

MORTIMER WHEELER ARCHAEOLOGICAL LECTURE

THE DANCING SIVA IN EARLY
SOUTH INDIAN ART

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THE previous five archaeological lectures in honour of Sir Mortimer Wheeler have dealt with the classical world and early Europe. By comparison the subject of this paper might seem forcedly exotic were it not that South India is ground hardly less familiar to Sir Mortimer than Verulamium or Maiden Castle. His excavation at Arikamedu near Pondicherry provided for the first time a secure chronology for the culture of South India in the first two centuries of our era: on it all subsequent work has been based. This inquiry into one aspect of the religious art of a period 800 years later than Sir Mortimer's is offered as a sincere tribute to his remarkable achievement in the archaeology of the Indian sub-continent.

Throughout the Indian sub-continent one of the most popular forms of the god Siva, both in stone and bronze sculpture, is that which shows him as the Divine Dancer or Lord of the Dance. Generally referred to in North India as Nataraja or Natesa, he is called in South India Kuttaperumanadigal or, with a special reference to the god at Chidambaram, Adavallan. There are several distinct and easily recognized regional variations of this iconographic form but the one particularly associated with South India and whose origin and early development form the main subject of this paper is that in which the god is shown in the pose of ananda-tandava or the dance of ecstasy. Here the right leg, slightly flexed, is supported on the back of Apasmara, the Dwarf of Ignorance, who clasping a cobra, lies prostrate facing the god's right. The left leg is raised and pointed across the body. The god is four-armed. The upper left hand holds a flame (agni), sometimes contained in a bowl: the upper right, a double drum (damaru). The lower left arm is held across the body, fingers pointing to the raised left foot, in the gesture known as gaja-hasta. The lower right hand is in the gesture of reassurance (abhaya mudra), the forearm entwined with a cobra. The hair is dressed high, ornamented with a skull, a cobra, the

crescent moon, and a datura, sacred flower of Siva, and often crowned with a fan-shaped crest of the leaves of the Konnai, the Indian laburnum. Braided locks, interspersed with flower-chains, symmetrically frame the head of the god, flowing outwards with the movement of the dance. In the locks on the god's right sits the river goddess Ganga, represented as a mermaid with hands clasped in adoration (*anjali mudra*). The hair is bound in a jewelled diadem, held at the back of the head by a large clasp shaped like a lotus or wheel (*siras cakra*). The god wears a dhoti, a long floating sash twisted about the waist and a short cloth over the left shoulder. The whole composition is, in bronze images, enclosed in a flamed mandorla (*prabha*) fixed to a lotus pedestal, which itself stands on a rectangular base. Again in bronze representations of the deity he is accompanied by a standing image of his consort Parvati or Umaparamesvari.

This form of Nataraja makes its first appearance in South Indian religious art in the Early Cola Period (A.D. 866–1014). In the First or Aditya I Phase (A.D. 866–940) of that period the two lateral walls of the ardhmandapa of the temple are either decorated with spaced pilasters or occupied each by a single image—usually Ganesa (south) and Durga (north)—in a devakoshtha or plain niche.¹ In other words the main iconographic scheme comprised three images on the vimana and two or none on the ardhmandapa. In the Second Phase (A.D. 940–70) a tentative effort was made to extend the scheme. On the key temple for this Phase, the Gomuktesvara at Tiruvaduturai, which may be dated A.D. 945, three devakoshthas occupy the length of the south wall of the ardhmandapa.² The centre devakoshtha contains Ganesa, the east devakoshtha is blind and was clearly intended to be so, for its field is covered by old inscriptions. The west devakoshtha contains the bearded sage Agastya, who is said to have brought the benefits of Sanskrit culture to the South and whose importance, artistically at least, is here emphasized for the first time. On the north wall there are also three devakoshthas: the centre contains Durga, while

Abbreviations used in footnotes

Barrett, 1965 = Douglas Barrett, *Early Cola Bronzes* (Bombay, 1965).

Barrett, 1974 = Douglas Barrett, *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture* (London, 1974).

Sivaramamurti = C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes* (Delhi, 1963).

¹ The sole exception is the Nagesvara Temple at Kumbakonam, which has a central devakoshtha with two flanking niches on each lateral wall.

² Barrett, 1974, pp. 79–81.

the two flanking are again blind. This more elaborate planning of the wall decoration has architectural point certainly, but iconographically merely serves to present one additional image, that of Agastya. A similar attempt is made, rather more timidly, on the other masterpiece of this Phase, the Naltunai Isvara Temple at Punjai, which may be dated about A.D. 940.¹ Here two devakoshthas occupy the south wall: they contain Ganesa (west) and Agastya (east). On the north wall opposite Ganesa is a devakoshtha containing Durga, but the rest of the wall is left plain.

In the Third or Sembiyan Mahadevi Phase (A.D. 970–1014), however, each lateral wall of the ardhmandapa is planned to carry three true devakoshthas or a central devakoshtha flanked by two plain niches, giving an iconographical scheme of six images. The earliest dated example of this new scheme is the Umamahesvara Temple at Konerirajapuram, which was built between A.D. 969 and A.D. 976 by Sembiyan Mahadevi herself.² On this temple a Nataraja in ananda-tandava for the first time in South Indian art occupies a devakoshtha on the temple (Plate I). Placed in the east devakoshtha of the south wall of the ardhmandapa, it follows the description of the form already given except for two details. The cobra depends not from the right forearm of the god but from the left: this is general on stone sculptures and is presumably due to the fact that on a relief the left arm of necessity partially conceals the right forearm, a problem not presented to the bronze-caster. Secondly, the river-goddess Ganga is shown in the locks not on the god's right but on his left. Though the form was in other respects fully realized by the beginning of the Third Phase, the position of Ganga—indeed, as we shall see, her actual presence—was evidently not yet canonically prescribed.

After the temple at Konerirajapuram it is possible to follow the use of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava on a close series of dated or datable temples throughout the reign of Uttama Cola (A.D. 969–84). On the Agastyesvara Temple at Anangur, built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 979, the Nataraja occupies the west devakoshtha of the south wall of the ardhmandapa.³ There seems to be no Ganga present in the locks. On the Tirukkotisvara Temple at Tirukkodikaval, built in A.D. 980, again by Sembiyan Mahadevi, the Nataraja occupies the east devakoshtha on the south wall.⁴ Here there is certainly no

¹ Barrett, 1974, pp. 81–2.

² Ibid. pp. 90–2.

³ Ibid. pp. 92–3.

⁴ Ibid. p. 93.

Ganga. On the Kailasanatha Temple at Sembiyan Mahadevi, a new village created by the queen-mother and named after her, the Nataraja occupies the central devakoshtha of the south wall, thus usurping for the first time the position generally reserved for Ganesa.¹ The temple was built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 981. There seems to be a Ganga in the locks on the god's right. On the Gangajatadhara Temple at Govindaputtur built in or just before A.D. 982, though the walls of the ardhamandapa are organized with a central devakoshtha and two flanking plain niches, it is the Nataraja which occupies the position of honour in the devakoshtha on the south side.² On the Apatsahyesvara Temple at Aduturai, built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 985, the walls of the ardhamandapa are designed with three devakoshthas, but it is again the Nataraja which occupies the central devakoshtha of the south wall.³ There is certainly a Ganga in the locks on the god's right.

In the first half of the reign of Rajaraja I (A.D. 985-1014) there is little change on dated or datable temples. On the Siddhanathasvami Temple at Tirunaraiyur, built in or just before A.D. 986 perhaps by Sembiyan Mahadevi, the Nataraja occupies the central devakoshtha on the south wall: Ganga is present on the god's right.⁴ The same applies to the Achalesvara shrine in the great temple at Tiruvarur, built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 991: the Nataraja is a fragment but the Ganga is clear.⁵ However, on the Uktavedisvara Temple at Kuttalam, built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 991, the Nataraja is relegated to the east devakoshtha on the south wall (Ganesa occupies the central devakoshtha) and there is no Ganga.⁶ It would have been satisfying to quote here the ruined Siva shrine in the Candramaulisvara Temple at Tiruvakkarai.⁷ Dedicated in A.D. 1001 by Sembiyan Mahadevi, it crowned sixty years of work by the most munificent patron in the history of South Indian art. Unfortunately Tiruvakkarai, on the road from Pondicherry to Mailam, lies far north of the metropolitan centres of Colamandalam and the Siva shrine retains the First Phase scheme for the ardhamandapa—one devakoshtha on each of the lateral walls. I should add that throughout Rajaraja I's reign there is little, if any, awareness in the northern part of the Cola empire of the six-image iconographical scheme on the ardhamandapa: consequently there is no Nataraja. After Kuttalam

¹ Barrett, 1974, pp. 94-5.

² Ibid. pp. 95-6.

³ Ibid. pp. 98-9.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 109-10.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 110-11.

⁶ Ibid. p. 111.

⁷ Ibid. p. 116.

there are no firmly dated temples in Colamandalam until the last quarter of Rajaraja I's reign: no doubt work was mainly concentrated on the vast undertaking at the capital, the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjavur. The most important small temple of this period is the Uttara Kailasashrine in the Panchanadisvara Temple at Tiruvaiyaru, built by Danti Sakti Vitanki, a queen of Rajaraja I, in or just before A.D. 1008.¹ Here though three devakoshthas occupy each lateral wall of the ardhmandapa, the two flanking devakoshthas are blind. Nevertheless it is the Nataraja in ananda-tandava (a fragment merely) which occupies the south central devakoshtha.

Clearly in that part of the Third Phase covered by the reign of Uttama Cola (A.D. 969–85) on temples built for the most part by that great patron Sembiyan Mahadevi, the Nataraja in ananda-tandava, having achieved by about A.D. 969 sufficient status to be included in the newly introduced iconographic scheme of the ardhmandapa, was given by A.D. 981 on the south wall the central position of dignity. Further, in the reign of Rajaraja I (A.D. 985–1014), where only one devakoshtha on the south wall is occupied by an image, it is the Nataraja which is preferred for the honour.

There is evidence from existing fabrics that the iconographic form itself, though not considered of sufficient importance to occupy a devakoshtha, was conceived some fifty years earlier than its sudden rise to popularity at the beginning of the Third Phase. There are three examples of its use in the Second Phase. On the Gomuktesvara Temple at Tiruvaduturai, which I have already mentioned as the key monument (A.D. 945) of the Second Phase, in the torana over the devakoshtha of Siva as Dakshinamurti (the image itself is late but the supporting figures are original) on the south wall of the vimana is a small figure of Nataraja in ananda-tandava under a projecting half-lotus canopy.² The figure is carved virtually in the round, fixed to the fabric between the shoulders and by small struts on the legs. There is no Ganga and, more important, no Apasmara. The image also occurs, this time in low relief, on the Naltunai Isvara Temple at Punjai, probably to be dated about A.D. 940.³ It is again in a torana but over the Durga on the north wall of the ardhmandapa. It also lacks both Ganga and Apasmara.

¹ Barrett, 1974, pp. 112–13.

² Aschwin Lippe, 'Some South Indian Icons', *Artibus Asiae*, xxxvii, 3 (1975), fig. 45.

³ Ibid. fig. 46.

Thirdly, on the Pipilesvara Temple at Tiruverumbur, built in A.D. 952, the Nataraja is carved in low relief in the torana above the original Dakshinamurti on the south wall of the vimana.¹ The god stands on Apasmara, but there is no Ganga. In the Second Phase then the conception of a Nataraja in ananda-tandava already existed, but he was presented as a minor subsidiary icon. The canonical form was not yet established: there was no Ganga and only once (Tiruverumbur) an Apasmara. More important perhaps is the fact that at Punjai the canonical position for the Nataraja on the south side of the temple is ignored.

These three miniatures are preceded by one certain representation of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava in the First Phase on the ruined Sadaiyar Temple at Tiruchchennampundi which may be dated about A.D. 920. In the field of the torana above the devakoshtha of a Vinadhara Dakshinamurti on the south wall of the vimana is an orthodox seated Dakshinamurti. Above this within a small roundel which serves—intentionally or not—as a kind of mandorla is the Nataraja.² There is no Ganga but below the Nataraja in a rectangular box between addorsed makara-heads is Apasmara, crouching rather than prostrate, but facing to the god's right. This is, I believe, the earliest representation of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava on an Early Cola temple. It does not seem to occur on any temple which can fairly be attributed to the reign of Aditya I (A.D. 870–907), in which the Phase I style reached full maturity. Nor—and here I digress briefly—does it appear on any temple, rock-cut or structural, of the Pandya or Pallava dynasties. The closest the Pallava sculptor seems to have got to this conception is the small panel on the north pilaster of the façade of Avanibhajana's cave-temple at Siyamangalam (North Arcot District).³ The position of the legs is correct, though there is no Apasmara. The god is four-armed but the lower left is held not across the body but downwards in the kari-hasta pose. The lower right is in the abhaya mudra, without the cobra which lies coiled near the god's right foot. It is the upper right which holds the bowl of fire, while the upper left holds not a drum but an axe. The locks are spread but there is no Ganga. The cave-temple itself is dated by a foundation inscription of Mahendravarman I (about

¹ Aschwin Lippe, 'Some South Indian Icons', *Artibus Asiae*, xxxvii, 3 (1975), fig. 44.

² Ibid. fig. 12.

³ K. R. Srinivasan, *Cave Temples of the Pallavas* (New Delhi, 1964), pl. xxiii.

A.D. 580–630) on the south pillar of the façade. There is however a second inscription, on the north pillar, referring to the construction of a mukha-mandapa in front of the cave-temple. This inscription is dated year 3 of Dantivikramavarman (about A.D. 796–846). I believe that the style of the Nataraja panel, together with that of Siva and Parvati on the south pilaster, the female figures on both pilasters, and the lions with looped tails on the north and south pillars, cannot belong to the early seventh century A.D. and suggest that all these panels were cut, or recut over old floral panels, not earlier than the reign of Dantivikramavarman.

The origin and development of the bronze image of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava during the Early Cola Period is by no means as clear as on the stone fabrics. Here again it is the Third Phase which provides the firm evidence. At the large and well-known Vriddhagirisvara Temple at Vriddhachalam in South Arcot District an inscription (47 of 1918) records that the temple (srikoyil), a hall for bathing deities (snapana mandapa), a gateway (gopura), and subsidiary shrines were constructed by Sembiyan Mahadevi. All her work has disappeared in subsequent renovations except the temple itself which may be dated A.D. 981 (year 12 of a Parakesari who is certainly her son Uttama Cola). The temple is typically Third Phase in planning and detail, the walls of the ardhmandapa being each organized with a central devakoshtha and two flanking plain niches. Unfortunately, on the south wall where we might have expected to find an image of Nataraja, the devakoshtha and niches contain late images of Ganesa. This disappointment is removed by the second part of the inscription in which, among several other precious gifts, Sembiyan Mahadevi is reported to have presented a gold diadem for the Kuttapperumal and a marriage badge (tali) for the Umaibhattaraki. Both Kuttapperumal (Nataraja) (Plates II and III) and Umaibhattaraki (his consort) exist in the temple and may be dated in or just before A.D. 981. Though I reported these images in 1965,¹ the Vriddhachalam Kuttapperumal remains the earliest dated Nataraja in bronze. I need say nothing of the consort (her prabha does not of course belong) except that she is close in style and quality to a famous bronze Parvati at Konerirajapuram which I have been able to date fairly closely to A.D. 969 to 977. Though the Nataraja, which measures 42 inches in height, is in excellent condition with no later recutting, a careful mend covering the whole of the nose

¹ Barrett, 1965, pp. 23 and 29.

and the adjacent parts of the cheeks may now be clearly seen. I shall mention this kind of casting flaw again, but in this instance I believe the mend to be of the date of the image. Several features of the Nataraja are worthy of note. Below the fan-shaped crest of Konnai leaves is a skull flanked on the god's left by a rearing cobra and on his right by a large crescent moon. The tapes of the diadem end in two beautiful floriate tassels, lifted and spread by the movement of the dance. The hair flows freely from the back of the head. The five tightly twisted locks and two flower-chains are held apart by four vertical strings of flower rosettes. No locks are shown falling over the back. To the left of the crescent moon, close to the god's head, is a remarkable figure of Ganga, not in anjali mudra but with the left hand lifted in adoration. The god holds the fire directly on the upper left hand. The sides of the flamed prabha, a little asymmetrical, run straight below the upper curve, turning out and thickening a little as they join the lotus pedestal. The image is secured to the prabha by a strut behind the upper right hand and by the two riveted ends of the floating sash. The Vridhachalam Nataraja demonstrates that the iconographic form was fully realized in bronze by A.D. 981, the only uncanonical feature being Ganga's uplifted left hand. It is perhaps of interest to mention here that in the famous bronze marriage group (Kalyanasundara) in the Manavalesvara Temple at Tiruvilakkudi, to be dated about A.D. 975 and one of the supreme masterpieces of the Third Phase, a Ganga in anjali mudra appears in the piled hair of the Siva on his left side.¹

Another piece of evidence, not so explicit, is provided by the most famous of all Cola temples, the Rajarajesvara at Tanjavur, completed in A.D. 1010. A well-known inscription (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. ii, no. 42) describes a bronze Nataraja dedicated by Colamahadevi, a consort of the king, in or just before A.D. 1014 (year 29 of Rajaraja I). This solid image of Adavallar had four arms, the goddess Ganga in the braided hair, nine locks, seven flower-chains (pumalai), and stood on Musalagan (Apasmara). The image was set on a large lotus, which stood on a pedestal. There was a solid prabha. Detailed dimensions are given both for the Nataraja and his consort, who was also provided with a prabha. Unfortunately these bronzes which were small no longer survive in the temple: there is a small Nataraja but it is not of our period. There is however a second Nataraja in the temple, perhaps the best known bronze in

¹ Barrett, 1965, pl. 10.

South India and often photographed (Plate XVI) with his consort who does not belong. This magnificent image, some 4 feet 6 inches in height, was severely damaged and out of worship some time before A.D. 1885, when it was repaired and reconsecrated by the chief queen of the Maratha King Sivaji of Tanjavur, a lady who continued in a modest way the great work of Sembian Mahadevi. The image was broken at the right ankle: it was refixed to the Apasmara, the mend being concealed, not very happily, by the coils of a rearing cobra. At the same time the lower parts of the prabha, broken or lost, were replaced by crude sections ending in makara heads. There is no doubt in my mind that this image was the original Nataraja of the Rajarajesvara Temple and was dedicated by the king himself. That there was a second Nataraja in the temple is clear from an inscription (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. ii, no. 2) which records gifts to Umaparamesvari, the consort of Adavallar, in A.D. 1010 by the elder sister of Rajaraja I. Unfortunately, this, presumably the main Nataraja, like several other of the most important bronze images which were original dedications, is not described. Indeed, in several cases we cannot identify the deities themselves, let alone their images, by the terms used in the inscriptions.¹ However this may be, the Tanjavur Nataraja may best speak for itself. The small crescent moon is set high on the Konnai leaves on the god's left. The tapes of the diadem form oval loops. On either side four tightly twisted locks and three flower-chains are held apart by two vertical strings of floral rosettes. Some locks fall on the shoulders behind. The fire burns in a small bowl in the upper left hand. The goddess Ganga is represented not in the locks but on the prabha itself. Her hands are in the anjali mudra. The prabha would presumably have been similar in shape to that of the Vriddhachalam Nataraja, but here, on what was probably the largest bronze image in the kingdom, it is designed with a solid inner rim, decorated with incised lozenge and rosette ornament, and an outer rim, which carries the flames, in open-work. I am content to accept this image—there has never been a dissident opinion—as a work of the royal atelier of about A.D. 1010.

I will now attempt to supplement the dated Nataraja at Vriddhachalam of A.D. 981 and the virtually certain image at

¹ Only if Adavallar = Adavallar Dakshinameruvitankar (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. ii, no. 2) = Dakshinameruvitankar (*South Indian Inscriptions*, vol. ii, no. 6), is it possible to argue on the inscriptional evidence that Rajaraja I set up the Nataraja.

Tanjavur of A.D. 1010 with five other bronzes, all masterpieces, of the Third Phase. Here it is the cumulative evidence which is telling and I will deal first with three images that derive some support from the date of their parent temples. At the Umamahesvara Temple at Konerirajapuram already mentioned as built between A.D. 969 and A.D. 976 by Sembiyan Mahadevi, and as the earliest dated temple to exhibit a stone Nataraja in a devakoshtha, there is a very rich collection of bronzes. It includes a group—a Vrsvahana, a Tripurantaka, and a Ganesa—which may be dated on inscriptional evidence to A.D. 969 to A.D. 977: the earliest dated bronzes in South India as they are among the finest to have survived.¹ There are three Natarajas in the temple collection, one of which, not of our period, is reputed to be the largest in South India. The second image is also later than the Early Cola Period. The third, which measures 44 inches in height, I consider to be an original dedication (Plates IV and V). The prabha is oval in shape, the sides curving inwards to meet the lotus in a shallow curve. The fire, in the upper left hand, burns in a clearly represented conical bowl. The cloth over the left shoulder and the two ends of the twisted sash turn and undulate with the god's movement. Balancing the prominent datura flower the flowered tapes of the diadem form on the right of the god's head an elaborate trellis-work. But the most important feature of the image is the treatment of the hair, which is presented wholly naturalistically. The seven extended locks above either shoulder are held apart by a broad flower-chain beyond which the tightly curled ends project stiffly. The locks on the back flow from the head like the floating ones, but are a little shorter. They also are held by a flower-chain, which together with the projecting curls is visible from the front. This beautiful 'cape' of hair is controlled by a large quatrefoil jewel on the back of the head which acts as a comb or slide. The splay of the end of the dhoti drawn through the belt above the buttocks is large and fan-shaped, itself an indication of an Early Cola date for any bronze image. The goddess Ganga is not represented either in the locks or on the prabha. The image is marred, I think, by one flaw. There is a large mend on the face, covering nose, mouth, and chin like a mask. Though I am no longer inclined to reject these large mends out of hand, I do not think it can be original on this piece.

A second Nataraja, 41 inches in height, survives in the Siddhanathasvami Temple at Tirunaraiyur, already mentioned as

¹ Barrett, 1965, pls. 1-3 and 7-9.

built in or just before A.D. 986 perhaps by Sembiyan Mahadevi. A stone Nataraja occupies the central devakoshtha on the south wall of the ardhamandapa, Ganga being present in the locks on the god's right. The Tirunaraiyur bronze Nataraja (Plate VI) is almost identical in design as it is in style with that at Konerirajapuram. The hair is treated with the same 'cape'-like effect and there is the same large quatrefoil jewel on the back of the head. The fire is again contained in a large conical bowl. The goddess Ganga is not represented. By an extraordinary coincidence there is the same large mask-like mend on the face. Again I would find it difficult to accept the mend as original.

A third Nataraja, 44 inches in height, belongs to the Agnisvara Temple at Tiruppugalur, a village well-known to students of Tamil devotional poetry as the place where the saint Appar is said to have composed his last song. Tiruppugalur¹ is a Third Phase temple: though there is no foundation date given in the inscriptions, it may be accepted as contemporary with the already mentioned Apatsahyesvara Temple at Aduturai built by Sembiyan Mahadevi in or just before A.D. 985. On the south wall of the ardhamandapa a late Nataraja has been inserted in the central devakoshtha. On the wall beside the devakoshtha is a small seated drummer, so it is safe to assume that the devakoshtha was originally occupied by a Nataraja. I hope it is clear from the reproduction (Plate VII) that the bronze Nataraja at

¹ Tiruppugalur is not included in Barrett, 1974, since I was not aware of its significance until early 1976. The inscriptional evidence is meagre. The earliest inscription (66 of 1927-8), on the west wall of the vimana, records a sale of land by Uttama Cola deviyar, a queen of Uttama Cola, in year 16 of a Parakesari. The fabric makes it clear that A.D. 985 is, or is very close to, the foundation date. The first tala of the vimana is of Form B. 1. The base of the projecting frontispieces is of Form C. 2. a, found only at Aduturai. The base of the flanking wall-sections and of the ardhamandapa is of the cognate Form B. 2. a, found at Tiruvaduturai and on Third Phase temples. The ardhamandapa is of Form II, f, the recessed wall-spaces being occupied by split-pilasters and lintel without torana. The images on the vimana are a late Dakshinamurti (south), Lingodbhava with Brahma mounted on hamsa (west), and Brahma (north). The images on the ardhamandapa are (reading from west to east) Gangadhara, Durga, and Bhikshatana (north): and a late Ganesa, a late Nataraja, and Agastya (south). The dvarapalas are two-armed. All pillars and pilasters are of the full Early Cola order with roll corbels, throated and with decorated median band. The pillars and pilasters on the vimana have the torus moulding cut into munai. The griva and sikhara are now heavily plastered and octagonal. The Third Phase images on the north wall of the ardhamandapa are excellent.

Tiruppugalur, which has recently been published as of twelfth-century A.D. date, is closely related to the two I have just discussed. The treatment of the hair, which is exceptionally beautiful, follows the same pattern but is more elaborately conceived, at least from the front view. (I should perhaps mention that these bronze images are utsavavigrahas, to be carried in procession on festival occasions and therefore designed to be seen from all sides.) Seven locks on the god's left and eight on his right with a flower-chain on either side are extended out to the prabha. They are held separate by two vertical strings of flower rosettes. The 'cape' effect of the hair is not so apparent from the front though one curl may be seen on the god's left just below the armpit. There is a large quatrefoil jewel on the back of the head. The small crescent moon may be seen on the god's right just below the rearing cobra which is balanced on the other side of the Konnai leaves by a datura and a fully opened flower I cannot identify. The fire burns in a large conical bowl. The shape of the prabha follows that of the two companion pieces but with less of an inward curve where the left side meets the lotus base. It is remarkable how few of the early prabhas are absolutely symmetrical, but this does not offend the eye. Fortunately there is no recutting on this splendid image but there are several casting flaws, including two major ones on the right knee and left calf. The ancient mends are beautifully executed. Here again the nose, mouth, and chin form one mend: in my opinion, as at Vriddhachalam, original. I have not been able with the other two members of this group to quote the consort of the god as supporting evidence for date. At Tiruppugalur the present consort is late but the original is in the temple collection. It is a splendid thing and absolutely typical of the Third Phase.

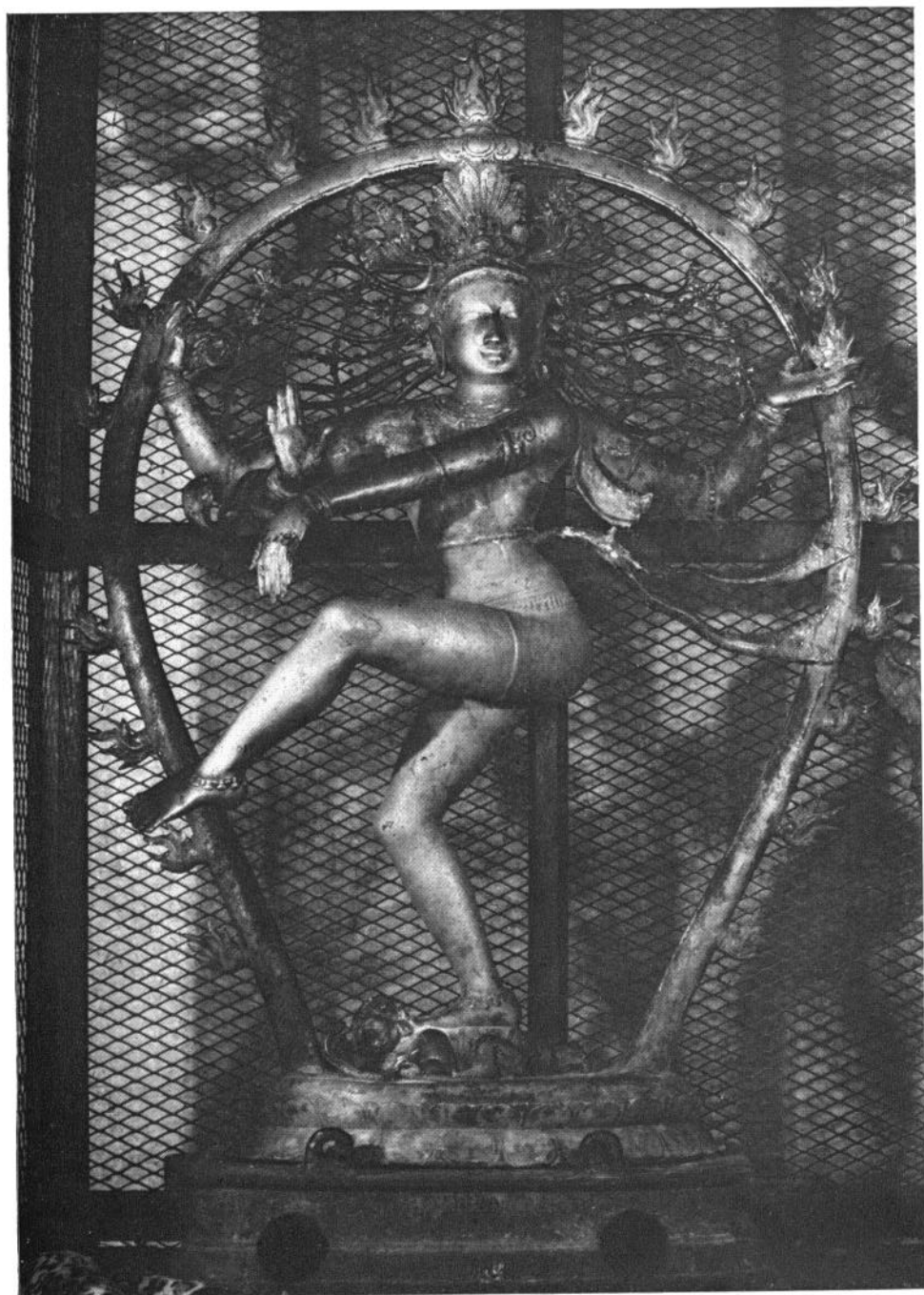
I would like to claim that the three images already discussed, emanating perhaps from an atelier working for Sembiyan Mahadevi, form a stylistic and iconographic group; are related to the Vriddhachalam Nataraja and are earlier than the Tanjavur Nataraja. I would also like to think that the dates of the parent temples may be used as presumptive evidence and that all three bronzes may be placed in the first half of the Third Phase, that is, about A.D. 970 to A.D. 990.

If this is acceptable, I may add to the group three more pieces where there is little evidence other than style and iconography. The fabric of the Vedaranyesvara Temple at Vedaranyam retains no features of interest to the student of Early Cola

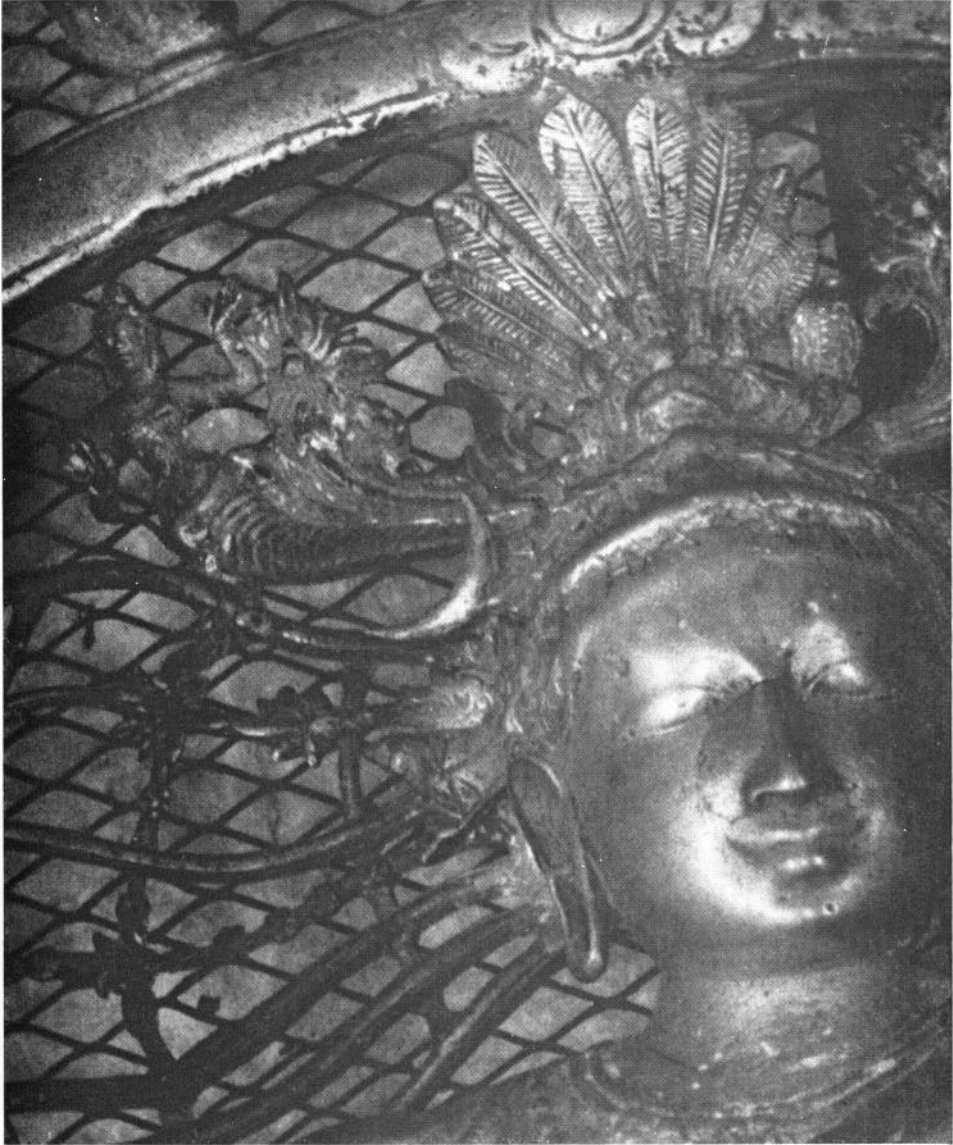


Konerirajapuram. AD 969-976

PLATE II



Vriddhachalam. AD 981



Detail

PLATE IV



Konerirajapuram. AD 969-976

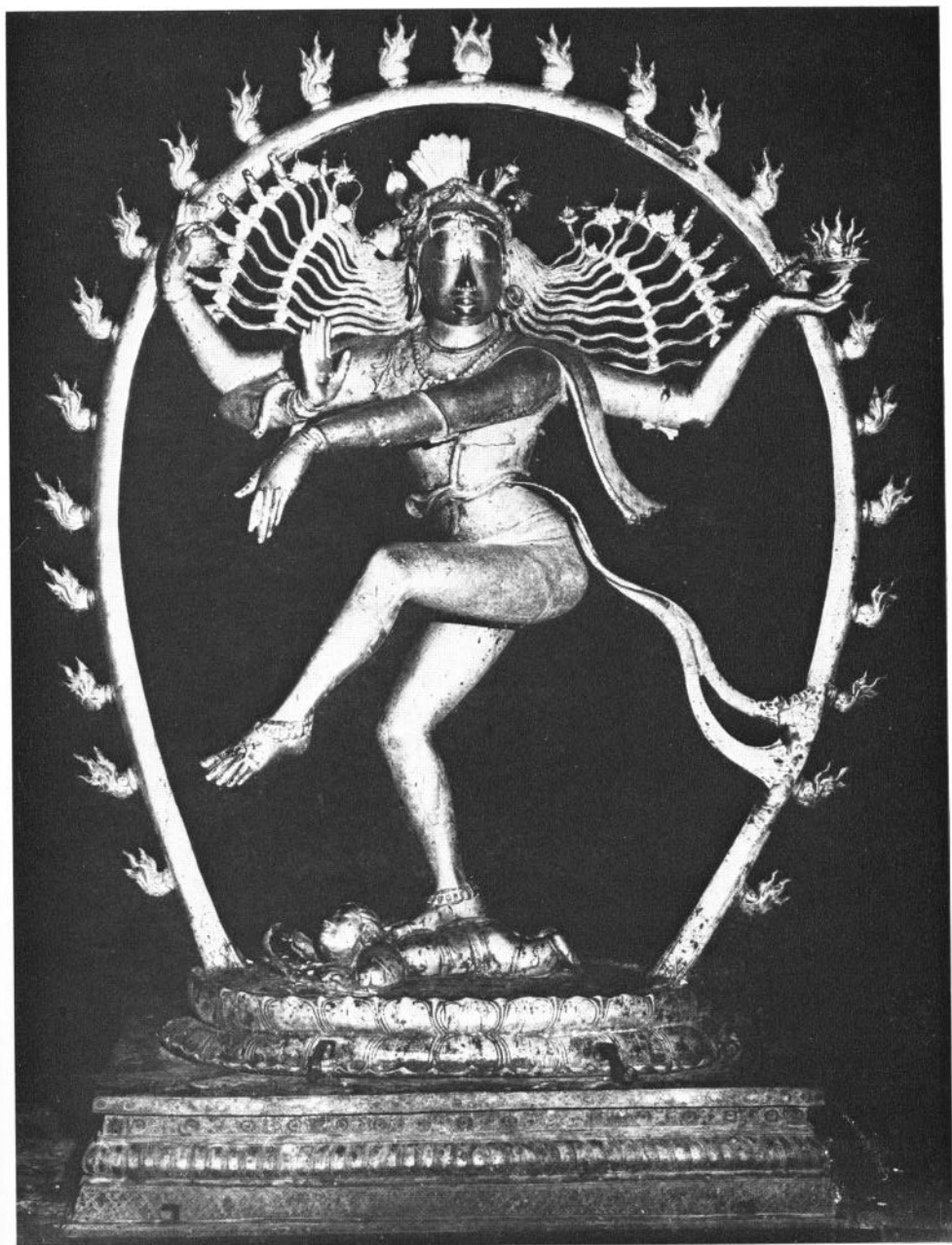


Reverse

PLATE VI

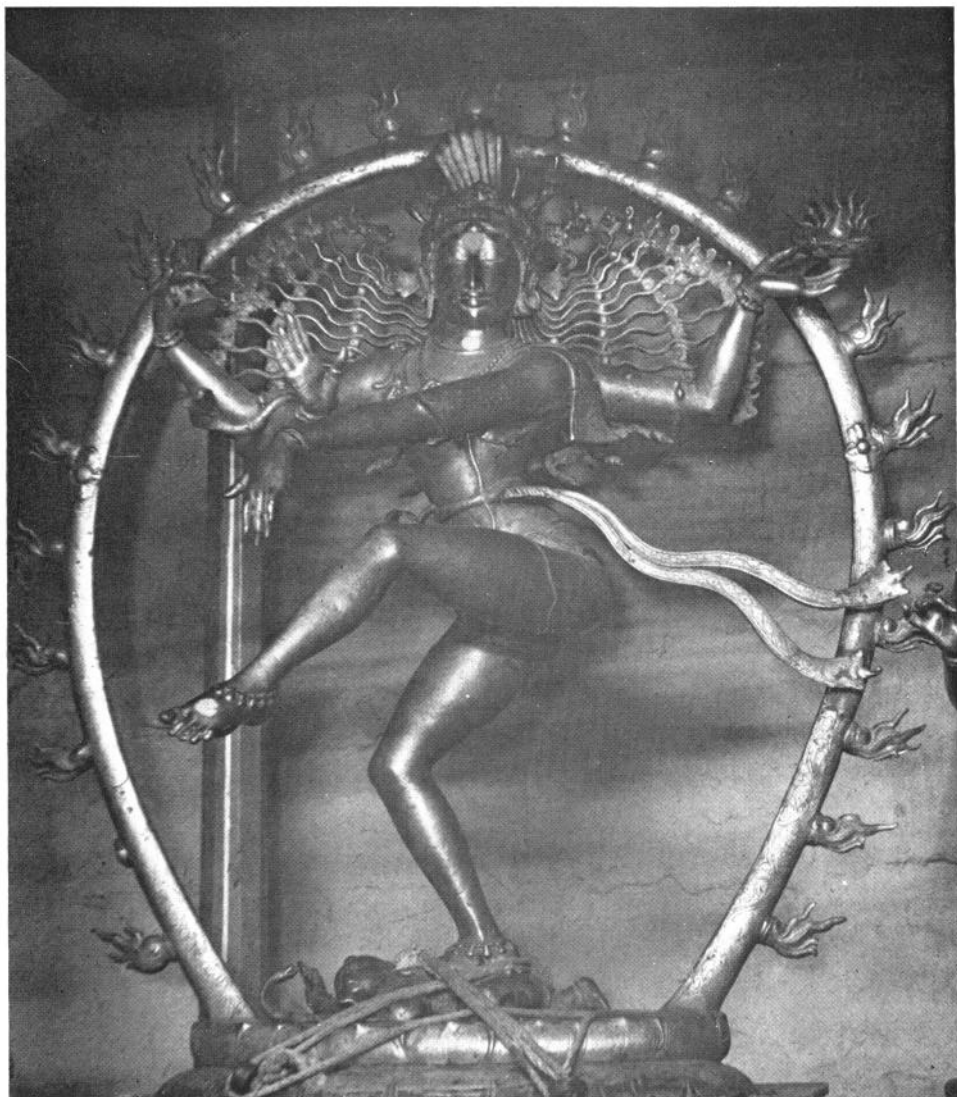


Tirunaraiyur. About AD 986



Tiruppugalur. About AD 985

PLATE VIII



Vedaranyam. About AD 985

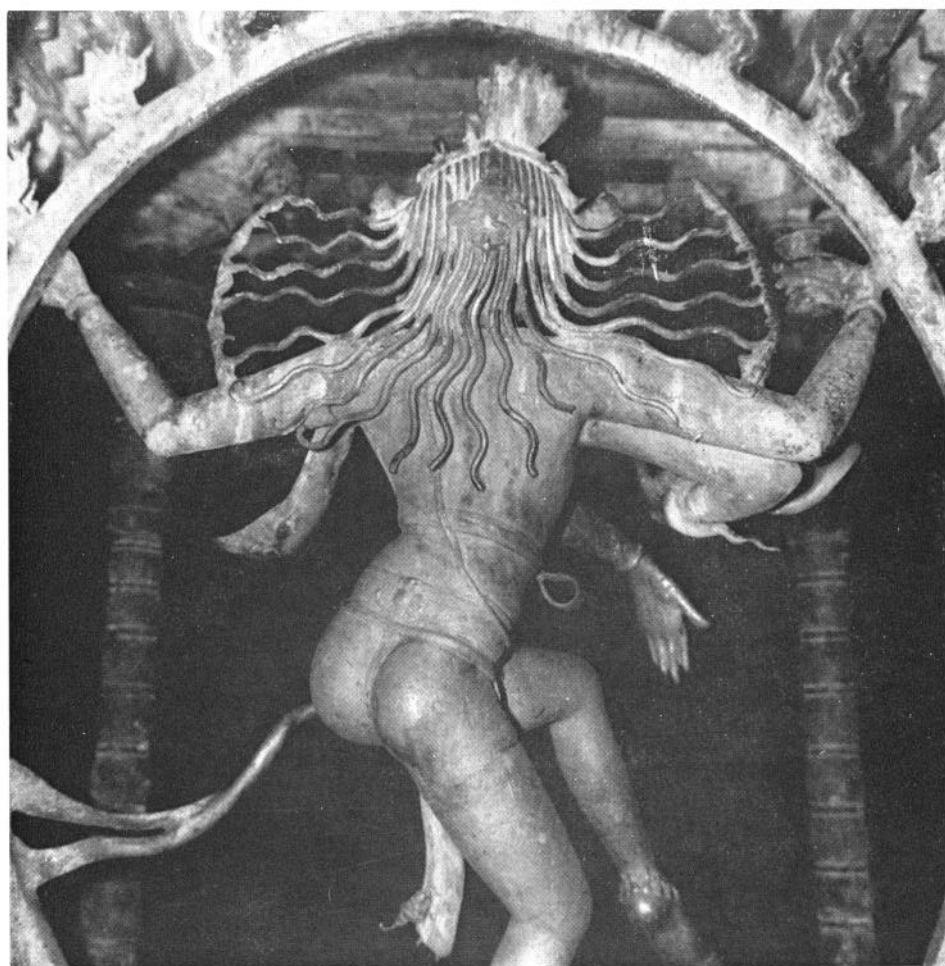


Detail

PLATE X



Nalur-Tirumeyjanam. About AD 985



Reverse

PLATE XII



Tiruppalanam. About AD 1000



Reverse

PLATE XIV



From Sivapuram. About AD 970



Reverse

PLATE XVI



Rajarajesvara Temple, Tanjavur. About AD 1010



Achchalpuram. About AD 990

PLATE XVIII



British Museum. First half of 10th century AD

architecture and stone sculpture. The temple however still houses a bronze Nataraja, the finest in the group under discussion and, to my eyes, the most perfect realization of the form ever achieved by the South Indian master-craftsman (Plates VIII and IX). The Nataraja measures 48 inches in height and is in excellent condition with no recutting. The flying sash however from the waist to the original pointed ends which are riveted to the prabha, is an old but not original mend. Well designed and competently engraved, it lacks the tight furling and sinuous flow of the other members of the group. The hair is treated as at Tiruppugalur, but even more elaborately. Alternate locks and flower-chains reach out almost to the prabha, their regular undulations controlled on either side by two vertical strings of flower rosettes. Eight locks fall on the shoulders, their curled ends and linking flower-chain clearly seen from the front. A superb and large quatrefoil jewel is suspended from a chain on the back of the head. The effect of the 'cape' of hair is even more telling than on the Natarajas at Konerirajapuram and Tirunaraiyur. The shape of the prabha, which retains much of its engraved ornament, follows the other members of the group. The fire is contained in a large conical bowl decorated with lotus petals. The noble face is again a 'mask' covering nose, mouth, chin, and the cheeks: surely an original mend. The goddess Ganga is not represented.

The Jnanaparamesvara Temple at Nalur-Tirumeyjnanam, certainly a tenth-century A.D. fabric, is difficult to date more precisely. I have argued that it is quite late in the reign of Uttama Cola or early in that of Rajaraja I. I will not labour the point, except to say that on the south wall of the ardhmandapa is carved a small Nataraja in ananda-tandava without a Ganga. Within the temple is a bronze Nataraja 51 inches in height (Plates X and XI). At first sight it may seem a little disappointing after the overwhelming impression made by the Vedaranayam image. This is due to the rather dull treatment of the hair, which lacks the beautiful 'cape'-like design of the other pieces. The plain and comparatively short undulating locks are held at the ends by a single vertical string welded to each shoulder, beyond which there are no projecting curls. Ten locks hang over the shoulders and back, growing, like the side-locks, naturally from the head but not held by a flower-chain. On the back of the head is the lovely quatrefoil jewel hanging by a chain from the hair-fillet. The figure itself lacks the taut energy of the other images. Indeed, its static beauty is almost feminine. The

soft modelling and the relaxed pose of the body, especially of the singularly graceful left leg, is repeated in the gentle curve of the unusually long end of the dhoti and the slow fall of the furled sash. The oval shape of the prabha, slightly asymmetrical, follows that of the other images. Again the fire burns in a large conical bowl and again the goddess Ganga is not represented. Here, fortunately, supporting evidence for date is provided by the consort of the Nataraja.¹ She is perhaps the most admirable of all her Third Phase sisters and may be dated about A.D. 985.

I may mention here that there is a sixth Nataraja in this group, very close to that at Vedaranyam in design, style, and quality. I know it only from a small reproduction in a Tamil publication. I have been searching for it for eleven years, and have not yet succeeded in identifying the publication, let alone the provenance of the image.

If the above argument is convincing, we have in the Third Phase a dated Nataraja at Vriddhachalam of A.D. 981, a virtually dated image at Tanjavur of about A.D. 1010, and at least five other images forming a closely knit stylistic and iconographic group of about A.D. 970 to A.D. 990. I would now like to make a few further attributions, concentrating on images which may be unfamiliar.

It will be remembered that the goddess Ganga is not represented on any of my group of five bronzes, but does appear at Vriddhachalam in the flying locks but not in anjali mudra. On the big Nataraja at Tanjavur she is shown in anjali mudra but on the prabha itself. She occupies this position, more prominently, on an image in the Sivalogatyagesvara Temple at Achchalpuram (Plate XVII). This Nataraja, which measures 43 inches in height, is in excellent condition, though the eyes and brows are recut and the head of the cobra on the lower right forearm is missing. On either side of the head seven short flowing locks and six flower-chains are controlled by three vertical strings of floral rosettes. All these elements are close-set and the two-dimensional treatment, like a pierced plaque, is meagre and lifeless. Six locks hang on the shoulders at the back. From the necklace is suspended a heavy jewel between the shoulder-blades. The splay of the dhoti above the buttocks is large and wavy. The fire burns in a small high-footed bowl. The prabha retains the familiar oval shape. Though the least successful in the treatment of the hair, the image is in all other respects comparable in style and quality with the pieces already

¹ Barrett, 1965, pls. 25-6.

discussed. I suggest a date in the last decade of the tenth century A.D.

A little later, but earlier than the big Tanjavur Nataraja is an image, measuring 37 inches in height, in the Apatsahayesvara Temple at Tiruppalanam, itself a uniquely elaborate First Phase fabric of the last decade of the ninth century A.D. (Plates XII and XIII). Here again the goddess Ganga is fairly prominently displayed on the prabha. Seven flowing locks are held by two vertical floral strings, the outer a prominent part of the composition. (The locks on the god's right, which I found in the temple, have now been replaced on the image.) The back view admirably illustrates the treatment of the hair I have already mentioned on the Achchalpuram and big Tanjavur images. The 'cape'-like effect of my group of five images has been abandoned, and, so far as I am aware, will never reappear on South Indian images. The locks continue to be treated naturalistically but are now designed in two quite separate units: the floating locks flow outwards from either side of the head, while shorter locks drawn from beneath the main body of the hair, lie on the back and shoulders. The prabha is again oval in shape and the fire burns in a small, high-footed bowl. An interesting detail is that the loop of the waist-sash, which hitherto has projected beyond the right side of the god, thus providing an important accent in the composition, is here tightly placed against the left side of the body. This fine image—the figure of Apasmara with his upturned face and flowing mane of hair is exceptionally beautiful—is marred by coarse recutting of the face. The consort, stolen from the temple in 1968, is contemporary and a worthy companion.

Mention should be made here of the small but excellent Nataraja in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which seems not unrelated to the Tiruppalanam image. The goddess Ganga is perched high on the prabha. Though there are short curling locks on the back, there is no attempt to represent the floating locks, similar in design to Tiruppalanam, as drawn from the head: they are simply welded on as a unit. Nevertheless, I would wish to date the Victoria and Albert Museum's Nataraja early in the eleventh century A.D. It is perhaps the only Third Phase Nataraja outside India.

In the rich collection of bronzes in the Siva Temple at Tirukkaravasal is an outstanding group of about A.D. 1000. It includes a Bhikshatana, a Vrsvahana and consort,¹ and a

¹ Barrett, 1965, pls. 38–41.

Nataraja and consort. I believe the whole group to be by the same hand: indeed, the consort of the Vrsvahana may easily be confused with that of the Nataraja. The tall, slender Nataraja measures 49 inches in height. The floating locks, as seen from the front, receive much the same treatment as on the big image at Tanjavur. On the back however, where they are drawn directly from the head, they are confined by a beautifully knotted bow, a feature found on other Third Phase bronzes. No locks are shown between the shoulders. A large incised jewel falls from the necklace between the shoulder-blades. The splay of the dhoti above the buttocks is large and wavy. The oval prabha and all other stylistic elements connect this image with those already discussed. There is no Ganga and the prominent fire burns direct on the hand. I regret my photograph is not adequate for reproduction.

Several other attributions could be made but I hope I have already presented a sufficient body of material to establish the style and iconography of the bronze Nataraja in ananda-tandava during the Third Phase (A.D. 970-1014), when, like its counterpart in stone, it had become one of the most important icons in the Sivaite temple.

The Second Phase (A.D. 940-70) is a more difficult problem. I have already mentioned Tiruvaduturai as the first dated temple (A.D. 945) in which a tentative effort was made to extend the iconographic scheme on the ardhamandapa. With this went a new conception of architectural detail, especially on the base, and of sculptural form, both of which already anticipate the full Third Phase style. This development was brutally interrupted by the disaster at Takkolam (about A.D. 949), when the young Cola empire was overwhelmed by the Rashtrakutas from the Deccan. The events of the following two decades are obscure, but the Rashtrakutas or their feudatories seem to have occupied Tondaimandalam until well into the sixties. As inscriptions and surviving fabrics indicate, the Colas, in their fight for survival, had few resources for religious patronage even in Colamandalam. Their political revival appears to date from about A.D. 964, when Aditya II, the able heir-apparent, seems to have secured the southern flank against the Pandyas and to have regained most of Tondaimandalam. The reconstruction of social and economic life had by A.D. 969 made sufficient progress to support the great series of temples built or patronised by Sembiyan Mahadevi in the reign of her son Uttama Cola. For us the beginning of Uttama Cola's reign is important because we have

at Konerirajapuram the earliest dated temple with the full iconographic scheme of six images on the ardhmandapa, one of those images being a Nataraja in ananda-tandava. There is however some evidence that the new scheme for the ardhmandapa was already in use some five years earlier on the Anantesvarasvami Temple at Udaiyargudi in South Arcot District. I have argued this in detail elsewhere.¹ Briefly, in year 2 of Aditya II (A.D. 965) a soldier made a gift for an annual supply of cloths to the image of Kuttaperumal 'who is pleased to dance on the south side of the temple'. He also set up shrines (Koyil) to Kuttar, Ganesa, and Bhikshatana. The south wall of the ardhmandapa carries a devakoshtha flanked by two niches. The devakoshtha is empty but two ganas are carved at its side: it contained, we may assume, a Ganesa. The west niche is also empty, but a gana beating a drum is carved at its side: I suggest it contained a Nataraja. A Third Phase Bhikshatana survives in the temple compound. If the Nataraja in the west niche was, as is probable, in ananda-tandava, we may look for Second Phase bronze images of size earlier than the extensive Third Phase series associated mainly with Sembiyan Mahadevi's dedications. It would, I suppose, be perverse to attribute such images, should they exist, to the bleak and troubled decade following the defeat at Takkolam. Rather would one place them in the period of recovery (A.D. 960-70) or in the period A.D. 940-9, when, in a prosperous and as yet powerful empire, the new Second Phase style was beginning to assert itself. Udaiyargudi would support the first suggestion. The second is perhaps more difficult to sustain. There is however in the Tirutondisvara Temple at Tirunamanallur (South Arcot District) an inscription, one of the earliest references to a Nataraja, which records the gift of a lamp to Kuttaperumal in A.D. 945, the date of Tiruvaduturai. It is no longer in the temple but, whatever its size and whether or not it was in ananda-tandava, I think we ought to accept this as a bronze image. Consequently, whereas at Punjai (about A.D. 940), Tiruvaduturai (A.D. 945), and Tiruverumbur (A.D. 952) the Nataraja in ananda-tandava was, on the fabric of the temple, a minor deity and at Punjai on the 'wrong' side of the temple, a bronze Nataraja of one form or another was probably in worship by A.D. 945 at Tirunamanallur.

There are three important candidates for a date in the Second Phase. The first is the now famous image unearthed at Siva-

¹ Barrett, 1974, pp. 107-8.

puram in Tanjavur District (Plates XIV and XV) together with an equally impressive Somaskanda and Ganesa. When I first discussed this bronze in 1965, I had been able to study it only briefly after it had received a hurried cleaning. Indeed, I was more familiar with the interesting copies of all three bronzes in the temple. I have now had the opportunity to study the Nataraja at leisure. The three cleanings it has endured have of course destroyed and pitted the original surface. But now for the first time all details of modelling and traced ornament are clear to see. P. R. Srinivasan, when he first published the image in 1959, dated it to the early tenth century A.D. Later he revised his opinion and placed it about A.D. 950. I was not prepared to entertain a date earlier than A.D. 950 and preferred to consider it as another version of the earliest type of Third Phase Nataraja. I will stress those details which persuade me to retain my opinion. The image measures 43 inches overall. On the god's right there are four floating locks and five flower-chains, on his left five locks and again five flower-chains. On both sides they are held apart by two vertical strings of floral rosettes. The floating locks and flower-chains have not the slender tensile strength of those on the early members of my Third Phase series, but are more massive castings, treated as on the large Nataraja at Tanjavur, though admittedly with more life and to better effect. The flying ends of the sash, original, are not furled as on the earlier members of the Third Phase series and lack their lovely undulating flexions. The sides of the prabha, though markedly asymmetrical, are straighter than on any piece we have yet seen. It is perhaps the back which indicates most strongly a 'late' date within the Early Cola Period for the image. The two sets of floating locks and flower-chains are treated as separate units as on the bronze at Tiruppalanam, but unlike Tiruppalanam, are flat castings merely with no textural interest. Nor are there any locks on the shoulders. Now that the image is clean, one feature is very clear. The previously admired open flower, which secures the two sets of floating locks to the back of the head, is now seen as a late mend: a roughly shaped lump of metal, crudely incised. Its importance perhaps lies in the fact that it indicates that the image was buried in the not-too-distant past. It is impossible to say now how the two castings were originally fitted to the back of the head. Clearly it was not so beautifully or naturalistically contrived as at Tiruppalanam. Perhaps the castings were simply welded on, as on the Victoria and Albert Museum image. The splay of the dhoti is very small:

indeed, it is hardly represented. The fire burns in a small bowl. The goddess Ganga is not present. The Sivapuram Nataraja remains a masterpiece, if a flawed one; but I see no features, iconographical or stylistic, which would persuade me that it is a predecessor, even an immediate predecessor, of the earliest of the Third Phase images.

The second candidate belongs to a large and important hoard of bronzes unearthed and now housed in the Natanapurisvara Temple of Tandantottam, a small village near Kumbakonam. The hoard seems to have been a temple collection: the pieces vary in date and one, a Siva and Parvati group, comes not from South India but from the Southern Deccan. The Nataraja, which measures 40 inches in height, is certainly in the ananda-tandava, but differs in several important details from the images already discussed.¹ The hair is not crowned with the fan of Konnai leaves: the locks are piled high in the mode known as *jatamakuta* (the hair forming the crown), found on all images of Siva. A beautiful and unique feature is the garland which hangs from the hair on the god's right below the crescent moon. The cloth over the left shoulder receives unusual treatment: the short end is held under the armpit but the long end, instead of floating down to the front over the lower left arm, is taken behind the upper left arm and then welded to it. There is no waist-sash with its flying ends. The *Apasmara* is incongruously small, hardly larger than the god's right foot. The small half-lotus base, if that is what was intended, has no point in the design. Consequently the separate *prabha* was fixed to the rectangular base by two pointed lugs. The *prabha*, the villagers informed me, was found with the hoard but was sold for scrap. The reverse of the image introduces a feature I mentioned at the beginning of this paper: the large circular clasp of the diadem shaped like an open lotus or a wheel (*siras cakra*) and pinned to the back of the head by a lug from the tip of which, as here, is suspended a decorated pendant. The *siras cakra* which is worn by all deities, Sivaite or Vaishnavite, is a difficult problem. In very general terms the form in which the open lotus derivation is clear, is usually early. The surrounding of the lotus petals with a thin circular rim and the stylization of the petals into narrow spokes, thus producing a wheel, is, like many an attractive formal sequence, unsupported by other evidence. However, we have here the *siras cakra* as a large open lotus. Though close-set locks hang on

¹ R. Nagaswamy, 'Some Adavallan and other Bronzes of the Early Chola Period', *Lalit Kala*, no. 10 (October, 1961), figs. 1 and 4.

the shoulders, it is clear that no flying locks were intended, and that one of the most distinctive features of the Third Phase series and of later images was not yet canonical. I should add here that from about the middle of the eleventh century A.D. the cakra performed a useful function on a canonical image. If the floating locks were simply welded as two units to the back of the head, the cakra concealed and keyed the union. A more cursory method was to weld the two units to the outer curves of the cakra itself. I do not have to say that neither method was employed by the Early Cola craftsman. I suggest that in the Tandantottam Nataraja we have a large image which is less advanced iconographically and somewhat earlier than my Third Phase series. The ananda-tandava pose is there certainly, but without the floating locks and sash which contribute so much to the fully realized composition. The image is of a Siva in a specific dancing pose rather than that unique conception, the dancing Siva. I would place the image about A.D. 960, a date supported by his consort, who, judged in isolation, would, I think, be accepted as an early Third Phase image. Her cakra, incidentally, is of the open lotus form with a narrow circular rim.

The third candidate is the strange image from Okkur, which measures only 25 inches in height.¹ Iconographically it is completely canonical, less, of course, the goddess Ganga. The thick, plain prabha rises straight-sided from a good double-lotus base. The waist-sash is present with one lifelessly modelled end. The fan of Konnai leaves, above which a thick strut ties the image to the prabha, is also shown. The back of the head is roughly worked. There are no locks on the shoulders and the floating locks, four on each side, are simply welded to the side of the head: you see as much from the front as from the back, only the lowest locks being crudely represented as drawn from just above the nape of the neck. It is clearly not a successful image, if complete iconographically. I had previously regarded it as a very poor relation of the Third Phase masterpieces. I am now more inclined to take it at its face value as a true 'primitive' and, with my friends P. R. Srinivasan and Karl Khandalavala, to give it a formal date of about A.D. 950. However, I still feel uneasy about it, as one always does about a fully developed but poor quality member of a series. If it can be dated about A.D. 950, it is the earliest known canonical bronze Nataraja in ananda-tandava. We must then assume two lines of evolution, represented by Okkur and Tandantottam. Okkur is the forerunner

¹ Sivaramamurti, pl. 22a.

of the great images of the Third Phase. Tandantottam, fine thing though it is, is perhaps the latest example of what I hope to indicate as an older iconographic tradition.

To recapitulate briefly. The final conception of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava, less the position or actual presence of the goddess Ganga, seems to have been simultaneously realized by the stone-carver and the bronze-caster. It became a major icon on the southern wall of the ardhmandapa by about A.D. 965 and began to occupy a pre-eminent position there by about A.D. 981. The bronze image, by about A.D. 970, had achieved a dignity and importance, both in size and complexity of design, above all the other processional images. There is no large-scale 'primitive' in stone: the one fairly large 'primitive' in bronze is Okkur, to be dated about A.D. 950. Reject Okkur and the earliest bronze image, not yet canonical, is Tandantottam.

Other bronze images of the Tandantottam type probably await discovery. Here I should say that though the miniature representations in stone I have already quoted—one from the First Phase and three from the Second—are difficult to read, none of them seems to have the fan of Konnai leaves, and only Tiruverumbur the floating locks.¹ In other words the Tandantottam type or something very like it, may have existed in bronze as early as A.D. 920 (Tiruchchenampundi), if not earlier. I will conclude with an attribution.

In the First and Second Phases there are several representations of other forms of the dancing Siva on the temple fabrics. They are all, except one, miniatures, and have to be looked for in toranas, kanthas, and mala-sathanas. The one exception is a four-armed Nataraja in catura-tandava, not on the walls of the temple but on the south face of the first tala of the vimana of the south shrine at Kodumbalur, where it is associated with other magnificent forms of the Siva image in which dancing plays a conspicuous role. This unique representation of a Nataraja on a fair scale and in a prominent position dates, I believe, from about A.D. 960 in the Second Phase. The miniatures, which go back to about A.D. 890, are usually four- or eight-armed and in some form of the catura- or urdhva-tandava. These miniatures have three counterparts in bronze, which date, I cover most opinions, from the second half of the ninth

¹ At Punjai (c. A.D. 940) a long sash hangs laxly from low on the hips. The sash carries perhaps little weight in the argument, since it is more often than not omitted on large stone images in the Third Phase, presumably because of the technical problem involved.

century A.D. Two of them come from Tanjavur District: a famous image in the Kalyanasundaresvara Temple at Nallur¹ and a lesser-known image in the Siva temple at Kilakkadu.² The third comes from Kuram in Chingleput District.³ Certain iconographic features are shared by these bronzes. None possesses a lotus base, the image being welded to a plate let into the rectangular base. The Apasmara, which is small, faces not sideways but to the front. Prone at Kuram, he is seated on the other two images. At Kilakkadu, where he is represented as a miniature Atlas, and at Nallur, the god's foot rests on his head, at Kuram on his back. None displays the floating waist-sash, movement being indicated by short flying tapes from the girdle, symmetrically disposed. None wears the crest of Konnai leaves. Nallur alone carries the cloth over the left shoulder. All wear the open-lotus form of the cakra,⁴ with locks on the shoulders but no floating locks. Kilakkadu and Kuram had a separate prabha fixed to pointed lugs, Nallur a prabha which forms an integral part of the baseplate.

These three bronzes are of fair size: Nallur and Kilakkadu 34 inches and Kuram 22 inches in height. There is in the British Museum a small bronze Nataraja, measuring 11 inches in height: the base is missing (Plate XVIII). The god dances in ananda-tandava certainly, but the raised left leg is in a laxer position with thigh and foot held outwards rather than in the single plane of the mature Third Phase images: in this it resembles the Tandantottam and Okkur bronzes. Like Tandantottam it wears the shoulder cloth, featured prominently, but lacks both floating locks and waist-sash. Unlike Tandantottam it displays the fan of Konnai leaves. Two features which it shares with the three early bronzes are the absence of the lotus base, and a small Apasmara, which faces to the front, left hand up-lifted and right clasping the cobra, and is prone, as on the Kuram bronze. Where it differs from the three bronzes is that the god wears no cakra, the hair flowing naturally from the head on to the shoulders in twelve close-set locks. From the front the curled tip of a lock is visible on either shoulder. A large jewel is incised on the back of the head above the pearled fastening of the makara-diadem. The prabha, of a beautiful oval form, is an integral part of the baseplate, as on the Nallur

¹ Barrett, 1965, pls. 61-2.

² S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Art*, Part I (1966), pl. 113.

³ Sivaramamurti, pls. 7b and c.

⁴ Missing at Kilakkadu, but the lug remains.

bronze. I hazard the suggestion that this small but very elegant image is a true forerunner of the fully canonical Third Phase masterpieces, preceding both Okkur, if it is accepted as evidence, and Tandantottam. I would place it quite early in the first half of the tenth century A.D. and would wish to recognize it as the oldest known bronze image of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava. To relate the piece *stylistically* with the few bronzes which have some claim to belong to the First Phase, is difficult, even if the Nallur and Kilakkadu images are held to derive their style from sources other than Early Cola. The unusual design of the prabha, its large flames interrupted by small comma-shaped ones connected by a thin wire, may also suggest a later date. All this merely underlines the inadequacy of our evidence for the development of bronze-casting during the First and Second Phases in Colamandalam, let alone in Tondaimandalam. New discoveries may radically change our views, though not, I venture to claim, of the development of the Nataraja in ananda-tandava during the Third Phase of the Early Cola Period.

I would like to thank the Archaeological Survey of India for Plates XIV and XV and the French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry, for Plates VII and XVII.