

The mighty, virile buffalo, whose hooves pounded the earth, also grew furious, smashing the lofty mountains with his horns and bellowing aloud. Trampled by his violent sallies, the earth was shattered, and the ocean, lashed by his hairy tail, overflowed on all sides. Shaken by his slashing horns, the troops were utterly dispersed. Mountains tumbled by the hundreds from the sky, struck down by the wind of his snorting breath.

When she saw this great demon attacking, swelling with rage, Chandika then became furious enough to destroy him. She threw her noose and lassoed the great Asura. Thus trapped in that mighty battle, he abandoned his buffalo shape and became a lion. At the moment Ambika cut off its head, a man appeared, sword in hand. As soon as Ambika cut down that man along with his sword and shield, the demon became a huge elephant. With a roar he dragged the goddess's lion along with his trunk, but while he was pulling the lion, she cut off his trunk with her sword. Then the great demon resumed his wondrous buffalo shape, causing all three worlds with their moving and unmoving creatures to tremble.

Provoked by this, Chandika, mother of the world, guzzled her supreme liquor, laughing and red-eyed. And the Asura, puffed up with pride in his own strength and bravery, bellowed aloud and tossed mountains at Chandika with his horns. Pulverizing those mountains that were hurled at her with arrows sent aloft, the goddess, excited by anger, her mouth red with liquor, cried out to him and his invincible troop, "Roar and bellow, but only as long as I drink the mead, you fool! In a moment the gods will be howling at you when you die by my hand!" So speaking, the goddess flew up and trod on his throat with her foot, piercing him with her spear. Crushed by her foot, overcome by the power of that goddess, the demon came half-way out of his own mouth. Still battling in this way, he was felled by the goddess who cut off his head with her mighty sword. So that demon Mahisha, his army and his allies, who had so distressed the three worlds, were all annihilated by the goddess.

At Mahisha's death, all the gods and demons, mankind and all creatures living in the three worlds cried "Victory!" And when the entire army of the lamenting Daityas was annihilated, the whole host of the gods went into exultant rapture. The gods and the great celestial seers praised that goddess, while Gandharva lords sang aloud and hosts of Apsaras danced.

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Playful Ambiguity and Political Authority at the Large Relief at Mamallapuram

Padma Kaimal

Introduction

In this article, Padma Kaimal, a leading scholar of Indian art, analyzes the monumental seventh-century narrative relief at Mamallapuram, the primary trade and port city of the southern Indian Pallava dynasty (550–728). In 630, the king Narasimha whose epithet was "Mamalla" or "Great Warrior," founded a new port city, which he named Mamallapuram after himself. Over the next hundred years, generations of Pallava craftsmen created scores of monuments from the granite outcroppings dotting the region. The best known of these is a large narrative relief facing the ocean. Scholars have long debated the subject matter of this work, as it has elements from at least two major stories found in the Indian textual tradition. Kaimal develops her own reading that incorporates both stories into a holistic reading of the relief.

To accomplish this, she looks to other examples of similar subject matters and compares their iconography to that of the relief. She also draws on what we know of the politics of the time: the way in which the royal image of the Pallavas is communicated and its implications for this prominent relief. She examines the position of this relief in relation to other carvings at Mamallapuram, asking how viewers might encounter the relief, and what else was nearby to support its program. And she looks to contemporary linguistic patterns in Sanskrit, the ancient courtly

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