CHAPTER-4

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE: EVOLVING PATTERNS AS EXPRESSIONS OF POWER, PATRONAGE AND LEGITIMATION (CIRCA 1000-1800 A.D.)

The history of art explores the dynamics of the relationship between the patron, the artist and the work of art in the context of the social formation of a given period in history. The change and variations in the artistic activity could be linked, among other factors to the changing mode of production, in the composition of the patron class, in socio-religious institutions and ideologies, which in turn create new requirements and fresh opportunities for the emergence of new forms and contents in art\(^1\). There is no doubt that history of art and its relevance in society can not be treated in isolation from the socio-political and economic processes and the context of this relationship. As a visual text, it is open-ended and the interpreter can discover infinite interconnections. The art history of Tamilakam represents the fusion of mainstream Sanskritic norms and the region-specific cultural traits and together it makes a huge impact as a visual text. There was definitely evolution of a ‘language’ of art which also evolved with the changing times and carried more or less different meanings and value in a changed historical context. The process of iconographic as well as sculptural representation was continuous and went through various additions, deletions etc. in course of its history.

In fact, the study of the evolving patterns in art (visual text) at Srirangam can not be separated from the emerging dimensions of power, patronage and legitimation.
that prevailed at any given historical moment or historical context in the evolution of this temple. It is believed that the temple and its images are just as much indexical signs of power as they are its iconic embodiments. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976) aptly refer to the deity installed at the heart of the temple as a “paradigmatic sovereign.” Since the sovereign power of the kingdom is made of stone, effective power is wielded by the human agents who rule on the deity’s behalf. The expanding form of the temple is not only an index of the power of the site, but also of the king who formerly functioned as the God’s agent \(^2\). The ritual practice of this structure is mediated by the architectural forms in which it has dialectically developed: radiating compositions consisting of concentric walls and gate towers, implicating passage in and out of a site and the circumambulation of a central axis--marked by the tower over the sanctum--projecting its creative power toward the four quarters. South Indian temples like the one at Srirangam seem to materialize like concentric waves emanating from points of impact in a still pool of liquid. These compositions have no internally fixed limits to their potential expansion; the only limits are external factors, such as human values and material resources. In a sense, they can never be exhaustively completed. Like the fluid universe (samsara), of which the temple is said to be a model, it is a structure that implies continuous processes of becoming and change \(^3\).

As a matter of fact, Srirangam is placed first in the list of 108 Vaisnava shrines. It was the spearhead of the Vaisnava movement in south India until the split occurred, in the post-Ramanuja period, into the Tenkalais and the Vadokalais in the 13\(^{th}\) century, when the latter withdrew to Kanchipuram. According to the
Srirangam sthalapurana (site history), Brahma performed penance in order to invoke the shrine containing Vishnu as Ranganatha to emerge from the primordial ocean of milk when it was churned by the Gods and demons. After Vishnu (in his Rama incarnation) defeated Ravana, the evil king of Lanka, Rama gave the shrine to Ravana’s brother, Vibhisana, in reward for his services. While carrying the shrine to Lanka, Vibhisana halted at an island in the Kaveri river. When he attempted to resume his journey, he found that the shrine had become immovable. Ranganatha informed him that it was his intention to remain at this spot; however, he agreed to forever face south and cast his gaze (parvai) on Lanka.

The Srirangam temple has seven prakaras or enclosures and hence is said to belong to the uttamottama type. The Rajamahendran Tiruvidi becomes the first prakara and the Adaiyavalaindan street the seventh prakara. As God Ranganatha reclines facing south, the main entrance to the temple complex is from the south. As such the prakara widens out in the south and contains more structures there than elsewhere, thus giving a definitely rectangular shape to the temple. The size of the gopuras, the height of the enclosing walls and the width of the enclosures diminish gradually as one approaches the sanctum, which is the central structure. This fact has been a point of debate for many years among the western archaeologists. Our ancient temple builders were not motivated by only structural principles; rather they used to have certain religious beliefs in their plan and layout for the temples. As a rule, the sanctum sanctorum is a small and dark structure and the vimana over the sanctum too is small compared with the other towers. The grandeur of the structure increases as one moves away from the
sanctum towards the outer structures. The idea is to illustrate the fact that a pious devotee steadily marches away from the humdrum attractions of the world and tries to concentrate his thoughts on the God, however unattractive and difficult it might be. This common feature in our temples, referred to as the ‘bathos’ in the south Indian temple structure, has been much ridiculed by Fergusson and others.

“As an artistic design, says the former nothing can be worse. The gateways irregularly spaced in great blank wall lose half their dignity from their position and the ‘bathos’ of their decreasing size and elaboration as they approach the sanctuary, is a mistake that nothing can redeem. We may admire beauty of detail and be astonished at the elaboration and evidence of labour….but as an architectural design, it is altogether detestable” ⁵. Speaking of Srirangam he further says, “looked at from a distance or in any direction, where the whole can be grasped at once, their arrangement is exactly that which enables them to produce the least possible effect that can be obtained either from their mass or ornament. Had the four great outer gopurams formed the sides of a central hall or court and the others gone on diminishing in three or four directions to the exterior, the effect of the whole would have been increased in a surprising degree” ⁶. Again he (Fergusson) says, “the temple which has been most completely marred by the false system of design is that at Srirangam, which is certainly the largest and, if its principle of design could be reversed, would be one of the finest temples in south of India. Here the central enclosure is quite as small and as insignificant as that of Trivalur and except that its dome is gilt, has nothing to distinguish it from an ordinary village temple” ⁷.
It is obviously difficult, on the basis of well recognized architectural styles, the periods of structures in a huge, sprawling temple-complex, which was continuously being repaired and maintained by the local kings and chieftains. Old features were not entirely rejected e.g. the so-called Chola corbels were continued long after the Chola period. The Nayakas continued the Vijayanagara features with local variations. As a rule, however, the latest styles in pillars, pilasters, pavilion ornaments, niches etc were adopted in new constructions.

As far as the Srirangam temple is concerned, the Pandyan and the Madurai styles predominate here. One of the inscriptions during an early Chola kings, Parantaka I, refers to the platform (tinnaï) raised for the flag (tirukkodi). Beyond this, there is not much to refer to in terms of patronage during the Chola period. But the principles of carving and decoration evolved from this time on and major contributions come only during the Pandyas as far as this temple is concerned. The tall pillars with slender rectangular pilasters decorated with scrolls and carrying the single heavy upward sloping lotus-stalk corbel often in combination with the double lotus-stalk and bodigai corbel are a common feature in the Srirangam temple and appear in many of the mandapas in the two or three prakaras immediately surrounding the central shrine structure. It may be understood that this was predominantly a local style belonging to the period of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I and his successors, who contributed not a little to the structural growth of the temple. The main emphasis seemed to be on the decoration rather than elaboration in this period. For example, an inscription records the various gifts to the deity and the gilding of several parts of the temple...
from out of the gold of the second Tulabhara ceremony performed by the king Sundara Pandya and alludes to his victories over Simhana and Rama of the Hoysala dynasty, the Cheras and the Cholas. The king may be identified with Jatavarman Sundara-Pandya I who bore the epithet Pommeynda-Perumal or Hemachchadanaraja. Another inscription clearly testifies that he gilded the vimana of the temple with gold after defeating the Kerala and Hoysala kings.

An inscription of the Hoysala period not only records the founding of a salai on the west side of the gopura enshrining the God Eduttkai-Alagiya-Nayanar in the Ranganatha temple and an endowment of land for its upkeep, but also records a gift of a crown embedded with rubies, two fly-whisks and a betel-pot made of gold for Lord Ranganatha. Another inscription from the same dynasty records the setting up of the images of Sarasvati-Deva, Vedavyasa-bhagavan and Hayagriva which had been newly installed in the mandapa built as an adjunct to the Sarasvati-bhandara (library) by Nilakantha-Nayaka of Palpalli and the endowment of 100,000 kasu for providing offerings to the deities. The donor of this inscription is known to us from an inscription of this king from Jambukesvaram near Srirangam.

The introduction of images of the Vaisnava-Alvars in shrines which previously contained images of Gods appears also to have been a later innovation made during the time of Ramanuja and Vedanta-Desika. A shrine of Dhanvantari, the God of medicine, which is located in the north side of the fourth prakara, is a unique feature not met with in any other temple in south India. A stucco figure of
God Narasimha called Eduttakai-alagiyar depicted as tearing asunder the entrails of the demon king Hiranyakasipu, figures on the north gopura of the fourth prakara and provided with a mandapa constructed in front of it, presents a rare instance of an ornamental image of a gopura acquiring sanctity in course of time.

The temple received huge architectural additions in the Vijayanagara period from 14th century onwards. While it might have been no less vigorous during the earlier periods, the expansion of the temple is so profusely illustrated by the inscriptions of this period that one is compelled to feel that the pomp and splendour of this period is but a very true reflection of the pomp and splendour of the Vijayanagara masters. The continuous control of the Tamil country by the Vijayanagara rulers gave it a political stability, as referred to earlier, and guaranteed, a steady growth and expansion of the temple at Srirangam in all respects. A considerable number of structures were also put up resulting in the expansion of the temple proper with its seven prakaras. In fact, Vijayanagara inscriptions of the fourteenth century onwards depict the Vijayanagara king, his son, or preceptorial agent making gifts to temples or to Brahmans, adjudicating disputes among such personages, or re-establishing temple worship long interrupted by Turkish depredations or other disorders. There is in the Vijayanagara records an immediacy of the royal presence that is largely absent from most Chola inscriptions 14.

Right at the outset of Vijayanagara period, during Kampana or Kampa who was the son of Bukka I, one comes across an inscription that records that Goppana took the image of Ranganatha from Tirupati to Chenji, his capital, and after defeating the
Muslims, restored the image to Srirangam and had it installed there with Lakshmi and Bhudevi, the consorts of the Lord. An inscription of Virupaksha during Vijayanagara period records the construction of the vimana, gopura and mandapa for Chakrin i.e. chakrattalvar, the deity symbolic of the disc in one of the hands of God Vishnu by Virupaksha, son of Harishara and grandson of Bukka, who commenced to rule as one of the Viceroy in the south from circa 1383 A. D. The inscription is engraved on the nitals of two pillars in the mandapa in front of the Chakrattalvar shrine in the fifth prakaras. Since an inscription of the Pandya times engraved the south wall of this shrine refers to Tiruvalialvar i.e. Chakrattalvar, the constructions recorded in this inscription were evidently improvements made upon a small shrine that already existed. Another inscription of the same period registers gift of house sites by the executives of the temple to Annappa Chavundappar, the Sthanika of the temple, in recognition of his services in the administration of the temple. The gift is said to have been sanctioned by the God. Chavundappa is said to have consecrated the deity Vittalantha and provided for regular offerings therein. He further made for the God an aureole (Tiruvasigai), repaired the 1,000-pillared mandapa and also gilded the koyilalvar i.e., vimana of the temple. It should be noted that several structural improvements were made to the temple by Chakraraya, the brother of Uttama Nambi, during the reign of King Devaraya I (circa 1406-1422 A.D.) and Devaraya II (circa 1422-1446 A.D.). Some of these were – (a) structural improvements made to the Annadi-Emberuman and the Maruti shrines and to the kitchen in the Ranganatha temple, and the colonization of the precincts of the temple of (Kattu) Alagiyasingar at Srirangam (b) constructed...
a passage with nine pillars to the south of the Perumaltolan-tirumandapam and the
*tirukkavanappatti* in the *mandapa* constructed by Uttamaraya, consecrated Maruti in
the *mandapa* constructed by him in front of the shrine of Annadi-Emberuman and
also consecrated Lakshmi in the porch near the entrance into the kitchen of the
temple 19 (c) eight celestial elephants (*ashta-dig-gajas*) rested at the presenting
(building) of the eight elephant (in stone) by Chakraraya to the God; that the
celestial elephants were held by the *dikpalas* lest they run away in fear of these
(stone) elephants 20 (d) consecration of the image of Deyvappullurvar (e) 1,000
*kalanju* of gold for the pedestal of the Goddess 21 (f) got the image of Dasavatara
installed in a temple at the southern bank of river Cauveri etc 22. Annadi-emberuman
is evidently identical with Annamurti, the presiding deity of the kitchen. This is now
represented in the temple by a two-armed stone image holding a bolus of curd-rice
in one hand and *kalasa* containing *payasa* in the other. In the *prabha-mandapa*
behind the head are carved the emblems *Sanikhaa* and *Chakra*. This image is placed
in the *unjal-mandapa* near the Aryabhattalvalsal, close to the passage leading into
the kitchen. An inscription in the year circa 1500 A.D. states that Kandadai
Madhavayyangar, a disciple of Kandadai Ramnujayyangar, the *dharmakarta* of the
Ramanujakutam at Tiruvarangam-Tirupati, constructed a temple to the north of the
Nanmugan-gopuram and constructed therein the images of Vitthalesvara and
Madhuakavi-Alvar and arranged for their worship and also constructed a kitchen 23.

An amazing instance is the setting of the image of God Dhanvantari (God of
medicine) in the temple complex. The donor is also stated to have revived the
hospital (*arogya-salai*) which had been in the charge of his ancestor
Garudavahana-Bhatta and which had been destroyed by fire. The reign of Achyutadevaraya witnessed more decoration and elaboration of the temple and the images within. For example, one of the inscriptions of this period states that as the 4-pillared mandapa was found insufficient to accommodate the deity on the 7th day festival called the Ellaikkarai-tirunal, Sankarsa, son of Avasaram, Mallarasayyan, enlarged it into a sixteen-pillared mandapa and provided for offerings to the God as the gift of Achyutadeva Maharaja. A few implements of the Rathakaras such as a pair of pincers, a hammer, a chisel, etc are also carved on one of the faces of the pillar. During Sadasivaraya (A.D.1542–76), the Tirukkuralappan, shrine, i.e. shrine for Vamana is stated to have been endowed with a garbhagriha, ardha-manadapa, mahamandapa, nrityamandapa, gopura and a four pillared mandapa by Srirangadevarajan, the disciple of Tatacharya in 1546 A.D.

It is safe to assume that in the Vijayanagara and the Nayaka periods, the tendency in temple building was towards expansion rather than ornamentation. There was increase in power and position of the patrons and the rubbing effect of it was witnessed by the temple at Srirangam as well. This was achieved by the addition of prakaras with gopuras and mandapas e.g. the Kalyana mandapas and the Hundred and Thousand Pillared mandapas. Taller and taller gateway gopuras were erected in the outer prakaras. As it comes out, a late medieval south Indian temple sought to impress by its size rather than its beauty, and architecture had to serve in new directions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Tamilnadu, the growth of temple complexes with large numbers of shrines, halls,
gateways, and corridors led to the use of major sculpture throughout the temple, especially on the composite columns in the corridors and open detached columned halls (mandapas) that are such a distinctive feature of the period. The composite column is similar to the earliest form of column created in the Tamil country but is rectangular in section rather than square. Each is a monolith up to five or six metres in height.

The origin of the south Indian composite column lies in Tamilnadu but the figural composite column developed further north in the Deccan, most prominently at the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire in the early sixteenth century. Later in the sixteenth century and on into the seventeenth, huge architectural sculptures began to proliferate in many temples in Tamilnadu, with figures two to three metres high as part of composite columns carved from a single piece of stone. The subjects depicted in these Nayaka-period architectural sculptures range from images of deities familiar throughout India, to figures from local Tamil folk literature, rearing cavalrymen, mythical lion-headed animals, and life-size portraits of kings and devotees. While continuity with earlier sculptural practice is evident in sixteenth and seventeenth century temples, the major emphasis of Nayaka-period sculptors was on the creation of composite columns, and more particularly the carving of large-scale figural composite columns, with images up to three metres high, lining the corridors and open mandapas that proliferate in the period. The composite column is an adaptation of the simple column form present in the earliest rock-cut caves and structural temples of the Tamil Dravidian architectural tradition. The earliest examples of the simple column
form are cubical at top and bottom and therefore square in section, with chamfered sides in the middle creating an octagonal section. Later examples retain a cubical middle and have octagonal chamfered sections above and below; thus they are divided vertically into five parts, of square then octagonal section (square-octagon-square-octagon-square). From the sixteenth century onwards, the octagonal parts are normally chamfered into sixteen sides with a band around. While the number of parts generally remains consistently five, the height of the column can be varied by elongating the lowest and topmost sections, the central part usually remaining cubical no matter how tall the whole shaft. Many simple columns, and all composite columns, have a molded base beneath this core shaft, sculpted from the same monolith. They support a series of separately sculpted capital elements stacked one upon another, which in the Nayaka period include the *puspapotika* (flower-bud bracket-capital) and the seated *simha*, and ultimately the flat beams of the stone roof. What distinguishes the composite column from the simple column are additional columns emerging from the same monolith. This scheme is the basis for substantial variation, for composite columns may have several attached columns or colonnettes, sometimes carved fully in the round on one or more sides of the core column, which is ‘detached’ though they are still joined top and bottom to the core monolith; or they may have attached figural sculpture. Composite columns are architecturally significant for they allowed greater distances to be spanned within temple complexes, supporting much longer beams in higher, wider, and more open corridors and mandapas. This is in contrast to the earlier prevalence of mandapas with dense rows of shorter columns.
that left narrower aisles between them. The use of the composite column in Tamil temples went alongside the continued use of simple columns. As the basic composite column spread in Tamilnadu from the mid-sixteenth century, so too did the addition of composite columns with figural sculptures. Adam Hardy, who has demonstrated that Indian temple architecture, both Dravida and Nagara, ‘depends for its visual structure, its expression, and its meanings, on the combination and interrelation of images of shrines.

But it is clear from the Tamil Dravida material that the architectural conception of structures being composed of miniature replicas of themselves extends from the vimana not only to the distinctive pyramidal gateways (gopura), in essence a vimana split in half, but also to smaller elements such as composite columns. Adam Hardy goes on to demonstrate that Indian temple architecture conveys a sense of movement, of emergence and expansion, in the architectural forms themselves. This concept is not always static, for the power inherent in such a column is often seen to expand out and emerge from it. Heinrich Zimmer described this phenomenon as ‘expanding form’, seeing an inherent dynamism to sculptural forms.

A purely sixteenth-century development with no clear precedent is the rearing horse with a rider armed with a sword or spear, and with a number of other figures beneath. These include more soldiers, musicians, elephants, or lions; often these men are fighting or killing a lion. This composite column type is well known from the late sixteenth-century examples at the north end of the
Sesagiriraya mandapa on the east side of the Ranganatha temple at Srirangam’s fourth prakara. The rider always turns to one side, towards the entrance or main axis of the mandapa, while brandishing his sword or spear, his horse rearing up high like the related yali composite columns. An imaginative and unusual variation at the kalyanamandapa in the Varadaraja temple at Kanchipuram is the cavalry composite column with a differently armed and dressed rider on each side. On one side the rider waves a sword, a spear on the other; one rider has tight-fitting striped trousers, the other a flaring tunic. Horse-man composite columns always appear in groups, normally in pairs around the entrances to mandapas, alongside the more common yali composite columns (The south Indian yali is a mythical animal, a combination of a lion and an elephant like the Sanskrit- named vyala).

Percy Brown has suggested that the appearance of horseman columns was linked to the Vijayanagara period’s character as a martial ‘Age of chivalry’, a view repeated by J.C. Harle 31. There is no doubt that warfare and militarism were notable features of Vijayanagara and indeed Nayaka society, but other imperial formations such as the Cholas have also been profoundly militaristic. If these composite columns of mounted cavalrymen are considered a reflection of a martial society, then this has more to do with the numerous conflicts between the Vijayanagara Empire and its regional subordinates and later rivals, the Nayakas, in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Further, these representations were an also an expression of their (patrons) worldly power and it’s assertion at the God’s abode for people at large to acknowledge its
legitimacy. In this case, the Srirangam temple complex became the medium for such an assertion.

In Tamil temples, reliefs of deities and other figures often fill the flat recesses of the sub-base (upapitha) and the horseshoe arches (nasi, Tamil kutu) of the curved moulding (kapota) in the base and above the wall. These can become quite substantial and contain large narrative and mythological scenes rather than just a single small figure. Columns were also covered with small, low-relief images of deities, which, while of interest for the range of subjects depicted, do not have great visual impact in the manner of figural composite columns. Two of the most elaborate examples of the increased use of major relief sculpture are found at the Alakiya Nampirayar (Vishnu) temple at Tirukkurunkudi in southern Tamilnadu, and the Gopalakrishna temple in the Ranganatha temple complex at Srirangam. The Gopalakrishna temple is located in the southwest corner of the fourth prakara of the Ranganatha temple complex. The walls of both the vimana and ardhamandapa are dramatised by large high relief sculptures of women and Krishna.

The Nayakas seem to have continued this local style in the inner prakaras whose structures were often repaired or reconstructed by them while they introduced the latest features of the Vijayanagara style in their new additions either in the inner or the outer prakaras. It is generally agreed that the bodigai, which is not hanging down but which is merely rounded off and hence very shallow, and the slender horizontal band, which connects its base with that of the double lotus-stalk motif,
are both Pandyan features, which preceded the Vijayanagara order of the pillar corbel, marked by a hanging bodigai and the absence of the horizontal band. The former is clearly seen in the pilasters decorating the kudya of the Kaliyugaraman gopura built by Jatavarman Vira Pandya (acc. 1297 A.D.). The latter is seen in the long rows of pillars in the colonnade south of the Dorai mandapa in the second prakara of the temple and in the Tiruvandikkappu mandapa in the southern wing of the fourth prakara, the latter being undoubtedly a Nayaka construction.

Elsewhere, except in the pillars bearing the Chola corbels, the Vijayanagara order is the rule with the further developments of the Nayaka period. Deep niches with deity sculptures, flanked by pilasters and crowned by Toranas, which are very common in the Pallava, early Chalukya and Chola temples, do not, as a rule, appear on the walls of the Srirangam temple. In their place, we only find the shallow niche designs. The roof is invariably flat and plain and does not contain a raised central section, except in the case of Unjal mandapa. There is neither the lotus shaped vault in any ceiling. Except for the Vrittyayata vimana above the main shrine, which also has a projection over the antarala, the vimanas over the other shrines belong either to the Nagara (four-sided) or Dravida (six or eight-sided) order, have no such projection, and are in an austere style. It is a unique feature of the main shrine that it is more or less circular all over, from base to top, a true vesara prasada as defined by the silpa sastras.
Srirangam temple is very rich in sculpture and one notices a distinct shift in the representation as the temple evolves through the different periods of various dynasties. Deity sculptures in deep set niches in the walls of shrines are rare. They are found mostly on pillars and in small niches in the adhisthana or in the central spaces of toranas above pavilion ornaments and on the gopuras. In the Venugopala shrine e.g. portraits of women differently disposed, playing on the vina, applying the tilak, holding a parrot etc are prominently shown in the niches than the deities themselves. Almost all the manifestations of Vishnu are represented on the pillars of the various mandapas. As a matter of fact, there was multiplication of shrines and sub shrines in the temples of the Vijayanagara period which provided a great scope for making several images meant for actual worship while the outer walls were put merely to a decorative use \textsuperscript{35}. The deity sculptures, though relegated to the sides of the pillar-blocks, interest one by their variety.

While interest in deities was transferred to the icons, non-iconic figure sculptures and carvings received particular attention in the Vijayanagara period. To this class belongs the powerful and impressive horse brackets of the Sesagiriyar mandapa and the near-life size Nayaka figure sculptures of the Garuda mandapa \textsuperscript{36}. The latter are realistic but there are no direct evidences that would help an identification of the portraits.

This temple is rich in icons of great interest especially to one who knows about the Vaisnava lore. To a pious Vaisnava, Srirangam is vaikuntha on earth and the
seven prakaras represent His abode within oneself (antaryami) surrounded by the body and the senses and the various worldly illusions, which act like rampart walls separating the individual from the Lord. The central image, Ranganatha or Vishnu in *Yoganidra*, is to him the God of Gods, Periya Perumal, who is reached once the seven enclosures are crossed. Besides this image, there are images, both stone and metal, of all the important avatars, various other forms of Vishnu, several Goddesses, minor deities like Anjaneya, Garuda and the dvarpalas and finally the Alvars and the acharyas, whose lives were intimately connected with the Srirangam temple. The *Pancaratragama* lays down, no doubt, an ideal plan of a temple with seven prakaras, complete in all details. Each of the three outermost prakara walls has two smaller gateways on either side of the main central gateway. Actually, the supplementary gateways are non-existent in the Srirangam temple. Dvarpala guard every entrance according to the agama but this is not the case in Srirangam. For the gateway, which leads one into the first enclosure, dvarpalas are provided on both sides, i.e. facing when one enters the first enclosure as well as when one leaves it. The pairs Bhadra and Subhadra and Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi appear in these places both in the north and the south according to the agama. But it is actually only in south in Srirangam temple.

A detailed scrutiny of the history of the Srirangam temple clearly shows that the temple itself was a gradual growth, that all the seven prakaras did not appear simultaneously, nor all the deities and shrines, and the temple builders and chieftains consecrated the images of their choice, so that we have more than one shrine for Rama, Krishna or Narasimha, while they left altogether many of the
agamic Gods whose worship was perhaps not in vogue in their time. For example, the introduction of the images of the Vaisnava Alvars in shrines which previously contained images of Gods, appears to have been a later innovation, made during the time of Ramanuja and Vedanta-Desika (13th century). Though it is a fact that Ramanuja installed the images of the Alvars in the Srirangam temple, there is no evidence to suggest that he got some other removed to make room for the Alvars.

In the end, one must say that the art and architecture at Srirangam temple becomes a ‘visual text’ that could never be separated from its context. The sacred and the temporal built a close bond in course of time that found definite expressions in stone, along with gold and silver. The notions of power, patronage and legitimation were deeply embedded in this art form which in itself was closely connected with the evolution of the political power in this region. As a good many inscriptions suggest, it was definitely a part of the broader aim of the rulers for almost thousand years to showcase their might and strength to the people in general and their adversaries in particular. The inscriptions engraved during various dynasties over a long period of time in the temple complex are a standing testimony to this ‘Power of art’.
Endnotes


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.


10. Ibid., no. 3.

11. Ibid., no. 5; no. 6.

12. Ibid., no. 10; no. 11.

13. Ibid., no. 12.


15. Appendix-14, no.1.

16. Ibid., no.2.

17. Appendix-5, no.1/6.

18. Appendix-14, no.3.

19. Ibid., no. 4 and 5.

20. Ibid., no. 6.

21. Ibid., no. 7.
22 Ibid., no. 8.
23 Ibid., no. 11.
24 Ibid., no. 10-a.
25 Ibid., no. 18.
26 Ibid., no. 24.
29 Ibid.
32 Crispin Branfoot, ‘Expanding Form…’, op.cit.
34 Ibid., p.54.
36 Ibid., p.82.
37 Ibid., p.110.
38 Ibid., p.123.