

*PŪRVĀPARAPRAJÑĀBHINANDANAM*  
EAST AND WEST, PAST AND PRESENT

Indological and Other Essays  
in Honour of Klaus Karttunen

EDITED BY

BERTIL TIKKANEN & ALBION M. BUTTERS



# STUDIA ORIENTALIA 110

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Helsinki 2011

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# RARE MEDIAEVAL KERALA MURALS AT KUMBLA, NEAR KASARGODE

*Henri Schildt*

## 1. SUBJECT AND METHOD

### 1.1 Subject and acknowledgements

This article presents a mural panel (Pls 3–11) found in the main shrine of the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple of Kumbla (Kerala, Kasargode District). This mural is exceptional in the Kerala heritage of mural painting.<sup>1</sup> I visited the temple on 12 March 2007 with Professor M.G. Sasibhooshan (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala), who kindly arranged access. Since the edifice was then under repair and not in a consecrated state, it was possible to photograph the murals. Subsequently, Professor Michael W. Meister (Norman Brown Professor in Art History, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA) kindly encouraged me to present the photographs at the colloquium of the South Asia Center, University of Pennsylvania, (Philadelphia, PA) on 23 October 2008.

### 1.2 Method and sources

The mural in the main shrine of the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple is located on the southern panel of the western wall, within the inner ambulatory (Pl. 2). Its style is analyzed to determine its probable age. It presents the scene of the divine marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, with Śiva at the center, accompanied by his consort Pārvatī, two different aspects of Viṣṇu, two Bhūtas, and two temple servants (Pl. 3). Harman's (1989) study on the divine marriage and Donaldson's (2007) study on Śaivite iconography are referenced to further highlight the details of the painting.

The relation of this mural to the different schools of the craft of painting can be ascertained by referring to S. Sivaramamurti's (1970) and Moti Chandra's (1970)

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<sup>1</sup> Pictures of the painting are already published in a recent work entitled *Wall Paintings in North Kerala: 1000 Years of Temple Art* (Frenz & Marar 2004: 66–74, Pls 99, 100, 103).



works. Due to the small number of surviving murals, for further enlightenment on their evolution one must turn to examples of sculptural art, as explained by Sivaramamurti's (1963) work on South Indian bronzes. Though the two crafts evolved independently, they were in theory both under the same concept of *citra* (Nardi 2006).

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PAINTING IN THE ANANTAPADMANĀ-BHASVĀMI TEMPLE AT KUMBLA

### 2.1 Outline of regional history

In the early centuries AD, South India formed to some extent a homogenous ethno-cultural region. Kerala was part of a larger Tamil-speaking area that stretched from the Chandragiri River and Nilgiri hills in the northwest and Tondai Nadu in the north-east to Kanyakumari in the south. In the Early Middle Ages (i.e. the late 7th century and 8th centuries), the greatest events were the continuous wars between the Cālukya kings of Bādāmi, Karnataka and the Pallavas of Kāñcī, Tamil Nadu, with both dynasties claiming to have also conquered Kerala. By the 10th century, the Cēra kingdom of Makotai had extended to include the Āy Vēls in the south and the Mūśikas in the north, ending the peaceful terms between the Cōlas and Cēras. King Parāntaka I Cōla (AD 907–955) was the first Cōla king to wage war against the Cēras, due to loyalty towards the Pāṇḍyas. True Cōla expansion began during Rājarāja I Cōla's reign (AD 985–1016). He started the so-called “Hundred-Year” war, which was continued by his son Rajendra I (AD 1012–1044) and their successors. The Cēras succeeded in reestablishing power after this war effort, but King Kulōttuṅga I Cōla (AD 1070–1122) campaigned against Kerala immediately after this recovery, eventually splitting it into the smaller kingdoms of Venad, Cochin, Calicut, and Kolattiri (Sreedhara Menon 1967: 65, 86, 126–127, 130–137; Swaminathan 1998: 63).

In Tulu Nadu, the most significant local kingdom from the 6th century AD was the Āḷupa kingdom. It received the onslaught of the Cōlas by Rājarāja I and Rājendra I slightly before AD 1006. The Cōla occupation lasted until circa AD 1020, after which the Āḷupa reign was restored. The Āḷupas would later become close to the Late Cālukyas and the Hoysalas. The kingdom was annexed by the Vijayanagara Empire by AD 1400 (Ramesh 1970: 35, 101–103, 107, 149).

Kumbla and the nearby Atandapadmanābhasvāmi temple, located approximately fifteen kilometers north-northwest of the town of Kasargode, fall between northern Kerala and southern Tulu Nadu. Being a “gray territory” between two cultures, the history of Kumbla has not been extensively studied. Once ruled

by the local kings of Kumbla loyal to the Āḷupas, the rule of the Mūsika and Kōlattiri kings did not reach here (Sreedhara Menon 1972: 725).

## 2.2 The architecture of the temple and its probable date

The Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple (Pls 1 & 2) and its plan are ordinary in terms of Kerala temple architecture. Mostly built of laterite and wood, it has a square or *samacaturaśra* plan with the principal shrine or *garbhagṛha* within an ambulatory (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*). The eastern entrance is covered by a four-pillared antechamber (*mukhamaṇḍapa*), which in turn is preceded by a four-pillared front pavilion (*namaskāramaṇḍapa*) of later date. The inner ambulatory (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*) is spacious. The central shrine or *garbhagṛha* is an independent edifice existing within another edifice typical of the “Middle” Kerala phase from AD 1000–1300. With the ancillary outer wall (*bāhyabhitti*), the central shrine forms a two-story *dvitalavimāna*. The stucco of the central niches (*devakoṣṭha*) within the inner ambulatory (Pl. 18) shows influence from Tulu Nadu. The stucco images in the central niches date to the 11th–12th century, indicating that the temple was built around AD 1100. According to a legend, Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa appeared as an orphan boy to its founder, the sage Vilvamaṅalam (Sarkar 1978: 98–99, 199; Jayashanker 1999: 103–104).<sup>2</sup>

## 2.3 Inner ambulatory and its paintings

The sanctum wall, surrounded by the inner ambulatory (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*), offers panels with two layers of murals.<sup>3</sup> On the eastern wall above the sanctum door, one finds murals that have been badly damaged and even recently retouched several times. The northern panel of the eastern wall is a description of native people, apparently wearing festival attire and celebrating, with a forest and wild-life in the background (Pl. 12). The southern panel is dedicated to Śiva as the Naṭarāja (Pl. 13), with female dancers and two different aspects of Pārvatī above.

In the southern wall, the eastern panel shows a pastoral landscape (Pl. 14) with Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs and a large-size herd. The upper part of the western panel provides a description of a village, though it has somewhat lost its original character. Below it is a dancing Śiva.

<sup>2</sup> One must note that only photographs of their appearance exist (see Sarkar 1978: Pl. XXXIV BN). After H. Sarkar’s visits in the 1970s, they were replaced by other images.

<sup>3</sup> Albrecht Frenz and Krishna Kumar Marar date these two layers to the 14th and 17th centuries. Their work offers a fairly comprehensive set of photos of these murals (see Frenz & Marar 2004: 66–74).

In the northern wall, the western panel presents a large Viṣṇu Anantāsana (Pl. 15), surrounded by his consorts (Pl. 16). On the eastern panel there stands a large and damaged figure of Durgā treading on Mahiṣāsura (Pl. 17), surrounded by subordinate female figures.

In the western wall, the northern panel hosts a large sun god Sūrya (Pl. 18). On the southern wall, the upper half reveals a large Narasiṃha, with Brahmā and Śiva on the right and left. The murals above, with different hues of brownish reds and yellows, bear the typical Late Mediaeval (17th–19th centuries) touch. The lower two-thirds, on the other hand, are clearly older and exceptional in style. These will be the focus of the remainder of this article (Pls 3–11).

### 3. THE MEANING OF THE PAINTING

#### 3.1 On the sacred and divine marriage

The painting of the sacred marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī presents the ascetic Śiva at the center, Pārvatī on his left side and the boon-receiving Viṣṇu on his right side. The boon in Śiva's hand given to Viṣṇu for that god's gift, the bride, Viṣṇu's "sister" Pārvatī, however, is not visible due to slight damage on the mural. Since sculptural settings that depict Śiva and Pārvatī (the *umāmabheśvaramūrti* and *umāsahitamūrti*) are popular in Pallava, Cōla and Vijayanagara bronzes, it is logical to assume that this mural was just one mural among many similar murals that belonged to this same school of mural painting but have perished. We also notice another Viṣṇu, above the boon-receiving Viṣṇu, worshipping a *śivaliṅga*. This may denote Śaivism.<sup>4</sup>

Marriage is one of the most meaningful ceremonies in Hindu society. It is the rite of passage in which a member of Hindu society accomplishes his or her full status as a caste member. Marriage is an exchange where two families establish both an economic agreement and affinal bond. In the case of royal marriage, it signifies alliances between kingdoms and the exchange of wealth and power. With regard to the anthropomorphic deities, as they share many similar traits with humans, it is possible and even likely that they should also marry. Purāṇic texts describe Gods practicing different marital and extra-marital relationships with the opposite sex. Gods may even marry humans. The principle of superiority for

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4 The mural may refer to the marriage of a local village goddess to Śiva to unify different groups of devotees. It might also reflect a royal myth of a royal daughter, here Pārvatī, wed to Śiva. Like in Madurai, the princess may be associated with the goddess and Viṣṇu, as well as with her royal brother and the royal deity of the temple. For a more conclusive identification, more local evidence is needed.

the one who takes a wife is significant, compared to the status of the wife-giver, as in traditional Hindu society females always marry upwards in caste and males downwards. The divine marriage is described in texts as being significant for the world order. Marriage of a royal daughter to a divine being bestows mythical legitimacy to a kingdom, providing it with a divine bloodline. Thus Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma usually marry royal daughters and their wife-taker status is enhanced though tales of abducting royal daughters in fits of passionate love. Śiva, on the other hand, is usually tied to a locality through marriage to village goddesses. Śiva may also marry a royal daughter, in which case she is Pārvatī, daughter of King Himavant of the Himalayas. Unlike the more passionate gods (i.e. Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa), Śiva is almost compelled to marry by the other gods and the rather active Pārvatī. Versions of this myth occur in the *sthala-purāṇas* of some temples and myths of royal houses (Harman 1989: 9–20).<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2 On the *umāsahita-* and *umāmaheśvaramūrti* sculptural groups

The mural referred to above has parallels in sculpture, particularly the sculptural groups called *umāsahitamūrti* and *umāmaheśvaramūrti*, which both describe Śiva and Pārvatī as a divine married couple sitting on a pedestal. The concept of this setting reflects principles of Śaivism and Śāktism, as the idea of this divine couple is associated with the dualism of spirit and matter (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*), as well as with the unity (*advaita*) of creation (Kramrisch 1981: 58). The composition is also close to the *somāskandamūrti*, but obviously lacking Skanda, the younger son of Śiva. In the painting, the figure of Śiva is four-armed, has a *varadamudrā* in his front right hand and a *kartarīmudrā* in his back right hand, with the axe (*paraśu*) balanced on the tip of its middle finger. The front left hand is damaged but possibly forms an *abhayamudrā*. The back left hand embraces Pārvatī, holding her left breast. Śiva sits with both of his legs up, which is the yogic lotus posture of *padmāsana*. Pārvatī is two-armed, holding a lotus flower in her right hand and leaning on her left hand on the seat. She has her left leg pendant and her right leg folded, her body slightly rotated away from her husband but her face turned towards him.

Compared to the *umāsahitamūrti* described in the textual sources, the composition is close to certain Āgama texts (e.g. *Aṅśumadbhedāgama*, *Pūrvakaraṇāgama*),

<sup>5</sup> A version of this myth tells of Mīnākṣī of Madurai, the androgynous daughter of King Malayadhvaja Pāṇḍya, who conquers the known world up to the Himalayas, defeats even Śiva himself, and then marries him. Śiva is compelled to marry to save the world order, but at the same time he ascends the Pāṇḍya throne, establishes the divine bloodline of the Pāṇḍya kings and bestows a powerful divine ally to the royal house (Harman 1989: 44–63).

the *Śiva Purāṇa*, and the *Śilparatna* (Donaldson 2007: 299 & Chart no. 7). All these texts have:

1. *abhayamudrā* and *varadamudrā* in Śiva's front right and left hands;
2. weapons *paraśu* and *mṛga* in Śiva's back right and left hands;
3. lotus (*padma/utpala*) in Pārvatī's right hand;
4. Pārvatī's left hand on the seat.

If the first left hand of the Śiva in the painting really forms an *abhayamudrā*, then five of the six characteristics in the texts match with the painting. The greatest differences lie in the fact that instead of Śiva holding the deer (*mṛga*) in his second left hand, that hand embraces Pārvatī's left breast. The *mudrās* of the first right and left hands are also in reverse order.

When one scrutinizes the signs and gestures of the four hands as they appear in Tamil sculpture, they follow the rules presented in the above texts (Āgama, etc.) regarding the first and second right hands, the *abhayamudrā* as the most common type in the first right hand, the axe (*paraśu*) in the second right hand, and the deer (*mṛga*) in the second left hand. However, unlike the aforementioned Āgama texts, the first left hand only seldom portrays a *varadamudrā* but a wide variety of different choices, including the *kaṭaka-* and *siṃha-karṇamudrās* or the hand placed on Uma's knee, leg or thigh. Closer inspection of the *umāsahitamūrti* composition in the light of existing sculpture reveals that in none of these sculptures does the second left hand touch Pārvatī's breast like in the painting, but instead holds a deer (*mṛga*) (see the *umāmaheśvaramūrti* composition below). As for Śiva's consort, Umā, she most often holds a lotus flower in her right hand. Her left hand is mostly found on the seat or on her knee, hip or shoulder. The left hand may also form a *kaṭaka-* or *varadamudrā* (Donaldson 2007: 299–301 & Chart no. 7).

Comparing the composition of the painting with existing sculptural *umāsahitamūrti* compositions, one finds that it is rare, if not anomalous, with some close parallels. The closest individual match seems to be a Cōla 11th-century sculpture from Gaṅgaikondacōlapuraṃ. In this example, the first right hand has the *varadamudrā* and the second right a hand-axe (*paraśu*). The first left hand is on Pārvatī's thigh and the second left hand holds a deer (*mṛga*). The close similarity lies not only in the occurrence of the *varadamudrā* in the first right hand, but also with the first left hand that seeks contact with Pārvatī (even though it is the second left hand which bears this characteristic in the mural). The next closest matches, the 10th-century sculpture from Kāverīpakkam and the 14th or 15th-century sculpture from Tiruttani, are close but more Āgamic, showing the *abhayamudrā* in the first right hand and a rosary in the second left hand instead of the deer. One also finds a group of 11th-century bronzes (Tiruvalīśvaram,

Kēraḷapuram, Nīlakaṅṭheśvarī, Settūr Agrahāram, etc.) with the *abhayamudrā* in the first right hand and the first left in the *kaṭakamudrā*.

In terms of the *umāmāheśvaramūrti*, the similarities of this type of composition with the mural do not lie in the overall posture, which is more intimate in character than in the *umāsahitamūrti*, but with the hands. Here one observes that Śiva's second left hand, which embraces Pārvatī's breast, does not follow the Śāstric rules of this type. Nor does it appear in existing sculptures. Examining the Śāstric rules of the *umāmāheśvaramūrti*, such a detail is seen to be normal for the first left hand. A closer look at the gestures and weapons in the texts *Prapañcasāra Tantra*, *Sāradātilaka Tantra* and *Tantrasāra* reveal close similarities with the mural (Donaldson 2007: 299 & Chart no. 11):

1. the *varadamudrā* in Śiva's front right hand;
2. Śiva's front left hand on Umā's breast;
3. the signs (*paraśu* and *mṛga/Veda*) in Śiva's back right and left hands.

As for Pārvatī, she holds a red lotus in her left hand. In the mural the lotus is in the right hand.

When inspecting the two existing sculptural *umāmāheśvaramūrti* compositions more closely, both dated to the 11th century, they offer a combination of the signs (*paraśu* and *mṛga*) in the second right and second left hands, while the first left is embracing Pārvatī. The closest match is the Gaṅgaikondacolapuram *umāmāheśvara*, which displays, in addition to these, a *varadamudrā* in the first right hand. The second closest match is the Tirunelveli *umāmāheśvara*, which displays an *abhayamudrā* instead.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. PAINTING, ITS STYLE AND POSSIBLE AGE

##### 4.1 Comparing the mural to South Indian schools of mural painting

When one looks at the mural on the lower half of the southern panel of the western wall of the sanctum (see Pl. 3, a line drawing of the composition), the deities are outlined and painted clearly in a style which is more related to earlier Dravidian sculpture (Pallava, Pāṇḍya and Cōla) in general than the Kerala School of mural painting with a strong Karnatic label.

A brief look at the Kerala school, such as the paintings of the Mattanchery Palace (Cochin, Kerala) from the 16th century or those of the Todikkalam Śiva

6 Donaldson (2007: 451–456 & Chart no. 20). This chart, which corresponds to type E in Donaldson's classification, comprises seven *umāmāheśvara* sculptures from Tamil Nadu which are dated to 9th–13th centuries.

temple (near Thalassery, Kannur District, Kerala) from the late 16th century, is sufficient to immediately show that no resemblance exists between this style and the painting in question. Even though it offers similar iconographical treatment of its motifs, the style is too different. Being almost cartoonish with strong outlines of round and fleshy figures with broad noses and mouths, it more closely resembles late Western Chalukya and Hoysala sculpture.<sup>7</sup> The earliest known and partly surviving Kerala painting at Tirunandikkara, associated with the Cēra rule (8th century), is too fragmentary to impart any sense of resemblance (see Sivaramamurti 1970: 74, Pl. 6).

There does exist the possibility that the painting matches the Vijayanagara school. However, early examples of the Vijayanagara school have not survived. Examination of the late Vijayanagara school, such as it is portrayed in the 16th-century paintings in the Virabhadra temple at Lepakshi (Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh), proves that at that point the style had evolved in a very two-dimensional manner lacking plasticity and being rather miniature-like. Its cloth- or carpet-like panels, defined by decorative bands with rosettes and vegetative motifs, are also visible in the Kerala school. Figures are lined up, forming processions and ceremonial settings, heavily clothed according to the fashion of the time (see Sivaramamurti 1970: 75–76, Pls 11, 12). As it is clear that the Kerala School owes much to the late Vijayanagara style of mural painting (along with earlier Hoysala/Late Cālukya influences), one should shift the focus of interest from this Late Mediaeval mural tradition to the sparse surviving Early Mediaeval tradition of the southern Drāviḍadeśa, in order to find parallel works among Early Mediaeval South Indian sculpture.

The most ancient paintings of any South Indian school are the Cālukya dynasty paintings, dated to AD 578–579, in Cave IV at Badami. These are close to the more northern Vākāṭaka school in Ajantā in the treatment of facial features with full lips and heavy eyelids, but differ from the Vākāṭaka school in the technique of outlining figures rather than shading them with different hues of colors in order to enhance their plasticity (such as one finds in Ajantā). The overall character is more secular here than religious. The Cālukya school is thus not parallel with the Anantapuram mural (cf. Sivaramamurti 1970: 46–49 & Pl. 4).

The next South Indian school of mural painting, the school of the Pallava Dynasty seen in the Talagiriśvara temple at Panamalai (Villupuram District,

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7 Compare, for example, the above mentioned Mattanchery-Palace murals (see Ramachandran 2005: 208–273) and the Todikkalam-Temple murals (ibid. 341–379) to the Hoysala sculpture (see particularly Settar 1975: Pls XIII, XIV, XX–XXIV, XXVIII–XXXI, XXXIV–XLVII; Maity 1978: Pls 25–33, 46–81, 93–102).

Tamil Nadu), offers a close match from the 7th century to the figure of Pārvatī in the Anantapuram mural. This mural painting presents Pārvatī in a standing posture with her body flexed and head bent towards the right. Her complexion is fair, unlike that of the Anantapuram Pārvatī (Sivaramamurti 1970: 51–53 & Pl. 5), but her right hand is placed in an almost identical way as in Anantapuram, above her right shoulder. In both cases the bodily form is enhanced by darker shades of color and clear outlining. There are also similar details, such as the facial features, the conical form of the crown (*karaṇḍamukuṭa*), and the sets of cords, necklaces and bangles.

The 9th-century Pāṇḍya Dynasty paintings in a Jain cave temple at Sittannavasal (Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu) present a dancing Apsara. Even though badly damaged and fragmentary, it is also a close match to the Anantapuram Pārvatī. The posture is flexed towards the right and the treatment of the face has as much resemblance as the Anantapuram Pārvatī discussed above. Further similarities can be found in minor details of the face and tiara (see Ramachandran 1961: Pl. C). The Sittannavasal paintings also offer a portrait of the royal patron with his wife, analogous to the Śiva of Anantapuram (see Ramachandran 1961: Fig. 21). Even though the crown here is of a different type, the facial features display many similarities: the ears are elongated and adorned with large earrings, and the eyes bear similar expression.

As regards southern Dravidian influence on the art of Kerala, it is obvious that Kerala already belonged to its sphere during the dominance of the Pallavas. It is therefore difficult to assume any precise onset of the influence of the Cōḷa patronage of art, as it may well have begun before the Cōḷa expansion. It is also noteworthy that the Pallava and Pāṇḍya patronages dominated the so-called “Early” phase (c. AD 800–1000) of Kerala architecture and sculpture, following many trends typical of the “Lower” Drāviḍadeśa as the Cōḷa art of the Kaveri delta on the opposite coast, though the Cōḷa patronage of art had more direct impact on the temple architecture of Kerala during the so-called “Middle Kerala” phase after c. AD 1000, when the dynasty had become very powerful.<sup>8</sup>

Since the impact of Cōḷa art on Kerala temple architecture is clear, it is interesting to compare the Anantapuram painting of Śiva and Pārvatī to the Cōḷa school of mural painting. Unfortunately, all that remains of this once large and

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8 H. Sarkar (1978: 98–99) points out that the impact of the Cōḷas at the beginning of the 11th century AD brought several innovative traits of Cōḷa or contemporary Tamil origin. These include: (1) Māḍakkōvil-type shrines; (2) an architectural design in which the *garbha-gṛha* became an independent edifice inside the edifice enclosing an ambulatory (*pradakṣiṇāpatha*); (3) the practice of placing a goblin (*bhūta*) figure under the end of the water-chute (*praṇāla*); and (4) carvings on the *hasti-hasta* banisters depicting dance scenes.



influential school of painting is the series of murals in the inner ambulatory of the Bṛhadīśvara temple, coeval with the temple built (c. AD 1004–1010) by Rājarāja I Cōla.<sup>9</sup>

These paintings offer two close matches to the figures of the Śiva and Viṣṇu presented in the Anantapuram temple. The first match is the Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti located on the western wall. The overall shape and bodily proportions bear uncanny resemblance. This figure, unlike the Anantapuram Śiva, is sitting on a tiger-skin. The axe in his second right hand is the only thing that remains of his signs, and even that is fragmentary. The facial features, including the three eyes, the eyebrows and the shapes of the mouth, nose and elongated ears with large earrings, appear to be an almost exact match. The crown of matted hair (*jaṭāmukuta*) is almost as high and the necklaces are similar to those of the Anantapuram Śiva. The sitting posture is slightly different (*sukhāsana*) from that of the Anantapuram Śiva (*padmāsana*), however. The fragmentary state of this mural unfortunately prevents a closer examination of details (cf. Sivaramamurti 1970: 63–65 & Fig. 6).

Among all of the available examples, the portrait of King Rājarāja I with his guru, Karuvūr Dēvar (see Nachiappan 2004: Pls XXII, XXIII), is perhaps the closest match with the Anantapuram painting. The similarities lie in the treatment of the male figures and their outfits, as well as in the colors. The eyes and eyebrows of the Śiva of the Anantapuram painting are similar to those in the portrait of Rājarāja Cōla, though Śiva's face is more elongated. Śiva's brown color refers to the wearing of the holy ashes, exactly like the figure of Karuvūr Dēvar, who is standing beside the king. The matted hair of the king and his guru has the same overall shape as Śiva's *jaṭāmukuta* crown. Moreover, the outfits of the male bodies in these two murals are similar: the *dhoti* of the Viṣṇu of the Anantapuram painting is surprisingly similar to those of King Rājarāja I and his guru, Karuvūr Dēvar, in the Tañjāvūr Cōla painting. Śiva's colorful sacred thread, which is normally found on the right shoulder, is treated like that of Karuvūr Dēvar (even though the latter wears the sacred thread on his right shoulder as a symbol of certain sectarian currents of Śaivism): the thread is folded on the shoulder and the knots are the same. Another good example of the sacred thread in the Tañjāvūr paintings is that of Brahmā as charioteer (Nachiappan 2004: Pl. XXXV), with an almost identical treatment of the sacred thread and its knot on the right shoulder.

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9 According to Balasubrahmanyam (1975: 14–15), the temple was built between the 19th and 25th regnal year of King Rājarāja I ruled between AD 985 and 1014. The paintings are probably coeval with the temple (see Pichard 1995: 13, 53).

As for the overall coloring of the Anantapuram painting and the Tañjāvūr paintings, it is worth noting that the background is blue in both the Anantapuram painting (turquoise) and the Tañjāvūr paintings (dark blue). This kind of blue background is still visible and virtually intact in many Tañjāvūr panels (see Nachiappan 2004: Pls XVII, XXII, XXIII, XXXII, XXXV). It can be clearly seen that the background above the heads of the figures of Rājarāja and his guru was once blue, exactly like is found in the Anantapuram painting.

As the paintings in the Tanjavūr Bṛhadīśvara are the only surviving examples of the once widespread heritage of the Cōla school, the possible evolution of painting can be theorized by comparing the possible stages of the Anantapuram paintings with Cōla sculpture, the evolution of which is divided into the “Early”, “Middle” and “Late” Cōla sculptural styles (Sivaramamurti 1963: 12–13; Barrett 1974: 17; Balasubrahmanyam 1979: ix–x). Douglas Barrett and C. Sivaramamurti mark the beginning of the “Early” style at the foundation of the Cōla dynasty by King Vijayālaya (AD 866), while S.R. Balasubrahmanyam places it around AD 850. The “Middle” style begins, according to C. Sivaramamurti and Douglas Barrett, when Rājarāja I ascended the throne (AD 985). While S.R. Balasubrahmanyam agrees with this, he states that there is a subsequent transitional phase, called the “Sembiyan Mahādeva”, that ends in approximately AD 1000.<sup>10</sup> As for the end of the “Middle” phase, C. Sivaramamurti understands it to be with the ascension to the throne of King Kulōttuṅga Cōla II in AD 1135, whereas S.R. Balasubrahmanyam regards the end of the “Middle” phase with Kulōttuṅga I Cōla’s ascension to the throne in AD 1070. The end of the so-called “Late” phase, according to Balasubrahmanyam, occurs at the end of the Cōla empire in AD 1280. It is obvious that a continuity of patronage and craftsmanship existed up until the Vijayanagara dynasty, which would create its own hybrid but highly Cōla-inspired school of sculpture. These stages will be analyzed below with a comparison of the details of the Anantapuram painting and surviving Cōla sculpture.

#### 4.2 Śiva (Pl. 4)

The nature of Śiva’s ascetic aspect is enhanced here by his light brown color, which differs from the dark greenish blue color of the other deities and the *śivaliṅga* above. This figure clearly wears the holy ashes with which the Śaiva devotees smear their entire bodies. Considering the color of the *śivaliṅga*, it

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<sup>10</sup> Barrett (1974: 17) further divides the first phase into three phases of which the first and third are clearly different in character: (1) the “Aditya I phase” spans from AD 866 to c. AD 940, (2) the “Sembiyan Mahādevī” phase from AD 940 to c. AD 970, (3) and the third phase which is the transitional phase from the Early to the Middle is from AD 970 to c. AD 1014.

could also be inferred that without the ashes he would have a similar complexion as the other deities. Moreover, this ascetic Śiva is sitting on the pedestal in a yogic *padmāsana* posture which does not follow the usual norm of the *umāsahita* (*umāmaheśvara/ somaskanda*) compositions (see below), where his sitting posture is of the *sukhāsana* type but with Śiva's ascetic *dakṣiṇāmūrti* aspect (cf. Jouveau-Dubreuil 1926: 19, 32). Śiva seems to be handing something to Viṣṇu, who is standing on his right-hand side. In this way, the hand forms the *varadamudrā* hand gesture, indicating the offering of a boon (Sivaramamurti 1963: 20 & Fig. 5b). The gesture of the second right hand is a *kartarimudrā*, used often with divine signs (*āyudha*) and here an axe (*paraśu*) on the tip of the middle finger (see Sivaramamurti 1963: 20 & Figs 5a, 5c). The axe has a form that can be associated with the "Late" Cōḷa period or "Early" Vijayanagara period.<sup>11</sup>

The first left hand is unclear and partly damaged, although it probably does not hold any sign and here forms the *abhayamudrā* hand gesture. The second left hand is on the left breast of his divine spouse, Pārvatī, and forms the gesture called *siṃhakarṇamudrā* or *kaṭakamudrā* (Sivaramamurti 1963: 20 & Figs 5a, 5d). Śiva's eyes are benign in expression (*padma* or *utpala*, cf. Nardi 2006: 49–52 & Figs 3.8–12).

Śiva's matted hair forms a crown called *jaṭāmukuṭa* (Sivaramamurti 1963: 20; cf. Jouveau-Dubreuil 1926: 18–19). It is adorned with jewels and silver rings. At the top left is the crescent. The very elongated form of the matted crown conforms here with both "Early" Cōḷa and "Late" Cōḷa sculpture, though the even more elongated form of the late phase seems to offer a closer match.<sup>12</sup>

Śiva's earrings are asymmetrical, the left ear having a larger earring than the right (cf. Sivaramamurti 1963: 28 & Fig. 15a–c & Pls 37b, 38b, 49a, 69a, 75a, 94b, 98). In the mural, however, the right earring is larger. This may occur in sculpture as well.<sup>13</sup>

11 In a 14th-century Vijayanagara-style "Adhikāranandi with consort" from Tirumullavāśal, Tañjāvūr District and an 11th–12th-century Candraśekhara (Musée Guimet, Paris), the axes have exactly similar proportions in terms of barrel-shape volume and blade. A similar, albeit slightly more slender, shape of the axe with larger blade occurs in the 13th-century "Late" Cōḷa Viṇādhara, Śeyyanam, Tañjāvūr District (Government Museum, Chennai). In "Early" Cōḷa 10th-century examples, the axes are different, being slender and less barrel-like in the upper part, while the blades are larger and of different shape (Sivaramamurti 1963: 40 & Figs 30–1b & 30–1c; Pls 33a, 38b, 45a, 49a, 94b).

12 The Viṇādhara from 13th century, Śeyyanam, Tañjāvūr District and a Candraśekhara from the 11th–12th century (Musée Guimet, Paris) have very elongated *jaṭāmukuṭas*, more than their "Early" Cōḷa counterparts (Sivaramamurti 1963: 24, Pl. 38b & 49a; cf. Pls 36a–38a).

13 According to Jouveau-Dubreuil (1926: 19): "Śiva's ears are always dissimilar. The right ear is long and hanging, and a small ring in the form of a snake is attached to its extremity (*nāgakuṇḍala*). The left ear on the other hand is ornamented with a big round buckle. This lack of symmetry is found in most ancient sculptures." The 10th-century "Early" Cōḷa Tripurāntakamūrti, Kīlayūr (Tanjavur Art Gallery) has a large right earring (Sivaramamurti 1963: Pl. 33b).



Plate 1

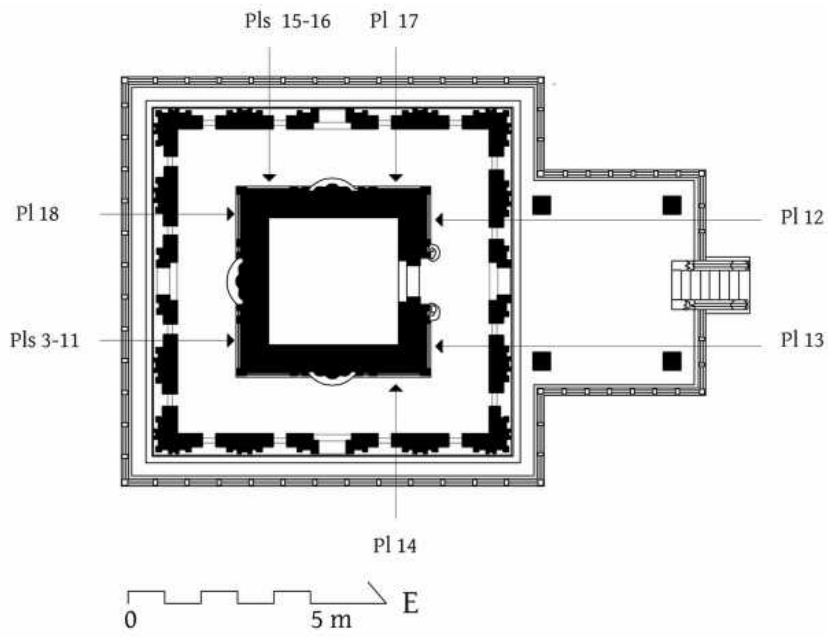


Plate 2

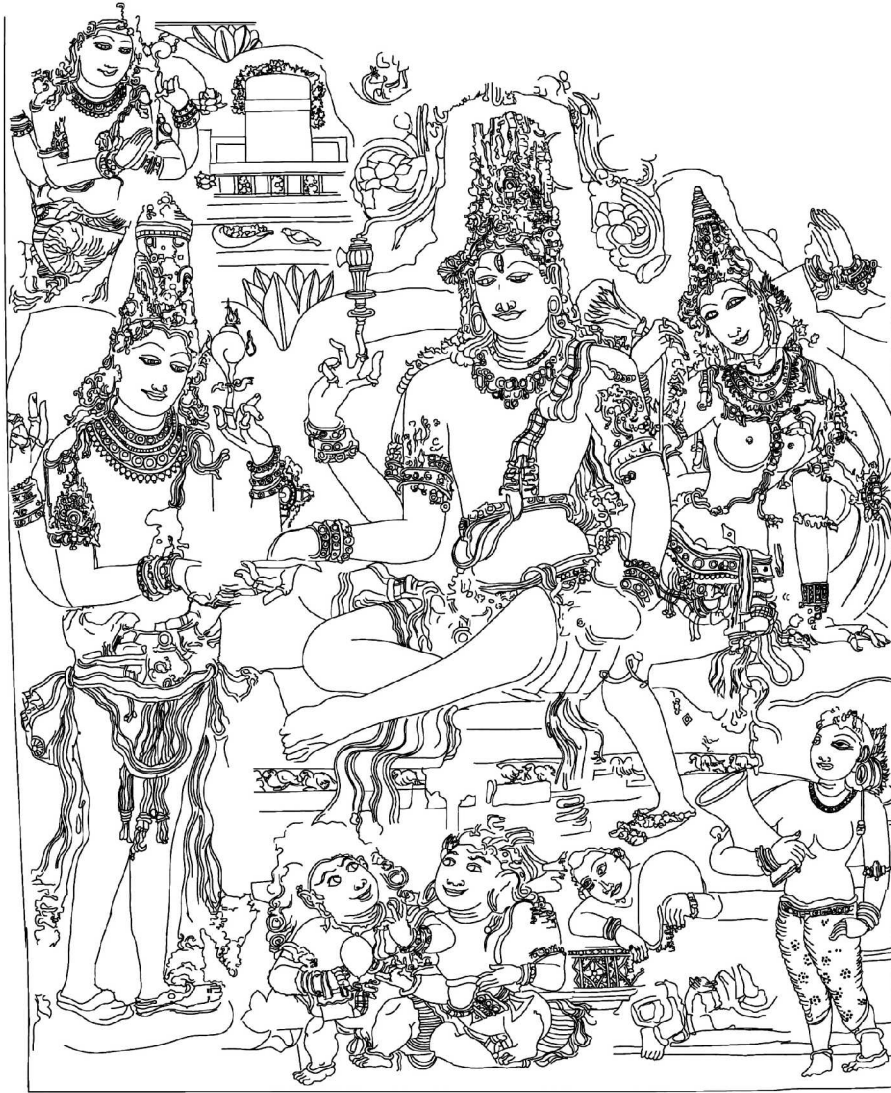


Plate 3



Plate 4



*Plate 5*



*Plate 6*

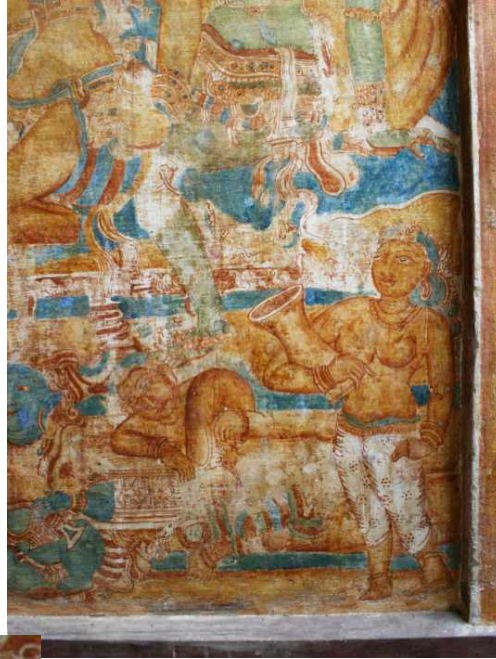
Plate 7



Plate 8



*Plate 9*



*Plate 10*



Plate 11



Plate 12



*Plate 13*



*Plate 14*



Plate 15



Plate 16



*Plate 17*



*Plate 18*

Śiva's sacred thread (*yajñōpavīta*) is broad, colorful and consists of many folds. The form of the usual knot on the heart (cf. Jouveau-Dubreuil 1926: 125–126) refers clearly to “Late” Cōla or Vijayanagara sculpture, where this garment tends to be richer in form than before (see Sivaramamurti 1963: Figs 17a–d & Pl. 38b).<sup>14</sup> However, as noted above, if compared directly to the sacred threads portrayed in the murals in the “Middle” Cōla school of painting in the Tañjāvūr Bṛhadīśvara temple, finished in approximately AD 1010 or immediately after that, one notes striking similarities of painting technique with the sacred thread of Karuvūr Dēvar in the portrait of King Rājarāja I. Śiva has two necklaces: a neck chain and an elaborate necklace adorned by circular stones or jewels, with tassels where similar stones have been inserted. This arrangement, which bears similarities with some “Early” Cōla sculptures, is somewhat different from the necklace that became popular in the “Late” Cōla or Vijayanagara style.<sup>15</sup>

The armlets of Śiva belong to the snake-shaped *ananta* type, which in the Cōla style are ornate with beads, thus differing from their simpler Pallava predecessors.<sup>16</sup> Here Śiva does not have shoulder tassels or epaulettes (*skandhamālā*), but his shoulders are adorned by flowers reminiscent of the “Late” Cōla and Vijayanagara styles.<sup>17</sup> The stomach-band (*udarabandha*) is decorated by round stones, like in the “Early” and “Late” Cōla styles. However, this component seems to regain its original simplicity here.<sup>18</sup> The waist-band (*kaṭisūtra*) is too unclear to be analyzed.

14 For example, in the 13th-century “Late” Cōla Viṇādhara, Śeyyanam, Tañjāvūr District (Government Museum, Chennai; Sivaramamurti 1963: 38b).

15 The early-11th-century Tripurāntaka from Tiruviḍaimarudūr (Tanjavur Art Gallery) and the 11th-century Rāma from Paruttīyūr, Tañjāvūr District have similar necklaces as the Śiva in the mural. A different and more popular type in the “Late” Cōla style but not unknown in the “Early” Cōla style either, occurs in the 10th-century “Early” Cōla Somāskanda (National Museum of India, New Delhi), in the 12th-century “Late” Cōla Royal Devotee (Gautam Sarabhai Collection Ahmedabad), and the 14th-century Vijayanagara Adhikāranandi from Tirumullaivāśal, Tañjāvūr District (Tanjavur Art Gallery; Sivaramamurti 1963: 31, Fig. 17c; Pls 34, 35 43a, 81a, 94b).

16 The snake-shaped and ornate armlets of the 12th-century Gaṇeśa, Semaṅgalam, Tañjāvūr District (Trivandrum Museum) and the 13th-century “Late” Cōla-Vijayanagara Adhikāra-nandi (Sir Gowasji Jehangir Collection, Bombay) provide two almost exact matches, even though the “Early” Cōla 10th century *Chaṇḍikeśvara* from Okkūr, Tañjāvūr District (Government Museum, Chennai) is also close (Sivaramamurti 1963: 33, Figs 20-1a & 20-2a; Pls 49b, 53a, 75a).

17 A 12th-century “Late” Cōla Śiva from *umāsahita* group, from Kiḷayūr in Tirukkivilūr, District South Arcot (Government Museum Chennai), a 11th–12th-century “Late” Cōla Candraśekhara (Musée Guimet, Paris), a 12th–13th-century “Late” Cōla Vṛṣabhavāhanamūrti, Vedāraṇyam, Tañjāvūr District and the 14th-century Vijayanagara Adhikāranandi from Tirumullaivāśal, Tañjāvūr District (Tanjavur Art Gallery; Sivaramamurti 1963: 30–31 & Figs 17a–c, Pls 37b, 49a, 51, 94b).

18 A 12th–13th-century “Late” Cōla Vṛṣabhavāhanamūrti, Vedāraṇyam, Tañjāvūr District (Sivaramamurti 1963: 33, Pl. 51).

### 4.3 Pārvatī (Pl. 5)

The posture of Pārvatī is confusing, with her straight left leg resting on the ground and right leg bent over her left knee. The figure looks as if originally intended to stand, having been painted accordingly until the painter added the left leg.

The upper body of the Goddess beautifully flexed towards the left with head inclined towards Śiva at the right, reminds of the aforementioned Pallava Pārvatī at Panamalai and the Pāṇḍya Apsara at Sittannavasal. When compared to sculpture, one notes that the same style occurs in the “Early” Cōla bronzes of Pārvatī in standing posture.<sup>19</sup>

The complexion of Pārvatī is bluish-green, much like the deities described in mediaeval Dravidian textual sources and schools of painting (see Jouveau-Dubreuil 1925: 57–58).<sup>20</sup> The two-armed Pārvatī holds a lotus flower in her right hand in *kaṭakamudrā* (see Sivaramamurti 1963: 20 & Fig. 5d; Jouveau-Dubreuil 1926: 38). Her left hand rests on the *pīṭha*.<sup>21</sup>

The type of crown found here is clearly the conventional “pot-crown” (*kaṛaṇḍa-mukuṭa*) of Pārvatī, which was prevailing since the “Early” Pallava dynasty. As in the “Early” Cōla-style, the “pot” components are found only at the top while the bulk of the conical crown is adorned with jewels.<sup>22</sup>

Pārvatī has three necklaces, the first of which appears to be a string (*maṅgalyasūtra*) higher up the neck with a central bead. This is typical for Goddesses in Cōla style. The next necklace is a neck-chain, similar to the one worn by Śiva but slightly damaged and blurred in the painting. The third necklace is broad and elaborate, adorned with colorful circular stones and a string of mango-leaf-shaped beads. This belongs to a type that was popular both in the “Early” and “Late” Cōla styles.<sup>23</sup>

19 Note the standing Pārvatī from c. AD 1000 from the temple of Konerirājapuram, Tañjāvūr District (in the Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad) and Śivakāmasundarī from c.9th–10th century AD Okkūr, both of which are “Early” Cōla style and from Tañjāvūr District (Sivaramamurti 1963: Pls 17a–b & 23). A beautiful 16th-century Vijayanagara example of Pārvatī with gently flexed posture is visible in Tanjavur Art Gallery, Tañjāvūr District (see Sivaramamurti 1963: Pls 17a–b, 23 & 83a).

20 This rule is followed in the Late Mediaeval Kerala school of mural painting (Ramachandran 2005). A large part of textual theory on painting does not follow this rule (Nardi 2006: 41–45).

21 A Pallava example of a Somāskanda (with the Skanda missing) from the 9th century (Tiruvāṅgāḍu Government Museum, Chennai) is an “Early” Cōla example of Umā and Skanda (of a Somāskanda group) from the 9th–10th centuries, of the Pallavanīsvaram temple in Śīrkālī, Tañjāvūr District.

22 The 9th–10th-century “Early” Cōla Pārvatī (Metropolitan Museum New York) and the 11th-century “Early” Cōla Pārvatī (Museum of Fine Arts Boston; Sivaramamurti 1963: 26; Fig. 11a–c; Pls 58a–b, 59a–b).

23 The “Early” Cōla Sītā, c. AD 1000, from Vaḍakkuppaṇayūr, Tañjāvūr District (Government

The armlets of Pārvaṭī appear to be of the type with a large jewel in the center flanked by two *makara* heads and topped by five decorative spikes, as found in “Early” Cōḷa, “Late” Cōḷa, and Vijayanagara images of Pārvaṭī (which portray also the alternative *ananta* type armlet).<sup>24</sup>

Pārvaṭī has a pair of shoulder tassels on both shoulders, but no flower decoration. In addition to this, there are singular thick blue strings on her shoulders. These do not seem to match the Cōḷa and Vijayanagara styles, which display singular tassels on both shoulders and sometimes the flower adornment as well. Pārvaṭī wears a bejeweled cross-shoulder belt (*suvarṇavaiḱakṣaka*), which generally appears as an alternative for the sacred thread of female figures in the Pallava to Vijayanagara styles. Its central component is here adorned by one red and two blue jewels. Two strings fork from this central component, one below it around the waist and one above it around the neck. This kind of cross-shoulder belt is clearly different from that of the Pallava period, but is similar to both the “Early” and “Late” Cōḷa styles.<sup>25</sup>

The waistband worn by female figures, called *mekhalā* (which differs from the *kaṭṭisūtra* worn by males), is almost completely visible here despite the fact that the figure is sitting – due to the aforementioned peculiar mistake made by the painter. This *mekhalā* waistband does not exhibit the usual *makara*-shaped central piece of the circular band, which in the “Early” Cōḷa style consisted of two *makara* figures facing each other and in the “Late” Cōḷa style turned away from each other. While the *makara* figures are replaced by a row of jewels, this waistband shares similarities with sculptures that portray another row of jewels and golden beads below the circular band and a ribbon hanging from the left side. Similar *mekhalā* waistbands can be found from both the “Early” and “Late” phases of Cōḷa sculpture, though “Late” Cōḷa sculpture offers the closest matches.<sup>26</sup>

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Museum Chennai), the 12th-century “Late” Cōḷa Queen (Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad), and the 11th-century *kalyāṇasundaramūrti*, Tiruveṅgāḍu, Tañjāvūr District (Tanjavur Art Gallery; Sivaramamurti 1963: 31, Fig. 17c; Pls 40b, 81a, 85).

24 The 13th–14th-century “Late” Cōḷa-Vijayanagara Adhikāranandī with consort (Sir Gowasji Jegangir Collection, Bombay), the 12th-century “Late” Cōḷa royal devotee (Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad), the 12th-century “Late” Cōḷa queen (Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad), the 11th-century *kalyāṇasundaramūrti*, Tiruveṅgāḍu, Tañjāvūr District (Tanjavur Art Gallery), the 14th-century and Vijayanagara-style Adhikāranandī with consort from Tirumullavāśal, Tañjāvūr District, and a 11th–12th-century Candraśekhara (Musée Guimet, Paris; Sivaramamurti 1963: 33, Figs 20-1c & 20-2c; Pls 75a, 81a, 81b, 85, 94b).

25 The “Early” Cōḷa, Pārvaṭī, from c. AD 1000, from Konerirājapuram, Tañjāvūr District (Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad) the 12th-century “Late” Cōḷa royal devotee (Gautam Sarabhai Collection, Ahmedabad; Sivaramamurti 1963: 33, Figs 20-1c & 21a & 21b; Pls 17a, 17b, 81b).

26 See the Sītā at the Government Museum, Chennai (“Early” Cōḷa style c. AD 1000) from Vaṭakkupaṇayūr, Tañjāvūr District and the Cōḷa Queen of the Gautam Sarabhai Collection,



#### 4.4 Viṣṇu (Pls 6 & 7)

Viṣṇu (Pl. 6) is standing on the right-hand side of Śiva's and Pārvatī's pedestal. The color of the deity is greenish-blue (Jouveau-Dubreuil 1925: 57–58).

Viṣṇu's eyes are benign (*padma/utpala*, cf. Nardi 2006: 49–52 & Figs 3.8–12). He seems to be receiving a boon from Śiva. The *mudrās* of his first right and left hands cannot be deciphered due to damage on the painting. The second right hand does not hold Viṣṇu's wheel (*cakra*), as one might expect, though it does form the *kartarīmudrā*, the usual hand gesture found with the wheel. As for the second left hand, it does form the *kartarīmudrā*. Following convention, a conch (*śaṅkha*) appears on the tip of the middle finger. The small flames issuing from its extremes appear first in the “Late” Pallava and “Early” Cōla styles, though these flames may be still absent at those stages. These four small flames grow in size and become more flamboyant with the Vijayanagara- and post-Vijayanagara sculptural styles. Here the flames appear as they had developed by the 12th century.<sup>27</sup>

Viṣṇu's tiara, originally Indra's tiara in Kushan Indo-Greek art, is of the characteristic *kirīṭtamukuṭa* type, which reflects royalty. Here it is a truncated cone in the characteristically Mediaeval form, which was achieved by the 8th century in “Late” Pallava sculpture and prevailed until the Vijayanagara period. Its overall shape seems to be slightly sweeping or concave at sides, as in the “Middle” Cōla style and later. Its usual central motif of central jewel, two *makaras* and five vertical spikes, is blurred.<sup>28</sup>

Viṣṇu's sacred thread (*yajñōpavīta*) is relatively narrow, even though it consists of several strands. Its knot is partly damaged and blurred, but does give an impression of an outline that is different from the early double-bell shape characteristic of the “Late” Cōla style (Sivaramamurti 1963: 30, 17c). Viṣṇu has two necklaces:

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Ahmedabad (“Late” Cōla style from the 12th century AD) (Sivaramamurti 1963: 34–35 & Figs 23-2a & 23-2b; Pls 40b & 81b).

27 G. Jouveau-Dubreuil (1926: 61 & Fig. 19) shows the evolution of the conch and the flames with a series of drawings. The Viṣṇu in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai (“Late” Pallava style from 8th–9th centuries AD) reveals small flames in the conch, like the “Early” Cōla Viṣṇu, Paruttīyūr, Tañjāvūr District, from the 9th–10th centuries. The flames are clearly larger and the conch more ornate in the “Late” Cōla-style, early 12th-century Viṣṇu from Peruntoṭṭam, Tañjāvūr District currently housed in the Tanjavur Art Gallery (Sivaramamurti 1963: 38–39, Figs 27-4b & 27-4c, cf. Pls 14b, 15b & 71b).

28 The tiara had already evolved essentially to its final form in the “Late” Pallava-style Viṣṇu dated to the 8th–9th centuries AD, which is found in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai. See also the slightly later 9th–10th-century “Early” Cōla Viṣṇu, from Paruttīyūr, Tañjāvūr District. The “Late” Cōla-style, early 12th-century Viṣṇu from Peruntoṭṭam, Tañjāvūr District, in the Tanjavur Art Gallery, has somewhat concave sides (Sivaramamurti 1963: 25–26 & 14a, 15b, 71b; Jouveau-Dubreuil 1926: 57 & Fig. 17).

a simple neck chain adorned by a row of jewels and a broad necklace consisting of three zones, adorned by large colorful circular stones in the middle belt and pearls or golden beads in the lowermost belt. While this arrangement bears similarities to the sculptural styles of “Early” Cōla, “Late” Cōla and Vijayanagara, “Late” Cōla sculpture offers the closest match.<sup>29</sup>

The armlets of Viṣṇu have a large jewel in the centre, two *makara* shapes facing each other, and ornamental spikes on top. Armlets of this type occur from the Pallava to the Vijayanagara periods. As such, they are clearly recognizable in the “Late” Pallava style in the 8th century and the final stage of evolution attained by the “Early” Cōla sculpture.<sup>30</sup>

Viṣṇu wears shoulder tassels or epaulettes (*skandhamālā*) which cannot be earlier than the “Late” Cōla or the “Early” Vijayanagara styles. These epaulettes consist of two symmetrical strands on the right and left shoulders, one hanging loose on the shoulder in the symmetrical manner of the “Late” Cōla, and the other encircling the top of the shoulder as seen in the Vijayanagara style.<sup>31</sup>

The stomach band (*udarabandha*) of Viṣṇu is either missing or covered by his right arm. The waistband (*kaṭisūtra*) and its side tassels are meticulously presented. The belt consists of three separate parts, with the middle one displaying the usual central lion-head-shaped clasp. This waistband is clearly very archaic, most closely matching “Early” Cōla sculpture and having very little in common with “Late” Cōla and Vijayanagara sculpture.<sup>32</sup>

29 See the “Late” Cōla Śiva, 12th century AD, in the *umāsahita* group from Kīlayūr, Tirukkōvilūr, District South Arcot, Government Museum, Chennai; the “Early” Cōla Candraśekhara, 10th century AD from Dharmapuram Ādhīnam, Tañjāvūr District; the “Late” Cōla 12th-century Gaṇapati from Semaṅgalam, Tañjāvūr District, in Trivandrum Museum; the “Late” Cōla 12th-century Royal devotee in Gautam Sarabhai collection Ahmedabad; the “Early” Cōla 11th-century Kalyāṇasundaramūrti from Tiruveṅgāḍu, Tañjāvūr District, Tanjavur Art Gallery (Sivaramamurti 1963: 31, Fig. 17c; Pls 37b, 45a, 49b, 85).

30 In the Viṣāpaharaṇa of “Late” Pallava style in Government Museum Madras, 8th–9th centuries, the armlets are fully evolved; in the “Early” Cōla Rāma, dating c. AD 1000 from Vaṭakkupaṇayūr, Tañjāvūr District and found in the Government Museum, Chennai, the armlets are evolved in the same stage as the painting, in the style seen in the “Late” Cōla 12th-century Viṣṇu from Peruntoṭṭam, Tañjāvūr District (Sivaramamurti 1963: 33, Figs 20-1c & 20-2c; Pls 6, 40a, 81a, cf. Pls 25b, 71b).

31 See the Adhikāranandī with consort, representing the “Late” Cōla-Vijayanagara transition in the 13th–14th centuries (Sivaramamurti 1963: 17d; Pl. 75a).

32 The overall shape waistband of the 9th–10th-century “Early” Cōla Viṣṇu from Paruttiyūr, Tañjāvūr District is close to that of the painting, also resembling the 10th-century “Early” Cōla Brahmaśāstā, from Kīlayūr, Tañjāvūr District; on the other hand, the waistbands of the “Late” Cōla 12th–13th-century Vṛṣabhavāhanamūrti and Devī, Vēdāraṇyam, Tañjāvūr District and the 12th-century Candraśekhara in Haridas Swali Collection, Bombay are very different (Sivaramamurti 1963: 34–36, Figs 22c, 23-1a & 24-b; Pl. 15b, 45b, cf. Pls 51, 61b).

The second Viṣṇu (Pl. 7) is sitting above the first one, worshipping the *śivaliṅga* on his left-hand side. This figure is similar to the first Viṣṇu, with similar complexion, facial features and outfit. The first right and left hands form an *āñjalīmudrā*. The second right hand might have held Viṣṇu's wheel (*cakra*), forming the usual *kartarīmudrā*, but here the painting is damaged and such details cannot be seen. The second left hand has the *kartarīmudrā* and the conch (*śaṅkha*) on the tip of the middle finger flaming at its extremes as described earlier. The *kirītamukuṭa* crown is partly veiled by a second layer of paint. The sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) is relatively narrow even though it consists of several strands. Its knot and the hanging tassel are better preserved, but do not resemble the "Early" Cōḷa double-bell shape (Sivaramamurti 1963: 30, 17c) or "Late" Cōḷa sculptural norm.

#### 4.5 Other figures (Pls 8 & 9)

There are two dwarfish figures (*gaṇa/bhūta*) sitting at the feet of Śiva. The complexion of the dwarfish figure sitting on the right-hand side (Pl. 8) is white, which may be due to the application of sacred ashes. The face of this figure is round and fleshy. Even though it is clearly painted by the same artist as the deities above, it is completely different in character. The eyes are almost shell-shaped, expressing good mood and agility rather than benevolence. The nose is flat and short, while the ears are pendant like those of the deities. The coiffure includes a band on the forehead. The sacred thread corroborates the twice-born status, while the figure's fair color may corroborate Brahmin status. The broad sacred thread, which consists of many folds, is very similar in color and form to that of Śiva. This figure also wears a peculiar large necklace and a pair of simple golden anklets. The upper body is veiled by the type of *veṣṭi* worn by the Malayali Brahmins. The arms have large golden bangles, which are adorned with colorful stones. The *dhōti* is striped in the common South Indian style worn even today in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The second dwarfish figure (Pl. 8) sitting on the left-hand side of Śiva, under his feet, is very similar. It has matching posture, bodily structure, facial features, and twice-born status (as indicated by its outfit). The complexion is blue, which may signify a demigod-like character. The axe in the right hand may also identify royalty, a demigod, or a demon. The ears are adorned with large golden rings and the hair is matted.

Below Pārvaṭī, on her left-hand side, is a standing female figure (Pl. 9) with a naked upper body. She is wearing a long *dhōti*, which is typical for South India. This figure appears to be an assisting female temple servant, with her bare upper body underlining subordinate status or the reverent attitude shown before deities in the temple. Her left ear is adorned with a large earring, apparently of gold or

brass, and she is wearing bangles, anklets, and a neck chain of gold or brass. She is holding a ceremonial brass vessel for sprinkling holy water. Her hair-dress is of the *dharmilla* type (Sivaramamurti 1963: 27 & Fig. 41 & Pl. 66a), occurring not only in the Cōla sculpture but also in the Hoysala sculpture and in the later Kerala schools of painting and sculpture.

To the right-hand side of the female attendant is a male human figure (Pl. 9) who is placing a wreath on a *śivaliṅga* installed on a pedestal. The feet (only fragmentary) before the structure must belong to a different figure that can no longer be deciphered. The face of this male figure lacks any adornment. He may be a temple servant or a patron in the act of expressing devotion.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.6 Architectural details (Pls 10 & 11)

In many South Indian (Pallava, Cōla and Vijayanagara) *umāsahitāmūrti*, *umāmabheśvaramūrti* and *somāskandamūrti* sculptures, the seat consists of sets of moldings like socles (*adhiṣṭhāna/upapīṭha*), pedestals for bali-offerings (*balipīṭha*), or pedestals for deities (*pīṭha*). The painter has here depicted the normative sequence of moldings from the bottom to the top in order: (1) the “shoe” (*upāna*), the narrow blue strip close to the lower edge; (2) the frieze (*jagati*), the brown strip above the former; (3) the first recessed strip (*paṭṭikā*), the narrow blue strip above; (4) the round or faceted torus (*kumuda*) above; (5) the second recessed strip (*paṭṭikā*), the narrow blue strip above; (6) the convex dark brown scotia (*valabhī*), adorned with a row of white swans (*haṃsamālā*); and (7) the light brown cornice, the top molding (Pl. 10).<sup>34</sup>

The swan frieze (*haṃsamālā*) in Kerala temple architecture is associated with the impact of Cōla dynasty patronage after AD 1000 that is present, for example, in the 11th-century temple at Kaṇḍalūr Śālā at Trivandrum. However, it has been assumed by Tuḷu temple architecture as well. Though the swan frieze was never popular in the Mūsikā country in the early phase of Kerala temple architecture (i.e. before AD 1000), it was in the neighboring Tuḷu region to the immediate north. Thus the occurrence of the swan frieze in the *valabhī* may be of Tuḷu influence even though, due to the somewhat later dating of the temple in the

33 Professor John Richardson Freeman has suggested that this male figure could possibly be the royal patron and the female figure a royal attendant. According to Professor M.G. Sasibhooshan, the figure offering the wreath to the *śivaliṅga* would be Mārkaṇḍeya, thus referring to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.

34 The lotus-shaped seats are not visible, but given the fact that the deities are seated at a higher level than the topmost visible molding, it is possible that they have been veiled here by the blue cloth (cf. the *umāsahitā*- and *somāskandamūrtis* in Donaldson 2007: Figs 231, 238, 239 & 244–254).

“Middle” phase of Kerala temple style, the influence of Cōla patronage is also possible (Sarkar 1978: 138, 179).

The *śivaliṅga* (Pl. 11) is installed on a pedestal (*pīṭha*) which is of the *pādabandha* type, consisting of: (1) a greenish blue frieze (*jagatī*); (2) white recessed strip (*paṭṭikā*); (3) light brown round torus (*vṛttakumūḍa*); (4) blue lower narrow band (*adbahṭpaṭṭikā*); (5) light brown broad recessed strip (*gala*) with railing motif (*galapada*) adorned with white floral motifs; (6) blue upper narrow band (*ūrdhvaṭṭikā*), (7) and a light brown narrow rectangular top moulding (*prati*). This kind of *pīṭha* follows the “Middle” phase Kerala style of temple architecture (c. AD 1000–1300). The *adhiṣṭhānas* of the Tṛprayār Rāma, Peruvanam Iraṭṭayappan, and Trichur Vaṭakkunnātha temples, all from the 11th century, have similar railing motifs (*galapada*) in the broad recessed band (*gala*) with floral motifs depicted in every second recessed field. Like the swan frieze (Pl. 10) on the scotia (*valabhī*), this is a characteristic feature associated with the influence of the Cōla dynasty (Sarkar 1978: 204–209). Also evident is a *tōraṇa*-like structure (Pls 3 & 4) above Lord Śiva in the painting. Even this motif has *umāsahitāmūrti* (*/umāmabeśvaramūrti*) counterparts in Tamil sculpture (cf. Donaldson 2007: Figs 238, 239).

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Meaning

The meaning of the mural (Pls 3–11) in the inner ambulatory of the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple of Kumbala (Kerala, Kasargode District) is the sacred marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. Regarding the “signs” or insignia of the divine married couple, the setting of this motif is closest to the so-called *umāsahitamūrti* variant, bearing also similarities to the slightly different *umāmabeśvaramūrti* variant, with equivalents in the iconographic notes of the Āgamic or local Tantric texts. The nearest extant parallel works with this insignia are found in the 11th-century sculpture of Cōla-Nāḍu.

### 5.2 Style

The overall style of the painting in the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple represents a school of the southern Drāviḍadeśa that is parallel to the surviving few paintings of the Pallava, Pāṇḍya and Cōla schools. The 11th-century Cōla-school paintings in the inner ambulatory of the Rājarājeśvara temple (Tamil Nadu, Tanjavūr District) offer the closest match of colors, particularly the blue back-

ground, and the overall treatment of such motifs as facial features and outfit, the crown of the matted hair (*jaṭāmukuṭa*), and the articulated folds of the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*).

### 5.3 Details and age

As pointed out above (see 1.2 “Method”), the details of the mural can be compared with those of South Indian sculpture. When compared to sculpture, the mural is a curious combination of archaisms and characteristic features of the “Late” Cōla style. The loincloth (*kaṭisūtra*) of Viṣṇu and his armlets are similar to the “Early Middle” phase of Cōla sculpture in the 11th century, as is Pārvatī’s archaic “pot-crown” (*karaṇḍamukuṭa*). “Late” Cōla characteristics are clear in the slightly concave tiara (*kirīṭa-mukuṭa*) of Viṣṇu and his shoulder epaulettes (*skandhamālā*), which are particularly popular in Vijayanagara sculpture. Even the insignia of the deities reveal “Late” Cōla or “Early” Vijayanagara traits, such as the conch of Viṣṇu with flames and the form of Śiva’s axe (*paraśu*). No matter how archaic some other details are, the painting cannot be earlier than the late 12th or early 13th century. It is difficult to put a date to how late the painting might be. However, because the Vijayanagara Empire achieved power and influence only in the latter half of the 14th century, probably only then creating its own identity and the hybrid Cōla-influenced revival sculptural style, one may posit the probable date to be either the “Late” Cōla period before AD 1280 or the transition period between the “Late” Cōla and Vijayanagara schools (c.1280 and 1350). Taking note of the “Middle” Kerala style in the architectural details portrayed by the mural itself, such as the pedestals of the *śivaliṅga* and the *pīṭha* for the seated divine couple, one can assume that the first layer might be coeval or not more than two hundred years later than the “Middle” Kerala style of temple. This would suggest a date prior to the 14th century (i.e. between AD 1200 and 1300).

### 5.4 Significance of the mural

The mural in the southern panel of the western wall of the Anantapuram temple shows remarkably the continuity of earlier Mediaeval southern Dravidian mural painting. It proves that the overall styles and content portrayed by the Pallava, Pāṇḍya and Cōla schools of mural painting were still in use, albeit slightly modified in the 13th–14th centuries. Though the style had evolved subtly over the centuries from these earlier schools, this mural reveals parallel traits with contemporaneous sculpture. Certain aspects, such as the outfits of the figures, are fallaciously archaic in style, while some others reveal the probable date of the work.

This eclectic tendency reveals a special relationship between the Anantapuram painting and the only surviving Cōla-school mural paintings at Tañjāvūr, dating to two or three centuries earlier. In other words, the entire surviving tradition of murals represented by Anantapuram and Cōla is to a great extent based on contemporary and parallel sculpture, even though it is far from identical in style and expression. Considering this, it is very probable that the almost completely vanished Cōla school of mural painting was once widely spread throughout the southern Drāviḍadeśa and that its expression evolved to some extent independently of sculpture, but favoring certain eclectic archaisms borrowed from it.

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