

PREFACE

The term 'style' is a frequently used word in art. Moreover, style and influence are interlinked, thus making it dependent on external aspects. Chōla art too is subject to this. The present thesis titled 'Origin and Emergence of Style in Early Chōla Art' is the outcome of a need to shift the art historical perspective to the works of art themselves and overcome the lacunae in the formal approach and analysis. It is left to the forms to answer for themselves about their origin, emergence and creating style.

The prior information in this area treats the subject as isolated specialities, namely architecture, sculptural iconography and iconology, history, archaeology and religion. No mention is made of the 'minds' of these creative artists who breathed life into these works of art. J. Bronowski in his 'Ascent of Man' perceived and pinned down the character of an age by stating, "In every age there is a turning point, a new way of seeing and asserting the coherence of the world fixing a visionary moment when it was transformed by a new conception either of man or nature". Chōla art suggests such a moment. In this thesis the 'forms' will attempt to show how it shaped the human landscape, by grasping forms of life and manipulating them through their own possibilities. Such a formal study of art, which is an important aspect of style has been little explored previously.

The 'Critical Review' covers the gist of scholarly views on the subject, with explanatory notes following at the end. An introduction to style unfolds its wider implications, and the art historian's 'tour de force', the visual and formal aspect of style is defended and enhanced by the understanding of form.

The first two chapters are retrospectives. We describe herein external influences that show a general 'predeliction' towards style as a whole. The ideas and ideals, historical facts and religious manifestations are expressed visually through the temple architecture and sculpture. They in turn bridge the past, present and future through continuous links, through centuries of history. These chapters reflect on those aspects embraced by the nobility, commoner and the philosopher. The systems of philosophy are briefly reviewed to highlight the 'discerning age'.

The third and fifth chapters describe with facts and figures the salient features of the South Indian architecture and sculpture with special reference to the Pallavas, the pioneers.

The fourth chapter introduces the beginning of formal values and typological variations of the Early Chōla temples as exemplified in the adhisthanas and first talas. Componental derivation results in the enriched articulation. Embellishment of such nature beco-

mes a purely Early Chōla architectonics. The finer Chōla sensibility are recreated within the forms in architecture, apart from already established architectural changes.

The sixth and seventh chapters analyse the sculptural forms in stone and bronze; and establish the internal logic and interrelationships that goes into making an Early Chōla style. The extant sculptures show a gradual metamorphosis of the form. A distinctive vocabulary gives them an authentic classicism of style derived from the works of arts themselves. Conclusive chronology has not guided these chapters as patterns in historical development, which is not the major objective. A broad arrangement of stylistic similarity and affiliation is adopted to illustrate the emergence of style.

The conclusion reiterates the origin and emergence of style from within the nature and the possibility of the works of art themselves - Thus Chōla coming from Chōla itself; where the plastic forms are subject to the principles of metamorphosis and get renewed. A continuous adding, shedding and shaping is as delicate and subtle a creation as the chrysallis emerging as a butterfly.