

The Outer Gopura



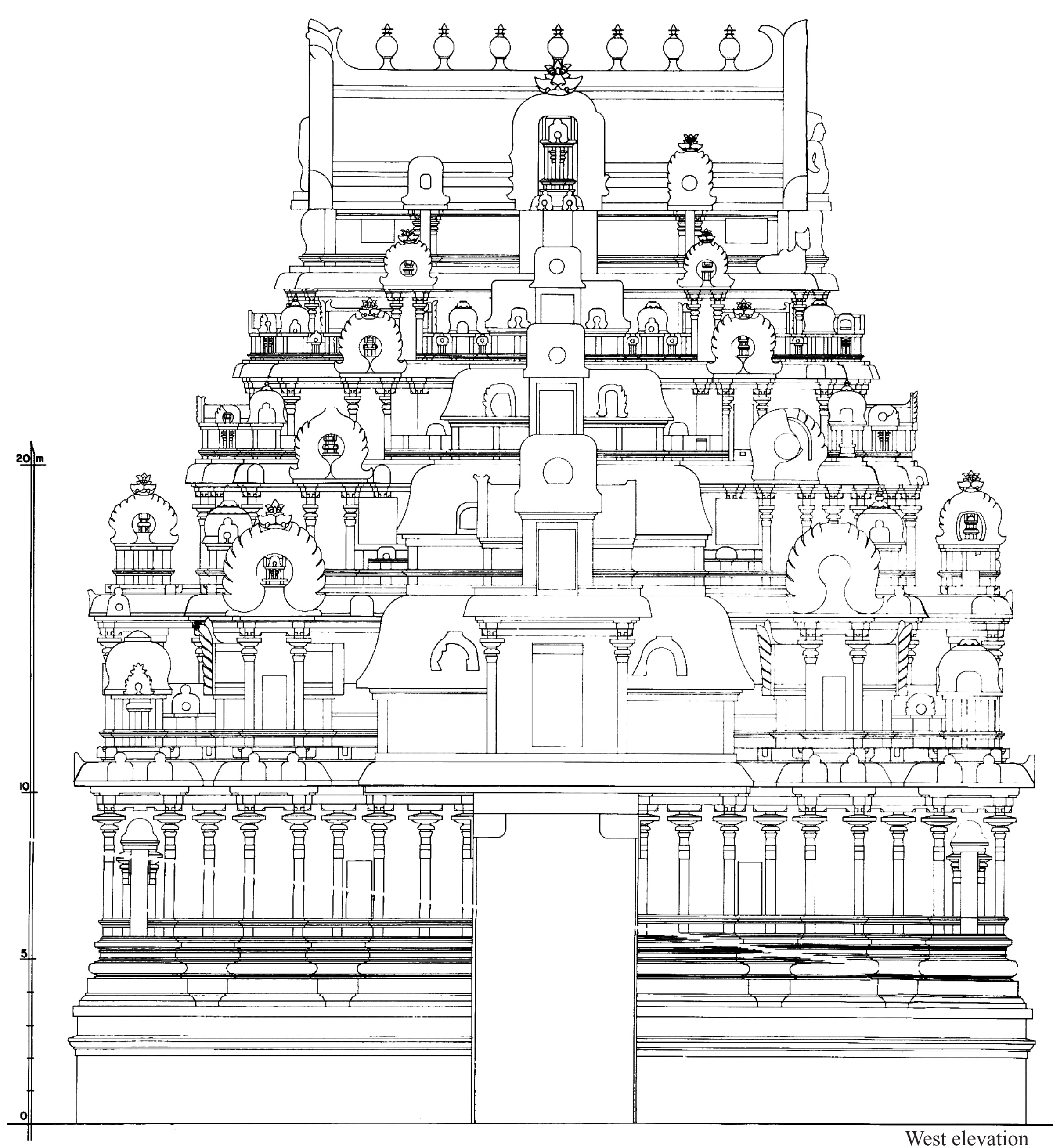
Outer gateway, intrados of superstructure

The presence of two gateways aligned with the access on the east is sufficient evidence that two concentric enclosures had been planned around the Bṛhadīśvara temple. However, it is not possible to determine whether the second enclosure, which should have been contiguous to the outer gopura was ever built, because the vast rampart constructed by the Marāṭhā eliminates all traces.

Rājarāja Cōḷa built the outer gopura in 1010 AD and named it Keralāntakan vasal after one of his titles. It is a five storied structure; the first three storeys are built of granite stones and the upper storeys are built of brick and mortar. Niches have been planned on the first floor to house images of various gods, but except for some sculptures, most of these niches remain empty.

The second or the outer gateway is more simply treated than the inner gateway. The main body is devoid of door-keepers, and those which flank the axial opening of the first tier, outwardly as well as facing the temple, may date only from the Nāyaka period.

The stucco figures on the upper part of the Gopura were added in the 17th century, by the Nāyaka rulers of Tanjavur.



West elevation



Outer gopura seen behind the toran arch



Outer Gopura, called Keralāntakan Thiru-Vāsal, view from inside

