

# **Reimagining Tradition: The Sompura Hereditary Temple Architects of Gujarat**

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### ABSTRACT

By examining the shifting working practices of the Sompura community of hereditary temple architects of western India my thesis argues that the nature of their work culture invested in their architectural and textual production is far more critical, innovative, heterogeneous and fluid than how it is portrayed in post-colonial knowledge located within the disciplinary bounds of architecture and art history.

Through unchartered empirical investigation, which uses 'cultural translation' as a framework for analysis, the thesis highlights their creative negotiations and struggles with modernity between the late 19th and early 21st - century. Whether it is modern historical consciousness, notions of 'antiquity', nationalist ideas of hereditary craftsmen and tradition, changing patronage, global economy or technology, the Sompuras in their concrete and 'present' practices, translate all these as well as their long architectural lineage in specific inviolable modes. These query notions of a 'fossilised' tradition viewed through historical frameworks; the agency of 'ritual' untouched by capitalist processes and binary oppositions such as 'east vs west' or 'traditional vs modern'.

The publications of Narmadashankar M. Sompura (1883-1956) and P.O. Sompura (1896-1978), are analysed as transformations of both modern notions of antiquity and history *and* indigenous practices. The restoration of medieval ruins of Ranakpur and Dilwara temples in the early and mid-twentieth century by master builder Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi (1910-2005) are explored as negotiations with western European ideas of history and conservation. The contingent relations between practice and codified knowledges are explored through oral histories concerning transnational case studies in the UK, whereas a variety of qualities and affects are seen as transforming capitalist processes and relations in modern carving factories, deploying a range of hand intensive, machine and digital technologies for a global dispersal.

The thesis uses a variety of extra disciplinary methodologies such as oral history, close reading of family archives, along with a range of architecture and texts by the Sompuras and their medieval ancestors. It demonstrates that the Sompuras, believed to be carriers of a dynamic architectural tradition, have creatively and dynamically negotiated change by translating and transforming both their pre-existing cultures of work, as well as modern and global paradigms.



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# INTRODUCTION

## Framing Practice

### Scenario 1

Several years back in 1995, I left New Delhi for London during my third year of architectural education, to study architecture at a UK university. The shift was marked by simultaneity in my new status as a migrant along with dislodgement from the everyday practices of living and studying architecture in India. One such site of dislodgement was a school of architecture in Delhi reputed for its emphasis on indigenous forms of architecture and urbanism. The problem of getting beyond Eurocentric history and architecture was reflected in the emphasis on post-independence histories – with a start date of 1947 - particularly through narratives of nation building including the construction of 'Indian' identity. However, looking back, parallel developments in a growing body of postcolonial theory and literature dealing with the limits of national identity when seen through subaltern forms of imagination was less of a concern. In particular I refer to the works of the Subaltern Studies Collective which had from the early 1980s radically begun to question the notion that the history of nationalism was the story of an achievement by the elite classes, whether Indian or British.<sup>1</sup>

Coupled with a predominantly English speaking metropolitan upbringing, my institutional training shaped my ideas about what legitimately belonged to an album called 'contemporary Indian architecture' by 'modern Indian architects'. Even though the syllabus was wide and looked at a variety of architectural production including the informal sector and regional settlements untouched by the profession, when it came to history lessons and questions of identity, certain dominant narratives held sway. These narratives revolved around an album primarily consisting of architecture professionals, partly educated abroad, conversant in the English language as well as in the language of modernism tempered to the Indian cultural context. Notwithstanding their valuable contributions, the work not only met the approval of the professional fraternity at home, but also had, and still has,

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<sup>1</sup> For a sharp overview See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies', in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 3-19. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History', in *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2008 (1st ed 2000)), pp. 27-46



tremendous currency and acceptance in Indian, and, Euro American architectural networks, at the expense of other forms of architectural expression and production that did not subscribe to its aesthetic dogmas. Contemporary work which directly drew from older architectural lineages - for example at the Swaminarayan temple in Neasden UK - was not part of the album in any sense (Figure 0.1).

Some names in the modern genre I mention were Raj Rewal, B.V. Doshi and the late Charles Correa (1930-2015), and many others, who framed themselves as resisting a universal modernism in India during the years immediately after independence, and all of whom appropriated gestures from 'traditional' architecture in their work or in their writing to create an aesthetic that satisfied a search for an Indian identity. For these architects, as has been suggested, 'tradition had to be interpreted, integrated with, and not sprinkled over, to avoid the hazards of pastiche'.<sup>2</sup> It was unimaginable to have this category of contemporary architects transgressed by other kinds of shapers of the built environment, particularly those who *continued*, albeit also in a transformed sense, architectural lineages that could be traced back many centuries. This continuation when written about at the site of academia and architectural publications came to be associated with at best 'traditional architecture' and at worst signifying a 'lack of imagination', a certain conservatism and 'sterility'.<sup>3</sup> The efforts of contemporary temple makers fell in this category.

### Scenario 2

At the beginning of my shift to London in 1995, these secure notions came to a head-on collision with the products of the supposed 'other' of elite professionals: hereditary temple architects hailing from Gujarat and Rajasthan in western India. For these architects no formal school of architecture existed and they, by and large, sat outside the above mentioned networks. I use the term 'elite' to talk about certain configurations of power which had made possible the acceptance of one kind of architecture as 'modern' and the designation of the other as 'traditional'. For at the

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<sup>2</sup> G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture : Continuity, Controversy, and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) p.136

<sup>3</sup> See A. G. Krishna Menon, 'Contemporary Patterns in Religious Architecture', *Architecture + design*, 14.6 (1997), 23-29. By and large serious architectural journals in the UK have so far ignored projects such as the Swaminarayan temple at Neasden. However the Architects Journal (UK) ran a small article in 1995, Deborah Singmaster, 'Hindu Architecture Transcends Its Suburban Context', *Architects' Journal*, 202.24 (1995), 20. See also

other end of the spectrum of the elite architects were certain highly visible patrons such as the BAPS for whom national pride in transnational settings relied as much in the creation of the binary. On a sunny autumn morning in 1995 an ageing grand uncle drove me along the choking North Circular Road to the newly inaugurated BAPS Swami Narayan temple complex in Neasden, adjacent to IKEA, to show me a sample of recent 'Indian architecture' in Britain (Figures 0.1, 0.2, and 0.3). BAPS as is well known is a large transnational, reformed religious organisation with a presence in several countries.<sup>4</sup> It had called on the services of the Sompura community of hereditary temple architects of Western India in the early 1990s to work in collaboration with British engineering and architectural consultants for their new temple and *haveli* complex in London. However despite this transcultural and transnational encounter, which the organisation is proud to share, it also staged a version of nationhood vested in 'tradition', 'heritage', 'craft' and 'antiquity'- drawing on modern concepts that had a complex one hundred and fifty year old history of representation in the colonial encounter.<sup>5</sup>

While the tradition and the craft of temple building thrived in India much before and during the colonial encounter, the lenses through which tradition and craft were represented in the imagination of the patrons at Neasden seemed to obscure at times the multitude of modern and transcultural processes that the temple architects themselves embodied, let alone the contingencies at work. These in turn fitted the expectations, mould or grid of a 'traditional India' on state platforms. In portraying the architects and the architecture as traditional, strictly conforming to ancient scriptures, the struggles and negotiations with modernity that this thesis will elaborate upon, became diminished. The nation it would be seem was being understood and portrayed as 'a narrative that eliminates cultural difference in its attempt to represent people as a homogeneous body'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Christiane Brosius and Karin M. Polit, 'Ritual, Heritage and Identity in a Globalised World', in *Ritual, Heritage and Identity : The Politics of Culture and Performance in a Globalised World*. ed. by Christiane Brosius and Karin M. Polit (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 19-3, Christiane Brosius, *India's New Middle Class : Urban Forms of Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity* (Delhi: Routledge India ; [London : Taylor & Francis distributor], 2010, Raymond Brady Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

<sup>5</sup> See [Http://Londonmandir.Baps.Org/the-Mandir](http://Londonmandir.Baps.Org/the-Mandir), [accessed 14.08.2016]

<sup>6</sup> Felipe Hernandez, *Bhabha for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.109

But were the architects of the temple to be seen from the same hardened nationalist and political religious frameworks<sup>7</sup> as some of their patrons or through reductive frameworks imagined by their elite counterparts? Was it necessary to subsume them under oppositions such as the modern or the traditional architect? What vantage point did the temple architects occupy in possessing and practicing a craft that seemed to be at a conjuncture of several worlds at the same time?

### Questions

Posing sheepishly for photos that autumn afternoon in 1995, a host of questions raced through my mind, which later formalised into research questions for this thesis: Who were the makers of these temples? Where did they come from? What were their histories? What kind of social and cultural practices were involved in the production of their architecture? What were they thinking? What were the modalities of their practices? How did they conceptualise their design and production processes? How did they relate to the long architectural lineage of temple architecture particular to western India? In what sense did they continue it, and in what sense did they not? What kind of life worlds did they inhabit? How did they perceive and express themselves? How were they organised? How did they act collectively? How did they act individually? What were their skills and how were those transmitted?

In what sense did they carry forth and transform a long architectural lineage belonging to western India to modern contexts? How did they negotiate the colonial encounter and its particular forms of knowledge formations, such as the idea of 'history' as expressed in calendrical time? How did nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalist currants on the academic study of medieval Indian temple architecture and texts touch their lives? Indeed how do they relate to the magnificently historicised field that is the study of Indian temple architecture? What kinds of negotiations are made in the transmission and transformation of the tradition? What are the forms and spaces of their modernity?

Further, in relation to the late twentieth century- particularly since the opening of the Indian economy in the early 1990s - what kinds of shifts in practices were brought about by the liberalisation of the economy? What is the nature of their hereditary training, given that new economic and cultural contexts are bound to

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<sup>7</sup> In this context see Kavita Singh, 'Temple of Eternal Return: The Swaminarayan Akshardham Complex in Delhi', *Artibus Asiae*, 70.1 (2010), 47-76

activate new constituencies and competencies in the global production of temples? How have they adjusted their regional practice from Gujarat to global platforms? What kind of power relations are produced in the reconfiguration of a long tradition to modern contexts? What frameworks might be deployed in reading a practice that escapes rigid and unmediated ideas of tradition?

### Scope

This thesis is about the architects behind numerous temples built in the dynamic and internally differentiated tradition of the *Nagar shaili*<sup>8</sup> of temple architecture: hereditary temple architects from the Sompura community hailing from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Although firmly in existence in western India from about the 7<sup>th</sup>- century, the *Nagar shaili* has seen manifestations in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, East Bengal, Northern Karnataka and Orrisa.<sup>9</sup> The thesis is specifically about the Sompuras' negotiations with modern spheres of life, between the 19<sup>th</sup>- century and the present moment. It is about how the community has creatively negotiated change brought about by late colonial, post independent and contemporary contexts. Whether it is modern historical consciousness, a rising interest in the antiquities of India, an interest in reified ideas of hereditary craftsmen, changing patronage and cultural arenas or current global economies and technologies, in each of the chapters the dissertation aims to show that the Sompuras in their concrete and 'present' practices negotiate change in innovative ways. Of particular interest to the thesis is a kind of unobjectified and non-historicised knowledge practiced by the Sompuras, marking its departure from the scant literature that does deal with them, for this literature, as discussed later, tends to emphasise

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<sup>8</sup> The term *shaili* could be understood as 'style' or 'manner' or architectural language in this context. The *Nagar shaili* encompasses an entire lineage of architecture and textual production prevalent in western India, with the beginnings of the architectural language in the Gupta period. The *Nagar shaili* is how the Sompuras talked about this lineage in all my interactions with them and it is for this reason I have used it throughout the thesis. In academic discourse the lineage is discussed as the 'Nagara tradition'. See for instance Adam Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007) or Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNC, 2015) the more recent Adam Hardy, 'The Nagara Tradition of Temple Architecture and 'Truth to Shastra'', in *Swaminarayan Hinduism: History, Literature and Theology, and the Arts*. ed. by Raymond Willaims (New Delhi: OUP, 2015 forthcoming)

<sup>9</sup> See Adam Hardy, 'Śekharī Temples', *Artibus Asiae*, 62.1 (2002), 81-137

architectural form alone, particularly through evolutionary analysis.<sup>10</sup> No comprehensive academic study has so far dealt with the Sompuras, from the perspective of their struggles with modernity. As living practitioners and carriers of a long architectural lineage, the dissertation relies on their deeply felt accounts on the production of temples in shifting contexts.

Direct ancestors of the present generation were architects of several mid-19<sup>th</sup> century conceptions in Gujarat most notably in Palitana in the Motishah tunk, the Balabhai tunk and several others temples on the Shatrunjaya hill (Figure 0.4, 0.5, 0.6) funded by the Jain mercantile community. Their immediate ancestors, some of them alive today and in old age, also conducted large scale restorations of 15<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> - century temples at Ranakpur and Dilwara respectively in the early and mid-twentieth century (Figure 0.7 and 0.8). The rebuilding of the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan immediately after independence accounts for a distinct moment when this community was propelled into a politico religious domain.

However numerous other conceptions of various scales and through patrons ranging from industrialists to religious trusts all through the 20<sup>th</sup> - century have been realised through the skills of this community. The Sompuras's projects have seen a distinct proliferation in the last three decades spawning into locations such as the UK, the US, Canada, East Africa, New Zealand.

A few of the Sompuras' most revered examples are the Sun temple at Modhera (11<sup>th</sup> - century, Figure 0.9, and 0.10), the renovated temples at Ranakpur and Dilwara (Figure 0.7 and 0.8), the Someshwara temple at Kiradu (11<sup>th</sup> - century, Figure 0.11, 0.12). These examples draw on earlier temples less known by the Sompuras but held in high regard by the academia, such as the temples at Roda (8<sup>th</sup> - century, Figure 0.13, 0.14), which themselves draw on an earlier tradition. Included in this list of references cited by contemporary architects are examples of mosques built in the walled city of Ahmedabad from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, when pre-existing temple details from Gujarat were incorporated into mosque architecture such as at the refined example of the Rani Sipri masjid amongst many others. (Figure 0.15). The list of references is not only restricted to the distant past, but also

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<sup>10</sup> A notable exception being Lawrence A. Babb and others, *Desert Temples : Sacred Centers of Rajasthan in Historical, Art-Historical, and Social Context* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2008).

Although not about the Sompuras per se, this interdisciplinary work goes beyond the mere physical structure of four functioning temples in Rajasthan, 'as centres of economic activity, political power and a confluence of social relationships of every conceivable sort'. According to the contributors these are not bereft on any count of aesthetic contemplation and judgement.

involves works that immediate members of families have undertaken. The *Nagar shaili* has historically accepted, through the works of its architects, constant change and adjustment to shifting contexts and patronage, as most evident in the architecture of the Sultanate period.<sup>11</sup> Equally there is fluidity to the architectural projects of the makers, in terms of the typologies of buildings executed. Bridges, palaces, forts, *dharamsalas*, hostels, housing, rest houses fall under their ambit, as do buildings for Jain, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim worship.

Despite their prolific output throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> - century, in the architectural profession as well as the art and architectural history circuits the Sompuras seem to be a forgotten group of architects. Evidently their presence is manifest in the numerous places for worship, and associated buildings, but from the limited appraisals on the Sompuras, a sense of disregard permeates. Paying attention to the disregard illuminates the epistemic structures that the appraisals are embedded in. The disregard is compounded by the fact that behind the built edifices and published material by the Sompuras resides an idea of practice that escapes representation, a void that ethnographic research in this work attempts to fill. Further meanings that reside between the power of the text (including architecture) and the creators is paid attention to. Configurations of dominant ways of looking at the tradition also illuminate vantage points of the Sompuras that are shared with academic histories but also subverted.

Thus in addition to bringing their hitherto unknown creative practices to light, the thesis also pays attention to how individuals or the community with different vantages look at the same objects and artefacts differently to academics. The works and methodologies of this community had escaped the radar of my education in India in the early 1990s and continues to escape serious attention in scholarly circuits particularly those looking at the studies of Indian temple architecture from the point of view of its makers – a long standing and valuable inquiry with its roots in early 20<sup>th</sup> - century nationalist revisions of history of temple architecture.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Alka Patel's work shows the remarkable adjustment of masons made in the 14<sup>th</sup> - century using architectural language of temples to mosques. See Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat : Architecture and Society During the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries*, Series: Brill's Indological Library, 220925-2916 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2004). See also George Michell, *Late Temple Architecture in India 15th to 19th Centuries : Continuities, Revivals, Appropriations, and Innovations*, First edition. edn (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2015)

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the beginnings of the enquiry on temple makers, see Pramod Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a*

Taking the last one hundred and fifty years as its broad time frame, at a time when the modern structures of architectural history, art history and the architectural profession fell firmly into place in India, this thesis will explore a set of creative practices and livelihoods that emerge out of different as well as shared structures and cultures of training and imagination. These largely remain unrecognised within the worlds of modern and contemporary architectural history.

While the research does not claim to be a comprehensive mapping of Sompura families or listing of their temples in India and across the globe, its focus is primarily on an idea of work culture. Scholarly interest has not extended to their affective and contingent relations with their tradition of architecture, their relations with the modern historiography of the tradition, modes of practices and architectural conceptions within and outside India. Nor have recent discussions by Indian architects, conservationists and other scholars through the frameworks of critical regionalism, 'traditional knowledge systems' respectively and timely discussions on 'Hindutva' paid them serious academic attention.

Looking at this glaring lacuna my research focusses on how individuals and distinct families from this community as well as entire networks of people associated with it, in specific moments of time and in diverse ways have, translated and transformed their architectural lineage to modern and late capitalist contexts. The time frame of my research spans between the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 21<sup>st</sup> - century, whereas the geographic limits are determined by a network of both western Indian and global locations: from small towns and large metropolises in Gujarat and Rajasthan to locations in the diaspora, such as Neasden, Wembley, Potters Bar and West Bromwich in the UK. For this it has been necessary for me to engage with present day practitioners in addition to analysing their architectural and textual works.

### **Argument**

By looking at the Sompuras' working practices, my thesis argues that the nature of their work culture invested in their self-conceptions, architectural, textual and craft production is far more critical, innovative, heterogeneous, and fluid than how post-colonial knowledge portrays it to be. It creatively negotiates change using diverse paradigms through a situatedness, which is yet to be recognised. This criticality in

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*Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967.* ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 1-39

their work culture is vested in their multiple modes of creative practice which query dominant and wooden understandings of the idea of tradition in several senses: one as embroiled in nationalist frameworks through policed enclosures of concepts and categories like 'ancient' and the 'traditional' and two, as the subjects of histories written in linear chronological time, using evolutionary frameworks as their basis, which inevitably end up 'placing the past as the relic of another time and place.'<sup>13</sup>

The thesis pays attention to key moments of transformations and translation that occurred in the works of the community through contact with late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>- century colonial and nationalist preoccupations with the modern category 'antiquity'. Along with antiquity are considered the new disciplines of art history, archaeology and architecture as well as the emergence of the new categories of 'hereditary craftsman' and 'indigenous traditions', all of which were bound up with nationalism in the opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> - century. The thesis demonstrates that while the Sompuras interacted with all these cultural arenas to produce their own distinct and creative responses, they simultaneously departed from dominant understandings of these very concepts.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century when nationalism was rife on political and cultural fronts their responses included the writing of innovative architectural manuals such as the *Shilparatnakar* (1939), very much in use by the current generation.<sup>14</sup> The *Shilparatnakar* straddled both the domains of historical consciousness as brought about by colonial archaeological surveys, and live practice - wholly enmeshed with the presence of Gods and goddesses- by visually illustrating temple types from fragments of medieval texts. A sense of expediency is marked by the full use of ASI drawings to supplement the main part of the manual thereby unwilling to be subsumed completely by historicist understandings. The *Shilparatnakar* also casts light on how contemporary scholarship on medieval *Nagara* traditions could perhaps

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<sup>13</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2008 ), p.238. See for instance the seminal article by M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65. Here temple creations after the 13<sup>th</sup> - century are considered degenerate.

<sup>14</sup> Narmadashankar M. Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*, 2nd edition edn (Dhranghadra, Kathiawad: Sompura, Narmadashankar Muljibhai, 1990 (1st ed. 1939))



loosen its grip of evolutionary frameworks, to include those which are less teleological and predetermined.<sup>15</sup>

Other significant Sompura responses in the mid twentieth century concern the long term restoration of ruined temples such as at Ranakpur (1930s) and Dilwara (1950s) in Rajasthan, which have a central place in training a number of craftsmen in the material practices of *jirnodhar* (renovation) as well as detailing specific to the 'Maru Gurjara' style of temple architecture.<sup>16</sup> These renovation practices were unwilling to resonate with colonial conservation ideals, and were in fact in direct contestation to the overseers of the works. The thesis looks at the seepage of nationalist and art historical concerns into the Sompuras' own publications from about the 1960s, yet at the same time, it distinguishes these works from those of key art historians active at the time by virtue of their difference for being written for practitioners and not historians, and also by virtue of how the art historians often found the practitioners' works aesthetically unpleasing, anachronistic and unsonorous.<sup>17</sup> In this regard the works of P.O. Sompura stand out for disseminating and segregating knowledge held in medieval texts into smaller publications as well as conducting translations of more or less complete medieval manuscripts.

More recently as their temples have started appearing in global locations, attention is paid to transnational practices as the Sompuras collaborate with patrons' architectural briefs in the diaspora as well as negotiate government regulations/frameworks particular to specific localities. Their relationship with architectural manuals such as the *Shilparatnakar* are analysed, as contradictory to the perceived norm of strict adherence professed by their patrons. This is in the context of specific projects in the UK which demonstrate extraordinary flexibility in terms of accommodating diasporic desire on the one hand in releasing new spatial typologies, while at the same time standardising and simplifying certain elements for the sake of legibility and for accommodating the exigencies of time and capital.

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance the bleak conclusion regarding contemporary temple architects by Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* p. 240

<sup>16</sup> A term coined by M.A. Dhaky for temple architecture between the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. See Dhaky, 1975.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussions on the reconstruction of the Trinetrishwara temple in M A Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 3, North India : Beginnings of Medieval Idiom, C. A.D. 900-1000* (New Delhi: AIIIS and IGNCA, 1998). See also M A Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 71 (1997), 65-85

So too are manufacturing systems considered in this study involved in the present day global production of temples, boosted by the liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991. These processes and resultant social formations such as the daily wage 'labourer' working with contractors, supervisors and temple architects resist any overarching ideas of traditional crafts as imagined on nationalist platforms through frames of the anonymous craftsman, performing village based, hand intensive actions.<sup>18</sup> Here on the other hand a vast assemblage of hand intensive, mechanised and automated processes are given attention in thoroughly modern spaces of production: the factory form, most ubiquitous with modernity (Figure 0.17, 0.18, 0.19). The PhD looks at the different scales of work cultures that the factory form generates as well as the relations of the constituencies involved with craft, technology and the discipline process. In highlighting these entanglements the research is primarily interested in singular histories of the Sompuras - the production of locality - as individuals from the community encounter and domesticate modern, nationalist, global and transnational currents.

Bearing in mind some of the global configurations in their work culture, the thesis questions representations that insist on viewing their practices through simple binary frameworks of tradition vs. modern, east vs west; through linear, chronological methods of analysing temple architecture where they come to be seen as practitioners of a fossilised tradition at the end of a historical process; through purely ritual modes of production as positioned against capitalist modes, and as a conduit of religious fundamentalism. Evoking Saurabh Dube's words, this work aims to highlight their innovative contributions in modern contexts 'as a creative process that straddles *and* subverts hard ideas, symbols and practices that define dominant nationalist ideas'.<sup>19</sup>

### Critical Framework

In thinking about the carrying of tradition in modern contexts, this thesis leans on ideas explored in postcolonial studies, particularly through conceptual frameworks

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<sup>18</sup> See the brilliant analysis of Kavita Singh in relation to the production of Swaninarayan temples. Singh, p.71

<sup>19</sup> Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time : Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles* (Durham, N.C. ; London: Duke University Press, 2004), p.18

posited by historians of modern South Asia in relation to cultural translation.<sup>20</sup> Here European codes such as historical consciousness and capitalism are encountered by the temple makers and reconfigured into their very own through 'affective and contingent relations'.<sup>21</sup> In turn the encounter with these codes also transforms and renews the architectural tradition in question. This framework is particularly useful when viewing the Sompuras' negotiations with modern spheres of life from about the nineteenth century. In a particularly deterritorialised world that we live in, where the temptation is to flatten cultural phenomena under global flows cultural translation offers a way to talk about specificity.

Translation as a conceptual strategy also aids in understanding the sinews that connect what conventionally might seem as disparate worlds: east and west or modern and traditional or lived and academic histories. These strategies are increasingly being deployed by postcolonial intellectuals to understand architectural and urban production in the South Asian context as an effort to write post orientalist histories, as discussed in the literature review.<sup>22</sup> The kind of questions it leads to, have more to do with appropriation and reconfiguration of knowledge rather than unmediated worlds. This strategy also helps with seeing the Sompuras as conduits of a heterotemporal conjunction, where there is no conflict between the modernisation of a tradition. The conjunction is between very old and very new practices that simultaneously constitute the 'present', between social worlds and their academic histories, between pasts and the present. At times this conjunction between the past and the present is unobjectified, and at times highly conscious of historical objectifications and it is for these conjunctures that the Sompuras invite attention.

The carrying of the tradition implies continuities, but as it is also implicated in global power systems, this thesis recognises and demonstrates that the temple

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<sup>20</sup>In particular Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Differenc*, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity : Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, Ill. ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Saurabh Dube, 'Presence of Europe: An Interview with Dipesh Chakrabarty', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101.4 (2002), 859-68

<sup>21</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Two Histories of Capital', in *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 47-71

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent example see Swati Chattopadhyay, *Unlearning the City : Infrastructure in a New Optical Field* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). For a definition of post orientalist history, I draw on Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography', *Comp Stud Soc Hist*, 32.2 (1990), 383-408

architects' distinctness can never be located *solely* in the idea of continuity of culture or tradition. Migrating between native and colonial perspectives, subaltern and elitist, local and global, regional and national scales, it presents their work and working practices as both continuity and rupture.

### Methodology

The PhD involves a combination of extra disciplinary methodologies: ethnographic, architectural, archival and textual evidence forming the backbone of the data collection. Given the interest between affect and historical consciousness it has been necessary for me to move out of the realm of architectural evidence alone and engage with a number and range of temple makers operating out of Gujarat and Rajasthan. So has it been necessary to engage with a network of people tied in with the production of contemporary temples: clients, factory owners, supervisors, *karigars*, engineers, architects, planning and building control consultants in specific local authorities.

Two field trips were made to India in 2012 and 2013, and field work continued in the UK by visiting buildings by the Sompuras. A third trip was made during the end of 2015 as part of a separate research project, which helped with consolidating some of the data previously gathered.<sup>23</sup> During fieldwork semi structured interviews with individuals formed a key part of data collection. These revolved around topics such as family histories, design processes, textual references, and actual architecture. Around sixteen individuals were interviewed, ranging from small scale practitioners to those who had a presence in the global arena. These individuals were based primarily in Ahmedabad and Palitana. It must be reported that the Sompuras were eager to share their practices without gloss. They were eager to talk about the shifts that their families have witnessed over the course of the century. Their candidness challenged many assumptions that I had myself taken to the field, highlighting the contingent nature of architectural production. For instance their very relations with history diverged from that of historical representations of western Indian temples.

During these research trips, live construction sites were visited as well as a range of factories and carving work yards, with and without the Sompuras. The field trips also included visits to a range of temples completed in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> - century as well as older revered examples from the 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> -

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<sup>23</sup> The Nagara Tradition of Temple Architecture: Continuity, Transformation, Renewal at the Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University. Funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

century to understand the architectural lineage being tapped into. In the UK, a range of clients of the Sompuras were interviewed. Also included in the study were consultants who dealt with local authority approvals. The research also looked at informal drawing archives held within families.

### **The Sompuras: organisation**

Contemporary temple architects based in Gujarat describe themselves as belonging to the 'Sompura' *jati*, a Brahmin sub caste of professional temple and image makers. Many temple architects described the word 'Sompura' as a caste name. The term 'Sompura' is used as a general identity marker signifying this status. 'Sompura temple architect', 'a Sompura', 'Sompura community', 'Sompura jati' are some of the ways in which this term was applied in an everyday sense. In many instances, temple architects used this term as part of their name. But equally architects preferred not to use the caste name. Within this general caste name are several sub divisions or *gotras*. Belonging to a specific *gotra* determined the family name used. Trivedi (Vacchas gotra), Acharya (Kashyap gotra), Upadhyaya (Galva or Galmik gotra), Dave (Shandilya gotra), Pathak (Bharadwaj gotra), Vyas (Angiras gotra) and Dwivedi (Gautam gotra) are some of the family names that are used by the architects.

Simultaneously they use the term 'temple architect' to denote their profession, which differentiates them from architects graduated from schools of architecture. The primacy of affiliation with caste may be related to late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> - century colonial classifications of the Indian population on a religious and caste basis, but it is interesting to note that the term 'Sompura' also appears in a medieval text predating the Surveys.<sup>24</sup> Due to the networked nature of the production of temples as well as related codified knowledge the idea of the 'temple architect' from the Sompura *jati* seems to be porous to other constituencies. Knowledge is passed down from fathers and grandfathers, but it is also assimilated in new contexts through lateral structures.

Not all individuals belonging to this community are practicing architects or sculptors and evidently not all sculptors and stone carvers involved in temple production today are from the Sompura *jati*. (See chapter 7) Within Gujarat, the

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<sup>24</sup> See Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind : Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2001) 'Sompura' brahmins form the basis of an origin myth in a verse quoted from the Skanda Purana. See Introduction, Prabhashankar O. Sompura, ed., *Diparnava* (Ahmedabad: Balwantrai Sompura, 1960)

Sompura community is settled primarily in the Saurashtra region, in the towns of Wadhwan, Palitana, Halwad and Dhrangadhra. It is from these areas that some families have migrated to the metropolises of Bombay and Ahmedabad to set up successful offices. Dhrangadhra has the maximum number of individuals from this community because of its proximity to the stone quarries of Dhrangadhra stone, followed by Wadhvan and Palitana. Halwad has a relatively small concentration. Vadnagar and Vishnagar in northern Gujarat are also home to Sompuras and so are Marwar and Mewar in Rajasthan. Fieldwork as well as a look at informal sources such as advertisements and business cards suggests that contemporary temple architects from the Sompura community are organised in a variety of ways, which are all part of the study.

They operate as small scale family business enterprises, which own carving work yards. Here they operate as one stop shops within highly localised contexts serving a regional need for temples in Saurashtra, Kutch, Gujarat and further afield in the neighbouring states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. (Figure 0.18) These small businesses may employ up to fifteen *karigars* in busy periods, but depending on the workload the numbers may drop down to one or two, working either on or off site. (Fig 0.19, 0.20) Here the Sompura architect may be responsible for designing and delivering whole temples hiring other work yards in the process, or the architect may be engaged by temple trusts to carve specific 'layers' of carved stone to the design of other temple architects.<sup>25</sup> (See chapter 7) In certain cases specific workshops may be associated with particular expertise e.g. some workshops are known within the community and patron circles for producing the best figural work.(Figure 0.21, 0.22). Sompura run businesses and work yards vary in scale. At the other end of the small scale workshop is the large scale business where conglomerates of factories are managed either by the Sompuras or by contractors who don't belong to the community, each employing an average of two hundred workmen (Figure 0.17)

The Sompuras also operate as private independent architectural consultants, without workshop ownership, offering purely drawing services to clients. At the same time they offer co-ordinating services in conjunction with carving work yards, ensuring work is carried out in accordance with their drawings. In this scenario they

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<sup>25</sup> See Megha Chand Inglis, 'Factory Processes and Relations in Indian Temple Production', in *Industries of Architecture: Relations, Process, Production*. ed. by Nick Beech Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff (London: Routledge, 2015 )

may operate from office spaces in commercial complexes or from their own domestic settings. Some are employed in the capacity of in-house temple architects with more established firms. Some are employed with large carving contractors as in house temple architects. Some run full architectural departments in large scale stone export houses. If they work for carving contractors their role is primarily checking drawings by other Sompura architects, to ensure they are fit for the fabrication process. If they work as architectural consultants for stone magnets, they design entire temples with modern versions of medieval Gujarati architectural manuals in mind. These forms of employment do not preclude private commissions and in many instances temple architects straddled both domains. The CV of one temple architect from such a situation is an interesting case in point for demonstrating the repertoire of skills that contemporary Sompuras deal with:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Expertise:           | Designing Stone Structures in traditional Indian architecture                      |
| Design Capabilities: | Design principles adhering to the norms of ancient Shilpa shastras                 |
|                      | Understanding the requirements of the clients                                      |
|                      | Site analysis and studying prevalent conditions                                    |
|                      | Finalising project logistics as per the directions <sup>26</sup> and accessibility |
|                      | Conceptualising the entire project   |
|                      | Preparing drawings at various stages   |
|                      | Preparing tender documents and specifications                                      |
|                      | Choosing the right contractor  |
|                      | Site supervision and quality control   |
|                      | Bill checking and final statement  |

One of their top most competencies in designing temples involves the use of sacred architectural manuals or *shilpa shastras*. The PhD will demonstrate that this use has a built in fluidity and flexibility, which could also be considered a 'norm', as argued by recent scholarship.<sup>27</sup> This use differs from ideas of strict compliance. The

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<sup>26</sup> Direction in this sense refers to *vastu* calculations which specify the direction that the temple must face in relation to the deity being installed.

<sup>27</sup> Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings*

CV extract also demonstrates that the practicalities of running various stages of jobs are very much part of their competencies. These roles are remarkably similar to what architects would perform in a normative office, albeit in networks that are specific to temple construction.

Some Sompura architects are employed with transnational religious organisations like the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in Ahmedabad which has its own 'Design Cell' and carving work yards comprising of hereditary temple architects on the one hand and graduate professional architects, engineers, urban planners on the other. Some are employed as in-house architects or sculptors by Jain religious trusts like the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, which engages in a continuous programme of renovations and new builds across its numerous sites of worship. Many supervisors who oversee carving works in factories or *karkhanas* are from this community, although supervisors also come from a range of backgrounds depending on their skill.

If one common strand ties all these diverse ways of organisation it is the notion of differentiated practices within the community: that there is no one single way they are organised or operate. One strand that can be discerned is that from about the late twentieth century, Sompura temple architects no longer work directly with the material their temples are made of.<sup>28</sup> Fathers and grandfathers of the contemporary generation were adept at working on stone or indeed the casting process if working with cement concrete technology and possessed a hands on understanding. This is no longer the case, apart from in rare cases where temple architects take on the full range of tasks. Across the board this split was ascribed to the pressures of time and budgets, with carving work now more or less subcontracted to carving *karkhanas* in entirety, overseen by specialist contractors and supervisors where an entirely new constituency is relied upon, comprising of the Bhil and Gharasiya tribes of Gujarat and Rajasthan. (Chapter 7) Thus 'choosing the right contractor' as listed in the design capabilities above is of paramount importance, for different contractors are known to possess workforces capable of executing different quality of work.

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<sup>28</sup> Rare exceptions exist. During fieldwork, I had the chance to meet one such expert in Palitana: Arvindbhai Acharya (Sompura), who is known within the community for his highly refined skills in stone carving, particularly statue work of divinities.



It is for this split that titles such as *sthapati*, *shilpashastra* or *shilpi*, more readily identifiable with all-encompassing roles described in medieval treatises, which were in use till the late twentieth century are now redundant in favour of newer titles such as ‘temple architect’ or ‘temple contractor’. Throughout the period of fieldwork, individuals simultaneously used the term ‘temple architect’ along with the idea that they are a professional *jati*. Unable to use the term ‘architect’ which is reserved for graduates of professional institutions, regulated by the Council of Architecture, these new titles themselves speak of a struggle for global legibility, a certain contingent reality and tactics adapted to make themselves visible.<sup>29</sup>

Within these ways of organisation there are a small number of individuals and families who have captured the international market serving the needs of communities in the diaspora and in turn the building of temples in India through transnational funding, both on a magnificent and modest scale. Some examples in the UK are the BAPS Swaminarayan Neasden temple (Figure 0.1, 0.2), the Sanatan Hindu temple (Figure 0.23), the Oshwal Jain Temple in Hertfordshire (Figure 0.24) and the Shri Krishna Temple in Potters Bar (Figure 0.25), which have the hand of these particular families. In India the BAPS Akshardham complexes in Delhi and Gandhinagar are probably the most visible, however other smaller, more modest projects are numerous through offshoots of these families.

These families form a particular focus of the thesis for the contributions of their immediate ancestors also stand out as exemplar in relation to others. Chief amongst these are the families of Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi (1910-2005) and P.O. Sompura (1896-1978), offshoots and younger generations of which continue to build prolifically in India and abroad. This is not to preclude other individuals who have managed to find their captive audience, who were part of the study but monopoly in international temple projects seems to be through offshoots of these two distinct families. Within India, again, it is offshoots of these families which have taken the mantle forward. thesis will analyse the specific competencies of these families by narrating their activities across the broad span of the early 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Considering the dynamism, diversity and provisional nature of their working practices in shifting cultural, economic and geographic contexts, I argue that it is

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<sup>29</sup> Swati Chattopadhyay’s explorations of the term ‘contingency’ have been useful here. See Chattopadhyay, p. 193. See also Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

futile to try and find an essence or any form of idealised meaning through axioms like 'Indian tradition', 'traditional knowledge systems' or 'traditional' architects' all of which tend to obscure a lived everyday sense on the ground, a matrix of encounters. One of the problems with this argument is that it seems to contradict the self-perception and self-representation of the architects themselves seemingly occupying one side of the binary as evident from the CV extract: 'designing Stone Structures in *traditional* Indian architecture'. What might be posited as essentialising or wooden in one context might unwittingly be ruling out the livelihoods of the temple makers.<sup>30</sup> It thus becomes doubly incumbent on any research project such as this to make the distinction that the adjective 'traditional' has different implications in different circuits. For the Sompuras continuity of tradition is very much the emphasis and must be recognised and respected as a creative process. There is no conflict in this continuity with modernisation. Since they themselves are also practitioners of a diverse range of modern processes, I suggest that their notion of what constitutes the traditional has a built in flexibility and fluidity in comparison to other platforms. This idea of sympathy I hope carries through the work.

### **Complex of encounters**

By way of offering a glimpse into the complex of ideas this thesis deals with, the temple at Neasden was designed by hereditary temple architect C. B. Sompura in conjunction with BAPS' own figureheads in a thoroughly transnational operation. It is relevant to note that C.B. Sompura came from a family which had actively shaped community identity in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century through the architectural and literary works of his illustrious grandfather P.O. Sompura, the latter encouraged by architectural historians from Gujarat to publish translations of architectural manuals as well as illustrate them. P.O. Sompura played a key role in helping architectural historians decode medieval architectural texts in the 1960s (see chapter 1). Along with the efforts of legendary contemporaries within the community such as Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi and Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura, the full span of the twentieth century witnessed a rise of this community: now and then, interacting with nationalist movements, but by and large subverting them in their own particular ways.

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<sup>30</sup> This tension is very well captured in Samuel K. Parker, 'Making Temples/Making Selves: Essentialism and Construction in the Identity of the Traditional South Indian Artist', *South Asian Studies*, 19.1 (2003), 125-40

C.B. Sompura's particular family is a direct descendent of Ramji Ladharam Salat's, who in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> - century had led the building of the Motishah *tunk* in Palitana through patronage from the Jain mercantile community, when nationalism had not touched the community. This is the furthest that their family can count back, taking them back by eight generations. It is evident from publications written in the 1960s that the Sompuras refer to, that the community at large traces its lineage to Mandan, an architect from the 15<sup>th</sup> - century in the court of Maharana Kumbha of Mewar, as well as consider themselves to be fragments of Vishvakarma, the divine architect of the universe.<sup>31</sup> (See Chapter 1)

The Sompuras consider themselves to be carriers of the *Nagar shaili* architectural lineage from Gujarat, which has relevance to their world in both historical and non-historical notions of time, with the presence of Gods and Goddesses permeating every stage of drawing and construction and given pause at the same time, by time and budget constraints: a veritable universe. In the words of one temple architect architectural knowledge and its practice could be likened to an unlimited 'ocean of art', of which even a few drops are difficult to grasp in their hollowed hands for such is the nature of the vast pool of possibilities they draw from in the present day context. These words spoken in 2013 suggest a modesty, humility and fragmentariness towards their own architectural lineage.

Further, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> - century temples such as at Neasden, not only has a vast heterogeneous assemblage of practices come together, but also different networks of people from outside the community with different kinds of expertise in materialisation played an important role. For each of the Sompuras' conceptions – like for that matter any architectural project - this is the case, where a unique set of conjunctions operate. At Neasden was involved an extraordinary voyage of materials touching Italy, Bulgaria, India and the UK with such material voyages made for temples in India too. The number of consultants involved at the UK end included structural engineers and local consultant architects, not to mention Planning and Building Control officials administering and checking through local building regulations submitted for approval (Figure 0.26, 0.27). While new spatial configurations are proposed by the temple architects, for which precedents do not exist, these UK based consultants made sure that they rose to the challenges of using compressive load bearing stone construction, without the use of reinforced concrete. This in itself constitutes a 'new' learning, accommodating traditional

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<sup>31</sup> See introduction of Sompura, ed., Diparnava, p.41

loadbearing technologies, for the generation of structural engineers involved in ratifying the projects for local authority approval were educated with reinforced concrete and steel technologies in mind. This learning process involved grand tours of medieval and recent Indian temples in India to understand the loadbearing structural principles involved. (Figure 0.28) Thus specific networks and assemblage of expertise are conjoined in the building of temples conceptualised by architects from the community, which cannot be classed as strictly hereditary.

In the mid nineteenth century the ancestors of this prolific community of builders, to which the above mentioned Ramji Ladharam Salat belonged, was noticed by the colonialist James Fergusson when he was writing his *History of Indian Architecture*. This pioneering and problematic publication as is well known amounted to India's first 'history' of architecture in secular linear time, followed by the ASI's extensive surveys of ruined and forgotten remains. Notwithstanding Fergusson's attitudes which saw Indian civilization as inferior to European, he saw the pilgrimage destination of Mount Shatrunjaya, near Palitana in Saurashtra as one of the most interesting places for the philosophical student of architectural art where a set of processes were at work, unparalleled in India and not seen in Europe since the Middle ages.<sup>32</sup> Here he proclaimed that the 'uncultivated' Hindu rose to the originality and perfection of the European builder of the Middle Ages. Those lost processes he maintained could be recovered in Europe by watching these temple makers at work. Knowing little that the export of modernising agendas to the Indian colony was to touch the lives of the temple makers in profound ways, domesticated, subverted and transformed by them, as the PhD will show, Fergusson could not have predicted how future generations of those very temple makers reconfigured European techniques and codes to think through projects located within India and Europe in the century to follow.

### Discourses and literature review

Looking at the scant literature that touches the works of the Sompuras, it would seem that methodological problems arise with interpretative frameworks. These works either outrightly disregard their works on the basis of being anachronistic and unimaginative, or do not recognise the capitalist and technological mediations at

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<sup>32</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture : Forming the Third Volume of the New Edition of the "History of Architecture"* (London: John Murray, 1876), p.27 For an excellent critique of Fergusson see Monica Juneja, 'Introduction', in *Architecture in Medieval India : Forms, Contexts, Histories* (Delhi, Bangalore: Permanent Black, 2001), pp. 1-108

work or simply view them as subjects of histories written in linear time frames. As any subordinated subject position is itself discursively formulated, one is led to consider the processes and forces that organise this position. I have summarised these discourses as:

a) The discourse of 'Swayambhu': The term 'swayambhu' or the 'self-emergent' is a concept that appears within the Sompuras' imaginations, particularly in relation to their beginnings as explained in origin myths. One such myth from the *Skanda Purana* recounts how they were self-born miraculously through a tubular stalk. Others deal with their emergence as reincarnations of Vishvakarma, considered to be the divine architect of the universe and divine author of all western Indian architectural manuals. In Tamil temple origin myths as well as *Shaiva Sidhhantha* philosophy in particular deal with the idea emission which resonate with this concept. This concept has recently been deployed in deeply sympathetic, valuable and fascinating scholarship on contemporary temple makers from South India through the works of anthropologist Samuel Parker. Drawing from Parker, it has even been adopted recently by architectural historians, already analysing historical transformations of Nagara traditions of western Indian temple architecture as a 'perennial' emanatory phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> Since Parker's work is the only other study comparable to the present study – in that it directly deals with the Sompuras' South Indian counterparts - it merits attention for its strengths and weaknesses. In *Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts*, Parker argues that 'rituals of temple production in South India function as a mode of creative practice that diverges profoundly from modern economic mythologies including those of creative personhood and intellectual property rights.'<sup>34</sup> While the latter are becoming naturalised through the forces of globalisation, he argues that they affect but do not organise contemporary practices of temple production.

Parker is correct in identifying continuities in creative practices as unobjectified and lived, differentiating these from an arena of national heritage and art collectibles including reified ideas of 'tradition', because they presuppose

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<sup>33</sup> See for instance Hardy, 'Śekhārī Temples'. See also the conclusion of Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings*

<sup>34</sup> Samuel K. Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', *South Asian Studies*, 26.1 (2010), 31-57

objectified relations, and a break with the past. He urges us to critically imagine agency without an overlay of market saturated practices and product brandings through the use of subtle terms of 'Swayambhu signs', which can be thought of as a 'way of organising the activity of a self-organising field of systemic relationships'. Many of these notions have been immensely useful for my own interpretations, particularly the idea of unobjectified and lived relations. However in diminishing and discarding the impact of 'modern economic mythologies', I feel that Parker has avoided an entire, immensely rich and telling field of production and negotiations to do with precisely these. Swayambhu assumes the form of an abstraction in this sense. His attitude assumes that present day temple makers could be nothing else but mute witnesses in the face of 'modern economic mythologies', whereas real agency lies in the ritual domain.

As all seven chapters in the thesis show the Sompuras' negotiations with 'history' and 'capital' highlight their agency in concrete socio historical and architectural terms as much as they do in the invocation of mythic systems which do not interact with these. I argue their agency cannot be sifted out conveniently in autonomous enclosures of ritual vs. capital, for both play an equal, inextricable and simultaneous part in their lifeworlds. Although I agree with Parker that continuities as represented in performances of heritage and nationhood misrepresent their concrete practices, I also argue that continuities cannot merely be seen in ritualised performances, it also comes out in their negotiations with modernity. Perhaps following Dipesh Chakrabarty, ritual and capital may be best seen as interrupting and accommodating each other's narratives.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless Parker's writings, have been a source of inspiration in highlighting relations different to academic understandings of the tradition.

Problems compound when an idea of Swayambhu is conflated with historical consciousness. In the above article, Parker refers to Adam Hardy's writings as reverberating with ideas of Swayambhu shown by a formal embodiment of diverse patterns of coming into being.<sup>36</sup> He shows this through an example from 11<sup>th</sup> - century Karnataka where it is impossible to define a moment when the 'Dravida' temple becomes a 'Vesara'. These he contrasts with Ajay Sinha's version of history

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<sup>35</sup> See Chakrabarty, 'Translating Life Worlds into Labour and History', *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 72-96

<sup>36</sup> These Parker brings into contrast with Ajay Sinha's parallel scholarship on temple makers from 11<sup>th</sup> - century Karnataka.

where ancient architects are seen as making discrete acts of creation, breaking away from the 'Dravida' tradition to create the 'Vesara'. Hardy on the other hand refers to Parke in illuminating his own scholarship on patterns of emergence; both are in mutual agreement about Swayambhu as a model of creativity in a ritually organised system. In fact Swayambhu as a design ideology has also been used by Hardy for a recent temple design in Karnataka.<sup>37</sup>

Problems with this conflation become apparent when seen in relation to the fact that it seems exclusive to medieval temple makers only and struggles when confronted by contemporary Sompuras' practices. As I have discussed in Chapters 5 it would seem that Hardy is waiting for a 'new cycle of creation' since the last one seems to have run its course, all mathematical possibilities expended.<sup>38</sup> From this very point it would seem that the present day temple makers' work cannot be "naturally organised" in a system of game playing that Parker and Hardy seem to agree on.

One other point that Hardy's temple designing activities in South India highlight is that Swayambhu when used as a representative strategy for creation obscures difference. Hardy is neither a Tamil *sthapati*, nor a Sompura temple architect. He writes in English and does not speak Tamil. He is an English architect and historian, from the United Kingdom, who has learnt through his own magnanimous efforts as well as the help of translators, and published knowledge, over the course of thirty five years or so, the languages of temple architectures in India. The procedures of knowledge gaining are radically different to that of a Tamil *sthapati*, yet Hardy has been commissioned to design a large scale Hoysala temple in South India in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century style of the Hoysala dynasty. This story in itself is fascinating in the way expertise is gained, collected and practiced from circuits which are different to hereditary circuits and deserves serious attention. However under the discourse of Swayambhu, such details get naturalised as if of no consequence. What could be a greater discontinuity than to commission in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century an expert English architect- historian to design a temple in the style of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century Hoysala temple in Karnataka?

Parker seems to see continuity and discontinuity as two opposite scales, whereas both phenomena were ever present in my own research in an embodied

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<sup>37</sup> Adam Hardy, *Hoysala Design (Design for Shree Kalyana Venkateshwara Temple, Venkatapura, Dist Kolar, Karnataka, India)* (<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/37340/>: 2014) [accessed November 2015]

<sup>38</sup> See Hardy, 'Śekharī Temples' p. 136

sense. Both constituted their reality. To privilege one over the other seemed to me to miss out on heterotemporal dimensions: the idea that 'actual people move in and out of several lifeworlds at once and that reality does not need to be made up of colliding and insulated lifeworlds'<sup>39</sup>. Despite this shortcoming in Parker's work, other works such as *Text and Practice in South Asian Art: an Ethnographic perspective*, have been useful. Ideas concerning the imprecise nature of relations with manuals deeply reverberated with my own fieldwork.<sup>40</sup> The fuzzy and non determined relationship of textual abstractions and concrete practices rang true in the case of the Sompuras. Also, Parker's adoption of a sympathy for the temple makers' self conceptions which might otherwise appear as essentialist in post structural critique have been valuable.<sup>41</sup>

b) The discourse of 'critical regionalism': This concerns a widely contested modernist intellectual movement of the late 20<sup>th</sup> - century that enshrined local resistance to global cultures through a tacitly understood formal architectural language. With temples scattered across the globe, the Sompuras compete robustly with elite Indian professionals whose works are largely concentrated in India. Yet they are absent on the very platforms the latter are valorised on. The English speaking, modernist, institutionally educated professional elites tend to disregard the Sompuras as an emerging force 'counter to modernity'<sup>42</sup> or as the producers of 'conservative', 'anachronistic' and 'pastiche laden' buildings.<sup>43</sup>

This legitimacy itself seems to be produced from a European modernity with its idea of history as 'linear and teleological and the obsession with newness and constant change'.<sup>44</sup> Key amongst these frameworks is the notion of Critical Regionalism, which 'rescripted the universal language of global modernism to

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<sup>39</sup> Chakrabarty and Dube, p.680

<sup>40</sup> Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-34

<sup>41</sup> Parker, 'Making Temples/Making Selves: Essentialism and Construction in the Identity of the Traditional South Indian Artist'

<sup>42</sup> Rahul Mehrotra, 'Counter Modernism: Resurfacing of the Ancient', in *Architecture in India since 1990* (Mumbai: Ostfildern : Pictor ; Hatje Cantz, 2011), pp. 251-301

<sup>43</sup> Menon, p.27

<sup>44</sup> Duanfang Lu, 'Entangled Modernities in Architecture', in *The Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory*. ed. by Stephen Cairns and C. Greig Crysler (Los Angeles SAGE Publications, 2011), pp. 230-45, p233



project a stable core of national identity untouched by the experience of colonialism.' The propagators of this ideology offered local resistances to the globalising forces of modernism without rejecting it, but ironically this rescripting of non-western modernisms also contained fundamental assumptions discarding other practices and knowledges making it problematic for those situations where living precolonial traditions were very much part of the contemporary architectural discourse.

Kenneth Frampton's influential and oft quoted essay by critical regionalists '*Towards a Critical Regionalism: six points for an architecture of resistance*',<sup>45</sup> guards against the "unrealistic" impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the pre-industrial past, at the same time distancing critically regionalist architecture from the Enlightenment myth of progress and a reactionary. For Frampton, a critical *arriere garde* had to remove itself from both the optimisation of advanced technology and the ever present tendency to regress into *nostalgic historicism* or the *glibly decorative*. Translating into the Indian context, as long as Indian architects from India complied with the aesthetic canons of European modernism in claiming authenticity and specificity within their own national contexts, they were welcomed with warm arms, but the moment we see competing practices like that of the Sompuras continuing, albeit in a mediated way, an aesthetic canon stretching back much further, there was a problem of acceptance, of an 'embarrassing nostalgic historicism'.

Further, they could only be viewed as craftsmen at best and 'anachronistic' and 'makers of pastiche', at worst, but never as contemporary architects on a level playing field. This asymmetry points to a particular notion of progress and the discursive practices through which architectural production is legitimised. For my purpose it also problematizes the very conception of the term "contemporary", in the context of architectural practitioners commenting on traditional architecture, where the term assumes a certain neutrality, standing in an asymmetrical relationship to the value loaded term 'tradition'. In considering the ideological arenas within which

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<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards Critical Regionalism: Six Points Towards an Architecture of Resistance', in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. ed. by Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 17-34pp. 17-34, Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture : A Critical History*, 1980 edn (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985). See also Charles Correa and Kenneth Frampton, *Charles Correa* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), William J. R. Curtis, *Balkrishna Doshi : An Architecture for India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1988, Brian Brace Taylor, *Raj Rewal* (London: Mimar, 1991)

the present day Sompuras operate, it becomes necessary to chalk out the ironies inherent in the writing of history.

The first irony is borne out of the notion that the *appropriation* of tradition in the works of elite Indian professionals is valorised in global circuits with universal applause, but when that very tradition is *continued* in the work of hereditary practitioners, in the form of architectural propositions; there is a problem of acceptance. This is the critical regionalist mode, which has wide unquestioned acceptance in the Indian profession; a critique of the concept itself escapes the mainstream discourse, barring a few scattered speculations.<sup>46</sup> Within dominant circuits it unproblematically continues to be the organising discourse in categorising and classifying contemporary architecture in India.<sup>47</sup> In this context Rahul Mehrotra's publication should be applauded for finally bringing temple makers into the ambit of contemporary architecture, but the terms on which they are discussed assume the same aesthetic and conceptual criteria as critical regionalists.

Further, the intellectual assumptions and defining ideas uncannily seem to perpetuate nineteenth century colonial myths about what is considered modern/progressive and on the other hand what is traditional. As Scriver aptly puts it, these are deeply lodged notions that dwell on the autonomy of "tradition" of Indian architecture from the story of modern architecture in the subcontinent.<sup>48</sup> Each of the 'modern Indian architects' has confronted a perennial post-colonial problem that in the words of A.G.K Menon echoes the critical regionalist agenda, i.e. 'to seek out roots and yet be modern.' However the "yet" in the above search itself suggests that appropriating precolonial roots cannot be seen in the same space as the modern, simultaneously. This very notion of reticence alludes to Critical Regionalist values which oppose "sentimental simulation" of the local vernacular.

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<sup>46</sup> See Keith L. Eggener, 'Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55.4 (2002), 228-37, Alan Colquhoun, 'Critique of Critical Regionalism', in *Architectural Regionalism : Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition*. ed. by Vincent B. Canizaro (New York: Princeton Architectural, 2006), pp. 141-45, Alan Colquhoun, 'The Concept of Regionalism', in *Postcolonial Space(S)*. ed. by Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu and Chong Thai Wong (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 13-24

<sup>47</sup> The most recent perpetuation of this discourse can be seen in Rahul Mehrotra, *Architecture in India since 1990* (Mumbai: Ostfildern : Pictor ; Hatje Cantz, 2011)

<sup>48</sup> Peter Scriver, Peter Scriver, 'Constructing Colonial and Contemporary South Asia', *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand*, 19.2 (2010), 34-57

A series of articles from the 1990s demonstrate this unease particularly when appraising hereditary temple architects and their practices. Writing in the widely circulated Indian journal *Architecture + Design*, architect and educationist A.G. K. Menon considers the work of the lineages of practitioners from Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. In an article titled “*Contemporary Patterns in Religious Architecture*” Menon lists three prevailing trends. First of these trends concerns the continuity of traditions by the above groups for a clientele in India as well as the Indian diaspora in various countries. The second trend is characterised by a ‘proclivity of kitch’, also conceptualised by hereditary practitioners, while the third and last category is defined by an attempt to build a “modern” temple building idiom by Indian modernists. In this categorisation itself, the burden of colonialism and critical regionalism is played out, where modern and traditional come to be seen as essential and discreet entities.

To the first category Menon attributes the qualities of an architecture of resistance. In a curious analogy with the very attitudes of Critical Regionalism, the hereditary builders are recognised for making a contribution in a world rapidly succumbing to the inexorable forces of modernism in the way they continue a classical tradition of Indian temple architecture.<sup>49</sup> However this continuation soon begins to lose credit for its ‘lack of architectural imagination’:

“What these temples *lack in architectural imagination*, the builders compensate by way of excellent traditional craftsmanship. What such craftsmanship lacks in terms of the classical *rasa*, is made up by way of a proliferation of decorative sculpture. . . . In sum these neo-traditional temples are *pale imitations* of ancient monuments *sitting anachronistically* in a new cultural environment, unable to emulate the spirit that spurred the past and unwilling to come to terms with the forces fuelling the future. That they are still built in this day and age, in complete sincerity and reasonable verisimilitude is perhaps the main element of cultural significance. It is indicative of a cultural continuity of a kind, which was wiped out in other societies with the outset of modernity. But the tragedy in architectural terms is that we have been *unable to translate* this valuable cultural resource into *critical* architecture. The blind worship of a known reality only represents a

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<sup>49</sup> Menon, ,p.26

resistance to change. This is *evidence of conservatism*, not conservation of traditional knowledge or skills. True conservation practice would sublimate such resistance in response to modern imperatives.”<sup>50</sup> (my emphases)

What might these modern imperatives be? In further sections of the article, ‘modern materials’, assimilated in a flexible building practice by the hereditary temple makers are dismissed. The use of reinforced concrete framed structures in temple architecture, with brick infill walls and decorative stucco is framed as emblematic of a paradigmatic cultural loss exemplified by the shift from stone and chisel to pallet knife, regardless of the conviction of the builders themselves. Similarly European-Indianised embellishments in the Nutan Bhavan temple complex in Delhi by the late Ganapati Sthapati of Tamil Nadu invite criticism very similar to the way the late 19<sup>th</sup> - century crafts enthusiasts arrested the degeneration of hybridised Indian crafts persons.<sup>51</sup> In short any process of transculturation in the work of the hereditary builders is assigned a value that is of inferior rank in relation to the elite productions of architecture, for the latter are permitted to be ‘modern’, never the former.

This very notion of time and progress is at odds with the notions of time that the Sompuras hold on to, where the past and the present simultaneously appear as the present. As pointed by Dipesh Chakrabarty, anachronism itself speaks of a lifeworld where continuity doesn’t have a place: it is a historicist stance. This is to say that the Sompuras, while using the arsenal of modern technology and knowledge surrounding temple architecture and having adjusted unapologetically to the present global world in terms of capitalist economies, also occupy other notions of time in conceptualising their architecture.

In declaring their creations as ‘pale imitations of ancient monuments’, Menon emphasises the modernist notion of creative personhood and possessive individualism, where notions of originality and creativity are paramount. However such notions of originality do not always occupy the same sacred space in the creative process for the Sompuras as it does for professionally trained architects.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.. p. 27

<sup>51</sup> See for instance a critical analysis of the 1886 Colonial and Indian exhibition, Swati Chattopadhyay, 'A Critical History of Architecture in a Post-Colonial World: A View from Indian History', *Architronic*, 6.1

When asked if copyright and ownership of design had a place in their practice, one temple architect exclaimed, 'We are all drinking from the same well, so why should copyright be an issue!?' It is perhaps for this reason names of temple architects often remain in oblivion even if the scale of the temples they produce might be magnanimous.

Second, the extract shows that the architectural fraternity is at ease with accepting the hereditary builders as executors of excellent craftsmanship, but not as contemporary architects in their own light. Menon concedes that they "*can and do*" innovate, but that the results would not shock even the most conservative worshipper (my emphasis).<sup>52</sup> In other words continuum and conservatism come to be seen as one and the same thing, at the expense of originality and the production of newness as espoused by the elite architects. Despite valid critiques of critical regionalism, its attitudes still pervade.

c) The discourse of the study of Indian temple architecture: The study of Indian temple architecture particularly the western Indian branch is immensely appreciative of the evolution of the tradition, its regional varieties and transformations over time, its relationship with texts which were contemporaneous with medieval architecture. So it is with extreme caution that I propose the ways in which it unwittingly and explicitly also locks contemporary practitioners such as the Sompuras into closure. Some of these ideas have been explained in the section on "Swayambhu". This historiography albeit with its own internal differences, broadly considers the aesthetic ingenuities of Nagara temples from 250 BC to the 21<sup>st</sup> - century.<sup>53</sup> The thesis accepts and values these readings. Yet the thesis demonstrates that evolutionary frameworks embedded therein need to be broadened and consider social practices on the ground that do not easily fit into the mould of chronology, developmental sequences and predisposed patterns.

The works of art historian M.A. Dhaky, a Padma Bhushan awardee, are of particular significance to the thesis, not only for his monumental contribution to studies in Indian temple architecture from about the 1960s, but also because of the

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<sup>52</sup> Menon, , p.26

<sup>53</sup> Michael W Meister and others, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 1, North India : Foundations of North Indian Style C 250 B.C.-A.D. 1100* (Delhi: AIIS and OUP, 1989, Michael W. Meister and M A Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 2, North India : Period of Early Maturity, C A.D. 700-900* (Delhi: AIIS and OUP, 1991, Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 3, North India : Beginnings of Medieval Idiom, C. A.D. 900-100*, Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India*.

awkward relationship this invaluable scholarship has with living practitioners' own knowledge base. As I elaborate in chapter 5, while Dhaky's contribution is well accepted within academia in India and Euro American circuits - he is accorded to have 'led a systematic, analytical and exhaustive understanding of architectural texts and their relationship to practice'<sup>54</sup> - the Sompuras are generally not familiar with this scholarship, let alone engage with its contents. They rely on Gujarati *shilpa shastras* instead, which were brought into the public domain in the 1930s and the 1960s. While the thesis shows that their works are best seen as historically contingent dependant on a range of factors, one of Dhaky's most significant contributions - on the other hand - stresses an evolutionary methodology of analysis of architectural form bringing into sharp relief different arcs of scholarships being produced for different readerships.<sup>55</sup> Dhaky's profound fascination for nationalists of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century like Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Stella Kramrisch amongst many others from the continent helps in situating him as a key historian who sought to modernise knowledge on classical Indian temples within modern frameworks of history, chronology, logic of morphology, and textual correspondence. This work was of a different tenor and texture to that being produced by Sompura practitioners like P.O. Sompura and N.M. Sompura, who were largely unburdened by historical frameworks, borrowed freely from modern sources and published in Gujarati instead for a Gujarati audience. (Chapter 3)

Dhaky is best known for curating, along with others, several volumes of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*, a monumental project which correlates textual terminology to extant buildings, analysing regional variations and stylistic tendencies. His beginnings lay in a basic degree in Geology after which he turned towards Archaeological studies with a special focus on temple architecture. In a fascinating lecture delivered in 1997 on the contributions of anthropologist Nirmal Kumar Bose, Dhaky explains his own career movement away from sociology towards the history of arts because of his strong leanings from his early days towards the *aesthetic* (my emphasis) aspects of all arts including architecture of the

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<sup>54</sup> For a detailed overview of Dhaky's writings, see Parul Pandya Dhar, 'Historiography of Indian Temple Architecture (Post-Independence Writings): Some Methodological Concerns', in *Archaeology in India: Individuals, Ideas and Institutions*. ed. by Gautam Sengupta and Kaushik Gangopadhyay (New Delhi, Kolkata: Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers in association with Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, 2009), pp. 333-50, p.337

<sup>55</sup> Dhaky, *Genesis*, pp. 114-65

ancient and medieval world.<sup>56</sup> While his writings have immense value in appreciating medieval temple architecture, particularly 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, it is deeply ironic that his interest did not infiltrate into the living, fluid and heterogeneous practices of the Sompuras. This is despite P.O. Sompura playing a critical part in decoding medieval texts of interest to Dhaky. For this reason of separation it can be said that a latent nationalism underlies Dhaky's works, which places a greater value on historicist frameworks where the life of the nation is seen to be better represented and experienced in history than in the immediacies of the present.<sup>57</sup>

A cursory glance on the beginnings of historicist attitudes is necessary. Although dealt with extensively by others, to reiterate them here helps to see some of the problems I wish to show in otherwise deeply sympathetic scholarship on temple architecture from Western India.<sup>58</sup> Within the discipline of architecture James Fergusson occupies a centre stage in the creation of the discourse of difference that privileged ancient architecture of India as material evidence of a 'distinct and primordial civilization'. This was in opposition to any building activity that displayed a hybridity as a result of the encounters between modern styles such as that of European Neoclassicism with the endogenous traditions of Indian architecture in the early 19<sup>th</sup> - century.<sup>59</sup> One of his core arguments was that Indian architecture in its monumental past was "true", whereas post-Renaissance European architecture was historicist mimicry and imitative.<sup>60</sup> Presumably native builders were involved in the construction of hybrid conceptions such as of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> - century Nawabi Oudh but these as Scriver has pointed out were disregarded as debased by Fergusson due to 'a basic ignorance of the grammar and vocabulary of the 'foreign' architectural language their builders had attempted to mimic'.

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<sup>56</sup> M A Dhaky, *Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose and His Contribution to Indian Temple Architecture* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1997), p.2-3

<sup>57</sup> For questions and problems on nationalism I draw on Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World : A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed for the United Nations University, 1986), p.9

<sup>58</sup> Peter Scriver, 'Stones and Texts: The Architectural Historiography of Colonial India and Its Colonial-Modern Contexts', in *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*. ed. by Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27-50, p.28

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.28

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.29

The significance of Fergusson's works are paramount in understanding contemporary trajectories that the Sompuras are represented through for he was the first to posit the truths of architecture through a historical understanding of architectural evidence in linear calendrical time, in a systematic way. As proposed by Scriver 'modern' could not be equated with 'Indian', for the 'Indian' was essentially different and 'other' to modern. Second his deeply problematic racial and religious readings proposed that along with the colonial encounter earlier incursions into the Indian subcontinent by other racial groups had resulted in the 'architectural interbreeding of essentially different racial types'.<sup>61</sup> Thus racially pure and distinctive architecture could be read into the stones and texts, he professed. While Fergusson's religious and racial views have long been questioned and discarded, his long lasting legacy remains with us in terms of viewing histories in terms of historical time.

In the realm of temple architecture and its makers the early twentieth century saw a rife and healthy interest in understanding structural remains from the point of view of builders – dwelling on medieval architectural texts as serious sources for a nuanced understanding of the tradition. However, live practice was ditched in favour of understanding medieval temples. (Chapter 1) Shifting to the post-independence scene, studies in temple architecture flourished in continuation with sympathetic ideologies instigated in the colonial national period, namely the interpretation of monuments using indigenous terminology, but again, the practices and products of the living practitioners were of no consequence.

The works of eminent historians such as M.A. Dhaky stand out in this regard; however they also create an arena which places much importance to the Solanki rule (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century) in Gujarat and Rajasthan, proposing anything after that as degenerate. This attitude is discernible in more recent scholarship. Hardy's remarkable and indispensable scholarship on Indian temple traditions for instance hints at the fossilised nature of the "later centuries" and the potentially sterile routes of "traditional" temple builders urging them instead to learn from his own mode of understanding as an ever unfolding mathematical game of aedicular compositions. From the vantage point of this logic of mathematical proliferation, the options for further invention are exhausted.

d) The discourse of religious fundamentalism: With their most visible clients associated with religious far right leanings, some critics have found it difficult to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.29



relate to their architecture as anything other than pandering to religious chauvinism and conspicuous consumption.<sup>62</sup> This PhD on the other hand maintains that the Sompuras' practices must not be seen as driven by politicised religion, separating them from their patrons.

e) The discourse of architectural heritage and conservation practice: This is best epitomised by the 'Charter of Conservation' promulgated by institutions such as INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) following UNESCO where the Sompuras are valued in neat essentialised boxes as bearers of ancient, local and indigenous knowledge systems, without any consideration of the global, capitalistic and technical mediations that inhere in their practices. (Chapter 7)

f) The discourse of craft and nationhood: A wealth of recent critical literature using postcolonial frameworks has made us familiar with how the late nineteenth century witnessed the presence of hereditary architects and craftsmen in the minds of orientalist amateurs, experts, and observers of architecture.<sup>63</sup> These relatively new readings have been particularly useful for the PhD in explicating the gaps between material practice and its representation, particularly as the Arts and Crafts discourse brought the native craftsman into a global system of imperial production and display in the late nineteenth century. The move away from top down unidirectional power relations and binaries that earlier scholarship seems to be based on is complemented by a reading that is mindful of mutually engaged and antagonistic domains.<sup>64</sup> While the highlighting of this mutual domain is a strength, occasionally much is desired in learning what the craftsmen themselves were thinking while acting out the bureaucracies and procedures of the Raj.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Jyotindra Jain, 'Curating Culture, Curating Territory: Religio Political Mobility in India', in *Art and Visual Culture in India*. ed. by Gayatri Sinha (Mumbai: Mar Publications, 2009). See also Brosius, *India's Middle Class*, pp. 144-160

<sup>63</sup> See Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Series: Architext Series (London: Routledge, 2007, Saloni Mathur, *India by Design : Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2007, Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*, 1st ed. edn (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>64</sup> An example of this early scholarship is Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision : Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*, Series: Oxford India Paperbacks (New Delhi Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>65</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty : Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2006)

19<sup>th</sup> - century discourses perpetuate in contemporary arenas, with craftsperson's identities seen through nationalist, nativist and atavistic frameworks. Chapter 7 in the PhD challenges this view and shows that it is futile to view the entire network of constituencies involved in the physical crafting of temples through such autonomous enclosures, particularly as the Sompura's own skills have split to accommodate modern prerogatives.

Fundamental to late 19<sup>th</sup> - century ideas about native 'traditional' architects is the belief that they operated in an autonomous domain and 'lost out' in the building of modern buildings with modern programmes brought about by the colonial encounter. The segregation of the traditional from the modern is the running theme in a range of recent references that deal with the fusion of traditional methods with modern programs of the late 19<sup>th</sup> - century.<sup>66</sup> This literature assumes that colonial power was reproducible at the level of practice and that the builders on the ground were merely mute witnesses to imperial ideologies, carrying out passively what was demanded of them. Sachdev and Tillotson's otherwise rich stories of colonial encounter with native building processes are underpinned by an irritating conviction that the two domains were separate, essentialist domains.<sup>67</sup> Such narratives and politics of 'loss' only serve to reinforce the partisan divide between the modern and the traditional, while the PhD demonstrates that the Sompuras' escape these divisions.

From these dominant ideological frameworks the Sompuras and their architecture appear to be locked into a corner, devoid of agency. I argue that the Sompuras should be listened to seriously, not with some kind of benevolent imperialism that they are makers of architecture of the minorities or architecture of the traditional or of centuries old tradition, but as serious participants in the modern and global history of architecture from India.

### **Plan of the work**

Chapter 1 starts with an idea of beginnings both in historical and non-historical time as articulated by practitioners during fieldwork and as expressed in key publications of the Sompuras. It draws attention to the idea that claims of continuity have built into them discreet elements of discontinuity. The lived relations with gods and

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<sup>66</sup> Tillotson, , Vibhuti Sachdev and G. H. R. Tillotson, *Building Jaipur : The Making of an Indian City* (New Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>67</sup> Sachdev and Tillotson, Tillotson,

goddesses surrounding 'Sompura' identity, beginnings and architecture are no doubt part of a long oral and textual tradition, which have been handed down from one generation to another over a long time, yet these beginnings are also to do with the seepage of modern European ideas of antiquity and conservation, and nationalist arenas of art history and aesthetics into pre-existing practices that the temple builders were already involved with. This chapter argues that the lifeworld of the Sompuras reconfigured itself to modern spheres in profoundly specific and innovative ways in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 2 traces the history and works of Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi and how several generations of his family came to be trained in restoration work between the 1930s to the 1960s, while resisting bourgeois ideas of conservation and history. Chapter 3 looks at the beginnings of Prabhashankar Oghadbhai Sompura (1896-1978) who both built and published prolifically. Perhaps best known for the controversial reconstruction of the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan at the behest of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, I will be looking instead at the impact of prevalent 'art historian' methods on P.O. Sompura's own scholarship, particularly the points of divergences and convergences.

Chapter 4 looks at the writing of the seminal *Shilparatnakara* as a mode of relating to the past in which historical consciousness and the hereditary profession negotiate each other in profoundly innovative ways. First published in 1939 in Baroda and subsequently in 1990 in Dhrangadhra, it was compiled by Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura a, native *sthapati* from Dhrangadhra itself in the Kathiawad district of Gujarat. Written at the behest of the native prince of Baroda State Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, and lauded by Indian archaeologists the compilation along with the monumental task of translating Sanskrit verses from a collection of medieval manuscripts. It describes and advises on the typology of the *Nagar shaili* tradition in a thoroughly knowing way through text, and drawing. Attention is paid to how N.M. Sompura made full use of the ASI material at his disposal, at the same time altering them fundamentally to use them for architectural practice, which they were never intended for.

Chapter 5 focuses on how individual temple architects from the Sompura community relate to and use two different cultures of codified knowledge in their everyday practices: modern day *vastu shastra*, and texts on the "history" of Indian temple architecture produced by art and architectural historians primarily from the late twentieth century onwards. Both have a place in their everyday practice in a fragmentary sense. I show that the *Shilparatnakar* informs contemporary practice in

a concrete – and above all – an improvised, fluid and imprecise sense, giving us opportunities to review certain widely held conceptions that profess strict adherence to *shastras*.<sup>68</sup> Along with correcting this misconception, in this chapter I have tried to suggest that there is scope for opening up a space to view the gap between ‘history’ of historians of Nagara traditions and the matrixial encounter that constitutes the here and now of everyday practice.

Chapter 6 looks at one architectural case study in the UK in detail in an attempt to work out strands of continuities and transformations in the encounter of older practices braided into newer transnational ones. The negotiations with both tradition and modern economic parameters are analysed through the Sanatan Hindu temple in London inaugurated in 2010. The desires of client communities are considered, in this case comprising of immigrant communities from East Africa, carrying a specific idea of India. How these were accommodated by the architects involved are considered. The design process and the architecture suggest profound innovations in spatial typologies as well as uncertain relations with history of western Indian temples as explicated in chronological time. The use of architectural details most associated with the high florescence of Mughal architecture suggests a heterogeneity of practices.

Chapter 7 looks at the practices of temple architects, labourers, contractors and supervisors as a collective engaged in the crafting of temples from the late 1980s till the present moment – without the burden of the anxious category “traditional”, but with an awareness of traces of a longer practice. It looks at the modalities through which they operate in the numerous offices and *kharkhanas* (factories) of Gujarat and Rajasthan, which are set up to produce a global flow of temples from India outwards.

In offering these scenarios and their analysis, the PhD concludes by making a case for reimagining the creative practices of the Sompuras as a crucible of encounters, and in a dynamic cultural negotiation. It also argues that it is futile to look for master narratives that can sum up their multifarious ways of operation. Instead it opens up a space for the recognition of their emergence, which has

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<sup>68</sup> The thrust of the methodology borrows from the only other comparable study of present day temple builders See Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-34. See also Samuel K. Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', *South Asian Studies*, 26.1 (2010), 31-57, although I am not convinced about the segregation of the domains of ritual and capital.

accepted and transformed modern paradigms and continues to do so in globalised situations. While being cautious of a unified vision of history, it maintains that the Sompuras improvise local performances from recollected pasts drawing on history, capitalism, the agency Gods, transnational currents, foreign media, technology, symbols and architectural languages in diverse and innovative ways. Instead of trying to capture their practices through unified essences, it suggests that their work be seen amongst a collection of these fragments.



## Introduction



Figure 0.1: BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, Neasden, London. (1995)

Figure0.0 (Chapter cover): Full size construction drawings for the Swaminarayan temple, Neasden being unfolded by the temple architects involved in its detailed drawing stage.



Figure 0.2: A road sign on the busy North Circular Road signalling the presence of the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, Neasden.



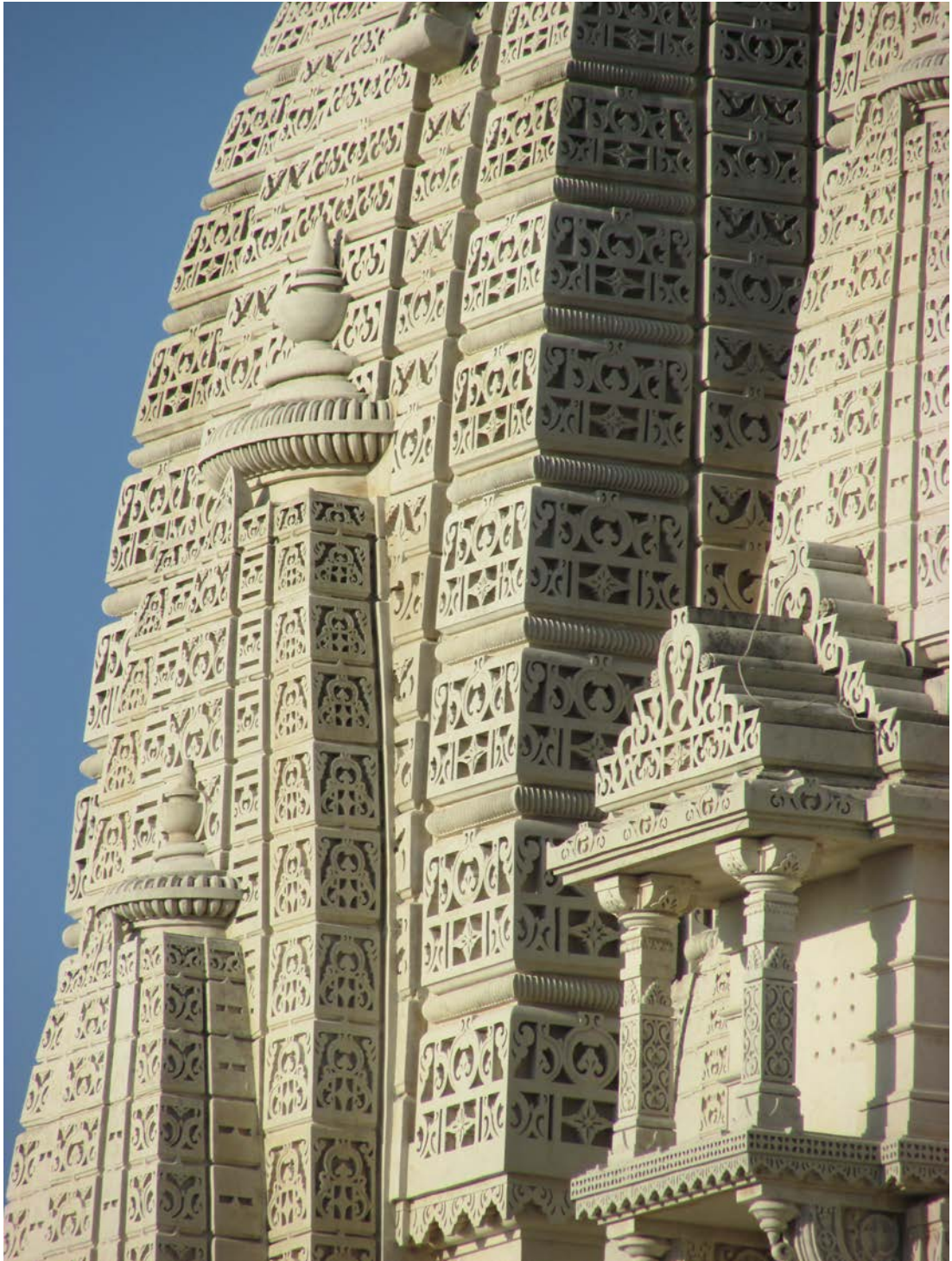


Figure 0.3: *Shikhar* detail, BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, Neasden, London (1995)



## Introduction



Figure 0.4: Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 0.5: Balavasahi Tunk Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 0.6: Motishah Tunk, (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat. Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia.



Figure 0.7: Dharnivihar Temple, Ranakpur, Rajasthan (1446 AD). Renovated by the Sompuras in the 1930s. Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies



Figure 0.8: *Rangamandap*, Lunavasahi Temple, Mount Abu, Rajasthan (13<sup>th</sup> century). Renovated by the Sompuras in the 1950s. Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies



## Introduction



Figure 0.9: The Sun Temple, Modhera, Mehsana District, Gujarat (11th century)



Figure 0.10: The Kund at the Sun Temple, Modhera Mehsana District, Gujarat (11<sup>th</sup> century)



## Introduction



Figure 0.11: Remains of the Someshwara temple, Kiradu, Rajasthan (11<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 0.12: *Ghatapallav* column detail, Someshwara temple, Kiradu, Rajasthan (11<sup>th</sup> century)

## Introduction



Figure 0.13: Temple no. 4, Roda, Gujarat (8th century)



Figure 0.14: Temple no. 3, Roda, Gujarat (8th Century)





Figure 0.15: Detail of the Rani Sipri Masjid, Ahmedabad, Gujarat (1514 AD)

અચ્યમ રત્ન ]

નાગરાદિ પ્રાસાદનાં લક્ષણ.

૧૮૩

શિખરની રેખા કામડીથી છોડવાનું પ્રમાણ.

રેખામૂલસ્ય વિસ્તારાત્ પદ્મકોશં સમાલિખેત્ ॥

ચતુર્ગુણેન સૂત્રેણ સપાદશિખરોદયઃ ॥૫૩॥

રેખા (પાયલા) ના મૂળના વિસ્તારથી ચાર ગણું સૂત્ર લાંબું રાખી વગર ખીલેલા કમળ પુષ્પ ( પદ્મકોશ ) ના આકારે શિખરની નમણું છોડવી અને શિખરની ઉંચાઈ સત્તારી કરવી. ૫૩.

૫ ભાગથી ૨૮ ભાગ સુધી નીચે પ્રમાણે  
એકેકે ભાગ વધારવાથી રેખા છોડવાના  
૨૫ બેઠ થાય છે.

૮ ભાગથી ૬૮ સુધી ચાર ચાર ભાગ  
વધારવાથી નીચે પ્રમાણે રેખા છોડ-  
વાના ૧૬ બેઠ થાય છે.

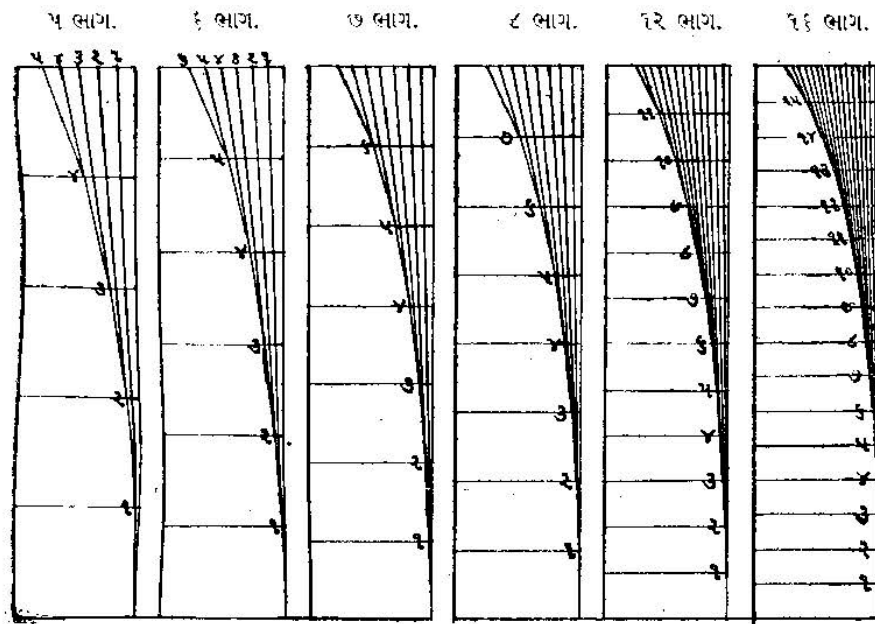


Figure 0.16: Instructions on the curvature of the *Shikhar*. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)



## Introduction



Figure 0.17: Daily wage labour in large scale carving *karkhana* (factory), Pindwara, Rajasthan



Figure 0.18: Small scale *karkhana*, (factory) Palitana, Gujarat. Image courtesy Adam Hardy

## Introduction



Figure 0.19: Low *karigar* numbers during quiet work periods, Palitana carving *karkhana* (factory), Gujarat



Figure 0.20: *Karigars* working on construction site, Palitana, Taleti, Gujarat. Image courtesy Adam Hardy





Figure 0.21: Workshop specialising in high quality *murti* work (statuary), Palitana, Gujarat

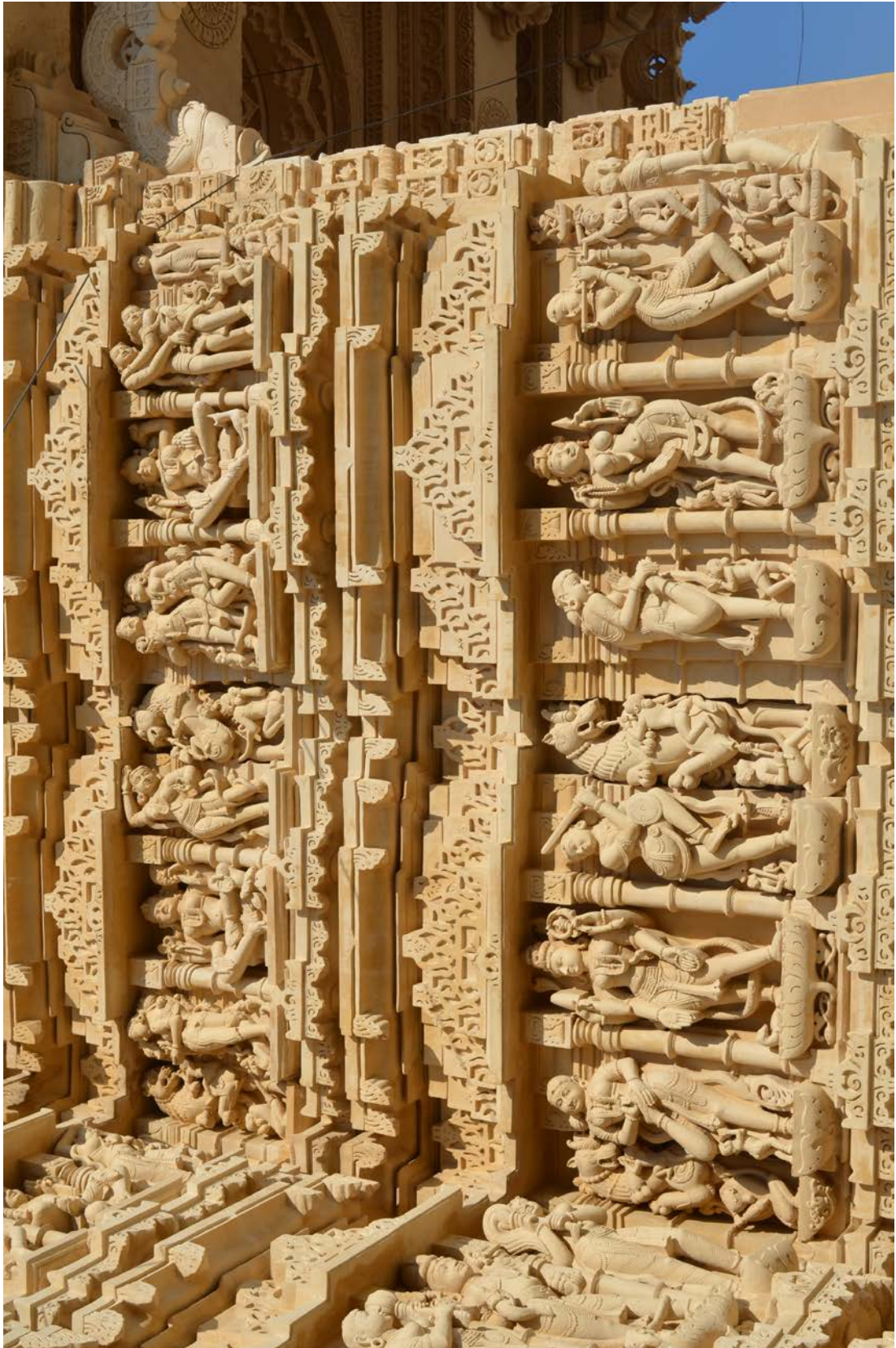


Figure 0.22: *Murti* work supplied by specialist workshop for the Mahavir Swami temple Palitana Taleti, Gujarat (1982). Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia



## Introduction



Figure 0.23: Sanatan Hindu Temple, Wembley, London, UK (2010)



Figure 0.24: The Oshwal Jain temple, Potters Bar, UK (2005)



Figure 0.25: The Shri Krishna Temple, West Bromwich, UK (2010)

### **IMAGE REDACTED**

Figure 0.26: Foundation design by UK based engineering consultants, without the use of steel or ferrous metals. Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, UK (2010) Image removed in line with copyright law

## Introduction

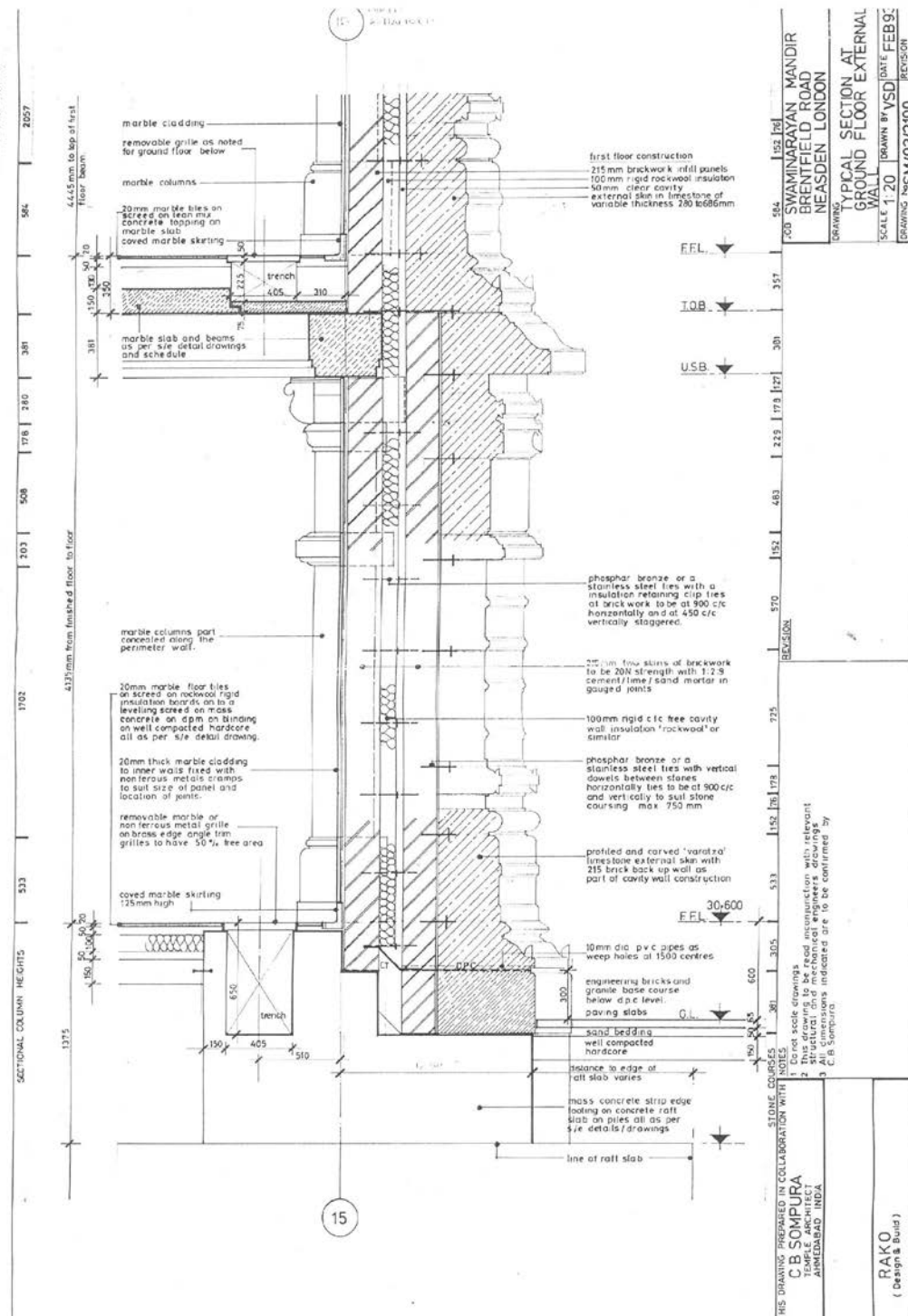


Figure 0.27: Detail of typical section for Building Control approval prepared in conjunction with Sompura temple architects, Swaminarayan Temple, Neasden, UK.(1995) Drawing courtesy BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, London



Figure 0.28: Tours of Gujarat temples undertaken by UK consultants working on Sompura designed temples. Image courtesy David Wareham Associates.





## CHAPTER 1

## Early 20th Century Arenas of ‘Antiquity’ and Nationalism

### Beginnings

*I can count back to three generations . . . but they say we are considered to be inhabitants of the moon (Som). We were invited to this world by the divine architect Vishwakarmaji to build the first Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan, as there were no karigars available to carry out the task. When the temple was completed, there was nothing for us to do. This gave the Gods much to worry about, as they could not send us back. This is when Bhagwan Shiv stepped forward and gave us his blessings saying he will look after us, as long as we continue to practice our work. If you listen carefully to the sound of stone being carved in any factory today, you will hear a distinct ‘tran tak . . . tran tak . . . tran tak.’ Meaning ‘three meals’ in Gujarati, it is Bhagwan Shiv’s blessing and promise to the Sompuras that as long as we are in this world, working with stone, he will look after us.<sup>1</sup>*

.....

*In Sompuri in Saurashtra in the neighbourhood of Somesh Soma performed a sacrifice for washing away his sins. He gladly gave away the entire Sompur as habitat to the highly brilliant brahmins who were selected to be invited to the sacrifice and he also (gave) handsome priestly gifts along with gold and jewels and several other offerings. The foremost brahmanas who were (thus) settled by Soma in Sompuri were to be known as Sompura brahmanas. There is no doubt about this. On the basis of Parvati’s words they were (believed to have) sprung from a tubular passage.<sup>2</sup>*

.....

*One of this learned class of shilp is that of Sompura Brahmin shilpis of Western India. There is a mention of their origin in Prabha skand of Skanda Purana. Earlier, in Som-puri (Prabhas Patan) in Saurashtra, Chandra (Moon) performed Som-Yagna to eliminate the curse of debilitating disease, in which bright Brahmins were invited. Upon completion of the work, the Moon gifted Som-Puri village along with other*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview Mukesh Sompura, Palitana, February 2012

<sup>2</sup> Narmadashankar M. Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*, 2nd edition edn (Dhranghadra, Kathiawad: Sompura, Narmadashankar Muljibhai, 1990 (1st ed. 1939)) p.15 It is with deep sadness that I use the prefix ‘late’ for Prof. Sushila Ambike in helping with the translation of Sanskrit verses in the *Shilparatnakar*. It was customary to accord greatness to people who were not born like ordinary human beings but in a miraculous way. They are considered ‘swayambhu’ i.e. self-born like Brahmadeva on a lotus stalk. Email communication with Prof. Ambike, July 2013

*gems, etc. to propitiate the Brahmins. From them, the Brahmins expert in architectural building work expressed their desire not to accept the gifts. They stressed on continuing to be experts in the knowledge of Shilp.*<sup>3</sup>

.....  
*The word Som means 'moon' and Pura means people who stay in a particular place. Thus Sompura means people who stayed in the moon. When the original Somnath temple was to be constructed, Vishvakarma the divine architect, brought to earth a select few Sompuras from the moon to build the temple. Once the temple was constructed the craftsmen requested Vishvakarma to send them back to the moon. However Vishvakarma told them that they were to stay back and carry on with temple construction.*<sup>4</sup>

.....  
*There are references to origins of Sompura shilpis in ancient scriptures. Sompura shilpis are counted to be auspicious. We will now see how they originated and how they accepted architectural building work:*

*Sompura, who originated in Prabhas Region, and are knower of Shilp Science are the manifestations of Vishwakarma. As ordained by Somnathji, followers of Vishwakarma, creators of stone work, knower of 84 art forms, in 84 types of Brahmins, Sompura Brahmins lived, infused with knowledge of religion, adorned with wealth & royalty and devoted to their work.*<sup>5</sup>

.....  
*In the heart of Sompura Shilpi, described above, Brahma lives. In his both hands Vishnu & Shiva live. In his two eyes, the sun and the moon are seated. And gods live in all his body parts. This is mentioned in the scripture called Sompurana.*<sup>6</sup>

.....  
*It is mentioned that after ascertaining the good and bad characters, the host should welcome the best shilpi and initiate the work. Regarding good and bad characters of the architect, scripture writers say that the architect should be an expert, knowledgeable in scriptures and mathematics, religious, truthful, of good*

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<sup>3</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, ed., *Diparnava* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraoi Sompura, 1960) pp. 33-34. I am most grateful to Bimal Mistry for translating the introduction of the *Diparnava* from Gujarati to English.

<sup>4</sup> Ashish Chandrakant Sompura, 'Architect's Voice', *Vaastuyogam*. November 2011 (2011), 1-4

<sup>5</sup> Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, pp. 34

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 34

*character, sweet talker, non-devious, non-greedy, with many friends, with healthy and without physical disabilities, addiction-free and expert in painting and line drawing work. In Prabhaskhand of Skandhpurana, Sompura Shilpi is counted to be the best.*<sup>7</sup>

.....  
*It is stated that Vishwakarma was born into the lineage of sixth Manu Chakshus. Still, in which era Vishwakarma lived is a question. But he himself lived in every era or like his fragment in each era experts of Vastushashtra were known as Vishwakarma. Even today, in Dravid, Shilpis of Brahmana caste like Sompura are known as Vishwakarma. Similarly in Udiya, Mahapatra Shilpis believe themselves to be incarnations of Vishwakarma. Shilp's deeply knowledgeable man is reincarnation of Vishwakarma. That is why the best of Vastushashtra scriptures created by them are counted to be by Vishwakarma.*<sup>8</sup>

.....  
*Troubled by the rule of king Pruthu, Prithvi (earth) went to complain to Brahma - the creator of the universe. At that time Vishwakarma was sitting there. Prithvi described the harassment on herself. So Brahma called Pruthu and inquired about the facts. Pruthu prayed to Brahmaji "Jagannath! You have made me the ruler of the world. But on earth there are pits, mounds, etc. So to suit the Varnashram Dharma for people's houses, how can we not level the earth to make it plain?" After listening to this statement of King Pruthu, Brahmaji, making both of them fearless, said "Mahipal! Only if you nurture the earth as per rituals, earth (Prithvi) will, without doubt and sin, become suitable for you and your entire animal-kinds' needs. Your places are beautiful. Hence you obtain the services of giver-of-every-fame, Brugu's nephew, Prabha's son, Vishwakarma, after felicitating him. He is very intelligent like Bruhaspati (Jupiter). He has created the Lord of heaven Indra's capital Devpuri & received much fame. He will build villages, towns, cities in your state. Because of which this earth will become habitable like the heaven. So son, you go and do your work and Prithvi you also become beneficial to King Pruthu and Vishwakarma, you too complete King Pruthu's desired works." Thus King Pruthu obtained the services of Vishwakarma and adorned earth (Prithvi) with sculpture-architecture.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 37

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.30

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-25

.....  
*It is mentioned in Skandh Purana that Gods handed over the business of architecture-building to Sompura Shilpis. These Sompura Shilpis received good respect in Western India's Saurashtra, Gujarat, Lat, Kutch, Mewad, Rajasthan and other regions and settled there. Even today some shilpis have farms and lands in Mewad-Marvad. Some families of this community have continued the traditional study of shilp and have preserved the knowledge of shilp. In fact, their study is quite minuscule. But they build temples, etc. as per traditional rituals. They also have a collection of shilp scriptures in some amount. Even today they are experts in this work.*<sup>10</sup>  
.....

*By work completed by the hands of only one shilpi there is benefit. There is fear of death from work done by more hands. Hence residence or temple construction should be done through the hands of only one shilpi. Vishwakarma has said thus.*<sup>11</sup>  
.....

*What will you do with dates? Dates are not given value in our system . . .we have been around for crores of years!*<sup>12</sup>  
.....

## **Two notions of time**

When present day temple makers from the Sompura community speak about their family histories, two notions of time immediately come to the fore, constantly weaving in and out of each other. One involves the movement through linear, historical time and space charting the architectural contributions of individuals in their families. Some can count back to three generations, some eight and all agree that they carry an ancient tradition: a claim to continuity is very much inherent in their self-conceptions.

Within this first historical notion is an idea of a 'before' of temple architecture and the imagined freedoms that architects enjoyed 'then', in relation to a 'now'. The terms *pehley* (before) and *prachin* (ancient) were omnipresent in my unstructured interviews. This idea of a 'before' was different to how historians have charted the chronology of western Indian temple architecture in developmentalist terms, and yet

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.37

<sup>12</sup> Interview, B.K. Trivedi, Ahmedabad, April 2013

drew from generally accepted norms in academia privileging the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century as having produced temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan unsurpassed in their ambition, leaving on the wayside earlier temples of equal if not more ingenuity.<sup>13</sup> Similarly later architecture of Gujarati mosques and temples from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were given due importance, but less than those of the classical age, during my interactions with the Sompuras.<sup>14</sup> These verbalisations sat happily with live practice where in fact they drew from a range of architecture which far exceeded the classical period. (See chapter 6). That the majority of their idealised classical temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan were rediscovered in the late nineteenth century in a ruinous state through individual explorations and colonial surveys gives us glimpses into how some of the current values of the Sompuras could be argued to be invested in an assemblage of modern 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas of rediscovery and beauty as well as pre-existing conceptions.<sup>15</sup> (Figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) Thus claims of continuity have built into them discreet elements of discontinuity.

Braided seamlessly into these family histories is a second notion of history in the time of gods and goddesses, where all ideas of historical time are dispelled. Here *Vishvakarma*, the celestial architect of the universe, whose fragments and reincarnation the Sompuras consider themselves to be, takes precedence.<sup>16</sup> (Figure 1.6) The lived relations with gods and goddesses surrounding 'Sompura' identity and beginnings are no doubt part of a long oral and textual tradition, which have

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<sup>13</sup> See for instance M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65. The majority of the temples quoted by the Sompuras as ideal examples from the past more or less all belonged to this period, the Sun temple at Modhera, Taranga, Dilwara temples on Mt Abu, Kiradu being notable examples.

<sup>14</sup> For example the Moti Shah *tunk*, the Balabhai *tunk* in Shatrunjaya hill, Palitana and the Hutheesing temple in Ahmedabad, all from the mid nineteenth century.

<sup>15</sup> See for example James Burgess and Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: More Especially of the Districts Included in the Baroda State* . . . (London: Bernard Quartich, 1903). Modhera, Rani ki Vav, Rudra Mahalaya, and a number of other 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century temples figure herein. Not all are deserted and ruinous e.g. the Ajitanath temple in Taranga (12<sup>th</sup> century), where, Cousens writes, 'Jainas make pilgrimages to this shrine particularly at the full moons of the month of Kartika and Chaitra'. This through 'rough jungles of the thickest character', rendering access difficult to all.

<sup>16</sup> See the introductions of Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, pp. 21-44, Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*, pp. 9-20

been handed down from one generation to another over a long time,<sup>17</sup> but it is of significance to note that these notions were rediscovered, published and popularised in print media - by individuals from the community - within certain practices of modernity that occurred in Gujarat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as well as an arena of historical writing in the post-independence scenario. These practices are specifically to do with the seepage of modern European ideas of antiquity and conservation, and nationalist arenas of art history and aesthetics into pre-existing practices that the temple builders were already involved with.

In a broad sense the present chapter followed by chapters 3,4, and 5 are interested in those seepages into a set of pre-existing practices, arguing that the lifeworld of the Sompuras reconfigured itself to modern spheres in profoundly specific and innovative ways in the early twentieth century. In the relating of singular histories of individuals I am interested in how the Sompuras domesticated and interacted with modern spheres of influence. While much is known of the colonial and nationalist arenas of knowledge production related to temple architecture, there is a void in how those practices were received and domesticated by the temple makers themselves.

### **The term ‘Sompura’**

It is pertinent to note that in the second quarter of the twentieth century, before independence in 1947, a period ripe with nationalism on cultural and political fronts that identity for the Sompuras as a ‘community’ came to be popularised and rediscovered gaining a certain momentum and purchase on communitarian, public and national fronts.<sup>18</sup> It is not clear whether the term “Sompura”, was in use widely in the nineteenth century for the term *salat*<sup>19</sup> seems to be more prevalent. Certainly

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<sup>17</sup> Both N.M. Sompura and P.O. Sompura quote from the Prabha Skhanda of the Skhanda Purana in narrating the origin myth of the Sompuras as inhabitants of the moon, having taken up residency on the earth after performing a yagna for King Daksha for washing away his sins. This story was narrated to me – albeit with minor differences- by various present day practitioners during fieldwork in Gujarat in 2012 and 2013.

<sup>18</sup> N.M. Sompura, *Shilparatnakar* published in 1939 stands out in this regard. There were other contemporary publications in existence such as Jagannath Ambaram, *Bruhad Shilpashastra* (Ahmedabad, 1936), however it is the former that seems to have left a lasting legacy, in that it is used prolifically by present day temple architects

<sup>19</sup> The term *salat* comes from *shilavat*, or one who works with stone, *shila*. Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, p. 38

through the writings of N.M. Sompura and P.O. Sompura it seems that there is mention of the Sompuras in the *puranas*: a collection of great and minor Sanskrit texts, veritable encyclopaedias in themselves and by far the most extensive sources of Hindu mythology.<sup>20</sup> ‘Sompura shilpi’ is a term of reference used in the *puranas* in relation to architects and sculptors.<sup>21</sup> This occurs in the *Prabha skanda* of the *Skanda purana*. As is well known it is impossible to arrive at any accurate estimate of the Sanskrit texts, as the myths, the inherent subject matter, do not have dates. The approximate date of the *Skanda Purana* has been posited to be anywhere between 700 AD -1150 AD.<sup>22</sup>

From accounts of colonial surveyors James Burgess and Henry Cousens surveying the antiquities of Gujarat in the winter of 1886-87 and 1889-90, it is the *salats* ‘ignorant of Sanskrit’, who possess rough abstracts of original works of *shilpa shastras*.<sup>23</sup> It is with the help of the *salats* that Henry Cousens is able to correlate terminology with architecture before Coomaraswamy, Havell or Kramrisch had started talking of ‘inner meaning’ necessary for the study of Indian temple architecture.<sup>24</sup> A *salat* from Patan using *vastu shashtras* and under the instruction of Henry Cousens reconstructs the plan of the 12<sup>th</sup> century ruined Rudra Mahalaya temple.<sup>25</sup> In 1931, in the first edition of *Somnatha and other medieval temples of Kathiawad*, Cousens uses the word *salat* to denote the builders he encounters in a consecration ceremony on Mount Shatrunjaya in Palitana. In the same volume he makes the point that the Palitana *salats* are bereft of the better taste of their forefathers from the Solanki period.<sup>26</sup> Apart from colonial sources, the biography of Sheth Motishah Amichand a wealthy patron from the Jain community in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Wendy Doniger, *Hindu Myths : A Sourcebook* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 14-18. See also Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present : Forging Contemporary Identities through History* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Co, 2014)

<sup>21</sup> Sompura, ed., *Diparnava* The introduction of the *Diparnava* is replete with references of the Sompuras in the *Prabha skanda* of the *Skanda Purana*. In the introduction of the *Shilparatnakar* the origin myth is also referenced to the *Prabha skanda*.

<sup>22</sup> Doniger, *ibid.* p. 18

<sup>23</sup> Burgess and Cousens, *Architectural Antiquities* . . . p.22

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Plates III and LXXXII

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 65 - 66.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Cousens, *Somanatha and Other Mediaeval Temples in Kathiawad*, 2nd edition edn (Delhi: Indological Book House Delhi, 1986), p.79-85



century refers to Ramji Salat who built the Motishah *tunk* in Palitana and a Premchand Salat who built the Hutheesing temple (1848) in Ahmedabad.<sup>27</sup> Both these names are mentioned in the introduction to the *Diparnava* by P.O. Sompura as Sompura *shilpis*. Crucially in the second edition of the *Shilparatnakar* (1990), one of N.M. Sompura's well-wishers makes the distinction between Sompuras and *salats*, He writes, "with the help of this book, the Sompuras acquired knowledge of architecture and have become well settled in this occupation. If this *granth* had not been published, Sompuras would be doing the work of *salats*"<sup>28</sup>

Beyond the 19th century in the domain of the first half of the twentieth century three moments are of importance in consolidating a group identity around the caste name "Sompura". One of these moments was the publication of the seminal *Shilparatnakar* (1939) by N.M. Sompura, dealt with extensively in Chapter 4, when Sayaji Rao, an eclectic nationalist prince with an interest in oriental manuscripts and antiquities, prompted a young temple maker to translate Sanskrit textual knowledge into Gujarati and provide visual illustrations of injunctions.

Another moment was the rebuilding of the Somnath temple (1951) by P.O. Sompura immediately after independence, propelling the Sompuras into a national arena.<sup>29</sup> The large scale restoration of medieval temples at Ranakpur (15<sup>th</sup> century), Dilwara (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>-centuries), Kumbhariya (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century) and Taranga (12<sup>th</sup> century) through the patronage of the Anandji kalyanji Trust through the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are all significant moments to consider, each of these training Sompura craftsmen in techniques of renovations and material reproduction of details of medieval temples.

Finally another moment came about a decade or so after independence with a spate of publications between 1960 and 1970 by P.O. Sompura when academic knowledge on classical temples started coming into its own through the efforts of art historians like MA Dhaky, who actively consulted with a few temple architects from the Sompura community, namely P.O. Sompura, N.M. Sompura and Amritlal M.

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<sup>27</sup> Motichand Girdharlal Kapdia, *Sheth Motishah*, 2nd edition, Gujarati edn (Mumbai: Shri Godiji Jain Derasar and Trustees of Dharmada Department, 1991) as quoted in Hawon Ku Kim, *Re-Formation of Identity : The 19th-Century Jain Pilgrimage Site of Shatrunjaya, Gujarat* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2007), p. 128

<sup>28</sup> "Some words" by Balkrishna Mahipatram Rawal in Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*

<sup>29</sup> See Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997) pp. and Romila Thapar, *Somanatha : The Many Voices of a History* (London: Verso, 2005) P.O. Sompura was the architect in charge.

Trivedi.<sup>30</sup> All these historical moments, and probably many more, have contributed to the present generation's conception of what it means to be a 'Sompura' hereditary temple maker.

The discussions that follow are ordered in terms of the global and colonial modern context of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the very category of the hereditary temple builder gained prominence within nationalist circuits. They are to be viewed as a preamble to chapter 2, 3, and 4. In chapter 2, I will then move on to the biography of Amritlal Mushankar Trivedi concentrating on some major restoration projects he led and the difference in approach that this *shilpi* embodied in relation to conservation ideals based on 'European affective registers'.<sup>31</sup> In chapter 3, I shall be discussing P.O. Sompura's publications particularly how wider currents of history writing were domesticated into his own publications. I will continue the discussion in chapter 4 on N.M. Sompura's expediciencies, negotiations, innovations and calculations in the writing of the *Shilparatnakar*.

### European and Orientalist configurations

Ideas of modernity and history, in how they came to be translated from a global configuration to a colonial and nationalist one have a bearing on early twentieth century Sompura practices. For instance as we shall see modern conservation impetuses provide opportunities to Amritlal Trivedi's family beginning in the 1930s. Similarly architectural historians from the 1960s encourage and affect P.O. Sompura's textual outputs. And equally a heightened desire for keeping alive the skills needed for building temples in the style of 'ancient' architecture prompts Sayaji Rao to encourage N.M. Sompura to compile the *Shilparatnakar*.

A sketch is necessary to set-up the 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural arenas since the years 1920-1940 are considered to be a crucial phase within the disciplinary formation of India's art history deriding colonial approaches to Indian art and architecture.<sup>32</sup> This is precisely the phase when publications start emerging by the

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<sup>30</sup> See M A Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 71 (1997), 65-85

<sup>31</sup> See Deborah Sutton, 'Devotion, Antiquity, and Colonial Custody of the Hindu Temple in British India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 47.1 (2013), 135-66

<sup>32</sup> See Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New Indian Art : Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, C.1850-1920* Camb. U. P., 1992, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Series: Cultures of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters : A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*

Sompuras, and a surge in commissions is noticeable. At this point it is important to stress that there was an ongoing pre-existing building practice in the mid nineteenth century which encountered global currents, the latter primarily to do with European notions of antiquity. The prolific building of new *tunks* in Palitana by the ancestors of the present generation of Sompuras, and an ongoing interest on the part of the craftsmen and their patrons in translating and interpreting *vastushastra* texts are at least two instances that demonstrate a dynamic tradition unburdened by ideas of 'antiquity' and 'nationhood'.<sup>33</sup> Patrons at this point were merchants from the Jain community who were not working under the frameworks of 'antiquity' or the nation rather keen on establishing their reputation for creditworthiness and prestige.<sup>34</sup>

Chief amongst the global currents were principles of historical time that were articulated in the European enlightenment, which became inextricably tied-in to understandings of material remains as well as their conservation. The historical method of enlightenment France demarcated the past and the present as distant conceptions leading to a new western taste for the antique.<sup>35</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> century ideas of archaeology specifically dealt with the material remains of classical antiquity, building on the earlier Renaissance recuperation of Greco Roman past. These 18<sup>th</sup> century ideas of taste came into their own in the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and a heightened awareness in contemporaneous literature of the period that the past 'had disappeared into the mists of time, never to return'.<sup>36</sup>

In the context of India, orientalist notions of antiquity – particularly in the shift from philology to archaeology in the 1840s and 50s - were a direct extension of the above European modes servicing imperial knowledge production; in Guhathakurta's words the 'deduction of history from stone, and from the compelling belief that material remains formed the only authentic repository of history', moving beyond the myths and fables of textual sources into hard evidence.<sup>37</sup> This approach was quite

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(Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922 : Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

<sup>33</sup> See 'Personal note' in Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, pp. 59-64

<sup>34</sup> Kim, pp. 93-130

<sup>35</sup> Partha Mitter, 'Monuments and Memory for Our Times', *South Asian Studies*, 29.1 (2013), 159-67, p.161

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 162. See also Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Alex Potts, *History of the Art of Antiquity* (Los Angeles, Calif: Getty Research Institute, 2006)

<sup>37</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, p.32

different to the single pioneering attempt of Ram Raz's (1790-1830) in decoding regional textual sources into drawn translations to understand medieval temple architecture from the South, this with the help of living practitioners, who were no doubt familiar with the architecture and who would have aided the drawn representations.<sup>38</sup>

It is well known that the new colonial enterprise came about in the pioneering scholarly activities of James Fergusson acting in an individual capacity (1808-86) – laying the ground for the modern history of Indian architecture.<sup>39</sup> Fergusson was closely followed by Alexander Cunningham (1814-93), who initiated the first institutional survey for the documentation of Indian antiquities by founding the Archaeological Survey of India (henceforth ASI) in 1861.<sup>40</sup> The ASI's surveying mandate proliferated into the arena of conservation in the later years under the directorship of John Marshall whose *Manual of Conservation* composed in 1923 elaborated on aesthetic codes of conservation.<sup>41</sup> While this manual was not directly imposed on the Sompuras, the principles were certainly desired by the overseers of the restorations in the temples of Ranakpur and Dilwara, the chief overseer being the Bombay based architectural firm Gregson Batley King which will resurface time and again in chapter 2.

The birth of the ASI as is well known was embedded in the rhetoric of imperial obligation, where colonial archaeology was equated to gaining knowledge of the subcontinent in order to rule it.<sup>42</sup> Although Fergusson's and Cunningham's specific methodological approaches are distinct, in both instances a pan Indian, comprehensive and *historical* conception of antiquities is vividly marked out. In both instances, it is important to note that it is the study of the ancient and medieval past that generated interest, vested entirely in its material remains. In the rare instance

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNC, 2015, Adam Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarāṇgasūtradhāra', *South Asian Studies*, 25.1 (2009), 41-62

<sup>39</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* pp. 5-7

<sup>40</sup> Cunningham was a Surveyor with the ASI between 1861-1865 and its Director General (1871-1885)

<sup>41</sup> John Hubert Sir Marshall, *Conservation Manual : A Handbook for the Use of Archaeological Officers and Others Entrusted with the Care of Ancient Monuments* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1923)

<sup>42</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* p.30

when it touched contemporaneous outputs of the *salats* and *sthapatis* of western India, assessments were largely derogatory. Burgess for instance looking specifically at Gujarat 'where the men have *silpa sastras*', writes disparagingly about the style becoming debased, comparing unfavourably with the purer style of earlier and better days.<sup>43</sup> For him this was due to a loss of interest in old mechanical and artificial rules, at variance with the conceptions he was looking at. Clearly there is a different set of vantage points being used in relation to the temple makers when talking about their work.

### **Nationalist reconfiguration: Expanding aesthetic criteria**

Questioning the methodologies of the above two pioneers and their successors, the opening years of the twentieth century saw fundamental shifts in approaching objects of Indian art and architecture, through the work of key writers such as the reformist art teacher E.B. Havell (1861-1934), the Sinhalese English scholar and prime ideologue of Indian art A.K. Coomaraswamy (1887-1947), and the Indologist Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993). Their writings emphasised textual canons in an effort to define a new direction as sources of legitimising a new nationalist conscience. Havell's publications *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908) and *The Ideals of Indian Art* (1911) emphasised the exclusively spiritual and transcendental qualities to Indian art ideas reverberating in the writings of his close collaborator and the cult nationalist and Bengali artist Abanindranath Tagore which 'fed on the polarities between Western naturalism and Eastern symbolism'.<sup>44</sup> Abanindranath was in turn Havell's supplier of Sanskrit aesthetic texts in determining 'correct' and 'authentic' information for his writings.<sup>45</sup> Havell's writings on the 'Indian craftsman' in *Indian architecture* (1913) praised the hereditary craftsman – able to work with *vastu shastras* - for his genuine and vital craftsmanship, deriding any exchanges with PWD work culture or for that matter Indo Sarascenic architecture popular with both the PWD and local ruling princes.

A younger contemporary of Havell's, Coomaraswamy's writings fashioned the image of Indian art as essentially a mental activity: idealistic, mystical and spiritual explicated in the *The Dance of Shiva* (1924), *The Transformation of Nature in Art*

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<sup>43</sup> Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Western India* (India society, 1926) pp. 21-32, p.22

<sup>44</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* pp. 156-159

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

(1934), *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908) and *The Indian Craftsman* (1909).<sup>46</sup> These earlier texts were also aligned with anti-industrialisation sentiments of the English Arts and Crafts movement pointing to alienation in traditional crafts societies. For Kramrisch, by relying on the Vedas, Agamas, Puranas and Vastushastras, the 'Traditions' of the Indian craftsman came to be essentialised in 'The Principle' of the Hindu temple. In *The Hindu Temple* (1946) and a short article *Traditions of the Indian Craftsman* (1958), the Principle is defined as the source and origin of his calling, known in the name of Brahma and Vishvakarma, the sum total of creative consciousness'.<sup>47</sup> The ultimate quality of The Principle could not be taught, transmutating skill and competence and if it was practiced outside the Vedic pale, it did not carry the same dignity; it was not considered hallowed.<sup>48</sup>

Kramrisch's case is particularly demonstrative of the obsession with a timeless and anonymous notion of craftsmen with this collective of scholars. As my own oral history work revealed, she was very much in touch with Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's family particularly Trivedi and his nephew Chandubhai Trivedi who was confident in English, and could communicate with her.<sup>49</sup> During the renovation of the Dilwara temples, she visited the construction site now and then, seeking help with the translation of Sanskrit texts, however those concrete everyday encounters with actual craftsmen were not her concern. Even if they were at the back of her mind, they did not meet her approval. In *Artist, Public and Patron in India* she cursorily mentions 'a family of architects from Gujarat and Rajasthan' who could be traced back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century during the time of the architect Mandana, but accords them with architectural degeneration compared to the Mandana workshop.<sup>50</sup> This

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<sup>46</sup> Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva*, revised edition edn (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1971, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and C. R. Ashbee, *The Indian Craftsman ... With a Foreword by C. R. Ashbee* (London: Probsthain & Co., 1909, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, 2nd ed. edn (London: Constable and Company, 1956, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (Broad Campden Essex House Press, 1908)

<sup>47</sup> Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*. ed. by Raymond Burnier (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), Stella Kramrisch, 'Traditions of the Indian Craftsman', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 71.281 (1958), 224-30

<sup>48</sup> Kramrisch, 'Traditions of the Indian Craftsman', p.229

<sup>49</sup> Interview with B.K. Trivedi, Ahmedabad 2013

<sup>50</sup> Stella Kramrisch, 'Artist, Patron, and Public in India', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 15.3 (1956), 335-42, p.336

said the Sompuras hold her in high regard as someone who uplifted the status of *bharatiya sthapatya kala* or Indian architecture to a national plane.

In short, these individuals argued, compellingly, for a spiritual, metaphysical dimension and inner meaning in the appreciation of Indian art and architecture, deriding the strictly 'archaeological and Eurocentric approach' of Cunningham and Fergusson, and their successors like James Burgess and Henry Cousens. The nationalists positioned themselves as champions of an aesthetic and 'Indian' point of view, privileging an enquiry into the values "actually attached to the art by those for whom it was made".<sup>51</sup>

This nationalist turn although important, rested on binaries such as the materialistic west and spiritual east, through the careful policing of east and west boundaries, whereas as we shall see practices on the ground were far more heterogeneous during the time of these writings, knitting together several paradigms. Second the new breed of nationalists could not extricate themselves from a particular logic of colonial historical consciousness where their compelling values were by and large articulated in relation to ancient and medieval art and architecture, not the vast repository of temples and social trajectories *in their becoming* through the works of constituencies like the Sompuras. These remained overshadowed. Third, when strands of the nationalists *did* acknowledge modern hereditary temple builders – such as in Havell's *Indian Architecture* – their subjects were cast as possessing an essentialist 'real' and 'vital' quality in a sense that was *opposite* to the roles they were given in the employment of the Public Works Department (PWD), the colonial constructional agency. Here their imagination was seen to be curbed by hierarchies of contractors and subordinate Public Works Officials. Instead of seeing these native practices as conjunctural, flexible, improvisary and accommodating foreign influences, Havell in *Indian architecture* could not look beyond essentialising differences. It is worth understanding how, because many of these attitudes tempered the patrons of the Sompuras in the coming years including contemporary representations mentioned in the introduction.

### **Essentialising difference**

The PWD (Public Works Department) officials, Havell argued, imposed 'archaeological styles' – Indo Saracenic, Renaissance or any other European style -

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<sup>51</sup> Pramod Chandra and American Institute of Indian Studies, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), p.24

on Indian masons, the styles 'deadly in their monotony, lacking all the essentials of 'real' architecture'.<sup>52</sup> Since this native hereditary architect had no share in 'designing', Havell claimed that his full worth was not realised under PWD employment. As a result 'native' modern buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century outside the departmental enclave came to be privileged over 'betise' epitomised by buildings commissioned by the PWD. Two specific contemporary examples demonstrating these oppositions constructed by Havell could be found in the modern town of Lakshar in Gwalior State. These were the general street scenes untouched by the PWD (Figure 1.7) and the 'Greek temple' General Post Office building (Figure 1.8). One stood for possibilities without the supervision of the European engineer architect, and the other 'blighting the life of Indian craftsmanship'. These binaries seem to lose meaning when seen in relation to the Sompuras' own activities which embraced and negotiated diverse set of 'western' paradigms, from the collection of everyday artefacts like picture postcards of winged angels and cherubs (Figure 1.0) to the reconfiguring of colonial forms of knowledge in their modern *vastu shastras* (Chapter 4)

In contrast temple Trusts were applauded for engaging *sthapatis* and masons – learned in *shilpashastras* – for 'helping to keep alive the traditions of Indian architecture and many of the crafts dependants on it'.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 1.9) In the teasing out of what was 'real' and 'vital', 'genuine' and 'authentic', questions of hybridity, heterogeneity were averted for as we shall see in the following biographies, ancestors of both Amritlal Trivedi and P.O. Sompura as a matter of practicality and expediency engaged with a diverse set of fluid practices, outside the remit of temple design. They worked under Maharajas as State architects and under British engineers in the construction of Indo Sarascenic conceptions. This heterogeneity continues in the present generation's work where new contexts and patronage generates new spatial cultures and social practices.

### **'Inner meaning' and the profession of architecture**

Before shifting my attention to individual trajectories of the Sompuras, I wish to highlight two legacies of the above complex of nationalist orientations of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that had an impact on parallel and later attitudes concerning patronage. This is to do with the formalisation of the profession of architecture and that of the

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<sup>52</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian Architecture* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co, 1913), p.228

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.227



post-Independence architectural history writing scene, particularly early and medieval temple architecture from western India. These were separate clusters of activity which did not directly have much to do with each other at all except that strands of the profession and strands of architectural historians began to develop a common interest in living hereditary temple makers, for their own separate agendas.

The 'Profession' of architecture, had by and large by passed hereditary temple makers as from its very beginning its roots lay in the institutional training of architectural employees – for low level PWD employment - in engineering schools set up by the British in Madras, Roorkee and Howrah.<sup>54</sup> Following the establishment of the first 'draughtsmen's certificate' course at the Sir JJ School of Art, in 1907, more substantial courses were developed with the intention of training professionals over five-year diploma courses gaining exemption from the final examination of the RIBA in London. It is indeed in the 1920s more or less parallel with all the above nationalism that the J.J. School got recognition from the RIBA and the Indian institute of Architects (IIA) was formed in 1929 to represent the interests of professional architects throughout India.<sup>55</sup>

A leading voice within this professional scene was that of British architect and educator Claude Batley (1879-1956), whose contributions in shaping an institutional discourse surrounding a revivalist Anglo Indian Architecture, had wide and long reaching implications not least for the profession, but also for the Sompuras. His orientations were towards a range of 'Indian traditions' and by default its living practitioners, resisting European classicism and modernist trends and styles imported from the west. Arriving in India in 1913 he formed an architectural practice - Gregson Batley King - with two other British architects, also heading the J.J. School from 1924-1943, where he devised educational curricula more suited to the 'Indian context' than British, making students 'study their own past':

The object in view of both my predecessors in office and by myself has been rather to bring out the reasoning powers of individual students, so that they may understand the *inner meaning* of the old forms and their original function and may develop and modernise them and gradually produce an

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<sup>54</sup> See Jon T. Lang and others, *Architecture and Independence : The Search for Identity - India 1880 to 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 142

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 143-144

architecture *Indian in character*, but at the same time as suited to present day India, as the old styles were to their own times and environment.<sup>56</sup>

And deriding the modernist orientations of young Indian architects, he urged them to research their own sources to develop a 'Modern Indian architecture' on the solid basis of their own traditions:

It is pathetic that India's youngest generations of Indian architects should. . . prefer to take their cue from hastily developed inadequately tested, but ready to hand ideas of the West, rather than by their own intense and critical but respectful research, develop a modern Indian architecture, on the solid basis of their own traditions.<sup>57</sup>

In Batley's voice, we again see the sifting out of the modern with the traditional. His nationalist orientations found deep sympathies with the industrialist Kasturbhai Lalbhai, in charge of the Anandji Kalyanji Trust. While Batley was openly critical of Western architectural imports of young Indian architects, he unproblematically imported with him English ideals of conservation, which he tried to impose on the Sompura shilpis during the restoration of the Ranakpur temple.<sup>58</sup> As we shall see these were mostly rejected by the practicing *shilpis*.

The other legacy of nationalist orientations I wish to highlight is the impact it had on studies in Indian temple architecture particularly in the enterprise of correlating text with extant monuments. The impact of Ram Raz's *An Essay on the architecture of the Hindus* as well as of the transcendentalists was also accompanied by a massive effort in locating and translating medieval texts that began to consider art and architecture during the process of conceptualisation. It showed them an incredibly sophisticated and nuanced system of thought already in place. In particular, the correlation of architectural terms with architecture, bringing out specific nuances and character, in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the publication of a spate of dictionaries by scholars like Manmohan Ganguli (1912) in

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<sup>56</sup> Batley, as quoted in *ibid.* p. 143

<sup>57</sup> Batley as quoted in *ibid.* p.196

<sup>58</sup> John E. Cort, 'Communities, Temples, Identities: Art Histories and Social Histories in Western India', in *Ethnography and Personhood: Notes from the Field*. ed. by Meister Michael W (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2000), pp. 101-28

the context of Orissan artisans, N.K. Bose (1932) again in the context of Orissan architecture and P.K. Acharya (1927), who famously translated Sanskrit architectural terms from the *Manasara* but was unsuccessful in correlating those with architecture. Coomaraswamy too in response to Acharya's misguided attempts published his own compilation of Indian architectural terms. It is in this cultural milieu that N.M. Sompura published his ingenious *Shilparatnakar* aimed at Gujarati practitioners and not this abovementioned parallel academic world, with marked differences from the nationalist discourse that they were steeped in.

However it is the 1960s that work with hereditary temple builders made a visible turn, with practitioners like Amritlal Sompura, P.O. Sompura and others coming into fruitful collaboration with art and architectural historians of Western India. The historians were M.A. Dhaky and Krishna Deva working tirelessly in the understanding of architecture on a regional and sub regional basis, overlapping it with a meticulously chronological stance. It is during this time that seminal works were written by these historians and others like the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* planned, new classifications such as the 'Maru Gurjara' invented and old ones embedded in texts, discovered. These directions reverberated with the writings of Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshilal, a leading novelist and politician in the Gujarati language, who made the reconstruction of a Gujarati golden age between the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries an important part of his literary agenda.<sup>59</sup> The dependence on the Sompuras for texts and help with understanding them is well known, so is appearance of articles written by P.O. Sompura in art history publications.<sup>60</sup> What is of interest is that their tone and content appears to be altered and standardised to match the art historians' voice, bringing out questions of editorial control.

### Conclusion

This chapter shows the colonial, nationalist and post-independence cultural arenas that the Sompuras were working within. Primarily a new interest in those architects not schooled in formal education captured the imaginations of British and Indian nationalists as sources to understand 'indigenous' conceptions of tradition as well as live architectural practice. These led to the creation of binaries such as

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<sup>59</sup> Davis, p.211

<sup>60</sup> See for instance P.O. Sompura's contributions in Pramod Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 1-39

## Chapter 1

discernible in Havell's writings. While the Sompuras interacted with archaeologists, educators and historians throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup>- century, what has not been assimilated by art and architectural history is that they also domesticated and negotiated historical knowledge for their own purpose, not strictly abiding by its rules. The very fact that they were practitioners and not historians, was always already their mark of difference. It is to architectural practice in an everyday material sense that I now turn.

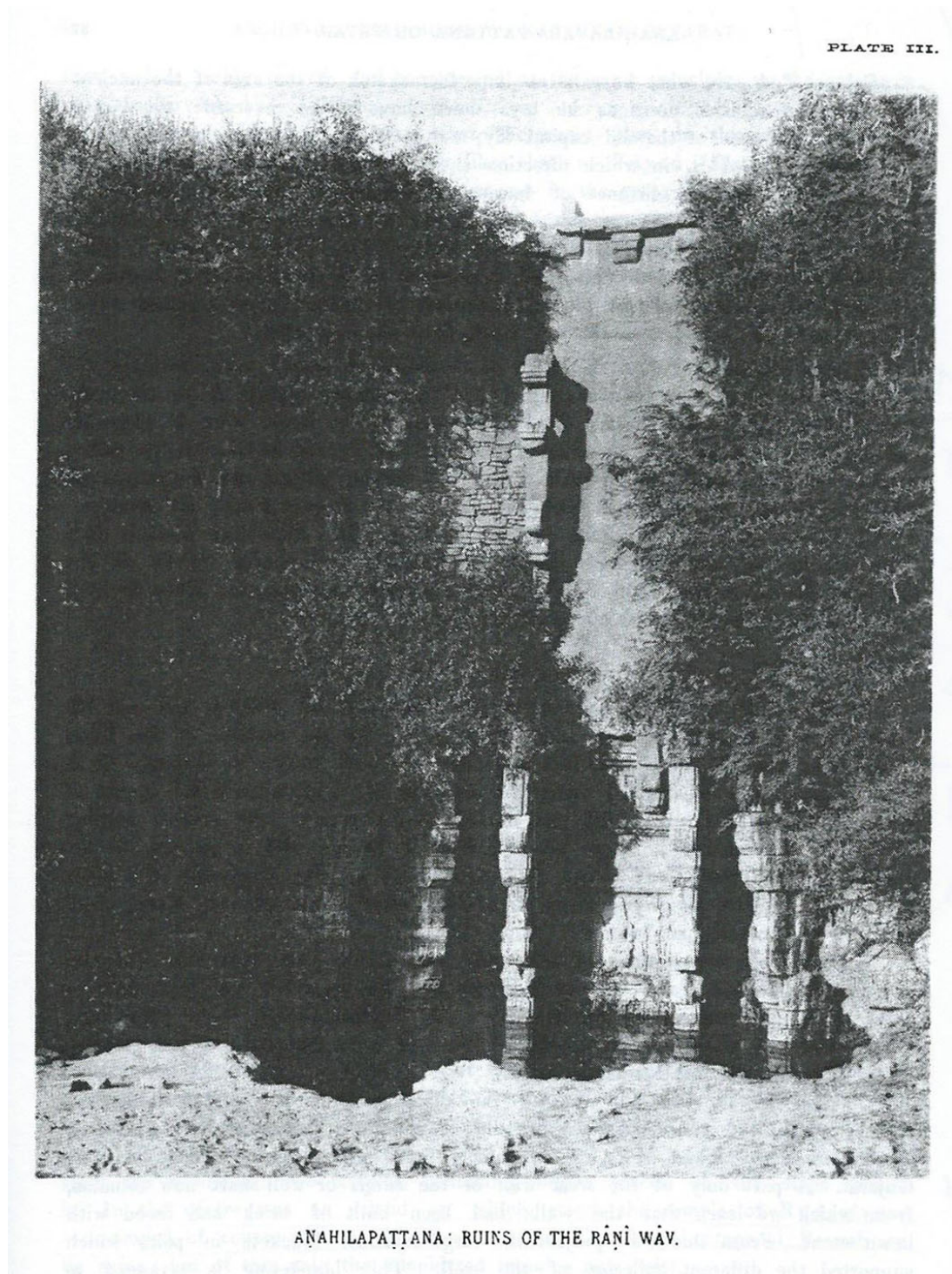


Figure 1.1: Ruins of the Rani ki Vav, Mehsana district, Gujarat (11<sup>th</sup> century). Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: more especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State. . .* (1903)

Figure 1.0: An unusual postcard entry showing a European winged cherub within a collection of postcards comprising of Indian salon artist Ravi Varma's (1848-1906) paintings. The album of postcards belonged to Amritlal Mulshankar Trvedi (1910-2005), a legendary figure within the Sompura community of Gujarat.





MODHERA: THE GREAT TEMPLE.

Figure 1.2: Ruins of the Sun Temple, Modhera (11<sup>th</sup> century). Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: more especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State*. . . (1903)



Figure 1.3: Ruins of Tri Murti Temple, Kasara (11<sup>th</sup> century?). Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: more especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State*. . . (1903)



Figure 1.4: Ruins of Bawandvhaja temple, Sarotra. Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: more especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State. . .* (1903)



Figure 1.5: Temple ruins at Chandravati. Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: more especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State. . .* (1903)

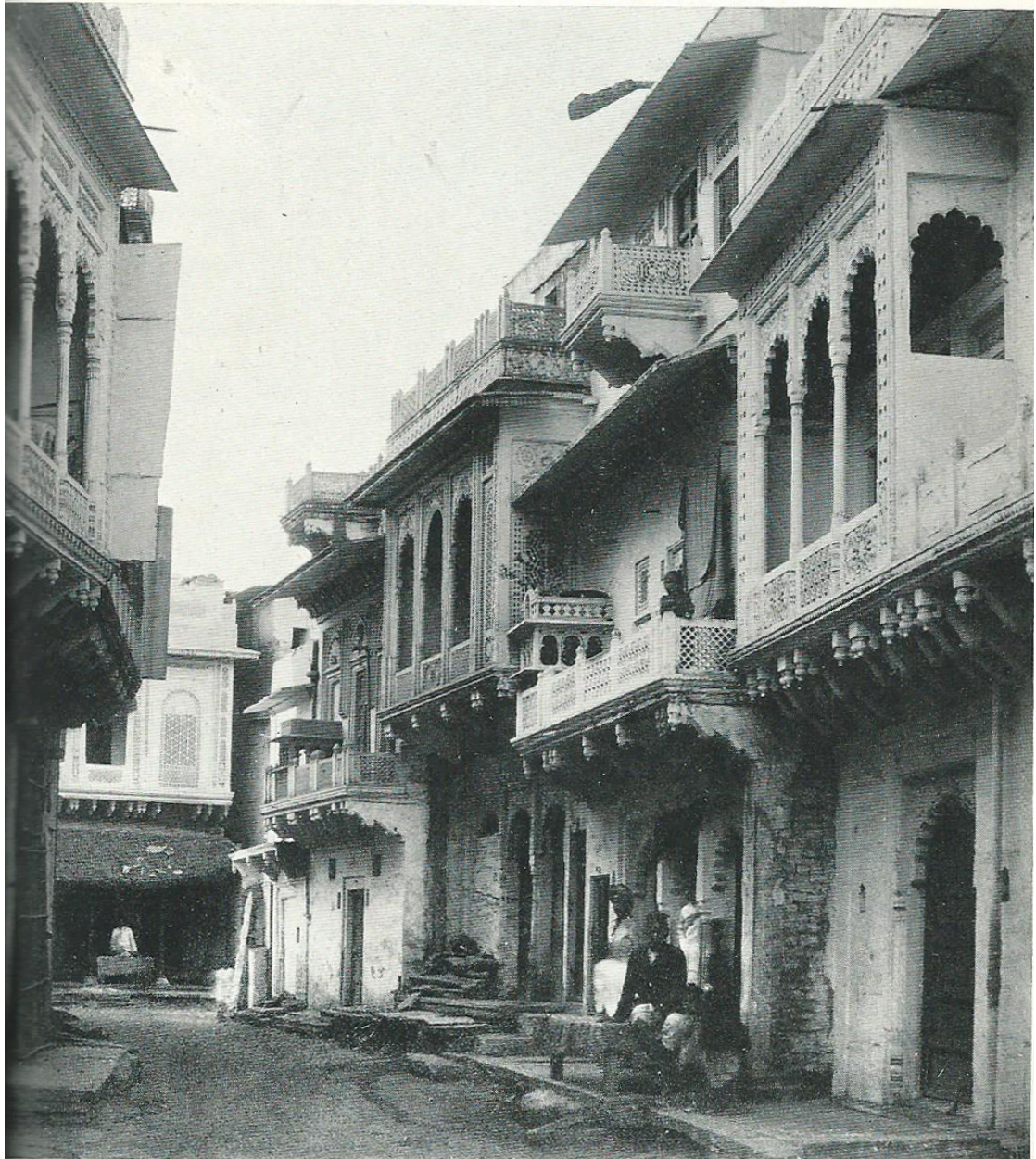




Figure 1.6: Vishvakarma the celestial architect of the universe. Image from the cover of *Bruhadshilpashastra* Part III (1936)



PLATE CXXII

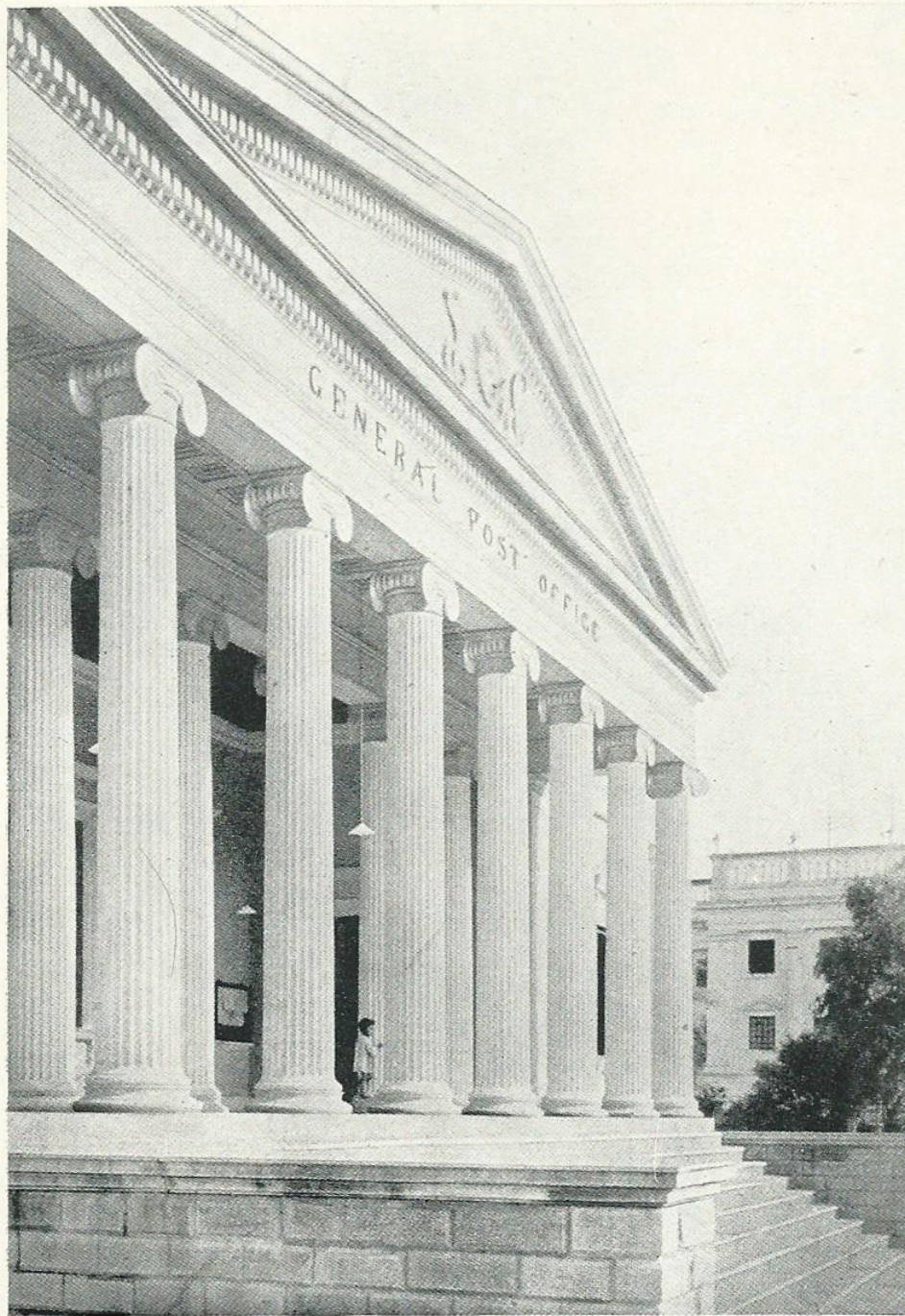


STREET IN A MODERN MASTER-BUILDER'S TOWN (LASHKAR)

Figure 1.7: Street scene lauded by E.B. Havell, Lakshar, Gwalior. Image from *Indian Architecture* (1913)



PLATE CXXV



POST OFFICE, LASHKAR

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Figure 1.8: 'Greek Temple' post office: architectural 'betise' derided by E.B. Havell, Lakshar, Gwalior. Image from *Indian Architecture* (1913)



PLATE CXII

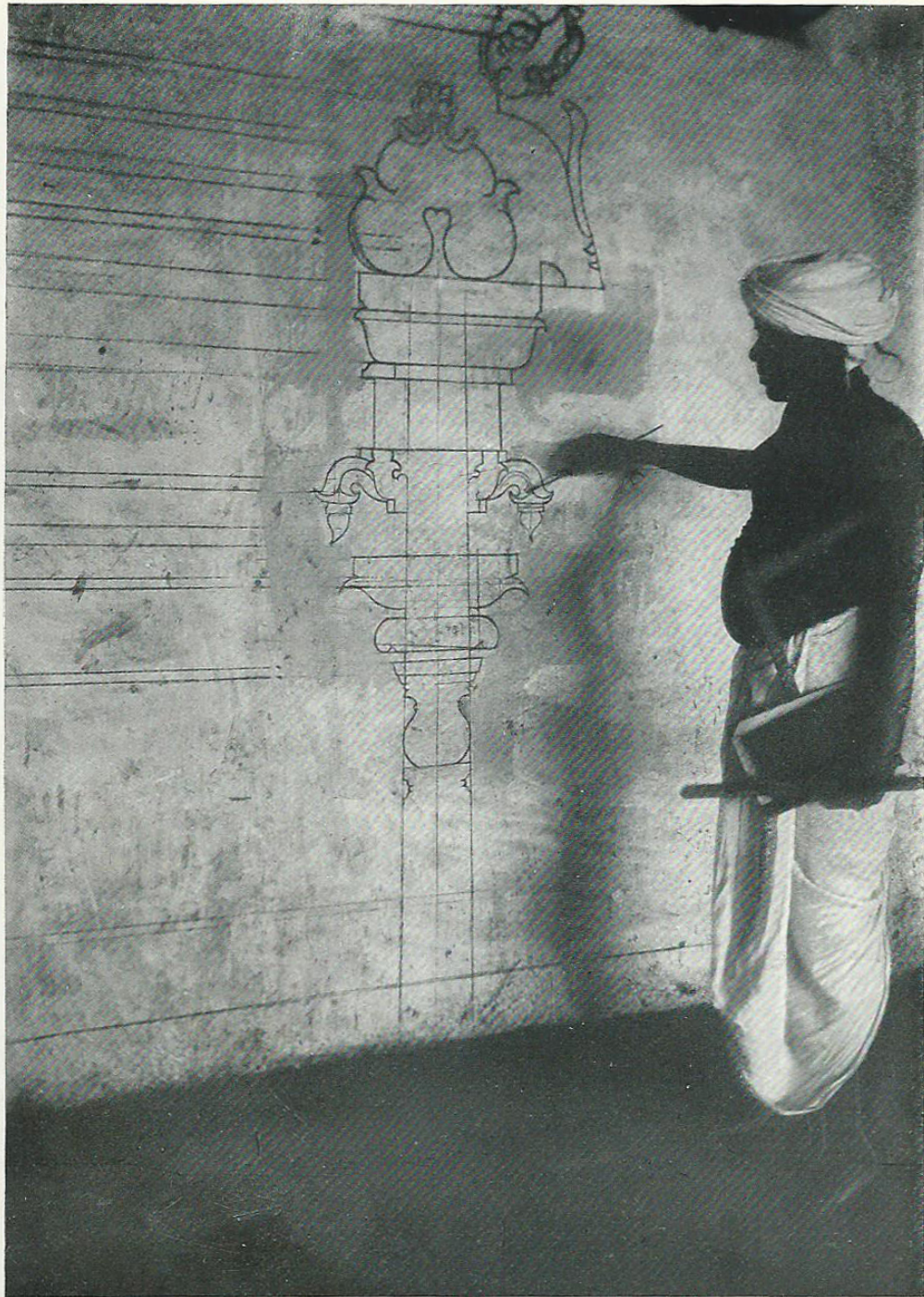


Photo [y]

[Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy

A SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE STAPATHI

224a]

Figure 1.9: A temple sthapati learned in *shilpa Shastra*. Image from *Indian Architecture* (1913)







## CHAPTER 2

## **Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi: Acquiring and Transmitting Material Practices of *Jirnoddhar***

### **Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi**

Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi (1910-2005) is considered to be one of the three most well regarded figures within the Sompura community for his expertise on a range of skills and the breath of works undertaken.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 2.1). With around seventy projects to his credit including both new builds, and renovations concerning primarily temples but also other typologies at a range of scales, Trivedi demands attention for understanding how the Sompuras responded to shifting contexts across the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and how architecture was implicated in this process. In particular, of interest to the chapter is understanding how different registers of modern historical consciousness were negotiated in different moments of time. Through the examples of large scale renovations at Ranakpur (1930s) and Mount Abu (1950s) elite notions of history and conservation were negotiated preferring instead an idea of continuum, which was unpalatable to the latter. Through examples of new build activity at Mount Shatrunjay Palitana in the 1980s, an idea of continuum is again expressed, but through a highly selective process that idealised classical Solanki era temples. Through an example of a complex of temple, museum and memorial on the outskirts of Delhi, Trivedi demonstrates an ingenuity that shows how an architectural lineage can be transformed innovatively into new paradigms. Unlike P.O. Sompura's family, which can be traced back to intense temple building activity in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Palitana, Amritlal's lineage did not go as far back, in that his grandfather was a farmer and his own father - for most of his career - an architect with the princely state of Dhrangadhra in the late nineteenth century.

Some of Trivedi's most notable projects include large scale, long term *jirnoddhars* or renovations of the Vimal Vasahi temple (1150 AD, Figure 2.2) and the Luna Vasahi temple (1230 AD, Figure 2.3) in the Dilwara temple complex at Mount Abu, Rajasthan between 1951-63, through lavish patronage from the Anandji Kalyanji Trust. Thereafter employment with the same Trust in Palitana as the resident *shilpi* for a number of years led to a number of large scale renovation

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<sup>1</sup> The other two figures who have contributed in exceptional terms are Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura (Chapter 4) and Prabhashankar Oghadbhai Sompura (Chapter 3)

works, new gateways (Figure 2.4), rest houses (Figure 2.5, 2.6), Jain temples on Mount Shatrunjaya (Figure 2.7) as well as on the base of the hill in Palitana (Figure 2.8) Outside the remit of the Trust, one of his most innovative projects is the Atma Vallbh Smarak (1998) on the outskirts of New Delhi, pushing structural boundaries to limits (Figure 2.9). More recently with the help of his late son Krishna Chandra Trivedi, and grandson Virendra Trivedi, he was involved with the conceptualising of the BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham temple complexes in Houston (2004), Chicago (2004) and New Delhi (2005).<sup>2</sup>

### Repertoire of skills

Amritlal Trivedi has a firm place as a rare 'master builder' in the memory and imaginations of the present day practitioners, particularly offshoots of his family. Not only present day temple makers, but patrons who have commissioned his buildings, and workshop owners specialising in carving, who dealt with him, remember him as one of a breed that does not exist today due to splits in skills and spaces of production, as well as changing patronage.<sup>3</sup> There is agreement that working directly on stone for temple architects - for instance - is a skill consigned to a bygone era, except in very rare instances.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this, his grasp of the classical language of the *Nagar shaili* is well known, predominantly drawing on the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> - century, encompassing his ability to draw on *shastras* in imaginative ways.

Amritlal Trivedi was an expert in building processes and technologies concerning not only load bearing stone construction in the tradition of the *Nagar shaili*, but also cement concrete, deploying complex casting processes. These he tested on a large scale at a Jain temple at Mount Girnar in the 1980s and a smaller scale at the Sompura Kelavani Centre in Ahmedabad (Figure 2.10, 2.11). The fluidity in the use of different materials is suggestive of an openness to client's limitations rather than any hard ideas of 'authenticity' invested in the use of stone. In addition, his repertoire included sculpting with extreme finesse in clay and Plaster of

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<sup>2</sup> For his involvement on the BAPS Akshardham complex in New Delhi, see Kavita Singh, 'Temple of Eternal Return: The Swaminarayan Akshardham Complex in Delhi', *Artibus Asiae*, 70.1 (2010), 47-76

<sup>3</sup> For a survey of current splits in skills and spaces of production, see Megha Chand Inglis, 'Factory Processes and Relations in Indian Temple Production', in *Industries of Architecture: Relations, Process, Production*. ed. by Nick Beech Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff (London: Routledge, 2015 ), pp. 114-124

<sup>4</sup> Such as in the case of sculptor and architect Arvind Acharya (Sompura), resident of Palitana, Gujarat

Paris. Both these material processes were essential in finalising shapes before sculpting began in stone or casting began in cement concrete. The examples shown include figures cast and detailed in Plaster of Paris by Amritlal Trivedi rescued by his grandson from the Dilwara restoration (Figure 2.12, 2.13, 2.14). These works were executed in the style of the existing temple as found (Figure 2.15). In the renovation process, the Plaster of Paris stage came after the figures had been modelled in clay and the desired shape accomplished. Before the clay dried out and cracked, complex rubber moulds would be prepared for pouring the Plaster of Paris. This direct working knowledge was dovetailed with the ability to think through projects at a larger scale.

To offshoots of his immediate family, during informal interviews, they saw themselves progressing on his *marg darshan* (guidance). They attributed much of what they knew to his efforts and direction discernible in his architecture and the staggering number of drawings (Figure 2.16, 2.17), working models (Fig 2.18) and sketchbooks (Figure 2.19) preserved in the family archive. These were regularly referred to. Currently many of these drawings are being digitised.

In the room that I conducted unstructured interviews with his eighty year old son, grandsons and great grandchildren, hand drawn line drawings and paintings hung on the walls, filled plan chests and cupboards. Sketchbooks comprising of photocopies of sketches by him lay at arm's length for ready reference. As one of his grandsons, himself an accomplished temple maker leafed through the sketchbooks, and talked through the drawings there was a palpable sense of a tacit transmission of practices even in his absence through these drawings. In one example I was shown a drawn detail of a carving pattern, with the shaded realism intended to convey three dimensions, 'shading' or 'naturalism' being relatively modern imports of colonial desire that had been appropriated and popularised by salon artists like Ravi Verma using European academic art techniques with the Indian body as its subject. In one photograph album, postcards of famous Ravi Verma paintings were preserved carefully (Figure 2.20)

In other examples I was shown sketches exploring various postures assumed by Gods and Goddesses. Then there were scaled drawings showing schematics for all the projects that he implemented. In the full size detail production drawings that the Sompuras made, up until the advent of computers in the early 1990s, comprising of entire wall elevations and *shikhars* (temple spire), shading again finds a central place in working drawings, meant for *karigars* to understand the depth of carving. There are echoes of the colonial survey drawings that Burgess and



Cousens modes of architectural representation, where flat elevations are given depth by shading. In yet another fascinating painting by Amritlal of a seated Vishvakarma, dated 1938, we get a glimpse of his assimilation of modern representational strategies, in action (Figure 2.21). Vishwakarma is flicking his beads sitting in a large palace like space, adjacent to a lake, adorned with billowing curtains suspended from columns embellished with details common to Gujarati temples. The details on the *misraka* column in the background are very much from the high medieval period such as at Modhera and Dilwara.

During informal interviews, his son once remarked that Amritlal Trivedi wanted to become a *chitrakar* (painter) and became a *shilpi* (sculptor) 'by chance'. It is then worth paying attention to Amritlal's formative years, the kind of milieu he grew up in, how he acquired his skills in designing and sculpting temples in stone, and indeed how he passed his craft on. Not to forget the kind of patronage that moulded the trajectory of his career as a temple maker and restorer. What were the conditions through which the 'accidental' *shilpi* became one of the most revered master builders in the community in the twentieth century? I begin this story by narrating his father and grandfather's professional activities.

### **Mulshankar Trivedi: family alignment from farming to temple renovations**

Amritlal Trivedi was born in 1910 in the Princely state of Wadhwan. Family written records extend up to his grandfather's generation, who according to the present family members was probably a farmer. In the family *chopda* (records) Amritlal Trivedi's grandfather is known as Ganeshji Trivedi. There was not enough information in the *chopda* nor knowledge within the family to say whether he was a *shilpi* or not. The *chopda* is clear though that Ganeshji Trivedi owned a piece of land and current family members make an educated guess that it was most likely that he was a farmer. Speaking about Amritlal Trivedi's immediate ancestors and skills, his son felt that it was not necessary that a *shilpi*'s father and grandfather had to be a *shilpi* too. Knowledge could be assimilated and transmitted by working laterally alongside someone from the community and profession.

Amritlal Trivedi's father Mulshankar Trivedi was in a sense a generalist construction professional. His career gives us interesting insights into the alignment of the family from agriculture into temple making. Mulshankar Trivedi's date of birth is not known but family records state that he died in 1935, when Amritlal would have been twenty five years old. Mulshankar Trivedi is considered the first in the family to engage with architecture and construction.

According to Balubhai, Amritlal Trivedi's son, Mulshankar Trivedi was not a *shilpi*, but the state engineer and architect employed by the princely state of Dhrangadhra. He did not attend an engineering college, a relatively new kind of institution which was brought to India during colonial rule to service the Public Works Department (PWD), but was a self-taught individual.<sup>5</sup> Although Mulshankar Trivedi spent most of his life in Dhrangadhra, he began his career in nearby princely state of Wadhwan, where he built a bridge, and where his two sons Amritlal and Premshankar Trivedi were born.

From Wadhwan Mulshankar Trivedi relocated to Dhrangadhra, at the behest of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra, Ghanshyam Singhji (r.1911-1942). Here he was involved with not only infrastructural and civil engineering work like roads and bridges, but, according to the family, also oversaw the construction of other kinds of important buildings such as the Dhrangadhra palace for the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra, repair works to the Dhrangadhra fort and many domestic buildings. The palace, just as the clock tower and other mid-19<sup>th</sup> buildings scattered all over the town, is eclectic in its use of European motifs. The occidental orientations of Indian Princes as a general phenomenon during colonial rule led to intense cross cultural flows, which, were realised through the hands of the local force, like Mulshakar Trivedi. The gothic pointed arch, Greek column and imagery were incorporated into new building types: palaces, law courts, clock towers, schools, libraries. (Figure 2.22, 2.23) It is interesting to see these projects in relation to the family's mainstay by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in temple construction. If anything an idea of flexibility and adjustment to shifting patronage comes across forcefully.

According to Balubhai, Mulshankar Trivedi – i.e. Amritlal Trivedi's father - was passionate about drawing. Mulshankar Trivedi's rhythms of work meant that he was constantly in touch with the stone mines of Dhrangadhra, known then and now for yellow Dhrangadhra sandstone. Oral histories suggest that he was involved with extracting stone, although he didn't own any quarries. One of his tasks would have involved transporting quarried stone from the mines to the various construction sites he was working on. From the family records, Balubhai builds a picture of this individual. He owned a bullock cart, which he used to supply stone. He kept precise written records of the number of bullock carts offloaded at every construction site he delivered to. He kept a note of accounts and salaries. It is through his business of

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<sup>5</sup> For PWD engineering colleges see G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture : Continuity, Controversy, and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 72

stone supply, overseeing construction works and his ability to draw, that Mulshankar Trivedi came in touch with Oghadbhai Bhavanji Sompura,<sup>6</sup> who in the late nineteenth century was working on the *jirnoddhar* of the ruined 10<sup>th</sup> century Trinetresvara temple in Taranetar, some 50 kms from Dhrangadhra. Although hereditary communities at large had been operating in Gujarat and Rajasthan, Balubhai notes that it is from this generation around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Trivedi family specifically, became directly associated with temples:

Balubhai (Amritlal's son): Taranetar temple is full of art. Mulshankar Trivedi started working with Oghadbhai Bhavanji Sompura because the latter noticed him for his excellent drawing ability and invited him to work with him; it is something not everyone can do. My grandfather –Mulshankar Trivedi– used to take out stone from the quarries of Dhrangadhra. He had a bullock cart which he filled up with stone and transported to site. Taranetar needed stone. Stone went from Dhrangadhra. Mulshankarji supplied the stone. This is how my grandfather got in touch with Oghadbhai Bhavanji Sompura.<sup>7</sup>

Oghadbhai Bhavanji Sompura was the father of P.O. Sompura, already part of a lineage of craftsmen operating in Palitana (Chapter 3). On the other hand, Mulshankar Trivedi's shift from being employed in the capacity of a state engineer and architect for the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra to a different kind of project altogether, the reconstruction of an early 10<sup>th</sup> century temple was to align the Trivedi family to a specific kind of building activity – the phenomenon of *jirnoddhar* or renovation of recently discovered medieval ruins, which were beginning to be seen in a new light as valuable antiquities as well as resurrected spaces for devotion.

The ability to draw and imagine the reconstruction of the Trinetreswara temple would have been a fundamental requirement at Taranetar, quite suited to the drawing skills that Mulshankar Trivedi already possessed and had used for other kinds of buildings as the state architect. The original temple had been largely destroyed by an earthquake in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>- century, affecting many other ancient buildings in northern Saurashtra and northern Gujarat.<sup>8</sup> The damaged temple was

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<sup>6</sup> Oghadbhai Bhavanji was the father of P.O. Sompura.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, B.K. Trivedi, April 2013

<sup>8</sup> M A Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 3, North India : Beginnings of Medieval Idiom, C. A.D. 900-1000* (New Delhi: AIS and IGNCA, 1998), p. 223

replaced by a new 'more or less' carefully copied temple.<sup>9</sup> Looking at the before and after images it is quite possible that the original fragments were worked on and reused in the new replacement, but the bulk it would seem was new. This much is also evident that most of the *shikhar* (spire) would have had to be reimagined based on surviving fragments, so too the *phamsana* roof (pyramid shaped stepped roof) over the *mandap* (hall) and most visibly the introduction of two new, bold and very prominent porches by the architects on the northern and southern *bhadras* (central offset) of the *mandap* (hall), which were not there in the original scheme. (Figure 2.24) The EITA notes that some original fragments were reused in the interior such as the lintels under the *antarala* ceilings.

When Balubhai suggests that the Trinetresvara temple is "full of art", he is indeed referring in his own way to the form and details of both the original and the reconstructed temples. While his description is cursory, it is interesting to note that some of the European motifs from Dhrangadhra have seeped into the reconstruction at Taranetar: winged angels and cherubs pop out from between the *urashringas* and under the *dodhiya* or *udgama* niches. (Figure 2.26, 2.27, 2.28)

### **Tensions in material practices of renovation and the writing of architectural history**

In art history parlance, the temple and its whole genre has been stylistically classed as belonging to the late phase of the 'Maha Gurjara' temples by the veteran art historian M.A.Dhaky, likely to have been built around 950 AD.<sup>10</sup> It is part of the Anarta school from Saurashtra. Its contemporaries are the Shiva temple in Kotai (Figure 2.25), the Sun temple in Kotai, the Laksheshwara temple in Kerakot all built around 950 AD. In Dhaky's analysis this late phase of Maha Gurjara temple emerges from the very restrained earlier Maha Gurjara temples such as at Roda (late 8<sup>th</sup> century) Soon after, in the 11<sup>th</sup>-century the 'virile and handsome' Maha Gurjara strain from Saurashtra, Kutch and Northern Gujarat meets the Rajasthan variant, the 'bewitchingly beautiful Maha Maru' and after a 'tense moment of intense passionate embrace' they have a splendid off spring the 'Maru Gurjara'. The Maru Gurjara style epitomises around one thousand remaining monuments, belonging to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.223

<sup>10</sup> M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65

the rule of Solanki Kings, between the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this classification of Dhaky's the Maha Gurjara of Taranetar is the parent style, so in a sense the Trinetreswara temple would have been a precursor to what is considered –in art history- as a period of prolific and unsurpassed architectural production. For the historian M.A. Dhaky, the Maha Gurjara features were sacrosanct, not to be meddled with.

I will now turn to how this reconstruction was received by Dhaky in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* in the late twentieth century some hundred years later, opening up differences in the sorts of positions and vantage points the Sompura masons employed, which could not be assimilated by historians.<sup>11</sup> Dhaky approves of the 'more or less carefully copied edifice', at Taranetar which he found serviceable in understanding the original structure, 'but' for some 'architectural errors and anachronisms', as well as details which 'properly' belonged to the late medieval era and not the 10<sup>th</sup> century to which the original temple belonged. These 'anachronisms' included a '*skhandha* below the *griva*, a cubicle *kalabo* for holding a flag staff and *yogini mukhas* in the *griva* at the cardinal points.' (Figure 2.28) The lion and the *phamsana* roof too do not find favour with the stalwart as they belong to a 'later' period. Elsewhere I have argued that one of the central modes of practice for the Sompuras is not working with an evolutionary framework which desires to place these features in precise chronological orders. (Chapter 5 and 6) This it would seem is the historian's prerogative, not the practitioners, and here at Taranetar, we see a clear example of this mode of creative practice.

At Taranetar, the subjectivities and imagination of the temple restorers shine through and is less burdened with a vision of a past which rests on a sacrosanct original. The introduction of the side porches on the northern and southern *bhadrās* of the *gudhamandapa* according to Dhaky may have been a 'mistake' in the renovation, as the details and nature were not known at the time of reconstruction. To my mind, they have a presence, they are about the present of the temple makers, which do not see the various chronological stages of the past and the present in opposition. The practices of faithful restoration are there but they are accompanied by a considered imaginative flair. It seems that the temple makers are understanding and domesticating the past and rejoicing in it on their own terms.

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<sup>11</sup> Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*, Vol 2, Part 3: Beginnings of a Medieval Idiom pp. 222-227

They transform the original design to something more specific to their present, layering it with individual interpretation. The so called ‘anachronisms’ are the present of the temple makers, and in this sense can never be “wrong”. Dhaky on the other hand suggests that they should have been *bhadravalokanas*: instead of a full-fledged porch there should have been an opening at the central offset of the *mandap* in the form of a balcony or a window in accordance with the original. The rejection of the temple makers’ imagination suggests that in the mind of the elite historian, medieval glory cannot be matched with the contingencies of live practice. In this sense, the temple makers’ subjectivities and judgements display varying relations with the past.

Returning to the notion of the kind of work culture Amritlal Trivedi was born into, it is clear that his father Mulshankar Trivedi would have been in contact with the material aspects of Taranetar’s reconstruction. The reconstruction of the ruined temple would have involved painstaking and careful copying from the original temple fragments, as well as imagining the new architectural features introduced by the architect. Working and incorporating original fragments would involve their careful study and drawing by the *shilpis* involved. It is thus pertinent to see this reconstruction as a transformation of the original, where new architectural elements give a new lease of life to the original 10<sup>th</sup> century temple, but also a site where human skills were transmitted and transformed. It would seem that the birth of the ‘accidental *shilpi*’ was already within part of an active work culture. How Amritlal’s skills were acquired as they were passed down is demonstrated in the following sections.

### ***Jirnoddhar* of Ranakpur temple**

Writing retrospectively about the Ranakpur temple renovation in a paper which is not dated but probably from the late 1960s it would seem that for Amritlal Trivedi, along with the devotee, the modern category ‘art lover’ is part of the impetus behind the *jirnoddhar* of the deserted 15<sup>th</sup> - century Dharani Vihar temple in Ranakpur, Rajasthan at the foot of the Arawali Hills. That art lovers from all over the world would be drenched in the ‘art of Ranakpur’ along with devotees experiencing divine love for their deity is indicative of the range of modern audiences in mind when restoration work commenced in the early 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi, *Shatrunjay-Ranakpur-Delwada* (Ahmedabad: Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai, n.d.)pp. 26-40

Amritlal Trivedi would have been twenty four years old when the *jirnoddhar* of the Ranakpur temple commenced in 1934, ending nineteen years later in 1953.<sup>13</sup> According to family records his involvement ran for around four years from 1936 to 1939, the beginning of which coincides with the death of his father. At the beginning of this period of involvement in Ranakpur, both Amritlal Trivedi and his brother Premshankar Trivedi were already known in the community as expert *shilpis*. This is through their apprenticeship under their father Mulshankar Trivedi, who worked on a range of building types as we have seen: bridges, roads, palaces, domestic architecture and indeed temples, but also with other members of the community. The focus on apprenticeship overtook educational qualifications at school, for he did not study beyond 'standard four', joining his elders at a very young age.

By then, according to his son, he had worked on the renovation of the Kumbhariya temples, in the early 1930s, where Narmadashankar M. Sompura was orchestrating the works to the patronage of the Anandji Kalyanji Trust. According to Balubhai at Kumbhariya, under N.M. Sompura, he did *art ka abyas* or received his first proper training in classical works, and practiced it in depth. This meant making detailed drawings of the existing temple complex at Kumbhariya, the various practices of working on stone involving the highly technical aspects of cutting and fitting to existing sculpture, and then making altogether new sections – all under the direction of Narmadashankar M. Sompura.<sup>14</sup>

It is around this time that N.M. Sompura was also compiling his seminal *Shilparatnakar*, many photographs and drawings of Kumbhariya temples finding their way into this publication. At his short stint at Kalabhavan in Baroda circa 1927 where he had temporarily relocated on the behest of Sayaji Rao to teach, N.M. Sompura enlisted Amritlal Trivedi and Jagannath Ambaram as students, however not for long. Balubhai reports that both Amritlal Trivedi and Jaganath Ambaram 'ran away' from Kala Bhavan as the teaching was too theoretically inclined for them. Clearly they did not run away from N.M. Sompura in the *jirnoddhar* of the Kumbhariya temples, as he is accorded an important place in the development of Amritlal's professional life.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 26-40

<sup>14</sup> Interview B.K. Trivedi, Ahmedabad, 2013

### The many meanings of *Jirnoddhar*: clash of aesthetics

The term *Jirnoddhar* is itself contested depending on which framework is adopted. It covers a range of renovation practices.<sup>15</sup> Amritlal Trivedi explains it as ‘any kind of improvement to beautify an existing temple, or to finish incomplete work, or to make additions of any kind’.<sup>16</sup> The scope is wide, there is an element of flexibility inherent in this definition. Looking at Taranetar, it could mean more or less entire temples are reconstructed from scratch, because the surviving remains are too structurally unstable. It could also mean adjustments to spatial layouts of existing temples such as at the Muleyva Parshvanath temple in Ahmedabad, which was completely remodelled internally and externally in the 1970s to accommodate shifting briefs. It could also mean repairing those sections which are in a broken or bad shape, with the explicit intention that the old and the new are indistinguishable. The renovations at Ranakpur exemplify this last approach. Nevertheless in all cases we have ideas of renovation which are quite at odds with codes of conservation practice popular at the time in colonial spheres - imported from England - which had seeped into the sensibilities of those in charge of the Ranakpur temple *jirnoddhar*. This was primarily the architectural firm Gregson Batley and Sons which was overseeing the works for the Anandji kalyanji Trust, by inspecting and signing off work stages.

These differences come to light in the *jirnoddhar* of the Ranakpur temple, where an idea of renewal is explicitly equated with matching the new with the old for devotional purposes; a practice celebrated and rejoiced and not frowned upon.<sup>17</sup> We shall see that *jirnoddhar* has a particular meaning in *shilpi* (sculptor) circuits to which Amritlal Trivedi belonged to, where devotion had a part to play in determining the aesthetics of material practices and where the practice was itself deeply related to ideas of gaining merit. The *jirnoddhar* practices in the Ranakpur Jain temple show a desire for newness contrary to the ‘conserve as found’ route. In comparison with English advisors to the Anandji Kalyanji Trust these very practices appear

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<sup>15</sup> John E. Cort, 'Communities, Temples, Identities: Art Histories and Social Histories in Western India', in *Ethnography and Personhood: Notes from the Field*. ed. by Meister Michael W (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2000), pp. 101-28, p. 114

<sup>16</sup> Trivedi, *Shatrunjay-Ranakpur-Dilwada*, p.19

<sup>17</sup> In a different context see Deborah Sutton, 'Devotion, Antiquity, and Colonial Custody of the Hindu Temple in British India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 47.1 (2013), 135-66 and Indra Sengupta, 'Sacred Space and the Making of Monuments in Colonial Orissa in the Early Twentieth Century', in *Archaeology and Text : The Temple in South Asia*. ed. by Himanshu Prabha Ray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 168-90 for an excellent analysis in the context of Orissa



'catastrophic' and amount to 'vandalism'. In a lengthy essay on the occasion of Kasturbhai Lalbhai's seventy-fifth birthday, Amritbhai elaborates:

If the temples appear new even after hundreds of years the mystery lies in its timely *jirnoddhar*. Just as bodily transformation converts an old man into a young one, so too a temple regains its youth by its *jirnoddhar* and its beauty blossoms once again.<sup>18</sup>

We must note how the restoration of a temple to its youth is a sign of its 'blossoming beauty'. It is with this idea that the *jirnoddhar* is conducted. Elsewhere:

Devotion is not possible without art. It is not possible to understand the symbiosis between devotion and art without watching how a devotee carefully places flowers on his deity, wraps and adjusts the garland around the neck. Devotion is the heartfelt wish of the devotee for everything meant for his deity, his god to be beautiful, extremely so. Beauty and art are unified. Creation of beauty is art, whether it is the beauty of the mind, external objects, man-made or natural.<sup>19</sup>

Amritlal reports that four sculptors who were considered the best at the time were invited to give their reports on the restoration. At the same time it was decided not to 'miss taking advantage of the intellect of experts in modern architecture'.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly the four sculptors shortlisted were Bhaishankar Gaurishankar, Prabhashankar .O. Sompura (Chapter 3), Jagannath Ambaram, and Dalchharam Khushaldas Trivedi, all of whom were from the Sompura community. 'On the other side', experts in modern architecture Gregson Batley and King were also assigned the work. After reviewing the reports, the works were entrusted to Dalchharam Khushaldas Trivedi, a resident of Dhrangadhra.<sup>21</sup> It was D.K. Trivedi who invited Amritlal and his brother Premshankar Trivedi to work on the Ranakpur restoration.

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<sup>18</sup> Trivedi, *Shatrunjay-Ranakpur-Dilwada*, p.3

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 26-40, pp. 10-11

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-40, p.35

<sup>21</sup> As a side D.K. Trivedi started mining operations in Ambaji in 1947 and his grandson Kiran Trivedi today operates some of the most sophisticated factories in temple production using a range of technologies including digital fabrication.

Both brothers negotiated a daily wage of Rupees 2.50 when the going rate for other workers was Rupees 1.50 per day.

The custodianship of the Ranakpur temple was with the Anandji Kalyanji Trust, which was headed at that time by the industrialist Kasturbhai Lalbhai. Lalbhai (1894-1980) was widely perceived as a nationalist industrialist. Both his father and grandfather had established cotton mills in the late nineteenth century. Lalbhai himself established several mills between 1924 and 1938 – overlapping with the Ranakpur temple *jirnodhar*. Lalbhai's nationalism reverberated with that of Claude Batley; infact as has been noted he was greatly influenced by the Englishman's views.<sup>22</sup>

As the ensuing sections will show, Batley was asked to supervise and sign off the works at Ranakpur.<sup>23</sup> Batley's own sensibilities were informed by William Morris's codes of conservation drafted in 1877 for the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB). Appalled by the 'destructive renovation' of English churches and cathedrals, Ruskin and then Morris and the SPAB denounced all reconstitution of the past, in favour of an appearance of 'antiquity'. Their charges were directed against 19<sup>th</sup> - century restorers who purged medieval churches of later additions in the efforts of reconstituting the past, and in the process rekindling the spirit of early Christian faith. More than seven thousand medieval churches were profoundly transformed in this way, which were unacceptable to the SPAB<sup>24</sup>:

'In the course of this double process of destruction and addition, the whole surface of the building is necessarily tampered with; so that the *appearance of antiquity* is taken away from such old parts of the fabric as are left., and there is no laying to rest in the spectator the suspicion of what may have been lost; and in short a feeble and lifeless forgery is the final result.'<sup>25</sup>

Trivedi begins by giving the readers a sense of the grandeur of the Ranakpur temple as it came to be during a fifty year course in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is

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<sup>22</sup> Cort, pp. 101-28, p. 116

<sup>23</sup> Claude Batley, 'Report on the Present State of and Schedule of the Principal Works Required to Be Executed at the Ranakpur Jain Temples, Jodhpur State.', (Bombay: Greson, Batley & King, 1936)

<sup>24</sup> See David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

<sup>25</sup> SPAB manifesto as quoted in *ibid.*, p.275

interesting to note he uses none of the *Maru Gurjara* references that the world of art history were being introduced to by M.A. Dhaky at the time. On the contrary the description of the temples begins not in a historical plane, but by narrating how the architect/sculptor Dipasha prior to the commencement of the works in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century tested the Jain merchant and patron Dharnashah, to ascertain whether he had the 'heart or the intellect to complete such a grand scheme'. Dharnashah passes the test and the temple which Trivedi terms *Nalini gulm viman* 'lands on the earth as a manifestation of Dharnashah's divine dream'. Amritlal M. Trivedi explains the significance of the word *Nalini gulm viman* in explaining the architecture of the temple, these explanations forming a different register to influential historians of the time:

'*Nalini* means a bunch of lotus flowers. *Gulm* means a bunch of ninety items. In architecture the lines of the *shikhar* are addressed as *padmakosh* and the shape of the *shikhar* may be compared to a closed lotus. Seventy six *deris*, four *Meghnath mandaps*, one *Megh mandap*, one *bhadraprasads* . . . four in the four corners of the court, and one in the centre. Such five large domed halls, shining like *pancha merus*, counting all these totals to number 90. If the number of smaller domes are not counted then then this arrangement might be the reason behind naming it *Nalini gulm viman*.<sup>26</sup>

To Trivedi the pinnacle of the temple lay in the pillars of the *Meghnath mandap* (columnar hall), the various layers of domes as seen from the inside, its *padmashilas* (ceilings with full blown centrally placed lotus), *vedikas* (balustrade) and *kakshasanas* (seat back, back rest). From the 'view of art, these are the best', writes Trivedi. After giving an account of 'the heaven created on earth', Trivedi touches on the neglect that followed because of political instability and turmoil brought about by *kaliyug*. No historical instances are provided, for the abandonment of the temple, other than a general sense that trading nobleman became too busy with their businesses and that with the division of community, religion too declined. 'Who would look after them', he asks rhetorically 'in lonesome and dead places'? In an account of the temple in its ruinous state, Amritlal Trivedi lists out the problems encountered by the craftsmen:

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<sup>26</sup> Trivedi, *Shatrunjay-Ranakpur-Dilwada*, pp. 26-40, p.217

This place resounding once with bugles and chants became infested with bats and pigeons! Where the surroundings were filled with the aroma of candles, saffron and flowers, there the smell of excreta of bats and pigeons started spreading. Carved pillars, gates and slabs became so dirty that it became difficult to believe that they were made of white marble. . . The life of iron pegs fixed to strengthen the joints of hundreds of artistic stones was over . . . the pegs swollen by rust started coming out breaking open the temple stones, and holes formed in various places. Water started leaking in many places in domes and terraces of ceilings. The tiles on the flooring slabs came out and became uneven. Cracks developed in some pillars and slabs and the support of *Nalini gulm viman* started shaking.<sup>27</sup>

The resurrection of the temple involved the expertise of many Marwari Sompura artists, and labour running into hundreds from surrounding villages of Ranakpur came to work on it. Work continued on an increased pace under the direction of the Dalchharam Khushalbhai Trivedi, who is referred to as *mistri* and not *shilpi* in the Gregson Batley King report, already giving us a sense of difference in worldviews. Trivedi outlines the delicate, fine, work as well as heavy work. Workers groups from Mathura, Agra, Jaipur, Alwar, from small and large villages from Marwad, Gujarat and Saurashtra contributed their skills. They were put to work under different supervisors, and work was distributed. The Anandji Kalyanji Trust spent Rupees 4, 70, 000 on the entire works.

The intentions and practices of the workforce are interpreted differently – from a western European perspective - in an inspection report prepared by the firm Gregson Batley King acting for the Anandji Kalyanji Trust in the early stages of the renovation. The report has a different notion of ‘art’ through colonial conservation beliefs which resonated with John Marshall’s *Conservation Manual* (1922). The report can be seen to be continuing colonial conceptions of conservation within nationalist domains through Batley’s writings.<sup>28</sup> The overriding tone that emerges

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See John Hubert Sir Marshall, *Conservation Manual : A Handbook for the Use of Archaeological Officers and Others Entrusted with the Care of Ancient Monuments* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1923). Partha Chatterjee’s writings on the problems of nationalism are deeply resonant here: ‘ . . . the problem of nationalist thought becomes the particular manifestation of a much more general problem, namely the problem of the bourgeois-rationalist conception of knowledge, established in the post enlightenment period of intellectual history, as the moral and epistemic foundation for a supposedly universal framework of thought which perpetuates in a real

from the opening cover page is that of dismay and alarm at the practices of the *mistris* in charge of the works who from Batley's point of view had 'failed' to follow his recommendations of 'conservation', instead following ideals of 'restoration'. I quote lengthily from a passage:

'We may say at once, although our first report was very clear, the work that was being done seemed to indicate that those in charge had failed to realise the first principles of our scheme for the "conservation" of the ancient work and were proceeding with a scheme of "restoration" involving infinitely more work than we ever contemplated and which would result in a *complete loss of the feeling of the old work* of the original craftsmen and in a *mechanically perfect reproduction* which would give the temple the appearance of having been constructed within the last few years and efface the authenticity of the old work entirely; for instance the work people were hard at work on the main plinth inside the building and renewing almost every damaged stone and replacing each by new pieces of stone, they were then re dressing the old stone and even in some cases, ensuring that the eyes and noses of the carved griffin heads therein were all in perfectly true horizontal line by cutting back the old carving and correcting it. This is ofcourse *absolutely vandalism* and must be stopped immediately. The only stone that we wished should be replaced are those in such constructional features as lintels, beams, brackets, capitals, shafts or bases that are so shattered as to jeopardise the stability of the temple itself, the only cleaning we ever suggested was the very careful removal of the accumulation of whitewash, grease, smoke, lichen, or other disfigurement, so as to bring out the ancient work of the carvings and mouldings. The discolouration of the old stonework due to time alone should not be interfered with, as *age is one of the most important elements to preserve*. (my emphases)<sup>29</sup>

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and not merely a metaphorical sense , a colonial domination'. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World : A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed for the United Nations University, 1986) p. 11

<sup>29</sup> Batley, *Report . . .* , p.p. 1-2. Along with the SPAB manifesto, the sentiments in the *Report* are completely in line with the ASI's own code of conservation. See Marshall, Article 25 of the *Manual* reminds officers that their first duty is not to renew but to preserve, and that historical value of any remnant or structure is gone when their authenticity is destroyed. It also maintains that broken or half decayed original work is of infinitely more value than smartest or more perfect new work. Pp. 9-10

What was considered beautiful and an opportunity to restore blossoming youth to one, seemed 'vandalism' to another from the vantage point of conservation codes prevalent in England, made popular in India through the colonial economy, with its accompanying taste for the antique. Gregson Batley's *Report* goes on to state that had the scheme of complete restoration and replacement not been stopped, the Trust would have spent unnecessary expenditure resulting in a temple that would have been 'bright as a new pin, but of no historical interest whatsoever'.<sup>30</sup> Detail schedule of works in the *Report* recommends that great care 'should be exercised in doing as little restoration work as possible to the central shrine, even the upper portion where the carving has fallen away should not be restored'.<sup>31</sup> And where limbs and other parts of the sculpture are missing, no attempt should be made to replace them.

None of these ideas held sway in the *jirnodhar* of the temple and oral history work with the present family members stress the importance of replacing and repairing damaged fragments in complete accordance with the old work as it would be considered unacceptable to worship idols with broken limbs. That old and new should be indistinguishable is stressed. If we find that English ideas of conservation as espoused in Batley's report were untranslatable then it is important to note that one aesthetic aspect did find itself in the practices of the *shilpis*: 'the cleaned up' archaeological aesthetic.<sup>32</sup>

The act of cleaning up layers of paint and plaster in order to reach the 'original' surface of carved stone and the practice of clearing away all lived in signs so that the original may come to be revealed may be seen to have seeped into the current generations' works. At an urban level, cleaning up was extended to hybrid accretions of structures over time. At the level of detail, Batley found the many colours, silver paint and tinsel paper in different parts of the temple 'repugnant', and ordered the restoration to the original surface. Similarly loose gaudy coverings and draperies were ordered to be removed.<sup>33</sup> All the white and red colours had to be removed and any vestiges of the original stone carving brought to light..

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<sup>30</sup> Batley, *Report* p. 5

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.16

<sup>32</sup> I am most grateful to Kavita Singh for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>33</sup> Batley, p.p. 14-19

This account provides critical contrasts in the desire of the *mistris* to renew and rejuvenate the temple for worship, and Batley's desire to conserve as found, with minimal interventions. The account highlights some of the clashes in ideas about aesthetics and history between the *shilpis* and Claude Batley, the overseer of the works, who was inspired by prevalent English codes of conservation. Even though Batley was an influential figure for the Anandji Kalyanji Trust, he begrudgingly signed off the project.<sup>34</sup> European Aesthetic codes of conservation are compromised in an effort and desire for 'blossoming youth'. The past and the present are not easily compartmentalised, on the contrary they are coeval in the *shilpis* lifeworld.

Notwithstanding this major difference, it would seem that the removal of gaudy paint and plaster – in other words a cleaned up archaeological aesthetic - became standard practice for the *jirnodhars* to follow at Dilwara, Taranga and Kumbhariya and indeed in new build commissions. Their aim was to remove all accrued layers of paint and plaster so as to reach the 'original' layer, all vestiges of original stone carving brought to light. This preference and desire for unpainted stone transmitted through Batley to the *shilpis* at work could be seen to have become an aesthetic mode that found itself in Amritlal's later new build projects, where unpainted surfaces are visually paramount. Not only his own work but it would seem that the arena of archaeological appreciation and conservation came to inform the aesthetics of the Sompuras and their patrons in their new temple commissions, where the use of colour is often kept to a minimum.

### **Consolidating material practice: Dilwara temples at Mount Abu, Rajasthan**

After Ranakpur, the early 1940s were spent by Amritlal Trivedi in Kolhapur, Maharashtra with his cousin Bhagwandas bhai working on a temple. After the restoration at Ranakpur, according to his grandson, Amritlal Trivedi completed several temples before he came to be employed by Anandji Kalyanji Trust in the late 1940s to lead their next major renovation of medieval temples at Mount Abu in the Sirohi District of Rajasthan. With the experience of Ranakpur and new build temples alive in him, the skills and expertise of Amritlal Trivedi in making new and in repairing old temples were already the attention of Kasturbhai Lalbhai.

The Dilwara temple complex consists of five temples dedicated to various Jain *tirthankars* built over time between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of these, two

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<sup>34</sup> Cort, pp.101-208, p.116

main temples were renovated by the Amritlal Trivedi: the Vimal Vasahi temple (1150 AD) and the Luna Vasahi temple (1230 AD). The Dilwara temple complex came to be in the custody of the Anandji Kalyanji Trust after protracted negotiations with Viceroy Curzon between 1898 to 1905. In this tussle, Curzon, who considered it his imperial duty 'to dig and discover, classify and reproduce, copy and decipher, cherish and conserve' had tried to include the temples under the Archaeological Survey of India, however Kasturbhai Lalbhai's negotiations won. Once the custodianship was settled, a small amount of restoration work was carried out by a local Sirohi Trust, using Makrana marble, which did not match the existing stone, the works themselves being undertaken through the hands of not very high quality craftsmen. This work was deemed unsatisfactory by Kasturbhai Lalbhai.<sup>35</sup>

Again Claude Batley was invited for his opinion and recommended once more that ideals of conservation should be followed. For Lalbhai though the results achieved at Ranakpur and a trust in the lead *karigars* took priority. On the basis of his impressive performance at Ranakpur, Amritlal was invited to lead the renovation of three of the Dilwara temple complex in Mount Abu, between the years 1948 and 62. These years coincided with another major reconstruction – the complete demolition and building from scratch of the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan by P.O. Sompura. Amritlal was ethically opposed to the demolition and had proposed to work with the existing structure in his own invited proposal, leading to a long time span, however in the interest of political expediency, it was considered appropriate to demolish the existing ruins, build from scratch in a shorter time frame.<sup>36</sup>

Both of Amritlal Trivedi's sons Balakrishna Trivedi and late Krishna Chandra Trivedi, teenagers at the time, received their training at Dilwara, His third son Jasubhai Trivedi was visually impaired and did not take on the family profession. In addition Amritlal's nephews – i.e. Premshankarbhai's son's - late Chandubhai Trivedi and late Sumanbhai Trivedi received their training at Dilwara. The entire family moved to Mount Abu from Dhrangadhra during the twelve year *jirnodhar*. At the start of the works, Amritlal Trivedi had very little sense of the number of years it would take to complete the works. The focus was on craftsmanship and finesse, supervision and training of the workforce, ensuring that work was done to high standards, bringing out a sense of devotion. Amritlal considers the renovation at

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<sup>35</sup> Trivedi, pp. 17-25

<sup>36</sup> Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997)p.p. 186-221



Dilwara one of his best achievements.<sup>37</sup> Today family members attribute their familiarity with classical detailing to the experience of their forefathers during the *jirnoddhar* of the temples

### **Material processes of renovation**

What were the material processes learnt and received from Amritlal Trivedi on the Ranakpur and Dilwara *jirnoddhar*? Balakrishna Trivedi elaborates on two broadly different kinds of activities. One technique involved making sculptures or carved beams and columns from afresh, where differently skilled *karigars* would work on different stages of preparation. This would be after full scale templates had been traced / transferred on to square pieces of stone. 18 new *deris* or subsidiary shrines were remade in the Vimal Vasahi temple out of a total of 52. Using templates for *nakshikam* or *roopkaam* fresh pieces were made in their entirety. These pieces were then carefully installed in place of the old. All damaged beams were replaced in the renovated temples for instance, which were hoisted into place using jacks, the existing beams removed using a complex scaffolding system.

This was a different activity to repairing the damaged part of a statue or a carved panel, which required far greater technical competency. Before work commenced, Amritlal Trivedi personally made full size drawings of every damaged part of the temple, covering every minute detail on beams, ceilings and columns. These were studied. One of the prime considerations in the work was to make invisible the junction between the old and the new, as well as matching the colour of the old stone with the new addition so that the whole looked one.

*Shastras* were used to imagine parts of deities that were lost and needed to be imagined and understood. For instance in a film produced by Gujarat University on Sompura traditions, Amritlal Trivedi gives the example of a broken idol of Kuber, its arm missing.<sup>38</sup> The broken statue would be studied first. The missing weaponry supposed to be held in his missing hand are described in texts. These would be researched, then drawn. To restore it, first clay would be applied to the damaged part, then the broken part of the idol would be prepared in clay. From this a rubber mould would be prepared after which a Plaster of Paris replacement would be made. This Plaster of Paris model became the basis from which stone was

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<sup>37</sup> *The Living Heritage of Temple Architecture (Sompura), Part 3*, dir. by Vismay Shah (Educational Multimedia Research Centre, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, 1991)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

sculpted. Finally a similar piece was prepared in stone and fixed in its proper place in the broken idol. If the new addition looked too new, pigments would be rubbed in to match to the old. Similar practices were repeated at Kumbhariya which was at the time of the Dilwara *jirnoddhar* time being led by Premshankarbhai. To supervise the works, Amritlal would make monthly trips from Mount Abu to Kumbhariya.

It is clear that these major renovations familiarised generations and large numbers of Sompura craftsmen with material aspects of Solanki era temples. Apart from academic appreciation, one could say that through the Sompura constituency, a bodily and embodied way of learning-by-doing was being practiced. After the *jirnoddhar* at Dilwara, Amritlal Trivedi concentrated his efforts on the pilgrimage site of Mount Shatrunjaya in Palitana as a resident architect/shilpi for the Anandji kalyaji Trust. For most of the 1950s his work comprised of primarily the ongoing *jirnoddhar* of the numerous temples therein, reorganisation of spaces in front of the *tunks* such as the Motishah *tunk*, and the clearing up of the crowded spaces around the main Adishwar temple. The construction of permanent steps to the hill was led by him as well as the construction of several gates namely Rampol, Saganpol, Vaghanpol, Hathipol and Ratanpol. (Figure 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, 2.32, 2.33) Here some of his most prominent contributions included the construction of the Nutan Jinalaya derasar (1975). (Figure 2.7) This temple involved the building of a new temple and an enclosure of subsidiary shrines rescued from the main temple shrine of Adishwara. A decision was made to rehouse these, in a new temple complex which in Trivedi's words would specifically derive its beauty from '10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century architecture'.<sup>39</sup>

The Anandji kalyanji Trust has a history of editing out amalgamations of non-Jain architecture in its patronage.<sup>40</sup> By now the head of the Anandji Kalyanji Trust, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, was actively promoting ideas of idealised temples as those from the Solanki era, not from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century temples such as at Palitana itself, which were more eclectic in their amalgamation of detail with Mughal influences, the use of colour and all together new spatial configurations such as fortified *tunks* with several freestanding temples. These were consequently edited out in Amritbhai's creations. So were many other architectural details like the composite infill arches, the pierced *jali* screens, the balconies and the baluster columns. Kim has argued that the Trust in its renovation and temple building at Palitana cleansed temple

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<sup>39</sup> Trivedi, p.3-15

<sup>40</sup> Argued in Hawon Ku Kim, *Re-Formation of Identity : The 19th-Century Jain Pilgrimage Site of Shatrunjaya, Gujarat* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2007)

architecture of non-Jain elements thereby restoring the architecture to a pristine idealised state.<sup>41</sup> This desire certainly bore its impress on the new temples by Trivedi, discernible in the language of the architecture. It may be that under the patronage of the Trust, such formal and stylistic considerations had to be borne in mind, however outside the influence of the Trust, Amritlal Trivedi's works remained far more fluid.

Outside the remit of the Trust, one of Amritlal Trivedi's most spectacular achievements is the Atma Vallabh Smarak, on the outskirts of New Delhi built between 1979-89. Aided closely by his nephew Chandubhai the Smarak incorporates three different programmes: a museum of Jain indological texts and artefacts, a small *chaturmukh* temple on the upper level and a memorial for Acharya Vallabhsuri Maharaj. While drawing from the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century temple architectural language in detail, such as in pillars and ceiling panels to the entrance pillared halls (Figure 2.34) or on the profile of mouldings of the notional base of the hall, or indeed in the *shikhar* some of its other spatial and architectural features are profoundly innovative and experimental; engineering feats in themselves designed without structural engineers on the one hand and of a different ilk to classical temples, in whose shadow they are otherwise imagined to be.

The basement comprises of the museum (Figure 2.34, 2.35), the display arranged around a 64 feet diameter ring of 2 feet thick columns. From these spring the ceiling structure: three concentric bands of 6 inch slabs of stone, spanning between three concentric rings, held in place by a keystone. Natural light and ventilation is facilitated through large openings in the perimeter walls. The basement columns continue to the entrance level above, where they, along with masonry walls support a double dome construction, also 64 feet at the base: a ring beam sits on the 12<sup>th</sup> tier of the first dome, becoming the springing point for the smaller dome above. (Figure 2.36, 2.37) Unlike Jain temples such as at Dilwara and Ranakpur, which the Smarak brochure refers to time and again, the interior is sparse apart from a measured band of lotus petals carved just below the gallery level, at the ring beam and at the apex of the smaller dome. On the exterior the dome is invisible, for it is covered by an ingenious pyramidal *phamsana* roof which reconfigures and reimagines the roof of the sun temple in Konark, Orissa. Instead of the compressed tiers at Konarak, the tiers at Atma Vallabh Smarak breathe with miniature colonnades running in all four directions. (Fig 2.40).

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.p. 199

### **Conclusion**

It is offshoots of Amritlal Trivedi's family who are carrying forth the temple making business as far as the Trivedi family is concerned in India and in the diaspora, in profoundly tempered and specific ways.(Chapter 6) Certainly a historical consciousness has been instrumental in Amritlal Trivedi's lifespan which provided opportunities for work and the acquisition of a set of skills to do with the material practices of renovation of medieval temples.

This approach might be mistaken for a lack of creativity or derivative of older styles but the sentiment expressed by Amritlal's grandson had a different vantage point: they saw the work of their work as preserving the best from the past, through practice, as best as possible.

This historical consciousness to my mind is different to academic historical consciousness preoccupied by a developmental and stagiest view of history. Trivedi and his father's oeuvre demonstrate a familiarity with classical notions but also an eagerness to explore new cultural practices. This fluidity escapes any rigid categories.



Figure 2.1: Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi (Centre), Mulshankar Trivedi (father, Left), Krishna Chandra Trivedi (son, Right).

Figure 2.0 (Chapter cover): Route to the workshop at Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's former residence, Anandji Kalyanji Trust compound, Palitana, Gujarat

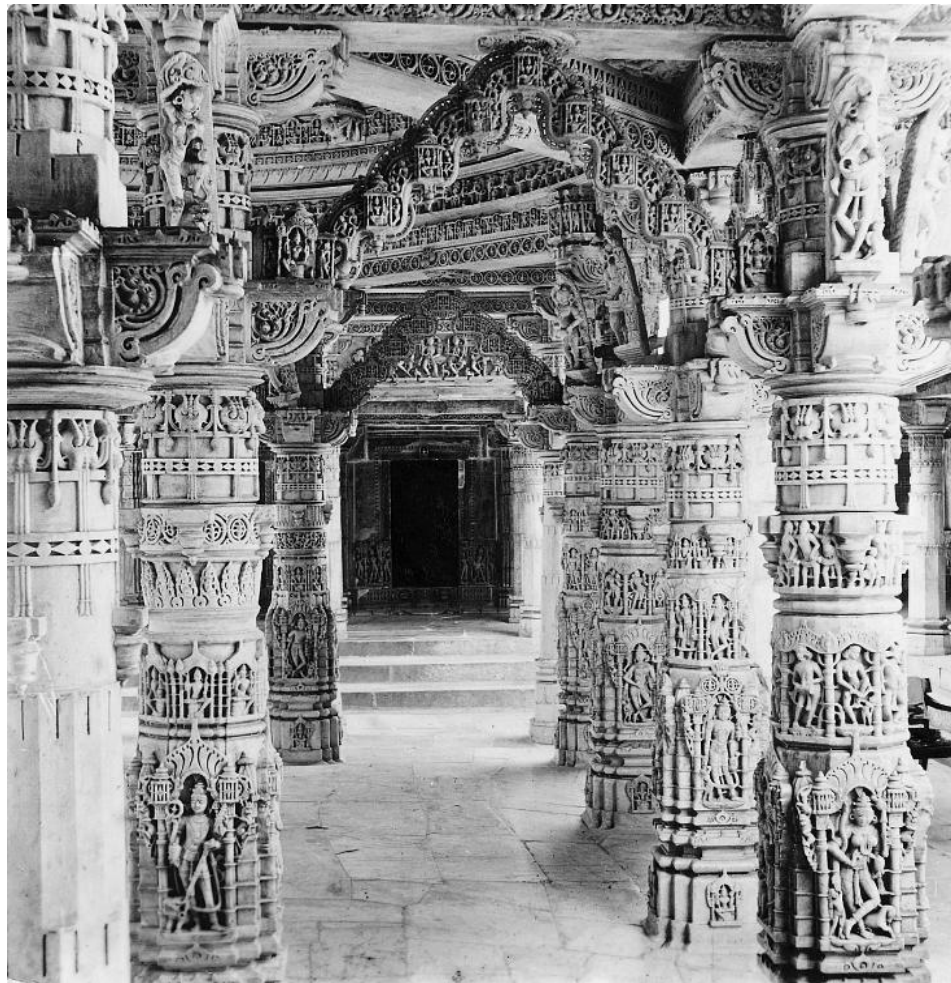


Figure 2.2: Restored interior, Vimla Vasahi Temple (1150 AD), Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies





Figure 2.3: Restored interior, Luna Vasahi temple (1230 AD), Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies



Figure 2.4: Sagal Pol gateway by Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana. Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia



Figure 2.5: Rest House by Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi, Palitana Taleti, Gujarat (1980s)



Figure 2.6: Rest House by Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi, Palitana Taleti, Gujarat (1980s)





Figure 2.7: Nutan Jinalaya Temple, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (1975)





Figure2.8: Shri Mahavir Swami Temple, Taleti, Palitana, Gujarat (1982) Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia



Figure 2.9: Atma Vallabh Smarak, on the outskirts of New Delhi (1980)



Figure 2.9a: Atma Vallabh Smarak, on the outskirts of New Delhi (1980)





Figure 2.10: Pre cast cement concrete technology at the Devi Temple, Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad, Gujarat (1999)



Figure 2.11: Devi Temple, Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad, Gujarat (1999)

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.12: Plaster of Paris Model of apsara, Dilwara temple renovation, Mount Abu. Photograph taken with permission from the private archive of the Trivedi family. Image removed in line with copyright law.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.13: Plaster of Paris Model of apsara, Dilwara temple renovation, Mount Abu.  
Photograph taken with permission from the private archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Image removed in line with copyright law

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.14: Plaster of Paris Model for ceiling panel, Dilwara temple renovation, Mount Abu. Photograph taken from the private archive of the Trivedi family. Image removed in line with copyright law.



Figure 2.15: Samatara ceiling, Vairocha Yakshi, Vimala Vasahi temple, Mount Abu. Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies





Figure 2.16: Drawing archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Figure 2.17: Drawing archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Figure 2.18: Full size Plaster of Paris model of column for the Atma Vallabh Smarak. Currently inserted in Trivedi family home, Ahmedabad.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.19: Amritlal Trivedi's sketchbook. Photograph taken with permission from the private archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Image removed in line with copyright law.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.20: Ravi Varma postcard collection in a small album belonging to the late Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi. Photograph taken from the private archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad. Image removed in line with copyright law



Figure 2.21: Seated Vishvakarma by Amritlal Trivedi (1938), Photograph taken and used with permission from the private archive of the Trivedi family, Ahmedabad, Gujarat





Figure 2.22: Clock Tower, Dhrangadhra



Figure 2.23: Former law court, Dhrangadhra



Figure 2.24: Reconstructed 10<sup>th</sup> century Trinetreswara Temple, Taranetar, Gujarat (1901)



Figure 2.25: Shiva Temple Kotai, Gujarat (10<sup>th</sup> century). Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies





Figure 2.26: Detail of *shikhar*, reconstructed 10<sup>th</sup> century Trinetrswara Temple (1901), Taranetar, Gujarat





Figure 2.27: Detail of niche, reconstructed Trinetrswara Temple, Taranetar, Gujarat (1901)



Figure 2.28: Violations according to the EITA, Detail of shikhar, reconstructed Trinetreswara Temple (1901), Taranetar



Figure2.29: Hathi Pol, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat





Figure 2.30: Ram Pol, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat



Figure 2.31: Ratan Pol, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat



Figure 2.32: Sagal Pol, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat. Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia



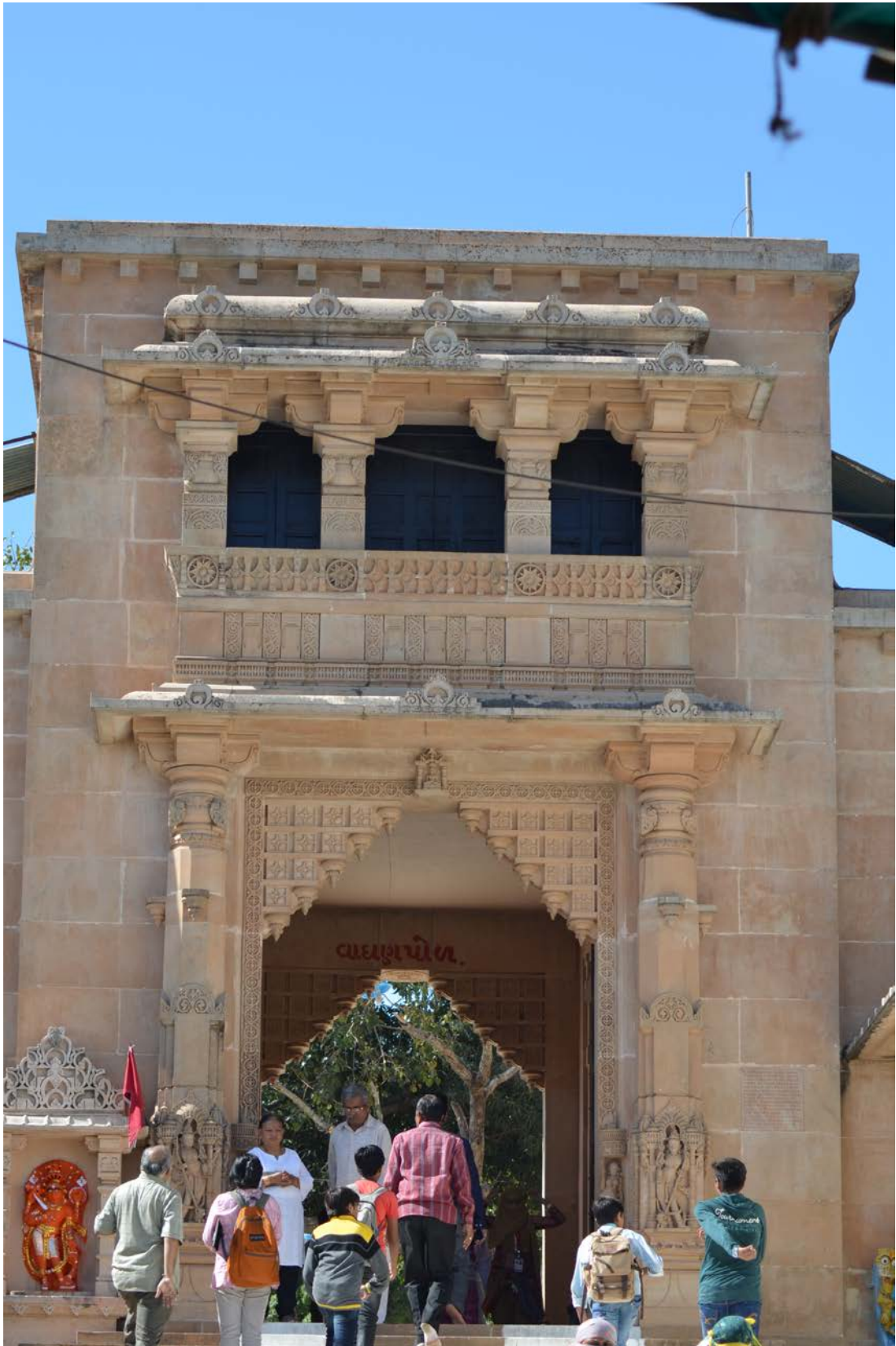


Figure 2.33: Vaghan Pol, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat. Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia





Figure 2.34: Flat ceiling in the basement of the Atma Vallabh Smarak on the outskirts of New Delhi (1980). Image courtesy Atma Vallabh Trust



Figure 2.35: Basement ceiling setting out, Atma Vallabh Smarak (1980), outskirts of Delhi. Image courtesy Atma Vallabh Trust

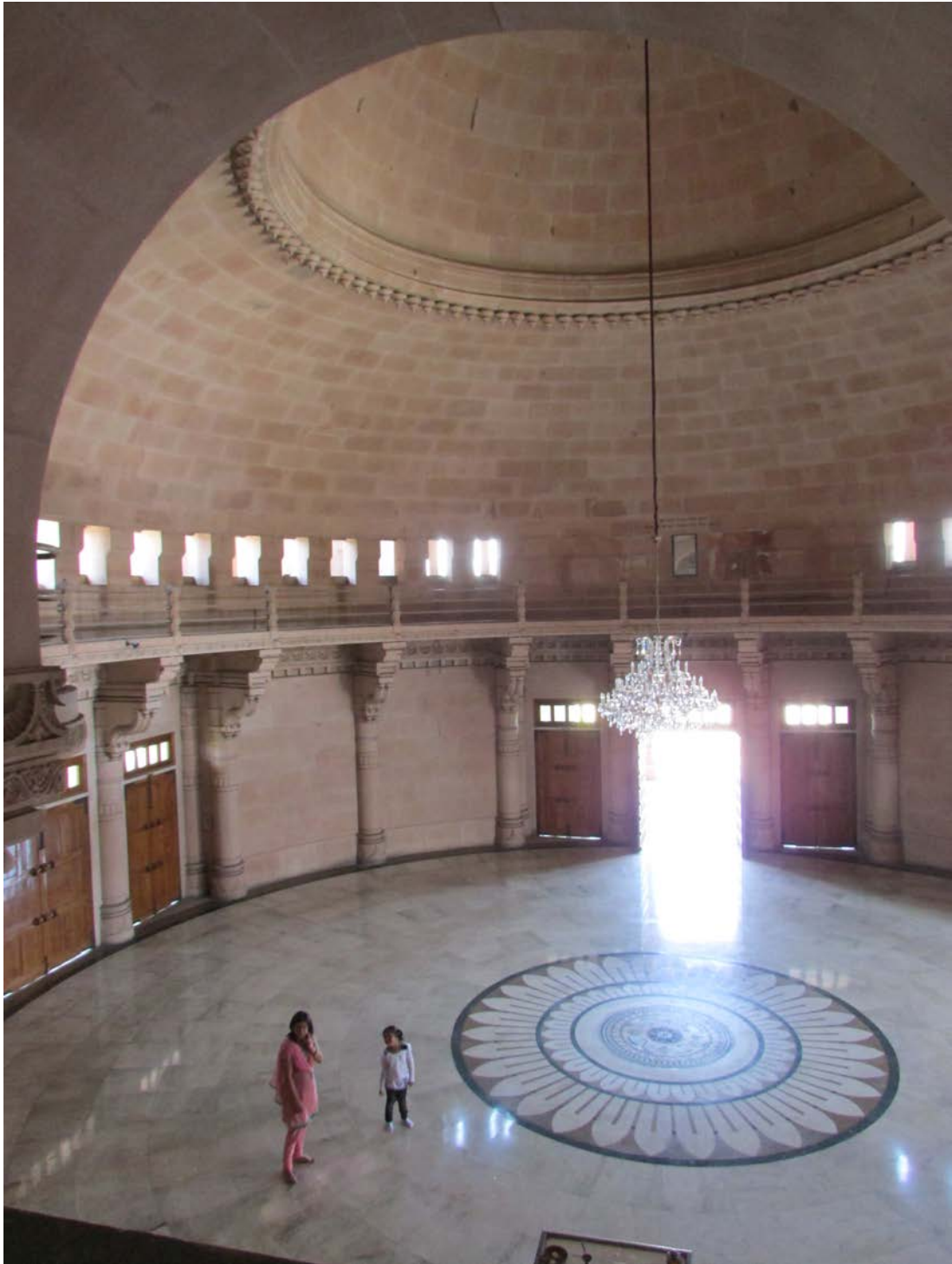


Figure 2.36: Double dome over congregation hall, Atma Vallabh Smarak on the outskirts of New Delhi.



Figure 2.37: Construction of the double dome, Atma Vallabh Smarak, Delhi. Image courtesy Atma Vallabh Trust



Figure 2.38: Interior detail, Atma Vallabh Smarak, Delhi.





Figure 2.39: Entrance porch, Atma Vallabh Smarak, Outskirts of New Delhi.



Figure 2.40: Phamsana roof at the Atma Vallabh Smarak,





# CHAPTER 3





## PRABHASHANKAR OGHADBHAI SOMPURA: INTERSECTIONS WITH ART AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

### Prabhashankar Oghadbhai Sompura

In this chapter, I shall be focussing on the contributions of Prabhashankar Oghadbhai Sompura (1896-1978) who both built and published prolifically. Within the Sompura community he is well known for the reconstruction of the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan (1951), Gujarat, planned immediately after independence in 1947 (Figure 3.1).<sup>1</sup> If Amritlal Trivedi (Chapter 2) represents one end of a spectrum, with a greater emphasis on built projects and less on written works, then Prabhashankar Oghadbhai Sompura's contributions are important for both built works and several publications, which started appearing in the early 1960s, although planned much earlier.

Some of his key built works apart from the Somnath temple are the Agam mandir (1942) in Palitana's Taleti area (Figure 3.2), which draws directly from a distinct architectural language of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century temple complexes of Palitana rather than from the Solanki era. These tend to be double storeyed with a profusion of balconies and porches, with extensive use of the 'engaged' cusped arch. The Panchasar Parshvanath mandir in Anhilpur Patan (1955), the Lalbagh Jain Mandir in Mumbai with his brother Bhaishankar Oghadbhai Sompura, the Chandra Prabhu Prasad Jain mandir in Prabhas Patan, a Jain Parshwanath temple by the river Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, a guest house in Palitana.<sup>2</sup> Along with younger members of his family, P.O. Sompura also worked on temples for the Birla industrial house such as in Renukoot (1967-1972), Nagda (1970 - 78) and Calcutta (1970s).

The publications on the other hand are *Diparnava*<sup>3</sup>, *Kshirarnava*<sup>4</sup>, *Prasad Manjari*<sup>5</sup>, *Vedha Vastu Prabhakar*<sup>6</sup>, *Jina Darshana – shilpa*, *Prasad Tilaka*,

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1997) pp. 186-221

<sup>2</sup> These projects are listed in the *Diparnava*, with not all temples dated.

<sup>3</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, ed., *Diparnava* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraoi Sompura, 1960)

<sup>4</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, ed., *Kshirarnava* (Ahmedabad, Bombay, Delhi: Balwantraoi Prabhashankar Sompura & Brothers, N.M. Tripathi & Co, Motilal Banarasidas, 1967)

<sup>5</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura Sompura, *Prasad Manjari* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraoi Sompura, 1965)

*Durga Vidhan, Bharatiya Shilpa Samhita, Vastusara, Vastu Kala Nidhi*<sup>7</sup>, *Pratima Kala Nidhi*<sup>8</sup>, *Prasada Kala Nidhi, Vastunighunta, Vriksharnava, Vastushastra, Jayapruchha, and Vastuvidya*.<sup>9</sup>

P.O. Sompura's architectural patrons ranged from the merchant class from the Jain community to industrialists like the Birlas to, famously, politicians who commissioned the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan, but he also had another group of 'patrons'. In the 1960s he was encouraged by a small group of archaeologists and art historians to publish several translations of medieval manuscripts, which he had already been working on through his own efforts since the 1920s.<sup>10</sup> In addition to sharing knowledge in print form Sompura's impetus in creating the knowledge also seems to be a response to a deteriorating attitude to architecture in the modern period due to the 'blind imitation of western styles.'<sup>11</sup> In the preface to *Vastu Kala Niddhi*, he permits the modification of interiors to suit new concepts of comfort, but professes retaining in the external appearance of buildings, an 'Indian character', reflecting pride in 'our' culture.<sup>12</sup> In 1977 when these words were penned, Gujarat had already been witness to Le Corbusier conceptions in the city of Ahmedabad, Louis Kahn and was seeing the flowering of Indian modernists in small numbers.

Here I will be concentrating on some of his own written works bringing out the cross overs with the relatively new disciplines of Art and architectural History, when historians of medieval western Indian temple architecture such as the stalwart M.A.

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<sup>6</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, ed., *Vedha Vastuprabhakar* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraai Prabhashankar Sompura & Brothers, 1965)

<sup>7</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, *Vastu Kala Nidhi: Album of Architectural Designs* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraai Prabhashankar Sompura and Brothers, 1977)

<sup>8</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, *Pratimakala Nidhi: Album of Hindu Iconography* (Ahmedabad: Balwantraai Prabhashankar Sompura & Brothers, 1976)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., listed at the rear of the book, without publication dates, on an unnumbered page.

<sup>10</sup> P.O. Sompura offers thanks to renowned archaeologist Krishna Deo for all his encouragement in the preparation of the *Diparnava* including securing a government grant of 4000 rupees to pay towards its printing cost. Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, p.64

<sup>11</sup> Sompura, *Vastu Kala Nidhi: Album of Architectural Designs* p. ix

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Dhaky started to interact and collaborate with the Sompuras.<sup>13</sup> This was to analyse medieval *vastu shastra* texts or architectural manuals in the Sompuras' private possession in addition to the collections available to them in the Oriental Institute, Baroda and the L.D. Institute, Ahmedabad. The interest in texts was concerned with the social and cultural context of a vast number of medieval ruins in western India, going beyond architectural evidence alone. Decoding the texts with the Sompuras would have been an inescapable part of the collaboration. I will be looking at the seepage of prevalent 'art historian' methods into P.O. Sompura's own scholarship, particularly the divergences and the convergences.

In terms of P.O. Sompura's publications present day practitioners hold them in high regard, although in practice they were second to the *Shilparatnakar* (1939) by N.M. Sompura, discussed in the next few chapters. These publications starting with the *Diparnava* in 1960 were aimed at a Gujarati and Hindi speaking audience comprising primarily of practitioners and not academics. Over the course of ten years we will see their nature becomes more "art historical" in stance, broadening the audience for the publications. English labels, subtitles and diacritical marks appear in the later books, which are undoubtedly a result of the collaborations with the historians. More importantly a preoccupation with a pan Indian mapping of temples and surveys in the introduction, as well as a preoccupation with a pan Indian classification into three types, the *Nagara*, the *Dravida* and the *Vesara* is discernible.<sup>14</sup> P.O. Sompura's publications show a growing emphasis on historical time in terms of origins of temple architecture, which were amiss in previous publications of the Sompuras, such as the *Shilparatnakara*.

### Beginnings

P.O. Sompura was born in Palitana to a family of *shilpis* (sculptors, architects) which was engaged in making temples for several generations. In the previous chapter we saw that Amritlal Trivedi's father Mulshankar Trivedi was the first to align his professional activities specifically to temple making in the example of the *jirnoddhar* of the 10<sup>th</sup> - century Trinetrswara temple (1901). This reconstruction was

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<sup>13</sup> Joint editorship of several works were planned between M.A. Dhaky and P.O. Sompura. P.O. Sompura passed away before the final press manuscripts could be prepared. See footnote 7 in M.A. Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 71 (1996), 65-85, p. 83

<sup>14</sup> See Adam Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007) for a broad overview and characteristics of the three types.

led by P.O. Sompura's own father Shri Oghadbhai Bhavanji. In the case of P.O. Sompura we find a direct lineage which takes us further back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century, to Palitana acting under the patronage of primarily Jain merchant classes settled in Ahmedabad and Bombay.

It has been argued that the patronage and building activity on Mount Shatrunjaya in Pailtana in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with increased wealth of Jain merchants, primarily the wealth gained through the export of opium to China in the 19<sup>th</sup>- century, with trade as well in silks and spices.<sup>15</sup> Kim has also suggested that many of the Ahmedabad merchants were involved in the running of the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, which could account for the increased patronage around this time. According to the preface of *Pratima Kala Nidhi* - one of P.O. Sompura's many publications which came out between 1960 and 1970 - it was his great grandfather Ramjibhai who was in charge of the design and delivery of the Moti Shah *tunk* on the Jain pilgrimage site of the Shatrunjaya hill, in Palitana, Saurashtra (Figure 3.3), the works being paid for by Sheth Moti Shah a wealthy Jain merchant from Bombay.<sup>16</sup>

Not only the Motishah *tunk*, more than half of the temples on Mount Shatrunjay - which currently has over one hundred and fifty freestanding temples - were built between the mid eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> The Moti Shah *tunk* that P.O. Sompura's great grandfather worked on, along with the nearby Balabhai or Balavasahi *tunk* (Figure 3.4) was constructed in a valley between the two summits at Mount Shatrunjaya over a course of twenty five years from 1835 to 1860. Spatially the *tunks* are different to those from the classical Solanki era temples from the 11th-13th century in planning and in detail.<sup>18</sup> They are planned within a square or rectangular fortified enclosure, with symmetrically arranged freestanding subsidiary shrines.<sup>19</sup> The abundance of balconies and baluster columns are other distinctions, as well as vertically discontinuous *shikhars*.

<sup>15</sup> Hawon Ku Kim, *Re-Formation of Identity : The 19th-Century Jain Pilgrimage Site of Shatrunjaya, Gujarat* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2007)p.80

<sup>16</sup> See Preface by P.O. Sompura, Sompura, *Pratimakala Nidhi: Album of Hindu Iconography*

<sup>17</sup> James Burgess, *The Temples of Satrunjaya, the Celebrated Jaina Place of Pilgrimage, near Palitana in Kathiawad*, 2nd edn (Gandhinagar, Delhi: Gujarat State Committee for the celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of Bhagwan Mahavira Nirvan ;, 1977 (1st ed. 1869), Kim, p.76

<sup>18</sup> Kim, pp.110-139

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.112



As a construction site, there would have been a pool of shared practices and a tacit sharing of knowledge generated around this operation. Some of the *shilpis* would possess *vastushastras*, but not all it would seem from Sompura's writings. Along with Motishah *tunk*, the Balabhai *tunk*, to its north was built contemporaneously. Recent scholarship on this sacred site has shown that the artisans who worked on the Motishah *tunk*, saved their own wages and built the Balabhai *tunk*.<sup>20</sup> Apart from these two *tunks* built in the valley several *tunks* were erected. The seven decades from 1786 onwards coincide with the most active patronage at Palitana, when seven new *tunks* were made and existing *tunks* heavily renovated.<sup>21</sup>

In 1786 the Modi *tunk* was built on the northern summit. Following this four more were added in quick succession in the 19<sup>th</sup>- century. Hemabhai *tunk* (1826, Figure 3.5), Sakar Shah *tunk* (1836, Figure 3.6), Ujambhai *tunk* (1837, Figure 3.7) and the Narshi Keshavji Nayak *tunk* (1862, Figure 3.8). Contemporaneous to this florid construction is also the Hutheesing temple in Ahmedabad, erected by the silk trader Sheth Huthhesing and his wife Harkubar Kunvarba Shethani in 1847. (See chapter 6) These projects give a sense of the kind of milieu and patronage that P.O. Sompura's family came from. His great grandfather Ramji Ladharamji was involved during this intense building activity, and very much part of this intense shared work experience.

We have seen that P.O. Sompura's great grandfather was executing the Motishah *tunk* and quite possibly his grandfather too grew up around this construction site and learnt his trade there. P.O. Sompura's father Oghadbhai Bhavanji led the Trinethreshwara *jirnodhar* with flair and imagination, along with Mulshankar Trivedi in 1901. We do not know very much about P.O. Sompura's grandfather's generation, except for one small but significant mention in the introduction of the *Diparnava*: P.O. Sompura accords the awakening of his interest in *vastu shastra* texts to his father's uncle, Pranjivan Jetharam, who he notes was *shilpi* of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace at Baroda. It is well known that the Lakshmi Vilas Palace is one of the clearest of examples of 'Indo Sarascenic' architecture where British architects designed public government buildings as well as palaces for

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p.75

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.68

princes using a concoction of Indian motifs.<sup>22</sup> This is an interesting connection indeed and needs further research, but for the moment it has the following implications.

Often the 'native' builder is portrayed in academic scholarship as having lost out in the Indo Saracenic experiment.<sup>23</sup> The British architect is portrayed as the 'designer' and the 'native' *shilpi* as the executer as mute witness to the 'designing' process'. The notion that Pranjivan Jetharam was already part of a thriving building culture at Palitana and himself part of a team of *shilpis* on what is considered a quintessential example of Indo Saracenic architecture demonstrates that the Sompuras' practices were fluid, flexible, and contingent – open to working on modern buildings with modern configuration of spaces, without the baggage of the nationalist view (See E.B. Havell's portrayal of the Indian craftsman in Chapter 1)

The Lakshmi Vilas palace was designed by British engineer Robert Chisholm at the behest of Sayaji Rao III, who also asked him to design the Baroda College. (See chapter 4) The Maharaja's palaces were part of a new spatial typology for entertaining British officials thereby keeping intact a political relationship of suzerainty. If the Sompuras were embodying Palitana temples and a long architectural lineage, then they also had worked with Indo Saracenic culture. Seen from the view, they have not lost out, rather assimilated new practices. That Pranjivan Jetharam introduced the young P.O. Sompura to the study of *shilpashastras* already gives us a sense of the versatility at work.

### **P.O. Sompura's journey**

P.O. Sompura charts his own professional journey in a personal note in the preface of the *Diparnava*, which he published in 1960. In childhood, he had wished for higher English education. However family financial reasons came in the way and he could not study further than third standard. He joined his family profession of temple making under the guidance of his brother Bhaishankarbhai. Gradually he became conversant with the profession. During his free time he dug out old cabinets and looked at the family manuscript collection. He scrutinised hand written scripts, notes, construction drawings made by his forefathers engaged in the building of

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<sup>22</sup> See G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture : Continuity, Controversy, and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 27-56

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.60

Palitana. In a few books belonging to his family, Gujarati translations were to be found; these he memorised.

P.O. Sompura's father made him memorise a small elementary book of mathematical and astrological calculations used by the family for temple construction. This was the 'Ayatatva' which later came to be the first chapter of the *Diparnava*. The *Ayatatva* must have been a shared resource for N.M. Sompura uses it too in the *Shilparatnakar* (1939). Thereafter he memorised four chapters of the *Prasadamandan*. The *Prasadamandan* had been written in the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup>- century by the scholarly architect Mandana, 'the architect royal' for the royal patron Maharana Kumbha of Chittor. Mandan has an importance for Sompuras, for the *Diparnava* includes Mandan in the 'Sompura' lineage stating that Mandan was from the Sompura caste belonging to the Bharadwaja gotra.<sup>24</sup> Mandan had composed a number of works on iconography and architecture in the fifteenth century and it is these that P.O. Sompura was reading, memorising, and interpreting. They could have been handed down to his immediate family through the act of copying. Although written in the 15<sup>th</sup> - century, the *Prasadamandan* itself freely borrowed from the *Aparajitaprarcha* of the 12<sup>th</sup> - century.<sup>25</sup> Sompura states that, along with memorising and reciting, he made drawings to aid interpretation as well as studied his elders' drawn interpretations.

This suggests that decoding texts into drawings was always already an activity in the late 19<sup>th</sup>- century, which later on as we shall see in the *Shilparatnakar* (Chapter 4) came to be de rigour in published form. These are concrete glimpses of how late medieval texts were preserved within the family and handed down or actively sought out through individuals.

While sifting through these medieval works written in the Sanskrit, much like his contemporary N.M. Sompura, who started working on the seminal *Shilparatnakar* in 1927 (Chapter 4), P.O. Sompura was thinking of the ordinary *shilpi*, whose family neither possessed the works nor understood Sanskrit. Thus his intended audience was the practicing *shilpi* in the 1920s. This is a different scenario to nationalist art historians, who were also analysing texts with the help of living practitioners but their intended audience was the global academic community.

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<sup>24</sup> See Preface Sompura, *Vastu Kala Nidhi: Album of Architectural Designs*

<sup>25</sup> M A Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 71 (1997), 65-85, p. 79

It was with the conviction to make the works freely available to as many Gujarati speaking *shilpis* as possible that as early as 1917, P.O. Sompura initiated the translation of the *Prasadmandan*. He is bound to have been influenced by the wider nationalist scenario in his desire for democratising, although these are not mentioned. He was twenty one years old at this point. It is interesting to note that in the nationalist arena, hereditary temple makers had gained much attention through the writings and petitions of various protagonists of 'method' rather 'style'.<sup>26</sup> Whether these events had a direct impact or not, P.O. Sompura's family members were only too delighted that the youngest in the family was on the path to ensuring that traditional knowledge was going to be properly conserved.<sup>27</sup> Sompura speaks of three things that helped move the wheels of his study: drawings made by his forefathers, his own practical experience on live projects and finally his own study of manuscripts helped by willing family members.

From 1919 to 1921 he lived in Bombay working on projects. In 1923, while he was living and working in Khambhat, with his brother Revashankarbhai, he was entrusted with the restoration of the Kumbhariya temples by the Anandji Kalyanji Trust. It is here that P.O. Sompura's translation work gained momentum, when more complex *vastushastras* came into his attention. These included the *Kshirarnava* and the *Diparnava*. It is here that he completed the translation of *Roopmandan*, *Vastumanjari*, and *Vastusaar*. Equally he makes a note that he helped N.M. Sompura as much as he could in the compilation of the *Shilparatnakar*. P.O. Sompura writes of his limited knowledge in Sanskrit, so help was enlisted from others proficient in the language. He mentions his very dear scholar friend from Jaipur, Pandit Bhagvandasji Jain, who encouraged him to publish the works and offered help with all grammatical corrections. Also P.O. Sompura did not just rely on his family wealth in manuscripts. He shares accounts of visiting the Royal Asiatic Society Library to hunt down the fragments. At one point he notes coming across chapters of the *Vruksharnava*, which to him was an extraordinary scripture for 'demonstrating the principles of the 'Saandhar Maha Prasad', 'Rudra Mahalaya' and large four faceted halls'. It was not easy, he says, to understand these scriptures without deep, detailed study. Nor was it easy to obtain them in complete form. 'Even I have obtained only 1500 shlokas of it'. Between 1931 and 1935 he finalised translations of all the work he had been working on.

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<sup>26</sup> Tillotson, pp. 103-124

<sup>27</sup> See preface, Sompura, ed., *Diparnava*, p.60

### The Diparnava (1960)

The first of many publications by Sompura was the translation of the *Diparnava* (1960). The basis for the *Diparnava* was a 16<sup>th</sup>- century western Indian text, a period associated with a renaissance and not the classical Solanki period. According to Dhaky, the 16<sup>th</sup> - century manuscript quotes copiously from earlier authoritative exemplar texts like *Vastuvidya* (first half of 12<sup>th</sup> - century), *Vastushastra* (latter half of the 11<sup>th</sup> - century), *Aparajitapracha* (late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup>-century), *Kshirarnava* (between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> - century) and *Vriksharnava* (15<sup>th</sup> - century). The manuscript consisted of fourteen chapters, but due to the unavailability of the first chapter Sompura substituted it with the *Ayatatva* mentioned earlier.

In Sompura's edition of *Diparnava*, there are twenty seven chapters in all. Apart from the first fourteen chapters, he collated the remaining chapters from other texts (footnote- doesn't specify which). These twenty seven chapters are divided into two sections. The first part consists of chapters 1 to 19, where advice is given in relation to different astrological and architectural details. These are the characteristics of *jagati* (plinth), *peeth* (base), *mandovar* (wall), *dwar* (doors), *shikhar* (spire), *devata drishti* (sight lines and directions of Gods), *mandap* (hall) etc. The second part consists of specifically Jain iconography.<sup>28</sup> Each of the chapters is accompanied by numerous drawings and photographs which by this stage were the accepted norm in publications. He made numerous drawings to illustrate the text and interspersed the pages with photographs of his own projects like the reconstructed Somnath temple (Figure 3.1). Many drawings are drawn by him. For others he enlisted the help of draughtsmen adept at drawing temples.

The *Diparnava* came to fruition in published form with the encouragement of several key names in the archaeological and political spheres: most notably Krishna Deo, a former director of the ASI and a specialist in Indian art and architecture. Deo was superintendent of the ASI's Temple Survey Project between 1956-62, responsible for extensive surveys of temples in North India. He was a keen advocate of using medieval *vastu shastra* texts. Along with a few others including V.S. Agarwala and M. A. Dhaky it is around this time that the study of Indian temple architecture is

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<sup>28</sup> Further analysis and studies of P.O. Sompura's *Diparnava* will be forthcoming in future studies.



considered to have come into its own, with texts augmenting other dimensions such as regional analysis, chronology, style, form, epigraphy and iconography.<sup>29</sup> Other than these names the Gujarati politician and literary writer K.M. Munshi encouraged him tremendously, even providing a note in the forward.

Around the same time Dhaky was publishing his writings on the chronology of the Solanki temples of Gujarat.<sup>30</sup> In 1963, Dhaky published a monograph on the ceilings of Gujarat.<sup>31</sup> Published in the mid-1970s Dhaky's seminal article on 'Maru Gurjara' traditions of the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century and his particular coinage 'Maru Gurjara' is an academic standard today.<sup>32</sup> This correlating of terminology was a different activity to how scholars were to use texts half a century later, where design intention in the texts was analysed in relation to the architectural evidence in innovative ways.<sup>33</sup>

However it is clear there was great activity and excitement between 1960-1970 in correlating textual terminologies to extant remains of 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> - century temples. Texts like the *Samaranganasutradhara* (11<sup>th</sup> - century) were relied on heavily by Dhaky for being the richest amongst many others in technical matters.<sup>34</sup> In his words the texts equipped them with the necessary vocabulary for attempting a truthful description of the monuments of the medieval period of Western India.<sup>35</sup> In his words also the texts liberated

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<sup>29</sup> Parul Pandya Dhar, 'Historiography of Indian Temple Architecture (Post-Independence Writings): Some Methodological Concerns', in *Archaeology in India: Individuals, Ideas and Institutions*. ed. by Gautam Sengupta and Kaushik Gangopadhyay (New Delhi, Kolkata: Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers in association with Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, 2009), pp. 333-50, p.337

<sup>30</sup> M A Dhaky, 'The Chronology of the Solanki Temples of Gujarat', *Journal of the Madhya Pradesh Itihas Parishad*, No. 3 (1961), 1-83

<sup>31</sup> J. M. Nanavati and Madhusdan A. Dhaky, *The Ceilings in the Temples of Gujarat* (Baroda, India: B.L. Mankad, 1963).

<sup>32</sup> M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65

<sup>33</sup> See Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2015, Adam Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra', *South Asian Studies*, 25.1 (2009), 41-62

<sup>34</sup> Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India' p.125-127

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.125

the academic from the 'jargon of tiresome, unsonorous terms of the Indian regional languages used by present day craftsmen.'<sup>36</sup>

The *Diparnava* is aimed at Gujarati speakers and practitioners, for the translation is in Gujarati, and the main body of the text consists of injunctions on architectural creation. Yet some of its modes of intention are also more aligned with those of art history. Its introduction, which contemporary practitioners during fieldwork referred to me for the history of the Sompura community, is as revealing as the main body of work, which Sompura had been working on long before his interactions with the art historians. Unlike the earlier *Shilparatnakar* by N.M Sompura, there is a distinct interest in laying down classifications and historical information on a pan Indian basis and an urge to historicise events in 'centuries'. In addition to the pan Indian dimension, there is a distinct interest in the historical mode through establishing the antiquity of *vastu shastras* and architecture, or through establishing the lineage of the Sompuras.

In the parallel world of art history, interest in classifying temples according to the *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* types emerged in the 1920s through the scholarship of Coomaraswamy, Kramrisch and others, with earlier tentative suggestions by James Fergusson.<sup>37</sup> These typologies were in the texts themselves, but the growing interest in the texts as sources to understand architecture was a new phenomenon. By the time of writing, the *Diparnava* mirrors these classification concerns. The earlier *Shilparatnakara* on the other hand is unburdened by these three pan Indian classifications, dealing only with the *Nagar shaili*.

*Diparnava's* introduction begins by stating that the *Nagaradi* building craft is found in the North, the *Dravidadi* building craft in the South and the *Vesaradi* in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Later it dwells on fourteen types of architectural classifications, of which 'eight are the most popular': *Nagaradi*, *Dravidadi*, *Bhumijadi*, *Latinadi*, *Sandharadi*, *Vimaanadi*, *Mishrakadi*, *Pushpakadi*.

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<sup>36</sup> Dhaky, p.125.

<sup>37</sup> Pramod Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 1-39, p.31

Some of the sub headings Sompura uses in the introduction are indicative of a historical consciousness, a desire to locate events in historical time. The first is titled 'Vastu vidya in Vedas-Upanishada-Ancient scriptures'. In this section he traces origins of architecture and *vastu* texts to ancient times from '3000 BC to 1500 AD'. Here the references include the Rig Veda, the Atharva veda, the Brahmanas and Gruha sutras. In the subsection "The advent of shilp", he explicates a material understanding written in texts through historical time. From grass to bamboo to wood to brick and then stone, on a pan Indian basis, finally listing out cave architecture in different states. Ajanta, Ellora, Udaygiri.

Following this historical narration of sorts, Sompura suddenly and effortlessly slips into the non-historical mode, narrating the story of how the celestial architect of the world *Vishwakarma* came to adorn the earth with sculpture and architecture. This is followed by a section titled 'Architecture in Samhita and Smruti scriptures', where different origin myths are recounted. Thus he constantly oscillates between two notions of history. The following section titled 'Great ancient creators of Vastushastra' lists eighteen teachers and preachers of *vastushastra*. Reference to these teachers' opinions are given. Of these, three are listed as the main architectural experts: Vishwakarma, May and Purochan. These are in a sense a list of celestial 'authors'. They are not ordinary human beings, but belong to the celestial world, the time of gods and goddesses.

This section is followed by one on the Sompura class of sculptors. Stories of their origin as written in the *Prabha skhanda*, and their divine qualities listed in the *Sompurana* (n.d.) are laid down. At other times references are missed out and the myth told. This is followed by a survey of the *shilpis* of different states: Mahapatra *shilpis* of Orissa, *shilpis* of south India practicing 'Dravidian art'. We find from here he jumps to the 13<sup>th</sup> - century to Hemadripant, then to 12<sup>th</sup> - century Mysore, naming some other *shilpis* of that era. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat come under his scan and his story oscillating between living practitioners and historical *shilpis*. What follows next is a fascinating section on the administration of architecture and the roles of different classes involved.

In this introduction Sompura writes about the inappropriateness of religious classification - Hindu, Jain, Buddhist architecture as untenable categories. He stresses - very much in Dhaky-esque manner of things - that

regional and time differences are the basis of differences in style. A section on famous *sthatpatis*/architects charts out all the mentions of artists and sculptors starting from the Gupta age, to the Solanki age, to “Sompura shilpi” Depaak who built the Ranakpur temple. He then moves on to South India beginning from the 12<sup>th</sup> - century. He then moves back to Rajasthan 15<sup>th</sup> - century of *sthapati* Mandan. He collects references of wherever *shilpis* and *sthapatis* names are mentioned. In a section on Muslim rulers, he reminds the reader that Muslim rulers created art as much as destroyed it. In the introduction tributes are paid to the Taj Mahal stressing that monuments made by the Muslim community are praiseworthy. He then praises the Indian craftsman, lamenting his lack of patronage from the government.

### **The Kshirarnava (1967)**

After a gap of seven years Sompura published the *Kshirarnava* in 1967 translating the older 15<sup>th</sup> - century Sanskrit text into Gujarati and Hindi. By this time he was very much in touch with the small circle of archaeologists and art historians deeply involved in the study of monuments and texts from Western India. The *Kshirarnava* is particularly interesting for its even more distinct introduction, where drawings, complete with English labels, with diacritics are introduced in published form to Sompura circuits. (Figures 3.9-3.13) These deal with both *Nagara* and *Dravida* traditions of temple architecture. Would P.O. Sompura have drawn these himself or would he have enlisted Dhaky's help for his own work, this remains to be discovered. The Hindi translations at the bottom of each drawing suggests that he was attempting to reach out to multiple audiences. The architecture of the *Nagara* spires in the photographs seems to be of the older variety from the Solanki era rather than the types built in Palitana, which are usually devoid of elaborate *jaal* patterns on their surfaces and tend to have different corner details. Other details like balconies and later shared practices with Islamic patronage are not part of these descriptions.

Two other smaller publications are worthy of mention to demonstrate how illustrations were used in specific ways to transmit knowledge. The *Pratima Kala Nidhi: album of Indian iconography* (1976) and the *Vastu kala Nidhi: album of Indian architectural designs* (1977) deserve a mention for the ways in which knowledge was segregated into smaller themes, like ‘iconography’ and ‘architectural designs’. Both these publications are purely

illustrative and can be likened to a visual dictionary dealing with images of gods and goddesses in the case of the former and architectural detail in the case of the latter. Both these publications have an uncanny resemblance to the 'CAD library' system that most Sompuras deploy today where it is assumed that the user is fully conversant with the coming together of the fragments.

### **Infiltrating Art historical scholarship**

In his seminal text *The Vastu Shastras of Western India* Dhaky makes it clear in a warm note that he was deeply indebted to P.O. Sompura for generously sharing his private collection with him and with whom he had planned to edit several works.<sup>38</sup> In addition to playing a role in the interpretation of medieval architectural texts he encouraged P.O. Sompura in publishing his own works to an audience which belonged to the world of international art history rather than the Gujarati community of Sompura practitioners. One result of that encouragement is an article titled 'The Vastuvidya of Vishvakarma' by P.O. Sompura in *Studies of Indian temple architecture* edited by Pramod Chandra.<sup>39</sup> The *Vastuvidya* is a text from the early 12<sup>th</sup> - century and deals with the formal aspects of 'Maru Gurjara' style.<sup>40</sup> In the chapter written in flawless English, Sompura systematically takes us through the content of the *Vastuvidya* by summarising its various chapters. These are the characteristics of the Jagati (terrace), the pitha (base), the shikhar (spire) and so on.

This short chapter throws up some interesting questions about editorial control and seepage of prevalent interests invested in the period up to the 13<sup>th</sup> - century. Its lucid prose and systematic structuring similar to Dhaky's other writings resonate with the historian's presence. It starts by stating attitudes which are clearly art historical and historicist in stance: primarily in stating that the tradition after the 13<sup>th</sup> - century had ossified and received a setback after the end of the 13<sup>th</sup>- century, when the Muslims overran India. It goes on to say that a degradation in formal elegance and metrical accuracy started in the

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<sup>38</sup> See footnote 42, Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', p.85

<sup>39</sup> Prabhashankar O. Sompura, 'The Vastuvidya of Vishvakarma', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 47-56

<sup>40</sup> Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', pp. 66-67



beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup>- century. But that despite these 'mishaps' the tradition survives through the hereditary exponents like himself. A few lines down, in a contradictory gesture that sits awkwardly with his own status as a practicing architect he states that in the context of the present day the building of temples in a traditional style seems 'anachronistic'. Whether these words really have been penned by P.O. Sompura is debatable, but it certainly seems to reverberate with the prevalent art historical arena of the objectified grand old era.

### **Conclusion**

P.O. Sompura's publications bring to the surface many issues, which need further detailed investigation. This chapter shows that while art historians were occupied in the 1960s in publications on Gujarat's medieval glory, the Sompuras were active in a parallel exercise that intersected and diverged with the art historians. This concerned the constant oscillation between historicised and non historical forms of knowledge. Also certain coinages that are taken for granted in studies of north western Indian temple architecture – like 'Maru Gurjara'- do not seem to have had an impact in Sompura circuits. As far as I understand they do not appear in P.O. Sompura's writings and neither are they common knowledge or even known in present day Sompura circuits.

This chapter gives us a glimpse of the response of a practitioner from the Sompura community to a post-independence nationalist interest in the antiquities in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century. P.O. Sompuura's publications brings up the issue of a deeply ironical absence of contemporaneous Sompura temple production in elitist circles despite an interest in 'living traditions'. In contrast most of his own publications are punctuated with his own works in drawing or photographic format. Lastly it brings up the issue of editorial control when his writings were included in influential art historical volumes.<sup>41</sup> This brief chapter has attempted to show that the rise of the profile of the community in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century and the spread of knowledge is intertwined with its interactions with modern contexts of the art history circuit. In the next chapter we will move back in time to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century to demonstrate how N.M. Sompura dealt with his own particular circumstances.

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<sup>41</sup> All these issues need further detailed explorations.

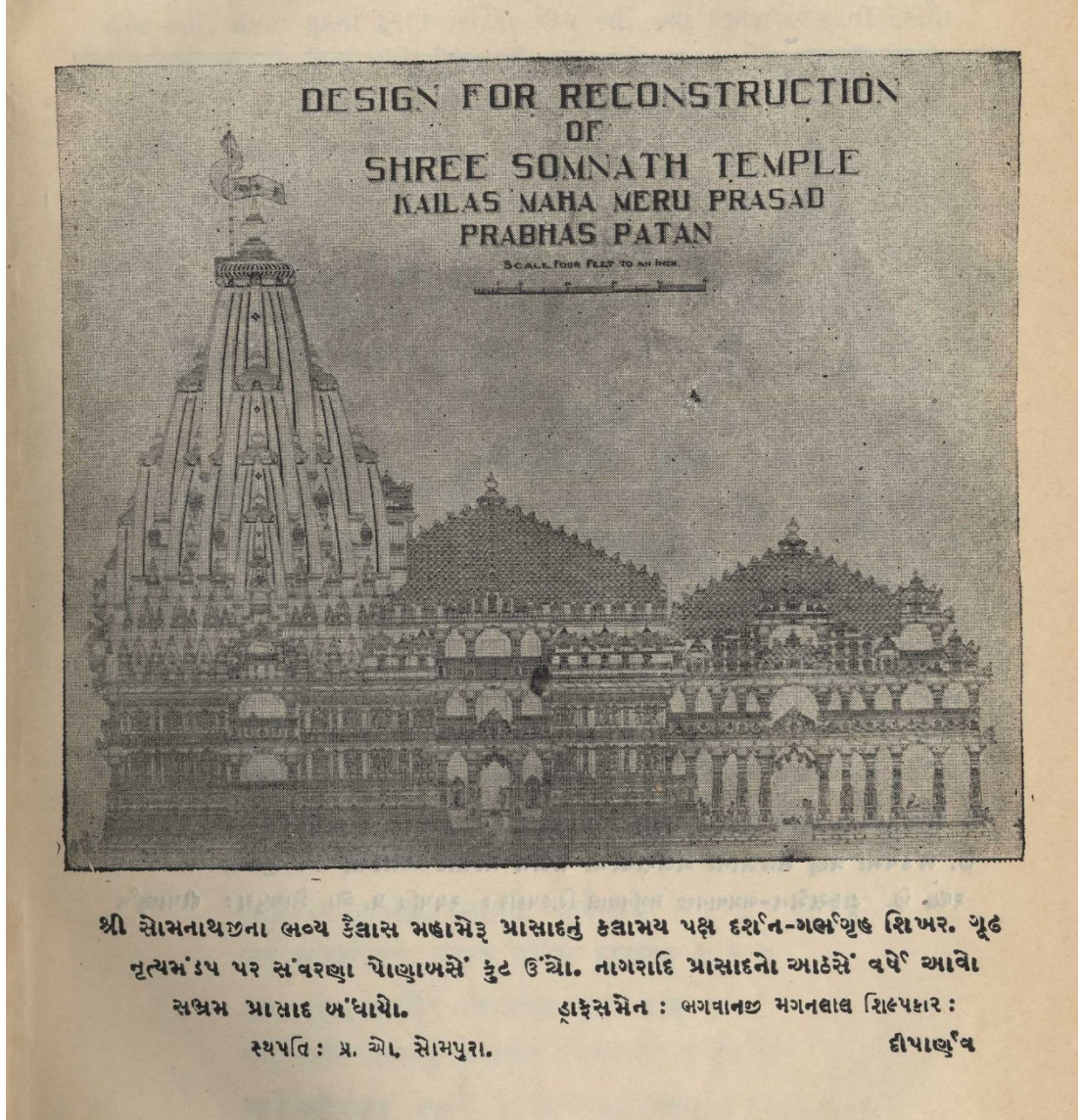


Figure 3.1: Drawing of the Somnath temple in Prabhas Patan, Gujarat (1951) Image from the *Diparnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1960)

Figure 3.0 (Chapter cover): A freestanding temple under renovation in the Motishah *tunk* built by direct ancestors of P.O. Sompura, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century)





Figure 3.2: Agam Mandir by P.O. Sompura, Palitana Taleti. Gujarat (1942)





Figure 3.3: General view of the Motishah tunk by P.O. Sompura's great grandfather Ramjibhai. Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 3.4: General view of the Balabhai tunk constructed at the same time as the Motishah *tunk*. Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)





Figure 3.5: Hemabhai *tunk*, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (1826)



Figure 3.6: Sakar Shah *tunk*, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (1837)

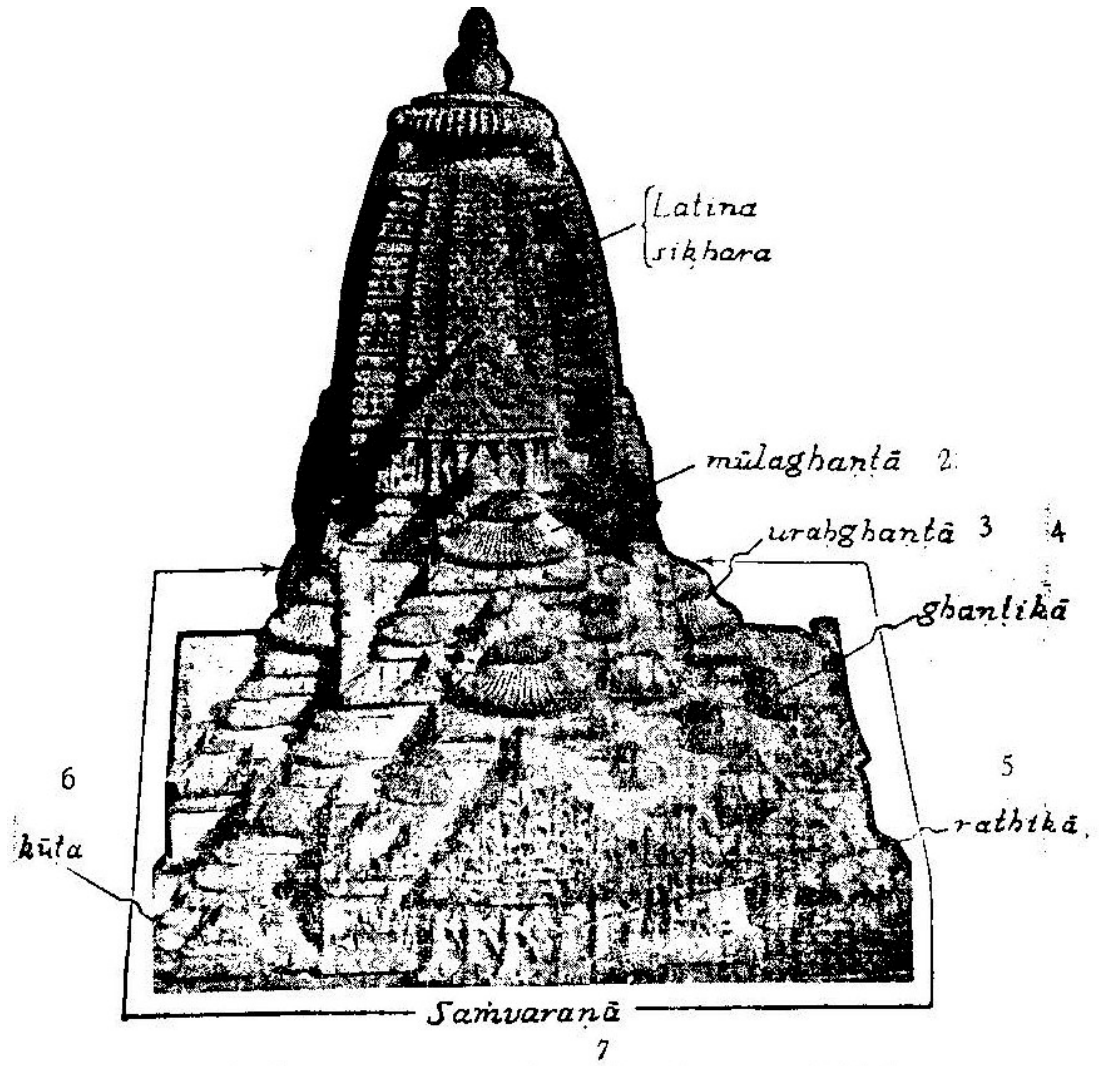




Figure 3.7: Ujambhai *tunk*, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitna (1837)

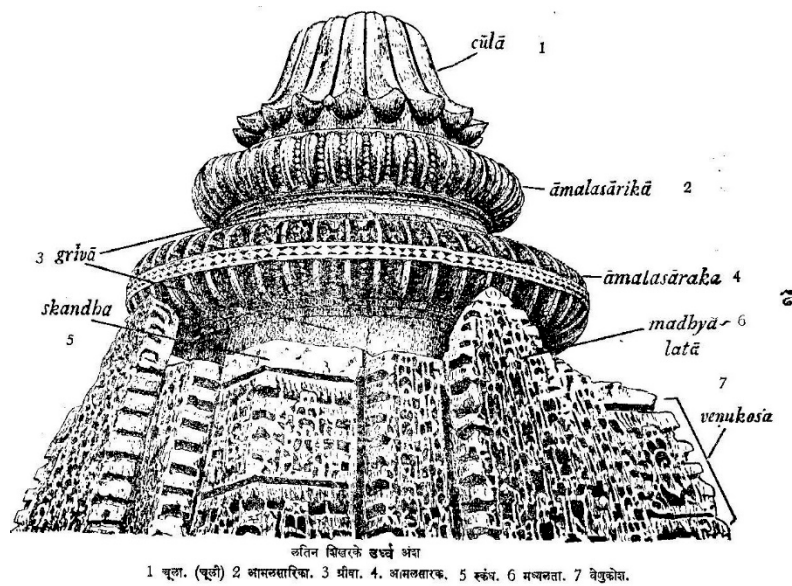


Figure 3.8: Narshi Keshavji *tunk*, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (1862)



1 ललितशिखर 2 मूलघंटा 3 उरुघंटा 4 घंटिका 5 रथ 6 कूट 7 संवर्ण ।

Figure 3.9: The *Latin shikhar*. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)



ललित शिखरके अंश  
1 चूला, (चूली) 2 आमलसारिका, 3 ग्रीवा, 4. आमलसारक, 5 स्कंध, 6 मध्यमला, 7 वेणुकोश.

Figure 3.10: The upper parts of the *Latin Shikhar*. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)

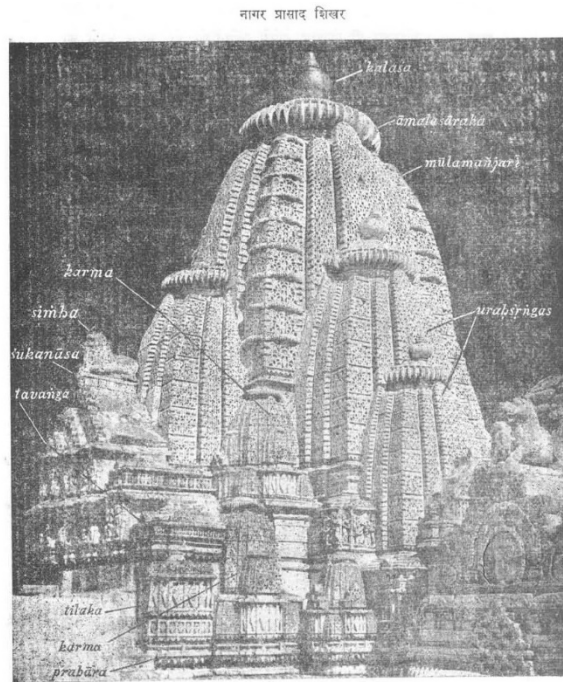


Figure 3.11: 'The Nagar Prasad Shikhar'. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)

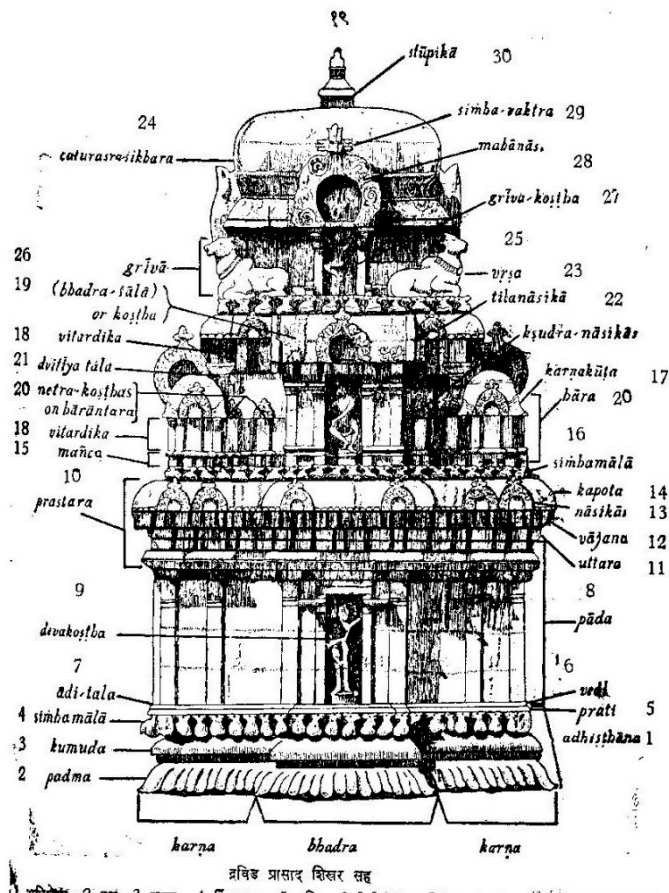


Figure 3.12: 'The Dravid Prasad Shikhar'. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)

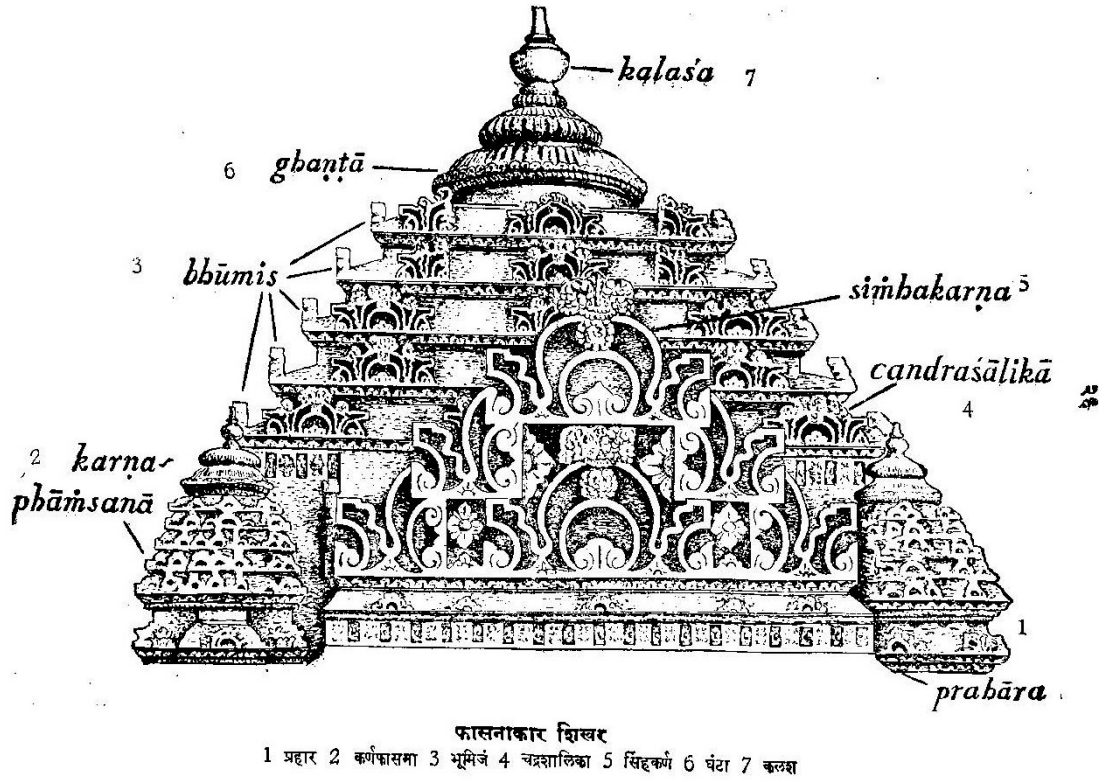


Figure 3.13: 'The Phamsanakar Shikhar'. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)

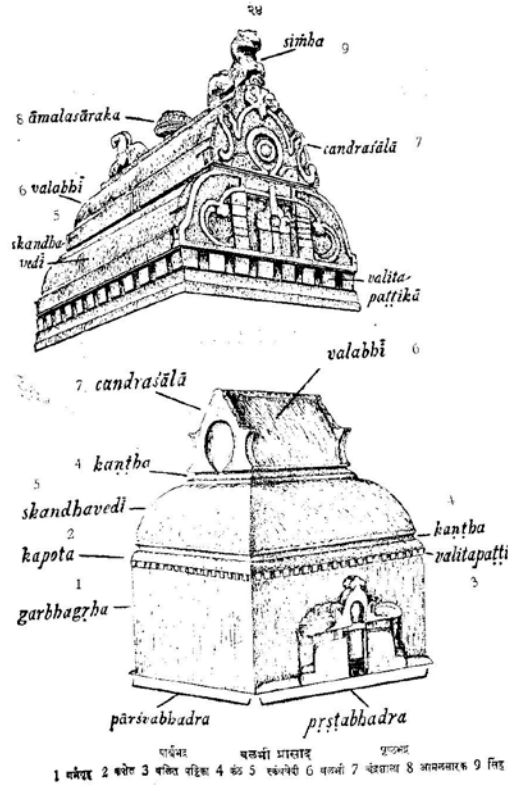
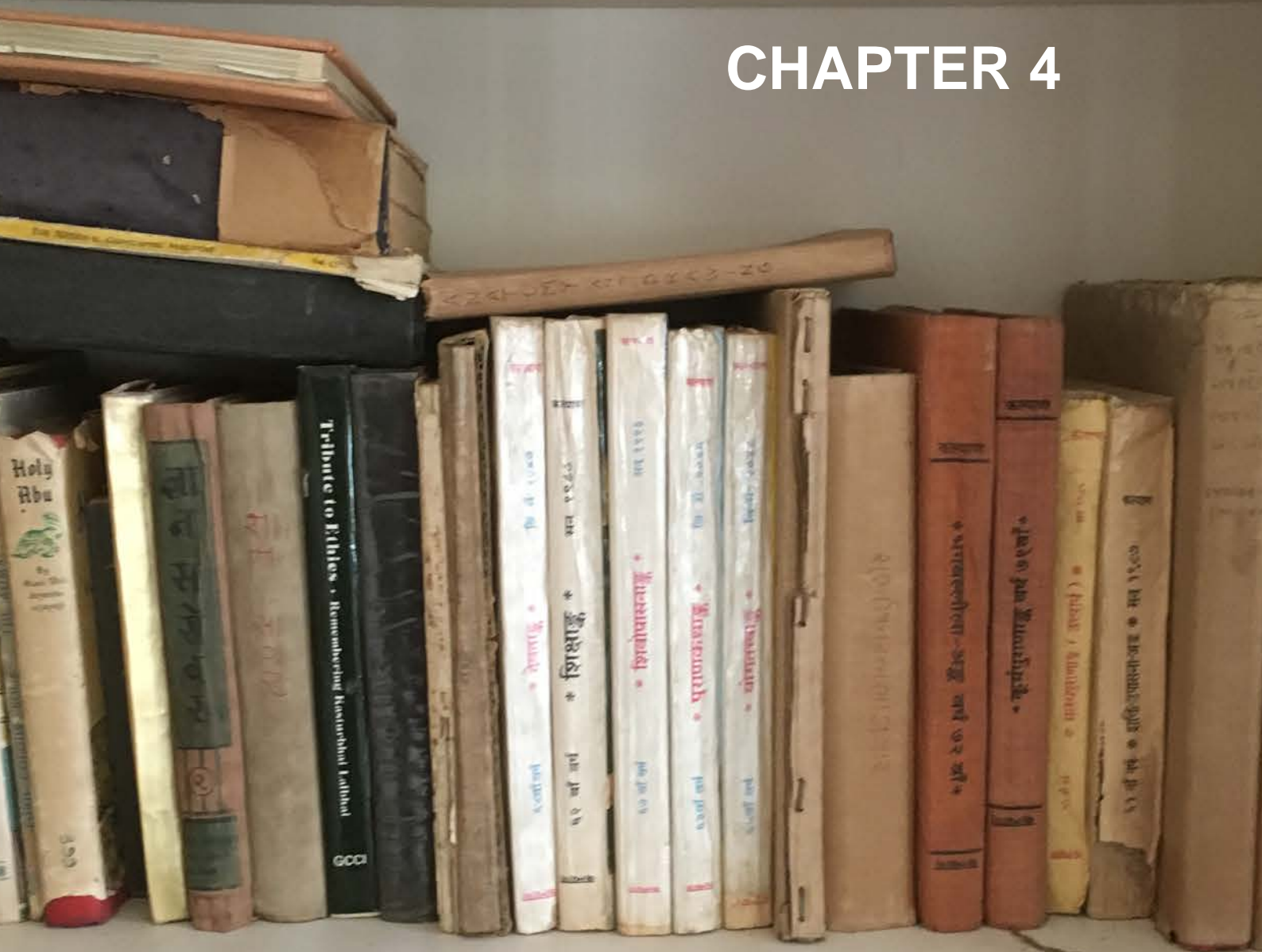


Figure 2.14: 'The Vallabhi Prasad'. Image from the *Kshirarnava* edited by P.O. Sompura (1967)



## CHAPTER 4



## **NARMADASHANKAR MULJIBHAI SOMPURA: RECONFIGURING THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE FOR LIVE PRACTICE**

### **Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura**

This chapter deals with the contributions of Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura (1883-1956) whose attempt at illustrating a body of medieval and late medieval codified knowledge in the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century augured a new arena of practice and identity for the Sompura community. These illustrations profoundly reconfigured the community's relations with its built architectural lineage through the mode of textual scholarship. Some of these reconfigurations surrounding identity have been discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. Their use in actual practice will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 5 and 6. Since the present generation use a range of textual references at hand, the chapter not only attempts to see N.M. Sompura's efforts, but also how it sits within a broader scene of text, practice, and knowledge production, within colonial and nationalist spheres.

I trace the conditions of production of an influential compilation of medieval Western Indian architectural treatises. First published in 1939 and subsequently in 1990, the text under consideration is the *Shilparatnakar* by Narmadaashankar Muljibhai Sompura a native architect from Dhrangadhra, Gujarat.<sup>1</sup> Written at the behest of the native prince of Baroda State Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad (Figure 4.1), along with the monumental task of translating Sanskrit verses from a collection of medieval manuscripts it describes and advises on the typology of the *Nagar shaili* in a thoroughly knowing way through its illustrations.<sup>2</sup> (Figure 4.2). The text also includes drawings by the Archaeological Survey of India (henceforth ASI), which are modified for a regional readership. In addition it contains a profusion of photographs of medieval and late medieval temples from Modhera, Mount Abu, Kumbhariya, Palitana, Ranakpur, and Ahmedabad. Its sacred status and intense use by present day Sompura temple architects in conceptualising and renovating Jain and Hindu temples on a global scale signifies the monumental task in reconfiguring the

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<sup>1</sup> Narmadashankar M. Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*, 2nd edition edn (Dhrangadhra, Kathiawad: Sompura, Narmadashankar Muljibhai, 1990 (1st ed. 1939))

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Adam Hardy for bringing Sompura's thoroughness and awareness of the whole tradition to my attention.



regional tradition to modern contexts that N.M. Sompura took upon himself in 1926, twelve years before the date of publication.

### **Complex of encounters**

As a way of entering the complex of encounters that this chapter deals with I turn to a conversation that took place in April 2012 with a temple architect, who is a direct decedent of Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi (Chapter 2). The conversation was about specific points in time that in one way or the other notated a major shift for the Sompuras. During our conversation the architect unlocked a glass cabinet, behind his office desk, comprising of his library of textual references and pulled out a well-thumbed copy of the *Shilparatnakar* by N.M. Sompura. Along with the *Shilparatnakar* he tabled an unexpected collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> - century colonial texts: James Fergusson's ground-breaking *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*<sup>3</sup> for 'general history', he explained, and Swinton Jacob's *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural details*<sup>4</sup> for 'details of Multan architecture. What is the historical narrative that ties these disparate colonial and indigenous texts together, and how might we read into this arrangement? On the one hand it demonstrates a certain fluidity and expediency in references, both western European and indigenous, used by the current generation; on the other, it elicits questions on the nature of the scholarship being referred to and its re-appropriation into Sompura domains of practice.

By concentrating on the Sompuras' shifting contexts through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> - century, the chapter seeks to understand the phenomenon through the critical framework of 'cultural translation', where a colonial and nationalist arena of archaeology, antiquity and revival of Indian craftsmanship is re articulated in terms of live practice by a local architect from Gujarat. Thus a global history is written into the production of locality. In the giving of new meaning, the textual scholarship creates its own arena as a complex intersection of multiple subject positions and historical temporalities, where we can begin to consider it as a production moulded

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<sup>3</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture : Forming the Third Volume of the New Edition of the "History of Architecture"* (London: John Murray, 1876)

<sup>4</sup> Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*. 12 vols (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1890-1913)

by the interaction of various actors and arenas, rather than simply being the product of one individual's thinking.<sup>5</sup>

Crucially while unquestioned assumptions by the Sompuras' patrons assert that *shastras* embody a continuous unbroken lineage, the *shastras'* fundamental modifications to modern contexts remain obscured in this vision, which this chapter hopes to illuminate.

The *Shilparatnakar* takes the idea of antiquity mining from the realm of colonial ideology and reinserts it back into the domain of living practice through its free use of ASI material. I argue that in this act of cultural translation, which as we shall see is both literal and ideological, archaeology and practice come to be seen as inseparable, enlivened *through* one another, by the native architect rather than as separate domains which colonial and nationalist discourse insisted on.<sup>6</sup> In this way I aim to reveal the complexity inherent in this text - that it is *both* a product of handed down western Indian hereditary practice *and* a 19<sup>th</sup>- century colonial consciousness of Indian architectural antiquity and crafts revival.

The task of compiling the *Shilparatnakar* was not part of an overt political anti-colonial nationalism on the author's part, rather in preparing a legible and practical 'step-by-step' guide specifically for Gujarati speaking temple makers, it could be read as straddling and subverting dominant nationalist consciousness. It intersected, with considerable flair, the inner domain of practice, ritual, myth and language with an outer domain of colonial and nationalist archaeological knowledge production and craft consciousness. Lying outside the purview of governmental efforts at decoding medieval *vastu shastra* texts with the help of native speakers<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Adam Hardy for this insight. It is essential to mention a contemporary of the *Shilparatnakara* at this point. The three volume *Brihad Shilpashastra* by Jaganath Ambaram (Sompura) was published in 1936 and contains, without doubt, the outline of some of N.M. Sompura's drawings. According to B.K. Trivedi (Sompura), Jaganath Ambaram was an assistant to Sompura at Kala Bhavan in 1926. Although the BSS was published prior to the *Shilparatnakar*, it is difficult to say if N.M. Sompura benefitted from J. Ambaram's work or the other way around. In any case the BSS is relatively unknown in Sompura circles today for it never captured the imagination like the SR did.

<sup>6</sup> See Peter Scriver, 'Stones and Texts: The Architectural Historiography of Colonial India and Its Colonial-Modern Contexts', in *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*. ed. by Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27-50

<sup>7</sup> See Ram Raz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1834). This text inaugurated the modern scholarship on Hindu temples. For recent analysis see Adam Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarānganasūtradhāra', *South Asian Studies*,

this chapter highlights an indigenous modernity in the making which is distinctly autonomous. Yet in its instigation and encouragement by a native Maharaja – Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III - in its unhindered but altered use of ASI drawings and photographs and in its very aim of mining antiquity from medieval sources, the autonomy is not a straight forward one.<sup>8</sup>

In interrogating this profoundly innovative native scholarship that undercuts orientalist paradigms, the chapter highlights the way in which the subaltern practice of the Sompuras becomes increasingly familiar with and even adapts itself to colonial forms of knowledge production and materiality in staking out its *own* sovereignty. In this sense my task is not to demarcate the colonial and native domains in their separateness, but to unfold how the very idea of an indigenous practice is reworked and domesticated through interactions with dominant structures – a hybrid space where, ‘cultural elements are continually rearticulated and reconstituted in relation to themselves and to one another, perpetuating their difference rather than disappearing in a merger’.<sup>9</sup>

The scene, for the purpose of the chapter is set between 1858 and 1939, in western India between the time Britain assumes crown rule by dismantling the East India Company and the year of publication of the *Shilparatnakar*. The first half of the chapter lays down the context under which it was produced, while the second half deals with content in a broad sense. The following two chapters will look at instrumentalities of the *Shilparatnakar* in everyday practice. The introductions by the author himself, V.R. Talvarkar, Baroda State Architect, and a biographical note by N.M. Sompura's son Dinkar Rai Sompura in the 1990 edition, are the primary sources for locating the text in a social and political context of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

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25.1 (2009), 41-62 and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Series: Cultures of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) pp.90-95

<sup>8</sup> Maharajas were effectively junior collaborators of empire, giving up political independence in the exchange for territory. For an impact on architecture of this ‘special’ relationship, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision : Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*, Series: Oxford India Paperbacks (New Delhi Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and G. H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture : Continuity, Controversy, and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)

<sup>9</sup> Felipe Hernández, *Bhabha for Architects*, Series: Thinkers for Architects (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) pp. 58-76. See also Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)

### **N.M.Sompura's discontent with occidental orientations**

The idea that 'Indo-Saracenic' and 'European styles' of architecture of the British Raj were instrumental in "eroding" indigenous practice is a recurring theme one encounters in the introduction of the *Shilparatnakar*. That Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III (1863-1939) ruler of Baroda was an ardent supporter of this style of architecture merits attention in laying out the contexts within which the *Shilparatnakar* was produced touching on colonial, national and regional paradigms. Hiranand Shastri, Director of Archaeology, Baroda State, regards the publication as a timely, "carefully written and authentic" work for the "old Indian architecture was being neglected and giving way to Saracenic and European styles." N.M. Sompura himself rebukes native Princes and wealthy businessmen for their western orientations. In the opening page of his introduction, he writes:

Today foreigners and learned people, particularly tourists, visit the sites of this old architecture. They delight in it. . . . . During British rule this architecture was protected, but due to lack of encouragement it is deteriorating day by day. Maharajas and wealthy patrons were attracted to Western architecture and in this way Indian architecture was ignored. India was unfortunate for this.<sup>10</sup>

The special relationship of political suzerainty between native princes and the British resulted in new spaces for interaction: enormous banquet halls, ballrooms, billiard rooms along with European furniture and paraphernalia in favour of the small cramped apartments of traditional palaces.<sup>11</sup>(Figure 4.3) These new spaces and amenities reflected the changing tastes of the maharajas, simultaneously suiting their British guests, for which they employed British engineers and architects, and native skilled and unskilled workforce.

The 'occidental orientation' of some native Maharajas that Sompura and Shastri refer to, concerns the prestige attached in espousing European standards of civilisation and consequently a desire to reflect this in palace architecture by adopting classical designs.<sup>12</sup> Thus we have wholly classical buildings such as the

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<sup>10</sup> Sompura, *Shikparatnakar*, p.20

<sup>11</sup> Tillotson, pp. 46-56

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.p.26-29,

Jai Vilas in Gwalior (1874) commissioned by Maharaja Jayajirao Scindia (r. 1843-86) to designs by Lt. Col. Michael Filose or Lalbagh Palace in Indore, a Palladian conception from the 1880s commissioned by Maharaja Sivaji Rao Holkar. Most striking of all, the Sikh Maharaja of Kapurthala Jagatjit Singh, commissioned a French architect M. Marcel to build the Jagatjit Singh Palace 1906 in the French Beaux Arts manner, which combined elements from the Palace at Versailles and the Louvre. These are only a handful of examples quoted amongst a large selection, but enough to give a sense of anxiety expressed by Sompura at changing patronage and European influence. We have seen in chapter 2 that Dhrangadhra, where N.M. Sompura hailed from, itself was utterly enmeshed in such cross cultural flows discernible in its public and palace architecture.

In contrast to European classicism, Indo Saracenic style on the other hand, came about in the late 19<sup>th</sup>- century at the instigation of British engineers and architects to impart an appropriate, paternalistic and politically expedient 'Indian' character to British rule, demonstrable in imperial architecture. Described by some as a "hybrid idiom of free style Indic ornamentation and structural forms, elaborated upon the generic plans of modern European building plans", <sup>13</sup> it is widely accepted that it built upon the legacy of James Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* whereby India's pre-colonial architectural heritage gained new importance in the post mutiny arena after 1857. <sup>14</sup>

This mode of thinking was seized upon by native Princes - with Sayaji Rao III as one of its most ardent supporters - in the building of their palaces, which too were programmatically new spaces where the British could be entertained. Crucially it enabled a double alignment: to native roots as well as imperial 'civilised values'. While this new self-conscious orientation purported to take interest in indigenous architectural forms, it has been pointed out that one of its deepest contradictions was that to achieve this indigeneness the local Maharajas looked not to the native builders, but to British engineers and architects to deliver them. <sup>15</sup> Leading Indo Saracenicists Charles Mant and Robert Fellows Chisholm both made major contributions to this style in Baroda in the Laxmi Vilas Palace (1890) (Figure 4.4) and the Senate House (1880)

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<sup>13</sup> Sriver, p.32

<sup>14</sup> Metcalf, p.57, Tillotson, p. 37

<sup>15</sup> Tillotson, p.49



A decade later, on a national front the complete bypassing of native builders in the design of the new administrative complex for Imperial Delhi had caused heated arguments amongst imperial aesthetes and crafts enthusiasts. E.B. Havell's petition of 1913, and Gordon Sanderson's letter to the imperial committee, implored it to reconsider method rather than style.<sup>16</sup> In the light of these local and nation-wide architectural developments it is safe to suggest that the 'side-lining' of native builders in important architectural commissions bore an impress on the Gaekwad in prompting Sompura to compile the *Shilparatnakar*.

### **Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III – different registers of patronage**

If Sayaji Rao's architectural patronage in Baroda's public building favoured British expertise, then it is worth dwelling on the nature of his parallel patronage for the crafts, most notably wood carving of Gujarat at the Colonial and Indian exhibition of 1886 – a spectacular display of imperial culture that coincided with the celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee.<sup>17</sup> This patronage reveals a continuation of aesthetic agendas visible in architectural production above, but in the realm of traditional objects designed for the colonial exhibition. So remarkable indeed was Sayaji Rao's contribution considered that he was bestowed lavish praise in the pages of the sumptuously produced *Journal of the Indian Arts and Industry*, under the bureaucratic eye of the Department of Science and Art in London's South Kensington.<sup>18</sup> This brings to light two points: first, that Sayaji Rao was thoroughly enmeshed with the colonial governmental commitment of arresting the degeneration of the Arts of India with the view of increasing the demand for them in England and for facilitating their supply<sup>19</sup>. Second, he is likely to have been conscious of the growing perceived redundancy of the native craftsmen: just like those who executed the new Indo Saracenic palaces of Baroda, the wood carvers for the exhibition, as

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.pp. 100-02

<sup>17</sup> For the politics of display, See also Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display : English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley ; London: University of California Press, 2001), Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty : Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2006) and Arindam Dutta, 'The Politics of Display: India 1886 and 1986', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 30-31 (1997), 115-45

<sup>18</sup> Unknown, 'Colonial and Indian Exhibition', in *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry* (London: Griggs, 1884-86), pp. 61-84

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

we shall see, too were working under oriental “expertise”.<sup>20</sup> This ‘redundancy’ might be thought as a construct in itself as argued in chapter 1, for it privileged the notion of loss of skills

I briefly turn to accounts of the exhibition itself in the first volume of the *Journal of Indian Arts and Industries*. The native princes were intimately involved in meeting costs as well as donating a range of goods for the exhibits. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 took place in London’s South Kensington as part of a wider governmental program of arresting the degradation of Indian art, which according to the Commissioner of India, E.C. Buck, was attributable to two powerful sources: one, the gradual decline of wealthy patronage, and two the introduction of a ‘cheaper and less artistic class of goods from western countries’. The degradation was to be arrested through the guidance of the oriental art expert to whom an appeal was made to assist the authorities in India to ‘*direct progress in the right groove*’ and to ‘prevent the decline of Indian Art’, by pointing out when and how to check degradation. The devotion and zeal of this oriental art expert was considered not to exceed by others and sometimes even equalled in India.

Much has been written about the role the JIA and the exhibitions played in the development of the colonial economy, with its stated aim of increasing demand and facilitating supply, through the mediation of taste.<sup>21</sup> These will not be repeated here; rather what I am more interested in is setting up the precise arena of crafts revival that the *Shilparatnakar* was located in through the patronage of Sayaji Rao.

One of the most prominent features of the exhibition was elaborately carved ornamental wooden screens that divided the many provincial courts of the Indian section (Figure 4.5, 4.6). A heavily carved pigeon house at the centre of the exhibition donated by him also occupied central stage, lauded for its intricate carving (Figure 4.7). The screens, which formed a convenient practical framework for the exhibition, containing the exhibits of each province and native state, were meant to ‘display a living type of decorative art’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For a penetrating analysis of the design of the Rajputana screens for the Colonial and Indian exhibition of 1886, See Vikramaditya Prakash, 'Between Copying and Creation: The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details', in *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*. ed. by Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 115-25

<sup>21</sup> Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty : Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility*

<sup>22</sup> The idea of illustrating decorated carving that ornamented many of the streets and temples of India already had a precedent in a smaller scale in the Calcutta exhibition of 1883. B.A. Gupte,

The cost of the Bombay and Baroda screens was met partly from a grant from the Royal Commission and by lavish contributions from the native states, on application by the former; both Sayaji Rao and the Thakur Saheb of Bhavnagar contributed Rs. 4000 each, while the smaller states contributed a fraction of this sum. As the exhibition was meant to improve taste in oriental pattern and Eastern art, it was considered fitting that the design of the screens too was determined by the new guardians of taste, not the workforce themselves, so all could view what could be achieved of a 'skilful artisan under skilful supervision'. The design of the Bombay court was by Mr. Griffiths the superintendent of the Bombay School of Arts, also secretary to the Bombay committee to the London exhibition, who made sure that it 'illustrated as fully as possible the characteristic wood carving of the presidency'.

The carving however was executed by native craftsmen under the 'able superintendence' of a Mr. Wimbridge of the East India Art Manufacturing Company in Bombay, who prepared all the working details for the carvers. For these details Mr. Wimbridge looked to well-known mosques at Ahmedabad and houses in Surat. The carved screens were found to be 'so characteristic in design and complete in workmanship' by the Royal Commission that they took one hundred and forty six copies of it in plaster to decorate the Indian bazaar. The adjacent Rajputana screens were to the general designs of the modified Saracenic, the only instructions issued to the wood carvers were that 'as great a variety of patterns should be employed as possible, the ornament to be *purely* Indian and no attempt to be made to work on *other than traditional Indian lines*'.<sup>23</sup>

By encouraging Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura, was the Gaekwad directing progress '*in the right groove*', such as found in the tight supervision of the screen designs at the Colonial and Indian exhibition on 1886? Certainly, from the JIAI accounts, we see that patronage is entirely moulded by the programs and aesthetic considerations of the colonial crafts enthusiasts. Further, moulded by commissions in the private sphere where oriental art dealers can be seen to be modifying taste to suit their collections for export, the screen carvers could be seen to be caught in an unending process of producing a traditional aesthetic.

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'The Baroda Court', in *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* (London: Griggs, 1884-86), pp. 126-33

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

While these two glimpses into his patronage for palace architecture and the crafts show an alignment with imperial interests, and an appreciation of English tastes and values, it is pertinent to note that Sayaji Rao was also in constant conflict in matters of governance with the viceroy and officials of the government of India.<sup>24</sup>

His patronage extended to the Arts in the encouragement given to Ustad Moula Bux in the setting up of the Academy of Indian Music in 1886, the same year as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition discussed above. More relevant to this chapter is his patronage for the revival of Sanskrit studies where a number of classical literary works began to be published under the title of the 'The Gaekwad's Oriental Studies' in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> - century.<sup>25</sup> Under the original editorship of C.D. Dalal and Pandit Anantakrishna Shastri, the series was concerned with the history and literature of Gujarat, where every branch of Sanskrit literature, including architecture, was represented. This scholarly enterprise contributed directly to the revival of Sanskrit studies, with an attractive collection of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Gujarati writings. Presently the Gaekwad Oriental Series is managed by the Oriental Institute at the Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, where 187 published works are listed between 1916 and 2009. It is of some relevance that by 1926, the year Sayaji Rao encountered N.M. Sompura, one key and critical architectural work had already been published in the series: the *Samaranganasutradhara* by king Bhoja of Dhara edited by T. Ganapati Shastri, published in two parts in 1924 and 1925. This text has contributed immensely to the understanding of medieval architectural knowledge as evident from the body of scholarship that has used it from the 1960s to the present moment. At the cusp of the meeting in 1926, the publication is likely to have instilled a desire in Sayaji Rao to spread knowledge held in similar Sanskrit texts to living architectural practitioners of Gujarat, this through the conduit of N.M. Sompura, whose skills were needed to make the knowledge legible to his Gujarati audience. Before moving on to details of the concrete encounter between the prince and the architect, I digress briefly to a colonial text, the *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details* (1850) which also lay at the intersection of colonial codes, knowledge production, craft and native practice.

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<sup>24</sup> Manu Bhagavan, 'Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive': Resistance through Mimicked Modernity in Princely Baroda, 1900-1913', *Modern Asian Studies*, 35 (2001), 385-409

<sup>25</sup> L.D. Barnett, 'The Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Edited by C.D. Dalal and Pandit R. Anantakrishna Shastri', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1.01 (1917), 123-26, L.D. Barnett, 'Gaekwad's Oriental Series', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 4.3 (1927)

### Colonial codes and the impress of hands

The *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details* was compiled in 1890 by Col Swinton Jacobs, an engineer working for the Jaipur PWD. It figures in the opening paragraphs of this chapter as a text referred to by the Sompuras and is part of the same arena of crafts resistance that the Colonial and Indian exhibition of 1886 purported to be. While the resistance in the former was for cheap and mass produced goods, which degraded traditional skills, the 'resistance' in the latter was for the Public Works Department's pattern book standardised designs and indeed its Indo Saracenic preoccupations with style that supposedly degraded native traditions.

An argument for method rather than style, was the impetus behind the compilation of the *Portfolio* which was conceived in Jacob's words principally for "practical use to the architect and the artisan". An extensive collection of full size details – columns, doors, brackets, plinths, arches, balustrades - of existing buildings in and around Rajasthan, it was a zealous effort to "train" native craftsmen of Jaipur State's Public Works Department. (Figure 4.8, 4.9) The segregated details were issued as loose leafs for ease of comparison and also because they were intended to be working drawings.<sup>26</sup>

If we see the *Portfolio* and the *Shilparatnakar* together, it is instructive to see how both colonial and native productions are joined in their motives i.e. in being practical guides to their users. While some forty six years later, the *Shilparatnakar* was prepared and paid for by N.M. Sompura, the *Portfolio* was prepared by Jacobs, a British engineer in the Jaipur PWD, under the patronage of Maharaja Madho Singh. While the *Shilparatnakar* was exclusively written for a Gujarati speaking readership dealing with various aspects of temple conceptualisation, the *Portfolio* was as much to satisfy an ideology of empire as for practical use for craftsmen 'under sympathetic guidance' of crafts enthusiasts. As Prakash argues, however radical its protagonists may have projected themselves to be in relation to the bland or the stylistic buildings of the PWD, it was ultimately enmeshed in the production of a glorious oriental stereotype.<sup>27</sup> In this sense the writing of the *Shilparatnakar* competes with the codes for craftsmanship being generated in colonial spheres; for

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<sup>26</sup> For details of how the *Portfolio* gained instrumentality, see Tillotson, pp. 61-102, Prakash, pp. 115-25, Vibhuti Sachdev, 'In a Maze of Lines: The Theory of Design of Jaalis', *South Asian Studies*, 19.1 (2003), 141-55pp. 97-128.

<sup>27</sup> Prakash, p. 115-25



while the *Portfolio* took away knowledge from the hands of the craftsmen employed in the Jaipur PWD, putting it in the hands of the 'expert', Sompura's efforts have the effect of restoring knowledge back to the hands of the native craftsman.

In Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura the Gaekwad was not directing progress in the groove of the 1886 Colonial and Indian exhibition at all. On the contrary he saw in N.M. Sompura an independent voice of both architect and a scholar. Not acting under oriental "expertise", such as at the Colonial and Indian exhibition screen design, nor under British architects experimenting with Indian traditional imagery in Indo Saracenic conceptions. Here was a native architect who was rooted in his practice within a larger network of temple architects and came with the added bonus of being able to procure, translate or enable the translation of medieval Vastu shastra manuscripts written in Sanskrit.

### **Princely and Professional Encounters**

It is worth recounting the story of how N.M. Sompura encounters the Gaekwad on a construction site, highlighting the alternate circuits that Sompura moved in, with patronage primarily from the Jain mercantile community. N.M. Sompura was born in November 1883 in the town of Dhrangadhra, the capital of princely state of Dhrangadhra in Gujarat. We have seen that Dhrangadhra itself was a terrain for architectural cross cultural flows in the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra's commissions for public architecture and his orientations towards European detail, which Mulshankar Trivedi (Sompura) oversaw (Chapter 2).

N.M. Sompura lost his father when he was a child; we are not told whether his father was a temple builder, but that he had an innate interest in 'architecture and architectural knowledge' from a young age. In 1905, at the age of twenty two years he travelled to Ahmedabad to work as a *kalakar* (artist) on the marble Jain *derasar* of Sheth Manik Chand Kapoorchand in Patasha Pol. While working on this project with the architect Prahladi Vanrajan Sompura, we are told that he immersed himself, in his spare time, in the self - study of Sanskrit manuscripts, which aided the main part of his work for a period of three years. In this way, the introductions are keen to state, that Sompura gained his knowledge through apprenticeship as well as his own efforts, for which he slowly started gaining a reputation. There is no

mention in his biography of a specific lineage in the family stretching back generations, like that of his contemporary P.O. Sompura.<sup>28</sup>

With a burgeoning reputation young Sompura's career plunged forward in great leaps with strong patronage from the Jain mercantile community. In 1907 at the age of twenty four, he was invited by Sheth Maganraj Jeevraj of Vadgaon, to renovate a Jain temple in the Kolahpur district of Maharashtra, to which he travelled with a team of artists. His work on this temple was so well received that he was invited to construct more temples in Kolahpur district, Maharashtra, including a renovation of the temple of Ichalkaranji. In 1915 he returned to Gujarat to work on the imposing Mahavir Swami Jain temple in the village of Pansar, in the Kalol district. From there in 1919 he travelled to Kaichol in Mehsana district and then Bahucharaji Gaon in Modhera for the construction of more new temples, which were completed under his guidance. These were accompanied by renovations in Chanasma, Unza, and Langhanaj carried out under his supervision. In 1920, when he was 37 years old, Sheth Sarabhai Dahyabhai, businessman of Ahmedabad invited N.M. Sompura to construct the Parshva Vallabh temple in Serisa village on behalf of the Anandji kalyanji Trust (Figure 4.10 - 4.17), in Mehsana province, intended to be a 'great and magnificent temple' to be built at the cost of Rs. 5 lakhs.

The architecture at Serisa is suggestive that N.M. Sompura is fully conversant with the overall shapes of *anekindak* or multi spired temples as they appear in the *Nagar shaili* between the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *shikhar* (spire) itself has four projections on the central off set, and below the *chajja* the projections continue down to the ground becoming plan projections. The use of the *samran* above the *gudhamandap* and side porches are from this genre, but the use of domes and *kangra* parapets are from the Palitana temple genre of the mid-19<sup>th</sup>- century. Within the broad architectural framework Sompura takes licence with details bringing in

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<sup>28</sup> See also Pramod Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 1-39pp. 31 and 33, where Chandra elaborates on the long family lineage of P.O. Sompura 'who counted among his family members the great Mandana who served under Maharana Kumbha' (1430-1439). More immediate family connections are elaborated by Chandra such as that of P.O. Sompura's great- grand father, Ramji Ladharam, who built the Moti Shah tunk at the Jain pilgrimage centre on Mt. Shatrunjay at Palitana. Chandra wonders whether it was indeed Ramji Ladharam who James Fergusson observed and wrote about in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* as a supreme example of a live process that reflected those of Europe in the middle ages. No such illustrious details are forthcoming about N.M. Sompura.

European imagery as well as details particular to the tradition, which can be discerned in the niches on the *mandovar* (Figure 4.15) and in column capitals (Figure 4.16). The *kumbha* too seems to be decorated with patterns which are improvisations.

We can see that in the span of fifteen years, N.M. Sompura moved his career from an apprentice working on a construction site to leading teams of craftsmen in the design and restoration of temples in Gujarat and Maharashtra. From the various dates stated, there is a sense of rapidity in the quick succession of temple commissions, as well as a sense of travel with an entourage of craftsmen to work sites.

It is within a milieu seething with political and cultural nationalism, the year 1926 proves to be a pivotal point in the life of Sompura which is marked by his first encounter with Maharaja Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad of Baroda on the temple construction site in Serisa itself. That the skill and knowledge to build temples 'as good as ancient ones' still existed in people like N.M. Sompura was something that the Maharaja applauded and spoke about with interest. In this meeting the first seeds of the idea of preparing a compilation, which would be a translation of various *vastu shastra* manuscripts, with the incorporation of explicit drawings translated from text was put forward by the Gaekwad. This not a novel idea in itself, for it somewhat derived its inspiration from Ram Raz's famous *Essay*.<sup>29</sup>

Concerned about 'access' to the general public, the Gujarati translation had to be 'simple so that 'everyone' could understand it'. He pledged necessary support in the preparation and publication of the book, although the final publication and printing costs in 1939 were borne by Sompura himself. That an English translation was not considered necessary at the time of publication and that one is still not available signals an intended readership within well-defined regional and professional circles, and for those familiar with the Gujarati language. Significantly as a result of the same encounter, the Gaekwad appointed Sompura to teach architecture at Kala Bhavan in Baroda, with ten days permitted leave every month to allow him to continue with live temple construction projects. (Figure 4.18) His stint at Kala Bhavan ended a year later in 1927 as he was unable to devote the time to teaching due to pressing needs of his own temple commissions, but during this time he managed to contribute to the design of the Kirti Mandir, the cenotaph of the Gaekwad family. (Figure 4.19 and 4.20) Was the *Shilparatnakar* ever meant to

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<sup>29</sup> Raz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*

accompany the teaching at Kala Bhavan, we don't know, but as the following two chapters will demonstrate, in its legibility and accessibility it was to assume the status of a 'framework' for generations of temple architects to come.

Along with his interaction with the Gaekwad, not to be underestimated is the author's links with one of the main proponents of architectural education during the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century, chiefly Claude Batley, who came to India in 1913, taught architecture at the JJ school of Art and was Professor of Architecture between 1924 and 1944. Batley, whose views on design in Indian architecture gave weight to the "essentials" of Indian traditional architecture, prioritised the master craftsman of the smaller towns and villages for preserving the balance of "thinking and feeling" and for wrestling the constantly changing requirements of his patron.<sup>30</sup> This sensibility in a sense continued with precedents already set in motion in the nationalism of E.B. Havell and Coomaraswamy.

In a short essay from 1946, Batley proclaimed that N.M. Sompura was not only an old friend of his, but also his God.<sup>31</sup> Indeed the two are likely to have been close. Batley is known to have visited Sompura on completed projects, expressing his admiration for the craft that he possessed.<sup>32</sup> His bibliography in the 1946 essay "Architecture" includes the *Shilparatnakar* along with the works of Fergusson and E.B. Havell, indicating that to his mind they clearly belonged together.

This closeness between a native architect operating out of small towns in Gujarat and a visionary professor of architecture at a pioneering institute of architectural studies also draws our attention to the orientalist and nationalist paradigms concerning arts and craft that were operating at the time. Led by nationalist ideologues A.K. Coomaraswamy<sup>33</sup> and E.B. Havell,<sup>34</sup> the new

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<sup>30</sup> John E. Cort, 'Communities, Temples, Identities: Art Histories and Social Histories in Western India', in *Ethnography and Personhood: Notes from the Field*. ed. by Meister Michael W (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2000), pp. 101-28

<sup>31</sup> Claude Batley, *Architecture* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1946) p.4

<sup>32</sup> In 1942, Claude Batley visited a recently completed Mausoleum paid for by the Nawab Sahib of Sachin State. Batley was impressed with and appreciative of the structure which featured finely carved creepers, foliage and flowers inlaid different coloured stones on the marble graves.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and C. R. Ashbee, *The Indian Craftsman ... With a Foreword by C. R. Ashbee* (London: Probsthain & Co., 1909)

<sup>34</sup> See E. B. Havell, *Indian Architecture* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co, 1913)

orientations, had a powerful influence over nationalist thought.<sup>35</sup> They had an anti-colonial and pro India image, where, as Guhathakurta argues, craftsmanship 'became a "mode of thought" and a whole way of life,' and where the pre-industrial village community came to be framed as the "ideal social context" that had produced and continued to produce a wealth of design and handicrafts.'<sup>36</sup> In relation to the study of temple architecture specifically, the new scholarly approach advocated going beyond an intellectual exercise concealed in fact alone, to a level which accounted for the living forces, the actual *shilpi* traditions including the study of *vastu shastra* texts. In these senses Sompura's enterprise gains certain validity as "the native Indian craftsmen" in the eyes of his patrons and influential friends. These networks of affiliation show us that he is thoroughly embedded in the modern paradigms of the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> - century.

### Drawing and text

Until the publication of the *Shilparatnakar* in 1939, *shastras* in the western Indian context were known to exist, but they were rare and held in manuscript form, within private libraries of influential and conservative families. N.M. Sompura informs us that they were written in Sanskrit, and consisted primarily of verses, without any elaborate drawings or visual accompaniments.<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that drawing was not an inherent part of the tradition; on the contrary, to imagine and build complex forms of early and medieval temple architecture, drawing played a fundamental role in the practice of the architects involved. The earliest surviving architectural drawings of the North Indian style, made during the reign of Raja Bhoja (reigned c. 1010-1055) are engraved on the rocks scattered around the unfinished Shiva temple at Bhojpur (Figure 4.21, 4.22).<sup>38</sup>

They exemplify the centrality that architectural drawing played in the thinking out as well as actual production of temples: determining measurements for quarrying, cutting, carving, setting up profiles through precise templates. As full size

<sup>35</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Making of a New Indian Art : Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, C.1850-1920* (Camb. U. P., 1992) p.148

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> As noted before, the Brihad Shilpashastra was published in 1936, but its repertoire of drawings was nowhere near the *Shilparatnakar*.

<sup>38</sup> See Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2015)



working drawings or as smaller sketches, the Bhojpur rock engravings also show a relationship to the compendious text *Samaranganasutradhara*, written during Raja Bhoja's reign. This relationship, as recent scholarship shows, was not about "illustrating" theory of any particular *shastra*, rather "of being tools in the applications of *shastra*, of building knowledge to the particular site" and in the process conveying a spirit.<sup>39</sup> Other studies on the nature of the relationship between medieval Indian architectural texts and drawing are also revelatory of the notion that the two did not exist in a stable relationship, as translating text into drawing involved a significant degree of imagination and licence resulting in several variations of the architecture described by the same verses.<sup>40</sup>

Certainly the lack of fixity because of imprecise copying of manuscripts was on the mind Sompura. The promise of print media tackled the issue of imprecision that the 'handing down' of manuscripts were prone to. Along with the central issue of a decline, but not erasure of patronage for new temples during Muslim and British rule, these issues are cited as some of the other motivations in the preparation of the book.

### ***Shilparatnakar* references**

The task of collecting moth eaten manuscripts, collating them into whole from fragments available in private libraries, translating and interpreting them was a magnanimous one undertaken by Sompura as an independent enterprise, especially when seen in relation to the number of live projects on site. In its selection of medieval and late medieval Indian treatises on architecture considered appropriate for translation, the *Shilparatnakar* mines a specific antiquity which is settled on manuscripts from the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> - century, all concerning themselves with the northern Indian tradition.<sup>41</sup> Through this selection Sompura seems to be saying, that in order to move forward in the 20<sup>th</sup> - century with the tradition, one must look back to these texts for the grammar and lexicon of the architecture described. In fact he states that it is meant to be a 'step-by-step guide' for the future generation of architects.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.pp. 225-264

<sup>40</sup> See for instance Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarānganasūtradhāra' and Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-34

<sup>41</sup> I am grateful to Prof. M.A. Dhaky for bringing this to my attention.

We are informed in the introduction that of these medieval and late medieval texts, five have been fully incorporated.<sup>42</sup> These are the '*Prasadmandan*' (15<sup>th</sup> - century), '*Rupamandan*' (15<sup>th</sup> - century)', '*Chaubis Tirthankara Jain Prasada*' (date not known), '*Ayatatva*' (date not known) and '*Kundasiddhi*' (date not known), however it is left up to the reader to work out where they appear in the *Shilparatnakar*. In addition he informs us that the 'essence' of certain older Central and Western Indian texts has been incorporated: *Sutrasantan* (also known as *Vastuvidya*, 11<sup>th</sup> - century), *Samaranganasutradhara of Raja Bhoja* (11<sup>th</sup> - century), *Aparajitaprccha* (late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> - century), *Kshirarnava* (between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> - century), *Diparnava* (16<sup>th</sup> - century), *Vriksharnava* (15<sup>th</sup> - century), *Vastusar* (15<sup>th</sup> - century), *Vastukautuk* (16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> - century), and *Nirdoshvastu*. At this point, it is useful to be reminded that the later texts were often compilations of the earlier ones themselves, as those had already been established as authoritative works. Today we know that the *Samaranganasutradhara* and the *Aparajitaprccha* are considered to be the most commanding works, exerting a considerable influence on the later texts.<sup>43</sup>

This is to tease out the notion that Sompura is not offering new typologies for the 20<sup>th</sup> - century, rather is re-presenting through drawing, content that has been the subject of western Indian *shastras* since the 11<sup>th</sup> - century, the tradition and its manifestations, its grammar and lexicon already predetermined. Further, differences were marked between the architectures of the various periods, so for instance 15<sup>th</sup> - century temple architecture, predominantly from Rajasthan, is already a reconfiguration of the 11<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century architecture characterised by the *shekhari* spire and this in turn grows out from the relatively simple shrine form known as the *Latina*, with its single curved spire from the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>44</sup>

Seen from this stance, the notion of looking back in deep time to move forwards appears to be part of a practice that Sompura is reinstating, the crucial difference being that while the previous texts *accompanied* building activity, the

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<sup>42</sup> I have accorded dates to the texts where ever I could on the basis of M.A. Dhaky, 'The Vastushastras of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 71 (1996), 65-85. This article is particularly useful for a summary of the content of main *shastras* available to the author and the interdependencies between them, all in the western Indian context

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp.69-75

<sup>44</sup> See Adam Hardy, 'Śekhārī Temples', *Artibus Asiae*, 62.1 (2002), 81-137, Adam Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007) and Dhaky, p. 65-85

present text does not appear to do so. It does not for instance register some of the emerging new typologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> - century, most notably visible in the Swaninarayan temples of Gujarat, nor divergences such as the one seen in the main shrine at Bhonsle ghat in Varanasi or at Palitana. Yet it does acknowledge other 19<sup>th</sup> - century conceptions through photographs, one example being the Hutheesing temple (1847), which appears more than once, declaring it to be one of the last examples that was praiseworthy, before the princely 'decline' set in.

### ***Shilparatnakar* organisation**

Organised in a legible and structured manner, the *Shilparatnakar* consists of fourteen core chapters which the author has called *ratnas* or jewels; each of these deals with a distinct aspect of temple conceptualisation. The first and the second *ratnas*/chapters describe the rules to be deployed in astrological calculations, the *bhumi puja* and *khat vidhi* rituals (purifying the ground), and at the same time include guidance on the design of a range of *jagatis* (platforms) and *peeth* (bases), from plain to elaborate ones (Figure 4.23).

The third and fourth *ratnas* describe the ideal proportions for the *mandovar* (the wall between the *peeth* and the *chajja*) and the *dwarshakh* (door frame), ranging from economical to elaborate ones, as well as various types of *mandap* (pillared hall) configurations found in western Indian regions. The fifth *ratna* deals with the setting out of the *shikhar* (spire) curvature. The notion of typology runs deep through writing of the *Shilparatnakar*, which he inherited from the texts incorporated. The most prominent and comprehensive of the typological studies are those of the types of the *prasad* or shrines, ranging from the *ekindak* (single spire *shikhar* also known as the *latin* *prasad*) to the *Anekindak* (multi spired *shikhar*) presented through rigorously drawn elevations and their corresponding floor plans (Figure 4.24, 4.25). Primarily the text deals with the several spired variety, which started sprouting from the single spire variety around the 10<sup>th</sup> - century.<sup>45</sup>

These are covered in *ratnas* six to ten which comprise of five series covering 172 *shikhar* types and their elevations and plan projections. Each of the series is likely to be taken from a distinct text. The *ratna* or series headings are *Kesharadi Prasad* (sixth *ratna*), *Tilak-Sagaradi Prasad* (seventh *ratna*), *Rushabadi Prasad* (eighth *ratna*), *Vairajadi Prasad* (ninth *ratna*) and *Mewaradi Prasad* (tenth *ratna*). The first four are dedicated to *nirandhar* shrines (without a circumambulatory) and

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<sup>45</sup> Hardy, 'Śekharī Temples', p.81

the last *Mewaradi* series is dedicated to grander *sandhar* shrines (with a circumambulatory) In each of the five series N.M. Sompura takes us through a range of shrine types, clearly enumerating the number of *indikas* (eggs) and *tilakas* that each of the types of *shikhar* possesses. In some of the series the prasadas “progress” from the simple single spire *shikhar* to ones where proliferation of projecting elements has been exhausted. In the other series no obvious progression can be seen, the drawings organised in more random fashion, confounding the logic of the other series. These series are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The details within the overall forms - the *jaal* - are left to the individual architect, Sompura only specifies outline shapes. Consequently he does not venture into the complexity of the *jaal* that some temples display such as at the 8<sup>th</sup>-century complex of temples at Roda, Gujarat.<sup>46</sup> Equally, the complexity of some of the simpler shrine forms before the 10<sup>th</sup>-century doesn’t have a place in this text, for it seems he is not concerned with forms before this period.<sup>47</sup> As there are no surviving texts from the period between the 8th-10th centuries, when incidentally some of the finest pieces of temple architecture from the *nagar shaili* were realised in western India, it stands to reason that Sompura did not incorporate these in his compilation.

*Ratnas* eleven and twelve deal with different types of *murtis* (statue) for the *mandovar*, covering Jain *tirthankars* (revered teacher), *yakshas* (demi-god) and *yakshinis* (female form of yaksha). The thirteenth *ratna* deals with the *pratishthan vidhi* (consecration ceremony) and finally the fourteenth *ratna* deals with astrological calculations.

Photographs from the ASI archive supplant the typological drawings. It is important to note that the drawings are not of specific built examples, related to the photographs, rather they are diagrammatic in quality, affirming that they were drawn directly from the older Sanskrit texts, a view confirmed by present day practitioners. The mysterious absence of roof plans, which are necessary to understand *shikhar* compositions suggest that these were to be imagined by the practicing architect.<sup>48</sup> Other typological studies consist of those of the *mandap* ranging from simple four columned square plans to multi-directional stepped ones going up to 64 columns.

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<sup>46</sup> I am thankful to Adam Hardy and M.A. Dhaky for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapters 10 and 17 in Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India*, pp. 106-123 and pp. 168-173

<sup>48</sup> I am grateful to Adam Hardy for this insight.

### Presenting again: the colonial archive and its native uses

In the absence of recorded architectural history, the retrieval of India's "lost" history from its ancient ruins and monuments had become the particular obsession of early British civilians and officers, who also took upon themselves 'to confer order on the modes of studying and interpreting the structural remains'.<sup>49</sup> Forming its own formidable body of evidence, what relationship did Sompura's publication have with this colonial knowledge production? The extensive publications and conservation programmes of the Archaeological Survey of India, established in 1862, extended the work of James Fergusson's influential but deeply problematic *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*.<sup>50</sup> By the time of compiling the *Shilparatnakar*, both Fergusson's *History* and the publishing and conservation mandates of the ASI had created an indelible arena in which in borrowing Peter Scriver's words, 'historic architecture from antiquity in all its materiality – the 'stone texts' of India's civilisation - took precedence over evolving cultural practices.'<sup>51</sup>

We have seen Sompura's formidable grasp of his lineage through rigorous illustrations translated from text, giving previously inscrutable Sanskrit verses a whole new visual dimension. These drawings bear the stamp of academic scholarship which is distinctly his own. They are qualitatively different to the recently completed drawing and surveying exercise of the architectural 'antiquities' of western India by James Burgess and Henry Cousens employed by the Archaeological Survey of India.<sup>52</sup> For our purpose what gathers these disparate domains of colonial and Sompura spheres together is the overlapping of their objects of attention: the representation of temples from a bygone era.

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<sup>49</sup> Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories : Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, pp. 3-41

<sup>50</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture : By James Fergusson, ... Forming the Third Volume of the New Edition of the "History of Architecture"* (London: John Murray, 1876) For critiques see Monica Juneja, 'Introduction', in *Architecture in Medieval India : Forms, Contexts, Histories* (Delhi, Bangalore: Permanent Black, 2001), pp. 1-108

<sup>51</sup> Scriver, pp. 27-50

<sup>52</sup> See James Burgess and Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of the Town of Dabhoi in Gujarat*. (Edinburgh: G. Waterston & Sons, 1888), J. Burgess and H. Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: More Especially of the Districts Included in the Baroda State* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1903), Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Western India* (India society, 1926), Henry Cousens, *Somanatha and Other Mediæval Temples in Kathiawad* (Calcutta, 1931), James Burgess and Henry Cousens, 'Revised Lists of Antiquarian Remains in the Bombay Presidency ... Originally Compiled by J. Burgess ... Revised by Henry Cousens. 'Bombay (1897)



This brings me to an equally powerful theme in Sompura's repertoire: the re-presenting and reconfiguration of drawings from the publications of the Archaeological survey of India specifically for a regional audience. Here Sompura's primary source is *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: most especially of the districts included in the Baroda State*, by James Burgess and Henry Cousens, published in London in 1903. While for the ASI, emphasis is on surveying and documenting, for Sompura the emphasis is on creating a legible framework for practicing architects on the basis of medieval texts. In Sompura's incorporation of ASI material, we see institutionalised knowledge production gain new meaning.

*Architectural Antiquities* is specifically devoted to the description of antiquarian remains within the dominions of Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad of Baroda. The remains that it describes were surveyed in the cold seasons of 1886-87 and 1889-90, by Henry Cousens and members of his native staff who were trained and supervised by him. Sifting through the book to select plates to stitch into his own narrative, Sompura would have encountered a substantial collection of drawings of medieval temples and mosques in western India – plans, sections, elevations, details– as well as photographs of whole buildings and their fragments.<sup>53</sup> Each of these are meticulously dated, historically located over time and described in some detail. One unique aspect about *Architectural Antiquities* is Henry Cousens' tentative attempt at native terminology of temple parts, but for his superior Burgess, its value lay elsewhere:

Finally as has been indicated elsewhere, much of the value of such a volume as this lies in the illustrations – valuable in proportion as they are judiciously selected, complete and trustworthy; and those now published have been carefully laid down on the spot from accurate measurements, and *represent the subjects architecturally*, and in a style that surely does credit to Mr. Cousens and the members of his native staff, trained and superintended by them.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Architectural Antiquities* is unique in relation to the vast corpus of Burgess's and Cousen's other publications for incorporating native architectural terms correctly and precisely, as found in local use. That Cousens had exchanges with a practicing architect is evident in this proper usage, as well as, the publication of a conjectural drawing of the largely destroyed Rudra Mahalaya in Siddhpur.

<sup>54</sup> Burgess and Cousens, p. vi (my emphasis)

Clearly the *accuracy* and *style* of the drawings have agency in ‘representing’ the subjects. How these are received by the subject in the form of Sompura deserves some attention. Around eight plates consisting of drawings of temple sections and fragments find their way in the pages of the *Silparatnakar*, with all English annotations removed, replaced by Gujarati ones. In addition several plates of photographs – that most accurate form of representation for the 19<sup>th</sup> - century historian of Indian antiquity - from this volume make reappearance in the *Shilparatnakar*, their semantic content altered, as again, we have new titles in Gujarati describing the images. In visiting these altered drawings and photographs we begin to see the imaginative process of reconfiguration of historical consciousness.

Plate LXXIX from *Architectural Antiquities* titled “*Sarotra: Pillars from the temple of Bavandhvaja*” is reproduced in part in the *Shilparatnakara* with the title and the all-important scale bar – that most crucial indicator of dimension - removed (Figure 4.26). Instead a new title is given: “*View of the Thamblo of the Shri Surya Prasad, Modhera Gaon*”, with further subtitles for each of the two columns (Figure 4.27). The column to the left is titled “*Prasad stambh*” and to the right “*Mandap stambh*”. The column of the “*Mandapa stambh*” is annotated by Sompura with labels in Gujarati describing various parts: *Rajsen, Vedika, Kakshasan, Thamblo, Bharnu, Sharu, Paat*. To the right of the column, Sompura adds proportions in numbers. In this one instance we can see two world views meeting, with the subject able to appropriate and modify a colonial archive and represent it as a conduit for practice. Equally productive is the notion that Sompura is unburdened about taking liberties with the ASI archive as long as it demonstrates his ideas for the *Shilparatnakara*.

Plate XXVIII is titled “*Anhilwada: Sheikh Jodh’s Masjid – Details*” with a drawing of seven courses from the ruins titled “*String-courses*” is reproduced in *Shilparatnakar* in the third chapter as “*Different type of carving work used for the construction of the jagati.*” (Figure 4.28). Another titled “*Vadnagar: a cell or small shrine of an old temple*” reappears as “*Nandan Prasad of Kesharadi jaati*”. A plate titled “*Modhera: the great temple*” (Figure 4.29) is reproduced as “*Modhera temple-ni dwarshakh*” (Figure 4.30). This last example is particularly interesting as we find the English word “temple” enter the lexicon of Sompura’s *Shilparatnakara*, abandoning just momentarily, the Sanskrit term *Prasad*.

The examples are too numerous to cite, but they gives us a sense that Sompura is giving a new visual dimension to the western Indian *shastra* tradition, through his own drawing efforts and the reconfiguration of a colonial archive.

Numerous other photographs punctuate the text; whether they are his own or taken from other sources is not entirely clear. *Architectural Antiquities* was a tremendous resource available to Sompura, immediately providing him with a database of illustrations to supplant his scholarship. He doesn't hesitate in incorporating it, revealing his pragmatic nature, very much the bricoleur of his time.

### Conclusion

For its time, the *Shilparatnakar* was a profoundly innovative production, arguably both part of a tradition of textual codification stretching back to the 11<sup>th</sup> - century and a 19<sup>th</sup> - century colonial and national obsession with Indian antiquity and indigenous practice. That an independent native *sthapati* was able to work in these arenas and reconfigure the Sanskrit text into a comprehensive set of conceptual drawings is probably its greatest legacy as can be discerned in the place these very drawings have in the practice of the present day Sompuras.

Bolstered by a growing art historical consciousness, the *Shilparatnakara* also augured a new era of modern *vastu shastra* publications particularly in the 1960s through the efforts of P.O.Sompura. *Diparnava*, *Kshirarnava*, *Vastukalanidhi*, *Pratimakalanidhi* are only a few of around fourteen such publications. Some of these came about with a fruitful collaboration between the well-known historian M.A. Dhaky and P.O. Sompura.

However, the focus of this chapter has been on the modalities through which the modern *vastu shastra* is reconstructed unapologetically at a particular moment in time. In this regard, the Sompuras can be seen as producers of their own modernity, subjects in their own right, rather than being controlled by a colonial or national agenda. On the other hand, the *Shilparatnakara* signifies an innovation demonstrating how the colonial encounter had a transformative effect on both the colonised and the coloniser, not a one way traffic. The bearing of colonial and nationalist impress is undeniable in the ways the idea of the "native craftsman" are legitimised, certain monuments are canonised, which in turn have already gained prominence in the canons of the ASI. But at the same time the text also bears the active impress of Sompura's own agency, his own intellect and skill to translate, to draw as well as to have the propensity and the audacity to play around with, 'cut and paste' and alter the colonial archive to his own ends.

In bringing this chapter to a closure, I would like to bring to the fore an inevitable aspect to this publication, which has repercussions for Sompura practice today. Writing in 2013, in the digital age where production, reproduction, re-

reproduction and so on are not to be blinked at, it is with some trepidation I suggest that in fixing the imaginative drawings in print media, the *Shilparatnakara* also lay ground for a paradoxical fixing of imagination. In that that it is *the* shastra that the Sompuras consult meticulously today, relying primarily on the drawings for charting out shapes and proportions for their new commissions.

In 1939, for the first time a consistent and easily digestible version of a collection of *shastras* on architecture is made available to the general public through print media. Priced at Rs.10, one thousand copies of the eight hundred page text were first published in Baroda, by Sompura himself. More significantly the translation into Gujarati - a language of the masses in Gujarat state - of older Sanskrit manuscripts and its accessible drawings, which he hoped even a beginner would follow with rapt interest, firmly placed this publication in a realm where access was not confined to elite and powerful families only, but could be used by anyone involved in the practice or for that matter anyone simply interested. Of the one thousand copies published one hundred were bought by Shri Pratap Singh Gaekwad of Baroda, who also gave approval to libraries within Baroda state to buy the book. Fifty copies were bought by the Anandji Kalyanji Trust, five by Bhavnagar state and a further two to four copies by other neighbouring states. In this way the publication of the *Shilparatnakara* marked the passage from a private and exclusive arena to a public and popular domain.

Today this text is freely available online, as a bound up Xerox copy in specialist Indological bookshops of Ahmedabad, as pdfs in the smart phones of the Sompuras so that it can be consulted while on the go. While we are not in the 1930s anymore, there is a definite sense that the codified drawings, just as Sompura intended, are very much instrumental in present day practitioners' work. Still, as the next two chapters indicate, there is plenty of room to innovate and transgress within these "rules"- just as their forefathers did. This, in far reaches of the globe as new transnational and diasporic contexts begin to mould the architecture that N.M. Sompura captured so effectively in his drawings during the turbulent times of the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century.

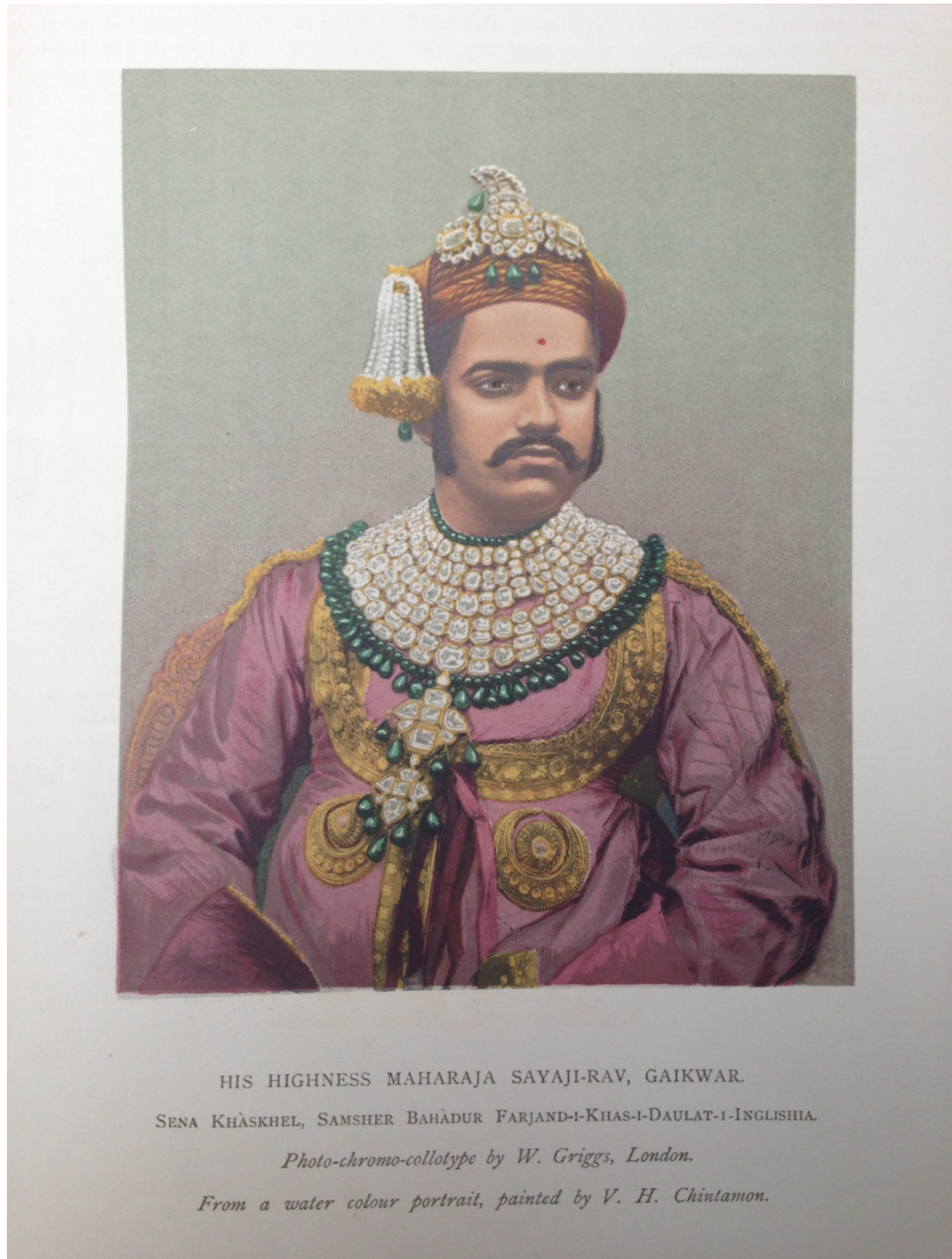


Figure 4.1: Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad. Image from *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Volume 1 (1884-86)

Figure 4.0 (Chapter cover): James Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (bottom shelf, red spine) and another title by the same author sit in a temple architect's library of ready references.

પ્રથમ રાત્ર ]

કેશરાદિ પ્રાસાદ લક્ષણાધિકાર.

૨૨૭

આરે દિશાએ ભદ્રે એકએક ઉરુશૃંગ ચઢાવવું. સત્તર ઇંડકનો આ નંદિશાલિક પ્રાસાદ બાણવો. ૩૦.

ઘડિશ્રી નંદિશાલિક પ્રાસાદ, તુલભાગ ૧૦, ઇંડક ૧૭, તિલક ૪, ચતુર્થ પ્રાસાદ ૪.

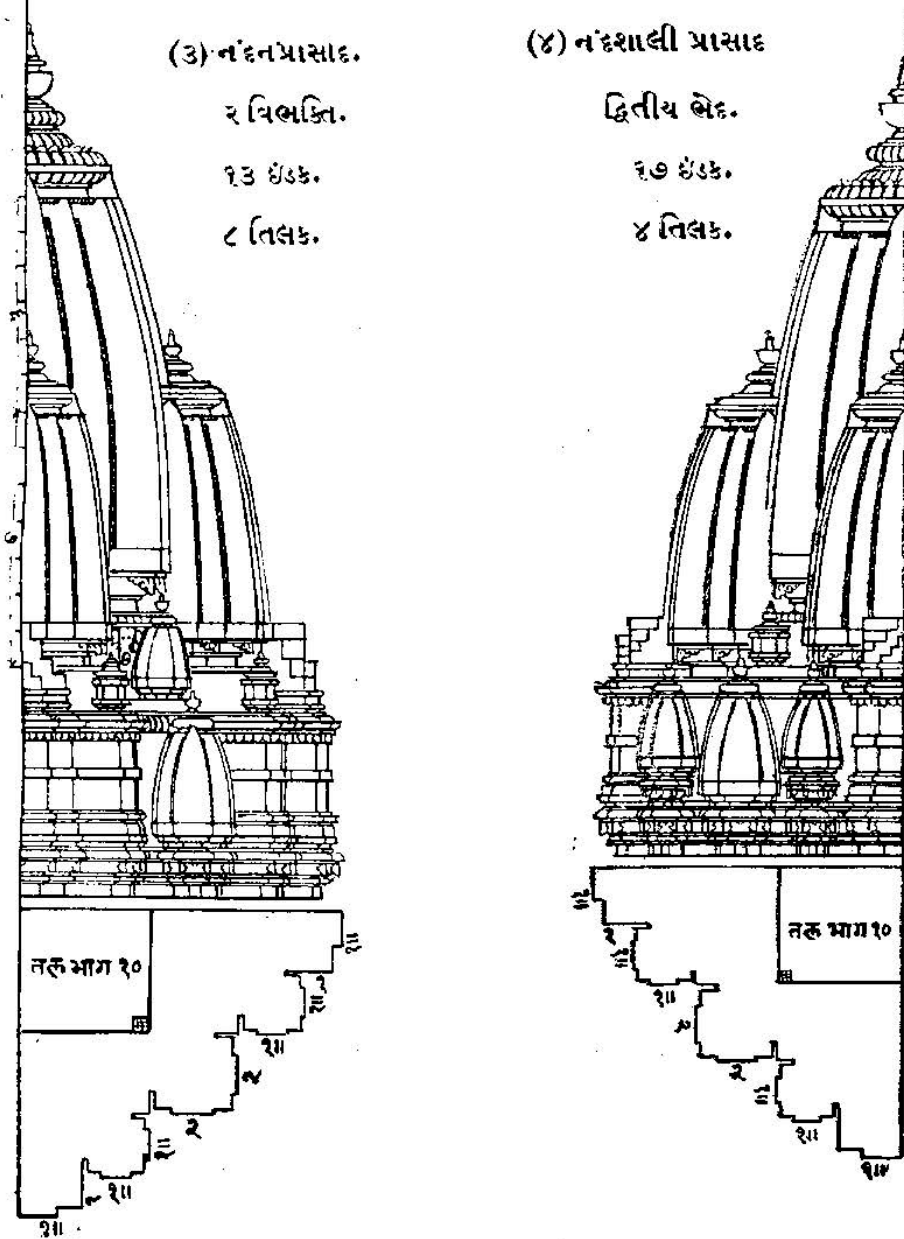


Figure 4.2: An example of *prasada* illustrations in the *Shilparatnakar*. These are from the series *Kesharadi Prasad*. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* by N.M. Sompura (1939)



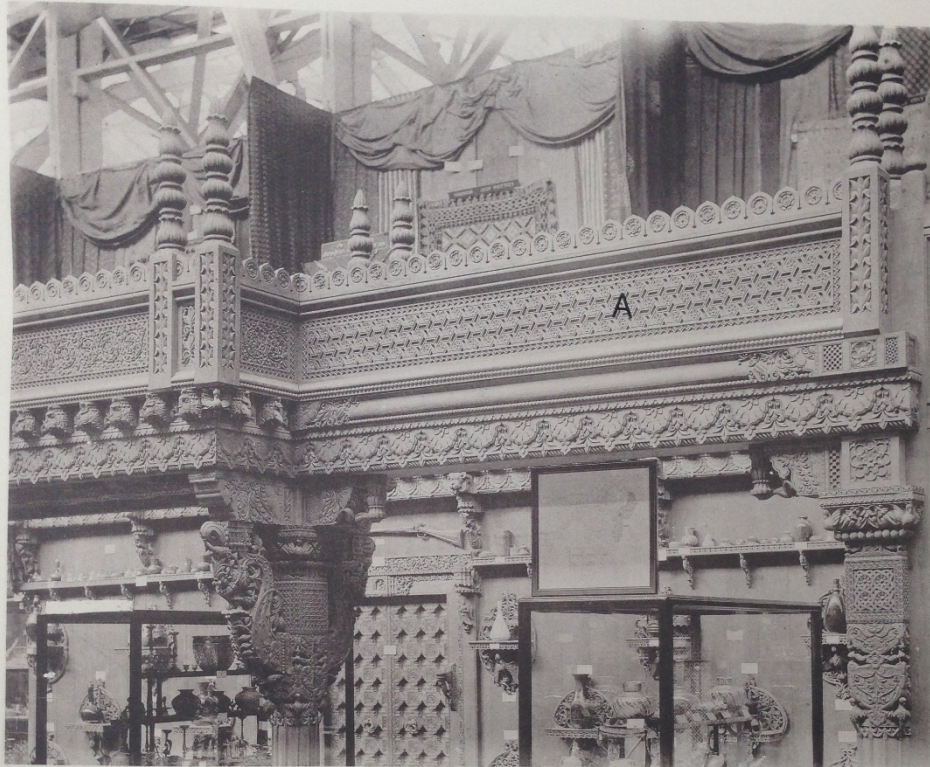


Figure 4.3: Interior of the Darbar Hall, Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Baroda, Gujarat (1890)



Figure 4.4: Exterior of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Baroda, Gujarat (1890)





### THE BARODA SCREEN.

In the background are seen the doorway and brackets of the "Back Screen." The show case to the right contains Baroda gold and silver work, and that on the left brass work.

Panel A has been reproduced by order of the Royal Commission for providing Screens (3,000 feet long, in 148 panels) for the Indian Bazaar.

*Collotype by W. Griggs, London, S.E.*

Figure 4.5: Carved wooden screen sponsored by Sayaji Rao III at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in South Kensington, London. Image from *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Volume 1 (1884-86)



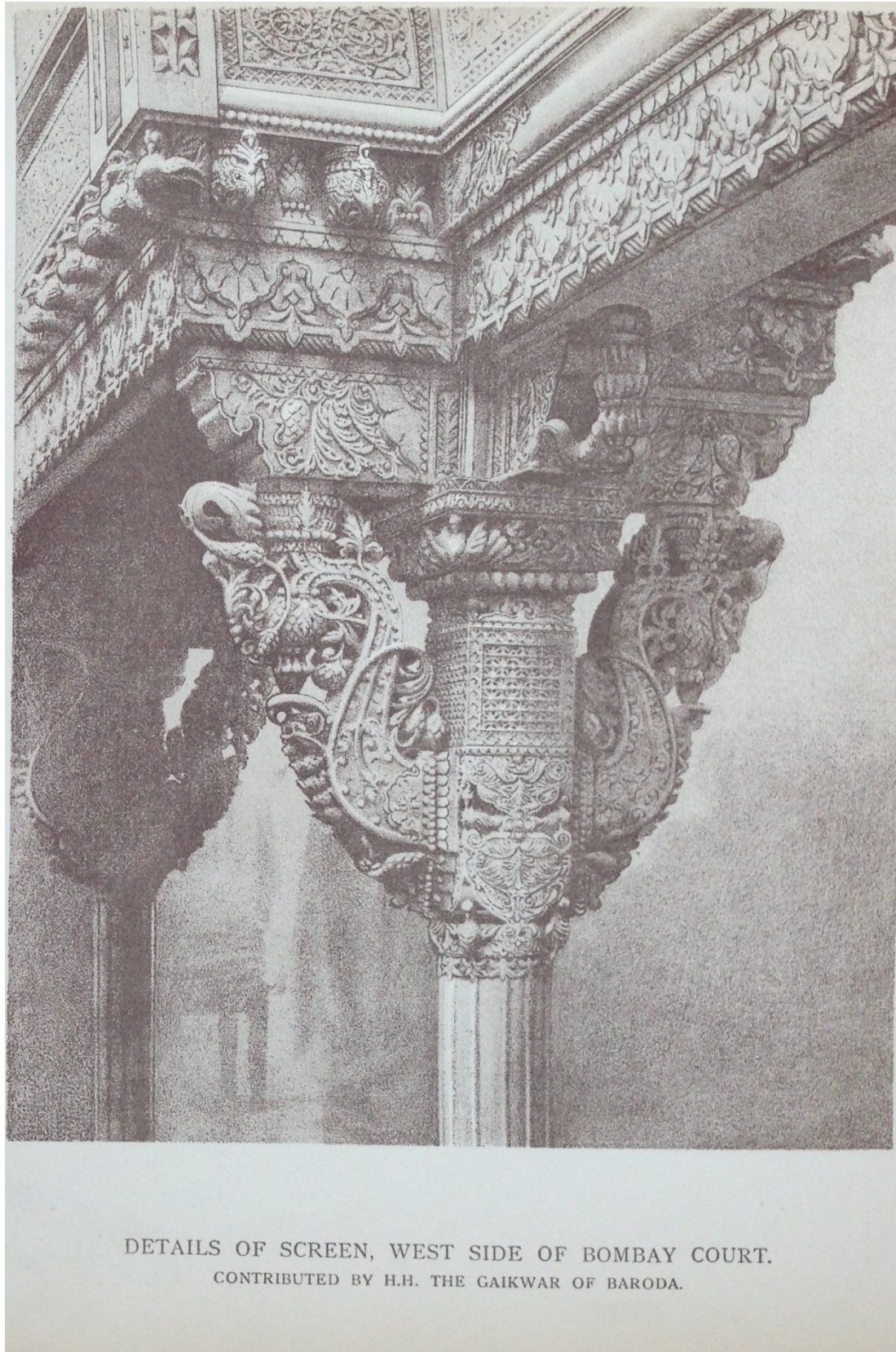


Figure 4.6: Detail of wooden screen sponsored by Sayaji Rao III at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in South Kensington, London. Image from *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Volume 1 (1884-86)



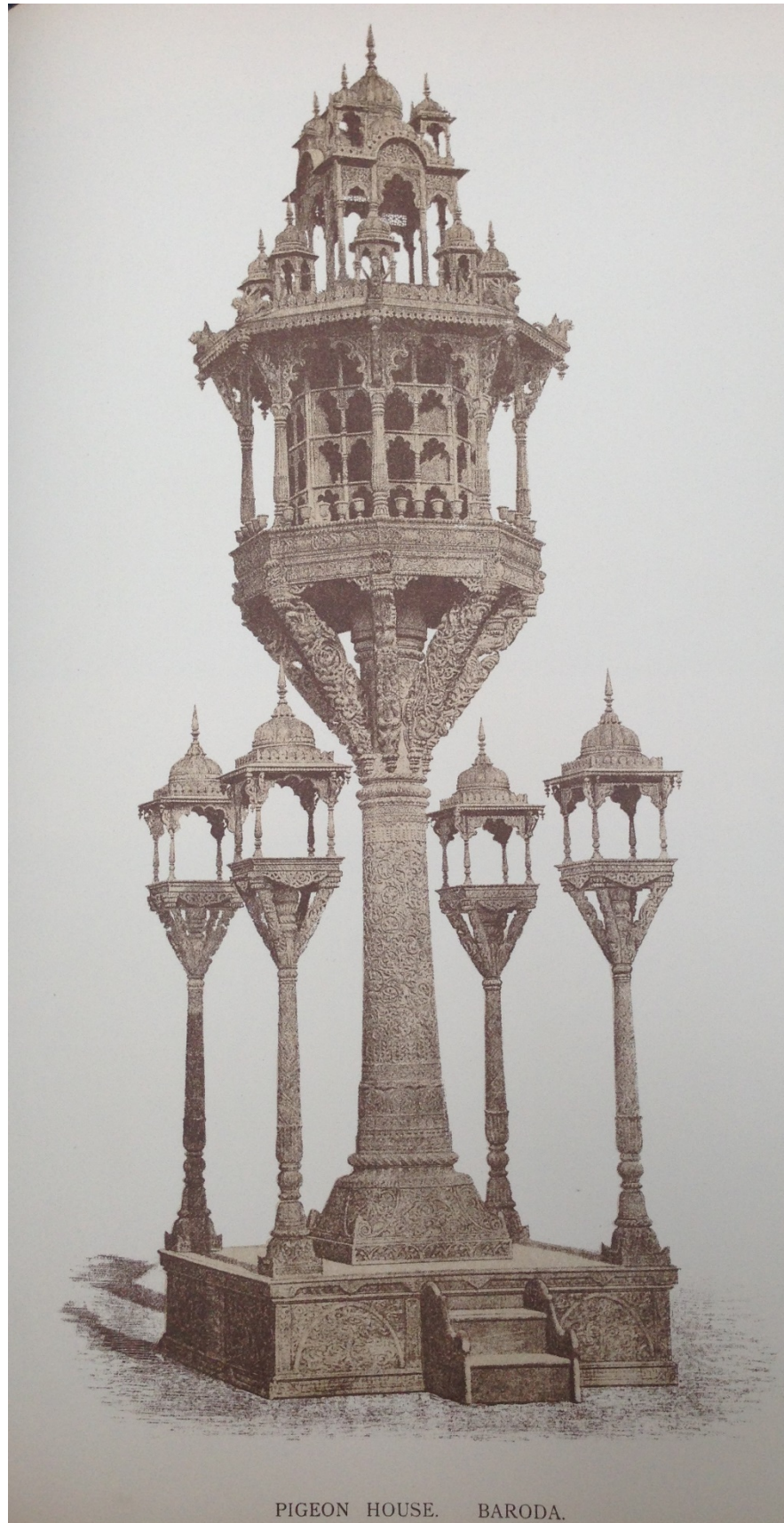


Figure 4.7: Wooden Pigeon House sponsored by Sayaji Rao III at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in South Kensington, London. Image from *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Volume 1 (1884-86)

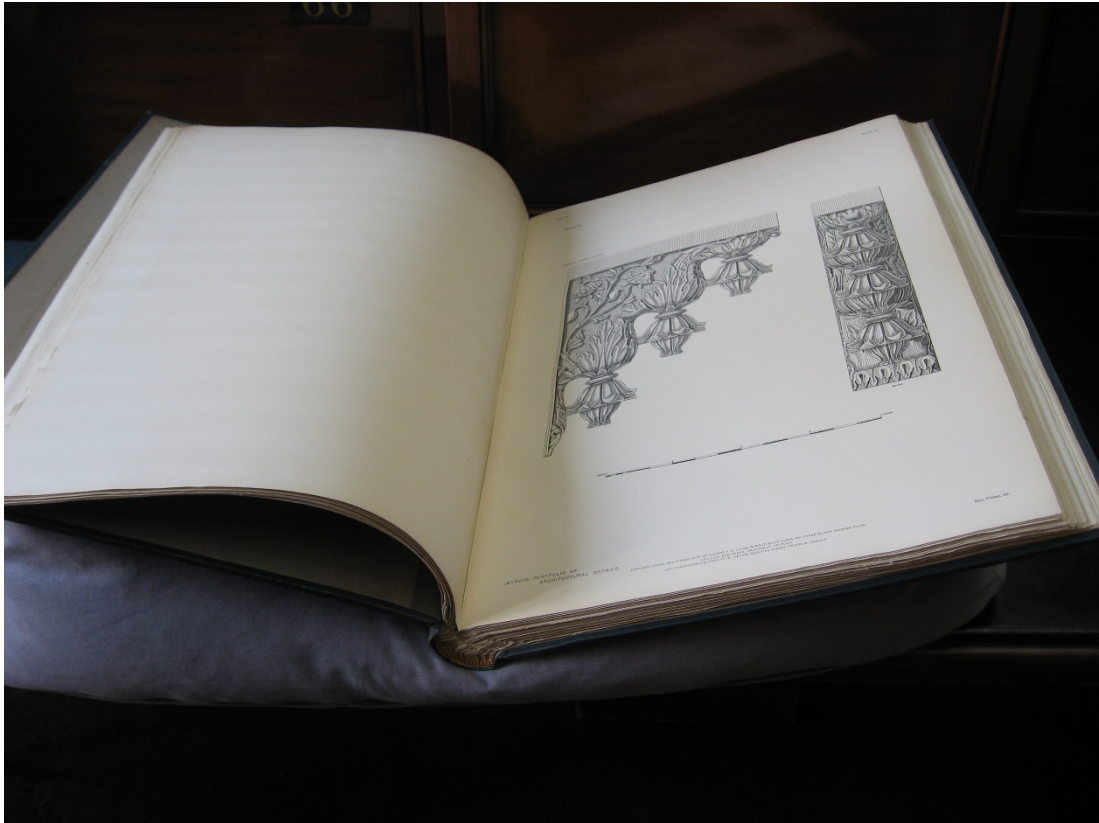


Figure 4.8: The *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*.

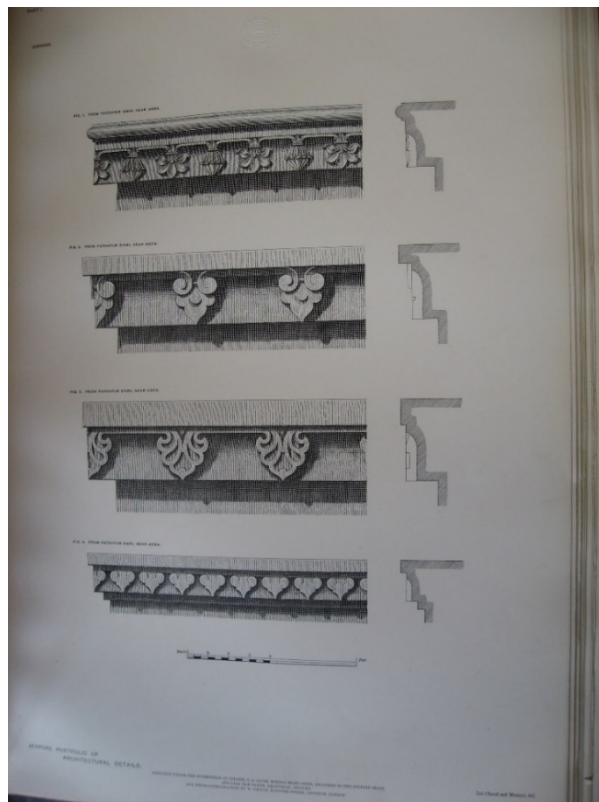


Figure 4.9: Coping details from Fatehpur Sikri, from *The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*. Image from *The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details* (1890).





Figure 4.10: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c.1930s)



Figure 4.11: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)





Figure 4.12: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)



Figure 4.13: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)





Figure 4. 14: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)





Figure 4.15: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)



Figure 4.16: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)

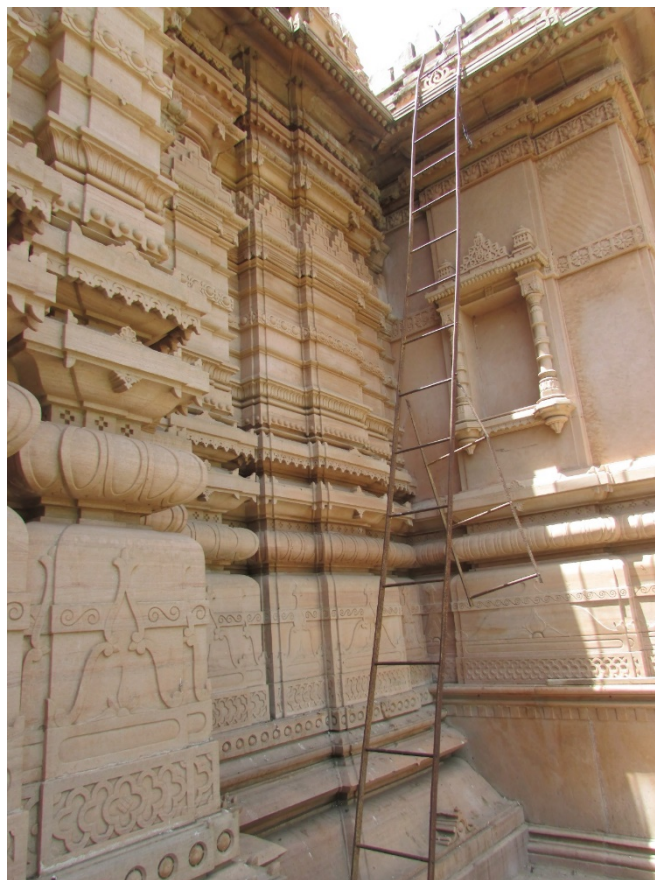


Figure 4.17: The Parshwanath Jain temple, Serisa, Gujarat (c. 1930s)





સને ૧૯૨૬ની સાલમાં મહેસાણા પ્રાંતની મુલાકાતે શ્રીમંત મહારાજ સાહેબ સયાજીરાવ ગાયકવાડ બાવેલા અને તે વખતે કલોલ તાલુકાના ચેરીસા મામે બ'ચાલા જૈન દેરાસરનું બાંધકામ જોવા પધારેલા ત્યારે મહેસાણા પ્રાંતના સુબા શ્રીનારાયણી સાહેબ, પ્રાઈવેટ સેક્રેટરી શ્રીભાઈ સાહેબ બાયકવાડ તથા સિલ્પશાસ્ત્રી શ્રીનર્મદાચંદ્ર મુલ્લજીભાઈ સોમપુરાનો હીથેલો મુખ ફોટો.

Figure 4.18: N.M. Sompura, (first from left) with Sayaji Rao III (foreground, second from right). Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.) by N.M. Sompura (1990)



Figure 4.19: Kirti Mandir, Baroda, Gujarat (c.1920s)



Figure 4.20: Kirti Mandir, Baroda, Gujarat (c.1920s)





Figure 4.21: Engraved architectural drawings at the site of the unfinished Shiva temple, Bhojpur, (11<sup>th</sup> century). Image courtesy Adam Hardy



Figure 4.22: Rocks scattered around at the site of the unfinished Shiva temple, Bhojpur. Image courtesy Adam Hardy.

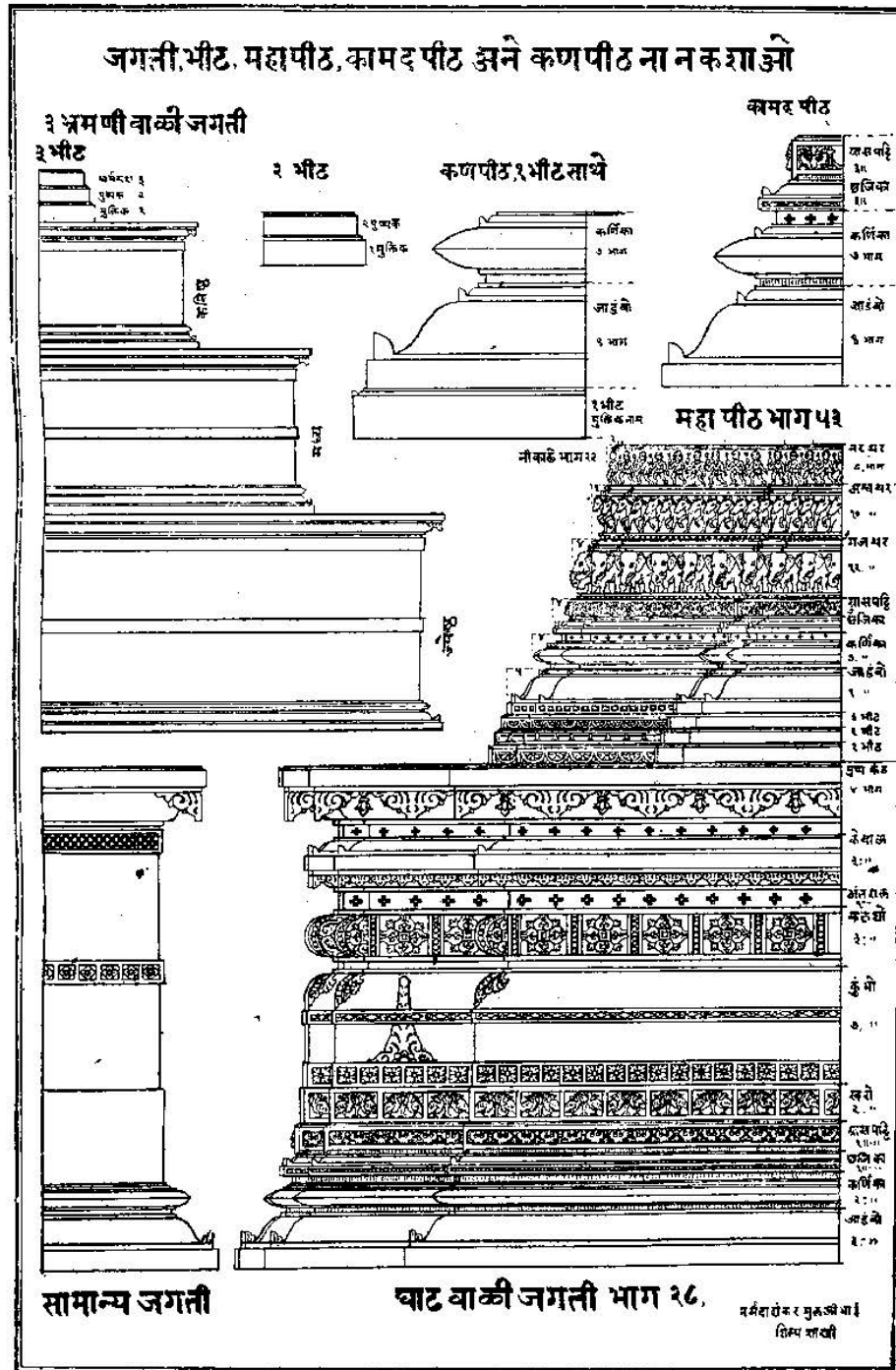


Figure 4.23: Types of *Jagati* (platform) and *Peeth* (base). Image from the *Shilparatnakar* by N.M. Sompura (1939)



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શિલ્પ રત્નાકર

[સપ્તમ સ્કન્ધ]

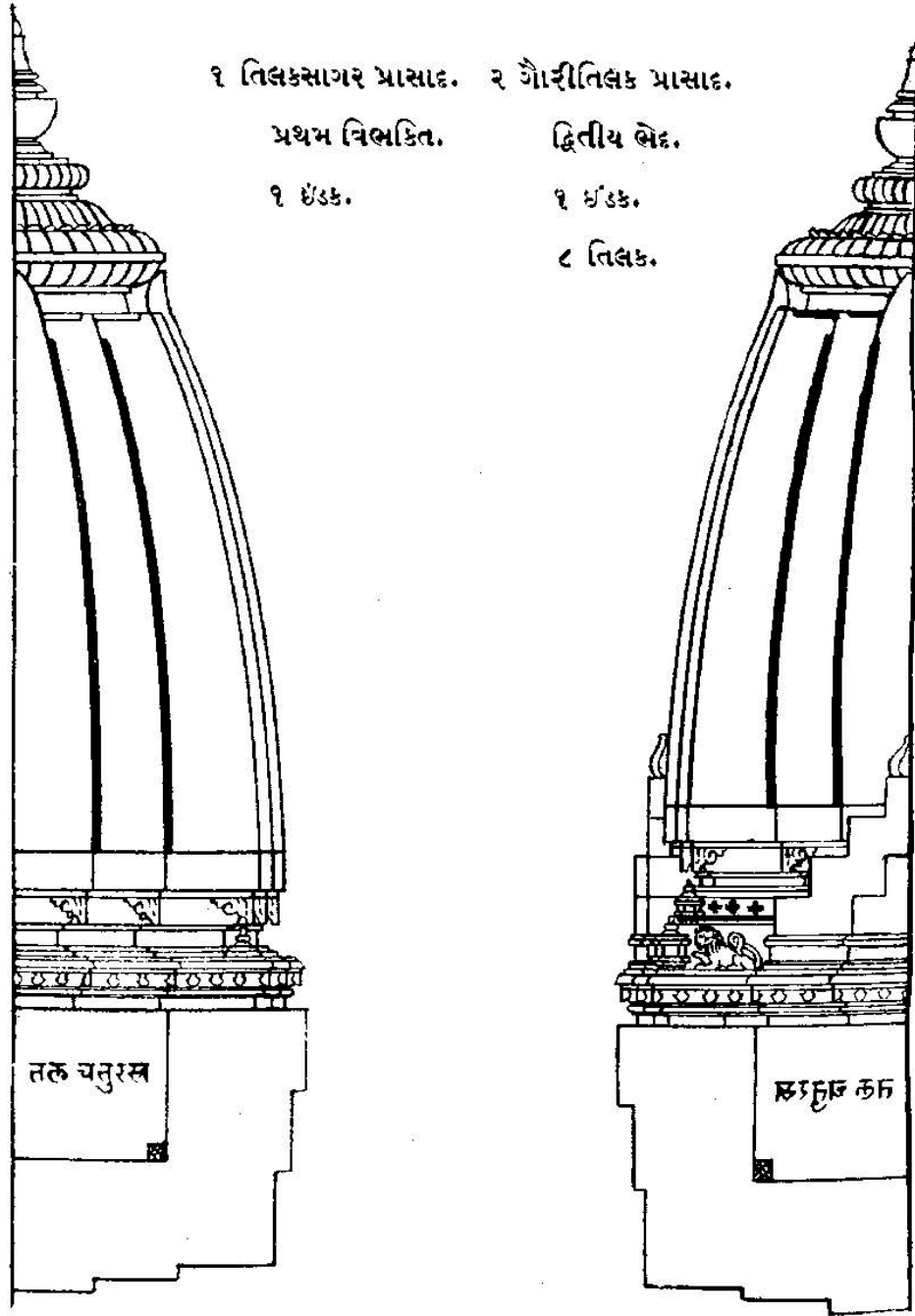


Figure 4.24: Latina or single spired *prasadas* from the *Tilaksagaradi* series. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* by N.M. Sompura (1939)

સમચોરસ ક્ષેત્ર કરી તેના ચોવીસ (૨૪) ભાગ કરવા. તેમાં કણું ભાગ ત્રણનો કરવો તેમજ પ્રતિકણું પણ ત્રણ ભાગનો કરવો અને કોણિકા તથા નંદિકા એકએક ભાગની કરવી. અર્ધું ભદ્ર ચાર (૪) ભાગનું કરવું. કણું અને રથે પહેલું શૃંગ સર્વતોભદ્ર, બીજું કેશરી અને ત્રીજું શ્રીવત્સ ચઢાવવું. આઠ (૮) પ્રત્યંગો કરવાં. ભદ્રે ચાર (૪) ઉચ્ચશૃંગો ચઢાવવાં અને નંદિકાએ તેમજ કોણિકાએ ઉત્તમ એક એક શૃંગો ચઢાવવાં.

શ્રીવિશ્વકર્મા પોતાના પુત્ર જયને સંબોધી કહે છે કે, હે પુત્ર, મેં તને જિનેન્દ્રોને અત્યંત પ્રિય વીરવિક્રમ નામનો ચોવીસમી વિભક્તિનો સીત્તેરમો પ્રાસાદ કહ્યો કે જે ત્રિલોકમાં પ્રખ્યાત છે અને તે ચોવીસમા તીર્થંકર શ્રીમહાવીર સ્વામીને માટે કરવામાં આવે છે. ૧૬૧, ૧૬૨, ૧૬૩, ૧૬૪.

ઇતિશ્રી વીરવિક્રમનામ શ્રીમહાવીરસ્વામીવલ્લભ પ્રાસાદ સમતિ, તુલ ભાગ ૨૪, ઇંડક ૨૨૧.

(૭૧) મષ્ટાદય પ્રાસાદ દ્વિતીય ભેદ.

તદ્વરૂપઞ્ચ પ્રકર્તવ્યં,  
કર્ણોદર્ધે તિલકં ન્યસેત્ ॥  
મષ્ટાદયઞ્ચ વિજ્ઞેયઃ,  
પ્રાસાદો જિનવલ્લભઃ ॥૧૬૫॥

ઉપર પ્રમાણે તલ તથા સ્વરૂપ કરવું અને વિશેષમાં કણું એક તિલક ચઢાવવું. આનું નામ “મષ્ટાદયપ્રાસાદ” છે અને તે જિનેન્દ્રોને અતિ પ્રિય છે. ૧૬૫.

ઇતિશ્રી મષ્ટાદય નામ જિનવલ્લભપ્રાસાદ એકસમતિ, ઇંડક ૨૨૧, તિલક ૪.

(૭૦) વીરવિક્રમ પ્રાસાદ.

૨૪મી વિભક્તિ.

૨૨૧ ઇંડક,

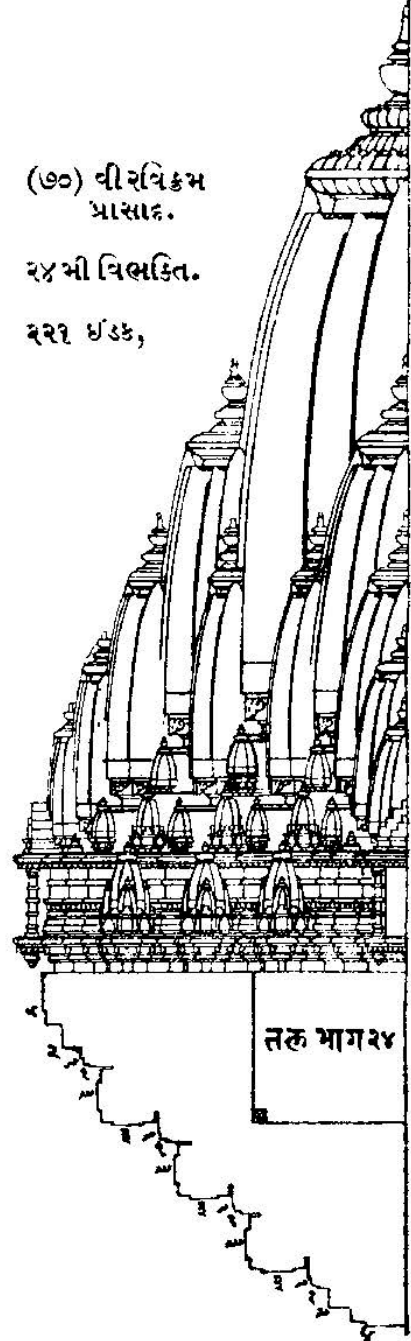


Figure 4.25: Anekindak shikhar from the Tilaksagaradi series. Image from the Shilparatnakar by N.M. Sompura (1939)

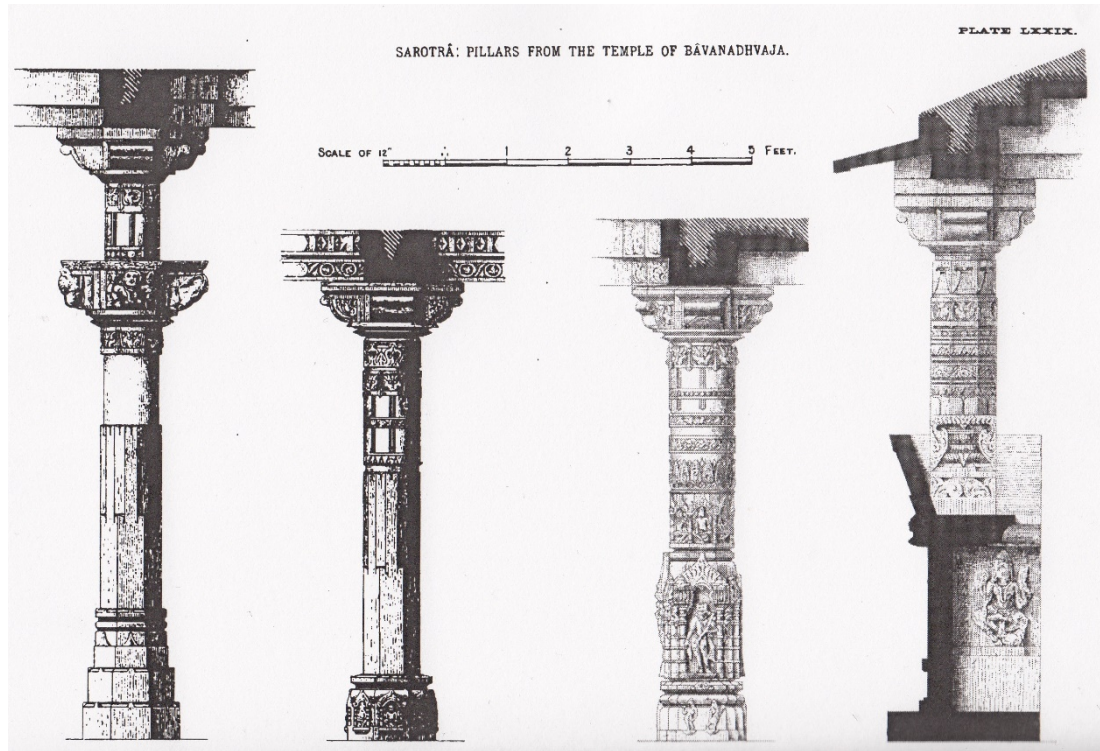


Figure 4.26: ASI drawing of the temple of Bawandhwaja. Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat Most Especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State* (1903)

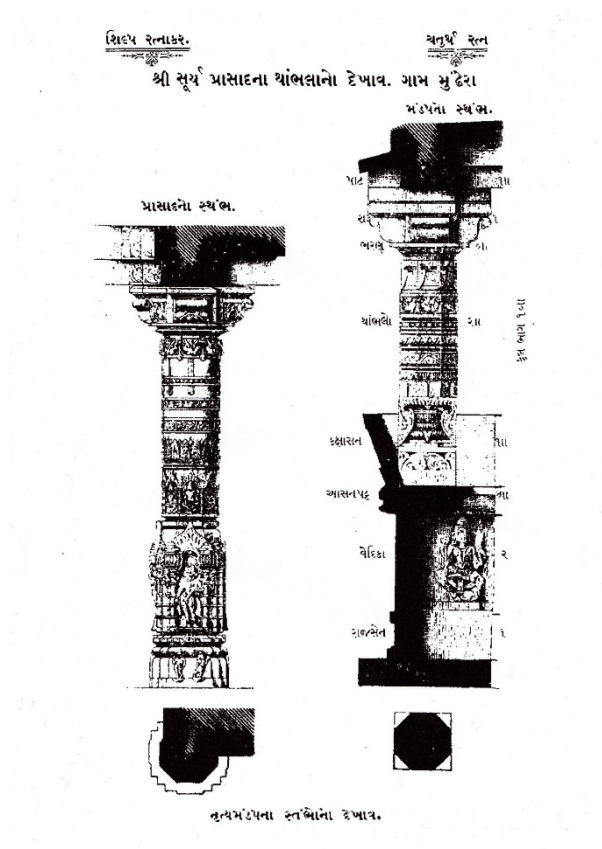


Figure 4.27: N.M. Sompura's modifications to the above ASI drawing. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

શિલ્પ રતનાકર.

તૃતીય રત્ન

આસ મુખ

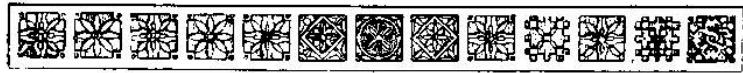
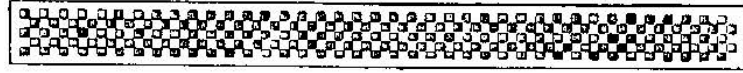
અર્ધચંદ્ર

આસ મુખ

આબુનો દેખાવ



ઉદભર, શ્રીનિમનાથ જૈન દેરાસર, (કુંભારીઆજી).



જગતી વિગરે ઠેકાણે બાંધણામાં કરવાનાં  
બુદ્ધી બુદ્ધી જાતનાં નકશી કામ.

Figure 4.28: ASI details of Sheikh Jodh's Masjid in Patan reappear as 'Carving details for jagati etc'. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)



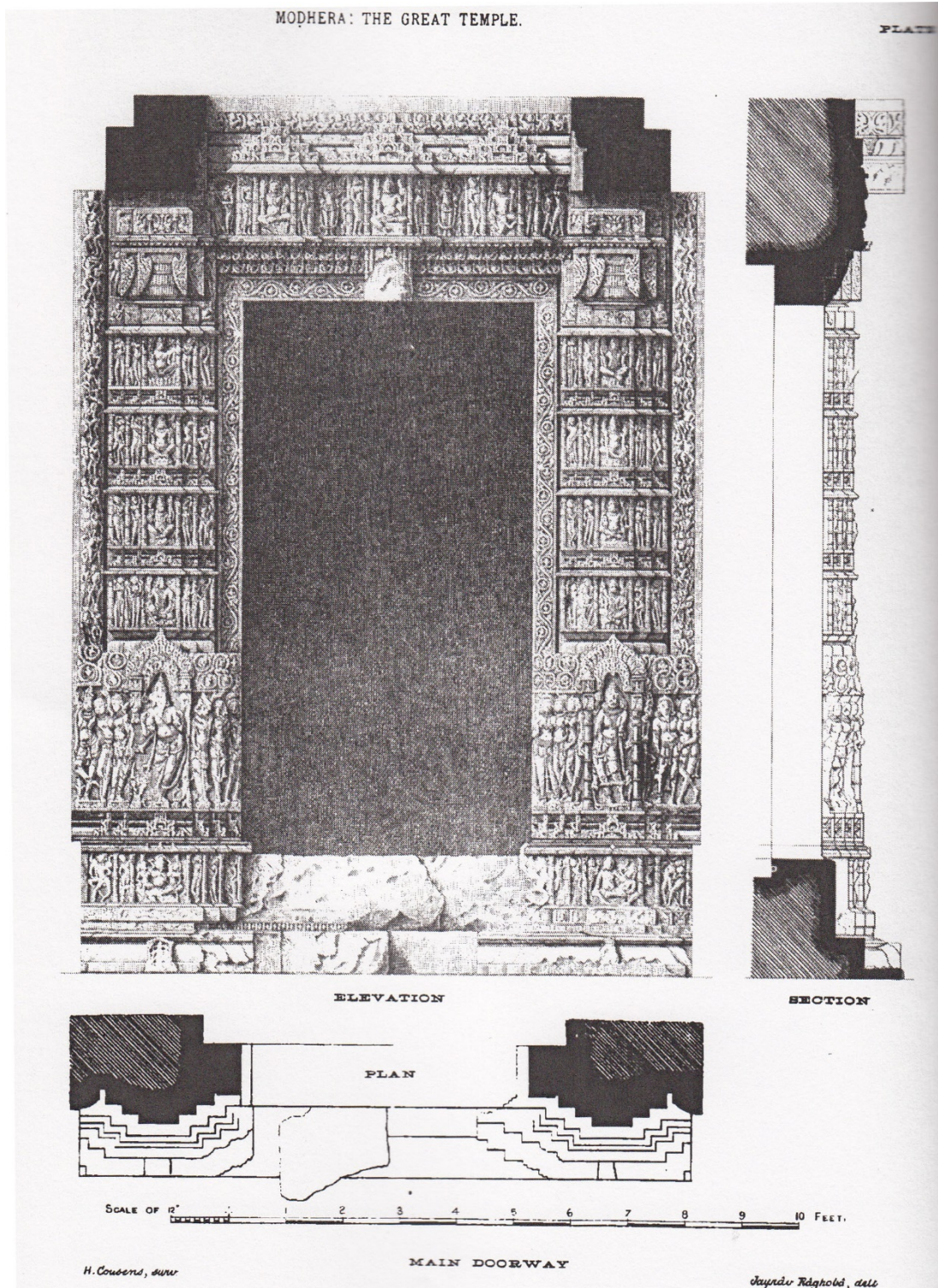


Figure 4.29: ASI drawing of the main doorway at 'Modhera: the great temple'. Image from *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat Most Especially of the Districts included in the Baroda State* (1903)



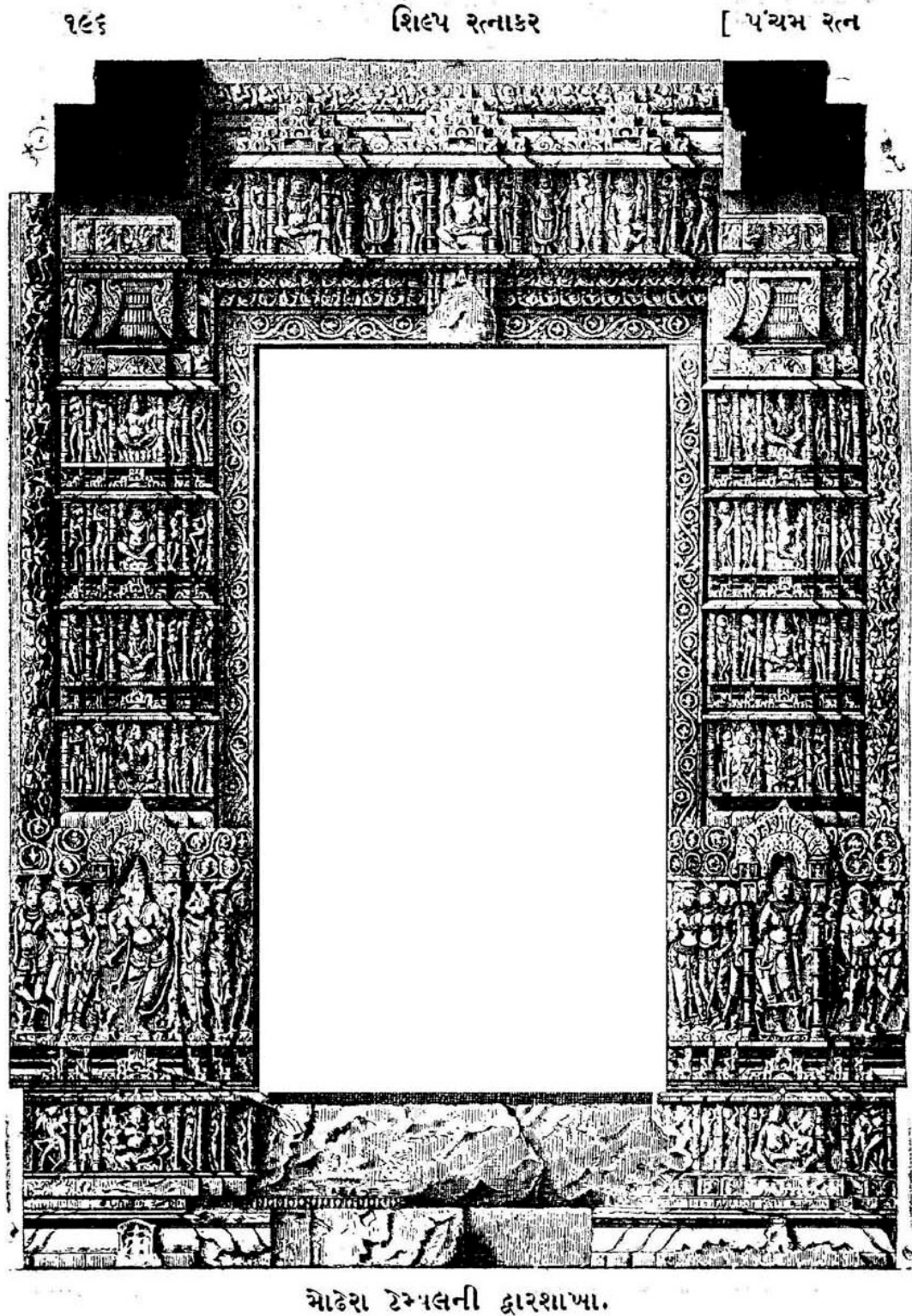


Figure 4.30: ASI drawing of Modhera reconfigured as 'Modhera *templeni* *dwarshakh*'. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)





## CHAPTER 5

## Text and practice I

### Two cultures of codified knowledge

This chapter focuses on how individuals from the Sompura community relate to and use two different cultures of codified knowledge in their everyday practices: modern day *vastu shastra* or canonical texts compiled from fragments of medieval manuscripts by erudite members of the community at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>- century, and texts on the “history” of Indian temple architecture produced by art and architectural historians primarily from about the late 20<sup>th</sup> - century.

In the first type of codified knowledge, of all the *vastu shastras* at their disposal, I focus on the *Shilparatnakar*, for being the most widely regarded, applied and indeed closely read by the present generation.<sup>1</sup> I hope to show that it informs contemporary practice in a concrete – and above all – an improvised, fluid and imprecise sense, giving us opportunities to review certain widely held conceptions that profess strict adherence to *shastras*.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand the texts representing “history” in the sense of historical transformations of Indian temple architecture using archaeological, architectural, epigraphical and textual evidence in western India between 250 BC and the present moment are the monumental *Encyclopaedia of Indian temple architecture* (henceforth EITA), in particular its volume II, which deals with the ‘Nagara’ tradition prevalent in Gujarat and Rajasthan.<sup>3</sup> This is followed by *The Temple architecture of India* and a selection of specific articles discussing the ‘evolutionary’ and ‘emanatory’ character of the ‘Nagara’ tradition of temple architecture as it is presented developing in a historical tradition as well as in a correspondence with

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<sup>1</sup> Narmadashankar M. Sompura, *Shilparatnakar*, 2nd edition edn (Dhranghadra, Kathiawad: Sompura, Narmadashankar Muljibhai, 1990 (1st ed. 1939))

<sup>2</sup> I draw on ideas of imprecision from the only other comparable study of present day temple builders See Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-3, Samuel K. Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', *South Asian Studies*, 26.1 (2010), 31-57.

<sup>3</sup> Michael W Meister and others, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 1, North India : Foundations of North Indian Style C 250 B.C.-A.D. 1100* (Delhi: AIIS and OUP, 1989, Michael W. Meister and M A Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 2, North India : Period of Early Maturity, C.A.D. 700-900* (Delhi: AIIS and OUP, 1991, M A Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. Vol 2, Part 3, North India : Beginnings of Medieval Idiom, C. A.D. 900-1000* (New Delhi: AIIS and IGNCA, 1998)

Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy.<sup>4</sup> This small corpus of publications arguably represents some of the most well regarded sources of modern academic knowledge in relation to medieval temple architecture from north west India with the latter edging into analysis of modern day temples and practitioners including the Sompuras.<sup>5</sup> The academic literature concerning Nagara traditions is vast; my choice of the above sources is informed by the fact that the latter references intersected with a handful of my informants' sources of knowledge as far as academic 'history' of their traditions was concerned.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter I argue for a translational reading of the Sompuras' working practices with regards to both cultures of codified knowledge. Just as it has been argued by political theorists that the political history of India from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> - century cannot be written except in terms of a modern state,<sup>7</sup> similarly this too is a story of a community, which creatively negotiates modern forms of knowledge held within the community and at the site of academia. The nature of this translation in relation to *vastushastra* texts I argue is unstable, very much like Samuel Parker has argued in the case of the contemporary *sthapatis* from South India, for it presupposes improvisation, moving away from the idea of a prescriptive text.<sup>8</sup> Similarly an innovative strand of Hardy's writing has argued in the case of medieval temple makers from the 11<sup>th</sup>- century that if texts are likened to recipe books, they cannot determine the dish, only set out the essentials of the ingredients, their manner of combination and relative proportions.<sup>9</sup> The use of *shastras* in concrete

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<sup>4</sup> Adam Hardy, 'Śekhārī Temples', *Artibus Asiae*, 62.1 (2002), 81-13, Adam Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007)

<sup>5</sup>For an extended bibliography see Parul Pandya Dhar, 'A History of Art History: The Indian Context', in *Indian Art History: Changing Perspectives*. ed. by Parul Pandya Dhar (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. and National Museum Institute, 2011), pp. 1-21. See also Pramod Chandra, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture : Papers Presented at a Seminar Held in Varanasi, 1967* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975)

<sup>6</sup> During one interview, a young temple architect showed me his Masters dissertation, in which he had copied and pasted from an Indian journal, typological studies by Adam Hardy. The library of another had all the volumes of the EITA, its writers held in the highest regard.

<sup>7</sup>Sudipta Kaviraj, 'An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity', *Arch. Europ. Sociol.*, 46.3 (2005), 497-526, p.500

<sup>8</sup> Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective'

<sup>9</sup> Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2015), p.268

practice it is argued in this chapter follows 'in the way codes of language shift and mutate in response to different contexts'.<sup>10</sup> This might at times even necessitate divulging from the above 'essential ingredients', 'their manner of combination' and 'relative proportions' codified in texts like the *Shilparatnakar*.

Given these insights that this chapter is indebted to, it also departs from evolutionary logic that is espoused by the most appreciative works of medieval temple architecture. The chapter argues that the logic of historicism that underpins the most deeply sympathetic works pertaining to medieval temples in the region struggle when trying to assimilate the present temple maker's works. Distinctions must be made between a text like the *Shilparatnakar*, and knowledge produced by art and architectural historians. While both are representing the same tradition, the former from the vantage point of the Sompuras seems to be open ended when applied to practice. On the other hand the latter despite purporting to correct a colonial bias, by including indigenous cultural references, correlating text to buildings and seeing the ingenuity and beauty in medieval temple architecture, seems to also hint on the stagnations inherent in the Sompuras' contemporary works. From this vantage point, the past is presented as alive, whereas the present is framed as dead. This framework of analysis poses a particular problem when living practitioners are brought into the equation, for surely they do not see themselves as practitioners of a fossilised tradition. This chapter sees their work not as a fossilised conclusion to a logical historical sequence to a particular, formal, evolutionary logic as has been posited, but as a creative practice unburdened by historicism, and in the process of constantly negotiating concrete circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

The Sompuras' relations with a text like the *Shilparatnakar* and architectural practice gives us pause to reflect on methodological frameworks that might be deployed to view their 'living fields of production and use'.<sup>12</sup> Historians of subaltern studies have termed this living field 'affective and contingent histories' always

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<sup>10</sup> Felipe Hernández, 'Translation', in *Bhabha for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 24-38

<sup>11</sup> See Hardy, 'Śekhārī Temples', p.137. See also Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India*, p.p. 242-243. Similar implications are inherent in the EITA, which is replete with references to the unmatched glories of temple architecture after the 13<sup>th</sup> - century.

<sup>12</sup> I borrow this term from Samuel Parker. See Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective'



wanting to interrupt and punctuate the logic of universalised historicism.<sup>13</sup> The Sompuras' living fields of 'production and use' do not rely entirely on the logic of historicism and evolutionary formal analysis, which can, to mind objectify and reduce the relations that the makers have with their architecture. I argue that the experience of modernity of the Sompuras' is in a contrary relationship to the modernity of academic scholarship.

### **Academic texts and the Sompuras**

I am partly motivated to look into questions of modernity as a consequence of an invitation by Adam Hardy, a historian of temple architecture, to problematize his own work. In a chapter in defence of patterns of evolutionary logic and historical evolution, Hardy writes, 'the temptation is to give up talking about buildings and join the critics, but some of us need to provide them with something to 'problematize.'"<sup>14</sup> While the said chapter clarifies that difference is kept in mind while not losing sight of the whole, one of the methodological problems with Hardy's formal analysis is that it obscures social lives, by ascribing a value of ossification and stagnation to the products of its live practitioners.

The practice of writing and framing history thus becomes as important as the content being analysed. The undeniable preferences in taste and aesthetics that accompanies the appreciation of medieval temple architecture can be argued to be a social construct in itself. As Samuel Parker argues in the South Indian context architects, sculptors and patrons always prefer some variation on convention and, 'that deployment, no matter how *stereotypically conventional*, is always context sensitive and therefore unique'.<sup>15</sup>

Moving on to the EITA, the various volumes relates text and actual monuments from medieval times in sympathetic ways. While being extremely finely tuned to the development of the tradition in all its regional nuances in architectural detail, it is instructive to note that the procedures of knowledge formulation at a basic level emphasise chronology and biological, evolutionary frameworks. This particular underlying structure has resonances with early colonial procedures of

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<sup>13</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Translating Life Worlds into Labour and History', in *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn edn (Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 72-96

<sup>14</sup> Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India*, pp. 8-62

<sup>15</sup> Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective'

knowledge production in terms of interpretation of India's built legacy, such as those deployed by James Fergusson and the Archaeological Survey of India, dividing the past and the present into fixed chronological phases. Sudipta Kaviraj's question comes to mind: as a method, if modernity is viewed as a process that expands from the west to other parts of the world, this raises a theoretical question.<sup>16</sup> Thus even though they may be sympathetic histories of Indian temple architecture and by implication its makers, methodologically speaking they represent one way of relating to the past, which differs from the Sompuras' engagement.

The majority of the architects I interviewed had not heard of the 'monumental' and 'seminal' EITA, despite being fully engaged with designing and producing temples. Some had, but not seen it and expressed an interest in acquiring copies. They asked me for names of bookshops or internet sites which might sell those. Most Sompuras made their own studies of revered temples for their own understanding and interpretations. This involved direct site visits to revered older examples, making their own measured surveys, pouring over the *Shilparatnakar* and other texts at their disposal, over photographs they had taken or copied from others, as well as those acquired from 'google image' searches:

A and B (temple architects): We look at all this and then we make our own design. We do something new each time.<sup>17</sup>

Without fail all had worked with fathers and grandfathers as children, during their formative years and possessed a working embodied knowledge, entirely communicated in Gujarati, not English, the prime language through which knowledge is imparted in the EITA. Vast banks of working drawings of temples that the older generations had worked on remained in their possession, either rolled up in cupboards, or in plan chests, or as ready to hand sketchbooks or carefully wrapped in old saris; some families referred to these occasionally and for others these informal family archives were very much part of a process of assimilation.

A select few had copies of the EITA in their libraries, which they referred to from time to time, primarily as a visual guide for the wealth of line drawings and photographic representations within it. While within academic networks it is considered essential reading for its 'ground-breaking and exhaustive co-ordination

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<sup>16</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Curious Persistence of Colonial Ideology', *Constellations*, 21.2 (2014), 186-98

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad April 2012

between concepts and terminology held within *vastu shastras* and structural and ornamental details of the temples'<sup>18</sup> it was accorded the status of wondrous authority signifying "history" in the few informants that did mention it.

When speaking of revered examples from the past, my informants were unencumbered by some of the very hallmarks that the EITA embodied: precise dates, precise periods, dynastic affiliations, intricacies of evolution, geographical settings, and last but not the least an idea of development over linear, calendrical time. Their terminology itself seemed to be at variance from the standardised Sanskrit terminology in the EITA overlaid on all the extant monuments it analysed (See chapter 6).

One of the most exciting and accepted moments in art historical scholarship, the genesis of the 'Maru Gurjara' style as postulated by M.A. Dhaky was not mentioned once by my informants when prompted to talk about their most revered examples.<sup>19</sup> The Sompuras' most revered examples coincided with the 'Maru Gurjara' period i.e. the period of intense building activity between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, however it would seem that the language and the very embodied way of talking about best examples was devoid of accepted art historical expressions. As an example I offer two contrasting extracts surrounding the base of the ruins of the Kiradu temple complex in Kiradu, Barmer, where the Someshwara temple (11<sup>th</sup> - century) and the Vishnu temple (10<sup>th</sup> - century) in the complex are considered to be the finest of examples to the Sompuras:

B (a temple architect): This is at Kiradu, the best example for us. Kiradu is a broken ruin. It has a Vishnu temple and a Shiv temple, in a complex of nine. They are not in use. . I don't know when it was built . . It must be written somewhere. Maybe a thousand years ago? Only two places have made us stop in our tracks – Kiradu and Dilwada. Look at this detail. (Figure 5.1) The

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<sup>18</sup>Parul Pandya Dhar, 'A History of Art History: The Indian Context', in *Indian Art History: Changing Perspectives*. ed. by Parul Pandya Dhar (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd. and National Museum Institute, 2011), pp. 1-21, p.8 Parul Pandya Dhar, 'Historiography of Indian Temple Architecture (Post-Independence Writings): Some Methodological Concerns', in *Archaeology in India: Individuals, Ideas and Institutions*. ed. by Gautam Sengupta and Kaushik Gangopadhyay (New Delhi, Kolkata: Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers in association with Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, 2009), pp. 333-50, p.338

<sup>19</sup> M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65

leaves are sprouting towards the viewer. Every detail is varied. There is an idea of labour that within an overall framework . . . every worker is making his own unique proposition. There is no comparison with this detail in any other old temple. Josh, madod, golai are the best here. . . . We need a patron for this kind of work. Client shouldn't have restrictions on time and budget. We are told what carving to draw and supervise. Nobody is interested in carving like this now. The first problem is time constraint, and then next problem is pay.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand an extract from the EITA about the nearby Vishnu temple (Figure 5.2:

The pitha of the prasada represents the earliest instance of a form that was to be common in the subsequent Maru Gurjara style. It is constituted by as many as seven mouldings, commencing with two successive bhittas, followed by a jadyakumbha, kumuda, grasapattika, gajapitha and finally a narapitha. . . . The date of the temple can be deduced by a comparison of its architectural features with those of the temples of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> - century AD. . . . The mean date for the temple seems c. A.D. 975-985.<sup>21</sup>

From these extracts it seems that the temple architects interviewed have an understanding that is unburdened by historicism – “it (the date) must be written somewhere”- reading the temple through the immediacies of the present, drawing our attention to the hetero-temporal conjunction of very old and very new practices. The overlay of a standardised framework discussing monuments in the EITA on the other hand objectifies the temples as a relic of the past through its meticulous chronological precision. As Parker reminds us the validity of the latter is not inherent, but an inbuilt property of an academic way of seeing things. The purposes of these descriptions are perhaps entirely lost on the temple builders.

Apart from the EITA, ideas of sequential growth as presented in other kinds of scholarship differ from lived practices on the ground. As an example it is now widely known and accepted in academia that the single spire *latina prasada* emerged in the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> - century, developing, spreading and finding full expression in

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<sup>20</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad April 2012

<sup>21</sup> Dhaky, pp. 311-12

structural and ornamental depth by the 10<sup>th</sup> - century. From this point on it started flowering into the many spired or *anek indak prasada* which proliferated in the eleventh to the 13<sup>th</sup> - century, the high point of Indian temple architecture. After this cut off point of ingenuity, temple architecture is portrayed as if in decline or as if on a predetermined path, the most fertile period of imagination over. By the time academic frameworks reach the 20<sup>th</sup> - century, ossification, fossilisation is considered the order of the day, as the possibilities within a 'formal logic' have been exhausted.<sup>22</sup>

While being undoubtedly useful in giving us a bird's eye view, and the development of the tradition up to a certain point in history, this particular view also results in a closure for its present day practitioners, masking the lived relations on the ground. In his concluding chapter to a book titled '*The Temple Architecture of India*', which stresses an emanatory and evolutionary logic Hardy suggests that present day temple makers could improve their realisations if they read his book. A few pages earlier 'contemporary traditional practitioners' are condemned to 'decapitated' thinking, for being 'oblivious to the vertical connections that are the basis of a multi aedicular composition.'<sup>23</sup> What is this if not a recommendation to the Sompuras to wait and prepare themselves into learning the language of their own traditions – through academic scholarship - before being its serious participants?

The Sompuras on the other hand, are mostly unencumbered by historicism in their creative practices. At many instances I was asked to refer to the EITA for lessons in *itihās* (history). Across the board I found this response whenever conversation meandered to past revered references:

C (a temple architect): We make temples. This is our main work. If you need to know our history, you must meet the very knowledgeable M.A. Dhaky . . . he is a legend. We are weak in this area. <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hardy, 'Śekharī Temples', p.136

<sup>23</sup> Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* p. 240-242

<sup>24</sup> Interview, April 2013. A paper titled "Our History is Weak" loosely based on this chapter was presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> international AHRA Conference, *This Thing called Theory*, Leeds University, 2015.



### History and creative practice

These startling and frank enunciations were often followed by theories of their origins and evolution tied in with the presence of Gods and Goddesses demonstrating they were existentially coeval with historical time, punctuating its logic. Any question on the history of their community or families invariably took on a dimension that illustrated this view, merging seamlessly with the time of Gods, at the same time being extremely finely tuned to concrete circumstances of places, time and budgets.

Rather than assuming that their thinking is decapitated or fossilised, or they are lacking in historical knowledge, critical postcolonial frameworks urge us to look at historical difference. The very enunciation that they are 'weak in history' is not to be seen as a "lack" but as a powerful difference in the process of negotiating modern contexts. The Indian political psychologist Ashish Nandy's words are relevant here:

Millions of people still live outside "history". They do have theories of the past; they do believe that the past is important and shapes the present and the future, but they also recognise confront and live with a past different from that constructed by historians and historical consciousness. They even have a different way of arriving at that past.<sup>25</sup>

While it is the claim of the chapter that practices of contemporary temple makers are best read in non-historicist terms, in a broader socio cultural field it would also be lazy to suggest that they are devoid of interaction with historicist consciousness at all. Certainly the very emergence of a text like the *Shilparatnakar* is bound up with social context of nationalism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century, which laid stress on ancient traditions. Not to be lost sight of is the idea that modern concepts like 'antiquity' from the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century did touch their lives in real ways prompting their rise through specific kinds of patronage. One could say that their specific negotiated worldview embodies a 'fragmentary and episodic' relationship to a theory of history predicated on linear calendrical time.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ashish Nandy, 'History's Forgotten Doubles', *History and Theory*, 34.2 (1995), 44-66

<sup>26</sup> See Swati Chattopadhyay and Bhaskar Sarkar, 'Introduction: The Subaltern and the Popular', *Postcolonial Studies*, 8.4 (2005), 357-63

**Shilparatnakar: ‘punctuating the logic of historicism’<sup>27</sup>**

The ground breaking *Shilparatnakar* was compiled by the practitioner Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura in 1939, at the behest of the eclectic and nationalist prince of Baroda Sayaji Rao III. Sayaji Rao's appointment of British architects and engineers is well known for civic and palace architecture, so is his readiness to help with archaeological surveys conducted by James Burgess and Henry Cousens, two of the most well-known colonial surveyors who surveyed and documented most of western India's ruined temples.<sup>28</sup> His interactions with and interest in the relatively unknown figure of N.M. Sompura, a local temple builder seems to be spurred by a desire to keep an ‘ancient’ art alive.<sup>29</sup> However despite this, a ‘lack of history’ was noticed by his well-wishers in the introduction, one of whom bemoaned the fact that enough “history” was included in the text.

In the tradition of medieval and late medieval architectural manuals, the *Shilparatnakar* incorporates fragments of earlier texts. It most likely, incorporates fragments of the 11<sup>th</sup> - century *Samaraganasutradhara* – in particular it would seem what has been termed ‘Series C’ by Hardy from chapter 56 therein on Nagara traditions in a recent publication.<sup>30</sup>

Read as a whole, together, the five series of spire types give us important clues as to how N.M. Sompura perceived the medieval fragments in the act of translation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> - century. The series do not spell out the end of a cycle as fossilised or ossified. Rather its vast examples – all one hundred and seventy two- are alive to its practitioners as potentials waiting to be individuated and expanded in different socio cultural contexts, each producing its own locality. The notion of individuation presupposes variation and accepts a diverse set of economic and cultural parameters.

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<sup>27</sup> I borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2008 ), for ideas on punctuating the universal logic of historicism.

<sup>28</sup> See for instance James Burgess and Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: More Especially of the Districts Included in the Baroda State . . .* (London: Bernard Quartich, 1903)

<sup>29</sup> This is stated in the introduction of the second edition of the *Shilparatnakar*.

<sup>30</sup> For Hardy's drawings of series C, see Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings*, pp. 75-164

It has been argued that 'patterns of sequential emanation are conspicuous in the way that temple forms develop both in the built record and in texts, with a formal logic by which new temple types are successively created'. This has been argued in relation to one series of *Nagara prasadas* which occur in the 11<sup>th</sup>-century *Samaranganasutradhara*.<sup>31</sup> While the evolutionary, chronological perspective in calendrical time and mythical time is one of the underlying principles of certain academic scholarship, it is important to note that the idea of emanation also figures in the *Shilparatnakar*. However, contrary to academic scholarship, this emanatory logic does not occupy a *central* place in the *Shilparatnakar*, and neither does it in the concrete practices of its present day practitioners.

The first of these series (Figure 5.4) seems to have a remarkable similarity with the chapter on *Nagara* temples in *Samaranganasutradhara* as well as a remarkable sequential logic of emanation. It is likely to be the same fragment handed down. Here the *indaks* (eggs) increase in a neat sequence of fours, starting from a five *indak prasada* and ending with a *prasada* consisting of hundred and one *indaks*. (Figure 5.4, 5.5) It is striking to note that the logic of the order in the rest of the four series is out of sequence, suggesting that other logics were on the mind that departed from sequential logic. (Figure 5.3) This is precisely the affective history that is of interest for the chapter. The progression fluctuates wildly, the *prasadas* beginning with complex types going down to simple ones and so on and growing again. Instead of emanating from simple forms to complex forms, they seem to be contracting, expanding, contracting, expanding, and so giving us a concrete glimpse into the minds of those writing series two, three, four and five.

The logic present in the first *Kesharadi* series has been presented in academic scholarship as colluding with historical evidence to argue 'that 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.*' (my emphasis). If the *Kesharadi* series is a neat emanating phenomenon in the *Shilparatnakar*, the following series – also showing twenty five describing the characteristics of *Tilaksgaradi prasad* is less precise in its progression. Starting from a single *indaka*, it ends in the 425 *indak prasada*. Inter spread within this sequence are oddities which interrupt or punctuate the run of sequential logic such as the *Singh Tilak prasad* of twenty five *indak*.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.p 75-164

The third series *Rushabadi Prasad* is most fascinating as all ideas of sequential logic are abandoned here. The series start with *prasadas* that are of the larger variety. Their scale is large as in the starting *prasada* is not a single spired *shikhar* but already a multi spired one with five *urahshringas* and 733 *indaks* going right down to the *Svakula Prasad* with one *urahshringa*. (Figure 5.5.) The series then proliferates again. The Latina single spire *prasada* is missing from the earlier section of this series and emerges as the twentieth as *Suparshva Vallabh* and then re-emerges as fifty fourth type in the sequence, the *Kamal Kanga Prasada*. The series then contract to simpler *prasadas* and then expand again pulsating away from visions of linear emanatory progression. This process of constant expansion and contraction ends in a 225 *indak prasada*.

The fourth series *Vairajadi Prasad* reverts to twenty five types of *prasada* again in an order that is more amenable to randomness than teleological development. The final series is the *Mewaradi* series again consisting of twenty types of *prasadas*. This series deals with a particular type with a circumambulatory inside.. These five series were described during interviews to me not in historicist terms but as possessing an affinity towards a particular deity as well as in degrees of amenability to capitalist forms of production.

### Sompura perceptions

A (a temple architect): *This is the Kesharadi prasad series. Bhagvan Shivji likes these prasadas. And these here are the Rushabadi prasad series. Jain tirthankars like these. But when it comes to deciding which one to use for our clients, we can pick any. Budget decides everything. There are only five or six that are used today. Mandir prasad is the most popular and works for both Hindu and Jain temple Trusts. It is also readymade in our computer.*<sup>32</sup>

After stating this, the above temple architect listed out the ones most favoured by patrons currently. These had a *pehchan* (readily identifiable). These were the *Keshari*, *Sarvotabhadra*, *Nandan*, *Nandish* and *Mandir prasad*, all from the first series. (Figure 5.4, shaded pink) And while present day practitioners are certainly aware of emanations and proliferations, terms of reference are far from historicist more it is the exigency of time, capital and client desire that is on their mind when it

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, Barsana, April 2013

comes to deciding a particular *prasada*. In other words their understanding of emanation did not lead to the conclusion that the tradition had stagnated, rather it was the possibility or impossibility of individuation that was topmost on their mind. This is a completely different relation to the past from academic understanding:

A (a temple architect): *The smaller prasadas are embedded in the larger ones. In the larger prasadas like the Kailash Prasad, which Shivji likes, this happens all the time! If we look at Som Tilak Prasad on page 283, it has the smaller Sarvotrabadra in it. The prasadas from the earlier pages have been reduced and incorporated in pages that have bhavya (grand) prasadas.*

*Today we make ordinary temples, not bhavya (grand) temples. In a small budget, bhavyata (grandiose-ness, monumentality) is not possible like they did before. Look at this example here . . . we start with the Nandish prasad on the line of the rekha. On top of that we put the Nandan prasada, on top of that the Savotrabadra prasada then Kesari and we have a bhavya mandir! Each projection is three feet. We can't make this in a small budget. Clients come to us with budgets and time first and then the conversation starts about the type of prasada that would work best within the constraints.*<sup>33</sup>

### **Unlearning history as a developmental process**

Postcolonial thought thus begins to come alive in the context of the discourses and vantage points within which present day temple makers are scrutinised from. Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts that the move of historicism is to 'deny coevalness', which is to say that the idea of universal developmentalist thought in secular historical time is *unable* to capture lived practices through which they get translated and configured differently on the ground.<sup>34</sup> He argues that intervening between the two is history – contradictory, plural and heterogeneous, struggles whose outcomes are never predictable, even retrospectively, in accordance with schemas that seek to naturalise and domesticate this heterogeneity. *Shilparatnakar's* five fluctuating *prasada* series is one example of the contingent nature of relations that historicism struggles to capture. An attempt to write the history of Indian temple architecture

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<sup>33</sup> Interview, Barsana, April 2013

<sup>34</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, p.8



from the material practices of everyday life opens up a radical space which does not privilege the analytical over the lived.

The question then is how to think of the political when the Sompuras who are already carrying a practice in an embodied, handed down sense, transforming and translating in every instance emerge in the modern sphere of life without having to do any preparatory work to qualify as the bourgeois historian? In the context of these questions the writings of anthropologist Samuel Parker take a relevance. Parker's ethnographic work on the uses of *shastras* by contemporary temple architects in relation to modern academic uses point to understanding them as 'ahistorical manifestations of divine power'. I quote:

texts and formalised practice . . . must be adaptable, fluid, generalised, imprecise and above all improvisational if they are to be ongoing and vital. It is not that they passively weather the changing times; they presuppose variability, fluidity and perpetual becoming.<sup>35</sup>

Similar conclusions are drawn out in a specific strand of work dealing with text and practice by Adam Hardy in his recent publication on the theory and practice of medieval temple makers, but this appreciation as pointed before is restricted to medieval temple makers, not contemporary ones. Perhaps most revealingly Parker suggests that knowing *shastra* is independent from the written word and its manifestation is not to be presumed to lie in a literal text itself, rather it manifests in three kinds of places as he sees it: the body, architecture and texts, with many architects honoured in their profession *without ever having read a single written version of the written Shastra*.<sup>36</sup>

As argued by Parker, these situated and living relations sit awkwardly with formal analysis, primarily because academic representations are necessarily mediated by contemporary imaginations and these are inevitably incomplete and selective, as they breathe life into the past through historical narratives selectively constructed out of surviving traces of past monuments.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', pp. 8-10

<sup>36</sup> Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective' p. 10

<sup>37</sup> Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', p.33

Something of an unacademic nature prevailed in all my interactions with the Sompuras. It is with these frameworks that I approach everyday attitudes and practices as the basis of my own analysis in the rest of the chapter. I have divided the remaining half of the chapter into five sections each discussing an aspect of local adjustment, contingency, and negotiations in the everyday creative practices of the Sompuras.

### **Section 1: Negotiations with the rhetoric of compliance**

To 'comply' with codified knowledge held within *shastras* is one of the key identifying marks of contemporary Sompuras on a number of platforms. For their patrons it is a key rhetoric that distinguishes them from other professional architects trained in schools of architecture accredited by the Council of Architecture. But strict compliance as has been shown elsewhere is likely to be a limited framework as the texts leave ample room for imagination, and cannot be followed to the last word.<sup>38</sup> Without fail temple architects emphasize their build is made exactly to Shastra and that all rules were given therein. The following rhetoric is commonplace:

D (a temple architect): Any Sompura will build according to this book. There will never be a compromise. For us this is God. Whatever is written in here we will follow. Dimensionally changes can't be made. Nobody can do that. It means if there is a map of the eastern direction, say 9ft 1"x 9ft 1" which has been matched astrologically, no one can make a change to that size on their own. Every direction has a nakshatra (star constellation). If a temple trust wants a bigger size, then you can get the next dimension from the book. This is in books, but in our blood as well.<sup>39</sup>

While this rhetoric might appear inflexible, shared by a number of practitioners, it also hints at variability. One way this flexibility was expressed was in the tempering of sizes of spaces within an overall framework of proportions as given in the texts. Another way it was expressed was in the tempering and adjusting of astrological calculations themselves. Yet a third way was in the tempering of

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra', *South Asian Studies*, 25.1 (2009), 41-6, Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings*

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012

proportions themselves. A fourth way was in exercising freedoms in the architectural language. These options my informants pointed out as contingent on client desires, and economic considerations.

There were moments when it seemed that despite having satisfied all the astrological matchmaking aspects, temple architects were often under pressure to abandon either the proportions or the language suggested in texts like the *Shilparatnakara*. In the following extract two temple architects describe this predicament:

A and B (temple architects): As an example, our shastra tells us that the mandap can be anything between one and a quarter to two times the dimension of the rekha.<sup>40</sup> You should not go above two times . . . even that we don't do. But these days . . . you see. . . clients want a small or medium garbha griha and a massive mandap so that they can fit in the maximum number of people. They want to accommodate the maximum public (sic). Our ratio is finished then, isn't it?! On the one hand there is no budget to increase the size of the shikhar, and on the other they want a big mandap. If you want a fifty foot mandap, then, the garbha griha and shikhar needs to be big according to that ratio, but clients don't want that.<sup>41</sup>

Understandably, no specific examples were given for this conundrum for no client would like to hear that their temple breaks away from ratios as suggested in *shastras*. As my interviews increased and conversations deepened, so did a realisation that the rhetoric of compliance to *shastra* was accompanied by a sense that accommodated diversity of opinions within the community itself. Here in a candid observation, a young temple maker makes it clear that what might appear as a violation of *shastra* is probably best seen as a valuable mode of creativity. These excerpts suggest that improvisation is a precondition:

E (a temple architect): We follow texts or sometimes work visually. . . . .  
People who are very rigid want everything done by the shilpa shastra, but sometimes it looks odd. The shilpa shastra doesn't need to be followed

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<sup>40</sup> The *rekha* was described as the external wall dimension of the *garbha griha*, without plan projections, or the dimension between two *karnas*.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, Barsana, April 2013

blindly. The design is about having energy, having a proper atmosphere, having the atmosphere of religion. You follow the shastra dimensions, but sometimes it looks blatant also.<sup>42</sup>

## Section 2: Negotiating historical time

Many of the architects I interviewed spoke of the *Shilparatnakar* as a literal text *and* as an embodied divine presence. This happened in a convoluted sense. Although the present generation of Sompuras do not call themselves 'Vishvakarmas', used as an adjective by their South Indian counterparts, it is implicit in their self-conceptions that they consider themselves to be fragments of Vishvakarma, the divine architect of the universe. This idea resides in an unobjectified, pre-analytical sense. This specific notion of their own body embodying Vishvakarma, or as a reincarnation of Vishvakarma is primarily ascribed to their ability and claims to work with *vastushastra*. In this worldview *Vishvakarma* is considered to 'occupy the present in all eras simultaneously'. This he does through his fragments: sculptors and architects such as those from the Sompura community:

Vishvakarma lived in every era or like his fragment in each era experts of Vastushashtra were known as Vishwakarma. Even today, in Dravid, shilpis of Brahmana caste like Sompura are known as Vishwakarma. Similarly in Udiya (Orissa), Mahapatra shilpis believe themselves to be incarnations of Vishwakarma. That is why the best of Vastushashtra scriptures created by them are counted to be by Vishwakarma.<sup>43</sup>

It is precisely this notion which was being articulated, when many of my informants distinguished themselves from architecture professionals or from labourers shaping stone in the numerous *karkhanas* (factories) of Gujarat and Rajasthan. It seemed like a badge of honour or a degree or a qualification:

F (a temple architect): In order to be a Vishvakarma, you need a degree of the highest order! You must have dhyan (attention, meditation) whether it is a temple or a house. Before doing all this work, the main person incharge is Vishvakarma. The person who has full gyan (knowledge) of shilpashastra –

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<sup>42</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2012

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.30

he is the one who can be called Vishvakarma or shilpi. The karigars in the factories cannot be called Vishvakarmas because they don't have Shastra and anyone who is successful can't be called a Vishvakarma. (Laughs).<sup>44</sup>

The introductions of both *Shilparatnakar* and *Diparnava* give a clear sense of the divine status ascribed to this community of architects, which reside with their day to day roles as architects, business men, contractors and project managers. It is this coevalness and porosity of heterotemporal conjunctions that I have tried to emphasise in chapter 7. The fourteen *ratnas* or chapters in the *Shilparatnakar* are organised as a dialogue between *Vishvakarma* - the divine architect of the universe - and his four mind born sons. *Vishvakarma*'s four sons gained their architectural knowledge through these dialogues and it is for this reason the texts appear as injunctions on architectural matters ranging from astrology to architectural typologies, to pleasing proportions. At one level they were books to read and understand; at another level they embodied divinity at the turn of every page, just as the Sompuras consider themselves embodied *Vishwakarma*.

On numerous occasions I was corrected in my understanding of authorship of the *Shilparatnakar*. Just as they considered themselves to be his fragments, rather than individuals creating architecture within myths of creative personhood, my informants considered the text not to be authored by N.M. Sompura in the year 1939, rather by *Vishvakarma*. N.M. Sompura had simply made a legible description in Gujarati, one explained, and provided useful architectural drawings of typologies:

F and C (temple architects): *Shilparatnakar* is written by Vishvakarma. Narmadashankar Sompura was very knowledgeable. The descriptions are there in Sanskrit, but he has given us a translation and the drawings. He must have sat down with pundits to get the Gujarati meanings and he used his own intelligence to make these drawings. He has made it easy for us.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time it was also commonly acknowledged that each of these ideas was subject to contingency and interruption. Divinity it would seem is infused in the body and being of the Sompura temple architect, yet each of the interviews

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<sup>44</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad April 2012

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2013



were also punctuated by the here and now, and a certain inevitability of capitalism, starting with a “But”:

G (a temple architect): But the fact is that with the passage of time, even Sompuras have started minting money by devious means (loot maar). Everyone is doing that! But, there is a limit to corruption. When the work is worth RS.500, we extract RS. 2000 from the client! That is hard to digest. This goes on and on. . . . <sup>46</sup>

### Section 3: Vastu as exchange

The *Shilparatnakar* offers two broad kinds of knowledge. One is invested in architectural designs, particularly spatial typologies in plan and elevation, architectural components and their idealised proportions and grammar. Some aspects were routinely expanded and improvised on, while others continued. All the four examples in the UK for instance show vertical discontinuity between *shikhar* and *mandovar*, which none of the *Shilparatnakar* drawings show. The other kind of knowledge therein is related to astrological calculations, also known as *Ayadi* calculations.

*Ayadi* calculations as explained below helped with verifying dimensions and were specific to deities being installed. This calculation came first and foremost in determining the *rekha* dimension of the *garbha griha*. A tenth of the *rekha* gave the *bhaga*, which informed the dimensions of the rest of the spaces as its multiples. In performing *Ayadi* calculations the Sompuras generated what they termed *Vastu* or *praman*. These seemed to be interchangeable concepts and fundamental to their conceptualisation process. Infact while the physical architecture took flight from texts, the *vastu* calculation seemed grounded in it:

A (a temple architect): Looking at architecture is one thing, but if we don't go by the shastra, we won't be able to generate the praman.<sup>47</sup>

One of my elderly informants explained the generation of *vastu* or *praman* as a way of ensuring that the gods in the skies were related to human activity on earth. An idea of 'exchange was involved here'. My informant explained that when the

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<sup>46</sup> Interview M. Sompura, Palitana, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2013

Sompuras begin conceptualising their temples ideas of *harzana chukana* – of paying back through compensation – are inherent. The noun *harzana* means compensation and the verb *chukana* means ‘to pay’ in exchange for something. Although not explicitly stated like this, in fact two kinds of logic related to the idea of “exchange” come to the forefront, both engaging with knowledge held in *shastras* in specific ways. One involves the invocation of specific Gods and Goddesses, in compensating the earth from which concrete substances - land and material - have been extracted for the materialisation of their building. The other is in the capitalist sense, where a fixed amount of money is exchanged for an architectural product and service.

This idea of making an offering *in exchange* for extracting resources from the earth, they term *bali* or sacrifice. Bali is completely independent of monetary exchange and inextricably tied to pleasing the gods through the generation of *vastu*, which involves matching various configurations of stars, and the planets with that of the spaces within the temple. Generating *vastu* ensured good fruit. It ensured merit for the Sompuras, a pleasant energy in the spaces and a *sanyog* (synthesis) with the gods above. At one level this is a creative logic that is unimpeded by capitalist intensions:

F (a temple architects): There is a *niyam* (rule) in our *shastra*. The *niyam* is that ‘hamein harzana chukana hai’. If we take something from *prithvi* (earth), then we must give something concrete back, for it is not ours to take. This rule exists because we don’t own this earth. We don’t know who does. We can’t give ‘back’ money because we don’t know who to give it back to, nor can we offer an animal as an offering – that would be violent. What we do instead is offer a small part of the *petha* fruit to the Gods, in particular to the *Vastu Purush*. This offering is connected to the generation of *vastu*. There are many things about *vastu* – my theory is not great – but the key thing is that the generation of *vastu* is related to the *kshetrphal* (area) and it unites the gods in the skies to human activity on earth.<sup>48</sup>

While *vastu* was explained to me in terms of exchange, and the bringing together of the gods and goddesses in contact with the earth, its generation relied on the *ayadi* calculation. The *ayadi* calculation gave a numerical remainder which

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2013

acted as a fertile left over, imbued with a quality that determined the quality of the spaces.<sup>49</sup> The generation of *vastu* or *praman* is indeed a complex, and highly abstract matter. All Sompuras are expected to be able to generate *vastu*. Both these terms were used in a similar sense i.e. both had to be 'generated' and at some level they even seemed independent of architectural language. This independence also generated the freedom to explore new spatial typologies, which were not found in the text, but were correct in *vastu* terms.

The Sompuras were not averse to making adjustments to *vastu* calculations if it meant that the project stayed with them and didn't get passed on to another architect. Across the board my informants suggested that at moments the pressure from patrons compromised the generation of *vastu*, for business interests had to be kept in mind too. Thus *vastu* itself was subject to contingency.

#### Section 4: Generating vastu

Generating *vastu* involved an astrological matchmaking which was explained to me as being similar to the matchmaking performed for a man and woman before marriage. The first chapter of the *Shilparatnakar* was referred to for this. To gauge if a boy and a girl are compatible their *nakshatra* (star constellation) is matched. In a similar sense to ensure compatibility between certain systems the *nakshatra* (star constellation) of three entities had to be matched in the initial stages of designing a temple. These were the donor's *nakshatra*, the principal deity's *nakshatra* and that of the temple building itself. While the donor's *nakshatra* could be ascertained by the date and time of their birth, and the *nakshatra* of various deities were known, the *nakshatra* of the temple involved the *kshetraphal* (area) of the temple after it had been measured against the twenty one *Ayadi* formulae.

The *nakshatras* (star constellation), twenty seven in number were sensitive to four aspects: their serial number or counting order, to orientation, to *nadi* (pulse) and had a specific *gana* or group: *deva* (divine) *gana*, *manushya* (human) *gana* and *rakshash* (demon) *gana*. For a temple to be co-ordinated astrologically certain aspects of the *nakshatras* were considered to be compatible and others created enmity.<sup>50</sup> As an example *manushyaa* and *dev gana* were compatible, whereas

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<sup>49</sup> See also Vibhuti Sachdev, *Indian Architectural Theory: Contemporary Uses of Vastu Vidya* (London: Curzon Press, 1998)

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 115

*rakshasa* and *manushya* and *rakshasa* and *dev gana* were not. However in concrete practice these internal, abstract rules were flexible:

C (a temple architect): This is our main work. But nowadays people are exploring many other things which are not in the shastra, to run their business. People forget the original things to match. As an example a particular deity's birth nakshatra might be *rakshash gana* (demon group) and that is what must be used for matching. But people are reticent, saying this is a bhagwan (god), so why not use *deva gana* (divine gana) nakshatra? We argue, but then accept defeat because if I don't do it, he will go somewhere else. And I'll lose my work.<sup>51</sup>

These observations suggest that flexibility towards generation of *vastu* itself was an approach that the Sompuras considered undertaking in order to ensure that projects remained with them.

### Section 5: Ayadi formulae

There are twenty one types of *Ayadi* calculations listed in the first *ratna* (chapter) of the *Shilparatnakar*, which generate *vastu*. Some of these calculations are termed *Aya* (Income), *Kshetraphal* (area), *Nakshatra* (star), *Vyah* (expenditure), *Nakshatra*, *Nakshatra gan*, *Nakshatra disha*, *Nakshatra*, *Tara*, *Nadi* (pulse), *Rashi*, *Mitrata*, *Tithi*, *Vaar*, *Karam*, *Yog*, *Varna*, *Tatva* and *Kshetra*. Each of these entails a specific calculation process. To match all twenty one calculations was nearly impossible I was informed, so most performed four or five on a routine basis and left out the others.

The remainder of the area of the temple tested against each of these twenty one calculations determined the suitability of the dimensions and the quality of the plan or the quality of the temple. If the remainder was unfavourable, then the dimensions were adjusted to get the best result and it is in this way that dimensions up to the last quarter of the inch became crucial.

Of all the twenty first calculations in *Ayadi*, I was explained the *Aya* calculations, the first of the *Ayadi* calculations. One of my informants explained that there are eight types of *Aya* as represented in the accompanying figure. (Figure 5.6) The *Aya* was calculated by the division of the area (or if calculating heights, then

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<sup>51</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad 2012

taking lengths into account) by eight and then ‘distributing’ the remainder into these eight spaces.

The order of counting began from the top central square which denoted “east”. Odd numbered *ayas* were considered beneficial and even numbered *ayas* were not. The first *aya* was of the Eastern direction and was occupied by *Dhwaj Aya* which was considered best for temples. Counting clockwise if the remainder was “1”, then this was the most desirable situation. Remainders 3, 5 and 7 were beneficial too. The second *Aya* was of the north east and was the *Dhumm* (cat) *Aya*. This was not good. The third *Aya* was for the south and was the *Singh* (lion) *Aya* and was considered good. The fourth *Aya* was for the south western direction and was *Shwanaya* (dog) and was not considered beneficial. The fifth *Aya* for the West was the *Vrishabha* (bull) *Aya* and was good. The sixth *Aya* was the *khara* (donkey) and was not good. The seventh *Aya* for the north was the *Gaj* (elephant) and the last or the first *Aya* – the eighth *Aya* – was *Dhwansha*

*Aya* was calculated by dividing the area (or length) by the number eight. The remainder that was left was then counted in the clockwise direction. The *Aya* square that the remainder landed on determined the quality of the dimension. Vibhuti Sachdev explains that there are eight types of *Aya* deduced from the eight remainders, for in the remainder lies the germ or nature of subsistence.<sup>52</sup> Achieving a desirable remainder or residue was beneficial to the Sompuras, the donors and the temple, or else for the architects’ misfortune awaited:

A (a temple architect): If your temple faces south – say we are calculating heights - then your height should correspond to Singha (lion) *Aya*. Now suppose you calculate the *dwarshakh* (doorframe) height and the dimension corresponds to *Vrishabha* (bull) *Aya*, then that is wrong! Because the *Singh Aya* and *Vrishabha Aya* are enemies. They eat each other! This should never happen! The door dimensions should be adjusted.<sup>53</sup>

Once a conceptual plan has been made and the *rekha* and *bhaga* dimension established, other *Shailparatnakar* illustrations come into the foreground for elevational components. These drawings I am told are deployed for setting out the proportions for a range of architectural features particular to Nagar *shaili*. These

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<sup>52</sup> Sachdev, p.115

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Barsana, April 2013



include the *jagati*, the divisions in it, the *pitha* and the divisions in it, the *mandovar*, the sequence of profiles and division in it (Figure 5.7), the *shikhar* and so on. Although the temple architects did not explain these drawings to me in historicist terms, it is clear that at least some of the drawings have a deep resonance with extant examples from 11th to the 13<sup>th</sup> - century when western India saw the most prolific building activity. The drawings of the *mahapitha* and *mandovar* in the *Shilparatnakar* are deeply resonant of the features which became popular during the Solanki rule in Western India. For example the most fully developed Maru Gurjara temple incorporated the three bands of the *gajapita*, the *ashwapitha* and the *narapitha*. These were never explained in historicist terms but as beautiful or full of art or as expensive or in terms of budget, which no clients were interested in.

I have not checked the dimensions of their temples with tape and measure in their realised conceptions in the UK or in India, nor do I intend to for the chapter shows that they are familiar with many sections of the *Shilparatnakar*, but sometimes its material manifestation may have other stories to tell. I would much rather if those stories of creative adjustment and expediency came from them, and so they do, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter. It is in this adjustment – both of *vastu* and actual architecture itself- that historical difference is negotiated, that ideas of carrying forth a practice and transforming it along the way lies.

This notion of transformations does not fit neatly emanatory logics underpinned by a historical consciousness, but it shows that for a practice that has been largely disregarded, immense relations of production are involved in the background.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to suggest that there is scope for opening up a space to view the gap between 'history' of historians and the matrixial encounter that constitutes the here and now of everyday practice. I have tried to show that the affective and contingent relations that the Sompuras have with the *Shilparatnakar* are unobjectified and continually responding to local contingencies. This relationship is unburdened with frameworks of historicism, which are suggestive of stagnation, ossification and fossilisation of their very own practices.





Figure 5.1: The base of the Someshwara temple, Kiradu temple complex, Barmer, Rajasthan (11<sup>th</sup> century)

Figure 5.0 (Chapter cover): Templates of client approved carving details in an on-site carving factory, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh



Figure 5.2: The Vishnu temple Kiradu temple complex, Barmer, Rajasthan (10<sup>th</sup> century)

## Chapter 5

| SHILPARATNAKARA PRASĀDAS   |                      |       |  |       |                          |  |                        |       |   | Megha Chand Inglis PhD Research                    |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------|-------|--|-------|--------------------------|--|------------------------|-------|---|--|------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Illustrated types  |                      |       |  |       |                          |  |                        |       |   | Most Popular according to Manoj Trivedi April 2013 |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Chapter 13 - Kesharadi Prasad<br>Page 221-260<br>From Samarangana? |                      |       | Chapter 14 - Tilaksagaradi Prasad<br>Page 261-288<br>From Kshirarnava? |       |                          | Chapter 15 - Rushabadi Prasad<br>Page 289-330<br>From Kshirarnava? |                        |       | Chapter 16 - Vairajadi Prasad<br>Page 331-349 |  |      | Chapter 17 - Mervadi Prasad<br>Page 350-393 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| S.No   | Name                 | Indak | Name   | Indak | Name                     | Indak  | Name                   | Indak | Name  | Indak  | Name | Indak                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1  | Keshari Prasad       | 5     | Tilaksagar Prasad  | 1     | Rushab Prasad            | 733  | Ekanga Ek Prasad       | 1     | Jyeshtha Meru Prasad                          | 2002   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2  | Sarvatobhadra Prasad | 9     | Gauri Tilak Prasad   | 1     | Kailash Prasad           | 733  | Triyangana Tran Prasad | 13    | Madhyam Meru Prasad                           | 505  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3  | Nandan Prasad        | 13    | Rudra Tilak Prasad   | 1     | Surendra Prasad          | 733  | Singh Prasad           | 13    | Kanishtha Meru Prasad                         | 293  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4  | Nandishali Prasad    | 17    | Shri Tilak Prasad  | 5     | Ajit Prasad              | 269  | Shri Nandan Prasad     | 29    | Mandir Prasad                                 | 185  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5  | Nandish Prasad       | 21    | Hari Tilak Prasad  | 9     | Gajendra Prasad          | 273  | Mandir Prasad          | 25    | Lakshmi Koter Prasad                          | 149  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6  | Mandir Prasad        | 25    | Lakshmi Tilak Prasad   | 13    | Vishal Prasad            | 273  | Malay Prasad           | 29    | Kailash Prasad                                | 129  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7  | Shri Vatsa Prasad    | 29    | Bhu Tilak Prasad   | 29    | Svayambhu Prasad         | 113  | Viman Prasad           | 33    | Pancha Vaktra (?) Prasad                      | 161  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8  | Amritodhbhav Prasad  | 33    | Rambha Tilak Prasad  | 33    | Kshirakh Prasad          | 113  | Vishal Prasad          | 37    | Viman Prasad                                  | 77   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9  | Himvan Prasad        | 37    | Indra Tilak Prasad   | 41    | Santosh Prasad           | 129  | Trilokya Prasad        | 41    | Gadhamadan Prasad                             | 209  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10   | Hemkunt Prasad       | 41    | ( Barsana) Mandir Tilak Prasad   | 37    | Abhinandan Prasad        | 177  | Mahendra Prasad        | 45    | Muktakon Prasad                               | 125  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11   | Kailash Prasad       | 45    | Hemvan Tilak Prasad  | 45    | Avidho(?) Prasad         | 177  | Ratnashirsha Prasad    | 45    | Giri Prasad                                   | 145  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12   | Prithvijai Prasad    | 49    | Kailash Tilak Prasad   | 49    | Pramod Prasad            | 181  | Sitshrunga Prasad      | 53    | Tilak Prasad                                  | 21   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13   | Indraneel Prasad     | 53    | Prithvi Tilak Prasad   | 57    | Survallabh Prasad        | 185  | Bhudhar Prasad         | 85    | Chandrashekhhar Prasad                        | 109  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14   | Mahaneel Prasad      | 57    | Tribhuvan Tilak Prasad   | 65    | Sumati Prasad            | 57   | Bhuvanmandap Prasad    | 89    | Mandir Tilak Prasad                           | 73   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15   | Bhudhar Prasad       | 61    | Indraneel Tilak Prasad   | 69    | Subodhi Prasad           | 73   | Trailokyavijaya Prasad | 97    | Saubhagya Prasad                              | 33   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16   | Ratnakut Prasad      | 65    | Sarvang Tilak Prasad   | 73    | Supriya Prasad           | 73   | Kshittivallabh Prasad  | 101   | Sundar Prasad                                 | 16   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17   | Vaidurya Prasad      | 69    | Survallabh Tilak Prasad  | 77    | Padmavallabh Prasad      | 209  | Mahidhar Prasad        | 41    | Shri Tilak Prasad                             | 17   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18   | Padmarag Prasad      | 73    | Singh Tilak Prasad   | 25    | Padmarag Prasad          | 209  | Kailash Prasad         | 45    | Vishal Prasad                                 | 157  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19   | Vajr Prasad          | 77    | Makardhwaj Tilak Prasad  | 77    | Pushkirtwardhan Prasad   | 209  | Navamalya Prasad       | 49    | Shri Parvat koot Prasad                       | 17   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20   | Mukutojwal Prasad    | 81    | Mangal Tilak Prasad  | 145   | Suparshva Vallabh Prasad | 57   | Gandhamadan Prasad     | 53    | Nandivardhan Prasad                           | 57   |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21   | Airawat Prasad       | 85    | Tilakaksha Tilak Prasad  | 117   | Sunand Prasad            | 69   | Sarvangasundar Prasad  | 57    |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22   | Rajhans Prasad       | 89    | Padma Tilak Prasad   | 149   | Shri Vallabh Prasad      | 69   | Vijayanand Prasad      | 61    |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23   | Garud Prasad         | 93    | Som Tilak Prasad   | 165   | Chandraprabhu Prasad     | 73   | Sarvangatilako Prasad  | 65    |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24   | Vrushabh Prasad      | 97    | Vijay Tilak Prasad   | 189   | Chandrashekhhar Prasad   | 105  | Mahabhog Prasad        | 69    |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25   | Meru Prasad          | 101   | Trailokya Tilak Prasad   | 425   | Viman Prasad             | 105  | Meru Prasad            | 97    |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26   |                      |       |  |       | Suvidhi Prasad           | 177  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27   |                      |       |  |       | Sushriya Prasad          | 177  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28   |                      |       |  |       | Vasupushpak Prasad       | 181  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29   |                      |       |  |       | Sheetal Prasad           | 229  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30   |                      |       |  |       | Shriyendu Prasad         | 229  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 31   |                      |       |  |       | Danuraj Prasad           | 229  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 32   |                      |       |  |       | Shriyansh Prasad         | 49   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 33   |                      |       |  |       | Shrivatsa Prasad         | 49   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 34   |                      |       |  |       | Putrad Prasad            | 49   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 35   |                      |       |  |       | Sheetal Prasad           | 33   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 36   |                      |       |  |       | Kirtihayak Prasad        | 39   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 37   |                      |       |  |       | Manohar Prasad           | 45   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 38   |                      |       |  |       | Svakul Prasad            | 17   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 39   |                      |       |  |       | Kulanandan Prasad        | 21   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 40   |                      |       |  |       | Vasupujya Prasad         | 257  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 41   |                      |       |  |       | Ratnasambhav Prasad      | 257  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 42   |                      |       |  |       | Vimal Vallabh Prasad     | 77   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 43   |                      |       |  |       | Muktisanghat Prasad      | 85   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 44   |                      |       |  |       | Anant Prasad             | 453  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 45   |                      |       |  |       | Surendra Prasad          | 453  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 46   |                      |       |  |       | Vrikshraj Prasad         | 453  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 47   |                      |       |  |       | Dharmada Prasad          | 225  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 48   |                      |       |  |       | Dharma Vriksha Prasad    | 233  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 49   |                      |       |  |       | Shant Prasad             | 189  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 50   |                      |       |  |       | Kamadaya Prasad          | 193  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 51   |                      |       |  |       | Shri Kunthunath Prasad   | 69   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 52   |                      |       |  |       | Shakti Prasad            | 69   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 53   |                      |       |  |       | Harshadayak ? Prasad     | 71   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 54   |                      |       |  |       | Kamal Kang Prasad        | 21   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 55   |                      |       |  |       | Kevli Prasad             | 21   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 56   |                      |       |  |       | Arhant Prasad            | 25   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 57   |                      |       |  |       | Mahendra Prasad          | 181  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 58   |                      |       |  |       | Papnashan Prasad         | 181  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 59   |                      |       |  |       | Maansantushti Prasad     | 85   |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 60   |                      |       |  |       | Gaurav Prasad            | 101  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 61   |                      |       |  |       | Sumati Kirti Prasad      | 473  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 62   |                      |       |  |       | Jinendrayatan Prasad     | 481  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 63   |                      |       |  |       | Rajendra Prasad          | 485  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 64   |                      |       |  |       | Nemindra Prasad          | 193  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 65   |                      |       |  |       | Katibhushan (?) Prasad   | 201  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 66   |                      |       |  |       | Supushpa Prasad          | 233  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 67   |                      |       |  |       | Parshva Vallabh Prasad   | 113  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 68   |                      |       |  |       | Padmavrit Prasad         | 113  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 69   |                      |       |  |       | Yarupa Prasad            | 113  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 70   |                      |       |  |       | Vir Vikram Prasad        | 221  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 71   |                      |       |  |       | Mashtaadaya Prasad       | 221  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 72   |                      |       |  |       | Tushti Pushti Prasad     | 225  |                        |       |   |  |      |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Figure 5.3: Table of *Prasada* types in the *Shilparatnakar*. The column on *indaks* (eggs or spires on the *shikhar*) give a clear sense of progression or lack thereof. The *Kesharadi* series shows an emanatory logic, whereas the remaining four series show a random, fluctuating logic. The *prasadas* highlighted in pink are the most popular variety for the current generation of Sompura temple architects.



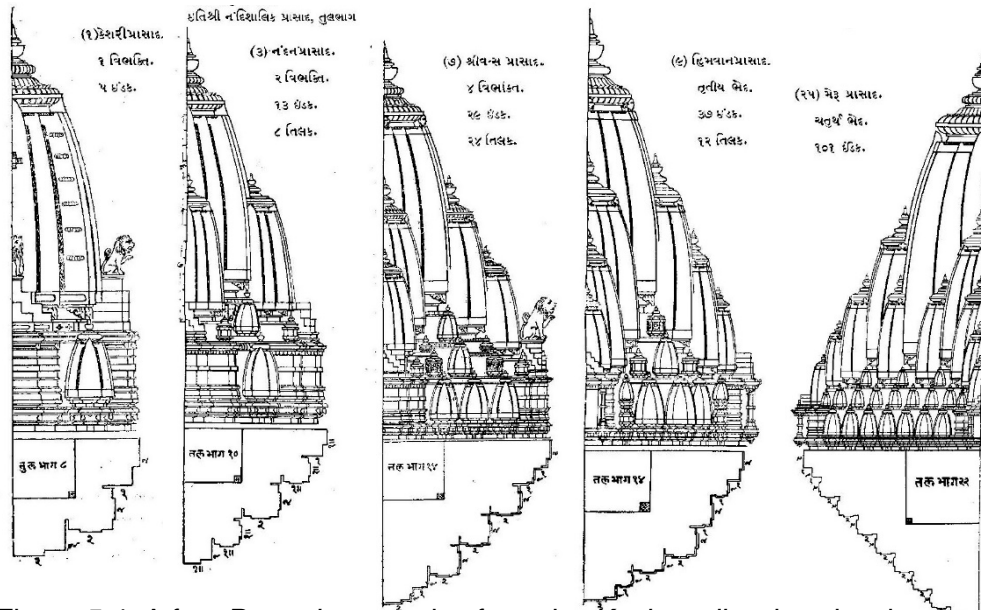


Figure 5.4: A few *Prasada* examples from the *Kesharadi* series showing a neat progression from simple to complex forms. Images from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

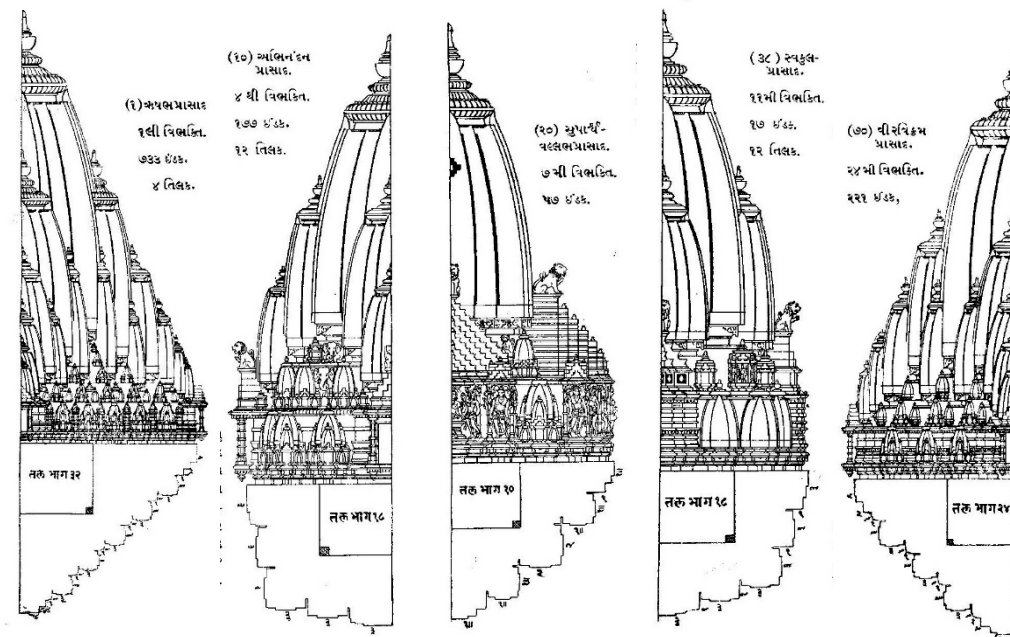


Figure 5.5: A few *Prasada* examples from the *Rushabadi* series, showing a fluctuating logic of progression from complex to simple to complex forms. Images from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)



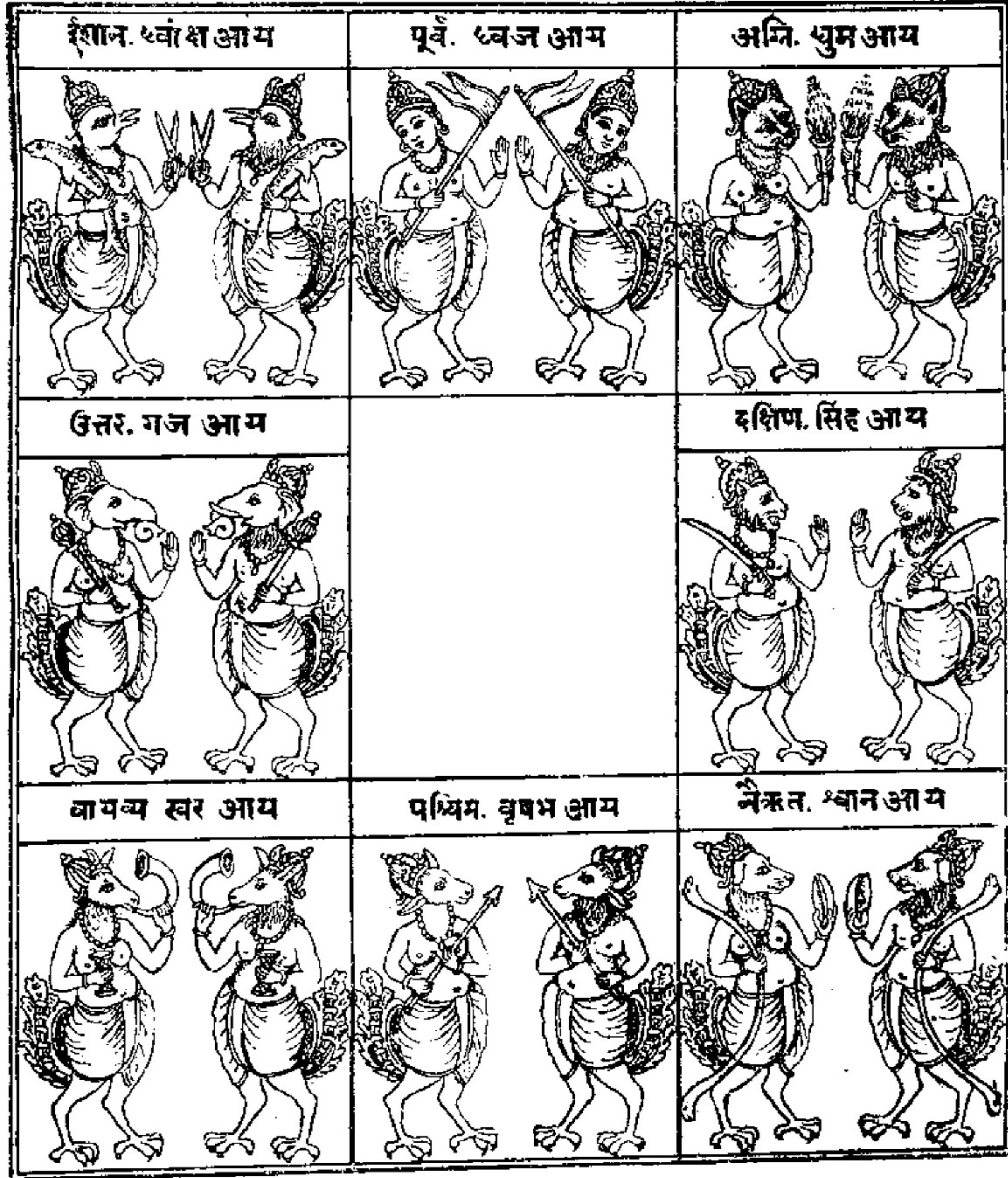


Figure 5.6: Illustration used for the calculation of 'Aya'. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

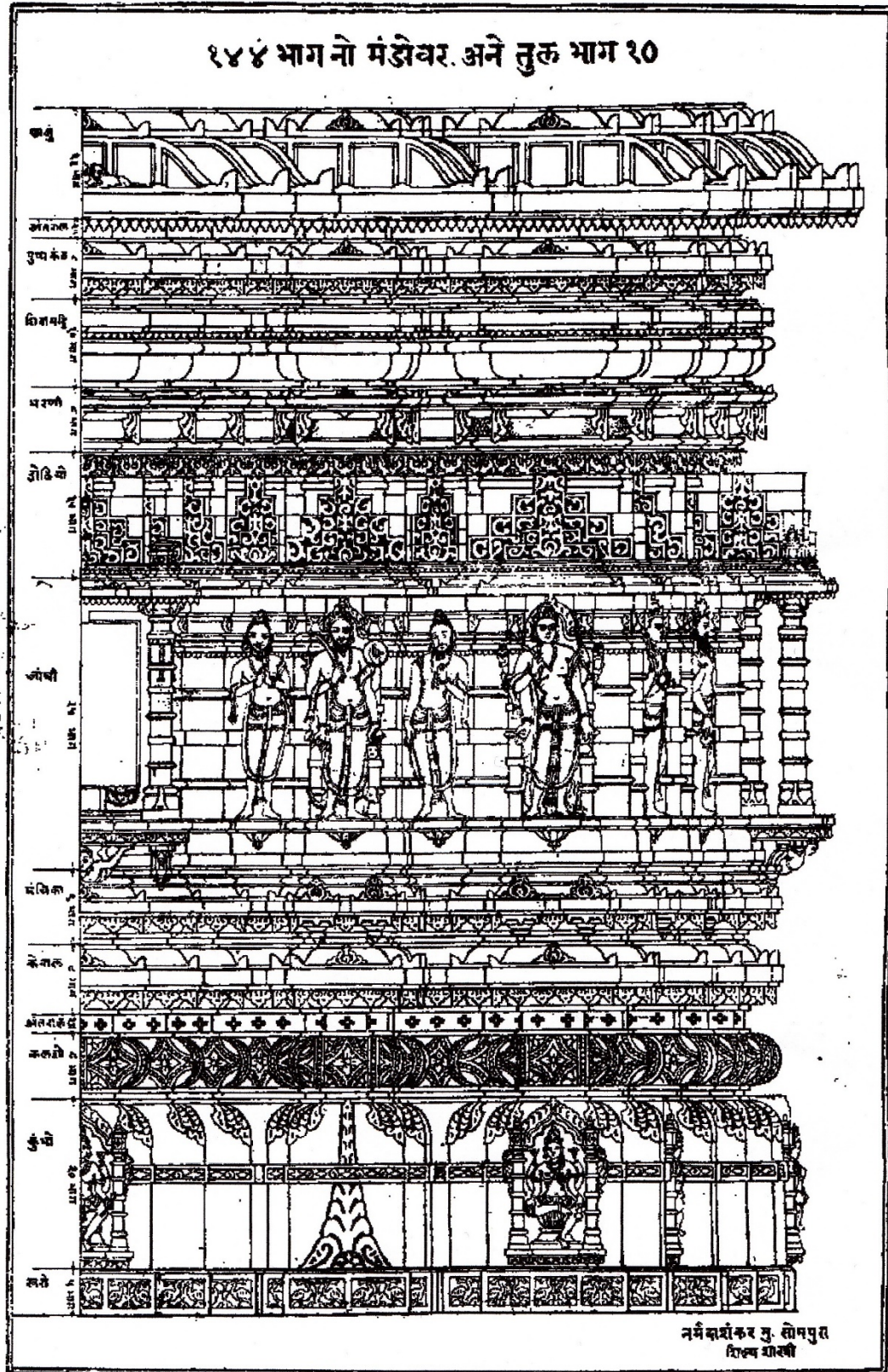


Figure 5.7: Illustration used for the horizontal division of *mandovar* (wall) profiles. Images from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)







## CHAPTER 6

## Text and Practice II

### The Sanatan Hindu Temple, Wembley

This chapter looks at one case study in detail, realised in the UK, in an attempt to understand how knowledge held in the *Shilparatnakar* translates into built artefact. The case study is the Sanatan Hindu temple (inaugurated 2010) in Wembley, North West London, and the architects are an offshoot of Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's family.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 6.1) This chapter is based on informal interviews of the temple architects involved, A and B Sompura, UK based architectural consultants collaborating in the design process, as well some members of the temple Trust who were involved with the early stages of conceptualisation and organisation of the build. At the time of its conceptualisation on the drawing board in the early 1990s A and B Sompura had both assisted their father, the late S Sompura, in the design and drawing process. Their role included preparing initial sketches, detail drawings and co-ordinating works with supervisors and labour in a temporarily erected carving workshop or *karkhana* in Sola on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. (Figure 6.2, 6.3, 6.4) The chapter is also based on direct site visits to the temple. It does not look at production processes, an integral aspect that has a bearing on the architecture; these are covered in detail in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 4 I asked whether a text like the *Shilparatnakar* is an agent for stagnation because of the high degree to which its illustrations are drawn, leaving potentially little room for imagination. Indeed it has made the understanding of Sanskrit injunctions easy as many of my informants stated, and this in turn has aided with their understanding of the *Nagar shaili* architectural lineage. Before any hasty conclusions are drawn about stagnation and fossilisation of the tradition in the hands of the Sompuras, the story behind the conceptualisation of the case study at Wembley demonstrates the case to be quite the contrary. Their proposal seems to be poised between immense freedoms on the one hand and restrictions brought about by the relations of production they are nested in. Questions surrounding the relationship of 'prescription' between text and architecture are important to this chapter. In the eyes of the patrons, the injunctions in ancient *vastu shastra* texts are strictly adhered to. This assumption continues in certain quarters of academic

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 2 for Amritlal Trivedi's family history.



discourse, and is being challenged by new scholarship, which the present chapter draws on.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter shows that the use of the *Shilparatnakar* is open ended in a set of lived and unobjectified relations. The *Shilparatnakar* offers a vast repository of possibilities that can be individuated, but equally, it is also but *one* of several factors in a matrix that moulds the Sompuras' architecture. Bearing in mind the matrixial gaze that this chapter and the dissertation as a whole espouses, the chapter shows that the relationship between text and practice is provisional, contingent, and interruptive. The chapter is inspired by the kinds of questions recent scholarship has posed in relation to the Sompuras medieval ancestors. Further drawing from critical translation studies, the approach of the chapter is one that privileges the translated as an entity with a life of its own rather than a debased copy of an 'original'.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view, the architecture is not viewed in terms of a lack in relation to medieval revered examples or types described in the texts, but one that possesses its own creative logic, ingenuities and struggles.

### Assemblage

Viewed as a whole the temple can be thought of as an assemblage of myriad architectural fragments, however when viewed altogether these fragments do not add up to an easily recognizable whole. There is no one origin that they point to. There are many 'originals' that live through the conception at Wembley, transformed profoundly in their innovative and sometimes crude coming together. While describing the architectural language A and B Sompura constantly referred to discreet architectural elements from particular historical precedents, new configurations and the demands of their patrons.

Externally, the temple is made of loadbearing yellow Jaisalmer limestone and internally it is made of loadbearing Bansipahadpur pink limestone, both sourced from quarries of Rajasthan. Externally many aspects of temple architecture from

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<sup>2</sup> See Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-34, Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2015), Adam Hardy, 'Drāvida Temples in the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra', *South Asian Studies*, 25.1 (2009), 41-62

<sup>3</sup> See Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1992, 1968, Felipe Hernández, 'Translation', in *Bhabha for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 24-3, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, Ill. ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002)

western India are discernible. Looking at the roofscape, particularly in the three *shikhars* (spire in the *Nagar shaili*) and *phamsana* roofs (pyramid shaped stepped roof, see Figure 6.1, 6.5). The imposing pot shaped merlons on the parapet or *matla kalash* detail seems to be an improvisation of parapet details common in temples and mosques in Gujarat starting from around the 15<sup>th</sup> – century, and exercised with vigour in Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana. The details carved on the *kanpeeth* (base) and *mandovar* (wall upto chajja) and the progression of profiles are to a large extent Gujarati and follow – in a negotiated sense – the *Shilparatnakar* up to the *chajja* (eve) level (Figure 6.6, 6.7 discussed in detail later in the chapter) The presence of *jharokhas* (overhanging enclosed balcony) in the *mandovar* is a distinct reference to the late architecture of *havelis* of Jaisalmer (Figure 6.8), although balconies of a different disposition, without *Bangaldar* roofs, were popular in temples of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> - century Gujarat too (Figure 6.9, 6.10). The front porch is a set piece on its own with heavy improvised baluster columns, acanthus leaf details - both introduced to India during Mughal reign and then shared with Rajput domestic architecture - a *kakshasan* (seat-back) and three Rajput *chattris*. (Figure 6.11, 6.12) The broad and grand staircase at the front seems closer to the recent BAPS Swaminarayan temples than any older temple precedent. The highly diminished sculptural figures of divinities in the *jangha* (wall) and the relatively flat carving on the external walls are both a product of budget considerations as well as a desire to spend funds on enlarging the internal space to the maximum possible.

Internally the entire arrangement of space as a conglomeration of miniature temples within a covered heated hall is unprecedented; it has a certain museum like feel where worship and display are intertwined in ingenious ways. (Figure 6.13, 6.14) This sense is compounded by the fact that the temple authorities prompt the worshippers and visitors - through the use of barriers - to move in a particular direction, along the perimeter walls rather than move around at their free will.<sup>4</sup> The perimeter walls themselves are embellished with more little temples embedded in them, and sideways glimpses of the deities in the freestanding miniature temples can be caught through side glazed openings. At the end of the trail, and in the centre of the temple along the long axis are the primary areas for congregation, which face the main shrine: two ornate *mandap* spaces, the ceilings of which are

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<sup>4</sup> There is a heightened sense of an overlay of museum like display and movement at both Wembley and Neasden. At the Swaminarayan Neasden temple, column bases are protected by clear acrylic casing. The Oshwal temple, Potters Bar and the Shri Krishna temple, West Bromwich do not impose such restriction on the visiting public.

elaborately carved in interlocking and cantilevered stepped sections in a Gujarati *Nagar shaili* idiom.<sup>5</sup> All the carved flat ceilings are supported on beams spanning a dense forest of columns. The octagonal based columns are detailed in classical Solanki era or 'Maru Gurjara' style of the revered examples,<sup>6</sup> whereas the cusped archways connecting them are translations of a long, complex and varied shared practice with Mughal traditions of cusped archways. Here flying *ilika toranas* of western Indian temple architecture such as at Modhera (Figure 6.15) are 'engaged' rather than free standing.<sup>7</sup> These shared practices of the cusped arch are used vigorously at Mount Shatrunjay, Palitana. (Figure 6.16) All these come together in the 'present' of the temple at Wembley.

The outdoor spaces come alive during festivals. Temporary stalls for food, congregational worship and community awareness campaigns occupy the space in front of and to the side of the grand staircase on such occasions, which is also paved in yellow Jaisalmer uniting it with the temple. This grand staircase generally remains closed for public access and a side entrance at the lower ground floor is used by the public to enter the temple on a daily basis. Consequently the threshold to the side entrance door is forever charged by people meeting and greeting each other. The placement of a Shiva temple in close proximity to the main temple also contributes to the charged nature of this intermediate space. (Figure 6.11) This space between the two buildings reverberates with the experience of medieval and late Gujarati temple complexes where subsidiary shrines are placed outside the main shrines, and for a few moments worshippers and visitors are in the presence of both scales of the main temple building and the smaller shrine. However this unwitting juxtaposition is forever interrupted in London by rain or cold wind. Traversing bare feet between the two, as done in India, is a distant dream. Heated plastic marquees accommodating ancillary spaces in front of the subsidiary Shiva temple, clumsily forgotten in the design, are testimony to some of the problems

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<sup>5</sup> For a background see J. M. Nanavati and Madhusdan A. Dhaky, *The Ceilings in the Temples of Gujarat* (Baroda, India: B.L. Mankad, 1963)

<sup>6</sup> See M.A. Dhaky, 'The Genesis and Development of Maru-Gurjara Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*. ed. by Pramod Chandra (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), pp. 114-65

<sup>7</sup> For a background see G. H. R. Tillotson, 'Rajput and Mughal', in *The Rajput Palaces, the Development of an Architectural Style* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 20-39 and Parul Pandya Dhar, *The Toran in Indian and Southeast Asian Architecture* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2010)

encountered in the translation from one cultural and climatic context to another. So is the profusion of pigeon waste layering the carved stone. The whole reverberates with traces of many pasts recollected by the Sompuras and a newness particular to the history and desire of the patrons. To these I now turn.

### The Client

The clients are the Shri Vallabh Nidhi UK Trust (SVNUK Trust), a registered charity established in 1979, whose objectives are 'to advance the Hindu religion in accordance with the teachings of Shri Vallabh and in furtherance thereof to provide and maintain a temple for public religious worship and other religious charitable purposes.'<sup>8</sup> During the initial stages of land acquisition at Wembley, in the early 1990s the SVNUK Trust was already involved with the running of a temple in Whipps Cross, East London. Funds for the project in Wembley were raised by private donations made by worshippers mobilised by the Trust.<sup>9</sup>

The trustees of the SVNUK involved with the design and construction were all of Gujarati origin. Some had relocated to the UK from India, and the majority from East Africa during the 1960s and the 1970s as a result of mass immigration due to Africanisation policies and post-independence uncertainties in Uganda and Kenya. The histories of the communities recounted in brochures and websites of all three other purpose built temples by the Sompuras in the UK are indicative of similar journeys of Indians to Britain via East Africa.<sup>10</sup> The popularity that the Sompuras have enjoyed from these distinct patron communities is intertwined with the phenomenon of the worshippers' migrations out of India and Africa into Britain. For the SVNUK Trustees, the idea of use of *vastu shastras* was a highly desirable anchor that satisfied their ideas of authenticity, identity, tradition and distinctiveness. *Shastras* stood for ancient values and could be seen as anchors that provide a sense of rootedness to a community that is displaced from India.

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<sup>8</sup> As stated in Financial Statements Year ended 31 December 2007, See Report 0000277833\_AC\_20071231\_E\_C <https://www.gov.uk/Government/Organisations/Companies-House>, [accessed October 2013]

<sup>9</sup> Various brochures published by the SVN UK throughout the construction process record the vigorous fund raising activity. A brochure published in 1998 for instance has letters of support from not only the trustees but also architectural and engineering consultants, as well as bank managers.

<sup>10</sup> These are detailed in brochures published by the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, The Oshwal Association UK and the Shri Krishna Temple, West Bromwich all of which have patronised the Sompuras. References to East Africa are omnipresent in the brochures.

A wholly owned company by the SVN UK Trust by the name of Vallabh Shrico Marble Private Limited, was incorporated in India and undertook the work in Sola, Ahmedabad.<sup>11</sup> Wages for the labour in India including the Sompuras were paid by the Indian company in Indian rates. On the other hand, all the local construction work in London was undertaken by another company Shrico Limited, a UK incorporated company wholly owned by the charity, which worked with both Indian *karigars* brought in specially for the fitting of the stone as well labour supplied by construction companies based in the UK. Shrico Limited also liaised permissions with the local authority as well as London based consultants aiding with Planning and Building Control approval.

It is of interest to note that the skilled Indian labour assembling the temple in London was paid directly in India in Indian rates, with their living accommodation and food provided for in the UK in pre-fabricated huts, on the temple premises. (Figure 6.18). This aspect of pay raised questions about minimum wage, which was the subject of an inquiry around 2001 by the Charities Commission under Section 8 of the Charities Act 1993.<sup>12</sup> The report states that a contractual dispute between the charity and the labourers employed on the construction emerged as the charity did not comply with minimum wage legislation. This issue was subsequently resolved by the SVN UK Trust by paying the correct wage directly into the labourers' London bank accounts. These details give a palpable sense of the economics and organisation at work and are important to understand the financial imperatives that the Sompuras were working under. A and B Sompura's involvement ran short because of financial differences with the Trust, while the construction was ongoing, and a new team of Sompuras was engaged to detail out the roof elements and the external subsidiary Shiva temple.

### **Architectural shifts and shared practices in the *Shilparatnakar***

It would be useful to summarise at this point the vast assemblage of illustrations that the Sompuras are looking at in the *Shilparatnakar* when conceptualising their

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<sup>11</sup> Interview Mahendra Patel, SVN UK trustee January 2012. These details are also described in financial statements submitted to Companies House. See for instance Financial Statements Year ended 31 December 2007, Report 0000277833\_AC\_20071231\_E\_C  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house>,  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house>.

<sup>12</sup> Charities Commission Enquiry Report for Shri Vallabh Nidhi UK, circa 2001. I am grateful to the Charities Commission for sharing the report with me under the Freedom of Information Act 2000



buildings. Some of these aspects have not been covered before. I wish to reiterate that much of their attention is vested in the illustrative dimension rather than the textual.<sup>13</sup> These are not just the drawn illustrations that N.M. Sompura prepared himself but also include a range of photographs therein which the drawings do not describe. Further, as the texts translated in the *Shilparatnakar* do not go beyond those produced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the drawings do not deal with some of the later architectural configurations that emerged in western India. In these instances photographs fill the void in the text.

Of the drawn illustrations the many *prasada* (main shrine) types are referred to, although of the vast numbers therein, only a few types are in demand according to A and B Sompura. The *prasada* types are not related to specific historical examples, although N.M. Sompura has attempted to supplant the drawings with either his own, photographs or the ASI's photographic and drawing collection. (See Chapter 4, Figure 6.19) The Sompuras are looking at a range of *prasada* types, from the single spire with no proliferations to large conceptions which have five projections or *urahshringas* on the central offset. They are looking at a range of complex *prasadas* which have quarter projections called *pratyangas*.

The *prasada* is the main shrine that houses the deity, in its square or rectangular inner chamber, the *garbha griha*. The *prasada* drawings in the *Shilparatnakar* assume the continuation of three basic parts: the *kanpeeth* (plinth), the *mandovar* (wall) and the *shikhar* (spire). These are assumed to be joined up or be continuous in the vertical plane. It is of interest to note that although there are no drawings of *prasadas* which show discontinuity between the *mandovar* and the *shikhar* explicitly, there are plenty of examples from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century when parapets with merlons – known as *kangra* - were used in temple architecture in Gujarat, splitting the *prasada* into two vertical planes, so that a flat ceiling occupied the space between the *shikhar* and the *mandovar*. Some examples of this dislocation are evident from temples in the 19<sup>th</sup>- century *tunks* of Palitana (Figure 6.21). The Hutheesingh temple in Ahmedabad which A and B Sompura admire also uses the parapet with the *kangra* merlon detail, although its main shrine is of the continuous variety. (Figure 6.20) These 19<sup>th</sup> - century traditions go back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when parapets, domes and *jalīs* (perforated screens) started to be incorporated into

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<sup>13</sup> Interview A and B Sompura, Ahmedabad, April 2012. All temple architects interviewed confirmed this point.

Hindu and Jain temple architecture and are a shared vocabulary with traditions of mosque building from the same time.

The *kangra* merlon detail has a presence in the *Shilparatnakar* in the form of photographs and certainly in the imaginations of the two architects interviewed. This dislocation has not yet been acknowledged in academia rather thus far discussed as a violation - whereas for the Sompuras the relatively 'new tradition' is inseparable from older classical examples when thinking about the *Nagar shaili* architectural lineage. All the shifts and turns of the tradition are alive in their imaginations in a non-historicised manner. The Sompuras' four purpose built examples in the UK all have parapets which dislocate the roof elements – such as *shikhars*, domes, *samrans* and *phamsana* roof forms- from the *mandovar* and are in a sense in continuation with this 'later' tradition. This is not to preclude the skill to design temples that correlate plan projections with projections on the *shikhar*. The Sompuras possess the skill to do this as evident from their many late 20<sup>th</sup> - century examples like the Simandhar swami Jain temple in Mehsana built in the 1970s. (Figure 6.22) However budgetary and climatic constraints, particularly in the context of the UK, mean that stepped plan projections are not proposed in favour of relatively plain walls that have split away from the 'main' shrine.

The *Shilparatnakar* also contains two photographs of buildings with a Mughal disposition, one being a photograph titled "Mughali style-ni chatri" (Canopy in the Mughal style, Figure 6.23). A photograph titled simply 'View of a *Chatri*' (Figure 6.24), gives a palpable presence of the *Bangaldar* roof profiles a detail associated with both Rajput and Mughal architecture, again as a shared practice.<sup>14</sup> The notion that they are present in the *Shilparatnakar* demonstrates that the Sompuras' practices and references are fluid and do not take religion as its basis e.g. by segregating knowledge as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim'. However this notion is not bereft of contradictions for during interviews A and B Sompura hinted that at Wembley they were asked to incorporate Rajasthani details which to them was 'Roman art'.<sup>15</sup> By this they meant that it had western influence of Mughal imagery for example in the acanthus leaf detail that takes precedent over the lotus decoration in the Baluster column. They said that their 'phool patti' (foliage based on the lotus) is different to 'Roman art' of Rajasthan. In an ideal world they would not have liked to incorporate

<sup>14</sup>Tillotson, 'Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Jodhpur: The Desert', in *The Rajput Palaces: Development of an architectural style* (London: Yale University Press, 1987) pp.119-147

<sup>15</sup> Interview MT and VT, Ahmedabad, April 2012

'Roman art' at Wembley. In practice however things are more fluid and the inclusion of Mughal details was an expedient response to the client brief.

Multi shrined temples in the *Shilparatnakar* too deserve a mention as they are part of the tradition, although understandably there are none part of all-encompassing covered roof spaces like in the case studies. The chapter in the *Shilparatnakar* on the various configurations of the *mandap* (hall) gives us a sense that generally the illustrated temples have one *prasada* housing one principal deity. (Figure 6.25) Very occasionally the illustrated temples show more than one *prasada*, with two or three shrines interconnected by the *mandap*. A pair of double shrines on Mansar reservoir Viramgam (early 12<sup>th</sup>-century, Figure 6.26), and the triple shrine at Kasara (early twelfth-century, Figure 6.27) are examples showing temples with shrines in twos and threes from the Solanki era. Multi shrined temples are a frequent occurrence in Jain temples in rectangular configurations where three *garbha grihas* housing Jain *tirthankars* are common place. This configuration has recently been popularised by the BAPS Swaminarayan sect in their 20<sup>th</sup> - century conceptions where their temples are identifiable by three *shikhars* crowning the top of three *garbh grihas*. Drawings of Jain *derasars* with their own particular multi shrine plans appear in the *Shilparatnakar* which show a 'girdle' of twenty four, or fifty two *devakulikas* or subsidiary shrines with cloistered corridors around a four faced *garbha griha*.<sup>16</sup> The plan of the *chaturmukha* temple at Ranakpur is shown possessing eighty four shrines, organised in a hierarchy of multiple shrines. As open to sky configurations, multi shrine temples are arranged as *Panchayatana* temples for Hindu worship, where four subsidiary shrines arranged around a main shrine make a complex of five. These are not illustrated in the *Shilparatnakar*, but built by present day temple makers under one roof in innovative ways such as Wembley and the Shri Krishna temple in West Bromwich. (Figure 6.28, 6.29)

In addition to these, the illustrations of the *jagati*, *mahapeeth* and *mandovar* are routinely referred to by the Sompuras in determining proportions and sequences of profiles. These elevations cover a broad range of scenarios for instance from classical Solanki era *mandovars* to simpler ones like at Palitana, thereby building in immense flexibility. (Figure 6.30) In terms of the interiors, it is primarily photographs of revered examples that convey a sense of the extraordinary ceiling configurations that they are looking at namely the Jain temples at Dilwara, Kumbhariya and Ranakpur. (Figure 6.31, 6.32) From this brief sketch, the Sompuras are working with

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<sup>16</sup> See Dhaky, p.129

a vast assemblage of references in the *Shilparatnakar*, which are translated in temples like at Wembley in specific ways. This knowledge is supplanted by their own working knowledge of the temples as practicing architects, their own visits, photographs, measured drawings, conversations, archives, all of which could be anywhere between the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as rooted in concrete circumstance.

### **‘Chalu bhasha’**

The drawings in the *Shilparatnakar* give us insights into how Sanskrit terminology is appropriated into the Gujarati for highly localised use by the Sompuras. Occasionally the terminology accompanying the *mandovar* and *pitha* drawings for instance diverged from accepted Sanskrit terminology used in academia. One of my informants called this ‘chalu bhasha’ or everyday language used in their current everyday life as opposed to Sanskritised terminology. This use in itself was contingent upon individuals and their preferences.

In relation to the illustrations of the *pitha* and the *mandovar* in the academic standard *Genesis and Development of the Maru Gurjara Temple Architecture*,<sup>17</sup> some examples from the ‘chalu’ use of the Sompuras are *Jadamba* in place of *Jadyakumbha*, *Kani* in place of *Karnaka*, *Andhari* in place of *Antarapatta*, *Chajjika* in place of *Chadyaki*, *Gajathar* in place of *Gajapitha*, *Ashvathar* in place of *Ashvapitha*, *Narathar* in place of *Narapitha*, *Khurra* in place of *Khuraka*, *Kumbha* in place of *Kumbhaka*, *Neechay ka Keval* in place of *Kapotali*, *Manchi* in place of *Manchika*, *Janghi* in place of *Jhangha*, *Dodhiya* in place of *Udgama*, *Uppar ka Keval* in place of *Kapotali*, *Chajju* in place of *Khurachadya*. These terms vary slightly in the detailed section of Wembley attached suggesting that within the community there are minor variations. The terminology in Dhaky’s *Genesis*, the *Shilparatnakar* and Sompura chalu bhasha have been tabulated below.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.pp 133-135

| <b>‘GENESIS. . .’<br/>(M.A.DHAKY, 1975)</b> | <b>SHILPARATNAKA<br/>R (N.M. SOMPURA,<br/>1939)</b> | <b>SOMPURA<br/>‘CHALU’ LANGUAGE</b> |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Bhitta                                      | Bheet   | Bheet                               |
| Jadyakumbha                                 | Jadambo   | Jadambo, Jadamba                    |
| Karnaka                                     | Karnika   | Kani, Badami Gola                   |
| Antarapatra                                 |   | Andhaari                            |
| Chadyaki                                    | Chajika   | Chajika                             |
| Graspatti                                   | Graspatti   | Graspatti                           |
| Gajapitha                                   | Gajathar  | Gajathar                            |
| Asvapitha                                   | Ashwathar   | Ashwathar                           |
| Narapitha                                   | Narathar  | Narathar                            |
| Khuraka                                     | Khurro  | Khurra, Khadsal,<br>Khadchal        |
| Kumbhaka                                    | Kumbho  | Kumbho, Kumbha                      |
| Kalasa                                      | Kalsho  | Kalsho, Kalsha                      |
| Kapotali                                    | Kevaal  | Kevaal                              |
| Manchika                                    | Manchika  | Manchi                              |
| Jangha                                      | Janghi  | Janghi, Jangi                       |
| Udgama                                      | Dodiyo  | Dodiya                              |
| Bharni                                      | Bharni  | Bharni                              |
| Sirahpatti                                  | Sirahpatti  | Sirahpatti                          |
| Khuracchadya                                | Chajju  | Chajju, Chajja                      |

### **Events leading up to Sompura involvement at Wembley, UK**

I will now shift attention to concrete historical events leading up to the Sompuras’ engagement at Wembley. Before the Sompuras came on board, in the early 1990s, the SVNUK Trust was already exploring ways in which it could build a new temple on a site in Alperton on Ealing Road, located in the London Borough of Brent. In the



late 1980s the Trust had identified an opportunity to purchase a vacant site from Brent council. The Committee needed to be sure that if they bought the site they could use the site as a place of worship, for there was a restrictive covenant in the Land Title Deeds for the site to be used only for 'education' use.<sup>18</sup> Modular Design a local firm providing services in architecture, town planning and interior design were appointed for an outline scheme that could show how the site could be developed for a temple, as the first priority was to purchase the site.<sup>19</sup> Modolor Design's brief was to obtain outline planning consent which registered a change from education use to religious use.

### **Outline Planning application**

In 1991 the SVNUK submitted an outline planning application prepared by Modolor Design. Planning consent was approved in July 1992. The drawings submitted by Modolor Design at this stage were illustrative only, a loose framework of sorts, demonstrating ideas for how the redevelopment of the site could be carried out. The architectural expression of the building was not critical.<sup>20</sup> The proposal was primarily concerned with massing, the road layout and parking arrangements. Its aim was to bring up issues which the SVNUK would have to address at a later time during the full planning application stage. The major issue for the planners and the public at outline planning stage were to do with traffic, parking, congestion, impact to neighbours and noise.<sup>21</sup> (Figure 6.33, 6.34)

One of the key concepts that SVNUK desired to articulate in their new temple was the ideological accommodation of all Hindu worshippers and not just those that were followers of a particular deity or a sect. The SVNUK desired a collection of deities and consequently a broad section of worshippers ranging from both Vashnavaites and Shaivaites streams as well as saints and smaller community gods and goddesses known as *kuladevatas* or *kuladevatis*. Today its website uses the term Vasudev Kutumbakam to promote the idea of a "big family".<sup>22</sup> Indeed in

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<sup>18</sup> Email communication with Modolor Design, October 2012

<sup>19</sup> This was following a chance encounter between the father of JS (principal at Modular Design) and RP, one of the founders and Chairman of the SVNUK. Email communication Modolor Design October 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Email communication with Modolor Design, October 2012

<sup>21</sup> Email communication with Modolor Design, October 2012

<sup>22</sup> See [Http://Www.Svnuk.Org/](http://www.svnuk.org/), [accessed January 2012]

thinking through the design brief, the SVN UK Trust desired an ecumenical formation where a large number of Hindu deities from different regions and traditions could be accommodated in a single hall, the term 'hall' being the operative word, through which I will take the narrative further.

This desire for a pan Hindu place of worship was reflected in the outline drawings prepared by Modulor in 1991, where all principal deities had an equal place in the spatial arrangement. If we pay attention to Figures 6.33 and 6.34 a two storey octagonal shaped hall consists of smaller subdivided rooms, each accommodating different – still to be named - deities. What we encounter today in the built work is a reworked and transformed version of the initial sketches, as I shall elaborate in the coming sections, but the idea of a giant hall encompassing multiple shrines housing different deities all at once remains consistent from these early days.

According to Modular Design outline planning consent was obtained in 1992 with political help from Brent councillors.<sup>23</sup> Conservative MP Bob Blackman's help was forthcoming. The SVN UK had contact with all parties and sought help from all of them. The parties on the other hand needed block votes from the community, a major section of which comprised of Indians of Gujarati origins.<sup>24</sup>

It is also worth bearing in mind that this ecumenical desire meant that the Trust could reach out to many different groups of worshippers in efforts to raise funds and was thus not limited to one community or sect of Hindus. Some of the other interesting characteristics of the outline planning application include the desire to be 'modern' while at the same time making the '*impression* of the building as a temple'.<sup>25</sup> At this point there were no overt features that directly identified the building with a 'temple' as that belonging to the western Indian *Nagar shaili* tradition of Gujarat and Rajasthan, which the Sompuras practiced.

### Personal encounters

With outline planning permission in hand, attention turned to the design of the temple. A design competition was announced by SVN UK and advertised in India.

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<sup>23</sup> Email communication with Modulor Design, October 2012

<sup>24</sup> Email communication with Modulor Design, October 2012

<sup>25</sup> Email communication with Modulor Design, January 2011.

About twenty submissions were received but none were considered professional enough.

At the same time the BAPS Swaminaryan Temple at Neasden was in the early stages of construction. RJP, an influential trustee and chairman of SVNUK took JS of Modular Design to the construction site at Neasden. During the visit they met with ST Sompura, who had prepared all the detailed design and fabrication drawings of the temple to the concept design of C.B. Sompura, a well-known temple architect based in Ahmedabad. SVNUK was given access to all the C.B. Sompura design and building drawings.<sup>26</sup> They also met with the UK structural engineer Austin Trueman who was marrying up the traditional load bearing construction to accommodate the requirements of modern building regulations, such as in the design of a mass concrete foundation, without the use of reinforcement bars. Neasden proved to be a strong influence and it was at this moment that help was sought from ST Sompura.<sup>27</sup> JS of Modulator Design developed a personal friendship with ST Sompura in London. Meetings took place at his residence, where ST Sompura enjoyed eating spicy food, for working and living at the Neasden site meant consuming food prepared without onions and spices.<sup>28</sup> These burgeoning micro networks of transnational friendship aided the fruition of the next stage of the temple design.

In 1992/93, both JS and RP went to Ahmedabad to meet ST Sompura, who had returned by then, to see how the design of the temple could be progressed. At this time they also met Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's son, Krishna Chandra Trivedi, for it seems ST Sompura did not feel confident to take on the start of the design and felt he needed someone more experienced to lead.<sup>29</sup> However together with ST Sompura JS and RP developed the first ideas / draft of the Wembley temple based

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<sup>26</sup> Email communication with Modulator Design, October 2012

<sup>27</sup> It is pertinent to note that Sompura involvement at Neasden had also influenced the trustees of the Shri Krishna Temple in West Bromwich. Their earlier proposals were designed by Adam Hardy, but eventually Virendra Trivedi (Sompura), Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's grandson was commissioned to undertake the design. Interview Chandubhai Patel, West Bromwich, 2012. For Hardy's proposal, see Adam Hardy, 'Architectural History and Ways of Seeing', in *Architectural History and the Studio*. ed. by Adam Hardy and Necdet Teymur (London: Question Press, 1996), pp. 187-208. See also the Shri Krishna Mandir Opening Ceremony Souvenir Book, 2010

<sup>28</sup> Email communication with Modulator Design, October 2012

<sup>29</sup> Email communication with Modulator Design, October 2012

on 'traditional Hindu temple architecture and construction'.<sup>30</sup> At this point the use of *vastu sastras* in the form of the *Shilparatnakar* also came into the picture and was warmly received by RP.

During their visit to India JS and RP saw many temples - old, new and some under construction by the Sompuras.<sup>31</sup> They were impressed by the Sompuras' ability to organise and manage construction sites. They also met with the BAPS Swaminaryan team which had worked on the Neasden project and visited their carving workshops. During this visit it quickly transpired that the basic proposal Modulator Design had prepared for the temple as a starting point needed fundamental revisiting. During this trip, with the vision of RP, ST Sompura prepared a first draft and the idea of miniature freestanding temples for each deity within the temple came about. It was felt that ST Sompura was more than capable of leading the design. At the end of their visit SVN UK had a basic sketch design which could fit into the site in terms of appearance and scale.

To summarise the story till now, in addition to being carriers of a particular architectural tradition from Gujarat directly associated with the expertise of designing and constructing temples in stone, the Sompuras were an attractive option on several other counts. As the Trust saw it, they represented a vision of 'authentic' traditions<sup>32</sup> as well as a certain 'brand'<sup>33</sup> of tradition. The Sompuras stood for the figure of 'the traditional' and could provide a service which was not accomplishable by British architects. The particular family of Sompuras in mind could offer something similar but modified in relation to the BAPS Neasden temple. A significant draw towards the Sompuras was also the idea that they had the skills and knowledge to conceptualise in accordance with *vastu shastras*. Finally the notion of a bespoke hand carved temple was an attractive draw.

Economically, Sompura involvement ticked the box, for the labour involved in producing the thousands of hand carved stone pieces was paid in Indian rates and so were the Sompuras' fees. The operation required the labour of hundreds of individuals who were the largest and the lowest paid in the entire temple production process: such skills were unavailable in the numbers and for the cost in Britain.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Email communication with Modulator Design, October 2012

<sup>32</sup> Interview Mahendra Patel, Trustee SVN UK, March 2013

<sup>33</sup> Interview C.B. Patel, Trustee, SVN UK, 2012

It should be emphasised that the contribution, drive and vision of RP of the SVNUK Trust is central to the design development.<sup>34</sup> Moving away from the approved outline planning scheme RP was keen to develop ideas of free standing temples around which the public could move freely. These he desired be visible altogether, at once, when standing at the top of the main entrance stairway. His other major insistence was the incorporation of architectural features found in the architecture of Rajasthan, in particular the *havelis* of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. Details most widely associated with Mughal architecture such as baluster columns and acanthus leaves were also favoured by this individual. Not to be forgotten is the requirement for large numbers of worshipers for congregational worship – unlike the private worship that medieval temples were designed for – as well as visits during popular Indian festivals like Diwali within the space of the temple. These were some of the parameters that the Sompuras had to contend with.

### **Sompura contribution**

ST Sompura was instrumental in articulating the idea of miniature free standing temples within a hall, as opposed to separate rooms for each deity divided by walls. The placement of these were ratified against *ayadi* calculations in the *Shilparatnakar*. (See chapter 5) In the attached early sketches the idea of freestanding temples is explored, along with the introduction of a new kind of architectural vocabulary for the project. This vocabulary directly drew from the *Nagar shaili* architectural lineage as explicated in the *Shilparatnakar* and as evident in the built architectural lineage, at the same time diverting from it profoundly. (Figure 6.35, 6.36)

The divergence is primarily to do with the provision of a large covered hall accommodating several deities at once and protecting worshippers from the elements. Looking at the plan and the section, the reconfiguration of spaces involved the introduction of seven free standing shrines in a covered space articulating the idea of the temples within a temple. These are as yet unnamed in the sketch. Of these shrines one occupies a focal point, and is the largest, continuing up to the *shikhar*. All, apart from two shrines face east. In plan and section, each of the miniature temples is articulated with three plan projections. The walls of the miniature shrines are solid apart from a single small opening into the *garbha griha*. These miniature temples are freestanding with elaborate *phamsana*

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<sup>34</sup> Interview A and B Sompura, Ahmedabad, 2012 and 2013



roofs. The basement car park has been omitted and the levels are negotiated with a grand staircase at the front.

The miniature temples are located within an external perimeter wall, itself stepping in and out with a notional *karna* and a *bhadra*, so as to avoid the outside 'looking like a box'.<sup>35</sup> There seems to be a distinct continuity between the horizontal progression of wall profiles on the *mandovar* of the external wall and that of the miniature shrines inside, tying the whole conception together. A grid establishes the spatial order. Octagonal spatial configurations of columns give pause to the forest of columns. These octagonal spaces are sometimes covered with flat ceilings and sometimes form the bases of domes. Apart from the main shrine, which continues into the *shikhara*, the miniature temples are covered with domed roofs, which appear to be true domes, common in Gujarat from the Sultanate period and used prolifically in mosques and temples as a shared practice. The entrance double dome seems to be a miniature version of the Atma Vallabh Smarak, which would have reached completion by the time the sketches were produced (See chapter 2)

These initial sketches give a palpable sense of how the outline proposal by Modulor Design was taken apart and given new meaning by aligning it to the vocabularies of the *Nagar shaili* by ST Sompura and the desire of the SVNUK. These were early stages that set the tone for the several stages that followed. The built temple as we see it today tinkered with the initial sketches to some extent, but the core strategy remained the same. From the attached approved planning application drawings, three *shikhars* instead of one are noticeable; instead of domes *phamsana* roofs in varying scales are noticeable and the whole is articulated in an assemblage of carving detail commonly used in medieval, late and modern temple architecture in Gujarat as well as bringing in Rajput and Mughal architectural elements into the picture. (Figure 6.37, 6.38, 6.39).

It is interesting to note that the elevational drawings are drawn without the surrounding context. Yet it is important to point out that both Wembley and the Neasden temples have given a new distinct visual profile to otherwise non-descript suburban neighbourhoods in the London Borough of Brent. In terms of urban legibility and regeneration, they sit with the Wembley stadium. According to Chris Walker, who was the Planning Officer in charge of the BAPS planning application in the 1980s, both the temples have a tremendous value when seen in relation to the plethora of bland modern office, commercial and residential blocks found in

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<sup>35</sup> Interview A and B Sompura, Ahmedabad, April 2012

abundance in the borough, which are designed to last under a century.<sup>36</sup> The Swaminarayan temple which was built on industrial wasteland has contributed enormously in placing the borough of Brent on a global map. This visual profile that the temples embody has much value in the eyes of local government, for the temples in turn contribute to not only in raising their own profile but also contribute to ideas of 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism' within a national and global context.

### **Transformation: the hall**

While narrating the Sanatan Hindu temple's core spatial strategy, which in a sense determined some of the major moves internally and externally, the architects explicitly make the point that the space inside is akin to a 'hall', the design for which is an innovation, not to be found in any *shastra*, such as the *Shilparatnakar* nor in an architectural precedent particularly to do the with *Nagar shaili*:

A and B (temple architects): Actually if we look at it, the thing we call 'mandir', this is not that thing. This is a hall . . . a hall. The temple is inside the hall. There are several temples dedicated to different *devis* and *devatas*. They are all enclosed within the hall because of the cold weather. This is how they do it in London. All temples are built like this there. This type of solution does not exist in any *shastra*, nor do we build like this in India.<sup>37</sup>

A and B Sompura explained that to them a temple means one *garbh griha* dedicated to one deity. This is the classical notion giving a concrete glimpse into what they consider 'proper' in theory, while in concrete practice there is room for experimentation. The hall space can be thought of as a roof stretched over a modern *tunk* in Palitana – in very broad terms - so that a conglomerate of temples is experienced under one unified ceiling. A perimeter wall with a notional *bhadra* (central offset) and *karna* (corner) was incorporated to bring relief to the flat wall. Finer proliferations were added to provide interest.

Instead of the single *garbha griha* with a *shikhar*, the realised temple has three separate *garbha grihas*. These temples are substantially bigger than the other temples. These belong to "Shri Ram Parivar", "Shri Shrinathji", and "Radha Krishna". They form the base of the three *shikhars* rising above the flat ceiling and roof level.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview Chris Walker, Planning department, London Borough of Brent, January 2012

<sup>37</sup> Interview Barsana, April 2013

Based on the dimensions of the central *garbha griha*, the *rekha* was kept in mind and dimensions generated for all other parts of the temple using the very astrological and proportional guidance given in the *Shilparatnakar*.<sup>38</sup> There are eight other miniature temples with *phamsana* roofs above them.

### Shikhar

More elaborate than the temples at Neasden, Potters Bar and West Bromwich, the *shikhar* conglomeration at Wembley are translations of *shikhars* popular in western India from the 15<sup>th</sup>-century onwards, which are discernible in the details. (Figure 6.40, 6.41). In overall strategy they are of the ilk of the *Mandir Prasad* from the *Kesharadi* series in the *Shilparatnakar*. The three spires have two *urahshringas* sprouting from the central offsets. At the base of the first *urahshringa*, each *shikhar* has a *dodhiya* (*rathika* in the EITA) bearing an image of a deity with lions crowning the top. Clusters of *shringas* or little *shikhars* sit at the bottom of the curvature. The central *shikhar* has more horizontal divisions (*bhumis*) than the ones flanking it. Consequently its *jaal* is more elaborate. The *jal* pattern of the first *urahshringah* has elongated *gavaksha* patterns, which started appearing in later temples of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The *bhumis* of the *mulamanjari* have a pot detail on the corner nestled within through-and-through carving. These corner details were again popular from the 15<sup>th</sup>-century onwards and are used ubiquitously at Mount Shatrunjay in Palitana.

The *jaal* pattern on the flanking smaller *shikhars* have a more rounded *gavaksha* pattern, and are improvisations on *gavaksha* patterns from earlier centuries.<sup>39</sup> The corners of the *mulamanjari* has *bhumi shikhars*, drawing from late temple architecture. Some more details resonate with 15<sup>th</sup>-century temples of Rajasthan, including the incorporation of *yogini mukhas*, and the cubicle receptacle for the flag.

The remaining eight miniature temples have *phamsana* roofs over them; wedge shaped stepped roof forms common from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards as the exterior forms of the *mandap*. Above the two ornate *mandap* ceilings on the exterior are two large *phamsana* roofs. Thus the roofscape comprises of varying scales of the *shikhar* and the *phamsana* roof forms. All the *phamsana* roofs have pieced screens under their *chajjas*, bringing in natural light to the interiors. The interior of

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<sup>38</sup> Interview, April 2013, Ahmedabad

<sup>39</sup> See Adam Hardy, 'Parts and Wholes: The Story of the Gavaksha', in *The Temple in South Asia*. ed. by Adam Hardy (London: British Association for South Asian Studies, 2007), pp. 63-82

the temple is brightly lit with electrical lighting and a semblance of natural light is refreshing to the senses.

### **Mandap**

A and B (temple architects): Our client wanted little mandirs with their own chhatris (canopies) under the level of the ceiling. He was keen that the public should be able to move around all four sides of each of the miniature temples, and that the deities should be open to view on three sides, not just the one. These are completely new ideas.

While the examples drawn by N.M. Sompura in the *Shilparatnakar* show the *mandap* itself forming the limit of the temple, in the Wembley example there are two grand ones surrounded by the freestanding miniature temples, and all are enclosed by the perimeter wall forming the outer extremity. On rare occasions when the barriers are down, this enables the worshipper to move around all four sides freely.

### **The Jagati, Kanpeeth and Mandovar**

A and B Sompura were at pains to explain that the *Shilparatnakar* is flexible enough to accommodate different budgets. The idea of the elaborate *jagati* that is drawn in the *Shilparatnakar* was very much on the mind of A and B Sompura when explaining the conception at Wembley. They explained that their desire was to propose a *jagati*, on top of which the *kanpeeth* and *mandovar* of the temple would be located. They expressed the importance of the *jagati* by saying it should elevate the temple from the ground and give a sense of space in the form of a platform around the temple. However the *jagati* at Wembley they explained was severely compromised, unlike in some of their other contemporary projects. It is compromised because the client wanted to maximise the enclosed 'hall', with the desire of having maximum covered space for public gatherings. There were also considerations for parking provisions, disabled access to bear in mind, which went against the logic of providing a generous *jagati*. Thus there was no scope for a prominent *jagati* and a notional *jagati* was incorporated.

The build-up of the *kanpeeth* and the *mandovar* is expressed as layers on a key section, corresponding with the layer drawing system described in Chapter 7 (Figure 6.42). The key section also shows the incorporation of a zone for insulation, and a layer of brickwork on the inside clad with stone. All rainwater pipes are integrated within the insulation zone and accessible from the inside. The section

also shows a mass concrete stepped foundation without reinforcement. This unreinforced foundation which was designed by structural engineers Austin Trueman Associates was a direct application of advice in the *Shilparatnakar* which prohibits the use of ferrous metals (See introduction)

The progression of profiles follows that described in the *Shilparatnakar* in a negotiated way bearing in mind the drawings on the *jagati*, *bheet*, *kanpeeth* and the '144 part *mandovar*'. (Figure 6.43) It must be borne in mind that this particular elevation is drawn in relation to stepped plan projections assuming that they continue up to the *shikhar*. The elevation appears adjacent to the *mandovar* of the Neminath Jain temple at Kumbhaiya (12<sup>th</sup> - century Figure 6.44) whereas their application at Wembley is on large sections of a flat wall, which is divorced from the *shikhar*.<sup>40</sup> There is a three dimensionality expressed in the '144 *bhag* elevation' which is by and large amiss at Wembley. The flatness of the walls is given some relief by the notional *bhadhra* and other minor offsets. Further the *mandovar* in the *Shilparatnakar* stops at the *chajja*, whereas the *mandovar* at Wembley continues up to the parapet detail. The *mandovar* thus accommodates the flat ceiling and beam zone behind. These differences are to be viewed as contingencies, rather than a 'lack'.

There are 23 layers in the section comprising of the *bheet*, *kanpeeth* and *mandovar*. (See Figure 6.42) Layer 1 is the notional *jagati*, its top profile and overhanging *pushpakanth* lotus petal ornamental detail corresponding to that in the *Shilparatnakar* and named thus. This lotus edge detail is found across a broad spectrum of architecture in Gujarat ranging from temples to mosques to stepwells. The height of the *jagati* comprises of a plain slab of cladding stone which is fixed to a pre-cast concrete foundation with cement mortar, the foundations designed by engineer Austin Truman

Layer 2 is the *bheet* added to give height to the *kanpeeth* above. The *Shilparatnakar* shows three *bheets*; at Wembley we have just the one because of budget constraints. The *bheet* is decorated with a diamond pattern, ubiquitous to Gujarati temples, mosques and stepwells.

Layer 3 and 4 together make up the *kanpeeth* in accordance with the *Shilparatnakar* Layer 3 comprises of the *jadambo*, a detail comprising of two inverse

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study of the Kumbhariya temple complex see Madhusudan A. Dhaky and Udayaravi S. Moorti, *The Temples in Kumbhariya* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies ; Ahmedabad : Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, 2001)



concave and convex curves. The *jadambo* is a complex shape. Given the fullness that it has appeared with in the past as well as in the *Shilparatnakar*, the translation at Wembley could be argued to be weak. The *jadambo* can be majestic. Certainly in the revered examples, like the Someshwara temple at Kiradu the *jadambho* has a distinct presence. The *jadambo* can be decorated with lotus petals and stencilled decorations or it can be plain like at Wembley. At the Oshwal temple in Potters Bar, the *jadambo* is carved, the depth of the carving diminished because of frost constraints. At Wembley, the *jadambo* is interspersed with the *chandrashala* motif.

Layer 4 is the *badami gola*, again in a diminished form. In the *Shilparatnakar* this layer is labelled *karnika* and some Sompuras call it *kani*. In the *Shilparatnakkara* drawing, above the *badami gola*, there is a small recessed band called *andhari* followed by a *chajika*, followed by the *graspatti* and three layers comprising of the *gajathar* (the elephant band) the *ashvathar* (the horse band) and the *narathar* (the human band). At Wembley, all five layers above the *badami gola* have been omitted.

Layer 5 marks the beginning of the *mandovar*. Dhaky's writings inform us that the *mandovar* has three constituents. First the *vedibandha*, then the *jangha*, followed by the *verandika*. These distinctions are not made in the *Shilparatnakara*.

Layer 5, the *kumbho* appears with its upper curved part carved in a band of lotus petals and, its flat vertical face ornamented with the half diamond motif like at Modhera. The *kumbho* has a band at its feet known as the *Khurro* (the hoof) and while not labelled as a separate layer, the *khurro* makes an appearance at Wembley, just as it does in the *Shilparatnakar*. The *khurro* profile can appear weak compared to its ancestors.

Layer 6 is the *kalsho*. The rotund part of the *kalsho* is decorated with a leafy diamond pattern as in the *Shilparatnakar*. Layer 7 is the recessed band *andhari* as in the *Shilparatnakar*. Layer 8 is the *kewal* as in the *Shilparatnakar*. It has the split *gavaksha* motif and lotus overhang. In the *Shilparatnakar*, above the *kewal* is the *manchi* but this has been omitted.

Layers 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 comprise of the *jangi* layers. It is in the zone of the *jangi* that we find architectural elements most readily associated with Rajput *haveli* architecture of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur as desired by RJP. These are the prominent *jharokhas* or projecting balconies. The *jharokhas* in Wembley have a particular disposition which are not about Gujarat, but Rajasthan. It is here that A and B Sompura have diverged completely from the *Shilparatnakar* illustration. The *janghi* in the *Shilparatnakar* shows highly sculptured figures sitting below *dodhiya*

pediments. The *jangi* at Wembley has the *jharokhas* and diminutive divine figures. Other than this the *jangi* has three *pattis* or bands, the bottommost having the *mala ghanta* pattern, the top most being the *gras patti*, which is where it joins up with the *Shilparatnakar* drawing again. The bell and chain motif ubiquitous with Gujarati temples also makes an appearance here. The *graspatti* in the *Shilparatnar* is a highly recessed band, on the contrary at Wembley it is projecting outwards.

Layer 14 is the *bharni*, which in the *Shilparatnakar* is describing the ‘fluted round echinus with arris’. As there are no vertical plan projections at Wembley, there can be no round echinus, and so we have a linear arrangement.

Layer 15 is the *maha kewal*, exactly the same profile as the *kewal* in layer 8, with the split *gavaksha* motif and overhanging ornamental detail.

Layer 16 is the *chajja* or ribbed awning, surmounting the *maha kewal*. It is interspersed with the split *gavaksha* detail. With the *chajja*, the *mandovar* terminates and typically as assumed in the *Shilparatnakar*, the *shikhar* begins.

Since there is no continuity between the *shikhar* and *mandovar* we have a new series of layers between layer 17 and 23 which are understandably absent from the *Shilparatnakar*. These comprise of two layers which look very similar, the *kewal* and the *lodhiyo*, which are separated by a recessed *andhari* layer.

Layer 21, 22 and 23 comprise of the *kangra* layers, essentially coping stone with the pot parapet detail. At the front portico, layers 21 and 22 have been substituted by a *kakshasan*, behind which sit the *chatris*.

## Conclusion

This chapter shows that the translation from text to built artefact is contingent on innumerable concrete factors rooted in specific circumstance, fluid and imprecise. The Sompuras’ relations with the text is one of proximity rather than precision. It also shows that the Sompuras are working within a tradition of architecture explicated in a text like the *Shilparatnakar* and in the built examples around them, and that they are also mindful of other architectural traditions not directly associated with their temple traditions. Their practices are flexible enough to explore possibilities that are not ascribable to any particular text but are borne out of a close communication with their patrons and their transnational desires. It is this flexibility, fluidity and improvisation – in a non-historicised sense- that is vital to the continuation and carrying of their tradition and offers a picture that is a far cry from perceptions that view them as resisting change or as articulators of pale imitations of the past or religious fundamentalism. Some of these ideas are further explored in

## Chapter 6

the next chapter on their adaptations to modern technology and spaces of production such as the factory form.





Figure 6.1: Rear view of the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London (2010)

Figure 6.0 (Chapter Cover): Family archive of a family of temple architects, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Figure 6.2: Labour in carving *karkhana*, Sola, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Image courtesy SVNUK Trust





Figure 6.3: Carving *karkhana*, Sola, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Image courtesy SVN UK Trust



Figure 6.4: Land formerly occupied by carving *karkhana*. Temporary sheds have been removed, Sola, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Image courtesy SVN UK Trust



Figure 6.5: Model showing the roof of the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London





Figure 6.6: Detail of the external south facing wall, Sanatan Hindu Temple, Wembley, London





Figure 6.7: General view from the south, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London



Figure 6.8: Patua ki Haveli (c. 1805), Jaisalmer





Figure 6.9: Jain temple in the Balavasahi tunk, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century)

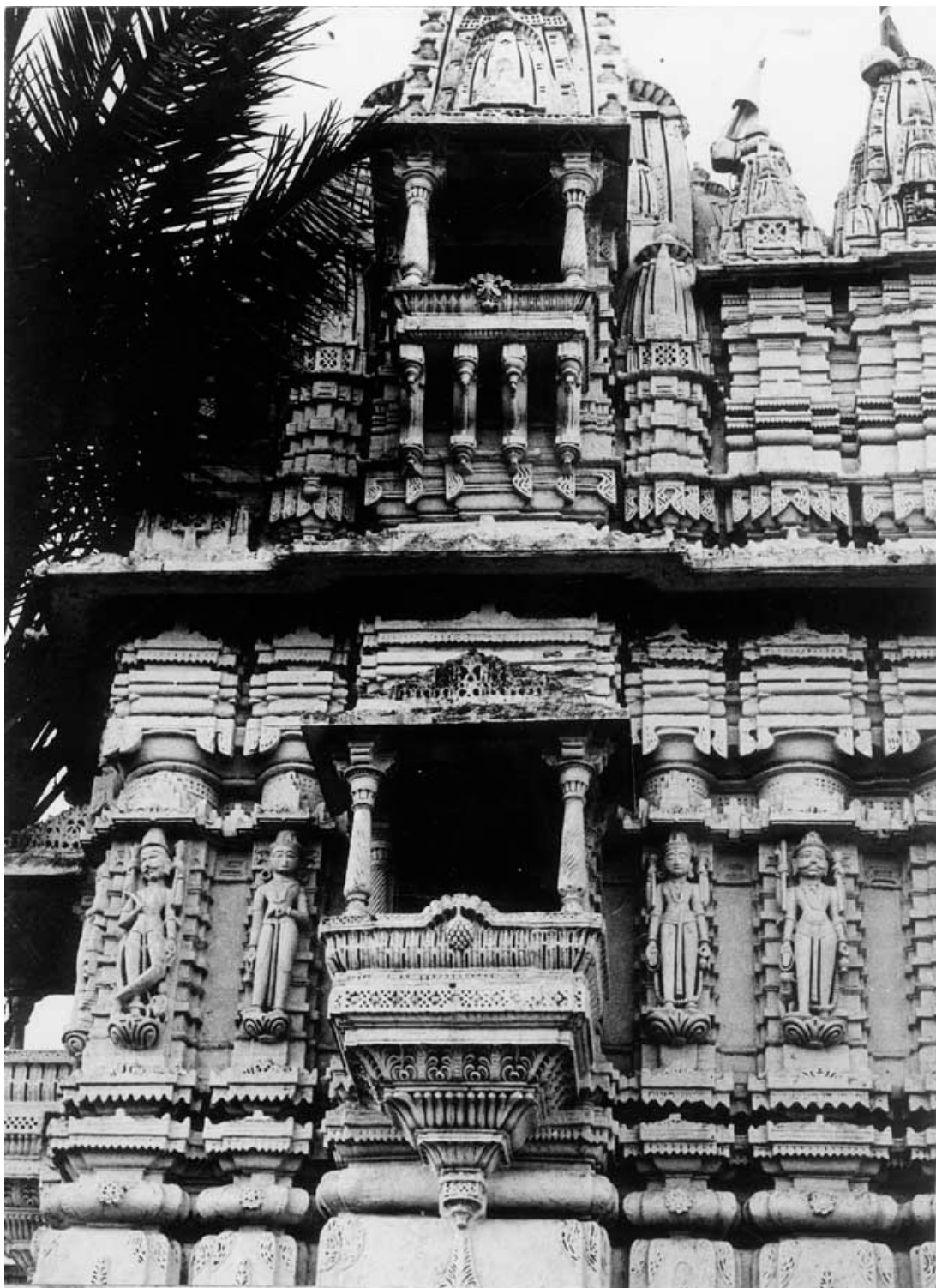


Figure 6.10: Sitalnath temple, Mundra, Kutch, Gujarat (c.1860) Image courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies.





Figure 6.11: Front porch, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London.



Figure 6.12: Improvised baluster column, front porch, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley



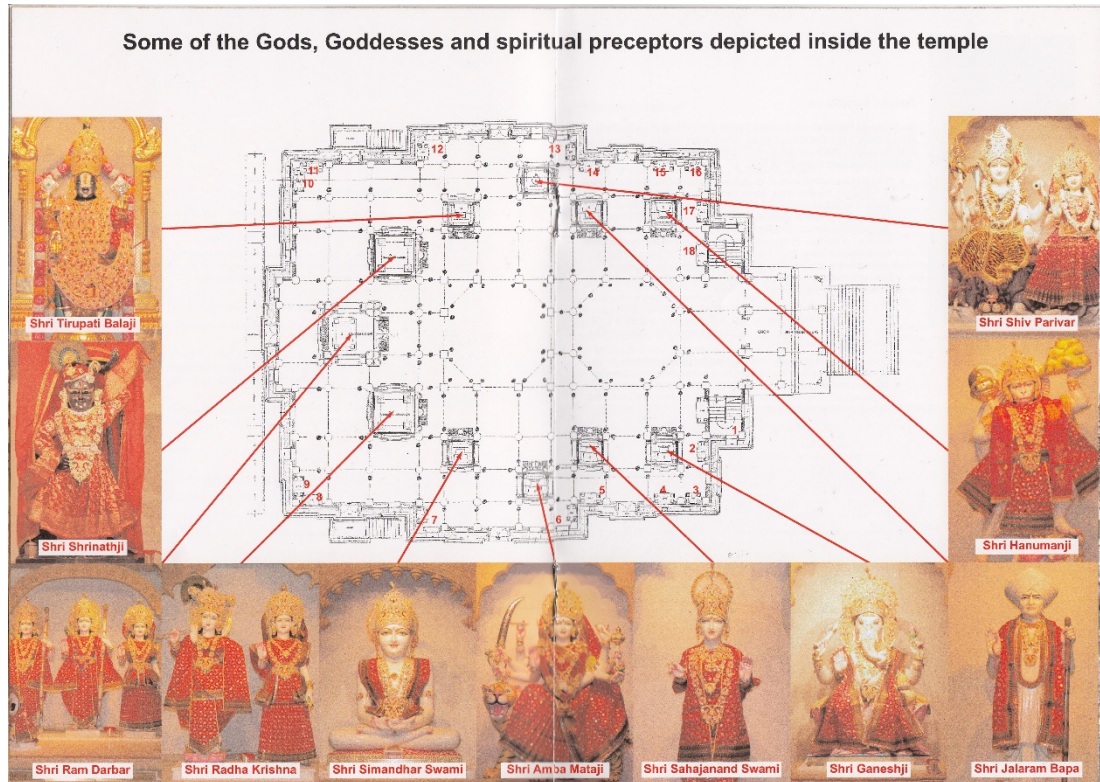


Figure 6.13: Plan, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London. Image from temple brochure, courtesy SVNUK Trust

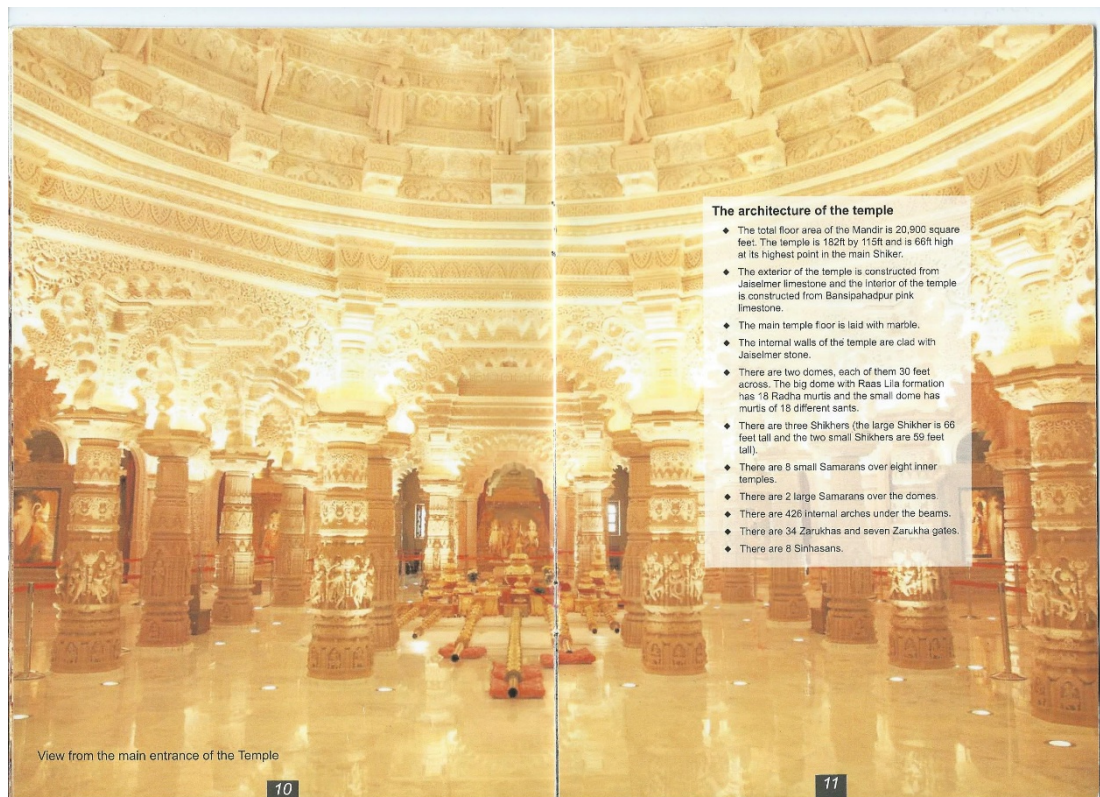


Figure 6.14: Internal view of mandap, looking towards the main shrine. Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London. Image from temple brochure, courtesy SVNUK Trust





Figure 6.15: Flying *Illika torana* at the Sun temple, Modhera, Mehsana, Gujarat (1027 AD)



Figure 6.16: Engaged cusped arches at Mount Shatrunjaya, Gujarat





Figure 6.17: Temporary tent in front of subsidiary Shiva shrine, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London



Figure 6.18: Site accommodation for workforce, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London



Figure 6.19: Photographic illustrations of Prasada types in the *Shilparatnakar*. For the temple on the left the title reads, “*Kesharadi jatino prachin mandir prasad*” (Ancient temple of the *Kesharadi* type). For the temple on the right, the title read, “*Ekandi Prasad*” (Single spire Prasad) Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

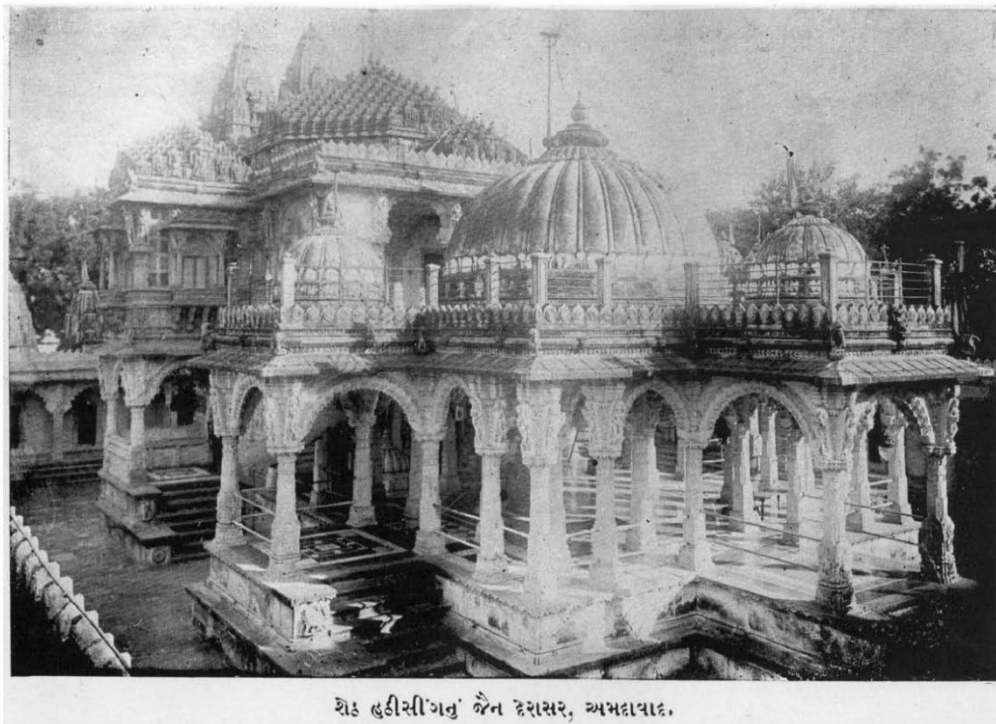


Figure 6.20 (a): Hutheesing Jain temple, Ahmedabad (mid 19th century) in the *Shilparatnakar*. Image from the *Shilparatnakar*





Figure 6.21: Jain temple in the Motishah tunk, Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, Gujarat (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century)





Figure 6.22: Simandhar Swami Jain temple, Mehsana, Gujarat (1970s)



Figure 6.23: 'Mughal Style-ni Chatri' (Canopy in the Mughal style). Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

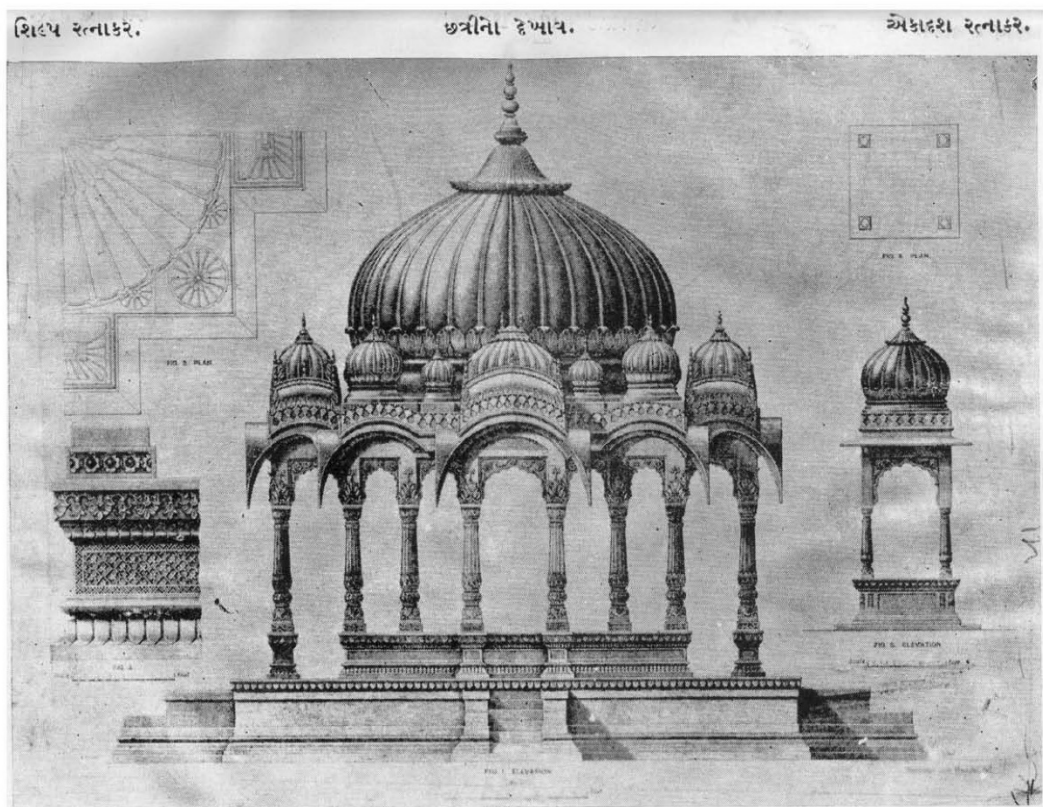


Figure 6.24: 'Chatri-no dekhav' (View of chatri). Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

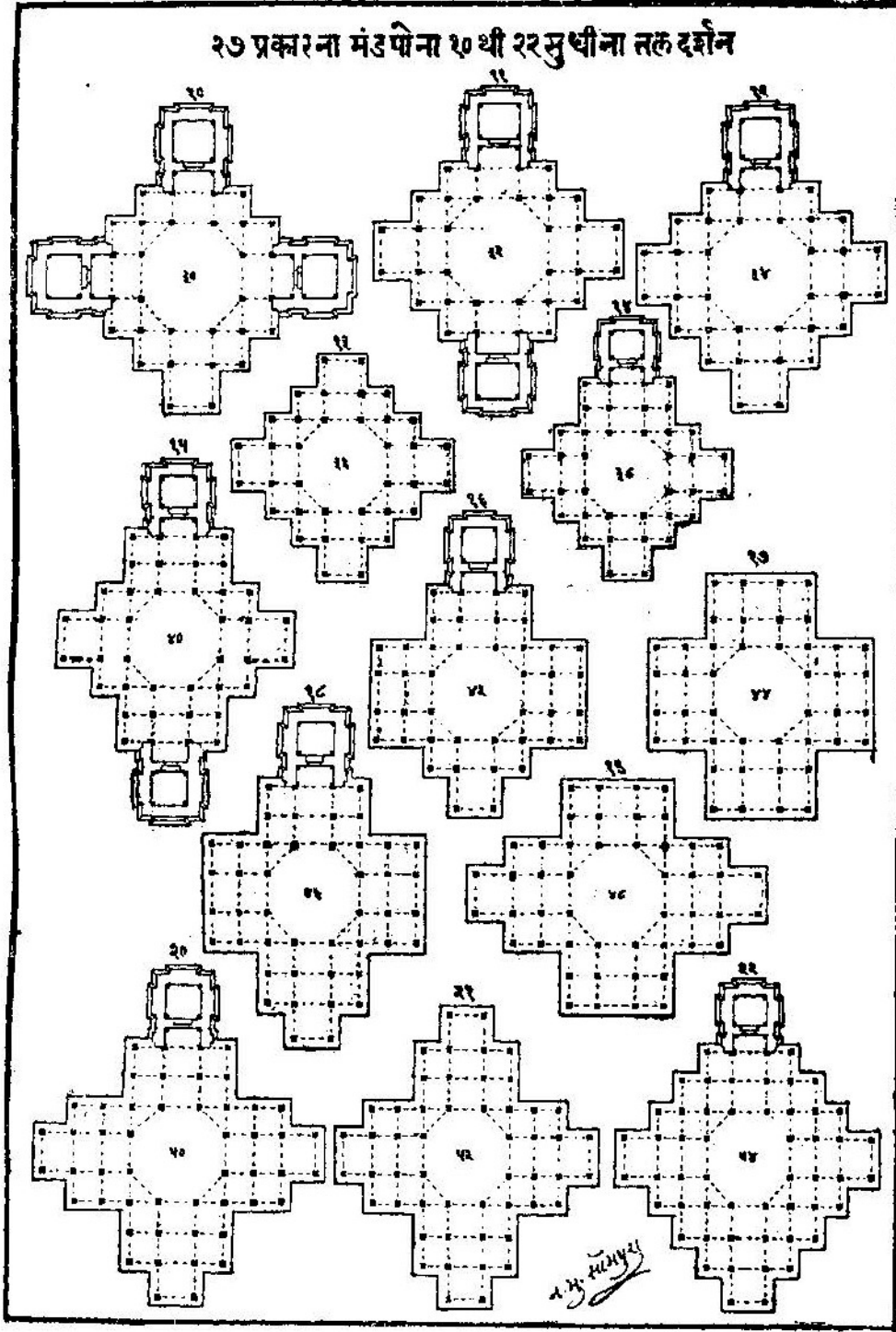


Figure 6.25: Types of the *mandapa* configuration in the *Shilparatnakar*. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)





Figure 6.26: Double shrine at Mansar reservoir, Viramgam, Gujarat. (12<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 6.27: Triple shrine at Kasara, Banaskantha, Gujarat (12<sup>th</sup> century)



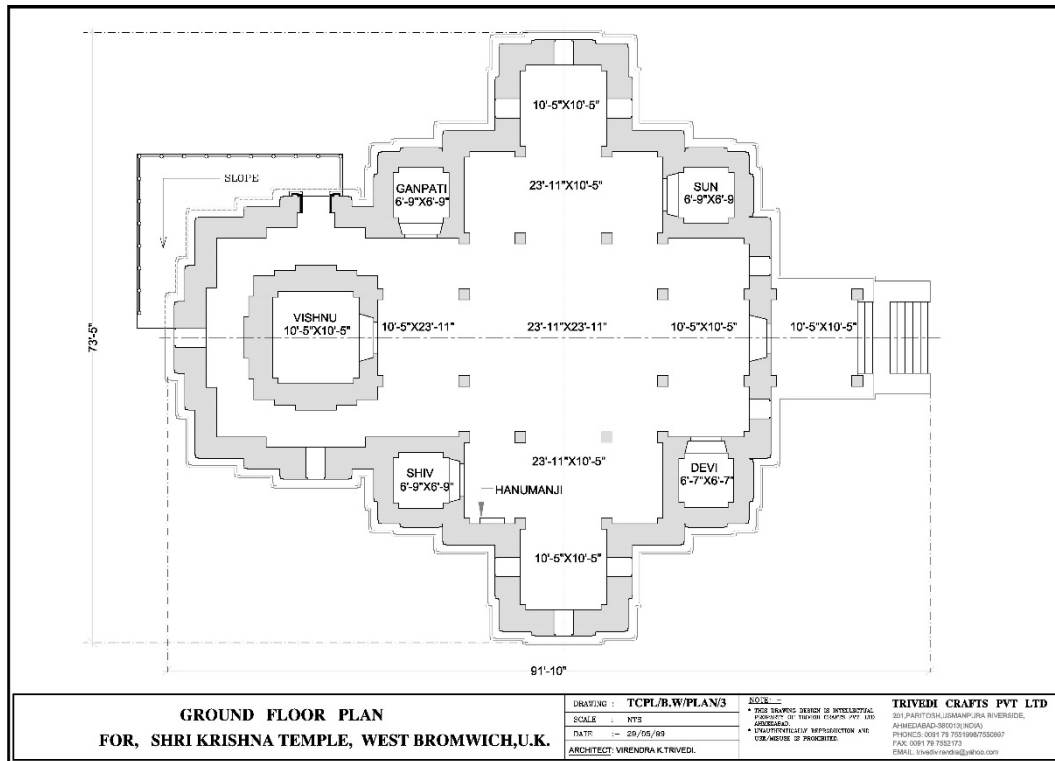


Figure 6.28: Enclosed *Panchayatana* configuration at Shri Krishna temple, West Bromwich (2010). Image courtesy Virendra Trivedi.

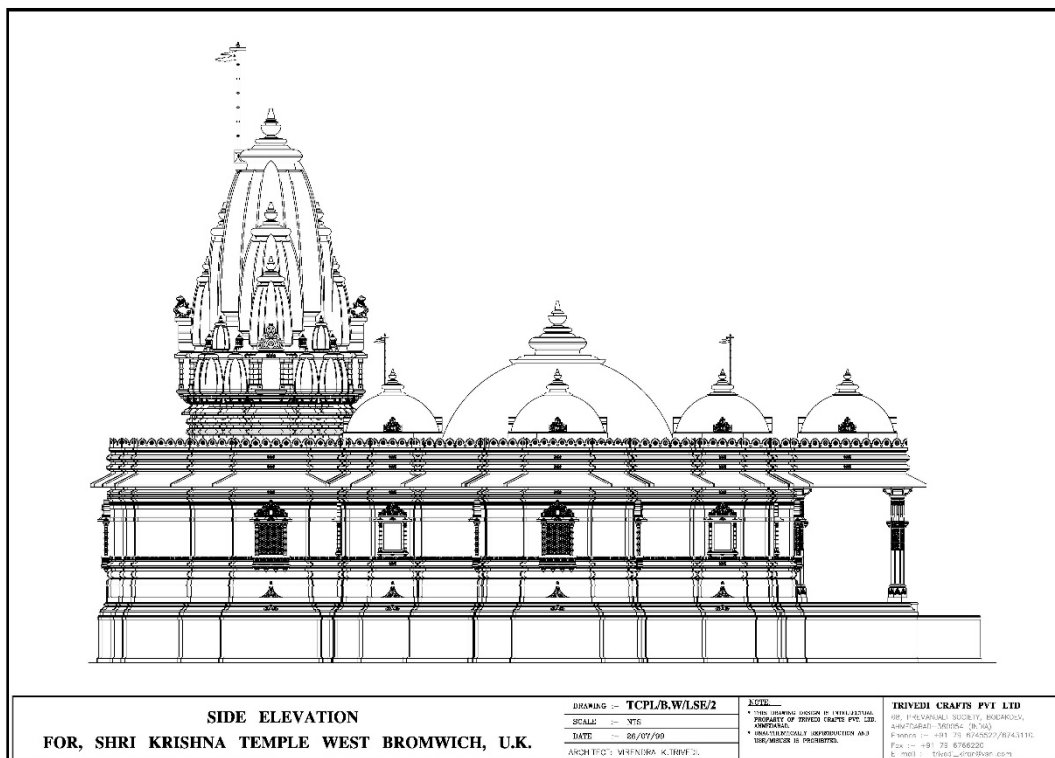


Figure 6.29: Elevation of *Panchayatana* configuration at Shri Krishna temple, West Bromwich (2010). Image courtesy Virendra Trivedi

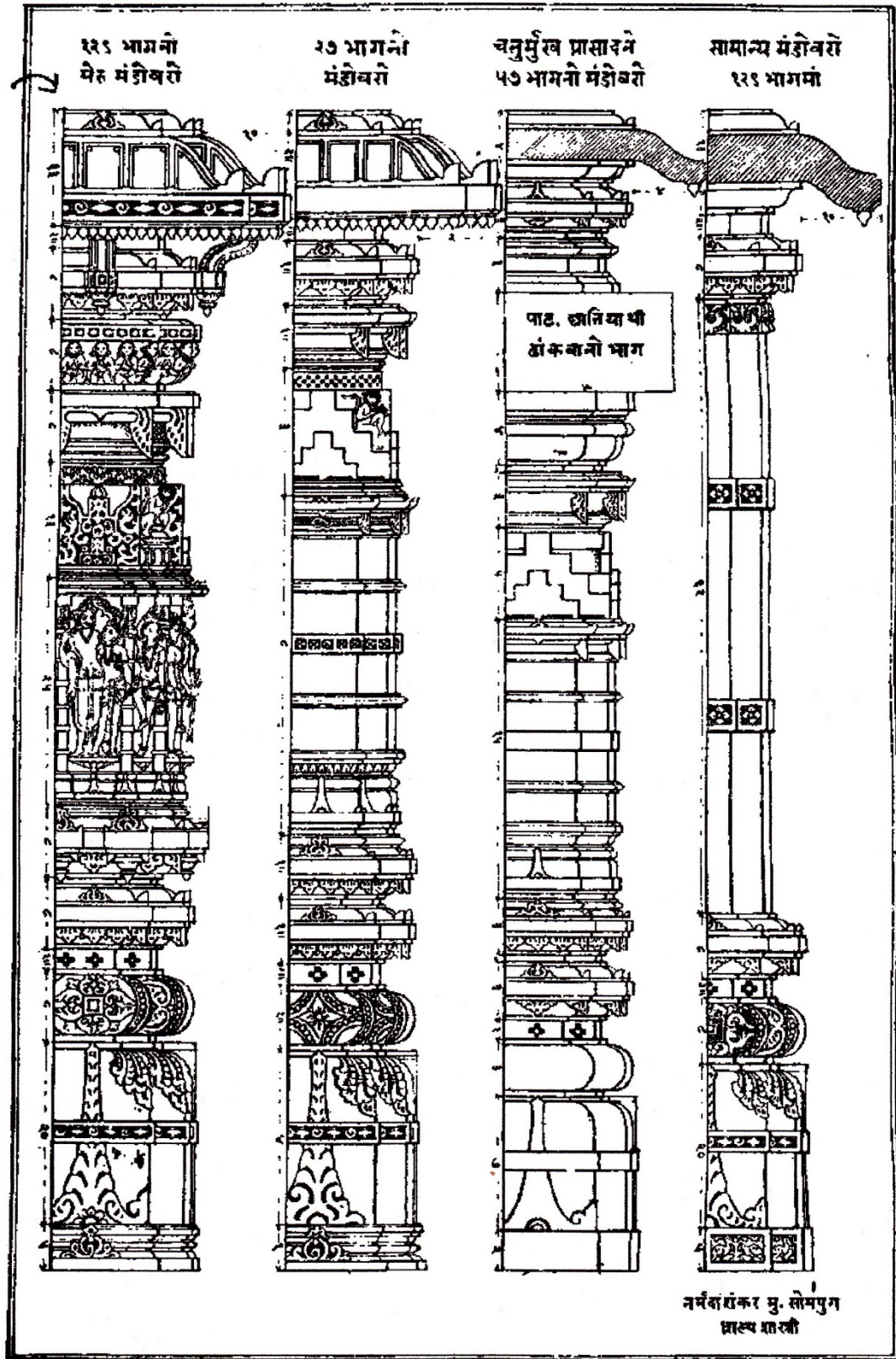


Figure 6.30: Four kinds of *mandovar* configurations in the *Shilparatnakar*. Image from the *Shilparatnakar*.

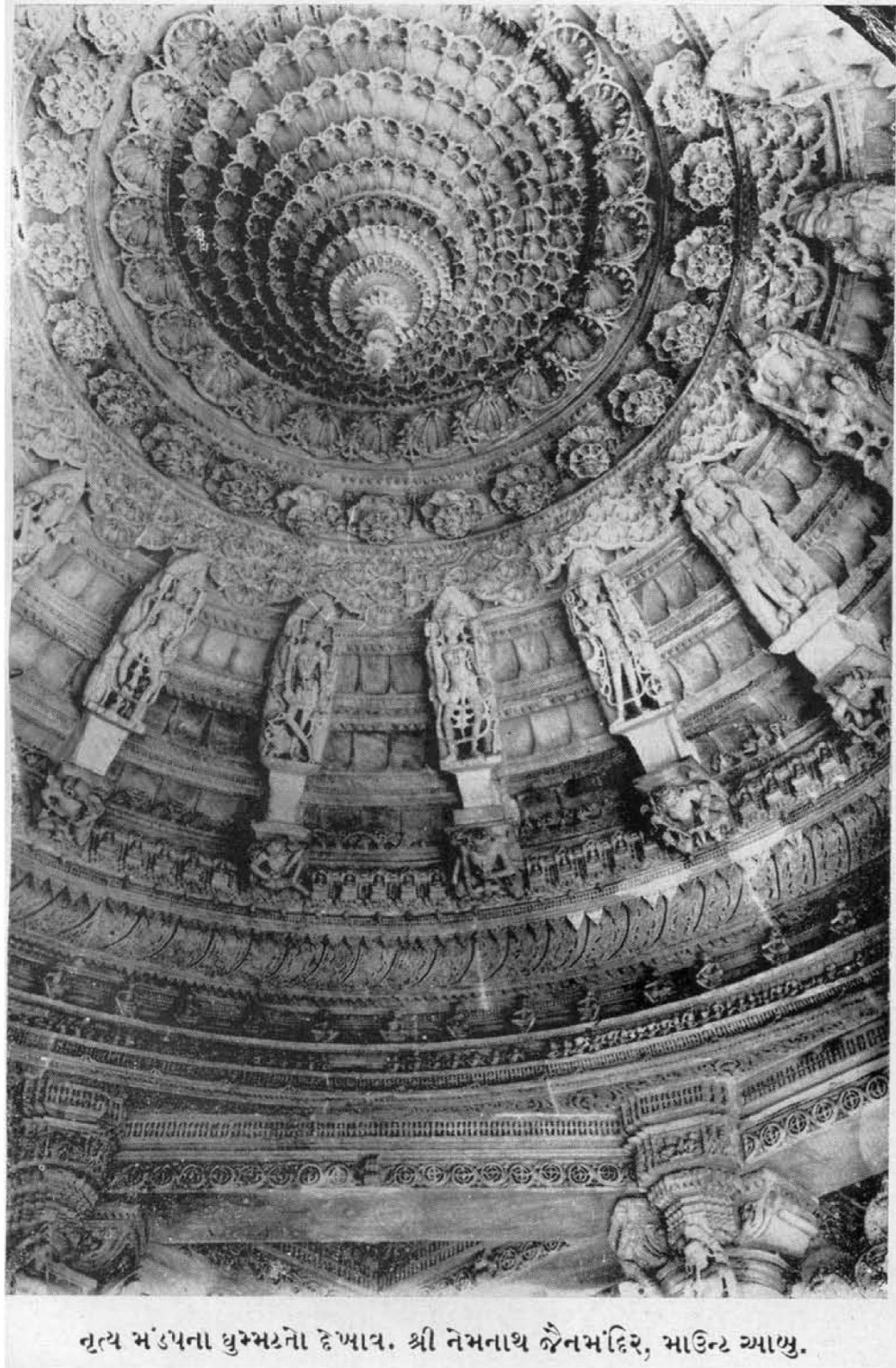


Figure 6.31: Ceiling of the *nritya mandap* (dance hall), Neminath Jain temple, Mount Abu. (12<sup>th</sup> century) Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)

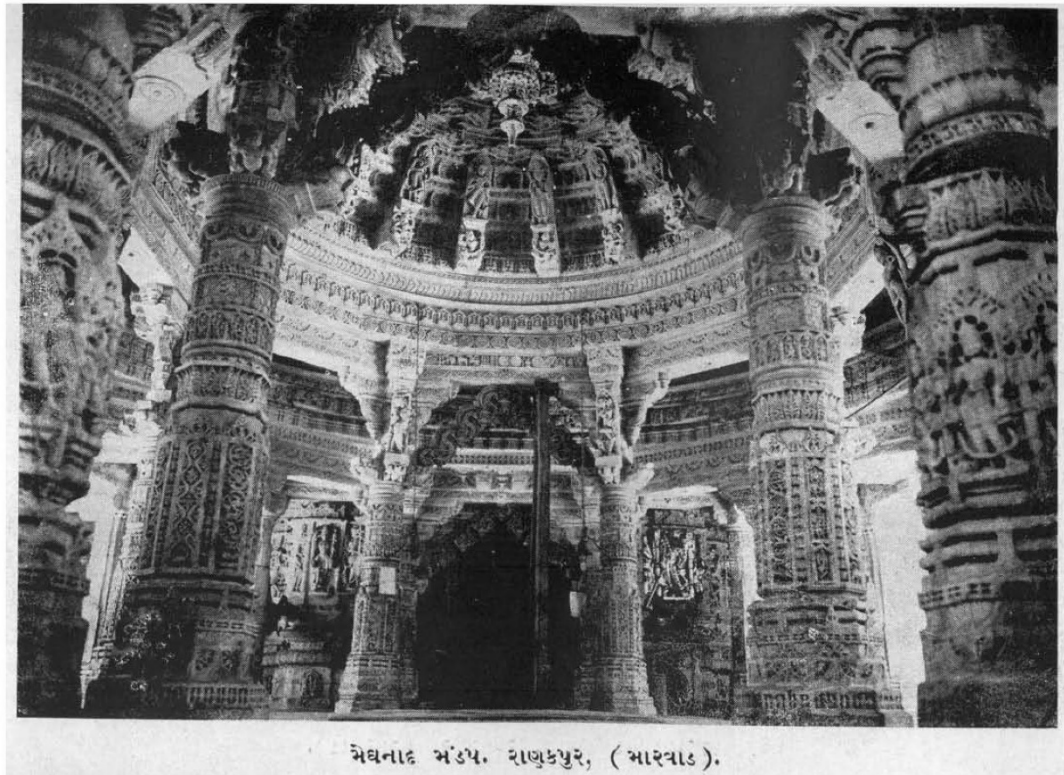


Figure 6.32: Meghnath mandap, Adinath Jain temple, Ranakpur, Rajasthan (15<sup>th</sup> century). Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)



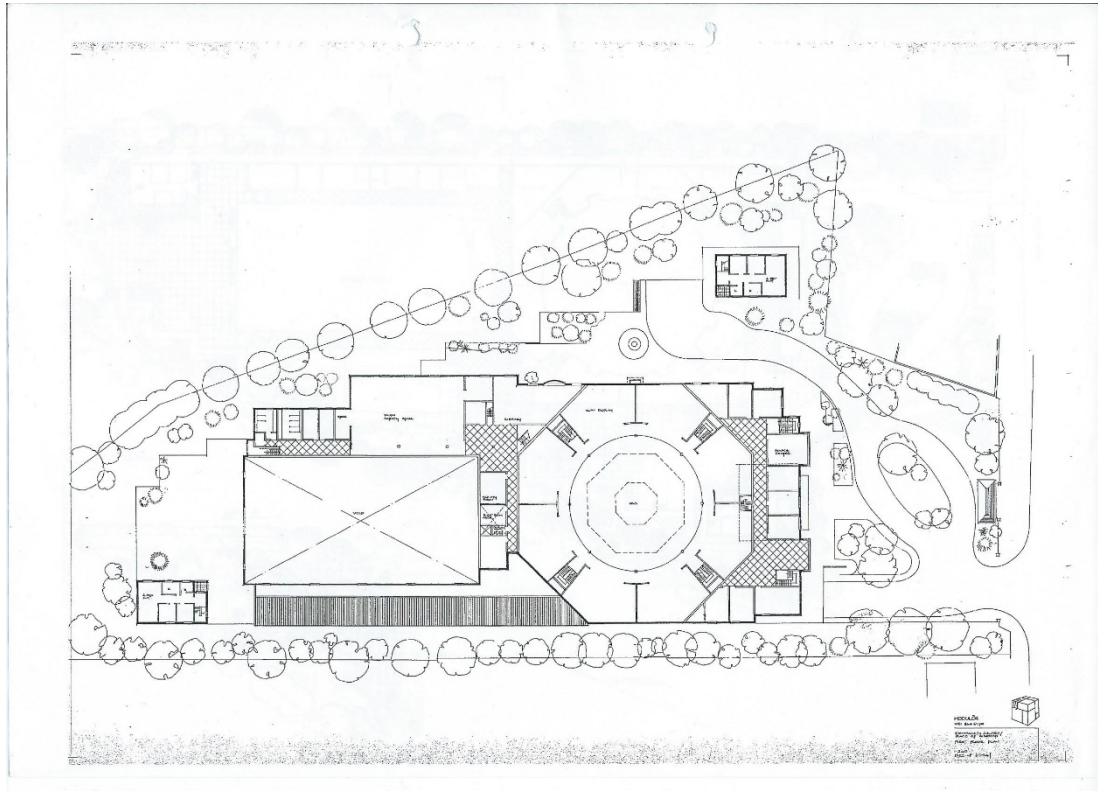


Figure 6.33: First floor plan of 'Community Centre and Place of Worship'. Outline planning application drawing prepared by Modulus Design. Image courtesy Brent council archives. File name: London Borough of Brent, Box 50, 910114

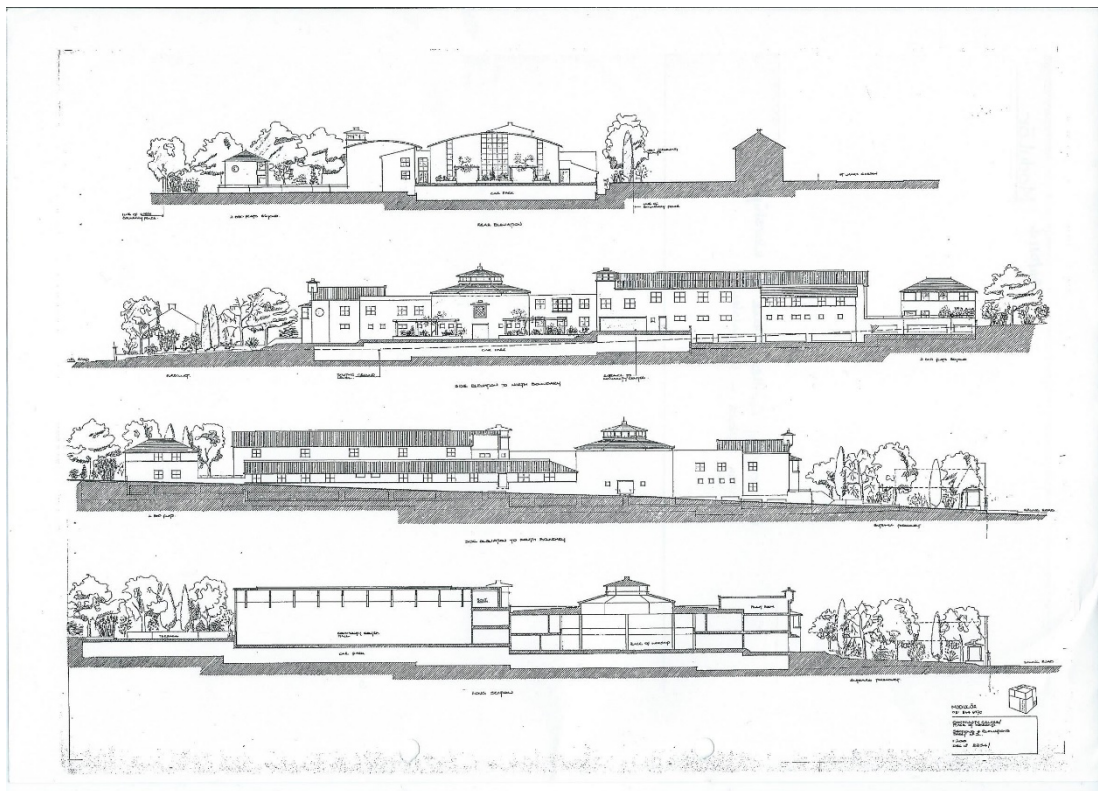


Figure 6.34: Elevations and sections of 'Community Centre and Place of Worship'. Outline planning application drawing prepared by Modulus Design. Image courtesy Brent council archives. File name: London Borough of Brent, Box 50, 910114



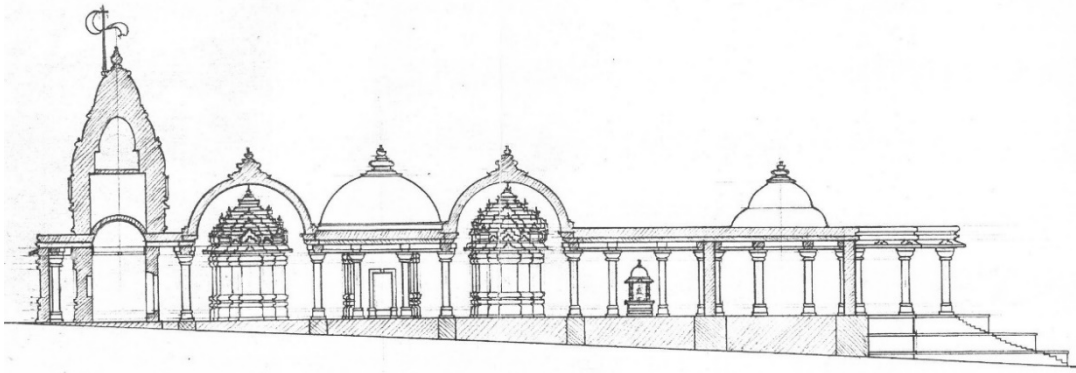


Figure 6.35: Early sketch section proposed by ST Sompura for the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley. (Early 1990s) Image courtesy Modulor Design.

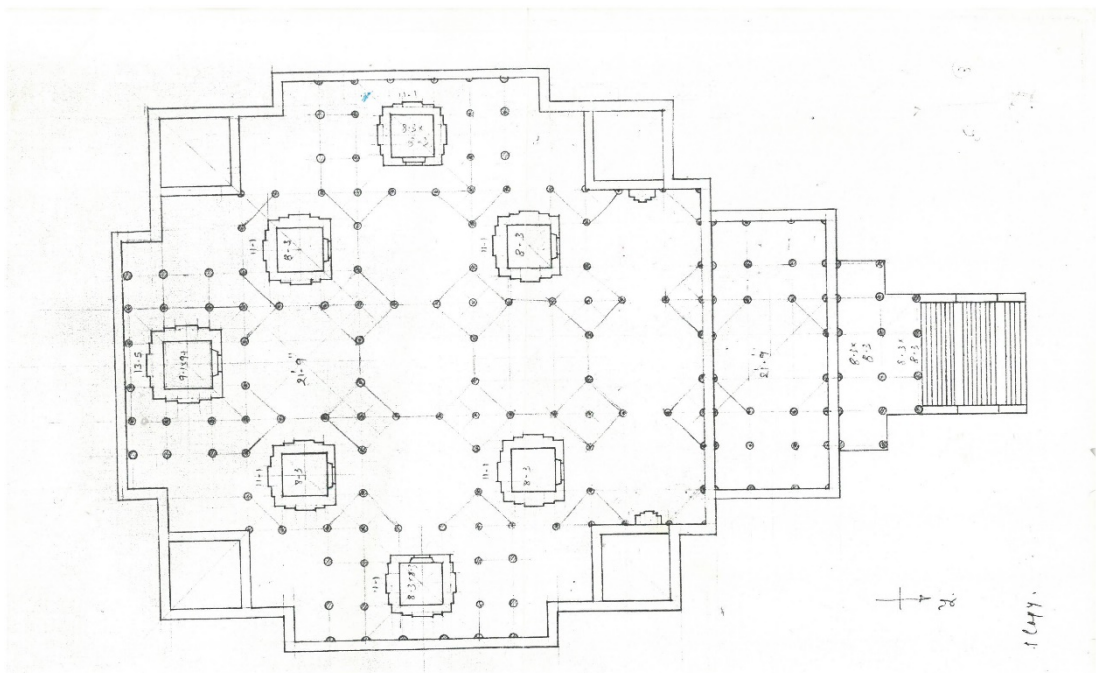
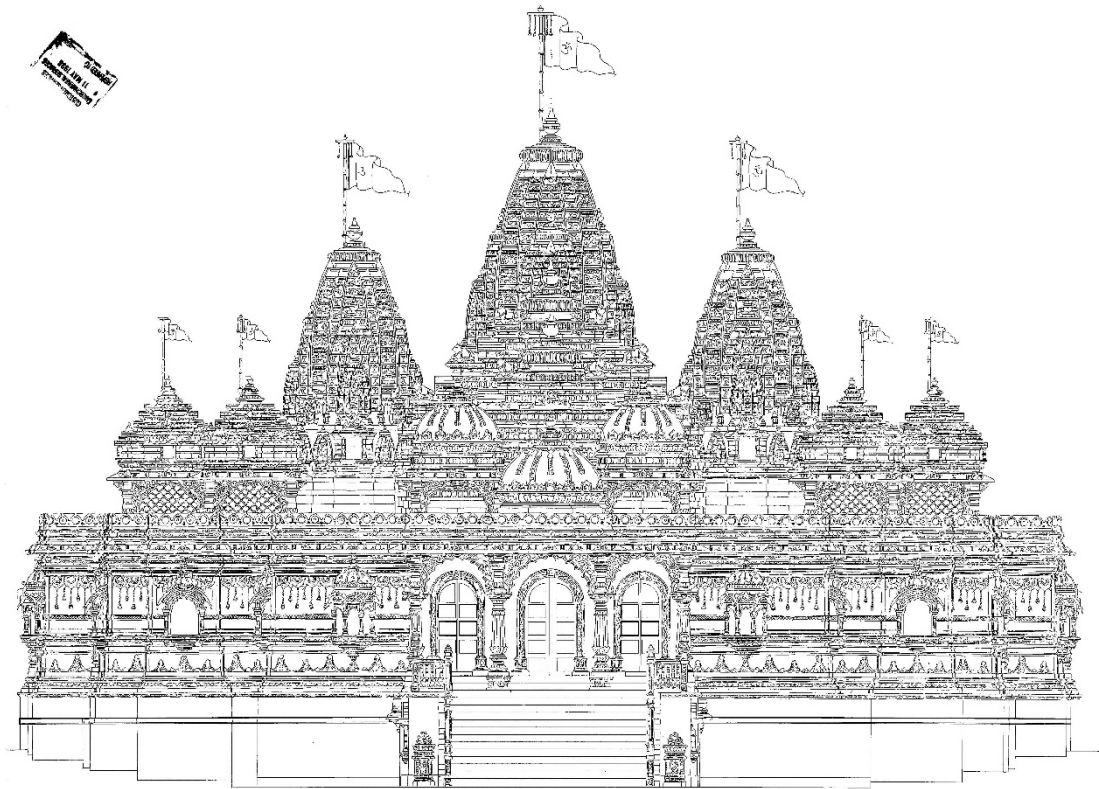


Figure 6.36: Early sketch plan proposed by ST Sompura for the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley. (Early 1990s) Image courtesy Modulor Design.



Front Elevation  
Shri Sanatan Hindu Mandir Ealing Road Wembley U.K.

Figure 6.37: ST Sompura and family's proposal for the front elevation, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London. Date of drawing 1997. Drawing courtesy SVN UK Trust

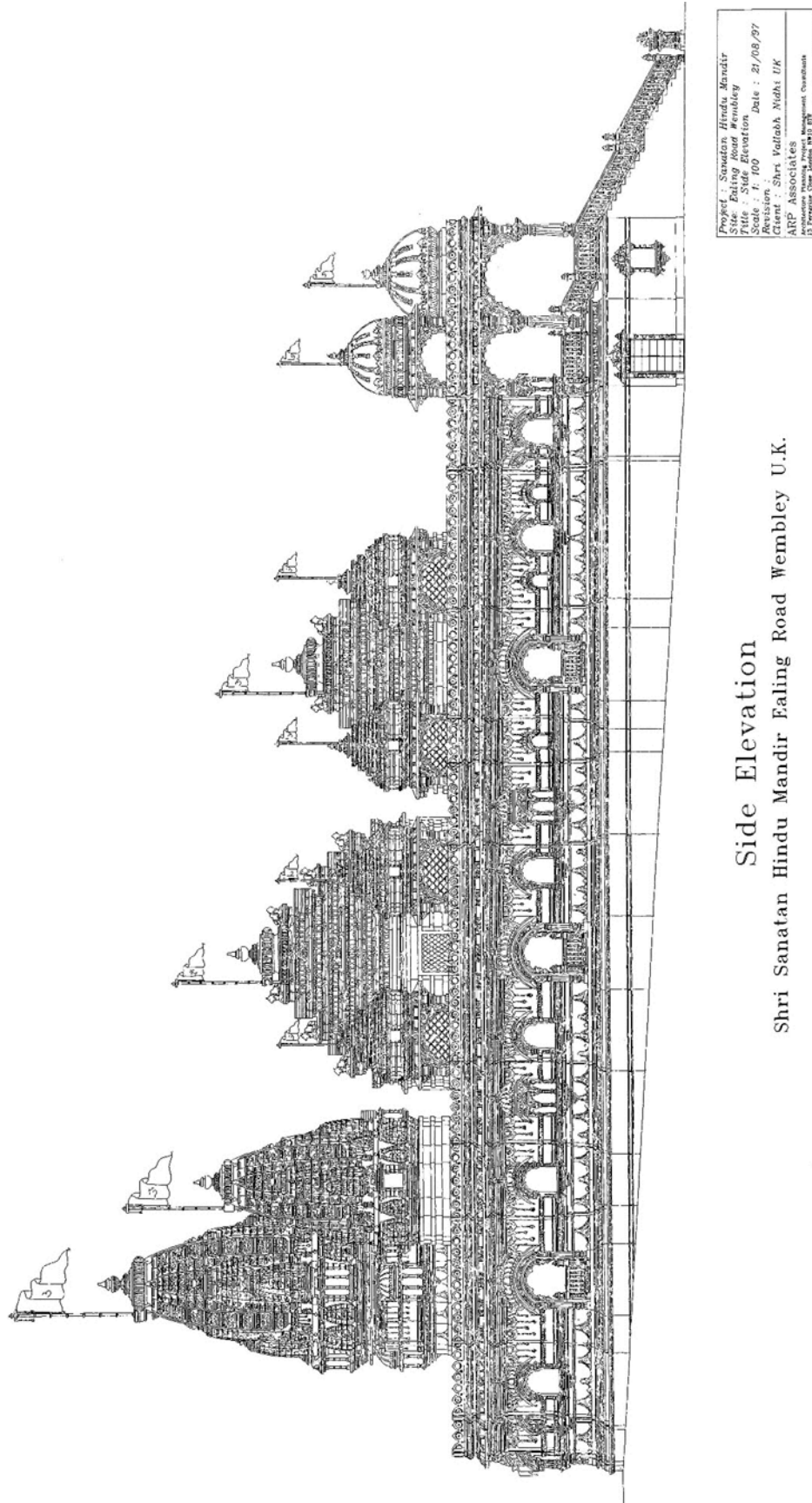


Figure 6.38: ST Sompura and family's proposal for side elevation, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London. Date of drawing 1997. Drawing courtesy SVNUK Trust

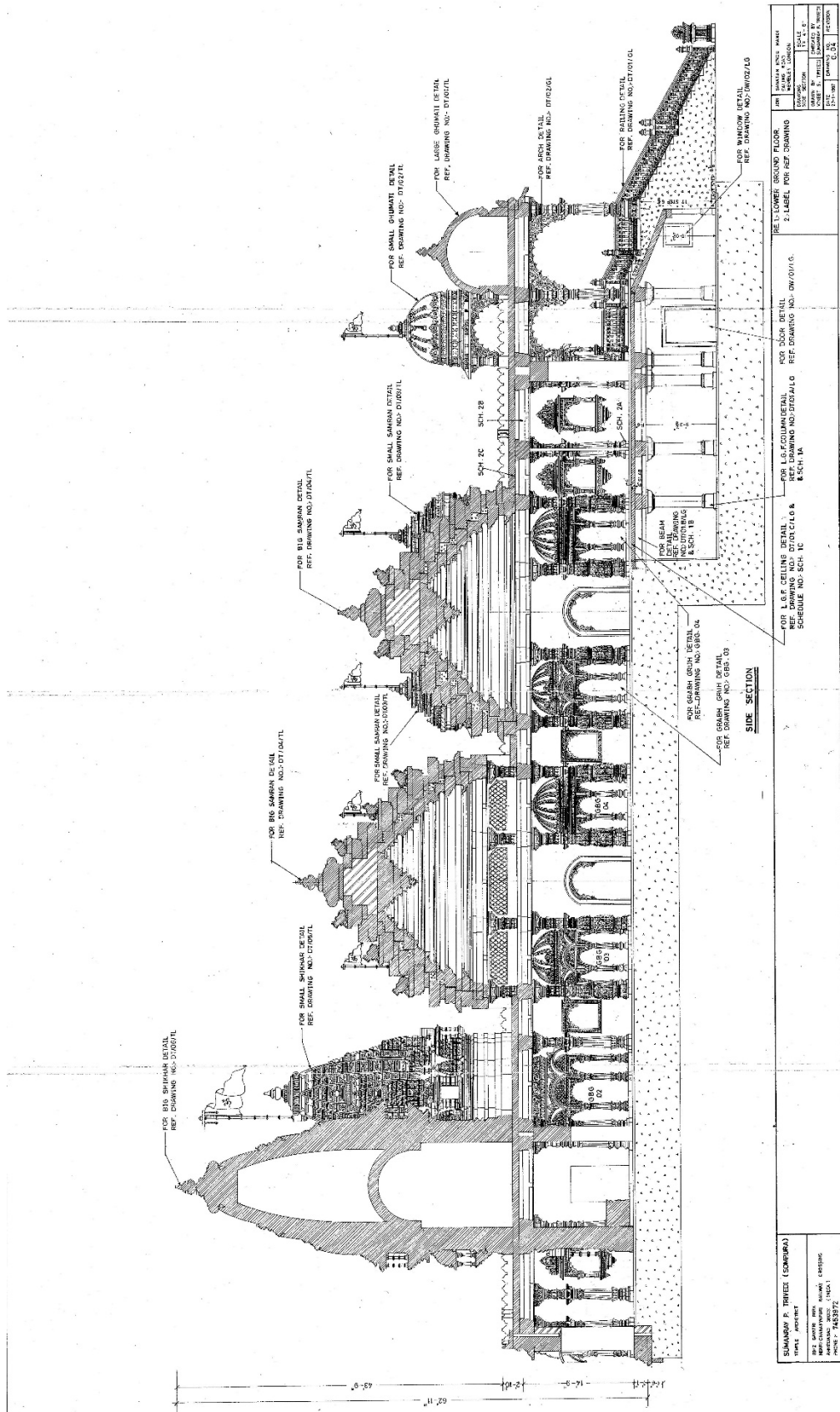


Figure 6.39: ST Sompura and family's proposal for long section, Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London. Date of drawing 1997. Drawing courtesy SVNK Trust





Figure 6.40: Central *shikhar* at the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London





Figure 6.41: Flanking *shikhar* at the Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London

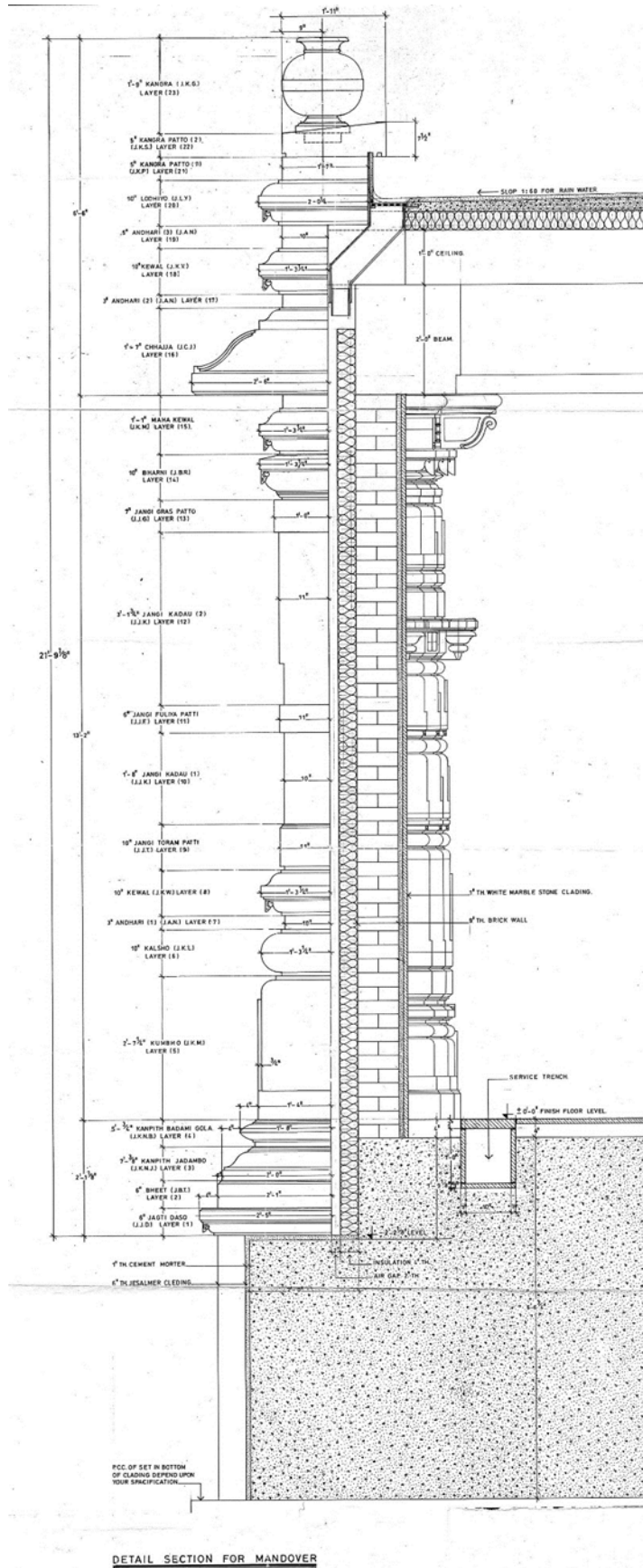


Figure 6.42: Detail section of the *mandovar* by ST Sompura and family. Sanatan Hindu temple, Wembley, London.



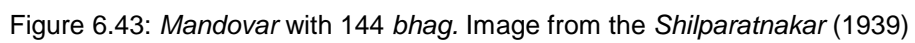






Figure 6.44: Mandovar of Neminath Jain temple, Kumbhariya. Image from the *Shilparatnakar* (1939)



## CHAPTER 7



## Factory spaces and relations in Indian temple production.<sup>1</sup>

### Karigar/Labour

The term *karigar* translates as craftsman, and the term *karkhana* denotes 'factory', the space and system in which the majority of *karigars* are employed today in the carving of temple fragments, in the context of the global production of temples designed by architects of the Sompura community. While up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the Sompuras identified themselves as craftsmen, adept at both conceptualising and sculpting stone using specific titles like *shilpi* or *sthapati*, this is largely not the case now. Contemporary practitioners from the Sompura community prefer to call themselves 'Temple Architect' for reasons of legibility for a global audience along with a host of other innovative titles like 'Ancient Temple Contratista', 'Temple Contractor' or simply 'Exporter' reflecting their shifting roles. (Figure 7.1, 7.2, 7.3) These are alternatives to the term 'Architect', reserved for graduates of nationally accredited schools of Architecture regulated by the State. Of such a type of formal institution, none exists for the *Nagar shaili*.

*Karigars* on the other hand today, are understood to be those who are exclusively working in *karkhanas* (factories) directly with stone to drawings produced by Sompura temple architects. A range of factories at varying scales are in operation presently, the nerve centre being Pindwara in Rajasthan, from which labour has leaked into neighbouring states. The *karigars* working in the factories are the largest and the lowest paid workforce in the entire temple production process, thereby suiting very well the needs of patrons commissioning the temples, whether in India or abroad. Unlike present day Sompura temple architects or South Indian temple and image makers, who consider themselves to be recreations of Vishwakarma the divine architect of the world<sup>2</sup>, the *karigars* who work in factories do not make any such claims. Instead they are referred to as, *adivasis* or tribals of the Bhil and Gharasiya tribe. In places like Pindwara, Rajasthan they till the land for four

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this chapter was presented as a paper titled 'Translating the work of the labourer into the lifeworld of the *karigar*' at the 11<sup>th</sup> AHRA international conference, *Industries of Architecture: Relations – Process- Production*, Newcastle University, 2014. See Megha Chand Inglis, 'Factory Spaces and Relations in Indian Temple Production', in *Industries of Architecture*: . ed. by Nick Beech Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff (London: Routledge, 2015 )

<sup>2</sup> See Samuel K. Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', *South Asian Studies*, 26.1 (2010), 31-57. Also Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63.1 (2003), 5-34

months in the year during the rainy season and carve stone in factories for the rest. (Figure 7.4) If they migrate to other factories away from the family home, their living arrangements are made on sites such as shown in the photograph of a carving factory in Barsana in Uttar Pradesh (Figure 7.5)

In addition to *karigar* and *adivasi*, they are often ascribed the terms labourer, worker, *nichh jati key log* (low caste), occasionally drunkard, *unpadh* (uneducated) and *ganwaar* (uncouth). During fieldwork, on the one hand, they were referred to by all the above terms pointing to their low rank, on the other hand, there was also a tacit acceptance of their relatively newly acquired skill. Thus this tribal force had a double ambivalent status. The efficacy and influence of this doubly inscribed tribal workforce has been dramatic in the last thirty five years, so much so that during my interactions with those above them, it was commonly acknowledged that *adivasi karigar* had become a category of its own, with its own generational identity around carving stone. Across the board in various scales of factories, I found that the idealised Sompura ‘community’ of temple makers was fragmented in the sense that skills had split in such a way that temple production in a global context relied on new communities and cultures of work in a profound way.

It is important to note that in lived memory of the Sompuras, this class of stone carvers used to consist of individuals from the Sompura community, itself, but around the time of the global proliferation of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sompuras have taken on the explicit role of drawing and contract management, while the *karigars* are explicitly the shapers of stone. As one factory supervisor put it, surveying his tribal work force, “this is not the *adivasi*’s proper work. This is the proper work of the Sompura (sic), but they don’t do this work anymore”.<sup>3</sup> One of the aims of this chapter is showing how the idea of the master builder has transformed into various other labour configurations using technological artefacts in specific ways.

With these social shifts in mind, if we were to look at the practices of both temple architects and *karigars* as a collective engaged in the crafting of temples from the late 1980s till the present moment – without the burden of the anxious category “traditional”, but with an awareness of traces of a longer practice, might we ask what the modalities are through which they operate in the numerous offices and *kharkhanas* of Gujarat and Rajasthan, which emerged in the wake of a global flow of temples from India outwards? How might we read the nexus of architecture, a

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<sup>3</sup> Interview Punambhai (Karkhana supervisor), Pindwara, April 2013

long architectural lineage, capitalist and technological mediations, and embodied practice?

This chapter is an attempt at capturing an idea of modernity out of a range of material and social practices from everyday life in factories deployed for carving stone. It borrows frameworks posited by postcolonial intellectuals of modern India, who invite us to think of 'relationships that do not lend themselves to the reproduction of the logic of capital', despite being thoroughly enmeshed in its processes.<sup>4</sup> All too often contemporary Sompuras are idealised through atavistic representations which insist on a separation between craft and capitalist production, resonating with orientalist epistemic categories of colonial and nationalist imaginations from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>5</sup> These it seems to me obscure the modernity and complexity inherent in the continuity of an ongoing tradition, instead preferring to see the traditional in a neat static box unsullied by cultural encounter.

### **Technological kit**

Two central questions inform the chapter. First how does the collective engage with technological artefacts and capitalist processes and second if there is a continuity with the past, then what is the nature of the 'trace' of past working methods that can be found in the newness?

When an early hand drawn sketch, for example, for a new temple designed by a present day hereditary temple architect from the Sompura community starts to take shape and attention shifts to material fabrication, a vast and complex assemblage of hand, machine intensive, and digital practices come into play in domestic settings, offices and factory spaces. The technological kit in the Sompura's work spaces, either offices in commercial complexes to living rooms at home, revolves around personal computers deployed for the production and organisation of drawings for printing as well as CNC (computer numerically controlled) manufacture, extensive CAD libraries of plans, elevations, architectural elements like the *shikhar*, *mandap*, *toran*, columns, beams, ceiling plans, *murtis*, iconographic ensembles and so on. The click of the mouse, the ping of email notifications, the whirr of plotters, printers, scanners, digital cameras, entire *shastras*

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<sup>4</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2008 ),p. 64

<sup>5</sup> Chand Inglis, pp. 114-124 for a discussion

held in smart phones for ready reference had a constant presence during my interactions with members of the Sompura community. Moving on to *karkhanas*, where manufacture takes place using a collective of *karigars*, factory owners and supervisors, the din of pneumatic drills, diamond cutters, band saws, circular saws on the one hand and the smoother sounds of the CNC 2, 3, 5 axis or water jet machines sat alongside the sound of the hammer and chisel or the *tanka hathori* used by the *karigar*.

Bringing this technological kit into being i.e. to pay attention to ontogenesis (the way things become) rather than ontology (the way things are) are a range of specific practices performed by the Sompuras, contractors, supervisors and the *karigars*. It is through this densely knitted socio technical world of practices, technical artefacts and scattering of spaces that I first came to know the collective that the Sompuras are networked into in realising the global proliferation of temples in emanating from Western Gujarat.

There is a tendency, in the scant literature that *does* deal with temple production processes, to see the use of technology as a force that can potentially stagnate the forms that the Sompuras' create: "Computer Aided Design (CAD), with its capacity for cut-and-paste detail, divorced from the human hand, not to mention CNC machines with their ability to cut endlessly repeated detail in stone, can be forces for ossification as much as they can potentially open up new creative possibilities."<sup>6</sup> This hint of anxiety seems to resonate with a discourse of mistrust of CAD technologies where the 'menace' of CAD, 'points' to a disconnect between simulation and reality where the former is deemed to be a poor substitute for the tactile experience of hand drawings.<sup>7</sup> Further, precision and over determination is considered to 'rule out the crinkled fabric of buildings that allows communities to grow and vibrate'.<sup>8</sup> These responses can obscure the eventful middle ground full of potential where the Sompura and *karigar* collective is actively engaged in. It may be that the architectural outcomes appeared standardised in the way that their medieval ancestors are not but instead of framing them as ossified, this chapter

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<sup>6</sup> Adam Hardy, 'The Nagara Tradition of Temple Architecture and 'Truth to Shastra'', in *Swaminarayan Hinduism: History, Literature and Theology, and the Arts*. ed. by Raymond Willaims (New Delhi: OUP, 2015 forthcoming) I am grateful to Adam Hardy for sharing this article to be published in the forthcoming conference proceedings of the Akhardham Conference 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2008), p.42

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.42

suggests that they be seen as negotiated outcomes. The negotiations have a profound relevance to the livelihoods of those concerned, as well as possessing an agency where an idea of improvisation resides in the strictest disciplinary regimes.

Instead of looking at the lack thereof of the great classical traditions and ways of working in the present day examples, I suggest we do exactly the converse i.e. look at the complex matrixial relations that are made in the actual co-production on the ground, in offices and factories, so as to appreciate how capital and technology encounter traces of the past.<sup>9</sup> Rather than obscuring the modernity, contradictions and heterogeneity inherent in the production of their temples, I treat the factory floor as a conceptual ground for negotiating difference. Here the term factory—ubiquitous with modernity—is made its own through the affective and contingent relations of a range of constituencies on the ground. I borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty's frameworks in arguing that the embodied orientations and social trajectories therein can never be fully subsumed by the universal logic of capital, pointing to an 'excess' that capital needs but can never truly domesticate.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of 'transduction' has some relevance here for it does not see opposition between human and non-human elements, rather a process of 'individuation'.<sup>11</sup> It emphasises how technical artefacts come to be rather than what they are. The notion of transduction has significance because it enables us to think about 'the double bind between technology as overloaded signifier and technical practices intimately embodied and situated'.<sup>12</sup>

### **Ritual as a mode of production?**

Along with drawing technologies deploying CAD process, the processes of capitalism are problematic to scholars working on contemporary practices of hereditary temple makers urging us to look at the efficacy of ritual mediations instead, unburdened by capitalist imaginations. Although dealing with hereditary

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<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Katie Lloyd Thomas for encouraging me to look at the idea of the matrix. For further explanation see Griselda Pollock, 'Thinking the Feminine: Aesthetic Practice as Introduction to Bracha Ettinger and the Concepts of Matrix and Metramorphosis', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.1 (2004), 5-65, and Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze* (Leeds: Feminist Arts and Histories Network, 1995)

<sup>10</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 60

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Mackenzie, *Transductions : Bodies and Machines at Speed* (London: Continuum, 2002)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.18



temple makers from South India, and not Western India per se, Samuel Parker's works throw some light on certain modes through which highly localised practices come to possess agency, which are anterior to professionalised architecture or the 'consumption of tradition through conservation and heritage practices'.<sup>13</sup> In his compelling article, *Ritual as a mode of production: Ethnoarchaeology and creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts*<sup>14</sup>, Samuel Parker argues that the rituals of temple production and image making function as a mode of creative practice that diverge profoundly from modern economic mythologies including those of creative personhood and intellectual property rights.<sup>15</sup> Relying on indexical signification in the here and now from immediate concrete practice rather than conventional dictionary like meanings, Parker invites us to 'critically imagine agency without the overlay of contemporary market saturated practices of possessive individualism, intellectual property and product branding', both of which he argues are based on an inappropriate notion of time, one which gives primacy to discontinuities rather than continuities.

Indexical significance which for Parker has an immediate and concrete social presence over verbalised meaning serves to remind him that such continuities with the past are more instrumental than commodification of ancient relics. If the here and now is an important methodological concern, might we not consider its implications for the other more worldly roles his subjects perform, precisely that of architects, draftsmen, businessmen and contractors in offices or the *karigars* in *karkhanas* enmeshed in capitalist production? Parker considers this question but sees the free market as a threat to other systems such as the ongoing reproduction and renovation from ancient times of a model of creativity operating within a ritually organised system.

While there are important lessons to be learnt here, one of its shortcomings is that by giving primacy to the ritual mode, and editing out 'capitalist imaginations of meaning' Parker seems to imply that his subjects are devoid of agency when considered as engaging in capitalist transactions, where technological artefacts are deployed in a routine sense. This is hardly the case for the western Indian collective, who straddle both ritual and capitalistic domains on a routine and

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<sup>13</sup> Parker, 'Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts', p.31-57

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

everyday basis. Not only does Parker's view overlook the relations and agilities involved with appropriating technologies and new contexts, but it paradoxically has resonances with orientalist frameworks that colonialists and Indian nationalists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> operated through *despite* the engagement with markets and technology that early 20<sup>th</sup> century artisans were already experimenting with.<sup>16</sup> As is widely known Coomaraswamy's portrayal of the timeless Indian craftsman returned 'again and again to the alternatives offered by a crafts society to the perils of modern industrialisation'.<sup>17</sup>

In her history of the discourses of crafts in India from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth, Abigail McGowan has argued that a whole series of interventions by a host of different agents –both colonial and Indian elites- reified the categories of crafts in *opposition* to modern industry.<sup>18</sup> This point has been made by others too; however McGowan's coinage "the long life of difference" has some implications here.<sup>19</sup> For her and a host of other a creativity of public documentation defined categories of analysis- describing crafts as contemporary manifestation of ancient, inherited practices, objects and skills as embodiments of Indian traditional culture, poised *in opposition* to modern technology and thought, and by implication capital.<sup>20</sup> As she says 'emphasising difference and not similarity was a key interpretative choice made in spite of evidence to the contrary'.<sup>21</sup> I am suggesting that there are structural similarities in the way Parker too neatly

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<sup>16</sup> Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India*, 1st ed. edn (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Tirthankar Roy, 'The Guild in Modern South Asia', *International Review of Social History*, 53.SupplementS16 (2008), 95-120

<sup>17</sup> McGowan, p.80. See also Peter Scriver, 'Stones and Texts: The Architectural Historiography of Colonial India and Its Colonial-Modern Contexts', in *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*. ed. by Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27-50. Saloni Mathur, *India by Design : Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2007)

<sup>18</sup> McGowan, p.18

<sup>19</sup> See also Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, *Colonial Modernities : Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Series: Architext Series (London: Routledge, 2007), Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision : Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*, Series: Oxford India Paperbacks (New Delhi Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Mathur,

<sup>20</sup> McGowan, p. 18

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

separates the two domains of ritual and capital, which for all its strengths, render his thesis problematic.

How then could one approach the problem of historical difference when considering the works of the collective in the global production of temples in the factories and offices of Western India? In what ways can we think of affective and contingent histories explored by Parker, but as encountering, accepting and modifying capitalist reasoning? Here, the writings of Dipesh Chakrabarty, historian of Modern South Asia, especially his reading of Marx's critique of *Capital*, have enormous significance in approaching waged labour activity in the carving factories with their disciplinary regimes, division of work and reliance on technical kit and ensembles.<sup>22</sup> Chakrabarty's central point, and I quote liberally below, is that capital cannot be universalised but its processes must be seen as a process of translation:

The politics of translation involved in this process work in both ways.

Translation makes possible the emergence of the universal language of the social sciences. But it must also by the same token, enable a project of approaching social-science categories from both sides of the process of translation, in order to make room for two kinds of histories. One consists of analytical histories that, through the abstracting categories of capital, eventually tend to make all places exchangeable with one another. History 1 is just that, analytical history. But the idea of History 2 beckons us to more affective narratives of human belonging, where life forms although porous to one another do not seem exchangeable through a third term of equivalence such as abstract labour.<sup>23</sup>

The rest of the chapter looks at technical and capitalist mediations occurring in the offices and factories engaged in the supply of temples globally. Concentrating first on the process of drawing and management routines, I move on to what the Sompuras consider to be the nerve centre of today's carving activity. This is the Sirohi District in Southern Rajasthan, home to the largest and the most

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<sup>22</sup> Chakrabarty, Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Two Histories of Capital', in *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 47-71 See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History : Bengal, 1890-1940* (Princeton: Guildford Princeton University Press, 1989)

<sup>23</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, p. 71

concentrated conglomeration of factories. Four factories that I base my observations on belong to the carving contractor Kaka<sup>24</sup> owner of a conglomeration of six factories and who at the time of the field work was engaged in the delivery of a multi-million dollar Hindu temple in New Jersey, USA, funded by a transnational religious organisation. My third space of encounter is a CNC factory, where the work of the body is to a large extent replaced by the work of the machine, yet the replacement is always partial, and mediated by the skill and intellect of CNC operators and *karigars*. In this spectrum which constitutes a representative sample, I will be moving away from overstating the ritual or the hand intensive nature of the activities within the factories, but rather focus on the range of socio technical and matrixial connections being made..

### ***CAD mein bhejna: margins of contingency in the drawing office***

During my fieldwork, recurring references were made by the Sompuras on designing with hand drawn sketches which were subsequently scanned and traced over in CAD programmes, AutoCAD being the most popular. After this point, the design development took on a life which made full use of predawn motifs saved in extensive CAD libraries (Figure 7.7, 7.8, 7.9), modified and adapted each time a new design was considered in strategy and in detail (Figure 7.10, 7.11). In Figures 7.10 and 7.11, we can see a *shikhar* redeployed from the CAD library (Figure 7.9) in the initial drawings for the Oshwal temple in Potters Bar. The initial drawings have been the basis of the execution, apart from changes in the roof and the pattern on *shikhar*, which seemed to have both been simplified (Figure 7.12) When asked if manual drawing had any value or use in their contemporary practices, one Sompura informant responded:

E (a temple architect): Yes, because ‘designing’, you can’t do on computer. We have to draw and trace out the thing, then we give it to the people for Autocad drawing. We have to do manual design. Many times what happens is . . . . (pause) . Since the last 10-15 years we have a proper library of all the elements. We don’t redraw every time. We just make a print-out of the element and just change minor things in it and give it to them, so they can design the new things.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Name withheld for confidentiality.

<sup>25</sup> Interview Ahmedabad, 2012

Many of my informants called this initial process of scanning 'sending drawings into CAD' or to put it the way they did in Hindi '*hum drawing ko CAD mein bhej detein hain*', giving CAD a warm, place-like interior and familiar quality. Another informant used the expression *computer mein sey nikalna* (taking out from inside the computer), in explaining the printing of full scale detail drawings to be further processed by *karigars* in the actual shaping of stone. Both these lexical expressions suggest simultaneity and ease with technological artefacts and processes before material production begins reminding us of the writings of Gilbert Simondon where technology is not thought of as a prosthetic device rather transduced in thought processes.<sup>26</sup> Rather than thinking of technology as the other – devoid of human feeling as the lament goes, at no point in my interaction did I get a sense that technological processes such as CAD technologies were being thought of as a way of removing the Sompuras from 'real' materials or human feelings and processes:

E (a temple architect): If I have that feeling of making a temple and you have a limited budget, I can't say 'no' to you. I have to serve you and not say 'no' to you. I need to offer you the best in your budget. And technology is coming up – it is a better way – so why not improve yourself also? With the way of the Shilpasastra, we are not going against it with technology.<sup>27</sup>

It is revealing to note that modern technology is not seen as secondary but inherent in the process – in the 'way of the Shastra' – canonical texts on temple architecture, themselves subject to constant renewals and transformations from medieval times. The use of CAD technologies is a new addition to the methods of working since the early 1990s and marks a major part of their collective imagination. Some of the older members currently in their eighties have been left behind with these processes taking on informal advisory roles instead, leaving the reins to younger architects.

### Left behind spaces

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<sup>26</sup> In his writings Gilbert Simondon sought to redress the opposition between culture and technology. See Gilbert Simondon, *Du Mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Éditions Aubier-Montaigne, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> Interview Ahmedabad, April 20012



Most architectural offices across the globe have gone through the shift from hand drafting to computer drafting with the proliferation of the personal computer and software programmes like Auto CAD. The specifics of what the Sompuras shifted *from* is useful in understanding their present relationship with drawing and production activity. This is because what is being specified in the drawings is in each case by and large a bespoke product, not available off the shelf. On an average temples have 150, 000 carved parts, and each has to be described in a drawing to settle contracts and determine time programmes. Most of the temple architects I interacted with had first-hand experience of what the shift entailed, having worked with fathers or grandfathers as children or adolescents:

C (a temple architect): Today we draw each and every stone in detail with the computer as we go along. These are called shop drawings. In the olden times this didn't happen, as it would have involved massive quantities of time and paper. The experience of the excellent person dictated this on the construction site. There would have been less experienced people under him, but because he would know, they would manage on site.

My grandfather would begin with a sketch, and then he would draw it to scale at 1":8' with corresponding sections and elevations. Then he would move on to a detail drawing at 1":4' and finally we would produce 1:1 drawings as a family, sometimes three generations together. With the computer, all this is not needed; it has become easy. . . .<sup>28</sup>

The full scale drawings were and are a critical tool for communicating to the *karigar* collective the scope of what they are doing, what is to be carved, albeit with the help of the supervisor, who acts as an intermediary. Before the days of the personal computer, entire temple segments were drawn by hand on large pieces of paper – several metres in length and width - to accommodate entire floor to ceiling sections. (Figure 7.13, 7.14). Correspondingly large halls or open spaces within the confines of domestic settings were the places such drawings would be made. (Figure 7.15, 7.16). In the case of the legendary Amrital M. Trivedi, during his employment with the Anandji Kalyaji Trust, small scale drawings were produced in an office, adjacent to his living room, whereas large scale drawings were made on the roof terrace. (7.16) A workshop was adjoined to the house where the Trust

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012

carried out its various works and where Trivedi himself made models and casts. (Figure 7.17, 7.18) A minimum of three people were required to set out the full size drawings. For the curvature of a *shikhar* for instance, two would become a human compass working a thread from a centre point off the sheet of paper, and a third would draw. That these very drawings do not fit the rooms in which computerised drawing activity takes place now could be taken as a marker of the compression in physical space that technological use has entailed. (Figure 7.19)

Between matter and final form a complex process ensues, and although a great degree of risk is involved in the work of the *karigar* in translating a two dimensional drawing to a three dimensional carved image regardless of drawing instruction, it would seem that the workmanship of risk was higher in the examples from the medieval age. This is because the drawn instruction may have had in it a built-in flexibility in temples from earlier ages, particularly in the sculptural details of the walls: not everything would be drawn to the last detail as can be seen in the base of the Jasmalnath Mahadeva temple in Asoda (12<sup>th</sup> century). Figure 7.21 gives us a sense that certain collectives invited variation in detail to the extent that perhaps one could think of the *karigar* exercising their own imagination to a large degree under the overall instruction of the lead *karigar*. The ‘copy’, ‘extend’, ‘array’, ‘mirror’ and ‘scale’ commands lend themselves to a standardisation which is suited to current global economic climate, where time limits too are compressed. In Figure 7.20 and 7.21, the standardisation is palpable in the difference in the disposition of the elephants:

A and B (temple architects): In the past the *kaarigar* would put in his own thoughts and create the design. He would know what to do. There would be many variations on the same design, like in Kiradu. All designs are different. Everything is *alag alag* (different). . . . See, look at this pillar in Kiradu; every detail is different. (Figure 7.22, 7.23)

Today we decide everything to the last detail. . . . it is not possible to do this kind of work (points at Kiradu image). We are told what carving to do. Nobody is interested in carving like this now. The first problem is time constraint, and then next problem is pay.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012

With time, pay and patronage as determining factors, the *karigars* and the Sompuras appear to be moulded greatly by the times. The compression of time makes it difficult to indulge in variation to the degree in the revered examples, even if desired. To give a sense of the compressions in time involved, the Swaminarayan Hindu temple in Neasden (1995) was carved over just two years, the Oshwal Jain temple in eighteen months, the gigantic Akshardham temple in New Delhi a record five years. These time scales are vastly different to those of the revered examples:

C (a temple architect): In the past the master craftsman would not have so many projects at one time. He may have one temple which he would work on for years, after which perhaps he would get another temple to work on. He would have a lot of time at hand. If you look at Kiradu, its art is very rich. The art of all the temples in the compound is the same. So it may be that one or two people would have designed this temple, and they would have the time. He would have the knowledge. He would be able to draw and carve all the various stages.

Today I can't do chiselling. I can draw but I'm not an expert in certain drawing like statues. The person who did Kiradu would have all different knowledge and he would be a master. Just like my father and grandfather. They could do all these roles. I can do these as well, but I get stuck on a certain stage.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Layer drawing**

With regard to time compression and the above split in skills, the use of the layer drawing system cannot be understated. For large Temple Trusts which have several temples on the go at the same time across several factories, this is a key type of drawing which ties scattered production sites together. Each piece of stone can be tracked on a daily basis and fed into bespoke software programmes.<sup>31</sup> But equally, for one off temple projects, which are spread across several sites of production, it becomes a key controlling device. The layer drawing has spatial connotations. It helps determine dispersal of works to different factories so they can occur concurrently. It is common for temple architects to refer to layers as entities in

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<sup>30</sup> Interview Ahmedabad, 2012

<sup>31</sup> Interview, Sanjay Parikh, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Ahmedabad, April 2013

themselves. A temple architect explained that a ‘few layers’ can be sent to such and such factory, a few to the neighbouring factory and so on.

In the layer drawing each piece of stone is numbered in the horizontal plane, and these planes are known the layers. Starting from the *pitha* (the base) and covering the *mandovar*, *shikhar* and *samaran*, the layer drawing identifies the location of every stone by being labelled by a short distinct name (Figure 7.24). It serves different purposes, four of which are outlined here: it is crucial for establishing complex management routines where at the end of the day the progress of each stone can be determined by the temple architect or the client (Fig 7.25). It is indispensable for preparing bills of quantities (Figure 7.25). It helps divide work spatially, often ‘layers’ being assigned to different factories, and finally it is critical for the final reassembly of the temples in distant locations. Once the fragments arrive at their final destination it is the only piece of information that tells the workforce where each piece goes, layer by layer.

Every *karkhana* has supervisors feeding back the status of every stone on a daily basis which is further fed into bespoke software programmes such as the ones the BAPS procurement team deploys, or into more rudimentary management plans. The feeding back is sometimes done online, somewhat dependant on wifi connectivity, or on hard copies, faxed back. In- progress digital photographs accompany problem areas for immediate resolution. Here a temple architect elaborates:

D (a temple architect): I do projects on a turnkey basis. This sheet is for my office purpose. I should know where each piece of stone is. When did the carving start and finish, when did the polishing finish, when did the pre-assembly finish. I coordinate this with the supervisor in the factory. Every site has an individual sheet, so I can tell sitting here in my office the progress of each layer in the workshop where it is being carved and the amount of work left. Basically it tells me what the status is for each stone.<sup>32</sup>

A large number of temple architects, impressively, prefer to operate from their home to control access, copying and distribution of CAD files by third parties, suggesting intense competition between present day practitioners. They draw every detail themselves, unlike other organisations where a hierarchy determines the

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2013

division of labour. A computer *masterji* (tutor) may come home for private tuitions or some attend AutoCAD training schools. The compression of actual physical space into offices, living rooms and bedrooms, due to the computational capacities of computers, seems to also have an impact on the way the Sompuras organise themselves in particular forms and in particular spaces.

I now turn to how certain ideas are translated from older revered examples into the CAD drawing process, in particular the drawing of carving details which forms a major part of the work. These details are quite often sketched on the sites of medieval temples or quite often taken from CAD libraries or photographs or publications or family archives:

A and B (temple architects) : Total computerisation is done in building work like flats, tower etc. Carving work has to start with hand and inserted into computer. Nowadays people say to us that everything is readymade in the computer in the CAD library, so we can just bring out a design. 'Bring it out of the computer', is a demand that temple trusts have. But how can we just bring it out? Arrey! We have to put it in first! They think all the designs come with Autocad for free and we don't have to do anything. Or they think we don't know anything!

D (A temple architect): You must note in your thesis that first we draw by hand, and then we scan by a scanner. Then on top of that we trace over with AutoCAD line. Autocad doesn't draw directly. The advantage of a library is that we can play around with the size, copy, and paste. If you want a new design you need to draw by hand and scan.<sup>33</sup>

If these extracts demonstrate a frustration with the client expectations that come with using CAD, then they also demonstrate the idea that despite the readymade motif in the CAD library, there is always a feeding back into the CAD system. (Figure 7.26). This feeding back continues right into the last stages of the finishing process of the carved artefact, rendering indeterminate a system whose very basis is removing difference.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012



### Drawing and crafting feelings

Many of my informants used the word *josh* in explaining revered carving details like at Kiradu (Figure 7.22). This word is used to connote excitement, passion, ardour and enthusiasm. While explaining the qualities of good carving, in addition, they use terms like *dum*, *ubhar*, *golai*, *madod*, *jhapat* and *gehrai*. *Dum* connotes breath or life, vitality and vigour. *Ubhar* connotes a rising, a swelling, a certain flourishing in the process of becoming prominent. *Golai* is associated with roundness and *gehrai* on the other hand connotes depth, in this case in dimensional terms. *Jhapat* is flight. The example of a ceiling detail shown in Figure 7.27 was shown to me as one that encapsulated all these qualities, whereas in the same instance the architects concerned also spoke about the difficulty, generally, in aspiring for details that allowed such qualities to infiltrate. Figure 7.27 demonstrates the standardisations induced by CAD practices, and yet within the repetition, traces of the above qualities can be discerned.

Once drawn, scanned, drawn over by a mouse and printed, it then is a matter of communicating with the *karigar* through Plaster of Paris models on the depth and workmanship of the final object (Figures 7.0, 7.29, 7.30). In a sense the potential of the drawing is only fully realised once it has undergone a series of translations by the *karigar*. Once a line drawing is drawn in CAD software, the onus then lies on an intensive three way communication between the temple architects, the factory supervisors and the *karigars* to prepare Plaster of Paris models that translate accurately all the qualities described above. This is a laborious and risky process employing the best *karigars*, who understand the intention behind the detail and have the skill to perform the task. It is now to the factory I turn to demonstrate and analyse the relations that support the transfer from drawing to matter to form, full of improvisations and potential for more, within the overall time framework of the over determining layer drawing management system, the drawing itself and the disciplinary regimes of the factory.

### The carving factories of Pindwara, Rajasthan

One would anticipate that with controlling devices like the layer drawing system, the Sompura determined detail drawing, and the disciplinary regime in the factory space particularly that of round the clock supervision, every bodily action of the *karigar* is predetermined. It would seem at first glance that there is no space for manoeuvre like the *karigars* of Kiradu or those of other magnificent medieval temples the Sompuras refer to. In the following sections we will see how drawings are assessed

and over written, corrected and challenged by the *karigar* workforce. Coupled with the breakdown of customary ways of organisation, it would seem at first glance that new relations of production are always lesser than those traditional ones. On the contrary I suggest that these very parameters have a built in flexibility to provide the space and potential for improvisations. The following is an excerpt from a temple architect who learnt his skill on the Dilwara renovation site in the 1950s from his father and uncles:

F (a temple architect): My father worked directly with a small selection of the best *karigars* throughout his life. They travelled with him to construction sites. Their relations with him, prayers and proliferation ensured the best work. Time was not an issue. On the 12 year renovation of the Dilwara we had no idea how long it would take when we started. This is art. This is no more. . . . Today it is difficult to get good work done. My son has to go to Pindwara (from Ahmedabad) regularly and explain the work to the *karigars* in the *karkhanas*. We contract out the carving work to contractors, but in dealing with contractors our intentions have shifted.<sup>34</sup>

Certainly the factories occupy an ambivalent position in the minds of the Sompuras. They are markers of the loss of older artisanal organisations and ties, also perhaps a place where *sauda* (business deals) take precedence over certain master apprentice workforce bonds. What was previously a family and caste based workforce has made space for new structures and modern relations of work on the factory floor. Relations in the factory are marked by wages, capital and disciplinary procedures more than an older communitarian bond. Yet as the chapter will show densely knitted within these new relations is an idea of older relations

The carving factories of Pindwara in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan, considered to be the nerve centre in terms of the global dispersal of temples out of north west India, deserve some attention. Their emergence is tied to the development efforts of RIICO (Rajasthan State industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd). RIICO is the sole government agency and facilitator involved in the development of land for industrial enterprise. Set up in 1969 RIICO's aim is to provide large, medium and small scale projects easy access to ready-to use bases with supportive infrastructure facilities. Sirohi District was declared "Industry less" in

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<sup>34</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, April 2013

1983. Today it describes itself as 'playing a catalytic role in the industrial development of Rajasthan' with the secure establishment of major industries producing Portland cement, synthetic yarn, high tension insulators, reconstituted cement, granite, marble slabs, polymers as well as medium and small scale industries. The opening up of the Indian economy in 1991 and the increase in demand for temples in and outside India made this district, particularly Pindwara the ideal infrastructural base. The presence of mega factories as well as smaller scale ones is conspicuous in the arid landscape of this area, which prior to state development was mainly agricultural and forest.

One of my key informants, a leading carving contractor explained that he set up his carving factory in 1980 as a result of the above government land subsidies offered by the state government of Rajasthan to stimulate economic development in the area. In addition to subsidised land rates, for seven years his company was exempt from sales tax, which provided a major incentive for entrepreneurs to set up business in this district. The *karigars* refer to the contractor as *Kaka* (a term of address used for senior male relatives, such as uncles), suggesting a paternal relationship along with that of the employer. *Kaka* in turn referred to the workers as *karigars* in tacit recognition of their skills, at the same time fully aware that each one is also producing a commodity, and being paid a fixed amount for the work. Such references were common during my interactions with Kaka:

Kaka (a contractor): My purpose here is temple business. . . how to make the maximum . . . (amount of profit), but I also have a *lagaav* (attachment, a feeling for something). There are different areas in this site related to different skills and wages. Those *karigars* there (points to an area) their rate is 250 rupees a day . . . those are 200 rupees a day. The plainest ones will be 150 rupees a day. We don't have plain ones; we don't have anyone less than 200 rupees. The most expensive are 500 rupees . . . to double their productivity; we sometimes have to give *inaam* (reward) over and above what they take home.<sup>35</sup>

It is revealing to note how a numerical monetary value comes to substitute the very being of the *karigar*, yet the substitution is never fully realised. By this I mean that the idea that *lagaav*, an emotion directed towards the *kaarigar* and what he is

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<sup>35</sup> Interview, Pindwara, April 2013

doing resides side by side with pure contractual relations go beyond intentions which say “you will be paid this much for the work that you produce, in my factory which opens between 9AM and 5:30PM”. This is one example of the excess of capital that I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Further as we shall see apprenticeship was key to the functioning of the factories just as it was until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century within the Sompura community. *Karigars* joined as the lowest and moved up ranks. This is precisely the model of passing knowledge that caste and communitarian relations relied on.

It would not do justice to some of the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> - century temple projects to assume that labour in the factories had miraculously picked up carving skills, rather informal apprenticeship on long term projects in the vicinity, such as the twelve year Dilwara temple renovations funded by the Anandji Kalyanji Trust are instrumental in percolating into the spaces of the factories. There are no formal records suggesting that such and such craftsmen from Dilwara were instrumental in passing skills to the new tribal population, but in lived memory both of Kaka and the older generations of the Sompuras, this is the case. Not a single *karigar* in Kaka’s factories claimed to descend from a long hereditary profession. In a conglomerate of six factories that comprised Kaka’s empire a total of three *karigars* could confirm that their father was a *karigar*, also having worked for Kaka.

This workforce entered the *karkhana* as laymen and left highly skilled. Those other (Sompura) caste, community and skill networks have made space for a new type of workforce which comprises of men *and* women from the Bhil and the Gharasiya tribes of Rajasthan, who have actively reconfigured their lives to oscillate between the field and the factory. For four rainy months of the year, the *adivasi karigars* till the land, and for the rest of the year supplements his/her income by carving temple fragments in a highly organised and hierarchical carving industry. This aspect in itself is of profound significance for it shows us that resident in a so called continuation of a great tradition, are discreet elements of newness, which on encountering older embodied practices become the markers of shifts and transformations. It is impossible to look at this practice as purely a manifestation of an ancient tradition. This new workforce is also indicative of the new relations that the Sompura temple builders have adjusted to, namely being the conceptualisers, designers, drawers and contract managers of temple schemes, and to a far diminished extent, the actual physical makers.

Kaka: This area is 100% *adivasi*.(tribal) . . There are a lot of farmers, but not a single Sompura. This is a new thing. Sompuras used to work with stone . . . earlier . . maybe hundred years back . . Now they do mostly drawing. Their *baap dada* (ancestors) used to do *pathar ka kam* (stone carving), but now they draw.<sup>36</sup>

C (a temple architect): There is no genius who can perform all tasks now.<sup>37</sup>

That there are a number of carving enterprises operating in the area gave rise to a certain dynamics of movement between factory to factory depending on which offers the most competitive rate. It was a matter of some irritation with factory owners and supervisors that the *Adivasi karigar* population was transient, and seasonally unreliable. Its ebbs and flows were determined not only by the rainy seasons, but by the highly localised market economy. There are no formal contractual agreements, no notice periods, between the owner and the labour force, requiring regular calibration in wages to keep up with the competition. Given the highly skilled and in-demand nature of their activity, this population had a temporal relation with the factory :

DR (a *karigar*): My name is DR. I am a Garasiya. They call us *karigars*. There are fifty people from my village in this *karkhana*. I come by cycle. I start at 7 AM and leave at 4:30 PM. Sometimes I am asked to do two hours overtime till 6:30. I have been working here for twenty five years. I am from Warli, five to six kilometres from here. It is a small village. I do *gadhai*. I learnt from other people who carved. My father didn't do this work. He did farming. I was the first to start work here. Our children will study, they won't do this. What they will do I don't know but this much is clear they won't do this. This piece I am making takes time.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Interview, Pindwara, April 3013

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Pindwara, April 2013



Numerous Adivasi *karigars* that I spoke to held the same view. In contrast Kaka had a different view about their future, thinking of technology and capital as hooks that would keep them coming back:

Kaka: Earlier there were no schools. This is where they would all come. Now education has come in. Now they are studying. They will do CNC. Their kids will do CNC, but they will never leave the village, because this is where their parents are. . . Five years back they were earning 30-40 rupees per day. Now their wages start at 250 rupees per day. They have motorcycles, they have pucca homes. . . they are no longer in *jhuggi jhompris* (temporary makeshift housing).<sup>39</sup>

### Plots

The carving factory that I base my following observations on was a conglomerate of four separate sites in Pindwara, separated by a few kilometres. They are referred to as plots. For ease of reference I will call them Plot 1, 2, 3 and 4. These were procedurally linked, but spatially not contiguous.

Plot 1 comprised of a large open shed where temple fragments were carved from square pieces of stone to specific designs, specific spaces delineated for specific activities. (Figure 7.4) Plot 2 was similar to Plot 1, but consisted of three sections separated by a track – one quiet zone for the *karigars* doing *roopkaam* (statuary) and the other noisier area for *Nakshi kam* (pattern work). Plot 3 was where the carved fragments were fitted in a pre-assembly stage to check for mistakes. Once the pre assembly was complete the pieces were polished specifically by a team of two hundred women referred to as 'polishing ladies'. Their fingers were considered nimble and 'ideal' for polishing the fine grooves of carved stone; their daily wage was also the lowest of all the *karigars* in the other plots (Figure 7.31). The finished carved pieces were packed, weighed and loaded on to trucks heading to shipping ports.

One half of Plot 3 was used for cutting the stone from the mines to the right size and dispersing to the other plots. Plot 4 housed two Italian CNC machines for primary cutting and shaping, which were then dispersed to Plots 1 and 2 for further carving. (Figure 7.32, 7.33) Kaka's living accommodation was at this site, along with a specially erected drawing office, which employed its own team of Sompura temple

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Pindwara, April 2013

architects and draftsmen (Figure 7.34, 7.35) These in-house architects working for the contractor took responsibility for ironing out mistakes that they spotted in drawings made by Sompuras who were employed by clients. In the drawing office Kaka's temple architect showed me mistakes in alignment and joints which had been overlooked and made little sense in the actual fitting of complex pieces of stones together in three dimensions.

Each of these plots had precise internal spatial demarcations, which were invisible, but tacitly understood in terms of carving activity, the most skilled sat in one area and so on. It now remains to be seen how the socio technics works in each of these sites. During my visit the carvers were working on Italian Carrara marble imported from Italy. The pressure of time hung intensely in the air.

### The mistri

Plot 1 had 250 *karigars*, one supervisor and two head *mistris*. The stone arrived by truck, cut square (*chauras*) to the right size by heavy machinery for two distinct activities: either *roop-kaam* (statuary) or *nakshi kaam* (pattern work). The square pieces were labelled according to the layer drawing system. The factory was run by one site supervisor, whose duties involved maintaining a daily attendance and wage register, amongst other operational duties. Other than this supervisor, two *mistris* patrolled the factory floor all day to ensure each *karigar* adhered to time schedules and carried out their work as precisely as possible. Although the *mistris* were highly skilled *karigars* themselves, they made the distinction from *karigars* they watched, by saying they were responsible for getting the work done not do the work itself. Any potential for mistakes, it was their responsibility to iron out as soon as possible. As the translation from drawing to final form is somewhat contingent upon subjective interpretation, the *mistris* controlling eye ensured work was done well, precisely and on time to the drawing issued. The *mistris* reported back progress on a daily basis. During my visits to the factory, no one chatted or could be seen to be taking breaks outside the prescribed timings.

The two head *mistris* described their role as being the *jod* (the join) between the architect and the *karigar*. The *mistris*'s surveillance have a resonance with Foucault's concept of the panopticon, yet not fully realised because beyond a particular class of *karigar*, the *mistris* had to step back leaving them to do their work in quiet. "The *karigar* knows", an implicit recognition that they perhaps know better and have to be left to their own devices, however controlling the regimes of power might be. The head *mistris* held the *karigars* in Plot 1 in high regard and even

reverence calling them *shilpis* or *artists* explicitly telling me they were not mere workers. The higher the skill of the *karigar*, the higher was the regard. At times a certain friendly demeanour marked their communication, however mostly relations were distant. It seemed that there were moments when factory form ran off key into an older collaborative way of working.

That reverence has a place in waged labour activity of a factory floor suggests that within the category of abstract labour, densely knitted older customary relations have a place. In the factory it would appear that efficiency is received through older relations of collaboration nestled in the factory floor system. In the following extract, a supervisor explains the work of the *mistri*.

P (a supervisor): *Mistris* and supervisors perform different roles. The *mistri* knows what to get done, how to materialise shapes from blocks of stone. His job is to communicate this to the *karigar* and make sure the *karigar* understands. If he doesn't understand he will go back to PB (inhouse Sompura architect). Or the *mistri* will invite PB Sompura to the site. Sometimes PB has to come three times for this. Then the *mistri* will sit closely with the *karigar* and explain what to do. The out cutting (first cut) is very important and he will remain close by. At times, he may himself initiate the work on the stone. His is the work of immense responsibility, because the price of stone is higher than gold.

There were 250 *karigars* working in concentration in Plot 1. The factory was marked by a boundary wall and consisted of a high shed, open on all sides. (Figure 7.4) Dust gathered up and out. The floor space was roughly divided into two; one side for *roop kam* (Figure 7.36) and the other for *nakshi kam* (Figure 7.37). The distinction between *roopkam* and *nakshi kaam* needs some attention for they both invite different degrees of 'workmanship of risk'.<sup>40</sup> The former includes all living beings: *murtis* of saints, gods and goddesses, celestial nymphs, humans and animals fall in this category. As the drawing out of *bhav* (mood, expression) from a solid block of stone is central to *roop kaam*, it is considered to be more involved and risk filled task than *nakshi kam*, which is the carving out of a repetitive pattern.

The *roopkam karigars* were considered to be the Class A of *karigars*, and in Plot 1 there were around fifteen of such superior *karigars*. The process of carving a

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<sup>40</sup> See David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, Rev. ed. edn (London: Herbert, 1995)

statue involved several stages and several categories of *karigars*. As a general rule, work stages were specific to the skill capacity so consequently a less skilled *karigar* would do initial paring and rough cuts and gradually incrementally more skilled *karigars* took over. The wage started at Rs.200 per day for the least skilled and Rs. 500 per day the most skilled. Each statue took six months to finish, and the slow laborious process in the next section its hallmarks being improvisation of the two dimensional CAD drawing.

### Roopkam

First the CAD drawing sent from the drawing office was scrutinised by the *mistri* and the best *roopkam karigar* available (Figure 7.38). The best *roopkam karigar* available translated it into a detailed Plaster of Paris model (Figure 7.39). This translation from drawing to model inevitably overwrote the drawing as, the *mistri* explained, “the office draftsman did not have much experience in *roopkam*”. The Plaster of Paris sample was sent away to be approved by the client. A revised free hand pencil drawing was prepared by the *mistri* in the factory based on the Plaster of Paris model (Figure 7.40). This was first traced on to tracing paper and then traced on to the square piece of stone. Thus the statues being carved were based on a drawing made by the *mistri* and the *karigar* and not the office based technician. This was tacitly understood and to some extent almost expected by all above the *karigar*.

The first category of *roopkam karigar* transferred the drawing on to the *chauras* (square) stone. The next class is the *out cutter karigar* and, his job was to cut the stone to roughly the right profile often deploying hand held power tools and the *tanka hathori*. The next step was performed by the *shape karigar*, giving the basic shape to the statue and this was deemed one of the most skilled jobs on the site, for the *karigar* merely glanced at the drawing from time to time.(Figure 7.41) After the shape cutter, the *safai karigar* took over, finishing off the shape using power tools .(Figure 7.42). After this the next class of *karigar* would trace the ornaments on to the shaped stone with pencil, following which the next class known as the *dagina karigar* would carve up the intricate ornaments, also paying attention to minutia such as finger nails.(Figure 7.43, 7.44) The last stage involved the carving and finishing of the face, which relied entirely on the imagination of the particular *karigar* and internalisations of photographs and drawings (Figure 7.45). After this the completed statue was sent to Plot 3 by truck for final finishing and polishing.

There are some interesting parallels and divergences in relation to training here with the *adivasi karigar*, which the chapter will come to in the next section. The majority of the *roopkam karigars* in Plot 1 had received their training through new cultures of training – in this case Government of Orissa's Schools of traditional sculpture. Since the *roop kam karigars* had temporarily migrated from Orissa for the ongoing project, because as Kaka explained, they were being paid better in Sirohi, he had made arrangements for their stay on site.

### **Nakshi kam**

We now come to the second category of carvers in the *karkhana*, the local *adivasis* carrying out the *nakshi kaam*. Out of the total of two hundred workers in Plot 1, they constituted the majority at around one hundred and eighty five. They sat in a different section of the factory from the *roopkam karigars* and made much more use of noisy power tools to carve out the stone. Their work included the carving out of repetitive patterns or designs on the basis of templates prepared by architects from the Sompura community.

While the *roopkam karigars* were held in high esteem, the *nakshi karigars* were held in less regard, but paradoxically distinctions were less predicated on the skill they possessed, and more on preconceived perceptions of the Bhil and Gharasiya tribes. They travelled to the factory on foot or bicycle, but Kaka also made arrangements for a truck to collect those who lived further away. At times Kaka joked that all the money they earned was spent on alcohol, or they were sons of drunkards, or that they came running to his factory once they had run out of food. Yet regardless of these ongoing perceptions, the bodily interactions seemed to be more about *lagaav*, rather than the factory owner – worker relation. It seems that in terms of the highly skilled work that they had learnt, the *adivasi karigars* too had joined the ranks of the *roopkam karigar* of Orrisa in this co-production.

For the majority of the *adivasi* workforce, both the contractor and the supervisors knew individuals by their names and were squatting and sitting beside them in dialogue, drawing and gesturing with a pencil or hammer and chisel. Further most Sompura temple architects I spoke to made weekly visits to factories to directly agree with *karigars* and supervisors the material nature of some of the qualities of carving they had in mind, while drawing in CAD, often working over pre-drawn motifs printed from their extensive CAD libraries. This interaction suggests that distance from the low caste *adivasi karigar* workforce was also accompanied by closeness and cross communication, and that their low rank created no barriers



when it came to their skill. Further, the supervisors' gaze had a built in flexibility. In dealing with the most expert of *adivasi karigars* as well the supervisors stood back deliberately, stating that the *karigars* knew best or that they didn't need instruction

Before carving actually begins on square pieces of stone for *nakshi kaam*, a complex process of making *farmas* (templates) out of mild steel sheets precedes the activity. It is worth paying attention to this process because it tells us something about the appropriation of the error free CAD drawing into an translation characterised by accident in the hands of the *nakshi*

A series of rooms often adjoined to factories tells the story of the rehearsals of production. Here the human mode again supplants the computational as we have seen in the process of drawing in *roopkam*. CAD drawing files of repetitive patterns are emailed to factories where 1:1 print outs are printed through A0 plotters. The paper print outs are pasted to mild steel sheets. On top of this, a sheet of tracing paper is fixed, as paper is considered fragile. A *karigar* whose full time job is to prepare *farmas* traces over in pencil, leaving an imprint on the mild steel sheets. (Figure 7.47) The act of tracing over in pencil is supplanted by punching in a series of dots, with a nail and hammer, so that when both the hard copy and the tracing paper - with the newly traced over pencil lines - are removed, what we are left with is a series of line and dot imprints on to the metal sheet. (Figure 7.46) These light engravings are further joined up freehand, using a pencil. Depending on where the maximum depth is, the relevant areas are cut out with a sharp scalpel and the *farma* imprint is ready to be transferred to a waiting piece of stone. Where it is sectional profiles that are needed to be transferred on to stone, the *farma karigar*, traces over a negative of the CAD profile provided by the Sompura temple architect.

Once the preparation of the *farma* is complete, a different class of *karigar* takes over. This class is considered the *mistri's* right hand man, for his job is of profound importance; also known as the *nishan laganey wala*, it involves placing the *farma* in the right position on top of the stone and transfer the pattern (Figure 7.48) This in itself is a laborious and highly skilled activity, requiring prolonged periods concentration. First the *farma* is placed over the stone. Next fine brick powder is sprinkled over the *farma*. The *farma* is removed, and the stone is left with a series of solid imprints and dots in powder, the dots being patterns within the pattern. Following immediately, the imprint of the brick powder is traced over finely with a pencil, and a next class of *karigar* starts work on the chiselling. If the carving detail is complex, an ideal model for everyone to follow is also prepared in parallel in Plaster of Paris. (Figure 7.49)

This labour intensive manual process supplants an automated process. Hand drawn motifs were translated into the co-ordinates of technology in the office, and then un co-ordinated back by the *karigar*. Those two dimensional co-ordinates provide a framework of sorts and have enough give in them to allow space for freedom.

Arindam Dutta has traced the shifts in jacquard weaving in the byelanes of Benares, in his case the procedure described is a laborious recreation of an already existing mechanised process, the jacquard loom invented by Charles Babbage in the late nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> While in the next section we will see how newer kinds of technology namely the CAD-CAM processes are being introduced to the carving business, Dutta's words have a resonance in the above production – that the artisan's work is defined as potentially error through and through, where every hit of the hammer and trace of the pencil bears the possibility of an incomputable deviation from the norm.<sup>42</sup> While Dutta does not dwell on the constructive possibilities of the error, i.e. improvisation and affective relations, to my mind this is precisely how traces of the past in stone carving practices come to enliven present day production.

This collaboration in factory circumstances has resonances with pre-capitalist social relations involved in temple production. But following Dipesh Chakrabarty's readings of Marx, the term pre-capitalist here is not used in a historicist sense, rather as a pre-analytical philosophical category, where the past, in practices of embodiment comes into the modern. 'It does not come as a remnant of another time, but as constitutive of a present'.<sup>43</sup> Seen from this perspective, the factory can be read as a negotiated space, as a crucible of encounters. Instead of rendering the *karigars* into mute witnesses to the discipline process, the factory relied on the subjective interpretations of the largest and lowest paid workforce as well as an exchange between *karigars*, the *mistris*, the contractors and the temple architects. In turn this would imply that there is indeed immense potential for production systems to loosen their grip and let *karigars* enjoy greater freedoms, but this prerogative is forever in tension with the exigencies of time and budgets.

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<sup>41</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty : Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2006)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, p.261

### **Crafting by machine: an inhuman process?**

E (a temple architect): CNC cutting is not successful because the finishing still has to be done manually. Personally as a temple architect I would like to see more of handwork, because the machine gives you monotonous work. In hand work, the artist or the carver will have two or three different ways to do the design that we prescribe, so there will be variations in the design. This is more important to me, not the monotony.<sup>44</sup>

C (A temple architect): The perfection that you can achieve in CNC cannot be achieved manually. All the mistakes that the human hands would make are not made by CNC. There is no chance for that mistake. . . This is a revolution that has taken place in the last few years.<sup>45</sup>

Two contrasting views open this section on crafting by machine, both from established temple architects, reflecting not only the diversity of opinions, but also touching on global debates on the role of architects in the climate of digital fabrication process. As this new process involving cutting-edge Computer Numerically Controlled (henceforth CNC) machines is described to me in full detail, the shifts surrounding temple production takes on a new dimension. An automated process comes to stand in for the *karigar* to a great degree, potentially giving the office based temple architect direct control over shaping matter. To understand the nature of the CNC enterprise, which has been instrumental in two temples in the UK, the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara (Gravesend 2010) and the Shri Krishna Mandir (West Bromwich 2005, Figure 7.53, 7.54), the following observations are based on Kiran Trivedi Group's production units on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.(Figure 7.50, 7.51)

The processing units are most conspicuously different to the factories of Sirohi District, such as the one discussed earlier, in the use of CNC machines for precision cutting, carving and polishing stonework. The Trivedi architectural design studio is set up to provide shop drawings for stones to be fabricated with exact dimensions

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<sup>44</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad 2012

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Ahmedabad, 2012

and finishes, using Unigraphics NX, a high-end commercial CAD/CAM/CAE PLM software suite for the designing and manufacturing process.

Predominantly the *karigar*'s role lies in the finishing and polishing stages, as the CNC crafted stone has visible ridges which 'need' to be smoothed over by hand. Excellent for removing mass at high speeds, the process gets expensive for fine detailing, which is where recourse to human labour in the last stages becomes a prerogative. (Figure 7.52) At the processing unit, *karigars* were seen filling in detail to architectural elements like doorways and columns, with hammer and chisel, as well as polishing the stone.

The CNC process starts life with a CAD drawing, which is produced in the design office by a team of architects and technicians. The CAD file is converted through CAD/CAM software into a mechanical language format for output, which is then transferred to the CNC machine. With its own inherent systems for decoding drawings, the CNC machine processes this information and sends it for precision cutting, measurable in microns. The biggest advantage of using this manufacturing process, is accuracy and speed, making it most efficient in projects where mass repetition is involved. The high cost attached with the process would dictate how much the client would like to spend which further dictates the extent to which a piece of stone will undergo the CNC process. Consequently the *kaarigar*'s role expands to encompass shaping the material, or contracts to polishing and finishing duties. There may be varying degrees of responsibilities, but in both instances, it is most interesting to note that automation is never fully realised, rather is mediated by the hand of the *karigar*.

Imported from Italy, the repertoire of machines includes gang saws, wire cutters, lathe machines, and the more sophisticated three, four and five axis machines, of which the latter can carve at angles in addition to the x, y, and z planes, 'giving good angular control.' The CNC five axis water jet machine, which is adept at inlay work in addition to cutting complex three dimensional shapes precisely, 'through the use of an abrasive water jet system capable at carving 400 inches per minute' and this with the help of complex software programmes, run by individuals trained on the job.

In the Trivedi factory, the long rectilinear space of the sheds is divided in two distinct sections – to one side is a line of mostly unmanned CNC machines dressing, slicing, sizing, profiling, and carving stones - and in parallel directly across is a row of men and women - sitting on the floor polishing and finishing off the

machine crafted pieces before they are packed and loaded in a truck for dispatch. The entire assembly line process from raw stone to packaged piece is visible in this one space. The presence of the CNC machines, the software operatives and the *karigars* all working in the same shed, in extremely localised and specific ways prompts one to think of transfers of skills. The improvisation skills of the *karigar* are still in demand in the finishing and polishing activity but to a far diminished extent.

When shapes get too complex to draft in CAD. A detailed 3D model is made in clay, which is then scanned using a 3D scanner from where information is sent to the CNC machine for carving. (Figure 7.55) Amidst the processing unit buzzing with machinery lies the earthy smelling clay modelling room where a sculptor works with his assistant in making three dimensional clay models of Gods and Goddesses, which are themselves based on paintings, calendar art or hand drawn sketches.

One way of looking at the CAD CAM exercise is that the, the *kaarigar* is removed from the creative process at several levels, but it would be more productive to my mind to see it as an automated processes that can never fully actualise itself, reliant itself on the skills and subjectivity of the *karigars*, the draftsmen and the technicians. In a constantly mediated process *karigars* overwrites the automated system. . One temple architect aptly remarked that the *karigar* is akin to a 'ten axis machine'. Far from being his fantasy of an independent 'cyborg artisan', this remark acknowledges the co-dependent nature of the temple building industry

### **Conclusion: degrees of improvisations**

This chapter must not be misunderstood as a futuristic vision for a cyborg-artisan figure, the *karigar's* abilities for precision and repetition extended by mechanical elements supplanted into the body. Nor must it be read as a manifesto for digital fabrication of temples in the name of technological progress where variation takes a central place, such as exemplified in the writings of Lars Spuybroek.<sup>46</sup> With variation and indeterminacy seen as an end in itself, such fabrication processes claim to give the architect the power to work with material directly, giving him/her back the status of the craftsman. But in doing so, they diminish the collective's presence and potential to improvise. Jonathan Hill suggests that the conjunction of CAD and CAM aligns thinking, drawing and making so that the architect can more accurately claim,

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<sup>46</sup> Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things : Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (Rotterdam: V2\_Publishing, 2011)



that to be in command of drawing is to be in command of building.<sup>47</sup> This vision does away with the eventful middle ground of social technical relations that a collective can contribute to.

On the contrary in this chapter I have attempted to pay close attention to the rich socio technical mediations, between matter and final form. I found it necessary to inverse the mode of looking to a matrixial gaze rather than as one that sees a lack in the survival of a great classical tradition. Yet I found improvisation played a key role, despite strict regimes of discipline on the factory floor, like the layer drawing system, and drives for precision and standardisation. In the factory, disciplinary regimes were improvised upon by older customary relations in an unobjectified sense, the co-ordinates of technology were improvised by the indeterminacy of the hand and mind. Architecture is mediated by these possibilities. The degree of improvisation is far diminished than say the various examples I ran through from the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century but it is the clearest material example of a practice, to my mind that survives as a trace from the past and that too improvisation in the tightest of circumstances.

Both the Sompuras and the *karigars* seem to be immune to claims that render them as mute witnesses to technological processes. One Sompura verbalised the presence of Vishvakarma, the divine architect of the universe, in every strike of the hammer: tran tak, tran tak, tran tak and to extend this verbalisation, one could think of divine presence in the whizzing and the whirring of technical artefacts. These sounds appear to me as subaltern murmurings, providing a robust immunity, rather than resistance to widely held misconceptions of crafts in India as unmediated practices. As for those voices that are quick to repudiate capitalistic and technological mediations, this chapter is a gentle reminder to slow down, and to see the potentials in the eventful middle ground.

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Hill, 'Building the Drawing', *Architectural Design*, 75.4 (2005), 13-21



Figure 7.1: Advertisement in *Shilpa Sangraha*, published by the Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad (2007)

Figure 7.0 (Chapter cover): A temple architect from Ahmedabad (left) on a co-ordination visit to an on-site carving factory at the Kirti Maya Mandir construction site, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh

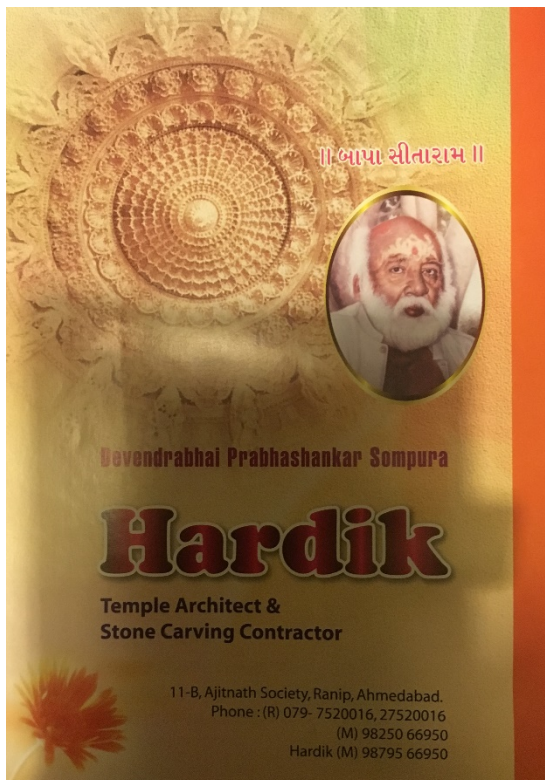


Figure 7.2: Advertisement in *Shilpa Sangraha*, published by the Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad (2007)

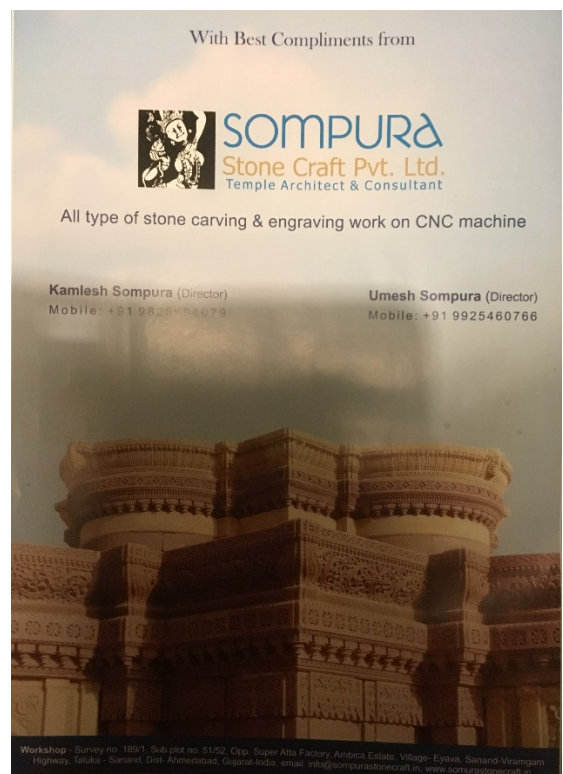


Figure 7.3: Advertisement in *Shilpa Sangraha*, published by the Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad (2007)



Figure 7.4: A example of a carving *karkhana* or factory in Pindwara, Sirohi District, Rajasthan



Figure 7.5: Carving *karkhana* or factory in Barsana, Uttar Pradesh. Living accommodation visible in the distance



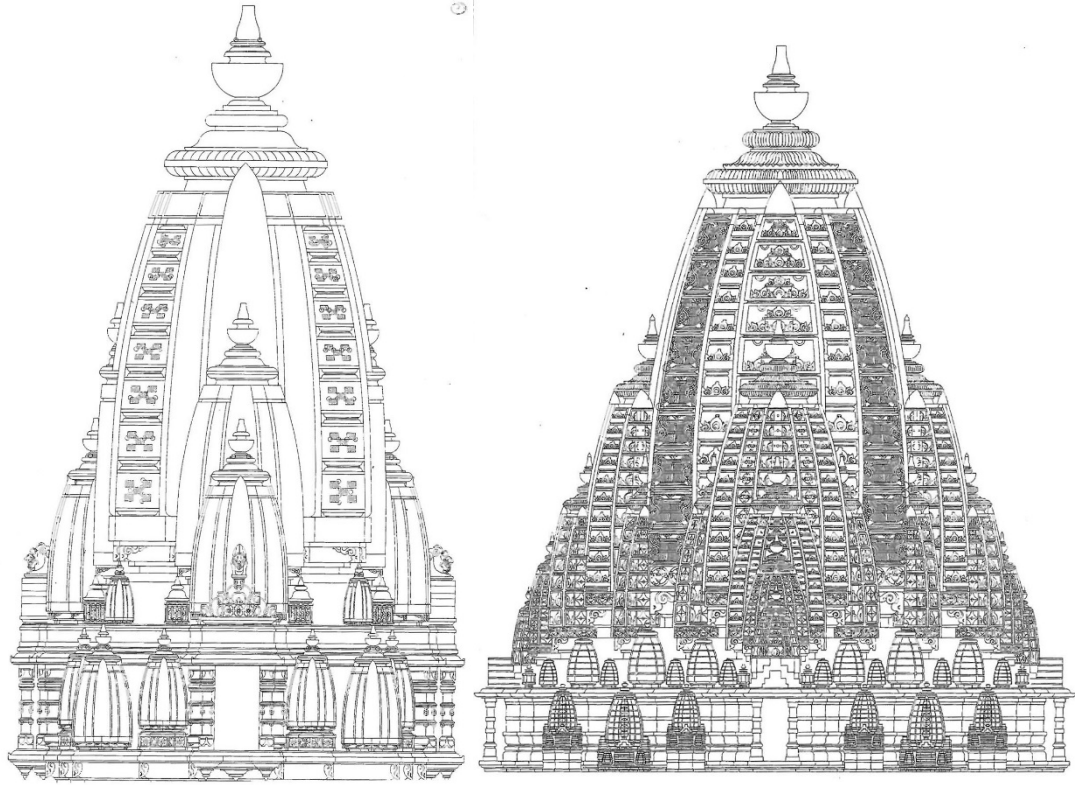


Figure 7.7 and 7.8 : Examples of *Shikhar* drawings from a CAD library. Image from the *Shilpa Sangraha*, published by the Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad (2007). Courtesy of Rajesh Sompura

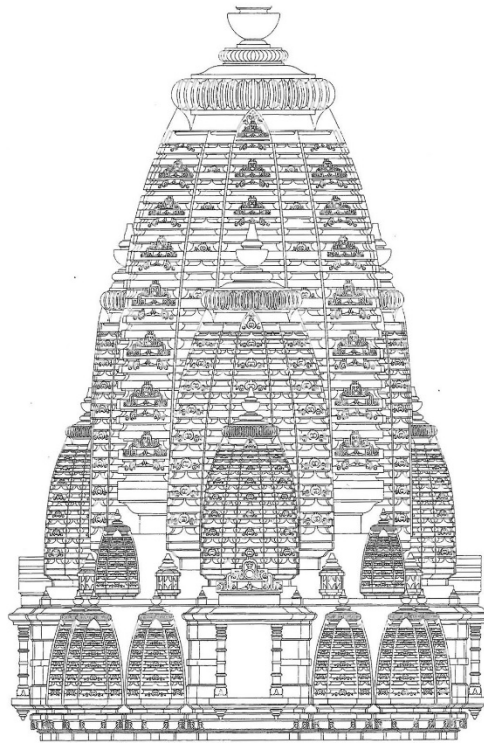


Figure 7.9: Example of a *shikhar* drawing in the *Shilpa Sangraha*, published by the Sompura Kelavani Centre, Ahmedabad, used in the drawings for the Oshwal temple, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. See Figure 7.10, 7.11. Courtesy of Rajesh Sompura

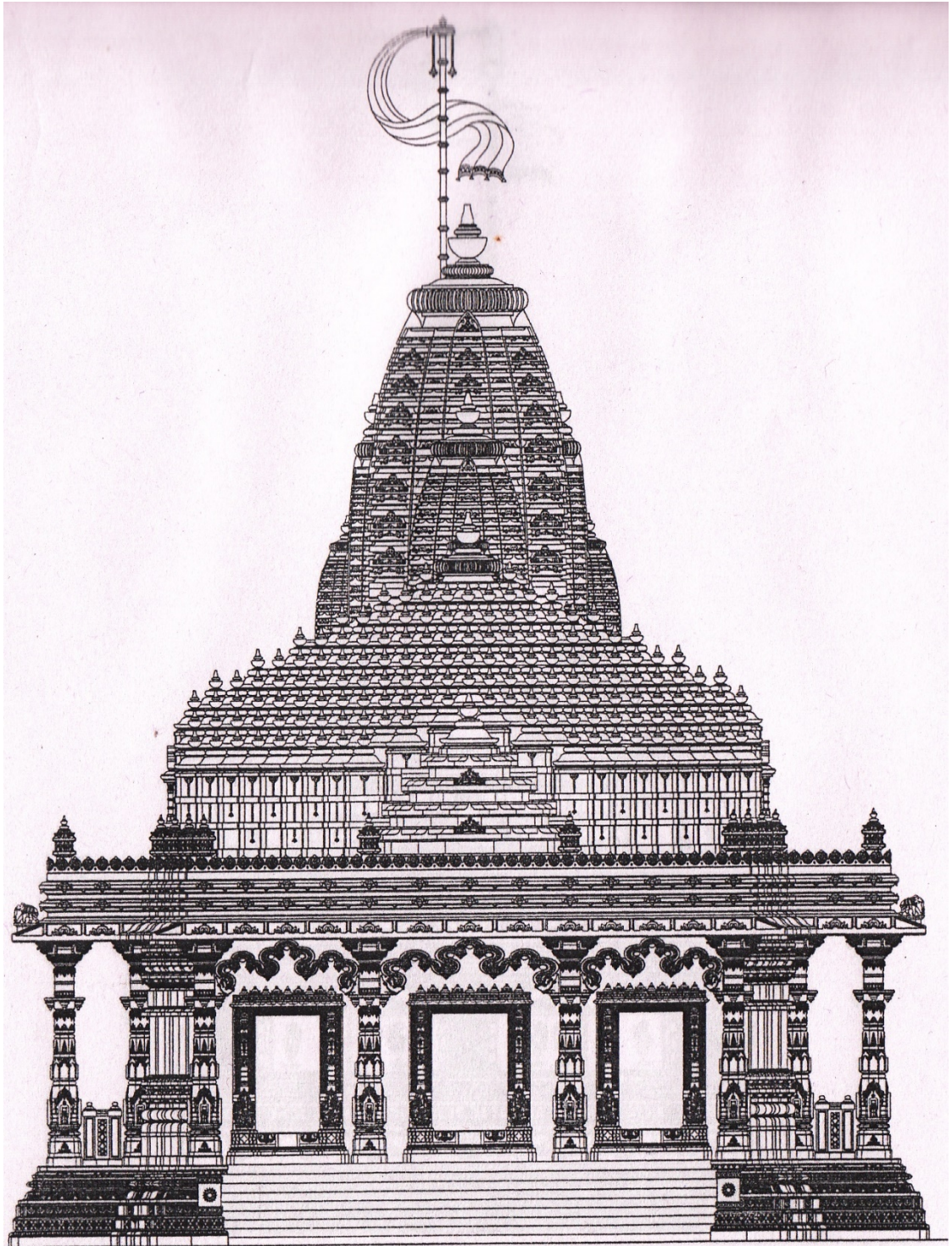


Figure 7.10: Front elevation, Oshwal Jain temple, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. Image courtesy temple architect Rajesh Sompura.



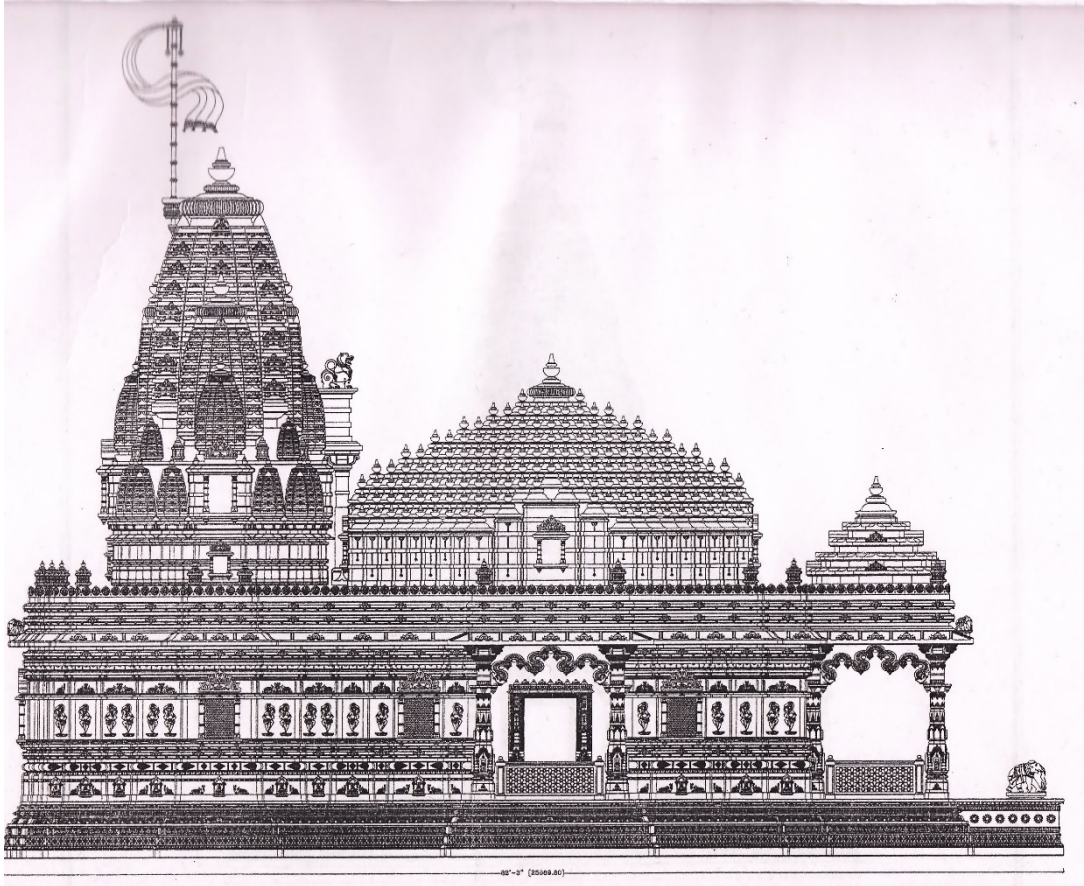


Figure 7.11: Side elevation, Oshwal Jain temple, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. Image courtesy temple architect Rajesh Sompura.



Figure 7.12: Oshwal Jain temple, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire (2005)





Figure 7.13: Large scale, full size drawings produced for manufacture.



Figure 7.14: Opening the family archive





Figure 7.15: The front yard of a present day Sompura family where large scale drawings were produced, before the age of computer drafting.



Figure 7.16: Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's grandson surveys his grandfather's workspace while he worked for the Anandji Kalyanji Trust: the roof of living accommodation where full size drawings were made by the family. Palitana, Gujarat.





Figure 7.17: Full size Plaster of Paris model made by Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi, in workshop spaces adjunct to living accommodation in Palitana, Gujarat. (c. 1980)





Figure 7.18: Workshop space adjunct to living accommodation in former home of Amritlal Mulshankkar Trivedi. Palitana, Gujarat



Figure 7.19: Compressed drawing space in a typical office using CAD technology





Figure 7.20: Variation in detail at the Jasmalnath Mahadeva temple, Asoda, Gujarat. (12<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 7.21: Standardisation in detail at the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh (Under construction)





Figure 7.22: Variated *Ghattapallav* columns at the Someshvara temple, Kiradu temple complex, Barmer, Rajasthan (12<sup>th</sup> century)



Figure 7.23: The Someshvara temple, Kiradu temple complex, Barmer, Rajasthan (12<sup>th</sup> century) Image courtesy Ashish Trambadia

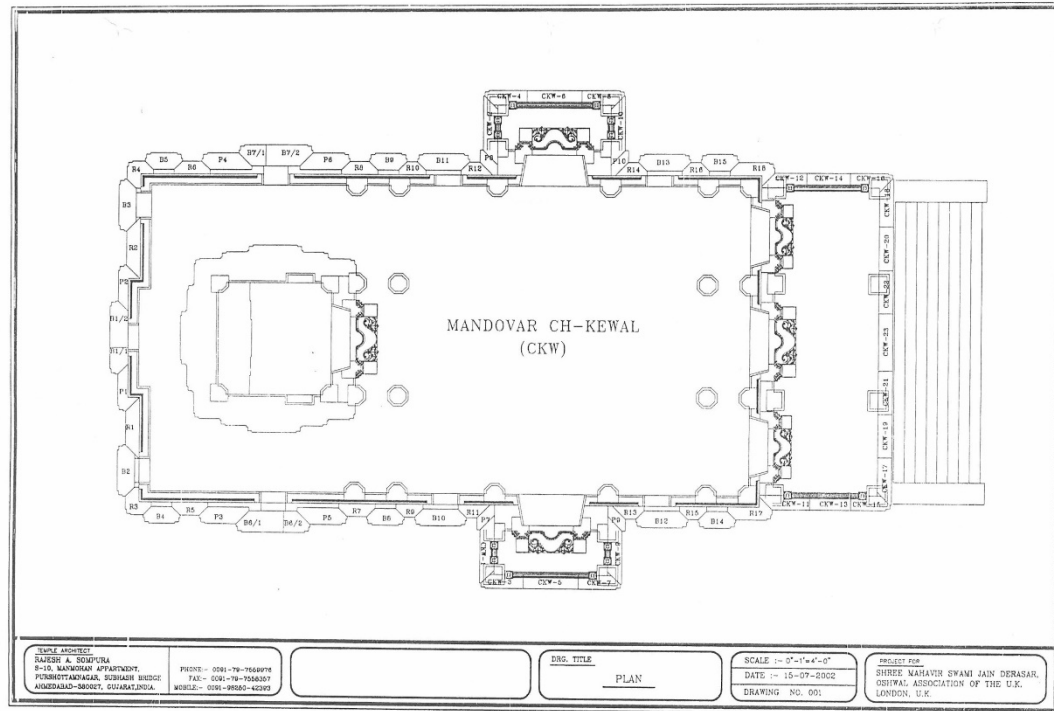


Figure 7.24: Layer drawing system, plan. Oshwal Jain Temple, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire (2005). Drawing courtesy Rajesh Sompura. See Figure 6.42 for a detailed 'layer drawing section'

| OSHVAL ASSOCIATION OF THE U.K.       |                          |                                |       |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
| LAYER:- MANDOVAR CH-KEWAL (CKW)      |                          |                                |       |        |
| DATE:-26-12-2003                     |                          |                                |       |        |
| S.NO.                                | STONE NUMBER             | STONE SIZE                     | PIECE | C.F.T  |
| 1                                    | B1/1                     | 2'-5 1/2" X 1'-8 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 4.14   |
| 2                                    | B1/2                     | 4'-4" X 1'-8 1/4" X 1'-0"      | 1     | 7.31   |
| 3                                    | P1                       | 4'-4 1/4" X 2'-0 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 8.79   |
| 4                                    | P2                       | 4'-4 1/4" X 2'-0 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 8.79   |
| 5                                    | R1, R2                   | 5'-8" X 1'-3 1/4" X 1'-0"      | 2     | 14.40  |
| 6                                    | B2, B3                   | 4'-9 1/2" X 1'-7 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 2     | 15.36  |
| 7                                    | B10, B11, B12, B13       | 4'-9 1/2" X 1'-6 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 4     | 29.12  |
| 8                                    | R3                       | 2'-6 1/4" X 2'-5 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 6.14   |
| 9                                    | R4                       | 2'-6 1/4" X 2'-5 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 6.14   |
| 10                                   | B4, B5, B6, B9, B14, B15 | 3'-5 1/2" X 1'-6 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 6     | 31.50  |
| 11                                   | R5, R6, R7, R8           | 3'-4" X 1'-2 1/4" X 1'-0"      | 4     | 15.80  |
| 12                                   | P3, P6                   | 4'-7 1/4" X 1'-6 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 2     | 14.00  |
| 13                                   | P4, P5                   | 4'-7 1/4" X 1'-6 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 2     | 14.00  |
| 14                                   | B6/1, B7/2               | 4'-4" X 1'-11 1/4" X 1'-0"     | 2     | 16.78  |
| 15                                   | B6/2, B7/1               | 2'-5 1/2" X 1'-11 1/4" X 1'-0" | 2     | 9.52   |
| 16                                   | R9, R10, R15, R16        | 2'-6" X 1'-2 1/4" X 1'-0"      | 4     | 11.84  |
| 17                                   | R11, R14                 | 2'-11" X 1'-2 1/4" X 1'-0"     | 2     | 6.92   |
| 18                                   | R12, R13                 | 2'-11" X 1'-2 1/4" X 1'-0"     | 2     | 6.92   |
| 19                                   | P7, P10                  | 2'-3 1/4" X 1'-7 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 2     | 7.28   |
| 20                                   | P8, P9                   | 2'-3 1/4" X 1'-7 1/4" X 1'-0"  | 2     | 7.28   |
| 21                                   | R17                      | 4'-1 1/4" X 2'-1 3/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 8.80   |
| 22                                   | R18                      | 4'-1 1/4" X 2'-1 3/4" X 1'-0"  | 1     | 8.80   |
|                                      |                          |                                | 46    | 259.63 |
| TEMPLE ARCHITECT:- RAJESH A. SOMPURA |                          |                                |       |        |

| OSHVAL ASSOCIATION OF THE U.K.       |      |      |     |     |      |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|
| LAYER:- MANDOVAR CH-KEWAL (CKW)      |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| STONE NO.                            | B1/1 | B1/2 | P1  | P2  | R1   | R2   |
| ARRIVAL                              |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING START                        |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| POLISHING OK                         |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| FITTING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| STONE NO.                            | B2   | B3   | B10 | B11 | B12  | B13  |
| ARRIVAL                              |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING START                        |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| POLISHING OK                         |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| FITTING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| STONE NO.                            | R3   | R4   | B4  | B5  | B6   | B9   |
| ARRIVAL                              |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING START                        |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| POLISHING OK                         |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| FITTING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| STONE NO.                            | B14  | B15  | R5  | R6  | R7   | R8   |
| ARRIVAL                              |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING START                        |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| POLISHING OK                         |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| FITTING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| STONE NO.                            | P3   | P4   | P5  | P6  | B6/1 | B7/2 |
| ARRIVAL                              |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING START                        |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| CARVING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| POLISHING OK                         |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| FITTING OK                           |      |      |     |     |      |      |
| TEMPLE ARCHITECT:- RAJESH A. SOMPURA |      |      |     |     |      |      |

Figure 7.25: Bill of quantities and work sequences generated in the layer drawing system. courtesy Rajesh Sompura. See Figure 6.42 for a detailed 'layer drawing section'



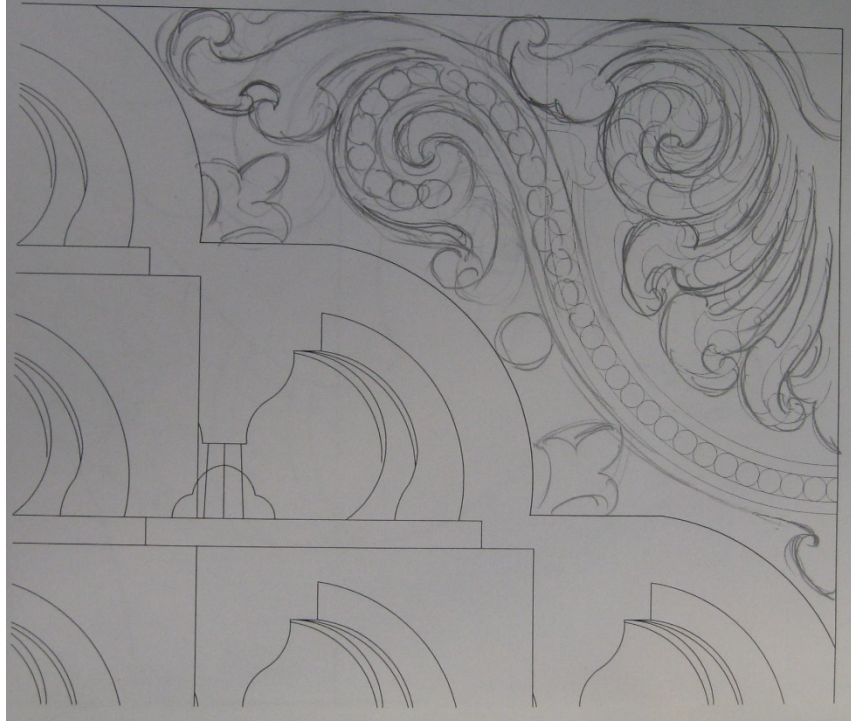


Figure 26: Additions and corrections to a pre made detail from the CAD library



Figure 27: Carved ceiling at the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh





Figure 7.28: Standardised pattern on the *mahapeeth* and *mandovar* at the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana Uttar Pradesh (Ongoing since 2007)





Figure 7.29: Plaster of Paris model of a ceiling panel made in the *karkhana* of the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh (2012)



Figure 7.30: Plaster of Paris model of peacock made in the *karkhana* of the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana Uttar Pradesh (2012)





Figure 7.31: 'Plot 3', Women engaged in polishing carved stone prior to packing and shipping. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.32: 'Plot 4', CNC machinery in carving factory, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.33: 'Plot 1', CNC carved fragments being detailed and finished by hand. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan





Figure 7.34: 'Plot 4', Contractor's house, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.35: 'Plot 4, Contractor's house overlooking workyards, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan





Figure 7.36: 'Plot 1', *Roopkam karigars* can be seen sitting in the foreground, in quieter areas. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan.



Figure 7.37: "Plot 1", Separate areas for *nakshi kam*, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan





Figure 7.38: 'Plot 1', CAD drawing scrutinised by *mistri* and *roopkam karigar*. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan.



Figure 7.39: 'Plot 1', CAD drawing translated into scaled-down Plaster of Paris model for client approval. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.40: 'Plot 1', Revised free hand pencil drawing by *mistri* and *roopkam karigar*. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 41: 'Plot1', *Shape karigar*, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan





Figure 42: 'Plot1', *Safai karigar* Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.43: 'Plot1', *Dagina karigar*, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan





Figure 7.44: 'Plot 1', *Dagina karigar*, Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.45: 'Plot 1', Finalising *roop kam*. Pindwara, Sirohi district, Rajasthan



Figure 7.46: *Farma* or template for *nakshi kam* based on full size CAD drawings. Carving template for the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh (ongoing)



Figure 7.47: *Farma karigar* in a at the construction site of the Kirti Maya Mandir, Barsana, Uttar Pradesh (ongoing)





Figure 7.48: Transferring the metal *farma* pattern on to stone



Figure 7.49: Plaster of Paris model for complex *nakshi kam*





Figure 7.50: CNC factory, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Figure 7.51: CNC carving, Ahmedabad, Gujarat





Figure 7.52: Precision and repetition through CNC carving, Ahmedabad, Gujarat



Figure 7.53: CNC carved Shri Krishna temple, West Bromwich (2010)



Figure 7.54: CNC carved details with the half lotus (above) and *gavaksha* motif (below). Shri Krishna temple, West Bromwich (2010)





Figure 7.55: Preparation of clay models for scanning. CNC factory, Ahmedabad.







**CONCLUSION**

*'Can we imagine another moment of subaltern history, one in which we stay - permanently not simply as a matter of political tactic – with that which is fragmentary and episodic? . . . What kind of social justice would one envisage as one embraced the fragment? . . .'*<sup>1</sup>

### Reimagining tradition

The various chapters in this dissertation I hope have illuminated not only the diversity of the creative practices embodied by the Sompura community of temple architects from Gujarat, but also shown how this community has creatively negotiated change brought about by late colonial, post independent and contemporary contexts. Whether it is modern historical consciousness, a rising interest in the antiquities of India, an interest in reified ideas of hereditary craftsmen, changing patronage and cultural arenas or current global economies and technologies, in each of the chapters the dissertation has shown that the Sompuras in their concrete and 'present' practices, are relating to the past in a particular inviolable mode. This mode is specific and situated in concrete everyday circumstance in which – invoking the Subaltern Studies project - 'historical and contingent difference is neither reified nor erased but *negotiated*.'<sup>2</sup> In other words the Sompuras are producing their own locality, their own modernity by translating, and reconfiguring each of these paradigms to their own end.

This mode of inviolability has no intersections with orientalist conceptions of the Sompuras as unchanging or with visions positing them as 'resisting' change.<sup>3</sup> If resisting change implies 'blindly' continuing a language – as against the 'refined' tastes of 'critical regionalist values' - then the commentators are apathetic to the livelihoods of a community whose mainstay has been for generations making places for worship for a diverse set of patrons: in continuum. Here ideas of individual creativity and personhood do not hold much sway, for continuity is the prerogative. Ideas of copyright of design too do not have much use. In the words of one of my informants, "We are all drinking from the same well. No one can claim copyright, apart from Vishvakarma!"

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<sup>1</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity : Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, Ill. ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 34-36

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.p. 140

<sup>3</sup> For both positions see A.G.K. Menon in Rahul Mehrotra, 'Counter Modernism: Resurfacing of the Ancient', in *Architecture in India since 1990* (Mumbai: Ostfildern : Pictor ; Hatje Cantz, 2011), pp. 251-301, p. 267



It is precisely for this reason their present conceptions cannot also be seen as a 'revival' or as an 'invention of tradition', which may see their works as anachronistic.<sup>4</sup> For a revival implies a feeble or dead previous state, and invention implies 'starting anew' or 'initiating' and may be more apt to nationalist imaginations which fabricate purity, authenticity and assumed static origins, a particularly worrying phenomenon being currently played out on political fronts in India equating the nation state with Hinduness.<sup>5</sup> This dissertation shows on the other hand that the Sompuras have been vigorously active all through the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it is well known their ancestors were active all through the Indo Islamic encounter and much before.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the language itself, continuities can also be seen in embodied cultures of work such as in contingent uses of texts, the coevalness of capitalist and older ways of work, and most importantly in a largely non-historicised relationship with the past. A more apt way of thinking about their tradition in modern contexts would be through frameworks of reconfiguration, on which their 20th - century rise is predicated on.

Further, the Sompuras' relations with the architectural tradition cannot be subsumed under any grand narratives of essences or unmediated notions of 'ancient tradition', for an idea of shared transcultural practices with modern, and transcultural forms of knowledge is always already present. The continued use of negative labels like 'unmodern', 'non-modern', 'counter to modernity', 'counter modernism' in relation to the Sompuras only shows the problems that academic writing is faced with when contemplating the works of those who have not undergone training in formal architectural education. The dissertation hopes to have illuminated that traditions can be reimagined as negotiated realms.

### ***Chalu bhasha*: Negotiating historical knowledge**

A particular interest to the dissertation has been the relations between non-historicised kinds of knowledge and historicised ones. The lived relations with gods and goddesses in terms of *harzana chukana*, the embodied craft practices in the factories of Pindwara, the very conceptualising processes in a temple like at Wembley all point to a certain 'present' of practice when seen from the vantage

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<sup>4</sup> See E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto edition. edn (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

<sup>5</sup> See Kavita Singh, 'Temple of Eternal Return: The Swaminarayan Akshardham Complex in Delhi', *Artibus Asiae*, 70.1 (2010), 47-76

<sup>6</sup> See Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat : Architecture and Society During the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries*, Series: Brill's Indological Library, 220925-2916 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2004)

points of the Sompuras. The concept of *chalu bhasha* the everyday and contingently captures a transmission of knowledge which cannot be easily historicised for it is constantly on the move and difficult to represent. It is tacit.

In the writing of the *Shilparatnakar* (1939), Narmadashankar Muljibhai Sompura encapsulates one of the finest moments of negotiating historical consciousness. On the one hand his illustrations and their sequences display his deep rooted immersion and understanding in the *nagar shaili* tradition, unencumbered by periods and chronology, on the other a complete awareness of, by then, established arenas of archaeology and antiquity. The thesis shows how drawings produced by the Archaeological Survey of India, the colonial surveying agency, were appropriated and enlivened to a local context. They too become part of the *Nagar shaili* for which they were never intended, suddenly in proximity to Vishvakarma's injunctions. P.O. Sompura's own publications demonstrate a seepage of modern art historical concerns in the translation of medieval architectural treatises, into a pan Indian 'history' of Indian temple architecture and craftsmen, yet knowledge is segregated and reassembled in ways which depart from art history methods. This departure is seen in the differences between P.O.Sompura's contributions to Pramod Chandra's seminal *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* and his own publications, where definite editorial concerns are visible in the former. Amritlal Mulshankar Trivedi's involvement with renovations at Ranakpur and Dilwara are another case in point where the breaking down of history into 'periods' brought about by western European conservation aesthetics is rendered invisible in the material matrices of *jirnodhar*.

The continued use of the *Shilparatnakar* and other modern architectural treatises in the present day context is another pertinent case in point through which conclusions can be drawn on relations with historical consciousness. That the present generations' revered examples by and large reside in temples from the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century is highly suggestive of acceptance of a valorisation of the Solanki era brought about by colonial surveys, historians in the 1960s as well as the Dilwara renovations. Yet in practice the case studies show fluidity in not only references covering a broader range but a willingness to explore new spatial typologies, not found in any text or architectural precedence.

These freedoms also point to an idea of varying vantage points when thinking of models of creativity. This dissertation has shown that the Sompura's architectural thinking and conceptualisation have an awkward relationship with a teleology which promises a future arrangement with a clear sense of direction and a well ordered

doctrine.<sup>7</sup> The future is open, we do not know what it will bring. While it may be that selected works of the medieval ancestors of the Sompuras are more amenable to historical representations predisposed to 'patterns of emergence and proliferation',<sup>8</sup> certainly those frameworks sit awkwardly when looking at the evidence of the period in question, especially so when well-argued and rigorous conclusions are drawn about fossilisation of the present.<sup>9</sup> This critique also comes disguised as immense appreciation of the same sources about medieval temple architecture, primarily in a spirit of dialogue and engagement.<sup>10</sup>

### **Negotiating binaries: Tradition *versus* Modern**

Throughout the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> - century and the present moment this thesis has shown the fluidity of practices characterised by the Sompuras, resisting any easy categorisation. By the very act of engaging with modern paradigms and cultural arenas brought from the late 19<sup>th</sup> - century, the Sompuras demonstrated the modernity of their practices. As soon as attention is paid to the sinews that connect that which is conventionally considered traditional and that which is conventionally considered modern, boundaries become fuzzy and to a large extent redundant. These categories in themselves are inadequate and are in direct continuation of colonial forms of knowledge formation, segregating the past and the present into distinct entities, as explicated in the introduction, in Chapter 1 and generally within postcolonial scholarship looking at non-western forms of modernity. They may be useful to a nationalist imagination that valorises the 'ancient' – particularly in the current political climate of far right Hindu fundamentalism - but the work of these categories ceases to have much meaning when seen in relation to performative dimensions as lived out on the ground. Certainly, the Sompuras are not exempt from placing themselves within a nationalist imagination – for they freely and joyously do so - yet it seems to me that theirs is a calculation of expediency, fluidity, flexibility and openness, where there is no conflict with modernisation.

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<sup>7</sup> A good example of the well-ordered doctrine can be seen in a contemporary of the Sompuras, Adam Hardy, where a rigorously argued academic vantage point imagines the *future* achievement of 14<sup>th</sup> century temple architects of South India. See Adam Hardy, *Hoysala Design (Design for Shree Kalyana Venkateshwara Temple, Venkatapura, Dist Kolar, Karnataka, India* (<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/37340/>: 2014) [accessed November 2015] For current debates on teleological thinking see Henning Trüper and others, *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015)

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Adam Hardy, 'Śekhārī Temples', *Artibus Asiae*, 62.1 (2002), 81-137

<sup>9</sup> A point also made by Giles Tillotson, 'The Temple Architecture of India. By Adam Hardy. Pp. 256. Chichester, Wiley, 2007', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series)*, 19.01 (2009), 128-30

<sup>10</sup> See Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: IGNCA, 2015)

### Negotiating capitalism

All too often contemporary Sompuras are idealised through atavistic representations which insist on a separation between craft and capitalist production, resonating with epistemic categories from the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup>- centuries.<sup>11</sup> In the case of heritage and conservation discourse in India they are viewed as bearers of unmediated 'traditional knowledge systems', obscuring the diversity of their practices. In the case of ethnographic readings of their contemporaries—the sthapatis of South India—the primacy of the ritual mode of production over the capitalist mode is argued for. In the case of their most visible transnational patrons, we are presented with a timeless dimension to the Indian craftsman's labour.

Rather than obscuring the modernity, contradictions and heterogeneity inherent in the production of their temples, the dissertation treats the factory floor as a conceptual ground for negotiating difference. Here the term factory—ubiquitous with modernity—is made its own through the affective and contingent relations of a range of constituencies on the ground. The densely knitted hand and machine intensive technologies do not offer a technocratic vision purporting to give back architects the status of the craftsman, rather suggest that a vital coproduction is at work.

The various collaborative forces on the factory floor have resonances with pre-capitalist social relations involved in temple production. But following Chakrabarty's readings of Marx, the term pre-capitalist here is not used in a historicist sense, rather as a pre-analytical philosophical category, where the past, in practices of embodiment comes into the modern. 'It does not come as a remnant of another time, but as constitutive of a present'.<sup>12</sup>

The translational reading offered by the dissertation concludes with neither an absence of relations with capitalist production and historical consciousness nor a subsumption of singular histories into the abstract spaces of both. It has shown that knowledge is transformed and transmitted in translation of modern paradigms. If the Sompuras are carriers of a long tradition, then the dissertation shows through overwhelming evidence they are also carriers of transformations. One could also argue that they are carriers of contradictions discernible in the occasional unspeakable untranslatability of aesthetics. The stresses induced by the exigencies of time and budgets have sometimes little room for some of the finer aspects

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<sup>11</sup> See Megha Chand Inglis, 'Factory Processes and Relations in Indian Temple Production', in *Industries of Architecture: Relations, Process, Production*. ed. by Nick Beech Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff (London: Routledge, 2015 ), pp. 114-124

<sup>12</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2008 ), p.251



## Conclusion

realised by their ancestors in detail and in strategy.<sup>13</sup> These were tacitly acknowledged and accepted. For the moment if a collection of fragments encapsulated in these chapters can begin to give a sense of their livelihoods in a living and lived out sense, that is reason enough to stray away from a politics of despair or loss.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 8.0 (Chapter Cover): At the workshop of Arvind Acharya Sompura, considered to be one of the best sculptors within the community today. Palitana, Gujarat.

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<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Adam Hardy for several conversations on this issue.

<sup>14</sup> I aim to take these investigations further in my role as Research Associate on a project funded by the Leverhulme Trust at Cardiff University: *The Nagara Tradition of Temple Architecture: Continuity, Transformation, Renewal*

## Conclusion

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