HEMAVATI

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DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

Front Cover. Detail of Ganga on Plate 8.

Back Cover. Pillar of main temple.

Plate 1. Pillar of pavilion before main temple.

" 2. Detail of pavilion pillar. Above: Lingodbhava. Below: Brahma and Vishnu.

" 3. Detail of pavilion pillar. Above: Gajahamurti. Below: Two Dvarapalas.

" 4. Detail of pavilion pillar.

" 5. Detail of pavilion pillar.

" 6. Small figure of Ganga at base of door to Doddappa.

" 7. Small figure of Dvarapala at base of door to Doddappa.

" 8. Ganga in window of Doddappa.

" 9. Detail of Plate 8.

" 10. Karttikeya in window of Doddappa.

" 11. Mithuna in window of Doddappa.

" 12. Window of Doddappa.

" 13. Surya.

" 14. Nandi in compound of Doddappa.

" 15. Nandi in shrine before Malikarjuna.

" 16. Matrika-Chamunda.

" 17. Matrika-Brahmi.

" 18. Mahishasuramardini.

" 19. Naga and Nagini.

" 20. Door of Malikarjuna.

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HEMAVATI lies eight miles south of Amarapuram in the Madaksira Taluk of Anantapur District. It is now a small village and difficult of approach except in fair weather. From the 8th to the 11th century A.D. it was, under its ancient name of Henjeru or Penjeru, a capital of the Nolamba dynasty. All that remains of its former glory are several inscriptions and a group of ruined temples.

The history of the Nolambas was conditioned by their geographical position. Their territory, known as Nolambavadi, included the modern Districts of Tumkur, Chitaldroog and Anantapur. They were thus forced to play, along with their neighbours, the Banas and the Vaidambas, the role of buffer states between the great powers of the Deccan and South India. North of the Tungabhadra lay the militant kingdom of the Rashtrakutas, who were dispossessed about 975 A.D. by the no less warlike Later Calukyas. In the south the Pallavas, their successors, the Colas, and the Western Gangas were equally aggressive. It was only when the powers had suffered a set-back or were occupied elsewhere, that the feudatories might enjoy a brief independence. The middle of the 8th century A.D. was such a moment: the Pallavas were relatively weak and the Rashtrakutas had but lately come to power. It was about this time that the Nolambas, who claimed to belong to the family of the Pallavas, are first found in Nolambalge, which was later to grow into Nolambavadi, a province of thirty-two thousand villages. The first three rulers were vassals of the Western Gangas and the Rashtrakutas, whichever was

in the ascendant. The fourth Nolamba, Polachora, married Jayabbe, the daughter of the Western Ganga, Rajamalla I (817-853 A.D.). Polachora, though a feudatory, was obviously a powerful ruler, and extended his territory southwards to include Kolar District. Mahendra, his son by the Ganga princess, was the greatest of the Nolambas. He attacked his neighbours, the Vaidumbas and the Banas, and claimed to have destroyed the latter. Certainly his kingdom included parts of Kolar and Bangalore Districts and Dharmapuri in Salem District, where his inscriptions are found. Finally he felt himself strong enough to refuse even nominal allegiance to the Western Gangas. He was however defeated and killed by Nitimarga II (907-935 A.D.). His son Nanniga (about 918-938 A.D.) seems to have made it up with his overlords, and aided them in their wars. It is during Nanniga's reign that the province of Nolambavadi is first mentioned. His successor, Dilipa, was defeated in 940 A.D. by the great Rashtrakuta Krishna III who with the help of the Western Gangas overwhelmed the rising power of the Colas at the famous battle of Takkolam in 949 A.D. Dilipa's successor, Nanni, was equally unfortunate. The Western Ganga Marasimha III (960-974 A.D.) claimed to have destroyed the Nolamba family, and though three princes are said to have escaped the massacre, nothing more is heard of the Nolambas until the next century. Then three generations of kings are known, all feudatories of the Later Calukyas. They were heavily involved in the bloody warfare between their masters and the Colas, and though frequently overrun by Rajaraja, Rajendra and Rajadhiraja, seem to have maintained their allegiance to the Later Calukyas.

The part played by the Nolambas in the political history of South India may not have been a distinguished one. Their art, though little known,* is of the greatest significance, and not only for its intrinsic beauty. The Rashtrakutas continued the brilliant tradition of Early Calukya art, but unfortunately few of their monuments have survived. We are not on firm ground again until the Later Calukyas. It is precisely this empty period—9th-10th century A.D.—which is occupied by Nolamba art. And the Nolambas, whatever their political allegiance, were heirs to the Deccan tradition, which they developed and transmitted as far south as the Kolar District.

Nowhere is Nolamba sculpture seen to better advantage than at Hemavati.† Unfortunately this does apply equally to their architecture. The main group of three temples which stand to the north-east of the village, are white-washed and have lost their towers (sikharas). To appreciate the quality of Nolamba architecture one must travel some sixty miles south to Nandi in the Kolar District. There the Bhoganadisvara shrine, which with the neighbouring Arunachalesvara forms perhaps the loveliest group in the old Mysore State, gives a good idea of the beauty of a Nolamba temple when clean and complete. There are two architectural features in which the Nolamba craftsmen excelled, and both are better represented at Hemavati than elsewhere. Though the Nolamba pillar was evolved from such Rashtrakuta examples as those employed in the Jain temple at Pattadakal

* None of the pieces here illustrated have previously been published.

† There is also a small but fine group of Nolamba sculptures in the Government Museum, Madras.

or the Navalinga Temple at Kukkanur, it is designed with a subtler invention and finer craftsmanship. The clean base mouldings, the beautifully turned capitals, and the crisp and delicate decoration of the square shafts are well illustrated by the four pillars now supporting a small modern pavilion in front of the main temple (plates 1-5) and by those in the porch of the main temple (Back Cover). It is not surprising that these wonderful pillars should have been admired and coveted by the contemporaries of the Nolambas. From one of his invasions of this area Rajendra, the great Cola conqueror, looted no less than forty-four of them to decorate the fine temple at Tiruvadi, some seven miles north of Tanjore, where they still stand as mute testimony to his admiration of Nolamba art *

Perhaps the most notable feature of Nolamba architecture is the use of pierced stone windows to give a soft, diffused light to the hall (navaranga), and antechamber (sukhanasi) to the shrine. This type of window had already been employed by the Early Calukyas, both in geometrical and in flowing, organic forms. Lovely examples of both are to be seen in the famous Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal, which was built by a queen of Vikramaditya II (733-746 A.D.). In the hands of the Nolamba craftsmen these decorative motifs were raised to the status of major works of art. One of the most attractive forms is a regularly curving and delicately cusped tendril, containing figures of dancers and musicians (Plate 12). It would be difficult to imagine a more perfect union of lovingly observ-

* C. Sivaramamurti. Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan. Calcutta, 1955 pl. xvii. b. Other small fragments are to be found in the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjore.

ed natural forms and controlled design. Even more ambitious and impressive are the windows filled with complete figures (Plates 8-11 and Front Cover), of which the Ganga is an outstanding accomplishment. All these windows decorate the walls of the shrine, called the Doddappa, behind the main temple. Similar pierced windows are also used in the Bhoganandisvara and Arunachalesvara shrines at Nandi already mentioned. One, which contains a Natesa, is of great beauty.* The Colas admired these windows as much as they did the Nolamba pillars. A fine example, similar to that on Plate 12, may be seen in the Kachesvara Temple at Conjeeveram†. Others in the typical greenish blue basalt used by the Nolambas, have been fixed in the covered hall before the main shrine of the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjore.

The door (Plate 20) to the Malikarjuna shrine which lies to the south of the main temple, is finely conceived, and an advance on such Rashtrakuta doors as those in the Jain temple at Pattadakal. The alternation of elaborately cut and plain bevelled surfaces give a wonderfully rich effect. A popular feature are the two dwarfs mounted on elephants which flank doors and windows. These dwarfs, who carry a lotus and a conch—two of the nine treasures (nidhis) of Kuvera—are a Calukya motif, which was later adopted by the Colas. On the Malikarjuna door the two dwarfs also appear on the lintel flanking the central figure of Gaja-Lakshmi.

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* Archaeological Survey of Mysore. Annual Reports 1913-14 pl. V. 2 and 5; and 1932 pls. XIX. 2 and XX. 4. Others were used in the superb Kallesvara Temple at Aralaguppe (Tumkur District) and in the Lakshmanesvara at Avani (Kolar District).

† Alexander Rea. Pallava Architecture. Madras, 1909 pl. CXXII.

About the site and in small modern cells in the compound of the main temple are many sculptures. The finest is a standing figure of Surya (Plate 13) of southern type—barefoot and holding his lotuses (which are missing) fairly low. A more impressive image of this deity does not exist in Indian art.* There are also four sculptures of Siva's vehicle, Nandi, of monumental size and conception. The two finest are here illustrated. (Plates 14 and 15). The lovely garland of bells is again a Calukya feature. Scattered about the site is a complete set of the Seven Mothers (Saptamatrikas). They exhibit a force and majesty (Plates 16 and 17) comparable with the Late Pallava and Early Cola representations of the goddesses. From the sculptures in the main temple we select a Mahishasuramardini (Plate 18), a perfect example of the Indian genius for three-dimensional form, and a charming group of a Naga and Nagini with tails intertwined (Plate 19). The latter is the only piece here illustrated which is later than the 10th century A.D.

A word may be said of one of the many inscriptions at Hemavati. To the right of the Surya (Plate 13) stands a broken pillar with a long Kanarese inscription which mentions the greatest of the Nolamba rulers, Mahendra.† Its archaic characters are cut into the intractable basalt with a beautiful precision and elegance—a model of lapidary art.

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* There is a second, but less fine image of Surya from Hemavati in the Government Museum, Madras (F. H. Gravely and C. Sivaramamurti. Illustrations of Indian Sculpture Mostly Southern. Madras, 1939 pl. XXII).

† R. Shama Sastry. South-Indian Inscriptions (Texts). Vol. IX. Part I. Madras, 1939. No. 19.

PLATE 2

PLATE 3

PLATE A

PLATE 5

PLATE 6

PLATE 7

PLATE 8

PLATE 9

PLATE 10

PLATE II

PLATE

PLATE 13

PLATE 14

PLATE

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