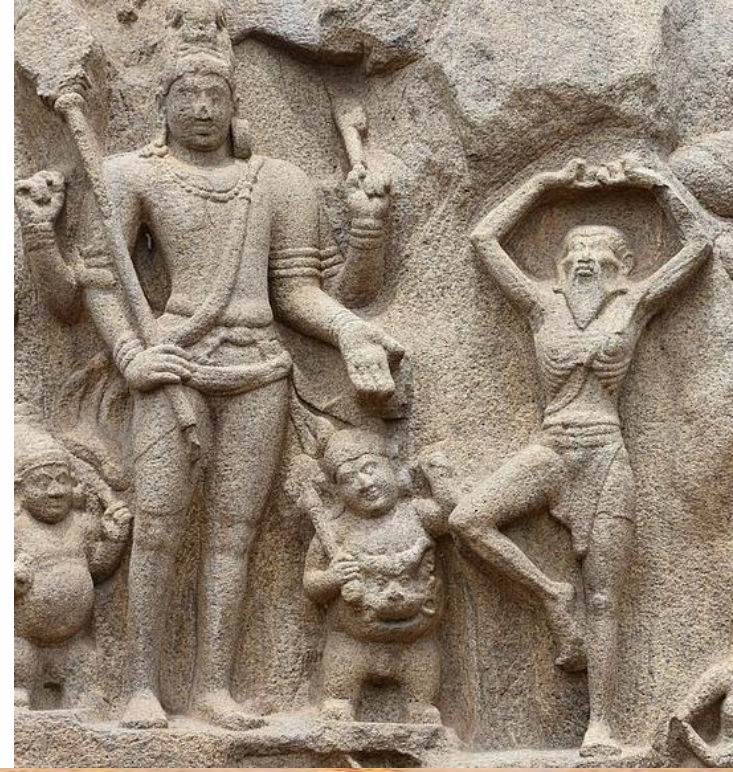


History of the Art of India, Part I: Origins to Mughals



OLLI
Spring 2024

Week 6



**South India:
Pallavas, Cholas,
post-Chola,
7th through 17th Centuries**

South India: Pallavas, Cholas, post-Chola, 7th through 17th Centuries

General introduction

- **Last week: Mostly architecture S and W India**
- **This week: Continue with 3 empires or dynasties in S India from 7C through 14-18C**
- **Next week: Same for N India**

A. Pallavas

B. Cholas

C. Post-Cholas

A. Pallavas

A1. History

A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges or Arjuna's penance

A3. Rock-cut ratha temples

A4. Shore temple

A. Pallavas

A1. History

- Successors of Sātavāhanas (2C BCE-3C CE) (w 2 & 3) in SE India
- Buddhists, 1C BCE... converted to Brahmanism in 5C CE
- Capital Kanchipuram, ca. 35 mi SW of Chennai (Madras)
- Seaport Mamallapuram (Mahabali-puram), ca. 35 mi S of Chennai
- Artistic center under Narasimha Varman I, ca. 630... named after king, aka Mamalla, “great wrestler”; original name Mamalai (SO: “colonialist” renaming...)
- Great artworks 7-8C:
(A2) rock-face reliefs,
(A3) series of rock-cut temples, &
(A4) temple on the shore



A. Pallavas

A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges or Arjuna's penance

- Mamallapuram monuments, dating uncertain, probably 630-668
- First monument: sculpted cliff facing the ocean (Bay of Bengal), 15 ft H x 98 ft W
- Ships coming into port would have seen this first

A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges or Arjuna's penance

next



Descent of the Ganges..., carved rock face, Mamallapuram, 98' w, 630-668

A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges or Arjuna's penance

(sections of the rock carving)

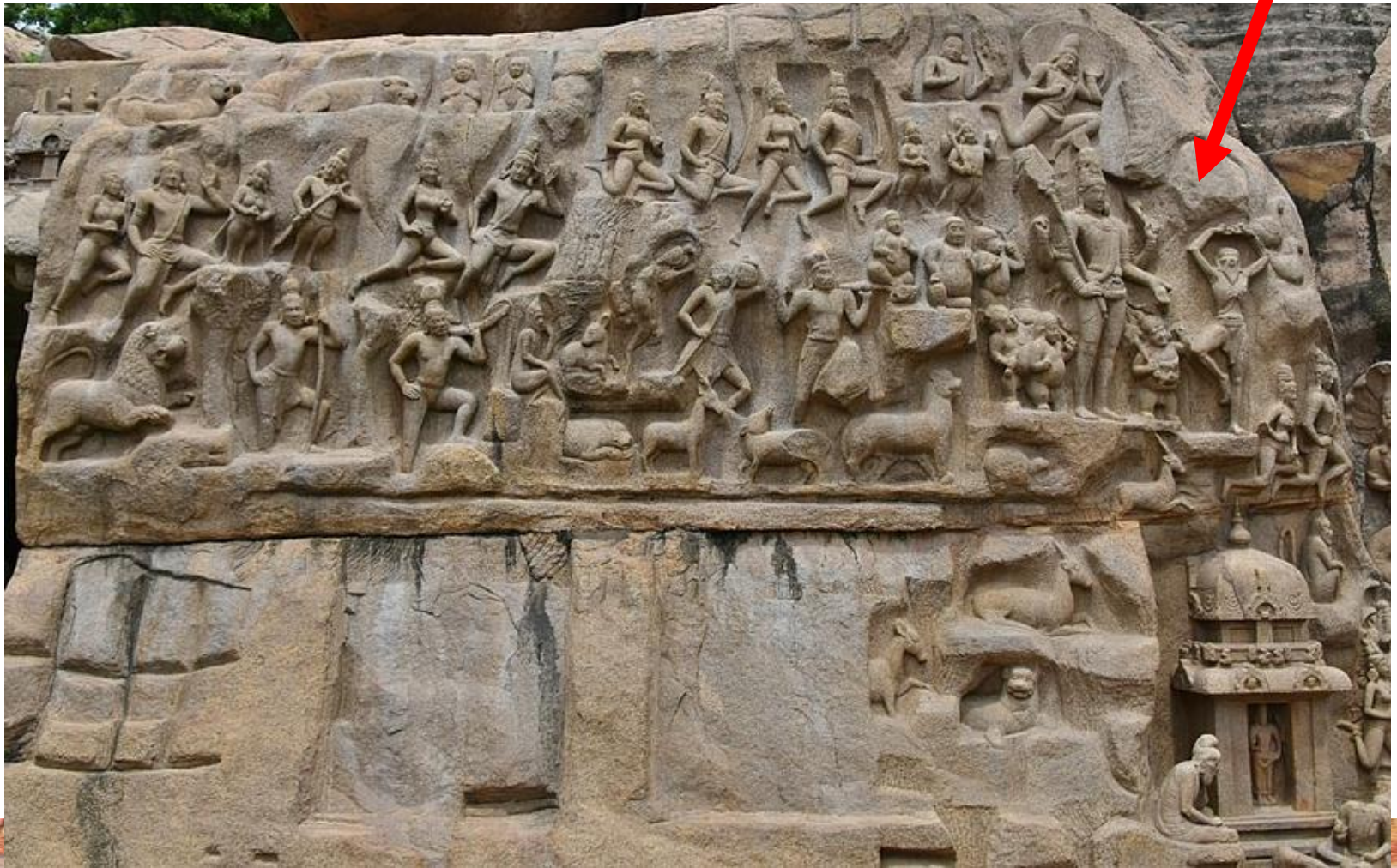
- **Central cleft** of rock = Ganges R
- In the river are the king and queen of the nagas (snake beings)



A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges...

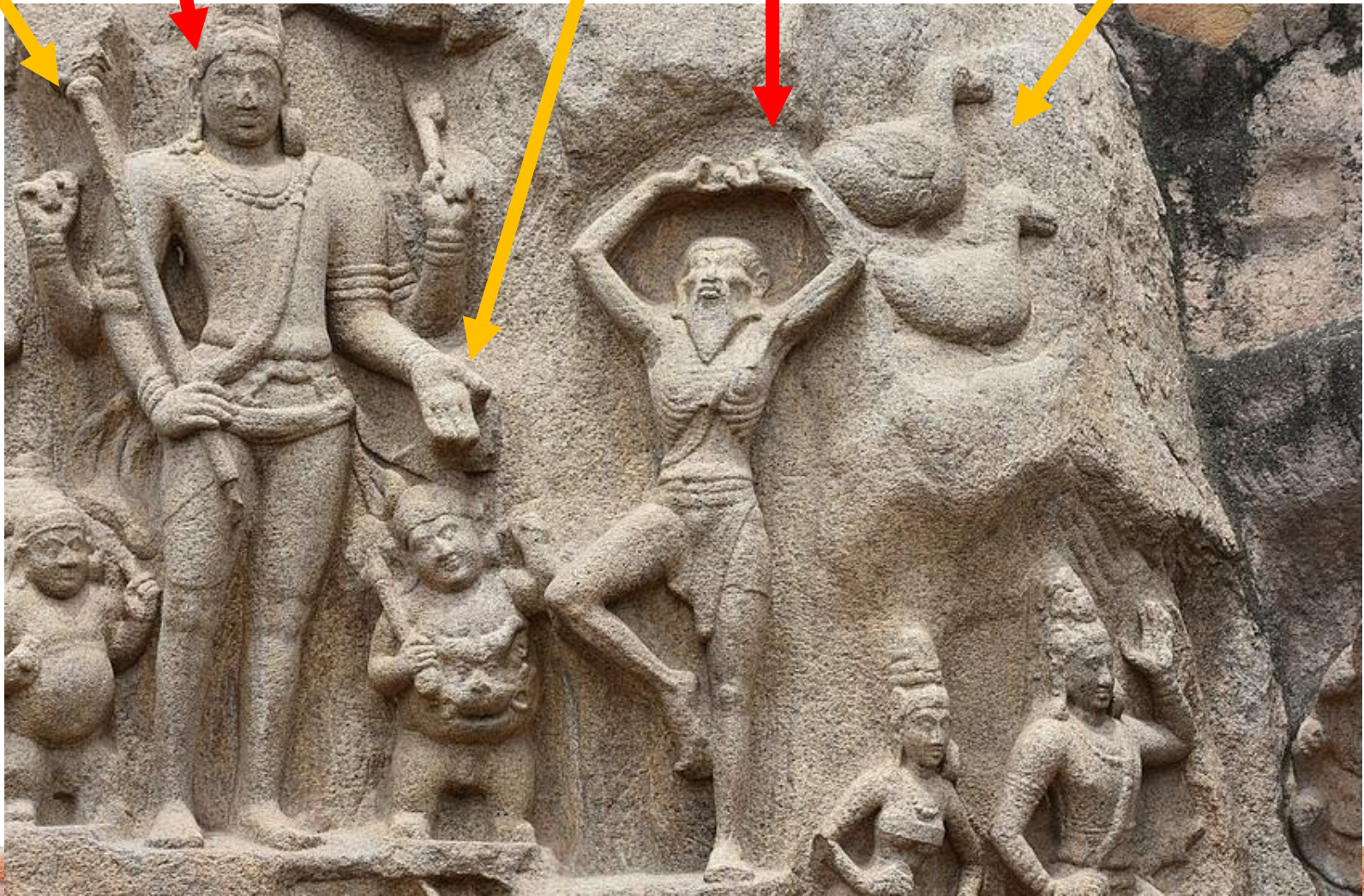
- LT side of rock... Incomplete at bottom left
- Various heavenly beings, saints, and animals

next



A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges...

- Top: Siva grants boon to ascetic standing on one leg
- Trident and vārada mudra... and ducks!



A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges...

- Below the ascetic, a shrine to Vishnu (1) (note shala, kudu motifs), before which are a sage (2a) and three (headless) disciples (2b)
- **SO:** Religious eclecticism
- Below these, other ascetics perform penances (3)
- Animals: Deer, lion, monkey (4a,b,c,...) and others...



- RT side of rock
- Life-size elephants: Male, female, young



next

A3. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges...

- Detail of cat practicing austerities
- Mice in front, including mouse with folded hands
- Story of cat's trickery from *Mahābhārata*



A2. Rock-face relief: Descent of the Ganges or Arjuna's penance

- 2 interpretations:
 - Ancient king Bhagīratha doing penance to get Siva to bear the force of Ganga's descent to the earth
 - Arjuna's penance to get boon from Siva of a weapon to use in *Mahābhārata* war
- Or both ~ literary ambiguity of the time (e.g., playwright Dandin in Pallava court... either *Ramāyana* or *Mahābhārata*)
- General fn: Show karmic evolution animal > human > celestial
- Theatrical fn: Originally a pool beneath the rock and a water tank above... water released to flow down the cleft as though it were the Ganges, into the pool (ocean) below

A. Pallavas

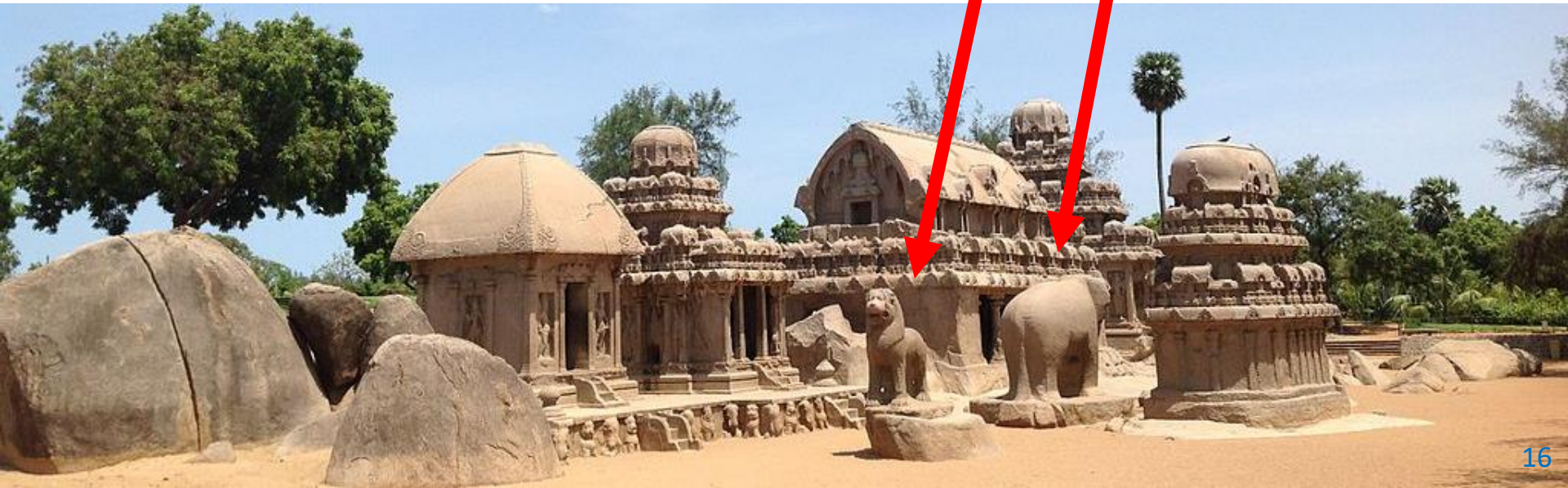
A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

- 5 freestanding temples in form of a ratha, 7C
- **4 carved in a line** from one huge granite boulder;
- **5th slightly offline** from another boulder
- **SO:** As much sculpture as architecture
- Based on earlier wood-frame structures
- Never officially used as temples



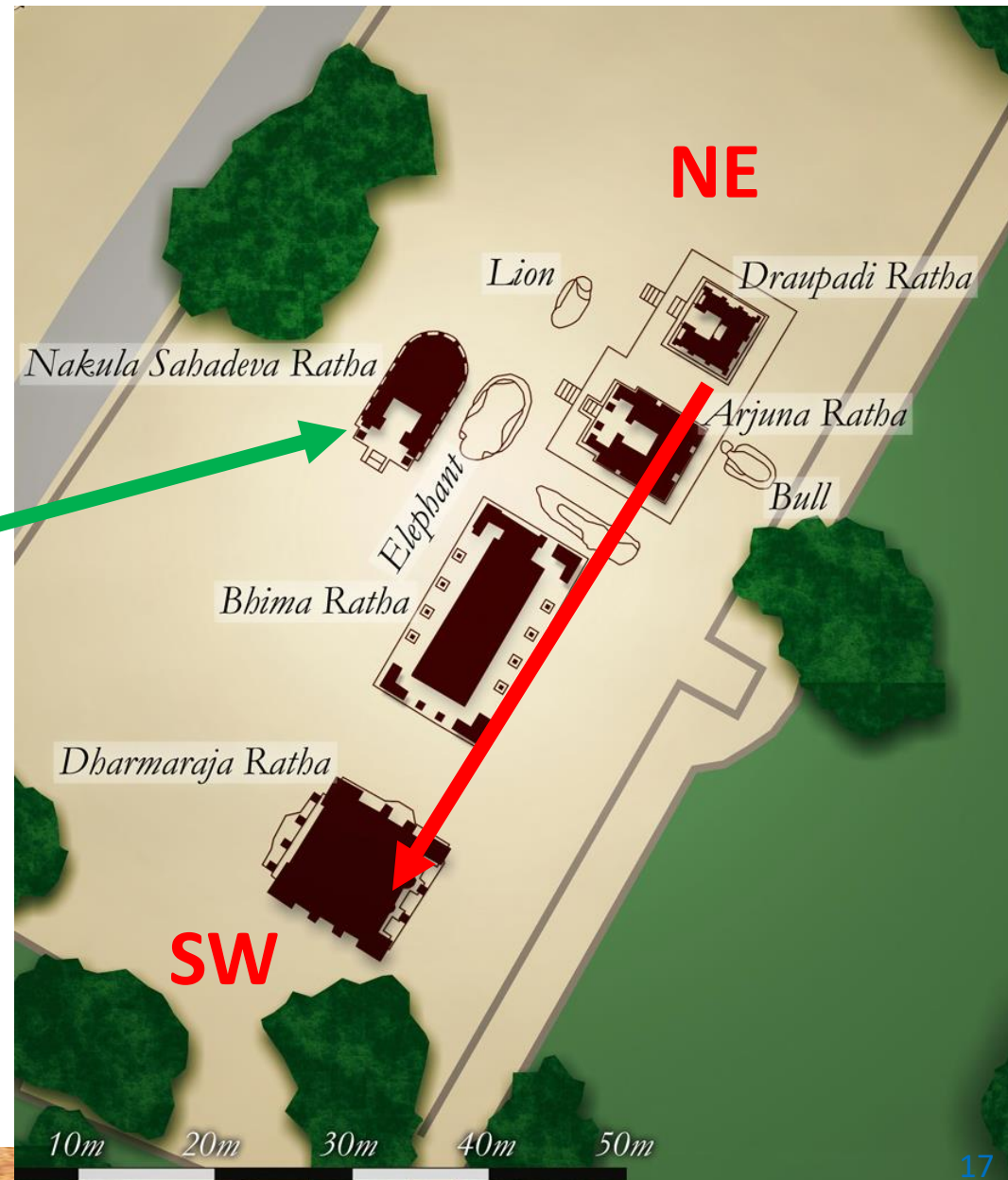
A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

- Incomplete... interiors not entirely excavated
- Called rathas as vehicles of the gods (cf. ceremonial chariots)
- Called Pāṇḍava Rathas: named after the 5 Pāṇḍava brothers and their common wife Draupadi. Called thus traditionally, but for unknown reason... no actual connection to the story from the *Mahābhārata*
- Relief sculpture on exterior walls
- Among the rathas are over-life-sized lion, elephant, & bull



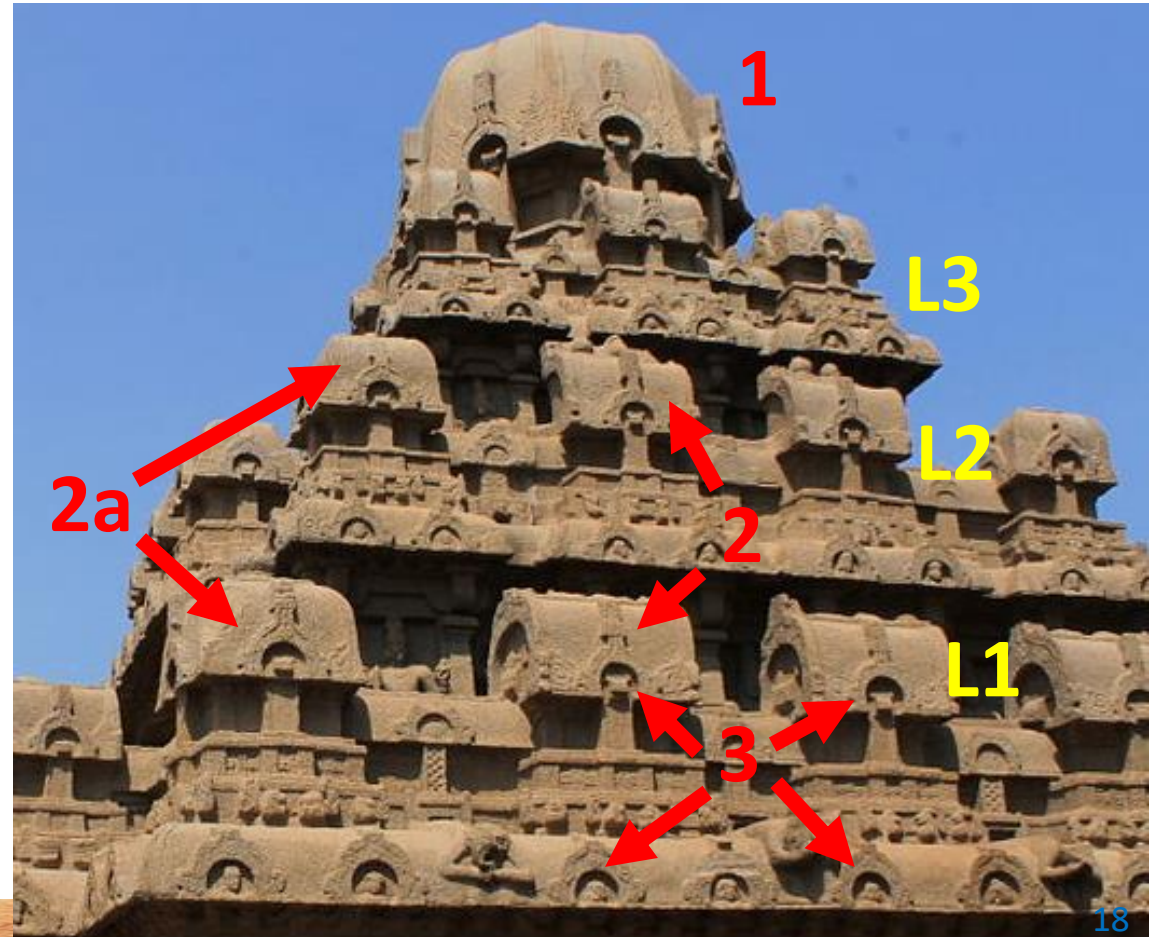
A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

- From NE-SW:
 - Draupadi (wife)
 - Arjuna (bro)
 - Bhima (bro)
 - Dharmaraja (i.e., Yudhisthira) (bro)
- Offline: Nakula Sahadeva (two brothers for one ratha)



Before individual rathas, some info on roofs:

- Pyramidal form: several receding stories/**levels** (here 3)
- **Stupi** at top (rounded or octagonal “finial”) (**1**)
- Suggest Mount Kailasha in Himalayas, home of the gods
- **Shala** = “miniature houses” (**2**)
- **Kudu** = window (**3**)... some w/ faces (i.e., god dwelling in the house)
- Corner shalas (stupis) square (**2a**), others rectangular



A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

#2, Arjuna ratha

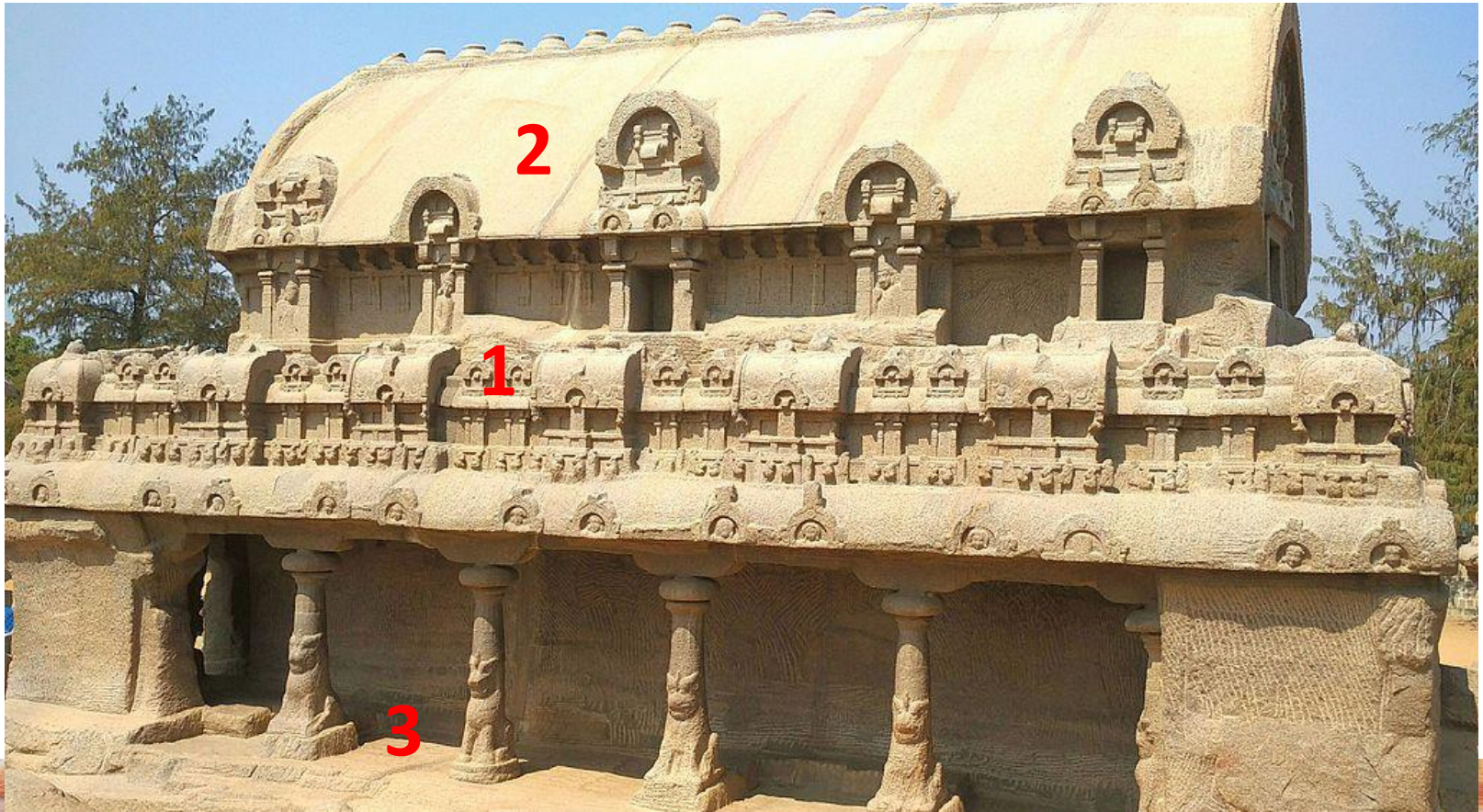
- Step-pyramid roof, 2 stories, with miniature buildings (shalas and kudas)
- Near square, 12 ft x 16 ft
- Unfinished: Monolithic, no interior
- Possible dedication to Siva, given the bull behind the ratha



A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

#3, Bhima ratha (largest at 42 ft x 24 ft, height = 25 ft)

- 1-story of shalas (1) + chaitya-style barrel-vault roof (2)
- Entrance portico with 5 bays... dormer windows
- Columns rise from seated lions (3)



A3. Rock-cut ratha temples, 7C

- **Stierlin:** Based on fundamental form of Indian architecture: elongated meeting hall (cf. Buddhist chaitya hall & cf. Roman basilica form, pagan & Christian)
- **Short sides:** Barrel vault presents a chaitya window (kudu)



A. Pallavas

A4. Shore temple

- Built ca.700 by Narasimha Varman II (r.700-728)
- Earliest dressed stone temple in South India... r/t early 8C Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram (Pallava capital)... model for later temples at Pattadakal and Ellora
- **SO:** Temples modeled on earlier temples
- Rectangular plan
- ~ arch. of the monolithic rathas, but in dressed stone
- Right on the beach, oriented to E, i.e., to the ocean
- Surfaces originally covered with carvings, but most eroded away by salt spray from the sea

A4. Shore temple

- Principal shikhara (tower) is ca.50' high (1)
- Dimensions: ca. 71' long X ca.36' wide
- Garbha griha under tower opens directly to the sea, for illumination & sailors to pay respects to the god
- Dedicated to Siva

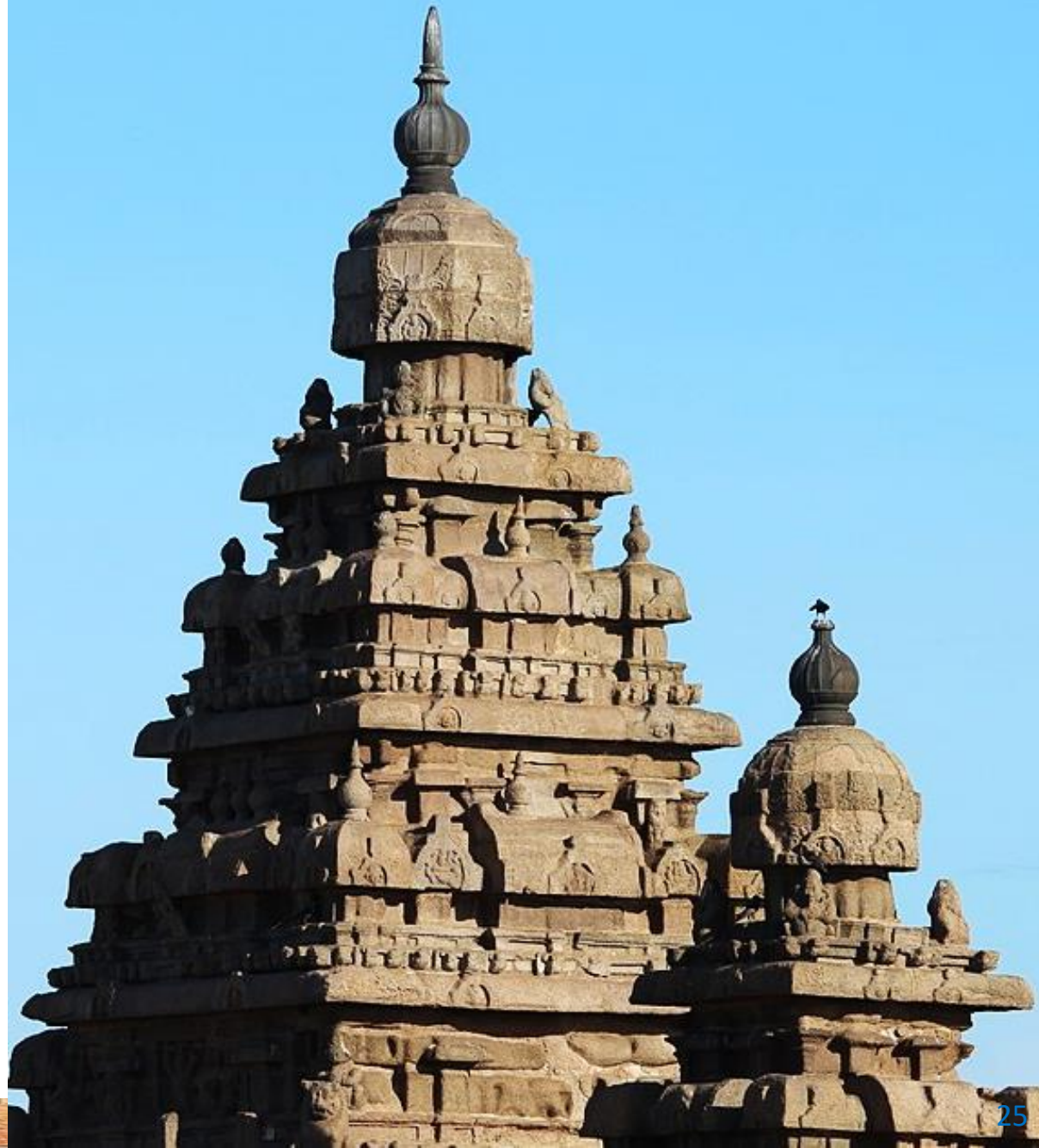


- Slender shikhara and **stupi** accent verticality
- On the inland side of the principal shikhara is a smaller tower Vishnu shrine OR a second Siva shrine (**2**)
- In front: ruined courtyard, walls lined w/ Nandi bulls (**3**)
- **SO: unusual: 2 shrines; no mandapas at this stage...**



A4. Shore temple

- Both shikharas:
Stepped
pyramidal roofs
with shalas,
kudus, stupi



B. Cholas

B1. History

B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

B3. Chola bronzes

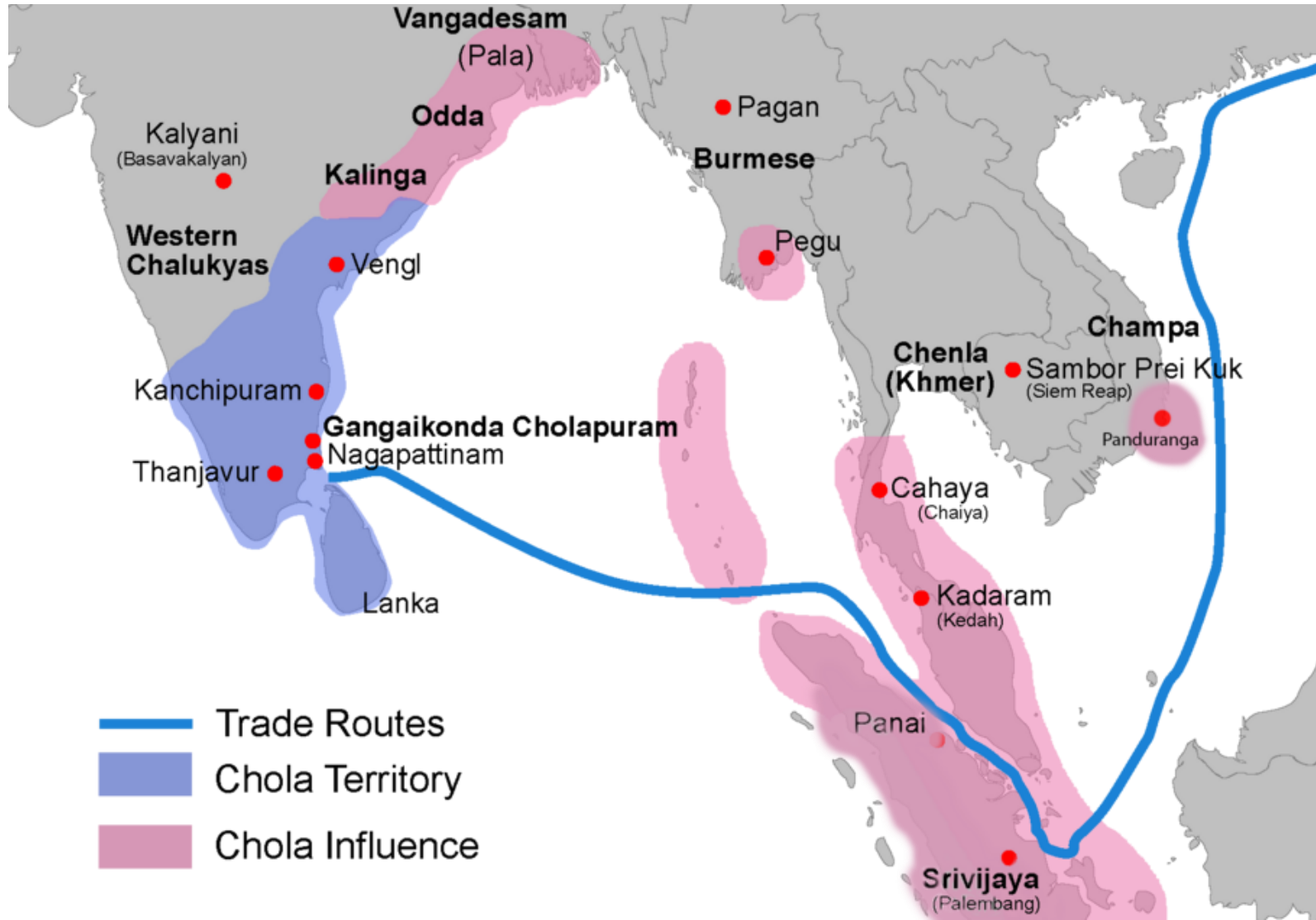
B. Cholas

B1. History

- Cholas conquer Pallavas 897... & Madurai Early 10C
- Expansion culminated under king Rajaraja I (r.985-1014), ...and son Rajendra I (r.1012-44)
- Rajaraja's capital: Thanjavur (Tanjore) on Kaveri R
- Chola rulers were supporters of architecture and Tamil literature
- **STIERLIN:** Here medieval brahmanic architecture achieved its culmination
- Empire lasted till ca.1250

B. Cholas

- Embassies and influence north to Ganges and SE and E to Sumatra and China



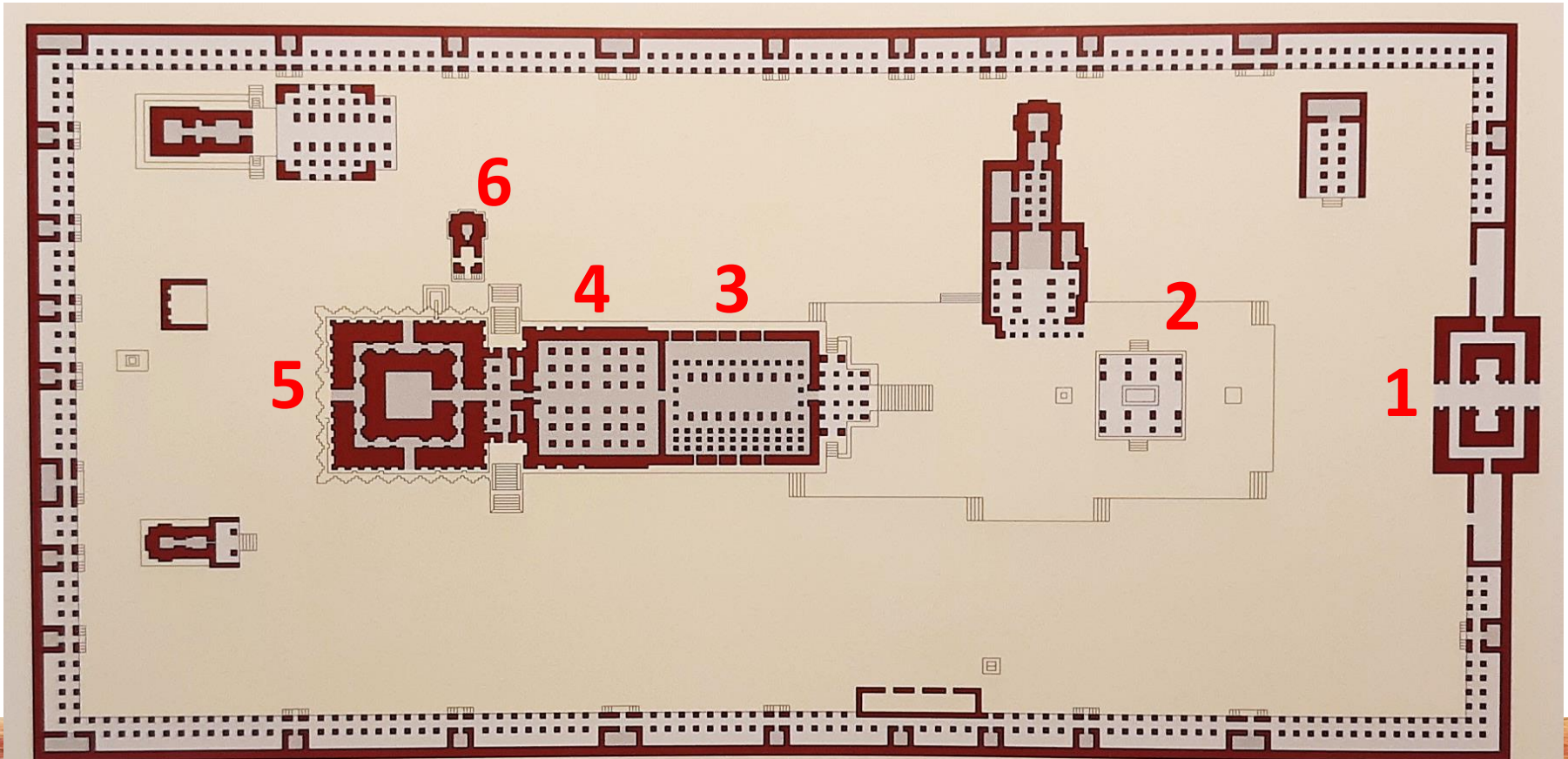
B. Cholas

B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

- Rajaraja completed temple ca.1010, named after him, i.e., Rajarajeshwara, aka Brihadishwara
- 180 ft long... Much larger than any previous temple in S India
- Masterpiece of S Indian architecture inspired by Pallava temples
- Dedicated to Siva



- On axis: Entrance through 2 gopurams (gateways) (1), Nandi shrine (2), hypostyle porch (3), mandapa (4), garbha griha (5)
- Off axis: Chandesa shrine (6)
- Walled compound



B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

Temple complex has precise layout

- ca.792 x ca.396 ft divided into 2 equal squares
- Garbha griha is at center of rear square
- Nandi pavilion at center of front square
- **SO:** Precise geometric forms and center points
- Height of shikhara (ca.198 ft) is base unit
- Width of complex = $2x H$ (ca.396 ft)
- Length of complex = $4x H$ (ca. 792 ft)
- **SO:** Precise mathematics

B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

B2a. Gopurams

- Entrance first through a 5-tiered gopuram and then a 3-tiered gopuram



B2a. Gopurams

- Back/inner side of 5-tiered: ca.90 ft high
- Much sculptural decoration; at top a barrel-vaulted story ~ chaitya hall
- On 3-tiered gopuram: Miniature houses on the levels (shalas/kudus)



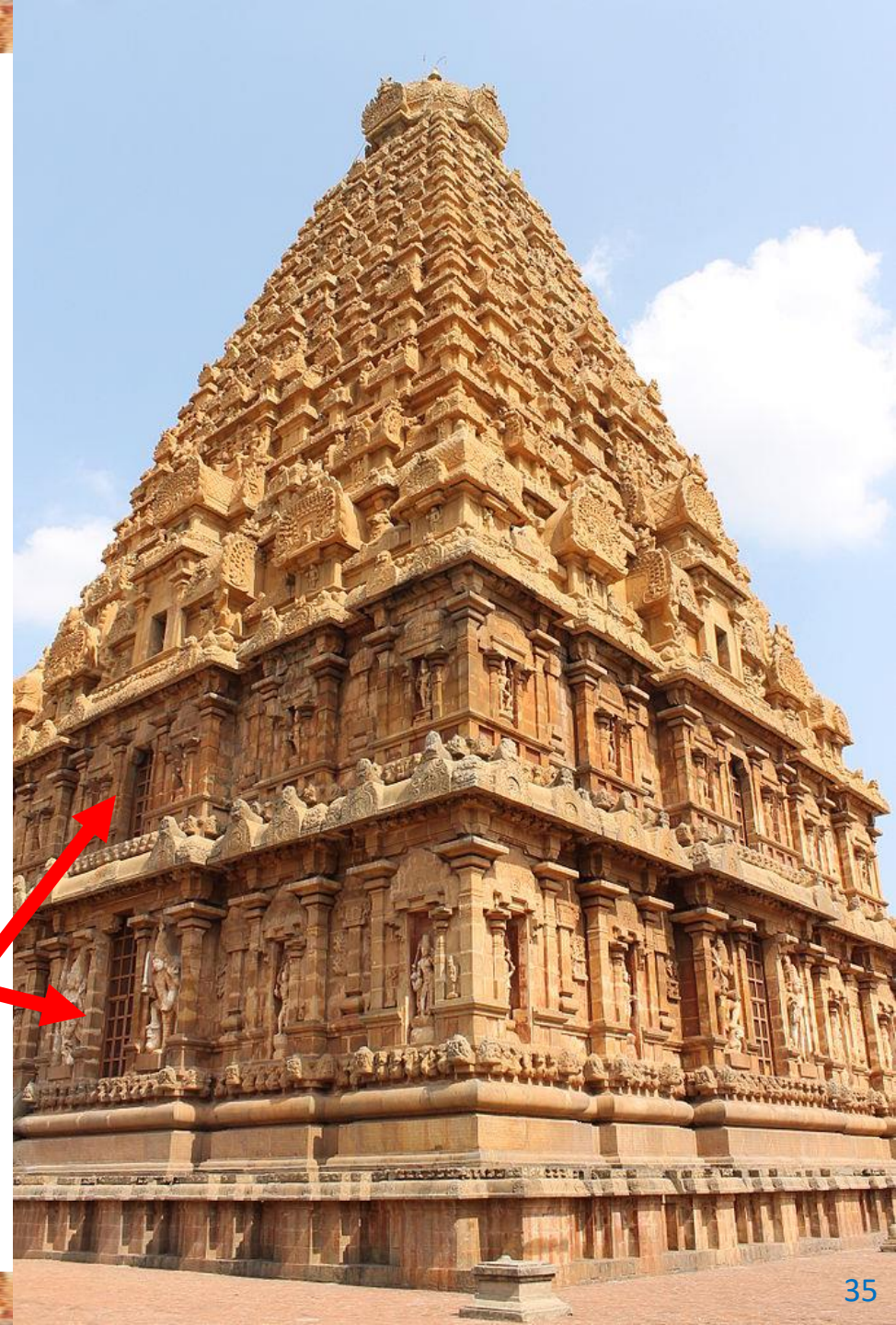
B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

B2b. Hypostyle porch & solid wall mandapa (interior:
hypostyle)



B2c. Shikhara

- On top of garbha griha, shikhara rises in 13 levels, step pyramid
- 80 ft square at base, 190-197 ft high
- Square platform at top: exactly the size of the sanctum below
- **SO:** mathematical precision
- On top: 80-ton dome
- ...to place: required earthen ramp perhaps 7 km long
- 2 levels at base of shikhara... in niches, statues of Siva in various manifestations... mastery of the sculptors' art



B2c. Shikhara

- Upper level of base: ~ images of Siva Tripurāntaka
- SO: Probably r/t Rajaraja as conqueror
- Dehejia: Carvings not as impressive as earlier Chola work, though iconography is clear... nor contemp. Chola bronzes... perhaps sculptors not used to carving such large works



B2c. Shikhara

- Lower level: Various manifestations of Siva, e.g., Nātarāja (iconography shortly)
- **Aside:** Inscriptions (though not at Rajarajeshwara): Chola Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi (grandmother of Rajaraja I) was patron of arts for 60 years in 10C
- She rebuilt early brick temples in stone, including the old patronage inscriptions along with her own inscriptions
- **SO:** Historical sensibility
- During her reign the iconography of Siva Nataraja became established
- **SO:** Perhaps instrumental in this evolution
- **SO:** Female aristocratic art patronage
- **Recall:** Chalukya Queen Lokmahadevi, 8C



B2c. Shikhara

- Multiple individual stories are distinguished in shikhara (Dehejia, p.207, P2)
- Shala and kudu motifs, square shalas at corners



B2. Rajarajeshwara temple

B2g. Painting in Rajarajeshwara temple

- Frescoes on walls
- Stylized portrait of
Rajaraja I
- Clean-shaven king with
matted locks upon his
head, like his spiritual
ideal, Siva; he stands
behind his bearded guru

Rajaraja I with his guru Karuvar Devar,
paint on plaster over granite,
Rajarajeshwara temple, Thanjavur, 1010



B. Cholas

B3. Chola bronzes (lost wax)

- Chola sculptural medium par excellence
 - Recall: dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro (w1)
 - Lost wax technique: Every bronze is unique
- **Queen Sembiyan: Grandmother of Rajaraja I and patron of arts**
- **Extremely thin, almost nude, crown and lower garment seem to merge with the body**
- **Grace of tribhanga pose, heavy breasts, arm and finger positions, create unified stylization**
- **Craven: Raises the human to the divine**



- **Holes in base for carrying in procession**
- **This is not a portrait!**

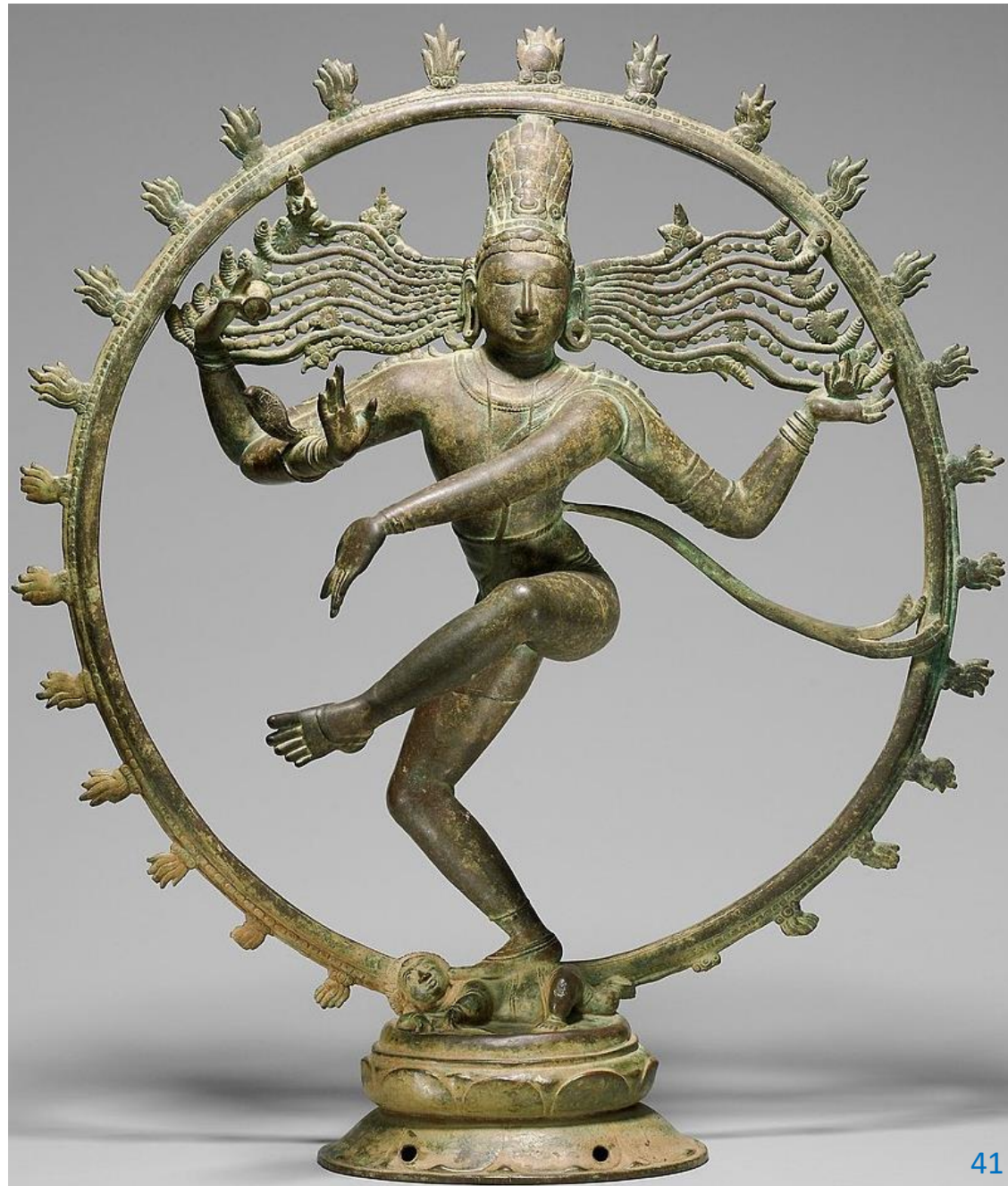
Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi as Goddess Parvati, Chola lost-wax bronze statue, 37" high, ca.998, Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art



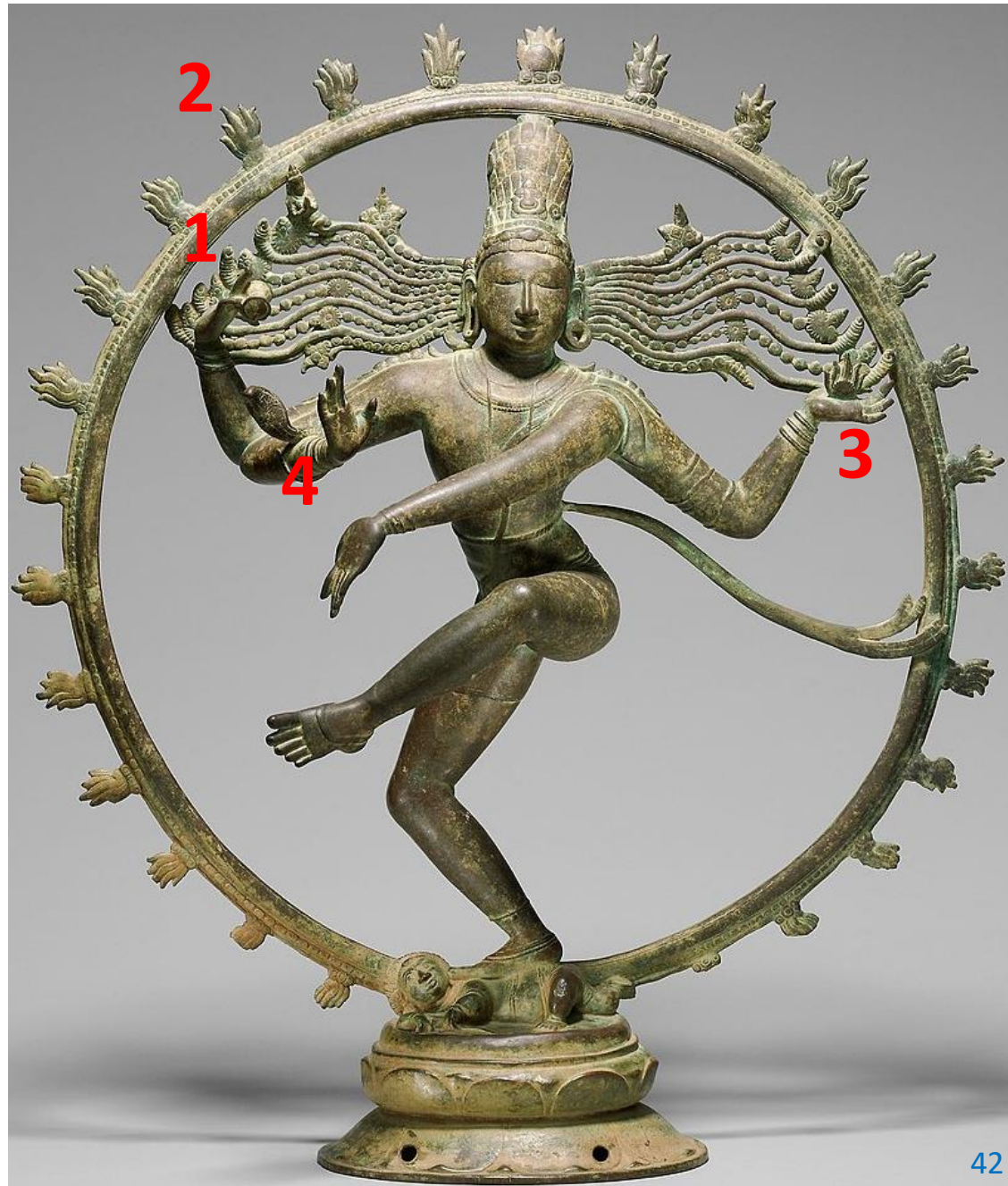
B3. Chola bronzes

- One of most famous of Hindu iconographies is that of **Siva Nātarāja (King of the dance)**
- E.g., Chola, 11-12C
- Siva is in cosmic dance creating & destroying the universe
- **Iconography:**

Shiva Nataraja, Chola, 10-11th C,
bronze, Tamil Nadu, ca.27 x 24 x
10 in, Art Institute of Chicago



- Hair flies out
- Beats rhythm with hourglass in upper RT hand (1)
- Creation of the universe symbolized by the encircling ring (2)
- Destruction by the flames around the ring & in upper LT hand (3)
- Lower RT hand in abhaya mudra (4)

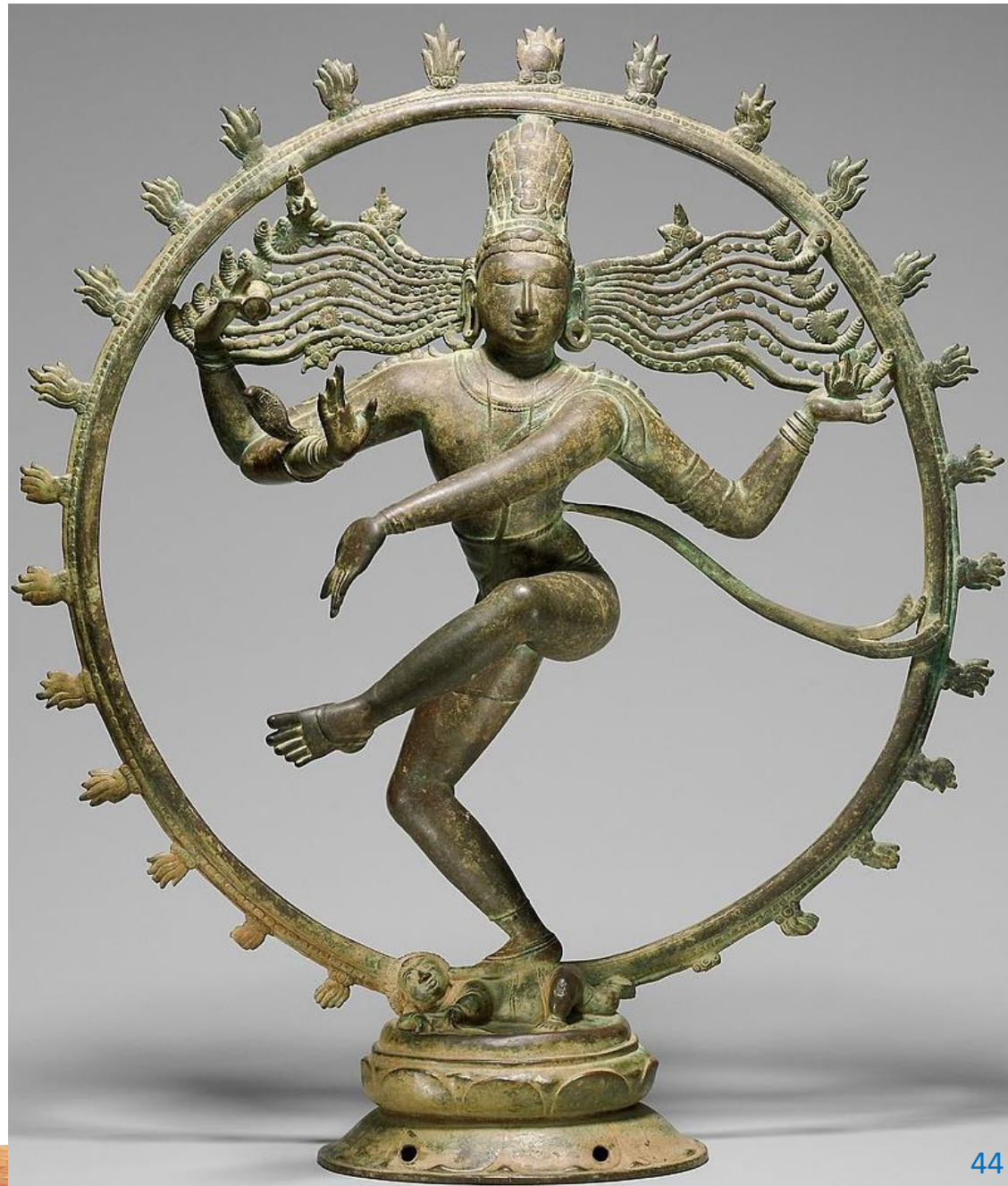


- Lower LT hand in gaja hasta mudra (elephant hand gesture) (5): aid to seekers on spiritual path; hand points to upraised left foot
- RT foot stands on dwarf of ignorance (6) who holds cobra in hand
- Another cobra worn as armlet around Siva's lower right arm (7)



B3. Chola bronzes

- **SO:** Image of illusory nature of the universe & of spiritual liberation from the illusion
- Aesthetically, an image of balance, except:
- Slight imbalance at bottom RT?... sash... impulse to movement...



C. Post-Chola

C1. Characteristics of south Indian temples, 12-17C

C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai

C. Post-Chola

C1. Characteristics of south Indian temples, 12-17C

- **Gopurams begin to overshadow shikharas**
- **Typical temple complex of 4 concentric squares**
- **4 principal gopurams on outer square w/ halls and shrines**
- **Inner squares: small gopurams, halls, shrines, garbha griha**
- **Exemplifies: Phenomenon of temple expansion, i.e., adding architecture to earlier modest temples... reasons for this:**
 - **Tradition: Do not destroy a temple to build a more impressive one, or add a tall shikhara above the garbha griha**
 - **Expansion of the function of the deity: not just dwell in the garbha griha, but perform tasks in the temple complex and even outside ~ functions of a king**
- **SO: architectural tradition & influence from royal patronage mimicking royal functions**

C1. Characteristics of south Indian temples, 12-17C

- **Characteristic of many temples in S India... we'll look at one temple in Madurai...**
- **Meanwhile: Mid-13C, Cholas superseded by the Pandyas of Madurai and the Hoysalas around Mysore... then Vijayanagar dynasty ca.1370, then Nayak dynasty 1564**
- **Nayaks transformed Madurai into temple city in 17C**
- **Minakshi temple: Last manifestation of Hindu temple architecture in the south at Madurai, 17C**

C. Post-Chola

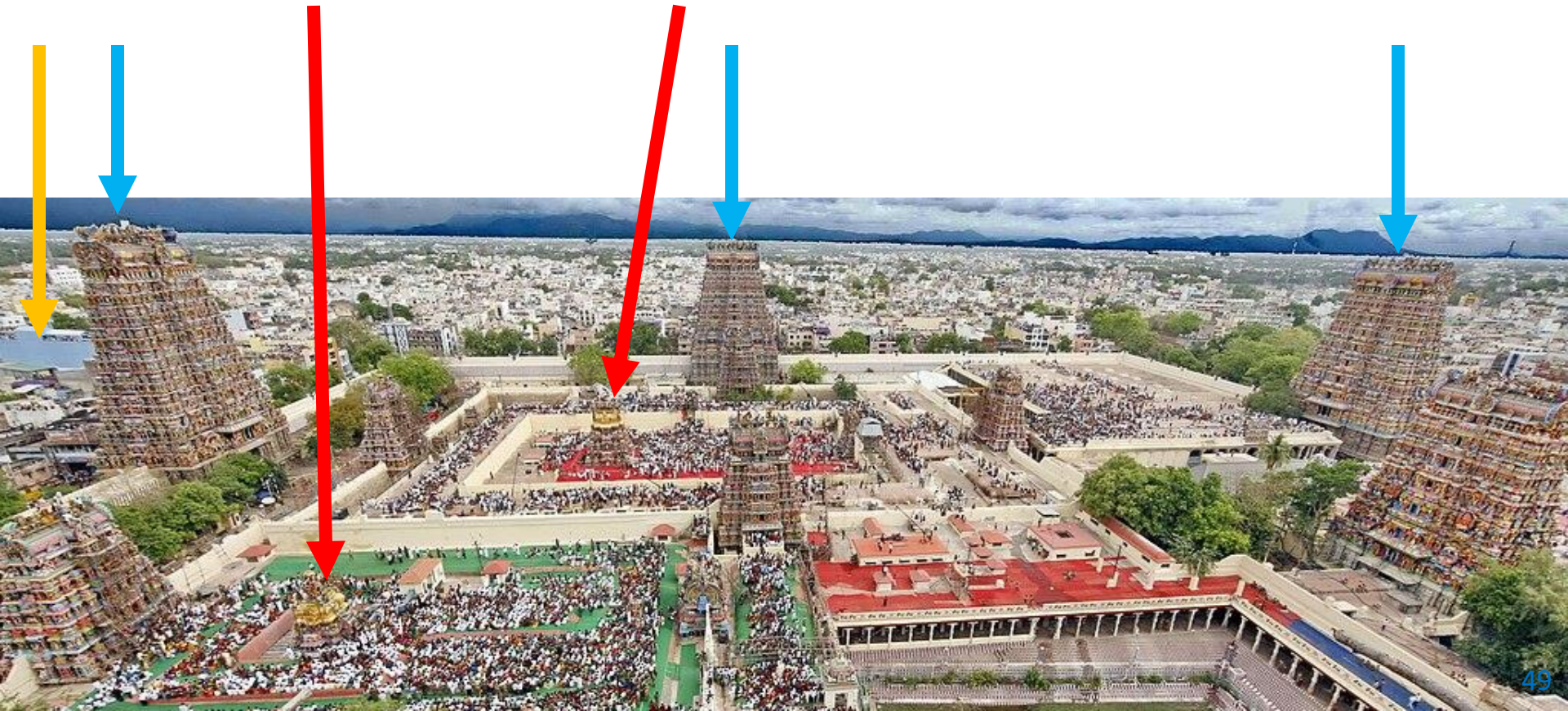
C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- Outstanding example of the expanded temple complex: Minakshi temple along the Vaigai R at Madurai, ca.60 mi NW of coast of Laccadive Sea
- Madurai known by Rom. historians Strabo & Ptolemy
- Mostly built under Vijayanagar kings, 1336-1565, and Nayaks, 1529-1736
- Dedicated to both Siva and Goddess Minakshi (“fish-eyed”) (equated with Siva’s consort Parvati) but known as Minakshi temple
- Temple complex 833 x 778 ft covering 15 acres



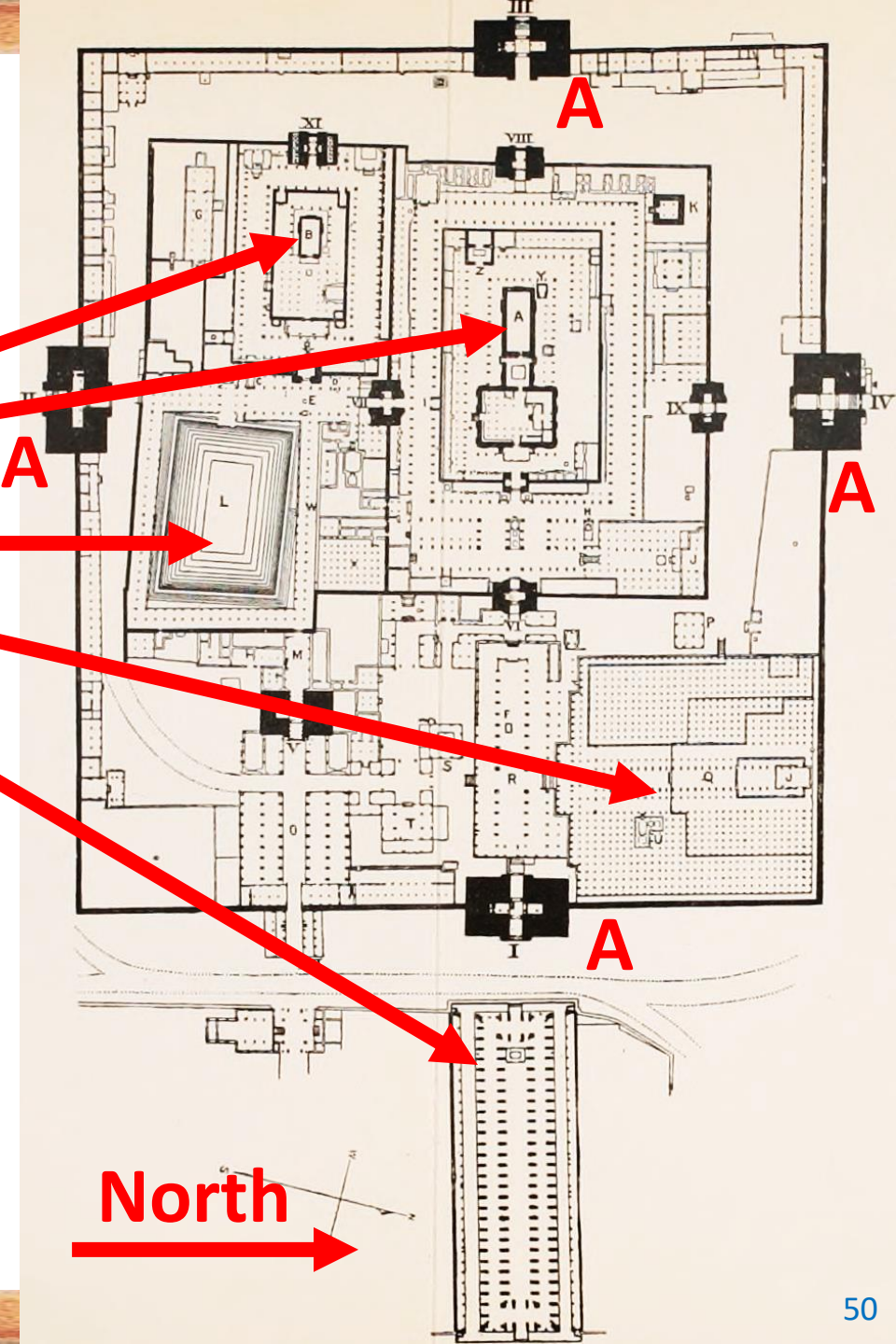
C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- Aerial view, from top of south gopuram, looking north, Vaigai R seen at top left (orange arrow)
- 3 of 4 principal gopurams (blue)
- Minakshi shikhara & Siva shikhara (red)



C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- 4 principal gopurams (A)
- Garbha griha for Minakshi
- Garbha griha for Siva
- Tank for ritual bathing
- Hall of a Thousand Pillars
- New (17C) pillared hall
- SO: not a clear or axial plan as in Chola temples
- Additions made by various rulers according to their interests
- SO: somewhat haphazard growth



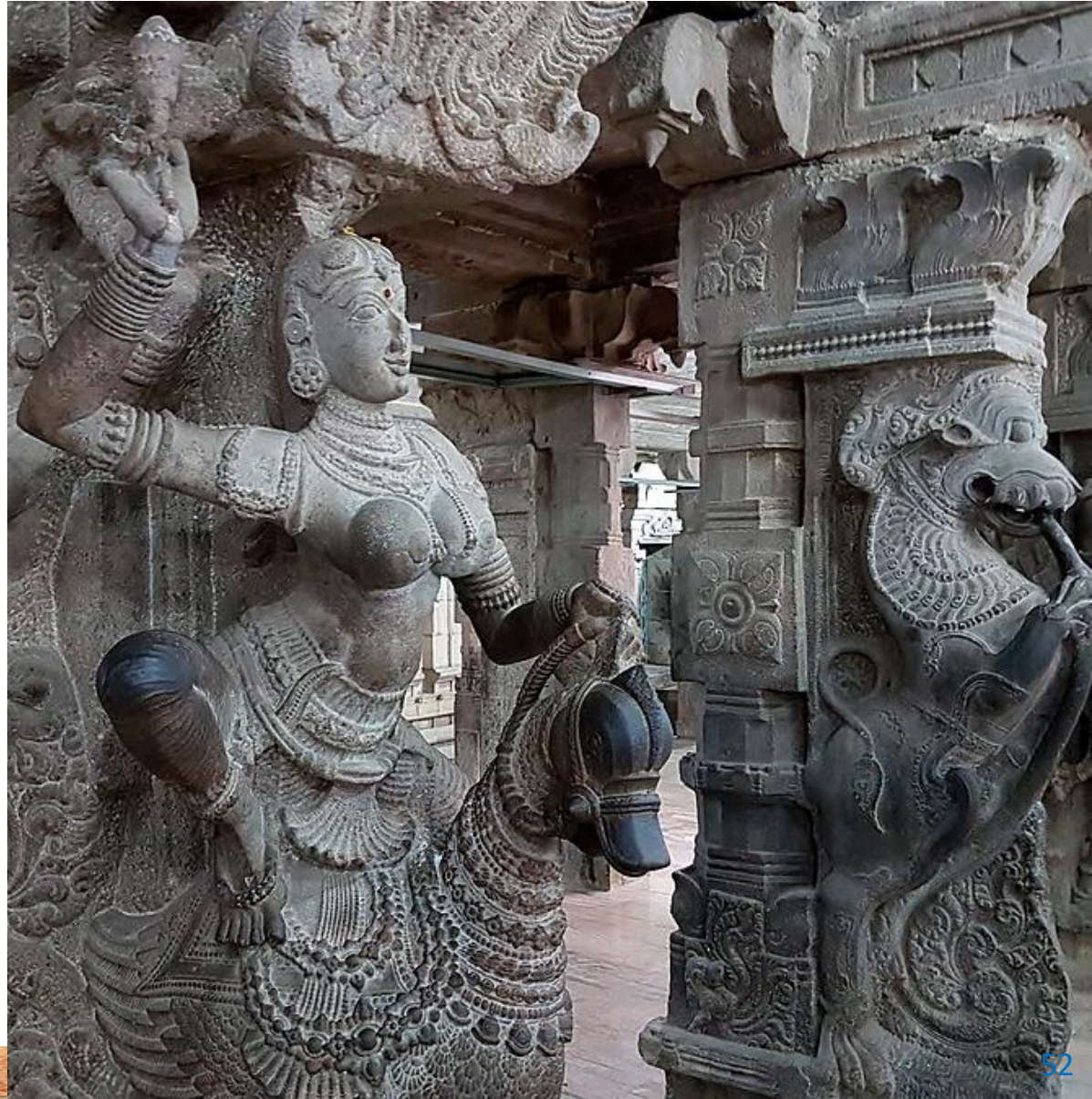
C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- **Hall of a Thousand Pillars**, 16C (actually 985 pillars)
- A mandapa: size ca.230 x 246 ft = 56K sq ft



C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- Each pillar, carved from single piece of granite
- E.g., pillar showing Rati, consort of Kama, seated on a swan
- Adjacent: Rampant yali
- Some depict secular love legends of gypsies
- **Stierlin:** overall impression (here and elsewhere): profusion



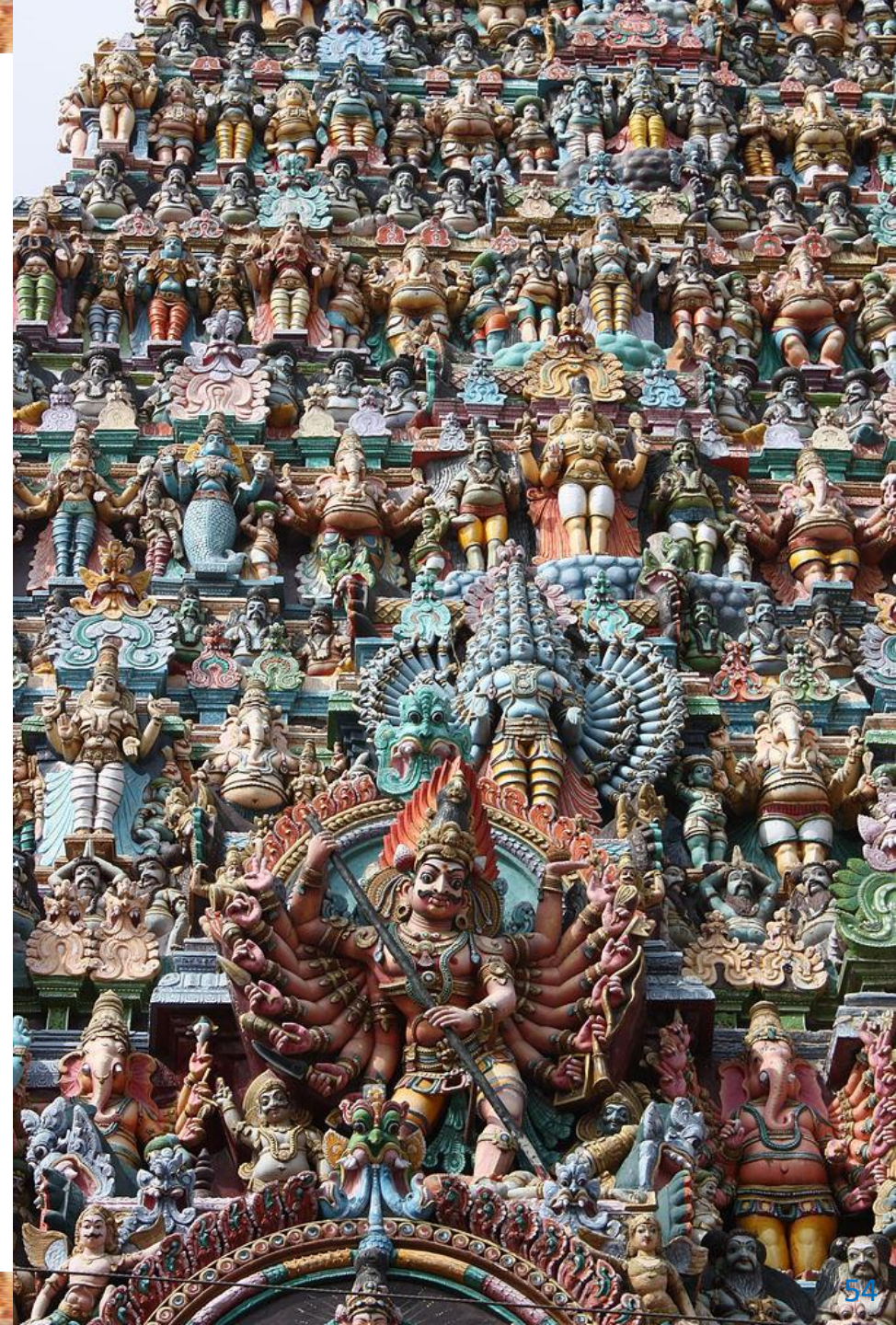
C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- **South gopuram**, 1599, 197 ft tall, 9-story concave curve
- At top: Barrel-vaulted summit (stylized), still reminiscent of chaitya, with ends as kudu windows (stylized)
- Covered with > 1500 plaster figures of gods and demons in multiple colors



C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- Periodically, repairs are undertaken, including replacement and repainting in bright colors of the stucco figures
- Carvers sometimes replace figures at their whim... temple at Tiruvannamalai includes the figure of an American cowboy!



C2. Minakshi temple at Madurai, 1336-1736

- Stucco figure of Siva Nātarāja on south gopuram
- Stucco sculptures of Madurai are inferior to medieval carvings
- Popular art

Iconography:

- Hourglass & abhaya mudra (1)
- Flame (2A) & gaja hasta mudra (2B)
- RT foot on dwarf (3)



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