esteemed maidens (*devadasis*) whose services were dedicated to the god of the temple. These temple maidens played an important role in dancing as well as in the singing of devotional hymns by which the temple god was entertained; they also bore lamps for the deity. Girls were admitted to the temple before reaching puberty and after an appropriate period of training they were 'married' to the god by means of a special ceremony.

The temple has traditionally been foremost among charitable institutions in Hindu society. In records of gifts to temples the stipulation is often found: 'to provide for worship, for gifts of food to the assembly of ascetics and for repairs'. Generally wayfarers, whether pilgrims or other devotees, took their food in the temple together with many of the temple employees. The fare was by no means sparse and consisted of cooked foods, especially rice. On festival occasions the cooking might be most elaborate. Some temples would house a number of residential students in boarding schools attached to the temple. There are also instances of hospitals associated with temples in which beds were provided for the sick. The most important role of the temple in matters of charity was the feeding of brahmans on sacred occasions. Endowments frequently provided for the feeding of specific numbers of brahmans in temples after the offerings had been made to the gods. Sometimes feeding houses were established in which free food would be offered daily throughout the year. Feeding of the poor was also widespread, with cooked rice offered as a public charity to the poor of the lower classes.

4 The Temple as a Link between the Gods and Man

The Hindu temple is designed to bring about contact between man and the gods; it is here that the gods appear to man. The process by which this contact is made comprises a series of ideas and beliefs incorporating a complex symbolism. Dynamic rituals and ceremonies permit a realization of these ideas through which the Hindu temple functions as a place of transcendence, a place where man may progress from the world of illusion to knowledge and truth. The rituals and ceremonies that lie at the very core of the religious life of Hinduism, as well as the more elusive ideas and beliefs that accompany divine personages, have fundamentally influenced the forms of temple architecture. Some of the earliest records of these symbolic ideas and beliefs are found in the Epics and the Puranas; in later periods they form the subject of chapters in texts on sacred architecture such as the numerous Shastras and Agamas. These texts are often concerned with imbuing sacred architecture and its art with symbolic meaning and are the work of theologians who compiled them from many different sources.

The fundamental preoccupation of Hindu thought is with man's release (*moksha*) from an illusory world into which he is recurringly born. The architecture of the Hindu temple symbolically represents this quest by setting out to dissolve the boundaries between man and the divine. For this purpose certain notions are associated with the very forms and materials of the building. Paramount is the identification of the divinity with the fabric of the temple or, from another point of view, the identification of the form of the universe with that of the temple. Such an identification is achieved through the form and meaning of those architectural elements that are considered fundamental to the temple. Hence the significance attached to the site of the temple, its ground plan and vertical elevation and the dominating images of mountain, cave and cosmic axis. A sacred mathematics is created, composed of a language of precise measurements, which permits a symbolic realization of the underlying cosmic ideas. The relationship that develops between forms and their meanings within the Hindu temple is essential to its function as a link between the gods and man.

The temple as a house of god

The willingness of the gods and goddesses of Hinduism to make themselves visible and accessible to man is emphasized everywhere in Hindu literature. That temples are places where the gods make themselves visible is conveyed by the very terms used to designate a temple: a seat or platform of god (*prasada*), a house of god (*devagriham*), a residence of god (*devalaya*) or a

waiting and abiding place (*mandiram*). The temple is a receptacle for the gods, who may appear there in the forms imagined by their worshippers. These forms are embodied in the sacred images or symbols of the deities which constitute the most important part of Hindu art.

Sacred images and symbols of the deity to whom the temple is dedicated are housed in a small sanctuary within the temple known as the 'womb-chamber' (*garbhagriha*), a term indicating that here is contained the kernel and essence of the temple. The sacred image or symbol of the god represents a means of union with the divine but is not usually identified with the deity—the god or goddess only temporarily resides within the fabric of the image. Such an occasional coincidence of form and divine presence only occurs after the sacred image or symbol has been prepared for worship by elaborate rituals of consecration and then ceremoniously enshrined. Precise laws regulate the production of these sacred images and symbols so that they may function successfully as suitable receptacles for the deity. The devotional cults which are served by the Hindu temple inevitably focus upon this sacred image or symbol of the deity in the 'womb-chamber', but devotion also extends to encompass the temple as a whole. Thus the temple is not only a place of worship but also an object of worship. The divinity that is revealed within the sanctuary may also be revealed in the very fabric of the temple itself. From this point of view the architectural and sculptural components of the temple are considered to be an evocation of the presence of the divine. To this end mythology, folklore and art meet in a common attempt to portray the varied manifestations and exploits of the gods and goddesses. All of Hindu art aims at recreating the celestial environment of the world of the gods.

As sacred images and symbols in Hindu art represent only temporary receptacles for the gods and goddesses who intermittently inhabit their outer forms, so the temple as a whole is also understood as a temporary abode of the gods in the world of man. In the temple the divine is always potential, but only on occasions is it manifested. Rituals and ceremonies are essential to promote this manifestation of the divine and, in fact, the priesthood of a temple is resident in order to maintain the continuous presence of the god. There are also the particular occasions when the community or an individual needs to approach the gods. If the necessary rituals are not performed, the temple lies dormant as the deities are not 'in residence'.

Rituals of temple worship

It is the direct worship of gods and goddesses (*devapuja*) that forms the focal point of the religious activities embraced by the Hindu temple. The various rituals of worship permit an identification of the worshipper and the place and means of worship with the godhead. Those who are able to achieve a unity of self and godhead through ritual gain merit and access to the path that leads to ultimate liberation. Practices of temple worship originated before the principal Hindu cults had become differentiated, and rituals performed in

temples dedicated to the cults of different deities follow more or less a basic pattern. Worship is conceived as an evocation, reception and entertainment of the god or goddess as a royal guest, reflecting the ancient association of royalty with the divine. There is also the belief, which has been particularly popular outside India, that the ruler's power is an extension of the divine law. The practices of temple worship are strictly laid down in a series of texts devoted to ritual, some of which may be traced back to the Puranas and earlier. What may be observed of rituals and ceremonies in present-day Hindu Asia indicates that they have not basically altered from what was practised in the earliest periods of Hinduism, even though the ancient rituals have doubtless become greatly simplified.

Before ceremonies can begin the priests who are to perform the rituals must first be prepared. Bathing and other acts of purification are necessary in order to promote the transformation by which the priests are able to identify themselves with the divine object of worship. At the ceremony there is no need for a congregation to be present as rituals are performed by priests on behalf of the community. However, devotees who desire to benefit from the influence emanating from these rites may also be present. The absence of a congregation reveals the fundamental role of the temple priests, who represent the community they serve and who are responsible for its satisfactory relationship with the divine. Upon this depends the happiness, welfare and success of the members of the community.

Temple ritual for an ordinary day consists of four celebrations which take place at sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight. The ceremonies usually begin with the reverential opening of the door of the sanctuary, or 'womb-chamber', in which the image of the deity is housed. The powers guarding over the door are saluted, and there is the sounding of the bell and the clasping of hands before the sanctuary is entered, in order to expel any unwanted spirits and to attract the attention of the god or goddess. The priest then expresses his intention of worship and asks the divinity for consent. Hymns are recited to persuade the deity to take visible form by inhabiting the image or symbol and once this takes place the priest is able to converse with the divine. Various verbal formulae (*mantras*), sacred syllables (*bijas*) and symbolic hand gestures (*mudras*) are then employed to concentrate the power of the god or goddess and to permit the performer of the ritual to draw himself into contact with the divine. The worship proper consists of the awakening of the god or goddess, who is considered to be asleep when unmanifested. Due attention is paid to the comfort of the divine presence, the preparation of vessels and ingredients necessary for worship, the bathing and dressing of the sacred image, and the offering of refreshments. The image is anointed with oils, camphor and sandalwood, garlanded, and entertained with moving flames. The offerings which are next presented vary considerably but usually have cooked foods such as rice forming the principal meal of the god. Several circumambulations (*pradakshinas*) are then executed around the image where it is free-standing and the priest bows and offers a handful of flowers. Finally the sanctuary door is closed as the deity is again considered

to be asleep. In this manner a typical ceremony is completed, to be repeated at the other appropriate times of the day.

In addition to these daily ceremonies there are also opportunities for private worship in the temple by individuals who make offerings to the deity, recite prayers and perform suitable circumambulations. Such private worship usually takes place between the regular ceremonies when the god or goddess gives 'audience' to the priest. Private worship may be undertaken as the result of simple devotion, or for some particular reason, perhaps in the hope of securing divine assistance in a time of trouble, danger, pain or sickness. Vows and presentations of offerings by laymen are an important part of the activities in any Hindu temple. Ceremonies such as the investiture of the sacred thread for brahman boys which is the commencement of their religious life, marriages, and oaths for civil and criminal cases also take place in the temple, either in front of the sacred image of the sanctuary or in the temple compound. Devotees and other individuals who wish to approach the deity are first required to purify themselves by bathing. They then present their offerings to the priest who places them at the feet of the god and recites the appropriate sacred hymns and prayers.

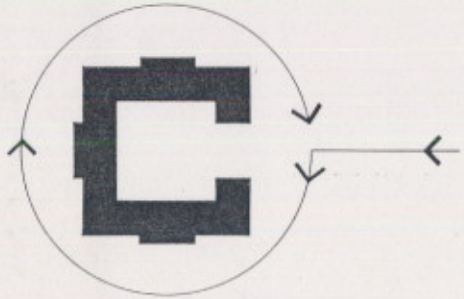
Some forms of worship that take place in the temple are more congregational in character. For example, public performances of sacred song and dance to glorify the worshipped god or goddess are an important aspect of the activities of the temple, as are the recitals of ancient texts and their exegesis by learned priests. Other ceremonies occur at regular intervals and are sometimes treated as festivals. Every important temple throughout Hindu Asia has regular festivals which consist mainly of processions and enactments of particular myths and are sometimes most spectacular. Processions have a particular significance for the community because the sacred image or symbol from the sanctuary of the temple, or its substitute, is brought outside to become visible to those who may not generally be admitted into the temple. Devotees have the opportunity of directly presenting flowers, fruits and other offerings to the god or goddess who is carried in procession. The processional image is not always the same as that which is permanently housed in the sanctuary, but for the purposes of ceremony it is identified with that image. Great attention is lavished upon the chariot (*ratha*) on which the processional image is carried and which may be an elaborate structure of timber, bamboo and canvas. The chariot functions as a temporary and mobile temple throughout the festival (Fig. 22). Of particular significance in festivals is the link with the agricultural life of the region, and they often coincide with the planting or harvesting of a crop. Festivals provide opportunities for the mingling of mythology and folklore expressed in performances of music, dance and theatre as well as for the manufacture of temporary images of clay or earth for special ceremonies.

22 *Left* Mobile temple—the chariot bearing the processional image is pulled by villagers at a festival near Badami

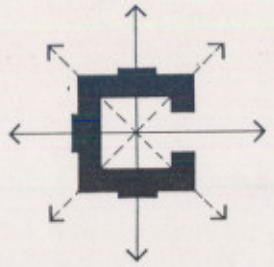
Dynamics of the temple

Associated with temple festivals is the undertaking of pilgrimages to sacred places. In Hinduism the attainment of spiritual perfection is likened to a long journey of many stages, frequently visualized as a progression upwards through various stages of consciousness. Likewise, the temple is conceived as a place of transit, a ford or crossing-place (*tirtha*). In the rituals that take place within the temple the movement of the worshipper and priest is of greatest importance. There is the symbolism of the passage through the doorways which is connected with the idea of transition from the temporal to the eternal. But the most significant aspect of devotional dynamism in Hinduism is the circumambulation (*pradakshina*) which proceeds in a clockwise direction around a sacred person, image or object and even around the temple itself. This circumambulation is a rite constituting a bodily participation in movements and prayer. In some cases it is translated into architectural forms and many temples are furnished with ambulatory passageways. Circumambulation takes the worshipper from the doorway of the sanctuary, housing the image or symbol of the deity, around the sanctuary in a clockwise direction where further cult icons introduce other aspects of the divine (Fig. 23).

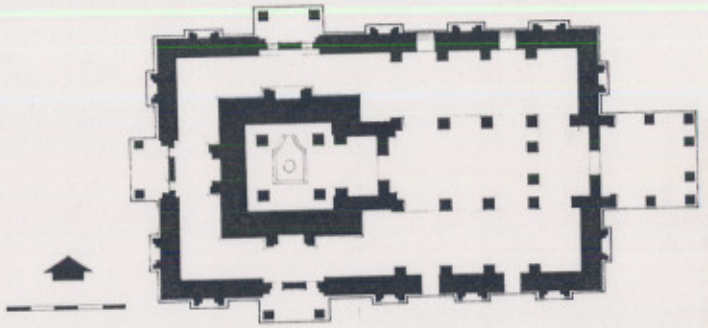
The centre of the sanctuary functions as the focus of other dynamics which are realized through a process of symbolic association. To begin with there is the radiation of energy outwards from the centre of the sanctuary in four directions. The sacredness of the image in the 'womb' of the temple expresses itself as a powerful force whose influence expands outwards: hence the potency of sacred images that are aligned with these forces, especially those positioned in the centres of the north, west and south sanctuary walls. These secondary images are often given prominence by being set within projecting and elaborately decorated niches. As a further extension of the idea of these lines of energy providing potency, images are placed at the four corners as well as at the centres of the sanctuary walls (Fig. 24). A connection with the guardian deities of the eight directions of the universe is sometimes realized in temple architecture with the positioning of the eight gods around



23 The dynamics of temple worship—the approach to the sanctuary and the circumambulation around it in a clockwise direction



24 Outward radiation of energy from the centre of the sanctuary. Along these lines of energy are positioned important secondary images of the deity housed within the sanctuary



25 Plan of the Svarga Brahma temple, Alampur, seventh century. In the appropriate niches of the outer walls are positioned the *dikpalas*, the guardians of the eight directions of space, and two syncretistic deities *(here and throughout each scale division represents one metre, unless otherwise stated)*

the temple (Fig. 25). Penetration inwards towards the centre of the sanctuary, usually conducted along an east-west axis, is of the greatest importance in ritual for the worshipper, and this too has had its effect upon the development of temple architecture. The interior spaces of temples are arranged to promote the movement of the devotee from the outside towards the sanctuary through a series of enclosures which become increasingly sacred as the sanctuary is approached. At the final stage in the penetration towards the centre, when the doorway of the sanctuary is reached, the priests take over from the worshipper and conduct offerings to the image of the deity inside the sanctuary. This is undertaken on behalf of the worshipper who must wait outside but who follows the movements of the priests, accompanying their actions symbolically. A further expression of the energy of the sanctuary radiating outwards is in the movement upwards; though the worshipper cannot physically participate in this ascent, the symbolism attached to the parts of the temple permits him ritually to undertake such movement.

The Hindu temple serves as a reminder of impermanence, a notion that

implies a turning away from the present illusory world in an effort to surmount and to transcend it. Though the temple with its art may be indispensable for the rituals of worship, it marks only a transitory stage in the journey from the temporal to the eternal. Mythology juxtaposes relative time sequences and cosmic eras as the keys to the inner mechanics of the universe. This overlapping of cycles of time and repetition of cosmic eras finds visual expression in the forms of the temple, where architectural and sculptural motifs repeatedly appear in different sizes in different parts of the building. The finial placed at the summit of the temple symbolizes the absolute and timeless principle beyond repetition and relativity, and is intended as a reminder of the ultimate goal of the journey that man embarks upon.

Potent temple sites

Hindu Asia abounds in sacred places, the potent sites where gods dwell or where they might reveal themselves. The locations of these sites are attractively described in many ancient texts: 'the gods always play where groves are, near rivers, mountains and springs and in towns with pleasure-gardens', states the *Brihatsamhita*. Temples are built at such places to gain the full benefit of resident auspicious deities. When the temple is completed and consecrated the potential sacredness of the site manifests itself and the distinction between artificially and naturally sacred places disappears. The principal features associated with these sites are water, shade and seclusion. The importance attached to these features indicates that they also came to be objects of worship.

Rivers are sacred, especially the Ganges which issues from the mountain of Shiva, and are celebrated for their healing and purifying powers, as are innumerable springs and lakes. Waters are identified with their most characteristic flower, the lotus, an ever popular symbol in Hinduism for renewal and enlightenment. Water is also necessary for the successful functioning of the temple as it is required for ritual ablutions. Where no river, spring or lake is available, artificial cisterns or reservoirs are constructed in which water is preserved in times of rain. Tree cults, common the world over among many cultures, are widespread in Hinduism where every village and town has its sacred tree or grove. These shady locations are always considered to be places where meditation is possible and at which contact with the divine may be successfully achieved.

In the sacred geography of Hinduism every natural feature is invested with significance by mythology and folklore. Certain sites are associated with a particular exploit or appearance of a god or goddess, for example the places in northern India where the god Krishna made his earthly appearances and those where the *yoni* and other parts of Parvati fell to earth after she had flung herself into flames. There hardly exists in Hindu Asia a temple that does not have some legend attached to it to explain the holiness of its location. Archaeology demonstrates that the sacredness of the site frequently survived changes of cult through the centuries. Some of these legends may perhaps

have been intended to justify the sanctity of sites whose original divine associations had been forgotten or were no longer considered appropriate. Potential sanctity of a site is also related to the calendar, in that only at certain times in the year may it be manifested, thus providing an opportunity for ceremony and festival.

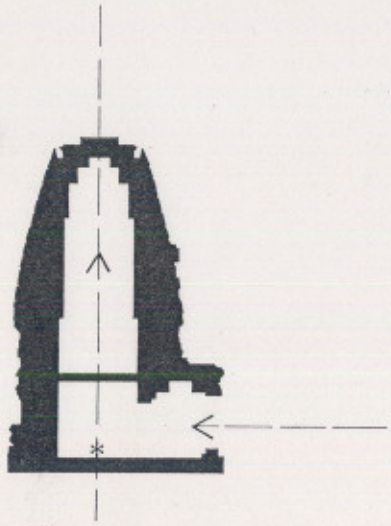
Mountain, cave and cosmic axis

The gods of Hinduism are always attracted to mountains and caves, and these geographical features have great importance for the symbolism and outer appearance of the temple. That the temple itself is considered a mountain is indicated by the names, Meru and Kailasa, that may be given to actual temples (Fig. 80). Demonstrated in a temple so designated is a specific desire to identify it with these celebrated mythological mountains. Thus, the temple becomes an architectural facsimile of the sacred places of the gods, providing for the worshipper the merit that would be his through an actual visit to the mountains. Meru is the centre or 'navel' of the universe, standing as a reference point for the surrounding and concentrically arranged continents, oceans and heavenly bodies. Kailasa is the celestial abode of Shiva, the supreme mountain god. In the superstructure of the Hindu temple, perhaps its most characteristic feature, the identification of the temple with the mountain is specific and the superstructure itself is known as a 'mountain peak' or 'crest' (*shikhara*). The curved contours of some temple superstructures and their tiered arrangements owe much to a desire to suggest the visual effect of a mountain peak (Fig. 62). The development of building techniques—in stone, brick and timber—permitted architects to realize increasingly complex schemes for the superstructures of temples, and there was a particular impulse to extend upwards to create soaring towers. The horizontal tiers or storeys which appear on the superstructures of temples are referred to as 'earth' or 'soil' (*bhumi*) in the architectural terminology of ancient texts on temple building, as if to further reinforce this mountain symbolism. In the reduplicating superstructure systems of some Hindu temples, spectacularly developed in the north Indian style, can be seen a conscious attempt to create in stone a complete mountain range.

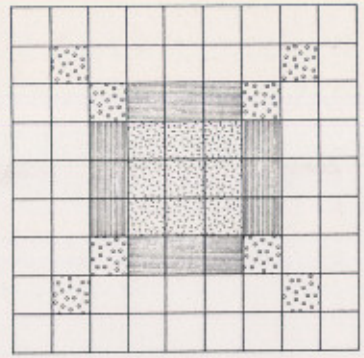
The cave is a most enduring image in Hinduism, functioning both as a place of retreat and as the occasional habitation of the gods. Caves must always have been felt to be places of great sanctity and they were sometimes enlarged to provide places of worship. Thus came about the practice of excavating into rock to create man-made grottos which were believed to be as sacred as their natural prototypes (Fig. 44). In fact, architects in India only turned to free-standing stone architecture with the greatest reluctance. Such hesitation is not satisfactorily explained merely in terms of technical inexperience with structural stonework, but reflects the survival of the symbolic power of the image of the cave in matters of sacred architecture. In all Hindu temples the sanctuary is strongly reminiscent of a cave; it is invariably small and dark as no natural light is permitted to enter, and the

surfaces of the walls are unadorned and massive. Penetration towards the image or symbol of the deity housed in this setting is always through a progression from light into darkness, from open and large spaces to a confined and small space. This movement from complexity of visual experience to that of simplicity may be interpreted by the devotee as a progression of increasing sanctity culminating in the focal point of the temple, the cave or 'womb'.

Accompanying this penetration inwards towards the cave is the ascent upwards to the symbolic mountain peak, whose summit is positioned over the centre of the cave-sanctuary. This means that the highest point of the elevation of the temple is aligned with the most sacred part of the temple, the centre of the inner sanctuary which houses the image of the god. Summit and sacred centre are linked together along an axis which is a powerful projection upwards of the forces of energy which radiate from the centre of the sanctuary (Fig. 26). The movement upwards is both visual and symbolic, since it dominates the external appearance of the temple and is associated with certain ideas about the universe. The Hindu imagination supplies various associations with this ascent along an axis which is likened to a progression towards enlightenment, and the goal of this journey is identified with the crowning finial of the superstructure of the temple. The mechanical conception of the cosmos identifies the axis with the support of the heavens, the central mountain Meru. The biological viewpoint transforms this axis into an ever-living trunk of a tree supporting the universe in its ample branches. The anthropomorphic approach imagines the cosmic man (*mahapurusha*) displaying the whole of creation on his body, providing a



26 Relation of the symbolic images of cave, mountain and cosmic axis in the temple section: the summit of the temple is directly above the sacred centre



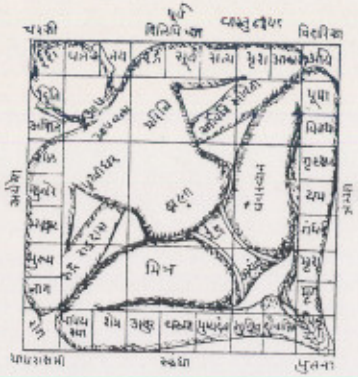
27 The *mandala* governing the temple plan, following the *Brihatsamhita*, a text dating from the Gupta period. Brahma occupies the central nine squares and is surrounded by various planetary divinities, including the Sun and Moon

means of access to the higher and more sacred spheres through his spine which is identified with the vertical axis. Also of significance is the pillar (*yupa*) associated with kingship and royal proclamations; cosmic support is another function of this pillar, which keeps apart the earth and sky. In one of the most celebrated of Hindu myths the world mountain is specifically identified with a churning axis or pillar. Vertical ascent and cosmic axis, therefore, are all bound up with ideas about the composition of the universe.

The cosmology of the temple plan

Once the site of the temple has been selected and ritually purified, the next stage in its erection is the laying out of the ground plan. Great importance is attached to the establishment of the temple's ground plan because it functions as a sacred geometric diagram (*mandala*) of the essential structure of the universe. The mandala is a concentric figuration, usually a square divided into a number of smaller squares by an intersecting grid of lines. This arrangement of central squares with others that surround it is taken to be a microscopic image of the universe with its concentrically organized structure (Fig. 27). By constructing this diagram to regulate the form of the temple, a symbolic connection is created, binding together the world of the gods—the universe, and its miniature reconstruction through the work of man—the temple. The assumption permitting such an identification of the universe with its model is that of a spatial and physical correspondence between the worlds of god and man.

The mandala of the temple plan is also considered a symbolic pantheon of the gods, as the smaller squares of the diagram are each the seat of a particular deity. The central and largest square is usually occupied by Brahma or some other prominent deity concerned with creation. Arranged around this square are the planetary divinities, the guardians of the directions of



28 The cosmic man, *mahapurusha*, drawn on a temple *mandala*, from an ancient manual of architecture

space, and other astronomical deities. The mandala is thus able to incorporate the courses of the heavenly bodies which are related to all recurring time sequences. It may also contain an image of the cosmic man arranged diagonally, each square connected with some portion of his body. This cosmic figure is identified with the processes of the creation of the universe and its underlying structure (Fig. 28).

Profound significance is attached to the centre of the temple mandala, as it is here that the worshipper may experience transformation as he comes into direct contact with the cosmic order. The centre is the most sacred part of the diagram and is materialized in Hindu temple architecture by the image or symbol of the divinity placed in the sanctuary. In the cosmological interpretation of the plan the centre coincides with the sacred mountain, Meru, the support of the universe. In ritual the dynamics of the temple all proceed with reference to this central point; symbolic processes of interpreting the form of the temple all focus upon the centre of the plan.

Set rules attend the laying out of the temple mandala before the commencement of building operations. In order that the temple should be able to function effectively the moment when the diagram is drawn upon the ground has to be accurately and suitably determined. Here the relation between time and architecture is introduced, in which the observation of the heavenly bodies bears upon temple building. Astronomy and astrology, never truly separated in Hinduism, provide the basis for determining the appropriate moments when all important activities are undertaken. The *Brihatsamhita*, one of the early sources of information about temple building, is actually a treatise on astrology which includes a chapter on architecture. Not only is the moment in time determined at which the plan of the temple is laid out, but the regulating mandala itself is a product of astronomical calculations. Characteristic is the symbolism of the cardinal points of the compass and the orientation of the mandala according to the course of the sun. The plan of the temple is strictly orientated to the cardinal directions,

usually along an east-west axis. Of great importance in the architectural texts, the Shastras and Agamas, are the detailed sections giving astrological-astronomical information. Here is expressed a conscious desire to identify the physical forms of the temple with the laws that govern the movements of heavenly bodies.

Sacred mathematics

In Hindu thought number is considered an expression of the structure of the universe and a means of effecting the interplay between the universe and man. Mathematical schemes are frequently constructed by the philosophers and theologians of Hinduism to describe the celestial, terrestrial and even the ethical worlds. In the Hindu temple mathematics has a peculiar significance. A common word used to designate a temple, *vimana*, means that which is 'well-measured' or 'well-proportioned'. Textbooks on temple building all devote lengthy chapters to the subject of proportional measurement, describing in detail different systems which are intended to control every dimension of the temple—the length and width of its plan, the extent of its internal spaces and even the measurements of such details as doorways and base mouldings. The proportional systems have as their outstanding feature the use of a unit of measurement sometimes known as the 'finger' (*angula*), from which are derived the dimensions of the sanctuary or the height of the image of the deity housed there. This then regulates the masses of the temple as they extend upwards and outwards from the sanctuary. Every part of the temple, therefore, is rigorously controlled by a proportional system of measurement and interrelated by the use of the fundamental unit.

Only if the temple is constructed correctly according to a mathematical system can it be expected to function in harmony with the mathematical basis of the universe. The inverse of this belief is also held: an architectural text, the *Mayamata*, adds that 'if the measurement of the temple is in every way perfect, there will be perfection in the universe as well'. Thus the welfare of the community and the happiness of its members depend upon the correctly proportioned temple, and architectural texts stress that only work that is completed 'according to the rules' will gain the desired merit for its builder.

Measurement in the Hindu temple is not confined to the architecture. The sacred images of the temple, whether carved or painted, are also subject to strict mathematical control in the discipline of iconometry, the geometry of image-making. The *Shukranatisara*, an iconographical text, states that an image is 'said to be lovely which is neither more nor less than the prescribed proportions'; another text warns that 'the image not made with the prescribed rules . . . is fruitless and its worship is without any effect'. Only a well executed image, satisfactory in its proportional measurements, will be able to invite the deity to reside within it. Various canons of proportions are discovered in the texts on image-making which mostly propose the face-length as the module (*tala*) for the figure. The systematic ordering of icons

29 *Above* Doorway to the Dashavatara temple, Deogarh, sixth century, showing the river goddesses elevated at either side, guardians, protective couples and auspicious female figures

30 *Right* Ritual sexual exhibitionism—the Kandariya Mahadeva temple, Khajuraho, eleventh century

according to their measurements is accompanied by equally particular classifications based upon facial expression, posture, hand gesture, costume, ornament and colour.

Protection of the temple

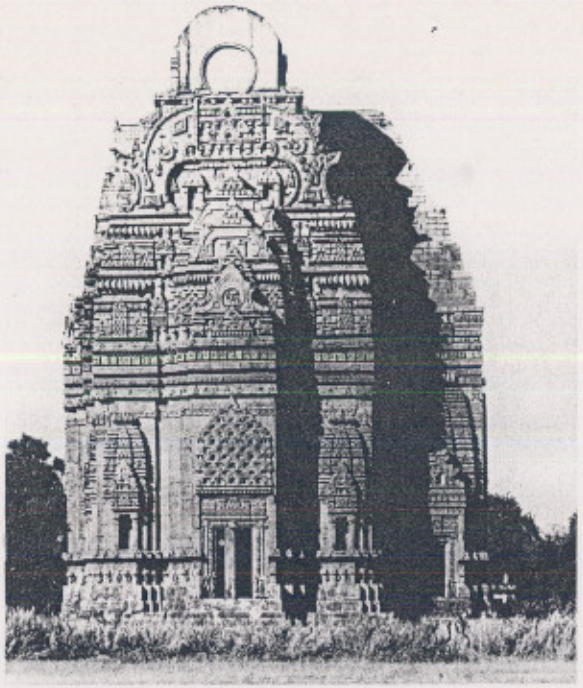
The sanctity of the temple naturally requires protection at all times from unwanted negative forces, sometimes personified as evil spirits or demons. In fact, the whole programme of erecting a temple is replete with rituals to provide adequate protection at vulnerable moments in the building process,

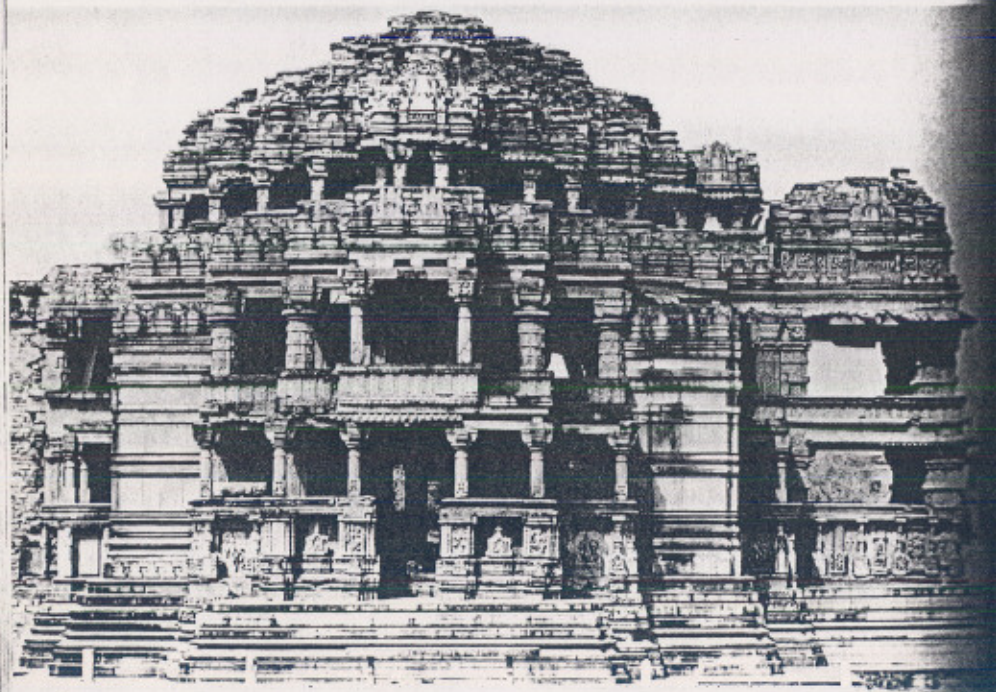
in particular the selection of the site, the drawing of the plan upon the ground, the laying of the foundation stones, and the final stage of building when the finial is placed on the summit of the superstructure. When completed, the temple continues to need protection as a place where the power of the divinity radiates outwards for the benefit of the community. The symbolic processes that permit the temple to be identified with the scheme of the cosmos and with the world of the gods are also in need of beneficial influences.

Many of the rituals performed in the temple are undertaken for the sake of security and as a source of prosperity and good health for the worshipper. Likewise, much of the art in the temple functions in this dual role. This is particularly true of the motifs and images that decorate the doorway or entrance to a temple or enclosure, the most vulnerable part of a sacred structure and the one most in need of protection from evil forces, real or invisible (Fig. 29). Protection is also required at the most critical moment in the fashioning of a sacred image—the carving or painting of the eyes of the image which are then 'opened'. At this point the image becomes a potential receptacle for the divinity. The magical aspect of Hindu temple art is seen in the numerous minor deities, guardians and attendant figures that surround the sacred image once it is installed, their powers of protection emanating from them. Coupled figures and demonic masks also appear as part of the repertoire of motifs which function in a protective manner.

Among the motifs that provide protection in the Hindu temple are erotic female images, the displayed female *yoni*, and ritual sexual exhibitionism in which the conjunction of male and female is stressed (Fig. 30). The only convincing explanation for the constant appearance of these motifs throughout the history of Hindu temple architecture as decoration, especially at doorways, would seem to be that they function as ornamentation imbued with magical powers. The fact that erotic images are continually found on temples, whereas other decorative motifs may be omitted, suggests that eroticism has a uniquely auspicious significance. Almost certainly this significance is bound up with the protection of the temple and the continuance and well-being of the community which it serves. The same is true of many of the other motifs that recur in Hindu temple art. From the Vedas onwards, Indian religion is full of prayers for the propagation of life and survival of the community. This is the cogent explanation for the copulating figures and emblems of fertility found on Hindu temples. Even sexual deviations, where they are depicted in the art of the temple, are an expression of life, which above all the Hindu temple embodies.

PART TWO
The Forms of the Temple





of attendant figures, especially musicians and amorous couples depicted in a variety of sexual postures. In its architectural features the Surya temple shows a continuation of the Orissan style: the roof of the hall has three storeys with free-standing female musicians in the recesses. In front of the temple is a detached columned hall, presumably for music and dancing according to the carved figures depicted on the plinth and pillars (Fig. 56). The Surya temple displays an overall exuberance of both architectural and sculptural forms in which the richness of carved surfaces plays a dominating part. Thereafter, a stylistic decline sets in and later Orissan temples imitate earlier architectural forms without the accompanying rich surface treatment. This is well illustrated in the Jagannatha temple at Puri.

The northern style under the Pratiharas and Chandellas (eighth to eleventh centuries)

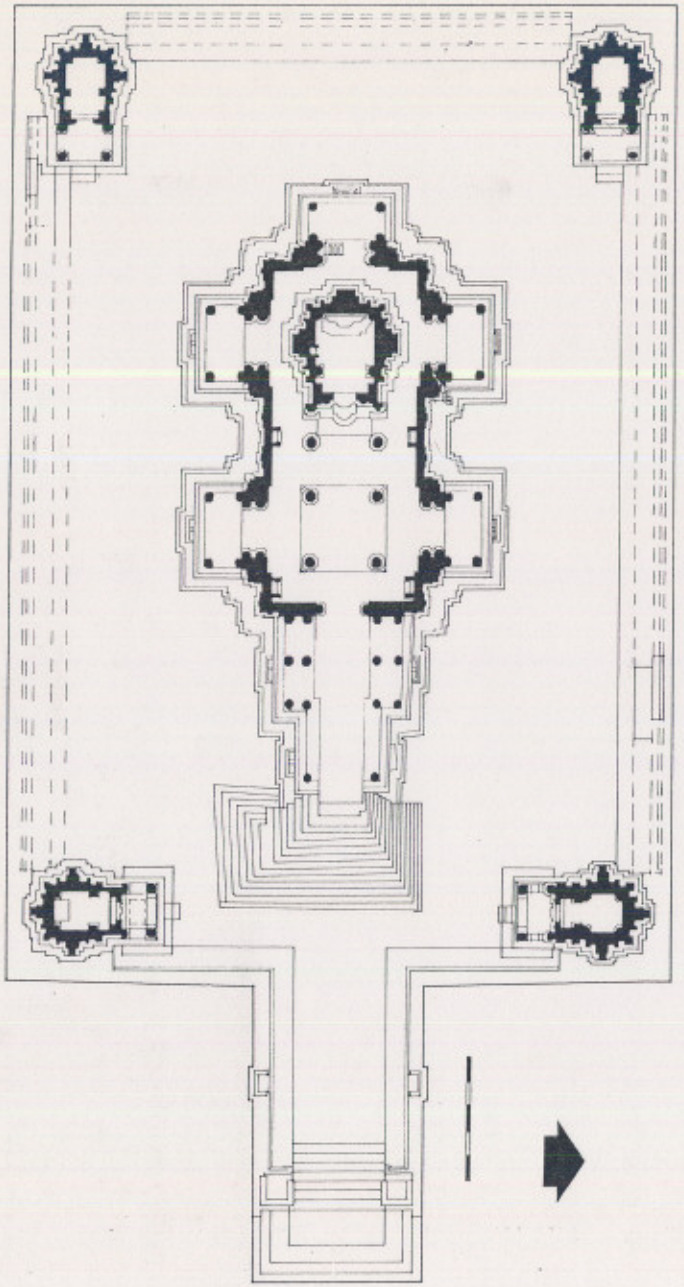
Much of central northern India from the eighth century onwards was under the influence of the Pratihara rulers, who erected many small temples at various sites. Most of these structures incorporate the characteristic northern stylistic features—square sanctuary with projecting niches, carved doorway and tower with curved profile, surmounting ribbed motif and arched projection—not unlike similar Early Chalukya temples. By the ninth century, however, distinct stylistic innovations appeared, as may be observed in the Telika Mandir at Gwalior (Fig. 57). This temple has an unusual rectangular sanctuary above which rises the superstructure in a massive barrel vault. The end elevations of the temple present a complex series of interlocking horseshoe arched motifs at different scales, which extend into the horizontal divisions of the tower and function as pediments above the niches and doorways. Over the next few centuries, temples at Gwalior were to exhibit unusual features—especially in their open multi-tiered halls (Fig. 58).

From the middle of the tenth century, Pratihara rule was replaced by the Chandella kingdom which dominated much of central India for the following two hundred years. At Khajuraho, one of its capital cities, over thirty stone temples survive which span the period of Chandella rule, providing evidence of a distinctive and coherent architectural movement. The Khajuraho temples mark the culmination of the northern style in its central Indian expression and reveal clearly defined characteristics in both plan and vertical elevation. Furthermore, the stylistic evolution of the Khajuraho temples attests to the inventiveness of local architectural traditions, which aimed at achieving increasingly complex effects of outer elevational appearance in which the rhythmic modelling of building masses dissolved the barriers between architectural and sculptural forms.

The Khajuraho temples are each elevated on a high terrace providing an ambulatory around the temple, and in some examples, such as the Lakshmana

57 *Opposite top* Telika Mandir temple, Gwalior, ninth century: the upper portions recently restored

58 *Opposite bottom* Sasbahu temple, Gwalior, eleventh century



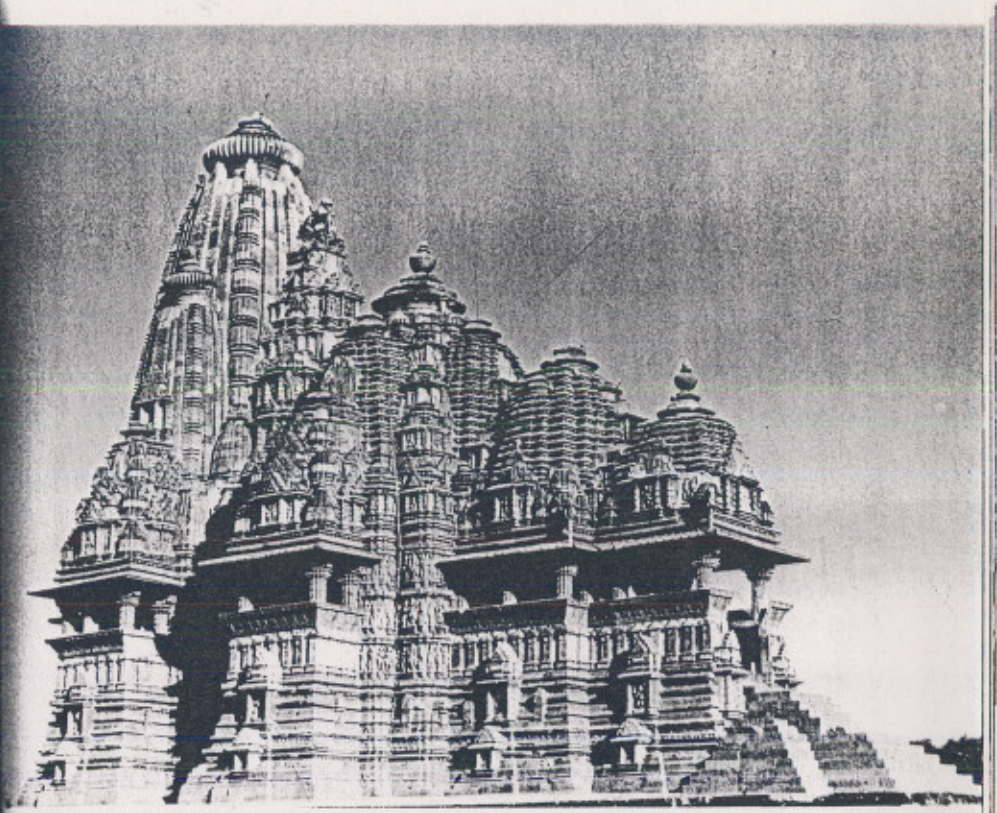
59 Plan of the Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, tenth century: the principal sanctuary is surrounded by four small shrines, the whole being elevated

60 Musicians from a temple plinth, Khajuraho, tenth century

temple, subsidiary shrines are introduced at the four corners of the platform, rendering the structure a five-shrined complex (*panchayatana*) (Fig. 59). The essential elements of the temple, connected internally on an east-west axis, consist of an entrance porch, hall, vestibule and sanctuary. The latter is usually surrounded on three sides by an ambulatory passageway, and open balconies admit light to the hall and passageway. There are some examples of detached pavilions housing images of the vehicles of the gods to whom the temples are dedicated.

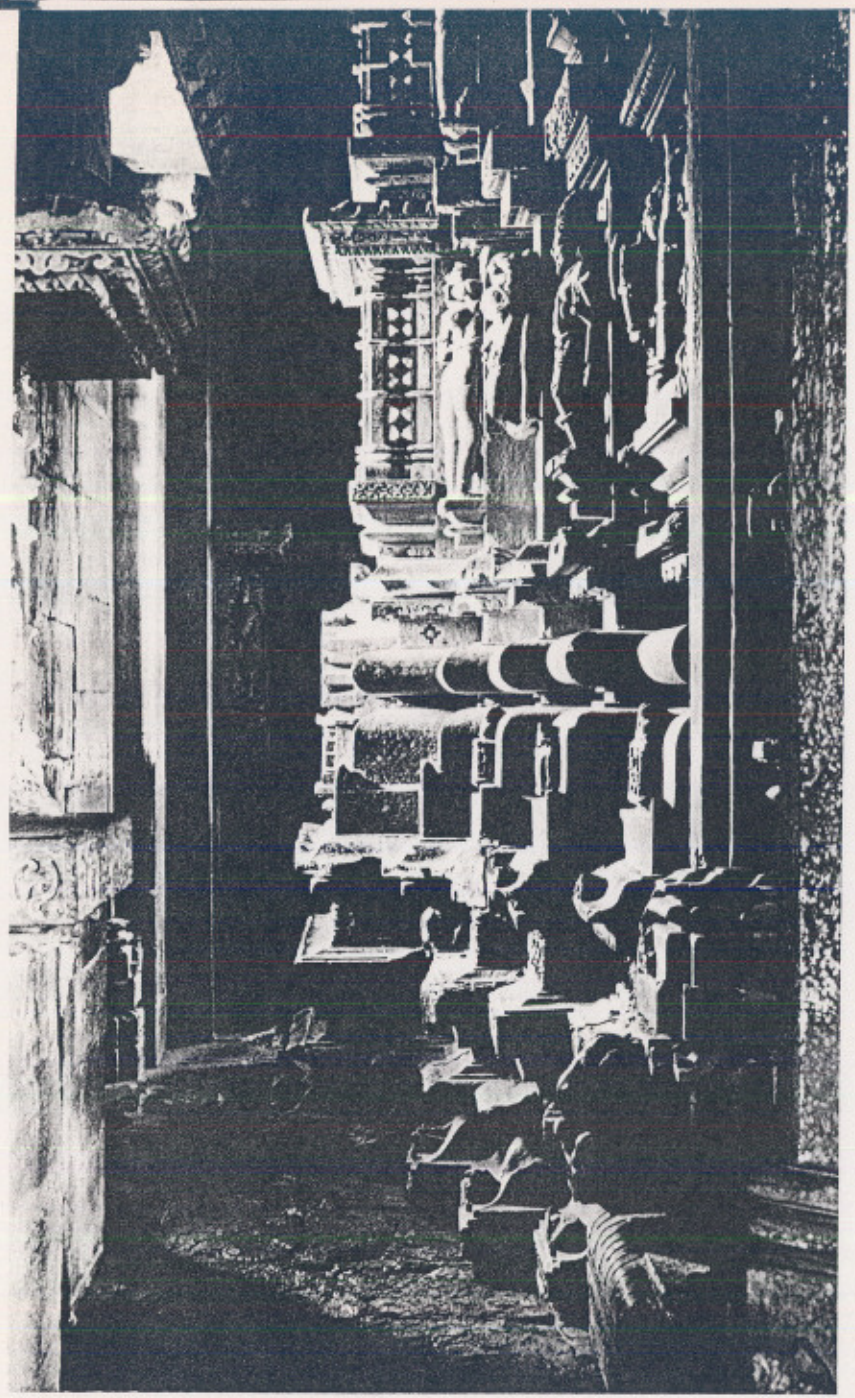
The lower part of the typical Khajuraho temple is deeply moulded into a high plinth, sometimes furnished with horizontal narrative friezes or attendant figures (Fig. 21); also miniature niches for subsidiary images. Above the plinth, and in continuation of its complex outline, rise the walls of the temple, mostly divided into two or more registers by horizontal mouldings. Each of the projections and recesses of the walls is deeply carved with cult images, attendant figures, auspicious couples posed in attitudes of sexual exhibitionism, and rearing animals (Figs 30, 61). The walls are broken by the voids of the balconies, whose lower portions have angled seating-slabs; the outspread decoration is introduced at the principal entrance to the temple where brackets are carved in the semblance of aquatic monsters and garlands.

Above rises the complex roof scheme of the temple, creating the distinctive



61 *Left* Royal couple from temple at Khajuraho, eleventh century
62 *Above* Vishvanatha temple, Khajuraho, eleventh century

silhouette of the temple masses for which Khajuraho is celebrated. Early examples display a single tower with a curved outline surmounted by a ribbed fruit motif and pot finial; the surfaces have a number of projecting bands and are divided into 'storeys' by ribbed motifs. The beginnings of stylistic evolution are seen in the tenth century Lakshmana temple, where a reproduction of the main form of the tower is introduced onto the middle of each side of the principal shaft; the projection on the front face of the tower is in the form of an elaborate niche framing an icon of the god within the temple. Horseshoe arched forms are interwoven to create mesh designs which are everywhere employed. In the Vishvanatha and Kandariya Mahadeva temples erected in the eleventh century the principal shaft of the superstructure is almost completely obscured by a clustering group of miniature towers which grow in number as they descend, providing a summit for each of the projections of the walls beneath. The balconies are



63 Ambulatory passageway within the Vishvanatha temple, Khajuraho, lit by open porches

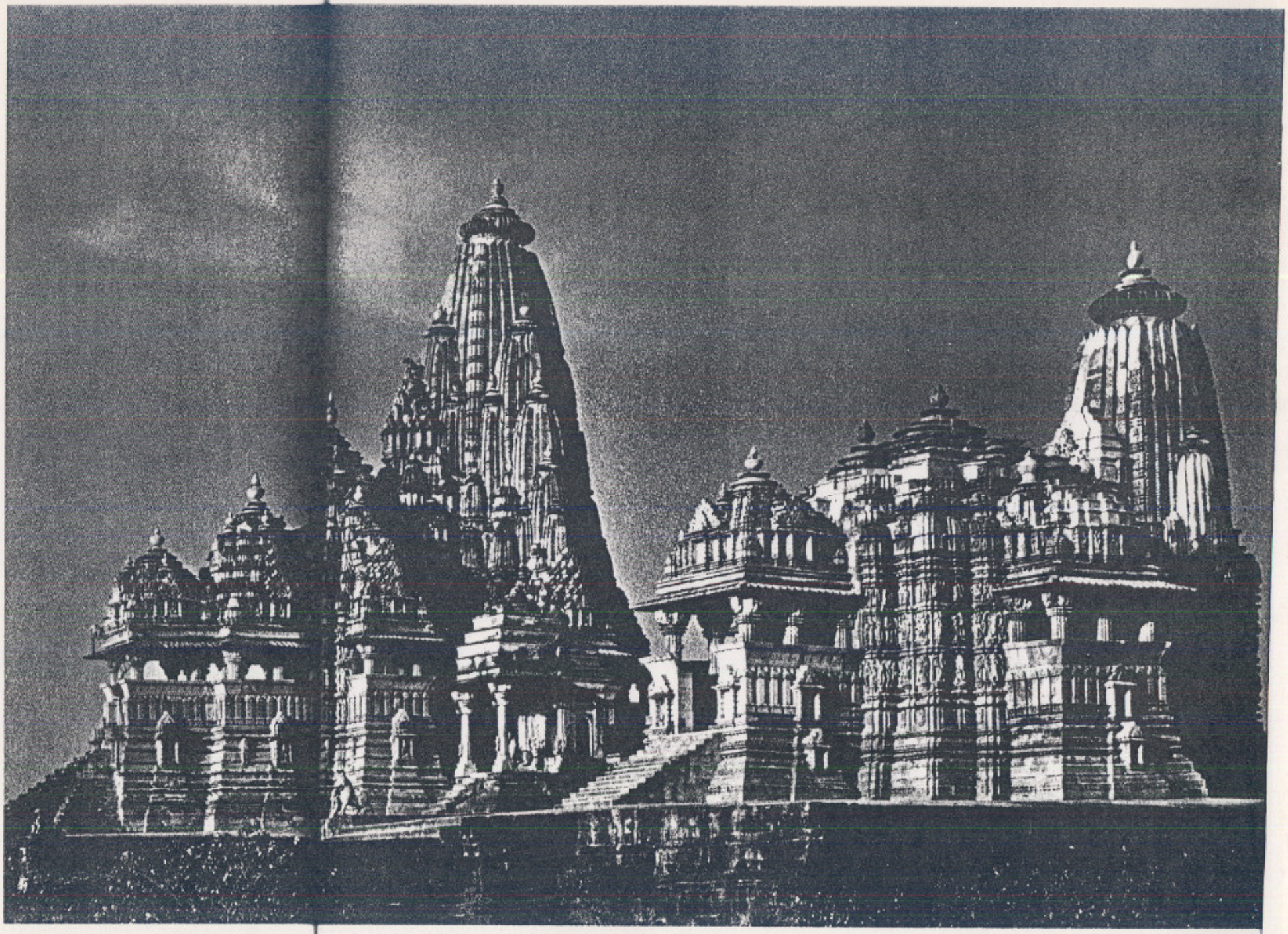
surmounted by niches which are identical to that projecting from the superstructure and include free-standing mythical animals. The roofs of the halls and porches consist of pyramidal arrangements of horizontal mouldings separated by deep recesses and surmounted by pot finials. The profiles of the temples are dramatically devised, ascending towards the summit of the superstructure above the sanctuary to provide a climax to the temple mass (Fig. 62).

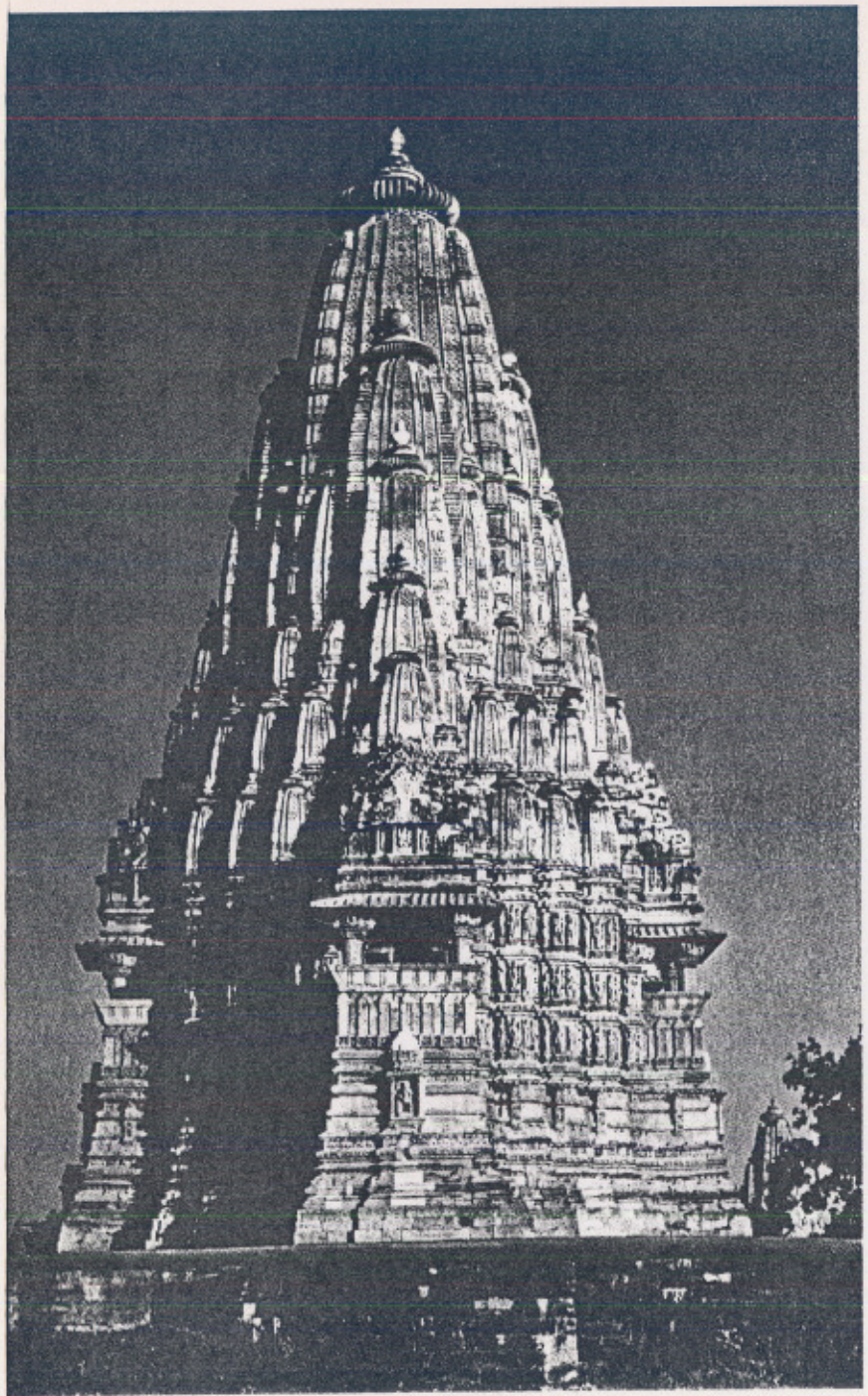
The interiors of the Khajuraho temples are characterized by their tall slender columns with brackets of projecting imps and auspicious females supporting beams decorated with foliage designs. The chief interest is provided by the dome-like ceiling above the central spaces of the porches and halls; these are frequently sculptured with lobe-like cusps rising in diminishing circles or ellipses to a pendant lotus bud. The doorway to the sanctuary is elaborately carved in the characteristic northern manner, and the images in niches in the outer walls are illuminated by a subtle lighting from the open balconies (Fig. 63).

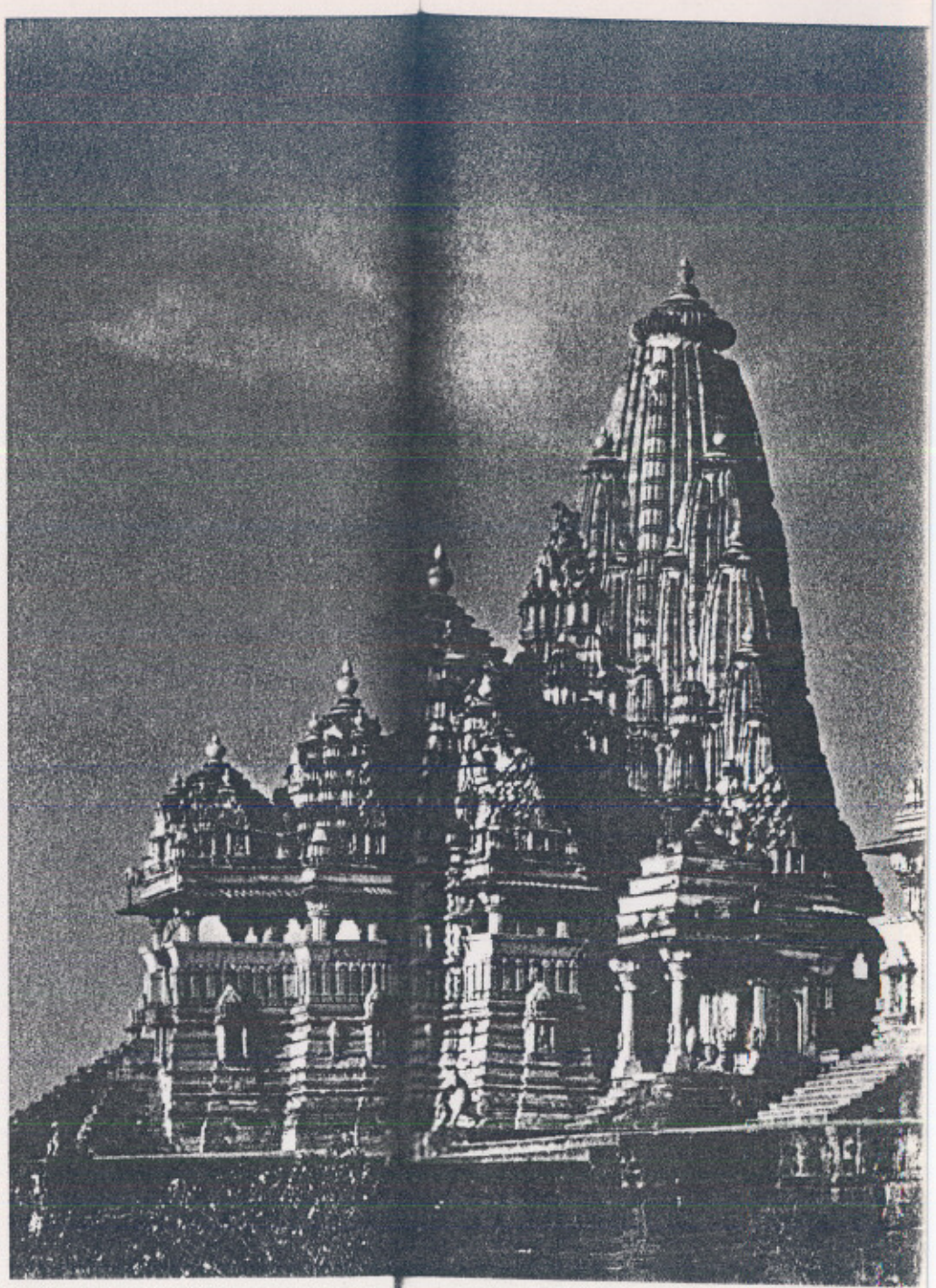
The northern style under the Maitrakas and Solankis (eighth to thirteenth centuries)

The earliest temples of Gujarat are attributed to the Maitraka rulers who gained control of the region in the seventh century. The Maitraka temples are small buildings of simple plan, with superstructures created by a series of diminishing stepped mouldings decorated with bold horseshoe arched 'windows'. A number of temples of this class are known at various sites throughout Gujarat. The temples at Roda, dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, are typical of another group of monuments in Gujarat executed in the northern stylistic formula. These temples have square sanctuaries provided with single or triple projections and adjoin a small porch. In the more developed examples, horizontal bands divide the walls into two registers and there is the utilization of ornamental friezes of garlands and bells. The towers of these temples are mostly covered with the characteristic mesh design with a large and flattened ribbed motif above. The niche on the front of the tower is greatly projected in the Roda temples, its triangular shape being created from a manipulation of arched forms.

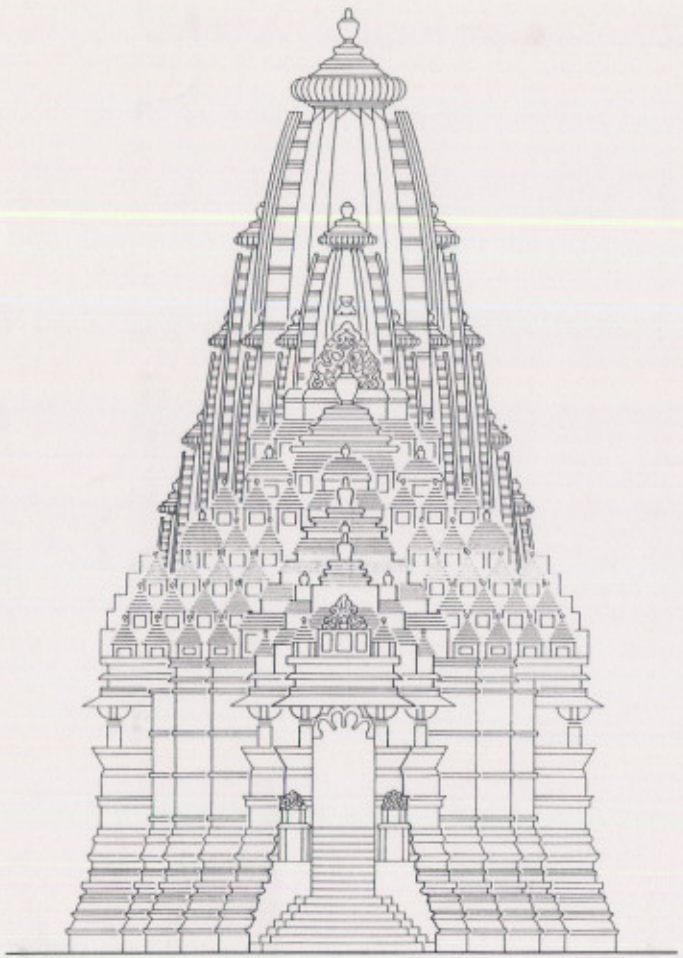
Under the Solanki kings who succeeded the Maitrakas early in the eleventh century, Gujarat developed a distinctive and prolific regional architectural style. One of the earliest temples to be built in the new style was the Surya temple at Modhera, the capital of the Solanki empire. Now in a ruined state, the temple consists of two structures and an artificial tank aligned along an east-west axis (Fig. 64). The columned hall is arranged with its long side transversely disposed towards the principal orientation of the temple complex, its plan spreading outwards in a number of projecting bays. Here are found many of the characteristic features of the Solanki version of the northern temple style. Balcony-slabs of the hall are divided into panels carved with attendant figures above which rise the columns with vase and foliage motifs at their bases. The capitals of these columns are

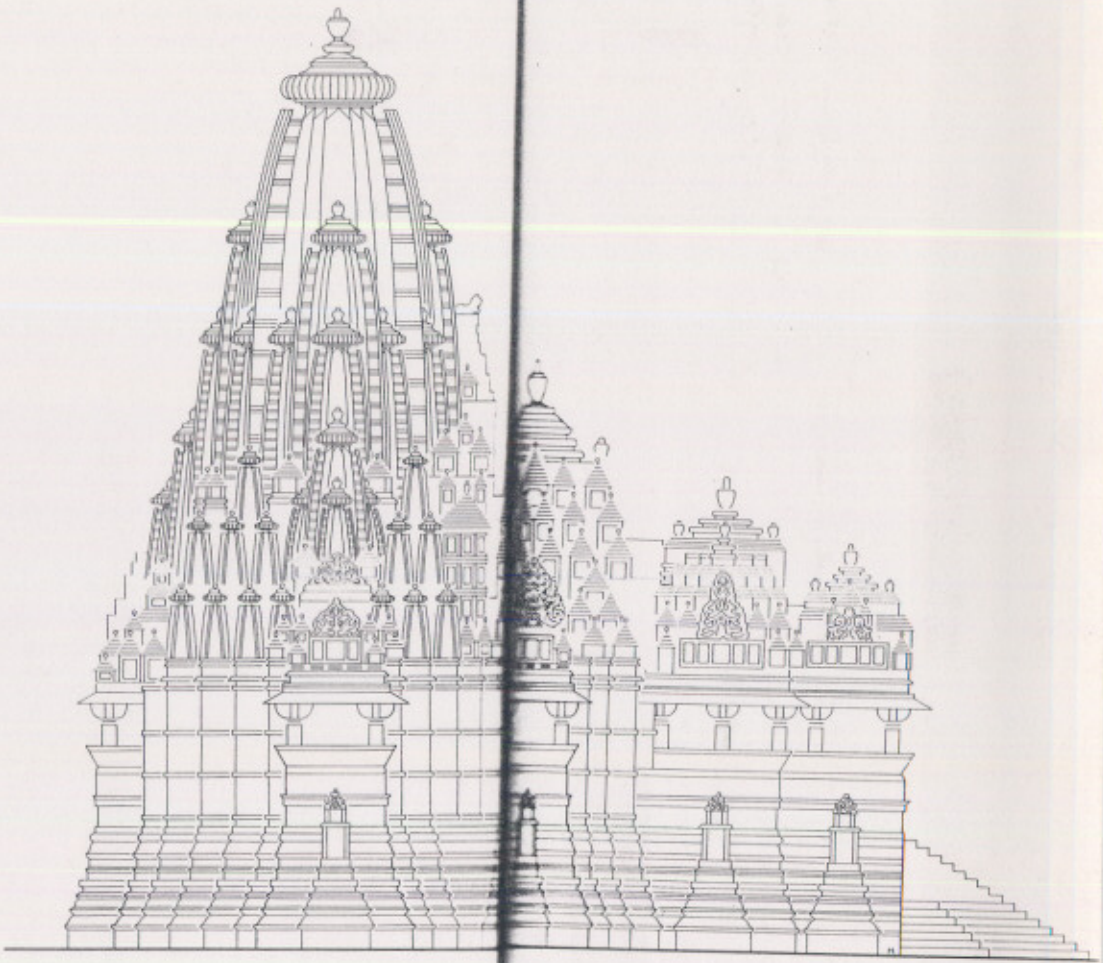


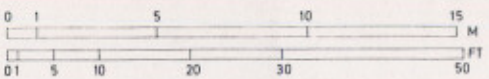


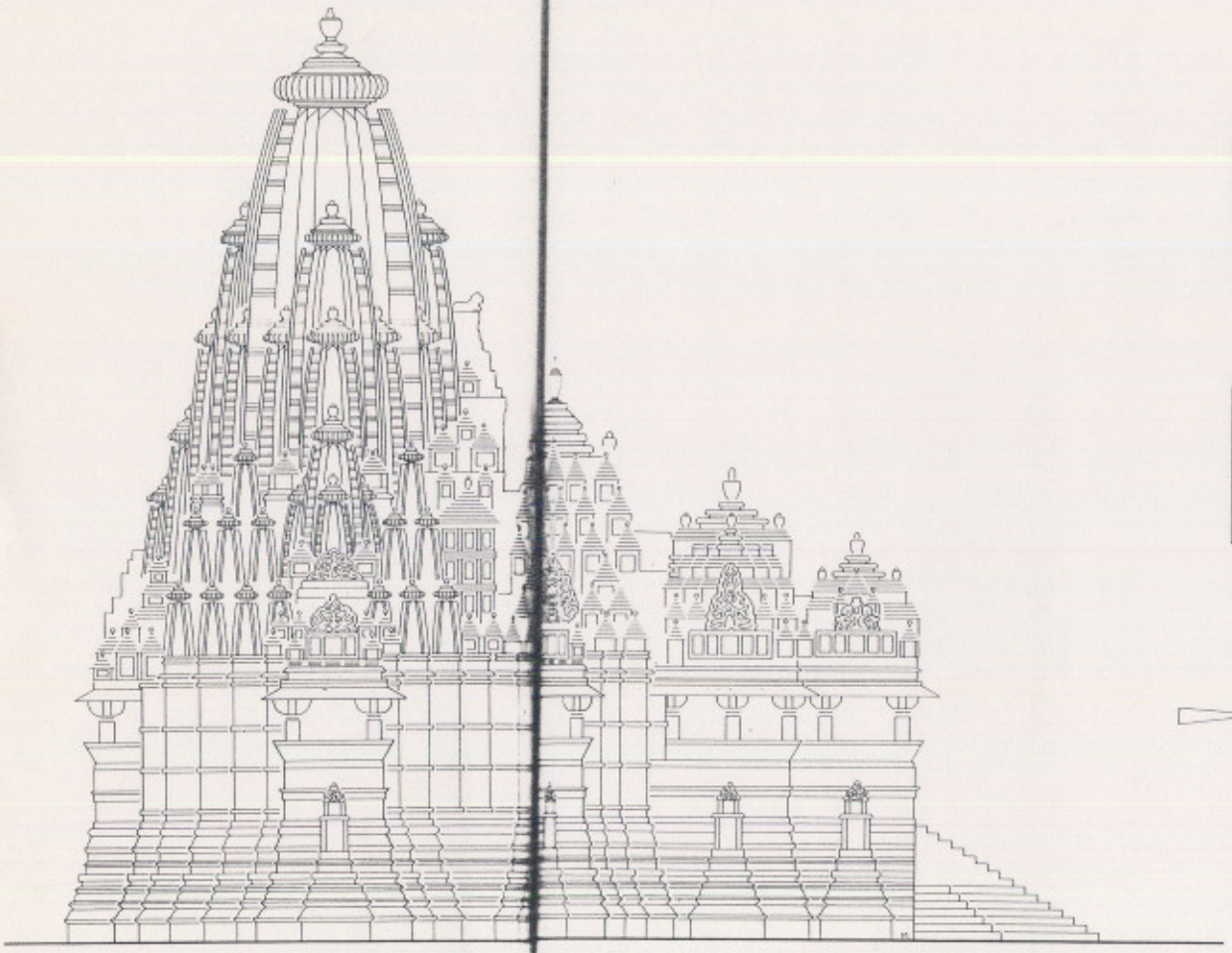


The Kandāriya Mahādeo temple at Khajurāho
Ground-plan and elevation 1:250









1 Garbha-griha
2 Interior pradakshinā-patha
3 Mandapa
4 Artha-mandapa