

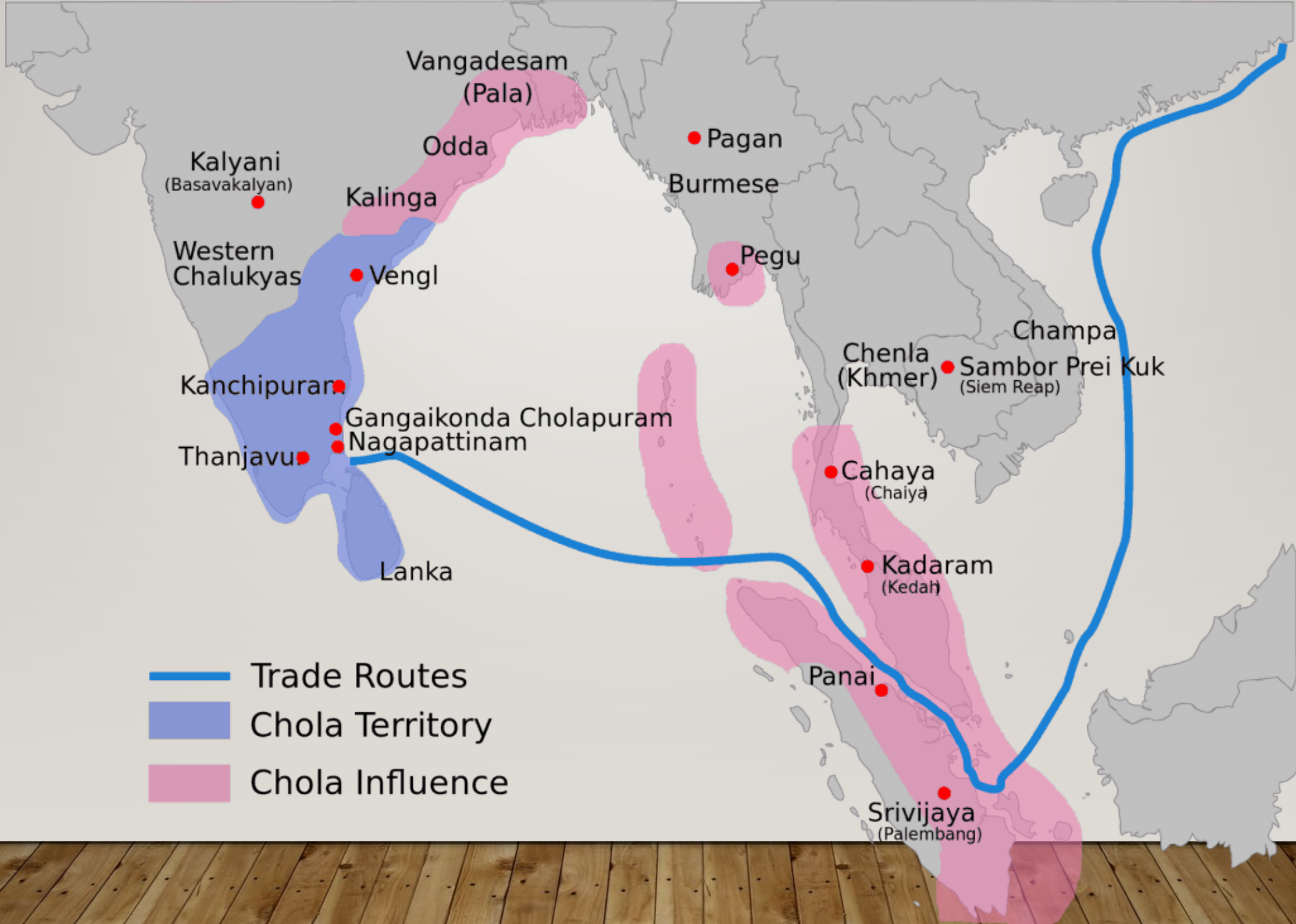
CHOLA ARCHITECTURE

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- After the Pallavas, Chola dynasty became the main power of Southern India and emerged victorious among other kingdoms.
- The capital of Chola dynasty was the city of Thanjavur
- They advanced as far as Bengal, Sri Lanka, Java, Sumatra and had trade links as far as Indonesia.
- Their military and economic power was reflected in the grand architectural productions under the period at Thanjavur, Gangaikondcholpuram, Darasuram, Tribhuvanam.
- They had built more than two hundred temples which seems to be continuation of previous Pallava architecture with some variations.
- These temples amply illustrate the style of architecture between 8th to 12th century CE and its influence may also be seen on the architecture of temples of Ceylone and those of SE Asian kingdoms like Sri Vijay (Sumatra) and Chavakam (Java).
- RajRaja I has constructed a Shiva temple at Polanuruva at Sri Lanka in the same pattern of Chola architecture.



- Trade Routes
- Chola Territory
- Chola Influence

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

- Chola temples can be categorised in two groups – Early Temples and Later Temples; early temples are influenced with Pallava architecture while later have Chalukya influence.
- Temples were surrounded by high boundary wall unlike Nagara.
- The earlier examples were modest in size and while later ones were huge and large with Vimanas or Gopuras dominating the landscape
- The spire is in the form of stepped pyramid, popularly known as *Vimana*. Pallava influence may be seen in spire/vimana similar to Rathas, an octagon shaped crowning element known as *Shikhara*.
- *Panchayatana* style, but no vimana on subsidiary shrines
- Absence of lion motifs in pillar's base as seen in the Pallava architecture, but presence of *Kudus* decoration, however, it is little bit different with that of Pallavas
- The temple mostly consists *grabhgriha*, *antarala*, *sabhamandapa*
- Presence of water tank inside the boundary of the temple
- The raw material used are blocks of gneiss and granite
- The important example of early group is **Vijayalaya temple** while later group represents **Brihadishwar temple of Tanjaur** and **Brihadishwar temple of Gangaikondcholpuram**

VIJAYALAYA TEMPLE

- Built by Vijayalaya Choleswar, the founder of Chola dynasty in 9th century CE. Located in Nartmalai in Pudukkotti district.
- A cluster of small hills Nartmalai lies 25 km from Trichy on Trichy- Pudukkoti route.
- The west facing temple is situated within a square courtyard and dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- It has four tiers in which first three are square while the fourth is circular. It is in pyramidal shape.
- At the top there is oval shaped shikhara on which *kalash* like part is placed as finial.
- A mandapa is situated before the square sanctum.
- It has decorated entrance with five feet high carved *dwarpalaka* on both sides.
- Around the main temple seven other small temples are also seen which all facing the main temple.
- On the kornis portion kudu decoration can be seen.



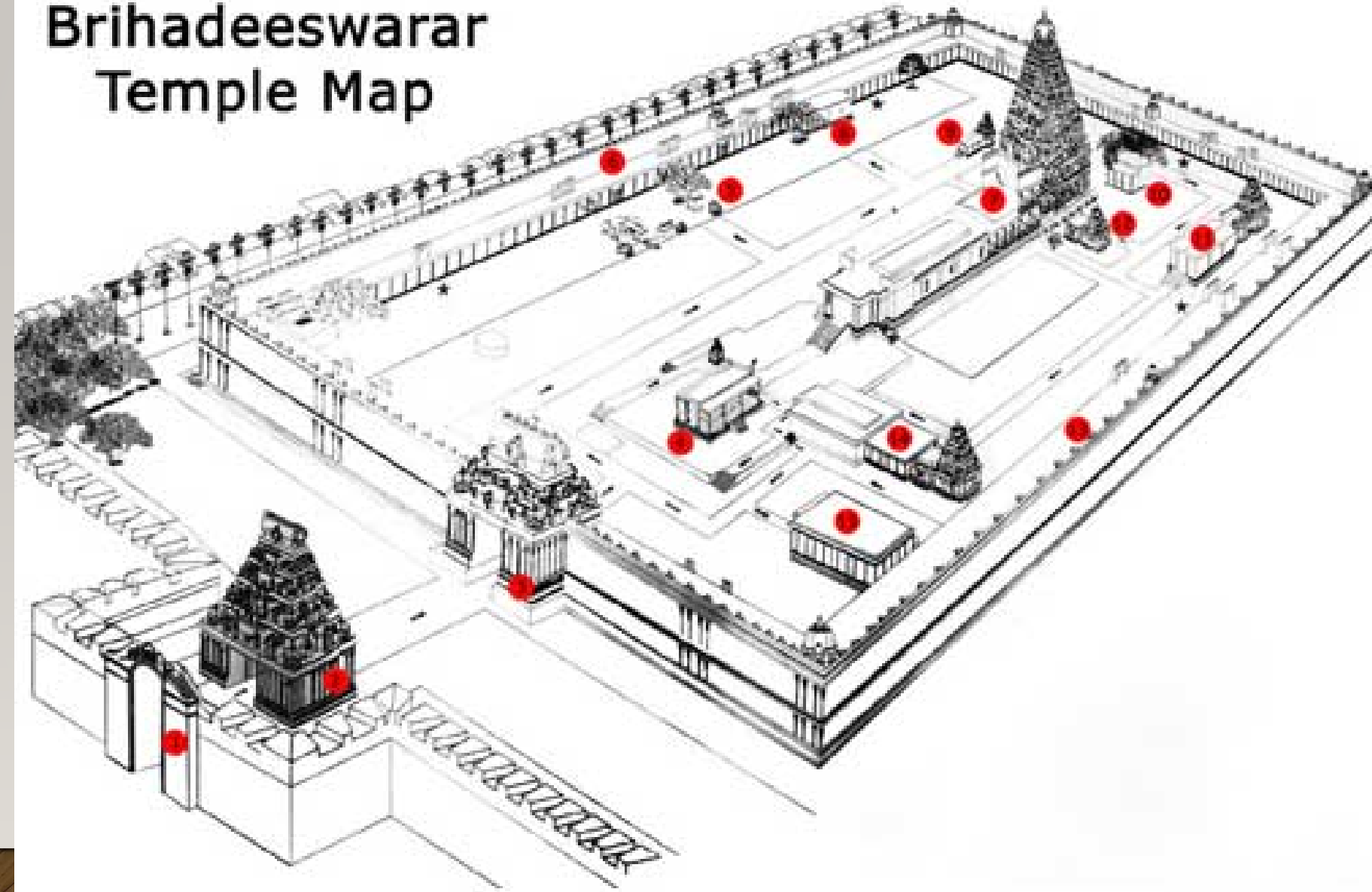




BRIHDESHWAR TEMPLE

- The later phase of Chola architecture broadly starts from the reign of Uttam Chola.
- The most important specimen of this phase is the Brihdeeshwar (lord of universe) Temple of Tanjore or Thanjavur.
- Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple complex is known as *Raja Rajeshwaram* and *Peruvudaiyaar*.
- It was called 'Dakhina Meru' as a complement to the 'Uttara Meru' the sacred mount of Kailas.
- Considered as one of the largest temple of India, it is exclusively built by granite (first fully granite temple in world) and completed within five years. The granite are not found within the periphery of 100 km. It is not known that from where the massive granite were brought.
- It was built in 1010 CE, during the reign of Raj Raja I.
- The temple stand amidst fortified walls that were probably added in 16th century CE.
- There are three main entrances – *Keralantakam*; main entrance represented by 30 m high gopuram (to commemorate Raj Raja's victory over Chera king), *Rasarasan* (opens into a large central area housing the main shrine) and *Tiruannukam*(northern entrance of the complex, without goupuram).
- In complex, there are many sub-shrines built during the various successive stages of history.

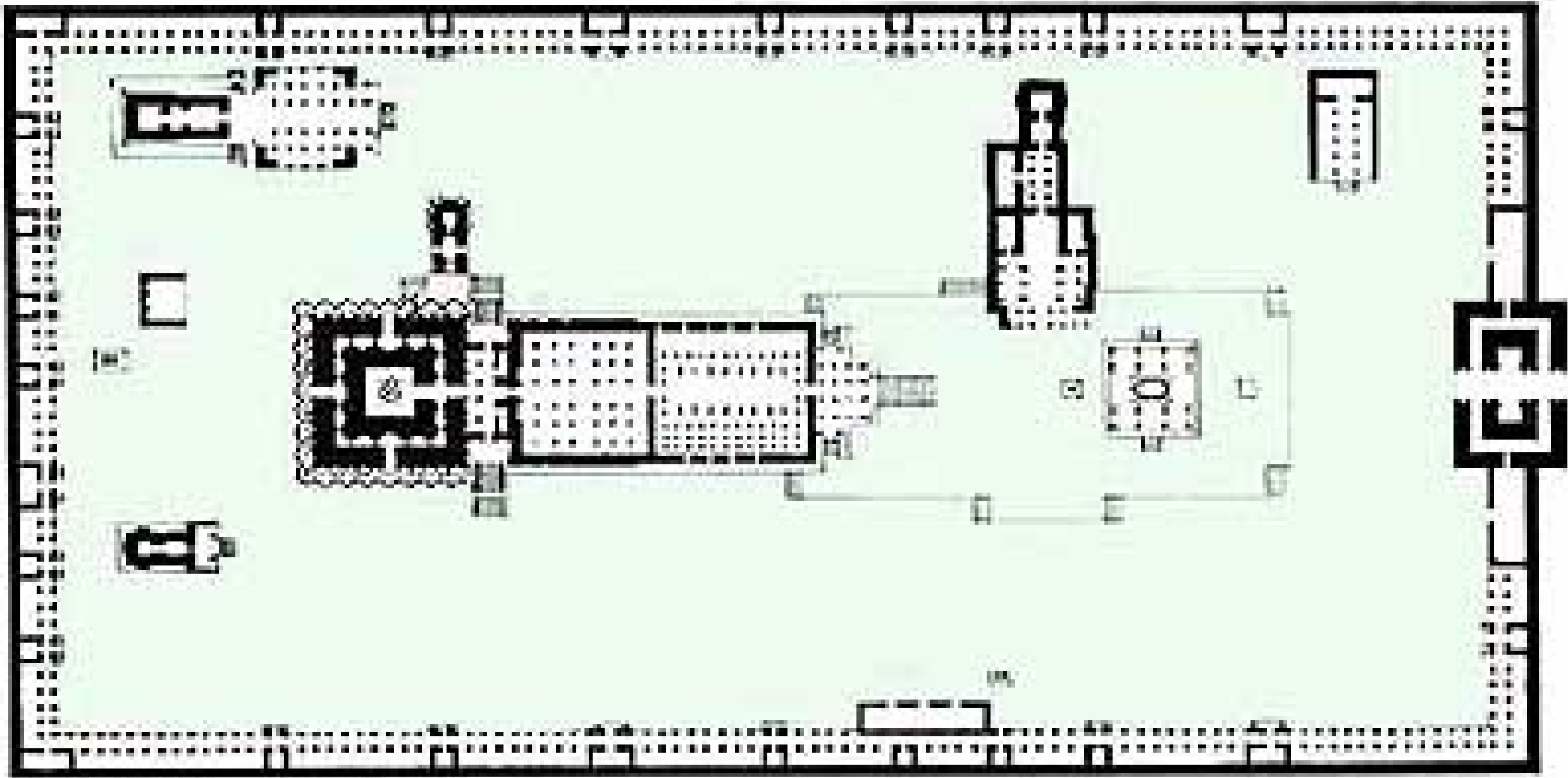
Brihadeeswarar Temple Map



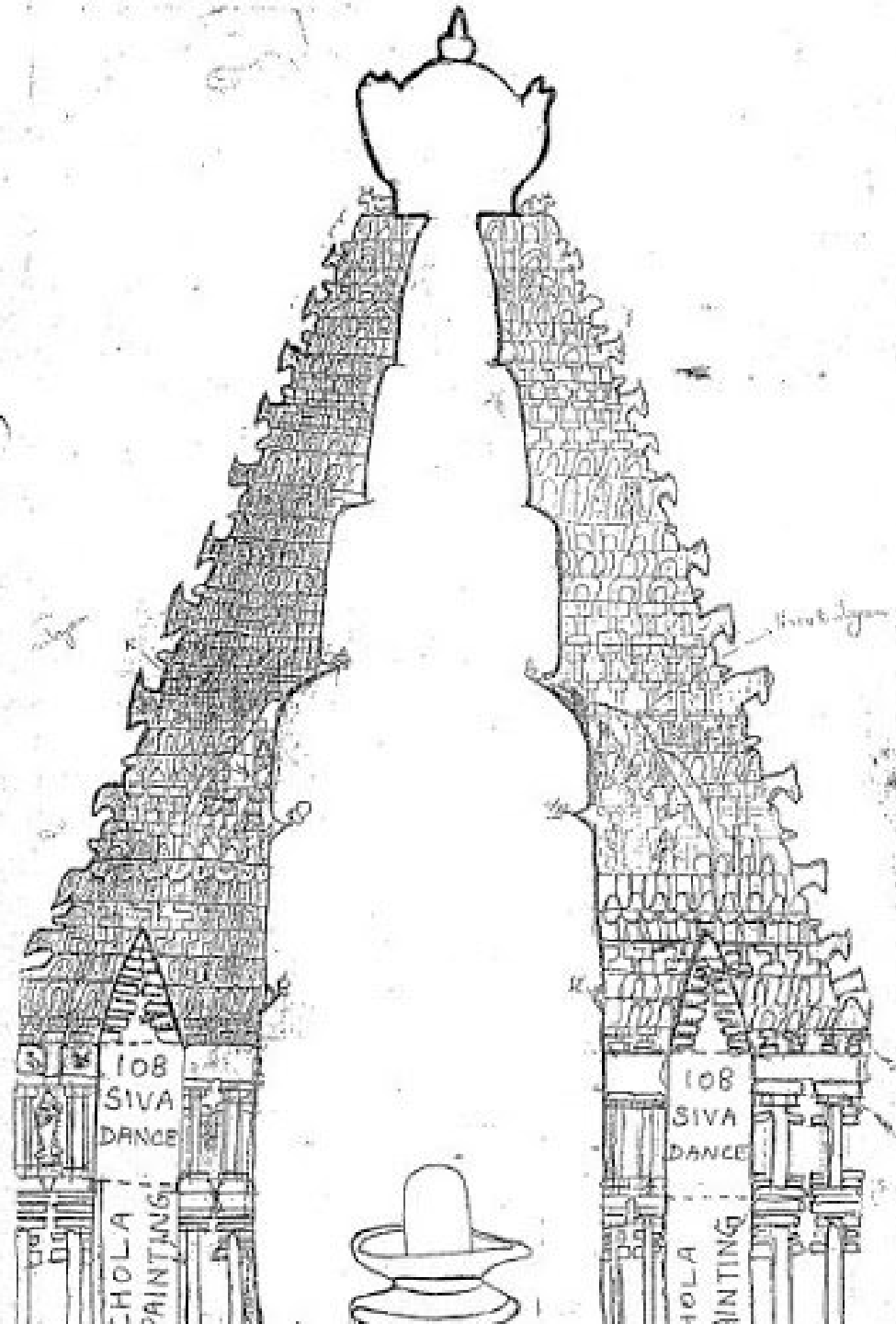
- 1 Maratha Entrance
- 2 Keralantakan Tiruvasal
- 3 Rajarajan Tiruvasal
- 4 Nandi Mandapam
- 5 Varahi Shrine
- 6 South Cloister Mandapam
- 7 Brihadeeswarar Temple
- 8 Intepretation Centre
- 9 Ganesha Shrine
- 10 Karuvur Devar Shrine
- 11 Subrahmanya Shrine
- 12 Chandikesvara Shrine
- 13 North Cloister Mandapam
- 14 Amman Shrine
- 15 Nataraja Mandapam

BRIHDESHWAR TEMPLE

- The plan of temple consists – *garbhagriha*, *ardhamandap*, *mahamandap*, *stapana-mahamandap* and *vadya-mandapa*.
- The sanctum 28 m square, housing the unique and extraordinary lingam (8.7m high); the main *shikhar* known as *srivimana* is about 66 m high and has 14 stories. It is decorated with niches and images of saiva cult.
- A cupolic dome resting over 25 feet square single block of granite. The base of the dome is beautified by two Nandis at each corners.
- In front of temple is a big Nandi Mandap with a massive monolithic image of Nandi, the second largest in country. Other is colossal bull in Lepakshi Veerbhadra Temple, Andhra Pradesh.
- The circumambulatory corridor around the *ardhamandapa* contain fresco paintings, discovered in early half of last century and display variety of secular themes.
- This world Heritage monument established as world tallest temple tower in which 1,30,000 tons of granite stone were used.
- The temple even survived 6 earthquakes









Tanjore (Thanjavur) : Brihadishvara Temple



Vimana
The 65-m (217ft) high pyramid-shaped vimana over the sanctum, is a 13-storeyed structure. Its gilded final was presented by the king.



An octagonal cupola Beautifully carved out of a massive block of granite weighing 80 tonnes, crowns the Vimana

The Passage way is Circumambulatory and built on two levels. Owing to the Colossal height of the 4m (13ft) height

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Linga shrine

