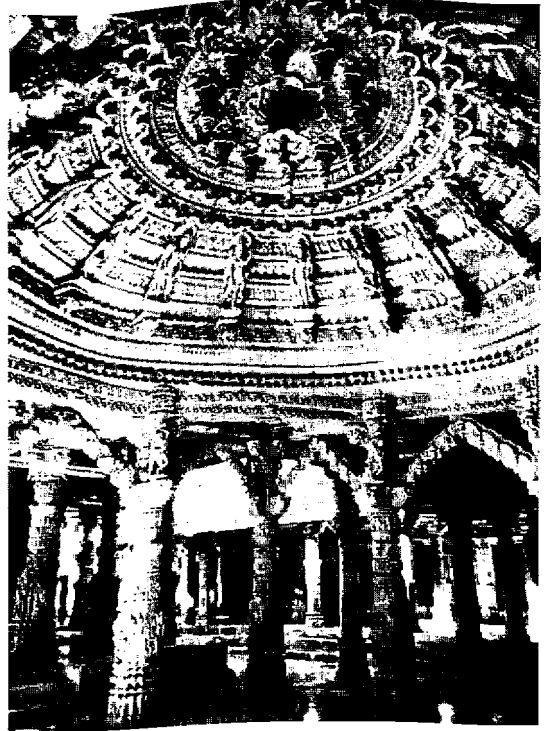
almost no expense was spared in the production of images and shrines for the religion. The white marble temples, generally stark and plain on the exterior but intricately carved inside, demonstrate that the Indic artists and their patrons had not lost their zeal for sculpture in spite of the fact that their energies were now diverted from primarily rock-cut monuments to structural temples.

Apparently, Jains played an important role in Solāṅki society, even from the time of the founder of the dynasty, Mūlarāja. Thus, it is

not surprising that during the reign of Bhīma I his minister, Vimāla, built a magnificent temple at Dilwārā (Delvādā, City of Temples) on Ābū, and dedicated it to Ādinātha (Rṣabhanātha), the first Jain *tīrthaṅkara* (Fig. 20.51A). (A second temple at Mount Ābū is also dedicated to Ādinātha [Fig. 20.51C].) Supposedly, Vimāla built the temple out of his desire to atone for the sins of killing (*hiṃsā*), which he had committed in carrying out the duties of statecraft. Jain legend records that Vimāla, who had no male heirs, propitiated the goddess Ambikā,

requesting two things: a male heir and help in erecting the temple at Ābū to atone for his sin. Ambikā replied that while his merit was great, it was not so great that he could have both wishes and, when forced to choose one, Vimala decided to erect the temple. Vimala's structure was completed in 1088 of the Vikrama era, or 1032,²¹ and was built almost entirely out of black marble apparently available locally on the mountain top.²² According to Jain tradition, the temple cost Vimala a total of 185,300,000 rupees, including the price of purchasing the land from the *brāhmins*.

Very little of Vimala's original temple remains today, although a few black marble sculptures and fragments testify to its former existence. As it stands, the temple is a product of many periods and is made almost entirely of white marble, not black. Some work was apparently done not long after the original construction, with most of its essential components built by the late twelfth century. However, building activity continued at least into the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar in the late sixteenth century, for one of his religious teachers is represented by a portrait at the temple. On the whole, however, the temple may be considered representative of the Solānki style. The plain exteriors of Vimala's temple and the other Dilwārā monuments belie the extravagant interiors and contrast strongly with so many other temples of this period whose exteriors were lavishly decorated with figures and other sculptural ornamentation. It is possible that when the temple was rebuilt after the partial destruction that probably occurred when Alaud-Dīn Khilji invaded Jalor fort near Ābū in 1311, the superstructures were not reconstructed to their full original height, nor were other aspects of the exterior decoration redone so extravagantly. It may also be suggested that these features of the exterior might never have been as grand as those of other contemporary styles. The constant threat of invasion by the Muslims during this transitional phase of South Asian history, especially in this western region, which suffered first when invaders arrived, may have led to a style in which the exterior of a religious structure did not advertise the wealth

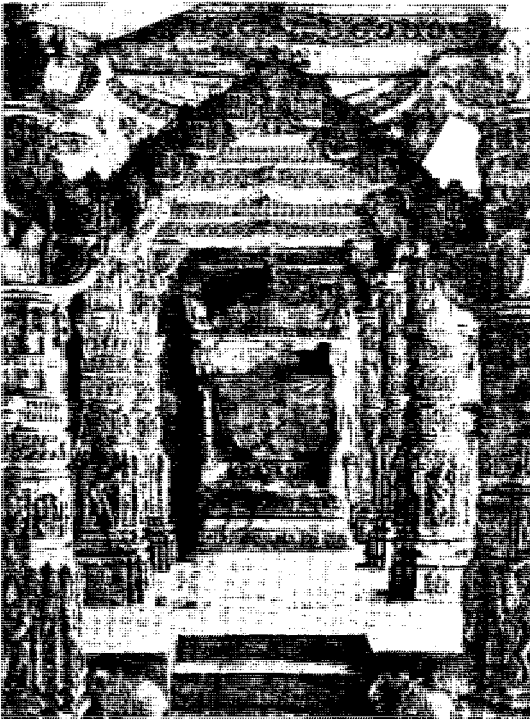


20.52. Vimala's temple, southeast corner of *sabhā maṇḍapa*. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solānki period. Ca. twelfth century. White marble.

of the temple, while the interiors could be made as lavishly as desired and thus be preserved from the Muslim iconoclastic energies.

Vimala's temple is essentially rectangular in plan and is oriented on an east-west axis with the main temple facing east. The temple is bounded by a rectangular cloister having a row of double pillars on the east, north, and south sides, a single row on the west, and fifty-two cells (*deva-kulikā*) containing representations of seated Jain *tīrthankaras*. This arrangement, in which the main temple is surrounded by a cloister, has been seen in other temple styles, but the emphasis on the pillars, here almost a forest of pillars, creates a totally different effect and characterizes the style. Outside the cloister walls, a number of other halls and structures were added in later periods.

The first of three *maṇḍapas*, the *sabhā maṇḍapa*, on the east, is the largest, but its form and the carvings, especially of its magnificent domed



20.53. Interior, *nava-chokī*, Vimala's temple. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solāṅki period. Ca. late eleventh century. White marble.



20.54. *Tīrthaṅkara* in shrine on north side of cloister, Vimala's temple. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solāṅki period. Ca. twelfth century. White marble.

ceiling, may belong to the mid-twelfth century, when repairs were carried out at the temple (Fig. 20.52). Almost every section of the ceiling and wall surfaces as well as the pillars is carved into intricate patterns. The *sabhā maṇḍapa* and the next *maṇḍapa*, the *nava-chokī* (nine-compartment hall; Fig. 20.53), are distinguished from the main body of the temple by their open form, as they are unwallled. These two pillared halls precede a third *maṇḍapa* that does not have pillars, but that is unified with the shrine area. This unit comprises the central core, which is virtually ubiquitous in Hindu temple architecture after the Gupta period, though sometimes its simplicity seems obscured because of the addition of pillared halls and other architectural units. The original image of the shrine has been replaced by a later sculpture. However, the appearance of this figure may be inferred from the representations of *tīrthaṅkaras* in the small shrines in the cloister of the temple. These figures, such

as the one illustrated (Fig. 20.54), epitomize the fully developed Jain sculpture style of western India in which the forms of the body are abstracted to almost pure geometric equivalents. The torso, for example, takes the shape of a triangle; the arms and legs are tapered cylinders; and the head is a slightly squared sphere. The surfaces of the body are smooth, serving as a physical symbol of the spiritual perfection of the *tīrthaṅkara*. The style of subsidiary figures adorning the temple reflects that of the major icons, although unlike the shrine images, others making up the elaborate decorative scheme of the temple are generally very animated in their poses. A representation of a female musician on a pillar capital in the *sabhā maṇḍapa* twists in space so that her body seems to revolve around a spiral axis from her grounded foot to her turned head (Fig. 20.55). Her limbs are rodlike cylinders, and the parts of her body are juxtaposed in an angular, geometric fashion.



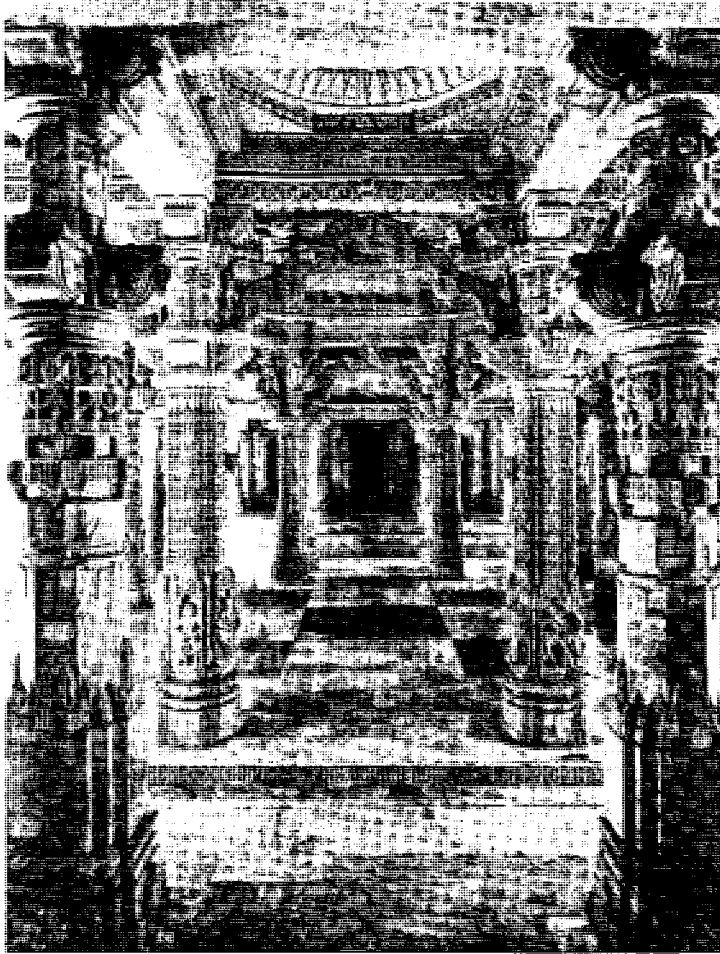
20.55. Female musician in *sabhā maṇḍapa*, Vimala's temple. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solaṅki period. Ca. twelfth century. White marble.

The fruition of the Solaṅki style, manifested in the thirteenth century, may also be seen at Mount Ābū in another Jain monument. The temple of Tejpāla, dedicated to Neminātha, the twenty-second Jain *tīrthaṅkara*, is clearly modeled after Vimala's temple, perhaps with the aim of outdoing its predecessor. Tejpāla, and his brother Vastupāla, have often been called the "Medicis of India" because of their extensive patronage of art and architecture in favor of the Jains. These two wealthy laymen are credited in epigraphic and literary sources with the building of numerous Jain monuments, a few of which survive, including a triple-shrined temple of Vastupāla at Gīmar, and Tejpāla's temple at Mount Ābū. No less than thirty inscriptions at the Ābū temple provide important historical information including the dates of consecration of various portions of the temple between 1230 and 1240 and after. Tejpāla built the temple for the spiritual welfare of his wife, Anupamādevī and their son, Lūṇasiṃha,

after whom the temple is often called Lūṇa Vasahī. Jain tradition holds that the cost of this monument was 125,300,000 rupees, slightly less than that of Vimala's temple. The later structure is built to approximately the same scale as Vimala's temple and, like the post-Vimala phase of that temple, is also made of finely wrought white marble. Permission to build the temple had been granted by the Solaṅki king Bhīma II as well as the Paramāra ruler of Ābū, Somasiṃha. Like Vimala's temple, this structure is more fabulous inside than out—its halls, pillars, and shrines being lavishly carved of the beautiful white stone.

In plan, Tejpāla's temple is a virtual duplicate of the essential features of Vimala's temple (Fig. 20.51b), although it is oriented to the west, not the east. Certain portions of the temple were repaired in 1321 after the Muslim destructions of 1311 to both this and Vimala's temple, but the interior speaks of the finest of Solaṅki monuments. A view of the interior shows the intricacy of carving for which the Mount Ābū temples are famous, which has led to the often repeated suggestion that the artisans were paid according to how much stone they removed so that they were encouraged to deeply undercut their forms and thus create the characteristic lacelike appearance (Fig. 20.56). Every ceiling is carved in a unique pattern, including foliate and geometric motifs, figurative sculpture, and invariably a central pendent made of a single piece of stone carved in an intricate design. As in the case of Vimala's temple, the ceiling of the *sabhā maṇḍapa* is a vast domed creation (Fig. 20.57). The major symbolic motif in each case is a set of sixteen female figures, the *mahā-vidyādevīs*. In Jain literature, there are sixteen *mahā-vidyādevīs* who personify various kinds of knowledge, usually associated with magical practices, and are invoked at certain stages of religious practice. These figures reveal the modifications in style that have taken place over the centuries of Solaṅki art. The figures are more slender and attenuated, and have tubular limbs, without joints or articulation of flesh or skin and no softness of form, contrasting with earlier styles.

This style is also visible in the portrait sculp-

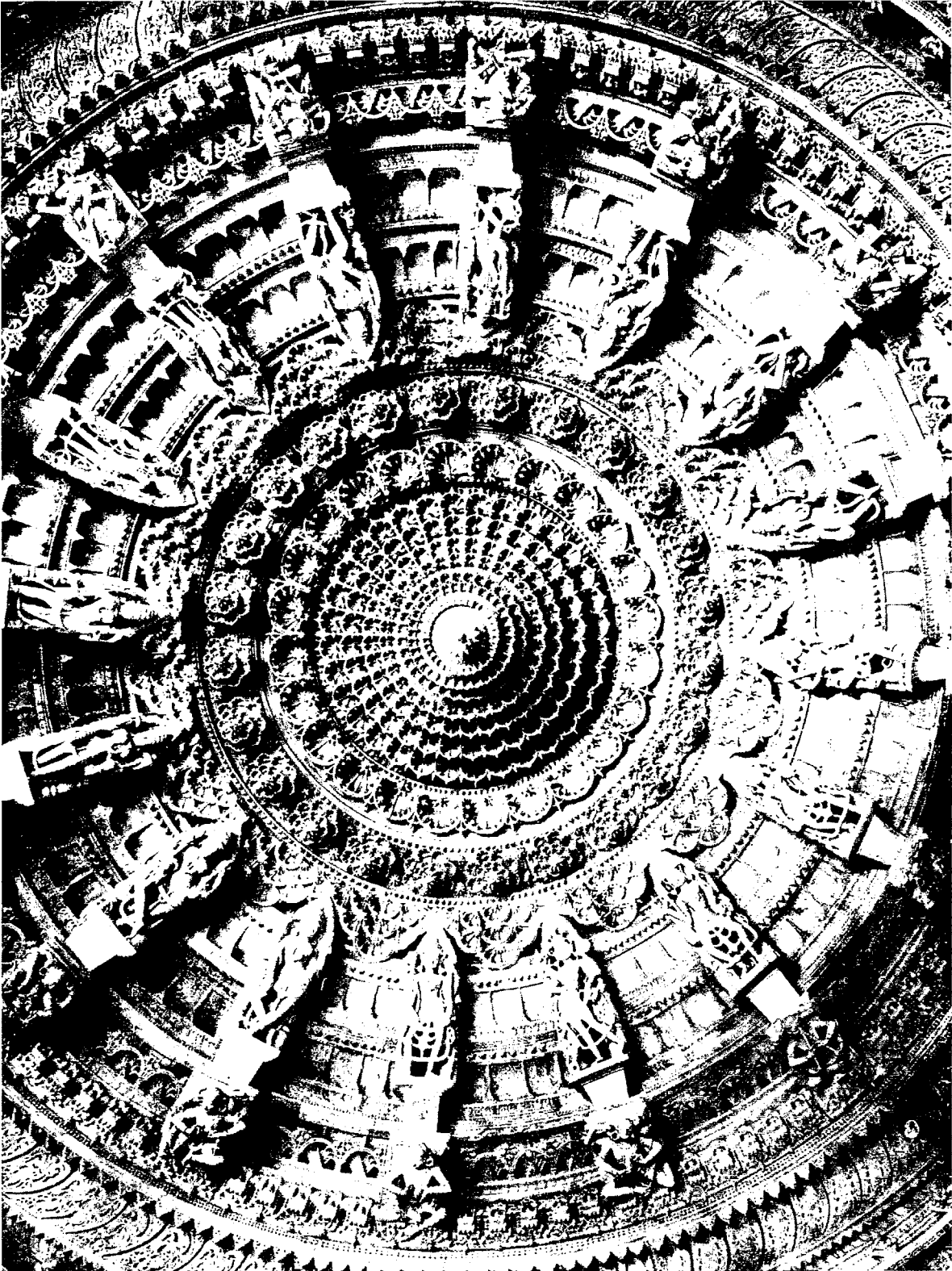


20.56. Lūṇa Vasahī, *sabhā maṇḍapa*, center part, from south. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solāṅki period. Ca. thirteenth century. White marble.

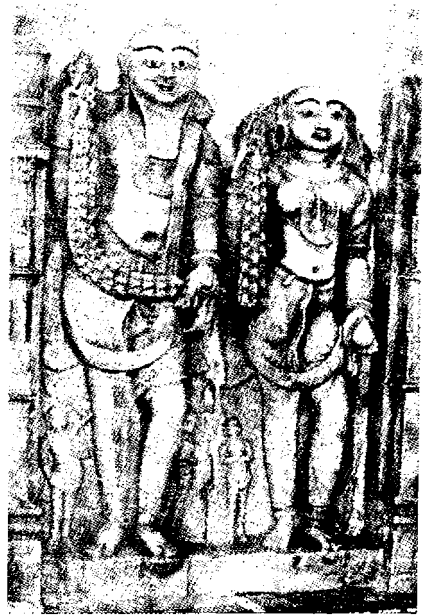
tures of Tejapāla and his wife Anupamadevī at the temple (Fig. 20.58). Hardly based on the actual physical appearance of the individuals, the stylized facial features, with the large wide-open, almond shaped eyes, painted to become a focus of attention, and the typically swaying poses resemble the numerous other portrayals in sculpture at the temple. Conceived as types rather than as individuals, the sculpted figures in various elements of the temple, such as a ceiling panel from one of the corridors (Fig. 20.59), became part of the patternized forms that pervade the temple, which are expressions of the highest religious goal in Indic

thought, that is, the absorption of the individual into the entire pattern of the cosmos. In spite of the fact that the extraordinary opulence of such a monument almost seems to contradict the world-negating asceticism of the Jain religion, perhaps it portrays the multiplicity within the Unity that underlies Jain belief.

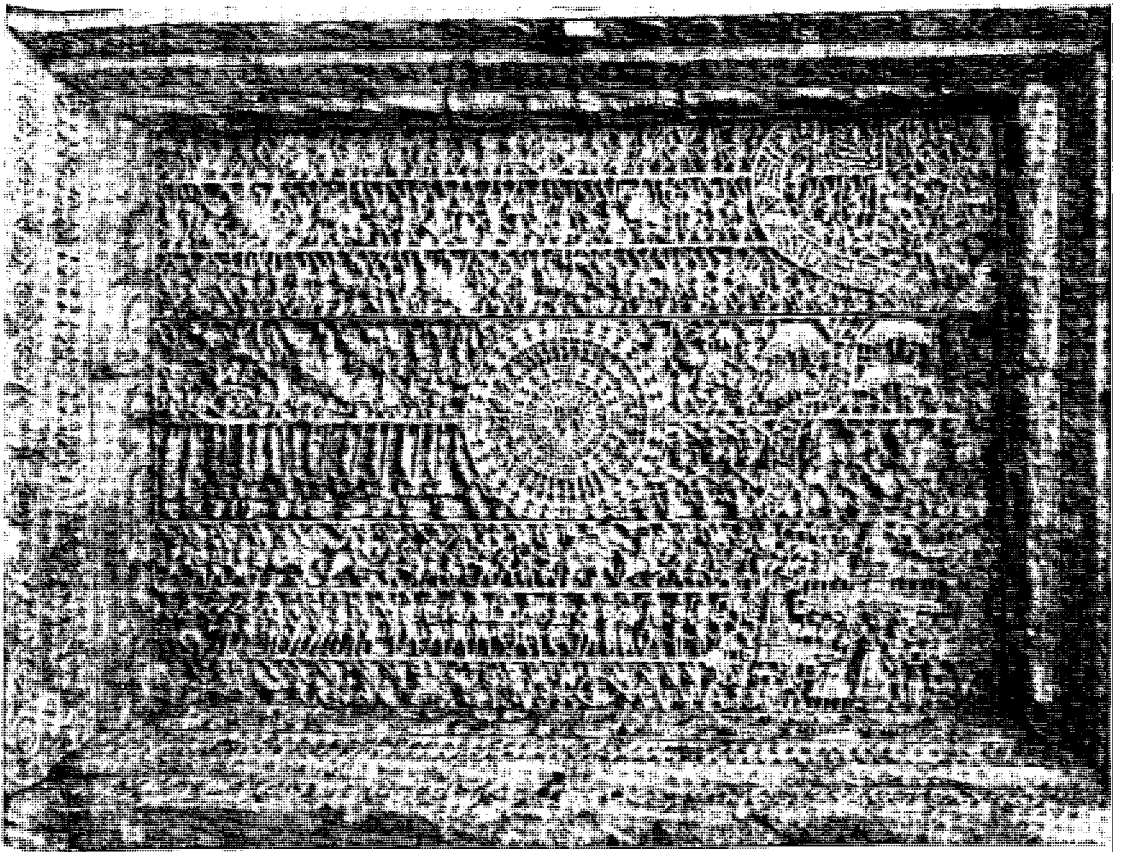
In addition to religious architecture in the Solāṅki period, a number of other types of structures survive. Notable among these are the *vāv* (*wāv*) step-wells that continued a popular tradition from an early period in Gujarāt, although strong Islamic influence that may date from post-Solāṅki times can be seen in the



- ◁ 20.57. Lūṇa Vasahī, central ceiling of *sabhā maṇḍapa*. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solaṅki period. Ca. thirteenth century. White marble.

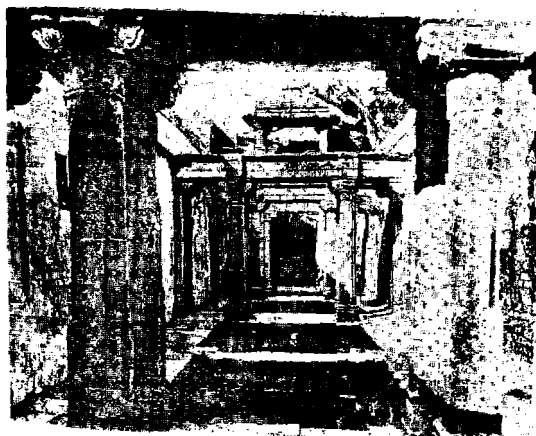
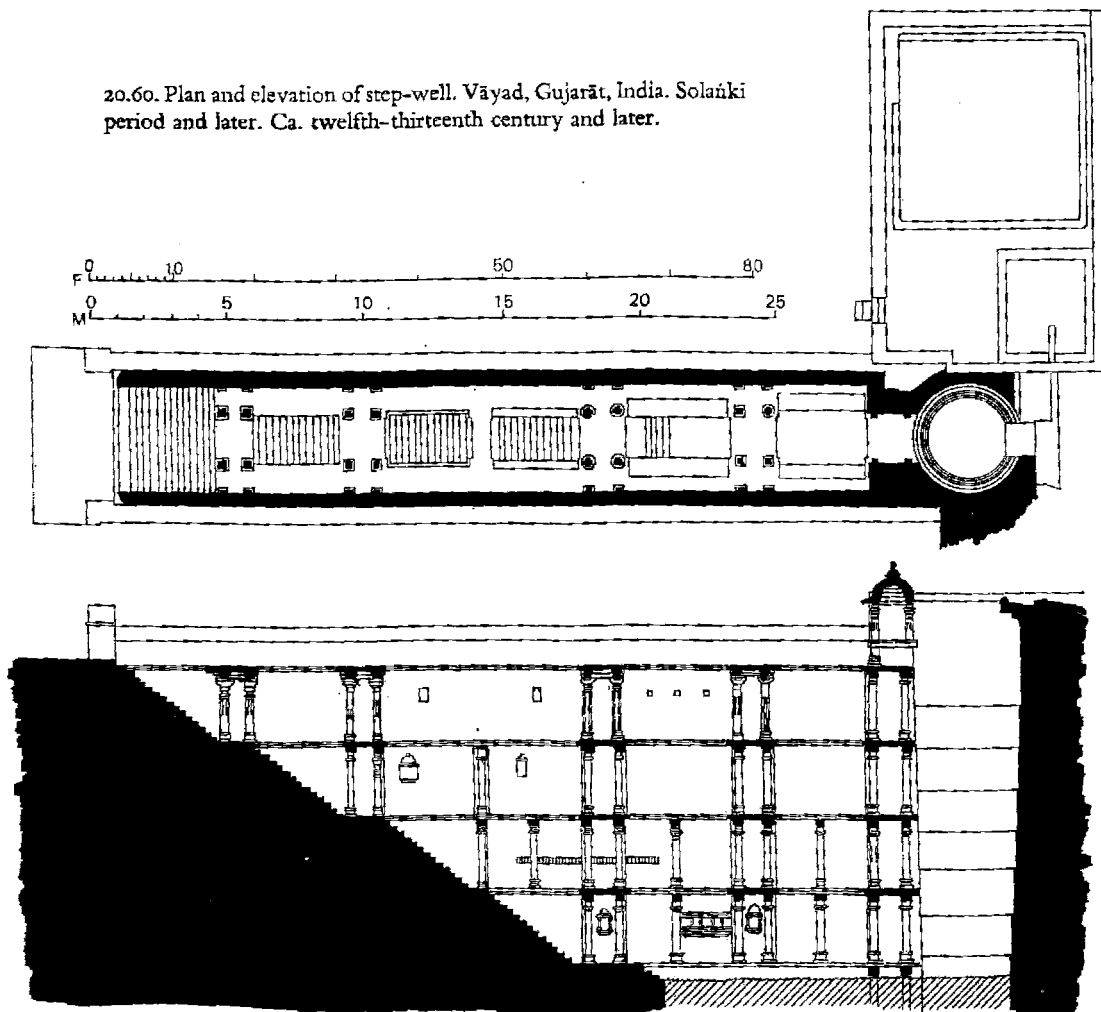


- 20.58. Tejpāla and his wife, at Lūṇa Vasahī (Tejpāla's temple). Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solaṅki period. Ca. thirteenth century. White marble.



- 20.59. Lūṇa Vasahī, ceiling panel with scenes of life of the *tirthaṅkara* Neminātha. Mount Ābū, Rājasthān, India. Solaṅki period. Ca. thirteenth century. White marble.

20.60. Plan and elevation of step-well. Vāyad, Gujarāt, India. Solāṅki period and later. Ca. twelfth-thirteenth century and later.



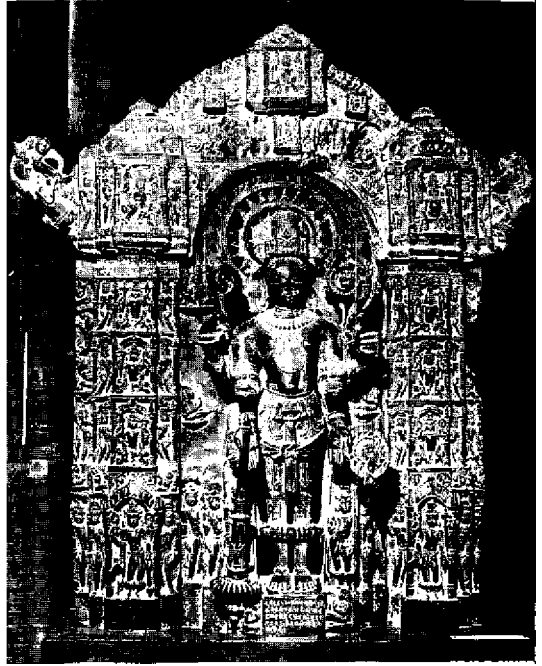
20.61. Step-well. Vāyad, Gujarāt, India. Solāṅki period and later. Ca. twelfth-thirteenth century and later.

design of some of them. The concept of a step-well goes far beyond the simple need for access to water; many consisted of several levels, were elaborately sculpted, and rank among some of the most beautiful productions in South Asia.²³ The step-well at Vāyad, near Pāṭan, demonstrates the concept of such structures, although its form reflects at least two periods of construction, the first in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and the second in the Muslim period (Figs. 20.60, 20.61). Measuring about thirty-six meters in length and nearly four meters in width, the *vāv* has five stories, ending in a circular well about four meters in diameter. Sculptured pillars and representations of deities decorate the structure.

THE GĀHAḌVĀLAS OF VĀRĀNASĪ (CA. 1075 TO 1200)

The Rājput dynasty that arose in the Vārānasī (Benares) region on the collapse of Gurjara-Pratihāra power in northern India was that of the Gāhaḍvālas, whose dominions extended throughout parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihār. Little is known about the art produced during their period of rule, however, since the regions they occupied were overrun by Muslims and the majority of their monuments dismantled or destroyed. The Muslim attack on the Gāhaḍvālas is chronicled in the *Tajul-Ma'athir* of Ḥasan Niẓāmī, which was begun in A.D. 1205 (A.H. 602) and is thus nearly contemporary with the events it records, including the devastating battles of 1192 and 1193 in which the king of Vārānasī was slain, much booty taken, and many Hindu temples destroyed.

A four-armed image of Viṣṇu Saṅkarṣaṇa, one of the twenty-four icons of Viṣṇu, recognized by the position of the attributes held in his hands (Fig. 20.62), typifies the mid-twelfth-century style popular over much of northern India and demonstrates its clear debt to Gurjara-Pratihāra art. The inscription on the pedestal gives the date Vikrama *saṃvat* 1204,²⁴ which corresponds to 1147. Although the Gāhaḍvālas are not named in the inscription, it is likely that they were in control of the region around Delhi—where it was found among the Islamic remains at the Quṭb Minār—at the time of its creation. In contrast to the more fleshy figures and animated poses of the Gurjara-Pratihāra period, this figure stands stiffly, and it is completely detached from the back-slab and surrounding elements, a characteristic associated with late sculptures throughout the north. The stylized facial features with the raised, ridged eyebrows show ties to Gurjara-Pratihāra art, although they have become abstract forms devoid of expression. A hard, linear quality, partly due to the use of the dense black stone that enabled the carvers to achieve a high polish and exquisite detail, pervades the work, contrasting strongly to the earlier periods of South Asian art in which artists almost seemed to transform the stone into flesh. Surrounding the main figure in the *torana*-like arch are representations of the ten



20.62. Viṣṇu Saṅkarṣaṇa. Found at Quṭb Minār area, Delhi, India. Gāhaḍvāla period. Dated Vikrama era 1204 (A.D. 1147). Black stone. H: 103.5 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

incarnations of Viṣṇu, which by this time were a standard part of Vaiṣṇavite iconography, while at the top are depictions of the nine planets (*navagrahas*). The image, highly complex in form and symbolism, represents a final development of trends that had been seen since pre-Gupta times. Its findspot, among the ruined Hindu temples destroyed by Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibek, who used portions of them to build his Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, is representative of the destruction of the Hindu art tradition and the transition to the Muslim phase of South Asian history.

Although Hinduism was certainly the dominant religion in northern India in the period just prior to Muslim dominance, Buddhism was still a major force and an important religion, as known from inscriptions found at important Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gayā and Sārnāth. Inscriptions indicate that the Gāhaḍvālas were Vaiṣṇavite, although they, or their wives, seem

to have provided some patronage at Buddhist establishments, such as Sarnāth. Since Vārāṇasi was the Gāhaḍvāla capital, it is not surprising that Sarnāth, hardly a few kilometers away, was brought under Gāhaḍvāla sway, and the art styles current among the Rājputs and other northern dynasties influenced the traditional Buddhist styles.

A figure of Tārā indicates the stylistic developments that probably occurred at Sarnāth during the Gāhaḍvāla period (Fig. 20.63). By the eleventh century, the probable date of this image, the figure style had become more angular and hardened and the jewelry and costume, more elaborate. The figure clearly stands in the *tribhāṅga*, or thrice-bent posture, with the legs, torso, and head aligned along different axes. Compared to earlier examples, the jewelry is much more dominant in the sculpture and serves to create a kind of texture across the smooth, feminine body. The crisply delineated facial features, including the high-ridged brow, further typifies this later style.

Tārā here appears as an emanation of Amoghasiddhi rather than as the consort of Avalokiteśvara, as indicated by the representation of the seated *jina* in her crown. She is attended by Mārīcī on her right, who is identified by the presence of a *vajra* held in her right hand and the *āsoka* flower rising beside her to her left. The small, portly figure attending Tārā opposite Mārīcī is Ekajaṭā, an angry (*krodha*) form of Tārā herself, whose presence demonstrates the sculptural representation of some of the esoteric forms of Tantric Buddhism. With these two attendants and the representation of Amoghasiddhi



20.63. Tārā. From Sarnāth, Uttar Pradesh, India. Probably Gāhaḍvāla period. Ca. late eleventh century. Beige sandstone. H: 140 cm. Sarnāth Site Museum, Sarnāth.

in her headdress, Tārā is clearly identified as the Buddha *prajñā*, or female counterpart, of Amoghasiddhi, Śyāmatārā (Green, or literally, Dark Tārā). Like other Buddhist images of this date from northern India, such a sculpture demonstrates that, while Hinduism was clearly the predominant religion of the period, Buddhism was still viable in India.

MANUSCRIPT PAINTING

As the sculpture styles of the Rājputs grew increasingly stiff, stylized, and repetitive, painting seems to have grown freer, more charming, and more innovative. As in the east during the Pāla period, manuscripts provide the main source of our knowledge about painting styles in the west, although it may be assumed that wall paintings were also produced. Tāranātha, the seventeenth-century Tibetan historian, men-

tions a painting school in the west, comparable to that of the east, supposedly founded by an artist named Śrīgadhari,²⁵ who lived around the time of the Maitraka ascendancy. However, painting remains from earlier than the eleventh century in western India have not been found, although numerous examples on palm leaf from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries indicate that many workshops and styles existed

for the writing and illustration of religious texts. After around 1400, paper, largely introduced by the Muslims, became increasingly popular as a support, although palm leaf manuscripts continued to be produced. Virtually all of the early manuscripts of western India that have survived belong to the Śvetāmbara Jain religion, probably commissioned by lay worshippers in order to gain religious merit. The study of these paintings forms a crucial link in understanding the relationship between the art of ancient India prior to Muslim control and the culture of the Islamic period. Therefore, although they are most often discussed in the context of Islamic-period art of ancient India, they are relevant here. Possibly, as iconoclastic pressures of the Muslims began to affect the production of temple sculpture and architecture, more paintings were produced instead, to be given as gifts to the Jain establishments where they were kept in libraries (*bhaṇḍārs*). The styles, clearly related to sculptural modes, eventually made their mark on the Islamic styles produced at the Mughal and other courts, since many of the artists who later worked for the Muslim rulers were trained in the Jain ateliers.

Although perhaps representative of a provincial style, rather than a major workshop, a page from a manuscript containing the *Kalpasūtra* and *Kālakācāryakathā* dated to 1278 (Vikrama *samvat* 1335) demonstrates the early style (Pl. 31). It was found in a *bhaṇḍār* in Pāṭan and may be of the Solanki period. The *Kalpasūtra* is a Jain religious text to which the story of the *ācārya* Kālaka is often appended. The Kālaka story (*Kālakācāryakathā*) was the product of a long tradition but was probably consolidated by the twelfth century or earlier. It is known in several versions and was a popular subject for Jain manuscript illumination. The horizontal format of the page has been determined by the palm leaf itself. At this time, the written text comprised the primary focus of the manuscript producers, and the paintings are confined to two small rectangles on the leaf. A hole, surrounded by a painted red dot, held string for tying leaves of the manuscript together.

Two Jain nuns, dressed in white, are depicted in the left illustration while two lay women,

elaborately garbed in bright clothes, appear at the right. Yet, in spite of the fact that they are arranged in distinct painted areas separated by a considerable span of text in between, the artists have bridged this gap with the arrangement of the two groups of figures facing each other and with poses and gestures that indicate a psychological and conversational relationship between them. Clearly, the lay women are having an audience with the two nuns, whose hands depict the gesture of discourse (*vitarka mudrā*), while the lay women have their hands together in the devotional *añjali mudrā*.

Color, which has always been extremely important in religious iconography of South Asia, but which has generally been lost in sculpture, is here a primary component of the composition and may have had symbolic value. The palette is limited to a few unmixed colors as is normally the case in the Jain manuscript tradition, and as was seen in the Pāla-Sena school. In this case, red, yellow, green, black, and white are used. Often, although not here, blue is an important element in the pictorial design and gold is used increasingly in later centuries. The red background, a feature also of Pāla-Sena manuscripts, may have served a symbolic purpose. In later Rājput painting styles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it serves as a symbol of passion. Color is applied in a flat manner, without mixing of pigments or shading of any kind, and there is little suggestion of pictorial depth. The forms of the figures and other elements of the composition are outlined in black; color is confined to specific areas.

Probably because the paintings are so small, only about five centimeters in height, it was necessary to reduce the composition to a few important elements. In later paintings, especially those on paper, in which the format is not restricted by the shape of a leaf, more detail is introduced. Here, the figures convey the primary meaning while other elements, such as the stools upon which the nuns sit or the canopy above their heads, indicate their rank (the lay women sit directly on the floor and have no canopy). The facial features are sharply defined, with prominent noses and almost caricaturelike rendering. The farther eye, as is typical in this

phase of painting, is shown as if detached from the face itself, an emphasis which may have derived from the prominence often given to the eyes in Jain sculpture. (Many Jain sculptures of this period and earlier have large eyes inlaid with precious stones, or painted in a manner that insures great emphasis on them. [Fig. 20.54].) The triangular-shaped torsos of the lay women show affinities to the geometrical Jain sculpture styles.

Two illustrations in a manuscript on paper from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century suggest later developments of the painting tradition (Pl. 32). Also a manuscript of the *Kalpasūtra* and *Kālakācāryakathā*, the selections illustrated show Kālaka being visited by a Sāhī (Śaka) chief and his attendant, in one case, and a king, Balamitra, conversing with his wife, in the other. The format of the pages clearly derives from the palm leaf type; even the red dots that marked the string holes in the palm leaf manuscripts are painted on the pages, although they serve no purpose here since paper manuscripts were not tied in that manner. The introduction of a foreign type in the case of the Sāhī chief is due to narrative concerns rather than foreign stylistic influence *per se*, since the chief plays an important role in the *Kālaka* story, which supposedly occurred during the Śaka period. However, the portrayal of the Sāhī chief shows clear evidence of some contact with Islamic painting styles, as he is shown in the typical three-quarter facial view of Persian painting, for example, in contrast to the Indic preference for the profile. In addition, he has a ruddy complexion and is bearded, his eyes are rolled to one side in a non-Indian fashion, and he is

garbed in an Inner Asian costume complete with boots. Both compositions show a major figure at the left, and an opposing figure or figures on the right. In the *Kālaka* scene, the two smaller Sāhīs balance the larger figure of Kālaka; in the *Balamitra* composition, the wife serves as the sole counterbalance to the imposing figure of the king. The faces, looking towards the centers of the compositions, from the left and the right, create a sense of dynamic interaction between the figures and focal points in the composition to which the eye of the viewer return again and again while looking at the painting. The two Sāhīs are depicted on a much smaller scale than Kālaka, indicating their lesser rank in this context, and Balamitra's wife is accorded less than half of the composition, suggesting her secondary role. Such pictorial devices, which indicate the hierarchy of figures in the scene and structure the viewer's interpretation of the characters and events, allow the artists to emphasize aspects of the story, just as in the theater, lighting and position on the stage accentuate the central characters and events of the drama. Essential stylistic features again include the black outline to define the forms and the flat use of mainly pure primary colors, and again, the red background. Additional colors, such as the brown of the Sāhī's boots or the light blue suggest a mixing of colors, which may be the result of contact with Persian or other Islamic painting schools. Still schematic and flat, with the compositions containing only a few essential elements, the pictures succeed in communicating complicated aspects of a narrative within a small area.

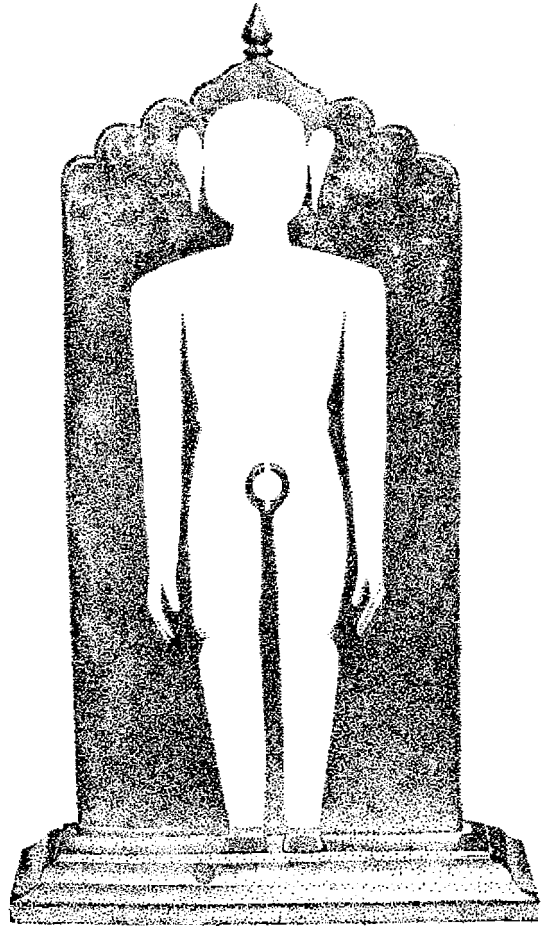
CONCLUSION

The study of the Rājput clans and their art, especially in relation to the growing Muslim domination of northern and central South Asia, is still in its infant stage. Little-known dynasties like the Cāhamānas and others not included here must have played an extremely important role in the history and art of this period. Yet because of wide-scale destruction in subsequent periods,

little is known of their architecture and art, except what can be gleaned from inscriptions and historical accounts that talk of the cities of Ajmer, Ranthambor, and the temples at Mount Harṣa, and others. These "lost cities" and others of the other Rājput families would have formed important chapters in the history of northern Indian art, and we can only suppose

what their achievements might have been. It is also difficult to assess how much, if any, Islamic influence was being felt in the creation of the indigenous art forms at this time. For example, is the type of borrowing seen in the adaptation of the Sāhī type in Jain painting indicative of more widespread borrowing and contact? Is the preference for dome-type *maṇḍapa* ceilings also derived from Islamic types? Can the growing mathematicization of forms in temple architecture and the use of complicated geometric diagrams in sculpture be related to concepts derived from Islamic sources? These questions cannot be answered until greater understanding of this rich period of South Asian history is accomplished.

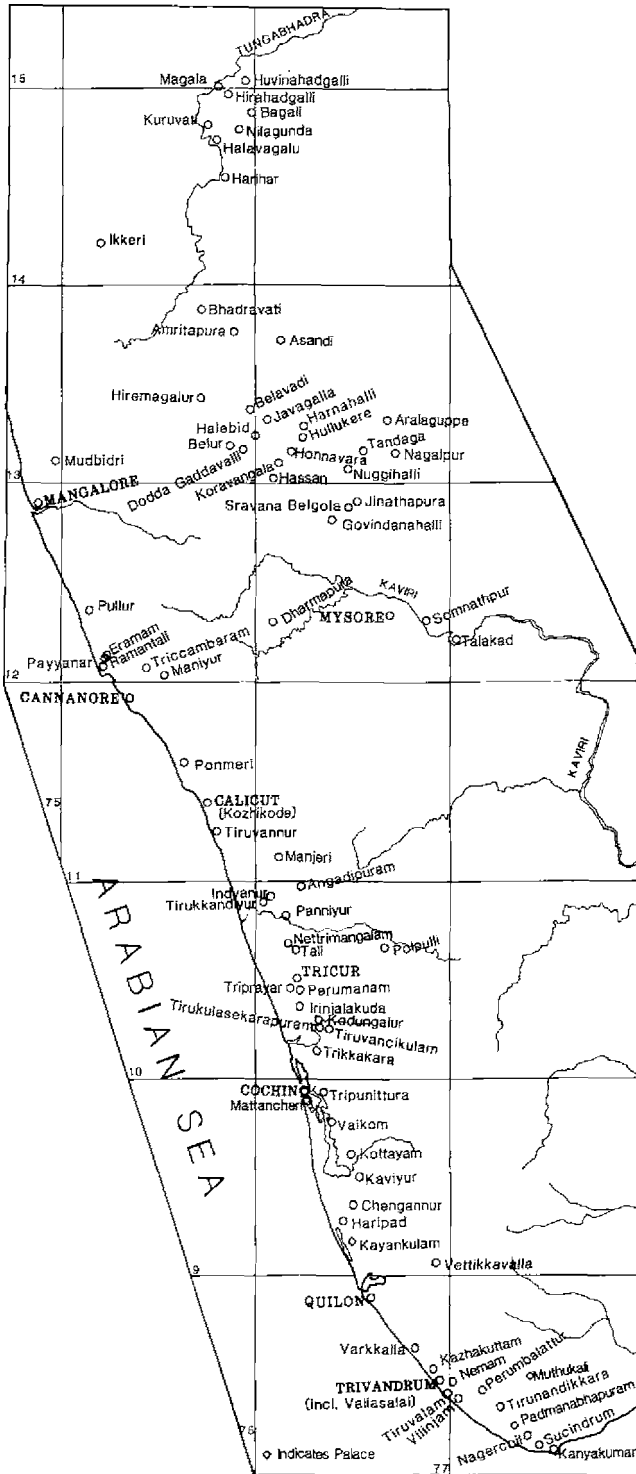
By 1206 Quṭb-ud-Dīn Aibek had established the Delhi Sultanate, firmly fixing Islamic rule in northern India. That the indigenous traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism were not destroyed, however, by this and future ruling lines such as the Mughals, is seen in a number of ways. Various saints' reform movements of the indigenous faiths, revival movements, and new literature—some of the richest in South Asia—all date from the period after the establishment of Muslim rule in the subcontinent. While temple architecture and sculptural modes may have been less lavish, the painting tradition blossomed—in Jain manuscripts, and later, in paintings of the Kṛṣṇa cult as seen in the Rājput and Pahāri styles (which are not covered in this volume). In addition, metal sculpture for temple icons and portable or home shrines continued to be produced, much of which testifies to the originality and growth of traditional ideas, instead of stagnation or repetition of earlier modes. A brass Jain icon from Rājasthān dating from approximately the eighteenth century testifies to this, for it ranks among the most

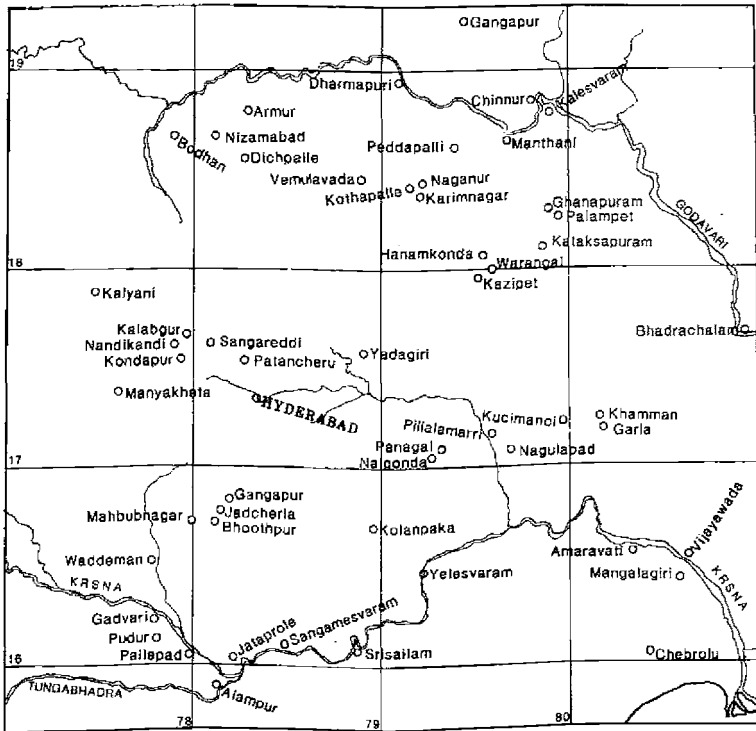
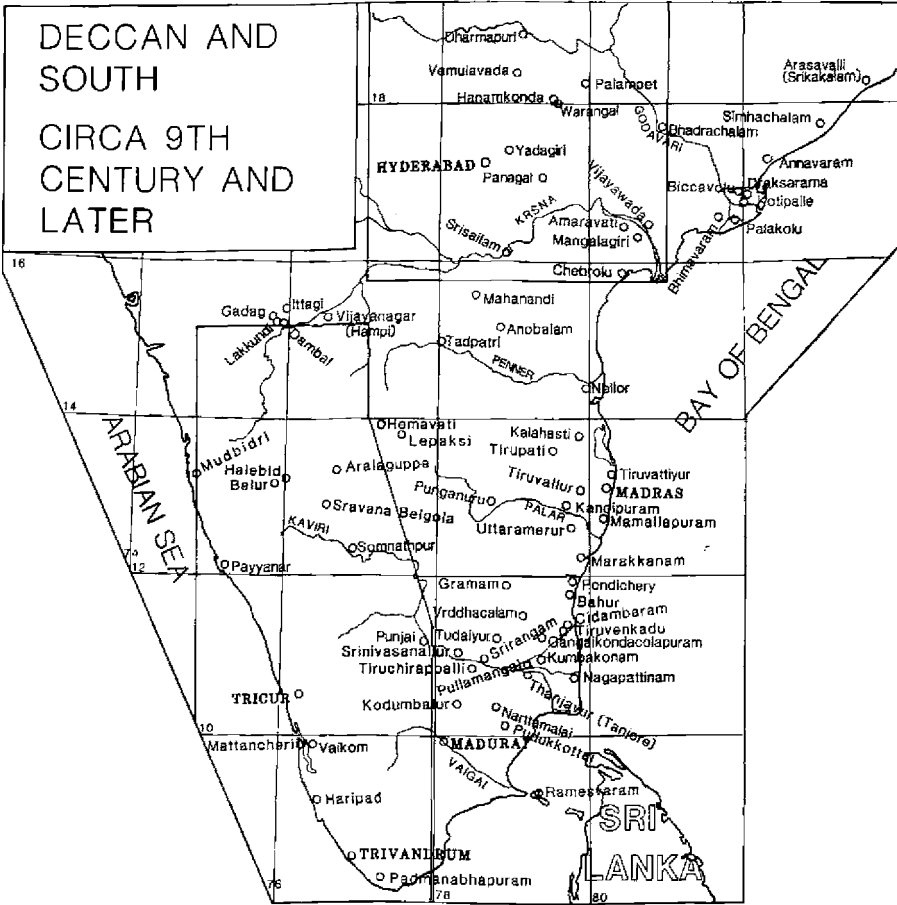


20.64. Jain sculpture of the Released Spirit. From Rājasthān, India. Ca. eighteenth century. Brass. H: 23 cm. Collection of Ajit Mookerji, New Delhi.

ingenious of all Indic creations, since it represents “the released spirit” as a totally nonmaterial being, its definition being created by the matter surrounding it (Fig. 20.64). Perhaps no more perfect example than this exists to show the ultimate religious concept of the Jains, shared also with the Buddhists and Hindus.

PART FIVE
LATER SCHOOLS
OF THE DECCAN AND THE SOUTH







Detail of 21.34.

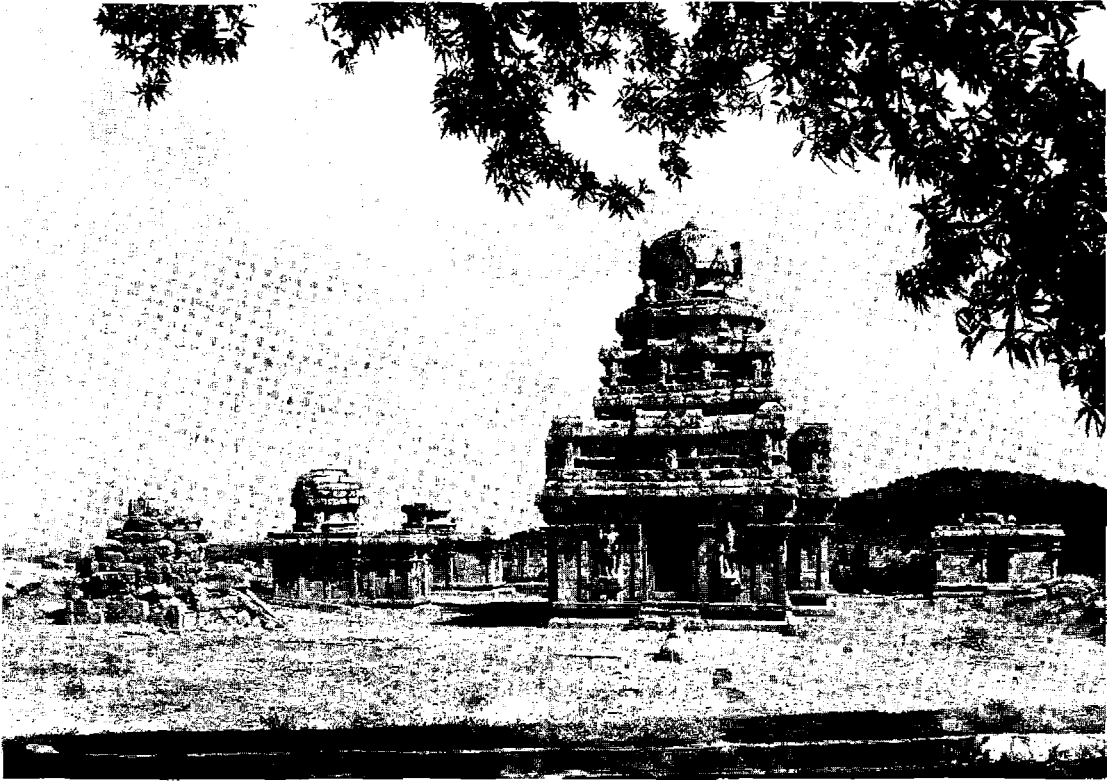
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Cōḷa and Related Schools of the Tamil South (Mid-Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries)

The Cōḷas were the successors to the Pallavas as the most prominent south Indian dynasty. However, the distinction between Pallava and Cōḷa art goes far beyond chronological implications, for while Cōḷa-period art reveals an indebtedness to the Pallava style, it is much more than merely a second step in a Pallava-Cōḷa chronological continuum. An important regional distinction must also be made when discussing Pallava versus Cōḷa art. The homeland of the Pallavas and the region where most of their monuments are found was centered around Kāñcīpuram, but the Cōḷa nucleus was further south in the vicinity of Tanjore. Thus, it is likely that disparate local traditions had some effect on the art. It is also probable that the art traditions of lesser known families, such as the Pāṇḍyas, Muttarayars, and Irukkuvels had some bearing on the formation of the Cōḷa idioms, although much work is yet to be done before the interaction between these groups is understood. Further-

more, the Cōḷas may have had a long-standing artistic tradition of their own upon which to draw (though nothing remains of it), for they are known in history as early as the third century B.C. in Aśokan inscriptions. Epigraphs on some of the approximately one hundred extant Cōḷa stone temples indicate that these monuments replaced earlier brick structures, clearly indicating an art tradition prior to the second half of the ninth century, at which time it apparently became the practice to either build or rebuild religious structures in stone.¹ Initiation of the stone tradition is largely associated with the reign of Vijayālaya Cōḷa, who wrested control of Tanjore probably from the Muttarayar chieftains in the middle of the ninth century and thus brought the Cōḷa family into a political and artistic prominence that was to last approximately four centuries.

Although most authorities agree that a free-standing stone temple at Nārttāmalaī dates from

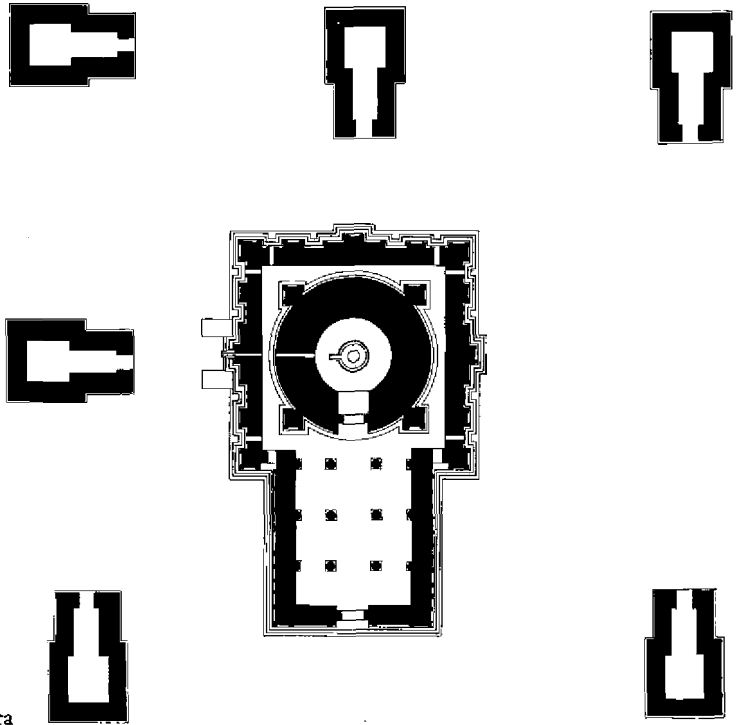


approximately the mid-ninth century, there is considerable disagreement about the patronage of the structure (Fig. 21.1). A Pāṇḍya inscription of 1228 refers to it as the Vijayālaya Cōḷiśvara temple,² a name suggesting that the monument was built during the reign of Vijayālaya Cōḷa and was perhaps patronized by him. However, the temple differs considerably in form and style from others that are more firmly established as early Cōḷa structures. On that basis, as well as on other inscriptional evidence at the site, the temple is now thought to be a monument of Muttarayar manufacture dating from around the middle of the ninth century.³ Thus, while its creation roughly coincides with the rise of the Cōḷa family and Vijayālaya specifically, it may not be a Cōḷa temple *per se*. Such seeming confusion frequently arises in the study of South Asian art when dynastic designations are used to define styles. For example, to be considered a “Cōḷa” temple, must a temple have been dedicated by a Cōḷa king, a member of his family or

retinue, or one of his subjects, or is it sufficient simply that the temple was created during the period of Cōḷa supremacy and in Cōḷa territories? Basic questions of terminology such as this are still widely discussed with regard to Cōḷa art (and indeed, many other areas of South Asian art history). It is probably most accurate to consider the Vijayālaya Cōḷiśvara temple a monument of Muttarayar patronage, but one constructed during the late pre-Cōḷa or early Cōḷa period, and therefore a fitting subject for study in relationship to early Cōḷa art.⁴

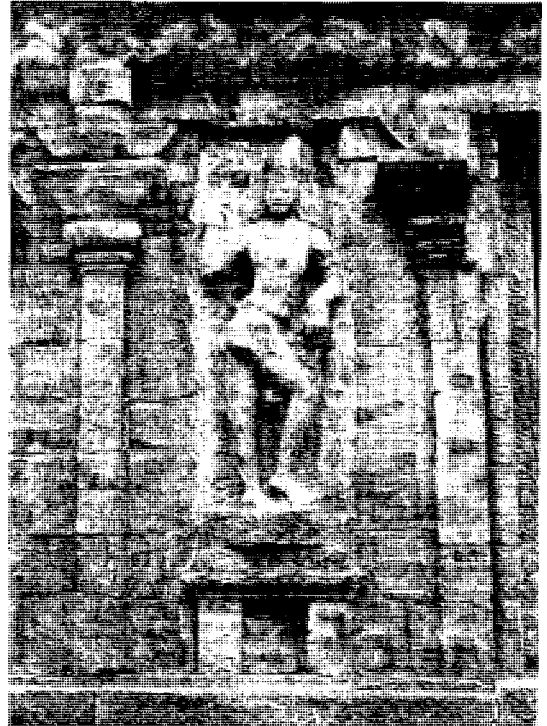
Dedicated to Śiva, the Vijayālaya Cōḷiśvara temple consists of a joined *ardhamanḍapa*⁵ and *vimāna* oriented to the west and surrounded by subshrines (*parivāralayas*; Fig. 21.2). Of these, six remain and there are traces of a seventh, although it is possible that originally there were eight of them dedicated to the eight *parivāra* deities (*aṣṭaparivāradevatā*), as is common in south Indian Saivite temples of this period.⁶ All these elements were originally enclosed in a rectangular

◁ 21.1. Vijayālaya Cōḷīśvara temple from west. Nārttāmalai, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. mid-ninth century.



21.2. Plan of Vijayālaya Cōḷīśvara temple. Nārttāmalai, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. mid-ninth century.

compound. The exterior of the main temple is nearly devoid of figurative sculpture except for the two *dvārapālas* on the west (Figs. 21.1, 21.3), some figures on the upper stories of the *vimāna*, and a series of small sculpted panels placed at intervals along the base of the temple. Instead, it is mainly ornamented by the detailing of various elements of the architectural scheme, including the base (*adhiṣṭhāna*), the walls of the first story (*tala*), and the cornices and other details of the upper stories. The pilastered wall treatment is a typically southern architectural feature, but the lack of niches containing deities (*devakoṣṭhas*) is at variance with the usual Cōḷa format, again suggesting that the structure is not of Cōḷa manufacture. The pilasters have plain and angu-



21.3. *Dvārapāla* to left of west entrance, Vijayālaya Cōḷīśvara temple. Nārttāmalai, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. mid-ninth century.

lar bracket-type capitals. The heavy cornice of the *prastara* above the pilastered wall separates the first tier (*tala*) from the second *tala*, which is continuous around both the *vimāna* and the *ardhamanḍapa*. However, this is the final level of the *ardhamanḍapa* with its flat roof while the superstructure of the *vimāna* continues in a series of diminishing *talas*, the next two being square in plan, the next round, and then the whole topped by a circular *śikhara*. In contrast to Pallava superstructures, which seem to rise directly out of the walls below, the superstructure of the *vimāna* is recessed. Like the main temple, the *parivāra* shrines have pilastered walls and appear very simple due to the minimal figurative sculpture. These shrines are single-storied, consisting of a *garbhagr̥ha*, and *ardhamanḍapa* and a round *śikhara* above the shrine.

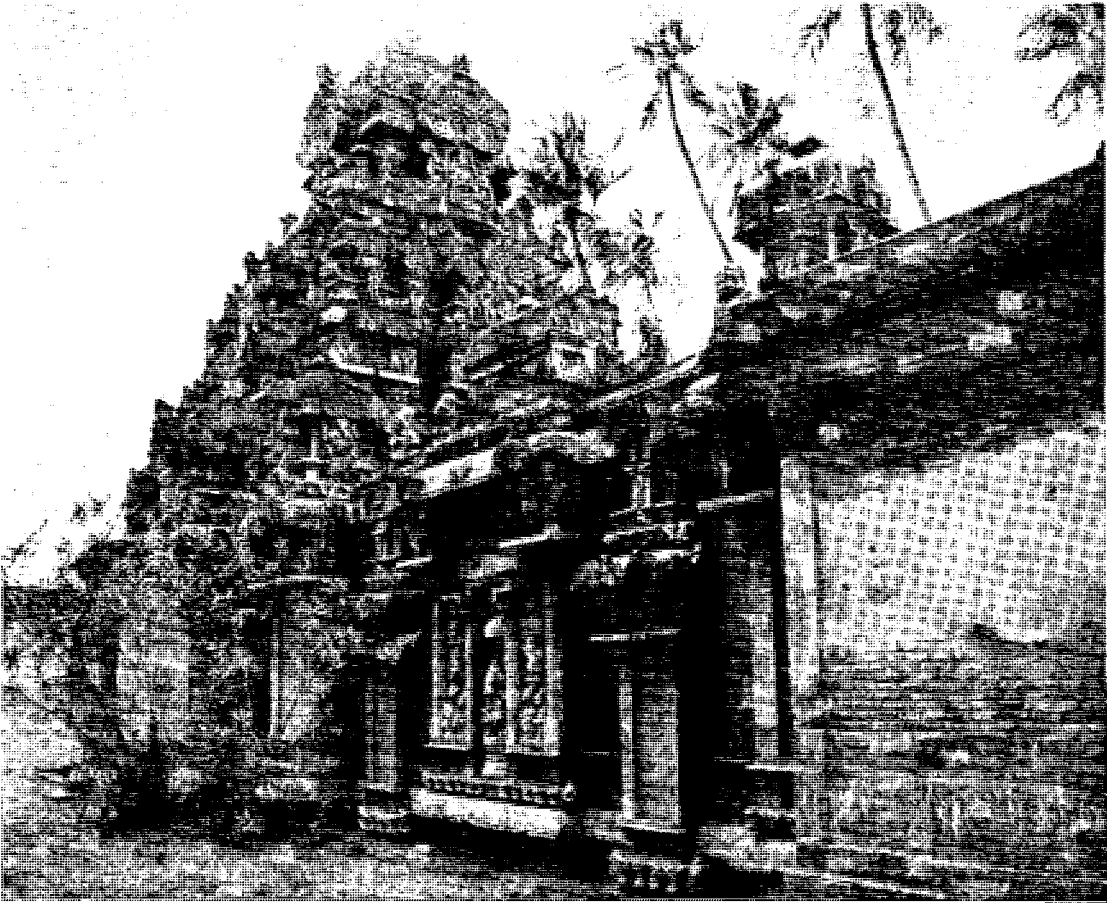
The entrance to the *ardhamanḍapa* of the main temple is flanked by a pair of *dvārapālas* (Fig. 21.3) that are approximately human-size. These two-armed figures stand in the twisted manner with one leg turned across the body often seen in southern Indian styles. Each figure rests on a club and has one hand in the *vismaya*, or wondering, pose. In style, the slender bodies are part of the southern tradition visible since the Sātavāhana and Ikṣvāku periods, although details of the costume and jewelry may be indicative of regional or local styles.

Within, the *ardhamanḍapa* has six pillars, arranged in two rows of three (Fig. 21.2). In size, both inside and out, the *vimāna* is larger than the *ardhamanḍapa* and it consists of two elements, the *garbhagr̥ha* proper and a surrounding passageway. Perhaps the most striking feature of the shrine area is the circular plan of the *garbhagr̥ha*. The surrounding passageway is very narrow, suggesting that it may not have been used for circumambulation by devotees but may have been a functional feature serving as a transition between the circular wall of the shrine and the rectangular exterior of the *vimāna*. The circular shrine contains a *liṅga* and a *yoni*.

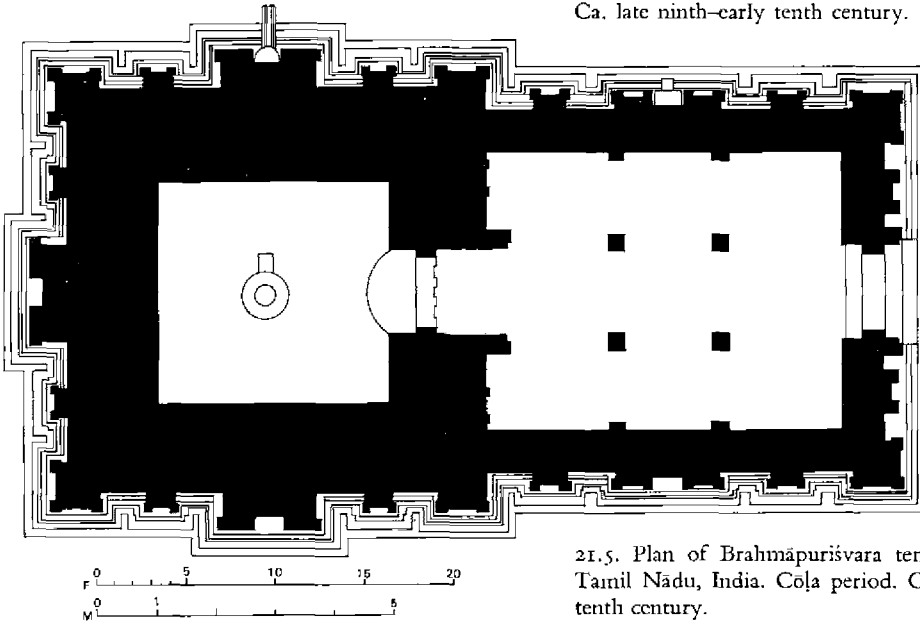
Whether or not this temple and others of Vijayālaya's time are truly "Cōḷa" works is uncertain, but by the time of Āditya I, Vijayālaya's son, who ruled from 871 to 907 and extended the Cōḷa holdings to include former lands of

the Pallavas extending to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa territories, a Cōḷa stone tradition must have been well established. Inscriptional evidence suggests that Āditya I was responsible for the construction of rows of Śiva temples—that were like the "banners of his own victories"—of stone on the two banks of the Kāviri River.⁷ One author has listed more than forty temples belonging to this period,⁸ although it is likely that some of these were monuments of the Muttarayars, Irūkuvels, or other contemporary families. Āditya I's son, Parāntaka I (r. 907–55), was also responsible for building a number of temples, including a funerary temple (*paḷlippaḍai*) over the remains of his father⁹ and thus, under Āditya I and Parāntaka I, Cōḷa art as we know it received its first major impetus.

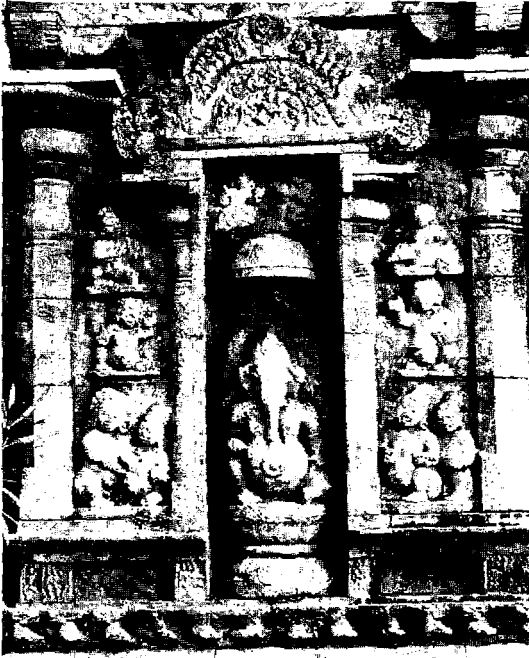
The surviving temples of this early stage, the late ninth and first half of the tenth centuries, are generally small in size, made completely of stone (in contrast with later temples, which often have brick superstructures), and consist of a joined *ardhamanḍapa* and *vimāna*. Invariably, these temples display exquisite workmanship. A finely preserved example is the Brahmāpuriśvara temple at Pullamangai (Fig. 21.4). The temple was clearly in existence by 918, as indicated by an inscription dated in the eleventh year of Parāntaka I, at which time it had already been consecrated.¹⁰ However, construction may have taken place during the latter part of Āditya I's reign or during the first part of that of Parāntaka I. Dedicated to Śiva (the name Brahmāpuriśvara is not original), the temple faces east and consists of the *ardhamanḍapa* and *vimāna* (Fig. 21.5), although the front portion of the *ardhamanḍapa* has been obscured by the addition of a later *mukhamanḍapa* and the superstructure of the *vimāna* has undergone modification in post-Cōḷa times. The temple is situated in a shallow masonry pit, a fairly common feature of early Cōḷa temples, apparently originally intended to have been filled with water. The lowest member of the temple base is carved in an inverted lotus design, and thus the temple was probably conceived symbolically as rising from the cosmic waters on a lotus. Such direct use of water and water symbolism seems particularly to have been a southern Indian feature, as suggested in earlier Pallava caves and



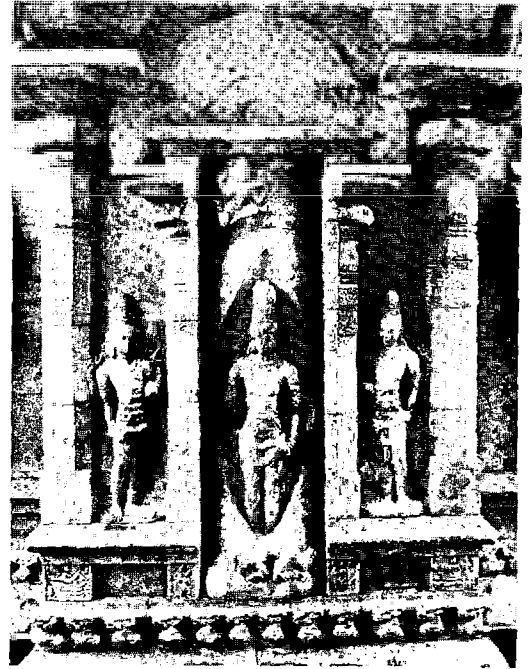
21.4. Brahmapurishvara temple, south wall from south-east. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century.



21.5. Plan of Brahmapurishvara temple. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century.



21.6. Gaṇeśa on south wall of *ardhamaṇḍapa*, Brahmā-puriśvara temple. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.



21.7. Liṅgodbhava composition on west wall of *vimāna*, Brahmāpuriśvara temple. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

temples, although not in this precise form.

The exteriors of the *ardhamaṇḍapa* and *vimāna* are articulated in the standard divisions of base, wall, and superstructure, although these elements differ considerably from those of the Vijayālaya Cōliśvara temple at Nārttāmalai. One of the most prominent elements of the base, for example, is the frieze of *yālīs* (lions), which is common on Cōla temples, both early and late. The walls are articulated with pilastered niches (*devakōṣṭha*) that protrude from the surface of the wall, including one each on the south and north sides of the *ardhamaṇḍapa*, and one on the south, west, and north sides of the *vimāna*. In form, these niches appear to be later variants on the treatment of earlier Pallava walls as seen, for example, in the “Arjuna *ratha*” at Māmalla-puram (Fig. 14.23).

In order, proceeding clockwise around the temple, the *devakōṣṭhas* reveal a systematic iconographic program beginning with Gaṇeśa on the south wall of the *ardhamaṇḍapa* (Fig. 21.6), and proceeding with Dakṣiṇāmūrti (now lost)

on the south wall of the *vimāna* (identified by the accompanying scenes and tree above), Liṅgodbhavamūrti on the west of the *vimāna* (Fig. 21.7), Brahmā on the north of the *vimāna*, and finally Durgā on the north wall of the *ardhamaṇḍapa* (Fig. 21.8). As in standard iconographic programs in Hinduism, the placement of Gaṇeśa and Durgā represent the beginning of worship (by the overcoming of obstacles) and the achievement of religious victory, respectively. Likewise, the appearance of Dakṣiṇāmūrti (the “Southern Form”) of Śiva is appropriate to the south, while Brahmā commonly appears on the north in southern-style temples. The placement of the Liṅgodbhavamūrti in the western niche indicates the Śaivite dedication of the temple, and carries the implicit suggestion of Śiva’s infiniteness and his supremacy over Viṣṇu and Brahmā.

The Liṅgodbhava form (Fig. 21.7) is explained in a number of Purāṇas. Supposedly, Viṣṇu and Brahmā were engaged in an argument concerning which one of them was the principal archi-



21.8. Durgā on north wall of *ardhamanḍapa*, Brahmā-puriśvara temple. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century.

tect of the universe when a giant *liṅga* appeared before them. Brahmā took the form of a goose (*hamsa*), or rode upon his *hamsa vāhana*, to seek the top of the *liṅga*, while Viṣṇu took the form of a boar to find the bottom. When neither could find the end of the *liṅga* they realized that they were in the presence of something greater than themselves, namely Śiva, and they began to pay devotion to it, at which time Śiva manifested himself in the *liṅga*. (According to some versions of the text, Brahmā did not admit that he had not found the end of the *liṅga* and, because of this lie, was doomed to have no temples dedicated to him—a modification undoubtedly intended to explain the almost total lack of Brahmā temples in South Asia.) In the Pullamangai relief, the central niche contains Śiva appearing in the *liṅga* while Brahmā flies above and Viṣṇu furrows below. In the side niches, Brahmā (left) and Viṣṇu (right) pay their respects to Śiva.

This format, in which a central niche containing the principal subject is flanked by subsidiary

pilastered niches, is used not only in early Cōla temples such as this, but also is found in later monuments. Gaṇeśa, in the south niche of the *ardhamanḍapa* (Fig. 21.6), for example, is accompanied by *gaṇas* (he is lord of the *gaṇas*, as one of his names, Gaṇapati, implies) and his mouse *vāhana* appears at the upper right. The Durgā group on the north side of the *ardhamanḍapa* (Fig. 21.8) similarly contains the main figure of the goddess standing atop the head of the defeated, decapitated Mahiṣa, and she is flanked by representations of her lion, deer, and male devotees in the side niches. The composition of the Durgā group recalls the Durgā relief in the Varāha cave at Māmallapuram (Fig. 14.12), including the devotee who is about to decapitate himself at the lower left.

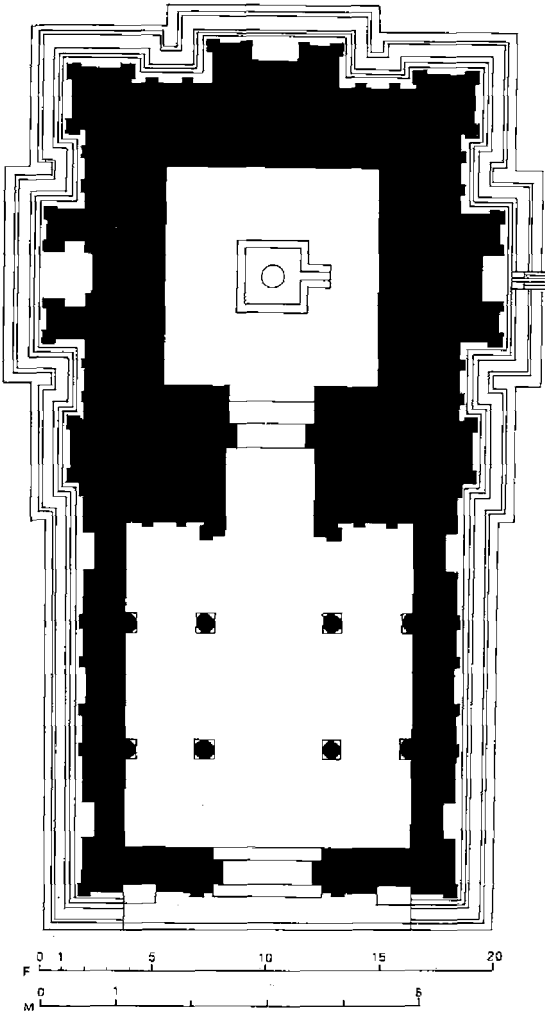
Above each sculpture group at Pullamangai is a decorated tympanum delicately carved with foliate and other motifs that carries out minor aspects of the temple's iconographic program. Stylistically, the figures reveal a debt to Pallava art in the relaxed postures and naturalistic stances. A slender body type prevails, as is generally true since Sātavāhana-Ikṣvāku times in the southeast regions, and the high headdresses and detailing of the jewelry and garments further reveal ties to Pallava and other south Indian styles.

In addition to the main iconic figure groups, the temple is adorned with numerous, smaller, sculpted vignettes, including standing figures within small pavilionlike forms that project from the upper portion of the wall of the temple above the empty pilastered niches flanking the iconic niches. These ornate architectural forms add a great deal of visual interest to the exterior of the temple and consist of pilastered niches surmounted by *candrasālas*. A lively figure in a naturalistic pose adorns each of these pavilions. In addition, the base of the temple is decorated with more than sixty small panels located beneath the pilasters of the wall (Fig. 21.9), including representations of aspects of Śiva and Viṣṇu, episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and other subjects.

Another temple approximately contemporaneous with the Brahmāpuriśvara temple at Pullamangai is the Nāgeśvarasvāmi temple at Kumbakonam, which has traditionally been held



21.9. Detail, base of Brahmāpuriśvara temple. Pullamangai, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century.



21.10. Plan of Nāgeśvarasvāmi temple. Kumbakonam, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. late ninth-early tenth century.

to be a Cōḷa temple from the reign of Āditya I or Parāntaka I.¹¹ It has rightly been noted that if this temple were not obscured by the many later additions and surrounding buildings of later date (which make it difficult to photograph), as well as by stucco accretions to the original structure, it would indeed be one of the finest of all South Asian artistic creations. As is typical of this period, the original structure consisted of an *ardhamandapa* and a *vimāna* (Fig. 21.10).

The beauty and elegance of this period's sculpture style is nowhere more clear than in the figures that adorn the pilastered niches on the exterior walls of the temple. These include deities in the principal niches, such as a highly naturalistic and relaxed representation of Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana on the north side of the temple (Fig. 21.11). In this form, which was extremely popular in south Indian art, Śiva becomes an ascetic in order to atone for his sin of having cut off one of Brahmā's heads in anger. Forbidden to wear clothing, Śiva is adorned only with ornaments, including a snake around his hips.



21.11. Śīva as Bhikṣātana on north wall of Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple. Kumbakonam, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.



21.12. Female figure on Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple. Kumbakonam, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

In addition, he holds a skull cup in his front left hand, representing the skull of Brahmā, with which Śīva begged for food. Secondary niches on the temple walls contain representations of standing figures, each approximately human-size, some of which may depict characters from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Figs. 21.12–14).¹² These are so lifelike and naturalistic in pose, facial features, and individualization of form that it is possible that the representations are based on specific individuals. Such a tradition is unusual but not unknown in south Indian art, and may be traced at least to the Pallava period. The naturalism of the figures indicates a predilection that was maintained in the south at least since Ikṣvāku times. Again, the slender body type with the narrow ankles, wrists, waist, and joints prevails, except in specific instances where fuller forms suggest the requisites of the subject matter, as seen in one of these niche figures (Fig. 21.14).

Many of the figures appear to be almost totally free from the niches, and convey the appearance of truly standing within them rather than being



21.13. Male figure on Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple. Kumbakonam, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.



21.14. Male figure on Nāgeśvarasvāmi temple. Kumbakonam, Tamil Nādu, India. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

attached to them. One author has correctly remarked that Cōḷa sculptures are best seen in the architectural settings for which they were intended,¹³ due to the dynamic interaction created by the relationship of the figure and the niche. In spite of the naturalism, even in the facial features, the figures fall within what must be considered to be the stylistic parameters of south Indian sculpture and reveal a clear tie to earlier traditions. Thus, the face of the sculpture in Figure 21.14 looks remarkably similar to the faces of many early images from Āndhra Pradesh, particularly those seen on Buddha figures from the Sātavāhana and Ikṣvāku periods; it is also possible that the garment falling over the left shoulder is derived from Buddhist styles of the Kṛṣṇa River region. Thus the earlier Āndhra traditions may have permeated the south and persisted in the later style developments. However, it is an intriguing possibility that the Cōḷas or Cōḷa artists had actually seen some of the Āndhra region Buddhist remains, for inscriptional evidence reveals that the Great Stūpa at

Amarāvati was in good condition at least until A.D. 1234 and it is known that the Cōḷas were active in this very region at certain times.

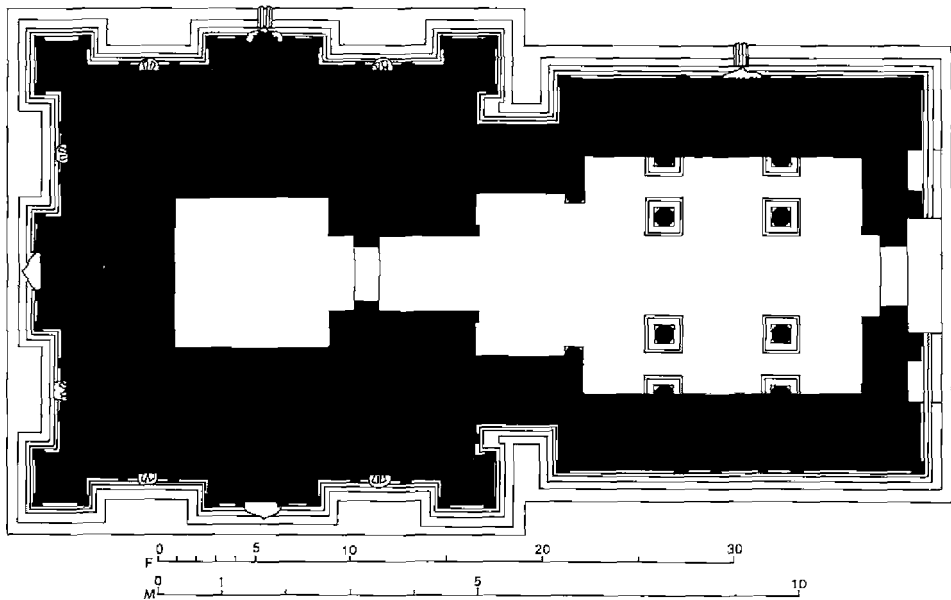
Another important monument from this early phase of Cōḷa art is the Koranganātha temple at Srinivasanallur, which may have been built during the reign of Āditya I or that of Parāntaka I (Fig. 21.15).¹⁴ On the exterior, the temple's division into the *ardhamanḍapa* and *vimāna* appears typical. However, within, a vestibule or antechamber (*antarāla*) separating the pillared hall from the shrine is a very unusual addition to the early Cōḷa temple plan (Fig. 21.16). As is general in Cōḷa-period architecture, the *ardhamanḍapa* is flat roofed while the *vimāna* rises in tiers (*tala*), in this case, two (*dvitala*), and is then capped by a square *grīva* (neck) and *śikhara*. Made of brick rather than stone, the superstructure of the *vimāna* apparently suffered damage and has been repaired. Therefore, the exterior detailing of this portion of the temple cannot be studied as a reliable index of the original form. The entire temple is situated in a masonry-lined pit and the lower moldings of the base include a massive double lotus, again in an apparent attempt to suggest that the temple arises on a lotus from the cosmic waters. A plank across the front of the moat enables the devotee to enter the temple without walking in the water. Circumambulation of the structure was undoubtedly performed on the outer side of the moat.

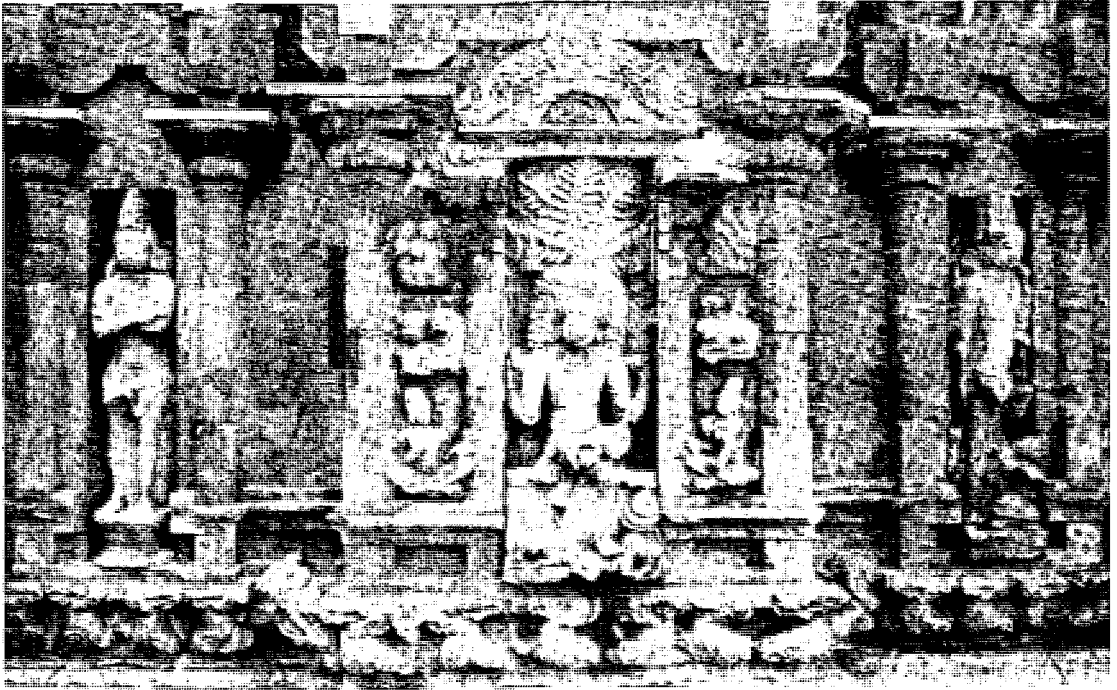
The carved decoration of the exterior of the temple ranks among the best of this period. A *yāli* frieze along the base is finely carved, consisting of animated forms of lions, as well as elephants, and even some figures. The main iconographic program of the temple is carried out by approximately human-size figures in pilastered niches on the exterior walls of the *ardhamanḍapa* and *vimāna* in the south Indian pattern traceable to the Pallava period. A decorated tympanum (Figs. 21.17, 21.19) was placed above each principal niche, although that on

21.16. Plan of Koranganātha temple. Srinivasanallur, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century. ▷



21.15. Koranganātha temple from southeast. Srinivasanallur, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

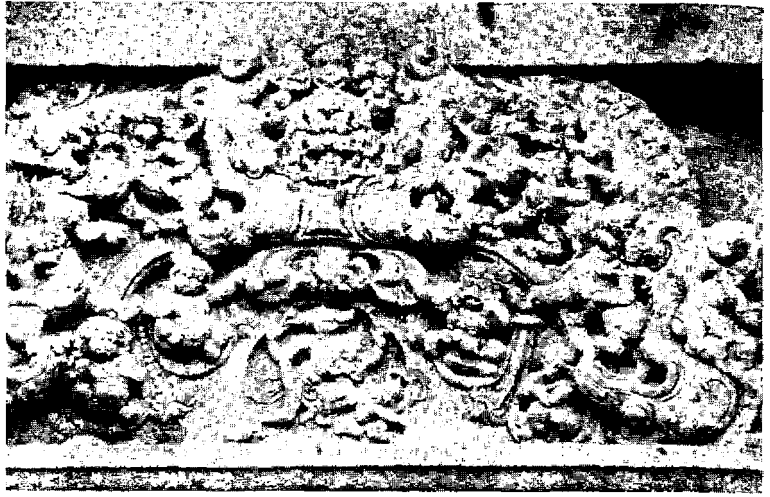




21.18. Female figure on west wall of *vimāna*, Koranganātha temple. Srinivasanallur, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

the north is missing. The niche on the south of the *ardhamanḍapa* is empty but the main niche on the south of the *vimāna* contains a representation of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Fig. 21.17) accompanied by animals and seated human devotees arranged in tiers in the flanking niches as well as large, standing male attendants in separate niches on either side of the main composition. Śiva, beautifully carved, sits in a peaceful attitude. The central *devakoṣṭha* on the west of the temple is empty, the image having been lost, but it is flanked by a pair of female attendants in the pilastered niches to either side (Fig. 21.18). Like others at this temple, the figures in this group display a great degree of refinement in the carving and in the very naturalistic poses and attitudes, and seem to be situated comfortably within their narrow niches. The figures are perhaps more ornately decorated with jewelry than has been seen in the preceding monuments, possibly an indication of a stylistic direction. The highly ornate, floriated tympanum above the niche on the west (Fig. 21.19) carries a representation of Varāha holding the earth goddess, a subject which may be important in determining

△ 21.17. Śīva Dakṣiṇāmūrti on south wall of *vimāna*, Koranganātha temple. Srinivasanallur, Tamil Nādu, India. CōĻa period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.



21.19. Tympanum on west, Koranganātha temple. Srinivasanallur, Tamil Nādu, India. CōĻa period. Ca. late ninth–early tenth century.

the identification of the now lost image of a deity originally placed in the niche below.¹⁵ The deeply cut forms and delicacy of the carving testify to the skill of the craftsmen. On the north side of the *vimāna*, the main niche contains an image of Brahmā, as is common in CōĻa-period temples, and he too is flanked by standing attendants. The last *devakōṣṭha* niche on the temple, that on the north wall of the *ardhamandapa*, contains a seated representation of Śīva. A pair of *dvārapālas* were probably originally placed in the now empty niches flanking the entrance to the temple on the east. In contrast to the pilastered and figured exterior walls of the temple, the interior is starkly plain except for the pillars and pilasters, although it is possible that the walls were originally painted. (Traces of paint are found at Nārttāmalai on the flat walls and this may document what may have been a common practice.)

The next phase of architecture and sculpture following the reigns of Āditya I and Parāntaka I has been called the Śembiyan Mahādevī phase, named after the queen of Gaṇḍarāditya (949–57), who died early; his surviving queen became a great patron of the arts through her religious devotion. It is thought that her influence on art was felt for a period of about sixty years, during which time she founded and patronized numerous establishments. Inscriptions clearly testify to her activities from the time of Parāntaka I

through the reigns of her son Uttama I (ca. 969–85) and the first part of the reign of the great Rājārāja I (985–1014). During the Śembiyan Mahādevī phase, numerous older brick temples were rebuilt and “almost overnight replaced by those in stone.”¹⁶

The monuments of the Śembiyan Mahādevī phase mark a departure from the grace and delicacy of the earlier CōĻa and related temples, which preserved something of the naturalism in the figure style and pose of figures that had existed since Pallava times. Instead, figures took on a stiffer, drier appearance, anticipating the forms to be found on later CōĻa monuments. In this way, the southern developments parallel many of the trends in other parts of South Asia, for by about the late tenth and early eleventh centuries many other regional schools also underwent a sort of “stylistic dessication” in which images often seemed to be lifeless repetitions of earlier, livelier formulae. In south India, as in other parts of the subcontinent, this may have been partly the result of codification of iconic types and development of greater adherence to textual prescriptions.

Many of the monuments of the Śembiyan Mahādevī period have been damaged, some have been refurbished so that the original forms are difficult to distinguish, and others are of mediocre or poor artistic quality. A representation of Durgā in the north wall *devakōṣṭha* niche of



21.20. Durgā on north wall, Agastyeśvara temple. Anangur, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Śembiyan Mahādevi phase. Ca. A.D. 979.

the Agastyeśvara temple at Anangur (Fig. 21.20) suggests something of the style change, however, and contrasts sharply with female figures of a slightly earlier date (Fig. 21.12). The temple was built by Śembiyan Mahādevī around 979, demonstrating that by the late tenth century, the figure style had lost the gentle countenance that had characterized much of earlier south Indian art.

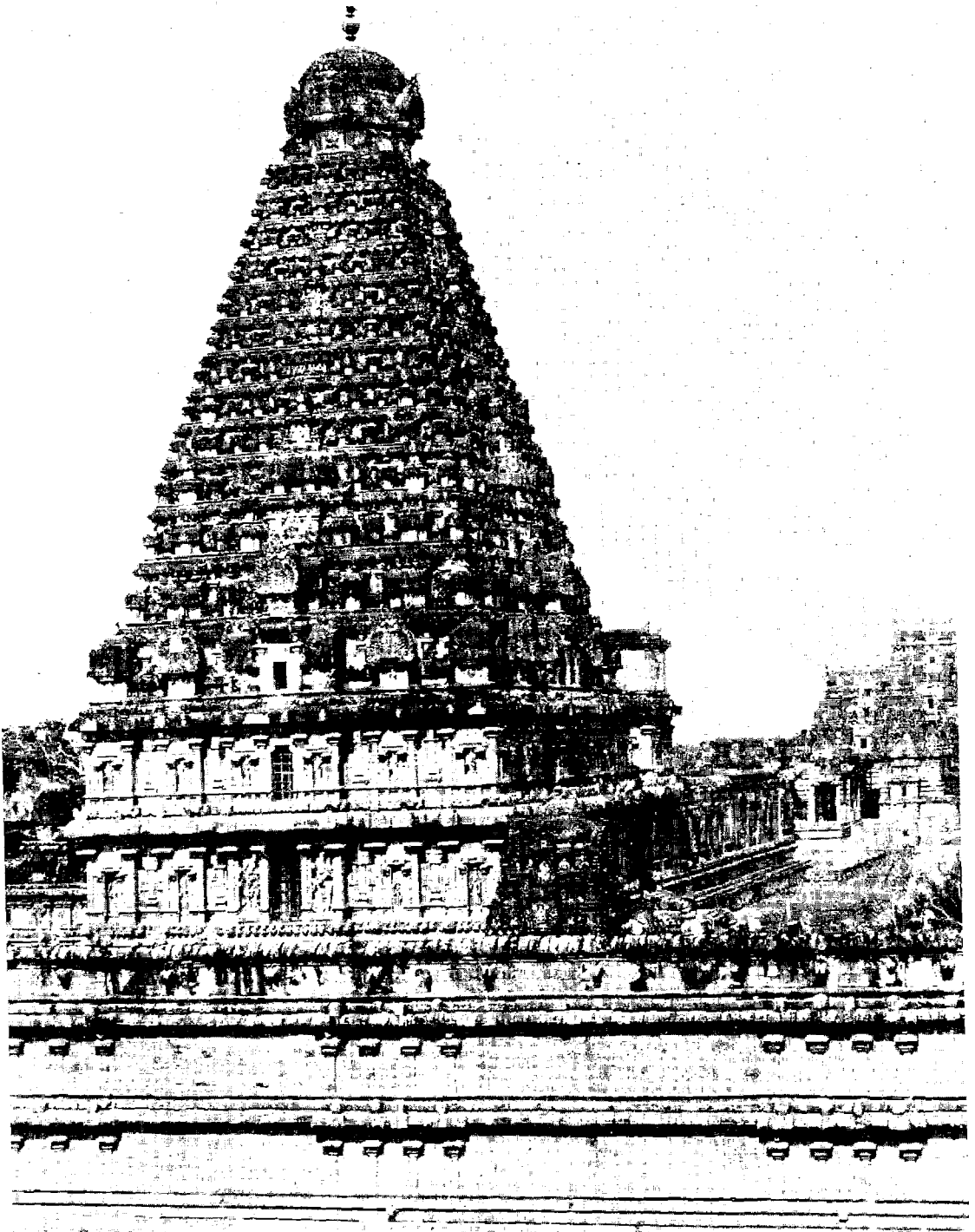
If size alone was the criterion for quality of art, there is no doubt that the Great Temple at Tanjore (Taṅjavūr) would stand among the foremost architectural creations produced in the world prior to the twentieth century. Indeed, at the time it was built, it was not only one of the largest buildings in South Asia but in the world. It seems to represent a moment in ancient Indian history when the apogees of both the political and artistic realms coincided, for the size and grandeur of the temple are an eloquent expression of the extent and power of the Cōḷa empire under Rājarāja I, the creator of the monument. Many of the architectural features of

the temple must be classified as innovations, that is, they are more than simply the next step in a continuum of artistic developments from earlier periods: the size alone was unprecedented. Thus, while it is by no means the only surviving temple from the reign of Rājarāja I, it is indeed the most commanding and the supreme example of what might be called the late Cōḷa phase.

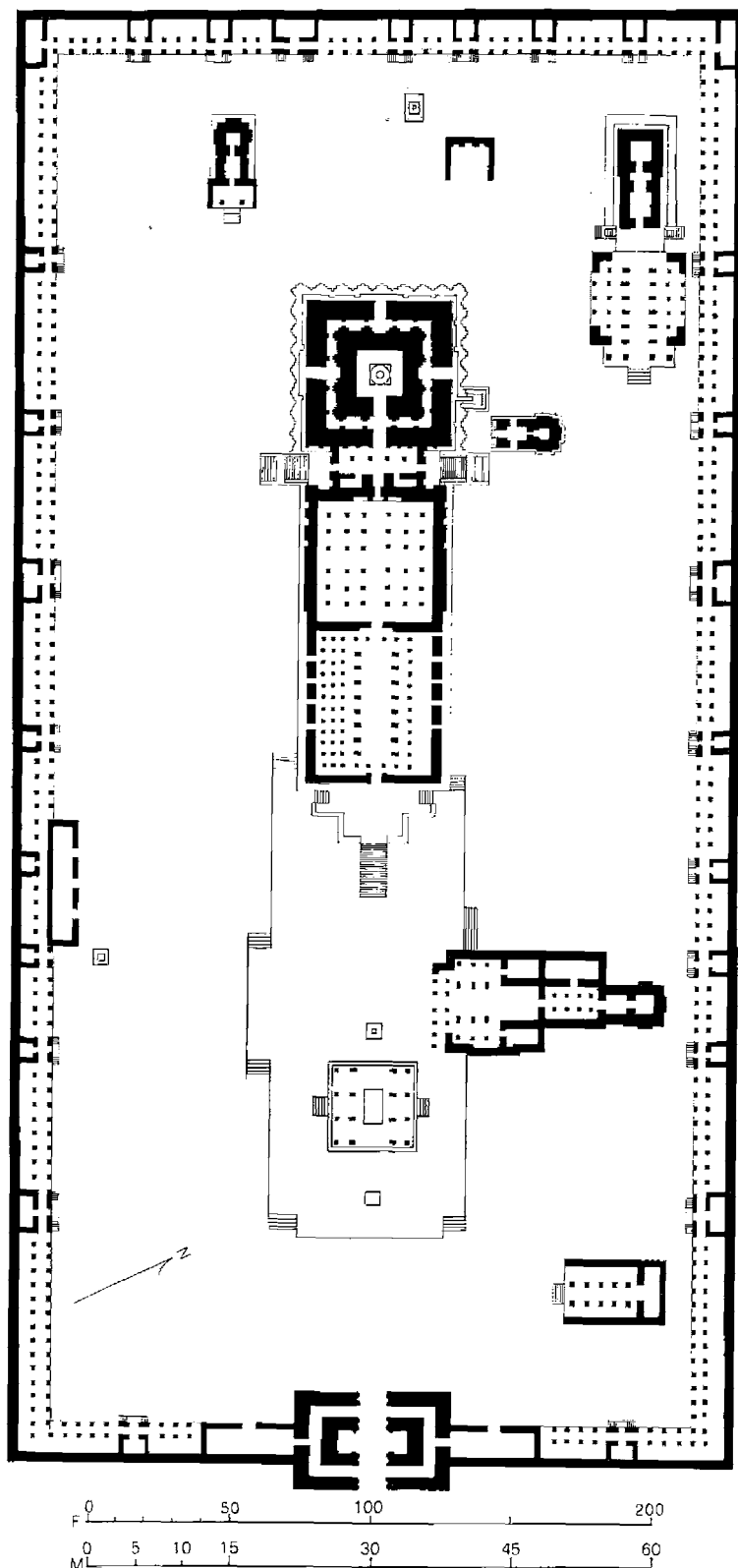
The Great Temple is also called the Bṛhadeśvara (Great Lord), in reference to Śiva's greatness. Further, it was called Rājarājeśvara after Rājarāja I himself, in accordance with the common practice of naming the *liṅga* enshrined in a Śaivite temple after a famed individual or the king or patron. Rājarāja I, "King of Kings," as he named himself upon his coronation in 985, must have enlisted craftsmen who had been working at other projects in the empire in order to create his great monument, for it was built in approximately seven years, from 1003 to 1010, a significant achievement for such a vast undertaking.¹⁷ It was thus the product of a unified, concerted building effort, conceived and executed nearly at the same time, and although additions and modifications were made in the following centuries, it should be considered largely a product of the reign of Rājarāja I and a testimony to his greatness as a king.

Rājarāja I's rise to power was facilitated by the fact that the Rāṣṭrakūṭas had been overpowered by the Later Cālukya Taila II in 980. The kingdom he had inherited was rather small due to the blow that had been dealt the Cōḷas by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa III at the Battle of Takkōlam during the reign of Parāntaka I. However, under him, the empire grew to be strong, well organized, and wealthy, having considerable influence not only in India but in Southeast Asia as well. Rājarāja I maintained a large navy and invaded Sri Lanka, making Polonnaruwa a provincial capital. In addition, he gained Nolambavāḍi and Gaṅgavāḍi, which furthered the conflict with the Later Cālukyas, who had taken over the former Rāṣṭrakūṭa lands.

The Rājarājeśvara temple is contained within an enormous rectangular enclosure (Figs. 21.21, 21.22). Preceding the temple on the east are two temple gateways (*gopuras*; Figs. 21.21, 21.23,



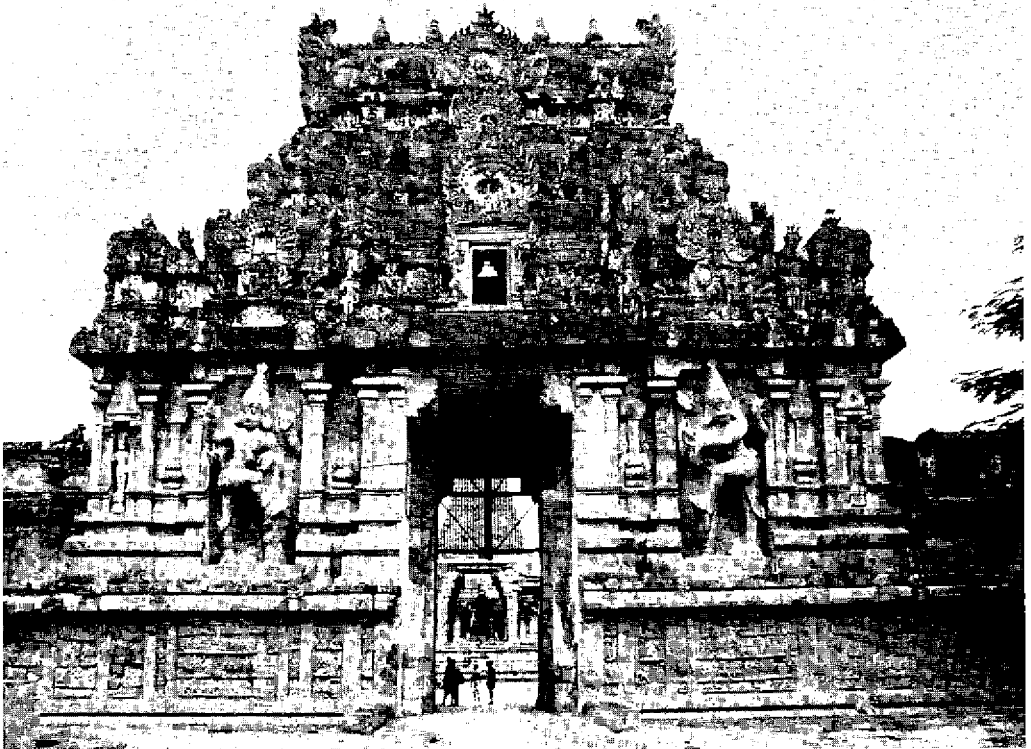
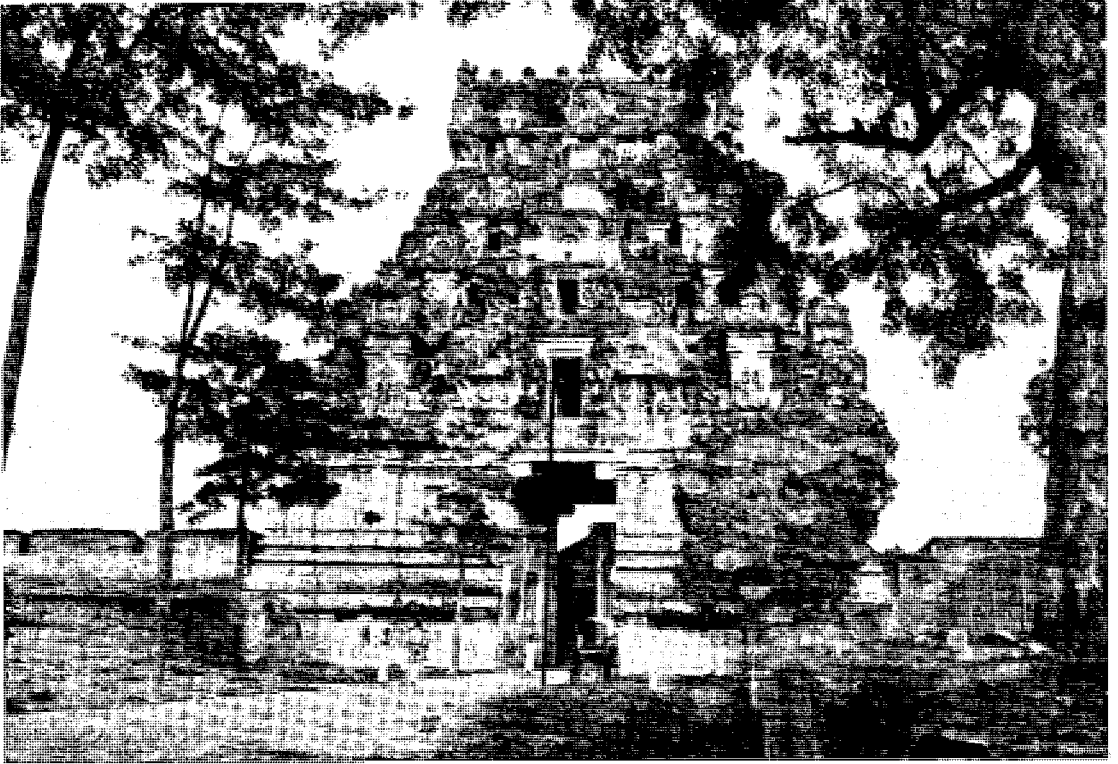
21.21. Rājarājesvara temple from west looking northeast. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period, reign of Rājarāja I. Ca. 1003-10.



21.22. Plan of Rājarājesvara temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period, reign of Rājarāja I. Ca. 1003-10.

21.23. Outer *gopura* from west, ▷ Rājarājesvara temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period, reign of Rājarāja I. Ca. 1003-10.

21.24. Inner *gopura* from east, ▷ Rājarājesvara temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period, reign of Rājarāja I. Ca. 1003-10.



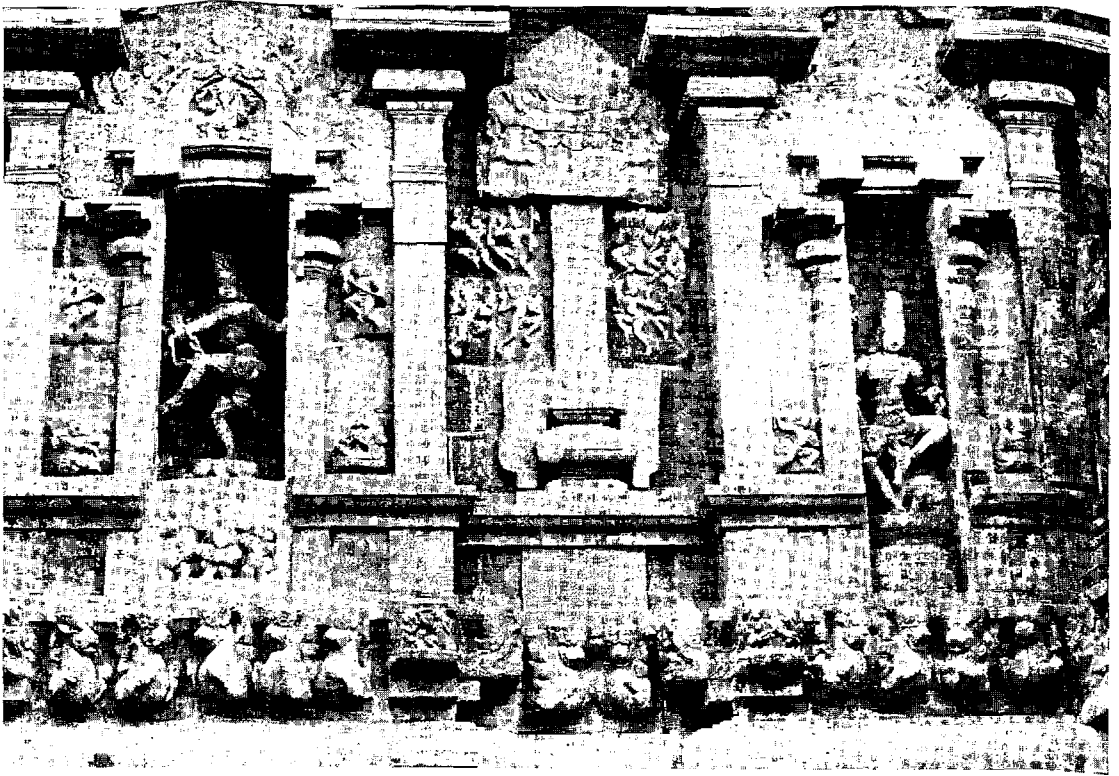
21.24). *Gopuras* are not a new feature at this time in south Indian architecture, for formative examples are known as early as the Pallava period. However, the form and emphasis given to them here marks a departure from earlier tradition and paves the way for the ultimate development of the south Indian *gopura* into the dominant architectural feature of the temple complex. In later south Indian temples, the creation of *gopuras* is intimately linked with the construction of additional enclosure walls (*prākāras*) built successively around the main temple. Ultimately, as many as seven concentric *prākāras* were built around some temples, each having one or more monumental *gopuras*. Usually, the *gopuras* farthest from the center of the temple, that is, the latest ones, tended to be largest in size. Because of this, it has often been suggested that over the centuries, architects and patrons became more ambitious and technically better able to create monumental forms and that the large size was thus a sign of the later date. While this may be partially true, it is clear that a precedent for such size differentiation exists in the two *gopuras* of the Rājārājesvara temple, where it may be firmly established that both gateways, though different in scale, are of the same date, both having been completed by 1014 as known from inscriptional evidence.¹⁸ Therefore, another, but still unknown, reason must explain the deliberate change in size between the *gopuras*.

The form of the Rājārājesvara *gopuras* cannot be explained as an outgrowth of earlier entranceways alone, in spite of their functional link with such structures. Harle has clearly shown that the form of these gateways is based on the form of the *vimāna* itself in terms of methods of construction, disposition of elements, and even iconographic patterns, a fact verified by an examination of Hindu architectural texts, which reveals that new instructions were not devised for the building of *gopuras*, but rather, instructions for the *vimāna* were "pirated" to serve in the new building.¹⁹ A major modification, of course, is the creation of a passageway through the gateway to allow movement through it. Although the basements of the Rājārājesvara *gopuras* are made of stone, the upper stories are brick, a combination that becomes the norm



21.25. *Dvārapāla* on east face, inner *gopura*, Rājārājesvara temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nadu, India. Cōla period, reign of Rājārāja I. Ca. 1003-10.

in south Indian *gopura* architecture, and that served the practical purpose of minimizing the weight of the superstructure. The superstructures of the two gateways are similar, although that of the outer *gopura* has five tiers, while that of the inner has three. Each is topped by a barrel-roofed *śālā*. The exterior of the gateways are elaborated with pilastered niches, and some sculpture, including a pair of monumental *dvārapālas* flanking the entranceway on the outer face of the inner *gopura* (Fig. 21.25), which are approximately two and a half times human-size. Each stands with one leg thrust across the body in a manner not unlike contemporaneous images of Śiva as Naṭarāja (Fig. 21.34). The four-armed, fanged *dvārapālas* are strikingly different in style from figurative carvings of the earlier phases of Cōla art, for they are heavier in body build and more elaborately ornamented. In addition, in spite of their presumed dynamic



21.26. Detail, lower tier of *vimāna* wall, Rājaraṣeśvara temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period, reign of Rājaraṣa I. Ca. 1003–10.

poses, the figures are remarkably static in appearance, almost totally lacking the sense of spontaneous movement within the architectural context so often seen in earlier Cōḷa and Pallava works.

Aligned with the two *gopuras* on the east within the compound is the main temple dedicated to Śiva. The Śiva temple is preceded by an enormous monolithic representation of Nandi measuring nearly six meters in length, now housed in a pavilion of a later date. The main temple consists of a pillared porch, two large pillared *maṇḍapas* (*mukhamaṇḍapa* and *ardhamaṇḍapa*), an *antarāla* (vestibule), and the shrine area, all aligned on an axis from east to west (Fig. 21.22). In addition to the staircase on the east, a monumental set of stairs gives access to the *antarāla* on both the south and north sides of the temple.

Although based on earlier Cōḷa forms, the

exterior treatment of the walls of the *vimāna* with its heavily recessed and projecting niches, deeply carved pilasters, and huge, carved-in-the-round figures creates a very different effect on the viewer (Fig. 21.26). The scheme is much more elaborate than that of earlier temples, consisting not only of the major *devakōṣṭhas* but intermediary pillar and vase motifs (*kumbha pañjara*). The deeply carved *yaḷi* frieze separating the base of the temple (which is carved with lengthy inscriptions) from the wall area further enlivens the wall surface. The lower tier of niches on the *vimāna* wall contains mainly representations of different forms of Śiva, including several dancing icons (Fig. 21.26). Dancing Śiva forms are especially prominent in the later Cōḷa period and appear commonly in metal sculpture (Figs. 21.33, 21.34). In this case, the figure on the right dances the *kālāntaka* dance, the dance of time and eternity, while that on the left performs

the more well-known *ānanda tāṇḍava*. In the more hardened treatment of detail and the less spontaneous and naturalistic pose and expression, the figures differ greatly from early Cōḷa and Pallava works but are typical of the later Cōḷa phase. The upper tier of figures on the *vimāna*, *antarāla*, and *mukhamaṇḍapa* walls bears thirty representations of Śiva in his Tripurāntaka (Destroyer of Three Cities) form, in which he vanquishes three powerful demons by destroying their three citadels with a single arrow. The popularity of this theme at this temple suggests that it had a special importance to Rājarāja I and may have served as a symbol of his military strength and imperial authority.²⁰

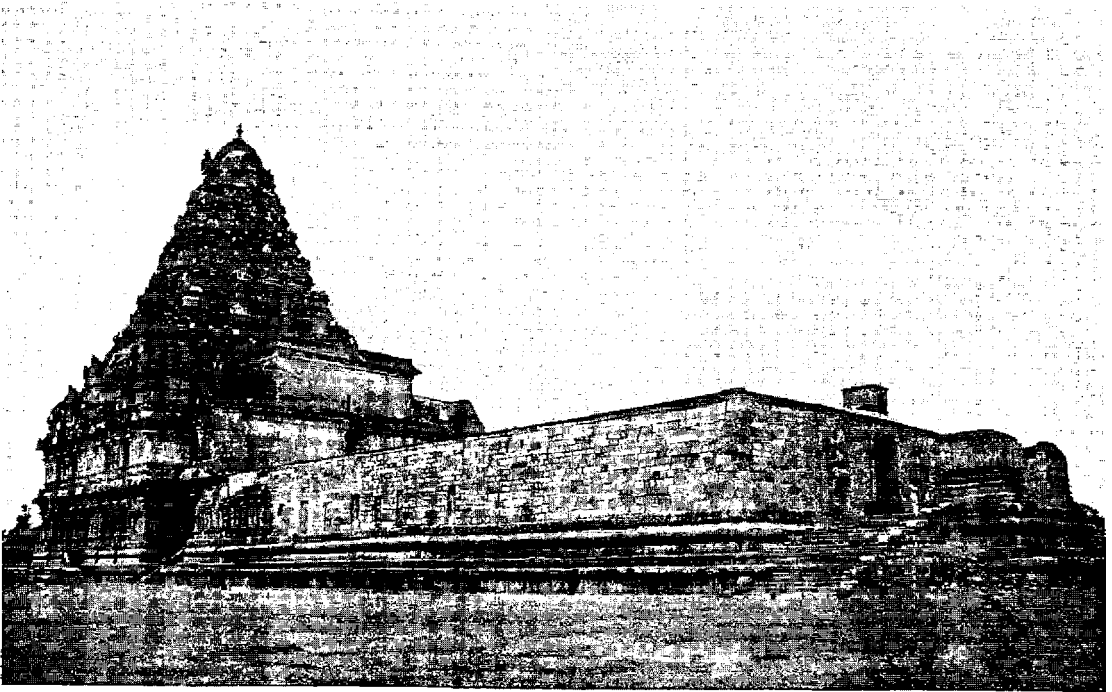
Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Rājarājeśvara temple is the *vimāna*, which reaches a height of approximately sixty meters and may have been the tallest structure in South Asia at the time it was built (Fig. 21.21). Consisting of the base moldings, a two-tiered wall, and a superstructure rising in a series of fourteen diminishing tiers, the whole is capped by a monolithic *śikhara* reputed to weigh eighty tons; it is traditionally held that this *śikhara* was set into its present position after having been hauled up an inclined plane about six kilometers long, the length necessary to make the slope gradual enough for the stone to be moved. The tower is pyramidal and straight sided in profile, in contrast to the curved shape of northern-style superstructures, and it is clearly based on earlier south Indian precedents, consisting of a multiplication of elements rather than creation of a new form.

Access to the *antarāla* and *garbhagrha* of the temple is restricted and no photographs of these areas have been published. The *liṅga* enshrined in the sanctuary is said to be one of the finest in all of South Asia, and like the temple that houses it, colossal in size, for the upper cylindrical stone alone measures three meters in height and more than seven meters in circumference. Surrounding the sanctum is a circumambulatory passage, within which are three colossal sculptures of Śiva, one each on the south, west, and north sides of the passage-way, as well as a series of paintings on the walls.

These paintings are of great interest for they

represent the only major body of Cōḷa painting known, having been discovered in 1930 when a later layer of painting of the Nāyak period began to flake off. Only portions of the Cōḷa paintings have been published, but they show a great relationship to sculptural idioms of the time. A pair of male figures that have been identified, perhaps without foundation, as Rājarāja I himself and his *guru* Karuvūr Devar (Pl. 33), shows that the dark line used to outline the figures and the details of their hair, jewelry, and facial features creates a configuration quite similar to what one might expect if a drawing was made of a typical Cōḷa sculpture of this date (compare Fig. 21.26, right). The almond-shaped eyes, the straight noses, and even the shapes of the faces are stylistic features that must have been products of specific aesthetic and/or iconographic concerns on the part of the artists. In contrast with earlier Indic paintings, such as those of Ajaṅṭā, outline plays a much more dominant role in delineating the forms, and color is applied in a flat, rather than modulated manner so that there is little suggestion of light or three-dimensionality created by the color. In general, this conforms to the developments occurring within painting styles all over South Asia at this time. It is seen, for example, in Pāla manuscripts, and western Indian Jain paintings of a slightly later date, and continues to be the major artistic mode in later south Indian paintings as well. The palette includes primarily earth and mineral colors, relating the painting styles to those of the Deccan as seen under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas at Ellora or earlier under the Vākāṭakas at Ajaṅṭā.

The Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore marked a departure from the earlier south Indian temples, which had been smaller in scale, more personal in feeling, and simpler in form, and simultaneously paved the way for future structures also of grand scale. Such influence was felt almost immediately, for Rājarāja I's son, Rājendra I, soon followed his father's example and constructed the Great Temple, also called Bṛhadeśvara, at Gaṅgaikoṇḍacoḷapuram (Fig. 21.27). In 1012, Rājarāja I had made Rājendra the *yuvārāja*, or heir apparent, in keeping with the general Cōḷa practice, and by 1014, Rājendra was on the



21.27. Bṛhadeśvara temple from southeast. Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōlapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period, reign of Rājendra I. Ca. third decade eleventh century.

throne, ruling until 1044. Rājendra I extended his father's empire even further, making it perhaps the most extensive Hindu state of the period. During his reign, embassies were sent to China (1016 and 1033), and he made victorious campaigns into northern India and brought water from the holy Ganges River back to south India, thus "sanctifying" the Cōḷa lands. Because of this, he called himself conquerer of the Ganges and founded a new capital, Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōlapuram (City of the Cōḷa who conquered the Ganges) to commemorate the event.²¹

Rājendra I's monumental temple at his new capital was obviously modeled after his father's temple at Tanjore, although the later structure is much more uneven in terms of the quality of its workmanship. It is possible that the temple was begun even before the Ganges expedition (which must have taken place before 1023, as it is mentioned in an inscription of that year) and was possibly named only after his victory. An inscription from 1029 refers to a king's palace at

Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōlapuram, and it is likely that the site had been consecrated before that time. However, the temple was probably primarily a product of the third decade of the eleventh century. Much of the temple complex is now in ruins and some parts were apparently never completed. The main structure has a double-storied basement, as had the Tanjore temple, but the *vimāna* rises only in eight tiers to a height of over fifty meters. In contrast to the Tanjore tower, the Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōlapuram *vimāna* has an inwardly curved rather than straight profile and the stories seem to decrease more abruptly. Greater crowding of the walls of the *vimāna* with sculpture than at Tanjore also occurs but, in typical Cōḷa fashion, figures are displayed in niches with accompanying scenes.

Perhaps one of the finest sculptures from this temple is a representation of Caṇḍeśānugrahāmūrti (Fig. 21.28). Śiva's power to give grace to a devotee is called *anugraha*. In this case, he grants favor to a young boy named Caṇḍeśa, and

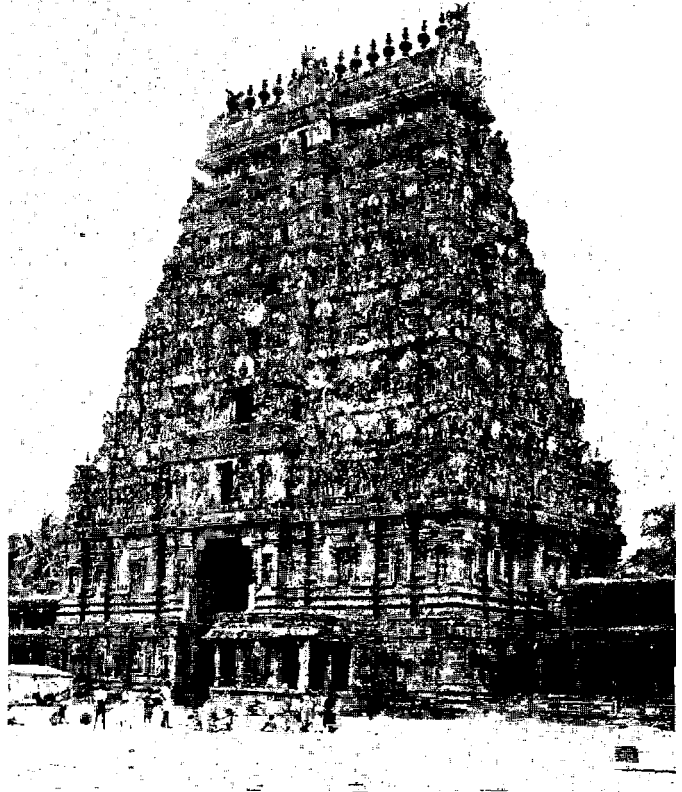


21.28. Śiva conferring grace on Caṇḍeśa, Bṛhadeśvara temple. Gaṅgaikondaḥapuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period, reign of Rājendra I. Ca. third decade eleventh century.

therefore this form of Śiva is called Caṇḍeś-ānugrahamūrti. Caṇḍeśa was a resident of the Cōḷa country and a devotee of Śiva. When he tended cows, they gave so much milk that he used the excess in his worship of Śiva by pouring it over *liṅgas* he made of sand. Thinking that Caṇḍeśa was being wasteful, his father kicked down one of the *liṅgas*, whereupon Caṇḍeśa, without even looking up from his devotions to see who had done this, chopped off his father's leg. Because of Caṇḍeśa's devotion, Śiva granted grace to the boy. In this relief, Śiva, who is accompanied by Pārvatī, places a wreath (symbolizing victory) atop the head of the seated boy. It has been suggested²² that this depiction may have a double meaning, perhaps referring to the victories won by Rājendra I through the grace of Śiva as well. Stylistically, the broad, full forms of the bodies and the lack of articulation of the muscles and bones suggests ties to Deccan sculpture schools rather than to strictly Tamil schools. It is

possible that Rājendra I's northward expeditions had some effect on the art.

By the late Cōḷa period, the basic components of the developing south Indian temple were well established, and included the principal temple, gateways, and subsidiary structures. In contrast with many north Indian developments, in which temples may be discussed as single structures, the developed south Indian temple must be seen as part of a large complex, as in the case of the Śaivite temple at Cidambaram. Largely a product of the reign of Kulōttunga I²³ (1070-1122) and his immediate successors, the temple was founded much earlier and is even mentioned in relationship to certain Pallava kings. The temple compound consists of a series of four enclosures that are arranged in a rectilinear plan, surrounded on all four sides by extremely wide streets used by temple carts (*rathas*) on procession days. The streets of the town have been laid out in such a way that they seem to be extensions of the plan of the temple itself. Indeed, the temple was the dominant focus of the town as well as its symbolic center. Covering an area of about fifty-five acres, the temple measures more than 350 meters by about 315 fifteen meters along the outer (fourth) *prākāra*.²⁴ The fourth *prākāra*, which may be the product of a later building period, defines the temple boundary, but it is at the third enclosure, which has the highest wall, that the sacred precinct of the temple properly begins. Much of the temple has been modified in later times, including the two main shrines, which are apparently largely modern. One of these is dedicated to Śiva as Naṭarāja, Lord of Dance, in commemoration of Śiva's supposed performance of his cosmic dance at the site. The other contains an "ether" (*ākāśa*) *liṅga*, one of five *liṅgas*, each made of one of the five elements of Indic cosmology, enshrined in south Indian temples. It has been suggested that some of the irregularity of the overall plan of the temple complex may be due to the accommodation of the two shrines. The *gopuras* of the third *prākāra*, one of which is illustrated here (Fig. 21.29), and the *Nṛtta Sabhā* (dance hall), a *maṇḍapa* that takes the form of a temple cart (Fig. 21.30), are of the later Cōḷa period.



21.29. South *gopura* from inside Śiva temple compound. Cidambaram, Tamil Nādu, India. Completed by 1272.

The third *prākāra* is not perfectly rectangular in shape. Its four *gopuras* are not arranged to be opposite each other; their positions may have been determined by the location of already existing structures in the compound. The west and east *gopuras* are placed south of center on their sides, possibly to align them with the central shrines, which are off center from the third *prākāra*. Harle has shown that all four *gopuras* of the third *prākāra* were conceived at one time, were part of an overall scheme, and are relatively close in date. The west *gopura*, the earliest, and that on the east were in existence by 1250, and the south *gopura* (Fig. 21.29) was completed by 1272.²⁵ The north *gopura*, often considered to be a product of the Vijayanagar period because of an inscription and portrait statue of the Vijayanagar king Kṛṣṇadevarāya, was probably started in the same period as the others, although it was possibly completed by Kṛṣṇadevarāya in the sixteenth century (closely

following the pattern of the other gateways).²⁶

In plan, design, form, style, iconography, and to some extent size, there is an underlying unity to the four *gopuras*. Each is built of stone up to the main cornice, above which the structure is of brick and plaster. Although the size of the towers varies slightly, each is about forty meters in height and has a seven-story superstructure consisting of *śālās*, pavilions, and other features that were by this time common to both *vimānas* and *gopuras* and is capped by a barrel-vaulted *śālā* (Fig. 21.29). The straight-sided profiles of the towers and the double-storied basement recall the *vimāna* of the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore (Fig. 21.21), supporting Harle's contention that the form of the *gopura* is indeed based on that of a *vimāna*. At the entranceway to each *gopura*, a series of pilasters is subdivided into rectangular units that contain sculptures of dance poses illustrating the dance texts known as the *Nāṭya-śāstras*, evidently as a corollary to the dedi-

cation of the temple to Śiva as Lord of Dance (Nāṭarāja).

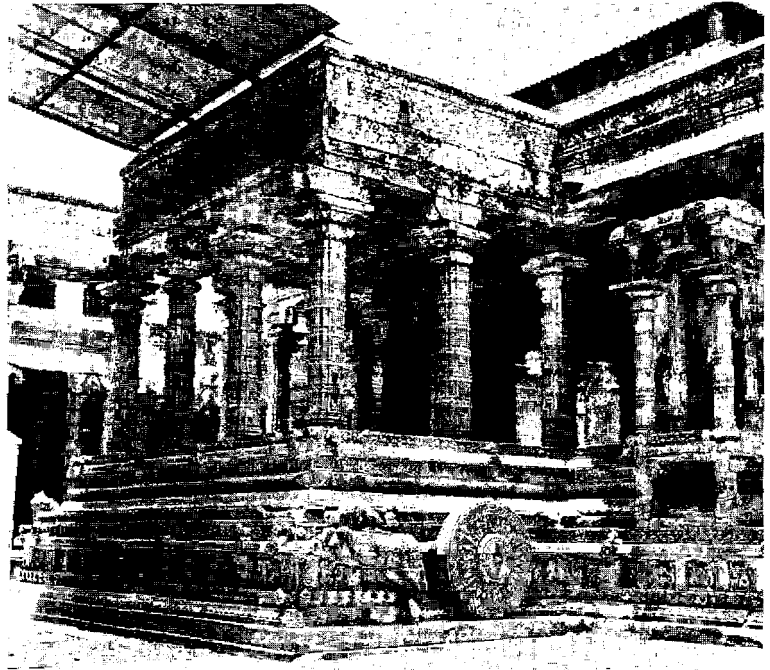
Iconographically, the sculptural programs of the four *gopuras* of the third *prākāra* present a kind of microcosm of Śaivite iconography of the Cōḷa period, for virtually every form of that deity known at that time is presented here. Many of the images are identified by inscribed labels and there is almost no repetition of images on a given *gopura*. Although the scheme of the west *gopura* differs from that of the other three, in general, the programs are similar except for the necessary modifications made for correct placement of directional figures, the *dikpālas*, since these invariably face the cardinal point of which they are regent. Gaṇeśa is invariably placed in the first large niche on the outside of the facade to the right of the entrance and Gaṅgā and Yamunā are always fixed in the same prescribed place. The images are of the mature Cōḷa style, which apparently changed little after the time of Rājarāja I. The deeply carved figures are very three-dimensional, an effect partially created by the deep niches into which they are set.

After the twelfth century, the *gopura* surpassed the *vimāna* as the most dominant visual element of the south Indian temple complex. While the *vimāna* tower was the most prominent element of the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore (Fig. 21.21), clearly overshadowing the still monumental and impressive *gopuras*, at Cidambaram and in later temples the emphasis is increasingly placed on the gateways. A full explanation of this phenomenon is yet to be made, although the addition of extra *prākāras* and *gopuras* was probably simply the result of a desire to add to already existing holy shrines. The increase in size remains a puzzle, and as suggested earlier, cannot simply be ascribed to greater ambitiousness on the part of the makers.

Another feature that began to be prevalent in south Indian temples of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the transformation of *maṇḍapas* into cartlike forms. The *Nṛtta Sabhā* at Cidambaram, possibly built during the reign of Kulōtungga III (1178–1216), is an elaborately carved hall distinguished by the presence of carved wheels and horses, which suggest that the entire structure is a *ratha*, or temple chariot (Fig. 21.30).

Examples of this metaphor in temple architecture exist since at least the early twelfth century, and it is apparently a southern innovation, although its origin is still obscure. Its appearance in the Sun temple at Konārak (Fig. 19.28) is likely to have arisen from southern influence. Probably, the symbolism is associated with the concept of portable images of deities, often made of metal, which were carried in procession in wooden temple carts, the form of which was translated into stone to suggest that the immobile *maṇḍapa* of the temple was such a transporter of the gods.

Such portable metal images, in fact, comprise a major corpus of artistic remains from the Cōḷa period, and a study of Cōḷa-period art is hardly complete without discussion of them. A great deal of work needs to be done before the full implications of chronological, regional, and workshop distinctions are known, for most of the images survive from the period of Rājarāja I and later, after which the Cōḷa figural style changed but little. As in the case of the study of Cōḷa temples, the problem of the artistic debt to the Pallavas is yet to be solved. Metal images generally lack inscriptions that provide information about their place and date of manufacture, and since there is no reason to presume that an image found in a temple was necessarily made in a local workshop due to the portability of such images, great confusion arises when attempting to discuss the schools of casting. A great technical proficiency is visible in the vast majority of Cōḷa-period metal images, which, along with their great iconographic variety and multiplicity, suggests that either an important but unknown earlier tradition existed, or that Cōḷa craftsmen quickly developed their idiom in response to favorable circumstances within that period. The production of metal images on a large scale implies great wealth in the empire, since metals have an intrinsic value and could also be used for jewelry, coins, weapons, and other items. It is interesting that the Cōḷa florescence coincides with the intense production of metal images in Bihar and Bengal under the Pālas and Senas, and one wonders if new deposits of ore were discovered at that time, leading to the burgeoning.



21.30. *Nṛṭṭa Sabhā*, Śiva temple. Cidambaram, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōla period, possibly reign of Kulōttunga III. Ca. late twelfth-early thirteenth century.

Tanjore, Rājarāja's capital, was a major center of metal image production, although there were also workshops in outlying regions. It is likely that the Tanjore workshops produced some of the many images given by Rājarāja I to the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tanjore as described in inscriptions on the base of the temple. The south Indian images differ technically from those in the north since, by and large, south Indian images are solid rather than hollow cast, although both are created by the lost-wax process. Supposedly, south Indian images were made of an alloy of five metals, the *pañcaloha* (usually given as copper, silver, gold, tin, and lead), in contrast with the octo-alloy traditional in the northern regions.²⁷ Finishing details, such as elements of the drapery, were often done by chasing after the work had been cast, and in particular, the image underwent an eye-opening ceremony, in which the details of the eyes were added, on a date selected by astrologers, at which time the god was "awakened" and the sculpture became the god. Often, south Indian metal images have lugs or holes in the pedestals that allow them to be carried with poles in processions (invariably, the images would be clothed and would not

appear ungarbed as they are displayed today in museums). Metal images were often considered "proxies" for the "immovable" deity within the sanctum of the temple, and would be carried in processions and in circumambulation of the temple.

South Indian metal images, like their northern counterparts, often form part of iconographic groups or sets. A typical group consists of a male deity, his consort, and various attendant figures, sometimes enacting a specific subject. For example, a group of figures, four in all, represents Kalyāṇasundara, or the Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Fig. 21.31). The group is from Tiruvenkadu and possibly dates from the early eleventh century, that is, from the period of Rājarāja I. The figures appear in hierarchic scale. Śiva, the largest, holds the hand of Pārvatī, who is approximately equal in size to Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu, is proportionately the same size in relation to Viṣṇu that Pārvatī is to Śiva, the appropriate scale between god and consort. The preservation of this figure group as a unit provides an opportunity to examine four figures of different gods that are of the same date and workshop, and thus establish a certain



21.31. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Kalyāṇasundaramūrti). From Tiruvenkadu, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period, possibly reign of Rājarāja I. Ca. early eleventh century. Bronze. H: 95 cm. (Śiva). Tanjore Art Gallery, Tanjore.

stylistic control. Too often, scholars attempt to analyze style by studying figures that are iconographically dissimilar, in which case it is difficult to differentiate stylistic characteristics from iconographic features. In general, for example, female figures are shown in a relaxed posture while Viṣṇu is normally shown frontally and stiffly posed. An analysis of "style" based on relative relaxation of pose, a valid index in some cases, would thus be inappropriate in such an instance. Stylistically, the facial features and the treatment of the garments and ornaments find close parallels with contemporaneous stone sculptures. This is also clearly seen in an image of Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana (Fig. 21.32) also from Tiruvenkadu in the Tanjore district dating from about the mid-eleventh century. (An inscription dated to the equivalent of A.D. 1048 may refer to this image.²⁸) Compared with the earlier example of the same subject on the Nāgeśvaraśvāmi temple (Fig. 21.11), which revealed

the heritage of Pallava-type naturalism, this figure more closely parallels stone images from the time of Rājarāja I and later in the full forms of the body, broad shoulders, and the rather crisply delineated detail.

Perhaps the subject *par excellence* of the Cōḷa period is the form of Śiva known as Naṭarāja, Lord of the Dance, of which a variety of types appear in metal sculpture. Dancing forms of Śiva (literally, *nṛtta mūrti*) were not new at this time, but the Cōḷa patronage of the Cidambaram temple dedicated to Śiva as Naṭarāja and the production of numerous representations of Naṭarāja during the Cōḷa period signify that the icon had a special meaning in Cōḷa times. Śiva's dancing forms appear in both angry and pacific aspects and depict individual dances he performed on specific occasions, the most famous of which was the dance to destroy the universe in order that it could be reborn again. Identification of the dance depends on both hand and leg positions and



21.32. Śiva as Bhikṣaṣāṇa. From Tiruvenkadu, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. mid-eleventh century, possibly 1048. Bronze. H: 89 cm. Tanjore Art Gallery, Tanjore.



21.33. Śiva Naṭarāja in *catura* pose. From Tiruvaraṅgālam, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. mid-tenth century. Bronze. H: 72 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

on subsidiary or accompanying elements. One of the earliest known Cōḷa Naṭarāja bronzes is from Tiruvaraṅgālam, probably dating from the mid-tenth century, which shows Śiva in the *catura* pose characterized by the two bent legs with the right leg bearing the weight of the body and the left posed with the heel up and the toes on the ground (Fig. 21.33). (A reversal of the leg positions would indicate that Śiva was in the *lalita* pose.) His four arms are gracefully posed; the front left is in the *daṇḍahasta* position ("staff-hand"; sometimes also called *gajahasta* or "elephant-hand" since it resembles the trunk of an elephant); the back left holds a flame; the back right holds a drum (*ḍamaru*); and the front right is in the *abhaya* pose. Śiva dances on the back of the dwarf Apasmāra (Mūyaḷaka), who symbolizes ignorance. This image, in terms of its grace and the lilting effect of the pose, is surpassed by none in South Asian art, and shares, with stone sculptures of the early Cōḷa

period, a sense of inner life and naturalism.

A more commonly depicted form of Śiva Naṭarāja from the Cōḷa period shows the god with his left leg thrust across his body performing the *ānanda tāṇḍava* (dance of bliss), also called the *nāḍānta*,²⁹ as seen in a large image dating from around the twelfth century (Fig. 21.34). The *nāḍānta* is believed to have been performed by Śiva at Cidambaram after vanquishing a group of heretical *ṛṣis*. According to some textual sources, Śiva had taken the form of Bhikṣaṣāṇa, the wandering ascetic, and was accompanied by Viṣṇu in the form of Mohini, the female seductress, when he went to visit the *ṛṣis* to test them. However, the *ṛṣis* attempted to destroy Śiva by creating first a tiger, then a serpent, and then a dwarf (Apasmāra or Mūyaḷaka), each of which Śiva overcame in turn. These creatures symbolize the threefold bonds or fetters to be overcome by the *ṛṣis*, with the tiger representing their beast-nature or untamed minds, the

snake denoting such evil traits as egoism, and the dwarf, their ignorance. It is possible that the three creatures symbolize the three "miserics," the fear of which Śiva is said to destroy during his dance.³⁰ The dance, then, represents the heretics' overcoming of their inherent characteristics, which were obstacles to their realization (and recognition) of Śiva and the resultant end to the cycle of rebirth. Coomaraswamy, in his classic essay on the dance of Śiva, says that the "Essential Significance of Shiva's Dance is threefold: First, it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movement within the Cosmos . . . Secondly, the purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls of men from the Snare of Illusion: Thirdly, the Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe, is within the Heart."³¹ As in the case of most religious icons in South Asia, a profound meaning as well as a narrative or exoteric one is thus implied.

In the typical *nāḍānta* image (Fig. 21.34), Śiva's arms are arranged in the same manner as in the preceding image and he holds the same attributes. The drum, according to one text that Coomaraswamy consulted,³² symbolizes creation, and as a musical instrument is especially appropriate to the dancing mode. The fire, according to the same source, represents destruction, while the *abhaya mudrā* denotes release and the *gajahasta* pose points to the lifted foot, the refuge of the soul. Typically, Śiva dances upon the dwarf whom he has just vanquished, and he wears the defeated snake as an ornament. In textual descriptions, Śiva is said to wear the skin of the tiger that had been created by the ṛṣis as well, although this is often absent in bronze images. However, since it is invariably depicted in paintings, it may have been included as an actual cloth to complete the bronze images, an obvious suggestion, since invariably the metal images were dressed with clothes and adornments during their worship. Thus, the three beasts created by the ṛṣis to deter Śiva would have been an integral part of the total image. A rim of fire surrounds the central image, and this element has been variously interpreted by different authors. On one level, it may be suggested that the rim of fire may symbolize the purifying



21.34. Śiva Natarāja performing the *nāḍānta*. From Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. twelfth century. Bronze. H: 96 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

cremation fire through which the individual is released from this world. The burning ground, according to Coomaraswamy, is not the place where our earthly bodies are cremated, but in the hearts of Śiva's lovers, the "place where the ego is destroyed [the crematorium] signifies the state where illusion and deeds are burnt away."³³ Śiva's *jaṭās* (hair) flow outward toward the rim of flame and bear a representation of the goddess Gaṅgā, an allusion to the descent of the Ganges and perhaps here a symbol of purification as well. Other elements of the image such as the earrings and other adornments also have symbolic meaning, rendering the image a complex assemblage of ideas.

Also popularly represented in Cōḷa metal imagery are depictions of the Kṛṣṇa incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa is sometimes shown as a young boy dancing upon the serpent Kāliya (Fig. 21.35), who had been contaminating the waters of a pond at Vṛṇḍāvana, where Kṛṣṇa lived as a child. By dancing on the hoods of the serpent,



21.35. Kṛṣṇa on Kāliya. From Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. tenth century. Bronze. H: 59 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.

he reduced Kāliya to helplessness, causing the serpent to repent. It is tempting to draw a parallel to the Naṭarāja imagery, although the Kṛṣṇa icon is less complicated, for here Kṛṣṇa defeats Kāliya, whose name is a variant of the word *kāla*, meaning time. In this act, then, Kṛṣṇa is the overcomer of time, and hence the provider of immortality, and his defeat of Kāliya may be compared both to Durgā's defeat of Mahiṣa and Śiva's destruction of the triple fetters by his dance. The image shown dates from around the tenth century.³⁴

In addition to representations of deities and deity groups in Cōḷa bronzes, a number of human devotees and saints are also popularly portrayed. One of the most dramatic of such images shows the female Śaivite saint Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār, whose emaciated form and hideous appearance testify to the severity of the penances and devotions she performed in order to see the beatific vision of Śiva dancing (Fig. 21.36). Two-armed, as is general for human devotees, she



21.36. Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār. From Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. twelfth century. Bronze. H: 41.5 cm. Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City (Nelson Fund).

holds a pair of cymbals and appears absorbed in her devotions. Her bony body, scant garb, and fangs suggest the negation of physical beauty in favor of the vision of the divine.

Another metal image shows the saint Māṇikka Vāsahar (Māṇikka Vāchaka), who is believed to have practiced austerities at Cidambaram and miraculously to have given the gift of speech to the mute daughter of a Cōḷa king (Fig. 21.37). The image dates from about the twelfth century, although the issue of when the saint himself actually lived is debated. Māṇikka Vāsahar's devotional appeal is among the strongest of the Tamil Śaivite saints, possibly because the hymns he composed give great importance to the expression of emotion. In one verse, for example, he implores Śiva's blessing:

O Śiva wreathed with honeyed blossoms,
 "When shall come the morn
 When Thou wilt grant Thy grace to me?"
 I cry with anguish torn.³⁵



21.37. Mānikka Vāsahar. From Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. twelfth century. Bronze. H: 51 cm. National Museum, New Delhi.



21.38. Bodhisattva Maitreya. From Nāgapaṭṭiṇam, Tamil Nādu, India. Cōḷa period. Ca. eleventh century. Bronze. H: 29 cm. Madras Government Museum, Madras.

In this image, as in others of saints from the late Cōḷa period, something of the naturalism and grace found in early Cōḷa-period art seems to persist, for the figure stands in a relaxed (though standardized) pose and the artist has taken great care to emphasize the smooth contours of the body.

Buddhist metal images, though less well known than those of the Hindus, were also produced during the Cōḷa period. At Nāgapaṭṭiṇam in the Tanjore district, which had been an important Buddhist site at least since the Pallava period, numerous metal images of the Cōḷa period were found in hoards in the monastery

area and near the Chinese brick pagoda.⁸⁶ Many of the images show a striking similarity in style to contemporaneous Hindu sculptures, as demonstrated by a figure of Maitreya (Fig. 21.38). This image shows the bodhisattva holding a rosary in his upper right hand; his upper left hand may once have held a *nāgakesara* flower, while the lower left hand is in *varada mudrā*, and the lower right is in the *abhaya mudrā*. He is recognized by the *stūpa* in his headdress. In the treatment of the facial features and details of the costume and jewelry, the sculpture strongly resemble Cōḷa Hindu images of about the eleventh century.

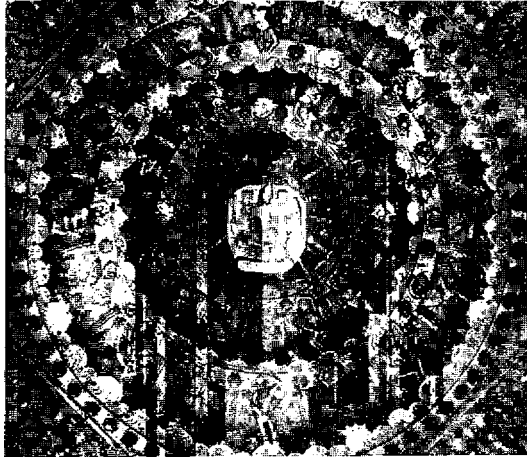
CONCLUSION

The Cōḷa period may be seen as one of considerable artistic unity, yet a great deal of richness and diversity is also present. Within the Cōḷa period, south Indian art underwent a major alteration.

While works from the early Cōḷa period maintain something of the simplicity, naturalism, and more personalized scale that were characteristic of early south Indian idioms, as those of the

Pallavas and other dynasties, later CōĪa works are often marked by a greater formality in the depiction of figures and by monumentality and ambitiousness in the architectural schemes, such as the tall *vimānas* and *gopuras* of temples. By the late CōĪa period, the Hindu pantheon manifested

in art had greatly expanded and many forms that had not been seen earlier began to appear. In contrast with a number of contemporary art schools in the north, virtually no erotic subjects appear in CōĪa art.



Detail of 22.21.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Later Deccan Schools

Although many of the most famous and important monuments of South Asian art are located in the Deccan, the artistic developments of the region as a whole, from the earliest to the latest periods, are rarely discussed and poorly understood. At least since the time of the Early Western Calukyas, monuments in purely northern and southern styles were built in the Deccan, a fact that is not surprising considering the geographic position of the region. In addition, many temples were built that bore features of both northern and southern types at once along with individualizing characteristics that defy traditional classification. These temples belong to what must be considered to be a broadly based "Deccan style," within which, of course, there is considerable variety. It is likely that the Deccan style encompasses the *vesara* form described in textual sources.¹ Frequently, these texts describe the three major architectural types of ancient India as *nāgara*, *drāviḍa*, and *vesara*. *Nāgara*, which literally means "pertaining to the city" (possibly indicating the origins of

the form), is widely accepted as referring to the temple types most commonly found throughout northern India; *drāviḍa*, as the name implies, refers to the southern, or Dravidian, style; *vesara* literally means "mule" and, by implication, a hybrid, and thus might be an apt description of the mixed architectural forms of the Deccan. However, it is difficult to apply the term to specific examples instead of just to a generic type, although the *vesara* designation is usually assumed to be most appropriate to the buildings of the Later Calukyas of Kalyāṇī and the Hoysaḷas.

In spite of the mixed character of Deccan art, to view it as simply a bridge between the northern and southern styles or as no more than a combination of those two better understood style groups would be to overlook the significant developments in both temple building and sculpture that are preserved in the Deccan. Within this geographic area, numerous formal distinctions may be made, at least some of which are dependent upon regional factors. Late

sculpture styles of the western Deccan, for example, tend to depict a full-bodied, robust figure type, probably reflective of earlier traditions in that area such as that of the Vākātakas. Conversely, in the east, following the earlier patterns established under the Sātavāhanas and Ikṣvākus, sculpted figures tend to be lean and

slender. The full ramifications of the stylistic developments of the Deccan are yet to be made known and it is possible at this time only to provide a brief outline of the major developments. As in other regional styles, religious patronage and other factors had great bearing on the evolution of the forms.

THE WESTERN GAṄGAS OF TAḶAKĀD (TENTH CENTURY)

From the second to the eleventh century A.D., kings of the so-called Gaṅga line ruled over parts of what is now Karṇāṭaka (formerly Mysore) state, usually as feudatories of more powerful ruling families. One branch of this family, the Eastern Gaṅgas, came to be powerful in Orissa and, as we have seen, distinguished themselves through the impressive monuments they built. The Western Gaṅgas had their capital at Taḷakāḍ and were prominent particularly in the tenth century. This family played an important role in the politics of the Deccan during the last period of Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule but were subjugated in 1004 when the Cōlas captured Taḷakāḍ.

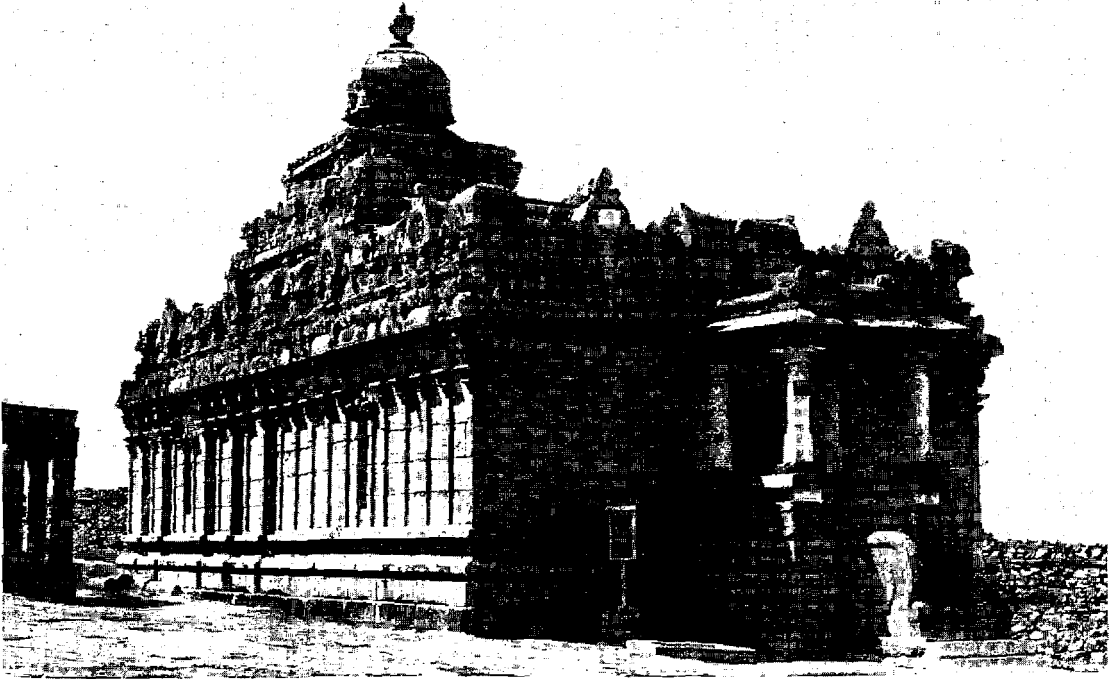
Historical and political information about the Gaṅgas survives in the numerous hero stones (*vīraśālas*) produced to commemorate the deaths of warriors and members of the royal line in keeping with a practice that was prevalent throughout the Deccan since early times. One example, from Doḍḍahundi in Karṇāṭaka, shows the death of the Western Gaṅga king Nītimārga (II) and dates from around 920 (Fig. 22.1). Reclining on a couch, the king is attended by two male figures. The rather animated forms of the three figures, including that of the dying king, are typical of Western Gaṅga hero stone depictions, as are the costumes, consisting primarily of loincloths, and the hairstyle, with its distinctive topknot.

Important Western Gaṅga remains are found rather extensively at their capital city, Taḷakāḍ, although many of the monuments are in ruins and, in general, none have been widely published or studied. Instead, the Western Gaṅgas are perhaps best known for a number of structures and carvings at the Jain holy site of Śravaṇa

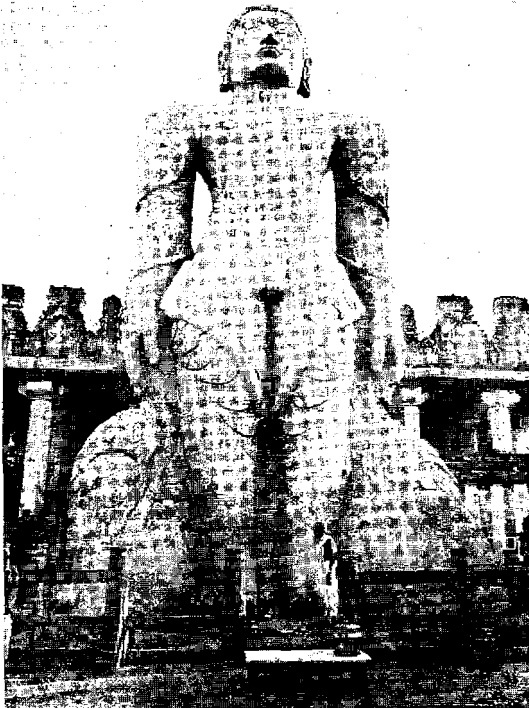


22.1. Hero stone showing death of King Nītimārga (II). From Doḍḍahundi, Karṇāṭaka, India. Western Gaṅga period. Ca. 920. Granite. H: 148.5 cm. State Archaeological Museum, Bangalore.

Belgoḷa in Karṇāṭaka, a center reputed to have been important at least since the time of the Maurya dynasty. In 982, the minister of the Western Gaṅga king Rājamālla IV, Cāmuṅḍa Rāya, dedicated an impressive Jain temple at Śravaṇa Belgoḷa, commonly known as the Cāmuṅḍa Rāya *basti* (Fig. 22.2), and at the same place in the following year, 983, he dedicated the colossal statue of Bāhubalī, popularly called Gommateśvara (Fig. 22.3).² A devout Jain,



22.2. Cāmuṇḍa Rāya temple from southeast. Śravaṇa Belgola, Karnāṭaka, India. Western Gaṅga period. Dedicated in 982.



22.3. Bāhubali (Gommaṭeśvara). Śravaṇa Belgola, Karnāṭaka, India. Western Gaṅga period. Dedicated in 983. H: ca. 18 m.

Cāmuṇḍa Rāya was a distinguished general, a knowledgeable gentleman who knew a number of languages, and the author of the *Cāmuṇḍa Rāya Purāṇa*, a work dated 978 in the local Kannada language. The granite temple (*basti*) is essentially southern in form, as seen in the tiered superstructure over the shrine and the pilastered walls. The absence of figure sculpture between the pilasters or in niches in the walls is a feature often found in Jain temples in the Deccan and the south, although is not exclusive to them. Such treatment continues one trend visible at least since the time of the Early Western Calukyas (Fig. 15.1).

The colossal statue of Gommaṭeśvara (Fig. 22.3) is said to be the largest free-standing monolithic sculpture in the world, reaching a height of about eighteen meters. By virtue of its location on top of a hill, it can be seen for great distances around. In form, the figure is characterized by high, square shoulders, curly hair, a flat nose, thick lips, and a small waist.

As in the case of many other Jain images, a stiffness pervades the statue. This, however, is not a stylistic or artistic defect but rather reflects the communicative content of the image. It might be suggested that the dry, sometimes lifeless, effect of Jain art is due to the fact that the Jain saints and *tirthaṅkaras* are considered to be beyond the material, sensual world and its attachments. Instead, they represent the realm of pure objectivity. Gommateśvara, the son of Ṛṣabhanātha, the first *tirthaṅkara*, was a Jain

saint who stood so long in meditation that vines grew up around his unmoving body. His posture is a specific standing meditation pose known as *kāyotsarga*, which is characterized by the firmly planted feet, unbent knees and arms, and the positioning of the arms so that they do not touch the body. The slight smile on the face of the saint indicates his inner tranquility, and it does not interrupt the sense of concentration that the image conveys.

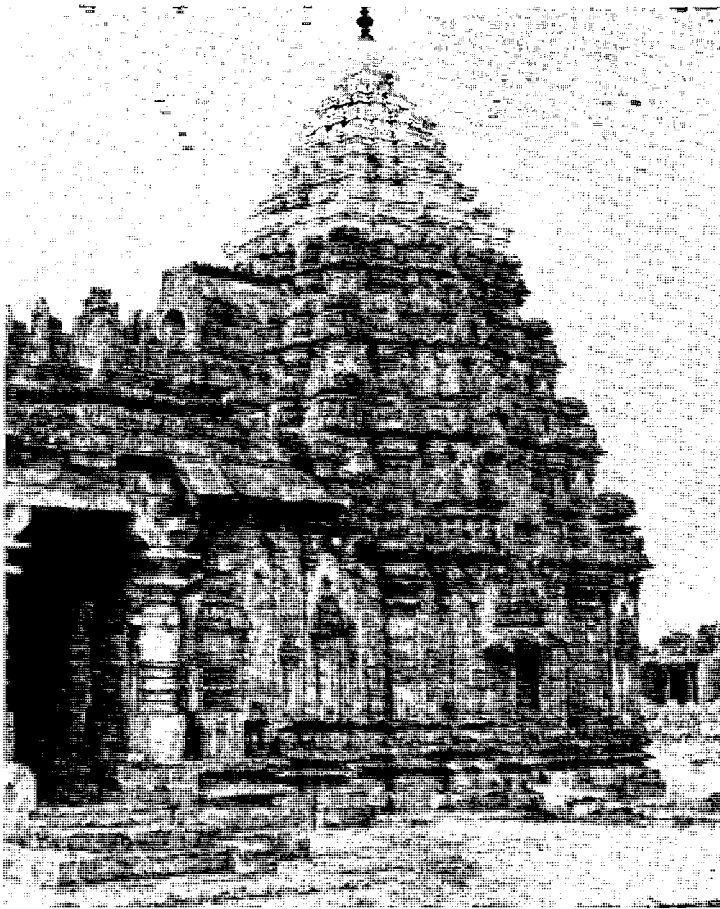
THE LATER CĀLUKYAS OF KALYĀNĪ (973 TO CA. 1189)

In approximately 973, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, who had dominated the Deccan for more than two hundred years, were finally overthrown by Taila II, founder of the Later Cālukya line, ruling from Kalyānī in what is now Āndhra Pradesh. This family claimed descent from the main line of the Early Western Cālukyas of Bādāmī. Except for a brief interregnum of approximately twenty-five years, when their Kalacuri feudatories wrested control from them, the Later Cālukyas of Kalyānī remained in power until around 1189. The Later Cālukyas of Kalyānī are important not only politically and artistically, but also because one of their kings, Vikramāditya II, was the patron of the famous poet Bilhaṇa, author of the *Caurapañcāsikā*.

The art of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyānī is often seen as a kind of link between the art traditions of the Early Western Cālukyas and those of the Hoysāḷas. This is suggested by the fact that some of their earlier monuments are built in sandstone, continuing the earlier tradition, while the later ones are invariably made of a fine-grained chloritic schist that lent itself to finer carving and greater detail and paved the way for the intricacy of Hoysāḷa sculpture. However, Later Cālukya art and architecture is more than just a link between two other art schools; it represents a widespread tradition that had important effects on Deccan art. More than fifty extant temples have been identified as belonging to the Later Cālukya period, ranging in location from Āndhra Pradesh in the east to Kārṇāṭaka in the west, with many

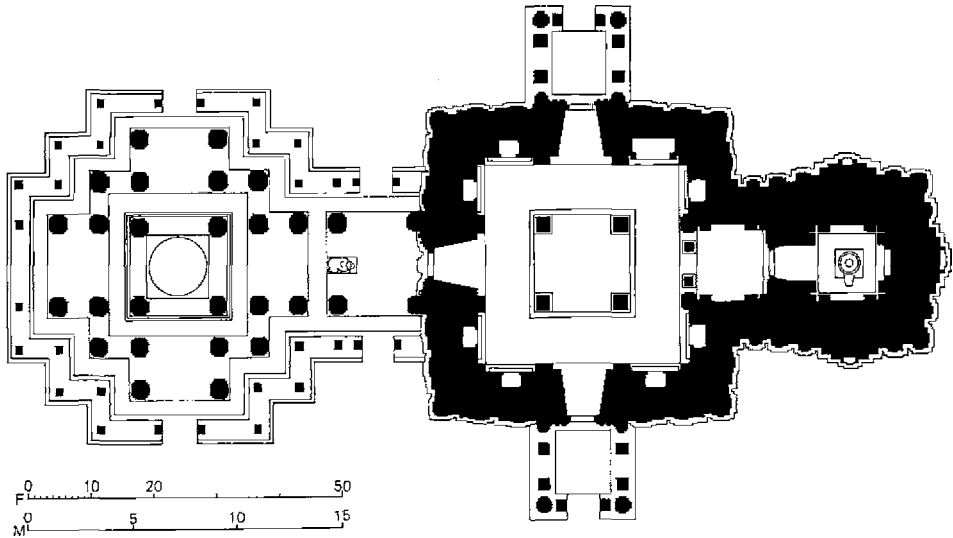
of them concentrated in the vicinity of Gadag, not far from the Early Western Cālukya sites of Aihole and Bādāmī. Unfortunately, few of these temples have received much notice, and none has been fully studied and integrated into the body of knowledge concerned with South Asian artistic developments. Further, Kalyānī, the dynastic capital, which undoubtedly contained some of the most important art monuments, is largely in ruins and has not been reconstructed. Thus, though the importance of Later Cālukya art is evident, it is not fully understood.

However, the Mahādeva temple at Iṭṭagi, near Gadag, exemplifies the developed style of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyānī (Fig. 22.4). Built by Mahādeva, a military officer of Vikramāditya VI, and called "emperor among temples" (*devālaya cakravartī*) in its foundation inscription, the temple was dedicated in Śaka 1034 (A.D. 1112).³ The main structure faces east and is the central unit of a group of structures on a terrace. It consists of a pillared hall with a porch on each side of it, an antechamber, and shrine (Fig. 22.5). A pillared *mandapa* to the east of it completes the temple scheme. The antechamber located between the pillared hall and the shrine is not visible from the exterior except that it is demarcated above by a projecting element of the superstructure atop the shrine. The superstructure is tiered in typically southern fashion although the uppermost portions have been rebuilt and their original appearance is not known. Increased elaboration in the treatment of the



22.6. Detail, wall treatment of Mahadeva temple. Ittagi, Karnāṭaka, India. Period of Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi. Dedicated in Śaka era 1034 (A.D. 1112). ▷

22.4. Mahadeva temple, rear sections from north. Ittagi, Karnāṭaka, India. Period of Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi. Dedicated in Śaka era 1034 (A.D. 1112).



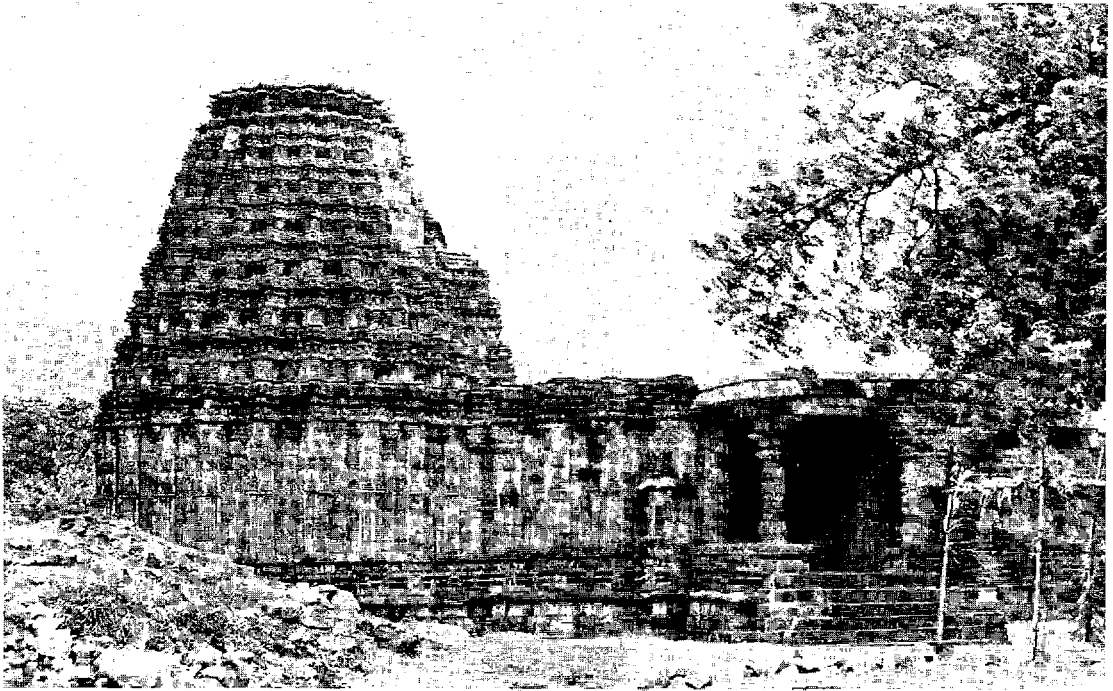
22.5. Plan of Mahadeva temple. Ittagi, Karnāṭaka, India. Period of Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi. Dedicated in Śaka era 1034 (A.D. 1112).



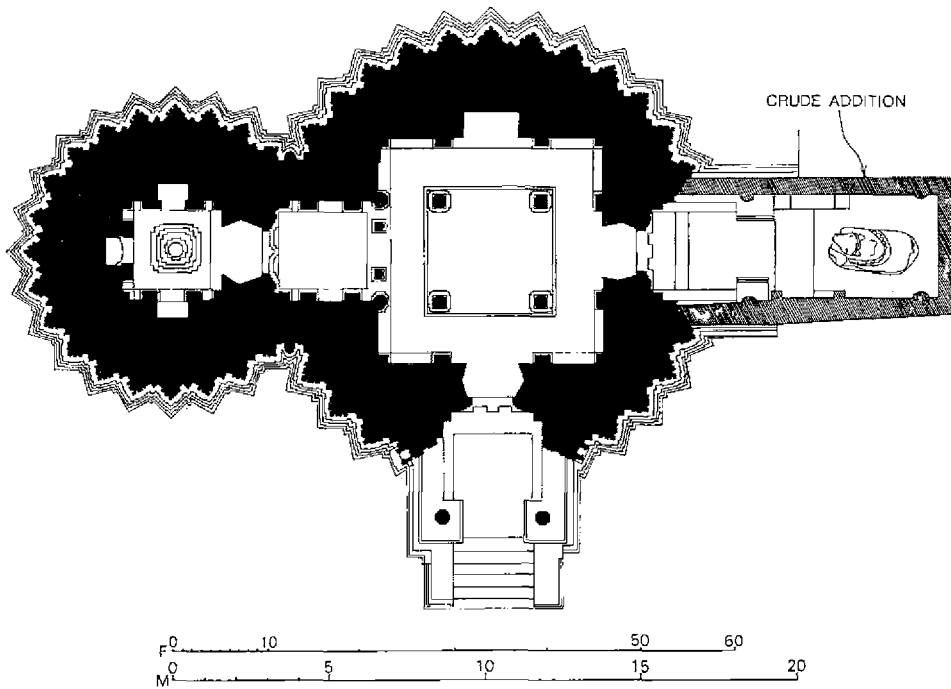
exterior wall surfaces, moldings, and superstructure indicate a departure from Early Western Calukya traditions and anticipate the Hoysala developments. Wall treatment includes pilasters, deeply carved niches (many of which have tower forms above them as repetitions of the main form of the *vimāna* itself), and figurative sculpture (Fig. 22.6). Because of the projecting bays on the *vimāna* especially, the form of the structure appears to be scalloped rather than simply rectangular. The large *maṇḍapa* to the east of the temple originally contained more than sixty pillars. Many of them, like some on the exterior porches of the temple, are so perfectly shaped that it is sometimes said that they were lathe-turned, a claim also made regarding many other pillared structures in the Deccan. Like almost all temples of the Later Cālukyas, this structure does not have an interior passageway for circumambulation.

An approximately contemporary or perhaps slightly later example of a Later Cālukya monument is the Dodda Basappa temple at Dambal, also near Gadag (Fig. 22.7). Unlike other structures ascribed to the Later Cālukyas, this temple has a stellate plan (Fig. 22.8), similar conceptually to a type frequently seen in Hoysala monuments (Fig. 22.38). However, it differs from even the Hoysala examples, in which only the *vimāna* is stellate, for here both the *maṇḍapa* and *vimāna* are stellate. In this case, the sanctuary is based upon a twenty-four pointed star and the *maṇḍapa* upon a thirty-four pointed star, although the actual number of points is smaller, since some are omitted due to the juncture between the separate halls and the addition of entry stairs into the *maṇḍapa*. The angles of the stellate plan are right, not acute, indicating that the design of each star was formed by rotating a square around a central point. Stellate temples were not an innovation at this time, as examples are known from much earlier periods of Indic architecture. However, the complexity and richness of the form is characteristic of the late style to be brought to culmination under the Hoysalas. Temples such as this and the previous example clearly suggest something of the combination of northern and southern elements that characterizes much of Deccan architecture and may represent the *vesara* type. The tiered treatment of the superstructure of the *vimāna*, for example, is clearly southern in origin, yet the profile created by the diminished masonry courses and delicate carving suggests the typical northern-style *śikhara* (Fig. 22.7). In particular, this superstructure has a soaring and vertical profile, reminiscent of northern forms. The wall pattern, consisting of pilasters, niches, and other repeating architectural elements, but generally lacking figurative sculpture, indicates associations with southern Indian architectural styles.

The sculpture style of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi evolved over time and was subject to regional variation, just as was the case in other important art traditions of South Asia. An example of figure sculpture is found in a carving from Jalasangavi in Karṇāṭaka, which dates from around 1100 and depicts a woman writing a Sanskrit inscription in the Kannaḍa script (Fig.



22.7. Doḍḍa Basappā temple. Dambal, Karṇāṭaka, India. Period of Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi. Early twelfth century.



22.8. Plan of Doḍḍa Basappā temple. Dambal, Karṇāṭaka, India. Period of Later Calukyas of Kalyāṇi. Early twelfth century.



22.9. Woman writing. From Jalsangavi, Karnāṭaka, India. Period of Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī. Ca. 1100. Stone. Museum of Art and Archaeology, Kannaḍa Research Institute, Karnāṭaka University, Dharwar.

22.9). Interestingly, the inscription itself mentions the name of King Vikramāditya VI (1076–1126) of the Cālukya family and thereby provides the approximate date. Under Vikramāditya VI, during whose reign the Mahādeva temple at Ittagi was built, the Later Cālukyas were said to have experienced a florescence in art and literature. This sculpture, with its epigraph cleverly integrated into the composition and story, demonstrates the skill of the Later Cālukya artist in representing a figure in a twisted, complicated pose. The generous body proportions suggest ties to other western Deccan styles of earlier periods, as seen in the round hips and thighs, but the almost contorted pose and profile view of the face suggest associations with northern sculpture styles of the Solāṅkis or

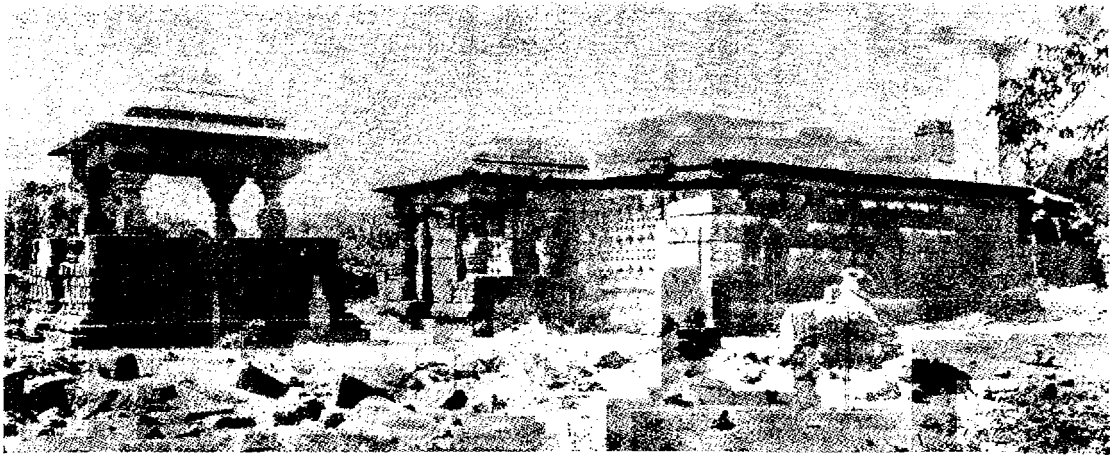
Candellas. Heavily laden with ornamentation and a jeweled girdle, the figure anticipates many of the carvings of the Hoysāḷa dynasty.

The downfall of the Later Cālukyas was facilitated by the rise of the Kalacuris of Kalyāṇī, who were scions of the Cedi Kalacuris (Haihayas). These later Kalacuris seized control from the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī from about 1156 to 1181, and by 1189, the Cālukyas had been weakened sufficiently to allow two other families to rise to power: the Yādavas, in the northern part of the empire, and the Hoysāḷas, in the south. A third dynasty, that of the Kākatiyas, had already claimed some of the eastern realms of the Cālukyas. The Kalacuri interregnum, though brief, was important culturally since this family patronized the so-called Liṅgāyat or Viraśaiva religious movement. In particular, a revival of this religious group was led by one Basava (1125–70?), who became prime minister under the Kalacuri king Bijjala (1156–68). Still a popular religious force in this region of India today, the Viraśaivas are ardent devotees of Śiva who may have exerted what might be considered a “negative” influence on temple building and art in this region, since they do not believe in building temples or in worshiping in them. Instead, each devotee wears a *liṅga* in a small case around his neck and thus each carries his own sign of the god. In some respects, the Viraśaivas may have been influenced by the Islamic religion, which had deeply penetrated portions of India by the twelfth century. For example, in contrast to the usual Hindu practice of cremation, the Viraśaivas bury their dead; in addition, they do not believe in a caste system or in the privilege of the *brāhmins*, and they believe in the unity of a single god, Śiva. Further, they reject traditional rituals and Hindu forms of worship. It is possible that the iconoclastic concepts of the Muslims were known by the Viraśaivas and led to their anti-temple and anti-image practices. While it is of course not possible to talk of Viraśaiva art or architecture because of this, in the context of Indic art, such a religious sect is important as a reminder that the material objects that were originally produced and those that remain provide only a partial picture of cultural life in ancient India.

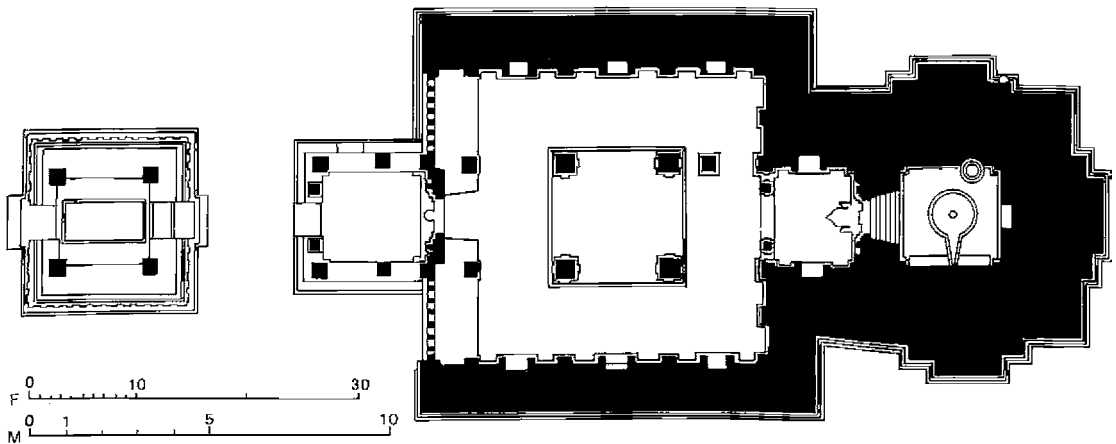
THE YĀDAVAS OF DEVAGIRI (1191 TO 1311)

Upon the collapse of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī, the Yādava line was founded in 1191, taking over the northern part of the former Later Cālukya lands. The Yādava capital was at Devagiri (Daulatābād) in Mahārāṣṭra in the western Deccan. At times, their power was very great, for they made conquests to the north in Gujarāt, thus augmenting their holdings. Many of the temples found in the regions of their control bear similarities to other

regional styles, such as those of Gujarāt and the Deccan Cālukya types. However, perhaps the most characteristic of the Yādava temple types is the so-called Hemādpanṭi style, named after Hemādra, a minister to the last two Yādava kings, Mahādeva (1260-71) and Rāmacandra (1271-1311), who reigned until the Muslims conquered them. Hemādra is credited with having had three hundred such temples built. Hemādpanṭi-style temples are characterized by



22.10. Siddheśvara temple. Limpangāon, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Period of Yādavas of Devagiri. Ca. late thirteenth century.



22.11. Plan of Siddheśvara temple. Limpangāon, Mahārāṣṭra, India. Period of Yādavas of Devagiri. Ca. late thirteenth century.

their heavy form and by the fact that their exteriors are nearly totally devoid of sculptural embellishment. This undecorated style apparently gained widespread popularity, replacing the much more elaborate structures that had been built previously. Such a reversal in the general trends of Indic art and architecture during this period deserves an explanation beyond the usually held view that the new form resulted from economic constraints. It might be suggested, instead, that the popularity of the Hemādṣanti style may be linked to the fact that the Yādava kingdom was increasingly threatened by Muslim forces coming into western India and the Deccan and that the style was chosen since the plain exteriors might help deter the usual iconoclastic fervor of the Muslim attackers. Temples without figure sculpture on the exterior were not new at this time, since a popular style in the Deccan and portions of the south was characterized by pilastered walls or other simple exteriors. The Hemādṣanti style, then, should not be viewed as totally innovative, but rather a revival or increased popularity of and variation on earlier architectural types.

An excellent example of the Hemādṣanti type of temple is the Siddheśvara temple at Lim-pangāon, probably a product of the late thirteenth century (Fig. 22.10). Although the roofing may be a replacement of a later date and the original form may have had greater height, the overall appearance of the main temple and the detached Nandi pavilion preceding it is squat and heavy. External decoration is confined to string courses, moldings, pillars, and to the pierced window screens with primarily geometric designs that ultimately suggest associations with Early Western Calukya monuments such as the Lād Khān temple at Aihole (Fig. 15.23). The simple plan (Fig. 22.11), consisting of the detached Nandi pavilion, a small porch, wide *maṇḍapa* with four central pillars, an antechamber, and the shrine itself also suggests ties to earlier architectural modes. The rectangular *maṇḍapa*, with flat exterior walls, and the treatment of the exterior of the shrine wall, relieved only by two projections on each side, is also unusual compared to temples of a comparably late date in other parts of South Asia.

THE KĀKĀTIYAS OF HANAMKONḌA AND WĀRANGAL (CA. MID-ELEVENTH CENTURY TO CA. 1325)

Profiting from the weakness of both the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī and the Cōḷas, the Kākātiyas rose to prominence in the eleventh century. Their empire, with its capitals in Āndhra Pradesh, first at Hanamkonḍa and later at Wārangal, about six kilometers away, at its greatest extended as far south as Kāñcīpuram, the old Pallava capital. Thus, while the Yādavas gained the northern part of the Later Cālukya lands, the Kākātiyas were the inheritors of the eastern realms. However, during the time of Sultān Ghiyās-ud-Dīn Tughluq (r. 1320-25), the Kākātiyas, like many other Hindu dynasties, were forced to submit to the Muslim rulers. This eastern Deccan dynasty, however, has left ample remains of architecture, sculpture, and even some painting, enabling us to reconstruct many of the major artistic developments of this period. Ties to the artistic styles of the east coast of south-

ern India, with their characteristically slender figure type traceable from the period of the Sātavāhana and Ikṣvāku dynasties through the art of the Pallavas, Cōḷas, and others, are highly visible in the art of the Kākātiyas, indicating the persistence of a strong local tradition. In addition, similarities to other late Hindu styles of the Deccan may also be seen, perhaps reflecting the political ties of the Kākātiyas with other Deccan ruling families such as the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī, whose hegemony had reached into the Āndhra Pradesh region. In contrast to most other Indic art schools, a surprisingly large number of Kākātiya monuments can be referred to by specific dates by inscriptional evidence. Because of this, and the fact that relatively few of them have been fully studied, Kākātiya temples are ripe candidates for future study, as it is expected that they could provide a very

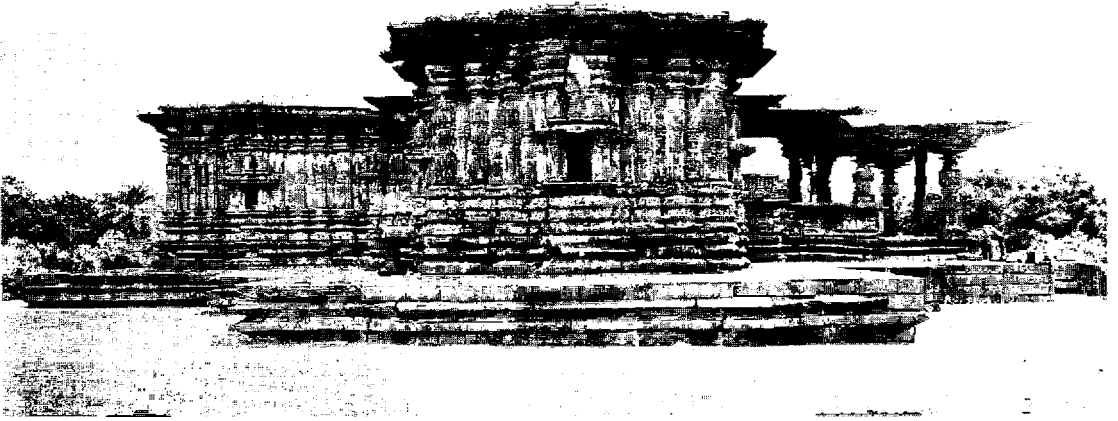


22.12. Detached *mandapa*, "Thousand-Pillared" temple, from north. Hanamkonda, Andhra Pradesh, India. Kākatiya period, reign of Rudra I. Built in 1162.

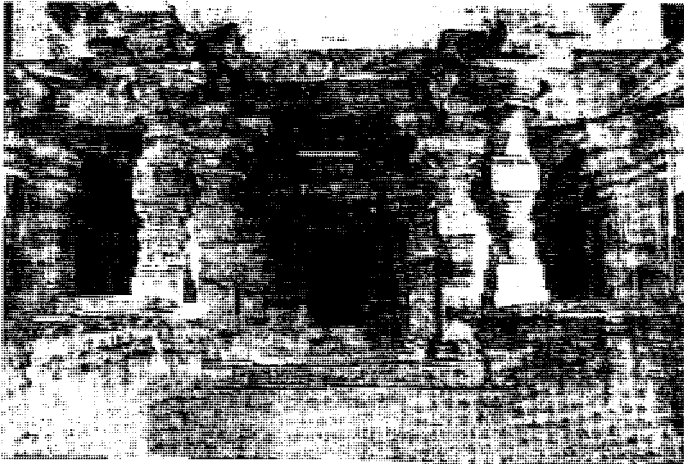
well documented sequence of Deccan buildings primarily of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the greatest period of building activity.

In general, Kākatiya temples are either single-shrine or triple-shrine (*trikūṭa*) in plan. The so-called Thousand-Pillared temple at Hanamkonda, (Figs. 22.12–16), the early Kākatiya capital, displays the *trikūṭa* format. Built in 1162 by King Rudra I of the Kākatiya family, the temple was dedicated to three deities: Rudrēśvara (Śiva), Vāsudēvara (Viṣṇu), and Śri Sūrya-Dēvara (Sūrya), as known from an inscription⁴ on a pillar at the modestly sized east gate of the large, walled compound that encloses the temple. The two major structures of the temple, a detached *mandapa* and the temple proper, are connected by a relatively narrow platform that has a representation of a reclining Nandi of enormous size on it (Fig. 22.12). The name Thousand-Pillared temple is a misnomer, for the temple proper does not have this many pillars at all and the detached *mandapa* has only around three hundred. The exterior walls of the detached *mandapa* (Fig. 22.12) and the main temple proper (Fig. 22.13) are exquisitely carved with intricate moldings and projections

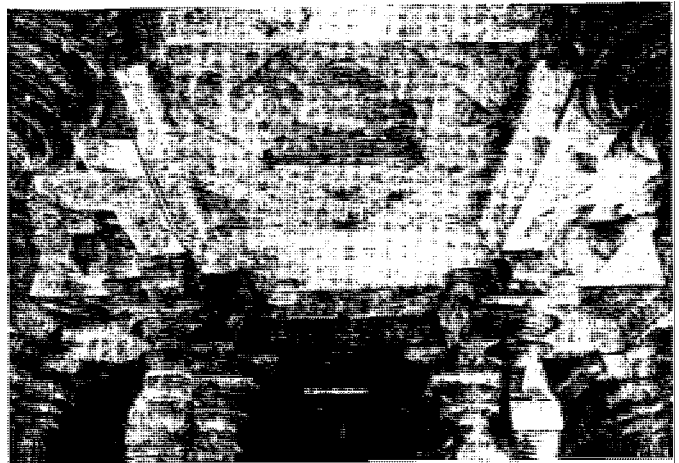
on both the plinth and walls. While not devoid of figurative sculpture, the main motifs consist of architectural forms including miniature temple spires, suggesting similarities to many other Deccan styles. Unfortunately, the superstructures over all three shrines are missing and their original appearance is not known. It is in the interior, however, that the carvings are richest, for there, virtually every stone surface has been carved and polished to create highly intricate and refined patterns. A view into the central *mandapa* of the main temple, from which the three shrines radiate, from the entrance porch (Fig. 22.14) shows the ornateness of the carvings. In particular, the pillar designs, typical of many Deccan substyles, are an important element. Like many temples of the various northern styles, and those following the tradition of the Early Western Calukyas in the Deccan, the ceilings are also elaborately carved in primarily geometric and foliate patterns (Fig. 22.15). Some of the most beautiful carvings are those of the entranceways to the three shrines (Fig. 22.16), each of which has an outer pilastered portico leading to its own antechamber and then the door to the shrine itself. Ample light is



22.13. Main structure, "Thousand-Pillared" temple, from west. Hanamkonda, Andhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Rudra I. Built in 1162.



22.14. View into central *mandapa*, main structure, "Thousand-Pillared" temple, from entrance porch. Hanamkonda, Andhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Rudra I. Built in 1162.



22.15. Carved ceiling, central *mandapa*, main temple, "Thousand-Pillared" temple. Hanamkonda, Andhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Rudra I. Built in 1162.



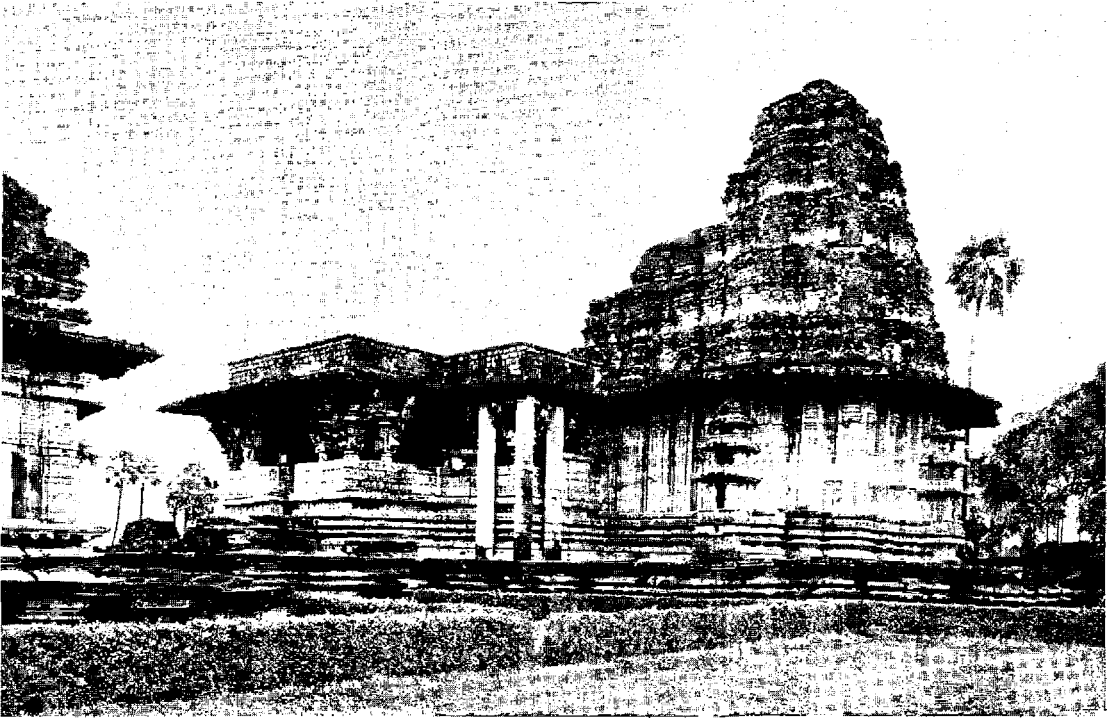
22.16. Entrance to one of the shrines, main temple, "Thousand-Pillared" temple. Hanamkoṇḍa, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kākatiya period, reign of Rudra I. Built in 1162.

admitted into the central *maṇḍapa* of the temple by porches at the junctures between the three shrines and the entrance porch.

At Pālampēt, about sixty kilometers northeast of Hanamkoṇḍa, further important remains of Kākatiya builders may be found. Today, Pālampēt is simply a small village, although during the Kākatiya period, it was a vital center of considerable importance. An inscription dated in the year 1135 (Śaka), equivalent to A.D. 1213, on a pillar at Pālampēt reveals that the city was founded by Recerla Rudra, a general for the king, Gaṇapati (r. 1198–1261).⁵ Rudra's inscription also reveals his gift of a temple at Pālampēt, the renowned and justly celebrated Rāmappa temple (also called Rudreśvara after Rudra himself, with an intended double play on the word as the temple is dedicated to Śiva as Rudra). Often said to represent the high point of Deccan architecture of this period, though it is not fully

typical of Kākatiya structures, the Rāmappa temple is a single-shrine temple within a large, walled enclosure that also contains a number of smaller structures. (Fig. 22.17). The temple faces east and consists of a pillared *maṇḍapa* with large projecting porches on three sides, an antechamber, and the shrine proper, all of which rest upon a large plinth that repeats the roughly cruciform shape of the combined sections of the temple. From the exterior, the porches and *maṇḍapa* appear sharply angular with their projections and flat roof, in contrast with the *vimāna* with its brick tower on the west. Like other Deccan examples, the tower reveals ties to both northern and southern forms, having the tiered arrangement of southern towers but the complexity, detail, and overall shape of northern *śikharas*.

One of the most notable features of this temple is the quality of the carvings on the exterior and interior of the monument, particularly those on the porches and under the roof. Ultimately a continuation of the Early Western Calukya practice of using bracket figures, the Pālampēt temple bears a series of delicately carved, finely finished, and highly polished brackets with rampant lion and female figures, many of which are nearly life-size (Fig. 22.18). By this time, the motif of the beautiful woman had been codified into the so-called Alasā Kanyā or "Indolent Maiden" type. The *Śilpa Prakāśa*, an architectural text probably formulated by this time, treats sixteen of the most important of these, including types well known in earlier artistic contexts, such as a maiden in a *torāṇa* or doorway (Fig. 7.1), a girl holding a mirror, the image of a mother, a dancer, and a girl playing with a parrot (Fig. 8.28). According to the *Śilpa Prakāśa*, the Alasā is vital to architecture, for without the image of a woman, the temple will bear no fruit. (This concept does not necessarily explain the presence of such figures on earlier monuments.) The example from Pālampēt (Fig. 22.18) shows the typical vitality of the figures, each of which is extraordinarily slender (following the Āndhra region stylistic preference) and has very smooth skin, which is played off visually by the detail of the ornamentation and garments. Many of



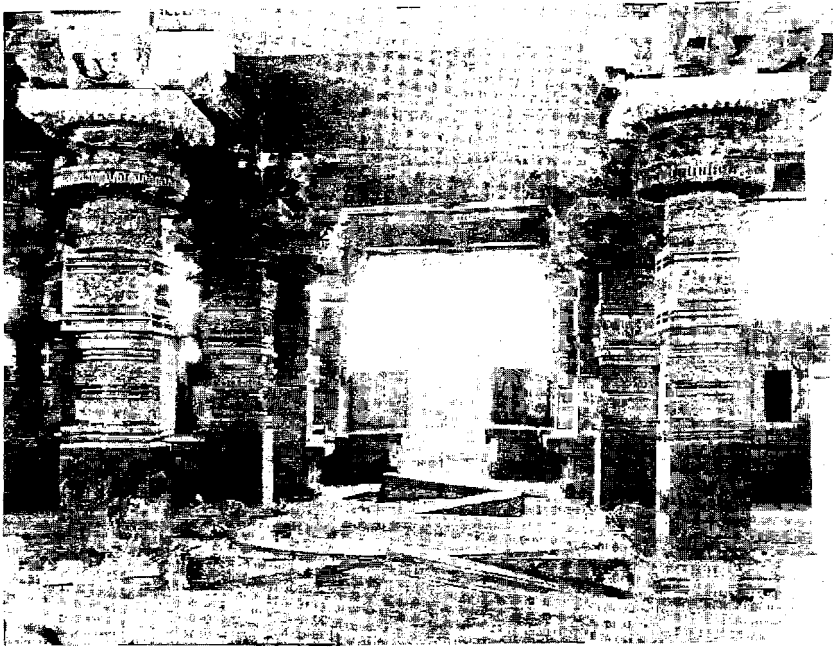
22.17. Rāmappa temple from northwest. Pālampēt, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kākatīya period, reign of Gaṇapati. Early thirteenth century (before Śaka era 1135, or A.D. 1213).

the figures are in very contorted positions, suggesting affinities to other highly stylized modes current in South Asia around the same time. The figures are generally accompanied by extremely detailed floriated bowers or vines, revealing an interest in detail typical of the Kākatīya carver.

An interesting feature of the interior of the temple is the presence of benches with small shrines placed along them at intervals around the perimeter of the pillared *maṇḍapa* (Fig. 22.19). One miniature shrine contains a representation of Gaṇeśa, another of Durgā as Mahiṣasuramardini (Fig. 22.20). In style, these figures bear resemblance to the carvings of the bracket figures, although as is generally true in the case of icons rather than subsidiary figures, they are stiffer in appearance. In contrast with many earlier depictions of Durgā Mahiṣasuramardini, this example shows the bull as a very minor element



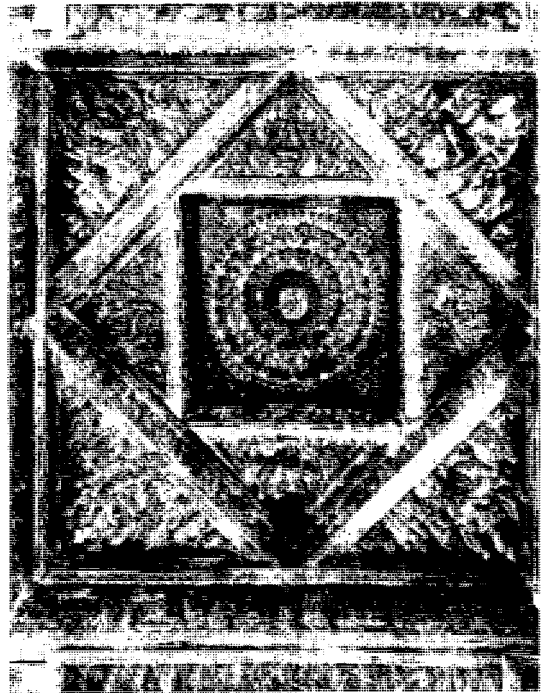
22.18. Female bracket figure, Rāmappa temple. Pālampēt, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kākatīya period, reign of Gaṇapati. Early thirteenth century (before Śaka era 1135, or A.D. 1213).



22.19. Interior, *mandapa*, from south, Rāmappa temple. Pālampēt, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Gaṇapati. Early thirteenth century (before Śaka era 1135, or A.D. 1213).



22.20. Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini in small shrine in *mandapa*, Rāmappa temple. Pālampēt, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Gaṇapati. Early thirteenth century (before Śaka era 1135, or A.D. 1213).



22.21. Ceiling, *mandapa*, Rāmappa temple. Pālampēt, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Kakatiya period, reign of Gaṇapati. Early thirteenth century (before Śaka era 1135, or A.D. 1213).

of the overall design, while the victorious Durgā dominates the composition. The angular, pointed arch behind her head is a form which appears in a number of Kākatīya sculptures, although often it is decorated rather than plain. The rich carving

is also seen in the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* (Fig. 22.21). The "lantern roof" convention is well known in northern-style architecture from an early date, though the richness of the carving typifies the later style.

THE HOYSAĀS OF SOUTHERN KARṆĀṬAKA (CA. 1006 TO 1346)

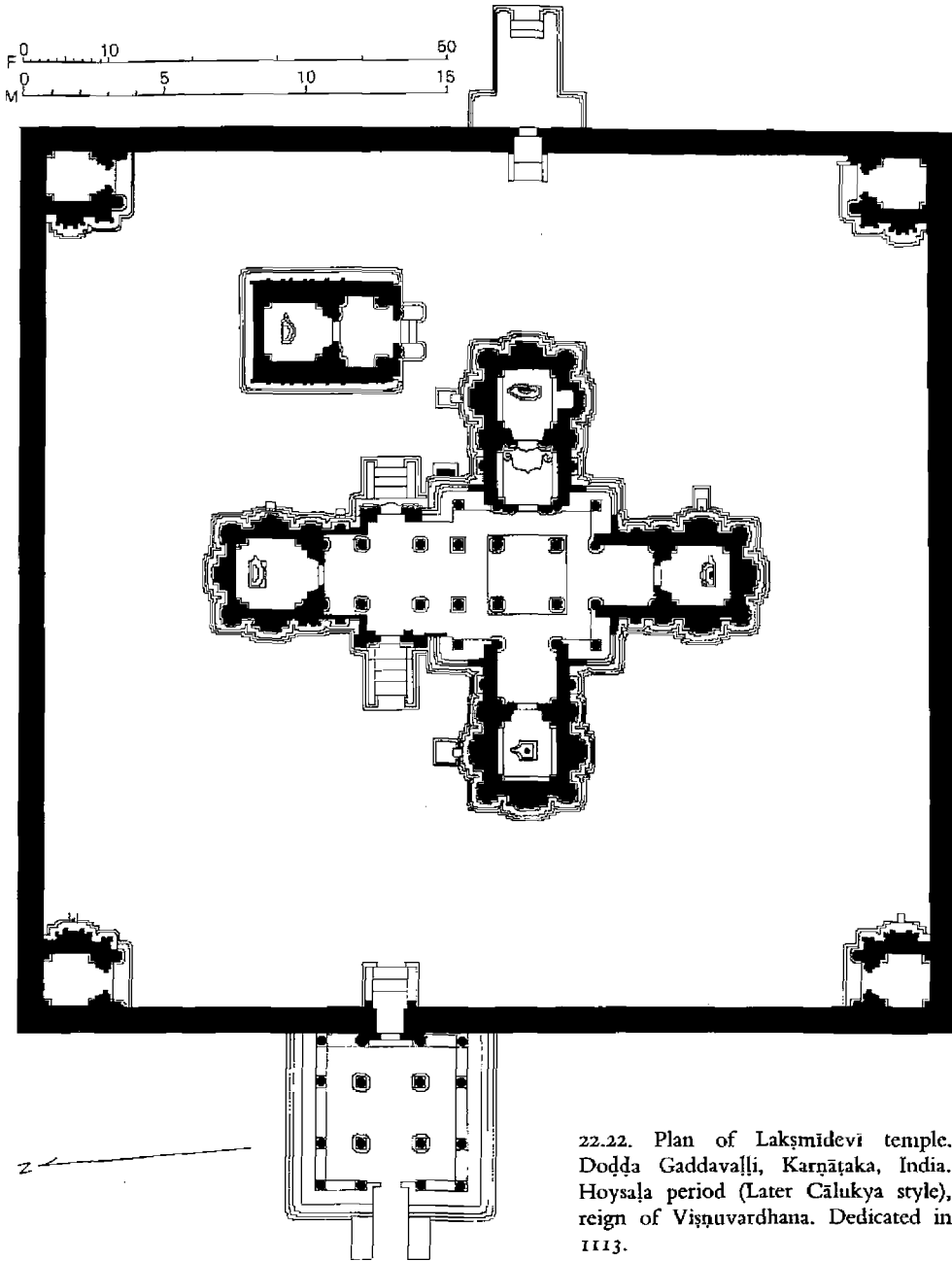
Upon the collapse of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī, their empire was essentially split into three portions: the northern part, which came to be ruled by the Yādavas of Devagiri; the eastern realm, which came under the control of the Kākatīyas; and the southern territories, which were claimed by the Hoysālas, who ruled from Dorasamudra (modern Halebidu). The Hoysāla family had been prominent for some time even prior to the fall of the Later Cālukyas, but their imperial independence was not proclaimed until 1192, when Ballāḷa II (r. ca. 1173-1220) proclaimed himself emperor and commenced his own era of dating (which was based, however, on 1190 instead of 1192).

Geologically, the southern Karṇāṭaka region ruled by the Hoysālas is not part of the Deccan plateau. Yet the art styles fostered under the Hoysālas are most properly viewed as an outgrowth of Deccan styles, showing a mixture of northern and southern elements, while being highly distinctive as well. Like many other Deccan temples, Hoysāla structures often have multiple shrines; examples are known with two, three, four, and even five shrines. Many Hoysāla temples use a stellate plan for the *vimāna*, again a feature found in other Deccan art schools, and known as well in northern India. But, as may be expected when describing an art tradition that is known through a large number of surviving examples, no single set of characteristics may be used to define all Hoysāla works. In general, Hoysāla temples may be classed into two types, the first being a rather logical development of Later Cālukya forms, the second, a much more ornate style. Although Hoysāla temples of the "ornate style" are much better known than their simpler relatives, these do not comprise even a majority of extant Hoysāla monuments. However, since the style seems original to the

Hoysālas, and was not apparently used by other dynasties, it may be considered, properly, the "Hoysāla style."

An interesting feature of the individual carvings on many Hoysāla temples is the fact that many of them are signed works by specific artists. Although this phenomenon of signing works of art occurs in other Indic art schools, nowhere does it appear with such regularity or with so much seeming pride on the part of the artist as in the Hoysāla tradition. Some artists are known to have worked on several Hoysāla temples. Ultimately, it may be possible to closely study the sculptural styles as artists progressed from monument to monument. On the basis of a purely stylistic analysis, it has proven impossible thus far to distinguish the work of one artist from that of another. Essentially, here, and in other Indic art schools, craftsmen, though perhaps proud of their own achievements, worked in what must be called a collective rather than individual style, although differences in skill and expression undoubtedly occurred.

The ancestral home of the Hoysālas was at Sosāvīr, where Saḷa, the first chieftain of the line, is reputed to have killed a tiger, using only a dagger, to protect an ascetic (perhaps a Jain). Supposedly, the ascetic shouted "Poy, Saḷa" (Strike, Saḷa), hence providing the name Hoysāla (Poysāla) of the lineage. A number of early Hoysāla artistic remains are found at Sosāvīr. However, it was not until the reign of the king Biṭṭideva (ca. 1108-42), better known by his Vaiṣṇavite religious name, Viṣṇuvardhana, that Hoysāla art, religion, and history become understood. Inscriptional records clearly show that Viṣṇuvardhana, his wife, officers, and ministers generously patronized the construction of temples and other structures. Of the eighty or ninety

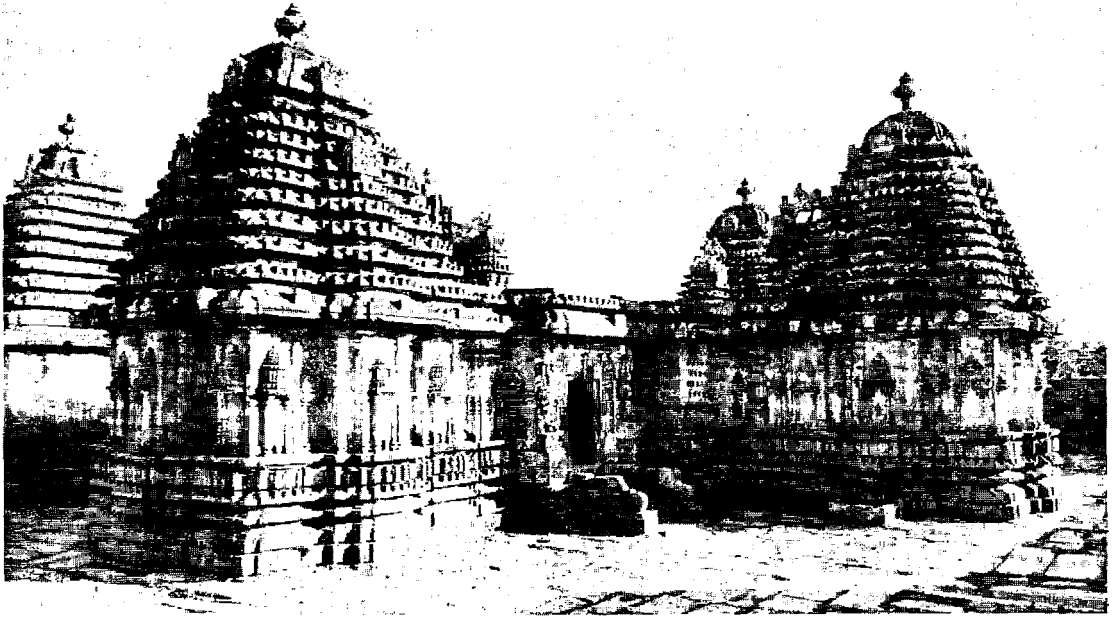


22.22. Plan of Lakṣmīdevī temple. Dodḍa Gaddavaḷḷi, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysala period (Later Cālukya style), reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1113.

extant Hoysala temples in Karṇāṭaka, several important ones have been identified as belonging to the reign of Viṣṇuvardhana on the basis of inscriptional and stylistic evidence.

An example of a Later Cālukya style Hoysala temple is the Lakṣmīdevī temple at Dodḍa

Gaddavaḷḷi, a monument of Viṣṇuvardhana's reign dating from 1113 according to inscriptional evidence.⁶ It is a cruciform, quadruple-shrine temple (Fig. 22.22) consisting of a pillared *mandapa* shared by the four separate shrines, each of which also has an antechamber. En-



22.23. West side of Lakṣmīdevī temple from northwest. Dodḍa Gaddavalli, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysāḷa period (Later Cālukya style), reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1113.

trances are placed on the east and west sides of the temple between the *maṇḍapa* and the northern shrine. The temple is enclosed in a rectangular compound and there are subsidiary shrines in each of the four corners, as well as a small temple dedicated to Bhairava, a terrifying aspect of Śiva, to the northeast of the main structure. Within the main shrines of the temple are images of Lakṣmīdevī in the east; a *liṅga* called Bhūtanātha on the west; Kālī, a fierce *śakti* of Śiva, in the north; the south was probably originally dedicated to Viṣṇu (since Garuḍa appears on the pedestal, although the image has been lost). As is characteristic in Later Cālukya inspired temples, the Lakṣmīdevī temple does not have an enclosed circumambulatory passageway.

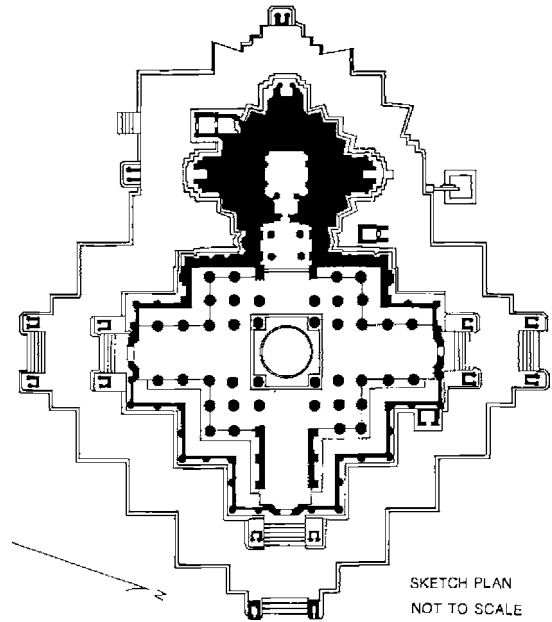
In contrast to Hoysāḷa temples of the ornate style, the Lakṣmīdevī temple lacks the sculpted friezes and figurative carvings so characteristic of those monuments. Instead, the treatment of the base, wall, and superstructure (Fig. 22.23) may be compared to Later Cālukya structures, such as the Dodḍa Basappā temple (Fig. 22.7).

Both structures are highly embellished with numerous projections and moldings; however, the decoration consists primarily of purely architectural designs, not the figurative sculptures found ubiquitously in the Hoysāḷa ornate style. Since this temple was created only four years prior to the highly ornate Keśava temple at Belūr (Figs. 22.24–31), it is evident that this is not due to an “earlier” stylistic mode; rather, this temple shows a clear association with other Deccan schools, especially those created under the Yādavas and Later Cālukyas, indicating the Deccan/Cālukyan heritage of Hoysāḷa art. The superstructures consist of diminishing tiers capped by a *śikhara* and *kalāśa* and are based on southern forms. While the temple lacks the sculptural decoration of the *vimāna* seen in the ornate-style Hoysāḷa temples, its individual sculptures, such as the *dvārapālas* to the shrines, reveal the same love of ornamentation seen throughout Hoysāḷa works.

Perhaps the most important monument of Viṣṇuvardhana’s reign is the Keśava (or Cenna Keśava) temple at Belūr, an example of the

Hoysaḷa ornate style. Erected on the orders of Viṣṇuvarḍhana himself to commemorate his victory over the Cōḷas at Taḷakāḍ, the deity of the temple, in fact Viṣṇu in his Keśava form, was named Vijaya Nārāyaṇa (Victorious Nārāyaṇa), in an apparent play on both the name of the god (Nārāyaṇa is Viṣṇu) and Viṣṇuvarḍhana's victory over the Cōḷas. In addition, the name may refer to the *ācārya* who is generally credited with converting Viṣṇuvarḍhana to Vaiṣṇavism, Rāmānuja, who is also known as Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa.⁷ Dedicated in 1117,⁸ the temple stands as the principal monument in a complex of later temples within a large courtyard. It consists of a pillared *maṇḍapa* that takes on a cruciform shape due to the *ratha*-like projections of the walls, an antechamber, and the shrine proper (Fig. 22.24). Like other ornate-style Hoysaḷa temples, this structure rests on a plinth. But unlike examples in many other Indic styles, where the plinth would be rectangular or square regardless of the contour of the temple, in this and other Hoysaḷa ornate-style structures, the shape of the plinth follows that of the temple itself. As a result of offsetting the walls of the temple and plinth, more space is provided for sculptural decoration, resulting in much of the richness associated with ornate-style Hoysaḷa temples. Staircases on the east, south, and north side of the plinth flanked by pairs of miniature *vimānas* give access to the temple and correspond with the three doorways leading into the *maṇḍapa*. The superstructure of the *vimāna* is no longer present, giving the temple an overall squat appearance that was not originally so pronounced (Fig. 22.25).

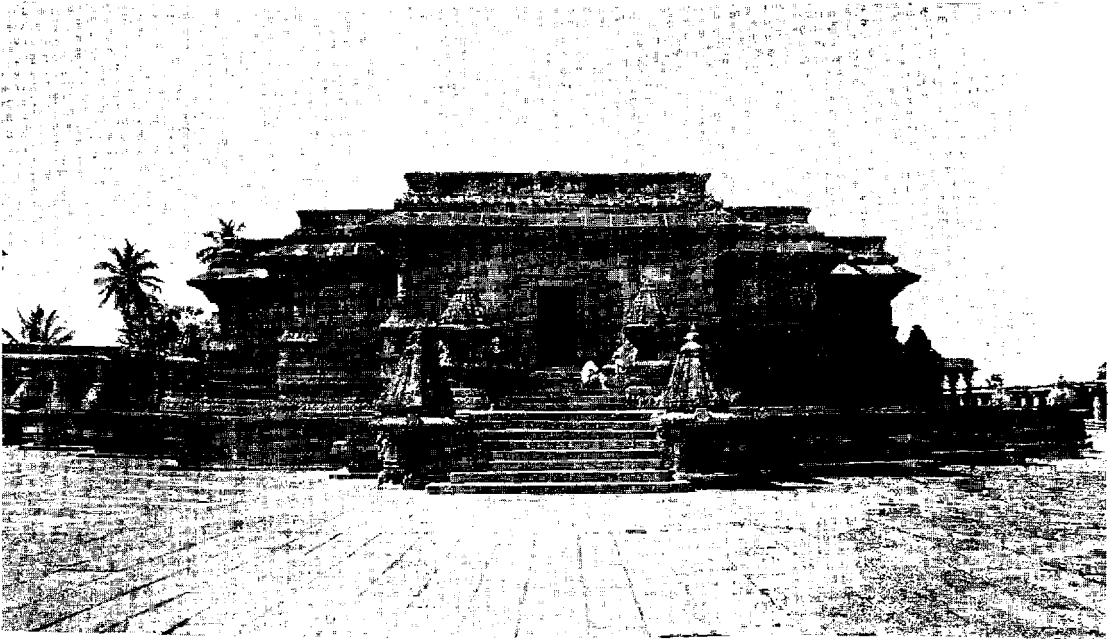
In its original state, the *maṇḍapa* had a more porchlike appearance, for the spaces between the pillars supporting the roof were left open. However, during the reign of the Hoysaḷa king Ballāḷa II, pierced stone windows were added, giving the present more closed appearance (Fig. 22.26). These windows, while not part of the original scheme, fall within the scope of Hoysaḷa art and ultimately may be derived from traditions of the Deccan, especially that of the Early Western Calukyas and monuments such as the Lād Khān temple at Aihole. In addition to the carved window screens, profuse sculpting of the



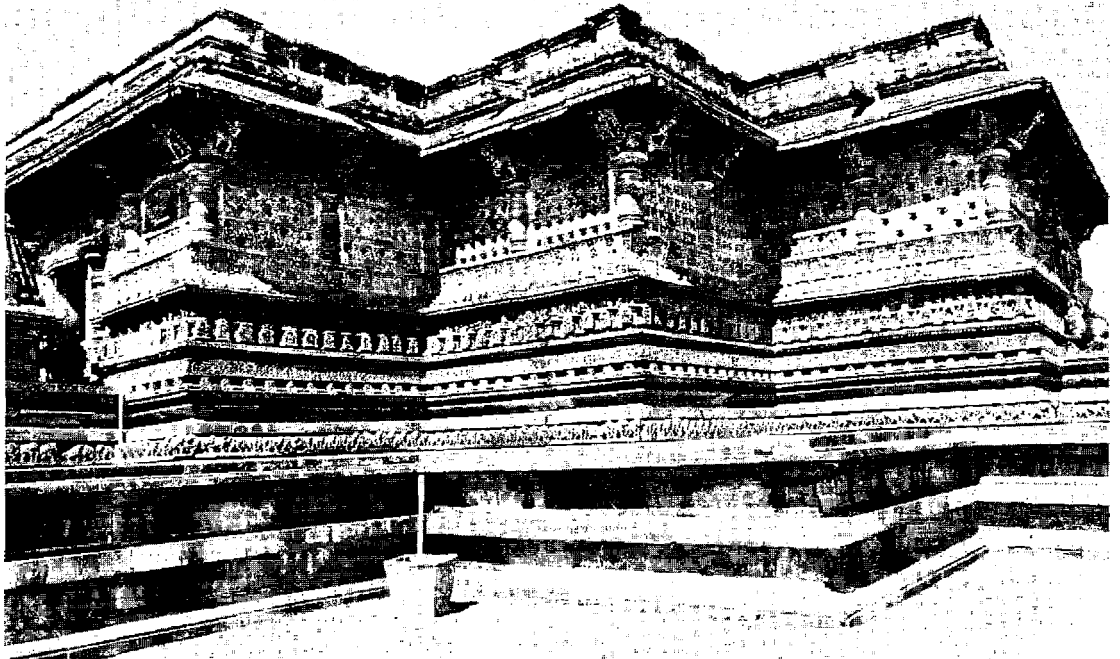
22.24. Plan of Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Viṣṇuvarḍhana. Dedicated in 1117.

exterior of the temple walls provides this monument with the characteristic richness of ornate-style Hoysaḷa works (Fig. 22.27). In a superficial sense, the abundant carving on the temple, both inside and out, is suggestive of northern styles, such as those of the Candellas or Solāṅkis. Indeed, it is possible that the preference for intricate form ultimately derives from northern associations. However, the delicacy of the carvings and their often miniature scale is characteristic of Hoysaḷa art. It is generally believed that the close-grained chloritic schist used in building the Hoysaḷa monuments was particularly conducive to such detailed work. The carvings are generally deeply undercut so that the figures and other motifs stand out sharply against their shadows. Decorative elements, such as female figures or inhabited vine scrolls (Fig. 22.27) generally run in horizontal rows continuously around the temple wall, creating a highly organized, controlled design pattern.

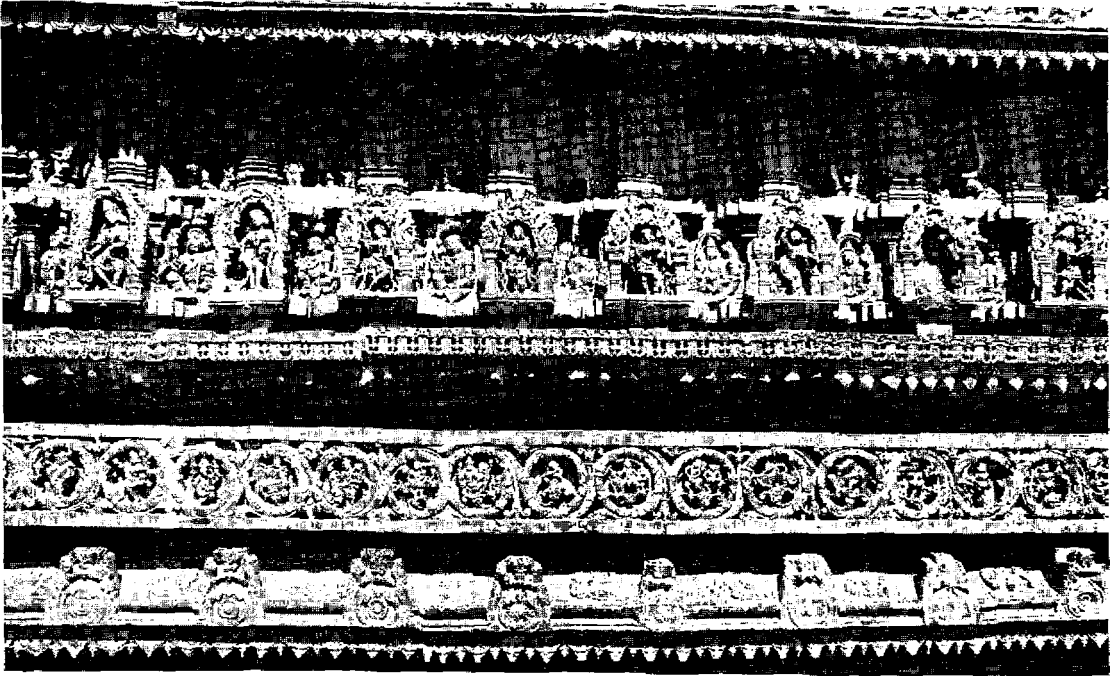
Some of the most acclaimed sculptures of the Keśava temple are the bracket figures, called



22.25. Keśava temple from east. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1117.



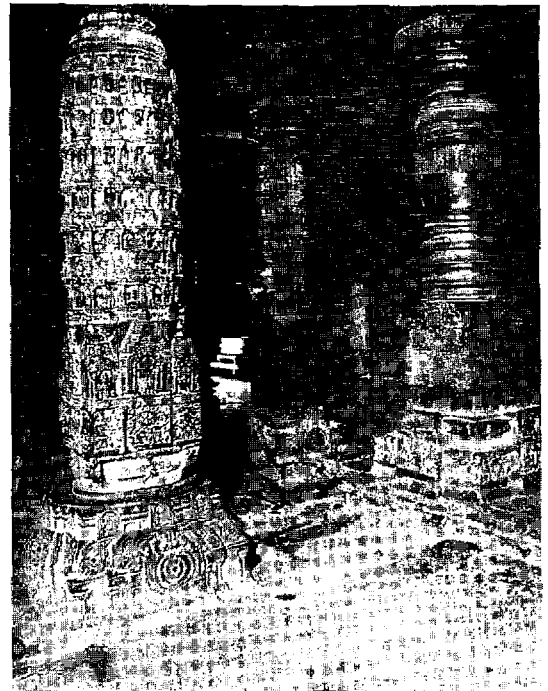
22.26. Keśava temple, from the southeast. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1117.



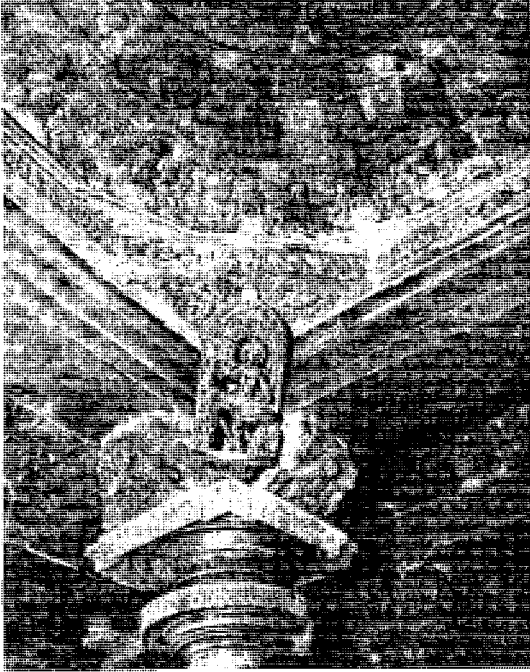
22.27. Detail, exterior wall, Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysala period, reign of Viṣṇuwardhana. Dedicated in 1117.



22.28. Female bracket figure, Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysala period, reign of Viṣṇuwardhana. Dedicated in 1117.

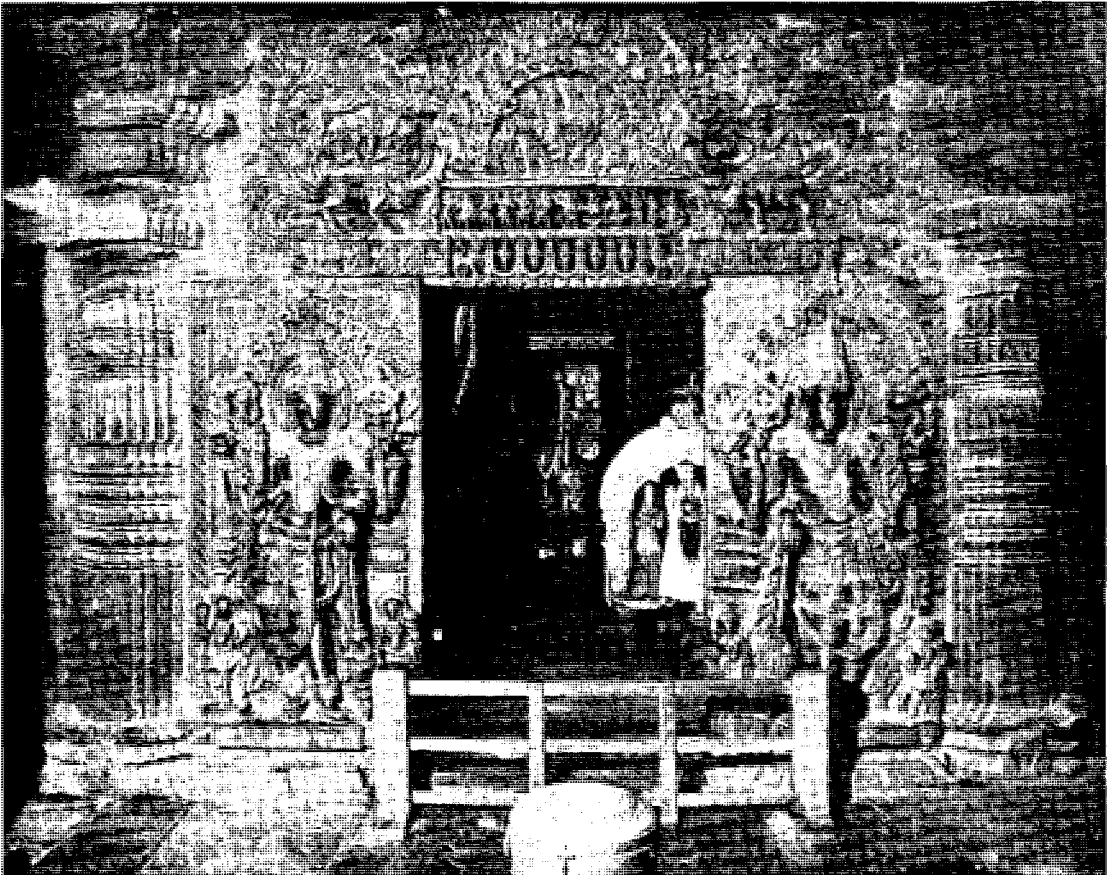


22.29. Pillars in maṇḍapa, Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysala period, reign of Viṣṇuwardhana. Dedicated in 1117.



22.30. Pillar capital and ceiling section, *maṇḍapa* of Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1117.

22.31. Entrance to shrine area, Keśava temple. Bēlūr, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Viṣṇuvardhana. Dedicated in 1117.

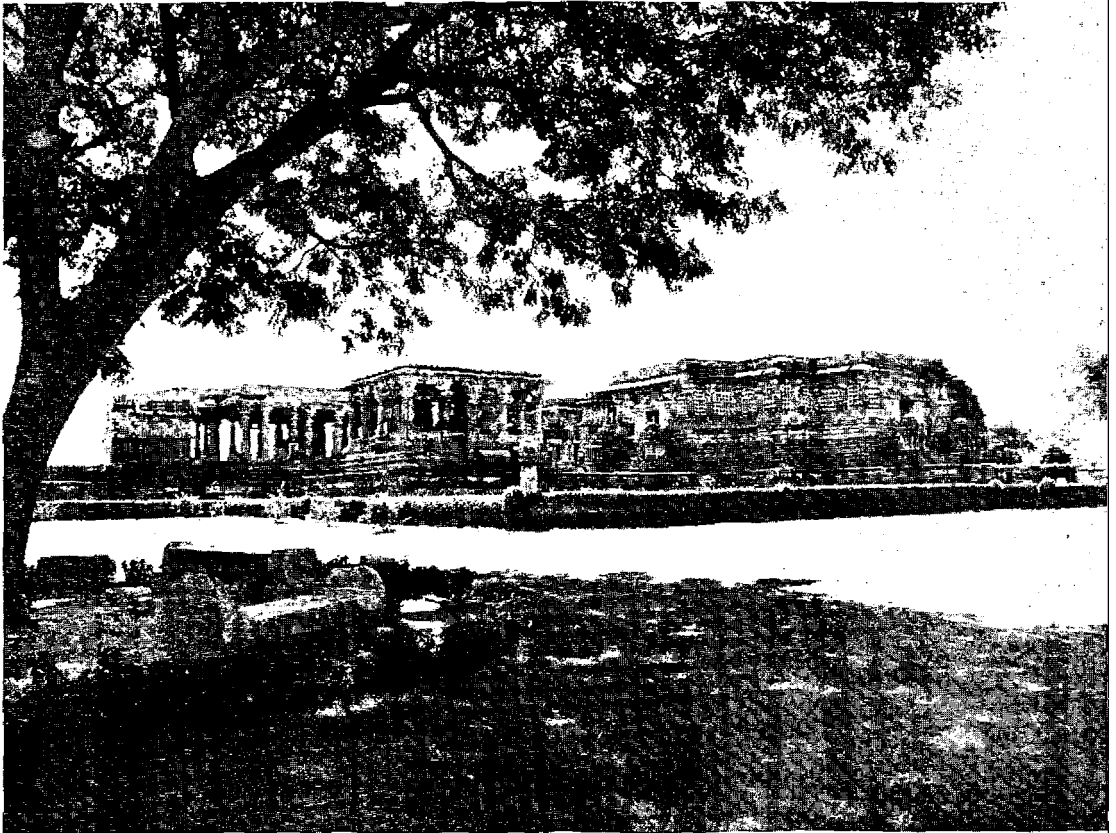


madanakais in the Kannaḍa language of the region, which are placed beneath the overhanging roof of the *maṇḍapa*. Originally, there were forty such figures, although now there are thirty-eight. In concept, the bracket figures can ultimately be traced to the art of the Early Western Calukyas once again. One example shows a woman presumably loosening her garment to get rid of a scorpion, shown below her feet (Fig. 22.28). The figure stands in an accentuated *tribhāṅga* posture and is virtually naked except for her ornaments and the loosened cloth around her hips. The fullness of her figure suggests associations with western Deccan traditions, such as the earlier art of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Vākāṭakas. The deeply undercut foliate motif behind her appears almost lacelike and is very effectively seen against the dark shadows.

The interior of the Keśava temple is as rich

and ornate as the exterior. Each pillar of the *maṇḍapa* is finely carved, some with figures and other elements, others simply in round patterns (Fig. 22.29). In the center of the *maṇḍapa*, a bay is created by the four central pillars, above which is a highly detailed, carved ceiling panel, reminiscent of examples found in northern temple styles (Fig. 22.30). Female bracket figures are placed at each corner of the central bay. The entrance to the shrine area is flanked by a pair of large Vaiṣṇavite *dvārapālas* and is decorated with an elaborate lintel (Fig. 22.31). Thus, the entire temple, from the exterior to the interior shrine, is a highly ornate, rich form.

At Halebid (ancient Dorasamudra), the Hoysaḷa capital, the most prominent structure is the Hoysaḷeśvara temple dedicated to Śiva (Fig. 22.32), another monument of the ornate style. Believed to have been begun around 1121 by



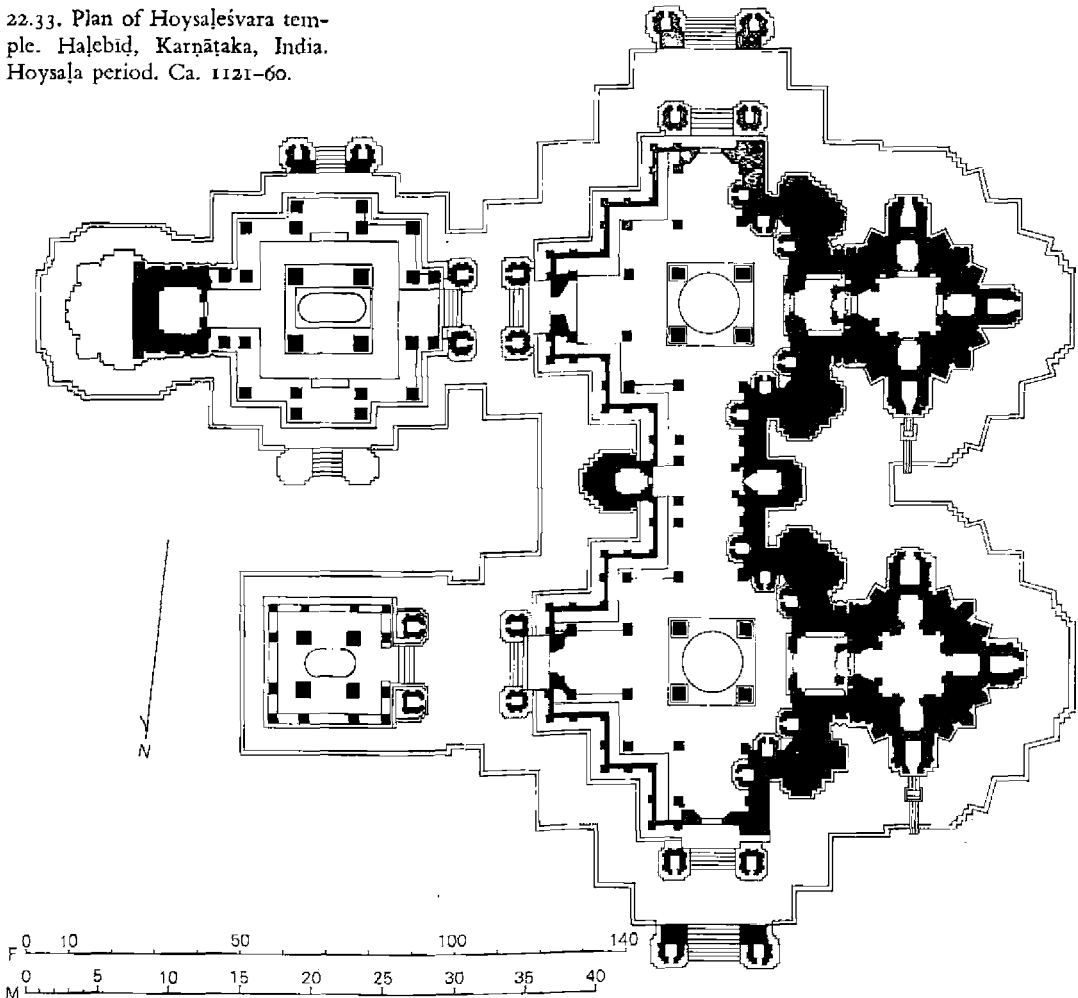
22.32. Hoysaḷeśvara temple from the northeast. Halebid, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period. Ca. 1121-60.

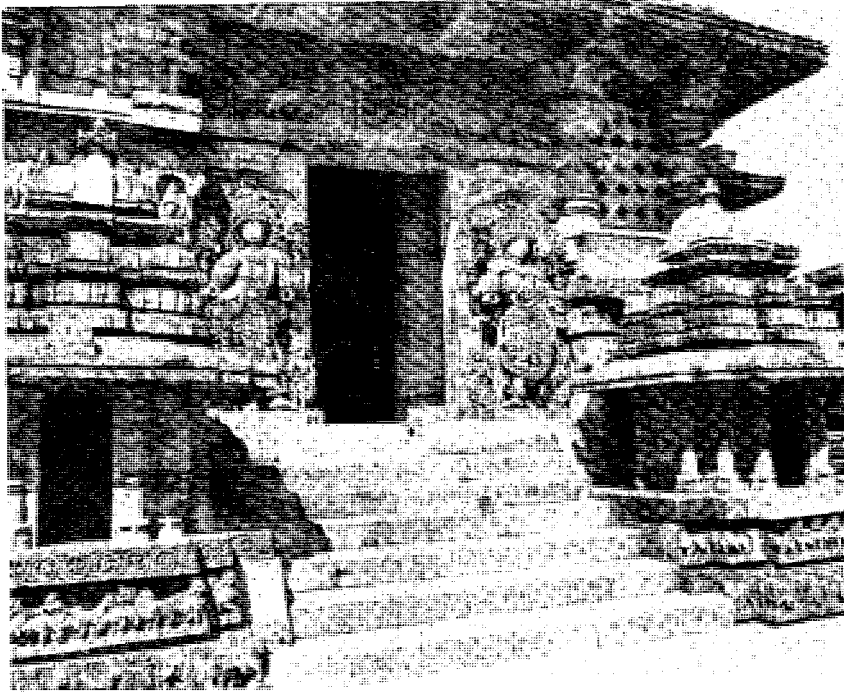
the orders of one Ketamalla, an officer of Viṣṇuwardhana, it was apparently completed some years later, around 1160, by Kedārōja, the architect of Viṣṇuwardhana's son and successor, Nṛsiṃha I (r. ca. 1142-73). In the opinion of Percy Brown, this temple "is, without exaggeration, one of the most remarkable monuments ever produced by the hand of man."⁹ It consists of two virtually identical but separate temples on a large single platform, connected at the inner arms of their transepts (Fig. 22.33). In plan, the two cruciform temples create a double cross, due to the joined inner arm. Preceding each of the temples is a pillared Nandi pavilion. The difference in form between these two structures is unexplained, but it is possible that one is a

later addition or had been modified in later times. As in the case of the Keśava temple at Bēlūr, the plinth of this temple essentially follows the outline of the structures. In plan, each separate temple is similar to the earlier temple at Bēlūr, consisting of the pillared *maṇḍapa*, an antechamber, and the shrine proper.

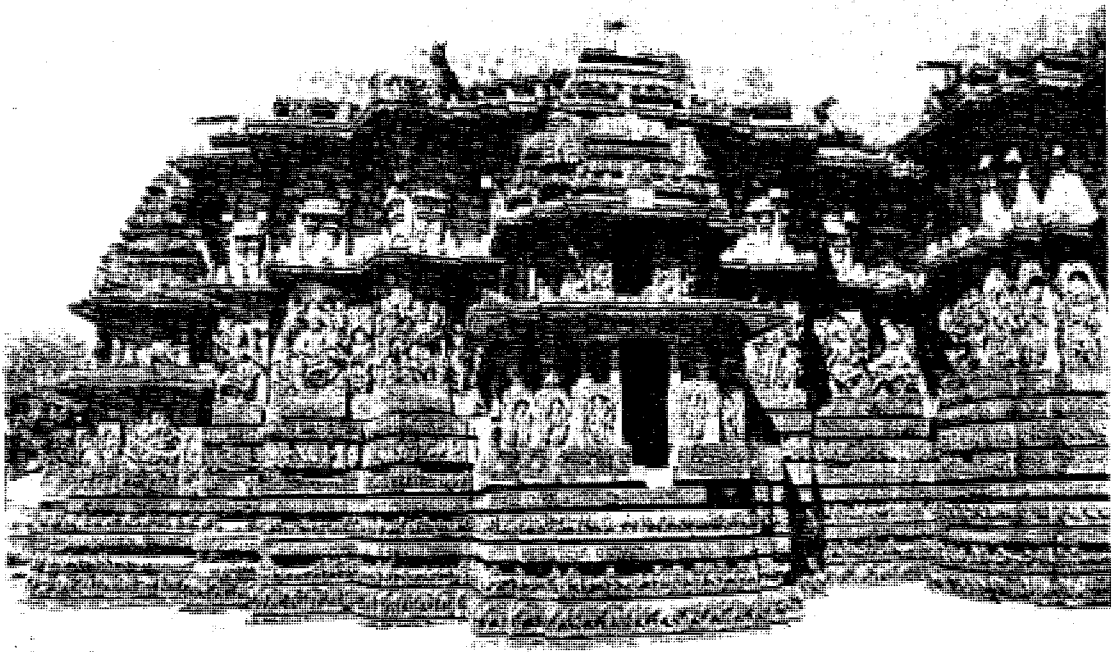
Since the towers over the shrines are missing, the overall appearance of the temple complex is low and squat, although this was not the original intention on the part of the makers. Following the pattern seen in the Bēlūr temple, the entrances have miniature *vimānas* flanking the stairs and large, ornate *dvārapālas* attending the doorways (Fig. 22.34). Perhaps even more profusely carved than those on earlier

22.33. Plan of Hoysaleśvara temple. Halebidu, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysala period. Ca. 1121-60.

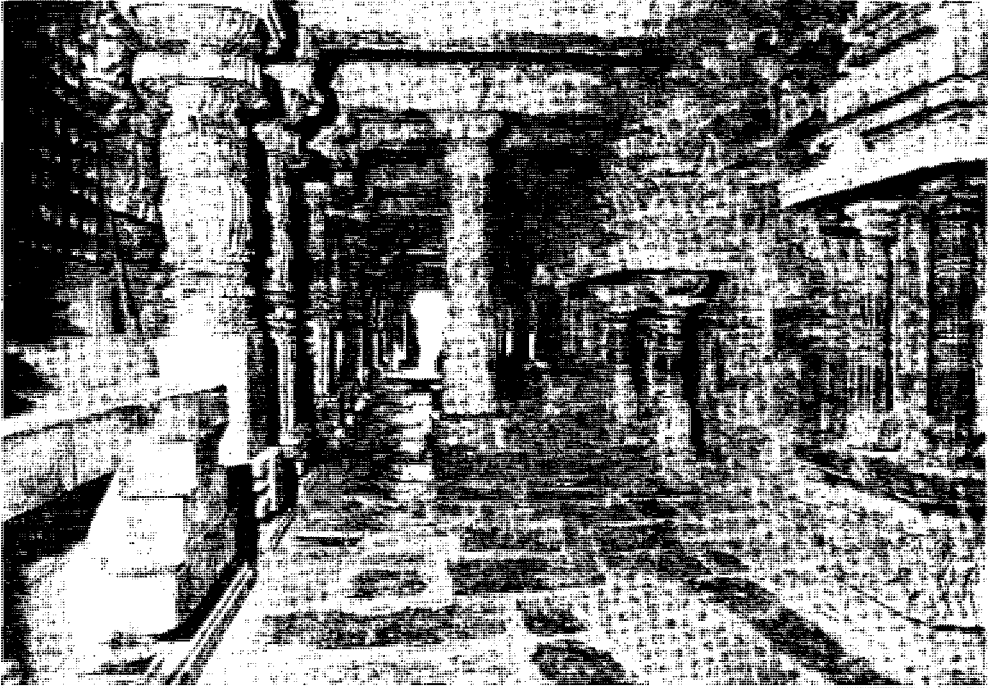




22.34. South entrance, Hoysaleswara temple. Halebidu, Karnataka, India. Hoysala period. Ca. 1121-60.



22.35. Temple wall, Hoysaleswara temple. Halebidu, Karnataka, India. Hoysala period. Ca. 1121-60.



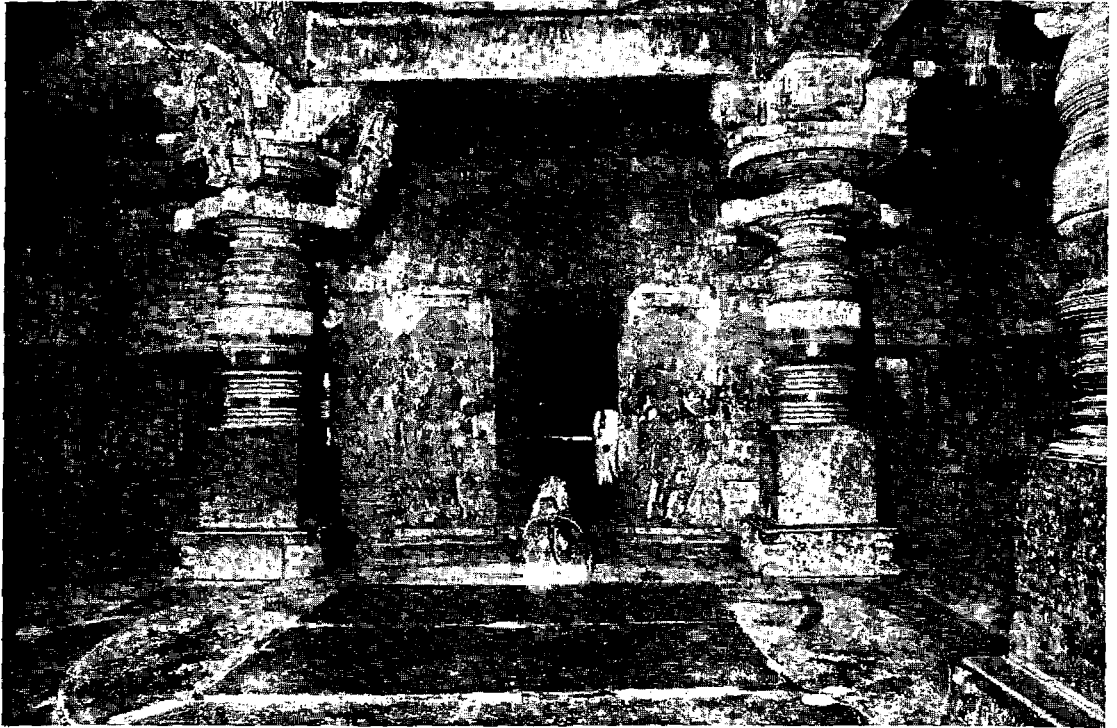
22.36. Transept connecting two temples, looking south, Hoysalesvara temple. Halebidu, Karnataka, India. Hoysala period. Ca. 1121-60.

Hoysala temples, the figures are literally encrusted with minutely detailed decoration. Yet all the elements are controlled within their appropriate context so that the effect is highly organized. The bodies of the figures are even heavier and fuller in appearance than earlier ones and stand in gracefully swaying postures. A strong relationship can be seen between the sculpture style of the Hoysalas and that of the neighboring Kerala region, in both the heavy figure type and the abundant ornamentation. The walls of the temples (Fig. 22.35) have delicate strips of sculpted friezes running along the base, including a row of elephants proceeding in clockwise direction at the bottom. In contrast with the massive scale of the elephant frieze of the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora, these animals are shown in miniature in keeping with the overall scale of carvings. The middle part of the walls bears figurative sculpture including deities and women in various postures. For the most part, these figures are in animated poses and are heavily

laden with jewelry, yet the effect is highly organized as each figure occupies a specifically defined space. The upper part of the walls has a row of miniature *vimānas*.

A rather spacious feeling pervades the interior of the temples, although once again, the interior is richly embellished with carved pillars and detailed ceiling coffers. The transept connecting the two temples is a long hall (Fig. 22.36) lit at both ends through the porch openings at the north and south sides of the temples. In format and treatment, the entrances to the two shrine areas are similar to that at Bēlūr, although the scale is greater (Fig. 22.37). The Śaivite nature of the shrine antechamber *dvārapālas* is clearly indicated by the snake entwined weapons they hold.

Temple building under the Hoysalas continued at an active pace during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At the same time, the Hoysala empire was expanding both to the north and the south. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, the empire was partitioned so that

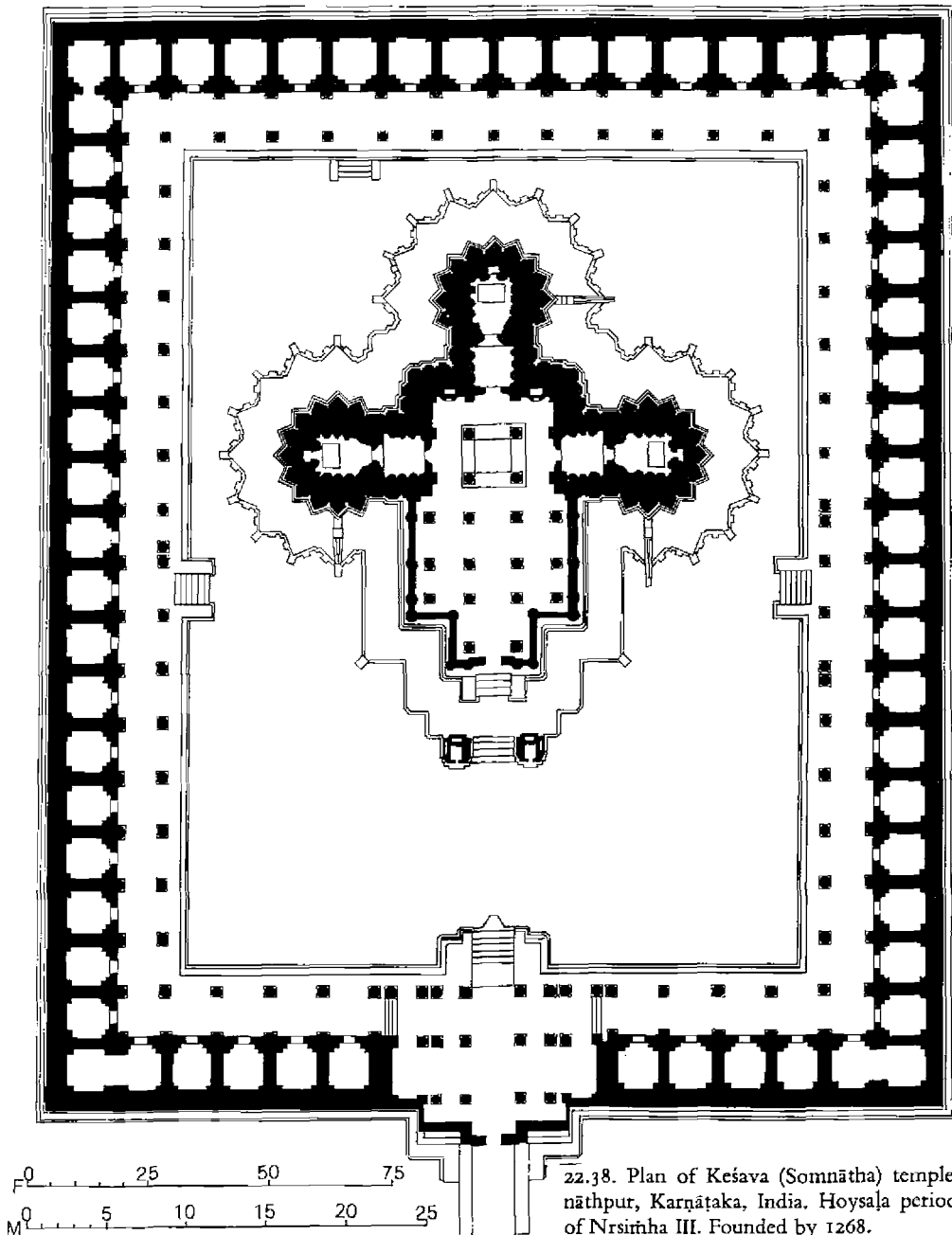


22.37. Shrine entrance, southern building, Hoysaleswara temple. Halebidu, Karnataka, India. Hoysala period. Ca. 1121-60.

Nṛsiṃha III (r. ca. 1254-92) controlled the northern regions, that is, most of the Hoysala territories, and his brother Rāmanātha ruled the Tamil holdings. Temples built under Nṛsiṃha III include the famed Keśava temple (called "Somnātha" in an inscription) at Somnāthpur, a Vaiṣṇavite monument, as its name implies, of the ornate style. Both the temple and the town of Somnāthpur were founded by 1268 by Soma, a general of Nṛsiṃha III. The temple is perhaps the most complete of the extant Hoysala monuments and its small size and gemlike carving render it one of the finest Hoysala structures.

The Keśava temple at Somnāthpur is a triple-shrine structure contained within a rectangular courtyard (Fig. 22.38). A single gateway (*mahādvāra*) on the east provides access to the temple compound (Fig. 22.39). In contrast to southern-style *gopuras*, which are *vimāna*-like in form, the profusion of pillars in the entranceway suggests the form of a Hoysala *maṇḍapa*. In plan, the

temple consists of three separate *vimānas*, each having an antechamber and shrine, with a single, shared *maṇḍapa*, which is preceded by a smaller, pillared porch (Figs. 22.38, 22.40). Each *vimāna* is stellate in plan and is topped by a moderately sized tower (about nine meters high), thus providing an extant example of what may have been a typical Hoysala tower form (Fig. 22.41). In contrast to both northern and southern styles of approximately the same time, the Hoysala architect did not strive after extravagant height. As in other Deccan or Deccan-derived styles, the towers are an intermediate form between the tiered, storied southern-style superstructures and the generally curvilinear spires found in northern architecture. The detailed treatment of the surface of the tower, especially the vertical, tapered ribs, is also reminiscent of northern forms, suggesting the hybridization that some contend is the *vesara* form of architecture. The temple rests upon a low plinth that follows the shape of the temple, including the intricate

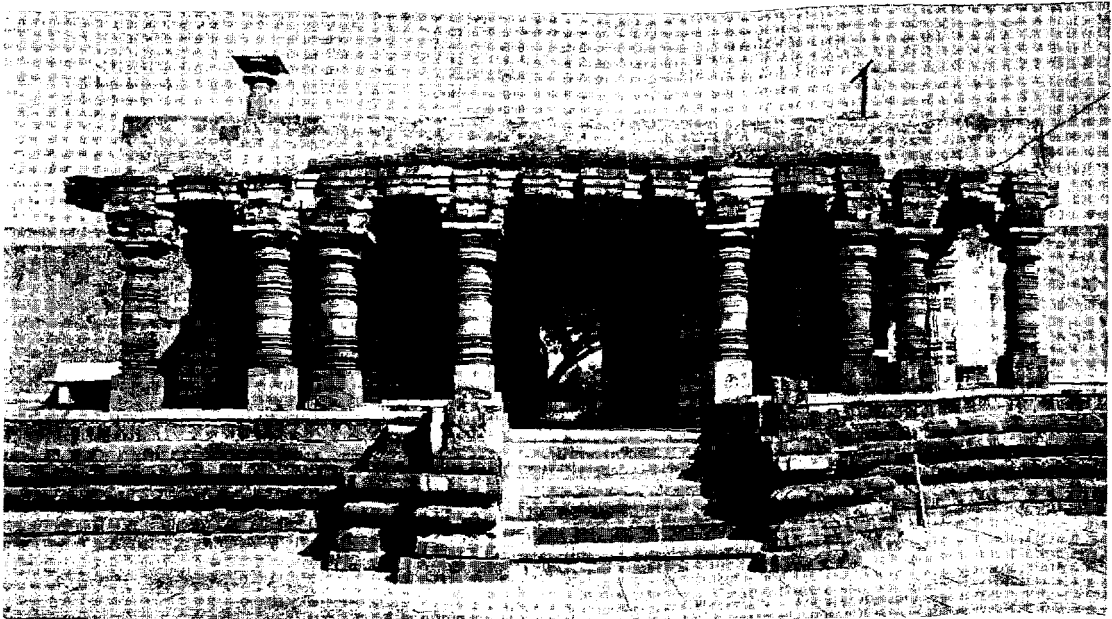


22.38. Plan of Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Founded by 1268.

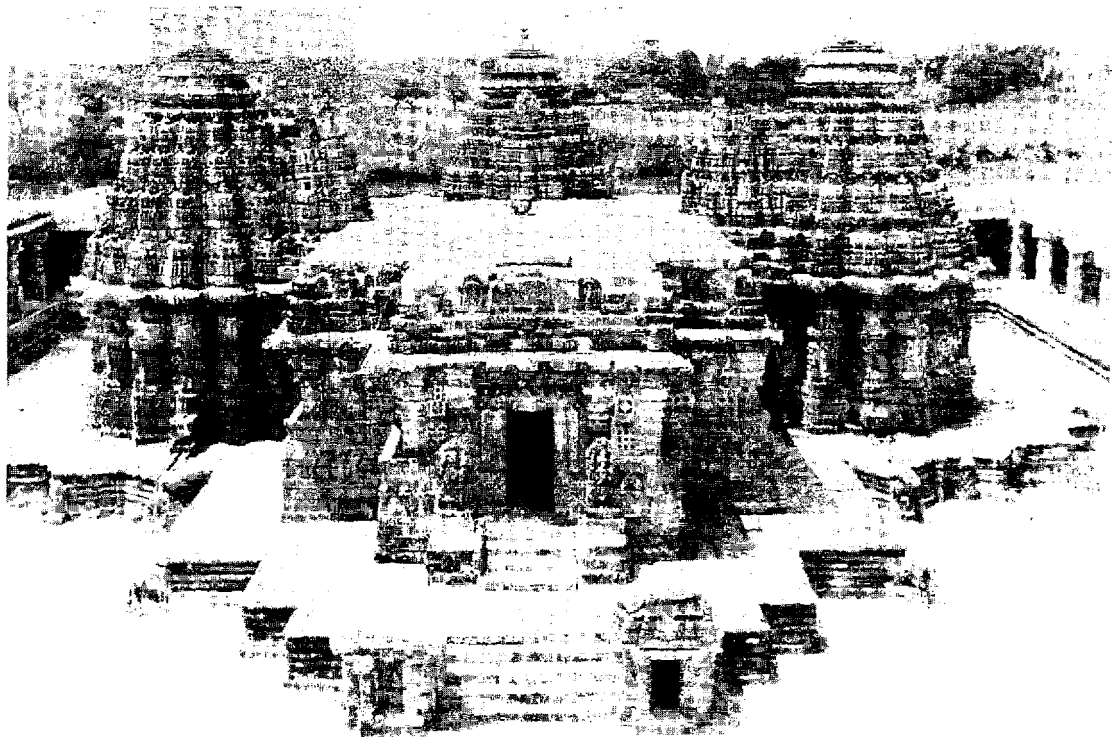
form of the star-shaped *vimānas*, and circumambulation can be performed on this plinth. (As in other Hoysaḷa monuments, there is no enclosed ambulatory passage.) The temple is surrounded by a pillared cloister (Fig. 22.42), off of which open sixty-four subsidiary shrines.

These shrines must have once contained Vaiṣṇavite images, though the images are no longer present.

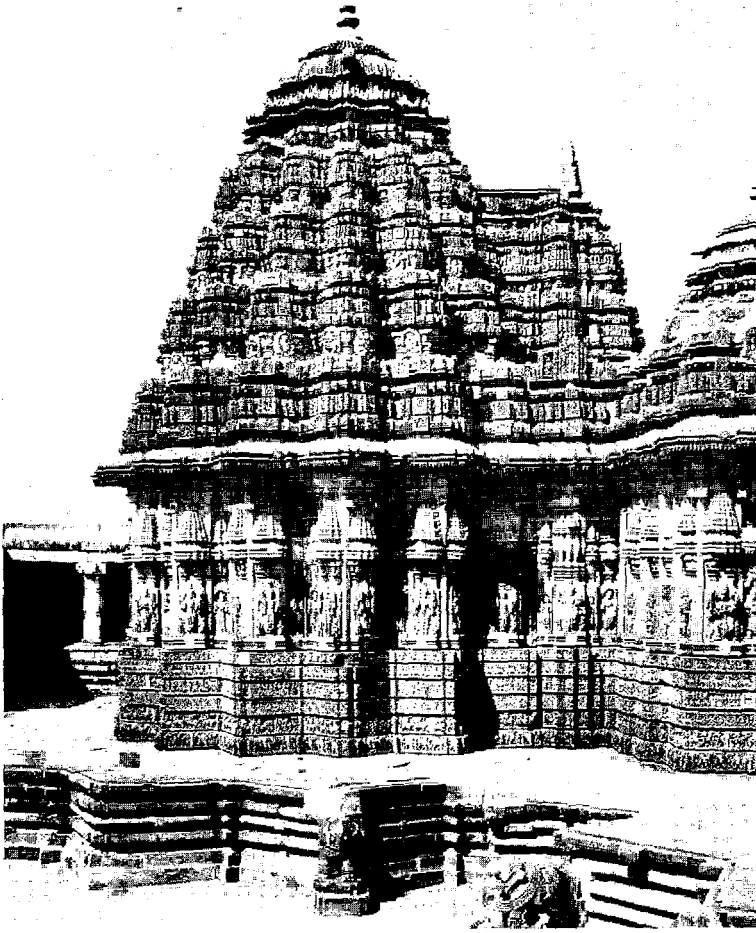
The arrangement of sculptural decoration on the exterior of the temple is similar to that seen in some other Hoysaḷa ornate-style temples,



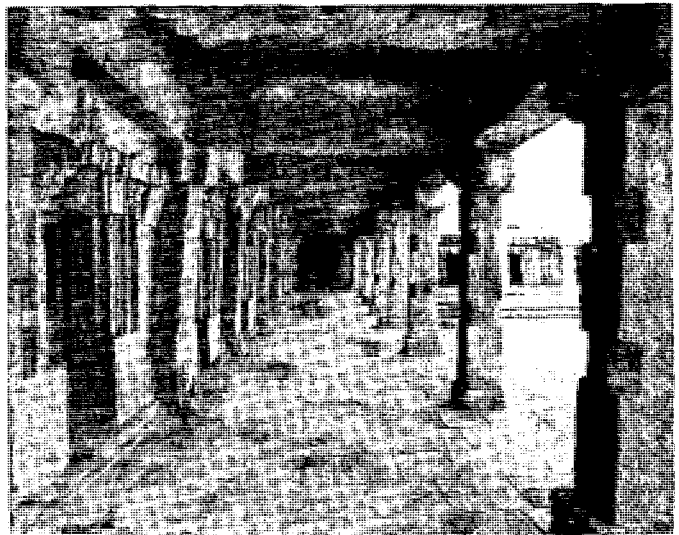
22.39. Eastern gateway to Keśava (Somnātha) temple, from west. Somnāthpur, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.



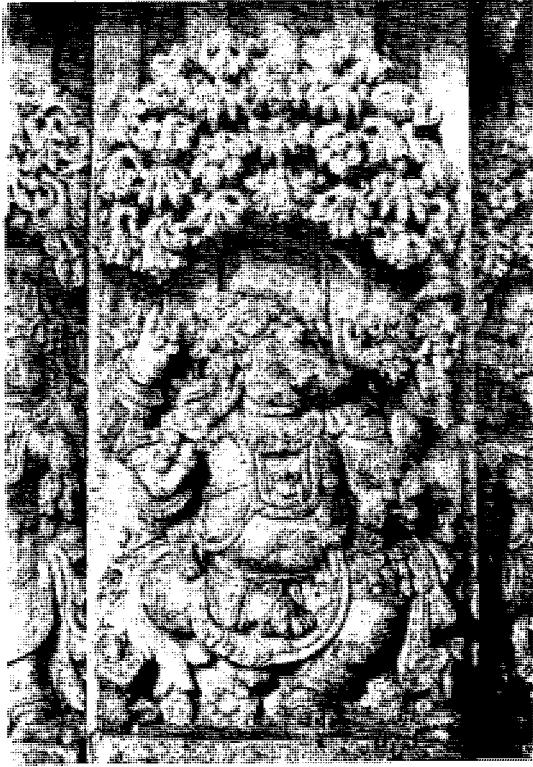
22.40. Keśava (Somnātha) temple as seen from roof of eastern gateway. Somnāthpur, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.



22.41. *Vimanas* of Keśava (Somnātha) temple, from south. Somnāthpur, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.

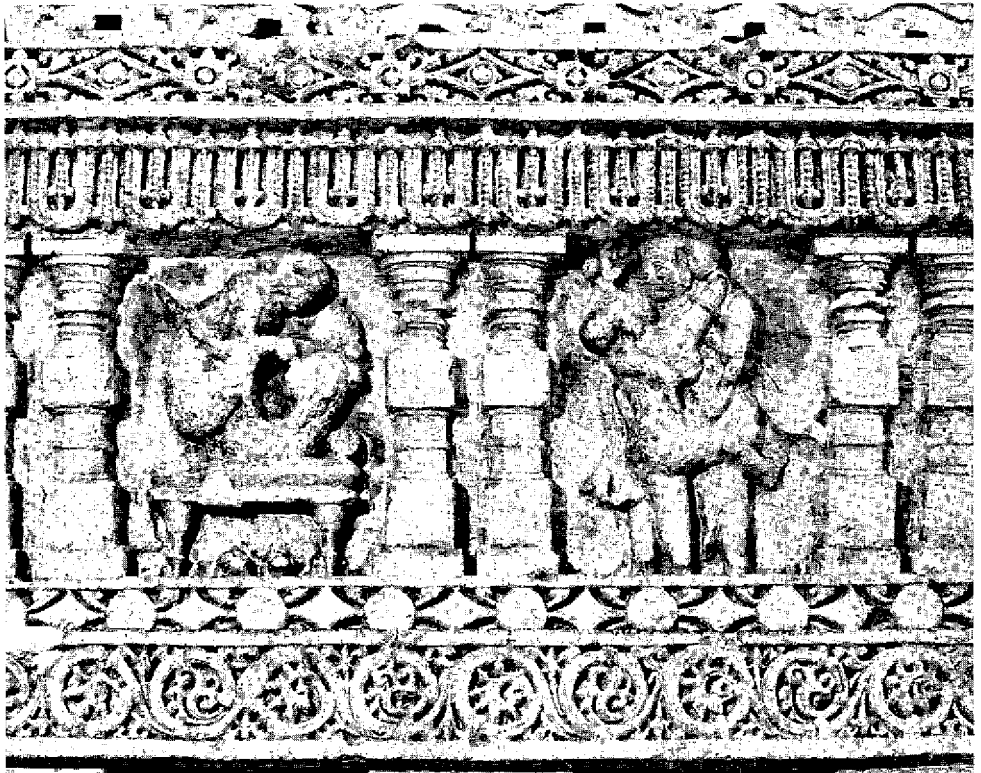


22.42. Pillared cloister on north, looking east, Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karnāṭaka, India. Hoysaḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.



22.43. Gaṇeśa on south side, Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysāḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.

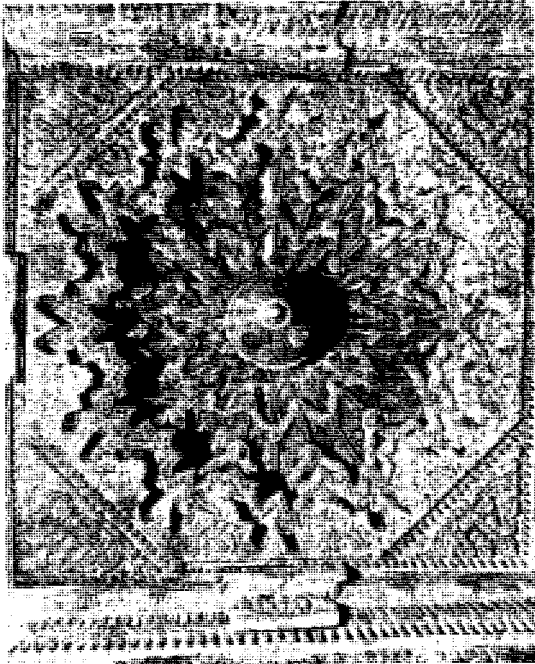
22.44. Erotic figures, south side of entrance porch, Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysāḷa period, reign of Nṛsiṃha III. Ca. 1268.



consisting of the small, detailed horizontal friezes, above which are deities and other figurative carvings. Sculptures include what are by this time familiar subjects in Hindu art, such as a dancing figure of Gaṇeśa (Fig. 22.43). An interesting feature of the sculptural program of the temple is the presence of erotic imagery on the south side of the entrance porch (Fig. 22.44). While not unique among Hoysala examples, such figures are generally de-emphasized or absent from south Indian and Deccan imagery, in contrast with their popularity in many northern styles, such as the art of the Candellas or in Orissan temples.

Inside, the temple is similar in treatment to other Hoysala ornate-style temples. The ceilings are elaborately decorated (Fig. 22.45), as are the entrances to the three shrines and shrine antechambers. The images in the three shrines are each slightly smaller than human-size and consist of Kṛṣṇa as Veṅṅopāla in the south shrine (Fig. 22.46), Janārdana Viṣṇu in the north, and Keśava,

the principal form after whom the temple is usually called in the west. As Veṅṅopāla, Kṛṣṇa is shown playing a flute with which he enchants his companions, the cowherdesses (*gopīs*) and cows, thereby instilling deep devotion in his followers. In this form, Kṛṣṇa stands with the weight of his body on one leg with the other leg bent and thrust across the stable leg. Janārdana and Keśava are two of the standard twenty-four icons of Viṣṇu, which are differentiated by the position of the attributes held in the hands. Each of the figures stands on a high, complex base with a representation of Garuḍa beneath. It is likely that the multiple-shrine temples of the Hoysalas (and other Deccan families) reflect a specific form preferred because it allowed worship of multiple aspects of deities without combining them into composite forms, in contrast with what was done, for example, in Kaśmīr with the popular Caturmūrti form.



22.45. Ceiling panel, Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysala period, reign of Nṛsiṅha III. Ca. 1268.

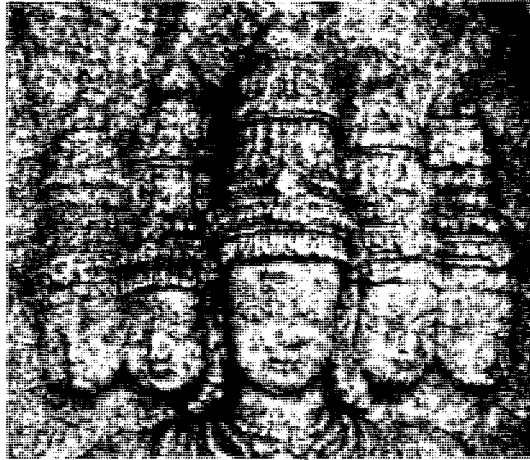


22.46. Kṛṣṇa Veṅṅopāla in south shrine, Keśava (Somnātha) temple. Somnāthpur, Karṇāṭaka, India. Hoysala period, reign of Nṛsiṅha III. Ca. 1268. Stone.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the partitioning of the Hoysala empire that had taken place in the latter half of the thirteenth century was reconciled, although not before a great deal of damage was done and the empire had become significantly weakened. Ballāla III (r. ca. 1292-1343) annulled the partition and reunited the kingdom, but by this time the Muslim threat was so great to the Deccan and the south that it was impossible for him to carry out his plans to rebuild the Hoysala kingdom. In 1311 Malik Kāfūr had attacked the Hoysala capital of Dorasamudra, and although

Ballāla III was able to effect a temporary agreement with his enemy, another Muslim expedition in 1318 and an attack by Mohammed bin-Tughluq in 1326 made the demise of the Hoysala kingdom inevitable. When a Muslim sultanate was established in nearby Madurai, the Islamic conquest seemed nearly complete. However, under the Vijayanagar rulers, the Deccan and the south made one final resistance to the foreign rulers and protected the indigenous culture from destruction.



Detail of 25.11.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Vijayanagar Period (ca. 1336 to 1565)

The Muslim forces that drew to a close many chapters of Hindu history and art in northern India would probably have done the same in the south and the Deccan were it not for the rise of the kings of Vijayanagar. The success and strength of these kings, who ruled in three successive dynasties from the city of Vijayanagar¹ during the time that the Muslims were establishing various states in the north, enabled the south and the Deccan to continue the indigenous Hindu traditions, although with some overlay of Islamic culture.

Vijayanagar, the "City of Victory," was founded at Hampī by the brothers Harihara and Bukka, Hindus who had been appointed governors by the Muslims to help quell Hindu resistance.² However, after embracing Islam (or perhaps merely pretending to do so in order to gain power), the brothers "reconverted" to Hinduism and founded an empire whose primary mission was to hold back the Muslim forces and foster a Hindu revival. Within two decades, the kingdom extended across the Deccan from

sea to sea and, at its height, encompassed an area that included the former territories of such powerful dynasties as the various Cālukyas, the later Cōḷas, and the Pāṇḍyas. Because of this, the art produced during the Vijayanagar hegemony strongly reflects these earlier traditions. Rather than being a synthesis of them, however, regional variations incorporating the local traditions are apparent and, properly speaking, Vijayanagar-period art should be studied in light of these geographical concerns as well as developments over time. Thus, Vijayanagar temples and art works in southern India may be viewed as a further step in the Tamil continuum, while in the northern Deccan and Āndhra Pradesh, the Cālukya heritage prevails. In contrast to the Cālukya artists, however, the Vijayanagar workers preferred the harder granitic stones used primarily in the southern traditions and this was used throughout the kingdom.

In spite of its importance and abundance, Hindu art and architecture of the Vijayanagar period has been a much neglected area in the

study of South Asian art history. Yet one can hardly travel in the Deccan and the south without continual reminders of the Vijayanagar craftsmen, who left their products virtually everywhere. Since most Vijayanagar monuments, including lofty *gopuras*, multipillared *mandapas*, and many sculptures, are characterized by their huge scale, the Vijayanagar heritage has great impact. Size alone, of course, is not an indicator of quality in art, but the overwhelming effect of enormous sculpted deities or buildings that dwarf the viewer cannot help but assert the might and vigor of their makers and the religion for which they were made. In this way, the art of Vijayanagar perfectly reflects one of the main motivating forces behind its production—the reassertion of Hindu power against the Muslim intruders. Carried along on the crest of a religious revival, primarily *bhakti* in character, the builders produced new structures, lavishly decorated with sculptures and paintings, and refurbished and added to numerous older monuments throughout the empire, many of which had been destroyed by Muslim attackers. It is important to remember, however, that the Vijayanagar state was not without its own internal political and religious dissension. Two of the three separate dynastic lines of Vijayanagar were founded when ministers overthrew their predecessors. Religious conflicts also plagued the rulers, such as the famous one between the Jains and Vaiṣṇavites during the reign of Bukka I (1356–77), which led to his proclamation that in the eyes of the state all religions were equal and were to be protected. Intrigue, attempts at fratricide, and other such events punctuate Vijayanagar history.

The city of Vijayanagar, which covered an area of at least twenty-six square kilometers, was a glorious monument to the kings and the empire. After the Battle of Tālikōṭa, which took place in 1565 when the four allied Muslim sultans of Bijāpur, Ahmednagar, Golconda, and Bīdar defeated the Vijayanagar army and caused the demise of the dynasty, pillaging of Vijayanagar continued for more than six months. Yet, in spite of this, a tremendous amount of the city survived, which has led some to speculate about how vast it originally must have been. The

glories of the city are known through the accounts of numerous foreign travelers who visited it, including Nicolo Conti (Italian, 1420), Abdur Razzāq (Persian, 1443), and Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz (Portuguese, 1522 and 1535, respectively). All were apparently impressed by its wealth, grandeur, and fortifications. According to the eyewitness account of Razzāq, the city had seven concentric enclosures, each of which was heavily fortified—the outer three enclosures contained the cultivable lands and the inner four enclosed the city proper and the palace area. The ruins of the walls extant today reveal their grand scale, for some are as much as ten meters high and as wide as a modern two-lane road. Razzāq further remarked that city was “such that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed that there existed anything equal to it in the world.”³ Paes, who visited Vijayanagar during the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, the foremost of the Vijayanagar rulers, said he thought the city was as large as Rome and had countless inhabitants and was the best provided city in all the world. He saw one room in the palace that was made entirely of ivory from floor to roof.⁴ Such sights and accounts brought back to Europe must have stimulated the age of exploration in Europe and the search for better routes to these fabled places. It is of interest to note that the abandonment of the city after the battle of Tālikōṭa was so complete that Caesaro Federici, an Italian who visited it two years later, remarked that “the houses stand still but empty, and there is dwelling in them nothing, as is reported, but Tygres and other wild beasts.”⁵ Both secular buildings (such as the elephant stables and the Queen’s bath) and religious monuments survive, largely arranged into two centers, one royal, the other sacred.⁶ In addition, numerous buildings show the clear influence of Islamic architecture, although these latter are outside the purview of this volume.

Perhaps the most important Vijayanagar ruler, especially insofar as art and architecture are concerned, was Kṛṣṇadevarāya, who ruled from 1509 to 1530. He was a patron of literature, a social reformer of sorts, and is credited with

numerous building projects both at Vijayanagar and the nearby town of Nāgalpur, as well as throughout the provinces where he is said to have been responsible for the creation of countless pillared *maṇḍapas* and *gopuras* (usually specifically called *rāya gopuras*).

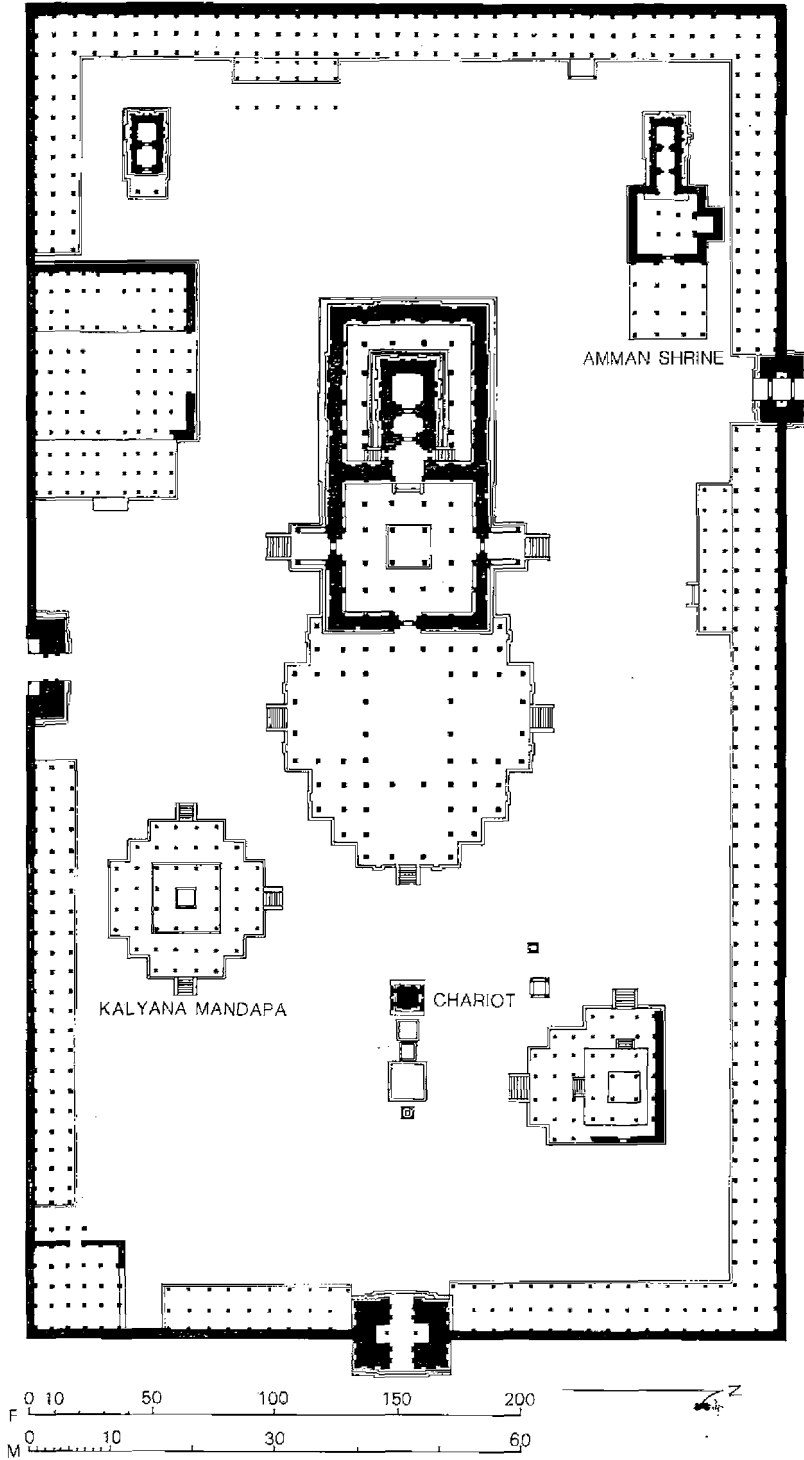
The Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple at Vijayanagar belongs mainly to his reign and is considered to represent the finest of Vijayanagar architecture. Perhaps begun in 1513, and possibly never completed (some say due to the sack of Vijayanagar), this complex contains the essential elements of a typical Vijayanagar-period temple, including the main temple itself and its pillared halls, subsidiary shrines, and other accessory buildings. In addition, its elaborately decorated pillars with figural carvings and rearing animal motifs typify Vijayanagar-period trends. The temple scheme consists of a large rectangular walled enclosure containing at least five separate structures within the capacious courtyard (Fig. 23.1). Three *gopuras* provide access to the courtyard, although the main entrance is through the gateway on the east (Figs. 23.2, 23.3). A typical but small example of the period, this gateway is built of granite on the lower level and has a brick superstructure that rises in receding stories in typical southern fashion. Directly preceding the main temple on the east (Fig. 23.1) is a chariot carved completely of stone (Fig. 23.4). Modeled after wooden carts like those used to carry images of deities in procession in south India, its wheels are reputed to have movable parts. Its towered superstructure, visible in the illustration, a photograph taken in 1856, is now lost.

Two other typically Vijayanagar-period accessory structures to the temple are the Amman shrine (Fig. 23.1) and the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* (Figs. 23.5, 23.6). Usually resembling the main temple, although on a smaller scale, an Amman shrine is dedicated to the feminine consort of the male deity of the temple, and is normally placed to the northwest of the principal shrine. Inclusion of a specific residence for the female divinity in Vijayanagar art is a logical culmination of the growing importance of the female, which had been developing over the centuries, visible as early as the Pallava period where, for example, at Māmallapuram, the Trimūrti cave temple

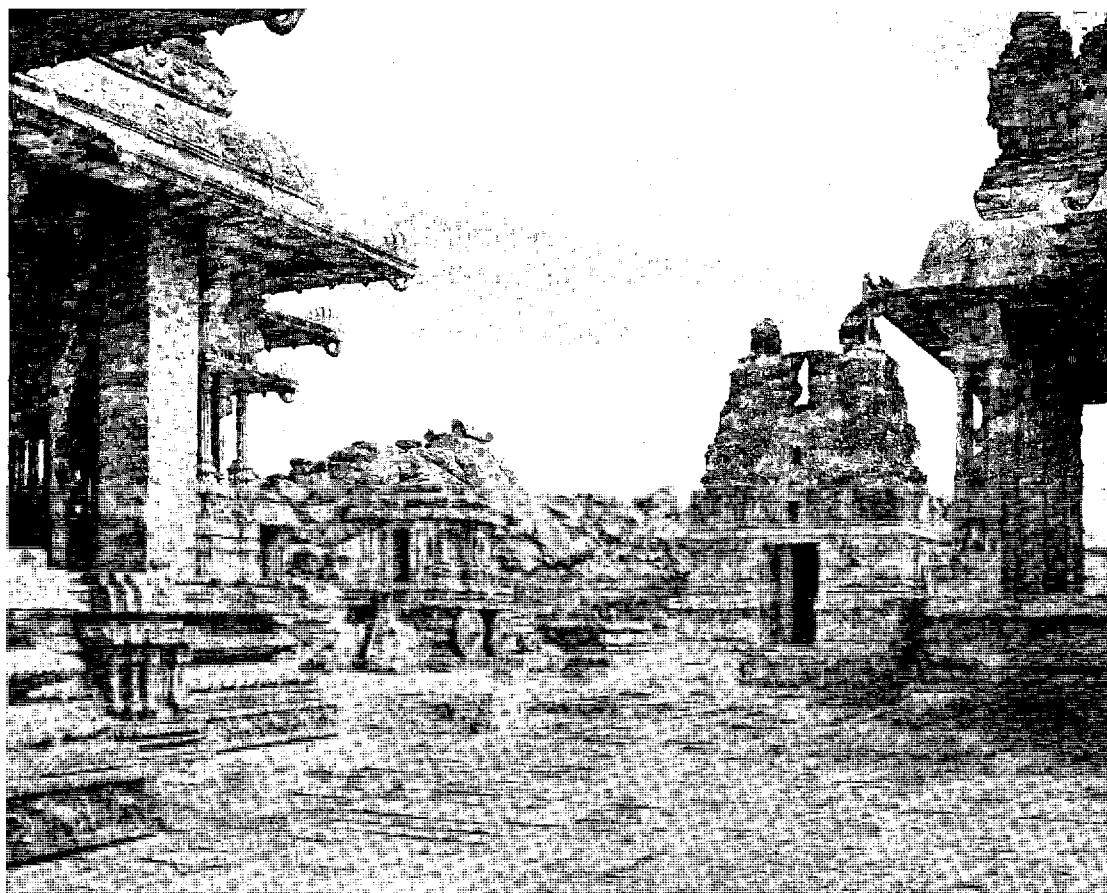
allowed a separate worship area dedicated to Durgā (Figs. 14.13, 14.14). Also an important feature of late south Indian temples, the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* or "marriage hall" was invariably placed to the front of the main temple and slightly to the side. This type of hall, usually the most elaborate and lavish of all the structures in the temple complex, as is the case here, was used for the performance of certain rituals. On some occasions, the male and female deities of the temple and Amman shrine, which were frequently made of bronze and were thus portable, would be transported from their usual abodes to be placed in the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* for exhibition and worship. Square in plan and containing a central raised platform surrounded by rows of intricately carved pillars, this open but rich pavilion is one of the gems of Vijayanagar art.

The main temple, dedicated to Viṭṭhala, a form of Viṣṇu, is comprised of an *ardhamaṇḍapa*, a *maṇḍapa*, and a *vimāna* (Fig. 23.1). Viewed from the rear (Fig. 23.7), the granite wall and base of the building seem to stop abruptly, for the diminutive brick tower over the *garbhagr̥ha* does not reach to the edges of the base, indicating that it is probably a substitute for what was intended to be a much larger, grander superstructure. Had the roof and tower been completed, the temple would indeed have been one of the finest examples of southern Indian architecture. Some of the elaborately carved pillars in the *maṇḍapa* preceding the shrine are "musical" and sound different notes when hit with a wooden stick. The *garbhagr̥ha* has an enclosed circumambulatory passage at the courtyard level. However, since the devotee must descend dark staircases from the level of the *maṇḍapa* floor in order to circumambulate, it creates the impression of being underground when one is inside the temple.

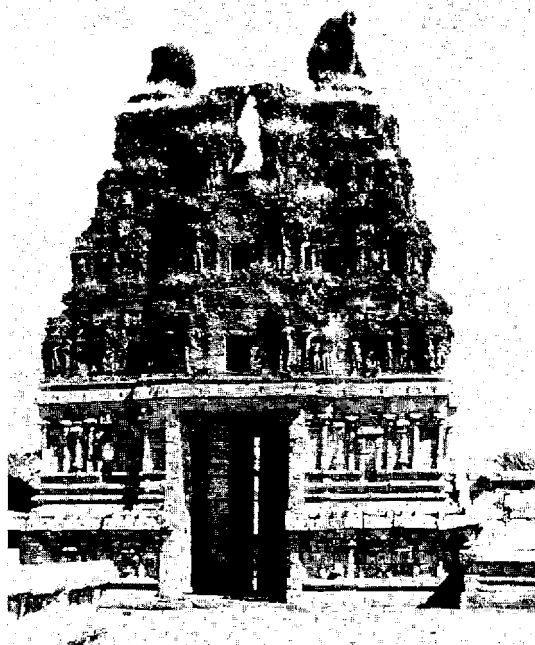
Besides the numerous structures that were founded and built initially by the Vijayanagar kings, their nobles, and other individuals at Vijayanagar and elsewhere, a number of already existing monuments were added to during this period. Since these additions were not part of the original plans of the temples, they sometimes present a nonintegrated appearance. Most commonly, Vijayanagar-period additions in-



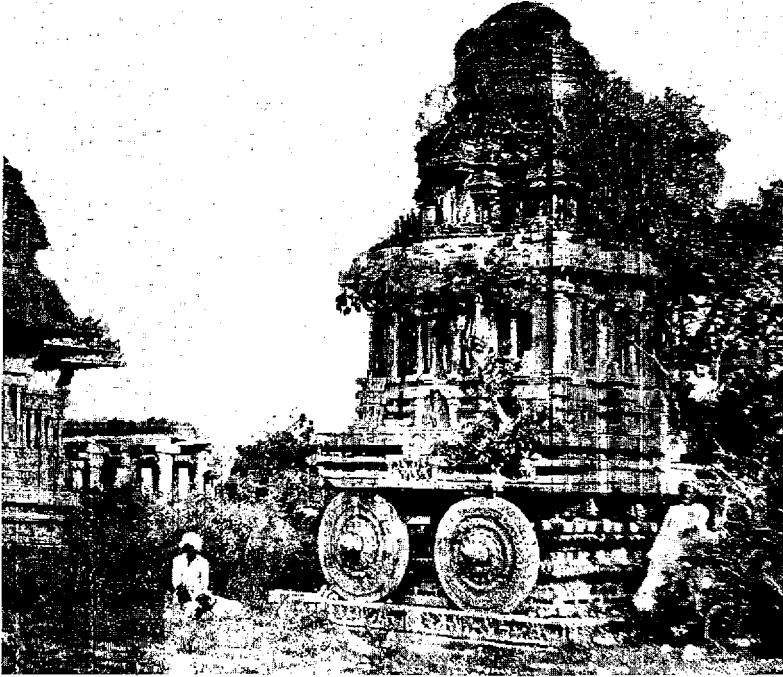
23.1. Plan of Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karṇāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, mainly reign of Kīṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second-third decades of sixteenth century.



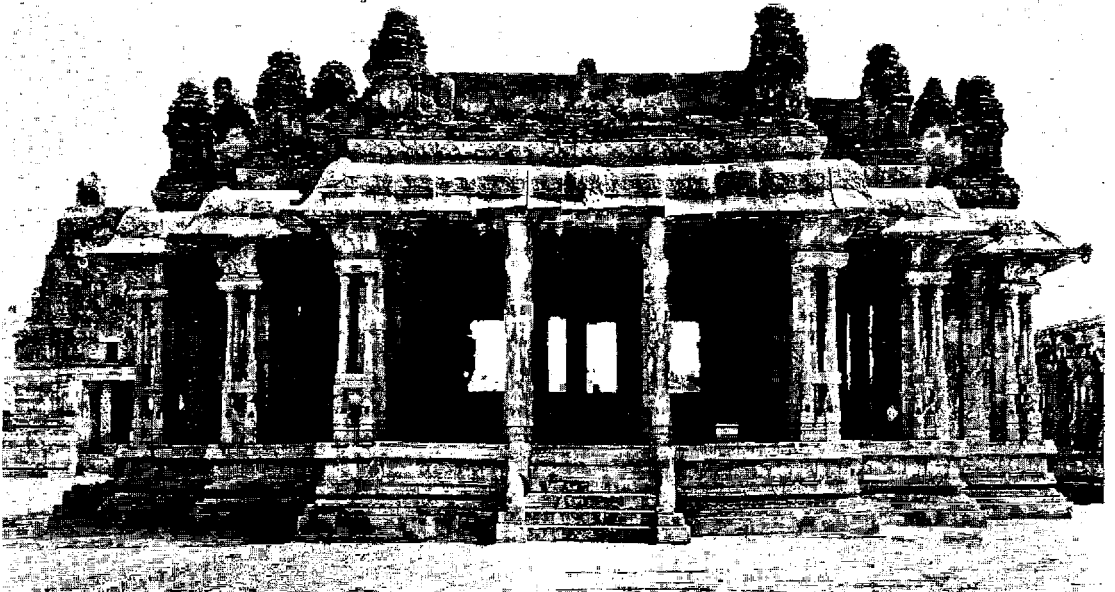
23.2. View looking northeast, Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karṇāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, mainly reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second-third decades of sixteenth century.



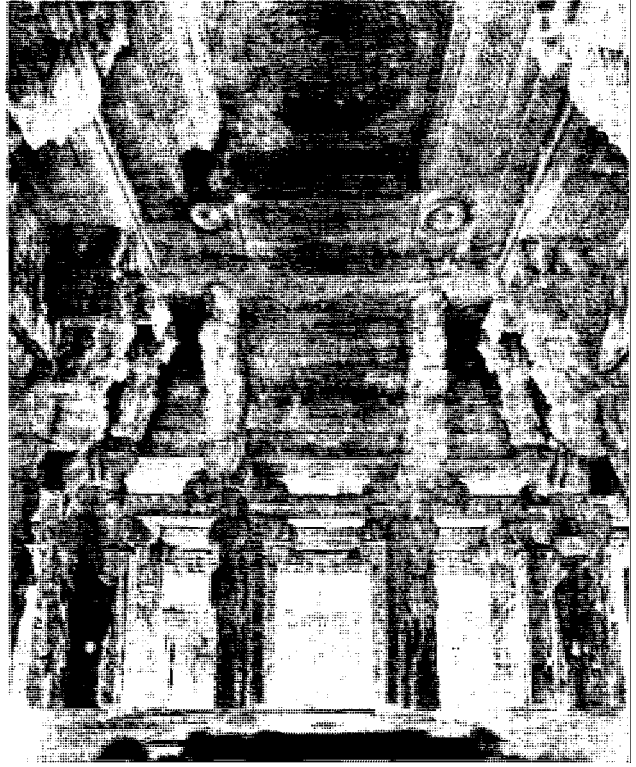
23.3. East *gopura* from west, Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karṇāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, probably reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second-third decades of sixteenth century.



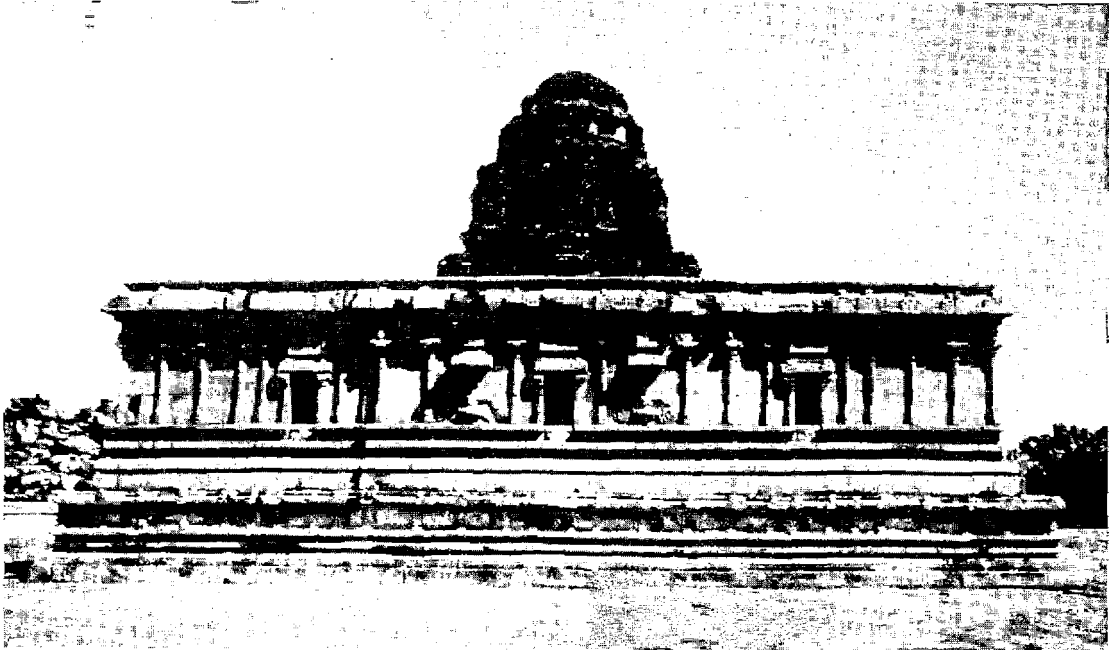
23.4. Stone chariot in courtyard of Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple, as it appeared in 1856. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karnāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, probably reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second-third decades of sixteenth century.



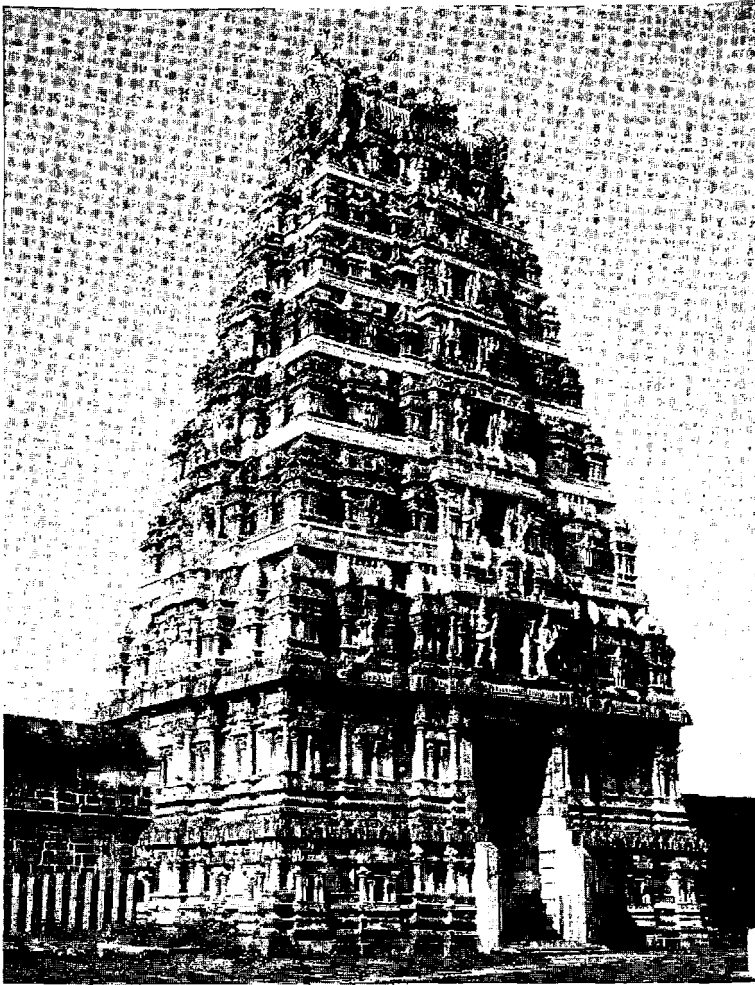
23.5. *Kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*, from west, Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple, Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karnāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, probably reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second-third decades of sixteenth century.



23.6. Interior from west, *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*, Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karnāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, probably reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second–third decades of sixteenth century.



23.7. Viṭṭhalasvāmi temple from west. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karnāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period, probably reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. Ca. second–third decades of sixteenth century.



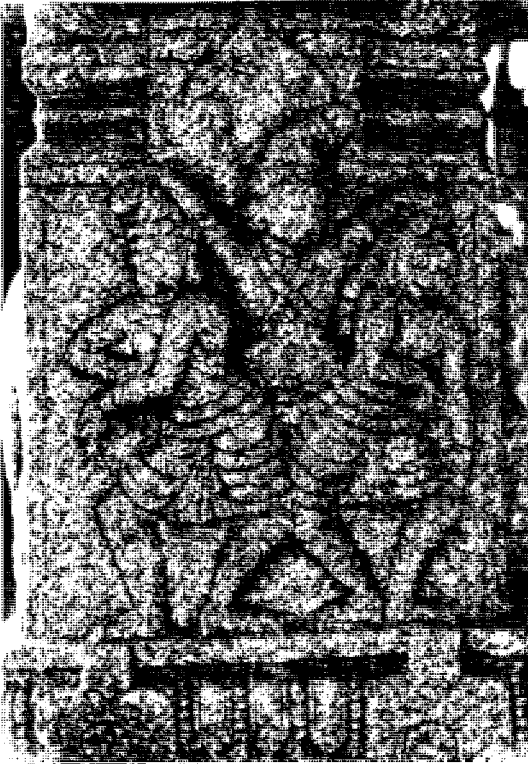
23.8. Southern *gopura* from north-east, Ekāmbareśvaranātha temple. Kāñcīpuram, Tamil Nādu, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century.

cluded large *gopuras*, pillared *maṇḍapas*, *kalyāṇa maṇḍapas*, and temple chariots, that is, the main features of the typical temples of the Vijayanagar period. Usually, these elements were added in large scale, often at the expense of the emphasis on the original *vimāna*.

Perhaps the most conspicuous display of Vijayanagar rulership is found in the enormous *gopuras* that were added to form entrances to the courts or precincts of innumerable south Indian temples. Most of the *gopuras* added to temples during the Vijayanagar period are commonly credited to Kṛṣṇadevarāya, although, as in the case of Aśoka, who is credited with the erection of eighty-four thousand *stūpas*, this ascription is undoubtedly apocryphal. One such example is

the southern *gopura* of the Ekāmbareśvaranātha temple at Kāñcīpuram (Fig. 23.8). Its ten stories rise to a height of more than fifty meters. Clearly the descent of south Indian structures seen as early as the Pallava period, the rectangular stone base is topped by a pyramidal brick tower rising in diminishing stories and having a barrel-vaulted structure (*śālā*) at the top. Much taller than gateways of earlier periods, such as the Cōḷa period, such *gopuras* literally dwarf the central shrines of older temples while calling attention to the religious site by their visibility for great distances around.

The pillared *maṇḍapas* of the Vijayanagar period are usually called "thousand-pillared *maṇḍapas*" regardless of how many pillars they



23.9. Pillar carving showing three figures with four legs at Virabhadra temple. Lepākṣī, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century.

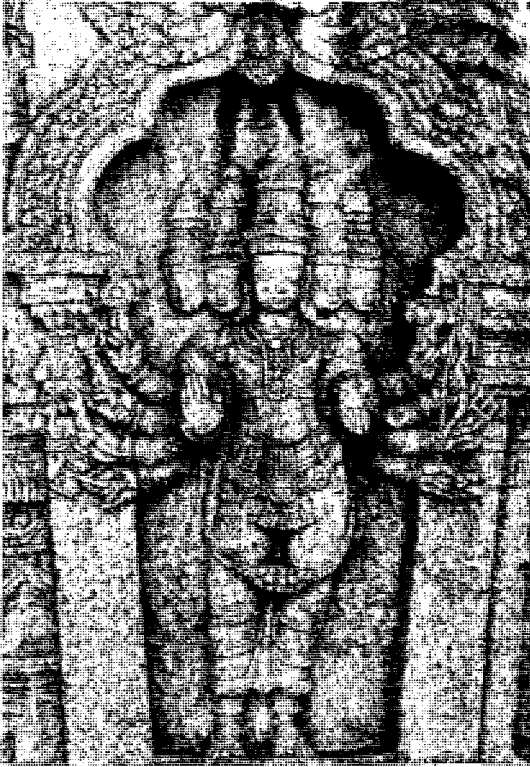


23.10. Pillar carving of seated lion, at Virabhadra temple. Lepākṣī, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century.

in fact possess. These too were added to many already existing temples. Often, they obscure the basic plan of an older temple and overwhelm the viewer or devotee.

The architectural impressiveness of multi-pillared halls and towering gateways frequently overshadows the sculptural decoration of many Vijayanagar-period monuments, yet sculpture was an important part of the overall decoration and iconographic program of virtually every temple of the period. Pillars in *maṇḍapas*, for example, are invariably carved with a rich variety of forms, many of which are eye-catching and some even amusing. A typical Vijayanagar-period sculptor's device was to create a motif in which part of one object or figure is incorporated into the design of another. A pillar decoration from the Virabhadra temple at Lepākṣī in Āndhra Pradesh (Fig. 23.9) shows three figures who share four legs, yet each figure may be

viewed as being complete. This device, known throughout the range of South Asian art,⁷ is not new in this period, but it is nowhere more ubiquitous nor more fully exploited with variety and ingenuity than during the Vijayanagar period. Another common pillar decoration is a forward-facing squatting lion (Fig. 23.10), which is seen virtually without variation on pillars throughout the Vijayanagar territories. In this and the preceding example, it may be noted that the figures are carved in very low relief and give the appearance of being little more than line drawings rather than fully three-dimensional carvings, and often this is true, especially in halls where literally hundreds of pillars have been carved. Some, however, are quite elaborate, such as a representation of Mahēśvara in the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* at the Lepākṣī temple (Fig. 23.11) in which the multiarmed deity stands in an elaborate architectural construct.



23.11. Maheśvara in *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*, Virabhadra temple. Lepākṣī, Andhra Pradesh, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century.



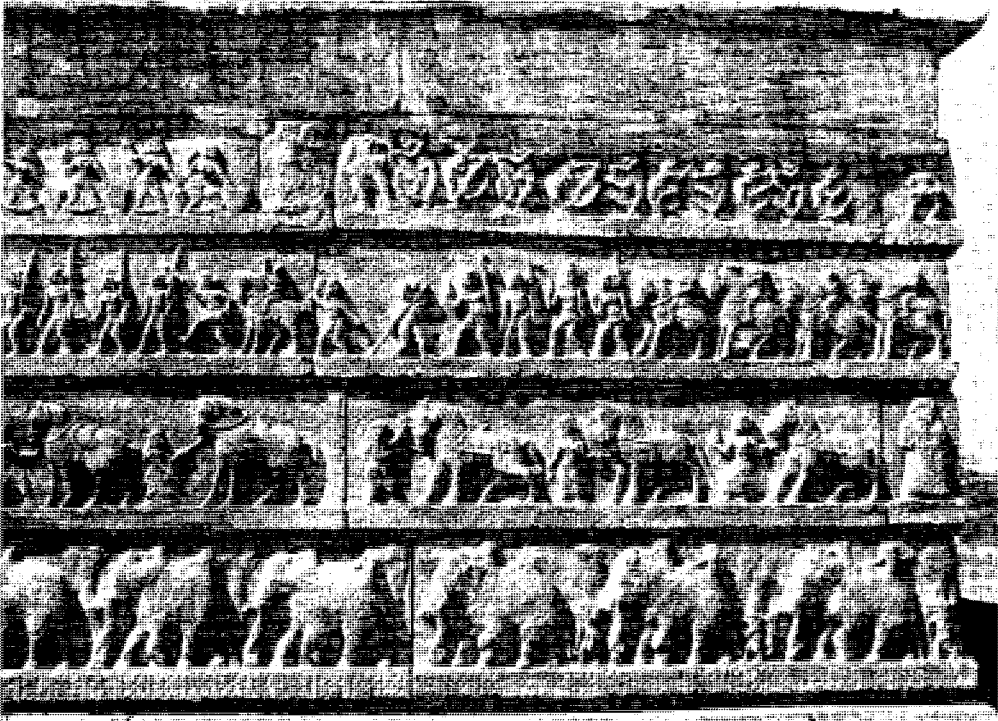
23.12. Baby Kṛṣṇa, on wall of Hāzāra Rāma temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karṇāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century (temple begun 1513).

Temple walls of the Vijayanagar period also bear sculptures. As in other south Indian styles, these often consist of designs of single figures or motifs in niches or separated by pilasters. A figure of baby Kṛṣṇa from the Hāzāra Rāma temple at Vijayanagar is an example of this type of decoration (Fig. 23.12). Carved in deep relief against the plain background and set off by decorated pilasters, the chubby figure is lively and finely carved. Such carvings testify to the fact that Hindu art traditions were hardly in a decline during the Vijayanagar period, although so often this period is described as being decadent or of diminished vigor.

Also at the Hāzāra Rāma temple are at least two walls of sculptures in a format that is quite unusual in South Asian art but appears in painting and sculpture of the Vijayanagar period (Fig. 23.13). Essentially a pictorial rather than sculptural conception, this example shows rows of

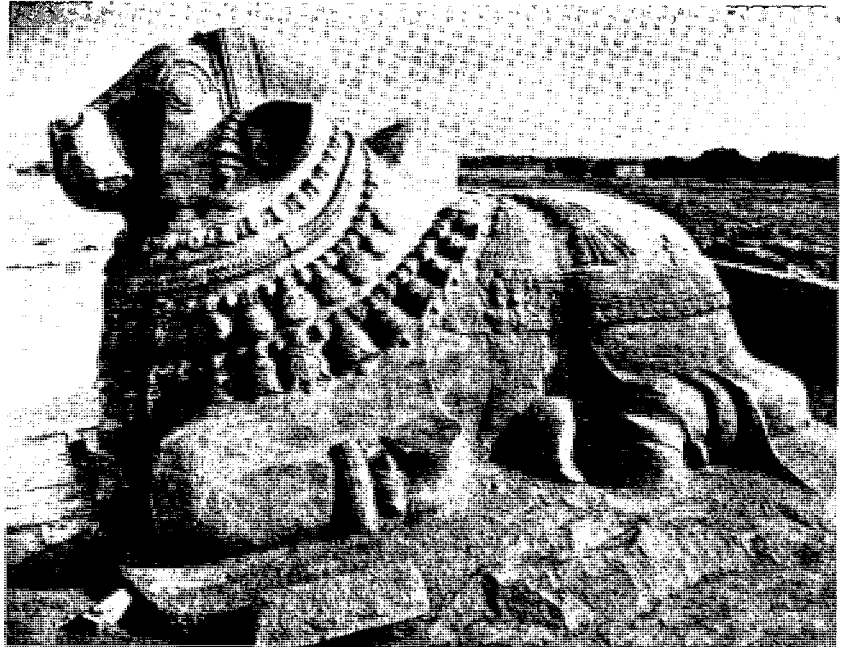
figures and animals in a procession, single file, separated into distinct registers that serve also as ground lines. This format is somewhat similar to that seen earlier in Hindu art (for example, it is used at the Kailāsanātha temple at Ellora in the narrative carvings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*), but here, the evenly spaced elements seem subservient to the overall scheme and lack the liveliness of the earlier representations.

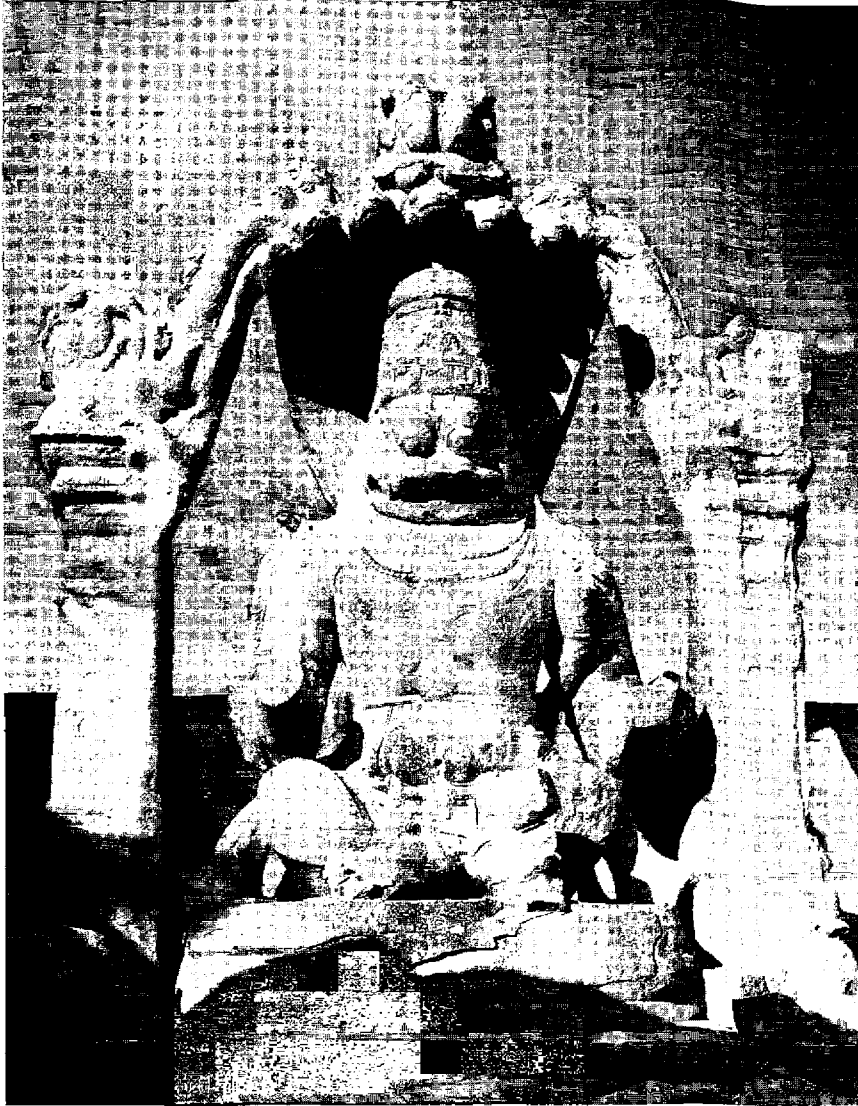
Typical of Vijayanagar-period sculpture are a number of large monolithic carvings found at various sites. The reclining Nandi located some distance to the northeast of the Lepākṣī temple, for example, is more than eight meters in length, more than four meters in height, and is believed to be the largest monolithic Nandi in India (Fig. 23.14). Even more impressive, perhaps, is a gigantic representation of a seated Ugra Nṛsimha or "Angry Nṛsimha" (Fig. 23.15) at Vijayanagar. A figure of Lakṣmī was originally seated



23.13. East wall, exterior, Hāzāra Rāma temple. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karṇāṭaka, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century (temple begun 1513).

23.14. Nandi, to northeast of Virabhadra temple. Lepakṣī, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Vijayanagar period. Ca. sixteenth century.





23.15. Ugra Nṛsiṃha. Vijayanagar (Hampi), Karnāṭaka, India.
Vijayanagar period, reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. 1528.

upon the deity's lap, as may be seen from the arm that remains around his waist. Dedicated in 1528 during the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, this monolithic image measures about six and a half meters in height, literally dwarfing its human worshipers. Thus, while Vijayanagar sculptors used carvings sparingly on their temples, at least compared to many Deccan and northern schools, independent sculptures such as this give testimony to their skills and the impressive size suggests the Vijayanagar power in

the face of political threats. A number of other huge images were produced at Vijayanagar, notably a gigantic representation of Gaṇeśa enshrined as the main deity in a Gaṇeśa temple.

Perhaps because the Vijayanagar period is fairly recent in terms of South Asian history, many paintings have survived in a number of different temples throughout the former kingdom and it is possible to sample some of the trends in this medium. The heritage of the painting styles is rooted both in the Deccan, for example,

at Ellora, and in the south, as in Cōla painting. In addition, very strong evidence of shared stylistic features with painting traditions of western India, such as seen in Jain manuscripts of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries as well as with Rājput paintings of the sixteenth century, are also to be found. These latter are a subject not covered in this volume, for they are better left for a full examination of artistic developments of the Mughal period. However, it should be pointed out that painting schools of the south shared what might be considered to be certain pan-Indic features prevalent during this time. These include an emphasis on line, usually through black outlining of figures and other elements in the composition, use of a profile point of view for the heads of figures (generally shown with a full front representation of the eye, which is usually large and prominent, and sometimes a detached farther eye), little or no shading, use of exaggerated poses and body forms such as narrow waists, swelling chests, and fully formed hips. Other characteristics include lack of spatial depth, arbitrary arrangement and scaling of elements in the composition, use of flat, primary colors, animation of the figures, and abundance of decorative detail.

Paintings were probably used throughout *maṇḍapas*, shrines, and other parts of the temples, especially on the ceilings. At Vijayanagar, a large composition on the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* of the Virūpākṣa temple (Pl. 34) is divided into rectilinear compartments of varying sizes, providing an abstract schematization of the narrative scenes portrayed. This format, like the sculptured reliefs at the Hāzāra Rāma temple, is in strong contrast to the earlier painting tradition seen at Ajaṅṭā, for example, where one scene flows into another without constraint of such divisions. Although the colors are to some extent obliterated, red, blue-green, black, and white predominate. Figures are drawn in a black outline and color is applied in a flat manner with no modeling or shading apparent. The scenes show Vidyāraṇya, a spiritual master instrumental in early Vijayanagar history, along with episodes showing Arjuna, Rāma (Pl. 35) and incarnations of Viṣṇu. Typically, the figures are shown with faces in profile, large frontal

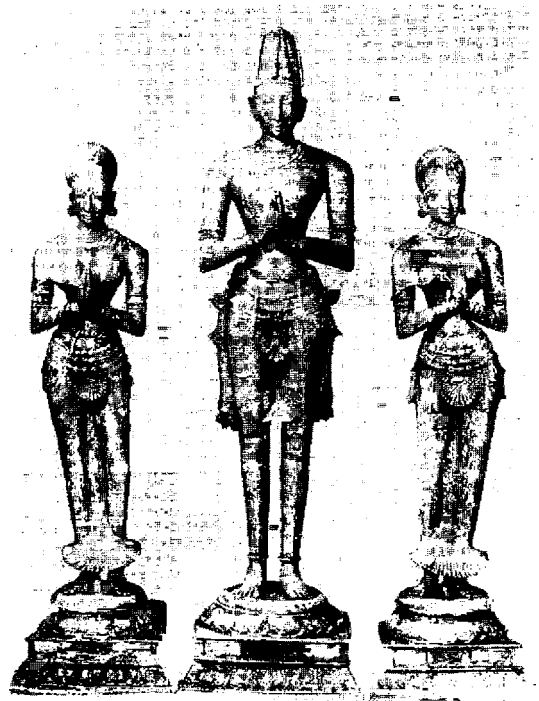
eyes, and narrow waists, and in this way, they are related to pan-Indic developments, seen particularly in the miniature painting traditions of Gujarāt, Rājasthān, and neighboring regions of approximately the same date.

Perhaps the best preserved and best known paintings of the Vijayanagar period, however, are those found at the Virabhadra temple at Lepākṣī. The temple is presumed to have been built during the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's half brother and successor, Acyutadevarāya, who ruled from 1530 to 1542. Yet a number of aberrant features about the temple that are not fully ascribable to the rugged, irregular terrain suggests that it may have been built over a longer period of time. The paintings, at least those in the *raṅga maṇḍapa* with which we shall be concerned, however, probably date from the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

The ceiling panels of the *raṅga maṇḍapa* are delimited by the beams and pillars used in the construction of the building. A number of the narrative panels are as great as eleven meters in length (one is in fact eighteen meters). Often, painted borders with abstract motifs (Pls. 36-37) set the compositions off from their architectural settings. The Lepākṣī paintings are characterized by the earth tones of the palette and the nearly complete absence of blue (and in fact, the absence of primary colors in general). The female attendants to Pārvatī (Pl. 36) in one composition are similarly conceived but are also notable because of their varied costumes and elaborate hairstyles. The forms of their bodies and the details of their costumes are outlined in black, and colors are applied in a flat manner, in contrast with early painting styles, such as that at Ajaṅṭā. The faces are essentially profiles to which a "detached" farther eye has been appended, giving the suggestion of a three-quarter view. One of the most published sections of the *raṅga maṇḍapa* ceiling is the narrative of *Kirātārjunīyam*, "Arjuna's Penance." One episode (Pl. 37) shows a boar running through a stylized landscape while a number of male figures try to escape at the left. The figures and the boar are animated, but little emotion is expressed and all the faces look alike. Trees, rocks, and other elements of the landscape are arranged

almost like textile designs, filling in the space and setting the scene without attempting to capture the likeness of the physical world. As in earlier Indic traditions, "realism" is not the main concern.

In addition to the architectural, stone sculpture, and painting traditions of the Vijayanagar period, metalworking continued as an important south Indian craft. A nearly life-size figure group of Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his two queens, Tirmalamba and Cinnadevi, each identified by an inscription on the shoulder, has received just praise and much attention (Fig. 23.16). In contrast to images of the Cōḷa period, which were solid cast, these hollow statues are executed in a repoussé technique, being made of two beaten sections joined to give the figures a solid appearance. Each figure stands frontally, with hands in *añjali mudrā*, obviously paying reverence to a now lost image of a deity. The figures are extremely slender, as has been the general type seen since Sātavāhana times in the south. Probably, these figures were executed during the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya or shortly after, around 1525–35, yet they demonstrate that metal imagery was still vital.



23.16. Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his queens. Believed to be at Śrī Venkateśvara temple. Tirupati, Āndhra Pradesh, India. Vijayanagar period, reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya or slightly later. Ca. 1525–35. Repoussé metal. Nearly life-size.

CONCLUSION

Like other late Hindu traditions in India, the art of the Vijayanagar empire has often been ignored in the literature about the history of South Asian art. Yet the presence of Vijayanagar art is felt virtually everywhere in south India and the Deccan, both because of the usually grand scale of Vijayanagar productions and the near ubiquity of Vijayanagar-period structures throughout these regions. Often viewed by earlier writers as despoilations to earlier monuments, Vijayanagar-period additions to existing

monuments have often been disparaged, though the art remains at the city of Vijayanagar itself, where the richness and vigor of the Vijayanagar period is everywhere in evidence, have been rightfully accorded their justly deserved admiration. Recent excavations at Vijayanagar⁸ continue to reveal the impressiveness of Vijayanagar culture and promise to assure Vijayanagar period art its rightful place among the most impressive and dominant artistic traditions of South Asia.



Detail of 24.11.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

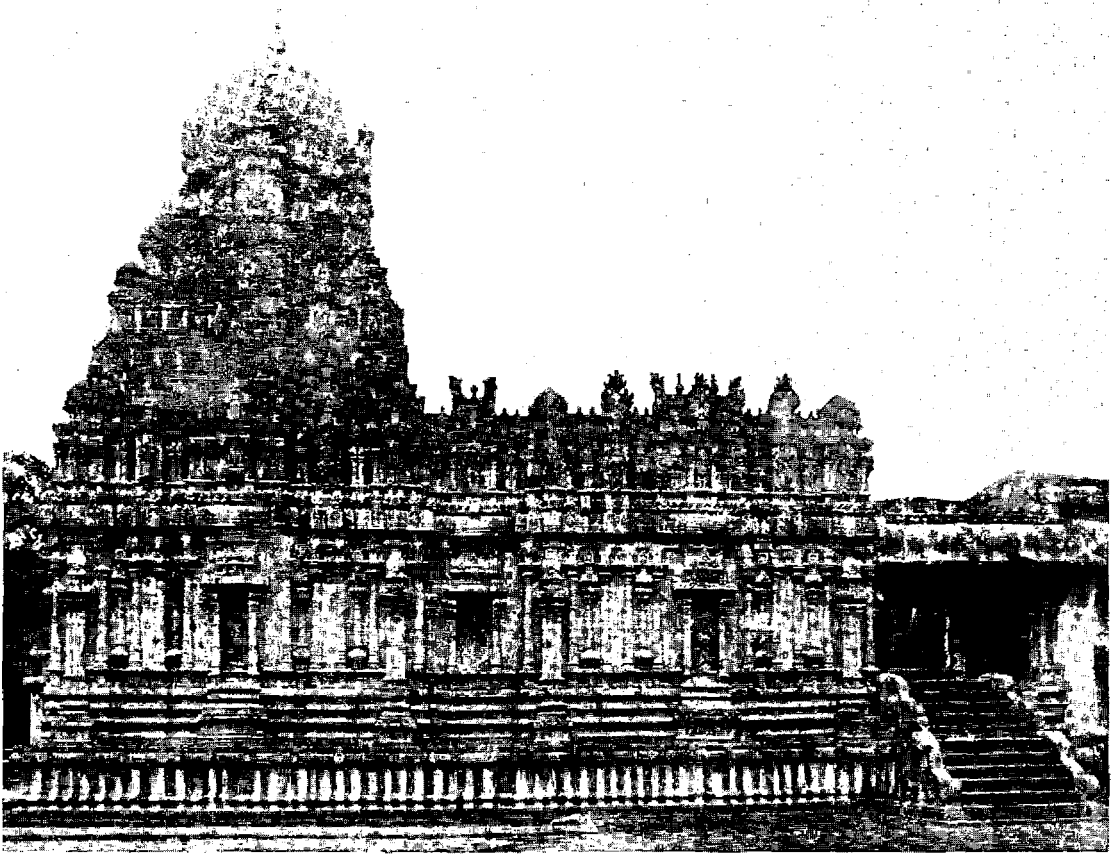
The Nāyak Period

Upon the collapse of Vijayanagar after the Battle of Tālikōṭa in 1565, the Nāyak princes who had been their viceroys¹ took advantage of the power vacuum and asserted their political independence. Essentially, south Indian art under the Nāyaks represents a continuation of traditions fostered by the Vijayanagar kings, but which the Nāyaks pushed towards further elaboration, greater scale, and ambitiousness of scheme. Like the Vijayanagar kings, the Nāyaks added to existing monuments by building pillared halls, *gopuras*, and other structures. During the Nāyak rule, many south Indian temples took their "final form," that is, the form that they assumed during their last major period of construction. These "living organisms," built over centuries in many cases, were (and still are) important, thriving centers within the daily lives of the people.

Four branches of the Nāyaks ruled respectively at Madurai, Tanjore, Gingee, and Ikkeri, thus establishing separate centers throughout the once politically unified Vijayanagar territories.

Many of the most important structures and art works of the Nāyaks belong to the reign of Tirumalai Nāyak (1623-59), the most famous of the Nāyaks. A number of portraits of him exist and his personality is well known. Tirumalai's capital was Madurai, which he ornamented with a number of new temples in addition to expanding and adding to a number of already existing monuments. Since this whole period has been scarcely studied, little is known, from an art historical point of view, about Gingee and Ikkeri, and distinctive trends among the four capitals have not been defined. However, it may be assumed that the geographic location of each capital and associated art sites was a determining factor in the utilization of earlier traditions in the styles.

Of the four Nāyak centers, Tanjore and Madurai are most renowned for their art productions. An extremely fine example of a complete temple from this period, but one of modest scale, is the Subrahmaṇya temple in the northwest corner of the compound of the Rājarājes-

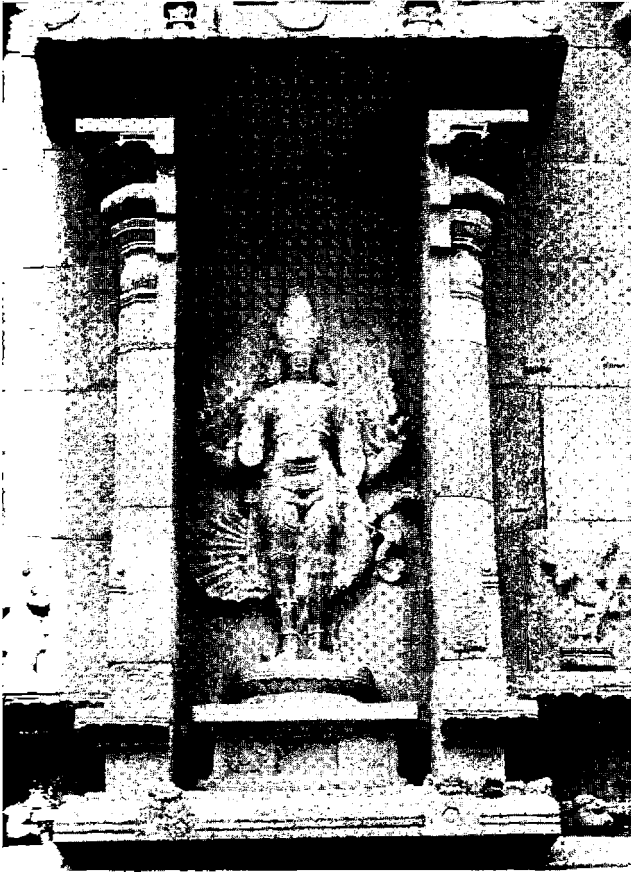


24.1. Subrahmaṇya temple in northwest corner of Rājarājeśvara temple compound, from south. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyaka period. Ca. seventeenth century.

vara at Tanjore (Figs. 24.1, 21.22). Its date of creation is estimated to be in the seventeenth century, although there is no inscriptional evidence to support this. At first glance, the jewellike precision of the carving and high quality of workmanship throughout the temple suggests that it could be a monument of the Cōla period, contemporary perhaps to the Great Temple in whose shadow it stands. But close examination reveals that the architectural and sculptural decoration are clearly of a later period.

The temple consists of a shrine preceded on the east by an enclosed *maṇḍapa* and a porch that is accessible by stairs on both the north and south sides (Fig. 21.22). A tower of about sixteen meters in height rises above the *garbhagrha*, its

basic shape and structure being clearly derived from south Indian *vimānas* seen as early as the Pallava period. However, much greater elaboration of architectural features, such as the inclusion of miniature shrines, pilasters, and niches may be seen, and there is greater three-dimensionality to many of the elements. In addition, figurative sculptures, also highly three-dimensional, play a major role in the iconography and form of the superstructure. The crowning element is also elaborately treated with surface decoration.² The wall treatment of the exterior of the temple also bears resemblance to earlier traditions, such as those of the Pallavas and Cōlas, yet may be distinguished from them by a number of features. Compared to the Rājarājeś-



24.2. Subrahmaṇya (Kārttikeya), in niche on south side of Subrahmaṇya temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period. Ca. seventeenth century. Stone.

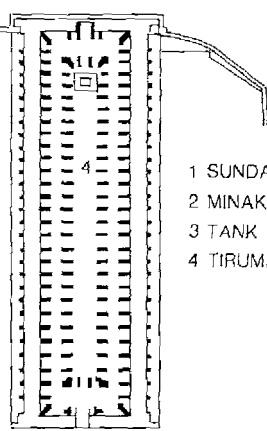
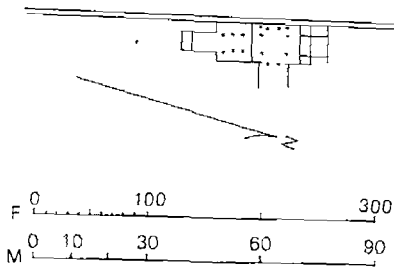
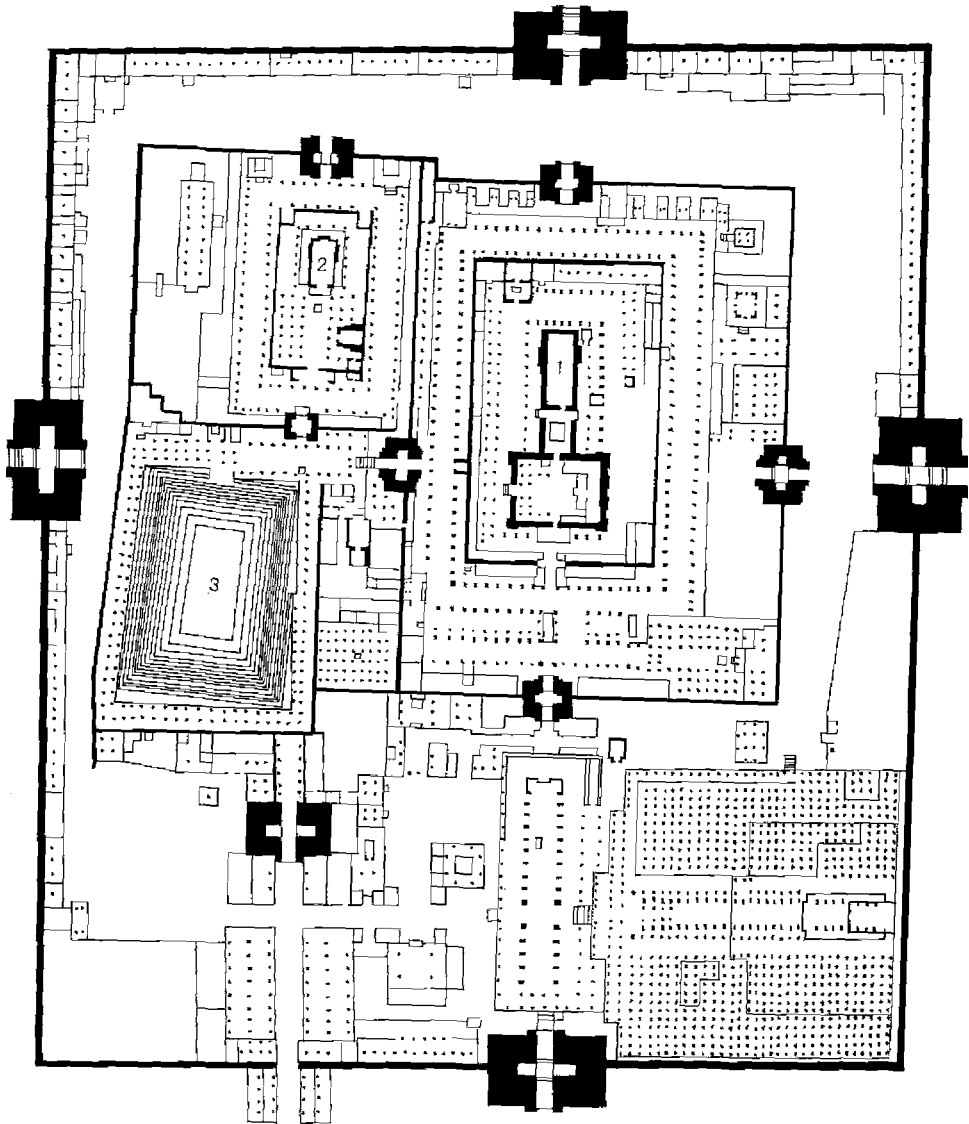


24.3. *Dvārapāla* flanking entrance on east, Subrahmaṇya temple. Tanjore, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period. Ca. seventeenth century. Black stone. H: ca. 150 cm.

vara temple, by whose side it stands, and which must have influenced the later Nāyak artists to some degree at least, this temple, also ornamented with niches and pilasters, appears more delicate in its treatment. While this effect may be due in part to its decidedly less massive scale, it is also due to the rows of deeply carved moldings of the base, the extremely slender pilasters, and the tidy arrangement of vertical and horizontal elements into an easily discerned pattern covering the surface of the structure. Instead of the blockish pilasters and niches of the older temple, here round pilasters and more slender proportions create a lighter appearance. Each of the principal niches on the three sides of the *vimāna* contains an image of Subrahmaṇya (Kārttikeya),

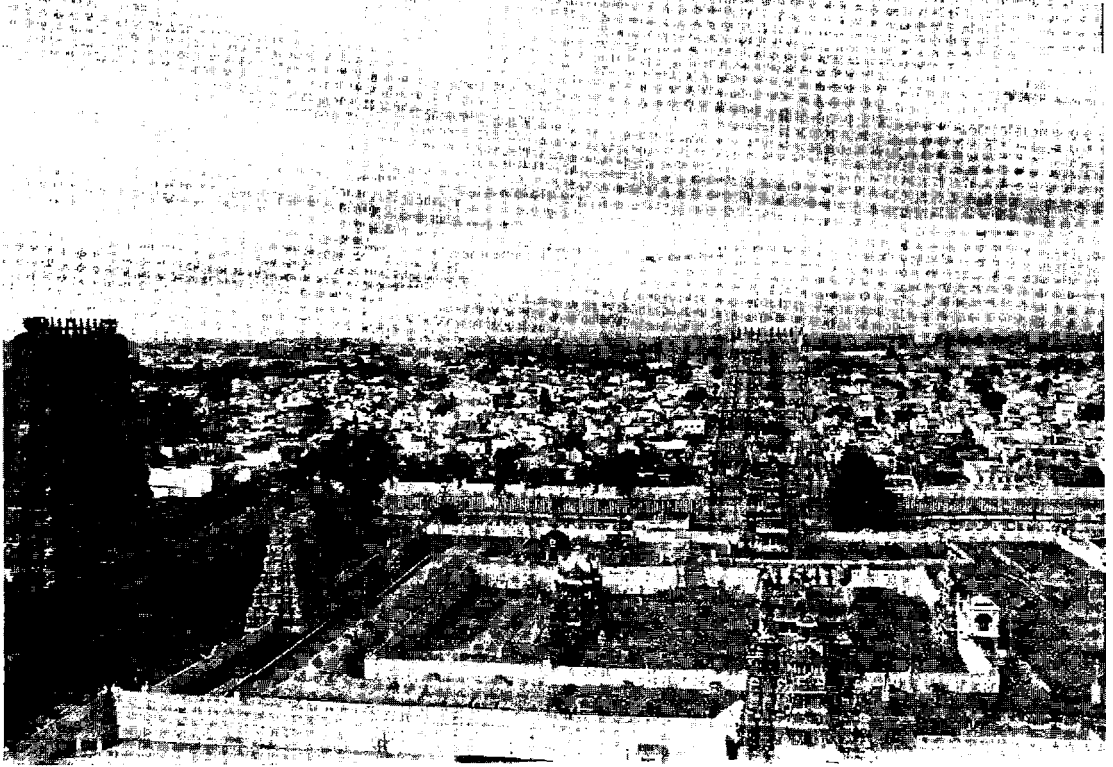
to whom the temple is dedicated (Fig. 24.2). As in the case of the niche figures on the Rājarājesvara, these are carved of a different type of stone than the temple itself, and have been inserted into the niches. Above the niches on the exterior of the temple are model temple roofs of the barrel-vaulted (*śāla*) type that occurs as the crowning element in the typical south Indian *gopura*.

A pair of black stone *dvārapālas* flanking the door leading into the interior of the temple, one of which is illustrated here (Fig. 24.3), may be compared to the Cōla-period guardians on the Rājarājesvara temple (Fig. 21.25). Similar in pose, the figures share a number of features, such as being full-bodied and animated. How-



- 1 SUNDARESVARA TEMPLE
- 2 MINAKSI-DEVI TEMPLE
- 3 TANK OF GOLDEN LILIES
- 4 TIRUMALAI'S CAULTRI

24.4. Plan of Great Temple. Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. Nayak period, mainly reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.



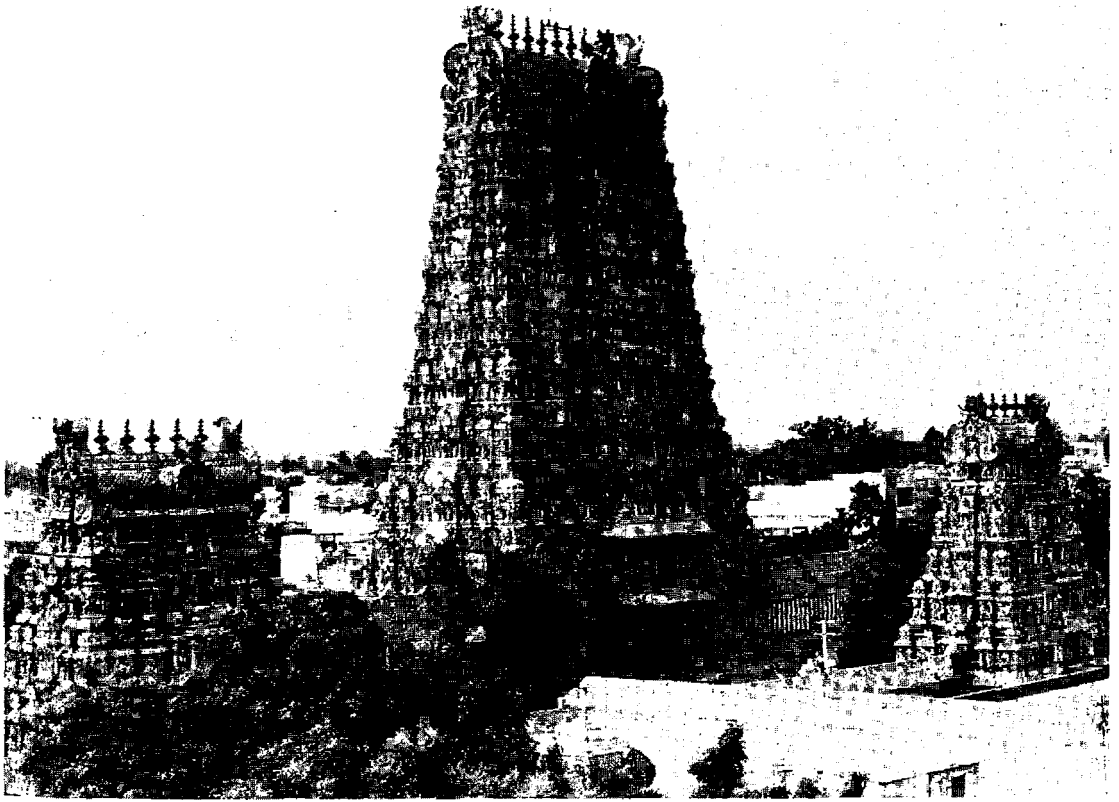
24.5. View of Great Temple from south. Madurai, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period, mainly reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.

ever, the Nāyak-period versions are much more detailed and ornate in the carving of drapery, jewelry, and hair. It is clear that the Nāyak images grew out of the earlier traditions yet they are also distinctive in their own right.

One of the major artistic achievements of the Nāyak age is the creation of the Great Temple at Madurai. This titanic project, largely executed during the reign of Tirumalai Nāyak in the mid-seventeenth century, stands as the prime example of Nāyak architectural schemes, and indeed, is one of the greatest temple complexes in all of South Asia. Two temples are enclosed within the walled compound (Fig. 24.4); the primary shrine is dedicated to Śiva as Sundarēśvara (Beautiful Lord) and the second temple (in essence, an Amman shrine) is dedicated to

his wife in the form of the goddess Mīnākṣī (Fish-Eyed One). Often, the entire complex is called the Mīnākṣī temple after the consort of the god. The inner sanctuaries of these two structures may belong in part to an early period of the temple's history but they were razed to the ground in 1310 during Malik Kāfūr's expedition to the south and were later rebuilt on a vast and ambitious scale by the Nāyaks.

The outer rectangle of the temple encloses the Mīnākṣī and Sundarēśvara temples, a huge tank (Tank of the Golden Lilies), numerous pillared halls, and great lengths of covered walkways (*prākāras*; Figs. 24.4, 24.5). The four outer *gopuras* are the largest of the eleven at the temple (that on the south measures about forty-five meters in height), and are aligned on axis



24.6. West *gopuras* of Great Temple, from southeast. Madurai, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period, mainly reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.

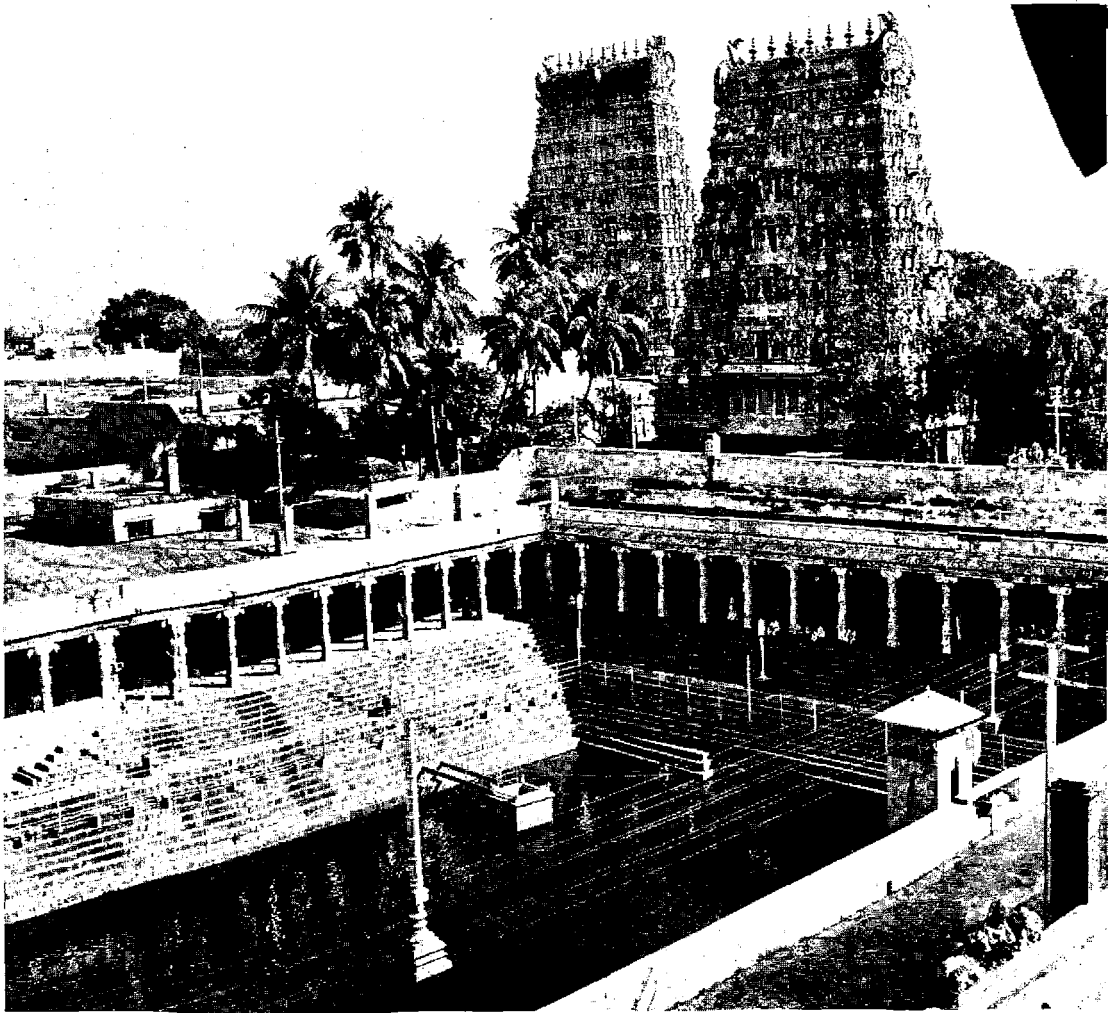
with the Sundarēśvara temple rather than the center of the respective sides of the enclosure. By Nāyak times, the entranceway to a temple compound had become visually the most important element in the south Indian temple and this temple was no exception. Rising from a high granite base, the brick and painted stucco superstructures of the *gopuras* taper with a slight curve and end in the barrel-vaulted (*śālā*) roof (Fig. 24.6). Now more numerous than ever before, the stories diminish in size as they ascend. The structure now swarms with sculpted figures; virtually every space is filled with surface carvings of niches, pilasters, and other forms. The iconographic program, still not analyzed, undoubtedly reflects the highly structured pantheon crystallized in Hinduism by this

time and probably adheres strictly to canonical textual materials. The large tank (Fig. 24.7), set slightly off axis to the main temple (Fig. 24.4), is another impressive feature of this temple. Surrounded by steps and a pillared portico, the tank was used for ritual bathing; its grand scale is a pronouncement of the ambitious schemes of the Nāyaks.

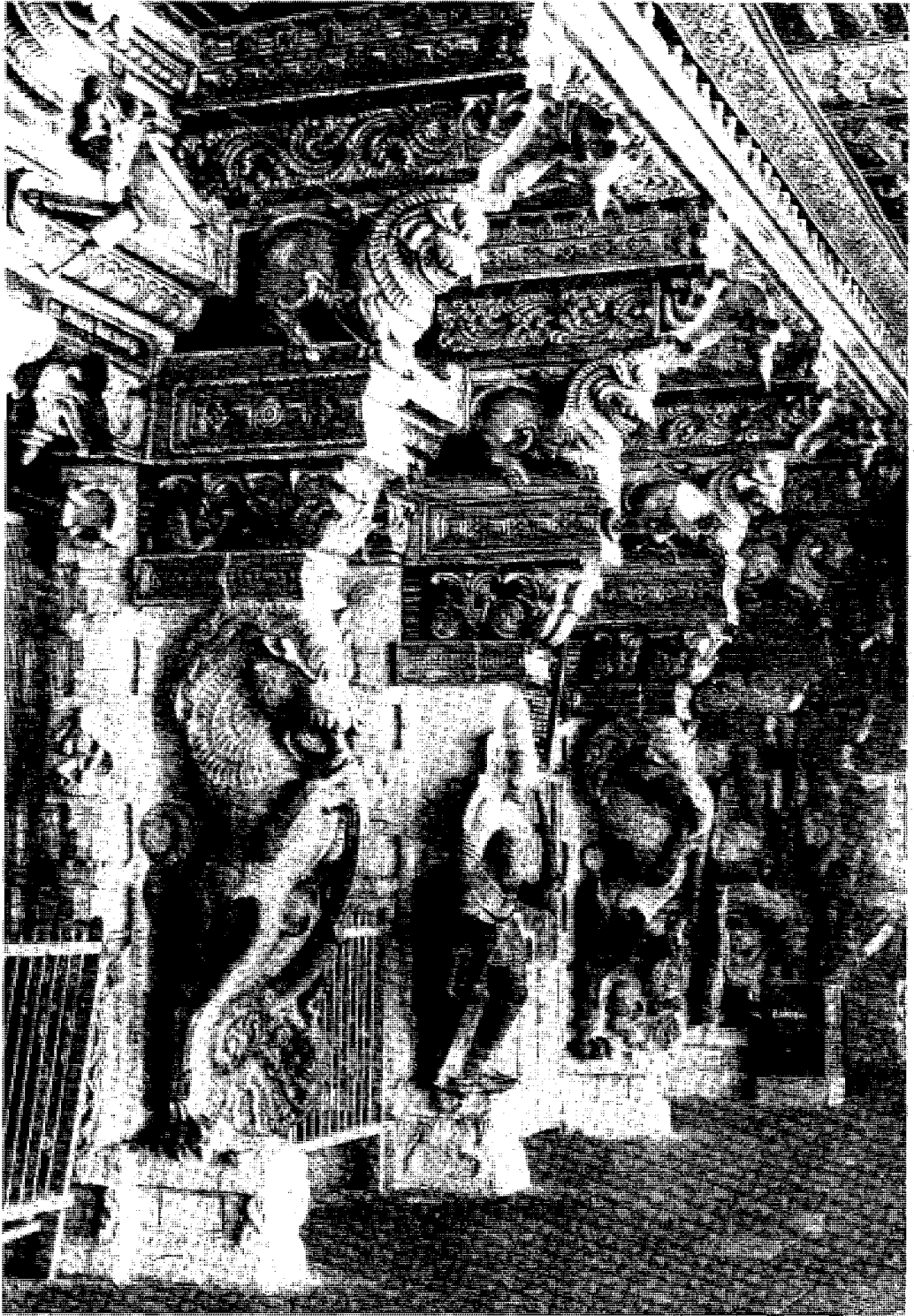
The interior corridors, pillared halls, and shrine areas of the temple complex present an almost bewildering array of heavily ornamented, monumentally sculpted forms to the devotee. Temple officials estimate that there are 33 million sculptures at the temple, although this may be a generous estimate in spite of the elaboration of the *gopuras* or the detail seen in the interior (Fig. 24.8). The enormous stone piers are each sculpted

with numerous larger than human-size figures, primarily depicting forms of Śiva, that overwhelm and dwarf the beholder. Concentrated in this one area alone, there are more individual sculptures than exist from some other major periods of South Asian art; yet this temple and others of its type have barely begun to be studied. While this is in part due to the fact that many such temples are still used for worship and are therefore inaccessible for scholarly study, it must also be ascribed to a feeling of defeat almost before one even begins due to the enormity

of the task that has led to such neglect. Detailed photographs and architectural drawings of the two main temples remain to be made before the architectural forms can be more fully studied. The *vimāna* towers, however, suggest that the temples may resemble the Subrahmaṇya shrine at Tanjore or a similar structure, although they are much larger. Virtually no attempt to deal with the stylistic, historic, and developmental aspects of the sculptural and architectural forms of this temple and most other Nāyak period monuments has been undertaken. Instead, they



24.7. Large tank at Great Temple, from southwest. Madurai, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period, mainly reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.



24.8. Carved stone piers at Great Temple. Madurai, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period, mainly reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.



24.9. Female musician, on pillar in "thousand-pillared hall," Great Temple, Madurai, Tanul Nādu, India. Nāyak period, probably reign of Tirumalai Nāyak. Ca. mid-seventeenth century.

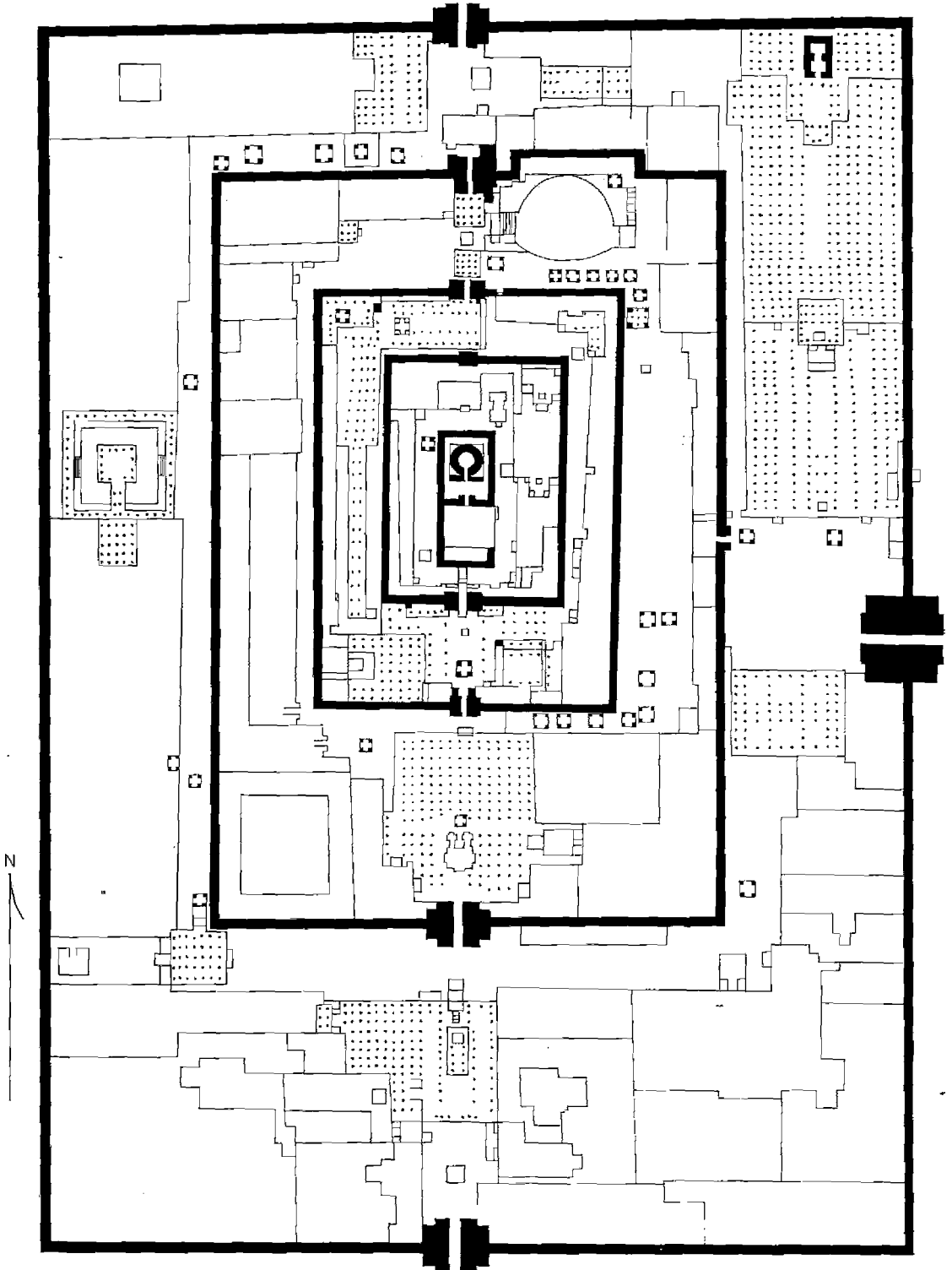
are sometimes considered decadent examples in comparison to earlier works. Yet it is certain that these works of art, too, have a story in their meaning and religious purpose, and represent both a link with the past as well as a distinct contribution to the art of South Asia in their own right.

An incredible standard of craftsmanship was maintained in spite of the scope of the project. This may be seen in the carved pillars of the so-called "thousand-pillared" hall, which contains some 985 pillars and is located in the north-east corner of the compound. Now serving as a museum, this hall seems to be a sea of pillars (Fig. 24.4), many of which bear figures as great as three meters in height (Fig. 24.9). Virtually in the round and nearly free of restraint by their architectural setting, the figures assume a variety

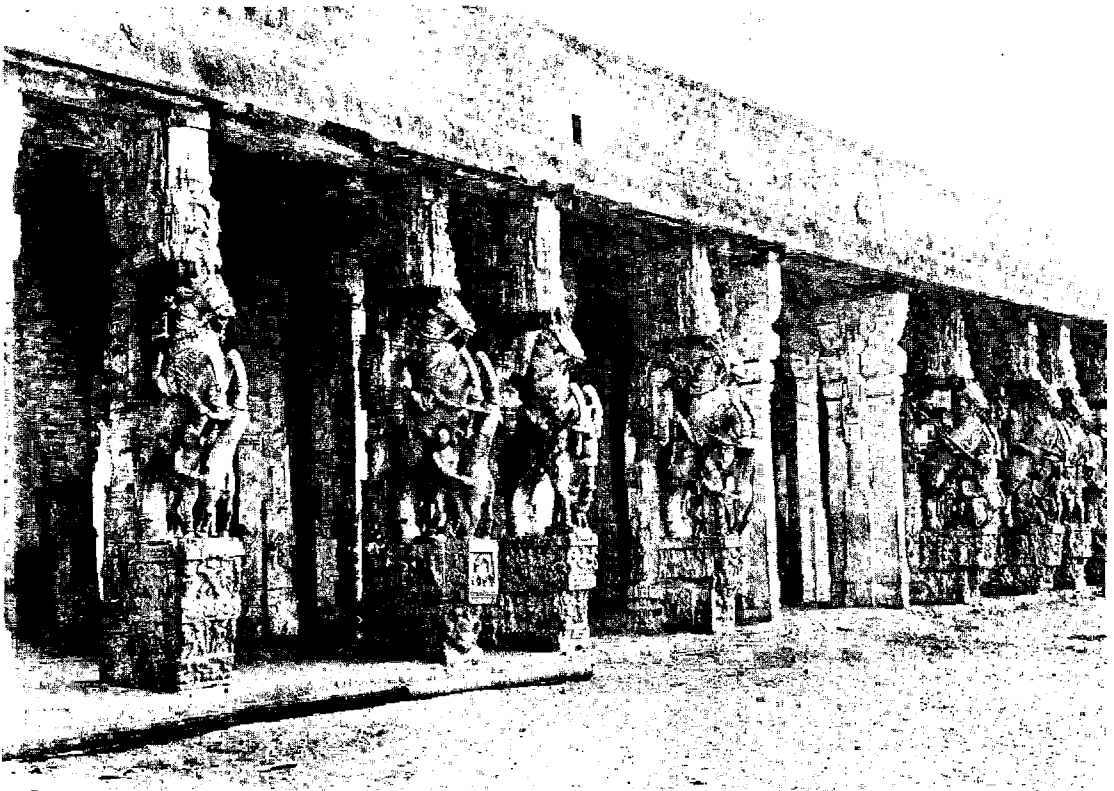
of poses. In spite of the hardness of the granitic stone, much detail has been rendered in the ornamentation of the figures, for the garlands and sashes they wear are generally deeply undercut. Thus, while still part of an architectural context (as had been the case as early as Pallava times in the south where figures were dominated by pilastered niches or other architectural settings), the figure has now been released, nearly every image taking on the strength and vigor that had previously been reserved for shrine or primary deities.

Set at an angle to the main temple compound and outside of it to the east is the rectangular pillared hall called Tirumalai's *caultri* (Fig. 24.4). Built by Tirumalai Nāyak between 1622 and 1633, this hall bears life-size statues on the pillars including portraits of the Nāyaks of Madurai and Tirumalai himself. Tirumalai has, in fact, been immortalized in a number of portrait statues at the temple, one of which is illustrated (Pl. 38). In a worshipful pose, the figure carries on the tradition of royal portraiture identifiable since Pallava times in the south. Tirumalai is rendered in a naturalistic manner; his distinctive mustache and corpulency are known also from other contemporaneous portraits of him and thus the artist apparently attempted to capture his actual physical appearance. In contrast, the female figures on the adjoining side of the pillar, presumably the wives of Tirumalai, are shown in a much more stylized fashion, resembling many of the more typical figures of the Nāyak period.

Even a brief glimpse at the Madurai temple reveals that the temple in south India during the post-Cōla period was much more than simply a place of worship for a king or few chosen individuals. Built at enormous cost and over considerable periods of time, the temple was a focus of south Indian life and a major factor in the economic and social life of the people. It was a city unto itself, sometimes containing market places in its outer courtyards and always active with crowds of people. Such an institution needed constant rather than occasional sources of funds, large permanent staffs of priests, temple officials, and workmen to maintain the place and build new structures. No longer simply a



24.10. Plan of four inner enclosures, Vaiṣṇavite temple city. Śrīraṅgam, Tamil Nādu, India. Various periods. Mainly thirteenth-seventeenth centuries.



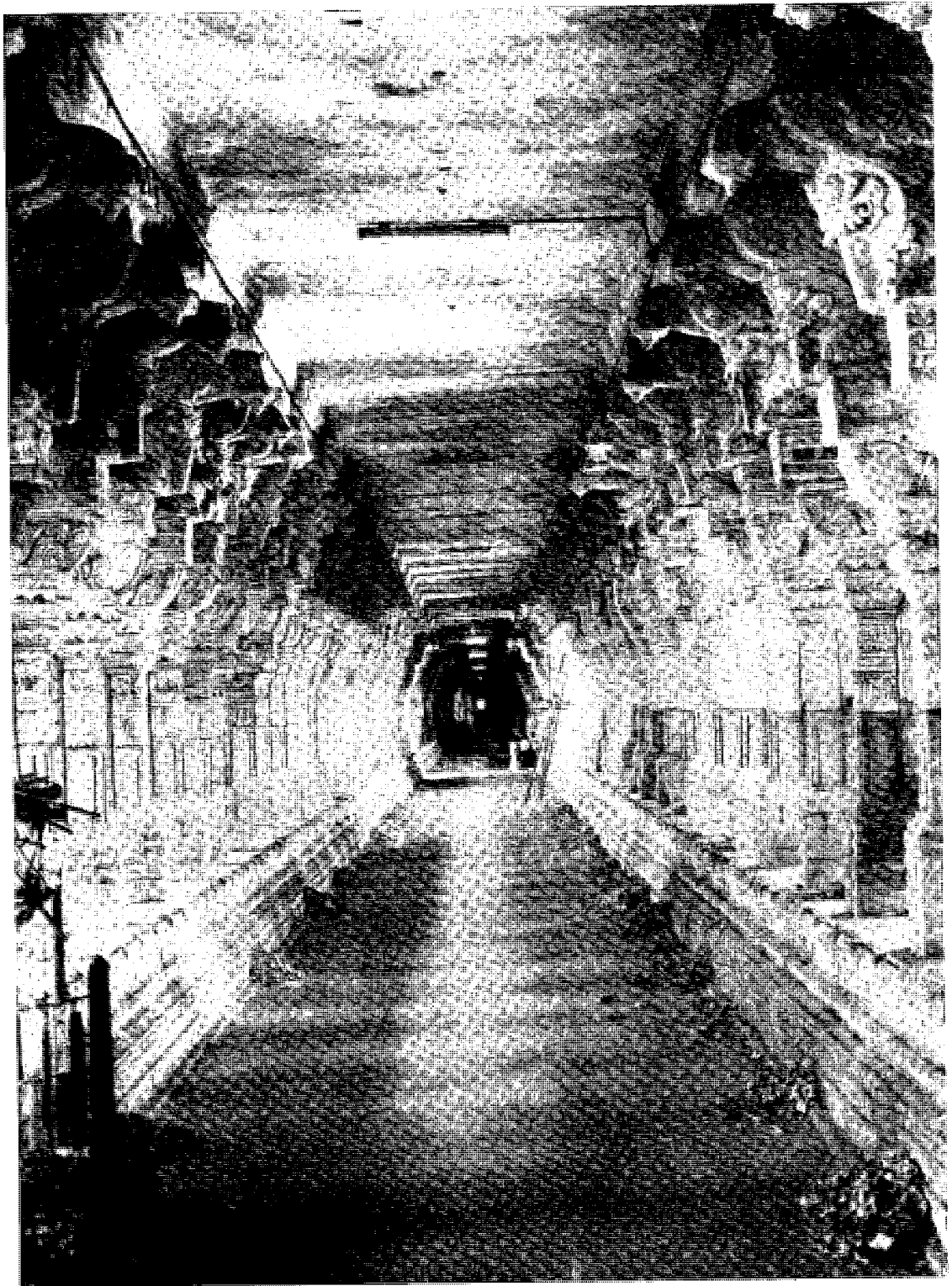
24.11. "Horse Court," Vaiṣṇavite temple city. Śrīraṅgam, Tamil Nādu, India. Probably Nāyak period. Ca. seventeenth century.

personal offering of a king wishing to gain merit or proclaim his might, the temple became an institution greater than any individual or his single contributions. The sociological and cultural aspects of south Indian temples are subjects properly within the sphere of the art historian's quest to understand the monuments being studied, for along with traditional art historical areas of investigation such as style and history, these other areas must also be considered.³

Even more impressive in terms of size than the Madurai temple is the Viṣṇu temple-city at Śrīraṅgam, the largest south Indian temple (Fig. 24.10). Its outer rectangle measures 878 by 755 meters and it has twenty-one *gopuras*, not all of which were completed. Thirteen of these are on an axial line with the main sanctuary. One unfinished gateway on the south would

have been about ninety meters high if completed. In all, there are seven concentric rectangular enclosures, the outer three of which are now built into the surrounding town area.⁴ (The outer three *prākāras* are not visible in the plan here; the temple proper begins at the fourth *prākāra*.) Constructed over a long period of time as was the case with many south Indian temple cities, important periods of building included the Pāṇḍya period of the thirteenth century, the Vijayanagar period, and the Nāyak ascendancy. The temple is peculiar in that it is built along a north-south axis rather than having the usual east-west alignment of most Hindu temples.

As in the case of the Great Temple at Madurai, this temple is used for worship and many areas are not accessible for scholarly study. One of the most famous portions of the temple is the so-



24.12. Temple corridor. Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, India. Nayak period. Ca. seventeenth century.

called Horse Court near the east gate of the fourth *prākāra*, with its rampant horse carvings (Fig. 24.11). Although the Horse Court is believed to belong to the Nāyak period, the rampant horse motif was based on a model developed under the Vijayanagar kings whose own military strength depended on the might of their cavalry, especially Arabian and Persian horses, which they imported. The animals here, each with a rider and attendant figures, are executed on a grand scale for they are nearly life-size. More than simple architectural forms supporting a roof, these piers are dramatic expressions of the sculptors' art as it reached its culmination in south India. Like their northern counterparts, the southern artists feared nothing in the stone and boldly carved away the matrix, releasing figures from the quarried stone. No block seemed too large, too hard, or too unmanageable for these workers.

In addition to the new temples built under the Nāyaks, and the *gopuras*, "thousand-pillared" halls, and other structures added to older temples, a major contribution of the Nāyak artists was the building of *prākāras* at many temples. These roofed ambulatory passageways served to connect various parts of the temples while enclosing certain areas. In addition, they must have created a dramatic effect on the devotee who walked along them on the way to worship. Typically, a Nāyak *prākāra* has massive columns with elaborate corbeled brackets and extensively carved (and sometimes painted) surfaces. One of the most famous of these passageways from the Nāyak period is at Rāmeśvaram (Fig. 24.12). Although this must indeed be one of the most memorable portions of the temple, the rest of the complex is largely unphotographed and unstudied, and thus this corridor, which has received just praise, should not be thought of in isolation. The temple is built on an island now connected by a railway bridge to the mainland of India and was probably planned and built in a fairly concentrated time during the Nāyak period. Approximately 1,000 meters of corridor length are estimated to exist at the temple, with breadths ranging from five to six meters; the height from floor to roof, including pillars and their bases and capitals, reaches a height of more



24.13. *Mithuna*. From Alagar temple, near Madurai, Tamil Nādu, India. Nāyak period. Ca. late sixteenth century. Ivory. H: ca. 15 cm. Madurai Temple Museum, Madurai.

than seven meters. Each pillar is elaborately carved with a great variety of motifs.

Small objects, especially ones of ivory, from the Nāyak period have also survived. This does not mean that ivory carving was a new or revived art in South Asia at this time, since it is probable that the craft had continued since early times; simply, since the Nāyak period is close to modern times, more examples have survived, many of them having been preserved among the belongings of various temples. One example from the Alagar temple, near Madurai, shows a traditional Indic theme from religious art, a *mithuna* couple (Fig. 24.13). Yet the treatment of the figures, especially the bodies and the faces, suggests something of a European stylistic overlay. This is not at all surprising, for by this time Europeans were well established in south India for trade, religious, and other purposes. The unjeweled, unornamented, and naked, figures are unusual in the Indic context.

Paintings from the Nāyak period have also survived at a number of temples. Again, these were sometimes part of the decoration of new buildings, but often, paintings were added to refurbish older structures.

At Cidambaram, paintings were added to the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* preceding the Śiva shrine in approximately the seventeenth century. Narrative scenes showing Śiva in his Bhikṣāṭana form and Viṣṇu as Mohinī are arranged in strict registers of varying widths (Pl. 39). The subject is particularly appropriate at Cidambaram, the site associated with Śiva's cosmic dance, for Śiva wandered as Bhikṣāṭana with Mohinī just prior to performing his famous dance. And indeed, Śiva is shown performing his dance in another section of the paintings. The figures and main elements of the composition, such as the architecture or trees, appear almost as silhouettes, light shapes being used against dark areas and darker forms being placed

against light. To the devotee, seeing these from below, the forms are clear and easy to discern. The minimal use of line, visible only when the paintings are seen close up, is lost to the naked eye of the devotee viewing the paintings in the darkened interior of the hall. The paintings are also characterized by a somewhat limited palette rather than a full range of colors, little or no shading, and quite animated and exaggerated poses that are clearly perceptible from a distance. Figures are actively posed and bodies appear as a series of angular shapes—narrow waists, broad hips and shoulders, faces in profile. In these ways, the paintings share characteristics of the miniature paintings of Orissa, western India, Rājasthān, and other parts of South Asia of the same period. It is an important area of investigation to attempt to understand the pan-Indic nature of some of these stylistic features while defining what are indeed local traditions.

CONCLUSION

The story of Bhikṣāṭana and Mohinī, in which Śiva disguises himself as a naked beggar and Viṣṇu takes the form of a beautiful woman, is not new during the Nāyak period. Nor, for that matter, are most of the subjects of paintings and sculpture that dominate the temples and structures of the Nāyaks. Most of the forms of

the sculptures, temples, and paintings also do not represent significant departures from earlier styles. Thus, this period, with its abundance in terms of numbers of things produced as well as preserved, might be seen as a sort of culmination of earlier developments and as a display of the manifold aspects of south Indian art.



Detail of Pl. 45.

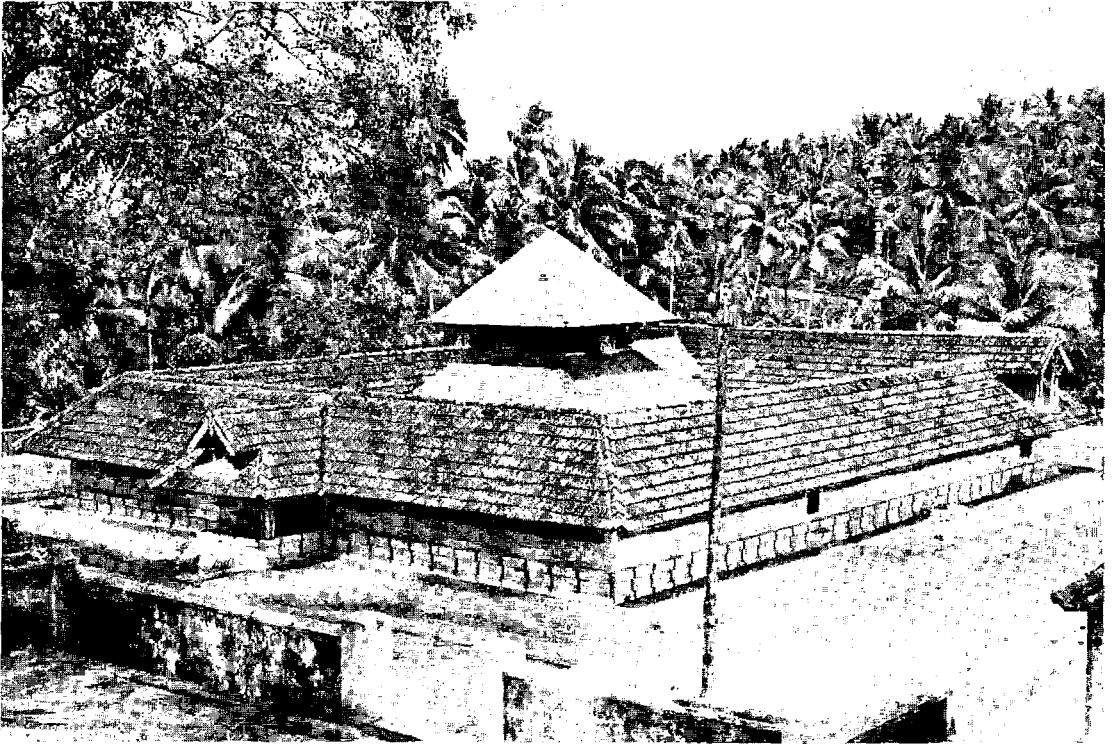
CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Keraḷa Region

Separated from the rest of south India by the western Ghāt mountains, the region of Keraḷa consists of a rather narrow strip of land along the Arabian Sea. The climate in this region is tropical, with fertile soil conducive to growing spices such as pepper, cardamom, and nutmeg, and more than 600 varieties of trees. Many products, including ivory, have long been exported by the Keraḷa people, who were in trade contact at various times with the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and other non-Indic peoples.¹ External influences resulting from such contacts are identifiable in the art of Keraḷa, although invariably, these were quickly modified to suit the local taste. In addition, Keraḷa art exhibits associations with both the traditions of the Tamil south (including works in the styles of the Pallava, Pāṇḍya, Cōḷa, Vijayanagar, and Nāyaka periods) and southern Karṇāṭaka, especially the art of the Hoysaḷas.² Ties to other west coast Indic styles may also be noted, possibly arising from sea contact with Gujarāt and other areas.

Yet, in spite of all its associations with other artistic schools, Keraḷa art developed into what can only be considered a highly distinctive and original idiom. The present discussion will emphasize those distinctive aspects of Keraḷa art and architecture while including minimal discussion of its ties to other schools.³ Most of the monuments to be examined are relatively recent in date compared with the art studied in other parts of South Asia, largely as a result of the probable loss of earlier remains, but also due to the persistence of a strong, viable art tradition into modern times. Today, Keraḷa is noted for the strictness of the Hindu religious observances practiced by its people in its more than two thousand temples of active worship. However, most of these have not been studied since entry is forbidden to anyone other than religious practitioners; still, they offer a promising area for future research.

The Cēra people, as the inhabitants of Keraḷa are generally known in Indic historical documents, are mentioned as early as the Maurya



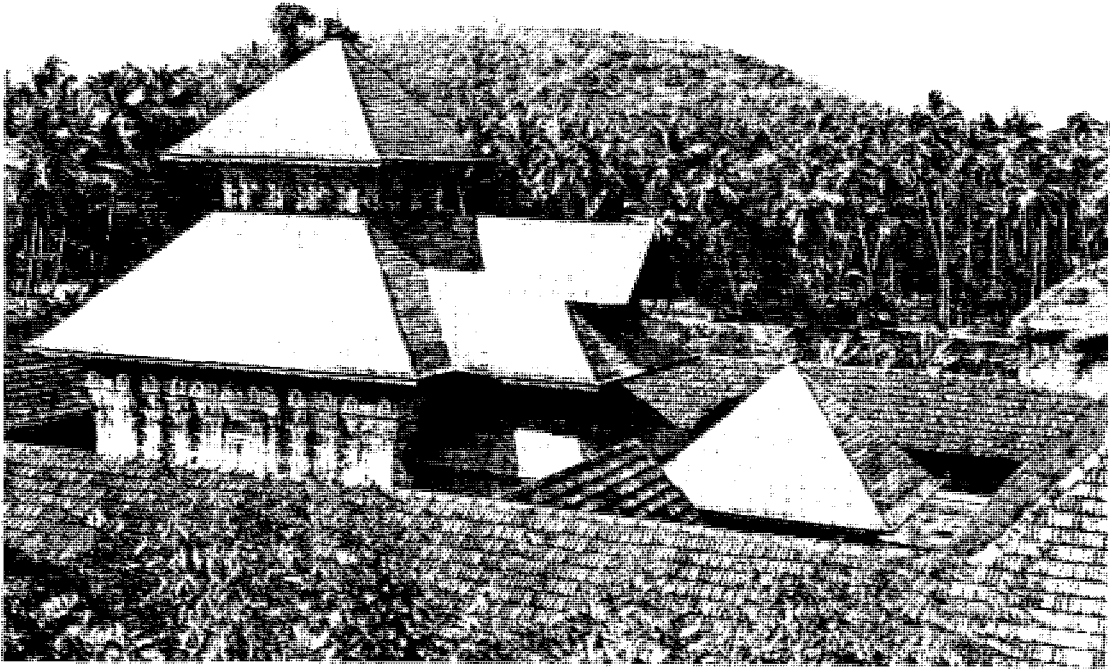
25.1. Kṛṣṇa temple complex. Vettikkavalla, Keraḷa, India.

period. However, a continuous art tradition known from extant examples has not been traced back that far. The megalithic burials found in significant numbers in Keraḷa indicate that stone, at least in relation to funerary monuments, may have been used more than two thousand years ago in that region. Apparently, however, it never became as popular as in other regions, perhaps as a result of specific religious, practical, or aesthetic concerns. Early monuments in easily perishable materials have disappeared almost without a trace and it is not until around the eighth century that the art traditions of Keraḷa become less obscure, apparently through contact with the Pallavas and the resultant increase in the use of stone.

The temples of Keraḷa generally consist of several buildings unified into a single complex by a walled enclosure. The main shrine, called a *śrīkōvil*, can be of various shapes, including square, circular, rectangular or apsidal. Often, temples were built upon stone basements, but the

rest of the structure was made of wood, brick, or other materials. Sometimes, the stone basement is all that remains of an early temple while the walls and other parts are later replacements, and in some cases more recent shrines have been built to enclose the entire shrine of an earlier structure. Keraḷa temples are notable for their dramatic roof shapes, which may have evolved as a response to the heavy rains of the region, and which were made of various materials including copper or brass sheeting, wood planks, or tiles.

The Kṛṣṇa temple at Vettikkavalla shows a type of arrangement commonly found in Keraḷa temple complexes (Fig. 25.1). A rectangular cloister, called a *nālambalam*, encloses the central sanctuary, which in this case is square in plan. In contrast to temples in the Tamil tradition of a comparable date, the Keraḷa-style complex does not have tall, commanding *gopuras*, though gateways mark the entrances to the various walled enclosures in a typical temple. Instead,



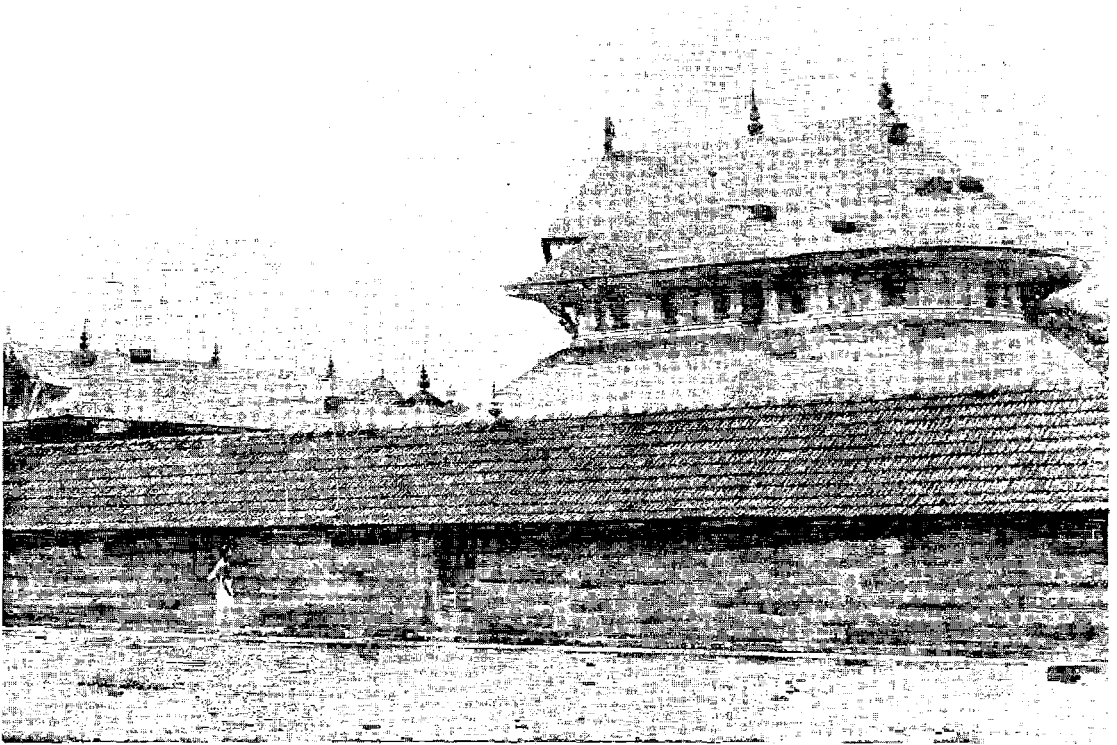
25.2. Śiva temple complex. Ponmeri, Kerala, India.

perhaps the most distinctive visual feature of the complex is the form and arrangement of the roofs of the *śrikōvil*, which extend beyond the walls of the temple building and seem to dominate it. In this case, the *śrikōvil* has two roofs.

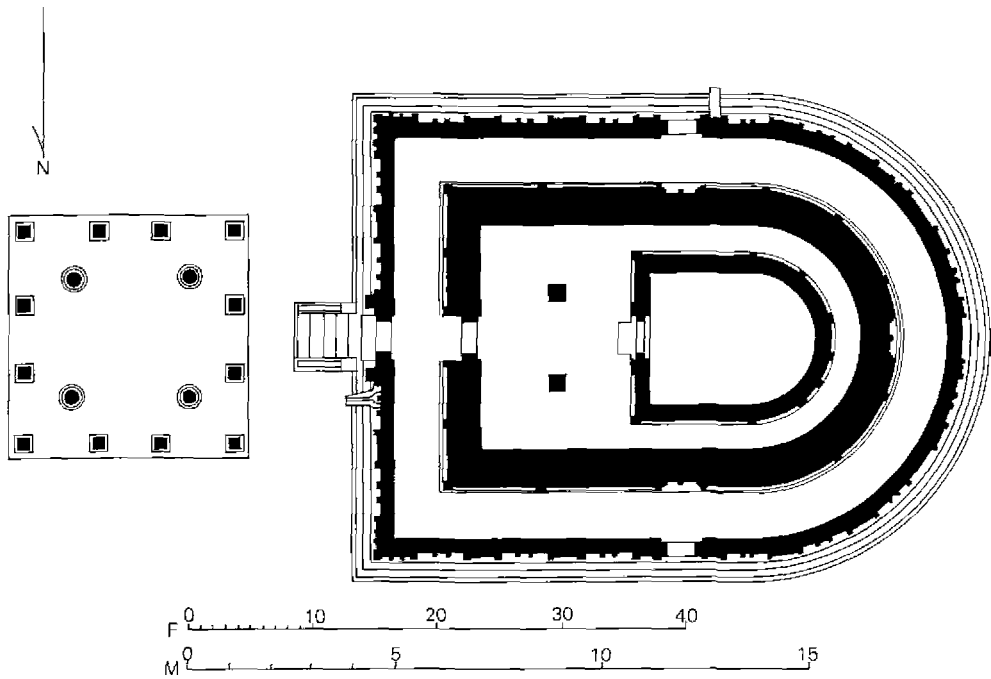
Also square in plan, double-storied, and enclosed by a *nālabalam* is the *śrikōvil* of the Śiva temple complex at Ponmeri (Fig. 25.2). As is generally the case in multistoried KeraĻa buildings, the upper level is smaller in area and height than the lower story, providing a sense of lightness to the structure, though the diminution of the upper story is much more pronounced than in the Kṛṣṇa temple at Vettikkavalla. The walls of the temple, like many others in KeraĻa, are articulated in a typically southern fashion, with pilasters, niches, and other architectural elements constituting a major decorative motif, creating an evenly punctuated and systematic organization on the wall surface.

Apsidal-shaped temples, rare in the surviving

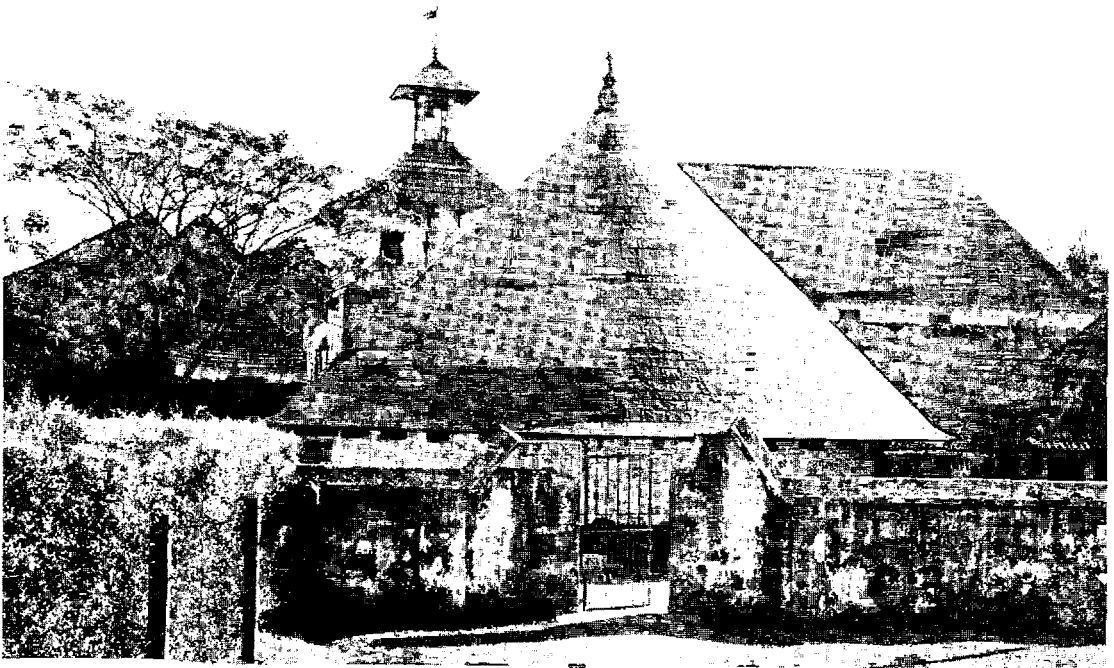
architecture of other regions of South Asia, are well known in KeraĻa, as seen in the famous *śrikōvil* of the Subrahmanya temple at Payyanur (Fig. 25.3). The apsidal shape has a very ancient history in Indic architecture; it is first preserved in the rock-cut *caitya* halls of the Buddhists of the second and first centuries B.C., and those monuments in turn must have been modeled after wooden structures of an even earlier date. A few examples have been preserved from early periods, such as the small hall at Chezarla (Fig. 9.28) or the "Nakula-Sahadeva *ratha*" at Māmalapuram (Fig. 14.28), indicating that the use of this plan for temples in KeraĻa was not innovative. The Subrahmanya temple at Payyanur faces east and is built primarily of laterite and wood. The roof, along with others in the temple complex, has been covered with copper sheets. The temple is of the *sāndhara* type and is notable for having two enclosed circumambulatory passageways. Preceding the main temple is a detached *maṇḍapa*, called a *namaskāra maṇḍapa*



25.3. Subrahmanya temple. Payyanur, Kerala, India. Ca. seventeenth century.



25.4. Plan of Subrahmanya temple. Payyanur, Kerala, India. Ca. seventeenth century.



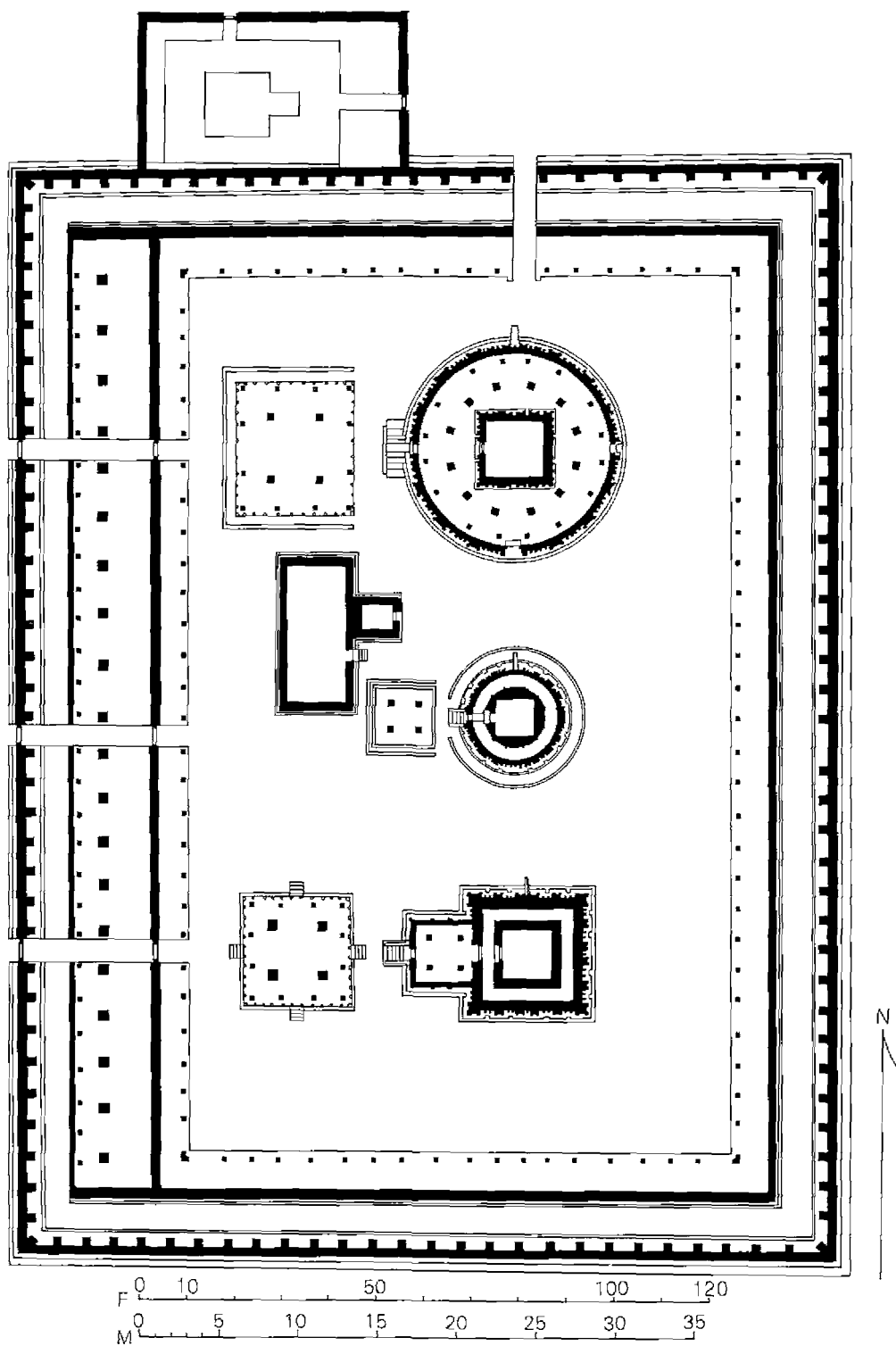
25.5. *Srikōvil* of a Hindu temple. Cochin fort, KeraĻa, India.

in KeraĻa (Fig. 25.4). Although there are no inscriptions remaining that shed light on the date of this temple complex, on stylistic grounds, it may be assigned to the seventeenth century.

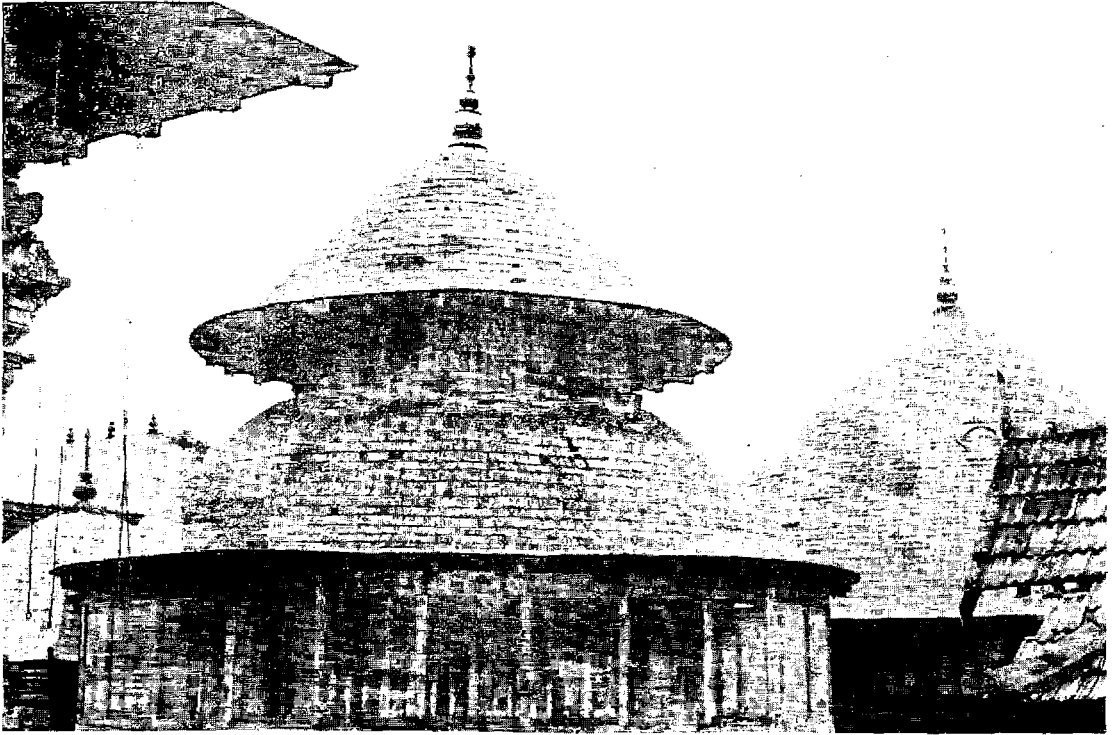
Though the square and apsidal temples of KeraĻa easily find counterparts in other South Asian artistic traditions, the use of a circular format for the *śrikōvil* is more distinctive to KeraĻa. A single-roofed example of a circular temple is the example found at Cochin fort near the Jewish synagogue, which is visible in the background of the photograph illustrated (Fig. 25.5). As in the case of shrines of other shapes, the roof overhangs the walls by a considerable margin, protecting what must have once been richly painted wall surfaces.

One of the most important of the KeraĻa temple complexes is the Vaṭakkunnāthan temple at Tricūr, which houses three *śrikōvils*, two of which are circular, and one of which is square (Fig. 25.6). Possibly founded as early as the eleventh century, the present complex, like

many others in KeraĻa, underwent reconstructions at least into the nineteenth century. The three shrines face west and are aligned in a single row within the *nālabalam* that defines the inner enclosure of the temple. Although the external shape of the three *śrikōvils* varies, all have square *garbhagrhas*. Each temple is preceded by a detached pillared *namaskāra maṇḍapa*. At the northern end of the series, the circular temple known as Vaṭakkunnāthan is dedicated to Śiva; that at the south is dedicated to Rāma. The central of the three temples is dedicated to Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa (Hari-Hara), the combined form of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and is an excellent example of a double-roofed circular *śrikōvil* (Fig. 25.7). The diminished size of the upper story creates an almost caplike effect over the swelling form of the lower story roof. Though the walls of the lower story have been protected by a modern enclosure, the general appearance of the structure may still be discerned. The smooth surfaces of the roofs contrast with the walls, which are



25.6. Plan of temple complex, Vaṭakkunnāthan temple. Tricūr, Kerala, India. Probably founded in eleventh century; reconstructions continued through nineteenth century.



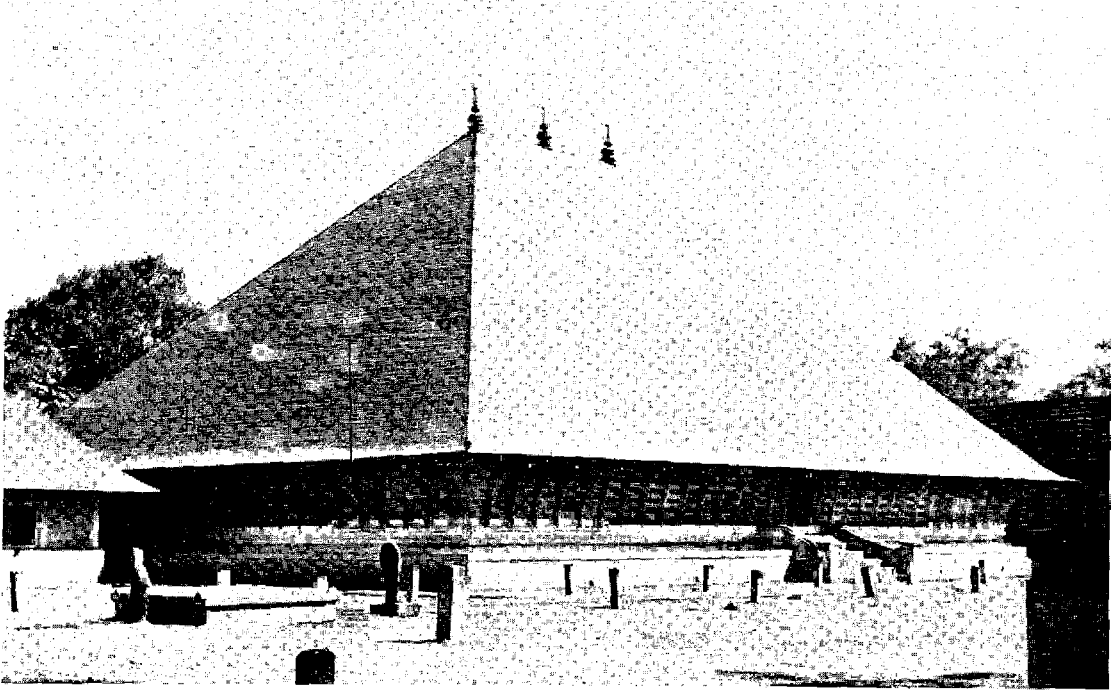
25.7. Śaṅkara-Nāraṇa śrīkōvil at Vāṭakkunnāthan temple. Tricūr, Kerala, India.

enriched by sculpted pilasters and other forms, and painted surfaces.

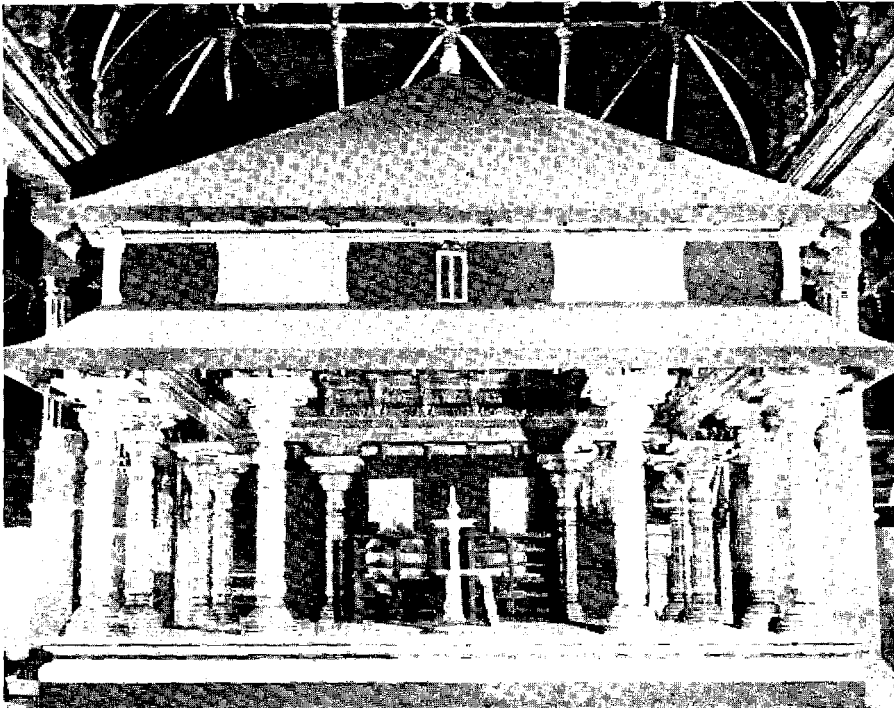
The Vāṭakkunnāthan temple is also famous for one of its subsidiary structures, a hall especially created for theatrical performances (Fig. 25.8). Called a *kūttambalam*, such buildings constitute a major element in many Kerala temple complexes.⁴ The *kūttambalam* was used for the performance of a type of Sanskrit drama called *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. Theaters of this sort were usually maintained by private patronage. Performances took place on festival days or for special purposes such as petitioning the gods that the blessing of children might be given to a childless woman. The Vāṭakkunnāthan theater, the largest and one of the finest known, has a dramatic roof that almost seems to hover above the pillars and the open, wooden slats of the walls; it dominates approximately two-thirds of the total height of the building. The interior of the hall is open and airy, since the high ceiling pro-

vides a feeling of spaciousness (Fig. 25.9). A separate roof covers the stage area, which consists of a raised platform with three lacquered teak pillars at each corner supporting the roof. The inner side of the entablature above the stage is richly carved with representations of deities and other motifs (Fig. 25.10). In a general sense, the stage is similar to what is often the form of the central part of a pillared *maṇḍapa* in other temple styles of South Asia, although the specific treatment of the roof and pillars and the surrounding room is different.

Comparisons to the architectural forms of Nepal, parts of Southeast Asia, and even China and Japan have been made by scholars discussing the architecture of Kerala. Some contend that the forms developed in this southern region are unique and that such resemblance is merely superficial and coincidental. Others maintain that these styles are variations on what must have once been a widely current tradition



25.8. *Kūttambalam* (Theatrical Pavilion) of Vaṭakkunnāthan temple. Tricūr, Keraḷa, India. Last reconstructed in nineteenth century.



25.9. Interior, *kūttambalam*, Vaṭakkunnāthan temple. Tricūr, Keraḷa, India. Last reconstructed in nineteenth century.



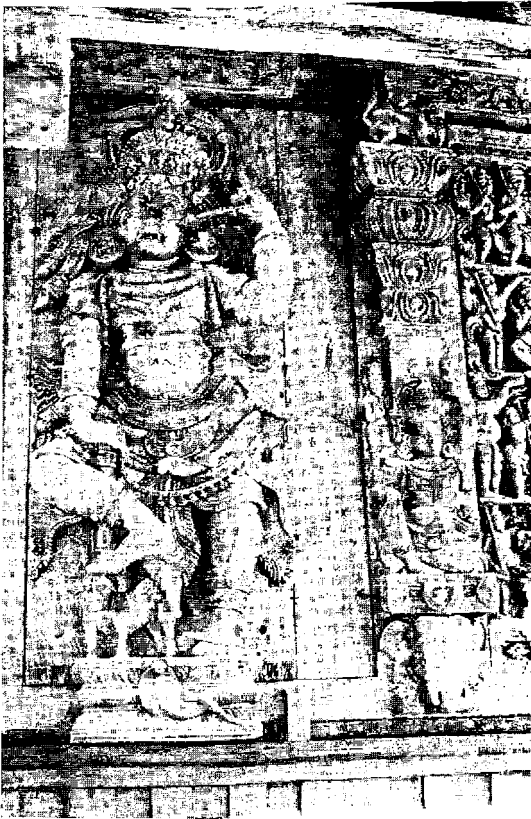
25.10. Carving on inner side of entablature above stage in *kūttambalam*, Vaṭakkummāthan temple, Tricūr, KeraĻa, India. Wood.

throughout ancient India and India-related countries. The answer to this complex problem remains to be discovered, and awaits a fuller study of the KeraĻa idiom in particular.

In sculptural style, KeraĻa's individuality as well as its relationship to other art traditions is easily seen. Sculptures in metal, wood, ivory, and stone are found in KeraĻa, with wood being the most popular medium undoubtedly due to the abundance of timber locally. In style, there is a great deal of consistency from one medium to another. As in the discussion of architecture, examples found in KeraĻa of typical Tamil styles, such as Pallava, Pāṇḍya or CōĻa-type works, will not be included here. The indigenous type, with its characteristically robust and heavy figures and abundant ornamentation can be seen in a wooden figure of a *dvārapāla*, one

of a pair from Kaviyur (Fig. 25.11). The fanged guardian is related iconographically to angry forms found in south India since Pallava times, but the heavy treatment of the jeweled girdle, crown, earrings, necklaces, and the strands of gems that almost cloak the torso is characteristic of KeraĻa images. A very strong stylistic association between the KeraĻa work and sculptures from Karnāṭaka, especially of the HoysāĻa period, is seen in the treatment of both the body and the ornamentation. This relationship exists in works in various media, including painting, and indicates that important relationships among the art traditions of these neighboring regions may have existed.

Woodcarvings of KeraĻa consist both of separate images and architectural ornamentation, including decorated pillars, niches, and ceilings.



25.11. *Dvārapāla*. Kaviyur, Keraḷa, India. Ca. seventeenth century. Wood.

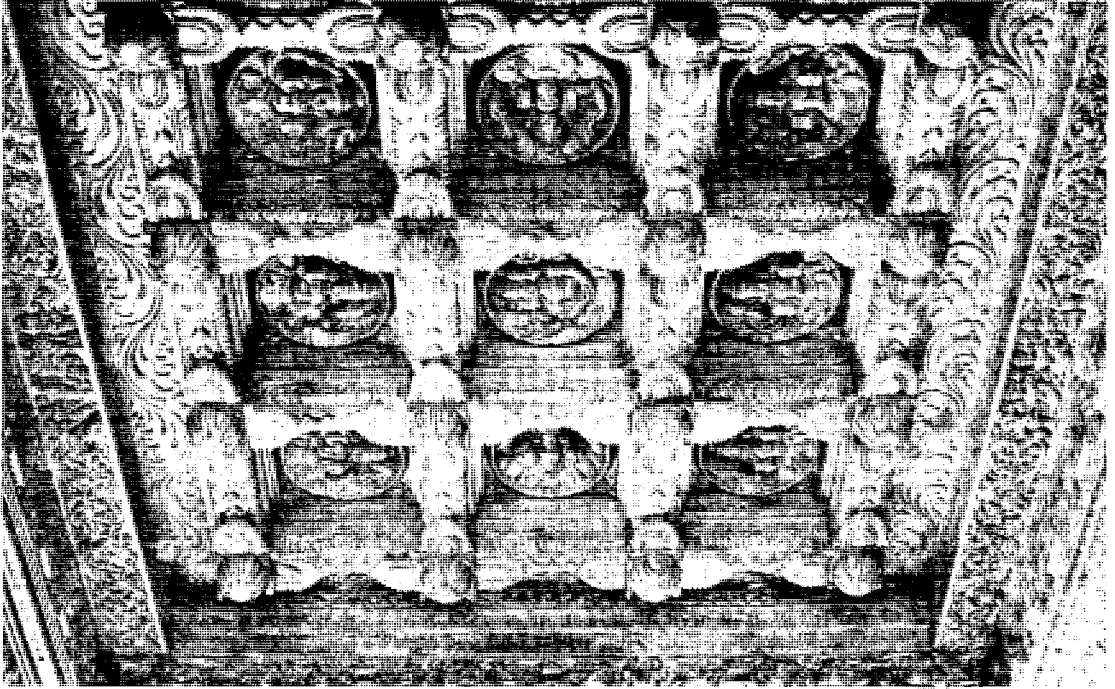
A fine example of a carved wooden ceiling is in the *maṇḍapa* of the Ānandavallīśvara temple at Quilon (Fig. 25.12). The rich carving and elaborate ornamentation of the figures are characteristic of the Keraḷa style. The ceiling is divided into nine square compartments containing a central image of Brahmā surrounded by the eight *dikpālas*. The nine-square design, while popular in Keraḷa, is commonly found in other architectural traditions of South Asia, including northern, Deccan, and southern styles, from at least the ninth century.

Metal was also popularly used as a sculptural medium in Keraḷa. In general, the stylistic progression of metal imagery parallels that of wood and other media. A striking pair of *dvārapālas* from Iranikulam, probably dating from the seventeenth century, reveals the same love of detail and richly ornamented surfaces seen in

woodcarvings from Keraḷa (Fig. 25.13). The full-bodied figures are typical of the Keraḷa idiom, as is their enhancement through the almost lacelike encrustation of jewelry over the figures. The bulging eyes, fangs, and lines around the mouths give them the angry countenance so well known in south Indian *dvārapāla* imagery.

In Keraḷa, many of the crafted objects used in religious ceremonies and performances are preserved, providing a glimpse into aspects of the Keraḷa tradition of a type that is frequently lacking for other Indic subcultures. A beautifully carved example of a dancer's headpiece reveals the same richness seen in other contexts in Keraḷa art (Fig. 25.14). Such elaborate and enormous headpieces, and other dramatic costume elements, are virtual hallmarks of the dance and drama idioms of Keraḷa. The central motif of this carving is a head of Bhairava, a fierce form of Śiva. The god's bulging eyes, long, curved tusks, and serpent ornaments reveal his angry nature. Traces of red and green paint on the mask, which may have been made as early as the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, suggest its original appearance and serve as a reminder that the wood sculptures of Keraḷa were all undoubtedly once polychromed.

In addition to elaborate carvings that decorated the interiors and exteriors of temples and other buildings in Keraḷa, walls were frequently completed by painting. The exterior walls of the *śrīkōvil* were often painted, so that a complicated array of architectural, sculptural, and painted forms confronted the viewer, as seen in a detail of the *śrīkōvil* wall of the Thirunakarra temple at Kottayam (Fig. 25.15). The earliest paintings yet discovered in the Keraḷa region are on the wall of a *maṇḍapa* at the Śiva cave at Tirunandikkara. One fragment shows the head of a figure wearing an elaborate hair style and jeweled necklaces (Fig. 25.16). Dating from the latter part of the eighth or early part of the ninth century, the painting bears a striking resemblance to examples of that approximate period in other parts of Asia. In particular, comparisons may be made with paintings from T'ang-dynasty China, Japan, and Inner Asia. The very full, rounded face depicted in three-quarter view with the head slightly



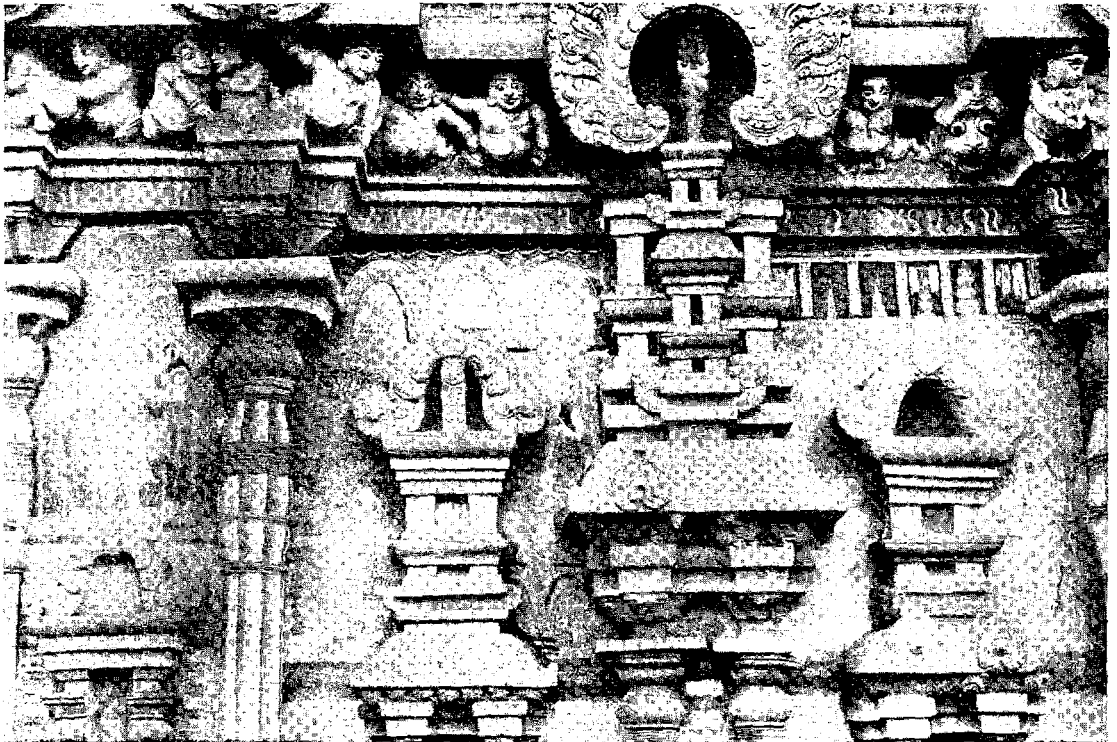
25.12. Carved wooden ceiling in *mandapa* of Ānandavalliśvara temple. Quilon, Keraĵa, India.



25.13. Pair of *dvarapālas*. From Irarīkulam, Keraĵa, India. Ca. seventeenth century. Hollow cast metal. Slightly less than human-size. Tricūr Museum, Tricūr.



25.14. Dancer's headpiece with Bhairava. From Kerala, India. Ca. late sixteenth-early seventeenth century. Wood, with traces of paint. H: 104 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lenart).



25.15. Wall of *srikoovil*, Thirunakarra temple. Kottayam, Kerala, India.



25.16. Painting in Śiva cave. Tirunandikkara, Tamil Nādu, India. (KeraĻa cultural region.) Ca. late eighth or early ninth century.

tilted, the elegant use of line, and the absence of modeling or strong coloration suggest associations with Inner and East Asian forms. Such a relationship must be more than merely coincidental. It is known, for example, that the T'ang Chinese set up an important port at Quilon in KeraĻa, which was apparently in use for several hundred years, although the full ramifications of such contacts and the direction of artistic influences remain to be seen.

A significant gap exists between the scant early painting remains and the large body of materials that survive from the sixteenth century and later, including murals in temples and palaces. The Maṭṭancheri palace in Cochin, which was built by the Portuguese in 1557 and presented to Vīra KeraĻa Varma, the Cochin ruler of the time, contains four rooms with paintings. Most of the paintings do not date from the original period of construction; they are estimated to range in date from the late sixteenth or seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.⁵

The Royal Chamber (*paḷḷiyarai*) contains an impressive series of forty-eight paintings, the majority of which are scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These paintings may be the oldest ones surviving at the palace, possibly dating from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. A section of a *Rāmāyaṇa* scene depicting Rāma, Sita, and Lakṣmaṇa returning to Ayodhyā in an aerial chariot above and being received by the citizens of Ayodhyā below shows the typically crowded, airless composition used in KeraĻa painting of this phase (Pl. 40). Figures are pressed together closely, as if woven into a heavy fabric, and all available space is filled with ornaments or decorative elements in vivid colors. The figures have wide-open eyes and are full-bodied, paralleling the style found abundantly in KeraĻa sculpture and relating to the styles of the Hoysaḷas. (It is possible that the Hoysaḷas had a related mural style, although examples have not survived.) Vivid reds, deep greens, and oranges predominate in the composition. Often, color is used to suggest a kind of shading or illumination across the surface of the skin of the figures, usually by using a darker and a lighter color combination. However, this does not create the effect of a specific light source, but rather gives the impression of an inner glow. Line is used to demarcate the figures and details of the composition and serves as an important visual element, just as it does in many other painting styles of South Asia. In contrast to the preference for profile faces seen in Rājasthān, Gujarāt, and other regional styles, however, the three-quarter view (or, perhaps more properly, a five-sixths view) is generally used here, perhaps in order to add a sense of volume to the already robust forms.

A great deal of vitality is created by the compositions, which appear to spill into one another rather than be contained within obvious arbitrary pictorial devices, such as registers or other abstract units. The vibrancy of this painting style may be seen in a detail from this composition showing a lamp bearer (Pl. 41), in which the rich coloration and balance between the use of line and color are especially notable. Invariably, the variety of facial expressions, physiognomies, and skin colors create remark-

ably powerful images, as seen in a portrayal of Viṣṇu holding his four principal attributes, the conch, discus, mace, and lotus (Pl. 42). Viṣṇu's green color, rather than his usual blue or black, seems to be a peculiarity found regularly in Keraḷa art.

One of the downstairs rooms of the Maṭṭāncheri palace has a series of large panels with individual subjects showing Kṛṣṇa or Śiva scenes that are generally ascribed to the eighteenth century. A finely preserved composition shows Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa (again colored green) in a pavilion, playing his flute and surrounded by *gopīs* (Pl. 43). At the sides of the composition and below (partially obscured in the photograph) are landscape scenes showing the forests and animals of Vṛindāvana. The naturalistic coloration of the landscape and the more naturalistic approach to pictorial space suggests that European or other artistic modes had been incorporated into the painting, although the robust forms, vivid coloration, and presence of modeling are clearly of the Keraḷa idiom. Of the same date and in the same room is a representation of Śiva and Pārvati (Umā-Maheśvara) accompanied by Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya, Śiva's dwarves (*gaṇas*) and Nandi, and a number of other figures (Pl. 44). Unlike the previous example, the broad forms fill up the available space, leaving the impression of little pictorial space and only the depth created by the bulky figures.

The so-called Queen's bedroom at the Maṭṭāncheri palace, alongside the room just discussed, contains a series of paintings (said to be narrations of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*) that are simply outlines appearing against a white background, as seen in a detail showing a woman looking into a mirror (Pl. 45). Possibly executed as late as the nineteenth century, these badly damaged scenes reveal the extraordinary control over line that the Keraḷa artist possessed. Although these outlines may only have been intended as preliminary sketches for what would have been fully polychromed paintings, the power of the evenly controlled lines and the expressiveness of the faces alone are enough to classify these among the finest drawings in South Asia.

Another important repository of Keraḷa mural paintings is the Padmanābhapuram palace at the ancient capital of Padmanābhapura, where nearly fifty paintings decorate the four walls of a room on the upper floor of a four-storied building. Generally attributed to the eighteenth century, these examples show a variety of Hindu deities, each separated from the others by a rectilinear boundary consisting of a decorated border. One of the most remarkable compositions shows Viṣṇu on the serpent Ananta (Śeṣa; Pl. 46), a subject commonly seen in Hindu art since the Gupta period (Fig. 10.29). In this case, Viṣṇu is specifically named Śrī Padmanābha, since the composition depicts the principal deity of that name at the Padmanābhavāmi temple, in Trivandrum. The representation is thus an image of an image. The highly organized composition, with the body of the serpent formed into concentric squared forms and with the row of figures above, contrasts with the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes from the Maṭṭāncheri palace and other earlier paintings. However, the airless ambiance and tendency to fill in all available space is still present, as is the use of shades of red and green as principal colors, the broad, full forms of the bodies, and the use of shading created by using two tones of one color.

Another painting from the Padmanābhapuram palace shows a *liṅga* upon a pedestal crowned with a *makara toraṇa* above and attended by a pair of figures (Pl. 47). A particularly dramatic effect is created by the painted face on the *liṅga*, which bears the third eye and crescent moon of Śiva himself. As in the case of the reclining Viṣṇu image, this painting probably represents the specific *liṅga* enshrined in a famous temple.

The paintings of Keraḷa provide a glimpse at what was still a vital artistic tradition in South Asia, even after many areas had become Muslim states and after extensive European contact. Along with sculpture and architecture, they reveal the somewhat hybrid nature of Keraḷa art as well as the richness and vitality of the tradition. As in other Indic styles, the area's own history, peculiarities, and special features are manifested through the stylistic and iconographic patterns discernible in its art.

CONCLUSION

The art of KeraĻa may be singled out as perhaps the most poorly known and poorly published of all the South Asian artistic traditions. Yet, at the same time, it is one of the richest and most exuberant. The enigma of KeraĻa art has been due to some extent to the natural insularity of the region, though this does not fully explain the lack of attention paid to it by scholars. Other regions of South Asia, such as Kaśmīr, are equally isolated geographically, yet have been regarded as "mainstream" developments. To some extent, the minimal study of KeraĻa and its art forms is the result of the general inattention paid to "late" artistic traditions in the subcontinent. Not only are many of the struc-

tures created throughout India after about the tenth century extremely complex and difficult to study, but there are also so many surviving structures that it becomes a major task just to document and classify them. In KeraĻa, religious restrictions have limited scholarly access to many temples, making it additionally difficult to study them and place them into their proper historical context. The uniqueness of many aspects of the KeraĻa tradition, seen for example in the layout, roof structure, and other features of the Hindu temple, however, clearly assert the importance of the art of this region to any study of Indic art.

Glossary

- abhaṅga*. "Bend"; a standing posture with a slight bend in both the upper and lower halves of the body so that a plumb line from the top of the head to a point midway between the heels passes slightly to the right of the navel.
- abhaya mudrā*. A gesture of protection and reassurance (the granting of the "absence of fear") displayed by deities to their worshipers; the hand (usually the right) is held palm outward with the fingers pointing upward. In Buddhism, it is used as a teaching gesture, for it is through the Buddhist teachings that the "absence of fear" (of death) is granted.
- abhiṣeka*. Religious consecration or initiation by sprinkling with water.
- ācārya*. One who observes (the rules of his religious order); a teacher or spiritual guide.
- adhīṣṭhāna*. The base (of a Hindu temple).
- Ādi Buddha. The supreme Buddha; the embodiment of *śūnyatā*; in certain esoteric traditions, the Buddha from whom emanate the *jīna* Buddhas. Technically, he is without form, but, according to various texts, he may manifest as different supreme Buddhas, including Vairocana, Vajradhara, Akṣobhya, and others.
- ahimsā*. Without violence; the doctrine of non-injury to living beings practiced by members of many Indic religious sects.
- aiśvarya*. Sovereignty.
- Ajaikapāda Bhairava. "One-legged goat Bhairava." A one-legged form of Bhairava. See Fig. 19.43.
- ākāśa*. Ether. In Buddhism, "space" in the absolute sense; the infinity of Universality.
- Akṣobhya. "Imperturbable." One of the *jīna* Buddhas; he symbolizes the awakening of the will to enlightenment and presides over the eastern paradise, Abhirati. See Fig. 18.11.
- ālīḍha*. A standing posture in which the deity is shown actively posed, sometimes trampling upon an enemy, usually with one leg bent, the other stretched. See Fig. 18.22.
- āmalaka*. "Fruit"; a flattened, fluted round form used as a crowning member of the superstructure of northern-style Hindu temples, as a repeating decorative motif on such superstructures, and sometimes in other architectural contexts.
- Amitābha. "Light (Radiance) Without End"; "infinite radiance." One of the *jīna* Buddhas; he symbolizes entry to attainment through meditation and presides over the western paradise, Sukhāvati. As presiding Buddha in Sukhāvati, he is identical with Amitāyus.
- Amitābha / Amitāyus. The Buddha who presides over the western paradise, Sukhāvati. See also Amitābha; Amitāyus.
- Amitāyus. "Life Without End." Another name for Amitābha as the presiding Buddha of the western paradise, Sukhāvati. In contrast to Amitābha, however, Amitāyus is not considered to be one of the *jīna* Buddhas.
- āmra*. Mango tree.
- ānanda tāṇḍava*. A dance performed by the god Śiva; the *nādānta*. See pp. 535–36 and Fig. 21.34.
- Ananta. "Endless." The serpent upon which Viṣṇu reclines or sits. Also called Śeṣa. See Fig. 10.29.
- añjali mudrā*. "Two-handfuls pose"; a gesture of respect and salutation in which the two hands are held together near the chest, palms touching. See Fig. 5.12.
- antarāla*. An intermediate space in a temple; an antechamber or vestibule between the main shrine and the *ardhamaṇḍapa*.
- anugraha*. The god Śiva's power to grant grace to a devotee.
- Anuttarayoginī-tantra*. A classification of Buddhist Tantric texts that emphasize the most esoteric teachings of the "mother" or female / *prajñā* tradition.
- apsarās* (pl. *apsarasas*). A female minor divinity that inhabits the sky; *apsarasas* are the "wives" of the *gandharvas* and are often depicted dancing or making music.

- ardhamandapa*. A closed hall (*mandapa*) which may be joined to the main shrine of a temple by an *antarāla* or may abut it directly.
- Ardhanārīśvara. "The Lord who is half woman"; a representation of Śiva combined into a single body with his consort. The proper right side of the body is male, the proper left, female. See Figs. 13.6, 18.30.
- ardhaparyāṅka*. A half-squatting standing pose characteristic of angry (*krodha*) deities. See Fig. 18.13.
- ardha patākā*. "Half-flag"; a hand gesture. See pp. 267-68.
- āsana*. Seat or throne; the leg positions or sitting postures assumed by deities and religious practitioners.
- āsoka*. "Absence of sorrow"; a kind of tree; also the red flower of that tree.
- āsoka dohada*. A *dohada* who grasps an *āsoka* tree; a symbol of birth and creation. See pp. 68-69.
- aṣṭadhātu*. Metal of eight alloys. See p. 388 and Chap. 18, n. 7.
- aṣṭadīkṣpālas*. The eight protective, directional deities; the regents of the regions of the sky.
- aṣṭaparivāradevatā*. The eight *parivāra*, or "retinue," deities attending the main god of a shrine. Usually placed in surrounding circuits, corridors, or shrines of a temple. The number varies according to some systems.
- āstika*. "Asserter"; one who is "orthodox" and accepts the authority of the Vedas.
- asura*. In the Vedas, a class of gods who were adversaries of the *devas*. Later, the term came to refer to a type of demon.
- āsvamedha*. Vedic horse sacrifice.
- āsvatara*. A mule; the *vāhana* of the goddess Śrī. See Pl. 22.
- āvattha*. A fig tree (Lat. *Ficus religiosa*); the *bodhi* tree of Śākyamuni Buddha; a *pipal* tree. Its leaves are essentially heart-shaped and have an elongated point. See Fig. 1.4d.
- Ātman. In Indic religious thought, the Universal; Brahman. See pp. 29, 30.
- ātman*. In Indic religious thought, the individual. See p. 29.
- Avalokiteśvara. A *mahāsattva* bodhisattva, the embodiment of compassion and sometimes of enlightenment itself. After about the sixth century, he became the most popular bodhisattva in Buddhism. For some of his variant names and forms, see Index and Illustration Index.
- avatār*. An incarnation (lit. "descent") of a deity; generally used to refer to the forms of the god Viṣṇu.
- avidyā*. "Non-wisdom"; ignorance. In Indic religions, ignorance is seen as an "enemy" that must be defeated in order to achieve religious "victory."
- āyudhapuruṣa*. A personification of one of Viṣṇu's weapon attributes. See Fig. 10.29.
- bāḍa*. A term for "wall" in Orissan architecture.
- Bāhubali (Gommaṭeśvara). A Jain saint; the son of Rṣabhanātha (the first Jain *tīrthāṅkara*). See Fig. 22.3.
- bala*. Power; strength; force.
- Balarāma. "Rāma of strength"; the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. Balarāma is considered to be the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu. See Fig. 18.32.
- Bhagavad-Gītā*. The "Song of the Lord [Kṛṣṇa]"; an appended portion to the *Mahābhārata* which has as a theme the notion that only deeds springing from altruistic motives, devotion, and faith can lead to the realization of Brahman. Central to much Kṛṣṇa devotion.
- bhāgavata*. A devotee. In later Hinduism, generally used for devotees of Kṛṣṇa.
- bhakti*. "Devotion"; a mystical religious doctrine of faith by which the devotee, through ardent, uncompromising love of the god, attains unity with the god.
- bhaṅḍār*. The library of a Jain religious establishment.
- bhikṣu*. A "beggar" or "mendicant." A Buddhist or Jain monk (fem. *bhikṣuṇī*, a nun).
- bhogamaṅḍapa*. The "hall of offerings [enjoyment, wealth, possessions]" in an Orissan temple.
- bhūmi*. "Earth"; floor; foundation; level; stage; story. In architecture, the levels or stories (of a building or superstructure). In Buddhist thought, the stages (or spiritual spheres) through which a bodhisattva (or practitioner) moves in quest of enlightenment.
- bhūmisparśa mudrā*. "Earth-touching gesture." Characteristic of depictions of Śākyamuni Buddha in his victory over Māra. The right hand extends downward, palm inward, and touches (or reaches toward) the earth. Used only for seated figures. See Fig. 8.21.
- bīja*. Seed; semen; sound essence. A mystic syllable that constitutes an essential portion of a *mantra*. Can also refer to the relic in a *stūpa*.
- biruda*. An epithet; usually for a god, a king, or a great religious teacher.
- bodhi*. In Buddhism, enlightenment; perfected knowledge or wisdom; the result of the unification of compassion (*karuṇā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).
- bodhi tree (bodhivṛkṣa)*. Enlightenment tree; each mortal (*mānuṣi*) Buddha became enlightened while meditating under a type of tree that came to be considered his "enlightenment tree."

- bodhipākṣika*. The thirty-seven "wings" or aspects of enlightenment; "talent" for enlightenment or the thirty-seven mental gifts characteristic of a Buddha.
- bodhisattva (bodhisattva)*. "Enlightenment Being." A potential Buddha; a being destined to attain Buddhahood; a being capable of attaining Buddhahood who serves as a guide to others on the Buddhist path. See p. 115.
- bodhyaṅgi mudrā*. See pp. 402-3 and Fig. 18.18.
- Brahmā*. A Vedic and Hindu god; in later Hinduism, he is seen as the god of creation and is considered to be, along with Śiva and Viṣṇu, one of the Hindu triad. He is sometimes considered to be a *dikpāla* and guardian of the zenith region of the sky. See Fig. 11.18.
- Brahmā kepāla*. The severed head of Brahmā; sometimes held in the hand of a Buddhist deity to symbolize supremacy over Brahmanism. See Fig. 18.22, lower proper left hand.
- Brahman*. The Universal; Ātman. See pp. 29, 30.
- brāhman (brāhmaṇa)*. The priestly class in Vedism and Hinduism.
- brhad*. Great; large; gigantic.
- Buddha (buddha)*. An enlightened, omniscient being. May refer to mortal (*mānuṣi*) beings (such as Śākyamuni Buddha) or those of the abstract, theoretical realms.
- buddhaloka*. Buddha-world. A world that is presided over by a Buddha. See p. 247.
- Buddhamātṛkā*. Mother of Buddhas. The *Prajñāpāramitā* texts.
- buddhapāda*. Footprint of a Buddha.
- Buddhism*. The Buddhist religion. Its many forms, sects, and variations reveal a great diversity; only a portion of the religion centers on the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, and his teachings. Its basic principles include nonviolence, compassion, and generous works; for most Buddhists, the goal of the religion is to attain enlightenment, and, hence, extinction of individual existence (*nirvāṇa*).
- caitya*. A sacred spot, sometimes associated with a relic, funeral pyre, or burial. It may be marked by a tree or mound and surrounded by a sacred railing (*vedikā*). A *stūpa* is a type of *caitya*.
- caitya hall*. A hall that contains a *caitya*.
- cakra*. Wheel; discus; sometimes a solar symbol. In Buddhism, the *cakra* refers to the wheel of the law (*dharma-cakra*) and, sometimes, to Śākyamuni Buddha's first sermon, by which he "turned the wheel of the law" into motion. In Hinduism, the *cakra* is a symbol (and weapon) of Viṣṇu.
- cakrapuruṣa*. A male figure who personifies Viṣṇu's wheel (*cakra*); one of the *āyudhapuruṣas*.
- cakravartin*. A universal monarch. See Fig. 5.36.
- candraśālā*. "Moon-chamber"; the rounded opening at the end of a "barrel-vaulted" hall. Its shape is used as a repeating decorative motif in South Asian religious architecture. See Fig. 12.3.
- catura*. A dance pose. See Fig. 21.33.
- caturvīṃśatimūrti*. The twenty-four forms or aspects of Viṣṇu. They are usually depicted as standing, four-armed figures who can be recognized only by the twenty-four variant ways in which the god's four principal attributes may be rotated among his hands. For a list and description, see T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras: Law Printing House, 1914-16; 2 vols. in 4, New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1968), 1:1:229-32.
- caurī*. Fly-whisk; chowrie; also called *cāmara*. Held by figures attending respected individuals (both religious and secular). See Fig. 4.12.
- chattrā*. Umbrella; parasol. A symbol of royalty, protection, or honor.
- chāya stambha*. "Shade-pillar"; a type of hero stone (*viragal*). See Fig. 9.31.
- Dakṣiṇāmūrti*. See Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti.
- ḍamaru*. A type of drum consisting of two triangular forms joined at the apexes; used by dancers. When held in the hand of a deity, it can represent the rhythm of time and the creative energy. The two joined sections may also represent the male and female principles. See Fig. 19.47, proper right hand, second from top.
- daṇḍahasta*. "Staff-hand," or *gajahasta* ("elephant-hand"); a hand gesture. See p. 535 and Fig. 21.33.
- darśana*. "Viewing"; especially having sight of a sacred image, place, or revered person.
- daśabhūmika*. The ten stages of achievement of the bodhisattva, leading to Buddhahood. Sometimes numbers other than ten are given (such as eleven and thirteen) though they are still called the ten stages.
- daśāvatāra*. The ten principal *avatārs* or incarnations of Viṣṇu. The incarnations usually cited are: 1. Matsya (fish); 2. Kūrma (tortoise); 3. Varaha (boar); 4. Nṛsiṃha (man-lion); 5. Vāmana-Trivikrama (dwarf); 6. Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe); 7. Rāma; 8. Kṛṣṇa; 9. Balarāma (or, sometimes, Śākyamuni Buddha); 10. Kalkin. According to Vaiṣṇavite thought, the first nine incarnations have already appeared; the tenth, Kalkin, is still awaited.
- deul*. The residence of the deity; the main shrine

- of a Hindu temple and its superstructure; a *vimāna*. Sometimes used to refer to the temple as a whole, including its *maṇḍapas*. Used especially in Orissan architectural terminology. (Similar terms include *devakula*, *devāgāra*, *devagrha*, *devālaya*.)
- deva*. A god of the Vedic pantheon belonging to the *deva* class; later, the term is used generically to refer to a god or deity. (Fem. *devī*.)
- devakōṣṭha*. A niche on the exterior of the wall of a southern-style Hindu temple containing an image of a deity or, sometimes, other figures. See Figs. 21.12-14, 21.17, 21.18.
- deva-kulikā*. A variant of *devakula* (see *deva*). Often used to refer to the small cells containing sacred images in the cloister surrounding a temple. See Fig. 20.51.
- devaputra*. "Son of god"; a term sometimes used to refer to kings in Indic epigraphs and other contexts.
- dharma*. "Law; practice; justice; duty (moral or religious)." In Buddhism, refers to the basis or essence of the religion itself, its foundation. In Hinduism, refers especially to duty performed for its own sake, without thought of reward.
- dharmacakra*. "Law-wheel"; "wheel of the law"; the first sermon of Śākyamuni Buddha is said to have "set the wheel of the law into motion," that is, to have set the process of world righteousness into motion. Represented as a wheel in art. In depictions of Śākyamuni's first sermon, a wheel may be placed in front of or beneath the Buddha. See Fig. 8.22.
- dharmacakra mudrā*. A teaching gesture (*mudrā*); the gesture of "setting the wheel of the law into motion." The gesture requires both hands, held at about chest level and touching each other, though there are many variations in the way the hands can touch.
- dharmakāya*. "Law-body"; the universal condition of order. See pp. 115, 263. See also *trikāya*.
- dharma-pāla*. Guardian of the law; a protector of the Buddhist faith; a Buddhist tutelary deity often having a terrifying appearance and an angry (*krodha*) character. See p. 383 and Pl. 21.
- dhotī*. A garment covering the lower portion of the body, worn around the waist and passed between the legs to be tucked in behind.
- dhvaja*. A standard, banner, flag, or pole. A form and symbol used universally in Indic religions.
- dhvaja stambha*. A pillar standard; a flagstaff.
- dhyaṇa mudrā*. A meditation hand-pose. Usually, both hands are placed in the lap of a seated figure, palms upward, with the right hand atop the left.
- Signifies deep meditation rather than communication to a devotee. The term may also refer to the similar lap position of one hand while the other (usually the right) makes another *mudrā*. See Figs. 8.13, 8.14, 8.18, 8.20.
- Digambara*. "Sky-clad" (naked) Jain sect; one of the two main Jain sects, distinguished from the Svetāmbara by its more rigorous asceticism.
- dikpāla*. A regent or guardian of one of the directions or quarters of the sky who protects the world from demons. Images of *dikpālas* are often depicted facing the directions on Hindu temples. Usually, eight such guardians are listed (*aṣṭadikpāla*), who guard the four main and four intermediate directions; sometimes, two others are cited as protectors of the zenith and nadir. See Fig. 15.14 for Agni, guardian of the southeast.
- dhōhāda*. "Two-hearted one"; see pp. 68-69.
- drāvīda*. One of the three major "styles" of Hindu architecture; the "southern" style. See p. 540.
- Dravidian*. Relating to a group of South Indian languages (Tamil, Malayālam, etc.) and the people who speak them.
- durgā*. A fort; difficult of access or impassable.
- Durgā*. The supreme goddess in Hinduism, who came to have her own very important cult. She combines aspects of a warrior goddess and a mother figure and is *śakti* of Śiva, to name only a few of her characteristics. See also *Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini*.
- Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardini*. *Durgā* as supreme victor over the demon (*asura*) *Mahiṣa* and a symbol of religious attainment. See p. 191 and Figs. 10.6, 14.17, 15.8, 15.20, 17.26.
- dvārapāla*. Door guardian. See Fig. 10.5. (Fem. *dvārapālikā*. See Fig. 14.22.)
- dvārataraṇa*. An arch (*toraṇa*) surrounding a doorway (*dvāra*). See Fig. 9.9.
- dvitala*. "Two-tiered"; a two-tiered superstructure on a southern-style Hindu temple. See Figs. 14.23, 21.15.
- Ekādaśamukha*. "Eleven-headed"; a form of *Avalokiteśvara* in which he has eleven heads. See p. 265 and Fig. 12.27.
- ekamukhaliṅga*. A *liṅga* with a representation of a single face. See Fig. 10.9.
- Ficus religiosa*. The Latin name for the *āśvattha* tree.
- gaḍā*. A mace or club. One of Viṣṇu's principal attributes. See also *Gadādevī*.
- Gadādevī*. "Mace-goddess"; the personification of

- Viṣṇu's mace (*gadā*), which takes a female form. See Fig. 10.7.
- gajāhastā*. "Elephant-hand"; see *daṇḍāhastā*.
- Gajalakṣmī. "Elephant-Lakṣmī"; a goddess symbolizing prosperity, abundance, and auspiciousness. She is depicted with two elephants sprinkling water over her. See Fig. 14.11.
- Gajendramokṣa. See p. 211 and Fig. 10.31.
- gaṇa*. "Flock," "multitude"; usually, represented as dwarves. See Fig. 14.36. Some serve as attendants to Śiva (Fig. 14.19, top left). The god Gaṇeśa (Lord of *gaṇas*) presides over the *gaṇas* who, in this context and some others, symbolize the "categories" (all that can be counted, comprehended, or named).
- gandhakuṭī*. "Fragrant hall."
- gandharva*. "Fragrance"; a kind of sky-dwelling deity; *gandharvas* are sometimes considered to be the musicians of the gods. Their "wives" are the *apsarasas*.
- gaṇḍī*. "Trunk"; an architectural term. See p. 423.
- Gaṇeśa (Gaṇapati). "Lord of *gaṇas*"; an auspicious and popular Hindu god, characterized by his elephant head (and, often, body). He is also known as Vighneśvara (Overcomer of Obstacles [hindrances to religious attainment]) and is invoked at the beginning of any venture, including worship. See pp. 190–91 and Fig. 18.27.
- Gaṅgā. The Ganges River; the goddess personifying the Ganges River. Her symbol and *vāhana* is the *makara*. See Figs. 7.2, 10.37.
- Gaṅgādharā(mūrti). Śiva as bearer of Gaṅgā, the Ganges River. See pp. 279, 281 and Fig. 13.8.
- garbhagrha*. "Womb chamber." The inner, principal compartment of a temple in which the major image or *liṅga* is placed and, as such, the container of the seed of manifestation.
- Garuḍa. A part bird, part human creature associated with sun and air; the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu. He is the destroyer of serpents and, like Gaṇeśa, is considered to be a remover of obstacles (that is, hindrances to religious attainment).
- ghaṅṭā*. A bell; its transient sound is symbolic of the impermanence of existence. May be held in the hand of a deity. As an attribute of Śiva, it may symbolize creation. Its sound can warn away demons and attract the attention of worshipers or the gods. In Buddhism, it can represent *prajñā* (wisdom). See Figs. 18.22, 20.13.
- ghee* (*ghī*). Clarified butter. Used in both cooking and religious rites.
- Gommaṭeśvara. See Bāhubali and Fig. 22.3.
- gomukha*. Cow's-face; sometimes refers to shape of torso, especially as a convention in mature Pāla sculpture. See Figs. 18.17, 18.19.
- gopi*. Milkmaid; cowherdess. One of Kṛṣṇa's female companions. See Pl. 43.
- gopura*. A south Indian temple gateway. See Figs. 21.29, 23.8, 24.6.
- grīva*. "Neck"; an architectural term. In southern Indian style temples, the wall portion beneath the *śikhara* and *stūpi* of the superstructure over the shrine. It may be square, circular, or octagonal in shape.
- gūḍha maṇḍapa*. The assembly hall of a temple; a term used especially in western Indian (Gujarāṭi) nomenclature. See p. 485.
- guṇas*. Qualities; the three universal qualities. See *rajas*, *sattva*, *tamas*, and pp. 279, 367.
- guru*. "Venerable"; a religious guide; a spiritual teacher.
- hansa*. A (wild) goose; sometimes erroneously translated as swan. In Buddhism, a semidivine bird that is frequently cited as a resident of various paradises.
- Hari-Hara. A deity who is half-Viṣṇu (Hari), half-Śiva (Hara). The image is said to represent a syncretism between the cults of the two gods. See Figs. 10.10, 20.11.
- Hārīti. A goddess; patroness of children. See pp. 147–48 and Fig. 8.26.
- harmikā*. A railing crowning a *stūpa*. See Fig. 6.1.
- Hayagrīva. "Horse-neck"; a fierce form of Avalokiteśvara. See Fig. 18.23. In Buddhism, he is also a *dharmapāla*. In Hinduism, the name refers to one of Viṣṇu's many incarnations.
- Heruka. A Buddhist deity and a class of deities. See pp. 398–99 and Fig. 18.13.
- Hevajra. A Buddhist deity. See p. 399 and Fig. 18.14.
- Hīnayāna. "Lesser or smaller vehicle"; used to describe the form of Buddhism in which it is believed that only a few beings contain the germ of potential Buddhahood. The term was apparently created by Mahāyāna Buddhists and was given a pejorative connotation. The so-called Hīnayānists, therefore, reject the term. See pp. 32, 70, 115.
- Hinduism. A term used to describe the many, primarily orthodox (Vedic), indigenous religions and sects of South Asia (thus excluding Buddhism and Jainism), their observances, practices, and beliefs. The term itself has a foreign origin; there is no similarly comprehensive word native to the Indic languages. Due to the vast variance in beliefs and practices, Hinduism is virtually impossible to define: there is no common creed, set of dogmas, uni-

- versally accepted canon of texts or deities, nor any "Church," *per se*. It evolved over millennia and has roots in the prehistoric cultures of South Asia and the Vedic beliefs. The major Hindu deities include Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Durgā.
- Indra. Vedic god of thunder, rain, clouds; later worshiped as a *dīkṣāla* and as Indra/Śakra, lord of Trayastriṃśa heaven. See Figs. 7.11, 17.20.
- Indrāṇi. The consort of Indra. See Fig. 17.14.
- jaḡamohan*. Orissan architectural term for *maṇḍapa*; an assembly hall; an enclosed porch.
- jaḡatī*. In architecture, a terrace, plinth, or platform; the basement of a temple.
- Jainism. The Jain religion. Its two main sects are the Digambara and Śvetāmbara. A "nonorthodox" religion, its followers reject the authority of the Vedas and believe in a series of twenty-four *tīr-thaṅkaras*, one of whom was Mahāvira (Great Hero), a contemporary of Śākyamuni Buddha's. See pp. 31-32.
- jambu*. Rose-apple tree; the tree under which the prince Siddhārtha (Śākyamuni Buddha) sat during his first meditation. See Fig. 8.18.
- jaṭā*. Matted hair; characteristic especially of ascetics and of Śiva as the great *yogin*.
- jātaka*. "Birth story"; a narrative of one of the many lives of Śākyamuni Buddha prior to his final life. As a fully enlightened being, the Buddha was able to remember these lives and he revealed them to his disciples. In each case, the purpose of the revelation was to emphasize the virtue demonstrated by his actions in that life and, thereby, to have his lives serve as a model for others.
- jaṭāmukūṭa*. Crown of matted hair; worn by some bodhisattvas, but is especially characteristic of Śiva.
- jina*. "Victor; victorious." A being who has attained the state of supreme knowledge. In Jainism, a *tīr-thaṅkara*. In Buddhism, one of the manifestations of the five *jñānas* (transcendent knowledges) that make up *bodhi* (enlightenment). The five *jina* Buddhas are considered to be directional Buddhas. The five are almost invariably given as Akṣobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amitābha (west), Amoghasiddhi (north), and Vairocana (center). In some systems, Vairocana is associated with the east and Akṣobhya with the center.
- jñāna*. Knowledge; specifically, supreme knowledge or transcendent insight.
- Kailāsa. A range of mountains in the Himālayas. In Hinduism, it is the name of the mountain that serves as Śiva's abode; it is also the residence of Kubera. See Fig. 16.7.
- kāla*. "Time"; the destroyer of all; death. Often used as a name and epithet of deities (both Hindu and Buddhist). Also means "black," the "black one." (Fem. *kālī*.)
- Kālacakra. "Time-wheel." A tutelary deity of the Vajrayāna / Tantric Buddhist pantheon. See Pl. 26.
- kālāntaka*. The dance of time and eternity; performed by Śiva. See Fig. 21.26, right.
- kalaśa*. Pitcher; water pot; ewer. Sometimes held as an attribute by a deity. In architecture, may be the crowning emblem of a Hindu temple.
- Kaliya. See pp. 536-37 and Fig. 21.35.
- kalpa*. "World period"; an aeon; a cosmic cycle, from the creation to the destruction of the physical universe.
- kalpadruma*. "Tree of the world period"; a wish-fulfilling tree. See Fig. 5.2.
- kalpalatā*. "Vine of the world period"; a wish-fulfilling vine or creeper. See Fig. 5.9, along the coping stone.
- kalpavṛkṣa*. "Tree of the world period"; a wish-fulfilling tree. See Fig. 5.2.
- kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*. "Marriage hall." In late south Indian architecture, a building or pavilion in the temple complex for celebration of divine wedding festivals. See Figs. 23.5, 23.6.
- Kalyāṇasundaramūrti. Marriage ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī. See Figs. 20.2, 20.3, 21.31.
- kapāla*. A skull or cup made of the upper part of a skull. The term may also refer to a severed head. Such a cup or head may be held as an attribute in the hand of a deity (usually of the *krodha* type).
- kaparda*. A type of scashell; a hairstyle in which the locks of hair curl spirally like the top of a shell. Characteristic of some Buddha figures as well as of Śiva.
- kapardin*. Characterized by or wearing a *kaparda* (hairstyle).
- karma*. "Act; action; deed." See pp. 29-30.
- kartri*. A type of knife. An attribute held by some deities. In Buddhism, it is used metaphorically to flay the skin of the meditator as a gesture of destroying the ego.
- Kārttikeya. "Related to the Kṛttikās (Pleiades)." The Hindu god who is also known as Skanda, Kumāra, Guha, Subrahmaṇya, and Śaktidhara, among other names. He is sometimes considered to be the son of Śiva; generally, he is depicted as a youth. See Figs. 8.40, 11.7, 19.12.
- karuṇā*. (Buddhist) Compassion; a quality that constitutes half of Buddhahood, the other half of

- which is *prajñā* (wisdom). Characteristic of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. See p. 154.
- kāyotsarga*. A standing meditation pose characteristic of Jain figures. The body shows no bend and the hands hang down at the sides. See Fig. 22.3.
- Ketumati*. The earthly paradise that will be presided over by Maitreya at the time of his descent as a Buddha.
- Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara*. A form of Avalokiteśvara. See Fig. 18.5.
- khṛtvāṅga*. A type of staff or club with a skull at the top symbolizing victory over demons, that is, religious attainment.
- kiṁnara*. A creature that is part bird, part human, or part horse, part human. Sometimes considered to be a type of *gandharva*.
- kīrttimukha*. A "demon" mask placed above doorways and niches of temples or at the top of the halo or back-slab of sculpted images. It is intended to drive away evil and protect the devout. See Fig. 18.17.
- kośambakuṭi*. Treasure hall.
- krodha*. "Angry"; "wrathful"; characteristic of some deities (Buddhist and Hindu). Their anger is meant to ward off enemies of the faith and protect the devout. See Pl. 14.
- krodhakāya*. An angry form of a deity. See also *krodha*.
- Kṛṣṇa*. The "Dark-One." One of the most popular Hindu gods, considered to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu. See Figs. 10.11, 21.35, 23.12 and Pl. 43. See also *Kṛṣṇa Venugōpāla*.
- Kṛṣṇa Venugōpāla*. A form of *Kṛṣṇa* in which he is depicted playing a flute with which he enchants his devotees. See Fig. 22.46.
- kṛttikā*. The Pleiades constellation, which, according to Indic thought, has six (not seven) stars; each of these stars is considered to be one of the six foster mothers of Kārttikeya (Skanda). See p. 231 and Chap. 11, n. 15.
- kr̥satriya*. A warrior or a member of the warrior caste.
- kṣetrapāla*. "Lord of the field or region"; a Śaivite protective deity. See Fig. 11.14.
- Kubera*. A *yakṣa* and king of the *yakṣas*. God of wealth and riches and a *dikpāla* of the northerly direction. In Buddhism, he serves as a *dharma*pāla. He is also known as *Vaiśravaṇa*, *Jambhala*, and *Pāñcika*, among other names. See Fig. 5.3.
- kula*. "Family." In Hindu society, one of the considerations that helps define an individual's position in society. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, all characteristics of existence are classified into "families," usually considered to be either five or six in number.
- All beings, including Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others, are classified according to this system.
- kumbha pañjara*. A niche decorated with a vase motif. See Fig. 21.26.
- kunḍa*. A pitcher; a bowl-shaped vessel; a reservoir.
- kūttambalam*. A theatrical pavilion in a Keraḷa temple. See Figs. 25.8-10.
- lakṣaṇa*. A mark, symbol, or sign, especially the auspicious marks on the body of a Buddha, bodhisattva, or *cakravartin*. Śākyamuni is said to have had thirty-two major *lakṣaṇas*. See p. 121.
- Lakṣmaṇa*. "Endowed with auspicious marks." The half brother of Rāma. A major character of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. See Fig. 10.39 and Pls. 35, 40.
- Lakṣmī*. "Mark"; "token"; "sign." The goddess of good fortune and wealth, generally considered to be the principal consort of Viṣṇu. She is commonly known as Śrī.
- Lakuliṣa*. "Lord with a Club." The founder (or systematizer) of the Pāsupata Śaivite sect, who is considered to be an incarnation of Śiva. He is generally depicted in art as naked, with an erect *liṅga*. See Fig. 15.11.
- lalitasana*. A posture of ease and relaxation. One leg, generally the left, is folded on the seat while the other hangs downward and sometimes rests upon a pedestal or stool. See Fig. 8.39.
- liṅga*. Literally, a "sign," sometimes interpreted as the sign or indicator of gender or sex, especially the male sex organ or phallus. In Hinduism, the *liṅga* (phallus) is associated almost exclusively with Śiva. Temples dedicated to Śiva generally have a stone or metal *liṅga* enshrined as the main object of veneration. A *liṅga* may be set into a *yoni*, a symbol of the female generative organ, that serves as its pedestal, but, more importantly, together, the *liṅga* and *yoni* symbolize the unity within duality that is central to much of Hindu thought. Sculpted *liṅgas* may be adorned with heads or faces and, occasionally, full figures. See Figs. 2.7, 5.38, 10.9 and Pl. 47.
- Lokaṇātha*. "World Lord." In Buddhism, a form of Avalokiteśvara. See Pl. 27.
- madanakai*. Kannaḍa word for a type of bracket figure found on temples of Karnaṭaka. See Fig. 22.28.
- Mahābhārata*. One of the two major epics of South Asia. See pp. 30-31.
- mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*. The Great Departure whereby Prince Siddhārtha left his palace to seek truth and knowledge. See pp. 99, 141-42 and Fig. 8.19.
- mahādvara*. "Great door"; a monumental entranceway.

- Mahākāla.** An angry, protective manifestation of Avalokiteśvara and a *dharma*pāla (protector) of the Buddhist law. See Pl. 21.
- mahāmaṇḍapa.** A large *maṇḍapa* (usually with many pillars) preceding the central shrine area.
- mahāsattva.** "Great Being"; in Buddhism, a supreme bodhisattva. See p. 115.
- mahāstūpa.** "Great stūpa"; a large stūpa. See Fig. 6.1.
- Mahā-vidyādevīs.** "Great Knowledge Goddesses." In the Jain religion, the sixteen goddesses who personify the various kinds of knowledge and are invoked at various stages in religious practices. See Fig. 20.57.
- mahāvihāra.** "Great vihāra"; a large Buddhist monastic establishment, usually having a number of smaller monastic units.
- Mahāvīra.** "Great Hero." The twenty-fourth of the Jain *tīrthaṅkaras*; he lived in Magadha, ca. 540–468 B.C. See pp. 31–32.
- Mahāyāna.** "Great Vehicle." One of the major categories of Buddhist practices, encompassing a wide variety of sects, beliefs, and practices. Mahāyānists emphasize bodhisattvas of the *mahāsattva* type and believe in the potential of all sentient beings to achieve Buddhahood. See pp. 32, 70, 114–15.
- Mahēśvara.** "Great Lord." An epithet of Śiva.
- Mahiśāsaramardīnī.** "Slayer of the Buffalo Demon." See Durgā Mahiśāsaramardīnī.
- Maitreya.** "Friendly"; "benevolent"; "loving." In Buddhism, Maitreya appears as both a Buddha and a *mahāsattva* bodhisattva. As a bodhisattva, Maitreya is said to reside in the Tuṣita heaven, where he awaits his rebirth as the next mortal (*mānuṣi*) Buddha. As a Buddha (of the future), Maitreya will preside over Ketumatī, an earthly paradise where his devotees will reside in great tranquility and will be able to hear him preach the doctrine. For Bodhisattva Maitreya, see Figs. 8.15, 8.34, 18.20, 21.38; for Maitreya Buddha, see Pl. 8.
- makara.** A mythological quasi-crocodilian creature that is a symbol of auspiciousness and the primal life source. The vehicle (*vāhana*) of the river goddess Gaṅgā. See Fig. 5.8.
- mālā.** A rosary; a garland; a string of beads; a wreath.
- maṇḍala.** A circular diagram; a type of *yantra*. A *maṇḍala* can serve as the basis for the ground plan of a building, as an aid to visualization during meditation, as a magical or symbolic offering, and in other capacities. Used in all Indic religions. For an architectural example, see Fig. 6.2; for a two-dimensional example, see Pl. 15.
- maṇḍapa.** A hall or porchlike area, usually pillared, in a religious structure. A *maṇḍapa* may be attached to the shrine area directly, or may precede a transitional space (such as an antechamber) before the shrine, or may be completely detached from the portion of the temple that contains the shrine. May be entirely enclosed, partially enclosed, or open (without walls).
- maṇḍir.** "Temple."
- maṅgala.** An auspicious sign. Usually eight are cited (*aṣṭamaṅgala*).
- mantra.** An incantation; a verbal chant; a mystic syllable; a phonetic symbol that both evokes and vivifies the divinity being propitiated. A *mantra* consists of a series of syllables which may or may not have translatable meaning; it is the sound of the *mantra*, not its "sense," that is important. A *mantra* may be personified (see Fig. 18.6).
- mānuṣi** Buddha. A mortal (human) Buddha, such as Śākyamuni. In various types of Buddhism, different numbers are cited, but, frequently, five, or eight, such Buddhas are mentioned. See Fig. 12.39.
- Māravijaya.** "Victory over Māra." Śākyamuni Buddha's defeat of Māra ("death," "destroyer," "killer") and, thus, his attainment of the liberative promise of Buddhahood. In artistic representations, the Buddha-to-be is shown seated beneath his *bodhi* tree, his right hand usually reaching toward the earth or touching it (*bhūmispārśa mudrā*) to call the earth (goddess) to witness his right to attainment and, sometimes, the armies of Māra, his tempter's daughters or others of Māra's retinue, are shown in the composition. See pp. 142–43 and Figs. 8.21, 12.15.
- mastaka.** "Head"; the crowning elements of a Hindu temple tower.
- mātā.** "Mother"; a goddess; the goddess who personifies the Great Mother, the mother of all things.
- maṭha.** A monastery or cloister.
- mātrkā.** (Also, *mātara* and *mātr*.) "Mother"; a divine mother; a *śakti* of one of the Hindu gods. Several numbers are given, but, often, seven are named (*saptamātrkā*). Also, a type of *yantra*. See Figs. 13.12, 16.8.
- mayā.** The illusionary nature of the phenomenal world. The power of illusion or artifice. See p. 29.
- Māyā(devī).** "Illusion"; "power of illusion." The name of the mother of Śākyamuni Buddha; that from which he was born.
- mayūra.** A peacock. The *vāhana* of Skanda, Amitāyus, and others.
- medhi.** The berm of a stūpa.
- mīthuna** (also *maithuna*). A loving couple; the act of love. *Mīthunas* serve as symbols of union (unity within duality) in the Indic religions and have

- other meanings as well. They are considered fitting adornments to religious structures and are found decorating or flanking doorways and at other locations on such buildings. See Figs. 9.4, 13.14, 19.40, 24.13.
- mokṣa*. "Release"; "liberation." The religious goal of Hindus, whereby the individual realizes a state of oneness with the Universal.
- mudrā*. A "seal" or "sign." A gesture made with one or both hands. Sometimes, the term *hasta* (hand) is substituted for *mudrā* in naming the gestures. In Buddhism, the term is a generic name for the female companion (*prajāñā*) of a male deity.
- mukha maṇḍapa*. The front hall or porch of a temple.
- mukūṭa*. "Crown or diadem"; a tiara.
- mūrti*. A form; an image or representation; a manifestation; a personification (as of a god).
- nāda*. A roar (as of a lion); a voice.
- nāḍanta*. The *ānanda tāṇḍava* dance performed by Śiva. See pp. 535-36 and Fig. 21.34.
- nāga*. A snake (*śarpa*); generally, a cobra. A serpent deity. (Fem. *nāgini*.)
- nāgakesara*. A type of tree; a twig or flower of this tree may be carried as an attribute of Bodhisattva Maityeya.
- nāgara*. "Town"; "pertaining to the city." The style of temple architecture associated with northern India. See p. 540.
- nāgarāja*. A serpent king. See Figs. 5.12, 12.5.
- nāgini*. See *nāga*.
- nālanbalam*. In Kerala, the cloister surrounding a Hindu temple complex. See Fig. 25.1.
- namaskāra maṇḍapa*. In Kerala, a detached *maṇḍapa* preceding the main temple. See Fig. 25.4.
- Nandi (Nandin). "The Happy One." Śiva's bull *vāhana*. See Fig. 23.14.
- nara*. See *nṛ*.
- Nara-Nārāyaṇa (Nṛ-Nārāyaṇa). Two saints who are together considered to comprise the fourth of the twenty-two minor incarnations of Viṣṇu. See pp. 210-11 and Fig. 10.30.
- nāstika*. "Denier." One who rejects the authority of the Vedas. See pp. 28-29.
- nāṭanaṇḍir*. "Hall of dance"; one of the *maṇḍapas* of an Orissan temple; a *nṛtta sabhā*.
- Naṭarāja. "King of Dance"; Śiva as lord of dance. See Figs. 13.20, 21.33, 21.34. Other virtually equivalent terms include Naṭeśa and Naṭeśvara.
- nava-choki*. A nine-compartment hall; a type of *maṇḍapa*, the ceiling of which is divided into nine coffer, arranged in three rows of three.
- navagraha* (*navagrha*). The nine planets or the nine planet deities. See Fig. 19.33.
- nidhi*. "Treasure." Kubera, the god of wealth, is said to have nine *nidhis*, all of which may be personified.
- nirmāṇakāya*. In Buddhism, the "transformation body." The body-form taken by a *mānuṣi* Buddha or another manifest teacher. See pp. 114-15. See also *trikāya*.
- nirvāṇa*. "Blow out"; "extinguish." The goal towards which Buddhists strive. The attainment of perfect knowledge and integration with the Universal.
- niśa*. A niche or cavity; a niche temple.
- nṛ*. "Man." Used with the name of one of Viṣṇu's *avatārs*, refers to a human or partially human form. See also Nṛsimha and Nṛ-Varāha.
- Nṛsimha (Narasimha). The man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu. See Figs. 9.30, 17.27, 23.15.
- nṛtta mūrti*. A dance-form; a manifestation of a deity performing a dance. Especially characteristic of Śiva, but other gods, such as Kṛṣṇa and Gaṇeśa, are also shown dancing. See Figs. 21.33, 21.34.
- nṛtta sabhā*. A dance-pavilion; a *maṇḍapa* for dance performances and ceremonies; a *nāṭamaṇḍir*.
- Nṛ-Varāha. Viṣṇu in his Varāha (boar) incarnation, depicted with the body of a man and the head of a boar. See pp. 192-93 and Fig. 10.12.
- Om maṇi padme hūm*. A Buddhist *mantra*; the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara. It is generally translated to mean "the jewel (*maṇi*) is in the lotus (*padma*)"; in esoteric Buddhism, the jewel is seen as the male sex organ (*vajra*), while the lotus in which it rests is interpreted as the female generative organ (*bhaga*). The six syllables of the *mantra* are personified in the Ṣaḍakṣari form of Avalokiteśvara. See Fig. 18.6.
- padma*. "Lotus." One of the most universal and widespread symbols in Indic culture, the lotus serves as a pedestal upon which divine beings stand or sit and is an attribute characteristic of many deities. Its symbolism has many variations, but it is invariably associated with transcendence, life-assertion, grace, and peacefulness. Specific subtypes and color variations of the lotus carry specific meanings.
- Padmapāṇi. "Having a lotus in the hand"; a form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.
- padmāsana*. "Lotus-seat"; a sitting posture in which both legs are crossed and each foot rests upon the thigh of the opposite leg. Used by *yogins* and religious practitioners primarily during meditation. Characteristic of divinities, especially of Buddhas

- and *tirthaṅkaras* or others who are being depicted in peaceful, meditative forms. Other names for identical (or slightly variant) forms include *vajrapary-āṅkāśana*, *vajrāsana*, *dhyānāsana*. See Fig. 10.20.
- paḷlippaḍai*. In south India, a temple that serves partially as a commemorative funerary monument for a deceased royal personage but is, at the same time, also dedicated to a deity.
- pañca jina maṇḍala*. The *maṇḍala* of the five *jina* Buddhas. See p. 263.
- pañcaloha*. An alloy of five metals, usually cited as being copper, silver, gold, tin, and lead; the alloy presumed to have been popularly used in south Indian metalwork.
- pañca makāra*. The five "m's"; in Hindu Tantric practices, the enjoyment of the company of women (*mudrā*), the drinking of wine (*mada*), the eating of flesh (*māṃsa*), the eating of fish (*matsya*), and sexual intercourse (*maithuna*). They are so called because in Sanskrit all the names of these things begin with the letter *m*. Some lists substitute human sacrifice, the use of the human skull as a drinking vessel, and the singing of lusty songs for some of the practices. Although the five "m's" are not specifically mentioned as a group in Buddhist texts, the same practices occur in Tantric Buddhism. See p. 468.
- pañcaratha*. "Five-ratha"; a side of a pedestal or a building that is offset so that its length is divided into five sections. See p. 213.
- Pāñcarātra*. A Vaiṣṇavite sect. The meaning of its name ("Five Nights") is obscure, as are its origins. Its doctrines, however, can be traced to the late first millennium B.C. and are known to have been formalized around A.D. 100. The *Pāñcarātra* sect emphasizes monotheism, *bhakti*, and simple forms of worship.
- pañcayatana*. "Five-temple (shrine, support, abode, resting place)." In architecture, a temple that has a central shrine surrounded by four others. See Fig. 10.27.
- Pāñcika*. A wealth god and *yakṣa* king; another name for Kubera. See pp. 146-48 and Fig. 8.25. See also Kubera.
- pañḍita*. A scholar; a learned man; a teacher; a pandit.
- pāramitā*. A Buddhist term meaning "perfection"; specifically, the virtues to be perfected by a bodhisattva in the quest for buddhahood. Generally, six or ten are cited, though sometimes twelve are named. The ten are: 1. *dāna* (giving, charity, generosity); 2. *cīla* (morality, proper conduct); 3. *kṣānti* (patience); 4. *vīrya* (energy, vigor); 5. *dhyāna* (meditation); 6. *upāya* (skillful means); 7. *prañidhāna* (vows); 8. *bala* (strength); 9. *jñāna* (transcendent knowledge); and 10. *prajñā* (transcendent wisdom). When only six are given, the first five of the list remain as cited, but the tenth, *prajñā*, is listed as the sixth.
- paraśu*. "Axe"; the axe attribute carried by a number of Buddhist and Hindu deities.
- parikramā*. "Circumambulation"; "roaming about"; especially, circumambulation (of a deity or a religious structure) performed as part of religious practice. When circumambulation is performed with the object of veneration to the right of the devotee (that is, with the devotee moving in a clockwise fashion), the circumambulation is called *pradakṣiṇa*; when the object is to the left (and the worshiper moves in a counterclockwise direction), the circumambulation is called *prasavya*. Clockwise movement is considered to be auspicious; counterclockwise movement is inauspicious and generally associated with death. See pp. 62, 208-10.
- parinirvāṇa*. The "complete" *nirvāṇa*; the final passing away of Śākyamuni Buddha; his extinction. The death after which the Buddha was to have no more births. See Figs. 8.23, 12.14.
- parivāra*. One of the "retinue"; a deity attending the main deity of a shrine.
- parivāralaya*. A shrine for a *parivāra* deity.
- Parṇasabari*. A female *krodha* deity and an emanation of the Buddha Akṣobhya. See p. 400 and Fig. 18.15.
- pārsva-devatā*. "Side-deity"; secondary deities of an iconographic program, usually placed in subsidiary niches in a temple.
- Pārvatī*. The principal consort of Śiva. Her epithets and variant forms include *Devī*, *Durgā*, *Gaurī*, *Kālī*, *Mahādevī*, and *Umā*.
- paṭa*. A painted banner or cloth.
- phāṃsanā*. A peaked, pyramidal roof rising from a square base. See Fig. 11.11.
- piḍhā*. Horizontal platformlike divisions or courses of the superstructure over the *jaganmohan* (*maṇḍapa*) of an Orissan temple. See Fig. 19.19.
- pīṭal*. The *bodhi* tree of Śākyamuni Buddha. See also *aśvattha*.
- pīṣṭa*. In Orissan architecture, the platform or base comprising the lower portion of a temple.
- piṭha*. "Seat"; "throne." The pedestal of an image or *liṅga*.
- prabhāmaṇḍala*. "Circle of light or radiance"; an aura or halo radiating from the head or body indicating transcendence or divinity. Sometimes called a *prabhāvalī*. See also *śiraścakra* and *śirasprabhācakra*.
- pradakṣiṇa*. "Toward the right"; moving or turning in a clockwise direction. See also *parikramā*.

pradakṣiṇapatha. A passageway or walkway for circumambulation surrounding an image, shrine, or building. In Western literature, the term is used generically to refer to all circumambulatory passageways. However, since the term *pradakṣiṇa* implies only clockwise movement, the name may be inappropriate for some forms of circumambulation, which are performed in a counterclockwise (*prasavya*) direction. See also *parikramā*.

prajñā. "Wisdom." The transcendental wisdom that constitutes one half of the state of buddhahood. It is personified in Mahāyāna Buddhism as a female who can serve as a consort to a male deity, and, thus, as half of a united duality that represents buddhahood. As a female consort, the *prajñā* is sometimes compared with the *śakti* in Hinduism although the terms are not fully equivalent.

Prajñāpāramitā. In Buddhism, the feminine personification of the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts and the personification of perfect wisdom. She is sometimes regarded as the mother (that is, creator or source) of all Buddhas.

prākāra. An enclosure wall of a south Indian temple; an enclosure wall and the compound created by the wall in a south Indian temple; a covered walkway that serves as an enclosure boundary in a south Indian temple. See Fig. 24.10.

prakṛti. The "urge to produce." That which has the immanent quality of creativity or production; the reservoir of potential. In Hindu thought, *prakṛti* is seen as the active principle and is personified as a female. With *puruṣa*, the male principle, which is considered to be inactive, all things are manifested. Together, the male and female principles represent all of creation, that is, Nature, which is both the creator and destroyer of all.

pralambapādāsana. A sitting posture in which the two legs hang downward. It is often called "European pose." Also known as *bhadrāsana* and *panyānkāsana*. See Fig. 8.2.

prasavya. "Toward the left"; moving or turning in a counterclockwise direction. See also *parikramā*.

prastara. A flat surface; a flat top; a level. In architecture, the entablature above the wall of a structure.

preta. "Dead"; "departed." Often defined as a "hungry ghost," the term refers to the form into which beings who have been lustful and greedy in their past lives are born. See p. 393 and Fig. 18.5.

pūjā. The acts performed to honor or worship a divinity. May include the offering of flowers, food, and water to the god.

puṇya. Moral or religious merit.

puṇyapāramitā. Perfection of moral or religious merit. Purānas. Meaning "old," these are ancient tales or histories, especially a specific type of text that records stories about the gods and the ancient Indic dynasties. See pp. 30–31.

pūrṇaghaṭa. Vase-of-plenty.

puruṣa. "Man." As a suffix (as in *cakrapuruṣa*), it refers to a personification. The term also refers to the male member of the *prakṛti-puruṣa* duality. See also *prakṛti*.

pustaka. A book or manuscript; sometimes held in the hand of a deity as an attribute.

Rāhu. "Seizer." One of the nine planets (*navagraha*) in Indic astronomical thought; the ascending node of the moon. Rāhu is believed to cause eclipses by seizing and swallowing the sun and moon. His body was supposedly severed from his head and, thus, he is often depicted as a head without a body. (His body is Ketu, another of the nine planets and the descending node of the moon.) See Figs. 19.33, 19.34.

rāja. "King."

rājāliḷā. An *āsana*; the pose of royal ease. Both legs are bent and are placed on the seat; one knee (usually the right) is raised while the other rests flat on the seat. The two feet are close together. See Fig. 20.37.

rajas. One of the three universal qualities (*guṇas*); it implies mental activity and the rhythmic division of space and time. See p. 279.

rājkumār. "King-boy"; a prince.

Rāma. The seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu, who appeared on earth as the king of Ayodhyā to save the world from destruction by the demon Rāvaṇa. The story of his struggles is the principal subject of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Rāmāyaṇa. One of the two major epics of ancient India. See pp. 30–31.

raṅga maṇḍapa. An assembly hall in a temple; a type of *maṇḍapa*; a *sabhā maṇḍapa*.

ratha. "Cart or chariot." Sometimes used to refer to the temple that serves as the "chariot" (even though immovable) of a deity. The term also refers to the pedestal of an image or the base of a building (that houses an image). In form, the pedestal or base may be offset, in which case, the *ratha* is defined by the number of its sections. For this latter meaning, see p. 213.

Ratnasambhava. "Jewel-born." One of the *jina* Buddhas; the Buddha of the south, whose *vāhana* is the horse. See Fig. 18.12.

Rāvaṇa. A demon who is best known as the principal demon of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic.

rekhā. "Streak"; "outline." In Orissan architecture, the name for the *śikhara*-type temple; the curvilinear portion of a *śikhara*.

rekhā deul. A *rekhā*-type temple.

Rṣabhanātha. The first *tirthaṅkara*. See Fig. 10.42.

ṛṣi (riṣi). A "seer." An inspired poet; a sage.

rūpakāya. In early Buddhism, the "form-body" of the two-kāya system. At some point before the fourth century, the concept was divided into the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*, which are still known collectively as *rūpakāya*. See also *trikāya*. See pp. 114-15.

sabhā maṇḍapa. An assembly hall in a temple; a *maṇḍapa*; a *raṅga maṇḍapa*.

Ṣaḍakṣari Avalokiteśvara. "Six-syllable Avalokiteśvara." A form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the personification of the six-syllable *mantra* "Om maṇi padme hūm." See pp. 393-94 and Fig. 18.6.

Saddharmapūṇḍarika-sūtra. A Buddhist *sūtra*; "the *sūtra* of the lotus of the wonderful law."

sādhana. That which leads to the (religious) goal; a type of Tantric religious practice. Also, in Buddhism, a type of text that serves as a ritual and iconographic guide.

Śaivite. Pertaining to Śiva.

śakti. 1. A spearlike implement that is the emblem of Skanda (Kārttikeya). See Fig. 8.40. 2. "Energy." In Hinduism, the feminine creative force or the personification of that force as the female consort of a male deity. A corollary of the concept of *prakṛti*. See also *prakṛti*. The corresponding term in Buddhism is *prajñā*. It is unknown as to whether the two meanings of the word *śakti* as "spear" and "female energy" stem from related or completely different root words. In any case, in certain Buddhist contexts at least, the spear substitutes for the female (*prajñā*), perhaps as a pun on the word *śakti*.

Śākyamuni. One of the mortal (*mānuṣi*) Buddhas; the Buddha who lived in Magadha (ca. 563-483 B.C.). Though sometimes regarded as the "founder" of Buddhism, he is in fact held by Buddhists to be only one of a number of past mortal Buddhas and potential future mortal Buddhas. See pp. 31-32.

śāl (śāla). A tree (Lat. *Shorea robusta*); the tree grasped by Queen Māyā as she gave birth to Prince Siddhārtha, the future Śākyamuni Buddha.

śālā. A type of shrine or a miniature version of a shrine that is rectangular in plan and has a "barrel-vaulted," or perhaps, more properly, "barrel-shaped" roof.

It may serve as the crowning element of a tower (see Fig. 24.6) or as a decorative motif repeated on the stories of the superstructure of a south Indian style temple (see Fig. 14.23), as well as in other architectural and decorative contexts.

śāḷa. An enclosure or cloister (see p. 457).

śālabhāṅjikā. A tree goddess (*vṛkṣadevatā*) who grasps a *śāl* tree.

śambhaṅga. A standing posture in which the legs are unbent and the weight of the body distributed equally on the feet. See Fig. 14.26.

sambhogakāya. "Bliss Body." One of the three *kāyas* of the Mahāyāna Buddhist *trikāya* system. It is one branch of the *rūpakāya*, the other being the *nirmāṇakāya*. It is in this form that Buddhas appear to their bodhisattvas. The *jina* Buddhas are manifestations of this *kāya*. See also *trikāya*. See pp. 263-64.

saṅgha. The Buddhist monastic community; the members of such a community.

saṅghārāma. A monastery.

saṁsāra. The rounds of rebirths undergone by a living being; transmigration. The concept, and acceptance of it, is a presupposition of the Indic religions in general. See pp. 29-30.

Samvara. One of the Heruka deities of Buddhism and an angry (*krodha*) emanation of the Buddha Akṣobhya. See Fig. 18.22

saṁvat. A year; an era. Used in calendric reckonings.

sāndhara. A type of temple characterized by an enclosed passageway for circumambulation. See Figs. 20.24, 20.27.

śaṅkha. A conch or conch shell. Carried as an attribute of deities, especially Viṣṇu. It serves as both a war trumpet and a musical instrument; its sound is considered to be a symbol of the transience of the universe.

ṣaṁmudrā. The six bone ornaments worn by Tantric *yogins* and Tantric divinities. See Fig. 19.47.

saptamātṛkā. "Seven Mothers." Though the number of these goddesses is generally given as seven, the list of goddesses who comprise the group varies. The "mothers" are seen as *śaktis* of several principal Hindu gods.

saptaratha. "Seven-ratha"; a side of a pedestal or building that is offset so that its length is divided into seven sections. See p. 213.

Sarasvatī. The name of one of the ancient rivers of the northwestern Indic region. Though it was one of the most renowned of the rivers mentioned in the *R̥g Veda*, it is today virtually dried up. Also, the personification of the river as a goddess who is seen as consort (and sometimes a daughter) of Brahmā,

- but also as a consort of Viṣṇu. She is regarded as a goddess of learning and wisdom. See Fig. 20.41.
- śārdūla*. A leogryph; a winged lion or tiger.
- Sarvavid Vairocana. "All-knowledge Vairocana." A manifestation of the Ādi Buddha; the embodiment of *śūnyā* and omniscience; the personification of the undifferentiated state. See pp. 402-3 and Fig. 18.18.
- satī*. A suttee; a faithful, dutiful wife who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. In some parts of India, such a woman is afterward honored by a memorial stone.
- sattva*. 1. A being or creature. 2. One of the three qualities (*guṇas*) in operation throughout the universe in Hindu thought; the cohesive force implying a concentration of energy and a coming together. See p. 279.
- Śeṣa. "Remainder"; the serpent upon which Viṣṇu reclines or sits. Also called Ananta ("Endless"). See Fig. 10.29.
- Siddhārtha. The princely name of Śākyamuni Buddha; the name of that Buddha during the preenlightenment years of his last lifetime.
- śikhara*. 1. In north Indian architecture, the spire or tower over the shrine of a temple. See Fig. 20.25. 2. In south Indian architecture, the term does not refer to the entire superstructure but only to the globular or domical roof of the uppermost element in the superstructure. It is topped by a finial known as a *stūpi* and is supported by the "neck" (*grīva*). See Figs. 14.23 (for an example lacking a *stūpi*), 21.21.
- śilpīn*. An architect; a craftsman.
- śimha*. A lion.
- śimhaghoṣa*. "Voice of the lion"; a reference to the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha.
- śimhanāda*. The "lion's roar"; a reference to the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha.
- Śimhanāda Avalokiteśvara. "Avalokiteśvara of the lion's roar"; Avalokiteśvara as reciter of the Buddhist teachings. See Figs. 18.7, 20.37.
- śimhāsana*. "Lion seat or throne"; a throne supported by lions. See Fig. 8.31. Also, "sitting posture of the lion," an *āsana*.
- śiraścakra*. "Head-wheel"; a halo that is restricted to the head of a figure. See also *śiraśprabhācakra* and *prabhāmaṇḍala*.
- śiraśprabhācakra*. "Head-light wheel"; a halo that is restricted to the head of a figure. See also *śiraścakra* and *prabhāmaṇḍala*.
- Sitā. "Furrow"; the heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic and the wife of Rāma; she was abducted by the demon Rāvaṇa and carried off by him to Sri Lanka.
- Śiva. "Auspicious." One of the principal Hindu gods; god of destruction. He may appear in many forms, both peaceful and angry. His characteristic *vāhana* is the bull Nandi; he has many attributes, but one of the most important is the trident. In temples dedicated to him, a *liṅga* is usually placed as the central votive object in the shrine rather than an anthropomorphic image of him.
- Śiva Andhakāsuravadhamūrti. Śiva as destroyer of the demon (*asura*) Andhaka. See Fig. 16.6.
- Śiva Bhikṣāṭaṇa. A form of Śiva. See pp. 516-17 and Fig. 21.11.
- Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti. A form of Śiva as the supreme teacher of *yoga*, knowledge, music, and the Vedas. The term *dakṣiṇa* is thought to refer to the south (supposedly the direction the god faced when teaching the sages, and the direction associated with death and hence, perhaps, the overcoming of death through Śiva's teachings) or, alternatively, to the right, perhaps in reference to the usual teaching gesture of the god's right hand in this form. See Figs. 14.38, 21.17.
- Śiva Viṣāpraharaṇāmūrti. A form of Śiva as a world savior. See p. 321 and Fig. 14.39.
- Skanda. See Kārttikeya.
- Skandamātā. "Mother of Skanda." See *kṛttikā*.
- Somāskanda. Śiva with Umā and Skanda. A type of representation of Śiva with his consort and son that was popular in south India beginning in the Pallava period. See Fig. 14.27.
- śramaṇa*. An ascetic; a monk.
- Śrī. In Hinduism, the goddess of good fortune and wealth, sometimes considered to be an aspect of Lakṣmī. In Tantric Buddhism, an angry (*krodha*) female. For the latter, see Pl. 22.
- śrikōvil*. The main shrine of a Hindu temple in Kerala. See p. 602.
- stambha*. A pillar; frequently, a free-standing pillar. Also known as *lāṭh*.
- sthānaka*. "Standing." The representation of a figure in a standing posture.
- stūpa*. "Crest"; "summit." In Jainism and Buddhism, an architectural term denoting a dome-shaped or rounded structure that contains the relic of a Buddha, great teacher, or other honored individual, and, thus, generally considered to be a type of sepulchral monument. May be made in miniature (or votive) form, but even smaller versions often contain relics. A *stūpa* is a type of *caitya*. See Fig. 6.1.
- stūpi* (also *stūpika*). "Pinnacle." The usually vase-shaped finial atop the superstructure of a south Indian style Hindu temple.
- Subrahmaṇya. "Dear to *brāhmins*." An epithet and

- form of Skanda. Known primarily in south India. See Fig. 24.2.
- Sukhāvati. "Land of Bliss." The name of the western paradise over which Amitābha / Amitāyus presides.
- śūnya. "Zero"; the void. See *śūnyatā*.
- śūnyatā. "Emptiness"; "nothingness"; "voidness." In Buddhism and Hinduism, the mental state that is to be achieved as the final result of religious practices; neither existence nor nonexistence; non-being; a state of complete neutrality that is considered to be the ultimate reality. It is seen as a dynamic, not a passive, state.
- Sūrya. "Sun"; the sun god. See Figs. 8.42, 17.21, 19.35.
- sūtra. "Thread." A short text or doctrine consisting of aphoristic thoughts or rules "threaded" together into a sequence. In Buddhism, all *sūtras* are considered to represent the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha. However, the Hinayanists do not accept all Mahāyāna *sūtras* as being authentic.
- svabhāvikakāya. "Self-originated form." In Buddhism, the Ādi Buddha; the source of all and that from which all things derive.
- svastika. "Of good fortune"; an auspicious emblem shaped like an equal-armed cross having bent legs. It is found in the Indic regions as early as the Indus civilization. See Fig. 2.17.
- Śvetāmbara. One of the two principal Jain sects; the "White-Dressed" sect.
- tala. "Place." In architecture, a tier, especially, one of the tiers of the superstructure over the shrine in a south Indian style temple.
- tamas. One of the three qualities (*guṇas*) in operation throughout the universe according to Hindu thought; the opposite of *sattva*; the destructive, disintegrating characteristic that prevents concentration and is symbolic of dissolution and nonbeing. See p. 279.
- Tantra (*tantra*; also, Tantric, Tantrism). The origin of the term is obscure and has been variously interpreted. In Indic religions, the term refers to a class of texts and the practices and beliefs associated with them; Tantras are characteristic of some sects in all the Indic religions. They are associated with emphasis on the female, sexual symbolism, and secret, esoteric traditions and practices. Though the goals of Tantrins and practitioners of other forms of the Indic religions are essentially similar, the methods used to achieve the goals propounded by the Tantrins differ greatly from the other more widespread religious practices. Tantrism is considered a faster method of attaining religious achievement than the more conventional means; however, it is also more dangerous, due to its involvement of the practitioner in normally prohibited indulgences. See p. 468.
- tapas. "Heat" (and, hence, potential power). In contrast to the heat generated by sexual desire (*kāma*), this type of "heat" is associated with religious austerity. Through penance and renunciation, the individual—whether well- or evil-intentioned—may gain power of such magnitude that even the gods may be threatened. For a penance-performing individual, see Fig. 14.19, top center.
- Tārā (also Tarakā). "Star"; a goddess known in the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist religions. She is best known in Mahāyāna Buddhism, where she is implicitly the North Star, and, hence, a guide (to the devotee). As such, she is an important goddess in her own right; she is also the consort of Avalokiteśvara. See Fig. 20.63 and Pl. 30.
- tarjanī mudrā. A threatening gesture. See Fig. 18.15.
- Tathāgatagarbha. "Womb of the Thus-Gone One." The word *tathāgata* is translated as "Thus-Gone One" (that is, one who has arrived at perfect knowledge and, thus, a Buddha). With *garbha* ("womb"), the term refers to Buddha-potential or the essence of Buddhahood. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term refers specifically to the germ or essence of potential Buddhahood that is found in all sentient beings.
- tejas. Spiritual power.
- thang-ka (Tibetan). A painting on cloth; a banner painting; a *paṭa*.
- Theravāda. The Pāli term for the Sanskrit *stāviravāda*, the "speech of the elders." A form of Buddhism of the so-called Hinayāna category.
- tirtha. A holy site; a place of pilgrimage.
- tirthankara. "Ford-finder." A Jain *jina* ("conqueror"). One who has attained perfect knowledge. There are twenty-four such beings in the Jain system for the present time-cycle, the twenty-fourth being Mahāvira, who lived in Magadha (ca. 540-468 B.C.). For a list of the twenty-four, see Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), 2:505-6.
- torāṇa. An arch; a portal; a gateway. See Fig. 5.8.
- Trāyastriṃśa. The heaven of thirty-three (Vedic) gods, situated above Mount Meru; it is presided over by Indra / Śakra.
- tribhaṅga. The "thrice-bent" posture. A standing posture in which the head, chest, and lower portion

- of the body are angled instead of aligned vertically; a plumb line from the top of the head passes through the left (or right) pupil, the center of the chest, then to the left (or right) of the navel and, finally, to a point between the heels. See Fig. 18.5.
- trikāya*. "Three bodies"; a Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine concerning the threefold nature of Buddhahood. The three "bodies" are the *nirmāṇakāya* ("Transformation" or "Form Body"), the realm of the mortal Buddhas; *sambhogakāya* ("Bliss Body"), the realm of the *jina* Buddhas; and the *dharmakāya* ("Law Body"), the realm of the Ādi Buddha. The *nirmāṇakāya* and *sambhogakāya* are together known as *rūpakāya*.
- trikūṣa*. "Three-hall"; a triple-shrined structure.
- Trimūrti. "Triple form" or "triple image." Sometimes used to refer to a single, triple-headed figure, but also may refer to three separate images worshiped together (see Fig. 14.13). The triad usually consists of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā.
- Tripitaka*. "Three baskets"; in Buddhism, the collections of sacred writings.
- triratha*. "Three-ratha"; a side of a pedestal or building that is offset so that its length is divided into three sections. See p. 213.
- triratna*. "Three jewels"; the three "jewels" of Buddhism, that is, the Buddha, the Buddhist law (*dharmā*), and the monastic community (*saṅgha*).
- triśūla*. A trident; an attribute characteristic of a number of deities, especially Śiva.
- triśūlapuruṣa*. The personification of the trident.
- Trivikrama. 1. One of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. 2. An epithet for Vāmana, the dwarf, who is one of Viṣṇu's ten major incarnations. See p. 298 and Fig. 14.10.
- Tuṣṭita. The heaven presided over by Bodhisattva Maitreya.
- Umā-Maheśvara. Śiva, seated, with his consort Umā sitting upon his left knee. See Fig. 15.26.
- Upaniṣads. A body of ancient Indic religious texts. See pp. 28-30.
- upāsaka*. "Follower." In Buddhism, a lay worshiper. (Fem. *upāsikā*.)
- upāya*. "Skillful means; practice." In Buddhism, the means by which knowledge or compassion may be made manifest; it is identified with the active, male principle.
- ūrṇā*. One of the auspicious marks of the body manifested as a whorl of hair or a circle or protuberance between the eyebrows. It is one of the *lakṣaṇas* (lucky signs) of a Buddha and is characteristic of other exalted beings, such as *mahāsattva* bodhisattvas. See Fig. 7.11.
- uṣṇīṣa*. A knot of hair, probably a turban knot, atop the head of a male figure; indicative of princely heritage. See Fig. 7.11.
- vāhana*. "Vehicle"; the mount or carrier of a god; a being who accompanies a god. The *vāhana* is usually a theriomorph and may symbolize an aspect or quality of the deity.
- Vairocana. One of the *sambhogakāya* Buddhas and, in some systems, a manifestation of the *dharmakāya*. He is also sometimes considered to be a manifestation of the Ādi Buddha.
- Vaiṣṇavite. Pertaining to Viṣṇu.
- vajra*. An implement; an attribute. It is sometimes defined as "thunderbolt," though this is only a limited explanation of the term. The word is commonly translated as "diamond"; however, this is apparently incorrect. Regardless of its exact translation, it serves as a symbol of permanency and immutability, and, in Buddhism, the adamant nature of the universe. The *vajra* is a pronged instrument, sometimes flat, sometimes fully rounded, with prongs at both ends. The number of prongs varies but is always identical at both ends and is an odd, rather than even, number. (See Fig. 8.32, left, for a one-pointed example.) In Tantric Buddhism, all Buddhist deities are considered to be *vajras* or *vajra*-beings and the *vajra* also serves as a symbol of the phallus. In some Buddhist contexts (see Pl. 15), deities of non-Buddhist pantheons who have been converted to the Buddhist *dharmā* are referred to as *vajras*.
- vajrahūṅkāra* (*mudrā*). A hand posture that signifies the syllable *hūṃ* (*hūṅ*) in Vajrayāna Buddhism. The hands and wrists are crossed in front of the chest; the right hand holds a *vajra* while the left holds a *ghaṅṭā*—the two symbols in the crossed hands thus symbolize the union of male (*vajra*) and female (*ghaṅṭā*), and of skillful means (*upāya*; the male) and wisdom (*prajñā*; the female). See Fig. 19.47.
- Vajrapāṇi. The bodhisattva who bears a *vajra* in his hand. See Fig. 8.32, left; for his angry form, see Pl. 14.
- vajraparyāṅkāsaṇa*. "Vajra-throne sitting." The lotus position *āsana*; see *padmāsana*.
- vajrāsana*. "Vajra-seat." The seat of enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree. Also, the seat (or altar?) presently beneath the *bodhi* tree at Bodhi Gayā is known as *vajrāsana*. See Fig. 4.10. The term also

- refers to a throne or seat that has a *vajra* upon it or to *padmāsana*, the sitting posture. (Some authorities, however, contend that there are differences between the *vajrāsana*, *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, and *padmāsana* postures.)
- Vajrasattva.** "Vajra Being." In Buddhism, a being that the practitioner becomes when generating a *maṇḍala*. In Buddhist art, an image that symbolizes the fully-enlightened practitioner as the undifferentiated state of the Universal (*śūnyatā*). See p. 460 and Fig. 20.13.
- Vajrayāna.** "Vajra vehicle." One of the major types of Buddhist practices; Tantra, or Tantric Buddhism. See p. 32.
- Vāmana.** The dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu. See also *Trivikrama* and Fig. 20.10.
- vanamālā.** "Forest garland." A garland worn by Viṣṇu that is usually shown hanging down to his knees. See Fig. 18.28.
- varada mudrā.** The gift-bestowing gesture. It can be made with either the right or left hand; the hand extends downward, with the palm outward, as if offering something to a devotee, and, in fact, sometimes an object of offering is held in a hand performing this *mudrā*. See Figs. 18.8, 18.28.
- Varāha.** The boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. In this form, the god may appear completely as an animal (see Fig. 11.1) or as part-man, part-beast, in which case he may be identified as Nṛ-Varāha (see Figs. 10.8, 10.12). See pp. 192-93.
- Varuṇa.** One of the principal Vedic gods and, later, one of the *dīpālas* (protector of the west). See Fig. 19.22.
- Vāsudeva.** A manifestation of Viṣṇu; one of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu; sometimes, an epithet of Kṛṣṇa. (The name should not be confused with that of Vasudeva, the father of Kṛṣṇa.)
- vāv** (also *wāv*). A step-well. See Figs. 20.60, 20.61.
- Vedas.** A group of texts sacred to Hinduism. See pp. 27-28.
- vedī.** An altar; an altar-stand or pedestal.
- vedīkā.** A railing enclosing a sacred *caitya*, or a spot or object of veneration.
- vesara.** A "mule" or a "hybrid." The name of a style of architecture believed to be associated with the Deccan region. See p. 540.
- vidyā.** Knowledge, especially practical knowledge; lore.
- vidyādharma.** "Bearer of Wisdom." Especially, figures depicted as if flying above the heads of deities while bearing garlands (that symbolize the attainment of supreme wisdom). See Figs. 18.8, 18.25, 18.28.
- vighna.** An obstacle or impediment (to religious attainment). Sometimes, *vighnas* are personified and deities are shown trampling upon them as if to destroy them. See Fig. 18.25.
- vihāra.** A monastery; may be either free-standing or rock-cut.
- vimāna.** The shrine portion of a temple and its superstructure.
- viragal.** A hero stone. See Fig. 9.31.
- vīrya.** Heroism.
- Viṣṇupraharaṇamūrti.** See Śiva Viṣṇupraharaṇamūrti.
- vismaya.** A gesture of wonder, astonishment, or praise. The arm is bent at the elbow; the fingers point upward and the palm inward. See Fig. 21.3.
- Viṣṇu.** One of the most important Hindu gods; the "preserver" of the Universe. He appears in many forms, but is perhaps best known in his ten incarnations (*daśāvatāra*) and his twenty-four forms (*caturvīṃśatimūrti*).
- Viṣṇu Anantyaśayana.** Viṣṇu as creator, reclining on the serpent Ananta. See p. 210 and Fig. 10.29. Also called Viṣṇu Śeṣaśayana.
- Viṣṇu Caturmūrti.** A four-headed form of Viṣṇu. See p. 367 and Fig. 17.17.
- Viṣṇu Saṅkarṣaṇa.** One of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. See Fig. 20.62.
- Viṣṇu Śeṣaśayana.** See Viṣṇu Anantaśayana.
- Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa.** "Viṣṇu (Having) All Forms." Viṣṇu as the Universal, in whom is embodied all things and from whom all things emanate. See p. 233 and Figs. 11.15, 20.4.
- vitarka mudrā.** A gesture of discourse or discussion. The tips of the index finger and thumb of the hand are pressed together to form a circle, with the other fingers pointing upward. See Pl. 31, left figures.
- vṛkṣadevatā.** A tree goddess. See Fig. 6.6. See also *śalabhāñjikā*.
- vyākhyāna mudrā.** A gesture of explanation or discourse in which the palm is outward, and the fingers upward, with the thumb and index finger (or the thumb and another finger) forming a circle. See Fig. 7.10.
- vyāla** (or *vyālaka*). A horned lion (*yālī*).
- vyūha.** A manifestation or emanation; generally, an emanation of Viṣṇu but not a full incarnation. In Buddhism, an expansive vision of a paradise.
- yajña.** A sacrifice; an offering; a religious practice, especially characteristic of Vedic worship.
- yakṣa.** A male nature spirit; a wealth deity and guardian of treasure. *Yakṣas* are especially associated with trees. (Fem. *yakṣī*, *yakṣiṇī*.)
- yakṣī** (or *yakṣiṇī*). See *yakṣa* and Fig. 5.13.

yāli. A horned lion (*vyāla*).

Yama. The god of death; the judge of the dead; the one who conducts the dead to the place of the ancestors. He is considered to be guardian of the south (the direction associated with death) and is one of the directional guardian deities (*dikpālas*). See p. 338 and Fig. 15.25.

Yamunā. The Yamunā (or Jamunā and Jumna) River; the goddess personifying that river. Her symbol and *vāhana* is the tortoise. See Fig. 10.37.

yantra. A mechanical device such as a geometric or symbolic diagram. A *yantra* may serve as an aid to meditation, almost as a map or chart can serve as a guide. A *maṇḍala* is a type of *yantra*.

yaṣṭi. A pole; in Buddhist *stūpa* architecture, the pole that represents the World Axis.

yoga. "Yoke"; "union (as if joined by a yoke)." Practices by which the individual attempts to "yoke" himself with the Universal. There are many types of *yoga*, and *yogic* practices are universal to all the Indic religions; they can be traced in art at least as far back as the Indus civilization. In Hinduism, the many types of *yoga* include: *haṭha yoga*, which emphasizes mastery of the body; *bhakti yoga*, which stresses unconditional love and devotion of god; *jñāna yoga*, which propounds reintegration through knowledge; *karma yoga*, which emphasizes

the performance of religious duties; and *rāja yoga*, the royal way, which is considered to be the supreme form of *yoga* and the one for which all others serve merely as preparation. *Yoga* is a very important aspect of Vajrayana Buddhism, wherein *yogic* practices are classified into various systems.

yogin. A practitioner of *yoga*.

yoginī. A female practitioner of *yoga*. Also, a goddess or a woman possessed of magical powers. Different numbers of *yoginīs* are cited; sixty-four is a popularly given number. *Yoginī* worship implicitly suggests sexual religious practices. Very few temples of the *yoginī* cult are known in South Asia. See Figs. 19.41-43 and 20.21, 20.22.

yoni. The female generative organ; the vulva. The symbol of the female principle. May serve as the pedestal (or receiver) of the *liṅga* enshrined in a Śaivite temple. Together, the *liṅga* and *yoni* represent the unity within duality that is central to much Hindu thought.

yuganaddha. Sexually joined; joined as a pair. A representation of a male in intercourse with his female consort. The extension and completion of the concept of *mithuna*. See Fig. 18.14.

yuvarāja. The heir apparent; the crown prince. The term is sometimes used to refer to the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha.