

Situating culturally the study of modern Tamil temples and their builders at a time of religious revival and cultural nationalism in the 1910s in colonial South India.

Architectural knowledge and the ‘Dravidian’ temple in colonial Madras Presidency

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In around 1912 Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil, a young science teacher from French colonial Pondicherry in South India, visited the nearby town of Cuddalore in order to inspect the construction of a new Hindu temple. Since arriving in South India in 1909 he had been travelling to many temples and archaeological sites in order to understand the history of South Indian art. The modern temple that he visited in a suburb of Cuddalore at Tiruppappuliyur was not in fact new but a wholesale renovation of a nine-hundred-year-old shrine on a site sacred to Tamil Shaivas. This was just one of the many temples substantially rebuilt from the 1890s to the 1930s under the patronage of a wealthy merchant community, the Nattukkottai Chettiars, at a time of religious revival and growing Tamil cultural nationalism. The Nattukkottai Chettiars came from the villages and towns of Chettinadu, an arid region in southern Madras Presidency. This region was significant not only for being the provenance of the most prolific patrons of South Indian temple architecture in colonial Madras Presidency but also their builders, for many of the architects and craftsmen working on the temple at Tiruppappuliyur were from villages in Chettinadu. One of these men, M. S. Swaminathan of Pillaiyarpatti, was Jouveau-Dubreuil’s chief informant, one of the many ‘natives’ who were a critical and inextricable element of colonial knowledge production. The understanding of formal composition and terminology that Jouveau-Dubreuil learnt from contemporary architects and craftsmen and his observations of the evolution of architectural design contributed towards the first study of the Tamil temple for both a scholarly and wider public audience from the very earliest monuments of the seventh century through to those currently under construction. This article explores this architectural ‘renaissance’ in colonial Madras Presidency under Chettiar patronage and evaluates modern temple design through the pioneering scholarship of Jouveau-Dubreuil and his contemporaries.

Jouveau-Dubreuil and French colonial archaeology

Jouveau-Dubreuil was born in Saigon in 1885, the second of four sons of a naval doctor from the French territory of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, where he spent his childhood before studying physics and chemistry at university in Paris.¹ His five years in the French capital also enabled him to further his cultural interests, visiting the collections of religious art – from ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and India, China, and Japan – at the Musée Guimet and the collections from Indochina at the Musée du Trocadéro, and attending lectures by noted orientalist, including Alfred Foucher (1865–1952). These were exciting times for the study of Asian art in Paris. The École Française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO) had been founded in Hanoi in 1900 with a remit to explore the cultures of India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan *in situ* and not primarily from texts in European libraries, as had been the dominant practice in the later nineteenth century. In French Indochina, early explorations and surveys of ancient temple sites in coastal Champa (Vietnam) and Laos went alongside the initiation of the conservation of the better-known monuments at Angkor in Cambodia.² At the same period in India, a revitalised Archaeological Survey during Curzon’s tenure as Viceroy (1899–1905) and with John Marshall as director-general from 1902 resulted in the increased impetus for the care and conservation of monuments by the colonial authorities.

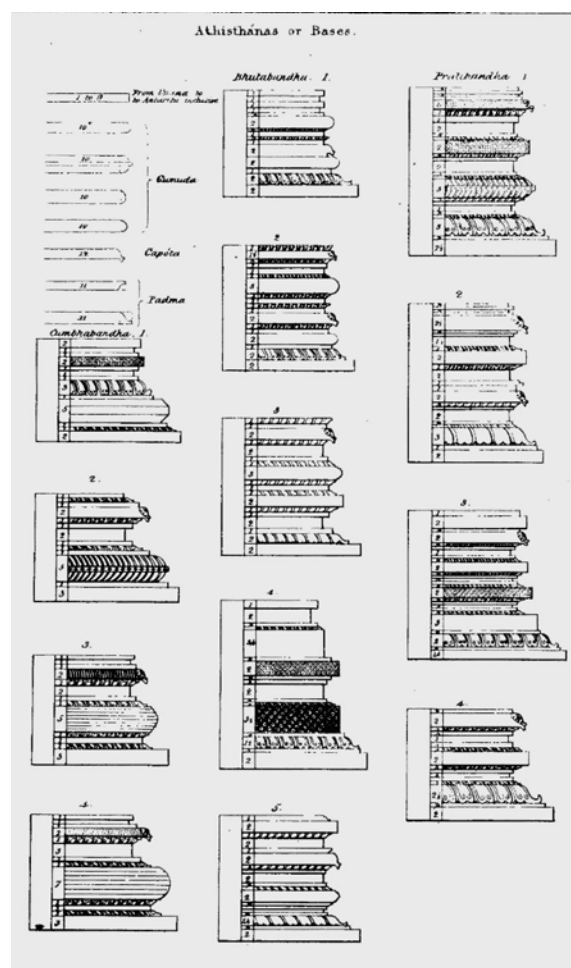
Upon graduation, Jouveau-Dubreuil moved to Pondicherry, a French colonial territory within British India, to teach science at the Colonial College from 1909–12. It was from this base that he embarked upon his studies of South Indian art and archaeology that would occupy much of the remainder of his life. His early family life in French colonies may have stimulated his later interest in South Indian temples, religion, and culture. Following the abolition of slavery by France in 1848, many Indians migrated to other French colonial territories as indentured labourers, and the majority were Tamils who left via Pondicherry. Significant numbers of Tamils from Pondicherry moved to Jouveau-Dubreuil’s birthplace in Saigon from the 1860s to work in the colonial

administration. By the 1890s, over 25,000 Tamil and largely low-caste Hindus had migrated to Guadeloupe in the Caribbean where Jouveau-Dubreuil grew up.³ Taking up the teaching position in Pondicherry thus enabled him to explore the land and culture from where these migrants had first departed. Furthermore, in 1909 he was still an amateur historian and thus he may have wished to make his mark and an original contribution to the study of temple architecture at a distance from the professional architects, archaeologists, and epigraphists working for the EFEO in Indochina. His professional and intellectual networks thus connected French colonial territory in the Caribbean and Indochina and, via Paris, with British-controlled India.

An important further catalyst for Jouveau-Dubreuil's study of the historical evolution of South Indian architecture and his emphasis on the analysis of style was Foucher's argument for the centrality of classical Greek art to the genesis of the Buddhist art of Gandhara in northwest India.⁴ In contrast, the long evolution of South Indian temple architecture seemed to have been isolated from or independent of 'Western' or other outside influence. After three years he returned to Paris where he was awarded a doctorate for his studies, published in 1914 by the Musée Guimet in two volumes as *Archéologie du sud de l'Inde*, which he dedicated to Foucher. Elected aged twenty-eight to the prestigious Société Asiatique, he returned to Pondicherry in 1914 where he would live until 1941, continuing his archaeological research until his death in France in 1945. A revised, shortened form of the first volume of *Archéologie* on architecture was published in English and in Madras for the wider public in 1917 with the title *Dravidian Architecture*. This included a preface and explanatory notes by S. Krishnaswami Aiyengar, the first professor of Indian History and Archaeology at the University of Madras.⁵ Several aspects of Jouveau-Dubreuil's study of South Indian architecture merit further discussion, not only in evaluating this scholar's historiographic significance but also in approaching the study of the South Indian temple in the colonial period.

Style, ornament, and architectural histories of the Indian temple

Jouveau-Dubreuil's work is the first study of the Tamil temple from the very earliest monuments of the sixth to seventh century CE through to those currently under construction. *Dravida* is a Sanskrit term for both southern India and an architectural term used from at least the mid first millennium CE for the southern of the two main languages or traditions of Indian temple architecture, *Nagara* and *Dravida*. The first study of Indian temple architecture from its textual traditions was by an East Indian Company employee from Tanjore named Ram Raz (1790–1834). While working for the Presidency government at Fort St George in Madras, he had collated a number of mediaeval South Indian Sanskrit treatises on architecture (*vastushastra*) and sculpture and crafts more generally (*shilpashastra*). *Vastu-vidya* or *-shastra* is the body of knowledge on architecture dating to the first millennium CE that



1 'Athisthānas or Bases' in Ram Raz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindūs* (1834).

was transmitted orally, through embodied practice and as written texts with regional variation across South Asia. His translation and explication of some of these treatises, especially sections of the South Indian *vastushastra* the *Manasara*, was published in 1834 as an attempt to explain the principles of temple architecture for a Western audience.⁶ But though the term *Dravida* appears in this and other texts, Ram Raz was concerned with comparing Hindu with Greek and Roman architecture rather than the historical development of the temple across the different regions of India. His book thus explores the proportional systems for plans and elevations of buildings, and systems of spatial organisation. Furthermore, Ram Raz presented some key terms for the *Dravida* temple from textual sources in Sanskrit, including the main vertical divisions – 'upapitha or pedestal, the *athisthana* or base, the *sthamba* or pillar, and the *prastara* or entablature' – and the mouldings of the base.⁷ But both he and his brahmin pandits (scholar, priest) struggled to understand the texts' technical language and most of the craftsmen he spoke to did not know any Sanskrit. But he was fortunate to meet a sculptor of the 'Cammata tribe' and with his valuable aid, Ram Raz was able, 'to solve many intricate problems, and to remove many difficulties



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against which I had long been struggling' and found some correlation between text and practice.⁸

Many scholars have emphasised Ram Raz's role as a 'native informant' interpreting Hindu architecture for a European audience in the nineteenth century. His inclusion of elevations of moulding types, columns, and shrines might suggest a new relationship of text and illustration, since the Sanskrit texts had none. As Madhuri Desai has argued, these diagrams were produced in a colonial environment by East India Company draughtsmen conversant with Western architectural drawings and directly compared with Greek and Roman 'orders'.⁹ But though some of Ram Raz's illustrations of column types seem to bear direct correspondence with similar drawings of classical columns, the drawings of types of base (*upapitha*, *adhithana*) and the elevations of multi-storeyed *vimanas* are derived from the proportional values outlined in the *Manasara* [1]. As Adam Hardy has noted, 'Whatever post-enlightenment orderliness Ram Raz may have been imposing on his material, the drawings in his *Essay* reveal a coherence that belongs to the text in which he found it, made visible by someone who knows the architecture of which it speaks.'¹⁰ But following Ram Raz, little scholarly attention was paid to *vastushastra* and it was only with the publication of editions of these texts from the 1910s that a more detailed understanding of temple terms gradually became better known.¹¹

A broader understanding of the history of the South Indian temple was offered by James Fergusson's pioneering histories of architecture from the 1850s and later.¹² After retiring to London in the 1840s after extended periods of travel in India, Fergusson relied on the emerging body of photographs from the 1850s on to compile his huge

2 Aerial view of Bhaktavatsala temple, Tirukkalukundram, mostly sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.

survey histories, formulating enduring frameworks of interpretation. He recognised that southern Hindu architecture – 'Tamul' or 'Dravidian' – was distinct from that of the North and was full of praise for South Indian temples. 'There is perhaps no country in the world where temple-building has received so extraordinary a development as in the south of India', he wrote.¹³ His account described the main elements of the South Indian temple: the main shrine or *vimana*, the attached columned halls or *mandapas*, the pyramidal gateways (*gopuras*) and pillared halls or *choultries* (*mandapas*). In order to demonstrate the continuity of design over a long period, he compared two *vimanas* built over a millennium apart: the more recent temple, *is changed, it is true, and the cells and some of the earlier features are hardly recognizable; but the wonder rather is that twelve centuries should not have more completely obliterated the original. There is nothing, however, in it which cannot be recognized in intermediate examples, and their gradual transformation detected by any one familiar with the subject.*¹⁴

Though in admiration for the 'endless and bewildering variety of detail' and high quality of the stone carving, it was the temples' layout with multiple gateways that were larger the further from the small shrine at the centre that baffled him, what he described as the bathos of diminishing scale towards the central shrine [2]. He considered the temple at Tanjore to be one of the few temples in the

south that had escaped ‘this fault, so destructive of architectural grandeur’.¹⁵ Another enduring legacy of Fergusson’s publications was his view that Indian art and architecture – and by implication its culture and religions – had gradually declined. South Indian architecture was, he wrote, different from any other but united in itself – ‘[...] and has gone through a process of gradual change from the earliest times at which we become acquainted with it, until we lose sight of it altogether in the last century.’ As he continued, ‘This change is invariably for the worse,

the earlier specimens being in all instances the most perfect, and the degree of degradation forming an exact chronometric scale, by which we may measure the age of the buildings.’¹⁶ Fergusson’s histories, only partially updated and revised as new photographs and research emerged from the 1870s continued to exert a profound impact on South Asian art historical discourse into the twentieth century as is evident from the notion of cultural decay and decadence.¹⁷

Jouveau-Dubreuil’s publication is thus notable for including contemporary temple architecture without any negative aesthetic judgement or consideration of supposed ‘decadence’, and presenting architectural terminology in Tamil learnt primarily from the builders of a new temple in Cuddalore not far from Pondicherry [3]. Discussion with these Tamil builders together with the close observation of design enabled Jouveau-Dubreuil to illustrate a history of temple architecture based upon what he describes as ‘the motifs of ornamentation’ that constitute the ‘Dravidian Order’. His father’s medical background and his own scientific training are evident in this Darwinist approach to the history of the South Indian temple focussing on the evolution of key motifs – columns, their capitals, niches – what he described as ‘the anatomy and palaeontology of the edifices’.¹⁸ In the middle of the nineteenth century Fergusson had little means to establish the dates for the construction of major temples, ascribing the construction of most Tamil temples to the period 1350 to 1750. Epigraphic surveys from 1883 onwards in southern India resulted in the collation and recording of a huge number of inscriptions on stone walls and copperplates. As these were gradually transcribed, translated, and interpreted, they provided additional sources with which scholars in the 1890s and 1900s both identified some of the earliest temples built before the twelfth century and established the foundations for subsequent studies

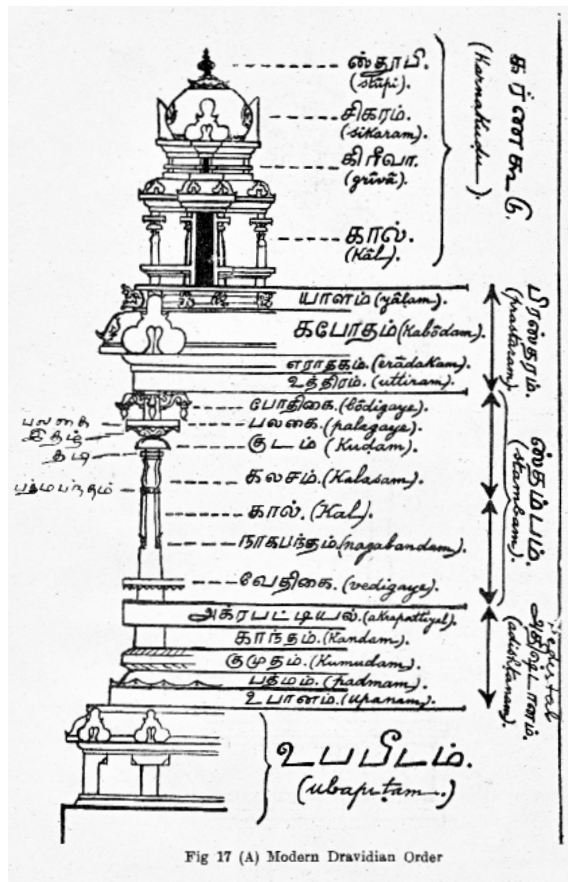


Fig 17 (A) Modern Dravidian Order



3 'Modern Dravidian Order' with Tamil terminology. From *Dravidian Architecture*, fig. 17.

4 New corridor, Jambukeshvara temple, Srirangam, c. 1890–1910.

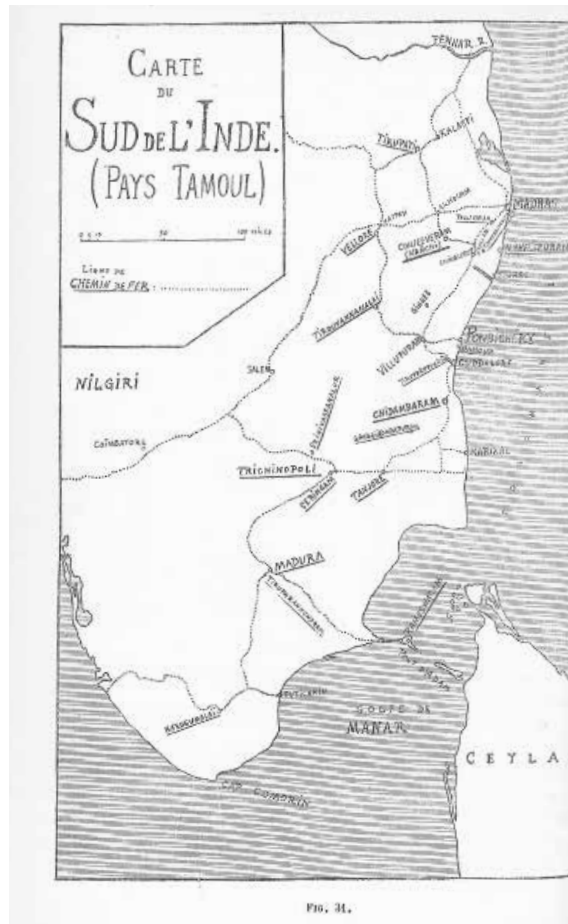
of South Indian history. Among the publications of this period, Alexander Rea's *Chalukyan Architecture* (1896) and *Pallava Architecture* (1909) had prioritised the earliest known monuments of specific dynasties and included detailed descriptions of individual temples. But Jouveau-Dubreuil's stylistic analysis offered a shorthand and still suggestive means to determine the approximate date of temples independent of the additional evidence offered by the burgeoning corpus of inscriptions.

Jouveau-Dubreuil's periodisation is largely dynastic – Pallava (600–850), Early Chola (850–1100), Pandya or Later Chola (1100–1350), Vijayanagara (1350–1600), and Modern – following contemporary historians' practice. Each period is identified with both a single style and a particular building type – rock-cut caves in the Pallava period, the main shrine or *vimana* in the Early Chola period, the tall pyramidal gateway or *gopura* in the Late Chola, the columned hall or *mandapa* in the Vijayanagara period, and the corridor for 'modern' temples [4]. In his 1914 book, Jouveau-Dubreuil separated the 'Madura style' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the contemporary temples currently under construction, but in the later revision the three centuries from 1600 to the present are all deemed 'Modern'. Three hundred years of temple architecture – from Madurai's celebrated Pudu Mandapam ('New Hall') built in the early seventeenth century, together with the long corridors built at Rameshvaram in the eighteenth century, and to the temple under construction in Cuddalore in 1912 – would seem to collapse a long, varied history into an overly homogenous interpretation of design. Had so little changed? Are Nayaka-period monuments of the early seventeenth century indistinguishable from the 'modern' ones constructed three hundred years later? Before evaluating the design of the temples under construction, the political and cultural history of Madras Presidency in this period merits consideration.

Neo-Shaivism and temple construction

The political and cultural environment in which Jouveau-Dubreuil was researching from 1909–12 may further have a bearing on his seeming isolation of South Indian temple architecture from monuments further north. Based in Pondicherry, his study concentrated upon his personal examination of temples within reach of the territory in Chingleput, North Arcot, and South Arcot districts, though his inclusion of a map with the railway network suggests that he travelled more widely across Madras Presidency during his three initial years in South India [5]. While the terms *Dravida* and 'Dravidian' were not new, their cultural connotations had gradually been transformed in previous decades in southern India. Jouveau-Dubreuil's conception of South Indian temple architecture – *Dravidian* – was not with the whole of southern India including the Deccan, but was more narrowly equated with the Tamil region, 'since the two words "Tamil" and "Dravidian" are in reality one and the same word'.¹⁸

The late nineteenth century was a period of religious reform and cultural revival in Madras Presidency. Over the course of the nineteenth century,



5 Map of South India. From Jouveau-Dubreuil, Vol. 1, *Architecture*, fig. 31.

the languages and cultures of Dravidian South India were argued to have developed separately from the Aryan North and were much more ancient than previously considered. In Robert Caldwell's *A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1856), 'Dravidian' was used not only for the historically related languages but also for the peoples and cultures of South India. The emerging pride in the antiquity of Tamil culture in the late nineteenth century went alongside the identification of Shaiva Hinduism (or Shaivism, whose followers worship the deity Shiva) as the true, most ancient and original religion of the Tamils, a religion that predated Sanskritic Hinduism and excluded Tamil-speaking brahmins who arrived later. From the 1890s, as David Shulman has remarked, 'Dravidian' had become an adjective, qualifying words like 'civilisation' and 'culture' in historical writings on Tamil literature and history in opposition to northern, brahmanical Aryan culture, peoples and language, especially Sanskrit.¹⁹ Together with the reformulation of Tamil religion in this period – what has been termed 'neo-Shaivism' – these cultural changes provided the foundations of the 'Dravidian Movement' that transformed the nationalist politics of Madras Presidency (from 1969, Tamilnadu, 'the Tamil land') through the twentieth century. The changing title of his books on architecture from the 'south of India' in the French edition in 1914 to

'Dravidian' in the shorter, revised English version of the book published in Madras in 1917 has its counterpart in the growing cultural nationalism of the period.²⁰ In spite of the shared history of *Dravida* temple architecture in the Deccan and the Tamil region from the sixth to seventh up until the thirteenth centuries, Fergusson had on formal grounds separated the two from the 1860s, henceforth categorising the Deccan temples as 'Chalukyan'. This distinction was implicitly shared by Jouveau-Dubreuil and Krishnaswami Aiyangar, the editor of the 1917 book published in English: Dravidian architecture was that of the Tamil region alone.

The public consciousness of Shaivism as the true Tamil religion resulted in rising numbers of pilgrims travelling along the new colonial railways to the network of Shaiva pilgrimage sites and the demand for the reform and renovation of the temples built upon them. As members of the non-brahmin elite, members of the Nattukkottai Chettiar community were in a position through their celebrated wealth, acquired as both successful merchants and as moneylenders within the British colonial economy, to express their devotion to Shiva through philanthropic patronage of new architecture. As a result of their lavish endowment of temples, they acquired, 'a reputation for sanctity and a ritual status almost as impressive as their bank balances.'²² Though some funds for temples in North India were donated by the Nattukkottai Chettiar community, the overwhelming volume of their philanthropy was concentrated in the Tamil country during the height of Chettiar prosperity from the 1870s through to the 1930s. Political change in Madras Presidency meant that from the 1920s, lavish religious philanthropy no longer seemed the route to social capital.

It is not only the amount of money that was expended upon temples by the Chettiars but which ones received funds. Of the estimated 106 million rupees donated to around 280 temples in Madras Presidency in this period, around half was expended on temples within Chettinadu and the remainder to the Tamil region's major Shaiva pilgrimage temples.²³ Much of this money was devoted not only to the renovation but to the construction of wholly new temples. It was the often-radical renovation of many of the most important Shaiva temples by the Chettiars that brought the community to the attention of colonial archaeologists; their activities in Chettinadu itself were curiously overlooked. While this is not the place to dissect all the details of individual temples, what was spent where and what this meant in terms of the histories of individual buildings, a modest comparison between the expenditure on archaeology and conservation by the colonial government and the Chettiar community may, however, prove instructive. Lord Curzon's arrival in India as Viceroy in May 1899 resulted in the often-celebrated revitalisation of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the increase in expenditure on archaeological research and the conservation of India's monuments. In Madras, the local government gradually increased the funds allocated annually for



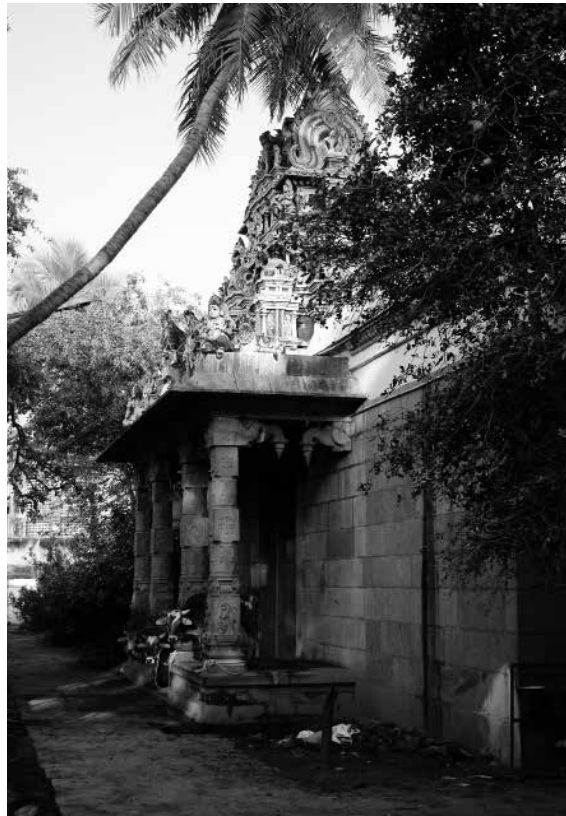
6 New vimana (main shrine) at the centre of the Ekambareshvara temple, Kanchipuram, built c. 1900.

the conservation of ancient monuments from Rs. 300 in 1898–9 to Rs. 2170 in 1902–03. Both Curzon and director-general John Marshall considered this to be insufficient, insisting later that there was material in the Madras Presidency for an annual expenditure of at least Rs 30,000 on 'repairs essential to preservation'.²⁴ With very different ideas of what architectural renovation or conservation might mean in practice, this annual figure for the whole of Madras Presidency is still dwarfed by the sums spent by the Chettiars on individual temples. For example, just over two million rupees – or around sixty times this annual amount by the Madras government – was expended on substantially renovating or rebuilding the Ekambareshvara temple in Kanchipuram in the 1890s–1900s alone [6].²⁵

Among the many temples rebuilt in this period under Chettiar patronage was the one visited in around 1912 by Jouveau-Dubreuil in Cuddalore's New Town at Tiruppappuliur. The temple under construction in this period was not in fact new, but was a wholesale renovation of a nine-hundred-year-old shrine. For this temple was built on one of the most sacred sites for Tamil Shaivas, understood to be the site of a monastery where Appar – one of the three poet-saints who composed the primary scripture of Tamil Shaivism in the seventh to eighth centuries – converted from Jainism. A stone temple dating to the eleventh to twelfth century was still there in 1902 when government epigraphists visited the site as part of an annual campaign of epigraphic fieldwork that had taken place across Madras Presidency since 1883.²⁶ But the epigraphists were fortunate to have arrived right at the



Fig. 13. Mandapam Tirupāpuliyaṛ.



7 Mandapam before entrance to first prakaram, Tiruppappuliyur. From *Dravidian Architecture*, fig. 13.

8 The same north entrance to first enclosure (*prakaram*), Tiruppappuliyur, built c. 1910.

9 Tamil craftsmen at work rebuilding the temple at Rameshvaram. Photo: ASI, c. 1908 [British Library Board, Photo 1008-8(2019)].



beginning of the twentieth century, for three members of a Chettiar family from Kadiyapatti, a village south of Pudukkottai – T. S. Murugappa, T. N. Muttaiya, and T. A. Chidambaram Chettiar – donated 1.2 million rupees to fund the wholesale renovation of the temple with a further Rs. 100,000 for the performance of *kumbabishekams* (re-consecration ceremony) in 1908 and again in 1917.²⁷ As a result, the inner of the two *prakaras* or concentric temple enclosures was completely rebuilt leaving no trace of the inscriptions recorded in 1902, for the main

shrine and its attached *mandapas* on which they were inscribed were wholly replaced. The result is the modern temple visited by Jouveau-Dubreuil and seen today [7, 8], one of the many temples substantially rebuilt in Madras Presidency from the 1880s to the 1920s.²⁸ He would have encountered *sthapatis* (Sanskrit, architect, master builder) and *shilpis* (sculptors) busy at work at other temples he visited, including the Ekambareshvara in Kanchipuram, the Jambukeshvara in Srirangam, and the Ramalingeshvara at Rameshvaram [9].

Sthapatis and craft practice in colonial Madras Presidency

Jouveau-Dubreuil is also notable for presenting contemporary architectural terminology in Tamil learnt directly from the builders of this new temple in Cuddalore. Such an interest in contemporary artistic practice stems from the European Arts and Crafts movement, an approach shared by Jouveau-Dubreuil's contemporaries in South Asia.²⁹ Late Victorian colonial rhetoric considered India's traditional arts and crafts to be in decline, as a result of the loss of craft skills and the transformation of taste, as well as the loss of patronage. The general perception in this period would seem to be that no temples were being built and no sculpture being fashioned. During his three-year tenure as Curator of Ancient Monuments in the early 1880s, Henry H. Cole remarked following his tour of South India that, 'a temple architect in Madras is scarcely to be found.'³⁰ The gloomy perception in the 1880s that many South Indian arts had 'declined', as Natesa Sastu lamented in an article in the Arts and Crafts-inspired *Journal of Indian Art*, and 'perished with their patrons, the old kings' was not as widely shared twenty years later at the peak of temple renovation and construction under Nattukkottai Chettiar patronage.³¹

By the turn of the century, the 'native craftsman' was receiving greater attention and indeed romantic valorisation for their adherence to traditional craft practice. Ananda Coomaraswamy, who was – with a doctorate in geology – a scientist by training like Jouveau-Dubreuil, had recently argued in *Medieval Sinhalese Art* that any study of Indian arts and crafts needed to take into account their contemporary forms which have survived from the past as it was a continuous living tradition.³² In a series of government-commissioned reports on the state of stone-carving across India in 1905 there was widespread concern about the dying nature of the art. Following his arrival in Madras in 1882, Alexander Rea had acquired a deep knowledge of the Presidency's archaeological sites and temple architecture from over twenty years' surveying and excavation. In his own study of contemporary stone carving in southern India he gave an outline of the castes involved in stone-working, their tools, types of stone sculpted and methods of working, and surveyed activities across the Presidency – especially the many temple renovations underway – in the hope that this 'decaying industry' might receive more patronage.³³

The year 1910 has been rightly regarded as a decisive moment in the European reception of Indian art. Cecil Burns, formerly of the Bombay School of Art, had argued in a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts in London in May 1909 that the ancient crafts of India were now dead and hence the concern for their revival was pointless. But not everyone agreed. Alfred Chatterton, the Principal of the Government School of Art, responded to Burns' lecture by reporting on the different conditions in Madras where with Nattukkottai Chettiar patronage large numbers of skilful hereditary craftsmen were currently restoring the temples of southern India to

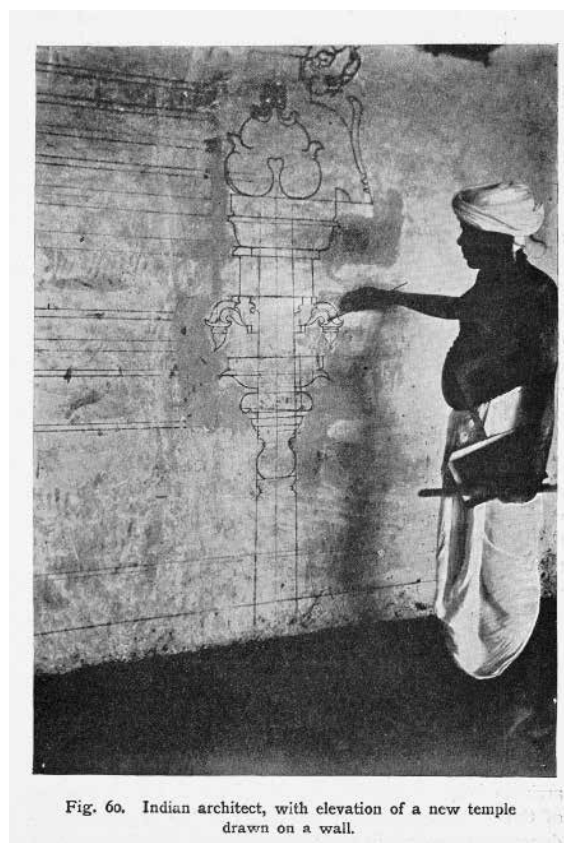


Fig. 60. Indian architect, with elevation of a new temple drawn on a wall.

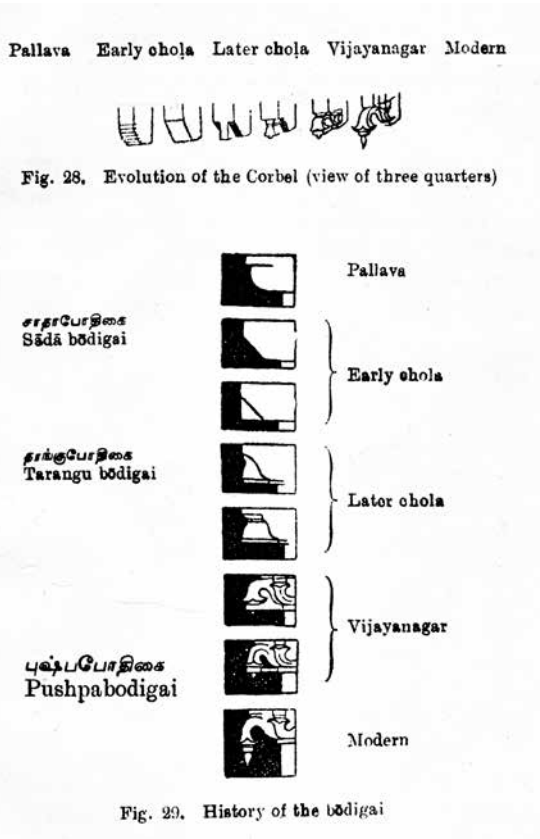
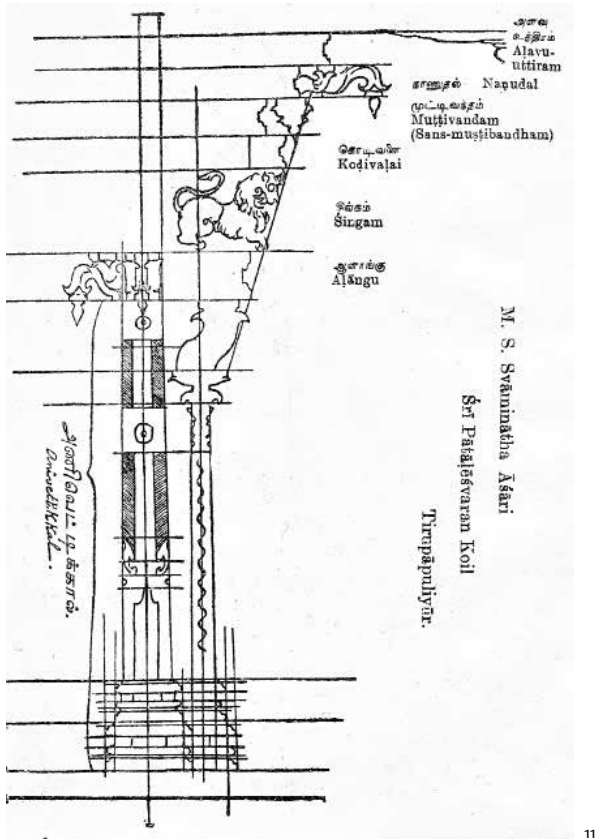
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¹⁰ 'Indian Architect, with Elevation of a New Temple Drawn on a Wall'. Photo: Ananda Coomaraswamy,

Avudaiyarkoyil, 1907 (British Library Board, reproduced from Thurston, *Madras Presidency*, fig. 60).

'even more than their pristine splendour'.³⁴ A vigorous and celebrated reply to Burns also came in January 1910 when Ernest Havell delivered a lecture chaired by George Birdwood on British methods of art training in India and the perceived poor state of Indian art, which he declared was 'not dead; it has been sleeping, but is now awakening'.³⁵ Amidst the debate, letters, and editorials that followed, the India Society was established in March 1910 in order to promote a better understanding of the traditional arts and crafts still existing in India. Havell's plea to learn from traditional craftsmen led to a series of articles in the Madras-based *Hindu* newspaper in 1910–11 in which he wrote that 'it is very necessary to find out and bring to public notice all the traditional master-builders and sculptors who are now practising the rules of their art in the traditional Indian way'.³⁶ In Madras, Alexander Rea reported on the reconstruction of many of the Presidency's temples as the only modern buildings of significant architectural merit.³⁷ With his archaeologist's hat on, Rea may have deplored the demolition of so many of South India's ancient monuments by the Nattukkottai Chettians, but he nevertheless held a degree of admiration for contemporary temple construction.

Many of the highest-regarded *shilpis* (sculptor) and *sthapatis* (architect) working on the temples extensively renovated and rebuilt in this period were



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from Madurai and Sivangangai districts, and specifically from the villages of Chettinadu. The expansion of the railway network that enabled greater numbers of pilgrims to travel across Madras Presidency also enabled builders to migrate widely to work on the many Chettiar-sponsored temple renovations. Rea remarks that the same group of craftsmen from Madurai district working at Chidambaram were also responsible for temple sculpture at twelve other temples across the Tamil country, including Kanchipuram and Tiruvannamalai in the far north, Tiruvanaikka on Srirangam island in the centre – where around two hundred men were at work on the Jambukeshvara temple – and Rameshvaram on the island closest to Ceylon (Sri Lanka).³⁸ After leaving Ceylon, Ananda Coomaraswamy visited India, including Madras Presidency, for the first time from January to March 1907 before returning to Britain to continue his prolific future career as the author of influential books and articles on the arts of India and Ceylon. A photograph of one of these *sthapatis* standing bare-chested with a square and rule before a drawing on the wall of a column elevation at Avudaiyarkoyil in Coomaraswamy’s collection dates to this period [10].³⁹ Some members of the same families of *sthapatis* also travelled to Ceylon to construct new temples: the Ponnambalavaneshvara (Shiva) temple in Colombo was built on a grand scale from 1907 under the initial direction of the *sthapati* M. Vaidyanathan.⁴⁰ The villages and towns of Chettinadu are thus not only of significance for being the provenance of the most prolific patrons of South Indian temple architecture in colonial Madras Presidency but also their builders.

11 Elevation of column (Dravidian Architecture, fig. 15).

12 Development of the potikai (Dravidian Architecture, figs 28, 29).

The names and native places of *sthapatis* and other temple builders occasionally appear in colonial records. Rea notes that many of the sculptors working on the temple at Tiruppappuliyaṛ were from villages in Chettinadu. One of these men, M. S. Swaminathan of Pillaiyarpatti (1889–1929) was Jouveau-Dubreuil’s chief informant. Swaminathan Sthapati supplied him in both written and oral Tamil with the architectural terminology used on site for each part of a column, and every moulding and detail of the Tamil *Dravida* elevation. It is the *sthapati*’s own annotated drawing of the elevation of large column (*anivettikkal*), with vertical and horizontal lines for indicating the proportional measures and the series of sculpted blocks above, of the type that line the corridors of all Chettiar-period temples [11].⁴¹ The photograph of the previously unidentified *sthapati* standing before the drawing of a Tamil *Dravida* temple on a wall who Coomaraswamy met at Avudaiyarkoyil in 1907 may be the same M. S. Swaminathan.⁴²

As discussed above, Ram Raz had presented some key terms for the *Dravida* temple from textual sources in Sanskrit seventy years earlier. But Jouveau-Dubreuil’s approach was quite different, proceeding directly to the temples and to their builders. Even without any mention of the South Indian Sanskrit texts on architecture (*vastushastra*) by either he or his Tamil informants, the terms he presents in their Tamil form and in common and current use in

around 1910 are in their original Sanskrit, in a Sanskritised form or in translation.⁴³ His illustrations are largely drawings of the elevations of a *vimanam*, *gopuram*, *mandapam*, or column with the Tamil terms and a French or English equivalent, and his chronological typologies of specific parts of the temple: columns, the niche (*koshta*), the horseshoe arch (*gavaksha*, *kudu*) within the eave, the 'corbel' beneath the column capital (*potikai*) [12].⁴⁴ These are the 'the motifs of ornamentation' that constitute the 'Dravidian Order' that his work is best known for, having been frequently reproduced without an understanding of the historical context within which they were generated.⁴⁵

The Chettiar temple

Chettiar period work from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can often be difficult to distinguish from the Nayaka temples dating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Based on their style alone, some scholars have mistakenly dated temples built little over a century ago for much older work. As mentioned earlier, Jouveau-Dubreuil's 'modern' period seems to be an overly homogenous interpretation of three hundred years of design suggesting that little changed. The close comparison between temples built around 1900 and those built three hundred years earlier at the height of the Nayaka period's cultural and artistic efflorescence may be a consequence of the maintenance of artistic traditions, modes of production and hereditary sculptural practices of the *sthapatis*, discussed by Alexander Rea. But I would also suggest that the Chettiar patrons sought a degree of conscious archaism, deliberately wishing their new temples appeared much older, and for their own pious

activities, their pursuit of honours and enhanced ritual status through temple patronage to be seen as 'royal'.

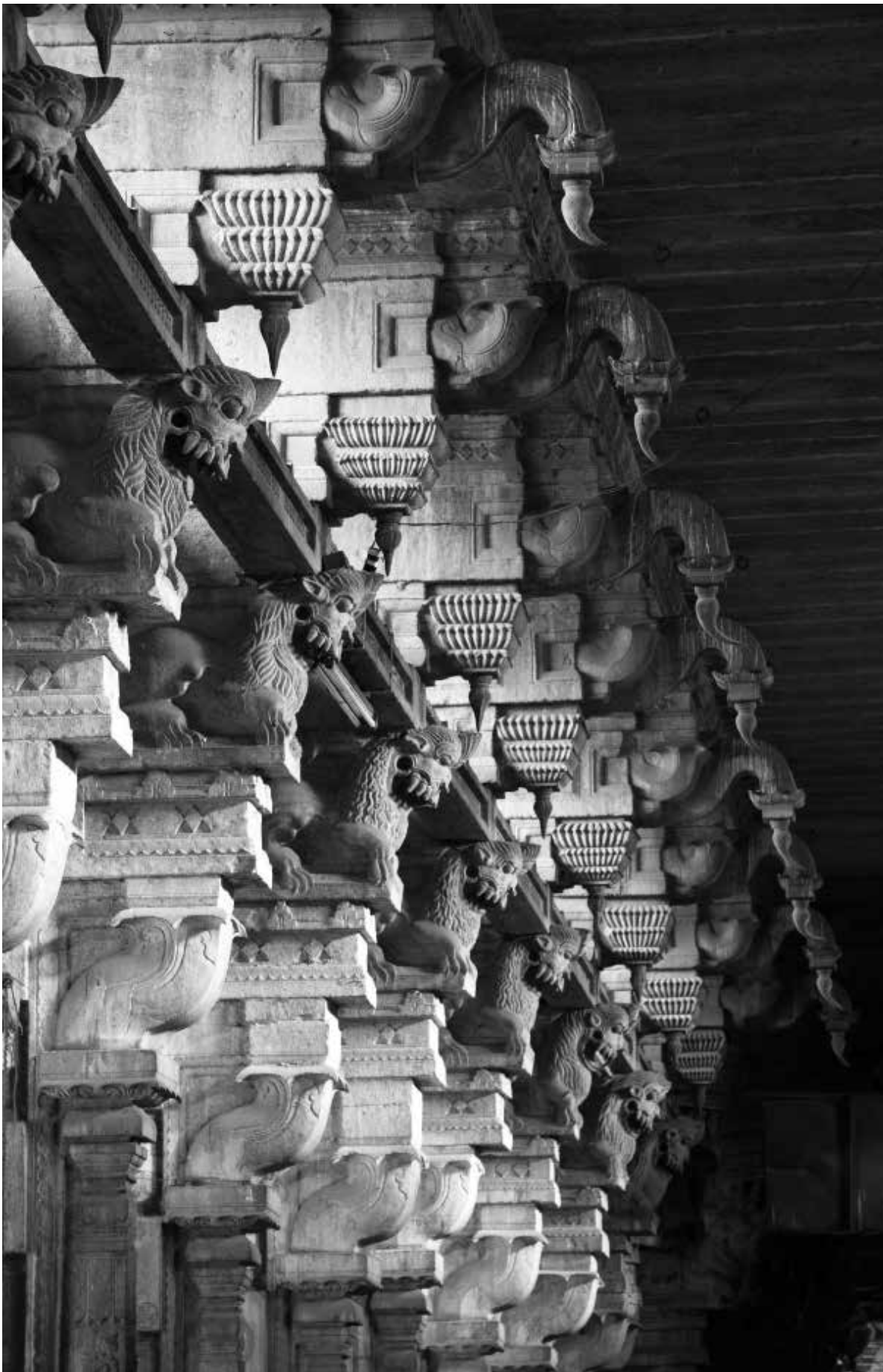
Continuity with the past is one aspect of design; continuity across a wide region in the present is a further issue of note for temples of the 'Chettiar period'. Though closely connected through kinship networks, no single Chettiar or related family members were the patrons of all the many temples under examination so patronage alone cannot explain the striking homogeneity of design for temples built from the 1890s to 1930s across the Tamil country. The limited sources of quarried stone and the relative similarity of the granite used for building temples across a wide region enhance the unity of forms and style. But it is the *sthapatis* and *shilpis* themselves, moving from one temple to another over the Tamil region from Srikalahasti in the north, to Chettinadu and Rameshwaram in the far south and indeed to Ceylon, that have effected the degree of stylistic unity seen in the temple architecture of this period. No two temples are identical, but many built in this period are strikingly similar. What then characterises the form, style, and design of the Chettiar period temple?

Temples wholly built in the period under discussion between the 1890s to 1930s are usually constructed within a rectangular walled enclosure entered through a *gopuram* on the narrower east side. An additional door or *gopuram* at the centre of the southern longer side may be aligned with an inner south-facing shrine. Single inner enclosures are

¹³ Chettiar-period temple at Velankudi in Chettinadu.



13



14

14 Capital detail,
Jambukeshvara
temple, Srirangam,
c. 1890–1910.



15 Adjacent columns, seventeenth century (left) and c. 1890–1910 (right), Jambukeshvara temple, Srirangam.

15

typically measure 35–50 m by 60–80 m at a relative proportion of 1:1.5–2: the inner enclosure of the temple in Cuddalore visited by Jouveau-Dubreuil is this size and scale. Some temples have an additional concentric walled enclosure; the entrances through each – whether *gopurams* or smaller gateways – are aligned with each other [13]. This is a near-uniform plan for the temples in Chettinadu that were built in their entirety within a seventy-year period from the 1860s to 1930s, and common for temples across the Tamil region wholly replaced in this period, such as the temple near Cuddalore. The inner and most sacred enclosure has a flat roof covering the entire space with only the pyramidal towers of the main and subsidiary shrines and the tall golden flagpole (*dhvajastambha*) rising above the roof level from the dark interior. Given the height of the exterior walls these towers are only visible from a distance. The

high stone walls may have a few painted plaster figures of deities or mythical figures at the corners, but otherwise it is largely the proliferation of brightly coloured, painted plaster images of deities and other divine beings covering the soaring pyramidal *gopurams* that relieve the severe exterior appearance.

The interior layouts of the many temples built in this period are also similar to each other, a result of both repeated building practices as much as ritual requirements. The reduced illumination under the flat roof results in often very dark interiors, with sunlight entering through the *gopuram* gateway and sometimes through raised barred light-wells in the roof that also allow greater ventilation. Rows of hanging coloured glass gas lamps remain in some temples, their former purpose now replaced by electric strip lights. All the shrines for the main and

subsidiary deities, are raised on a platform around one metre high. As most temples built during this period were dedicated to Shiva, a shrine for the dancing form of the deity as Nataraja is routinely located in the northeast corner facing south.⁴⁶

A characteristic feature of all Chettiar period temples – whether those built from scratch or additions to existing temples – are the massed rows of columns, normally all placed on a one-metre-high platform, that form long corridors all around the dark interior. These dramatic corridors are a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century development filling in formerly open spaces between *prakara* walls to create grand, processional aisles. By the nineteenth century such roofed corridors are standard architectural practice in both new temples and the transformation of older temples. The massed columns and corridors of Chettiar period temples initially appear to be little different to those built several centuries earlier. But the crisper sculpted details, such as the exaggerated point of the longer and more sinuous *pushpapotikas*, the sharp teeth or flowing manes of the seated lions beneath the flat ceiling, indicate their production around 1900 [14]. A plan of the Jambukeshvara temple at Tiruvannaikka on Srirangam Island made in 1882 prior to the substantial renovations in the 1900s that led to new central shrines to Shiva and his consort, the goddess Akhilandeswari, also reveals the open space filled by the new long corridors and monumental columns, demonstrating the value of late nineteenth-century plans and publications in documenting the architectural changes around 1900 at many Shaiva temples in the Tamil region.⁴⁷ The contrast between the Nayaka- and Chettiar period column design is evident where the two phases of work met [15].

Some individual columns erected in the late colonial period take the compositional principles of cumulative addition further than before in the creation of massive columns at the corners of corridors. Individually impressive in isolation as examples of colonial-period sculpture, the multiplication of these massive columns at the junctions of corridors or before gateways to the next concentric enclosure constitute even grander expressions of colonial-period Tamil temple architecture. Chettiar period architecture often betrays its modern date by the high quality of the polished finish, the depth and modelling of relief or the subtle degree of naturalism of figural sculpture or ornament, such as scrolling vegetation or individual flowers, sometimes in pots, the design sources for which may be traced to contemporary European imported ironwork rather than earlier temples. The iconography of relief imagery may also be related to contemporary developments in other media, demonstrating that while largely isolated from other artistic developments – as Jouveau-Dubreuil had understood – aspects of contemporary visual culture are sometimes evident in contemporary temple design. A striking example of this is the occasional translation into temple sculpture of the distinct iconographies of deities,

first produced as oil paintings and then from the 1890s as mass-produced chromolithographs, by Ravi Varma (1848–1906), sometimes considered the first ‘modern’ Indian artist.⁴⁸

Legacies

Until recently the continuity and vitality of temple construction and design into the colonial era in southern India had not been fully recognised or evaluated. Scholarship across the twentieth century has primarily addressed the earliest periods of temple construction from the sixth to thirteenth centuries CE, and only from the 1980s was there renewed interest in the early modern temples built prior to the advance of European colonialism in the eighteenth century. Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil returned to India in 1914 and remained based in Pondicherry until March 1941. During a long career, he conducted further research on the earliest Pallava-period monuments in South India, is credited with discovering the Roman port at Arikamedu near Pondicherry, and also conducted excavations in Afghanistan. His earliest work demonstrates the importance of deep, longitudinal architectural histories of Tamil temples that address the changes in layout and design over an extended period into the modern era. During a period of significant temple construction and renovation by the Nattukkottai Chettiar community amid the rise of neo-Shaivism and emerging Tamil nationalism, Jouveau-Dubreuil’s influential studies demonstrate the interrelation between emerging scholarship on the South Indian temple and contemporary architectural activity. His approach may be criticised for its emphasis on abstracted motifs of ornament devoid of meaning, but he offered a shorthand for suggesting an approximate date and historical evolution of a temple building tradition that was still living and active.

While the legacy of Jouveau-Dubreuil’s initial exploration of the architecture of South India – the ‘Dravidian’ temple – may be traced in subsequent scholarship, that of his informants is evident in the temples still in active use in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. For M. S. Swaminathan, the *sthapati* who led the rebuilding of the temple at Tiruppappuliur near Cuddalore in 1910–12 and supplied Jouveau-Dubreuil with a clearer understanding of temple design, was also involved in the construction of several new temples in Chettinadu alongside his contemporary, M. Vaidyanathan, the builder of the temple in Colombo mentioned above. In 1957 M. Vaidyanathan founded the Government College of Architecture and Sculpture at Mamallapuram near Madras (Chennai), where *sthapatis* and *shilpis* have been trained ever since.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Swaminathan and Vaidyanathan’s sons, S. K. Achary (1924–2015) and V. Ganapathi (1927–2011) – and later brothers-in-law when the latter married the former’s sister, Dakshinavati – were some of the most prolific Tamil temple architects of the late twentieth century, designing buildings not only in India but also for the worldwide South Indian diaspora.

Notes

- For an outline of his career, see Christophe Roustan Delatour, 'L'Inde de Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil', in *Âges et Visages de l'Asie: un siècle d'exploration à travers les collections du musée Guimet* (Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1996), pp. 29–41; Ariane de Saxcé, 'Jouveau-Dubreuil et l'archéologie Du Sous-Continent Indien', in *Du Voyage Savant Aux Territoires de l'archéologie: Voyageurs, Amateurs et Savants à l'origine de l'archéologie Moderne*, ed. by M. Royo and others (Paris: De Boccard, 2011), pp. 291–314; Yvain Jouveau du Breuil, 'Gabriel Jouveau Dubreuil, Archaeologist of Southern India', in *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, 77 (December 1995), 1500–2 [revised 7 December 2004] <www.gchcaraibe.org/bul/ghco77/p1500.html> [accessed 29 March 2022].
- Catherine Clementin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin, *A Century in Asia: The History of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (Paris & Singapore: EFEO & Editions Didier Millet, 2007).
- On the Tamil diaspora to French colonial territories in the Caribbean, see J. C. Sharma, 'The Indian Communities in Overseas Territories of France: Problems of Identity and Culture', in *Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications, Responses*, ed. by N. Jayaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 125–36.
- Alfred Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhâra: étude sur les origines de l'influence classique dans l'art bouddhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient*, Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris: E. Leroux, 1905). On Foucher and the historiography of Gandharan art, see Stanley Abe, 'Inside the Wonder House: Buddhist Art and the West', in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. by Donald S. Lopez (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 63–106; and Michael S. Falser, 'The Graeco-Buddhist Style of Gandhara – A "Storia Ideologica", Or: How a Discourse Makes a Global History of Art', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13 (2015), 1–53.
- The second volume was not translated into English until 1937 as *Iconography of Southern India* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1937).
- Ram Raz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindús* (London: Published for the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1834).
- Ibid.*, pp. 22–8.
- Ibid.*, p. x. 'Cammata' refers to Kammala(n), the Tamil name for members of the Vishvakarma caste of southern India, who claimed descent from Vishvakarma, the architect of the gods. This community included goldsmiths, brasssmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, and sculptors. There was not always a well-defined distinction between *shilpi* (Sanskrit, sculptor) and *sthapati* (architect, master builder), all of whom were considered to be within this occupational caste category and, as embodiments of shastric knowledge, were concerned with both design and production. An alternative name for kammalas in colonial Madras Presidency was ashari (or achari); see Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, 7 vols (Madras: Government Press, 1909), Vol. 1, p. 61 and Vol. 3, pp. 106–40. For further discussion of the Vishvakarma caste and the Tamil *sthapati*, see Samuel K. Parker, 'Making Temples/Making Selves: Essentialism and Construction in the Identity of the South Indian Sthapati', *South Asian Studies*, 19 (2003), 125–40.
- Madhuri Desai, 'Interpreting an Architectural Past: Ram Raz and the Treatise in South Asia', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 71:4 (2012), 462–86.
- Adam Hardy and Mattia Salvini, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts & Dev Publishers & Distributors, 2015), p. 2.
- Many of these texts were transcribed from palm-leaf manuscripts collected in the princely state of Travancore (now southern Kerala) and published under the editorial direction of T. Ganapati Shastri (1860–1926), a Tamil scholar working first at the Sanskrit college (1889–1908) and from 1908 as curator of the Oriental Manuscripts Library in Trivandrum, for example, *The Mayamata of Mayamuni*, ed. by T. Gaṇapatiśāstrī (Trivandrum: Govt. Press, 1919).
- James Fergusson, *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture: Being a Concise and Popular Account of the Different Styles of Architecture Prevailing in All Ages and Countries* (London: John Murray, 1855); James Fergusson, *A History of Architecture in All Countries: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: John Murray, 1862); James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1876). A revised, expanded edition of the latter was published in 1910.
- Fergusson, *Illustrated Handbook*, p. 85.
- Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 331.
- Fergusson, *Illustrated Handbook*, p. 92.
- Ibid.*, p. 86.
- See Pramod Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, ed. by Pramod Chandra (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), 1–39 (pp. 2–8); Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 256–67; Robert Elwall, 'James Fergusson (1808–1886): A Pioneering Architectural Historian', *RSA Journal*, 139:5418 (1991), pp. 393–404; Monica Juneja, *Architecture in Medieval India: Forms, Contexts, Histories* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, NY and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 3–27; Peter Kohane, 'From Scotland to India: The Sources of James Fergusson's Theory of Architecture's "True Styles"', *ABE: Journal of Architecture Beyond Europe*, 14–15 (2019).
- Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Archéologie du sud de l'Inde*, Vol. 1, p. 2 and *Dravidian Architecture* (Madras: Printed at the S.P.C.K. Press, 1917), p. 2.
- Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture*, p. 1. On the etymology of Tamil, see David Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 5.
- Shulman, *Tamil*, p. 307. On neo-Shaivism, see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) and V. Ravi Vaithees, *Religion, Caste, and Nation in South India: Maraimalai Adigal, the Neo-Saivite Movement, and Tamil Nationalism, 1876–1950* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- On the cultural politics of the non-brahmin movement and the foundation in 1916 of the Justice Party in Madras Presidency, see Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue*.

22. C. J. Baker, 'Temples and Political Development', in *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880–1940*, ed. by C. J. Baker and D. A. Washbrook (Delhi: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 69–97 (p. 72).
23. R. Ramanatan Cettiayar, *Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Nakarattār Varalāru* [A History of the Nattukkottai Nakarattar] (Chidambaram: Meyyappan Patippakam, 1953), pp. 204–14. This is an underestimate as precise figures and some major temple renovations are not always included.
24. 'Conservation of Ancient Monuments', Government of Madras, Public Department, Government Order (henceforth GO), no. 223, 7 March 1902 and GO no. 378, 24 April 1902.
25. Ramanatan Cettiayar, *Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Nakarattār Varalāru*, p. 214.
26. Twenty inscriptions were transcribed in 1902, all recording gifts to the deity during the reigns of Chola kings from Rajaraja in the early eleventh through to Kulottunga in the early twelfth centuries. Inscriptions nos 115–135 recorded in 1902 in *Annual Report on Epigraphy* (Madras: Government Press, 1903).
27. Ramanatan Cettiayar, *Nāṭṭukkōṭṭai Nakarattār Varalāru*, pp. 194–5.
28. Crispin Branfoot, 'Remaking the Past: Tamil Sacred Landscape and Temple Renovations', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, 76 (2013), pp. 21–47; Crispin Branfoot, 'Temple Renovation and Chettiar Patronage in Colonial Madras Presidency', in *The Contemporary Hindu Temple: Fragments for a History*, ed. by Annapurna Garimella, Shriya Sridharan, A. Srivathsan (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2019), pp. 22–35.
29. Cousens' attempts to develop a better understanding of North Indian temple architecture by collaborating with contemporary temple architects (in Gujarat named *salat*) in the 1870s had little success, and his desire to use Indian architectural terminology was dismissed by Burgess. See James Burgess and Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat: More Especially of the Districts Included in the Baroda State* (London: B. Quaritch, 1903), pp. vi and 21–8 and Chandra, 'The Study of Indian Temple Architecture', p. 17.
30. Henry H. Cole, *Preservation of National Monuments: Third Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the Year 1883–84* (Calcutta: Govt. Press, 1885), p. 27. Fergusson in 1867 had drawn attention to architecture as a 'living art' in India but had nothing to say about contemporary temple building in South India.
31. Natesa Sastu, 'The Decline of South Indian Arts', *Journal of Indian Art*, 3 (1890), 23–4, 28–32 (p. 29).
32. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (Broad Campden: Essex House Press, 1908), pp. v–ix; Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman* (London: Probsthain, 1909). On the idea of the 'native craftsman' in this period, see Deepali Dewan, 'The Body at Work: Colonial Art Education and the Figure of the "Native Craftsman"', in *Confronting the Body: The Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, ed. by James H. Mills and Satadru Sen (London: Anthem Press, 2004), pp. 118–34.
33. Alexander Rea, *Monograph on Stone Carving and Inlaying in Southern India* (Madras: Government Press, 1906).
34. Cecil L. Burns, 'The Function of Art Schools in India', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 57:2952 (18 June 1909), 629–50 (p. 649).
35. 'Proceedings of the Society: Indian Section', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 58:2985 (4 February 1910), 273–98 (p. 285).
36. E. B. Havell, *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India* (Madras: The Theosophist Office, 1912), p. 55. On the India Society, see Sarah Victoria Turner, 'Crafting Connections: The India Society and Inter-Imperial Artistic Networks in Edwardian Britain', in *India in Britain: South Asian Networks and Connections, 1858–1950*, ed. by Susheila Nasta (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 96–114.
37. 'Modern Indian Architecture', Government of Madras, Public, GO nos 939–940, 2 August 1912.
38. Rea, *Monograph on Stone Carving*, pp. 10, 12.
39. Published in Edgar Thurston, *The Madras Presidency: With Mysore, Coorg and the Associated States* (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), p. 165 and fig. 60 and attributed to Ananda Coomaraswamy, who published it with the date and location in his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (London: Goldston, 1927), pl. 74. I have not yet traced the original print.
40. This temple was built under the patronage of the Ceylon lawyer and politician Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1851–1930), a cousin of the aforementioned art critic Ananda Coomaraswamy: Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 125.
41. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture*, p. 22. In Tamil South India in the colonial period, *sthapatis* were considered members of the kammala community; ashari was sometimes used interchangeably with kammala (see n. 8), hence the caste-suffix M. S. Swaminathan Ashari.
42. I am grateful to Dr Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati for identifying his grandfather in this photograph; it was drawn to his attention by the archaeologist K. R. Srinivasan (1910–92). If this is indeed M. S. Swaminathan then he would be only eighteen years old in this dated photograph; it may then be another relative. As Parker has noted, 'because the master is usually his father (or a close relative belonging to his father's generation), it is rare to encounter a *sthapati* who is not at least well into middle age, normally with three to five decades of preparation (*samskaras*) behind him. The importance of the visible signs of (male) aging cannot be underestimated here.' Samuel K. Parker, 'Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective', *Artibus Asiae*, 63:1 (2003), 5–34 (p. 13).
43. Bruno Dagens, *Architecture in the Ajitagama and the Rauravagama: A Study of Two South Indian Texts* (New Delhi: Sitaram Bhattia Institute of Scientific Research, 1984), p. 9.
44. Similar unpublished elevations of columns from the Ranganatha and Jambukeshvara temples at Srirangam, Madurai, and Rameshvaram had been made by North Indian draughtsmen working for Henry H. Cole in 1881 but without any explanation or annotation. See Henry H. Cole, *Preservation of National Monuments India: Temples at Trichinopoly*, Published by order of the Governor General in Council for the Office of Curator of Ancient Monuments of India, 1884 [British Library WD1566-1594].
45. See, for example, James C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 313. The impact of Jouveau-Dubreuil's evolution of ornament as the key to interpreting the history of

- Asian architecture was followed by some later French scholars: for example, Philippe Stern, *Le Bayon d'Angkor et l'évolution de l'art khmer; étude et discussion de la chronologie des monuments khmers* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1927).
46. The construction of such shrines became widespread from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries but took on increased significance during the neo-Shaiva revival from the 1890s; see Leslie C. Orr, "The Lord Who Dances" in Medieval Tamil Inscriptions', in *Re-Envisioning Śiva Natarāja: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*, ed. by Anna A. Ślęczka (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Hotei, 2021), pp. 66–77.
47. Cole, *Temples at Trichinopoly*.
48. On Ravi Varma, see Rupika Chawla, *Raja Ravi Varma: Painter of Colonial India* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2010); Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Tapati Guha-Thakurta, 'Westernisation and Tradition in South Indian Painting in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)', *Studies in History* 2:2 (1986), 165–95.
49. For a brief introduction to the College, see Graeme Macrae, 'Who Knows How to Build a Temple? Religious and Secular, Tradition and Innovation, in Contemporary South Indian Sacred Architecture', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 27:2 (2004), 17–43.

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 British Library, 9, 10.
 Jouveau-Dubreuil, Vol. 1 *Architecture* (1914) and *Dravidian Architecture* (1917), 3, 5, 7, 11, 12.
 Ram Raz, 1

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Competing interests

The author declares none.

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