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GARY MICHAEL TARTAKOV and VIDYA DEHEJIA

SHARING, INTRUSION, AND INFLUENCE:
THE MAHIṢĀSURAMARDINĪ IMAGERY OF THE CALUKYAS AND
THE PALLAVAS

Two Closely Related Images

At the top of a pillar in the hall of the Mallikārjuna temple at Pattadakal is a fascinating small relief representation of the Goddess Durgā in combat with Mahiṣāsura, the Buffalo Demon (Fig. 1).¹ The treatment of the theme seems quite unlike any known on other Early Calukya monuments. Instead of the usual iconic slaughter of Mahiṣāsura it shows a battle between opposed hosts, immediately suggesting the inspiration, and even the model, of the well-known Pallava representation of this theme filling the northern wall of the Mahiṣāsuramardinī Maṇḍapa at Mahabalipuram (Fig. 2).

The logic of this suggestion follows a well established pattern in the art historical analysis of India's visual imagery, by which we trace the influence of one artistic work or tradition in subsequent works significantly resembling them. Sivaramamurti set the pattern for this particular design, in discussing its other widely known variation, at Ellora (Fig. 7), some thirty years ago.

A Great Theme has an Appeal

One of the most remarkable carvings at Mahābalipuram is the fight of Mahiṣāsuramardinī with the demon wearing a buffalo's head. While everywhere in North India and even in the Deccan, Mahiṣāmardinī is shown trampling a buffalo, from whose cut neck issues a demon in fighting attitude, and while as Durgā Mahiṣāmardinī she is shown calm standing on the cut head of a buffalo in the Tamil country, it is at Mahābalipuram that a great Pallava sculptor has created a great form of Devī seated unruffled on her lion playfully fighting the tremendous monster in front of her... To emphasize the great exploit, Devī is shown normal in size, her opponent colossal and with dignified royal bearing, an umbrella raised over his head, but still she fights with ease from her lion, while in other representations the figure of Devī dwarfs the opponent represented as buffalo under her feet in killing whom great effort is evident. *The appeal that this panel always has had is clear from the fact that the sculptor of the great Rāshtrakūṭa king Krishna has paid a tribute as it were to this panel, by almost adopting it in his own version of the theme in that magnificent temple at Ellora which is a wonder of temple architecture.*²

¹ The temple was originally called the Trailōkyēśvara.

² C. Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan* (Calcutta, 1955), p.3. Emphasis added.

In his detailed classification of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī types M. Seshadri supports Sivaramamurti's view and adds to it. He calls this an example of the "Anthropomorphic Type" of Buffalo Demon,³ the third of the four types he recognizes. Agreeing with the suggestion that the Mahabalipuram image is the source for the Ellora imagery, Seshadri adds that, "It is very possible that this form... originated with the Pallavas and became popular in the whole of South India".⁴

In bringing a Calukya version of the imagery to attention we can be seen as adding an intermediate, Calukya, step to the transfer of the motif from the Pallavas of South India to the Raṣṭrakūṭas of the northern Deccan. This logic fits into the broader and well established notion that Calukya's Southern (Drāviḍa) style is derived from an essentially *more-Southern*, archetypal Dravidian style, found in the tradition of the Pallavas. "More-Southern" in this case is taken to indicate both the geographical location of the Pallavas, to the south of the Calukyās, and the assumption that the Pallavas, with their older surviving Dravidian (Tamil) literature had the aboriginal, precedent-setting role in creating and maintaining the Drāviḍa artistic traditions shared by both the Kannada and Tamil regions. The Pallava artists, or their artistic tradition, are thus seen as influencing the Calukya artists or tradition, several generations before their influence was felt on the even more northerly Raṣṭrakūṭas.

The seminal version of this hypothesis occurs in Alexander Rea's *Pallava Architecture*,⁵ where it is not Tamil esthetic conceptions but artists that are supposed to have traveled, the style being considered the property of the dynasty and a supposed race it headed. The way Rea stated the situation historically was to propose that, "Previous to the arrival of the Chālukyās – who first established themselves in the Peninsula about the fifth century A. D. – the Pallavas were the dominant race in the Southern Dekkan".⁶ Art historically he proposed that the Calukyās had a style of their own and that the "southern features" and the Calukya temples themselves in a style similar to that found among the Pallavas, were done by imported Pallava artisans. He explained the "southern features" of the Kailāsa at Ellora the same way.⁷ Though references to race have since been dropped, most subsequent accounts continue to assume that the Southern style has traveled outward from Tamilnad through the emigration of Tamil artists.

The hypothesis deriving the Early Calukya's Drāviḍa architecture from the Pallava's Drāviḍa has been repeatedly stated. The usual demonstration of this is based on the comparison of the best known temples of each tradition, the Pallava's Kailāsanātha temple at Kanci and the Calukya's Virūpaṅga at Pattadakal.⁸ The formal similarities between the

³ M. Seshadri, "Mahiṣāsūramardīnī; Images, Iconography and Interpretation," *The Half-Yearly Journal of the Mysore University*, Sec. A, vol. XXII, No. 2 (1963), reprint p. 19-21.

⁴ Seshadri (1963), p. 19.

⁵ Alexander Rea, *Pallava Architecture; Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series*, vol. XXXIV (Madras, 1909). Illustrated exclusively by woodcuts and with extensive references to excavations and research of the early eighties, the latest work cited here is from 1885 and there can be little doubt that the work was written then.

⁶ Rea, p. 7.

⁷ Rea, p. 14.

⁸ The initial and best known discussion is in Henry Cousens, *Chālukyan Architecture of the Kanarese Districts, A.S.I., N.I.S.*, vol. XLII (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 61-62.

two are significant, and there exists inscriptional evidence to show not only that the Kailāsanātha is the older, but that the patron of the temple at Pattadakal, the Calukya emperor Vikramāditya II, both knew and admired the Kailāsanātha.⁹ Comparable formal similarities link this pair to the later Kailāsa at Ellora. And once again the historical evidence of the Raṣṭrakūṭa's conquest of the Calukyas, in the generation between the creation of the Virūpakṣa and the Kailāsa, link the structures politically. The Raṣṭrakūṭa's Kailāsa, which contains the sculpture described by Sivaramamurti, is the northern-most example of a major temple in the Drāviḍa style. Since the Mallikārjuna temple, housing our Calukya version of the theme, is the twin of the Virūpakṣa, we now seem to have a striking sculptural parallel to the long supposed sequence of architectural influences.

Our main intent in what follows is to test and refine this logic of stylistic origination and artistic sharing, by a more precise and thorough examination of the region's surviving imagery, and a more sensitive interpretation of the various sorts of cultural sharing possible.

The eloquent Pallava relief at Mahabalipuram is close to four meters long and two-and-a-half high. It depicts the battle between Durgā and Mahiṣāsura, with each of the principals shown surrounded by a host of supporters. On one side the charging Goddess is portrayed as a slightly larger than human-sized figure, mounted on a lion, surrounded by dwarfish male *gana*, and preceded by a female warrior. Before her, she forces the measured retreat of a still very powerful-looking Mahiṣāsura, shown with a human body and a buffalo head, surrounded by his own cohort of anthropomorphic male warriors.

Durgā is shown as a lithe and graceful figure seated *astride* the lion. She wears a crown and jewelry, a *dhōti* and a *kuca bandha* (breast-binding). With her two "natural" hands she wields the bow and arrow (implied rather than depicted), while her other hands hold (clockwise from *her* lower right hand) a sword, a bell, a wheel, and a conch shell, a noose, and a shield. The host of eight *gana* surrounds the Goddess like a halo. Four of them carry sword and shield. The one in the upper corner flies in with a tray of offerings. Those directly behind her carry the staff of the parasol extended over her head and a fly whisk, symbolic of her regal divinity. The *gana* below her imitates her pose, with a bow and arrow. The Goddess and her host occupy the half of the composition to the viewer's left.

The opposite half of the composition is filled by the demons' retreat. Mahiṣāsura, still very much in the fight, stands hefting a club in his two hands, his body inclined at an angle of roughly thirty degrees, turning away from the Goddess in an impressive and dignified attitude. The poses of the surrounding members of his host, however, foretell the *asuras'* doom. Only one of Mahiṣa's demons is still in the battle, shield and sword in hand at the top center of the panel. The rest scatter in disarray. The demons at the corner and edge of the panel look to the rear, the upper turning and the lower beginning to flee. The figure in the lower corner has fallen, while the one closest to Mahiṣāsura cowers beneath his

⁹ Cousens, p. 61. It should be pointed out that Cousens' interpretation of the Virūpakṣa inscriptions, following James Fleet's translations, claimed that the artists working there had come from Kancī, on the basis of references to their association with the "southern region". It is today recognized that the phrases involved referred in some cases to the southern side of the temple, and in others to a South India that included the region around Pattadakal.

retreating master. Just who carries the parasol over Mahiṣa's crowned head is unclear. Beneath him lies the body of a demon who has fallen.

At its center the opposing sides of the composition are joined by an interesting pair of figures (Fig. 5). Below is a female warrior, on her knees, striking upward with a short sword. Above is the torso of a male figure, with a shaven skull, falling head-downward onto her blade. This pair marks the division between the charging forces of the Goddess and the retreating forces of the demon, while at the same time it links them together within the composition of the scene.

Aside from its miniature size and less commanding situation – just over a meter long, at the top of a pillar (Fig. 3) – the small relief in the Mallikārjuna is remarkably similar to the Mahabalipuram relief. Here too we see a dramatic scene, depicting the two opponents in the midst of their struggle, where Mahiṣāsura remains a strong and vital figure, and the outcome seems far from decided. The retreating demon with a human body and crowned buffalo head is depicted at the same thirty degree angle, hefting the club in his two hands. To his right is the slim figure of Durgā, seated gracefully astride her lion, wielding the bow and arrow with her “natural” hands. Here too Durgā is eight-armed and carrying apparently equivalent *ayudha* symbols: a sword, something indistinct (that could be the bell), a wheel and an arrow in her right hands; a conch, a bow, something indistinct (that could easily be the noose), and a shield in her left hands.

Though the panel is small and there is comparatively little space allowed for depicting the armies of the two opponents, four figures (apparently demons) are shown prostrate on the ground. Again there is the back view of a shaven-skulled man falling downwards, between the lion and the demon. In this case the falling figure's arm is clenched firmly in the lion's jaws. Here also Durgā wears a *kuca bandha*. Both works are located beside the sanctum of a Siva shrine, on the north of the axis leading to the sanctum, where the God's image is found. Which is to say, on the God's left. Or, on the worshippers' right, as they face the God (Fig. 4 and 6).

Iconographically these are relatively unusual works and somewhat difficult to define. They do not fit exactly into any of the familiar pictorial or icon-text traditions, though there is little question about whom the figures are intended to represent. The scene depicts the battle between Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, who is the incarnation of the *śakti* (force) of all of the great Gods, and Mahiṣāsura, the demon who had defeated the Gods and driven them from their heavens. But, it does so in a way not cited in the familiar iconic texts or common among the material representations that now survive. In those images that have survived and have been recorded by scholars,¹⁰ e.g., Figs. 11, 12, 13 etc., and in those Puranic and Agamic texts collected to explain them,¹¹ the imagery depicted is that of the climactic moment in which the triumphant Goddess strides over the vanquished body of her enemy, piercing him with her *triśūla* (trident spear). Here, however, what we see is a penultimate moment in the contest, the battle before the Buffalo Demon's slaying. In

¹⁰ Seshadri's 1963 article is the best published. There is a Masters thesis at the University of California at Los Angeles, *The Goddess Durgā, Mahiṣāsuramardini in Indian Art*, Katherine Anne Harper, 1969, which is more extensive.

¹¹ E.g., T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras, 1914), vol. I, pt. II, pp. 341–354.

that form the Goddess is given many names; the most common associated with the actual incident of the combat are Kātyāyanī and Caṇḍikā.¹² In descriptions of the *pratimā* (idol) and in those images that have survived, the two cosmic beings usually appear as a pair at the precise moment of the demon's destruction, accompanied occasionally by the Goddess's lion.

In the two images we are studying and at Ellora, however, the scene is set before the Goddess's victory, and the figures are shown surrounded by a wide cast of characters, as a dramatic episode, not an iconic epitome. A better title than "Maḥiṣāsura-mardinī" (the Buffalo Demon's slaying, literally: his *crushing*) for this imagery might be "Maḥiṣāsura-sainyavadha" (the slaying of the armies of Maḥiṣa). This is the title of the incident preceding the Maḥiṣāsuramardinī incident in the *Devī Māhātmya*.¹³ (The advantage of this terminology lies in its description of the scene. We do not mean to suggest that that text is the specific source for these images. We will use it here to distinguish between this particular version of the theme, and others.)

The relative uniqueness and the geographic and chronological proximity of the two works, combined with the similarity of their rendering, seem to assure the existence of a close connection between them. Only two other published images among the many known representations of the Goddess require comparison, the already mentioned Ellora relief (Fig. 7) and a relief found in front of the Atiraṇachaṇḍa Maṇḍapa (Fig. 39, discussed below). But neither of these is as close to either, as they are to each other. In our pair we see the Goddess *astride* her lion and charging a Maḥiṣāsura, who leans away at an angle, separated from her by the falling torso of a shaven-headed man seen from behind. It is not just their similarity, but the combination of their similarity and their uniqueness that makes the suggestion of a direct connection between these designs seem unavoidable.

On the basis of this analysis we are warranted in suggesting that the Mallikārjuna and Maḥiṣāsuramardinī Maṇḍapa images are related through the designers of one being familiar with the other, or at least with the work of artisans in the same tradition. However many the number of intermediary images or artisans, a linked chain of artisans and images must connect the pair. Neither verbal descriptions nor accident will explain such close similarity.

The chronological priority of the Mahabalipuram relief also seems definite. The Maḥiṣāsuramardinī Maṇḍapa is architecturally a monument bridging the Pallava's austere, so-called "Mahēndra", style and the later, more ornate, "Māmalla" style.¹⁴ It combines elaborate versions of the geometric pillars of the austere style on its facade, with the lion-based pillars that characterize the ornate style inside (Fig. 6).¹⁵ Though there is still a controversy over the exact date of the beginning of the ornate style, and the degree to which it may overlap its predecessor, there is general agreement on a late seventh-century date for the Maḥiṣāsuramardinī Maṇḍapa and the reliefs within it. The Mallikārjuna temple

¹² E.g., the *Mahābhārata*, *Viṣṇudharmōttara*, *Agni Purāna*, *Devī Māhātmya*, *Matsya Purāna*, and *Rūpamaṇḍana*.

¹³ We have used mainly V.S. Agrawala's edition, *The Glorification of the Great Goddess* (Varanasi, 1963), which has the Sanskrit text paralleled by Agrawala's translation.

¹⁴ See K.R. Srinivasan, *Cave-Temples of the Pallavas* (New Delhi, 1964), Chapter IV.

¹⁵ Srinivasan (1964), fig. 3, p. 41.

at Pattadakal is dated by inscriptional evidence, firmly within the reign of the Calukya emperor Vikramāditya II, to whom it was dedicated by the younger of his two queens, between 733/4 and 744/5 C.E. (Śaka 655–666), half a century later.¹⁶

We can, therefore, suggest Pallava inspiration in the Calukya image on the basis of their striking correlation of formal design and on the priority of the Pallava work.

We can suggest Pallava inspiration, but we have not demonstrated it. What we have demonstrated is a *sharing* of characteristics, and a relatively direct coordination of the two images within a shared South Indian tradition. But, their relationship, the nature of that sharing, is not at all certain on the basis of what we have discussed thus far.

Sharing, Intrusion, and Influence, Some Propositions

Three positive criteria are required to establish the inspiration of one work or tradition in another work or tradition, or – as we say most often – to show one work or tradition has “influenced” another. These are a significant correlation of forms, the chronological priority of one, and the existence of cultural communication between their creators. We possess these *positive criteria* for suggesting the inspiration of the Mahabalipuram relief in the creation of the Mallikārjuna work. They show the *possibility* of influence. To show the *probability* of influence we must also show two *negative criteria*: first that no other outside source could have provided the inspiration, and second that it could not have come from the Calukya tradition itself.

It goes without saying that when we suggest any connection between two works we mean a connection existing in the activity of their designers. Works themselves do not absorb the influence or inspiration of other works, but only record the impression made by other works upon the artists who create them. There is a theoretical possibility that the designers of one of these works was aware of the other work, but the fact we must face in considering the art of ancient cultures is that we are dealing with a miniscule number of surviving images from a vastly larger body of work. This makes the likelihood of finding two works directly connected through the person of a single artist, who created one in emulation of the other, extremely unlikely.

The practice of reading the concrete record of surviving images as if it was all that ever existed is as misleading as it is convenient. In reality it is no more likely that what we see today is a large part of the art that once existed than it is that the names of people inscribed on those images and in associated texts represent a large part of the Hindu population of that time. The images we have from the first millenium are the fortunate survivors of a vast number of images in more perishable materials, and a good number in stone as well, which have since been lost. And we should treat them as such, as surviving representatives of a vastly more extensive corpus. Being in stone or metal, and often from temples of great political and historical centrality, they are undoubtedly among the most refined and

¹⁶ James F. Fleet, “Pattadakal Pillar Inscription of the Time of Kirtivarman II,” *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. III, pp. 1–7, discusses the Pattadakal inscription. R. Nagaswamy, “New Light on Mamallapuram,” in *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, 1960–62, pp. 1–50 provides the alternative chronology for Mahabalipuram.



Fig. 1 Mahiṣāsura sainyavadha, Mallikārjuna Temple, Pattadakal.
(All pictures here are reproduced through the permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.
Unless marked otherwise, they are Gary Tartakov's.)



Fig. 2 Mahiṣāsura sainyavadha, Mahiṣāsuramardini Maṇḍapa, Mahabalipuram. (Photograph courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi Center for Art and Archaeology, hereafter indicated: AIIS.)



Fig. 3 Pillar northeast of the sanctum,
Mallikārjuna Temple, Pattadakal



Fig. 4 Sanctum entrance, Mallikārjuna Temple, Pattadakal



Fig. 5 Detail of Fig. 2, Durgā, the warrior, and the falling man

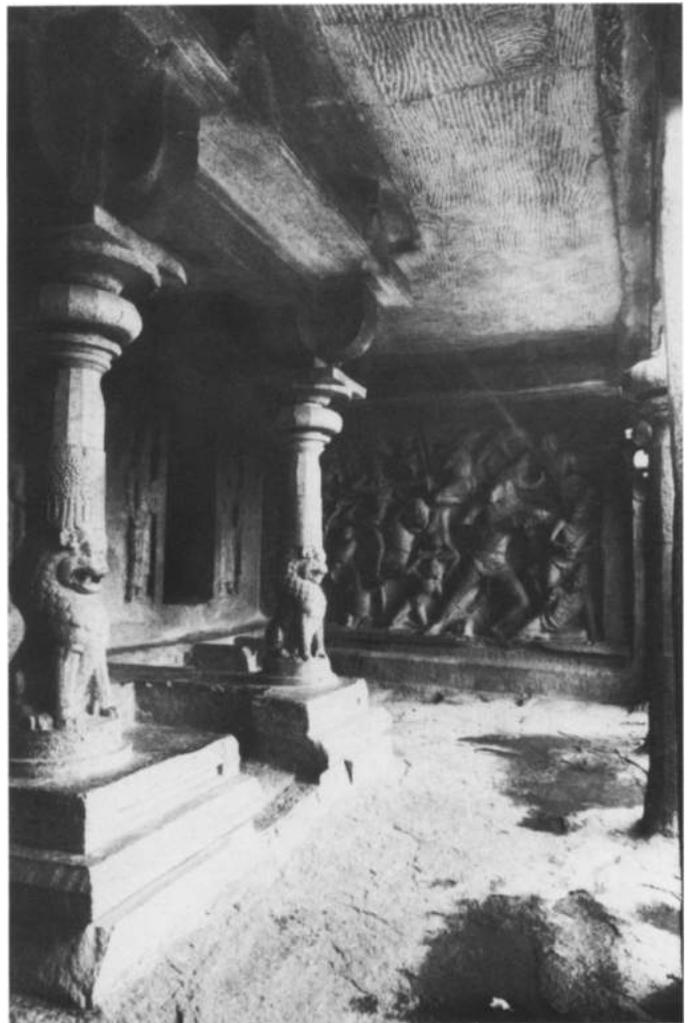


Fig. 6 Interior of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa,
looking north, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 7 Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, Kailāsa Temple, Ellora



Fig. 9 Mahiṣāsura mardini, on the wall of a modern building, Aihole, 1966



Fig. 8 Mahiṣāsura mardini, Orissan metal image, Amherst, Massachusetts



Fig. 10 Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, modern copy, on display in Mahabalipuram, 1981



Fig. 11 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, Rāvana Phadi cave, Aihole

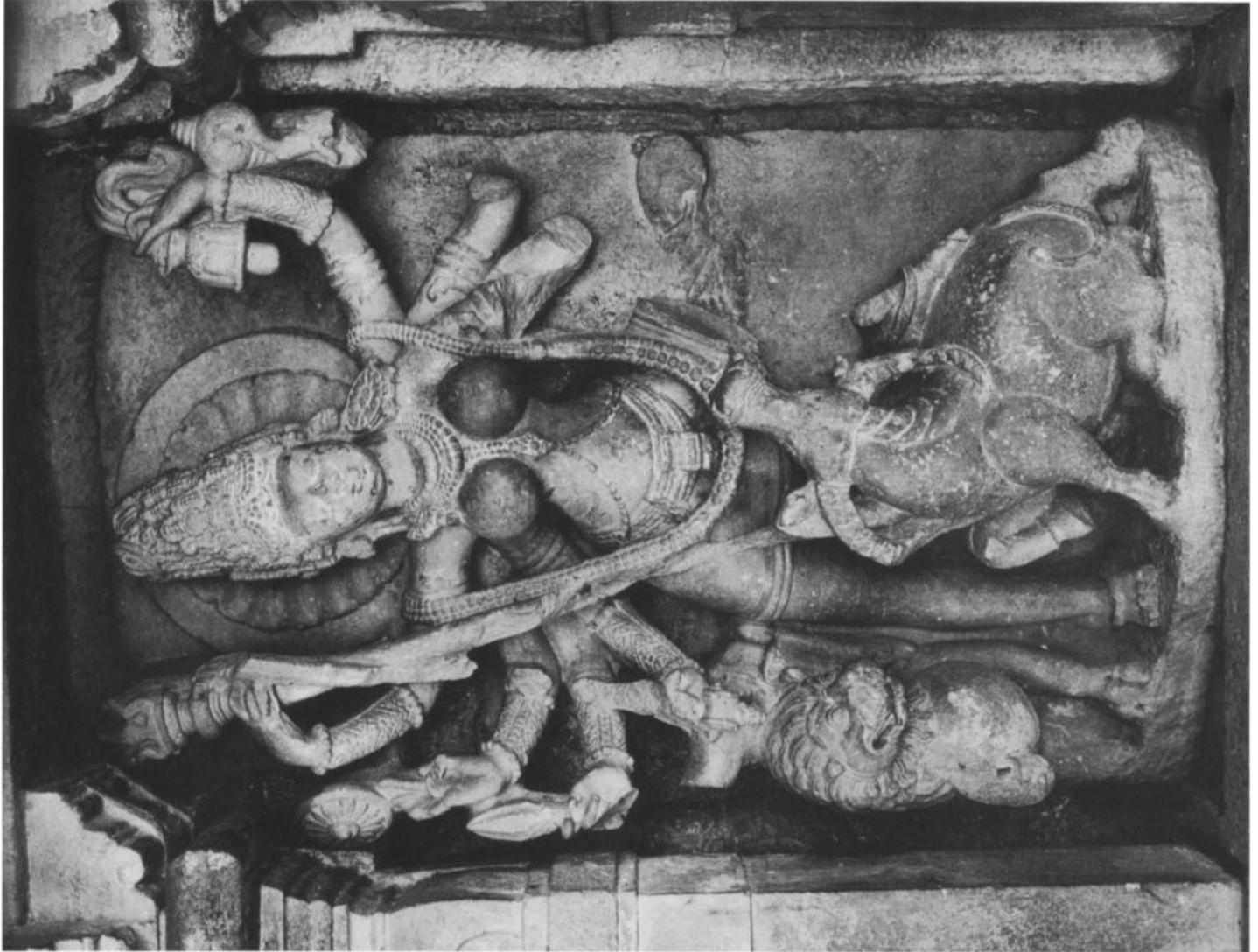


Fig. 12 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, Durga Temple, Aihole (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 13 Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, Jambuliṅga Temple, Badami



Fig. 14 Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and worshippers, Virūpākṣa Temple, Pattadakal



Fig. 15 Miniature shrine, Kumāra Brahma Temple, Alampur



Fig. 16 Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, Miniature shrine, Kumāra Brahma, Alampur (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 18 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, loose in miniature shrine, Bāla Brahma Temple compound, Alampur (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 17 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, exterior shrine of Cave I, Badami (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 19 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, interior shrine,
Virūpakṣa Temple, Pattadakal



Fig. 20 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī shrine, Virūpakṣa Temple,
Pattadakal



Fig. 21 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, exterior, Pāpanātha Temple,
Pattadakal



Fig. 22 Mahiṣāsuramardīnī, interior, Pāpanātha Temple,
Pattadakal

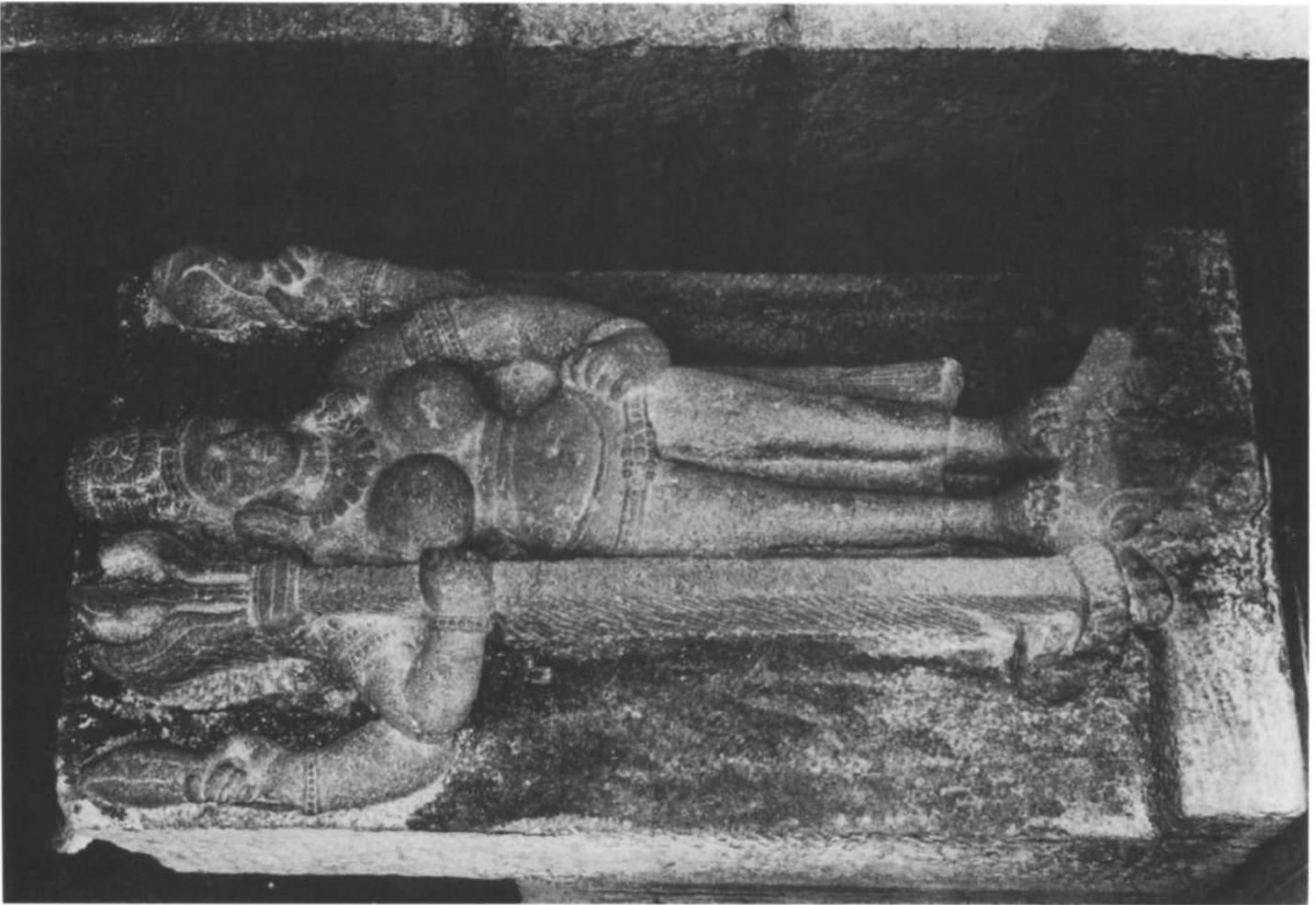


Fig. 23 Victorious Durgā, Alampur Museum (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 24 Victorious Durgā, Bāla Brahma Temple, Alampur (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 25 Victorious Durgā, miniature shrine, Bālā Brahma Temple compound, Alampur



Fig. 26 Victorious Durgā, Bhīmalingēśvara Temple, Saryavolu



Fig. 27 Victorious Durgā, terra cotta fragment, Sannatti.
(Reproduced with permission of the Directorate of
Archaeology and Museums, Karnataka State.)



Fig. 28 Victorious Durgā, Besnagar, Gwalior Museum
(photo: AIIS)



Fig. 29 Gods and Goddesses witnessing the triumph of the Goddess, Cave II, Badami



Fig. 30 Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, detail of Fig. 29, Cave II, Badami



Fig. 31 Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, Cave II, Badami, drawn by James Burgess for Pl. VIII of his *Report on the Elura Cave Temples and Brabmanical and Jaina Caves in Western India, A.S.I., N.I.S.*, vol. 6, 1883



Fig. 32 Mahiṣāsura sāinyavadha, Viśva Brahma Temple, Ālampur



Fig. 33 Simhavāhini Durgā, beside the Tripurāntaka *dēvakōṣṭha*, Kailāsanātha Temple, Kanci



Fig. 34 Durgā with worshippers, Cave II, Badami



Fig. 35 Mahisāsūramardīnī, maṇḍapa of the Kailāsa Temple, Ellora



Fig. 36 Mahisāsūramardīnī, entrance to the Kailāsa Temple, Ellora



Fig. 37 Mahisasur mardini, modern lithograph published by J. B. Khanna & Co., Madras



Fig. 38 Sketch map of sites mentioned



Fig. 39 Mahiṣāsura sainyavadha, Atiraṇaṇaṇḍa Maṇḍapa, Saluvankuppam



Fig. 40 Mahiṣāsura in flight, detail of Mahiṣāsura sainyavadha, Atiraṇaṇaṇḍa Maṇḍapa, Saluvankuppam



Fig. 41 Victorious Durgā, Ādivarāha Maṇḍapa, Mahabalipuram (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 42 Victorious Durgā, exterior, Draupadī Ratha, Mahabalipuram

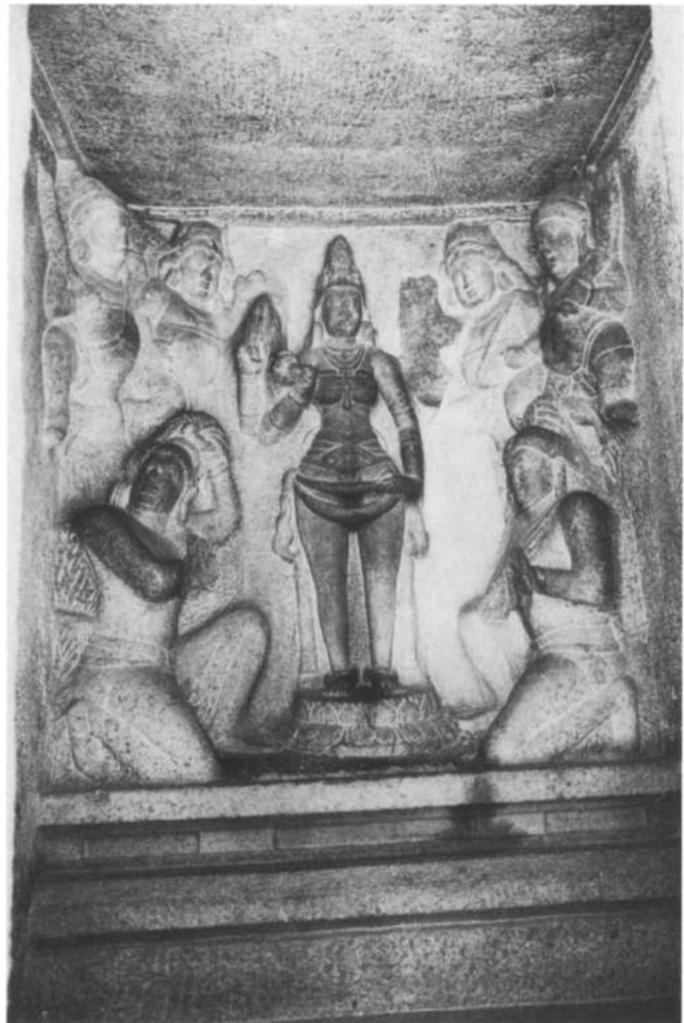


Fig. 43 Victorious Durgā with worshippers, interior, Draupadī Ratha, Mahabalipuram

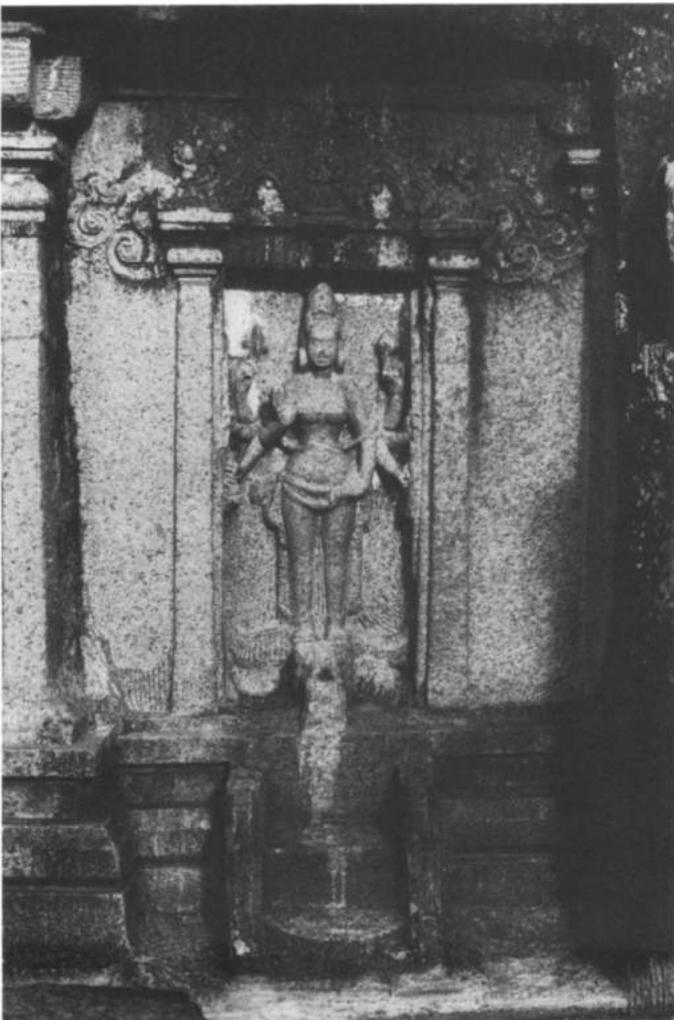


Fig. 44 Victorious Durgā, Trimūrti Maṇḍapa, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 45 Victorious Durgā with worshippers, Varāha Maṇḍapa, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 47 Sīmhavāhīnī Durgā with worshippers, Kṣārtiyasimēvara of the Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

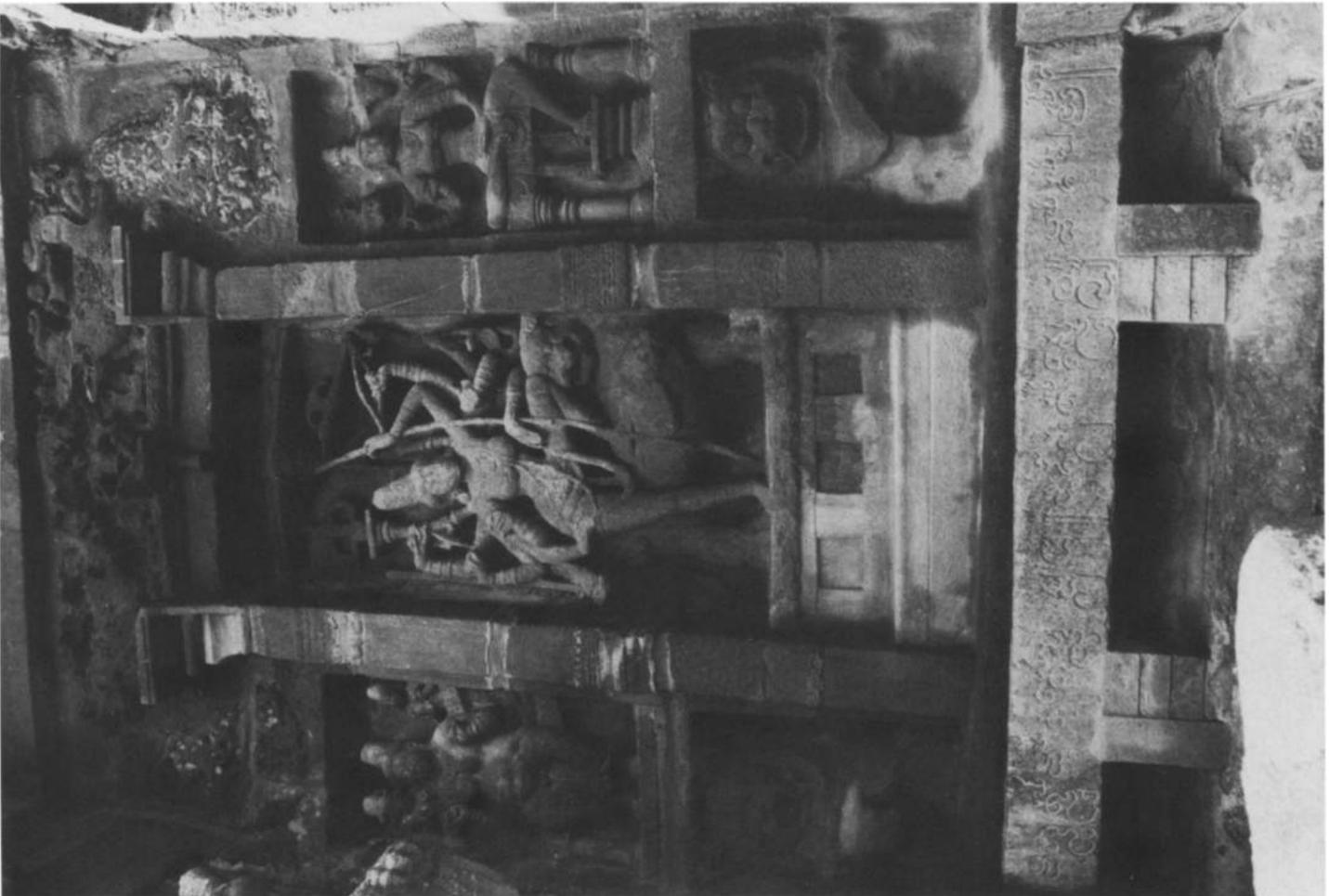


Fig. 46 Sīmhavāhīnī Durgā with Jyēsthā and a seated Durgā, Kailāsanātha Temple, Kāncī

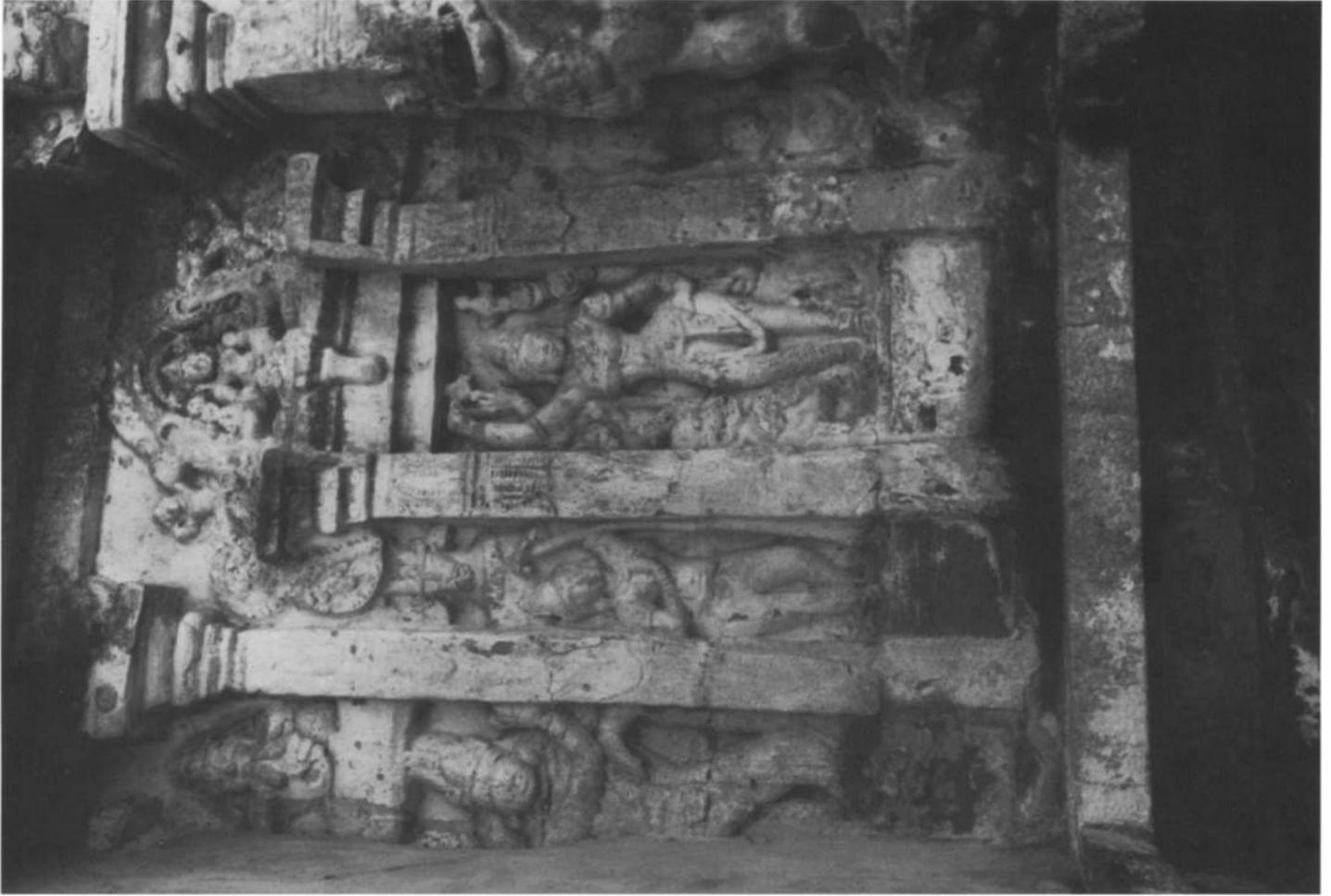


Fig. 49 Victorious Durgā, Iravātānēśvara Temple, Kānci



Fig. 48 Simhāvāhinī Durgā, detail of Fig. 46, Kailāsanātha Temple, Kānci (photo: AIIS)



Fig. 50 Durgā's Lion, Shore Temple compound, Mahabalipuram

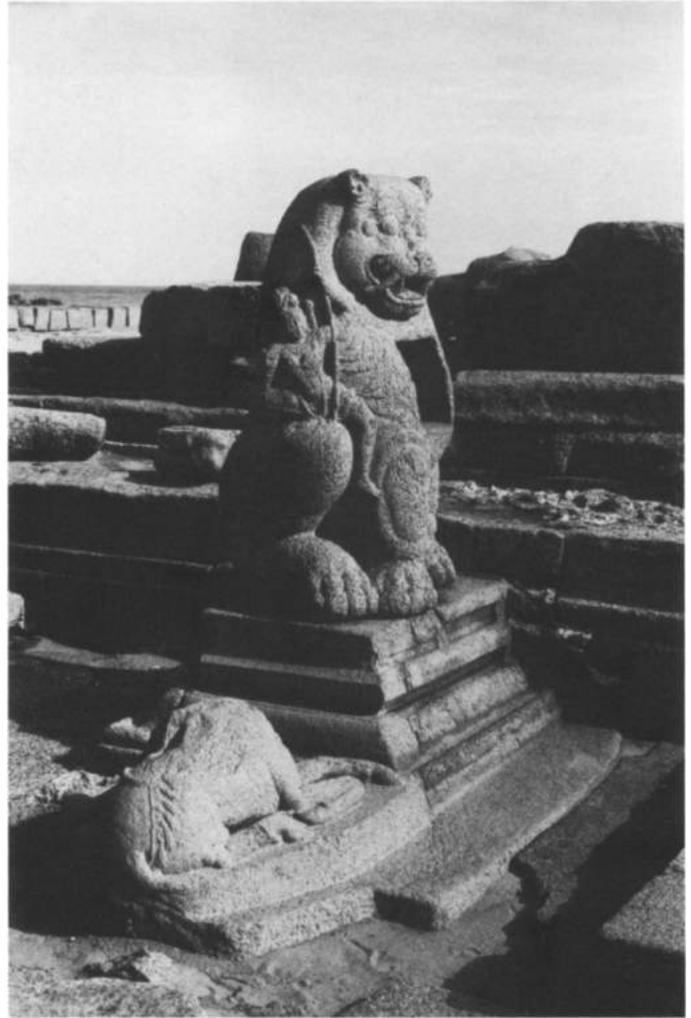


Fig. 51 Durgā's Lion, Shore Temple compound, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 52 The stag, detail of Durgā's Lion, Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

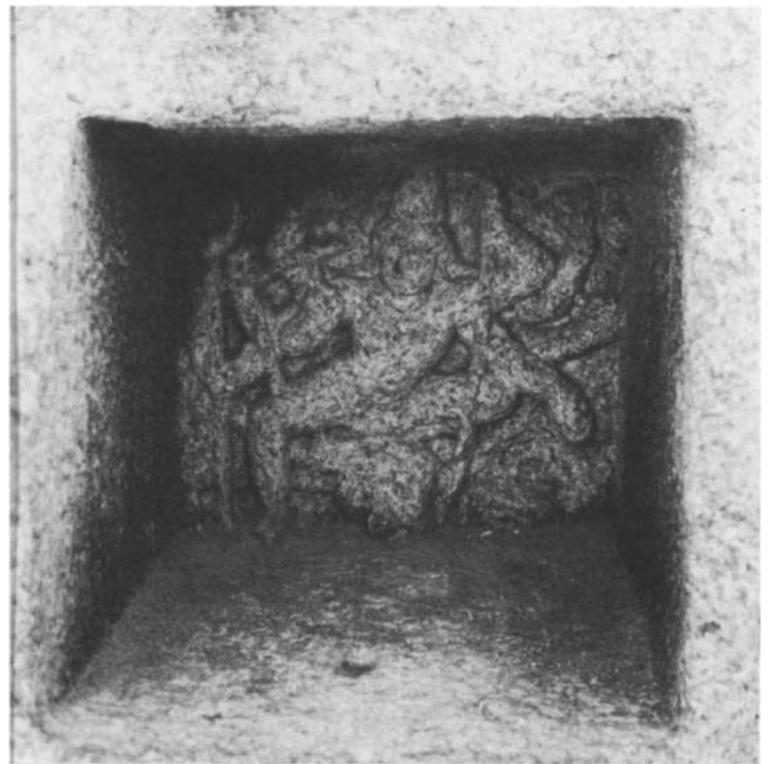


Fig. 53 Durgā seated on the Buffalo's head, in breast of Durgā's Lion, Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram (photo: Vidya Dehējia)



Fig. 54 Durgā Rock, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 55 Durgā Rock, detail of worshippers, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 56 Durgā Rock, Lion throne, Yāli Rock and the Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 57 Durgā's Lion, Yāli Maṇḍapa, Saluvankuppam

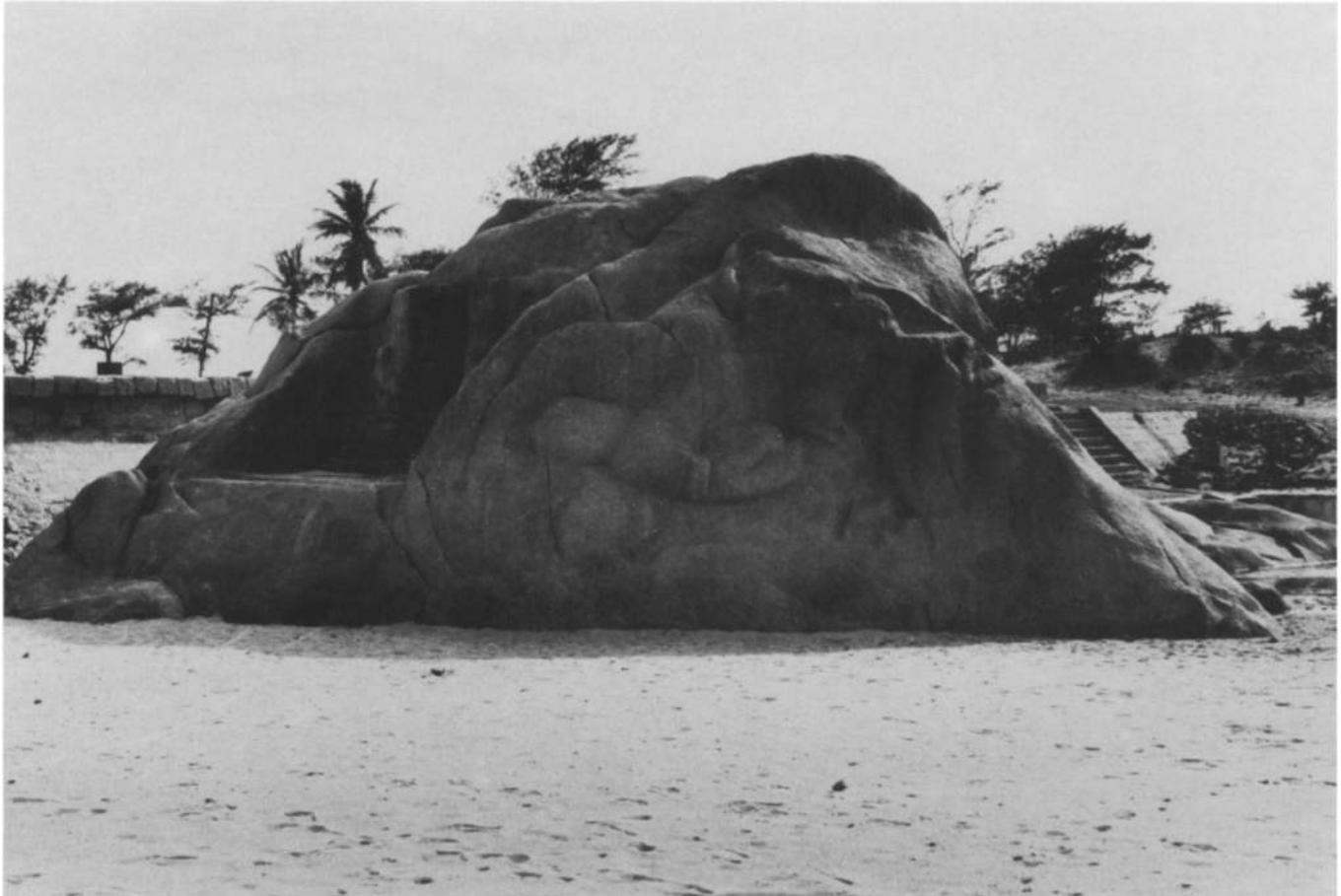


Fig. 58 Mahiṣāsura (mardini) Rock, Mahabalipuram



Fig. 59 Sanctum, Mahiṣāsura (mardini) Rock, Mahabalipuram

standard images of their times. But they are not the only images of those times. We may relate specific works from the well documented production of modern artists like Picasso or Braque to one another, to recreate their history. We know of their personal relations. We possess quite complete records of their production. So, we may string their works together into a reasonably full skeleton of their production. But working with the fortuitous survivals of a long past tradition, we are engaged in a paleontology that cannot recreate the past form by merely stringing together whatever we find. We must always assume a far more extensive and developed structure than the concrete evidence at hand, to explain and connect the fragments we discover.

Most of what is commonly referred to as the *specific influence* of one work upon another is *traditional sharing*: two works drawing upon a common tradition. That is one of the first things that our small relief in the Mallikārjuna has to tell us about Sivaramamurti's analysis, with which we began. Though its lion-borne Goddess at the Kailāsa may owe something to Pallava tradition, its Mahiṣa does not have the buffalo head found at Mahabalipuram. It has a human head with buffalo horns, a type which we find elsewhere in the Calukya tradition, but not in the Pallava tradition. The Kailāsa work is drawn from the same tradition represented in the Mahabalipuram relief, but from a strain distinct from that found among the Pallavas.

The Puranic theme of Mahādevī (the Great Goddess) created out of the energy of all of the great Gods to combat Mahiṣāsura, is common to every region of India, and it is popularly represented in the temple and popular art of every region as well. It existed in the Deccan earlier, as well as contemporary with and later, than the Calukyas, who were among the first to have it committed to stone there.¹⁷ Within the surviving corpus of stone images left to us by the Calukyas and Pallavas we know of some ninety images of Durgā's combat with Mahiṣāsura, fifty-four Calukya and thirty-four Pallava.

These are not ideosyncratic inventions, but traditional, sacred depictions, produced by consciously traditional artists within prescribed and well-established formulas. Though relatively few works of these traditions have survived from the sixth, seventh, and eighth-century heyday of the Calukyas and the Pallavas, we know that these few stone survivals represent great numbers of lost images in stone, metal, wood, plaster, clay, straw, sand and paint, not to mention hymn, narrative, drama, *mantra*, *puja*, conversation, and consciousness. That these stone survivals are typical of those lost images in perishable media, we may reasonably assume. The strong conformity of the survivals seems to guarantee a relatively similar conformity among those images that have been lost. When we look at the full range of surviving stone representations of the theme from this time, the continuity of the images within their traditions is quite impressive. This is as true beyond the South Indian realm of the Calukyas and Pallavas as within it. Which is not to deny the significant individuality of most pieces, but only to emphasize the fundamental ground of pervasive sharing upon which that individuality figures.

¹⁷ The earliest surviving Mahiṣāsuramardīnī imagery in the Deccan is the third-century Sannatti fragment illustrated here (fig. 27), and discussed below. Other pertinent examples are those found at Peddamudiyam, Jogeswari, and Elephanta. These are already in the styles found among the Calukya's zoomorphic imagery seen below.

To demonstrate the influence of the tradition of the Mahabalipuram image on the Mallikārjuna image we need to show not only that they are alike and that the Mahabalipuram image came first, but also that there was no alternative source, equally capable of supplying the features we wish to attribute to the Pallavas. And we must also show that there is reason to believe that the Calukya tradition itself was not likely to have produced these developments without the aid of outside models.

In fact the imagery of the Goddess seated upon her lion is relatively rare outside of southern India at this time, and the depiction of Mahiṣa as a composite, buffalo-headed, human-bodied figure battling the Goddess to a draw, as we see him in this particular scene, with the shaven-headed falling figure, is unknown elsewhere. But is this imagery characteristic of the Pallavas? Could it not have grown up among the Calukyas?

The Mahiṣāsūramardīnī legend is pan-Indian. The earliest surviving plastic images of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī to be identified within the two traditions we are concerned with, are found among the Calukya monuments of Aihole and Badami, in the second half of the sixth century. These are as much as a century earlier than the oldest surviving Pallava images. This, however, does not demonstrate that the Pallavas took the idea of creating sculptural representations of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī from the Calukyas, only that such imagery was committed to stone in the Calukya region earlier. Earlier plastic images can be found, at Sannatti in Karṇāṭaka¹⁸ and Peddamudiyam in Āndhra¹⁹ for instance. The earliest surviving representations of the image of the Goddess as the slayer of Mahiṣāsura, in the South, however, may be that occurring in the Tamil *Śilappadigāram*, where not only the Goddess, but her worshipped image as well are mentioned, at a date considerably prior to the Calukya's emergence.²⁰ This by no means proves that the Calukyas inherited the concept of the Goddess from the Pallavas. Each of these instances of the theme's appearance in the surviving record demonstrates nothing more than the existence of the common theme in these particular places and times. It is more likely that they indicate the continuing presence of a shared theme among various communities of both Tamilnad and Karṇāṭaka, than the exclusive possession of either one.

To go beyond the bland generality that priority among related forms in a sparse list of survivals proves little about priority in creation, we need to distinguish among the several sorts of sharing possible. Of the three most interesting forms of sharing, we tend most often to discuss the most unusual and to confuse the others with it. That is *influence*: the power of one cultural form to change other cultural forms. Most traditional works are created to follow conventional models. Only a few break out of this pattern to emulate unorthodox alternatives. But out of a long established habit we have often tended to link similar pieces like successive beads on a string, by referring to "influence", supposedly relating each later work to its predecessors, when what we have observed is conventional

¹⁸ See below.

¹⁹ C. Sivaramamurti, *Early Eastern Chalukya Sculpture*, *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, vol. VII, No. 2 (1962) pl. 1.

²⁰ The date of *Śilappadigāram* is still highly controversial, but there is considerable evidence to place the work around 450 C.E. See Kamil Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1974) and his *Smile of Murugan* (Leiden, 1973).

sharing. One image or style may influence other images or styles, but this is more rare than is usually acknowledged.

When discussing influence it is important to distinguish between limited influences, where one or two specific pieces seem affected, and more significant influences that effect an entire tradition. The most extreme example of influence is the copy, a piece such as the modern reproduction of the image in the Mahiṣāsūramardinī Maṇḍapa for sale as a souvenir (Fig. 10). But as totally influenced as it is, the souvenir copy does not show an important cultural influence. The Mahiṣāsūramardinī images in contemporary Tamil homes and temples (like Fig. 37) do not resemble this design.

There are two important sorts of sharing we should distinguish from influence. The most common of these is simple *sharing*: drawing upon the same cultural sources. The imagery of Mahiṣāsūramardinī exists throughout India by the sixth century of the common era. Any image after that time showing a Goddess with a conch, a wheel, a *triśūla*, and a lion, or combat with a buffalo, is likely to draw on that well-known theme. Peculiar features in any particular rendition of the theme might be attributable to particular regional, chronological or individual causes, but the essentials of the Mahiṣāsūramardinī theme are a pan-India sharing. Wherever it occurred in the seventh to eighth century the Mahiṣāsūra sainyaavadha imagery would have been a variation on a familiar local imagery, differing only in details from what was already present.

What was unusual about the imagery we may call an *intrusion*: an entering into local patterns of something that was not there previously. Intrusions may come from local or foreign sources, that is, they may be inventions of borrowings. If, as we shall see, there are six other Mahiṣāsūramardinī images at Pattadakal and this is the only one to show Durgā seated upon her lion, then that element of the Mallikārjuna's design is possibly an intrusion. Though whether it was an invention or a borrowing may be a question.

To show that something is an intrusion rather than a sharing we must show that it does not already exist in the region into which it is said to appear. Take for instance the presence of a small Orissan bronze image of Mahiṣāsūramardinī (Fig. 8) in a home in Amherst, Massachusetts. There is no native American tradition of creating such images, and so this work and the tradition which it represents were both brought into their present cultural situation as an intrusion from the outside. Or take the Mahiṣāsūramardinī painted in red on the side of a building in Aihole in the mid 1960's (Fig. 9). For all of its iconographic and design likeness to those that have existed at the site for the preceding fourteen centuries, the shaggy African mane on the Goddess's lion, and the classical Mediterranean shape of the pointed helmet she wears, are foreign intrusions.

The appearance of the characteristic Indian imagery of the Orissan bronze in Massachusetts hardly represents an *influence* of Indian upon American culture. It is a borrowing that as yet has no important cultural subsequence. Influence is power, and cultural influence is the power to change cultural patterns. If someone were to begin to reproduce images in some way modeled upon the Orissan bronze we could say that it (and so Indian culture) was having an influence in America. But even so, only if a significant portion of American imagery were to be adapted to that phenomenon could we say that American culture was being influenced.

And indeed this is the case with the adoption in wide areas of Indian imagery of the great-maned, African lion of British imperial imagery. We see this lion in Durgā imagery of contemporary lithographs (Fig. 37) and stone carving. We see it around the Lok Sabhā buildings of the national capital. And though few realize that this is an imperial replacement of a previous national formula, it records an attempt of nineteenth-century Indian artists to adapt to traditional uses a major symbol of a contemporaneous foreign power. As such, it records a genuine impact of the foreign conquest.

To demonstrate that the presence of the Mahiṣāsura saṅyavadha imagery in the Mallikārjuna is either an intrusion into Calukya culture or an influence of Pallava upon Calukya culture, we must consider the full imagery of both traditions to see if it belongs to either any more than the other, and to see if it represents a change in one to the characteristics of the other.

Early Calukya Images of Mahādevī's Struggle with Mahiṣāsura

When we survey the more than fifty surviving Early Calukya images of Durgā's struggle with Mahiṣāsura, we find a variety of visually distinct iconographic traditions, including two shared with the Pallavas and two apparently unknown or uninteresting to them. We will give examples of each, beginning with those unknown among the surviving images of the Pallavas, which are in fact the most common among the Calukyās.

The Goddess in the form of Mahiṣāsuramardinī is given a prominent location in the Saiva temples of the Early Calukyās – as in those of most South Indian traditions – where she regularly appears in an independent *dēvakōṣṭha* (niche) or independent shrine preceding the sanctum of Siva, to the God's left. Which in nearly all Siva shrines means to the north of Siva.²¹

The earliest of surviving Calukya Mahiṣāsuramardinī images, like most Calukya images of this theme, are in a form quite different from the combat which we have been examining. They do not represent the Goddess astride her lion in the midst of a battle, but standing over the demon at the moment of her triumph, with one leg or foot resting on his purely animal (zoomorphic) form, transfixing him with her *triśūla*.

At Aihole in the earliest surviving Calukya example of the theme we can identify, the demon is shown as a helpless victim, its head bent back over the Goddess's knee as she pierces its body with the spear-end of her *triśūla*-headed staff (Fig. 11). The Goddess here is shown wearing a *kirīṭa mukuṭa* (jeweled crown), *śīras cakra* (ruff-halo), earrings, wrist and arm bands, anklets, necklace and the typical Calukya string of pearls that hangs from her neck, crossing between her breasts and splitting around her hips. She wears a short *dhōti* (lower cloth wrap) and her breasts are apparently left uncovered. To her left her lion mount stands passively observing the Goddess's formalized destruction of the demon. In her eight hands she holds (clockwise from *her* lowest right) a sword, a parrot, a wheel, the *triśūla*, a bow, a conch, a shield and the beast's muzzle. With the exception of the parrot,

²¹ This is true for all significant images (*āvaraṇadēvatā*) found in situ. Decorative images such as those in *candrasālās* on the Mālegitti Śivalāya and Nāganātha may be elsewhere.

the combination and the right-left distribution are a standard that will continue. This image can be attributed, with the rest of the Rāvaṇa Phadi cave, to the middle of the sixth century. It is carved on the left wall of the *antarāla* that connects the sanctum with the hall.²²

A continuation of this imagery can be found in the Jambuliṅga Temple at Badami, dedicated in 699 C.E.²³ There is a small image of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī located on the *maṇḍapa*'s outer wall, on the north, where it was once the *udgama* crown of a Northern style *dēvakāṣṭha* (Fig. 13). Only about a foot high, the Goddess is shown with four arms, but otherwise in the standard form established in the Rāvaṇa Phadi: one leg on the ground, the other upon the zoomorphic buffalo. The natural left hand grasps the beast's muzzle while with the right she pierces its neck with the *triśūla*-headed staff. In the second pair of hands are raised her *śaṅkha* and *cakra*, the wheel and the conch. The lion is shown on the Goddess's right. There is an iconographically equivalent image inside the attic of the temple's porch ceiling.

A very graceful portrayal of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī from later in the reign of Vijayāditya (696–733/4 C.E.) can be seen in the Durgā Temple at Aihole (Fig. 12). Here a slender and elegant Goddess stands with her left foot upon the buffalo's back plunging the *triśūla* into its neck. The twisting animal rears its head, but it has obviously been overcome with little effort. To Durgā's right stands her lion mount. Here as in the previous cases it seems to come from behind the Goddess. Durgā has eight arms of which three are broken. Those remaining hold the sword, the arrow (or *vajra*), wheel, *triśūla*, bell and conch. The natural left hand was either on the beast's muzzle, where a bit of broken stone remains, or held a shield answering the sword on the opposite side. The other probably carried the bow. She wears a jeweled crown of *jatā* (hair), a *śiras cakra*, and elaborate earrings, necklaces, armlets, and bracelets. Once again as standard, she wears a lower garment with a jeweled girdle, and her breasts are apparently uncovered.

There are ten other examples of this iconographic form among the temples of the Calukya's Karnatak region, and five among the Calukya sites of Andhra Pradesh. The small image from the miniature shrine by the door to the sanctum of the Kumāra Brahma Temple is a four-armed version of this type, from Āndhra (Figs. 15 and 16). It shows how closely linked the two regions of the Calukya empire were artistically. The miniature, Southern style shrine is of the standard pattern. It has figures cut into three of its four sides, and was probably intended to stand, as it does now, against its temple context with its blank fourth side. As usual the central image is a Siva Liṅga, with a Gaṇapati on the right and the Goddess to his left, making it a complete miniature temple.²⁴

We will end our discussion of the most common Early Calukya vision of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī with the one that comes from beneath the major Vishnu *āvaraṇa* panel on the north

²² The dating of Calukya monuments here is discussed in Gary Tarr, "Chronology and Development of the Early Chalukya Cave Temples," *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970), pp. 155–184; and Gary Michael Tartakov, "The Beginning of Dravidian Temple Architecture in Stone," *Artibus Asiae*, XLII,1 (1980), pp. 39–99.

²³ James F. Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old-Canarese Inscriptions no. LXXXIV," *Indian Antiquary*, vol 10 (1880), pp. 61–62.

²⁴ Both the piece's completeness, as a temple itself, and its unusual placement here, inside a shrine and on the God's right, indicate that it was moved here fortuitously, and is not part of the original conception.

wall of the Virūpakṣa Temple at Pattadakal (Fig. 14). The Virūpakṣa is the contemporary and matching pair of the adjoining Mallikārjuna, marking with it the climax of the Early Calukya tradition. The dynasty was submerged by the Raṣṭrakūṭas in the following decade, and so this image, with the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, marks the end of that tradition.

Mahādevī, Durgā is shown here with six arms. She stands with one foot on the ground and the other on the buffalo's back, holding his muzzle with one of her natural hands and piercing its neck with the *triśūla* in the other. Her upper arms carry the usual wheel and conch. Otherwise, the conventional arrangement is taken out of its usual iconic isolation and located within a complex scene, showing the ritual context as well as the Goddess. Along with the lion we are used to, we see opposite it in this panel a stag, another of the Goddess's mounts. And flanking her there are a demonic looking female devotee and a pair of human worshippers, to whom she is offering her blessing (*varada mudrā*). The one on her right can be seen holding his topknot with his left hand and reaching with his right as if to cut off his own head.²⁵

This zoomorphic version of the Mahiṣāsuramardinī image is the most common form found in the art of North India and the Deccan in the preceding centuries. In its earliest known depictions, of Kuṣāṇ times, the Goddess is shown holding the buffalo up by its neck and literally crushing it, as her name implies. By the end of the Kuṣāṇ period the buffalo has all four legs on the ground, and from the Gupta period on it is killed by the thrust of the Goddess's *triśūla*.²⁶ By the sixth century this can be seen at Elephanta and Ellora, in Mahārāṣṭra, Peddamudiyam in Āndhra and in the North.²⁷ In an alternative version of the theme, dating from late Kuṣāṇ times, the Goddess holds the buffalo partially off the ground by its tail or hind leg and presses down upon his head with her foot. Four examples of this form survive among the Calukya monuments of Karṇāṭaka and fourteen among their remains in Āndhra.

The Mahiṣāsuramardinī of Cave I at Badami (Fig. 17), is the best-known example of this form. It can be attributed to the third-quarter of the sixth century.²⁸ It occupies the central position in a separate shrine, that stands just outside and to the (proper) left of the temple's facade, where it is flanked on adjoining walls by images of Gaṇapati and Kārttikeya. Durgā here is shown characteristically four-armed and standing with her left foot planted firmly on the ground and her right on the head of the buffalo. With her *natural* right hand she drives the pointed staff of her trident through its neck, while with her lower left hand she holds its tail, lifting its body completely off the ground. As usual her breasts,

²⁵ For the location of the image see Tarr, Fig. 30. Though such self-mutilation is best known to academic literature as a phenomenon of the South, it is found in the North in sculpture as early as the Gupta period; see George Michell et al., eds., *In the Image of Man* (New York, 1984), Fig. 256, a terra cotta from Mathura. It is known in the ritual practice mentioned in the *Devī Māhātmya*, and is familiar in Bengal; see D.C. Sircar, ed., *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, (Calcutta, 1967), p. 7, and below, here.

²⁶ This history is discussed in Seshadri (1963) and more recently in Gritli von Mitterwallner, "The Kuṣāṇa Type of the Goddess Mahiṣāsuramardinī as compared to the Gupta and Medieval Types," in *German Scholars on India, vol. II* (Bombay, 1976), pp. 196–213.

²⁷ For the Elephanta piece see Moti Chandra, *Stone Sculpture in the Prince of Wales Museum* (Bombay, 1974), pl. 76. For Ellora examples see Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, (New York, 1960), vol. 2, pl. 234. For Peddamudiyam see note 19, above.

²⁸ See note 22.

parted by a string of pearls, are left uncovered. A version of this type from Āndhra can be seen in a miniature shrine within the compound of the Bāla Brahma Temple at Alampur (Fig. 18).

It was once believed that this variation of the theme was the Gupta standard,²⁹ which could be traced earlier than the form where the Goddess holds the buffalo by the muzzle or tongue. Pioneer historians of the region supposed it to be the earliest of the two forms in Karṇāṭaka, and even called it the Kadamba type, identifying it with the dynasty from coastal Karṇāṭaka who preceded the Calukyas.³⁰ As far as we can tell, however, both versions of the form exist throughout the Calukya region for the full span of their rule. Though, in later times, the head down version more or less disappears from Āndhra while it remains a great favorite in western Karṇāṭaka.³¹

Among Seshadri's four types of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images this most typical Calukya form fits into his first category, where the demon is seen as a water buffalo plain and simple. It is the most common form of the iconography found throughout the Deccan and North India before the eighth century, and familiar though with diminished popularity, after that. It is, however, a form of the iconography that is not known to occur among the monuments of the Pallavas. Seshadri's illustration from Vellore, which he calls seventeenth century, is one of the few examples we know from Tamilnad.³²

The Goddess's slaying of the demon, as she stands dismounted from her lion and triumphant above him, takes place only after an extended combat. In the *Devī Māhātmya*, chapters 81 to 93 of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*, the best known of the texts commonly used by worshippers and scholars for explaining these images, this scene occurs at the end of the third chapter, "The Slaying of Mahiṣāsura", (chapter 83 of the full *Purāna*) in verses 20–41, following a chapter devoted to the slaying of the demon's armies.³³ Before this throughout the later part of chapter 2 and the first half of chapter 3 the Goddess is sometimes seen upon her lion and sometimes on foot. At 2.34 after receiving her person and attributes from the assembled Gods, "The Gladdened Devas spoke to her seated on a lion". While at 2.37–8 she is seen, "bending low the earth with the force of her strides". Throughout the later portion of chapter 2, which is titled "The Slaughter of the Armies of Mahiṣa", a battle rages in which Mahiṣa's host, but not Mahiṣa himself, is laid to waste. At 2.54 the *gaṇas* of the Goddess attack the *asuras*, at 2.55–58 the falling of the demons is the repeated topic.

It is only at 3.20 that the last battle with Mahiṣa occurs, "as his army was thus being destroyed, Mahiṣāsura assuming his buffalo form terrified the Gaṇas of the Goddess". And finally the climax of the battle takes place at 3.37 where "she jumped and landed herself on the Great Asura and pressing her foot on his throat struck him with her spear".

²⁹ Seshadri (1963), pp. 7–8; Mitterwallner, p. 200–201.

³⁰ George M. Moreas, *Kadamba Kula* (Bombay, 1931), p. 315. Seshadri (1963), note 28, p. 8, explains Moreas's mistake, though many still follow its lead.

³¹ Mitterwallner illustrates several; P. Gururaja Bhatt, *Antiquities of South Kanara* (Udipi, 1969) contains a number of others.

³² Seshadri (1963), pl. 15A. There are three post-Pallava examples in the State Transport Museum at Mahabalipuram, which seem to us to be imported.

³³ Agrawala, pp. 58–63.

Throughout India during the course of the eighth century there can be seen a shift away from the purely zoomorphic depiction of the Buffalo Demon, toward a depiction in which a human figure is shown emerging from the neck of the buffalo whose head has been severed. Various stages of this metamorphosis are found in the texts as well as sculptures. And many texts, as well as many sites offer alternative versions within the same context.

In the description of Caṇḍikā, the ten-armed form of Mahādevī as the slayer of Mahiṣāsura, in the *Agni Purāṇa*, the Goddess is said to be shown riding upon a lion and killing the Buffalo Demon with her *triśūla*, without any reference to his body changing form.³⁴ In the section describing an image of the Goddess that is twenty-armed, she is said to kill the demon in a form where he emerges in his human form from the neck of the buffalo.³⁵ But in sections where her image is described as twenty-eight-armed, like that where she is ten-armed, she is described simply as decapitating the buffalo, or killing the buffalo.³⁶

Most of the texts that we have been able to check describe the demon in the manner found at 3.38–9 of the *Devī Māhātmya*, as half-issued or half-revealed coming from the neck of the buffalo in a human form:

- 3.38. Thereupon trampled under her foot, the Asura half-issued forth from his buffalo mouth in his real human form, was completely overcome by the valor of the Goddess.
- 3.39. The Great Asura in his half-revealed form continued to fight until the Goddess cut off his head with her great sword and laid him low.³⁷

The Raṣṭrakūṭas, who replaced the Calukyas as the rulers of the northern and western Deccan in the middle of the eighth century (c. 757 C.E.) were the first to produce this *metamorphic* depiction of Mahiṣāsura in the region (Fig. 36).³⁸ As with the zoomorphic form of Mahiṣāsura, which was the form known at Ellora before the middle of the eighth century,³⁹ this metamorphic form is unknown among the Pallava remains.⁴⁰

Though there is no Early Calukya example of the metamorphic transformation, one stage of it, the final stage by some accounts, showing the Buffalo Demon in human form is found. This is the second distinct sort of Early Calukya imagery of Mahiṣāsuramardīnī. In it the demon is depicted as *anthropomorphic*, but for his diminutive buffalo horns.⁴¹ Six examples of this imagery survive. As far as we can tell, from the monuments in which they are found, they come from the end of the Early Calukya period.

³⁴ *Agni Purāṇa*, 52,16.

³⁵ *Agni Purāṇa*, 50,1–6.

³⁶ *Agni Purāṇa*, 135,2 (according to Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, *Les enseignements iconographiques de l'Agni-Purāṇa* (Paris, 1963), p. 143.

³⁷ Agrawala, p. 63.

³⁸ The earliest to survive, that is. In our judgement the images in this form at Calukya sites, such as the one on the boulder behind the Būthanātha Temple, are Raṣṭrakūṭa in date. None are integral in a Calukya monument.

³⁹ See the example cited in note 27, above.

⁴⁰ This is Seshadri's Type IV, (1963), pp. 21–27.

⁴¹ Seshadri illustrates two examples of this imagery under his Type III, "Combination of Man's body and buffalo's head," along with the Mahabalipuram and Kailāsa Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha images. But he fails to notice that these heads are human, and only their horns refer to the buffalo, (1963), pp. 20 and 27 and pl. 27.

The best known example of this anthropomorphic Mahiṣāsura is the image that still occupies its original place on the altar of the shrine inside of the *maṇḍapa* of the Virūpakṣa Temple at Pattadakal (Figs. 19 and 20), opposite a complementary shrine of Gaṇapati. This is a stunning work, that only a heavy coating of offerings has prevented from receiving much greater, modern interest. Mahiṣāsura is depicted here as a human figure, with only details like his nobby (Buddha-like) hair, fangs and unusually long ears to identify him as a demon, and only buffalo horns to identify him as Mahiṣāsura. He is shown on his knees. Durgā stands above him, her left foot raised onto his head, plunging the sword as well as the *trīśūla* into his breast. She is shown with eight arms, carrying the usual attributes in the usual order: *trīśūla*, sword, wheel, arrow on her right, bell, conch, shield and bow on her left. She wears a conical *mukuta* and halo, and the usual armlets, necklaces and earrings. She does not wear the *kuca bandha*. The image is exceptional for the quality of pathos in the rendering of the demon's expression and plight.

Two examples of this version of the theme can be seen on the Pāpanātha Temple at the same site. The latest of the two works (Fig. 22) is in the interior of the temple's forward *maṇḍapa*, where it stands in a *dēvakōṣṭha* at the center or the northern wall, opposite a matching *dēvakōṣṭha* containing Gaṇapati. This image is somewhat disintegrated but still readable. The Goddess is eight-armed, standing over the human torso of the demon, who has already emerged from the buffalo's body. He is shown bent backward in a pose that graphically mimics that found in the zoomorphic buffalo images. The buffalo's severed head lies below in a three-quarter view. Devī's lion is seen entering the fight from the side. Devī here has one foot upon the torso of the demon bending him backwards as she wields the bow and arrow in her natural hands, the *trīśūla* with which she transfixes him, wheel, and sword; the conch shell and shield. (One of her left arms is broken at the elbow.) This image is highly dynamic, twisting from a rear view of her hips to a full front view of her upper torso. She wears a *kaṇḍa mukuta* and no *kuca bandha*.

The forward *maṇḍapa* was added to the original temple in the reign of Vikramāditya II (733/4–744/5 C.E.), contemporary with the creation of the Virūpakṣa. This is seen from both the stylistic point of view in general and from the particular presence of the sculptor Baladeva, who signed his work on a *dvārapāla* (door guardian) of each: the north *dvārapāla* of the Pāpanātha's outer *maṇḍapa*'s entrance, and the eastern *dvārapāla* of the southern entrance to the Virūpakṣa.⁴²

The image on the exterior of the Pāpanātha (Fig. 21) is part of the slightly earlier *sāndhāra maṇḍapa*, surrounding the sanctum, from late in the time of Vijayāditya (696–733/4 C.E.). Though slightly less dramatic in its pose it has come down to us in a better state of preservation than the other. Here too the Goddess stands over a human-torsoed demon with one leg placed firmly on his chest. Seven of her eight *ayudhas* are visible. With her right hands she pierces the demon with her *trīśūla*, carries the sword and draws an arrow from the quiver behind her back. On her left she holds the conch, bell, shield, and bow. The combination is consistent with those inside, suggesting the bell as the missing *ayudha* there, and the wheel found there as the missing weapon here. It is possible that she wears

⁴² A. M. Annigeri, *A Guide to the Pattadakal Temples* (Dharwar, 1961), pp. 19 and 42.

a *kuca bandha* here. The severed buffalo head is visible below, in profile. Upon Mahiṣa's human head, there is a crown of snailcurled hair and buffalo horns. He carries a club.

A fourth example of this version of the theme, uncovered during the Archaeological Survey's clearing of the site in the last decade, is now in the site museum. There are also two examples of this form from outside of Pattadakal. One is a much abraded image that once formed part of an exterior wall of the (now partially dismantled) Bhadravaliṅga Temple at Mahakuta.⁴³ The other is found on the north side of the entrance to the sanctum of Vikramāditya II's *samādbi* at Bhadra Nayakana Jalihal, between Pattadakal and Mahakuta.⁴⁴

There are two examples of this type in the Kailāsa at Ellora. One is an iconic image comparable to these, on the north of the *mandapa* (Fig. 35).⁴⁵ We have already mentioned the other, the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha image of the western wall (Fig. 7). A major difference between that image and the others, which has gone unremarked by those who have compared it to the Mahiṣāsuramardinī Maṇḍapa relief, is the anthropomorphic head of the Buffalo Demon, with only buffalo horns to identify him. It is characteristic of the Kailāsa that it contains both the most advanced imagery of the Early Calukya's temples, as seen in these two images, and a further evolution, in the metamorphic image (Fig. 36), which is the most prominently displayed of the three.

By contrast, the third sort of Mahiṣāsuramardinī imagery found among the Calukyas remains (Seshadri's Type II)⁴⁶ is one they share with the Pallavas. This is imagery of Korravai, the Victorious Durgā,⁴⁷ standing alone and erect and usually over the severed head of the slaughtered Mahiṣāsura. This imagery exists in five examples among the remains of the Early Calukyas.

The best preserved example of the Victorious Durgā is in the Alampur Museum, and appears to have come from the Viśva Brahma Temple at that site, where it occupied the (now) empty niche on the north of the *garbha grha antarāla* (Fig. 23).⁴⁸ Devī is shown here standing upon the squarely frontal head of the buffalo. In her hands she holds the *triśūla*, wheel (on edge), conch shell, and the *kaṭi hasta* gesture, resting on her jeweled girdle. She wears simple bracelets, armlets, necklaces, earrings, a crown, and no *kuca bandha*. A second example of the form is found on a miniature shrine to the south of the passageway leading from the Bāla Brahma to the Tungabhadra (Fig. 25). It shows a four-armed Goddess standing in *dvibhaṅga* on the head of the buffalo.

A highly unsophisticated and partially unfinished image with similar characteristics is found on the north, over the shrine run-off, of the Bhīmalīṅgēśvara Temple at Satyavolu

⁴³ The Archaeological Survey of India has a photograph showing the image still intact.

⁴⁴ M. S. Nagaraja Rao and K. V. Ramesh, "A Royal Memorial to Chalukya Vikramaditya II," in M. S. Nagaraja Rao ed., *Madhu, Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History* (Delhi, 1981), pp. 175-177, pls. XLII-XLIII.

⁴⁵ This image is the only one we know comparable to the Calukya's anthropomorphic type. It differs from it significantly only in showing a second demon.

⁴⁶ Seshadri (1963), pp. 15-18, and 27.

⁴⁷ K. R. Srinivasan, *Some Aspects of Religion as Revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South* (Madras, 1960), pp. 21-24. J. C. Hatle, "Durgā, Goddess of Victory," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XXVI, No. 3-4 (1964), pp. 237-246.

⁴⁸ Measurements of the niche, and of the Skanda image in the opposite niche fit this image.

(Fig. 26).⁴⁹ In this case we are dealing with the southeastern-most of any identified Early Calukya site, and so with the periphery of the dynasty's stylistic reach as well as the exhausted end of its patronage. The imagery at this site is, as a rule, quite a distance in both quality and in content from that in the dynasty's heartland or its high period. Devī here is shown holding the wheel and *abhaya mudrā* to the right, the conch shell and *kaṭi hasta* on the left. Instead of being held, the *trīśūla* floats or stands as a standard behind her, as it sometimes does in Tamilnad.⁵⁰ She is accompanied by the deer on her right and the lion on her (upper) left. And she wears the *kuca bandha*. The image is too weathered to tell for sure if the form upon which she stands is the Buffalo Demon's head.

The fourth Early Calukya example of the Victorious Durgā is still in situ on the north *dēvakōṣṭha* of the *garbhā grha* of the Bāla Brahma Temple at Alampur (Fig. 24).⁵¹ The Goddess here holds a sword and the *trīśūla* in her right hands, a bell and either a fruit (*phala*) or cup (*kapāla*) in her left hands. She does not wear a *kuca bandha*. In a variation of this imagery she stands upon the backs of divergent lions. Wear makes it difficult to tell if a buffalo head was once here too, on the slab below.

The fifth example of the type is somewhat problematic, but interesting. It occurs on the north of the Kotilingu Temple, just inside the main entrance to the compound, at Mahakuta, on the left. Unfortunately this single example of the theme at one of the dynasty's Karnatak sites is largely hidden from view by a Laja Gaurī image, that for many years has lain against it. It stands over a buffalo head, but little else can be seen. Its temple is one of the latest Early Calukya structures at the site.⁵²

With the Victorious Durgā imagery we move again into a situation that has been attributed to some sort of influence. Unlike the most common Early Calukya Mahiṣāsura-mardīnī tradition, this image type exists among the Pallavas as well as the Calukyas. And it is not only more numerous among the Pallava temples, but so much more familiar to art historians in Tamilnad as to be generally assumed an essentially Tamil icon. But as Seshadri has pointed out, we are faced in this imagery with an inconvenient situation. "This interesting type became very prominent under the Pallavas of Mamallapuram. [But] when did it originate? It is not easy to find the answer with certainty."⁵³ The diffusionist tendency to derive an imagery's origin from its earliest surviving example is here confronted with the contradiction of the motif's association with another region altogether. Seshadri hesitates to attribute the motif's origin to the Pallavas, because of the enigmatic existence of the imagery in a single, isolated, colossal version found at Besnagar in North India and datable to the fifth century (Fig. 28).⁵⁴ Straining with the desire to attribute the imagery to the Pallavas, he says, "If this figure is Pre-Pallava, then, the interesting fact

⁴⁹ Odile Divakaran, "Les temples d'Alampur et de ses environs au temps des Cālukya de Bādāmi," *Ars Asiaticus* XXIV (1971), Fig. 41.

⁵⁰ E.g., at the Ādivarāha Maṇḍapa (Fig. 41), the Kailāsanātha (Fig. 46) or Singavaram.

⁵¹ This is one of the earliest Calukya temples at Alampur, from the later part of the seventh century. See Divakaran, figs. 6, 10-11 and 13-15.

⁵² The temple currently houses a Liṅga, though it is not definite that that was originally so. Still, the Durgā (north), Sūrya (east), Skanda (south) combination does urge a Saiva dedication.

⁵³ Seshadri (1963), p. 15.

⁵⁴ The date is based on similarity of the dress to the dated images at Mandasor and to Deogarh.

emerges that this provided the model for sculptures of the same type from Mamallapuram, (in the) 7th century A.D.”⁵⁵

The Besnagar Durgā is a six-armed image combining both of the alternatives we have seen among the Calukya’s Victorious Durgās. She stands on the severed head of the Buffalo, which rests on the backs of divergent lions. This imagery is otherwise unknown in North India. Should we therefore attribute the Pallava seventh-century style at Mahabalipuram to the inspiration of this specific piece and go on to attribute the late seventh to early eighth-century Calukya images to Pallava influence? We do not believe so. To string known examples of an imagery on a single chronological thread is to assume that they are all that ever existed, when in actuality they are, as we have emphasized earlier, but the rare survivors of a much more numerous population.

The continuing presence of the Victorious Durgā type in Karnāṭaka in figures at Hale Alur, Binnamangala,⁵⁶ Nandi,⁵⁷ Kunigal and Kampanayura,⁵⁸ and in Āndhra at Bikkavolu,⁵⁹ shows that the motif was not limited to Tamilnad but popular in the southern Deccan as well. Though several of these images are from the tenth to eleventh century period when the Tamil Cōḷa dynasty held important sway in southern Karnāṭaka, and both Kampanayura and Binnamangala are Cōḷa dedications, we can still distinguish Deccan as well as Tamilnad features among them. Both the lack of the *kuca bandha* in the figures from Bikkavolu and Hale Alur, and the presence of the divergent lions along with the buffalo head at Kampanayura and Bikkavolu distinguish these images from anything in Tamilnad. They indicate the continuity of long standing Deccan traditions, not the borrowing of outside traditions.

What we are thus faced with is not a simple case of one known-image influencing the creation of another known-image. It is, rather, a complex sharing of traditions, in which ideas and artistic forms as well as people have traveled, and where the occurrence of a motif beyond the region in which we are familiar with it is more appropriately recognized as the surfacing in the survival record of a local tradition, than as the rare occasion of a foreign intrusion. For, as we are beginning to see, there are distinct differences as well as congruences between the Karnatak and Tamil versions of the theme.

If this case against diffusionism were not strong enough already, the time between the original and the latest drafts of this discussion has brought us yet another bit of evidence of the indigenous creativity diffusionism often hides. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums in Karnāṭaka has found a fragment of a terra cotta plaque representing the Victorious form of the Goddess from the (third century, C.E.) Sātavāhana site of Sannatti (Fig. 27). This little piece shows the Goddess’s legs and the severed head of the buffalo,

⁵⁵ Seshadri (1963), pl. 17, caption.

⁵⁶ Seshadri (1963), pl. 23.

⁵⁷ On a window *jāla* of the Bhoga Nandīśvara Temple. Bhatt (1969), illustrates late examples at Kannarpadi (CLXIV), Kunjura (pl. LXXVI) and Trisulini (p. XIV), none of which wear *kuca bandha*.

⁵⁸ M. Seshadri, “Some Unique Mahīśāsūramardīnī Images from Mysore State,” in *K. A. Nilakantha Sastri Felicitation Volume* (Madras, 1971), pp. 297–299, figs. 1 and 2.

⁵⁹ Unpublished.

plus an adoring *gaṇa*.⁶⁰ So the earliest surviving representative of the theme we know now is one from the northern Deccan. Unquestionably others will be uncovered to replace it, twisting the diffusionist's string of supposed influences into ever more unlikely knots.

The last Early Calukya version of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī theme that we have to consider takes us back to the Badami caves and the third-quarter of the sixth century. It is a small carving, under 11 inches in height, located in one of the ten narrative panels that decorate the lintels of Cave II's porch.⁶¹ The lintel on which the scene is located faces out from the central bay of the porch, beneath the ceiling with the wheel of fish spokes (Figs. 29 and 30). Most of the panel is taken up with a scene of the great Gods proceeding toward Śrī, in the form of Gajā Lakṣmī, at the center of the panel. The west end of this scene blends into the scene of Durgā as Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Since the image is small and difficult to decipher, either at the site or in a photograph, we are also providing a diagram originally published by James Burgess (Fig. 31).⁶²

Durgā here is shown striding to her left, grasping a composite Mahiṣa with a buffalo head, and striking at him with her *triśūla*. She may have four arms, as Burgess's diagram shows. Beside the *triśūla* it is possible to make out the vertical blade of the sword on her right. On the left one hand grasps the beast's horn, while another seems to hold the conch shell. Another pair, holding the wheel and the shield, may be there as well. Her decoration is difficult to make out, but she wears no *kuca bandha*. Mahiṣāsura is shown here in a composite form with a buffalo's head on an anthropomorphic body, as he is in the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha images. And indeed the scene extends beyond these two figures. Durgā is accompanied by no less than six supporting figures, including the lion by her back leg. Mahiṣa is shown with three, one of whom is trying to flee and one who lies already crushed beneath the Goddess's legs.

Another Calukya example of Mahiṣāsura as a composite figure is found as a decorative detail on the Viśva Brahma Temple at Alampur (Fig. 32). Here on a pilaster flanking the western window-porch is an image of the Goddess astride a rearing lion, aiming an arrow at the still aggressive demon.⁶³ This is a highly dynamic representation of the theme. As usual among Calukya images, the Goddess wears no *kuca bandha*. An exceedingly weathered stone in the Kittur Museum, that once lay beside the Vishnu Puṣkarinī at Mahakuta, may be a fourth example of this imagery. It shows the Goddess astride the lion, pursuing a fleeing, club-wielding demon, whose head is worn beyond recognition.

These images with the composite Mahiṣāsura do not occur in icons, but in narrative depictions of the combat, the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, at a penultimate moment, prior to Durgā's climactic slaughter of the demon. They form a complementary pair with the

⁶⁰ We thank the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums in Karnāṭaka, for making this piece available to us, and allowing its publication.

⁶¹ These lintels are fully discussed in R.D. Banerji, *Basreliefs of Badami, Memoirs of the A.S.I.*, No. 25 (Calcutta, 1928), pp. 19-24.

⁶² James Burgess, *Report on the Elura Cave Temples and the Brahmanical and Jaina Caves in Western India, A.S.I., N.I.S.* vol. 5 (London, 1883), pl. VIII.

⁶³ This image and some others were pointed out to us by Dr. Carol Bolon.

anthropomorphic portrayal of Mahiṣa at the moment of the slaughter. Together they show a development of the plastic depiction of the Mahiṣasuramardinī theme. What in the Kuṣān and Gupta periods was depicted by a single emblem, of the slaughter of a zoomorphic buffalo, Early Calukya artists sometimes differentiated into stages, marking the transition from the combat to the slaughter by the transformation of the demon from his zoomorphic to his anthropomorphic form. Post-Calukya Mahiṣasuramardinī imagery in the Deccan incorporates this explicit depiction of the demon's transformation into the iconic image itself, showing Mahiṣa in the composite form, and in the more elaborated, metamorphic imagery, of the emergence of an anthropomorphic demon from the buffalo's body. As with the Victorious Durgā, the composite Mahiṣasura imagery of the Mahiṣasura sainyaavadha is one the Calukyas share with the Pallavas. And also, like it, it was an iconographic form occurring earlier in the Calukya region, and in several examples.

When we see the full scope of Early Calukya imagery of the struggle between Mahādevī and Mahiṣasura, we find some confirmation for the initial suggestion that the Mallikārjuna image of the Mahiṣasura sainyaavadha reveals the intrusion of something new into Calukya imagery, but also distinct limits on the scope of that intrusion. And though the possibility of Pallava influence in this particular image exists, the suggestion of significant Pallava influence in Calukya art is precluded.

The composition of the Mallikārjuna relief is undoubtedly close to that in the Mahabalipuram relief. The angle of Mahiṣasura's stance, his pose with the club and his crowned buffalo head are closely shared by both works. So too are the Goddess's pose astride the lion, the distribution of attributes, and her *kuca bandha*. The inverted falling man caps all of these sharings. Together they reveal a close connection between the two designs. Close not because of their likeness alone, but because their likeness is not shared by other Calukya images. Of the fifty some examples of the theme we know, only two others have the Goddess astride her lion, and in only one or two does she wear the *kuca bandha*.

Comparison of the style of the two works shows that the artists were not the same, and that the artists responsible for the Mallikārjuna relief were not working in the Pallava style. The pneumatic volumes of the Mahabalipuram image and the smoothly continuous contours of its major forms, so characteristic of the Pallava style, are not visible in the Pattadakal image. The technique here is typically Karnatak or Calukya: the surface is broken into irregularly joined contours and flattened volumes that are more organic than geometric in their rendering. These differences in technique are not due to differences in materials. They are differences in style. Each of these works is patently the product of its distinctly local, regional style. A design may have traveled here, but it is clear that artists have not.

Nor is there any reason to suspect that the theme or its use at Pattadakal owes any debt to the Pallava tradition. The popularity of the subject, its placement within the temple, and the depiction of all but a few details of its design were all well-established elements of the Calukya tradition. Its most conspicuous element, the buffalo-headed composite form of Mahiṣasura, had reached the stone record in the Calukya region a century earlier than it had in Tamilnad. What is unfamiliar here in Early Calukya art is the Goddess's sitting astride her lion, her use of the *kuca bandha*, the presence of the falling man, and the

particular composition of the scene, with Mahiṣa's angled stance and the lion-seated Goddess each surrounded by their hosts and separated by the falling man.

What we have here does not seem to be an *influence* of the Pallavas upon the Calukya culture, but a sharing between the two that may reveal a *possible intrusion* of a specific Pallava design variation of a shared theme into a single work of the Calukya tradition. Significant "influence" would mean an adoption by the Calukya artists of a Pallava motif. But there is no adoption here. No other examples of the design are known. And as yet we have no reason beyond our familiarity with the Mahabalipuram relief to believe that the shared motifs are peculiarly Pallava. Both could be drawn from a third source. What we have is *sharing*, one rare instance of two images in different traditions linked by close roots in a common source. We know the design has features unusual for Calukya art. But, as yet, we have no proof of its appropriateness to the Pallava tradition. To know if these characteristics are Pallava we must look at the Pallava imagery of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī.

Pallava Images of the Struggle Between Mahādevī and Mahiṣāsura

An investigation of the Pallava images of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and related works showing the Great Goddess reveals that for all of its prominence within our academic and tourist literature and for all of its splendid esthetic qualities, the panel in the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa at Mahabalipuram (Fig. 2) is not at all typical of Pallava iconographic traditions. And it is least typical in the characteristic features it shares with the Mallikārjuna relief. Of the thirty-five examples of this theme we have been able to study, there is only one other full rendition of the Mahiṣāsura saṅnyavadha, and one excerpt. There are three other formats for depicting Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, but these neither show the combat nor Mahiṣa in the composite form of a buffalo-headed, anthropomorphic being. After a consideration of the two works that share the Mahiṣāsura saṅnyavadha imagery with the panel in the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa we will describe the three more typical forms of Durgā imagery seen among the Pallava remains.

The second Pallava portrayal of the battle of Devī against the armies of Mahiṣa comes from Saluvankuppam, the little fishing village two miles north and hardly separate from Mahabalipuram. It is found on an irregular slab of granite now located a few meters in front of Rājasiṃha Pallava's early eighth-century Atiraṇachāṇḍa Maṇḍapa. The relief has been attributed, along with the *maṇḍapa* to the same time as the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa.⁶⁴ The slab is somewhat irregularly finished toward the right end, and measures about one by two meters (Fig. 39).

The scene is clearly derived from the same visual tradition as the panel in the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa, but for all the closeness of its design and the style of its execution, its iconographic details lack the similarity found in Pattadakal. Like the other depictions of the Mahiṣāsura saṅnyavadha Durgā is shown upon her lion pursuing Mahiṣāsura and his host. The moment of the combat depicted is a step advanced from the one seen in the cave here, and a step earlier than that seen in the Badami cave (Fig. 30). Mahiṣāsura has

⁶⁴ Srinivasan (1964), pp. 125–130.

abandoned his hope of triumph; he has dropped his club and turned to flee. While Durgā, surrounded by her host, is beginning to dismount from her lion, in preparation for the ultimate engagement.

The Atiraṇachāṇḍa Maṇḍapa relief shows the Goddess six-armed, dismounting from her lion, in the midst of eleven or twelve *gaṇa*. In her arms she bears the sword, the wheel and the *abhaya hasta* (gesture) on the right and the conch shell, bow and cup on the left. She wears arm and ankle bands, a pointed crown and the *kuca bandha*, standard in Tamilnad. Unlike the *maṇḍapa*'s portrayal of Durgā astride the lion, she appears here with one foot raised on the haunch of the lion, and the other stepping down onto a lotus pedestal, as if she were in the act of dismounting. Mahiṣāsura is shown in the composite form. His arms and hands swing in wonderfully rhythmical gestures (Fig. 40). His figure and expression are certainly the esthetic high point of the work. He is preceded in the retreat by a demon of his own size, in a tall headdress. Another demon is sketched out in hand and face in the upper corner.

The scene is completed by the Goddess's *gaṇa*, who fill every region of the panel left to them. Against the edge one *gaṇa* below carries a club, while one above blows a conch shell. In the upper corner is either a third with a deer-face, bearing the parasol, or the Goddess's deer *vāhana*. Directly behind her are three more, one with a fly whisk at the top, one with a sword and shield, and one at her feet. Beyond her, six *gaṇa* and the lion beset the fleeing demon. Two brandish swords and shields, while a lion-faced one bites the demon on the elbow. Two more descend directly upon Mahiṣa's head, while the last one descends toward his collapsing accomplice. There is no trace here of the inverted, falling figure, prominent in the other two panels.

An abbreviated version of the theme can be seen on a sometimes submerged boulder just north of the Shore Temple, called the Mahiṣāsura (mardīnī) Rock (Fig. 58). Here, on the side of a boulder into which an altar of the Goddess has been cut, Mahiṣa is seen in flight, alone, with his club tucked under his arm, and the lion pouncing upon his back and biting his horn. The Goddess is not shown as taking active part in the demon's downfall, here. Rather she appears in a more formal representation within an architecturally framed niche, cut on the boulder's east, flanked by *dvārapāla* and rearing lions (Fig. 59).

Of the more common types of Pallava Durgā imagery one is shared with the Calukyas: the Victorious Durgā who stands erect upon the severed head of the Buffalo, a lotus pedestal, or flush with the floor. Typical of these images is the figure in the *dēvakōṣṭha* to the proper left of the Trimūrti Maṇḍapa at Mahabalipuram (Fig. 44). Durgā is shown here standing erect in the bendless, *sambhaṅga*, pose with eight arms bearing *abhaya mudrā*, bell, sword, and wheel on the right, conch, bow, shield, and *katyavalambita hasta* on the left. She wears jewelry, a crown and a *kuca bandha*. The buffalo's head is shown frontally, with an emphasis on the contrast between the horizontal double bow sweep of the horns and ears and the wedge-like projection of the head.

The most elaborate image of this sort is the one found in the Ādivarāha Maṇḍapa (Fig. 41).⁶⁵ There she is eight armed, like the image at the Trimūrti Maṇḍapa, and carries

⁶⁵ The Paramēśvara-Mahāvarāha-Viṣṇu-Gṛham; Srinivasa (1964), pp. 166-175.

the same attributes, with the substitution of a cup for the *abhaya mudrā* and the presence of a parrot on her left wrist. She differs further in her dynamically posed, triple-bent stance, with her right leg crossing behind her left ankle. She stands upon the buffalo head, and like the image we have seen outside of the Virūpakṣa Temple at Pattadakal (Fig. 14) she appears in the midst of an elaborate worship scene. Behind the Goddess stands the *trīśūla*, as a standard (*stambha*). To either side *gaṇa* fly in, bearing the fly whisk and a box of offerings. In the upper corners stand her alternative *vāhana*, the lion and the stag. To either side below are a standard pair of female *pratihāri* (guardians) one carrying a sword and the other a bow. At her feet kneel male devotees: the one on her left gestures with respect, while offering a lotus, the other holds a dagger in his right hand against the wrist of his left, in the act of offering his own blood as a sacrifice.

The worn figure on the rear (east) of the Draupadī Ratha is similar to these (Fig. 42), though it possesses only four arms: *abhaya* and *katyavalambita hasta* in the natural hands, the wheel and conch in the raised pair. She is *samabhaṅga* on the buffalo head. The less finished images of the shrine's northern and southern niches are roughed-out to match this one.

The Draupadī Ratha is a Devī shrine, with the image inside an alternative version of the Victorious Goddess, showing her standing upon the lotus rather than the buffalo head (Fig. 43). Aside from the exchange of pedestals she is closely comparable to the images we have just examined. Her natural hands are in *abhaya* and *katyavalambita mudrās*, the upper right carries the wheel, and the (now effaced) upper left most likely carried the conch. She is shown *samabhaṅga* and wearing the usual garments. Like the image in the Ādivarāha Maṇḍapa, she is the center of a worship scene. Her attendants here include two pairs of *gaṇa* flying in above and two male devotees kneeling below. The devotee on her left seems to hold his hands in the *añjali mudrā* of respect, while the other holds his topknot with his left hand and gestures as if to cut off his head, with the sword crossing behind his neck in his right. The pair of *pratihāri* seen within the panel in the Ādivarāha composition are visible outside here, flanking the doorway.

The justification for calling this figure the Victorious Durgā and associating it with the slaying of the Buffalo Demon is both visual and textual.⁶⁶ Our earliest reference to the Victorious Durgā in the South is found in literature, such as the *Śilappadigāram*'s references to "Korravai, the Victorious Goddess who carries in her hands a glorious spear and stands upon the neck of a defeated buffalo losing its blood through its fresh wounds."⁶⁷ And,

How come you to appear, ... standing on a wild buffalo ... You came wandering on a stag that proudly bears black antlers. You hold in your bracelet-laden hands a sword dripping with blood after you killed the buffalo demon ... Why must you stand on a fierce lion whose eyes shoot darts of flame, holding in your frail lotus hand a discus and a conch?⁶⁸

and to whom her devotees pray,

⁶⁶ Srinivasan (1960), pp. 21–30, follows a similar logic.

⁶⁷ Ilango Adigal, *Śilappadikaram (The Ankle Bracelet)*, trans. Alain Danielou, (New York, 1965) (Ch. XX), pp. 126.

⁶⁸ *Śilappadikaram*, (Ch. XII, "Hymn to Shalini"), pp. 80–1.

Accept the blood that flows from our severed heads, the price of a victory you granted... Accept the blood and flesh we offer in thanks for victories... Virgin goddess! Accept our blood, our sacrifice performed before your altar in fulfillment of the Eiyars' vow. The tigerish warriors lie prostrate now, before the lotus of your feet.⁶⁹

We see among these of images a full interchangeability of attributes, ritual associations and temple location, most of which can be extended to the Calukya imagery already considered. Other Goddesses such as Jyēṣṭhā or Lakṣmī have quite different iconographic traits and occur elsewhere.

The version of the theme in the Varāha Maṇḍapa – which is like the Ādivarāha Maṇḍapa and Badami's Cave II unusual among the temples we have considered in being Vaishnava – combines these attributes another way (Fig. 45). The Goddess here stands *samabhaṅga* beneath a parasol, upon a lotus pedestal, with a broken (*abhaya?*) hand, wheel, conch shell, *katyavalambita*, and wearing the *kuca bandha*. Four *gana* fly to her, carrying a casket of offerings, a sword and a fly whisk. The lion and the stag are in the upper corners. The self-mutilating and lotus-offering devotees kneel at her feet. All of these images from Mahabalipuram can be dated to the reign of Rājasimha, Narasimhavarman II Pallava (c. 695–728 C.E.), though many would have them half a century earlier.

The Durgā image at Iravātanēśvara in Kanci (Fig. 49) is different from those just mentioned in that it is part of a structural temple, rather than a rock-cut one. And it is likely to be of a somewhat later date, in the eighth century. In comparison to the rock-cut temples, the structural temples were more systematic in their application of the prescriptions of the *Āgama* and *Śilpa* texts. As K. R. Srinivasan has pointed out, “The *Vaikhānasa-Āgama*... assign(s) to the Durgā figure a place in the *dēvakōṣṭha* outside the northern wall of the *ardhamaṇḍapa* of a Saiva temple as *Vindhyāvāsini*, a feature that becomes common from the close of the 8th century onwards, the corresponding south niche containing Gaṇapati.”⁷⁰

Rājasimha's structural temples and indeed most Pallava structural temples are Saiva and put this prescription into practice in the first-quarter of the eighth century. The rock-cut shrines are less consistent for a variety of reasons. Some were Vaishnava of Śākta rather than Saiva. Some consisted of interiors only, with no exteriors intended or surviving. Some, out of a desire to use an attractive site, faced in unusual directions. And apparently they were less thoroughly regulated by these still fledgling rules.

Typical of the Pallava structural temple whose imagery has survived intact the Iravātanēśvara has a panel representing Durgā in a *dēvakōṣṭha* on the north of its *ardhamaṇḍapa* (porch) wall. Here she is flanked by (at least one) female *pratibāri* of the type we have become accustomed to, and a stag on the proper right. The proper left is damaged. She stands flat on the plinth, in a *dvibhaṅga* (double-bent) pose, with six arms. Among her weapons can be made out a bow, and a wheel on the right and a conch shell and *katyavalambita hasta* on her left. She wears the usual *kuca bandha*. Behind her, looking out on her right side, stands her lion.

⁶⁹ *Shilappadikaram*, (Ch. XII, “Turaippattumadai”), p. 83.

⁷⁰ Srinivasan (1960), p. 22.

Of the sixteen images of the Victorious Goddess we know among the Pallava remains, seven stand over the severed head of Mahiṣa, three stand upon lotuses, and four flush on the level of the floor. The image in the Rāmānuja Maṇḍapa is too carefully erased to read, though its close association with the other caves suggests that it would have had the lotus.

This form of the Goddess is shared by the Pallavas with the Calukyas, as we have seen. It is found mainly at the Calukya sites closest to Tamilnad, in Āndhra at Alampur and Satyavolu. Though there is one example in Karṇāṭaka. The earliest surviving example of the theme comes from Sannatti, in northern Karṇāṭaka, and later examples are known in both Āndhra and Karṇāṭaka. Outside of these South Indian sites, this imagery of the Goddess, in the form where she stands erect over the severed head of Mahiṣa or an equivalent, appears rare. The only example we know is the one from Besnagar (Fig. 28). (Though we should note that the head-down version of the zoomorphic form, e.g., Figs. 17 and 18, popular from the fourth century on, may be a Northern variation of it.) Since it makes up about half of the known Pallava examples of the Goddess, and is quite popular in later times as well, it has become associated by scholars with Tamilnad. But as we have seen, it was important in Āndhra and Karṇāṭaka as well. Without a thorough study it is difficult to say just how comparable are the numbers of these images surviving in the other regions of Drāviḍa style.

In any case, it is clear that this is not a peculiarly Tamil iconography. It is a Drāviḍa imagery, with Calukya as well as Pallava substyles in the late seventh to early eighth centuries. As with the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha imagery, the Deccan version of the imagery has a distinct visual style, and distinct regional attributes.

The second typical form for showing Mahādevī in the monuments of the Pallavas can be called the Pallava Simhavāhinī (lion-borne), Durgā. Unlike the Victorious Durgā it has no really comparable equivalent outside of the eighth century art of the Pallavas. In the standard Pallava Simhavāhinī image Durgā does not sit astride the lion, but like the figure at the Atiraṇaḥaṇḍa Maṇḍapa, is shown seated sideways or leaning against it, with one foot on the ground and the other (usually the left) raised up on its back. The lion normally appears to crouch behind or beside her.

As a typical example we can consider the major Durgā of the Kailāsanātha at Kanchi, the ten-armed image of the western niche of the *vimāna*'s northern wall (Figs. 46 and 48), from the reign of Rājasimha (c. 700–728 C.E.). Standing on her straight right leg she lifts her left foot to the lion's upraised paw, as it turns out toward the viewer. Devī holds the wheel, the sword *katyavalambita* (on the hip), and *kaṭaka hasta* (as if holding a flower), while drawing an arrow on her right. On her left we can see the bow, shield, axe, and *katyavalambita hasta*, with one arm missing. A parasol is extended above her head and a *triśūla* is visible behind her, like a standard. She wears arm and ankle bands, a pointed crown, and the usual *kuca bandha*. Closely similar images stand on the north of the *maṇḍapa*,⁷¹ the western shrine of the southern *parivārālaya*, and at the southern entrance to the *parivārālaya*.⁷²

⁷¹ Approaching the situation advocated in the *Āgamas*.

⁷² Illustrated in Rea, pl. LI, fig. 2, and XXIX. This last is the only one in which Durgā's feet are both off the ground.

Similar images can be seen in several temples, in the *Vaikhānasa Āgama*-sanctioned location on the north wall of the *ardhamandapa* porch. For instance the eastern *vimāna* of the Shore Temple, the Kṣatriyasimhēśvara, at Mahabalipuram (Fig. 47). Here the *dēvakōṣṭha* holding the Goddess and the lion is flanked by niches containing *gaṇa*. Below, *gaṇa* with swords flank and separate a pair of devotees, kneeling beneath the pilasters of the *dēvakōṣṭha*, in attitudes of sacrificial self-mutilation. The one on Devī's right cuts at his neck while the other is piercing his hand or offering a lotus.

One of these Pallava images of the Goddess actually does sit astride her lion. It is found as a secondary panel on the north side of the Kailāsanātha (Fig. 33). Because of the weathering it is only apparent that this figure sits astride from the position of her left foot, appearing below the lion as if emerging from behind. The lion is rearing back and the Durgā is shown four-armed, like the Calukya image at the Viśva Brahma.

We know eleven examples of this variety of Durgā among the Pallava temple remains, none of which includes explicit depiction of Mahiṣāsura. (This is the reason that Seshadri has ignored it altogether, in his survey.) And yet, like the Victorious Durgā, where it occurs separate from the depiction of Mahiṣa's head, the Simhavāhinī Durgā is closely connected with the theme of Mahiṣāsuramardīnī by its associated imagery. It occurs on temples in the same location as the Victorious Durgā, as an alternative to it. This is a location similar to that where the Victorious Durgā and the Mahiṣāsuramardīnī imagery of the Calukya temples is found: on the north of the sanctum or the *mandapa* of Siva temples, on either the interior or exterior. It shows the Goddess as Mahādevī in her cosmic or universally independent form, bearing the weapons we find on this form when she is depicted with Mahiṣāsura (usually including the conch and wheel, bow and arrow, sword and shield, and often the *triśūla*), seated or leaning back upon the lion, wearing the *kuca bandha*. It too sometimes occurs in association with the stag,⁷³ bow-wielding *pratibāri*,⁷⁴ and the self-mutilating devotees.⁷⁵ In the images of the Iravātanēśvara (Fig. 49) and the Tripurāntakēśvara⁷⁶ we can see the Victorious Durgā and Simhavāhinī imageries melded, as the Victorious Durgā with the lion behind her or as Simhavāhinī standing *off* the lion.

The final form of Mahiṣāsuramardīnī we may distinguish as a separate type is found in three images where the Goddess is found *seated* upon the head of the Buffalo. Two of these offer an interesting twist to the concept of her being *simhavāhinī*, or lion-borne. The best known of these, though seldom recognized, is found in the photogenic lion on the south of the Shore Temple compound (Figs. 50 and 51). This popular lion, on its finely wrought pedestal, is the Goddess's *vāhana*, and the most visible surviving element of an elaborate expression of the Mahiṣāsuramardīnī theme. Cut out of the same stone is the (now headless) form of the stag, along with a *gaṇa* groom (also now headless) (Fig. 52). Seated on the haunches of the lion are the two *pratibāri*. And within the square cavity in the lion's breast is an eight-armed image of the Goddess, seated upon the head of the Buffalo (Fig. 53).

⁷³ As in the Airāvātēśvara and Iravātanēśvara (fig. 49).

⁷⁴ As in the Iravātanēśvara (fig. 49).

⁷⁵ As in the Kṣatriyasimhēśvara of the Shore Temple (fig. 47).

⁷⁶ Rea, pl. CXI, fig. 2.

She is in the same one-leg-up (*pratyālīḍha*-like) pose she takes upon the lion. Though small and worn, a number of her usual attributes are legible. Like the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī Maṇḍapa image this one too is paired with a Anantaśayana Vishnu. The stone from which it is carved is actually part of the living rock of the site, connecting (out of sight) with the recumbent Vishnu of the oblong shrine between the Shore Temple's taller spires.⁷⁷

A very similar imagery is found in the Durgā Rock, on the beach south of the Shore Temple (Figs. 54–56). The imagery in this case is greatly worn, due to greater exposure to the sea, and it is also more complex, extending into associated royal consecration imagery. The Durgā Rock includes the pair of *pratihāri* behind the lion (one is visible in Fig. 54), eight *gana*, the head of the stag (Fig. 56), and a pair of self-mutilating devotees (below the cut-out, Fig. 55) as well as Devī seated upon the Buffalo Demon's head, within the lion's breast. Taken with the nearby Yāli Rock the combination of elements here includes most of the imagery seen in the Yāli Maṇḍapa at Saluvankuppam, and a separate lion throne as well. The similarly posed lion image on the north side of the Yāli Maṇḍapa is only roughed-out, and the panel set in its breast is blank, but we can hardly doubt its intended imagery included the same scene as that found in its equivalents (Fig. 57). The image inside of the Mahiṣāsura (mardīnī) Rock (Fig. 59) also seems identifiable as this type.

We can thus see the Pallava imagery of Durgā as Mahādevī Mahiṣāsūramardīnī exists in a large number of examples, which can be classified into four iconographic types. Two of these types, the Durgā Simhavāhinī and the Durgā seated on the buffalo head, do not occur among the Calukya's monuments. The other two, the Victorious Durgā and the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, are shared with the Calukyas.

We will conclude this survey by mentioning the single seated image that shares this iconographic nexus within each tradition. There is a four-armed figure seated in *lalitāsana* on a throne beside the Simhavāhinī image on the north side of the Kailāsanātha (Fig. 46). She wears the *kuca bandha*, and sits between heads of the lion and the stag. A four-armed figure, carrying the wheel and the conch and also seated in *lalitāsana*, can be found at the top of one of the hall pillars of Badami's Cave II (Fig. 34). The four accompanying figures are all worshippers. The lower two may be involved in self-mutilation.

Primitive Influence Theory

The importance of *influence* extends far beyond the neutral geographic issue of where a particular motif first appeared and where it subsequently reappeared. By their premises, discussions of artistic imagery form parts of a broader discourse on creativity, and discussions of art history refer to discourses on originality and independence in creativity. And there exists an implicit contrast within these considerations between independent and creative work on one hand and dependent, derivative work on the other. When this discussion takes place across cultural boundaries it implicitly raises the issue of creative or independent versus derivative or dependent cultures.

⁷⁷ This linking of the two deities also occurs in the *Devī Māhātmya*.

When we suggest that one work has been influenced by another, we are qualifying the originality and independence of the designers of that work. We may specify our qualification as more or less important, but there is no question that we are setting limits on the value of the work. Derivative work is less respected than original and independently creative work. Consequently discussions of influence are often pejorative. When dealing with appreciated artists or works we may reverse this logic and devalue their supposed sources. In either case the issue is the same. Some works and artists are defined as creative and valuable while others are declared to be less creative and so, of less value.

Though we may recognize conventional sharing in highly valued works, it is not the sharing but the originality of the variation on the conventional pattern that we have chosen to admire in bourgeois society. Whether we consider the production of a particular artist or of an entire community, we confront similar issues of value judgement. To define a work or style as essentially derivative is to brand both the work and the artistry that produced it as relatively inferior. When we speak of works of one region being derived from works of another we are suggesting the dependence of the receiving culture upon the originating culture, and the inferiority of the receiving culture to the originating culture.

Most discussions of artistic influence do not intend to raise the broad ideological problem of what constitutes an inferior or dependent culture, or the broader question of whether or not such judgements can be separated from the subjectivity of our necessarily ethnocentric vision. Most specific references to supposed instances of influence between communities may not intend to reckon with cumulative estimates of the relative creativity or cultural independence, of the communities to which they refer. And yet whether or not they intend to, they raise these issues. It is impossible to avoid raising them, since they are implicitly assumed in the language of influence.⁷⁸ Hierarchical value judgements are implicit within our discussion of art. They are a major concern of bourgeois esthetic thought, and a major concern of our intercultural thought as well.

This is important, when we consider applying a modern Western system of cultural analysis, like art history, to a traditional non-Western culture, since our understandings are deeply biased by their fundamental grounding in our own traditions. Elsewhere we have (separately) pointed out the Western problem of dealing with the Indian Buddhist *caitya* hall as if it were in some way dependent upon European basilica architecture,⁷⁹ and the fundamental claim of nineteenth and early twentieth century Western historians that much of Indian culture is essentially derivative.⁸⁰ It is also important when we consider – as we do here – the claims of rival communities that are still contended over, by their cultural descendants in modern Karnataka and Tamilnadu, and where our historical analysis is prejudiced by a tradition which has incorporated strong political biases about more and less “martial”, “creative,” and “dependent” races or cultures.

⁷⁸ The one book that deals with the meaning of influence in detail is Göran Hermetén, *Influence in Art and Literature* (Princeton, 1975).

⁷⁹ Vidya Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples* (London, 1972), pp. 74 and 218, note 3.

⁸⁰ Gary Michael Tartakov, “Changing Views of Orientalism,” *Pupul Jayakar Festschrift*, Lokesh Chandra, ed. (forthcoming).

The alternative framing of the same considerations of cultural exchange presents them in the more value-neutral terms of *sharing*. In this case, extreme claims of artistic independence and dependence are avoided, and the underlying traditional patterns that all artists draw on are emphasized. When the fact of shared traditions is taken as central, value judgements about originality, creative independence and esthetic quality are still possible, but they are subordinated to issues of communal cooperation and development. In bourgeois culture analysis is focused upon the competition among alienated individuals which is the social ideal, and a language appropriate to that social model has been developed. But in traditional culture it is solidarity among producers that is the ideal, and conceptualizations expressing that social ideal are more appropriate.

When we attribute any occurrence of an identifiable sharing, like the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha imagery, to the influence of the first example we know upon all subsequent examples, we are practicing the crudest sort of influence theory. Though such a primitive theory may tell us something about a simple case of forgery, plagiarism, or copying, it cannot account for the more complex situation of normal cultural creation. It will explain the similarity of the Nashville, Tennessee Parthenon to its prototype in Athens, but not the similarity of the Parthenon to the Temple at Zeus at Olympia or the Temple of Poseidon at Paestum. It will explain the relation between Henry Cousens' *plan* of the Virūpakṣa and the temple, but it will not explain the similarity of the Virūpakṣa to the Kailāsanātha at Kanci. It can account for little more than the simplest and most automatic copying.

Primitive influence theory is premised on an asocial or non-cultural, blank-slate vision of human creativity. It supposes that likenesses between human creations are the result of simple copying, by one artisan of another's form. It fails to recognize the rich matrix of cultural traditions within which human creativity takes place. It misses the essential fact that even a copyist's recreation is accomplished through an elaborate conceptual process that involves a structural understanding as well as the surface "look" of the work they reproduce. It reduces the consideration of material objects to the look of their surfaces.

Primitive influence theory can comprehend the creation of a minor relief of Durgā, such as the miniature beside the doorway of the Kumāra Brahma's sanctum (Fig. 16), to be essentially the copying of a prior one. It is as if the creator did not know what Durgā should look like, or was expected to look like – what made her image identifiable and satisfying. Though we are relatively safe from such reasoning when we consider the familiar and respected art production of our own society, we are vulnerable to it in considering the unfamiliar work of a foreign tradition. For lack of deeper and richer cultural familiarity we easily reduce the study of historically distant production to comparisons of the surviving remains, without consideration of the entire world of cultural activity and production from which they come. Of necessity the earliest Western studies of Indian art suffered disproportionately from this approach, and more recent work has progressively improved upon it. In fact the reconsideration of such primitive and antagonistic approaches characterizes a great deal of recent work.

Analysts' sympathies with the culture or artists they consider and their understanding of the complexity of the creative process are no less important than their familiarity with

the nuances of form. The same person who might think of a fine soloist's rendition of a Chopin Étude as "original" may turn around and call a Tamil short story with a Hemingwayesque style "derivative". Any decent Western musician or listener realizes that to reproduce a score adequately one cannot just mimic the notes, but must understand the structure of the composer's musical and dramatic intentions. A concert musician of the Western classical tradition is not a typist repeating instructions, but a recreator of complex esthetic intentions. And yet unsympathetic partisans of the more independently inventive tradition of Indian music could, if they chose, avoid this reality and condemn Western concert music as continual repetition of the same pieces, by long-dead composers.

The masters who cut the Kumāra Brahma's miniature Mahiṣāsūramardīnī would not have likely been mere copyists even if their intention was only to recreate another, similar piece. Given the well understood conventionality of the theme there is no likelihood whatsoever that any master would have thought it necessary to look anywhere for a particular model, any more than any reader of this article would need to find a particular model to draw a guitar in the margin of this page.

Yet simple influence theory, in the form of casual dismissal of less favored or less familiar monuments as being little but derivation, has had a full and popular life. We will quote one example of such an analysis by Herman Goetz:

The Chālukyas were not so much creators as mediators in the field of art. In the north they came in contact with the provincial Gupta civilization of the Deccan and the later imperial civilization of Gujarat and Northern India, in the south with the Andhras, Pallavas and Cholas, in the west in trade relations with the Sassanian empire via the ports of the Konkān and of Gujarāt, and with Indonesia via Āndhra, and were later involved in wars with the Muslim governors of Sind. Chālukya art thus passed through several phases.

The first was that of the early 6th century, at the earliest capital Aihole on the Malprabhā river ... The oldest Śiva shrines, i.e. the Kontgudi group and the so-called "Lād Khān" ... are mere adaptations of the later Buddhist monastery type ... On top of the Lād Khān there is a small chapel like an early Gupta temple ... On the pillars of the front gallery of the Lād Khān there are three-quarter life-size figures of the river goddesses and of yaksha (Gandharva) mithunas, in Gupta costume and imagery, but in their general character descendants of the relief groups in the old Śātavāhana cave temples. Clumsy, poorly proportioned, they nevertheless have the charm of a naive honesty and directness. The most remarkable monument of this style, however, is the Durga (Fort) temple, an adaptation of a Buddhist chaitya hall, ... its sculptures cover all the transitions from homely figures in the manner of the Lād Khān to great masterpieces of the later Gupta style ...

The free-standing temples, especially the Malegitti Śivālaya and the temple on the Northern Fort, reveal the Gupta style of sculpture at its zenith, but their architecture reminds one rather of Pallava architecture in the transition period from the Mahendra to the Māmalla style, though without the exaggerations of the latter ... The Pallava occupation after the death of Pulakeśin II in 642 is probably responsible for a Pallava monument, the small but very fine Śaiva cave temple at Aihole, with sculptures and painting in the best Māmalla style.⁸¹

⁸¹ Herman, Goetz, *India: Five Thousand Years of Indian Art* (Baden-Baden, 1960), pp. 123–125.

The Calukya art of this account has no independent existence. Or at best its independent existence is interesting only where it takes on derivative forms. In fact what is going on is the reading of Calukya remains by someone who does not know Calukya art, but is familiar with Gujarāṭi, Gupta, Pallava and Indonesian art. Failing to understand what is longstanding pan-Indian, Deccan, and South Indian practice within Calukya tradition, he sees what is shared in common as the particular property of those in whose work he first noticed it.

Without going into all of the specifics of this analysis, which should be clear enough as an example of the meaninglessness of primitive influence theory, we will note only its last statement, since it has already been dealt with here. The Saiva cave temple at Aihole, Goetz mentions, can only be the Rāvaṇa Phadi from which we have seen the Maḥiṣāsura-mardinī image (Fig. 11) that our survey of Pallava imagery shows to have no possible Pallava source. Quite to the contrary, it is clearly an integral example of Calukya imagery. The same can be shown for the rest of the imagery in the temple. The architectural design is typical of the northern Deccan and has no parallels in Tamilnad.⁸²

Style and Cultural Autonomy

An adequate model for considering cultural sharing and social communication requires recognition of the complex cultural traditions internalized by every individual member of every society, and of the complex process by which imagery is produced. Such a model is necessary to comprehend the complexity, depth, and consistency of social traditions behind and within individual cultural activity. Social development takes place within a cultural field of invisibly shared consciousness as well as visibly shared traditions. All social communication is based upon this sharing of internalized mutual expectations. Any specific instance of close cultural sharing takes place within a context of a broad and pervasive general cultural sharing.

If the Maḥiṣāsura saṅyavadha relief in the Mallikārjuna Temple was based upon a Pallava design it could have reached its Calukya location only because it was essentially understandable through the sharing of the legend, its symbolic details, the tradition of plastic depiction, its location, the appropriateness for local Saiva practice, etc. Nothing but the Goddess's pose, the presence of the *kuca bandha*, the falling figure, and the organization of the scene seem to be unusual for the Calukyas. The amount of Pallava influence in this single piece can thus be seen to be minimal.

Or it would be, if we could say that these elements were Pallava. Which in this case we cannot. The *kuca bandha* is unquestionably characteristic of Pallava art. But the falling man is no more characteristic of Pallava than Calukya traditions. It exists in only one case in each tradition. And though the Goddess is regularly seen against or with the lion in the Pallava tradition, she is seen astride the lion in only one other case (Fig. 33); she is seen astride at least as often with the Calukyas, and earlier in North India.⁸³ If this feature

⁸² Tartakov (1980), pp. 96–99.

⁸³ For instance the image in the Lucknow Museum (55.201), from Bhitari, dated to the sixth century, N.P. Joshi, *Catalogue of the Brabmanical Sculptures in the State Museum, Lucknow (Part I)* (Lucknow, 1972), pl. 52.

surfaces earlier among the Pallava remains, the equally characteristic buffalo-headed, composite Mahiṣa is found earlier in the Calukya's remains. The iconographic composition survives in these two cases only. Still the large scale and importance of the Pallava version and its earlier date, than its smaller Calukya counterpart, when taken with the quotation of the Tamil-standard *kuca bandha*, suggest the possible existence of a Pallava work's influence on the composition of this Calukya design.

What seemed at first an example of Pallava influence in Calukya art turns out to be an example of a rare Pallava work whose design may have been *quoted* once in a minor Calukya decoration. Seeing this as a significant cultural influence is only possible if we take our contemporary familiarity with the Pallava piece as a measure of its original importance, and hold as unquestionable the century-old Western art historical conviction that the Pallavas were an important source for Calukya culture.

The problem with primitive influence theory is not only its simplification of cultural complexity but its anti-social portrayal of cultural interchange as an antagonistic relationship between culturally superior, independent creators and culturally inferior dependents.

To move beyond a primitive influence theory to a coherent theory of social communication it is necessary to treat comparisons of particular images rigorously in terms of the full fields of social activity that produced them, rather than the narrower and less appropriate fields of our contemporary interest in a few attractive survivals. Particular examples of sharing must be considered in terms of social sharing in general. Whether these sharings are examples of mutual continuity, intrusion from one community to another, or influences of one group upon the creativity of another, can only be understood in terms of the wider field of cultural sharing in general.

Where Goetz reduced the Early Calukya tradition to the copying of other traditions, we must see it first as autonomously creative of what it understood of contemporary Indian traditions. Within that creativity – equal to any Kannada speaker's ability to form and interpret coherent Kannada sentences and any Hindu's to explain the Goddess's triumph over Mahiṣāsura – they provided images of Mahiṣāsuramardīnī. At that point, if they took some specific guidance from a Gujarati or Pallava image seen in passing it was likely to be as minor as our example above. *What matters fundamentally is the Calukya or Deccan culture's sharing with Tamils and Gujarātis the common background of the patterns of pan-Indian tradition.* That is a profoundly positive phenomenon, expressing the underlying unity and coherence of Indian tradition across provincial, regional barriers.

The temple art of the Calukyās shows a sharing of North and South Indian traditions, not a succumbing of one region to the power of another. And as the joint possession of Dravidian linguistic patterns, in Tamil and Kannada, and of Hinduism demonstrates a unifying sharing of common cultural roots among South India's regions, so the sharing of iconographic conceptions shows a sharing not a domination of one regional subculture or substyle by another.⁸⁴

Early Calukya art is the oldest tradition of any extent surviving in Karnāṭaka. It is from the beginning cast in a fully developed style, recognizable as a variety of the refined temple

⁸⁴ In order to keep from making this analysis too unwieldy we have omitted distinguishing the Calukya's Andhra, non-Karnatak, style as fully as we might have.

art known throughout India. It displays a local version of structural, decorative and narrative patterns seen elsewhere; it is an autonomous regional substyle. The earliest architecture is largely in the Drāviḍa (Southern) variety of the pan-Indian tradition, but the Northern variety is known too.⁸⁵ Most significantly, it is in a variation of the Drāviḍa style that is earlier than any surviving Pallava Drāviḍa, distinctly different than the Pallava's regional variety of Drāviḍa, and in no way traceable to it. Calukya imagery of the Great Goddess is as characteristically regional as it is Indian. It is an autonomous local development of imagery shared with the rest of India, that has more in common with other, nearby Southern regional substyles than with the more distant Northern regional substyles.

There are all-India traditions and styles. They are synthetic *macrostyles*, defined by a looser sharing of characteristics than the more homogeneous regional substyles. The substyles generally conform to the linguistic areas that define the most basic regions of social communication. But they overlap and interpenetrate more freely. They are cultural, not genetic. They are the result of conscious assemblage not racial inheritance. Their expressions share features in varying degrees, the more local the more consistent. The Calukya style shares both Northern and Southern macrostyle characteristics at most of their major sites in Āndhra and Karṇāṭaka. But we can identify Telāṅgana (Āndhra) and Karnatak regional substyles, and specific site styles within these. They are not different branches off self-generated trees of style, but local collections. Their unity is thus inclusive, not exclusive.

Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, the Great Goddess who slays the demon with the buffalo's form, is a pan-Indian concept with regional and historic variations that can be traced to no single or even predominant root. No equivalent exists in the Indo-European traditions outside of India. And there is no mention of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī within the extensive record of the Sanskrit tradition of India before she emerges in two brief passages of the *Mahābhārata*.⁸⁶ So the imagery of the Goddess's war with Mahiṣāsura and the demon's eventual succumbing to her is an Indian conception. The earliest texts we have, like the earliest surviving sculpture, show a variety that denies the suggestion of any single source. The conception is in each case a synthesis of related, yet different, elements.

There is no Sanskrit association of Durgā (the Impassable) Mahiṣāsūramardīnī with the title "Victorious," associated with Korraṅvai, the Goddess identified with Mahiṣāsūramardīnī in the earliest Tamil literature to survive, in the Śāṅgam poetry and the slightly later *Śilappadigāram*. Both of these traditions are related to the imagery we find in the Deccan art of the Early Calukyas. No literature in the Kannada language of the Calukya region survives from earlier than the century after the Calukya's collapse, though a record of its writers and works exists.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Tartakov (1980).

⁸⁶ *Mahābhārata*, IV,6 and VI,23.

⁸⁷ See Nṛpatuṅga's *Kavirājamārga*. Earlier writing in Kannada is known in inscriptions, going back to the Halmidi inscription of the fifth century or those of the Early Calukyas.

There is no reason to suppose that either the Sanskrit or Tamil tradition of Mahiṣāsura-mardinī is drawn from the other. Rather it seems clear that both are drawn from related pools of tradition. Both, for instance, are related by referring to the buffalo and to self-mutilating blood sacrifice. But where the *Devī Māhātmya* goes on for chapters to explain in detail the origin of the Goddess as the chief of all beings, and the progress of her battle with the Buffalo Demon, it gives only passing reference to self-mutilation. Two devotees seeking a vision of the Goddess are said to have “offered *bāli*, sprinkled with blood taken from their own bodies”.⁸⁸ By contrast the *Śilappadigāram* refers to Korravai mainly as the patron of hunters and only obliquely to her slaying of the buffalo. It devotes greater interest to the offering of sacrifices, up to and including head sacrifices of the kind we have seen illustrated, as worshippers ask her to “Accept the blood that flows from our severed young heads, the price of a victory you granted to the powerful and valiant Eiyans”, and so on.⁸⁹ It also describes, as the *Devī Māhātmya* does not, the Goddess “standing on the black head of a wild buffalo”, and her association with the stag as well as the lion.⁹⁰

A rich and complex imagery of Mahiṣāsuramardinī has come down to us from the sixth to eighth century in Tamilnad, Karṇāṭaka, and Āndhra, the three great language regions of South India. By comparing the Calukya images, of Karṇāṭaka and southern Āndhra, with the Pallava images, of northern Tamilnad, we can see both a sharing and a diversity of these traditions. If we were to expand our survey to all of the sub-continent the area of sharing would grow as would the range of diversity. Between the sixth and eighth century the Calukyas and Pallavas share some peculiar South Indian aspects of this pan-Indian tradition, such as nearly exclusive use of the Victorious Durgā imagery of the erect Goddess upon the buffalo’s severed head and of the Mahiṣāsura sainya-vadha imagery of the slaughter of the demon armies. Each also maintains its peculiar regional imagery, not shared between them. The Pallava *Simhavāhinī* Durgā is an example of this on the one side; the anthropomorphic representation of Mahiṣa being slain by the Goddess is an example on the other.

The first Early Calukya Mahiṣāsuramardinī images are of two sorts. The Rāvaṇa Phadi type (Fig. 11), with the Goddess bending the zoomorphic beast’s neck back, as it stands on all four feet, is known commonly throughout North India at this time. The Badami Cave I type (Fig. 17), where she holds the beast up off the ground by its tail or rear leg, though fairly popular in the Deccan, was fading from interest in the North at this time. The composite form of Mahiṣāsura (e.g., Fig. 1) is known in the North though few examples exist. All three forms, however, can be found on the Paraśurāmēśvara Temple of Bhuvanēsvar, in that region’s characteristic south Orissan version of the Northern style.

What this reveals is the autonomous regional nature of Indian style, in which local variations on pan-Indian themes continue within traditions of local production. This autonomous local production is *connected* to pan-Indian traditions by incorporating their

⁸⁸ *Devī Māhātmya*, XIII.8.

⁸⁹ *Śilappadikaram*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ *Śilappadikaram*, pp. 80–81.

logic. It is not outside of those traditions, borrowing from them; it is their authentic expression. The *śilpin* of Aihole or Kanci were not dependent upon foreign models for specific inspiration. They were trained in local versions of the universal traditions.

This view contrasts with the dependent-creativity suggested when anything North Indian in flavor is supposed to derive from Gupta, or anything of the Gupta tradition to derive from Mathurā.⁹¹ Or in our specific case, when what is Southern is attributed to the influence of Tamilnad. Dependent-creativity supposes that creativity is a rare phenomenon occurring only in a few independent centers, and mimicked more or less successfully throughout the rest of a dependent hinterland. It aligns well with primitive influence theory and diffusionism in general, explaining variations on common themes as copies of works from the great centers, or the result of artists traveling out from one of these centers. All three lack conceptions of culture as something belonging to all members of a community and capable of production in many places.

As academic knowledge of India's art has developed over the years an ever greater number of autonomously creative artistic centers have been recognized. With this has come increasing sensitivity to the complex interaction among these centers. Monuments of Tamilnad once bracketed together as Pallava are now apportioned among the Pallavas, Pandyas, Muttaraiyars and others. The temples of Mukhalingam, once categorized as "provincial Orissan", because of their likeness to the better known temples of Bhuvaneshvar, are now being studied as an autonomous local Kalinga style, with its own unique characteristics, sharing features and qualities with not only the monuments of Bhuvaneshvar on the north, but of Bundelkhand on the west and Telangana Āndhra to the south.⁹²

When knowledge was most limited and analyses were largely imperial ones of dependence and diffusion, chronological priority dominated consideration. Logic was confined to statements such as Sesadri's, supposing Besnagar the source of the Victorious Durgā imagery of the South: "If the figure [our Fig. 28] is pre-Pallava, then, the interesting fact emerges that this provided the model for sculptures of the same type from Mamallapuram".⁹³ As our understanding grows, however, and as we take into account the vast amount of imagery in perishable materials, we recognize that chronological priority in the record of survival may often be a misleading clue to actual priority of production. The discovery of a third to fourth century Victorious Durgā at Sannatti is eloquent proof of this. But this discovery should not have been necessary for us to expect earlier examples in the South. Noting priority in the existing record is a basic tool in developing historical understanding of a body of material. But we should not confuse the survival record with the production it represents, or forget that its representation is a rough one.

As our understanding advances and we grow more capable of grasping the complexity and depth of the field of traditions in any region or community, the ability of local traditions to develop coherent variations on common cultural themes becomes an in-

⁹¹ E. G., an otherwise quite successful book, Joanna Williams, *Art of Gupta India* (Princeton, 1982).

⁹² Michael W. Meister and M. A. Dhaky, eds., *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture, South India, Lower Drāviḍadeśa 200 B.C.-A.D. 1324* (New Delhi, 1983); and Mary F. Linda, dissertation in progress, University of California, Berkeley.

⁹³ Seshadri (1963), caption of pl. 17.

creasingly critical issue of consideration. Alongside the problem of judging how the record of survival reflects the actual record of production we must judge the even more difficult issue of how a tradition generates new variations on established themes. Crude dependence-analysis of the appearance of new motifs favors foreign intrusion as an explanation. New ideas are assumed to originate either from *outside* of a tradition or from the *limited number of creative originators found only within the better documented traditions*. And yet, since all traditions change over time, it must be recognized that variants are a natural outcome of all traditions, minor as well as major. So, to show a characteristic comes from the outside, it is necessary to show that the continual production of variations on themes within any cultural tradition would not produce the same results. Simultaneous or parallel development of relatively similar imagery within a shared cultural field is a more reasonable hypothesis than continual unique invention and diffusion from a single macro-creative source. The more we know of any tradition the more we are forced to this conclusion.

Calukya and Pallava Styles

We thus have two major alternatives for explaining the appearance of the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha imagery at the Early Calukya site of Pattadakal. One, of dependent creativity, which would declare it a demonstration of Pallava influence on the Calukyas, because a closely similar piece predates it in the Pallava region. The other, of autonomous production within shared traditions, sees the opposite: a rare example of minor Pallava patterns intruding into a self-sufficient and essentially independent Calukya art.

Analysis of the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha reliefs reveals a remarkable closeness between the Mahabalipuram and Pattadakal designs. But consideration of the place of each work within its own tradition reveals that the features of the design that connect them most particularly are not significant characteristics of either tradition. They can neither be drawn out of the Pallava tradition nor seen to be adopted by the Early Calukyas.

Comparison of the full range Mahādevī imageries in the two traditions reveals distinguishable patterns of regional sharing and independence typical of the Indian language and cultural patterns in general. Both traditions fit together within an all-India context as Dravidian, South Indian. At the same time they are distinguished from each other as independent variations of the Southern style, as autonomous Southern styles.

The Victorious Goddess exists in the Dravidian-language South: Karṇāṭaka, Āndhra, and Tamilnad. But it is in fact more frequently met with the closer we approach the Tamil region. Influence theory, with its emphasis on a few culturally creative centers and centralized diffusion of motifs, interprets this pattern as the spread of a genetic possession. The form is supposed to belong to its identifiable creators, the Pallavas, and to be legitimately inherited by other Tamil-speakers. Outside of Tamilnad it is seen as “borrowed” by people who somehow have less authentic legitimacy in its use. Or it is called the result of the “influence”, of Tamil culture on these people. (Though the idea of legitimacy may seem at first out of place here, it is implicit in the terms of the discussion. We do not see references to Cōla uses of the Victorious Goddess as “Pallava borrowings” or “Pallava-influenced,” though these are no less that, than Calukya or Gaṅgā uses would be, unless

legitimate genetic inheritance is at issue.) In the same way, the self-mutilating devotees, and the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha imagery may be said to be Dravidian in character, and then associated more familiarly with Tamilnad.

A cultural rather than biological analysis of the distinct Dravidian traditions, as historically developing language-regional wholes, reveals a more complex pattern that comprehends both chronological evidence and regional variations more fully and cogently. It reads each of these motifs as Drāviḍa (Southern), but none of them as Tamil. In each case rather than the transmission of a single motif from one great center to other (subordinate) centers, we have a phenomenon better explained as shared traditions emerging more popularly in one region than another. Self-mutilation can be seen depicted much earlier at Mathurā and the Victorious Goddess earlier in Karṇāṭaka than in Tamilnad, where they eventually find their most extensive expression. The composite Mahiṣāsura, who stars in the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, is seen earlier in Karṇāṭaka. But far more important, each pattern occurs in a regionally distinct form. Each region has major Goddess imagery that does not have parallels in the other region, and for the two forms that occur in both we have distinct Pallava and Calukya versions.

Recognizing the language-regional contexts of the Calukyas and the Pallavas we see that a *simple* southern whole does not exist, and that the divisions among the various Dravidian regions are as important as the Sanskrit/Dravidian one in explaining Dravidian regional cultural developments. The Calukya imagery of Mahādevī shares the conventions familiar in North India much more than Tamil imagery does. Influence-theory can attribute such sharing – as Herman Goetz does in the passage quoted above – to the Calukyas being influenced by both Northern and further-Southern traditions. This is the most common approach available in our art historical literature. But only an approach that is more sensitive to the autonomous nature of the internal cultural development of local regions can explain the existence of the Victorious Goddess at Besnagar and Sannatti before it emerges in the Pallava record, or its appearance in local styles and iconographic variations. It also does a better job of explaining the continuing Karnatak use of this imagery in a peculiarly Karnatak version of the theme.

The Drāviḍa unity we find in the shared themes is not the consistent unity of a single developing tradition, such as we see in the Pallava development of the Simhāvahinī, or the Calukya's anthropomorphic Mahiṣa. Rather, it is a regular incorporation of common themes within otherwise autonomous imagery. We see it in the appearance of the Goddess's stag and self-mutilating devotees with an otherwise Northern style Mahiṣāsuramardinī at the Virūpakṣa, or the use by both of the Victorious Durgā, and of the Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha, which seldom occur anywhere else. It is a cultural unity of shared interests, not an inherited dependence on a single source. Far from being the passive receptors of other traditions the Early Calukyas – who have left us nearly a hundred fifty stone temples, created over a period of two centuries – were producers of a consistent and richly varied style, or set of styles, that was thoroughly their own. If some of that imagery traces to roots in earlier Northern and Southern traditions, of Mahārāṣṭra and Mathurā, Kanci and Banavasi, it does so not through passive copying, but by selective incorporation and adaptation of models found in those traditions and filtered through generations of inter-

mediaries. Their freedom from Tamil, Pallava influence as a root source for the creation of their Mahādevī imagery is an example of this independence.

Like the Kannada and Telugu languages that express the verbal traditions of Karnatak and Telāṅgana or Āndhra culture, the visual imagery of the Calukyas is an autonomous Dravidian system essentially distinct from that other major Dravidian cultural system of the time, the visual imagery of the Tamil-speaking Pallavas. The fact that we retain a more extensive and longer historical record of Tamil does not detract from the independence of Karnatak traditions at their emergence into the surviving record. Nor does the more southern location of the Tamilnad demonstrate a necessary priority or centrality in the place of its tradition among the other Dravidian traditions. Kannada is not an offshoot from Tamil but a distinct language, traceable *with Tamil* to roots that separated as long ago as the middle of the first millenium before the common era.⁹⁴

Located further from the North than the Calukyas, and separated by them and other Deccan powers from direct contact with it, the Pallavas were less directly affected by North Indian visual traditions. But there is no reason to suppose that Calukya traditions, for all of their obvious sharing of North Indian traditions, were less essentially Dravidian. Karnatak art, and so Calukya art, was only less exclusively Dravidian, less purely Dravidian. Where Pallava art is in Drāviḍa styles only, the Calukyas sponsored art in the Drāviḍa style, the Northern style, in explicit mixtures of the two and in local styles that seem to transcend both. Their Dravidian style was no less essentially Dravidian than the Pallava's.

Our experience of sculptural style and iconography throughout the Early Calukya remains is quite well represented by the evidence of this specific case. For all of the "influence" that various scholars have continued to cite, we find little evidence in the sculpture to support the suggestion that the local Karnatak traditions were anything but well developed local cultural inheritance and essentially resistant to the introduction of foreign iconographic subjects or stylistic traits.

There have been suggestions that significant aspects of important Early Calukya monuments have been re-cut under Pallava direction and inspiration,⁹⁵ or that Pallava artists were imported to work on Calukya monuments.⁹⁶ Though we have not considered this issue specifically here, we may say that we see no evidence to support such claims.⁹⁷ No work in a clearly non-Calukya, Pallava style in the Early Calukya region is known to us. Nor do we find any resonantly Pallava, non-Calukya iconography.

The usual arguments for Pallava influence over Calukya cultural traditions have come in the analysis of architectural rather than figurative imagery. In this case also detailed study of the evidence has revealed distinctly different Calukya and Pallava substyles of a

⁹⁴ George L. Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 76, discusses the splitting of Kannada and Tamil from a supposed Proto-South Dravidian, and accepts a date of 400 to 300 B.C.E. for it. It is possible to accept this explanation by divergence, if it includes a significant element of convergence as well.

⁹⁵ E.g., Herman Goetz, as quoted above (see note 81), or Aschwin Lippe, "Some Sculptural Motifs on Early Calukya Temples," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XXIX (1967), pp. 5-24.

⁹⁶ Since Cousens' cautious suggestion (1926), see note 8 above, this has been repeated and embroidered upon by a great many authors, e.g., most recently when "architects and workmen (are) removed bodily from Kanci to Pattadakal during warfare."

⁹⁷ See Tarr (1969), p. 178, for a discussion of this in terms of sculpture.

shared Dravidian style. These are cultural relatives not branches of a single tree or descendents of a common ancestor. They are not genetic, but cultural relatives. Their users were independent, local practitioners of autonomous varieties of mutually shared traditions.⁹⁸

The diminutive Calukya Mahiṣāsura sainyaavadha panel in the Mallikārjuna temple must be viewed as an isolated instance of an inconsequential Pallava intrusion.

⁹⁸ See Tartakov (1980), pp. 96–99, for a discussion in terms of architecture.