

IRUMBAI TEMPLE as YANTRAM

Timeless union of physical and subtle planes

a lecture by Christoph Kluetsch
Veedushi Malik
and Kalaivani

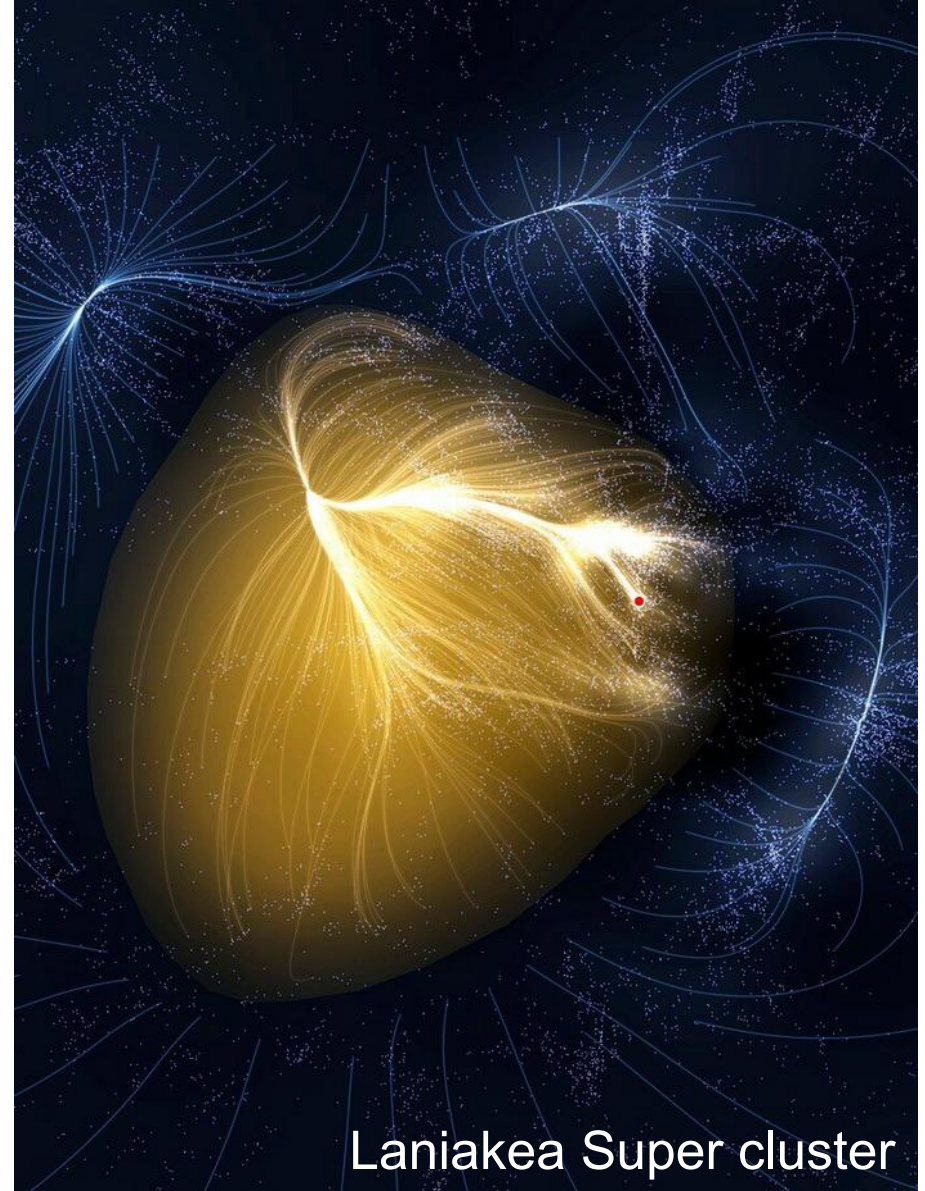
Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 5pm



Second of a series of lectures to explore connections between art, philosophy, and spirituality, bridging Eastern and Western traditions to illuminate the enduring questions of existence, consciousness, and creativity.



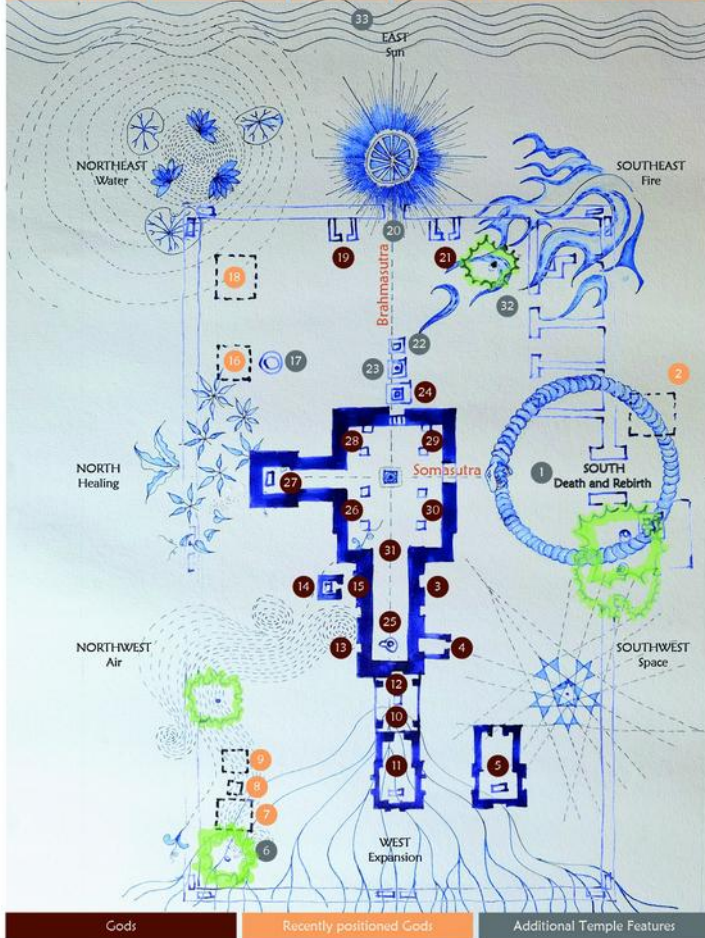
Multimedia Room / Centre d'Art, Auroville



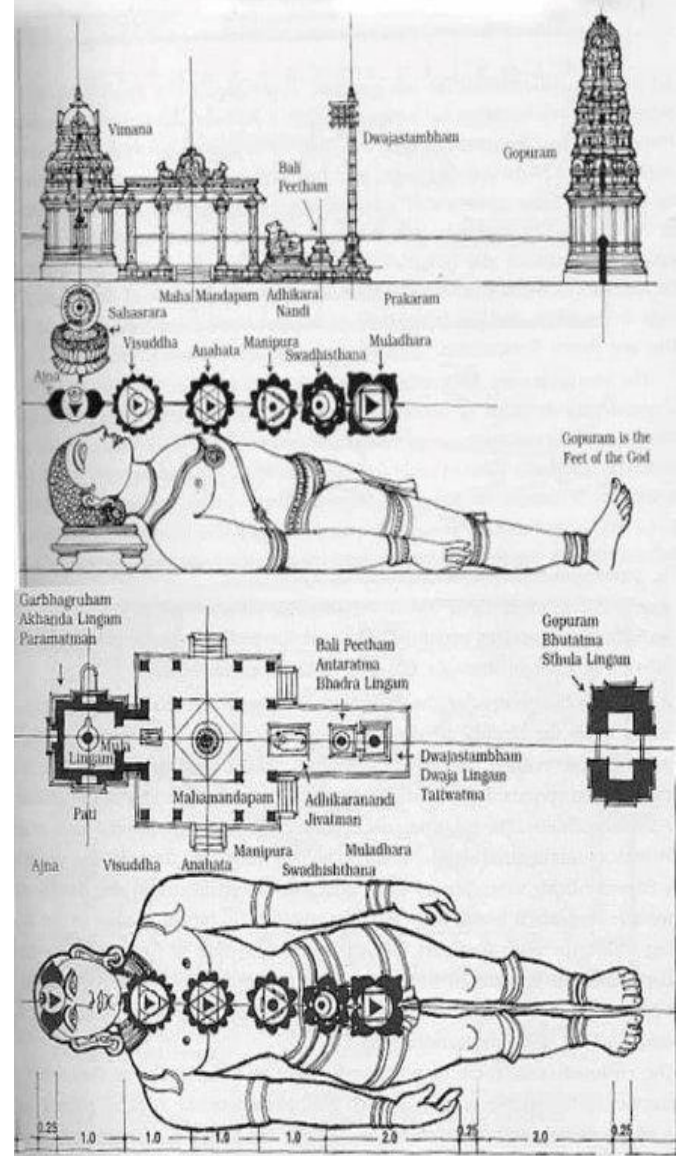
Laniakea Super cluster

Physical plane





1. Main entrance
2. Vinayagar: moved to the RIGHT side
3. Nartana Vinayagar
4. Dakshinamurthy
5. Vinayagar
6. Vilva tree
7. Vayu Lingam: moved to the new loc
8. Nandi: NEWLY INSTATED
9. Anjaneyar: NEWLY INSTATED
10. Peacock
11. Shanmugam
12. Lingodbhavar
13. Brahma
14. Chandikeswar
15. Mahishasuramardini
16. Bhairava: NEWLY INSTATED
17. Well
18. Navagrahas: moved to the new loc
19. Suryan
20. Pradosham entrance
21. Chandran
22. Bali peedam
23. Kodi maram- Flag post
24. Nandi
25. Maha Kaaleshwar (Madhapureesw)
26. Kaduveli Sithar
27. Madhu Sundara Nayaki
28. Nataraja and Sivagamiamman (Bro
29. Bhakthi saints
30. Chandrasekar and Parvati
31. Somaskandar
32. Punnai tree
33. Temple Watertank



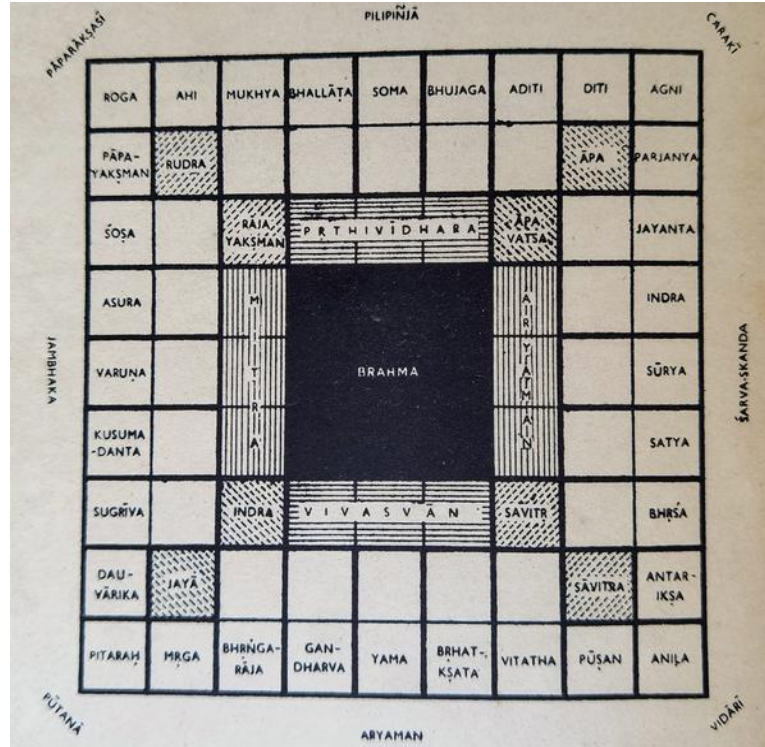
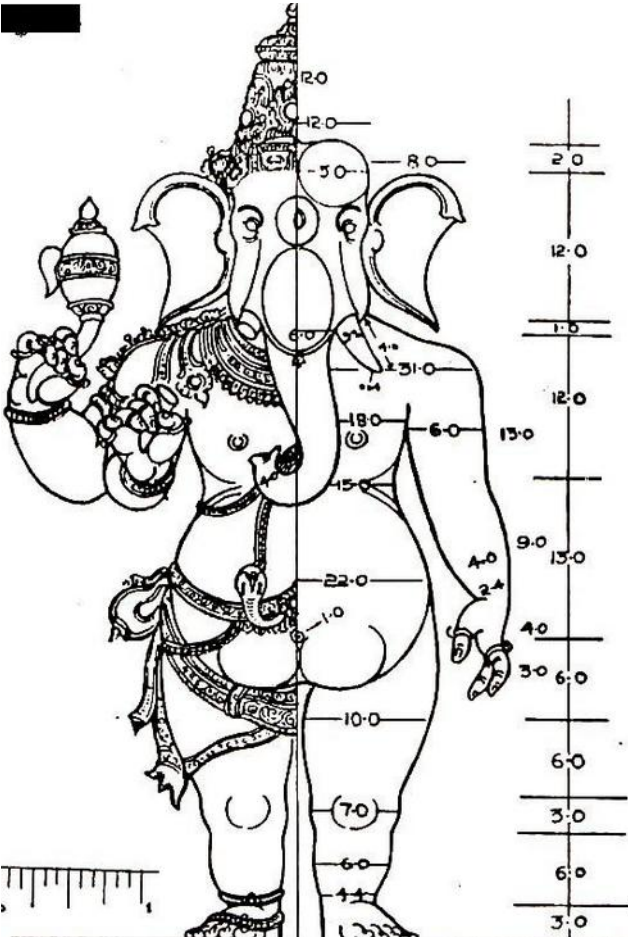
Purusha

In Hindu temple architecture, the concept of Purusha is integral to the design and spiritual significance of the structure. Purusha, the cosmic being, represents the universal spirit that permeates and sustains the universe. This concept is embodied in the Vastupurushamandala, a sacred geometric diagram that serves as the blueprint for temple construction. The Vastupurushamandala envisions Purusha lying with his head at the Garbhagriha, or sanctum sanctorum, which includes the Sahasrara chakra, symbolizing the highest point of spiritual consciousness.

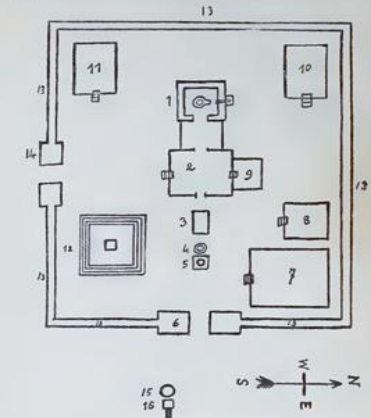
The throat chakra aligns with the Ardha Mandapa, the heart chakra with the main Mandapa, manipuraha with Nandi, Svadishtana with Bali peedam/ kodi maram and mooladara with Kodi maram/ Bali peedam, the feet with the Gopuram, the grand entrance tower. This alignment ensures that the temple is not only a physical structure but also a spiritual microcosm of the human body and the cosmos. The arrangement of the temple's components, guided by the Vastupurushamandala, reflects the journey through the chakras, from the material to the divine, facilitating a profound spiritual experience for the devotee and embodying the ancient Indian ethos of unity between the cosmic and the divine.

The temple as apparatus

- Vastupurushamandala
- Sacred geometry, iconometry
- Orientation and layout
- Chacras / Purusha



3. THE EDIFICES
Figure 8 is the plan of a temple of Śiva in its essential dispositions.



- Fig. 8. Plan of a temple of Śiva
- (1) Vimāna (ශ්‍රීමංඩපය) in the centre at which is found the sanctuary Garbhagrāham (ආරාධනාගෘහය) in the middle of which is found the Lingam (ලිංගය)
 - (2) Manṭapam (මන්දපය)
 - (3) Nandi (නන්ද)
 - (4) Dvājastambam (ද්වයාස්තම්බය)
 - (5) Balīpīṭham (බලිපිටිය)
 - (6) Eastern Gōpuram (නැගෙනහිර ගොපුරය)
 - (7) Kalyāṇa-manṭapam (කල્યાණ මන්දපය)
 - (8) Sanctuary of Nāṭya (නාට්‍ය ශාලාව)
 - (9) Sanctuary of Pārvatī (පාර්වතී ශාලාව) (The sanctuary of Pārvatī ought to be placed in front of the Gopuram at the South).
 - (10) Sanctuary of Subramanīar (සුබ්‍රහ්මණ්ඩරය)
 - (11) Sanctuary of Pīṭhāyār (පිත්තෘකා ශාලාව)
 - (12) Tank (kuṭam, කුළුම)
 - (13) Surrounding wall (maḍī, මාදි)
 - (14) South Gōpuram

Subtle plane



Bindu (Pradakshina)

Bindu as the Source of Cosmic Energy

- Represents the origin of cosmic and creative energy, symbolizing the universe's beginning
- Acts as a spiritual axis, linking earthly existence with the cosmos and guiding the devotee's path toward the divine

Garbhagriha (Inner Sanctuary) and the Bindu

- Bindu in Garbhagriha is the central energy point, focusing spiritual practices and meditations.
- This houses the main deity.

Temple Location and Energetic Alignment

- Chosen by the sacred energy field of the specific spot is the place for a temple. The space is further charged by the ideas and practices it accommodates.
- The subtle meanings-symbols and energies communicate to the subjective inquiries of individuals.

Yantra and Mantra as Energy Amplifiers

- **Yantra:** The tool/vehicle to enshrine divinity. Usually in the form of geometric pattern around a central bindu.
- **Mantra:** Sacred sounds inscribed and chanted, creating sound vibrations that harmonize the environment and amplify spiritual energy, aiding meditation and worship.





The Essence of Pradakshina (in Chola Temples)

In Chola temples, *Pradakshina* goes beyond a mere ritual; it is an embodied spiritual journey harmonized with the temple's architectural. Each circumambulation, whether performed by a single devotee or a group, forms a bridge between the divine and human realms, making the temple a microcosm of the cosmos itself. The act of *Pradakshina*, therefore, becomes a personal pilgrimage, a moment of inner alignment, and a journey toward spiritual transcendence.

History

Sri Mahakaleswarar Temple
at Irumbai Mahalam



Mahalam (Time) Kaleshwa

Reenergizing the
temple (21st century)

Siddhar timeline (500
years???) – dry period

Chola period (12th
century) – fertile
period

Vastupurushamandala

Tevaram (8th century)
songs – referencing
mulai land forest
Sangam (fertile)



Dancing Shiva(Nataraja),
Shakti(Sivagami)



Bakhti Saints
(Sambandar, Navukarasar, Sundarar,
Manikavasagar)

Texts Influencing the Architecture of the Irumbai Temple

Philosophical Foundations

- Rooted in ancient texts: Vedas and Upanishads (1500-500 BCE)
- Vedas: Core hymns and rituals shaping Hindu practices (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda)
- Upanishads: Philosophical insights into reality and self, establishing divine-earthly connections

Integration of Mythology and Practicality

- Puranas (300-1500 CE): Mythological narratives and deity guidelines for temple architecture
- Vishnudharmottara Purana and others guide the reflection of cosmic principles in temple design

Detailed Construction Guidelines

- Agamas and Tantras (500-1500 CE): Specific procedures for temple construction in Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism
Emphasis on spiritual rituals and consecration of sacred spaces

Vastu Shastra: Architectural Science

- Compiled between 600 BCE and 600 CE
- Vastupurushamandala: Sacred cosmic diagram aligning layout with cosmic/natural orders
Ensures temple as a microcosm of the universe, attributed to divine architect Vishvakarman

Classical Texts on Temple Architecture

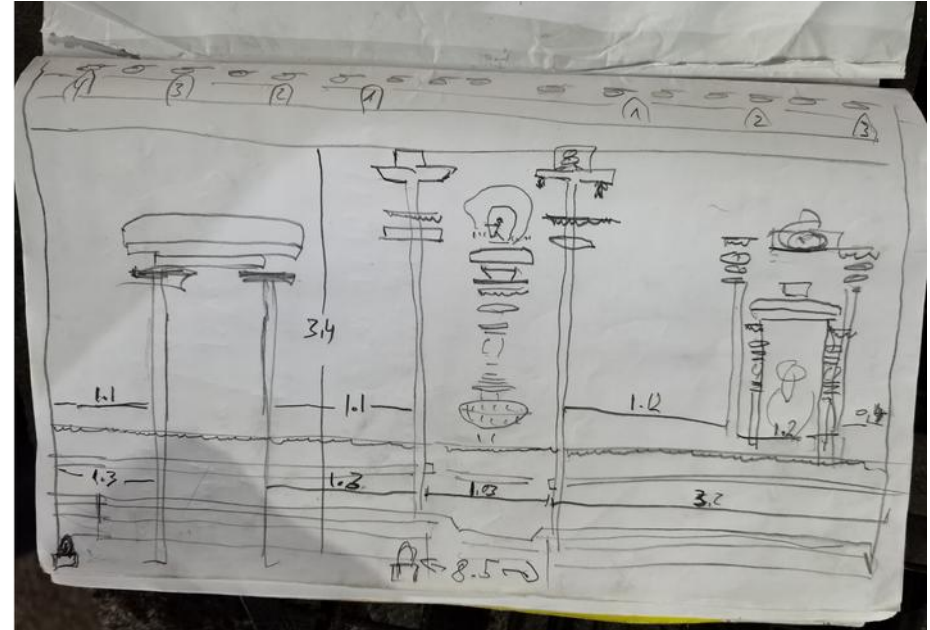
- Brihat Samhita (6th century CE), Samarangana Sutradhara (11th century CE), Mayamata, and Manasara (5th-8th centuries CE)
Offer principles on deity placement, layout, symbolism
Blend spiritual, cosmological, and practical elements in architecture

It is said that the temple was built under Chola King Kulothungan III 1178-1218. This is the time of the already declining Chola empire. It is associated with the legend of Kaduveli Siddhar, which is difficult to date. The temple is mentioned in one of the songs of Sambandar who was born in the 6th-7th century. His works are part of the Tevaram.

We began our analysis with the southern facade of the Vimana, sketching a preliminary drawing to understand its architectural elements. The Vimana base, i.e. the outside of the Garbhagriha splits into two interlinked sections, each based on a socket.

These sections represent different time periods. The left side shows Chola style bulbous capitals, while the right has Vijayanagar style. Similarly, the corbels are distinct; the left is from the later Chola period (1100-1350), and the right from the Vijayanagar era (1350-1600), as per G. Jouveau Dubreuil's "Dravidian Architecture" (1917).

Dimension-wise, the first three column segments are evenly spaced at 1.1, 1.1, and 1.12 meters. The fourth is only 0.4 meters from the Snapana Mandapa's extension, with 0.7 meters obscured. The Snapana Mandapa's corbels, in late Chola style, don't align with the temple's chronological construction, suggesting material repurposing during renovations.





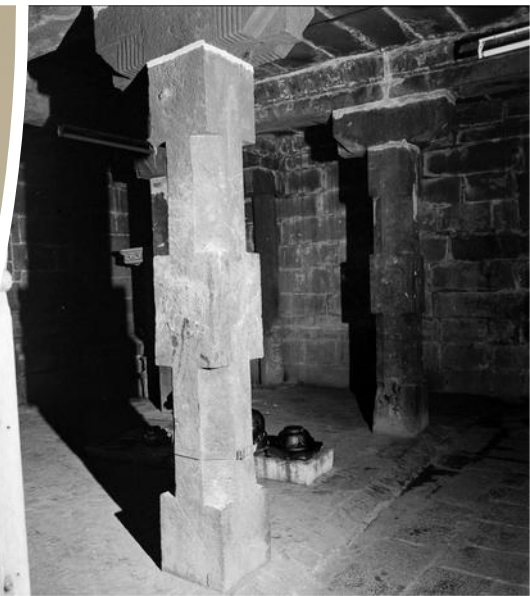
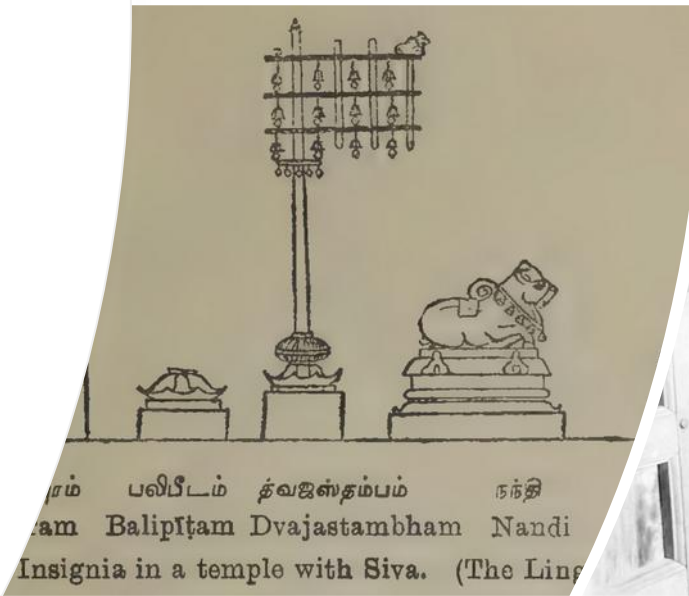
Practice

The closed east entrance before renovation

Why was the east entrance closed like in other temples from this time and area?

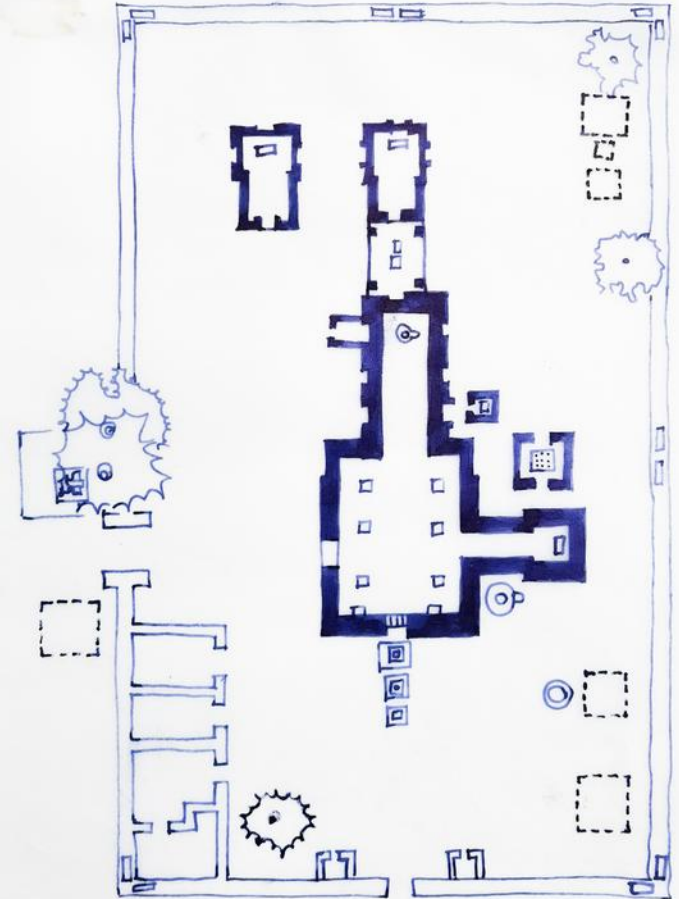


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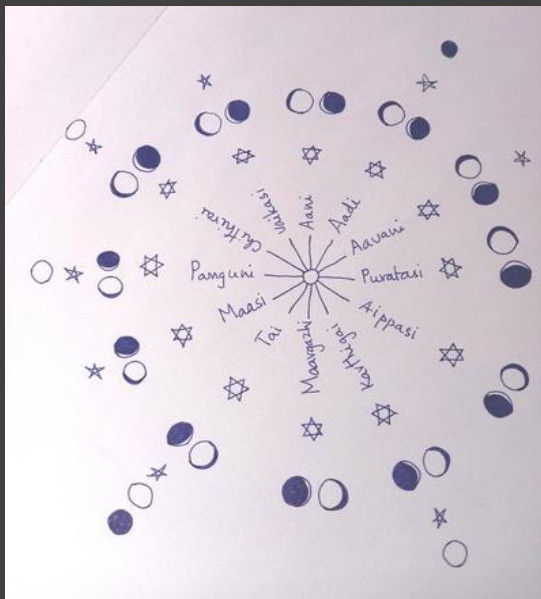


Practitioner temple

- Architecture: Bramasutra, somasutra intersection
- South entrance
- Tantra practice
- Salvation
- Temple for practitioners to come.
- Graveyard ritual, burial grounds
- Closed east entrance





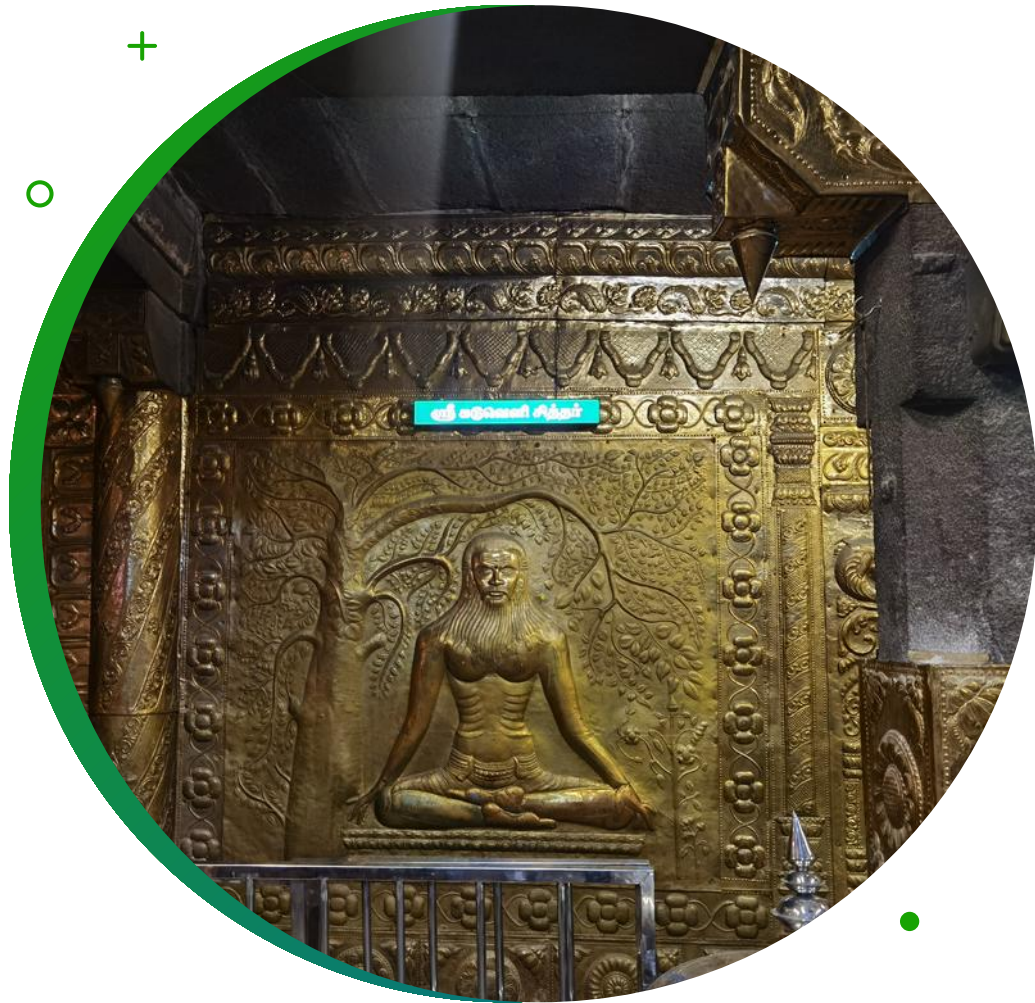


Festivals

Lunar and Solar
Calendar



Legend

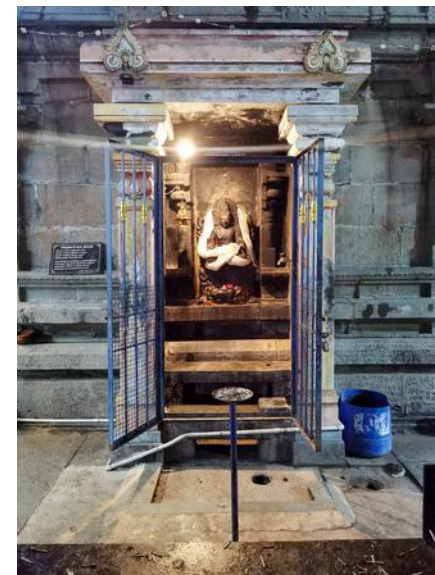
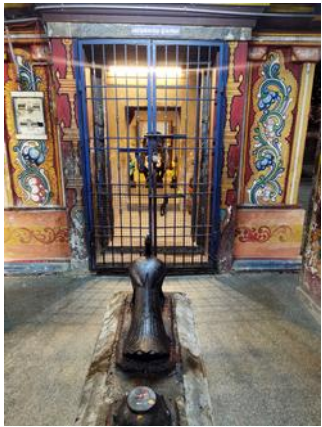


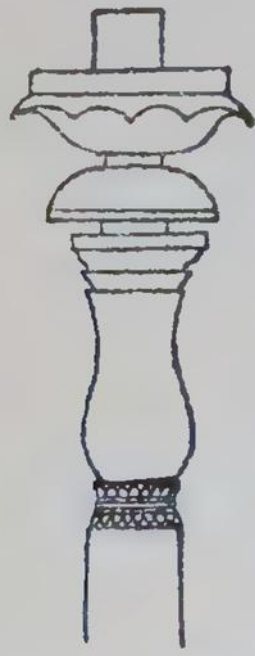
Kaduveli Siddhar

The local people tell a legend about the Irumbai temple, centering on one of the eighteen great Tamil yogis (Siddhas), Kaduveli Siddhar.

Finished நிறைவு





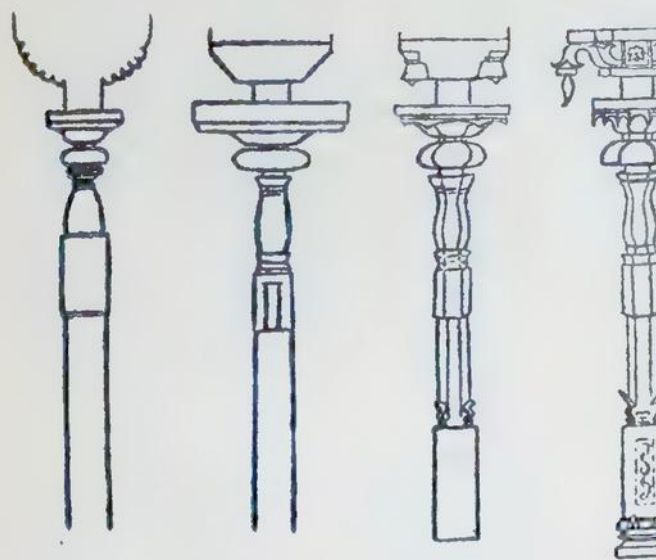


கண்டம் Ka
பலகை pala
முனை muna
இதழ் idal.
குடம் kudam
தாடி tãdi (

கலசம் kalas
பத்மபந்தம் p

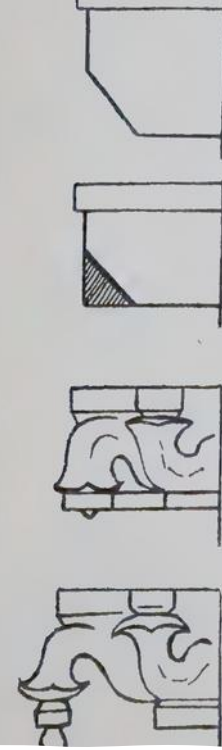
கால் kãl.

Fig. 1. Bulbous capital.



600 A.D. 1000 A.D. 1350 A.D. 1650 A.D.

Fig. 31. Evolution of the pillar with bulbous Capital



(2)
Early Chola A.D. 850 to 1100

(3)
Later Chola A.D. 1100 to 1350

(4)
Vijayanagar A.D. 1350 to 1600

(5)
Modern

Jouveau Dubreuil's "Dravidian Architecture" (1917)



