

CHAPTER 2

Techniques, Styles and Forms

A. Background

From the second half of the fourteenth century the empire of Vijayanagara encompassed territories from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, across the Deccan plateau and southern India. These regions had once seen the rule of the renowned dynasties of the Chalukyas, Cholas, Pandyas and Hoysalas, with different artistic traditions, each of which found its way into what was eventually to become 'Vijayanagara art'.

As far as sculpture is concerned, the developments are less obviously traceable than in architecture. On the one hand, there is strong attachment to long established forms, on the other, there is an undeniable fascination with newly popular forms. The local folk tradition, as seen for instance in memorial slabs commemorating the death of heroes, the self-immolation of widows, and numerous snake-stones, had a direct bearing on Vijayanagara aesthetics in the fourteenth and part of the fifteenth centuries. This epoch is characterised by a preference for shallow relief carvings disposed in bands, depicting vigorous figures, preferably in movement: marching, running, and dancing. The Tamil influence that played such a determinant role in architecture was also instrumental in the development of sculpture. Shallow relief was abandoned in favour of a bolder and more elaborate technique. In the sixteenth-century Vijayanagara artists had evolved their own style which, when disseminated throughout the empire, was to be further elaborated by the successors of the Vijayanagara imperial power.

B. Materials and Techniques

Granite is the first medium to be considered as it was the material commonly used by the Vijayanagara artists. Imposing monolithic

compositions were carved out of individual boulders. Reliefs on walls, pillars and columns of religious buildings were carved on granite quarried at the site itself. The particular texture of this material, however, makes it prone to flaking and surface alterations,¹ thus the comparative rarity of well-finished sculptures and the rendering of intricate details. The vast majority of the sculptures are roughly, sometimes even crudely, executed. This quality, however, was not important as the reliefs were covered with a thin layer of plaster, enabling artists to conceal the unevenness of the stone and improve on detail. Finally, they were painted in lively colours.

It is unfortunate that the granite of sculptures is no longer covered with the original plaster work and, therefore, the fine and sensitive modelling cannot now be appreciated. However, plaster work remaining on parapets and gopuras gives some indication of the high standard of workmanship that was achieved.

Extensive carvings and a small number of sculptures were made of schist, a material not found at the site, and probably imported from the Gadag region. Finely carved schist slabs were placed on the west face of the Mahanavami platform in the sixteenth century, covering up the original granite bas-reliefs. Grey-green schist is used for images of the Alvars and Acharyas found in the vicinity of the Vithala temple; since these were cult images they were executed in the round. This material enabled the artists to display their virtuosity in the rendering of details of dress, headgear and jewellery.

Stucco was extensively used in the fashioning of human figures, animals, birds and foliage motifs to decorate the parapets of mandapas, the superstructures of vimanas and the ascending storeys of gopuras. Most of this fragile plaster work has been eroded by the elements. Even so,

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it is clear from the remaining fragments that the artists had the opportunity to lavish great care and attention in the rendering of minute variations in costumes and other motifs.

Relief carving

There is an extensive use of shallow relief, as if the sculptors were seeking to achieve a two-dimensional, almost pictorial, effect in stone. This technique seems to have been used mostly in friezes, as seen in the shallow reliefs on the lower tiers on the south face of the Mahanavami platform, which is among the earliest building projects at the site, probably dating around the close of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the next. The carvings are disposed in flat bands without foreshortening or perspective. A more sophisticated version of the same style is exemplified in the friezes decorating the exterior and interior faces of the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple. Further examples are the aquatic motifs carved on the inner and outer faces of the enclosure wall of the Malyavanta Raghunatha temple.

A bolder relief was used in wall panels: for instance, in the narratives on the principal and the minor shrines in the Ramachandra temple complex, as well as in the four magnificent pillars of the rangamandapa in front of the principal sanctuary of the same complex. The figures stand out from the stone, and the decorative motifs surrounding them are carved in a shallow relief. This juxtaposition of bold and shallow relief is common in ceiling medallions where figural motifs are boldly carved in contrast with floral and vegetal motifs in low relief.

At the end of the fifteenth century and during the sixteenth century, the shallow relief technique is used sparingly. It occurs mainly in decorative patterns, as in the festoon and bead motifs on the pilasters on the external walls of the sacred buildings. While there continued to be narrow friezes on the basements of palaces and sacred buildings, monumental wall friezes and wall carvings ceased to be in fashion. Attention tended to centre on the embellishment of newly built pillared halls. Sculptors started experimenting with new techniques on pillars. Composite pillars, constituted by central shafts

and clusters of subsidiary colonnettes and piers adorned with three-dimensional leaping animals, became the focus of their artistic and technical efforts. These leaping or rearing mythical beasts 'emerging' from the pillars were to become the hallmark of mature Vijayanagara art and a source of great inspiration for the art of the seventeenth-century Nayakas. Moreover, not only mythical beasts, but also divine and human figures started to free themselves from the supporting pillars, thereby giving the impression of free-standing statues. The striking group of Vaishnava images in the north hall of the mahamandapa of the Vithala temple (1554), is the first example of this new technique at the site. A few years later the capital was sacked, but the idea of an almost free-standing statue emerging from a pillar had already been invented at the site.

Apart from the monumental Lakshmi-Narasimha² and the Ganesha on the slopes of Hemakuta hill,³ free-standing statues are no longer in situ. Beautifully finished schist images of the Alvares, courtly figures and sacred images both in granite and schist are now preserved in the local Archaeological Museum at Kamalapuram.

C. Spatial Organization

Processional friezes

The obvious choice for an extensive set of narrative carvings is either the wall of a temple or any other suitably large surface which can easily accommodate sculpted friezes. Thus the lowest tier of the Mahanavami platform and the outer face of the Ramachandra temple complex enclosure were chosen for the depiction of royal activities. These two monumental friezes are similar in character. In both, processions of men and animals are shown moving clockwise towards a point: the western face on the Mahanavami platform, the eastern gateway on the Ramachandra temple. This movement may not be altogether clear in the arrangement of the friezes on the lowest tier of the Mahanavami platform, as part of it was reassembled at the beginning of this century, but the direction of the procession is remarkably well expressed in the Ramachandra carvings.

The spatial organization of the sculpted masses

differs widely. While the friezes on the Mahanavami platform, especially those depicting soldiers, have the tendency to be overcrowded (the occasional overlapping of figures is a well-known artistic device to suggest a crowd), those on the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple are unusually well balanced. Sculpted and unsculpted spaces follow each other, imparting a unique rhythmic quality to the ensemble of this monumental frieze. Moreover, the Mahanavami carvings display a greater variety and inventiveness in the layout of the friezes. Although the thrust of the movement is towards the west face, there are some parts of the friezes in which the figures move towards the east, especially in the hunting scenes of the second frieze from the bottom, on the south face of the monument. The unconventional, meandering layout of this register is interesting, because it contrasts with the rest of the frieze in which all the figures are arranged in parade order. Here, men in the heat of hunting expeditions are shown marching through the forest, unleashing their dogs, chasing, wounding and eventually killing various animals. Sometimes the hunters are themselves chased by tigers and climb trees to seek refuge. The artists' virtuosity comes to the fore in the empathy in the rendering of animals, variety of movement, and organization of space. Fleeing animals generally follow a diagonal line; animals startled by the sudden appearance of a dog or a hunter are disposed in a circular pattern: their heads face the danger they have just sensed while their bodies turn the opposite way, ready to flee. Fierce fights between a hunter and a lion or a tiger are laid out in a triangle, the apex of which is constituted by their heads, the hunter in the act of thrusting his dagger in the gaping mouth of the animal.

A tendency to compartmentalization is observed on the upper tiers of the Mahanavami platform. While on the lowermost tier there is practically no halting of the narrative between one block and the other, the carvings on the second tier, constituted by smaller blocks of granite, tend to be self-enclosed units. This trend is perfected in the uppermost tier, where elephants and horses and the architectural and decorative motifs are carefully carved in an area delimited by pilasters to give a rhythmic quality to the whole frieze. Schist carvings of the six-

teenth century continue this tradition, introducing the foliage scroll motif as a division between two scenes in the same panel.

There is yet another development: apart from framing the scene with trees, pillars, vegetal scrolls, etc., the tendency is to use smaller panels and miniature the friezes. This tendency towards minute, jewel-like work is especially visible in the schist carvings on the western face of the Mahanavami platform and the horse-traders' frieze on the basement of the mahamandapa of the Vithala temple.

Epic narratives

In the Ramachandra temple, the inner face of the enclosure wall and the walls of the rangamandapa of the principal shrine were selected by artists for the rendering of the two most renowned depictions of episodes from the *Ramayana* at the capital.

The set of carvings on the enclosure wall are due to the structure of the wall itself, executed on large slabs of granite about 80 cm wide and 3 m long, each slab depicting more than one incident. The narrative frequently overlaps the panels, flowing from one block to the next without being interrupted by the narrow frames around each block. This gives artists ample opportunity to express themselves freely and to develop narrative themes with richness of detail and humour. Each slab is connected to the preceding and following ones by the movement of the figures, often looking backwards or forwards to adjacent panels, propelling the story to its inevitable climax (see Appendix I, C). The technique, vigorous throughout, is endowed with the same energy and vitality as that on the lower tiers of the Mahanavami platform, and the processional frieze on the outer face of the wall of the Ramachandra complex, though without the courtly formality of the latter.

There is, however, a substantial difference between the carvings on the inner face of the enclosure wall and those on the principal shrine. While on the enclosure the narrative flows unhindered from one block to the next, the narrative on the shrine is constituted by 108 individual panels (see Appendix I, A). Here, too, there is a compartmentalisation of each carving. This consequent division of one scene

from the next is partly due to the wall with its pilasters placed at regular intervals, and partly to a stylistic device in which most of the lower tier panels are framed by an arch. This framing device has been abandoned in the case of the panels on the upper tier, which incidentally, are somewhat smaller in size and not as elaborately finished as the bottom tier. In this case there is no connection between one scene and the next, each episode being treated as a tableau laid out around the main characters of the incident. The same phenomenon can be observed in the carvings on the adjacent minor shrine, dating probably from the last quarter of the fifteenth century (see Appendix I, B).

The *Ramayana* carvings on the gopura of the Ramanuja temple, probably of the early sixteenth century, come as a surprise.⁴ The carvings, generally small in size, are laid out in a very intricate way around the building (see Appendix II). The style demonstrates that the artists were drawing inspiration from the great narrative sets of the Sangama epoch, as evident in the large carvings sculpted in the entryway of the gopura.

The reliefs of the Virupaksha and Krishna temples are the last examples of carvings on temple walls at the site: the former probably executed at the close of the fifteenth century, the latter in the second decade of the next.

Here, the pilasters, kumbha-panjaras and niches determining the rhythm of the wall have no bearing on the carvings. The scenes illustrated on these monuments are not drawn from a single narrative but are a collection of various Vaishnava or Shaiva topics connected to each other only by overall religious affiliation. In the Krishna temple, however, there is an exception. The sculptures on the outer wall of the sanctuary, visible from the circumambulation path inside the temple itself, are largely inspired by the Krishna-lila.

D. Depiction of Figures

Sculptors at the site generally followed the traditional guidelines for the representation of the divine personages. For the portrayal of human beings, however, they relied more on observation than on prescriptions of the texts, which generally read 'In the case of those born

of woman, one should exercise one's own judgement. . . .'⁵

This apparent lack of 'reference material' compelled Vijayanagara sculptors to create a type of human figure which would satisfy the aesthetic ideals of their patrons. A source of inspiration for the creation of human figures in the early Sangama period were images carved on the hero stones. The figures on the early monuments display the same physical type as those on memorial stones. Both male and female figures are characterized by robust yet well-proportioned bodies, either shown in vigorous action, or as the case with many female figures on sati-stones, in dignified and majestic stillness. Physical power, expressivity and immediacy are perhaps the most typical characteristics of the early-Vijayanagara figures. These expressionistic qualities were probably those which baffled the early writers on Vijayanagara art.⁶

Influenced possibly by works of art from the Telugu and Tamil countries, a slightly more elongated and elegant type of figure gradually evolved during the fifteenth century. Sculptures on the walls of the two shrines of the Ramachandra complex exemplify this gradual change in taste. The new idiom, further refined, gained popularity in the sixteenth century. Examples are the schist carvings on the western face of the Mahanavami platform, the exquisite granite carvings of the avatars of Vishnu adorning the basement of the mahamandapa of the Vithala temple, and the stucco images fashioned with great delicacy and sensitivity on the gopuras of the Vithala and Malyavanta Raghunatha temples. This sixteenth-century type of figure, with a relatively elongated face and nimble body, was further developed by artists of the Nayaka period.

Changes in the aesthetic perception of the human figure through the Sangama, Saluva and Tuluva eras have been accentuated by changes in fashion, hairstyle and jewellery to be discussed below.

Profile and frontality

Since the early years of Vijayanagara sculpture, men and women have, in numerous carvings on the lower tiers of the Mahanavami platform, been shown in a variety of ways: in profile, three-

quarter profile and frontally. The figures are agile, immensely vital and full of power. There is a great interest in the rendering of movement: apart from royal figures seated on thrones or platforms, everyone seems to be walking, jumping, running, dancing, hunting or wrestling, thus imparting an extraordinary liveliness to the monument.

Most of the figures carved on the older parts of the Mahanavami platform have faces in profile, with frontal torsos but legs again in profile. Among the reliefs here are many examples of figures carved frontally, as for instance the three male dancers on the lowermost tier, south face, fourth register. An impressive array of frontal male figures is carved on the rear wall of the eastern 'chamber' in the same platform. Here are gate-keepers, musicians and dancers, the majority of whom wears outlandish garb and headgear. Carved in bold relief, with great care as far as facial features and details of the costumes are concerned, these vigorous figures stand out among the carvings of the earliest phase of the platform. The general impression is one of movement and unrestrained vitality.

As noted elsewhere, the processional carvings on the exterior of the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple share much in theme, layout, general appearance and costumes with those of the earlier parts of the Mahanavami platform. In this case, however, these parading, wrestling and dancing figures have all a dignified, slightly remote air which contrasts with the vitality of the figures on the Mahanavami platform, and with the immediacy of the *Ramayana* narrative on the inner face of the same wall. The rhythmic quality of the layout of the processional friezes, the careful execution of the carvings, and the exquisite finish stifled spontaneity in favour of an unparalleled elegance. Most of the figures are shown in profile, although there is the occasional frontal depiction, such as that of the foreign horse trader on the second register, on the east side.

The characters animating the *Ramayana* narrative situated on the inner face of the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple complex derive from carvings on the Mahanavami platform. There are, however, some changes: the figures are no longer carved in shallow relief, but emerge boldly from the stone.

The folkish air which pervades the carvings on the older part of the Mahanavami platform has been replaced by courtly sophistication. The artists are now status-conscious, rendering the most important characters in the story larger than the others. They are no longer gesticulating, and their demeanour is more restrained. This tendency toward a more subdued depiction of gestures and emotions is admirably exemplified in the *Ramayana* carvings on the main shrine of the same complex. Here the figures have lost the immediacy which was one of the characteristics of early Vijayanagara sculpture, in favour of a stifling formality. This is emphasized, as noted above, by the strict division of the narrative in panels. As in the previous instances, figures appear in profile. Especially impressive are courtly scenes, such as the putrakameshti yajna performed by the deer-headed sage Rishyashringa, or the arrival of the ascetic Vishvamitra in the hall where king Dasharatha is seated in the company of his sons. The size of the figures varies according to status, as in the first mentioned example where the sage Rishyashringa is the larger of the two figures. His importance is further enhanced by the fact that he is seated on a tall stool, while the king stands before him in obeisance. In the second example, the pivotal figure is the king who is larger than the others. There are many other instances of figures depicted frontally, as for example, Lakshmana, who stands resting his left hand on the bow and carrying an arrow in his right, in the panel representing the killing of the demoness Tataka. The demoness, with dishevelled hair and round eyes—physiognomical traits typical of the asuras—is shown in three-quarters profile, on the verge of collapse, pierced by Rama's arrow. Her uplifted arms convey her distress.

In the highly sophisticated sixteenth-century schist carvings on the western face of the Mahanavami platform there are occasional examples of figures in three-quarters view. This is observed in the numerous dancing scenes in which, for instance, dancers turn their heads to look at a person standing in the middle of the panel although their bodies are depicted frontally. Another example of figures in three-quarters profile is in the top row of carvings on the west face of the platform where

a noble man gently lifts the chin of a lady.

Sacred images carved on boulders and pillars and in niches, are generally depicted frontally. This is true for the sets of carvings on the rock shelf at Koti-tirtha depicting the ten incarnations of Vishnu and the twenty-four aspects of the same deity,⁷ the group of Shaiva deities and ascetics on the three boulders on the ridge to the north of the Royal Centre,⁸ the images of Durga and Bhairava located on the pilasters in the eastern gateway of the Ramachandra temple complex, the ten incarnations of Vishnu in niches in the basement of mahamandapa of the Vithala temple. The frontal portrayal of the deities is hardly surprising because of the conviction that contact between deity and devotee is established through darshana.

Some deities are shown in profile. Particularly good examples are the striding Hanuman and striding Garuda, whose faces and legs are in profile while the torsos face the viewer.

In the case of religious images, Vijayanagara artists generally followed the long-established iconographic tradition prevalent in southern India which did not permit much improvisation. However, they introduced variations in the iconographic repertoire, and created new images such as the image of Madana-gopala, as on the Ramachandra temple, west wall of the vimana, or the already mentioned striding Garuda, derived from the striding Hanuman.

E. Costumes

Courtiers

Male attire is simple in the early Sangama period. The 'royal figure' depicted in numerous carvings on the Mahanavami platform and on the exterior of the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple is clad in a short dhoti or lungi ending above the knee. A conspicuous yajnopavita generally appears on his bare chest. He wears necklaces, earrings, armlets, bracelets and anklets. The hair is tied in a large bun resting on the nape of the neck. Noteworthy is the attire of the 'royal hunter' in a carving on the lowest tier, second row, on the south face of the Mahanavami platform. He wears the usual bun at the back of the head, sports a beard and a conspicuous

moustache. The dhoti reaching to his knees forms a small fan in front. A dagger with an elaborate handle is stuck in the dhoti. Earrings, two necklaces, armlets and bracelets complete his dress.

Two major innovations in costumes are seen in the sculpted portraits of king Mallikarjuna and his chauri-bearer Shirangu that grace the entrance to the sanctuary of the so-called Anjaneya temple.⁹ The long scarf thrown over one arm, forming a loop near the left shoulder, a sign of royalty, is worn here for the first time by Mallikarjuna. The most important change in costume, however, is the kulayi worn by the king and his chauri-bearer. Both Mallikarjuna and Shirangu wear a cloth or girdle tied around the waist over the lower garment which appears to be longer than in the earlier period. Both are apparently bare-foot and bare-chested.¹⁰

The most typical item of sixteenth-century courtly attire is the kulayi. There are, however, slight variations in size, denoting the status of the wearer, and in fashion. For example, two tassels or streamers enhance the kulayi worn by the 'royal figure' carved on the pillars in the subsidiary shrine of the Tiruvengalanatha temple. Sixteenth-century visitors to the city often mention the kulayi worn by royal figures. Domingo Paes describes Krishnadevaraya as wearing 'on his head a cap of brocade in fashion like a Galician helmet, covered with a piece of fine stuff all of fine silk'.¹¹ Fernao Nuniz writes: 'on the head they wear caps of brocade which they call culaes'.¹²

The high-necked, full-sleeved and close-fitting shirt or jacket is yet another important innovation in sixteenth-century fashion. It has no collar and is buttoned down the front. This item of dress, either waist length or full length, seems to have been popular among courtiers.¹³

The sixteenth century also brings a greater variety of lower garment fashions, from knee-length to ankle-length. The way this item is draped is similar to the lungi, although the more elaborate, dhoti-like style is also evident. Over the lower garment is wound usually a broad girdle or sash, 'very tightly in many folds'¹⁴ sometimes covering not only the waist but the hips also.

Compared with the earliest phase of Vijaya-

nagara costume, as illustrated in the carvings on the lowest tier, south face, of the Mahanavami platform and on the exterior of the enclosure wall of the Ramachandra temple, there is less evidence of jewellery. This is probably because shirts and jackets were fashionable. Large, usually round earrings were, however, worn by all.

Little knowledge of footwear is to be gleaned from the sculptures. According to Domingo Paes, to be barefooted seems to have been a court custom.¹⁵

The scarf, first noted on the portrait sculpture of Mallikarjuna, is now worn by kings, dignitaries and other eminent persons at the court. It appears to have been first wound around the waist and then over the arm. It was folded in such a way as to form a large loop held at the crook of the left elbow. It seems to have been either a symbol of dignity or sign of importance. According to Paes, such a scarf was given as a 'token of friendship and love'.¹⁶

Soldiers

Although soldiers occur in considerable number in the carvings, these have weathered and it is difficult to discern the different costumes of the Vijayanagara troops. In the Sangama period, some soldiers wear a short lower garment; they have bare arms and chests, their hair is tied in a large bun resting on the nape of the neck, and little jewellery is worn. Soldiers belonging to another corps, armed with round shields and curved swords, wear the same attire, but for their headgear.

Sixteenth-century accounts provide literary evidence of the splendid costumes of the officers and grandees of the army, the sculpted counterpart of which has not yet been discovered at the site. After describing the sumptuous trappings of elephants and horses, Paes proceeds to the attire of the commanders:

Their head-pieces are in the manner of helmets with borders covering the neck and each has its piece to protect the face. . . . They wear on the neck gorgets (cofos) all gilded, others made of silk with plates of gold and silver, others of steel as bright as a mirror. At the waist they have swords and small battle axes and in their hands javelins with the shafts covered with gold and silver. All have their umbrellas of State made of embroidered velvet and damask, with coloured silk on the horse.¹⁷

Foreigners

Foreigners, generally identified as Arabs or Turks,¹⁸ are clad in long coats reaching to their feet, with sleeves covering their hands. Almost invariably they have beard and moustache, and apparently a long headcloth with tassels(?) hanging from the back. The sixteenth-century friezes decorating the basement of the mahamandapa of the Vithala temple depict a group of Portuguese horse-traders wearing typical hats, jackets, trousers and boots.

Female dancers

The costume of the kolata dancers remains unchanged from the fourteenth to the early fifteenth centuries. They wear pleated skirts reaching the ankles, and long hair tied in large bun or plaited. The jewellery consists of the usual items, the most typical being large round earrings. In the sixteenth-century short skirts, barely to the knee, came into vogue both for kolata and temple dancers.

Depictions of temple dancers appear in sixteenth-century carvings on the Mahanavami platform. Beneath their short skirts the dancers wear close-fitting tights. An elaborate girdle consisting of a sash ending in an elegantly pleated fan completes their attire. The hair is tied into a large knot either on the crown or at the side of the head.

Male dancers

On south face of the Mahanavami platform, in the fourth row of the lower tier, the frieze is occasionally interrupted by spirited renderings of male dancers, some wearing a ribbed cap, some others bare-headed. All have a short triangular-shaped trimmed beard, and are dressed in a skirt-like undergarment and a full-sleeved jacket with large lapels or shoulder pieces. They seem to be the prototype for the so-called 'folk-dancer', one of the most typical figures in Vijayanagara art.

This character, as much dancer as jester, is shown wearing a tall cap, sometimes with as many as three peaks, a short jacket and a lower garment fashioned out of a piece of material cut to resemble a leaf skirt. The drooping moustache

and pointed beard, as well as the typical flat tambourine or the chauris he holds in the hands, are characteristic.

Women

Apart from numerous representations of kolata dancers or tribal women clad in leaf attire, the Sangama epoch does not show a great variety of women's fashions.

Fashionable ladies in the sixteenth century wear a long sari tied below the waist. It is not clear, however, whether it is tied like a dhoti or a lungi, often with an elegant fan at the front. The girdle worn on the lower garment can be constituted by various strings, it can look like a pleated sash or it can imitate the bead-festoon motif seen on pillars; there is no end to the imaginativeness of the wearer. Hairstyles are also more diverse than in previous centuries: the bun is no longer tied at the nape of the neck but on the crown or at the side of the head. Long plaits and the low bun are still seen occasionally but are apparently out of fashion. Head ornaments are conspicuous: pins, studs, and chains. Various types of necklaces, armlets, bracelets and anklets are also in vogue. Details of jewellery can be gleaned from the accounts of foreign travellers who were overwhelmed by the riches that these women wore. Paes states that on the occasion of the Mahanavami festival, such was the weight of the golden bracelets and jewels carried by the women that they had to be supported by attendants.¹⁹ This was not an exaggeration as confirmed by the account of Nuniz who visited the capital shortly afterwards: 'These women are so richly bedecked with gold and precious stones that they are hardly able to move.'²⁰

The study of pillar carvings and memorial stones, however, reveals that ordinary women wore a simpler attire.

Ornaments

Sacred images generally wear the kirita-mukuta. This is 'slightly conical with a little flaring up of the conical cylinder towards the top, where it has a bud-shaped tip on a bulbous cushion'.²¹ A second type is the karanda-mukuta, a tiered crown reminiscent in its shape of a pile of pots.

There are various kinds of kundalas. The

most frequent are the simpler shapes: pattrakundalas, consisting of plain bands, and ratnakundalas, circular, set with gems. Neck ornaments are a solid flat kanthi worn at the base of the neck, and strings of bead or pearls, with or without pendants, falling on the chest.

An ornament peculiar to some male divine personages is the chhannavira. This is a circular flat medallion worn on the chest, kept in position by a string tied around the neck and then tied at the back of the waist. It is generally worn by Lakshmana, Krishna and Karttikeya.

Other ornaments worn on the chest are the udarabandha, generally rendered very simply, and finally the yajnopavita worn only by men.

Skandhamala are shown consisting of two strands: one encircling the shoulder at the top, the other hanging loose.

Various types of bracelets and armlets, as well as anklets complete the ensemble.

F. Representation of Nature and Architecture

Animals and birds

Animals are a great source of inspiration for Vijayanagara artists. The most spectacular example of animal sculpture occurs on the south side, lowest tier, of the Mahanavami platform where gazelles, bears, boars, tigers, lions and dogs have been rendered with an unique immediacy and empathy in forest scenes. Running, jumping, climbing on tree, mating and fighting with each other, fleeing from dogs and hunters, these animals have here the pride of place, the human figures being only accessory to the scenes. The freshness of approach, the distribution of animals in the panel, and the lively treatment of time and space sequences are unparalleled: no other animal carving at the capital can be compared with this early work.

Apart from hunting scenes, animals occur in various other contexts. Animals and mythical beasts were used as a decorative element in architecture on basement mouldings, balustrades, walls, pilasters, pillars and eaves. Thus elephants tend to appear on the walls of early Vijayanagara monuments, but in a later period on basement mouldings and balustrades.

Aquatic fauna are occasionally on the walls of temple precincts: the most outstanding example is on the interior of the enclosure wall of the Malyavanta Raghunatha temple. Fish are carved in the eastern gopura of the Krishna temple. A huge snake decorates the exterior of the enclosure wall of the Tiruvengalanatha temple, to the west of the southern door. Elegantly modelled plaster parrots grace the roofs of the vimanas while, in the interior of mandapas, parrots and other birds have been used as ornamental motif on ceiling medallions.

Numerous animals appear along with people, deities, plants and geometrical motifs and pillar blocks, one of the most popular being the squatting lion.

The most typical creations of the Vijayanagara artists are the yalis, mythical beasts, which occur as a decorative element in sixteenth-century temple pillars and balustrades.

Landscape

Rocks, mountains, rivers, ponds and seas occur rarely. Artists generally limited themselves to mountains and seas. Mountains are suggested by a pyramidal pile of semi-circular shapes, as for instance in the carving of the death of Kumbhakarna in the main shrine of the Ramachandra temple complex.²² The impressive seascapes, waters teeming with fish, turtles, crabs and all sorts of fabulous aquatic creatures, appear in the famous *Ramayana* episode relating Hanuman's tremendous leap from India to Sri Lanka. The scene appears in all major *Ramayana* narrative sequences at the site, as on the main shrine of Ramachandra complex.²³ It is found in the narrative sequence on the inner face of the enclosure wall of the same temple complex. Here, however, the panel is partly obliterated by the later wall of the north-east mandapa. Another lively rendering of the ocean is seen in the *Ramayana* narrative on the gopura of the Ramanuja temple.²⁴

If trees are not important to a narrative, they occur comparatively rarely. An exception is the tree on which Hanuman is perched when, peeping down from its crown, he discovers Rama and Lakshmana resting beneath it.²⁵

The inclusion of a tree is generally intended to suggest that an incident took place outdoors.

Trees and shrubs are used with great inventiveness both as decorative motifs and in narrative cycles, where a tree or a creeper is placed to subdivide panel for successive episodes.²⁶

An exceptional treatment of landscape, however, is found the lowest tier of the Mahanavami platform, especially on the southern face, where panels, showing forest and hunt scenes are located. The artists here were obviously keen observers of nature, taking great pride in illustrating various species of trees. They occasionally delight in showing birds and men perched on trees, safe from wild animals below.²⁷ Another popular theme on the same monument is elephants encircling or uprooting trees with their trunks.

Buildings

Architectural features, separating scenes and leading the eye onwards, are equally significant in the organisation of successive episodes within a single panel. Even when reduced to merely conventional elements, architecture serves to frame figures, indicating their place or urban settings by the simplest means.²⁸

Rendering of palaces or simple dwellings are found in the three *Ramayana* narrative cycles, in the processional friezes on the exterior walls of the Ramachandra temple, as well as in the group of family portraits of Rayasta Ramachandra Dikshita in the mandapa of the large temple at Koti-tirtha.²⁹ The structures shown here are elevated on finely moulded plinths; there is no suggestion of walls as the curved eaves of the roof are supported by slender pillars.

A more sophisticated rendering of architectural structure is found on the schist carvings on the western face of the Mahanavami platform. The intention of the artists to reproduce miniature models of extant buildings is clearly conveyed, although most of these projecting aedicules have been savagely vandalised. Each aedicule has its own miniature basement in which each moulding renders with great precision, pilasters, overhanging eaves, parapets and surmounting roofs. The aedicules incorporate small animals and birds as well as depictions of court scenes. Architecture and sculpture have fused in a work of outstanding sensitivity and fineness of detail.

NOTES

1. P. Filliozat, 'Techniques of Chronology and Construction in the temple of Vithala at Hampi', in *Vijayanagara, City and Empire*, ed. by A. L. Dallapiccola in collaboration with S. Zingel-Ave Lallemand, Vol. I, p. 296.
2. NLM/1.
3. NLg/2.
4. A.L. Dallapiccola and Anila Verghese, 'Ramayana Panels on the Gopura of the "Old Shiva" temple at Vitthalapura', in *Vijayanagara Progress of Research 1987-88*, pp. 143-53.
5. Goswamy, B.N. and A.L. Dahmen-Dallapiccola, *An Early Document of Indian Art, The Citralaksana of Nagnajit*, p. 107.
6. R.N. Saletore in *Vijayanagara Art*, p. 52, quotes the opinions of A. Rea and V.A. Smith on the Vijayanagara style.
7. NGn/6.
8. NMx/2.
9. NVo/1.
10. Anila Verghese, 'Court Attire at Vijayanagara', in *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Vol. LXXXII, Nos. 1-2, p. 52.
11. R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, p. 252.
12. R. Sewell, op. cit., p. 383.
13. Anila Verghese, op. cit., p. 56.
14. Duarte Barrbosa, quoted in Anila Verghese, op. cit., p. 56.
15. Anila Verghese, op. cit., p. 56.
16. R. Sewell, op. cit., p. 252.
17. R. Sewell, op. cit., pp. 276-7.
18. H. Goetz, 'Muslims in Vijayanagara: The Record of the Monuments', in *Studies in Indian Culture, Dr. Ghulam Yazdani Commemoration Volume*, pp. 66-70.
19. R. Sewell, op. cit., p. 274.
20. R. Sewell, op. cit., p. 378.
21. C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 26.
22. Main shrine, south entrance, west side, top register.
23. Main shrine, north entrance, east side, top register.
24. NCw/3. West side of the gopura, inside the prakara, third register.
25. Vithala temple, main shrine, north porch, north-east pillar.
26. A.L. Dallapiccola, 'Sculpture', in A.L. Dallapiccola, J.M. Fritz, G. Michell and S. Rajasekhara, *The Ramachandra Temple at Vijayanagara*, p. 86.
27. For instance, the tree near the cross-shaped tank. Mahanavami platform, lower tier, south face, second register.
28. A.L. Dallapiccola, J.M. Fritz, G. Michell and S. Rajasekhara, op. cit., p. 86.
29. NGm/2.