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# Glimpses of Indian History and Art

Reflections on the Past, Perspectives for the Future

edited by  
Tiziana Lorenzetti and Fabio Scialpi



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Cover: *Śiva, Pārvatī, and a Devotee*, Bṛhadīśvara Temple, Gaṅgaikoṇḍaḥapuram, Tamil Nadu, India (photo by Tiziana Lorenzetti).

## 4. Indian Temple Typologies

*Adam Hardy*

Typologies are a dominant feature of the diverse Sanskrit treatises surviving from ancient and medieval India. Canonical texts on architecture, called *Vastuśāstras*, are no exception. They put forward elaborate schemes naming and classifying all kinds of settlements and buildings – palaces, houses, stables for horses or elephants, altars, and not least temples, the palaces of gods. That distinctive varieties and categories are central to the way in which Indian temple architecture was traditionally conceived is as evident in the architecture itself as in the texts that deal with it. Formal types are the very basis of temple design, both through variations and permutations of a given type, and through combinations of types in composite arrangements. This essay surveys the typologies presented in the texts as well those inherent in the temples, and in the process discusses the uses and limitations of the former for understanding the latter.

Both the texts and actual temples make clear that the formal types in question are types of shrine. While the overall planning of temples and temple groups or complexes does largely reflect typological ways of thinking, it is the *vīmāna* or *prāsāda*, the sanctum and its enclosing envelope, the dwelling and embodiment of the divinity, which is the central idea of a temple.

Surveying the shrine types in classical temple architecture across the landscape of India, one broad distinction is immediately apparent: the division that had crystallized by the seventh century AD between northern and southern traditions, the former typified by curved spires (*śikharas*), the latter by stepped, pyramidal towers. James Fergusson, a nineteenth-century pioneer of architectural history in India, labelled these respectively the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian styles (Fergusson 1876). Modern scholarship favours the terms Nāgara (literally ‘of the city’) and Drāviḍa (relating to the southern country).



## Typologies in the texts

The terms Nāgara and Drāviḍa have a textual basis. While the earliest texts, such as the sixth-century *Brhatsamhitā* (an astronomical treatise with parts devoted to architecture), expound a single tradition without naming it (Kern 1869-74), later texts from central and northern India use “Nāgara” and “Drāviḍa” in a sense more or less equivalent to Fergusson’s Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. For example, the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, a compendious eleventh-century work from Malwa in central India, includes a chapter on Drāviḍa temples (Chapter 62), which are identifiably south Indian, and chapters on Nāgara temples dealing with recognisable northern types, with spire forms ranging from a single unit to the recently developed clustered compositions (Chapters 55-57).<sup>1</sup> Southern texts, however, use the terms quite differently, to denote varieties of plan or of roof shape, Nāgara being square or rectangular, the Drāviḍa generally octagonal or – a shape not found in actual temples – hexagonal (Acharya 1994 [1934]: Ch. 18, verses 93-99).

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the texts, in their chapter headings and in their frequent lists of types, do not present Nāgara and Drāviḍa as a binary pair of categories, but as just two among several possibilities – even if Nāgara is generally at the head of a list, followed by Drāviḍa. Such lists are echoed in inscriptions, notably from Karnataka, where, between the eleventh and thirteenth-centuries, masons demonstrated knowledge of temple architecture from far flung regions, especially in the miniature shrine models that they carved over niches in temple walls.

As well as Nāgara and Drāviḍa, common terms in lists of temple categories are Vesara, Bhūmija, Kaliṅga and Vārāṭa. Vesara, implying a mule or hybrid, and Bhūmija, made up of levels (*bhūmīs*), are terms that describe form, while Kaliṅga (Orissa) and Vārāṭa (Vidarbha or Berar in present-day Maharashtra) denote geographical origin. A temple type is often associated with a particular region, but the primary concern is the formal category. Thus, when inscriptions from Karnataka speak of “Kaliṅga” temples, they seem to refer to the class of shrine with piled up eave mouldings (more familiar as “Phāmsanā”, and termed Pīḍhā Deul in Orissan texts) (Dhaky 1977), and clearly do not mean every kind of temple found in Orissa.

<sup>1</sup> The author is engaged on a study of this text in collaboration with Mattia Salvini; see Hardy 2009. A volume entitled *Indian Temple Architecture through the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* is forthcoming in 2013 (New Delhi: IGNCAs).

Nāgara, Drāviḍa and Vesara form a triad of terms recurrent among southern texts. Here again the classification concerns shapes of plan or of roof in southern temple forms. Thus for the Manasara, circular or elliptical Vesara temples complement rectangular Nāgara and polygonal Drāviḍa ones (Acharya 1994 [1934]: Ch. 18, verses 93-99). Southern texts sometimes ascribe categories of temple to regions of India. Nāgara, Drāviḍa and Vesara may be linked respectively to the north, the south and the middle. In such cases, however, the geographical connection is a matter of convention or of constructing a universal scheme, as the corresponding descriptions are concerned with alternative shapes for southern temples (as in the *Kāmikāgama*; see Kramrisch 1946: 287). Vesara is hardly mentioned in northern texts, though it figures in inscriptions from Karṇāṭaka. Since the term implies a hybrid, it has, outside the context of the far south, been plausibly linked to the kind of shrine typical in Karnataka from the eleventh century.

The one ubiquitous kind of category found in the *Vastuśāstra* texts is not the broad division discussed so far, but comprises the more specific types of temple within those general classifications. Specific types are described in plan and elevation with instructions about dimensions and proportions. In some cases it is possible, with knowledge of the architectural tradition and a degree of interpretation that must always have been necessary and expected, to draw the intended design (Hardy 2009). These types are presented in series. For Drāviḍa temples the sequence progresses according to the number of storeys (*talas* or *bhūmīs*). Series of Nāgara temples, and of temples without any general designation but of Nāgara character, tend to represent particular numbers: the twenty temples, the sixteen *prāsādas* starting from Meru, the sixty-four *prāsādas* starting from Rucaka, and so forth. There may be sub-sets within these series: the nine *Miśraka* ('mixed') temples, the twenty-five *Sāndhāra* temples (with internal ambulatory). The names given to these specific types are of various kinds: names of mountains (Meru, Mandara, Kailāsa) will be mixed with descriptions of form (*rucaka* or 'square', *vr̥tta* or 'circular'), animal and flower names (*siṃha* or 'lion', *padma* or 'lotus'), and names with general auspiciousness (*bhūjaya* or 'earth victory', *vardhamāna* or 'thriving').

Many such names are applied in different texts to completely different temple forms: an architectural historian hoping to find a ready-made nomenclature for temple types in the *Vastu* texts will be disappointed. These texts are equally unhelpful if, regardless of names, one expects them to explain the typological developments of the built record: they are cer-

tainly not attempting a systematic historical and geographical overview. What they do give us is an insight into ways of thinking about types and their ordering and relationships. Types are arranged hierarchically, usually ranging from small and simple to large and complex. Often a design is described as an elaboration on a previous one, outlining the new features before announcing that “all the rest is as before”. Sometimes one type acts as the ‘root’ for a whole series developing from it. Some temple types are described as containing other types within them. Occasionally, the emanatory, genealogical character of a sequence is made explicit: types are ‘born’ from types and, from those, yet further types.<sup>2</sup> These kinds of relationship between types are indeed reflected in actual temple designs.

### Terminological issues

It will by now be clear that texts and inscriptions from the great age of temple building in India provide a range of terms that contemporary scholarship can draw upon in an attempt to give authentic and indigenous names to the rich variety of temple forms that survive. It will be equally clear that any such attempt will encounter problems, especially if the terminology is to be generally applicable. While a given term in a given text can often be correlated with a given form, usage varies from region to region, from period to period, from text to text. This is true not only for the multifarious poetic titles given in texts to specific temple designs, but also for the names of the generic categories of Indian temple architecture. There are no universally correct terms for Indian temple forms, only terms that are more or less correct, more or less accepted, and more or less useful. Present-day scholarship has a choice between labelling types by numbers, describing them in, say, English, or using relatively correct, reasonably well-accepted Sanskrit terms that are useful for explaining what the architecture itself shows.

Taking this last approach, the terms Nāgara and Drāviḍa may be usefully applied to the principal northern and southern categories of Indian temple architecture. Admittedly, their use in this way is close only to the more northern *Vastuśāstras*, and even in this context to make a binary division is to take liberties with the perspective of the texts. However, from

<sup>2</sup> *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* Ch. 52, v. 24: “The *prasadas* born in the family of Vairaja are supremely excellent. From these others too are born, as sons, grandsons and great-grandsons.”

the seventh century onwards, most of the classical temple architecture of India falls into one or other of two architectural systems or languages. The Nāgara and Drāviḍa languages are typical of northern and southern India respectively, though neither is confined exclusively to the region in question. They may be referred to, as they sometimes have been, as two architectural 'orders', but the column type is not a defining element as it is in the western classical orders. To call them 'styles' is ambiguous. Each system provides a kit of architectural parts and ways of putting these together, so 'language' is an appropriate term, in that each has a 'vocabulary' and a 'grammar'. To highlight these two systems is not to deny that very much temple architecture falls outside either category: such is the case for whatever appeared before the two became differentiated, for the pitched-roofed wooden temples found in the rainy regions of Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, for the medieval temples of Kashmir descended from the forms of ancient Gandhāra, and for all the rich architecture that sprang from interaction with Islamic traditions. Nevertheless, the Nāgara and the Drāviḍa, in the sense proposed here, dominate the picture.

The diverse temples created through the Nāgara and Drāviḍa languages call for further classification. A second-order category, which may be termed 'mode', is recognisable in a range of characteristic overall shapes which may entail distinct ways of combining the architectural components. The Nāgara modes are the Latina, the Valabhī, the Phāmsanā, the Shekhari and the Bhūmija. Of these names only Bhūmija, known from particular chapters of *Vastuśāstras*, is familiar from our earlier discussion. The other names have been gleaned from within the texts by recent scholarship, figuring predominantly in western Indian texts, yet nonetheless useful terms for more general application. Drāviḍa temples also take different shapes which may also be classed as modes, although the basic way of arranging the components in stepped tiers remains the same.

The architectural languages and the various modes are used to create an enormous variety of forms, often unique. Some of these forms become standard ones, repeated many times: that is, the overall composition is repeated, though there is often variety in the proportions, and nearly always in the details. This kind of standard form, where a given number of elements of particular kinds are arranged in a certain way, may be defined as a 'type'. When the texts list temple forms named Mount Meru, Lotus Flower, Half-goose and so forth, they are referring to types in this sense.

In the framework suggested here, 'style' can be reserved for the character sensed in the work of a regional or local school or workshop. A

school would normally work within the Nāgara or the Drāviḍa language, though some attempted both. Schools specialised in particular modes, and built particular types. A given school might build temples of two different modes or even in different languages side by side, but the handwriting, as it were, evident in their way of doing things would indicate a common 'style' in this sense. Or two different schools might each build a temple of the same type, and the two works would be different in style.

### Early shrine forms

It remains to describe, briefly, the actual architecture that implies these categories of language, mode, type and style, beginning with the earliest surviving shrine forms. In so doing it is worth observing the principles underlying the evolution of this architecture, and to note how this is driven by a particular typological way of thinking that is as creative as it is normative.

The prototypes of temple architecture built of masonry lie predominantly in forms developed in timber and roofed with thatch. These forms belong to a tradition related to vernacular construction, yet monumental in character. The tradition is known primarily through its depiction in narrative relief carvings from Buddhist monuments of c. 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Fig. 1), and its wide diffusion across South Asia is due to the spread of Buddhism along trade and pilgrimage routes. As well as religious structures, the reliefs show cities with gatehouses and storeyed mansions, illustrating constructional details such as pillars with brackets, beams, joists, and thatched eaves. If these depictions appear idealised, they are all the more useful as a key to later temple typology. As pointed out at the beginning of this essay, the very concept of a temple form is that of a shrine, a structure enclosing a sanctum. This concept takes shape as an idealised image of a building. The architectural idea of a given kind of shrine is its image, and to build such a shrine is to make that image.

This can be observed in the way that early forms of brick or stone shrine in India preserve, then gradually transform, the earlier wooden prototypes. Roof forms that were originally structural ones in timber become the main determinants of type in the masonry versions, while elements such as joist ends, floors, railings and thatched canopies are transformed into the horizontal mouldings that constitute the base, walls and superstructure of the shrine. One early shrine form consists of a cella sheltered by a canopy and surmounted by a pavilion with a domical roof – square, circular or polygonal (Fig. 3a). Another type is barrel roofed, generally apsidal at the rear,

with a prominent horseshoe gable at the front, and often with half barrel roofs at the sides and running around the apse (Fig. 3c). These indicate side aisles, a typical feature where this form of shrine has been carved into a hillside as a Buddhist *caitya* hall. In freestanding masonry versions, however, there are no actual aisles inside as it is the exterior image that is the concept. These two early shrine forms were known as far north as ancient Gandhāra. In the brick ruins of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century Gandhāran Buddhist monastery at Takht-i-Bahi (North West Frontier Province, Pakistan) is a courtyard containing a *stūpa*, surrounded by a cloister of square shrines (Fig. 2). It is clear that, when intact, these were crowned alternately by a domed pavilion, in this case circular, and an apsidal-ended barrel roof with side aisles. In both cases, as in Indian temples ever afterwards, the superstructure was built as an image, with no accessible interior space.

While this Gandharan example was erected well before the two great systems of Indian temple architecture became differentiated, the pavilion-topped and barrel-roofed shrines that it exemplifies are the prototypes of basic and enduring shrine forms, Drāviḍa and Nāgara respectively. The type crowned by a domed pavilion (*kūṭa*) sitting over an eave moulding becomes the Drāviḍa ‘minor shrine’ (*alpa vīmāna*) (cf. Figs. 17a-c). An *alpa vīmāna* may, alternatively, be rectangular and crowned by a barrel-roofed pavilion (*śālā*) – a form familiar from gateways shown in early relief carvings and from later temple gateways (*gōpurās*) (cf. Fig. 17e). The *śālā* or the entire shrine may be apsidal (cf. Fig. 17f-g). The Gandharan barrel-roofed shrine, however, is distinct from the *śālā*-topped *alpa vīmāna* that became standard in Drāviḍa traditions, the former, which may be with or without conceptual side aisles, being directly related to the *caitya* hall. This form became one of the basic modes of the Nāgara traditions, termed Valabhī (referring to the hooped roof beams of its timber prototype) (cf. Fig. 7c-e).

Two other early shrine forms have left an enduring legacy in later temple architecture. One, with a pyramidal superstructure of superimposed eave mouldings, usually crowned by a ribbed, globular or disc-like member called an *āmalaka*. The form is a stylization of a multi-tiered wooden building, but may equally have evolved in masonry traditions through piling up of slabs. This is the form known as Phāṁsanā (meaning ‘wedge-shaped’) (Fig. 3d, cf. Figs. 7h-k, 1). The other significant early form, which becomes a germinal ingredient in Nāgara shrines and is known through fragments from the Gupta period (c. AD 320-550), consists in its basic form simply of a cella with a roof slab crowned by an *āmalaka*. If the roof slab has masonry origins, it is nevertheless treated as a formalised thatched eave.

## Principles of composition

Apart from the last one, these early shrine forms persist for centuries, largely confined to either Nāgara or Drāviḍa traditions. Furthermore, all of them, including the ‘*āmalaka* shrine’, live on and attain yet greater significance in combination, as components of new and ever varied temple forms. Herein lies a fundamental design principle of Indian temple architecture in its maturity, the flowering of its typological way of thinking. Images of established shrine types become the architectural components, the representational building blocks, of composite temple forms. Temples become multi-aedicular – made up of many shrine images or aedicules, conceived in three dimensions and as if embedded within the body of the temple (Figs. 4, 5).

The early shrine forms derived from timber prototypes are combined into new forms within the masonry traditions, and as these traditions establish further modes and types, these, in their turn, become aedicular images within yet more complex designs. As well as being primary elements of temple designs, the various shrine images appear at lower levels of the compositional hierarchy, as niches, pavilions over doorways, and so on. Through its multi-aedicular structure the temple evokes a heavenly palace composed of many lesser divine abodes, just as the great god has many subservient deities, ranked in a graded hierarchy; or from another perspective, just as one god emanates, on successive planes, many aspects or manifestations.

Within the rules of the architectural language, or of the mode within the language, new forms are created by making new arrangements of aedicules. Within an established type, in the sense of a specific three-dimensional arrangement of components, the types of aedicules in particular positions may be varied. A characteristic way of arranging aedicules within a temple design is to project one from another and often yet another one from this, and so on in a sequentially emerging chain of diminishing forms. A typical way of developing a given design of an entire shrine, whether unitary or already composite, is for this to become the top portion of a more elaborate form. Or, equally typically, the principle of projecting one aedicule from another may be applied to the shrine as a whole, with a composite shrine form embedded in and emerging from another one along each cardinal axis. In these ways, relative to a previous stage, the whole form emanates downwards and outwards. A sense of growth is imparted to a single temple composition wherein successive stages of transformation



are presented in a dynamic progression. Through the same process, the emergence of successive types one from another can be clearly observed in the evolution of certain traditions.

## Nāgara temples

The early shrine forms described above undergo these kinds of transformation as the Nāgara and Drāviḍa traditions crystallise and develop. Temples of the sixth to eighth centuries in ancient Dakṣiṇa Kōsala (present day Chattisgarh state), probably related to a lost tradition of structural temples in the Vakataka dynasty's realm of Vidarbha (Maharashtra), use the entire range of early shrine forms as aedicules. The aedicules are inter-linked in pyramidally-stacked, cloister-like tiers, of which they take up the full height, and the tower is crowned by an *āmalaka*. Some of the shrines are built on complex stellate plans. While predominantly proto-Nāgara, these temples contain elements that would become typically Drāviḍa: a related tradition in Bihar, known from the Mahābhōdi temple at Bodhgaya (c. AD 600, restored nineteenth century), follows similar principles but is entirely 'northern' in its aedicule types and details.

These two early traditions could be said to have created a mode of Nāgara temple architecture, though its legacy is limited. It is the "proto-Nagāra" from the Gupta heartlands of the Gangetic basin and central India that becomes the Nāgara mainstream. The starting point is the simple *āmalaka* shrine. From the fragmentary evidence available it is clear that, during the fifth and sixth centuries, the basic type becomes the superstructure of a more elaborate version, and so on in a process of piling up (Fig. 6). At the same time Valabhī aedicules are projected along the cardinal axes in the successive tiers, creating a vertical chain of horseshoe arches, while *āmalaka* aedicules, simple or proliferated (and thereby resembling the multi-eave Phāṁsanā), sit on the corners of each stage. All that remains is to give a curved profile to the tower, and to make the central band of arch forms continuous, and the Latina mode of Nāgara temple has been created (Fig. 8) (Hardy 2007: 108-110; cf. Meister 1989).

This process is complete by the early seventh century. For a further three centuries the Latina, with its curved *śikhara*, would be the principal kind of Nāgara temple. During this period it predominates throughout central India and, from the eighth century, western India. From an early date it appears far to the south in the lower Deccan, and as far north as the Indus, and spreads eastward to Bengal, Orissa, and even to Burma. In Orissa,



where it is known as the Rekhā Deul, it continues as the preferred temple form long after it has been supplanted elsewhere. Shrine types within the Latina mode are distinguished firstly by the number of projections (*aṅgas* or ‘limbs’, *rathas* or ‘vehicles’) in the plan – stepping out progressively towards the cardinal projection (*bhadra*), and secondly by the number of levels (*bhūmīs*) in the spire, marked by the *āmalakas* of the corner pavilions. In a manner typical of Indian temple architecture in general, the tendency is one of proliferation, towards a greater number of projections and levels (Figs. 7a-b, cf. Figs. 8 and 9). The result is a kind of inflation, whereby earlier, simple types move down the hierarchy as more complex ones emerge.

During the period when the Latina is supreme, the two alternative Nāgara modes, both descended from very early forms of shrine, are the barrel-roofed Valabhī and the multi-eave Phāṁsanā. Valabhī temples (Fig. 7c-e), rectangular in plan and often dedicated to goddesses, are most popular in the eighth century, in central India (Fig. 10), Himachal and Orissa. Pediments of whole and half horseshoe arch forms (*gavākṣas*) are prominent on their end gables, often raised on storeys (*bhūmīs*) marked by *āmalaka*-crowned corner pavilions, all stylistically of a piece with contemporary Latina temples in a given region. In Orissa, where it is termed Khakara, the form survives into the thirteenth century; elsewhere it is rare after the eighth century, but lives on and develops as an aedicular component of other kinds of Nāgara temple – as a central projection, as a fronton or antefix (*śukanāsa*) and as the predominant form of niche surround.

The Phāṁsanā (Figs. 7f-i, 11), with Nāgara detailing, is widespread as a modest alternative shrine form to the Latina, though it is far more familiar as the form taken by attached halls (*maṇḍapas*) in front of Nāgara shrines. While the Phāṁsanā and Valabhī modes are quite distinct, the boundary between them is an overlapping one. Not only do Valabhī-like configurations of *gavākṣa* arch motifs emerge from the matrix of Phāṁsanā eave layers, where they represent dormer gables, but Valabhī ‘pediments’ are rarely found independently of a background of Phāṁsanā-like eave mouldings. Indeed, full-scale Valabhī roofs, which at first may appear like pure barrel vaults, have eave corners at the foot of their gable ends, indicating a rectangular dome.

In the Nāgara traditions of central and western India, the inflationary process whereby the topmost rank of a typological hierarchy is progressively usurped by increasingly complex forms continues beyond the heyday of the Latina mode and, from the tenth century onwards, right through

the emanatory development of the Śekharī mode. Latina temples continue to be built, lower and lower in the hierarchy. The composite Śekharī (related to ‘*śikhara*’) is born out of the Latina, and subsumes it. A new kind of aedicular component is the *kūṭa-stambha* (Fig. 5), an embedded pillar (*stambha*) crowned by a Latina spire (*śikhara*) or full Latina shrine in miniature, or by a Phāṁsanā or Valabhī form.

In the gradual transformation wrought by the tradition there is no distinct moment when Latina has become Śekharī. *Kūṭa-stambha* elements have already begun to be clustered around the crowning *śikhara*, with Valabhī pediments at the centre (Figs. 12a-b, 13), when, from the chest of the central *śikhara*, minor versions of the same *śikhara* form appear. These are ‘half-*śikharas*’, conceptually half embedded, half emerged (Fig. 5, cf. Fig. 14). Once established, proliferating sequences of these pour down along the cardinal axes, while stepped ranks of *kūṭa-stambhas* multiply across the corners (Fig. 12c-g). Quarter *śikharas* appear within the angles (Fig. 12f-g), three-quarters embedded, increasing the dense interpenetration. As the creative explosion reaches the limits of the formal system in the twelfth century, proliferation takes hold within the parts, the *śikharas* of the *kūṭa-stambhas* themselves becoming composite (Fig. 15).

A parallel development to that of the Śekharī takes place in the Phāṁsanā form used for *maṇḍapas*, notably in western India, creating a composite form termed Samvaraṇā, in which bell-topped pavilions proliferate down the tiered roof slopes (Fig. 7j-k).

The Bhūmija (Figs. 12h-i, 16) is a distinct alternative to the Śekharī. It also springs from the Latina, and has the *kūṭa-stambha* as an essential element. The spines of the Latina *śikhara* remain, rising above axially projecting Valabhī shrine forms. Instead of the intervening segments of a Latina shrine there are radiating *kūṭa-stambhas*, arranged in tiers (*bhūmīs* or ‘grounds’, hence ‘Bhūmija’). Specific types are defined by the number of projections and *bhūmīs*, with a radical distinction between types with a stepping forward orthogonal plan, and those with a star shaped plan based on a turned square.

The Bhūmija flourishes between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries in Malwa and adjoining regions, spreading southwards through the Deccan into Karnataka and Andhra. While its provenance and most of its details are Nāgara, its creators are aware of southern forms. For example, the miniature spires of the *kūṭa-stambhas* are typically composed of a form of Drāviḍa pavilion (*kūṭa*).

## Drāviḍa temples

The earliest and simplest Drāviḍa shrine form, the *alpa vīmāna*, has been described earlier. The crowning domed *kūṭa* may be square, circular or polygonal throughout its height, or simply in the 'neck' and roof of the *kūṭa* (Figs. 17a-d, 18). An *alpa vīmāna* may be crowned by barrel-roofed *śālā*, usually rectangular (Fig. 17e), though sometimes the *śālā* or the entire shrine is apsidal (Fig. 17f-g). Apsidal *alpa vīmānas* in brick, possibly as early as the third century, survive in the Deccan at Ter (Maharashtra) and Chezarla (Andhra Pradesh). Most widespread, however, is the square, *kūṭa*-topped variety, of which the earliest surviving full-size example, datable to the early sixth century, is at Aihole (Karnataka).

Early elaboration of these forms follows the perennial process whereby one type becomes the superstructure of another, which in turn becomes that of another (Fig. 19a-b). Then, the practice of placing of minor *kūṭas* and *śālās* in the 'entablature' of a tier (*tala*) is quickly given additional significance through the realisation that projections in the wall bounded by pilasters, paired beneath a *kūṭa* (typically at a corner) or a *śālā* (typically in the centre), create the image of interlinked *alpa vīmānas*, embedded and emerging (Figs. 4, 21). *Panjaras*, which are *śālās* seen end on, occupy intermediate positions, with corresponding projections and pilasters. In this system, the creation and definition of types becomes a matter of the shape of the plan and the crowning *alpa vīmāna*, the number of *talas*, and the number and types of projecting aedicules in each *tala* (Fig. 19c-g). Square *vīmānas* predominate. Four *talas* is generally a maximum, but for a brief period the range is extended to as many as fourteen by the eleventh- and twelfth-century 'imperial' temples of the Chola dynasty.

In the Drāviḍa tradition of Tamil Nadu, the design of *vīmānas* continues in this vein for centuries, notwithstanding variety in styles and dramatic developments in the scale and planning of temple complexes. However, the Drāviḍa of the lower Deccan, with its epicentre in northern Karnataka, undergoes continuous transformation (Fig. 19h-k). Increasingly the square plan steps forward with an axial swell. The number of projections in each *tala* is made the same and carried in radial bands right up to the crowning dome (Figs. 19j, 21). New kinds of composite aedicule are created by embedding existing types into one another, most significantly in the interpenetrating clusters of *śālā* aedicules on the cardinal axes, infusing the entire structure with dynamism as they appear to burst apart.

This degree of transformation is reached around the turn of the eleventh century (Hardy 1995), by which stage late Karṇāṭa Drāviḍa temples,

as they may be called, look very different from their early predecessors and from contemporary Drāviḍa works of the far south. This is the kind of temple often labelled Vesara by modern scholars, since the term implies a hybrid, and indeed southern forms have been transformed in such shrines to such a degree that they exhibit characteristics reminiscent of northern ones. The form may be considered a new mode of the Drāviḍa, although it must be recognised that, even more than where Latina is transformed into Śekhārī in Nāgara traditions, the process is a continuous one, with no definable moment at which the Vesara was born and the Drāviḍa ceased to be; and indeed, as in the Nāgara case, earlier forms persist but sink down in the typological hierarchy through a kind of inflation.

A further transformation in the Karṇāṭa Drāviḍa tradition produces *vīmānas* based on various kinds of stellate plan (Figs. 19k, 22), related to those of Bhūmija temples. Most fascinating are the experiments wrought by this tradition that really are hybrids, exploring different ways of combining architectural languages, modes and types. Also notable in the Decan, from the tenth century onwards, is a Drāviḍa version of the Phāmsanā, in which a Drāviḍa dome replaces the *āmalaka*.

## Conclusion

In Indian temple architecture the combination of types is at the heart of the creative process. Sometimes this is a question of deliberately creating hybrids; more often it is purely a matter of varying the aedicular composition, a process which, typically, over long periods, involves an extrapolation of progressively denser, more proliferated forms that retain the earlier, simpler stages within them. This organic way of developing is not an illusion produced by hindsight, but a result of the way in which generations of temple designers have gradually drawn out the possibilities inherent in the architectural language. Often-repeated types do emerge in this process, varied through proportions, detail and local style; but their day is limited as they are subsumed into further types and fade down the hierarchy.

As for the texts, they are not concerned with actual historical developments, and their rhetoric is one of god-given norms; yet their types are linked together through patterns of unfolding, described in terms of roots, growth, and successive births. The typologies of the Vastu texts, like those created across the centuries by architectural traditions, embody an emanatory vision of the universe that is perennial in Indian culture.

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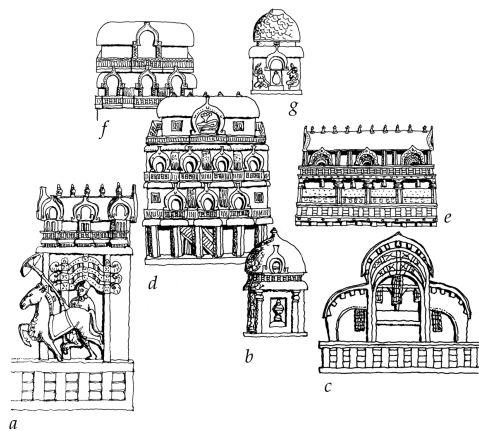


Fig. 1. Buildings from relief carvings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD: a. Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), b. Kanganhalli (Karnataka), c. Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh), d. to g. Kanganhalli.

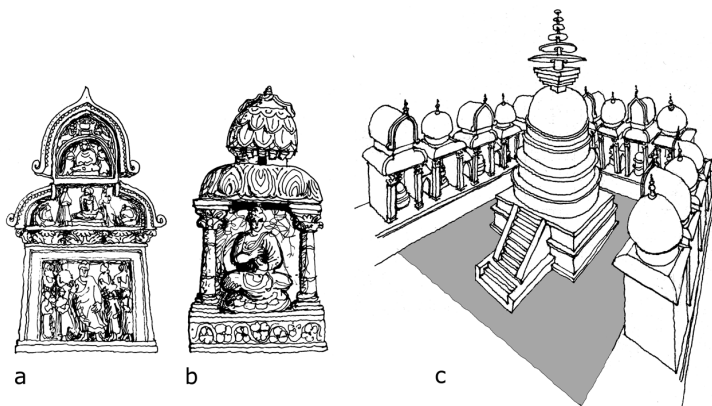


Fig. 2. Shrine types in ancient Gandhara: a. and b., depictions in relief carvings (cf. Figure 3a and 3c), c. Court of the *Stūpa*, monastery at Takht-i-Bahi, Pakistan, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

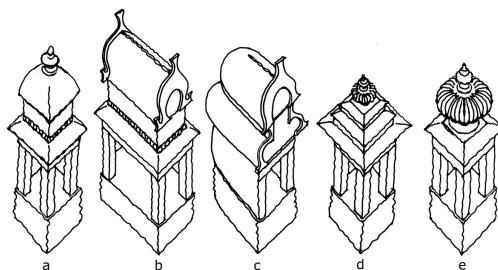


Fig. 3. Wooden prototypes of later monumental shrine types: a. shrine crowned by domed *kūṭa*, b. shrine crowned by *śālā*, c. proto-Valabhī shrine, d. proto- Phāmsanā shrine, e. shrine crowned by *āmalaka*.

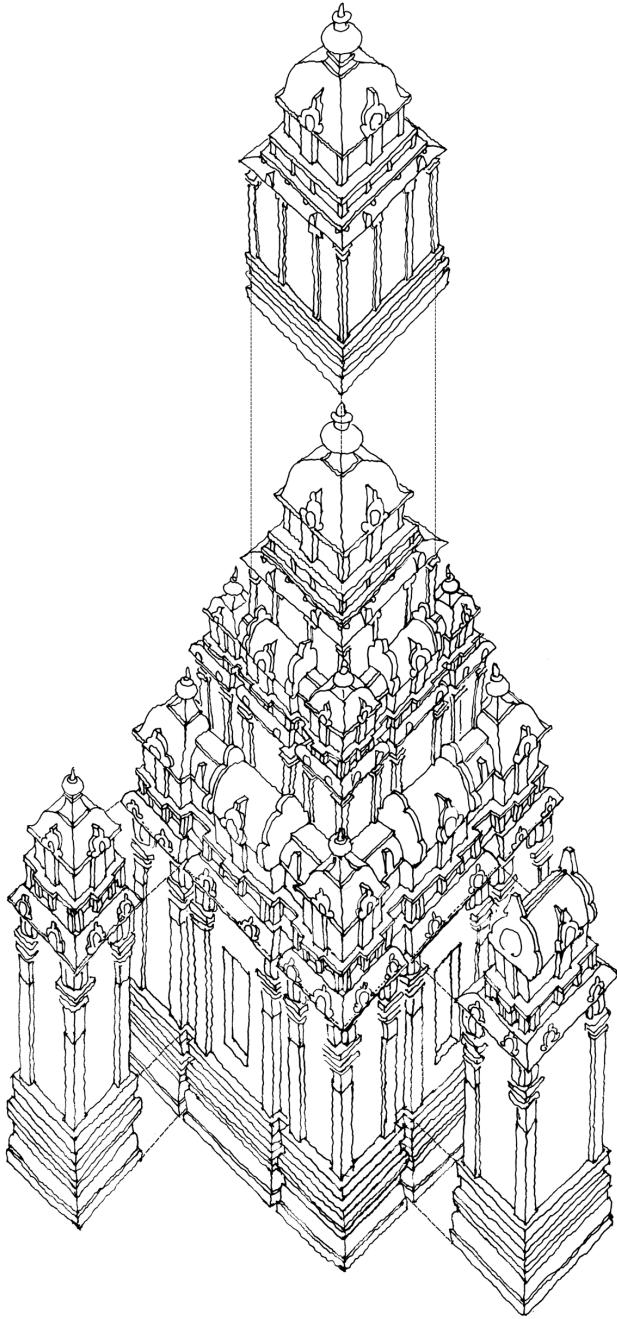


Fig. 4. Aedicules, or images of shrines, conceptually embedded in a Drāviḍa temple.



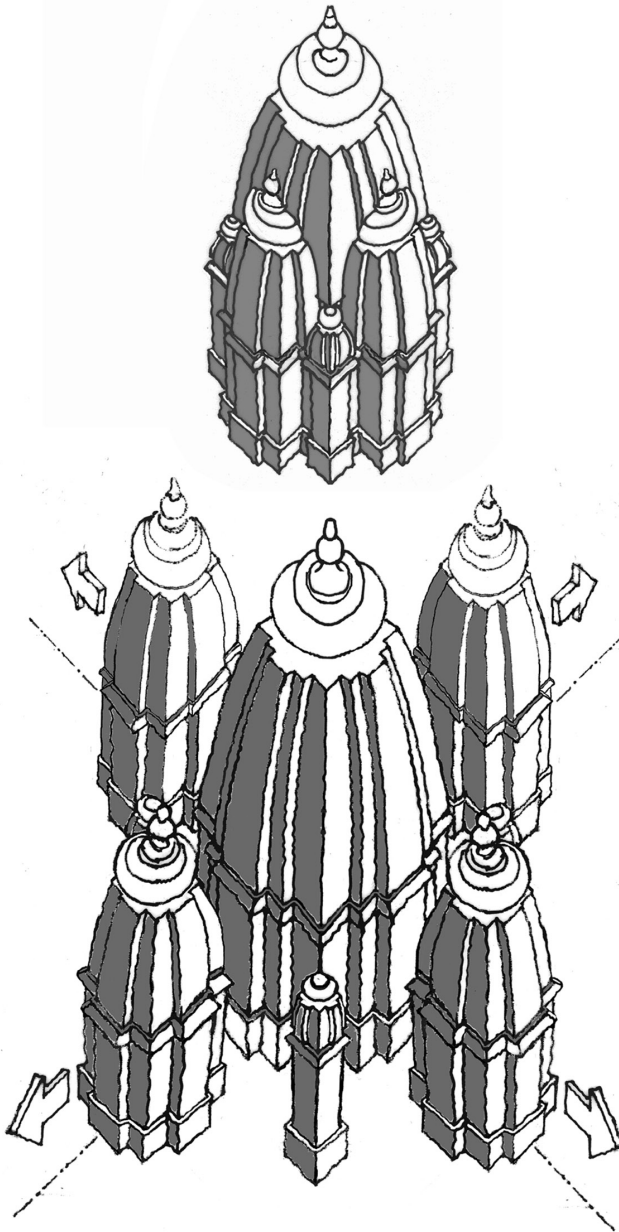


Fig. 5. Aedicules conceptually embedded in a Nāgara temple of the Śekhārī mode.



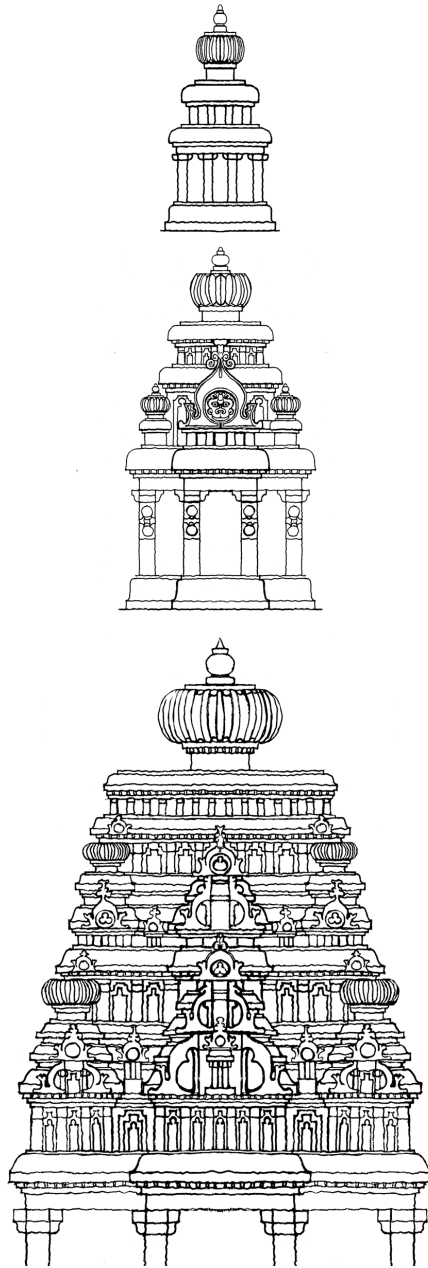
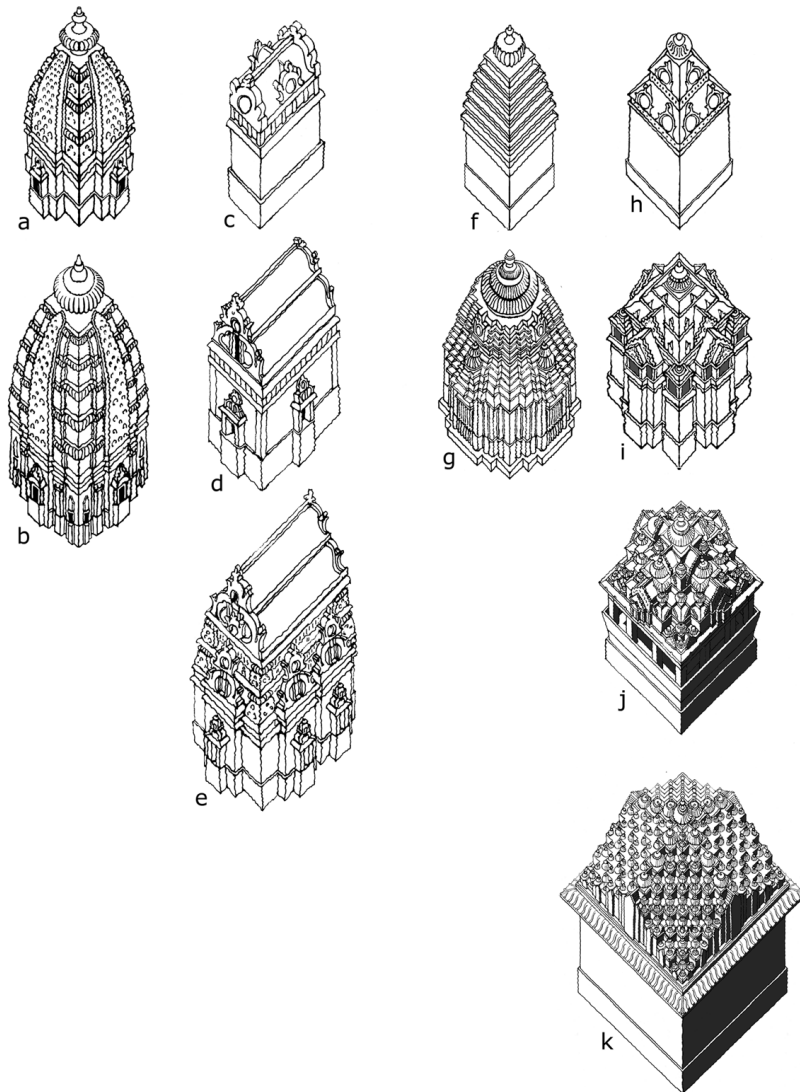


Fig. 6. Hypothetical evolution of early Nāgara temple architecture leading to a proto-Latina form (cf. Figure 9).



**Fig. 7.** Nāgara shrine forms: a. and b. Latina, c. to e. Valabhī, f. and g. Phāmsanā with layered roof, h. and i. Phāmsanā with pent roof, j. and k. Saṁvaraṇā.



Fig. 8. A Latina shrine: Galaganātha temple, Pattadakal, Karnataka, late-seventh century.



Fig. 9. A Latina shrine: Sūrya temple, Madkheda, Madhya Pradesh, ninth century. (Photo courtesy of Fiona Buckee)



Fig. 10. A Valabhī temple: Telī-kā-mandir, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, mid-seventh century. (Photo courtesy of Doria Tichit)



Fig. 11. A Phāmsanā temple: Śankha-ḍeruñ temple, Visavada, Gujarat, seventh century.

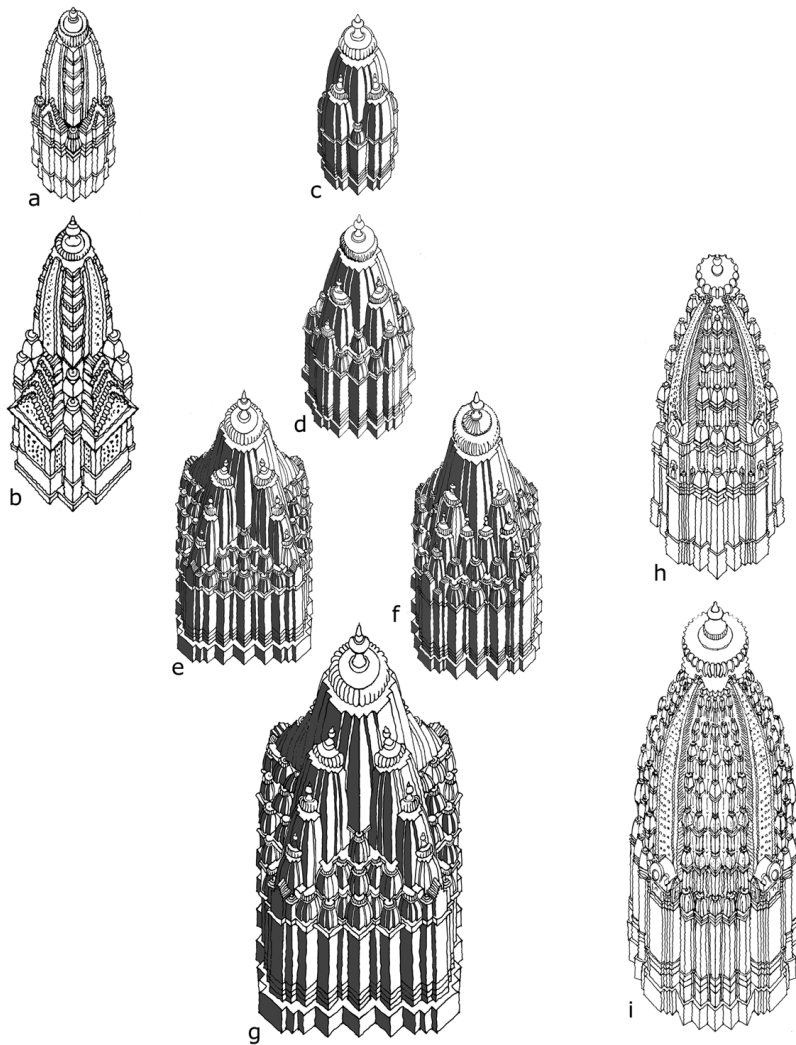
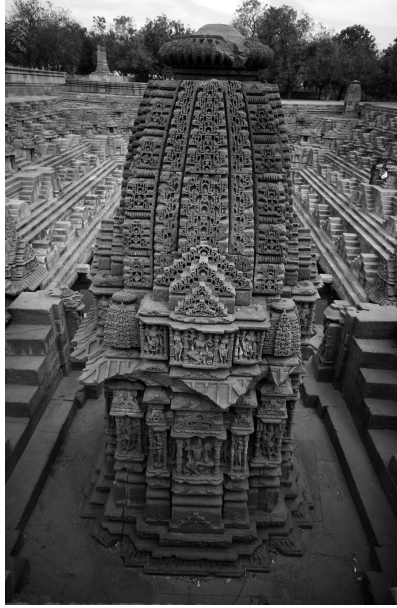


Fig. 12. Nāgara shrine forms: a. and b. Proto-Śekhārī, c. to g. Śekhārī, h. and i. Bhūmija.





**Fig. 13.** A proto-Śekharī shrine (cf. Figure 12a): subsidiary shrine at the Sūrya temple, Modhera, Gujarat, c. 1026.



**Fig. 14.** A Śekharī shrine (cf. Figure 12c): Vamana shrine in Sas-Bahu temple complex, Nagda, Rajasthan, c. 975.



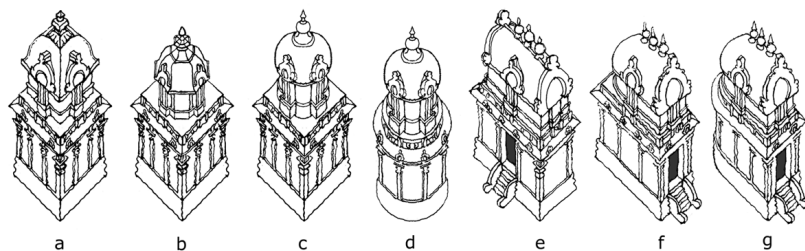
**Fig. 15.** A Śekharī shrine (cf. Figure 12f): Jasmalanātha Mahādeva temple, Asoda, Gujarat, twelfth century.



**Fig. 16.** A Bhūmija shrine (cf. Figure 12i): Udayeśvara temple, Udayapur, Madhya Pradesh, founded 1059.



**Fig. 18.** A Drāviḍa *alpa vīmāna* (cf. Figure 17c): Bhūmīśvara Śiva temple, Viralur, Tamil Nadu, mid-ninth century. (Photo courtesy of Gerard Foekema)



**Fig. 17.** Varieties of Drāviḍa *alpa vīmāna* ('minor shrine').

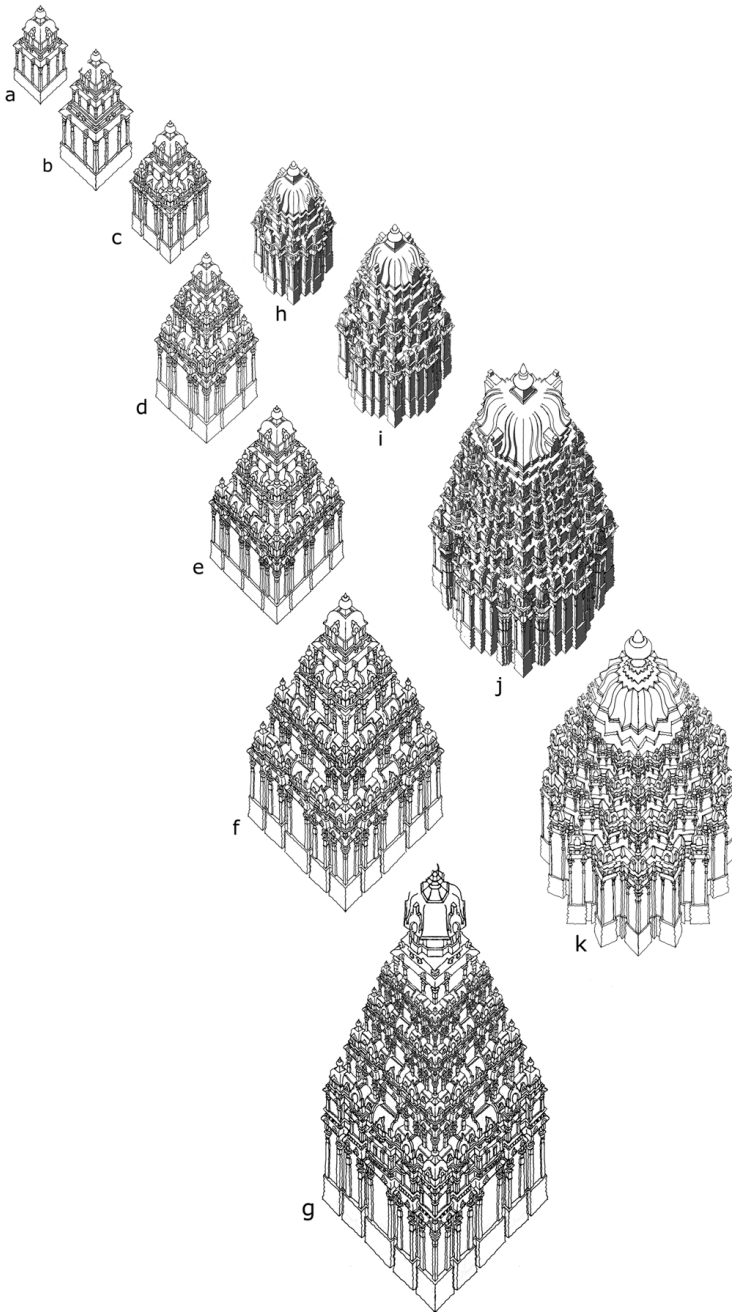


Fig. 19. Drāviḍa shrine forms: a. to c. early forms developing from *alpa vīmāna*, d. to g. a further range of types in the Drāviḍa tradition of Tamil Nadu, h. to k. progressive transformation in the Kaṇṇāṭa Drāviḍa tradition.



**Fig. 20.** A Drāviḍa shrine (cf. Figure 19c): Coliśvara temple, Viralur, Tamil Nadu, mid-ninth century. (Photo courtesy of Gerard Foekema)



**Fig. 21.** A later Karnāṭa Drāviḍa ('Vesara') shrine (cf. Figure 19c): Kedāreśvara temple, Belgave, Karnataka, c. late-eleventh century.



**Fig. 22.** A stellate Karnāṭa Drāviḍa shrine: Keśava temple, Somnathpur, Karnataka, 1268.

Note: Drawings and photographs are by the author unless noted otherwise.



This volume contains the papers presented at the International Congress *Glimpses of Indian History and Art. Reflections on the Past, Perspectives for the Future*, which was held at the Sapienza Università di Roma on 18-19 April, 2011.

The main purpose of the Congress, which brought together renowned Indian and European scholars, was to strike a balance between the past and the present of scholarly work in two of the major areas of the Indological studies, that is, the historical and the artistic. Until recent times, studies of Indian history and art have mostly followed trends established in the first half of the 20th century. Today, we can appreciate orientations of greater maturity; old tendencies and several stereotypes are being questioned and substituted with fresh criteria of inquiry and new interpreting insights to which the present volume seeks to bear witness.

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