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Cover Design:

The cover, illustrated by The Blue Chemist, is syndicated from *DOMUS 1024* which deals with the themes of LAND and LANDSCAPE. As we bring the thematics of TIME and TIMESCAPES to sit next to the ideas of LAND and LANDSCAPES in this issue, the image presents a provocative amalgamation of TIME and LAND. As natural and human-built landforms both exist in a state of dynamic tension in this image, we can somewhere perceive the patience as well as the urgency of Time, where Land negotiates ruin and regeneration simultaneously. For more details, turn to page 8.

Contents

The idea of Time is a narrative that connects many stories in this issue. The measure of Time as history but also as contemporary culture and processes in motion and across stages of evolution drive many of the features. On very few occasions have debates on architecture been driven and discussed on the sense of Time; often a talk on history or Time has been reduced to a timeline of monuments, as recently an architectural poster boasted of bringing in a consciousness about architecture from the past and an architectural heritage, simply by lining up a roster of monuments along a timeline. Architecture history cannot be a list of monuments lined up in a time-sequence, nor can the idea of learning from history or bringing consciousness of time-past be reduced to visiting monuments. With Ahmedabad becoming a World Heritage City and an important precinct in South Mumbai winning the UNESCO World Heritage tag, it remains, now, for us to see how heritage will transform from time-past to time-future and project towards a sense of evolution – architectural, cultural, and social, affecting the mental life of these cities rather than an occasion to sanitise and beautify, besides serving tourist and citizen fantasies for ‘heritage walks’! Cities such as Ahmedabad and Mumbai – and those such as Lucknow – which we briefly discuss in this issue, present to us a contested present where its negotiations with time-past and time-future is simultaneous, and most often, even difficult to separate one from the other.

Questions on Time get complicated then with questions of Land and Landscape. The latter is another thematic this issue focuses on. The thematic section explores Land and Landscape with very nuanced and creative propositions, but often as conversations on Land and Time come close to each other, questions of Region and Regionalism, Local and Locality emerge as difficult concepts and operative ideas. From Kenneth Frampton and Liane Lefaivre on the global state of affairs to scholars such as Romi Khosla, Gautam Bhatia, A G K Menon, Rahul Mehrotra, Annapurna Garimella, and A. Srivathsan commenting within the experience of modern and contemporary India have marked some important theses, propositions, and departures on the subject. Many young architects trying to engage with the idea of the Local and Locality would learn much by reading these scholars. Often, in India, practice has neither attentively, nor creatively – forget critically – engaged with theory and texts produced in their contemporary arena. This is followed by talk of (re) discovering the wheel, while making claims about lack of criticism or lack of critical writing in the field in India. What has been lacking is, firstly, attention and attentiveness, then the ability to read and listen to what someone is saying, and finally the capacity to reflect upon it. The result of this is that practitioners produce confused theoretical propositions. The annotated photo essay

in this issue presenting a summary-documentation of an exhibition that steers away from the mode of the timeline or the chronological, but through conceptual clusters and clustering of various practices (pedagogy, art, architecture, design, printing and publishing, curating exhibitions, writing critical texts, and theory) presents a set of debates and discussions on what would be the shape of ‘history of design’ in India, and why.

So Time and Land, Landscapes and Timescapes, come together in this issue, shaping an occasion and opportunity for us to think of these two simultaneously – one contained within the other, or one wrestling the other. Land as Cosmos, and rituals of temple-making and praying as Time, come together in the way we talk of aesthetics in India, in the case study of temples at Kiradu. Then, is aesthetics, or regionalism, or locality a category of Land or a motif of Time and History? How would we use these categories as creative constructs that help us shape concepts, rather than silos that force a stipulated imagination and understanding? We hope bringing these two conceptual and material categories to sit side-by-side within the covers of this magazine will open new possibilities of thinking not only about architecture and architecture practice, but also the culture of built-fabrics within which we live, work, think, and make things as landscapes of human knowledge, life, civilisation, and philosophical as well as material endeavours.

Sculpting temple design

Believed to have been constructed sometime between the 11th and 12th centuries CE by the then reigning Parmar and Chauhan rulers, the temples of Kiradu are located remotely, west of Barmer in Rajasthan. Known as the 'Khajuraho of Rajasthan' by the locals – and currently in a state of ruin owing to deliberate destruction and the ravages of nature – they now stand mute testimony to the passage of time, to the rise and fall of dynasties and their fortunes

Text and photographs by Sudha Ganapathi and Anuradha Shankar



This page, top: One of the smaller Shiva temples; right: remnants of the sculptures lie scattered all over at Kiradu

Opposite page, top-left: the Someshwara Temple is the best preserved one among all the temples at Kiradu; top-right: the Hari-Hara-Pitamaha-Surya, a composite deity with features and attributes of Hari (Vishnu: mace and discus), Hara (Shiva: weapons), Pitamaha (Brahma: lamp and manuscript) and Surya (lotuses in two hands); bottom: the intricately carved lintel and doorframe from one of the smaller Shiva Temples



About 35 kilometres west of Barmer in Rajasthan, where the Thar Desert meets some scattered outcrops of the Aravalli mountain range, lie the ruins of the temples of Kiradu. The temples have remained relatively unknown due to their isolated location, and it is difficult to believe that they were once on an important trade and pilgrim route connecting Sindh with Ajmer and Delhi. [1] Though there are only five temples 'standing' today at Kiradu, local legends claim that there were originally around 108 temples there. Piles of broken stones – some elaborately carved and some plain – lie scattered across the temple complex, pointing towards the existence of more temples at Kiradu in the past. A solitary watchman is in charge of the temples of Kiradu, though he leaves at sunset, thanks to a curse associated with the place – anyone who stays overnight at the temples would turn into stone. [2] The same legends also consider Kiradu, whose name is derived from the ancient site of Kiratakupa, to be associated with the Kiratas (a hunting tribe) who are mentioned in the Mahabharata. [3]

Not much is known about who built these temples, but they are believed to have been constructed by the Parmar and Chauhan rulers of the region, both of whom were feudatories of the Chalukyas of Gujarat (also called Solanki Rajputs) between the 11th and 12th centuries CE. [4] Of the five temples at Kiradu, four are dedicated to Shiva and one to Vishnu. The best preserved temple – also the biggest and the most intricately carved – is the Someshwara temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. According to an inscription found there, this temple is named after Someshwara, a Parmar king who ruled Kiradu around 1161 CE. [5] The other three Shiva temples are smaller, single-roomed structures and appear to have been built at a later date.

Architecture and Iconography
Architecturally, these temples mark the beginning of the Maru-Gurjara style of architecture, a fusion of the earlier styles prevalent in the desert state of Rajasthan (called Marusthala or Marudesh), and Gujarat (Gurjara). [6] Though





none of the temples have any idols in the *garbhagriha*, we know which deity was worshipped in each temple from the lintels and, in the case of the Someshwara temple, also from the aforementioned inscription.

The lintels of all the Shiva temples at Kiradu have two levels of carving. At the Someshwara temple, the lintel has a variety of images that includes Brahma, Vishnu, Ganesha, Kartikeya, and multiple forms of Shiva, indicating that the sanctum would have once housed a Shiva Lingam. The central image on the upper level of the lintel is that of Hari-Hara-Pitamaha-Surya, a composite figure that combines the aspects of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Surya. The doorframes are intricately carved with three deities on either side which include Ganesha and five Matrikas, among whom, Varahi, Aindri and Chamundi are recognisable. The three smaller Shiva temples have with images of Ganesha and Kubera,



along with Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, five Matrikas, and the Navagrahas on the lintel. Here too, the five Matrikas appear on the doorframes along with Ganesha.

The two biggest temples – the Someshwara temple and the Vishnu temple – have octagonal *mandapas*. At the Someshwara temple, the lower halves of the pillars are square and bare of sculptures, with only a hint here and there of the intricate carvings they might have once borne. The upper halves, however, bear a wealth of figures – different forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, alone as well as with their consorts; the Matrikas (Mother Goddesses); the Dikpalas (guardians of the directions); sages, and a rare depiction of a Pancha Ganesha. [7]. Religious as well as secular scenes of music, dance, combat practice, and war, have been depicted on the temple walls.

The pillars at the Vishnu temple, on the other hand, are octagonal in shape and would have supported the roof. The octagonal *mandapa* may have been a *nritya mandapa* or a hall for dance and music performances. The pillars are profusely carved with figures of dancing women, probably Apsaras (celestial women) at the lower level, while the Matrikas, Dikpalas, and different forms of the gods are carved above them. Vidyadharas or heavenly beings, and then a row of Kiritamukhas

This page, top: the different tiers of carvings on the pillars of *mandapa* of the Vishnu Temple; bottom: a rare depiction of Pancha Ganesha. The central figure is four-armed, while the other four are two-armed. Opposite page, top: the Vishnu Temple with the octagonal *nritya mandapa*; bottom: a sculpture of Brahma and Brahmini





are right on top. Above the pillars are Makaras from which emerge decorative arches or *toranas*. Sadly, only two such arches remain, while nothing remains of the roof or the *shikhara* or the walls of the temple.

It is very interesting to note the manner in which deities are depicted in the temples of Kiradu. The Dikpalas are large in size and easily visible on the outer walls of the temples, and also on the pillars and higher niches of the spires. The Matrikas are smaller in size, but are depicted in greater detail. One can also see the gods with their consorts on the pillars and in the niches. In addition, there are a number of composite images, such as the Hari-Hara-Pitamaha-Surya mentioned earlier. In comparison to the aforementioned Dikpalas and Matrikas, there are relatively fewer depictions of the various forms of Shiva and Vishnu.

Only two outer niches remain at the Vishnu temple. One niche has Vishnu in a meditative posture, and the second has Vishnu on Garuda flanked, rather unusually, by two elephants. The Someshwara temple has only two sculptures of Vishnu or rather two of his avatars – Vamana,

the dwarf, and another, which appears to be Buddha. None of the other avatars of Vishnu can be seen and it is not clear if they were ever carved or were destroyed.

Perhaps the most fascinating sculptures at the Kiradu Temple Complex are the ones depicting secular, non-religious themes. Battle scenes with elephants, horses and chariots; a warrior or sometimes a bird emerging from the mouth of *amakara*; a row of figures following the curve of a pillar; Apsaras on a pillar, each with a different hairstyle; an Apsara wearing a block-printed upper garment.

The Khajuraho of Rajasthan

Locals refer to the Kiradu Temples as the Khajuraho of Rajasthan. They are not far off the mark for the style and type of sculptures at Kiradu, as well as the temples themselves, at first glance, are quite similar to the ones at Khajuraho. The ordering and placement of sculptures, too, are almost the same with Vyalas (mythical creatures) and Apsaras appearing between the Dikpalas and other deities. The differences lie in the actual deities placed in the various niches, and the order of



deities in the lintels at Kiradu, which are probably more specific to the cults who were worshipped there.

The more apparent difference between the temples of Kiradu and Khajuraho is in their state of preservation. The temples of Kiradu are in ruins due to the both deliberate destruction caused by invading armies and the ravages of time and nature. [8] The destruction wreaked upon these temples also hints at how important the place must have been, both socially and politically. Very few sculptures are fully intact; the mutilated limbs and breasts of the sculptures, the disfigured faces and the empty *garbha grihas* are testimony to this destruction. Nature, too, has played its part in the present condition of the temples. The temples of Kiradu are located in a valley surrounded by hills and sand and rainwater coming down the slopes have contributed to the damage as well. Locals spoke about flash floods and seismic activity in the region, which could have caused structural damage to the temples and brought many of them down.

Conclusion

In spite of the isolation and the desolation that currently envelops the Kiradu Temples, it is not too difficult to imagine what it would have been like in its heyday. The temples would not have been just a religious site; it would have

been a social place for people to get together. There would have been markets, fairs and *pujas*, and people from nearby villages would have gathered to participate, and then partake in the *prasad* or the *bhog* that followed. Itinerant musicians and dancing troupes would have performed and entertained the people. Maybe on special days or on festivals dance or music performances would have been held at the *nritya mandapa* of the Vishnu Temple with the King himself coming to witness them along with his family and retinue of ministers, musicians and dancers who were invited to perform.

These temples have been witness to so much – the construction, consecration, the worship, the performances, the destruction, the neglect... The temples stand mute testimony to the passage of time, to the rise and fall of dynasties and their fortunes.

If the locals are to be believed, Kiradu is doomed forever due to the curse it has been bestowed with; doomed to be neglected and forgotten. But perhaps all is not lost – the ASI has taken up the restoration of the five temples. The Barmer Chapter of INTACH is also taking a keen interest. The site will perhaps have a new set of devotees – the tourists and travellers – bringing a ray of hope to the fate and future of the temples of Kiradu.

[1] Urvashi Srivastava (2007); 'The Ancient City of Kiratkoop: Lost in the Sands of Time', *Architecture plus Design, A Journal of Indian Architecture*, March 2018. Cited from <https://indiaheritagehub.org/2011/12/16/the-ancient-city-of-kiratkoop-lost-in-the-sands-of-time/> (Accessed July 7 2018)

[2] As with every temple, there are many legends, and multiple versions of each, associated with Kiradu. The most commonly accepted version relates to the disciple of a sage (in some versions, Ganesha in disguise), arriving at Kiradu village. He is ignored by most people, and is forced to go hungry. Eventually, a potter's wife takes pity on him and feeds him with what little she has. The sage (in case of the Ganesha version, this is Lord Shiva himself) arrives, and is furious to see the state his disciple is in. He curses the entire village to ruin, but spares the potter's wife and asks her to leave the village without looking behind. However, at the village borders, she is consumed by curiosity and turns back, only to be turned into stone. Villagers consider a hero stone, with a woman's figure on it, located at the edge of the village, as proof of this story.

[3] Progress Report of the ASI Western Circle, 1907. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.70435?q=Kiradu> (Accessed July 7 2018)

[4] Ashoke Kumar Majumdar (1956); *Chaulukyas of Gujarat: A Survey of the History and Culture of Gujarat from the Middle of the Tenth to the End of the Thirteenth Century*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Michael W Meister (1985); *Symbol and Surface: Masonic and Pillared Wall-Structures in North India*, *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 46, no. 1/2, pp. 129-148.

[7] Y. Krishan (1992); *A New Interpretation of 'Pañca-Ganeśa' Sculptures*, *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 52, no. 1/2, pp. 47-53.

[8] Ashoke Kumar Majumdar (1956).

This page, top: Two warriors firing arrows at one another. Arjuna and Karna from the Mahabharata, perhaps? Opposite page, top: a close-up of perhaps the *nritya mandapa* with elaborately carved *toranas* and pillars. One of the pillars has been reconstructed as part of the restoration work undertaken by the Archaeological Survey Of India (ASI) at Kiradu; bottom: the depiction of music is very intrinsic to most of the sculptures