

4 Śiva's Places Introduce the City: the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*

The Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(Ś)) is by far the longest of the three Māhātmyas on Kanchi and also introduces the largest number of sacred places. With regard to the concept of sacred geography, its Śaiva orientation manifests itself in the understanding of Śaiva sacred places, the *śivaliṅgas*, as the main sites of worship. Moreover, Kāñcī and its surroundings are referred to as belonging to Śiva from the very beginning. In particular, it is Śiva's presence as Ekāmranātha (Ēkāmparanātar) in the centre of Kāñcī under the mango tree that is said to give Kāñcī its splendour. The layout of Kāñcī's sacred landscape in the KM(Ś) presents a very consistent and coherent concept. Its most salient characteristics are the geo-spatiality-based approach, which translates into an arrangement of places according to the spatial distribution of the historical sites they can be identified with and a consistent pattern of locating them. Besides, the origins of the places are recounted in shorter and longer mythological narratives.

4.1 Situating Kāñcī

In its introductory part (KM(Ś) 1.1–4.34), the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* introduces Kāñcī through a pan-Indian classification of places associated with Śiva. This broader contextualisation serves to explain why this particular Māhātmya deals with Kanchi. The relevant passage is included in a longer conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī and starts with a question by the latter about the most outstanding and rewarding among the *kṣetras* (lit. field; here rather area or place) linked to Śiva.¹²³ In response, Śiva names an array of twenty-six sites, of which twenty-five are located on earth and one in the mythical world. The list is ordered geographically, starting with Setu (Rameswaram) on the southern edge of the Indian subcontinent. It then

123 [Pārvatī asks Śiva:] *kāni te kṣetravaryāṇi devadeva jagatpate | yeṣu vā mama deveṣa sātṣātkāras sadā prabho* || KM(Ś) 3.55.

moves northwards and ends with Mount Kailāsa, known as the abode of Śiva (KM(Ś) 3.56–62b).¹²⁴ The common characteristic of all places is clearly their association with Śiva as already suggested by Pārvatī's introductory inquiry. The inclusion of Kāñcī thus unequivocally reflects the understanding of the city as a significant Śaiva site.

A closer look reveals that among the twenty-six places, the five sites of the Pañcabhūtaṅgas, or the Five-Element Liṅgas of South India, as well as seven sites of traditional twelve with Jyotirliṅgas (*liṅgas* of light) are included.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the first fifteen of the Śaiva places in the list are situated in the historical Tamilakam region (Tamil culture region, modern Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh; Stein 1977) which shows a clear preference for this area. Finally, in partial agreement with this geographical emphasis is the categorisation of these places in terms of the Pāṭal Peṛra Stalams, the Śaiva sites lauded by the three most prominent Tamil Śaiva Nāyaṅmār poets. As most of the Pāṭal Peṛra Stalams are situated in the Tamil region, it is not surprising that out of the list's fifteen sites situated in this area, thirteen at least are Pāṭal Peṛra Stalam sites. Altogether, sixteen of the twenty-six places listed in the KM(Ś) have at least one Pāṭal Peṛra Stalam each.¹²⁶ Considered as a whole, the cluster of Śaiva places given

124 [Śiva explains:] *setur hālāsyam aparaṃ triśiro mahitaṃ punaḥ | gajāraṇyaṃ pañcanadaṃ madhyārjunam anuttamam || KM(Ś) 3.56 tataś cidambarasabhā yatra nṛttāmi saṃtatam | vṛddhācalākhyam aparaṃ vedādhyāpakam adbhutam || KM(Ś) 3.57 aruṇādrir ataḥ paścād viriñcipuram adbhutam | kāñcī puṇyātmā loke kāmākṣivratapālītā || KM(Ś) 3.58 vaṭāraṇyam api śrīmatkālahastimahāpurī | śrīparvataṃ siddhavaṭaṃ virūpākṣeśvarālayam || KM(Ś) 3.59 gokarṇaṃ trijagatpuṇyaṃ triyambakam anuttamam | ujjayinyāṃ mahākāḷaṃ kāśī kedāram adbhutam || KM(Ś) 3.60 prabhāsaḥsetram amalāṃ himālayamahācalam | mandaraḥ paramaś śailaś śrīmatkailāsaparvataḥ || KM(Ś) 3.61 evam ādīni puṇyāni sthānāni subahūni me | KM(Ś) 3.62ab.*

125 The sites of the Pañcabhūtaṅgas are Triśira (Tiruchirappalli), Cidambara (Chidambaram), Aruṇādrī (Tiruvannamalai), Kāñcī (Kanchipuram) and Kālahasti (Srikalahasti). The selection of the Jyotirliṅga places in the KM(Ś) includes Setu (Rameswaram), Śrīparvata (Srisailam), Triyambaka (Trimbak), Mahākāḷa in Ujjainī (Ujjain), Kāśī (Varanasi), Kedāra (Kedarnath) and Prabhāsa (Somnath). On the Pañcabhūtaṅgas, see Eck 2012, 253–256 and Fleming 2009; on the Jyotirliṅgas, see Eck 2012, 189–256. Thanks go to Jonas Buchholz for sharing with me his mapping of the sacred places in this list from his work on the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*.

126 Since the KM(Ś) in this context indicates place names and not the names of specific representations of Śiva in specific places—as is also the case in the poems of Nāyaṅmār (Peterson 1982, 72)—one or more Pāṭal Peṛra Stalams may be found in a place that is mentioned in the Śaiva Māhātmya. On the Pāṭal Peṛra Stalams at these places, see Chevillard and Sarma 2007.

here includes many sites that form a part of one or more conceptualised sets of Śaiva sacred places. A single, overall convincing pattern, however, cannot be discerned. A preference for South Indian places and even more so towards those situated in the Tamil region is the most evident emphasis, which suggests a strong geographical sense of the region.

Among this selection of Śaiva places, Kāñcī is characterised as the most meritorious place on earth and protected by Kāmākṣī's vow, supposedly hinting at the myth of Ekāmranātha's origin. In that narrative, the goddess Pārvatī—later identified with the local goddess Kāmākṣī—steadfastly protects the *liṅga* of sand from floodwaters sent by Śiva to test her devotion (KM(Ś) ch. 45; see pp. 62–63).¹²⁷ A few verses later, Śiva—again on the request of Pārvatī—names Kāñcī as the best of all his sites, where he happily lives together with Pārvatī (KM(Ś) 3.62c–65). This preference is exemplified by an explicit comparison with the North Indian site Avimukta / Kāśī (Varanasi) that lets Śiva state his preference for Kāñcī, the site where he manifested himself as Ekāmranātha under the single mango tree (KM(Ś) 3.66–69).

A similar classification is found at the beginning of Ekāmranātha's myth: Pārvatī inquires as how to atone for her misdeed of playfully covering Śiva's eyes, which plunged the entire universe into darkness. Here, Kāñcī is situated among Śiva's places in the land Bhārata within a broader outline of the mythical world.¹²⁸ Among the countless sites, sixty-four excel, and among these, Kāśī and Kāñcī are dearest to Śiva. In the end, however, Kāñcī is Śiva's most beloved site (KM(Ś) 40.35–38). In the continuation of Ekāmranātha's myth, Pārvatī is further instructed by Śiva to first go to Kāśī (where Śiva resides as Viśveśvara), before continuing to Kāñcī (KM(Ś) 41.44–68). Kāñcī is thus constructed as the final destination, where the goddess is ultimately granted redemption for her earlier misbehaviour.

Statements regarding the hierarchy of sacred places are found throughout the Purāṇic literature and pertain to a wide range of sites considered most significant (Bhardwaj 1973). Especially in Māhātmyas, these assertions are a common feature as these texts tend to exhibit partiality towards the site they glorify and consequently elevate the place in focus over others. Hence, the variety of these comparisons and hierarchisations does not construct a uniform and widely valid hierarchy of all sacred sites of the Indian subcontinent (Bhardwaj 1973; Jacobsen 2013, 122–145). The selection

127 [Śiva notes:] *kāñcī puṇyatamā loke kāmākṣīvratapālītā* || KM(Ś) 3.58cd.

128 The mythical Bhārata, one of the lands of the lotus-shaped island Jambudvīpa at the centre of the universe, is described as Karmabhūmi, the land of action, where the beings can influence their fate through their actions. See Eck 2012, 107–129 on the cosmology in epic and Purāṇic literature.

of places chosen for a comparison reflects rather the (self-)perception of the central site of a particular Māhātmya in relation to others. In the two examples given above, the KM(Ś) initially contextualises Kanchi in a Śaiva framework to eventually compare it only to Varanasi as the next best place and the second dearest to Śiva. This last comparison is repeatedly presented in the main body of the text; no other site is used to single out Kāñcī from the only two shortlisted places.¹²⁹

As Knut Jacobsen shows (2013, 127, 130–134), both the Purāṇic literature and the encyclopaedic works of the Dharmanibandhas include lengthy passages promoting Varanasi as the most sacred place, a meritorious pilgrimage destination, and an important Śaiva site.¹³⁰ Those claims do not mean that Varanasi was considered to be *the* most sacred place in all of the multidimensional Hindu traditions and *the* site of Śiva, but Knut Jacobsen argues for several factors that facilitated Varanasi to be perceived as such (2013, 129–138). Giving credit to the pan-Indian renown of Varanasi, the comparison of Kāñcī to the well-known North Indian Śaiva site in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to highlight Kāñcī's ascribed exceptional importance and effective powers, as “sacredness of one place is used to elevate the value of another place” (Jacobsen 2013, 26).¹³¹ The place chosen in the KM(Ś) to assert Kāñcī's superiority thus

129 See KM(Ś) 3.66–69, 11.17–18, 17.61c–68, 34.30–31b, 37.19c–21, 40.35–38, and 43.27–43. Furthermore, the notion of Kāñcī's superiority over Kāśī is also reflected in different settings in the mythological stories (KM(Ś) ch. 10, 12.23–47, 29.34–38b).

130 Among others, the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa* (around the fourteenth century CE; Adriaensen et al. 1998) as the longest Māhātmya on Varanasi, the *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* by Lakshmidhara (early twelfth century) and the *Triśthalīsetu* of Narayana Bhatta (mid-sixteenth century), the last two both written by residents of Varanasi, highlight Varanasi's exceptional position (Jacobsen 2013, 127, 130–134; Salomon 1985, xiii, xvii; Eck 1982, 82–85).

131 In Kerstin Schier's interpretation, the specific element of Pārvatī's intermediate stop at Kāśī as narrated in Ekāmranātha's myth in the KM(Ś) serves a particular aim in this comparative context. She writes (2018, 82–83): “[f]irst, a connection to the pan-Indian tradition is established and acknowledged by, for example, honoring a renowned pilgrimage site such as Kāśī. As the story progresses, the local site is, in comparison to the renowned site, depicted as superior. In this case, however, Kanchipuram is itself a renowned pilgrimage site on a pan-Indian level. Thus, it is likely that the goddess's stopover in Kāśī is meant to establish a connection between the North and South Indian tradition.” As Kerstin Schier points out, the motif of Pārvatī's intermediate stop in Varanasi is not found in all versions of Ekāmranātha's myth from different Tamil and Sanskrit sources (2018, 73–96, 199).

seems to be carefully selected. The tendency to compare the place in focus of the text to sites in North India in comparative statements in Māhātmya texts about sacred sites not located in the north is also observed by Anne Feldhaus (2003, chap. 5). She analyses various rhetoric means found, for example, in Māhātmyas that link sacred places and rivers in Maharashtra and in the Deccan especially to those in North India.¹³² With its repeated references to Kāśī, the KM(Ś) is thus an exemplary of this concept. At the same time, the text-internal consistency in naming the city is noteworthy. No other sacred site is referred to as much in comparative settings throughout the text and even the introductory part takes up this particular reference that is narratively processed in Ekāmranātha's myth.

4.2 The *Kṣetra* and the City

After the extraordinary significance of Kāñcī among other Śaiva sites is established, the KM(Ś) turns to characterising the place in greater detail. The first aspect is the spatial definition. With only two clearly marked spaces, the KM(Ś) has a considerably less complex spatial structure compared to the other two Māhātmyas. A passage in the text's introductory part (KM(Ś) 4.6–9a) outlines the two spaces that are distinguished terminologically and spatially: Kāñcīkṣetra, the larger area, and Kāñcī, the city (*purī*). The *kṣetra* is said to extend five *yojanas* to the east, west, north and south, thus covering an extended regional area.¹³³ The city is situated in the centre of Kāñcīkṣetra and stretches one and a half *yojanas* in all directions.¹³⁴ A fixed centre point is neither set for the *kṣetra* nor for Kāñcī, but from the overall context of the text it can be inferred that Ekāmranātha is the centre. The dimensions of Kāñcīkṣetra do by no means seem arbitrary; across the three Māhātmya on Kanchi, the region of Kāñcī is given similar dimensions and further corres-

132 The categories differentiated by Anne Feldhaus are claims of similarity, comparison, containing other places, and other references (2003, 158–178) and can also be applied to the analysis of Māhātmya texts on other places.

133 On the conversion of the temporal length units into contemporary length units, see subsection 1.3.3.

134 [Pārvatī asks:] *kāñcīkṣetrapramāṇaṃ ca tatra sthānāni te prabho* || KM(Ś) 4.6cd *kati viṣṇumukhādīnāṃ sthānaṃ brūhi dayānidhe* | KM(Ś) 4.7ab [...] [Śiva says:] *prācyāṃ pratīcyāṃ codīcyāṃ dakṣiṇe cāpi sundari* | *pañcayojana-mātreṇa pramāṇena pariṣkṛtā* || KM(Ś) 4.8 *tatrottamottamā kāñcī sārdayojanamātrataḥ* | KM(Ś) 4.9ab.

ponds to the spatial reach of the historical region of Tondaimandalam, the region ruled by the Pallava kings (see sections 5.2 and 6.2, chapter 7 and figure 7.1). Although no explicit reference to the historical region is included in the KM(Ś), the spatial modelling of Kāñcīkṣetra reiterates a close link of Kanchi with Tondaimandalam, which seems to have been thus alluded to in the text (see chapter 7 and figure 7.1).

The *kṣetra* is the overall frame of reference and represents the spatial extent of the region associated with Kāñcī. Besides a general association with Śiva, this area is not further characterised. The spatial focus instead lies on the inner space, the city of Kāñcī. This is described in greater detail and it is the city's space that constitutes the spatial framework for the sacred places and their myths of origin described in the text. On a geographical level, the city is said to be surrounded by seven rivers (KM(Ś) 3.78c–80b). These are listed according to their location from north to south; as far as an identification is possible, the *Māhātmya* situates Kāñcī roughly between the Pampā river (identification uncertain; presumably north of Kanchi; see n. 135) in the north and the Palar in the south.¹³⁵ Among the seven rivers, the *Vegavatī* (Vegavathi; KM(Ś) 7.1–78), *Niśā* (Manjalneer Kalvai; KM(Ś) 13.34c–39b) and *Kampā* (Kampā; KM(Ś) chs. 36/39–45, especially 45.66–92 and praised in 37.1–21b), a now dried-up river, nowadays represented by *Kampaitīrttam* at the *Ēkāmparanātar* temple as a remainder (Schier 2018, 106), feature again in the text's myths. When assuming that a more detailed consideration of

135 [Śiva elaborates on the city Kāñcī:] *kampayā kampayā puṇyajalayā niśayāvṛtā* || KM(Ś) 3.78cd *vegavatīyā viśeṣeṇa puṇyakoṭīśamānyayā* | *kṣīranadyā mahatyā ca skandanadyā ca saṃyutā* || KM(Ś) 3.79 *mālābhir abhita svacchasumābhir iva mānini* | KM(Ś) 3.80ab.

The number of the rivers is not explicitly mentioned, but seems to be seven: there is one *Kampā* (probably supposed to read *pampā*, see below; identification uncertain), another *Kampā* (*Kampā*, a now dried-up river; see pp. 240–241), *Puṇyajalā* (identification uncertain), *Niśā* (Manjalneer Kalvai), *Vegavatī* (Vegavathi, a northern sidearm of the Palar), *Kṣīranadī* (Palar), and *Skandanadī* (Cheyyar, a southern sidearm of the Palar) (Buchholz 2023a, 393–395). In view of the geographical arrangement from north to south, the first three rivers are or were located north of the Manjalneer Kalvai. With regard to the two *Kampā* rivers, Jonas Buchholz (2023a, 393–395) shows that the text's Tamil counterpart, the *Kāñcīppurāṇam*, helps with the understanding of the Sanskrit *Māhātmya*. The respective verse in the *Kāñcīppurāṇam* notes a *Pampā* (identification uncertain) first and then a *Kampā*, and it furthermore specifically mentions the rivers to be seven. Similarly, the *Hastigirimāhātmya* (4.64c–65b) indicates seven rivers in Kāñcī and mentions both a *Kampā* and a *Pampā*. This example indicates the value of parallel reading of several *Sthalamāhātmyas* and *Talapurāṇams* on Kanchi for understanding possible obscure passages.

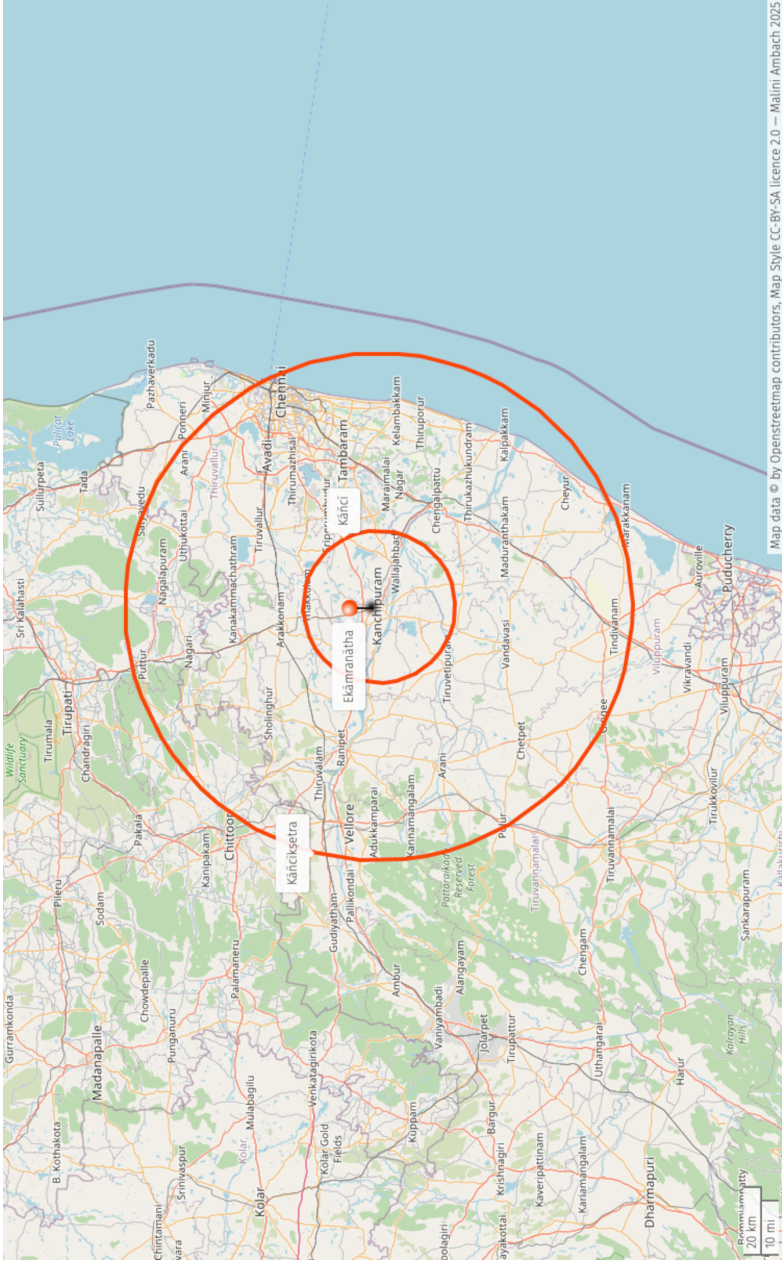


Fig. 4.1 Kāñcīkṣetra and the city Kāñcī (both approximations, see subsection 1.3.3) according to the KM(ś), with Ekāmanātha as centre.

a place indicates a greater attributed significance, it is these three water bodies that are emphasised in the text's layout of Kāñcī. The reasons for this seem to be evident with regards to the Māhātmya's outlook on Kāñcī's space; the Kampā is an integral element of the Ekāmranātha myth and thus intimately linked to the central site and its myth in the KM(Ś). The Vegavathi and the Manjalneer Kalvai, in turn, flow straight through Kanchi, from west towards the east and almost in parallel, the Manjalneer Kalvai to the north of the Vegavathi. They characterise the geographical landscape of the city and are visible markers structuring its space.

Kāñcī is both understood as an urban space (*purī*) and as an existing city. The Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* does not include a myth of origin for the city but still presents an imagined notion of Kāñcī. These descriptions are set in a mythical context and paint an idealised picture of the city. In the introductory part of the Māhātmya, the city is described in poetic words: it is a beautiful place, adorned with finely ornamented houses, pavilions, gardens and ponds, resounding with auspicious sounds and inhabited by various birds and other animals and people carrying out their duties. In the centre of the city is the abode of Ekāmranātha (Ēkāmpanātar), where Śiva resides in the form of a *liṅga* of light (Jyotirliṅga; KM(Ś) 3.64–110, 42.19–27b). As will become apparent below (see section 4.3), the position of Ekāmranātha within the space of the city has to be understood here in a figurative sense, as his temple is actually located in the northwestern part of the historically expanding city. The positioning of the Ekāmranātha representation thus intends to symbolise its central significance in the perception of Kāñcī whereas the Māhātmya later on specifies its position when dealing with Ekāmranātha's myth (cf. KM(Ś) 42.27ab).

The city of Kāñcī is known as Brahmā's city (KM(Ś) 3.103ab, 43.40), an association that can also be found in the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(V)).¹³⁶ The justification of the name *Kāñcī* is derived from Brahmā's designation *ka* and *Kāñcī* is interpreted as the city revered (*añcita*) by Brahmā—another parallel to the KM(V) (4.33cd–34ab). In the Śaiva Māhātmya, however, this is only one of several—partly philosophical and partly mysterious—interpretations of the name Kāñcī and the link to Brahmā is also attributed to the notion of Kāñcī as possessing the nature of Brahmā's world (*brahmaloka*; KM(Ś) 36.55–77b). While Kāñcī is fundamentally understood as Śaiva, the KM(Ś) nevertheless broadens its characterisation at times. In individual passages, Kāñcī is additionally characterised as *pīṭha*, a seat of the Goddess,

136 The Śaiva text explicitly considers the abode of Ekāmranātha to be constructed by the divine constructor Viśvakarman on the order of Śiva (KM(Ś) 42.19cd).

and Viṣṇu's city (KM(Ś) 37.23, 38.27¹³⁷). These ascriptions are not further specified—for example, in terms of space—but emphasise Kāñcī's distinct significance. Moreover, these notes pay tribute to the city's diverse religious landscape, which is characterised by the presence of Vaiṣṇava and Śākta sites and traditions alongside the Śaiva.

The Māhātmya not only connects a mythical past with historical sites, but also reflects idealised notions of the city and temples in the mythical context. This applies primarily to the descriptions of the character of the city, the few passages about the cityscape and the structures of temples. The descriptions of urban infrastructures like streets, houses and palaces, walls enclosing the city and gardens refer to the idealised ideas of a city that need not corresponded to a historical reality at any point of time in the past. Nonetheless, it is worth investigating the correspondences between the idealised characterisations derived from the texts and the phases of historical urban development or architectural history in case of temples. The notions of city and temple in the Māhātmyas must inevitably be based on ideas which the authors or compilers of the texts were acquainted with from their own observation or which they considered typical or ideal. Insights from such a consideration could contribute to the interpretation of the texts. It would be a stretch at this point to attempt such an analysis for the more general conceptions of the cityscape found in the KM(Ś)—and other texts on Kanchipuram.¹³⁸ Instead, the description of Ekāmrānātha's abode from the Śaiva text is given below as a specific example of how conceptions of architecture are processed in the Māhātmya.

The Dwelling Place of Ekāmrānātha

The idea of Kāñcī as an illustrious city is echoed in the central myth of the text regarding Ekāmrānātha. In the relevant text passage, it is mentioned that Pārvaṭī circumambulates (*pradakṣiṇa*) Kāñcī after being sent there to atone for covering, to a disastrous end, Śiva's eyes earlier. The city is said to be decorated with banners, its gateways adorned with gems and the air

137 [Kauśika tells:] *jaḡatsāro brahmapurī viṣṇupūś śivapūr api | kanyāarakṣeti viditā pīṭhanāmnī priyā mama* || KM(Ś) 37.23.

138 Similarly, it would be worthwhile to analyse the descriptions of Kanchi's historically grown cityscape in terms of the specifications proposed within works of Vāstuśāstra, the science of architecture, and Śilpaśāstra, the ancient Indian science of crafts and arts, and relate these to the notions of the city found in the Māhātmya texts.

reverberating with the sound of drums and flutes (KM(Ś) 42.9–15b). With regard to the imaginary view of Kāñcī's urban space, we are already familiar with similarly designed ideas. Beyond that, the narrative contains one of the few passages in all three Māhātmyas on Kanchi that mentions a built environment at a sacred place is mentioned. After Pārvatī has circumambulated the city clockwise, she goes on to install various goddesses. She worships all of Śiva's places and eventually reaches the dwelling place of Śiva residing at the foot of the single mango tree in the centre of the city (KM(Ś) 42.15c–18).¹³⁹ Among others, the Māhātmya mentions five enclosures (*prākāras*) with pavilions (*maṇḍapas*) of thousand columns and gems, towered gateways (*gopuras*) competing (in eminence) with the mountains Kailāsa and Mandara, and the deities Sūrya, Kālarudra, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, a female companion of the goddess, Skanda, and five Brahmāṅgas in different enclosures, and Śiva himself abiding at the foot the single mango tree (KM(Ś) 42.19–27b¹⁴⁰). The ornate descriptive element of the verses needs certainly to be considered in the light of an idealised imaginative view of Kāñcī, while details on the location of the deities and architecture point to particular physical features of a temple and are thus worth comparing with the characteristics of the Ēkāmparanātar temple.

Like many other in Tamil Nadu, the Ēkāmparanātar temple was extensively remodelled around 1900 under the patronage of the Chettiyars; this

139 This wording refers to Śiva in the form of a *liṅga* of light, since Pārvatī only afterwards installs a *liṅga* of sand on top of the *liṅga* of light (cf. KM(Ś) 45.11–65). However, the idea of Ekāmranātha in the KM(Ś) is connected to both these forms and most precisely points to Śiva residing at the foot of the single mango tree, where both *liṅgas* are said to be located. Interestingly, the text does not employ the designation *sthāna*, the otherwise used term for place, but *nilaya* (abode or dwelling place), to designate this site of Śiva.

140 [Kauśika describes Ekāmranātha's dwelling place to the brahmins of Kāñcī:] *nānāmaṇigaṇākīrṇahemaprākārasaṃvṛtam | nirmitaṃ manasā sambhor ājñāyā viśvakarmaṇā || KM(Ś) 42.19 devīpriyacikīrṣos tadbhavasya parameṣṭhinaḥ | kailāsamandaraspardhigopurair upaśobhitam || KM(Ś) 42.20 maṇistambasahasrādhyamaṇṭapais sarvato vṛtam | pañcamāvaraṇe sarvaprapañcabhavanojjvalam || KM(Ś) 42.21 dīptaṃ hetigrhānīkaiḥ turīye prāvṛte śubhaiḥ | dīneśakālarudrābjabhavaviṣṇvālayair api || KM(Ś) 42.22 tṛtīye gaṇapaśreṣṭhadevisakhijānālayaiḥ | divyāśmanīkarākṣiptair dīptaṃ dṛṣṭivimohanaiḥ || KM(Ś) 42.23 dvitīye viḡnapaskandapañcabrahmāṅgasaiṅkulam | prathame puṇḍārīkābhaṃ daharaṃ veśma nirmitam || KM(Ś) 42.24 śivenaiva svam āvāsam ekāmradrumamūlagam | vipāpaṃ puramadhyasthaṃ yad upāśyaṃ vimuktaye || KM(Ś) 42.25 dahre [']sminn antarākāśas tasmīn yajjyotir antarā | tad eva khalu yogīndrāir anveṣṭavyaṃ vimuktaye || KM(Ś) 42.26 tadbrahmapuramadhyastham ālayaṃ prāpa sā tadā | KM(Ś) 42.27ab.*

resulted in changes to the architecture, even if the new structures often simply replaced earlier ones on the same spot (Branfoot 2022b). Given that the first printed edition of the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* from 1889 contains the relevant text passage—with the text’s composition presumably dating significantly earlier (see pp. 85–89)—, it can be assumed that the *Māhātmya* describes a layout of the temple predating the mentioned reconstruction. A comparison of the textual description with the present-day temple therefore remains flawed but is nevertheless the best possible approximation. The text passage on Ekāmranātha’s abode mentions several architectural components that correspond to common forms of South Indian temple architecture of a certain period. Relevant elements are the arrangement of the space in concentric, most often walled enclosures with several subsidiary shrines and pavilions and entrances towered with gateway towers. These features became part of the temple architecture in the twelfth/thirteenth century (Branfoot 2017, 195).¹⁴¹ So while the historical temple in Kanchi may have never looked as glorious as the KM(Ś) describes it, the text still seems to refer to a typical post-twelfth/-thirteenth century South Indian temple. In addition to the architectural basics, the KM(Ś) specifies further characteristics of the enclosures, gateways and pavilions. The *prākāras* are said to be five in number, the *gopuras* huge and the *maṇḍapas* to be set out with gems and have thousand columns. In comparison, today’s Ēkāmparanātar temple indeed has five enclosures (the third and the second not separated by a wall but through an elevation of the latter), a nine-storied Rājagopura as the tallest in Kanchi and a pavilion called Thousand-Pillar Hall in the fifth and outermost *prākāra* as suggested by the text.¹⁴² These are surely not exclusive features, for there is, for example, also a Thousand-Pillar Hall at the Miṇāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar temple in Madurai or at the Araṅkanāta Cuvāmi temple in Srirangam, but they aptly describe individual architectural specifics of the Ēkāmparanātar temple.

Additionally, the KM(Ś) mentions several deities to be present there, some of which can clearly be linked to images of the deities found at the temple. One of them is Viṣṇu, which the *Māhātmya* locates in the fourth enclosure in

141 Accordingly, the corresponding passage of the KM(Ś) must be composed sometime after that—a more precise dating, though, cannot be inferred from this deduction (Buchholz 2022, 22–23; see also pp. 85–89).

142 For the outline of the Ēkāmparanātar temple and a summary of its history, I rely on Schier 2018, 17–24, 17, fig. 1.2, 29–38, Seshadri 2003, 121–124, a map with legend in Boulanger 1992, 96–98, an unpublished hand-drawn map by N. Subramaniam, and my own notes taken on site during field-visits in January 2020 and March 2023 as further references.

this text passage.¹⁴³ On site today, there is no Viṣṇu in the fourth but Viṣṇu called Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭa Perumāḷ in the first *prākāra*. In the fourth enclosure there is instead the *liṅga* Viṣṇuvēcvarar. Called Viṣṇuvīśvara in the KM(Ś), the separate story of its origins narrates that Viṣṇu has installed this *liṅga* and explicitly mentions this site to be both south of Ekāmranātha and in the fourth enclosure (KM(Ś) 42.29–67). The *liṅga* Viṣṇuvīśvara / Viṣṇuvēcvarar is thus linked to Viṣṇu but an image of Viṣṇu is not found at that spot on site. Since the enumeration of the deities found in the *prākāras* as given in the *Māhātmya* is rather condensed, it is difficult to ascertain whether the text refers to Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭa Perumāḷ or to the *liṅga* Viṣṇu is said to have installed. Furthermore, it could be that the shrine of Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭa Perumāḷ was not always in the first enclosure where it is now but in the fourth where the *Māhātmya* locates it. However, I have not yet been able to find information regarding this.

The case of the female companion of the goddess, who the Śaiva text mention to be present at the abode of Ekāmranātha, is largely similar. The reference here seems to point clearly to the goddess Praḷayamandā (Piraḷayakāḷi Ammaṅ), Pārvatī's helper with a crucial role in the Ekāmranātha myth.¹⁴⁴ According to Kerstin Schier's information (2018, 21, n. 15), the former shrines of Piraḷayakāḷi Ammaṅ was situated in the garden area opening from the third enclosure to the north, and in the third *prākāra* is where the *Māhātmya* locates the goddess. Her present shrine, though, is found in the second *prākāra*.

The *Māhātmya* further states that Gaṇeśa is to be found both in the third and second enclosures. On site, there is Aincamuka Vināyakar in the third *prākāra*, Tappaṭṭai Vināyakar and Vikaṭacakkara Vināyakar in the fourth, as well as several images of Gaṇeśa in the first enclosure. In the second *prākāra*, there does not seem to be another Gaṇeśa, but a shrine of Skanda (Māvatī Kantar) is found there, just as indicated by the text.¹⁴⁵ The identification of the other deities (Sūrya, Kālarudra, Brahmā, five Brahmāṅgas)

143 In the KM(Ś) and the KM(V) this Viṣṇu is called Candrakhaṇḍa and in the KV Candrakaṇṭha (see subsection 6.4.1). On the names, see Shulman 1980, 172–173.

144 The goddess called Bhadrakāḷi / Praḷayamandā is asked by Ekāmranātha to stay in front of him in the Ekāmranātha myth (KM(Ś) ch. 45). In the KV, she is called Praḷayabandhinī and mentioned as a goddess residing in Ekāmranātha's territory in Kāñcī (KV 6.11c–12b). She further appears in the *Māhātmya*'s version of Ekāmranātha's myth of origin, in which she contains in her skull-bowl the waters threatening to drown Pārvatī's sand-*liṅga* (KV 8.67–74).

145 In Ekāmranātha's myth, a Gaṇeśa and Skanda are also mentioned to be in the second enclosure of Ekāmranātha's abode (KM(Ś) 45.30c–31b).

the distinction between the sanctum sanctorum and the first enclosure nor the separation of the first *prākāra* from the inner courtyard.

The conception in the *Māhātmya* could well relate to the minor and major demolitions and subsequent reconstructions and renovations that the *Ēkāmparanātar* temple underwent since the Pallava times, with the latest large renovation at the end of the nineteenth century creating the shape of the present-day temple with—among others—the architecturally distinct enclosures (Schier 2018, 29–38). With the Śaiva *Māhātmya* referring to the layout predating the remodelling around 1900, it might reflect a more open structure of the temple wherefore no (spatial) separation between the central *liṅga* and the tree was perceived.¹⁴⁸ Besides, the focus on *Ēkāmrānātha*'s close conceptual (and spatial) connection to the single mango tree and the perception of *Ēkāmrānātha* as the central site of its layout of *Ēkāmrānātha*'s abode—and the entire sacred landscape—is much more pronounced than any accurate description of a built temple environment.

The above discussion shows that the Śaiva *Māhātmya* has a clear idea of both the architecture of *Ēkāmrānātha*'s abode and the spatial arrangement of the places occupied by individual deities within it. The description in the text apparently depicts a temple with architectural elements that became an integral part of temple architecture in South India in the twelfth/thirteenth century. Even if most certainly it adds glorifying attributes to any form of temple that existed when the text was composed, it is still rather precise with regard to the specific characteristics of the site—as they were at a particular point in time and as many of them are still found there today.

4.3 Mapping the Sacred Places

The area of the city of *Kāñcī* is the primary spatial frame in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* to name and describe its sacred places. The choice of sites included in the *Māhātmya* is mentioned in the introductory part of the text. There, the sages in the *Naimiśāraṇya* (a forest often mentioned in *Purāṇic* stories as a place for sages to gather) ask the bard *Sūta* how many places of

148 In this context, an oral narrative is worth mentioning, which recounts that the *liṅga* of sand has been moved to its present location in the sanctum sanctorum and away from its original spot under the single mango tree (Boulanger 1992, 95). It is, indeed, possible that it had been situated under the tree at a certain point of time, but either the *liṅga* or the tree have been since relocated.

Śiva and Viṣṇu, Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa), Viśākha (Skanda) and others there are in Kāñcī.¹⁴⁹ In response, Sūta introduces the Māhātmya of Śiva's capital, that is Kāñcī, as he had once heard the sage Kauśika narrate it to the brahmins of Kāñcī (KM(Ś) 4.5–19b). Before he starts the retelling of the Māhātmya, which forms the main part of the KM(Ś) (ch. 4.21–45.end), the sages remind him that they especially want to hear about the numerous sacred places and *tīrthas*.¹⁵⁰ This clear indication of what is to follow in the text could not be more accurate. The KM(Ś) describes and locates around hundred *śivaliṅgas*, around a dozen Vaiṣṇava sites, sacred water bodies, one site each of Gaṇeśa and Skanda and a few of the Goddess in various forms.¹⁵¹ As I show in the detailed analysis below, the places are spread all over Kāñcī. Taking into account the slight imprecision regarding the exact placement of the city's area due to the missing indication of its centre point (see section 4.2), figure 4.2 suggests that the places described in the text are located within the space that the KM(Ś) understands as the city's space. Or the other way around, the extension of the area seems to be defined in such a way that (almost) all places lie within it. This clearly shows an intentional conception to spatially correlate the extent of the city's space and the placement of sacred places described in the Māhātmya, emphasising the focus on Kāñcī and not the *kṣetra*.

Simply judging by the numerical distribution of sacred places in the KM(Ś), the focus on Śaiva places becomes apparent. The preference con- fers with the overall Śaiva character of the Māhātmya, which considers Śiva as the superior deity (see subsection 3.3.1 on the myths). A prioritising of Śaiva sites is further reflected in the arrangement of the entirety of sites and their stories of origin. The numerous *śivaliṅgas* are evidently understood as the main sites and narrating the origin of a *liṅga* is typically the key objective of a story. The latter can then present the narrational frame for

149 [The sages ask:] *kiyat pramāṇaṃ kṣetraṃ syāt kāñcīpurā mahāmate | kati śambhoḥ sthālāny atra kati viṣṇoḥ sthālāni ca || KM(Ś) 4.3 vināyakaviśākhādisthānam anyac ca yac ca tat | 4.4ab.*

150 [The sages ask:] *kathaṃ tena samākhyātaṃ kāñcīmāhātmyam uttamam || KM(Ś) 4.19cd sthānāni tatra tīrthāni puṇyāni sumahanti ca | santi tad vistarāt sarvaṃ sūta vaktum ihārhasi || KM(Ś) 4.20.*

151 The counting is not entirely clear, since the *liṅgas* are not always structurally separated from each other and the text itself does not specify their number. In his recent study of Kanchi's Śaiva landscape, Jonas Buchholz (2025) lists 106 *śivaliṅgas* in the order in which they are mentioned in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. For the clusters of *śivaliṅgas* that I have identified personally (see subsection 4.3.1), the numbers are based on this list. See the appendix for the sites mentioned in the KM(Ś).

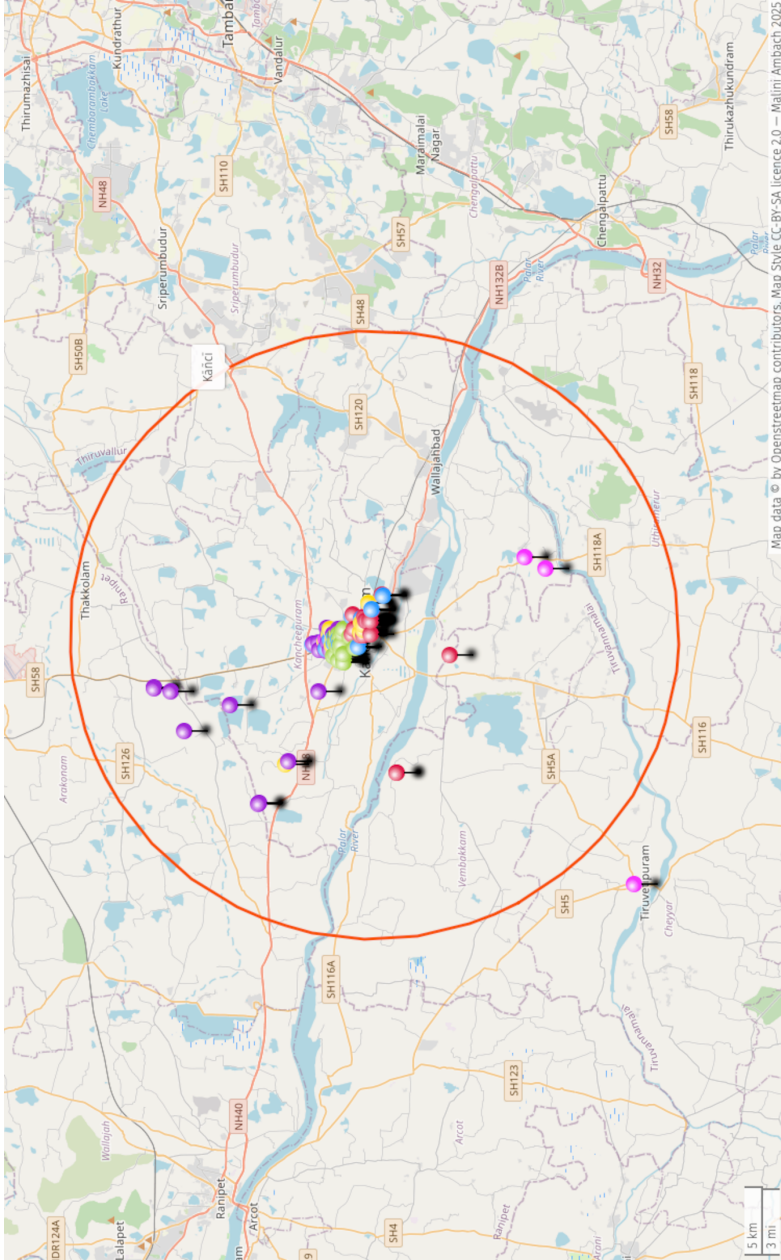


Fig. 4.2 Locations of the sacred places within the space Kāñcī (orange outline; approximation, see subsection 1.3.3) in the KM(S). Vaiṣṇava places are marked in yellow, *tīrthas*—blue, all other coloured pins point out *śivaliṅgas*.

myths about *tīrthas* and places of the Goddess or Viṣṇu that are linked to the respective *liṅga*. Furthermore, it is mainly the *śivaliṅgas* that serve as reference points for locating further sacred sites. Only the sites of Gaṇeśa Dakṣiṇāvartavināyaka (Valampuri Vināyakar; second *prākāra* of the Varatarāja Perumāḷ temple; KM(Ś) ch. 6) and Skanda Kumārakoṣṭha (Kumarakōṭṭam; KM(Ś) 33.23–83) escape from this structural template in that their narratives merely establish a loose link to a *śivaliṅga* and instead focus on the origin of this Gaṇeśa and this Skanda.

Despite the sectarian partiality of the text in the interpretation of Kāñcī and the myths, the outline of the sacred landscape essentially reflects the historically grown religious landscape and its geo-spatial conditions. There are indeed many more Śiva sites to be presented, for the number of Śaiva temples and shrines (around hundred and sixty) far exceeds that of Vaiṣṇava sites (around thirty-five) and those dedicated to other deities in Kanchi. Of course, the KM(Ś) is neither complete in its representation of the temples that constitute Kanchi's religious landscape as some sites are not mentioned; also, some of these are located directly next to one that is included.¹⁵² The focus on *śivaliṅgas* defines the interpretive approach of the text, which at the same time reflects the actual proportions of all the existing sacred sites in the city.

The view on Kāñcī's sacred places is reflected in the hierarchical arrangement of the narratives. The nesting of the stories about places of Viṣṇu and the Goddess as well as *tīrthas* under a superordinate narrative about a *liṅga* emphasises the understanding of a superior position of Śiva on a structural level. For example, the longer narrative in KM(Ś) 9.69–116 centres on the origin of Phaṇāmaṇīśvara (Paṇāmaṇīśvarar). This *śivaliṅga* is located in reference (northwest) to Maṇikaṇṭheśvara (Maṇikaṇṭīśvarar), whose story precedes that of Phaṇāmaṇīśvara in the KM(Ś). Phaṇāmaṇīśvara's myth further introduces a *tīrtha* called Anantasaras (Aṇantatīrttam; east of Paṇāmaṇīśvarar) and a site of the Goddess as Kālī called Bhinnodarī (Mākāliyamman; adjacent to Paṇāmaṇīśvarar in the north). Both sites are clearly elements of the superordinate story on Phaṇāmaṇīśvara. The narrative arrangement is also reflected with regard to the meritorious powers ascribed

152 It is not within the scope of this study to individually assess whether these sacred places came into being in more recent times, that is after the composition of the Māhātmya, but this might be a reason why some shrines found in contemporary Kanchi are omitted in the Māhātmya. However, a more recent origin cannot always be the reason, since, for example, the Vaiṣṇava Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ temple, a monumental heritage from the Pallava era (eighth century), is not mentioned either.

to the sites, as the efficacy of the *tīrtha* is linked to worshipping the *liṅga* (see subsection 4.3.2), whereas Phaṇāmaṇīśvara itself is ascribed separate and independent powers (KM(Ś) 9.113–116).

4.3.1 Arrangement of the *Śivaliṅgas*

Besides the emphasis on Śaiva places, some further structural elements mark the design of the sacred landscape in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*: the sequential arrangement of the *śivaliṅgas*, the pattern that indicates the location of a site, and the understanding of the sites as existing before the myths speak about their origin. These features reflect an orientation towards the geo-spatiality and a precise knowledge of the position of the historical sites. The result is a descriptive map of Kāñcī and the area that catalogues the sacred sites it deems relevant.

First, the description of Kāñcī's sacred space in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* clearly acknowledges the spatiality of the historically grown cityscape and takes it as its starting point. As a rule, the name and location of a site are indicated at the very beginning of the text passage that will tell the story of origin of the place. This approach reflects a conceptional understanding of the sacred sites as existing in the temporal setting of the text's frame story. This retrospective perspective is based on the existing historical places to which the myths about the individual places set in a mythical past are subsequently attached. All the stories are thus located in the same, stable, and coherent sacred geography consisting of all the places mentioned in the text, even if their story of origin has not yet been told. Thus, places that have not yet been dealt with can be referred to right from the beginning. For example, in the story about Vīrarāgheśvara (Vīrarākavēsvarar) found in chapter 17 of the KM(Ś) (17.1–52), it is said how the main character Rāma comes to Kāñcī, takes a bath in the water of Śivagaṅgātīrtha (Civakaṅkaiṭīrttam) and worships Ekāmranātha, although the myth about the origin of Ekāmranātha is narrated only towards the end of the *Māhātmya* (KM(Ś) chs. 39–45).

The second structuring element in the *Māhātmya* is the sequence of the Śaiva sites. Based on indications of the locations of the *śivaliṅgas* in the KM(Ś) and the apparent consideration of spatial characteristics of the historically grown city in the text, I identify clusters of *śivaliṅgas* that are situated close to each other in different parts of Kanchi and are described one after another. The *Māhātmya* first describes the *liṅgas* in the southeast, then in the centre and west, in the northwestern part, and finally those found within the compound of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (see figures 4.3 and 4.4).

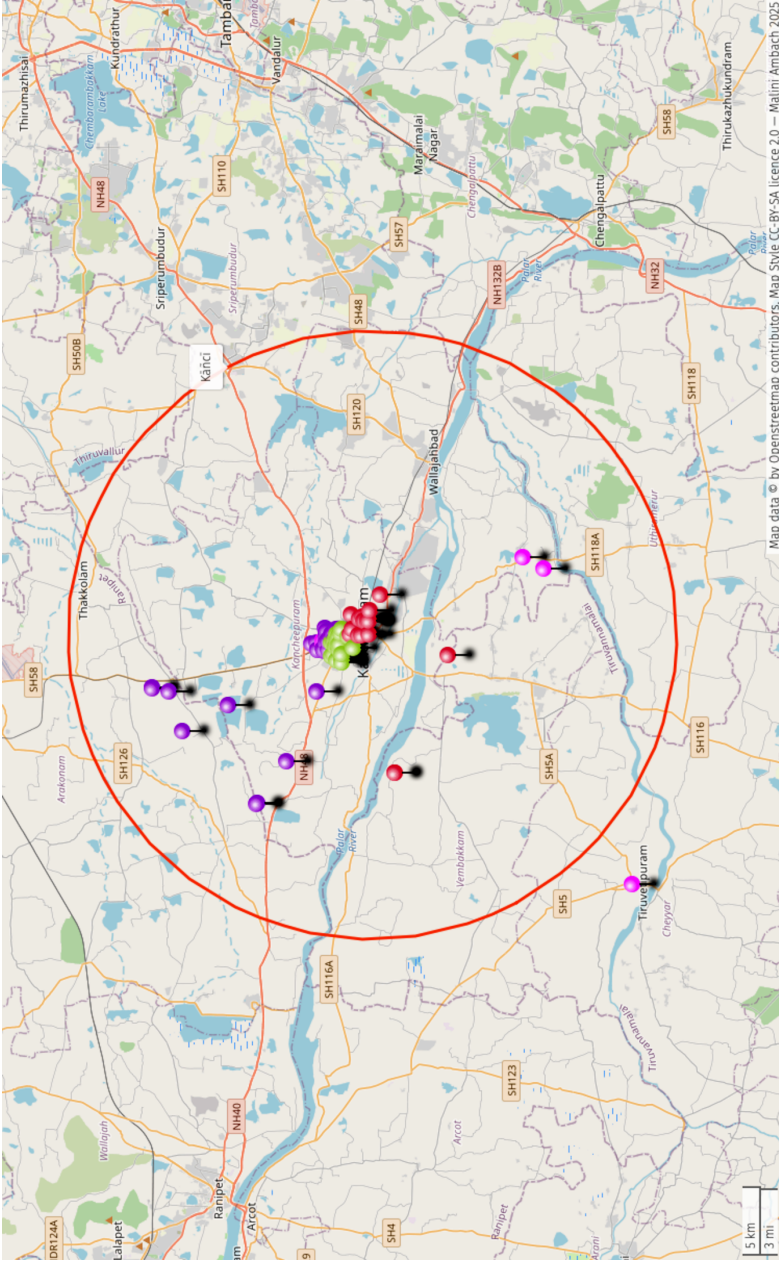


Fig. 4.4 Arrangement of the śivaliṅgas in clusters in the KM(Ś), overall view of the space Kāñcī (orange; approximation, see subsection 1.3.3). Śivaliṅgas in cluster 1 are marked in red, cluster 2—green, cluster 3—purple, cluster 4—pink.

This arrangement illustrates a shift of the spatial focus from the southeast to the northwest in the course of the text. Within each of the clusters, the *liṅgas*—and consequently their stories of origin—are arranged in consideration of their proximity to each other or rather from a previous one to the next in the sequence.

Connected to the sequence of the *śivaliṅgas* is the third characteristic of the design of the sacred landscape in the KM(Ś). This is an often continuous, standardised referencing pattern that indicates the location of the sacred sites mentioned in the text. It is a distinct marker because each narrative about a *śivaliṅga* usually starts with an indication of its position in reference to the *liṅga* whose story immediately precedes in the text. The preceding site is usually situated in the proximity. For example, the three *liṅgas* Abhirāmeśvara (Apirāmīsvāra), Airāvateśvara (Airāvatisvāra), and Iṣṭasiddhīśvara (Iṣṭasittisvāra; within the Kaccapēsvara temple compound) are situated close to each other and their stories follow one another (KM(Ś) 13.92–96, 13.97–103b, 13.103c–147). Conforming to the standard pattern, Airāvateśvara is located relative and west to Abhirāmeśvara and the location of Iṣṭasiddhīśvara is indicated to be south of Airāvateśvara (see figure 4.5).¹⁵³ The place that is described immediately before thus serves at the reference site for indicating the location of the next described place. This is the standard followed in the text, though exceptions do exist. The directions of all the sites in the KM(Ś) are consistently precise in comparison with their position in the historically grown city, as far as the location of the temples can be determined so far. Indications of distances are the exception rather than the rule and are mentioned only when the distance to the reference site is of a considerable length.

For the most part, the KM(Ś) follows the referencing pattern indicated above, thus creating a clearly recognisable uniform structure based on the spatiality of Kanchi. Within the clusters of Śaiva sites, the continuous string of referring to a site near a *liṅga* may be interrupted from time to time because the sequence reaches a dead end on the geo-spatial level. This, for example, occurs when the edge of a cluster is reached in one direction and/or a closer situated site would offer a better orientation. In such case, the next *śivaliṅga* is not located with reference to the previous site (that is farther away) but in relation to a more centrally, or closer, situated

153 [Kauśika tells:] *anyac ca sthānam abhramvāḥ kamitrārādhitam mahat | airāvateśvarākhyam tad abhirāmeśapaścime | | KM(Ś) 13.97 [...] asya dakṣiṇadighhāge sthānam anyat suśobhanam | | KM(Ś) 13.103cd iṣṭasiddhīśvarākhyam tadiṣṭasiddhipradam nṛṇām | KM(Ś) 13.104ab.*



Fig. 4.5 Directional referencing pattern that locates the śivalingas in the KM(Ś), example.

liṅga—or *tīrtha*—that has already been mentioned before in the text or is positioned at a distinct location.¹⁵⁴ For example, the *liṅga* Maṅikaṅṭheśvara (Maṅikaṅṭisvarar; KM(Ś) 8.1–9.69b) is said to be situated west of Puṇyakoṭīśvara (Puṇṇiyakoṭṭisvarar), which is introduced a few chapters before in the text (KM(Ś) 5.1–70). Both *liṅgas* lie around 900 metres away from each other in Kanchi's southeast. The preceding *liṅga* in the sequence from the Śaiva text, though, is Jīvatpākeśvara. Its exact location could not be identified yet, but is south of the Palar river as can be inferred from its own directional self-reference that mentions Jīvatpākeśvara to be south of Tālavaneśa (Tālapurīśvarar) and Kṛpānātha (Kirupānāta Svāmi) which are found around 7 kilometres to the southwest of Kanchi at Thiruppanangadu (Kanchipuram district), south of the Palar river. For actually finding Maṅikaṅṭisvarar on the ground, the spatial contextualisation in reference to Puṇyakoṭīśvara in the text is more helpful than a reference to the more distant Jīvatpākeśvara. It seems that the option chosen is the one that offers better orientation to navigate Kanchi's sacred sites on the ground. The consideration of distances thus overrules the basic structure of the referencing pattern in individual cases.¹⁵⁵ It seems to indicate that the reachability of the *śivaliṅgas* according to the location information given in the text could be a factor for their arrangement. However, I could not find out if there was or is indeed a pilgrimage practice that traces Kanchi's sacred places as per the KM(Ś).

Cluster 1 is formed essentially by sites located in the eastern and southeastern area of Kanchi. The limit to the west is Kamarajar Salai and Valla Pacchayappan Street (southern part), the major north-south throughfare since the Chola times that leads to Tirupati in the north and Uthiramerur to the south (Stein 2021, 92–126, 122, fig. 39; see section 2.3), with the *liṅgas* directly adjacent to the road in the west also included in this cluster (see figure 4.6).¹⁵⁶ In addition, the group includes some sites further away to the south (see figure 4.7). The first *liṅga* described in this group and the

154 Besides, no historical site is presented more than once with its own myth (with the exception of Apirāmīśvarar). Since there are several sites that have the same name in the KM(Ś), this may seem otherwise at first glance.

155 Apart from that, if the directions to individual places as indicated in the Māhātmya were traced, this would result in a back-and-forth movement within the clusters. This pattern evidently does not conform with the overall spatial shift from the southeast to the northwest that can be detected in the transition from one set of *śivaliṅgas* to the next.

156 The number of *śivaliṅgas* in the clusters that I give corresponds to the number mentioned in the KM(Ś) and can be higher than the number of sites marked in the figures in this chapter because not all places from the text could be identified with historical places so far (see also subsections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3).

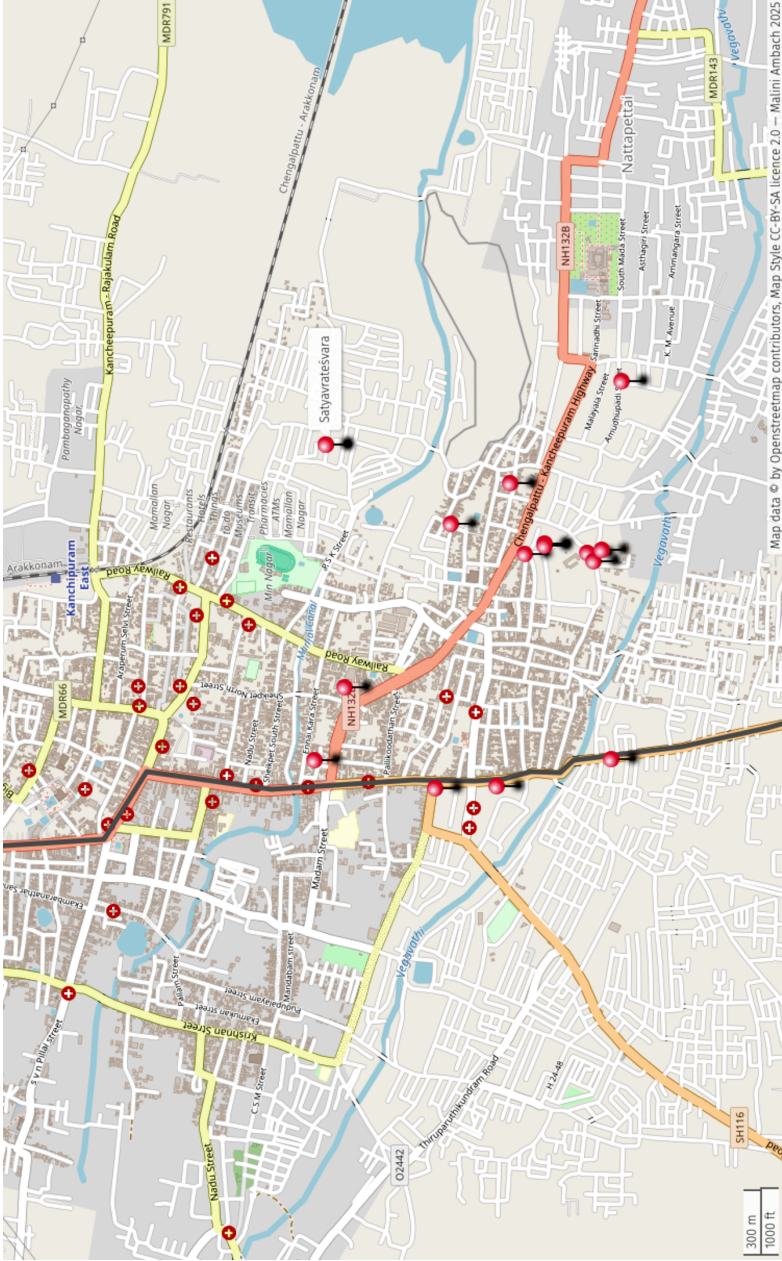


Fig. 4.6 Locations of the śivaliṅgas in cluster 1 in the KM(Ś), section on Kanchi. The conceptual spatial demarcation to cluster 2 is marked in grey (visualisation).

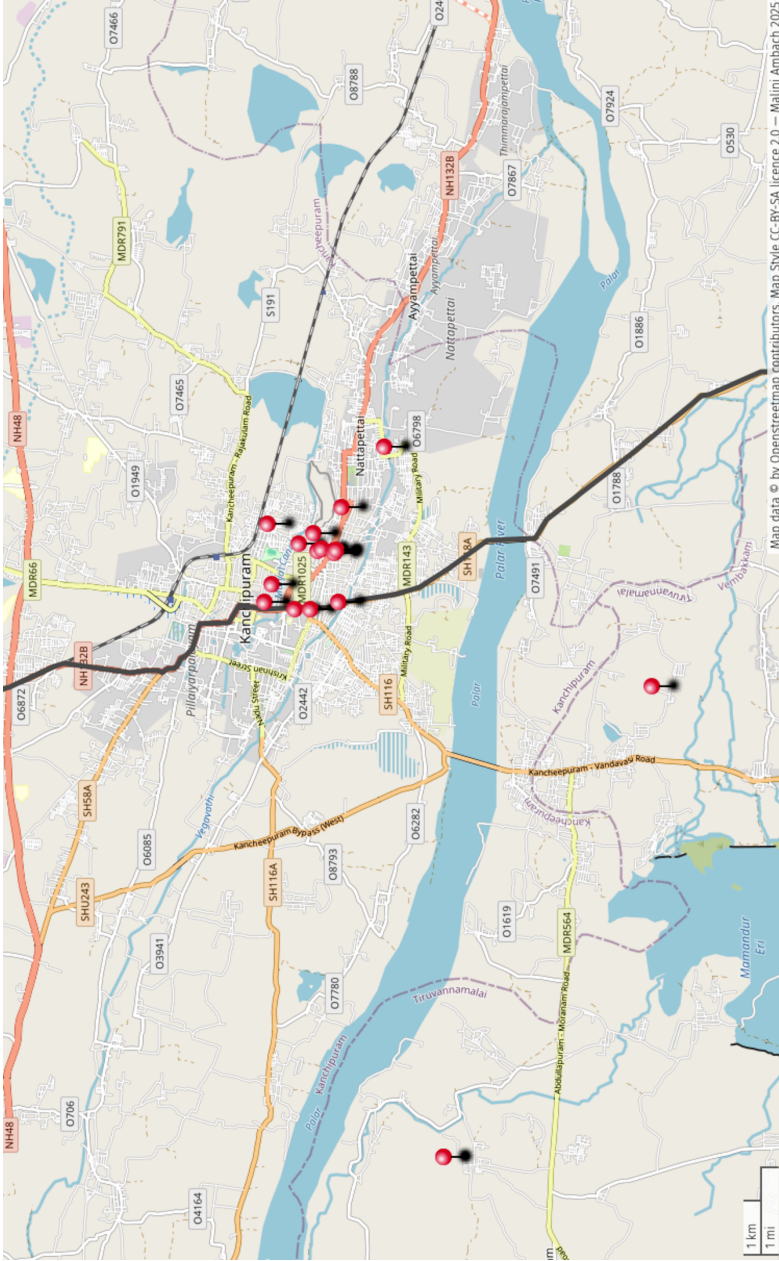


Fig. 4.7 Locations of the *śivalingas* in cluster 1 in the KM(S), overall view. The conceptual spatial demarcation to cluster 2 is marked in grey (visualisation).



Fig. 4.8 Locations of the śivalingas in cluster 2 in the KM(ś). The conceptual spatial demarcation to cluster 1 is marked in grey (visualisation).

Māhātmya in general is Satyavrateśvara (Satyanātasvāmi). The locations references are not entirely continuous since after a first part (four *liṅgas*; KM(Ś) 4.35–7.78), some places further south of Kanchi and south of the river Palar are described (three *liṅgas*; KM(Ś) 7.79–95; see figure 4.7). Following this detour in terms of spatial proximity, the focus returns to the southeastern area of Kanchi (further seventeen sites; KM(Ś) 8.1–12.83).

The demarcation of cluster 1 to 2 results from the shift of the geo-spatial focus to the centre of Kanchi. Most of the places in this group are located in the area that lies west of the aforementioned Kamarajar Salai and is roughly bounded in the north by the Annai Indira Gandhi Salai, the West Raja Street and its extension to the northeast. The Annai Indira Gandhi Salai demarcates the oldest urban core to the south, the West Raja Street to the west (see figure 4.8). Cluster 2 (twenty-six *liṅgas*; KM(Ś) 13.1–20.127) begins with Kāyārohaṇeśvara (Kāyārōkaṇeśvarar) and an interruption in the referencing pattern. The *liṅga* is simply located *in Kāñcī* (*kāñcyām*; KM(Ś) 13.1). Similarly, the standard references are missing for Paścimasthāna (Tirumēṙṙaḷiśvarar), Anekapeśvara (Anēkataṅkāvatēśvarar), Kailāsanātha (Kailācanātar), and Kaccchapeśvara (Kaccapēśvarar). It is my impression with regard to this cluster that places with a distinctive renown or a more exposed spatial position are exempted from the referencing pattern as their location is considered to be known. Tirumēṙṙaḷiśvarar and Anēkataṅkāvatēśvarar are counted among the Pāṭal Peṙṙa Stalams; Kailācanātar is a monumental Pallava temple built in the eighth-century at the major trans-regional route through Kanchi at this time (Stein 2021, 120–126); Kaccapēśvarar is one of the larger temples in Kanchi, located rather centrally at the southwestern corner of the Rājavīthis (streets framing the area around the Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ temple) and in the eighth century it marked the border of the city (Stein 2021, 101; Seshadri 2003, 135–137); and Kāyārōkaṇeśvarar, one of the more well-known temples in the city, is associated with the Śaiva Pāśupata ascetics and might have been a place of worship from the ninth century onwards (Stein 2021, 57–58).¹⁵⁷

The sites of cluster 3 map the northwestern part of Kanchi—with the exception of the places within the Ēkāmparanātar temple—and include some *liṅgas* further away to the northwest of the city (see figures 4.9 and 4.10). Again, a greater spatial distance from the last location of the previous group

157 For an overview of the Pāṭal Peṙṙa Stalams, see Chevillard and Sarma 2007. For details about the Kailācanātar temple, see Kaimal 2005, 2020, and Rajarajan 2015–2016. Kāyārōkaṇeśvarar is closely related to the Kaccapēśvarar temple and both temples are considered among the nine places in Kanchi where Viṣṇu worshipped Śiva (Ute Hüsken, pers. comm., February 2021).

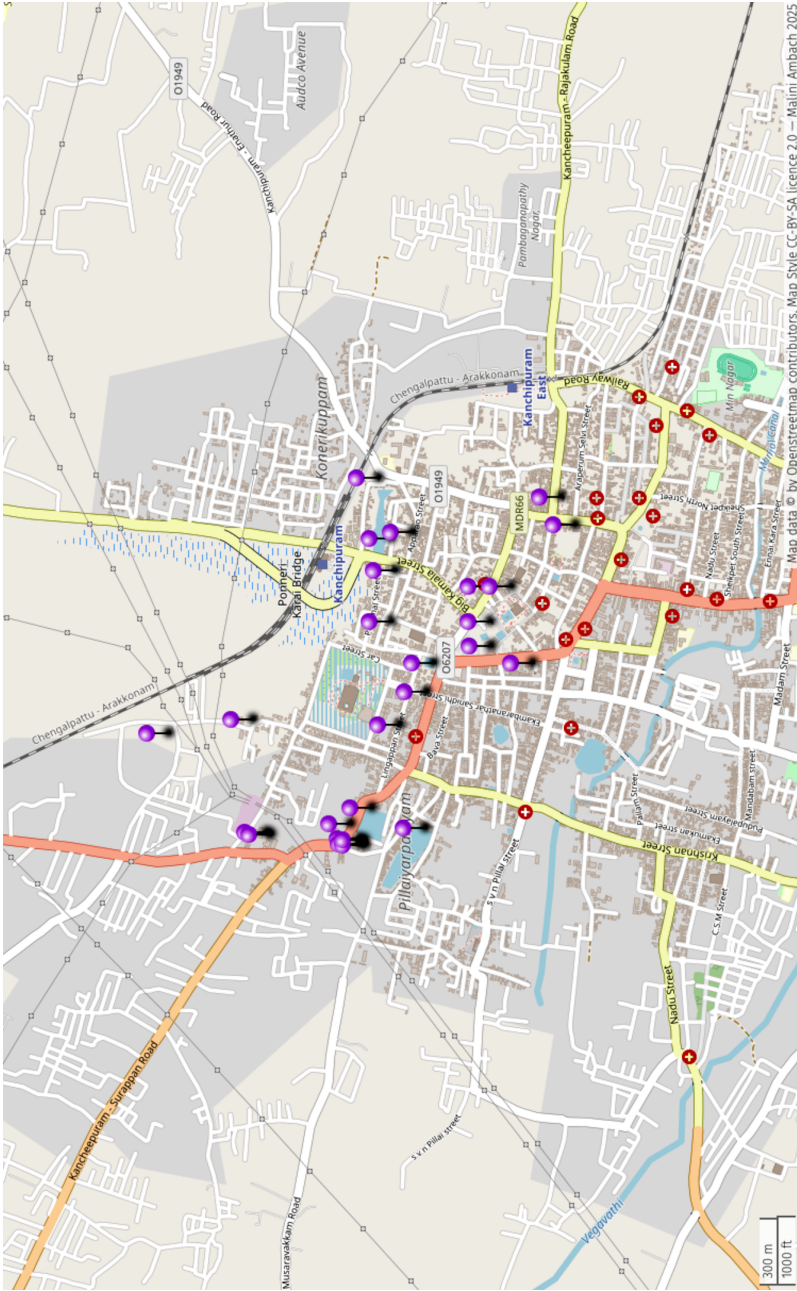


Fig. 4.9 Locations of the śivalingas in cluster 3 in the KM(Ś), section on Kanchi.

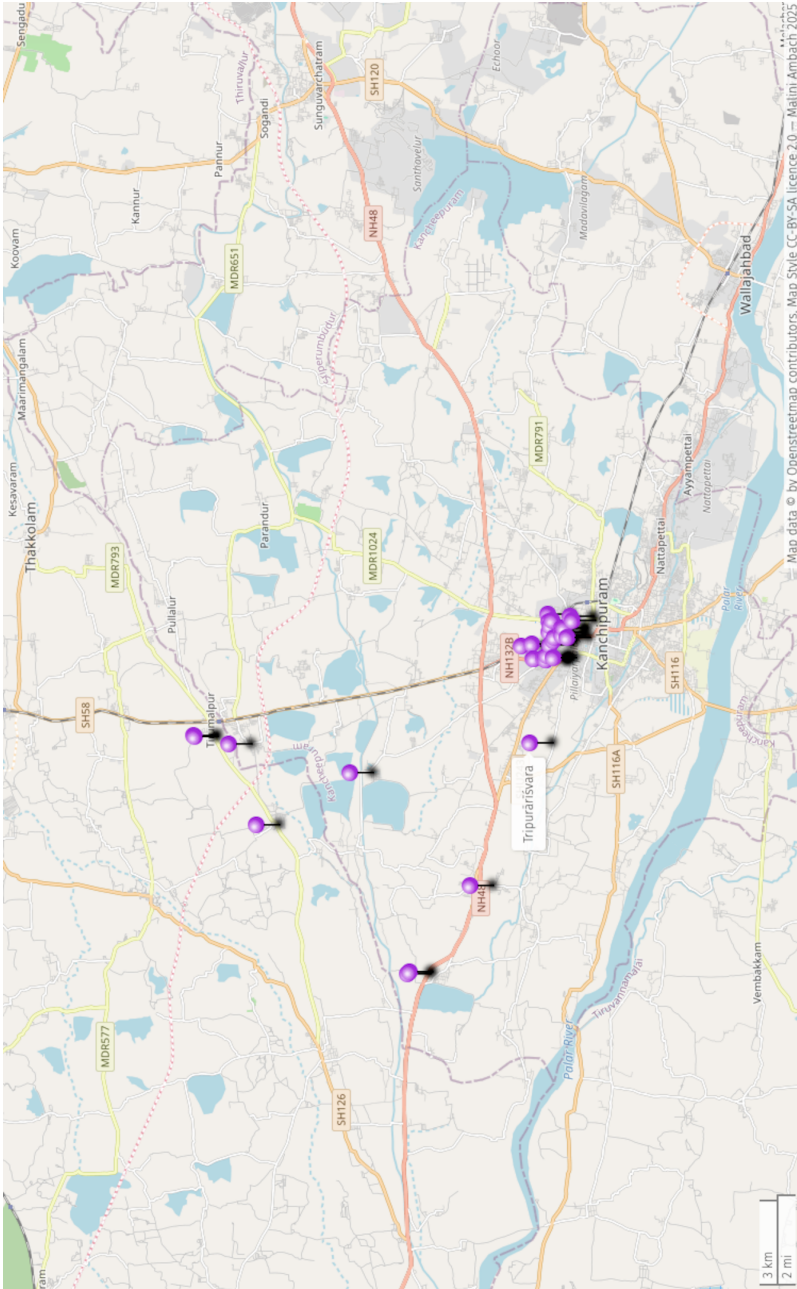


Fig. 4.10 Locations of the sivalingas in cluster 3 in the KM(S), overall view.

and a break in the reference pattern marks the transition to this set. It starts with Tripurārīśvara (Muppurārīśvarar; at Sirukaveripakkam village, a few kilometres west of Kanchi), which is said to be located west of the tank called Sarvatīrtha (Carvatīrttam). This sacred water body in the northwestern outskirts of Kanchi forms the central point of orientation and is repeatedly used to situate *śivaliṅgas* in this group. Deviating from the text's standard, it is not a *liṅga* that assumes this function, but a *tīrtha*. Carvatīrttam is one of the largest water bodies in Kanchi, it is part of the festival rituals of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (Schier 2018, 55) and an element of Ekāmranātha in Kanchi's Māhātmyas (Ambach 2022). In the third group of *liṅgas* in the Śaiva text (forty-one *liṅgas*; KM(Ś) 21.1–35.44b), the referencing pattern is often interrupted and starts anew to include all sites. They are spread over a large area and several of them are located at comparatively greater distances (up to circa 15 kilometres) from Kanchi to the west and northwest (see figure 4.10).

The fourth and last cluster of *liṅgas* essentially covers the sites within the compound of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (see figure 4.11). Their location in Ekāmranātha's immediate surroundings is their common characteristic. The first *liṅga* in this set is Śmaśāneśvara (Kaccimāyānam), which was presumably once a shrine separate from the building of the Ēkāmparanātar temple, but is now part of the latter (Stein 2021, 52–53; Schier 2018, 31). While the *liṅga* in question is not specifically located, it clearly starts the sequence of the *liṅgas* found inside the temple compound. The extent of the latter represents the spatial demarcation of cluster 4 to the other clusters. For the *liṅgas* in this set, the referencing pattern is systematically adjusted to construct the central place—Ekāmranātha—as the reference point. A total of ten *liṅgas* are located around Ekāmranātha, making this area the most densely mapped part of all of Kāñcī in the Śaiva text (KM(Ś) 35.44c–44.56; plus further descriptions of Ekāmranātha in ch. 45). In addition, the text mentions two *liṅga* nearby but outside the compound of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (KM(Ś) 42.1–4) and another three *śivaliṅgas* further south of Kanchi (KM(Ś) 37.54–62). The latter places are linked to Ekāmranātha by a story and thus fit into cluster 4 (see figure 4.12).¹⁵⁸

158 These three *liṅgas* are situated at the banks of the Cheyyar river (called Skanda in the text), which runs south of Kanchi at a distance of around 15 to 20 kilometres. A story about the Kampā links them to the other *liṅgas* in cluster 4. The reference place for the first *liṅga* in this group of three is Puṇyakoṭīśvara (Puṇṇiyakoṭṭīśvarar; KM(Ś) 37.54–55; cluster 1), situated in Kanchi's southeast and thus closer to the three sites further south. Puṇyakoṭīśvara is possibly chosen as reference because it is a larger temple located not far from the major road

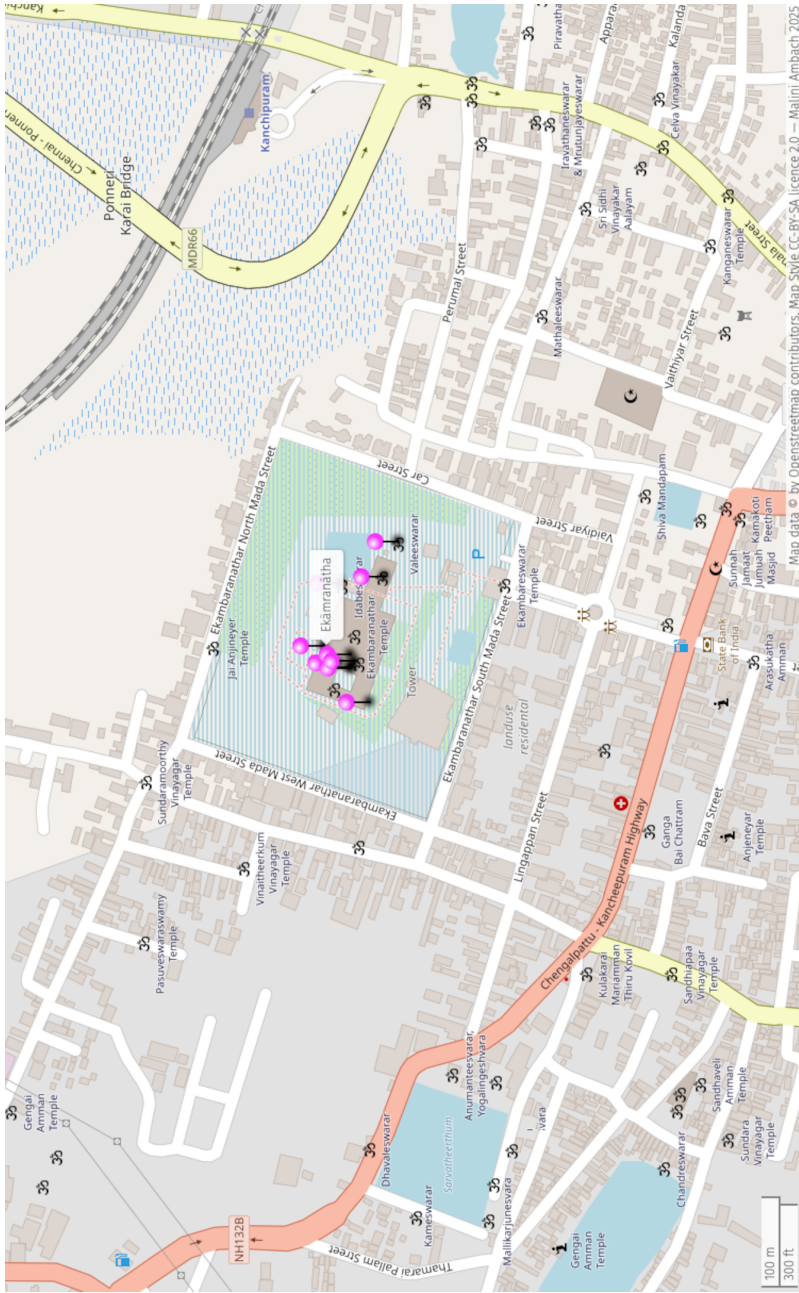


Fig. 4.11 Locations of the śivalingas in cluster 4 in the KM(S), section on Kanchi.

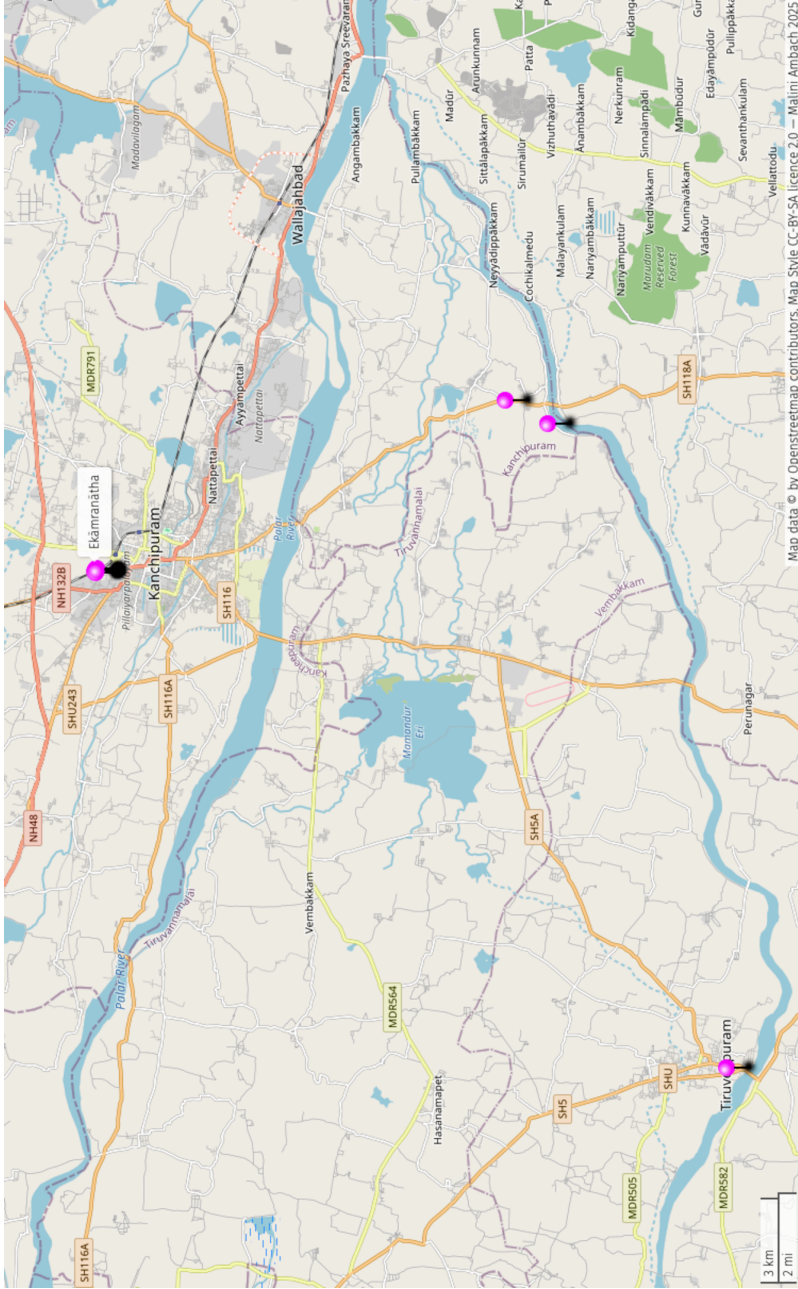


Fig. 4.12 Locations of the śivalingas in cluster 4 in the KM(Ś), overall view.

The site of Ekāmrānātha is the undisputed focal point in the Māhātmya's design of Kāñcī's sacred geography and its centrality is reflected on several levels. As analysed above (see section 4.2), the text's spatial outline constructs its site as the central focus and Kāñcī is primarily characterised by Ekāmrānātha's presence there. Moreover, as one of the few cases in all three Māhātmyas, architectural aspects of Ekāmrānātha's place are described in the Śaiva text (see pp. 101–106). Structurally, the particular importance of Ekāmrānātha's site among Kāñcī's sacred places is reflected in the elaborateness of its narrative. Similarly, the position of Ekāmrānātha's myth at the end of the Māhātmya is worth a note. As Jay Ramesh (2020, 7, 118) analyses using the example of the Sanskrit *Kumbakoṇamāhātmya*, Sthalamāhātmyas often position the site they consider most important at the end of a pilgrimage—a route that can be traced by following the sequence of the sites in a sacred landscape described in a Māhātmya.

The assessment by Jay Ramesh that the last place is the most important could also be applied to Ekāmrānātha in the KM(Ś). However, I do not see the arrangement of sacred sites in the Śaiva Māhātmya as an outline of a pilgrimage route that is actually to be followed and I am unaware of such a practice.¹⁵⁹ Compared to the other two Māhātmyas on Kanchi and their arrangement of the sacred sites, though, the spatial outlay of Kāñcī gleaned from the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* does correspond much more to an outline of a pilgrimage route than those of the other two texts: the description starts out from the spatial structures of the historically grown city and groups together places that are close to each other and usually indicates the directions from one site to the next. It could well be read as a descriptive map of Kanchipuram's religious landscape—with a focus on *śivaliṅgas*. All in all, it appears as if the arrangement constructs a geo-spatially most convenient—namely, shortest—route without any doubling back. At the same time, it remains clearly aware of all salient orientation points in the vicinity, that is, places already discussed, which serve as location references (see subsection 4.3.1). Beyond that and like any pilgrimage, the text's basic layout has a focus, a goal that is to be reached at the end—Ekāmrānātha.

Nevertheless, several features are missing in the text to view it as an interpretation of a pilgrimage route. First of all, the text itself does not indicate such a notion, neither terminologically nor conceptually. Second, the

leading south out of the city (a continuation of Kamarajar Salai) and to the first of the *liṅgas* at the Cheyyar.

159 As a genre, Sthalamāhātmyas exhibit characteristics suggesting that these texts were composed with pilgrims in mind (see section 3.1).

narrational style of the Māhātmya does not overtly describe or construct a pilgrimage route and there is no overarching narrative that would connect the sacred sites in such a perspective. The episodes telling the myths of the *śivaliṅgas* are self-contained and present separate stories, introduced within one and the same myth. Ultimately, the KM(Ś) presents a rather comprehensive outline of the city's religious landscape. This is aligned with the spatially structuring elements of the urban layout or distinctive locations in the city, such as the major north-south road dating to the Chola times (cluster 1 and 2), the large water body of Carvatīrttam (cluster 3), or the compound of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (cluster 4).

4.3.2 Sacred Water Bodies

While the *śivaliṅgas* are clearly understood as the main sites in the KM(Ś) and Ekāmranātha's as the most significant among them, other sacred places are less relevant to the spatial layout. After Śaiva places, *tīrthas* are the most frequently mentioned sites (around twenty, compared to around hundred *liṅgas*). They are mostly linked to a *śivaliṅga*, both spatially and narratively. According to my analysis, the selection of the *tīrthas* mentioned in the text does not follow an explicit pattern (see figure 4.13).

Among the sacred water bodies, Sarvatīrtha (Carvatīrttam; KM(Ś) 29.19–30b), at the northwestern end of Kanchi, the Kampā river (a now dried-up river; see pp. 240–241; KM(Ś) 37.1–25b), and Śivagaṅgātīrtha (Civakaṅkaiīrttam; KM(Ś) 35.87–97), the main *tīrtha* at the Ēkāmparanātar temple, are highlighted. All three *tīrthas* are part of the Ekāmranātha myth and particularly glorified. It is probably this connection with Ekāmranātha that engenders the particular attention given to them.¹⁶⁰

In accordance with the geography-oriented sequence of places in the Māhātmya, sacred water bodies are mentioned according to their location in Kanchi. In general, they are arranged within the cluster-design indicated above and their stories are presented right before or after the narrative of a *liṅga* to which they are narratively linked. The narratives of the *liṅga* and the associated *tīrtha* are often interwoven in as far as the same plot continues further or the same characters are involved if the *tīrtha* is provided with

¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Śivagaṅgātīrtha is repeatedly mentioned in narratives of other *liṅgas* in the KM(Ś) when characters from outside come to Kāñcī. These characters are described to take a bath (*snāna*) in it before they worship Ekāmranātha and then install their own *liṅga* (for example KM(Ś) 10.69 on Siddheśvara or KM(Ś) 17.5 on Vīrarāghaveśvara).

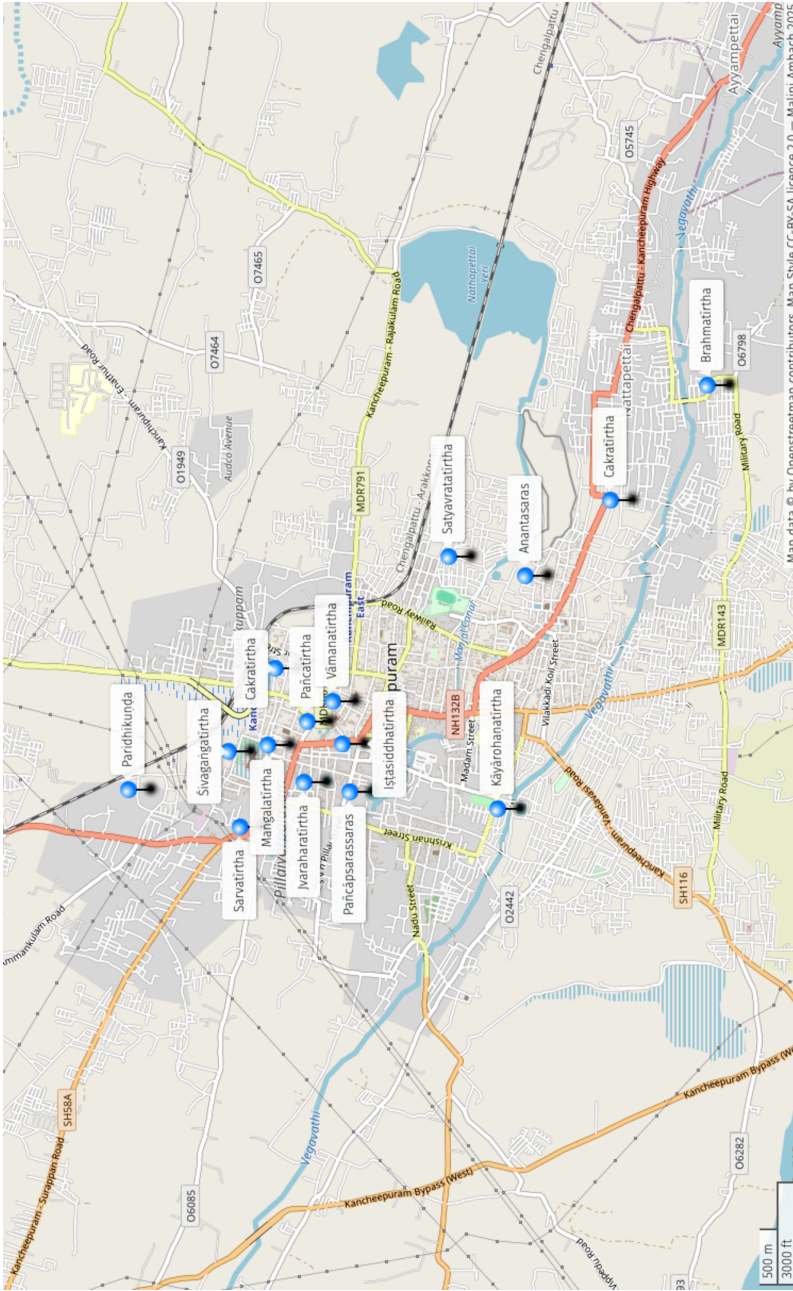


Fig. 4.13 Tirrthas in Kanchi as mapped in the KM(S).

a separate myth. For example, a story about Brahmā (KM(Ś) 7.1–78) narrates both the origin of the *liṅga* Śivāsthāneśvara (Pirammapurīśvarar) and the *tīrtha* Brahmātīrtha (Pirammātīrttam). The *tīrtha* belongs to the Pirammapurīśvarar temple and is adjacent to it on site. The connection of a *tīrtha* to a *liṅga* is thus generally based on the spatial proximity and a linking story in the Śaiva Māhātmya.

In principle, sacred water bodies are said to have a power of their own, which is realised either by bathing, visually perceiving or touching their waters. Each *tīrtha* is said to have an individual effect, with purifying properties—especially regarding offences or lapses—and the granting of liberation being described as inherent in each of these places. A ritual act at the sacred water body, however, is not regarded as sufficient for the attainment of benefits or the fulfilment of desires, but considered only as a component of a series of acts in which the worship of a *liṅga* brings about the desired aim. Accordingly, *tīrthas* are separate places in the Māhātmya's interpretation of Kāñcī's sacred landscape but are subordinate to and dependent on a *śivaliṅga* and thus Śiva's power in their own efficacy.

In the mapping of the *śivaliṅgas*, *tīrthas* sometimes also assume the function of reference points in the localisation statements which, as described above, otherwise falls to *liṅgas*. Among the few examples of this setting, Sarvatīrtha (Carvatīrttam) stands out. It is constructed like a central point in order to locate *śivaliṅgas* in cluster 3 (see section 4.3) and especially those located on its shores, Kāmeśvara (Kāmēsvarar), Tīrtheśvara (Tīrttīśvarar), Gaṅgāvareśvara (Kaṅkāvarēsvarar) and Viśvanātheśvara (Kāci Visvanātar; KM(Ś) 29.1–38b).

However, such a focus on a sacred water body in the spatial arrangement is the exception. As a category, *tīrthas* are basically subordinated to Śaiva places in the text-internal hierarchy of sacred sites. Structurally, this is reflected in their stories of origin usually being part of a narrative about a *liṅga* to which they are consequently linked and occupying a less significant role. On the level of efficacy, their subordinated status translates into their attributed powers to be understood as a sub-element in a series of rituals that ends with worshipping Śiva as the decisive component for the attainment of benefits.

4.3.3 Sites of Śiva's Sons, Viṣṇu, and the Goddess

In addition to *tīrthas*, a few other non-Śaiva sacred sites are mentioned in the text, albeit in smaller numbers. The Śaiva Māhātmya itself indicates

in its introductory part which places are meant to be foregrounded when the sages ask the bard Sūta how many places are there of Śiva and Viṣṇu, which places are devoted to Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa), Viśākha (Skanda / Murukan), and which other are there in Kāñcī. Accordingly, the KM(Ś) introduces several sites of Viṣṇu and a few of Gaṇeśa, the Goddess in different forms, and Skanda. Just as in the case of *tīrthas*, these sites are associated with a *śivaliṅga* both on the narrative and spatial level. As a rule, the story about a *śivaliṅga* presents the deity worshipping or installing a particular *liṅga* in Kāñcī, whereupon the deity also takes its abode in the vicinity of this Śiva. Accordingly, these associated places are also included in the sequence of sites in the Māhātmya and can be mapped within the clusters of *liṅgas*.

Structurally, the stories about places of non-Śaiva deities correspond to the usual narrative layout in the KM(Ś) according to which divine beings, deities or sages worship a certain *liṅga* in Kāñcī, whose origin and name (*-īśvara*) is thus explained (see subsection 3.3.1). They differ, however, in that the worshipping deity is also assigned a place near that *liṅga* where it has been present in Kāñcī ever since. The site of that deity is thus also considered to be part of the sacred landscape.

Gaṇeśa and Skanda

Greater attention is paid in the KM(Ś) to Dakṣiṇāvartaviḥneśa, Gaṇeśa with the right-wound trunk (Valampuri Vināyakar; second *prākāra* of the Varatarāja Perumāḷ temple; KM(Ś) ch. 6) and Kumārakoṣṭha, the place of Skanda (Kumarakoṭṭam; KM(Ś) 33.23–83). In contrast to all other non-Śaiva sites mentioned in the Śaiva Māhātmya, Dakṣiṇāvartaviḥneśa and Kumārakoṣṭha are structurally less closely connected to a *śivaliṅga* and its story. Said to be situated at Hastiśaila (Hastigiri), Varadarāja's abode, Dakṣiṇāvartaviḥneśa is associated with the *liṅga* Puṇyakoṭṭīśvara (Puṇyakoṭṭīśvarar), which is located nearby and to which the Māhātmya also connects its version of Varadarāja's story of origin. While reflecting this spatial link, Dakṣiṇāvartaviḥneśa is introduced in a separate narrative about Viṣṇu installing him there to get back his right-wound conch on Śiva's advice.¹⁶¹ Similarly, the myth of Kumārakoṣṭha concentrates on the origin

¹⁶¹ More incidentally, the KM(Ś) mentions four more Gaṇeśas: one at Śiva Anekaśeśvara (Vināyakar; outer enclosure of the Anēkatāṅkāvatēśvarar temple; KM(Ś) 16.1–18), Satyavāgviḥnarāj, said to be west of Kacchapeśvara (Poyyamoli Vināyakar; outer *prākāra* of the Kaccapēśvarar temple; KM(Ś) 14.26a), and two more at Ekāmranātha's abode (see pp. 101–106).

of Skanda, while the associated *liṅga* Devasenādipatīśvara (Tevaceṇāpatīcivarar; first *prākāra* of the Kumarakōṭṭam temple), which is worshipped by Skanda, is of secondary importance.¹⁶² While Kumarakōṭṭam is the largest temple dedicated to Skanda in Kanchi, which makes its mention in the KM(Ś) easy to comprehend, the situation with Valampuri Vināyakar is less clear. I can only surmise that its location within a Vaiṣṇava temple sets it apart from other Gaṇeśas and provides a way to connect this site with Śiva through a myth that tells of Viṣṇu worshipping both Gaṇeśa and Śiva.

The rare mention of Gaṇeśa's places in the *Māhātmya* is out of proportion to the around seventy shrines dedicated to this deity in Kanchi's religious landscape. In addition, there are subsidiary shrines to Gaṇeśa usually found in the compounds of Śaiva temples. Besides, the myths of both Dakṣiṇāvar-tavighneśa and Kumārakoṣṭha are less specifically local and distinctly pan-Indian, largely including episodes that are not set in Kāñcī. Such a framing gives the impression that both have been primarily chosen to include Śiva's two sons in the *Māhātmya*, thus fully depicting the divine nuclear family consisting of Śiva, Pārvatī, and their offspring. By the structural framing of the stories about Śiva's two sons, their places are set apart from other non-Śaiva sites in the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. Instead of being rather distinctly constructed as secondary in the story about a *liṅga* they are associated with, the origin of Skanda or Gaṇeśa is the main objective in their myths.

Viṣṇus

The KM(Ś) further introduces several manifestations of Viṣṇu in Kāñcī. In line with the text's Śaiva outlook, the textual structure considers the Vaiṣṇava sites as secondary and links a Viṣṇu to a *śivaliṅga*. The association is primarily based on spatial closeness and each mention of a Viṣṇu is therefore generally also subject to the overarching arrangement of the *liṅgas* based on geo-spatial aspects. Secondarily, but ultimately decisively, the plot of the story decides on the respective association, since the origins of both places are to be narratively interwoven. For example, Varadarāja (Varatarāja Perumāl) is linked to Puṇyakoṭīśvara (Puṇṇiyakōṭṭīśvarar), which is the closest of the *liṅgas* around, whereas Candrakhaṇḍa (Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭa Perumāl), situated in the first *prākāra* of the Ēkāmpara-nātar temple, is connected to Kṛṣṇeśvara (Kaṇṇēśvarar) that lies around 800

162 Besides Kumārakoṣṭha, further places of Skanda are only mentioned in passing in Ekāmranātha's myth and the description of his abode (see pp. 101–106).

metres away, with around forty *śivaliṅgas* also mentioned in the text located closer to that form of Viṣṇu. In the latter case, the storyline eventually justifies the association: Viṣṇu, who has become black (*kṛṣṇa*) from the poison that originated from the churning of the milk ocean,¹⁶³ comes to Kāñcī to worship Śiva, and is told to stay in front of Ekāmranātha (KM(Ś) 33.1–14b), precisely where he is found on site. Common to all stories is the portrayal of Viṣṇu in his respective manifestation as a worshipper of Śiva, thus illustrating the hierarchy aligned with Śiva. In contrast to the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcī-māhātmya*, however, the relation of the two deities is not per se marked by an opposition in the myths.

With the exception of Vaikuṅṭa Perumāḷ temple, all major Vaiṣṇava places in Kanchi, that is, where Viṣṇu is the main deity of the temple, are mentioned in the KM(Ś).¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the text introduces several Viṣṇus that are found in temples where the main deity is not Viṣṇu. In these cases, the Viṣṇus are located in a subsidiary shrine of the temples.

Following the text's geo-spatiality-based structure, the KM(Ś) describes five sites of Viṣṇu that are linked to *liṅgas* from cluster 1 and located in the southeastern part of Kanchi (see figure 4.14). Viṣṇu as Varadarāja (Varatarāja Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 5.1–70) is linked to Puṇyakoṭīśvara (Puṇṇiyakōṭṭīśvarar), the *liṅga* that lies the closest. In addition, there is reference within names since Varadarāja's heavenly chariot (*vimāna*), which is considered to be represented by the tower superstructure above the *garbhagrha* (sanctum sanctorum) at the Varatarāja Perumāḷ temple, is called Puṇyakoṭīvimāna. Yathoktakārī (Yatōktakārī Perumāḷ) and Dīpaprakāśa (Viḷakkoḷi Perumāḷ) appear in the story about Śivāsthāneśvara (Pirammapurīśvarar; KM(Ś) 7.1–78), in which Brahmā installs the *liṅga* named after him. The god further carries out a sacrifice in order to see Viṣṇu and in the process Yathoktakārī and Dīpaprakāśa appear. Śivāsthāneśvara is situated at some

163 On the known Purāṇic episode on the churning of the milk ocean, cf. *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, *Aṃśa* I, chapter 9. Besides, the reference to *kṛṣṇa* in the KM(Ś) might also refer to Viṣṇu's *avatāra* of homonymous name.

164 In terms of spatiality, there is no reason why Vaikuṅṭa Perumāḷ should not be included in the KM(Ś). Aneesh Raghavan (pers. comm., October 2025) suspects that its character as royal Pallava monument with secular origins—it was commissioned by King Narasimhavarman II—plays a role in its omission. He refers to the apparently contrived story of origin in the case of the other royal monument in Kanchi, the Kailācanātar temple, and argues that a link to a myth of origin may not be readily apparent for both sites. While the Kailācanātar temple, as Śaiva site, was certainly essential to include in the Śaiva *Māhātmya*, the compilers might not have deemed the Vaiṣṇava Vaikuṅṭa Perumāḷ to be equally relevant and thus did not prioritise the inclusion a myth about its origin.



Fig. 4.14 Viṣṇus (yellow) in Kanchi's southeast in the KM(Ś), in relation to the śivalingas (red) with which their stories are connected.

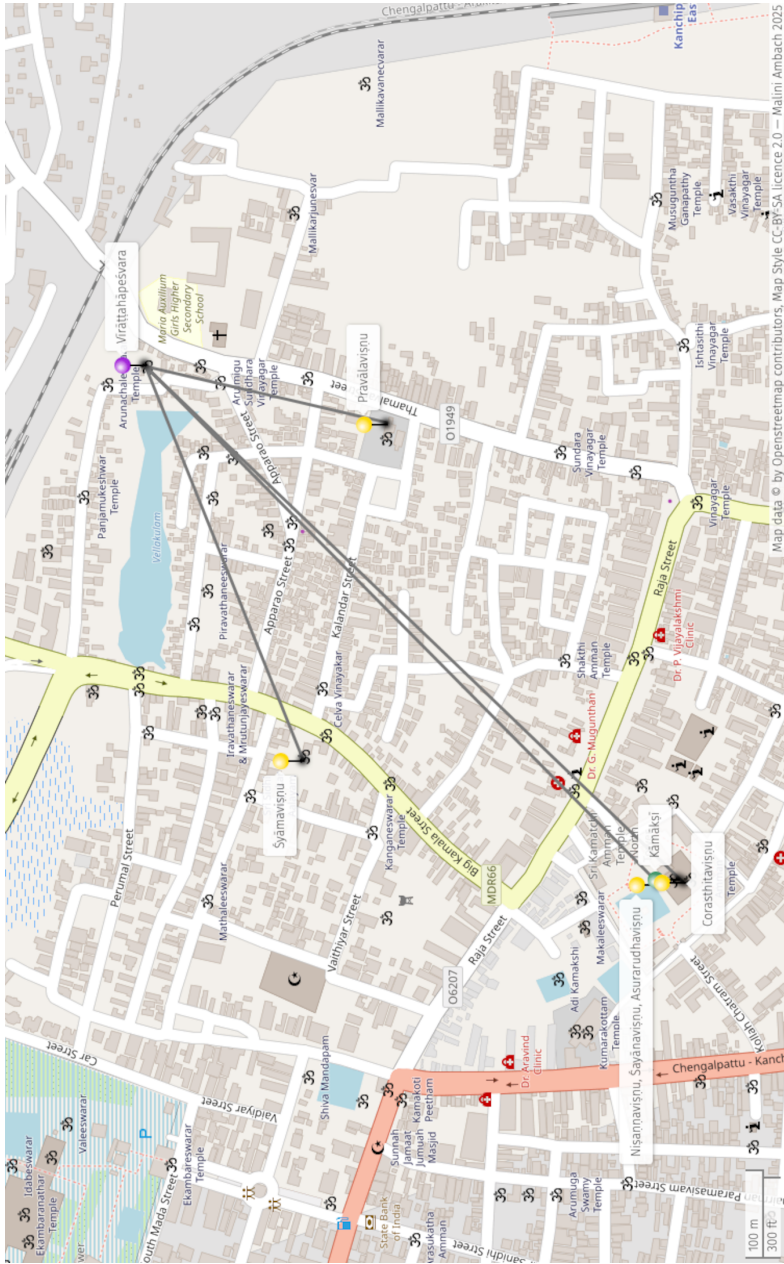


Fig. 4.15 Viṣṇu (yellow) around Kāmākṣī's site (green) in the KM(Ś), in relation to the *līṅga* Virāṭṭahāṣeṣvara (purple) with which their stories are connected.

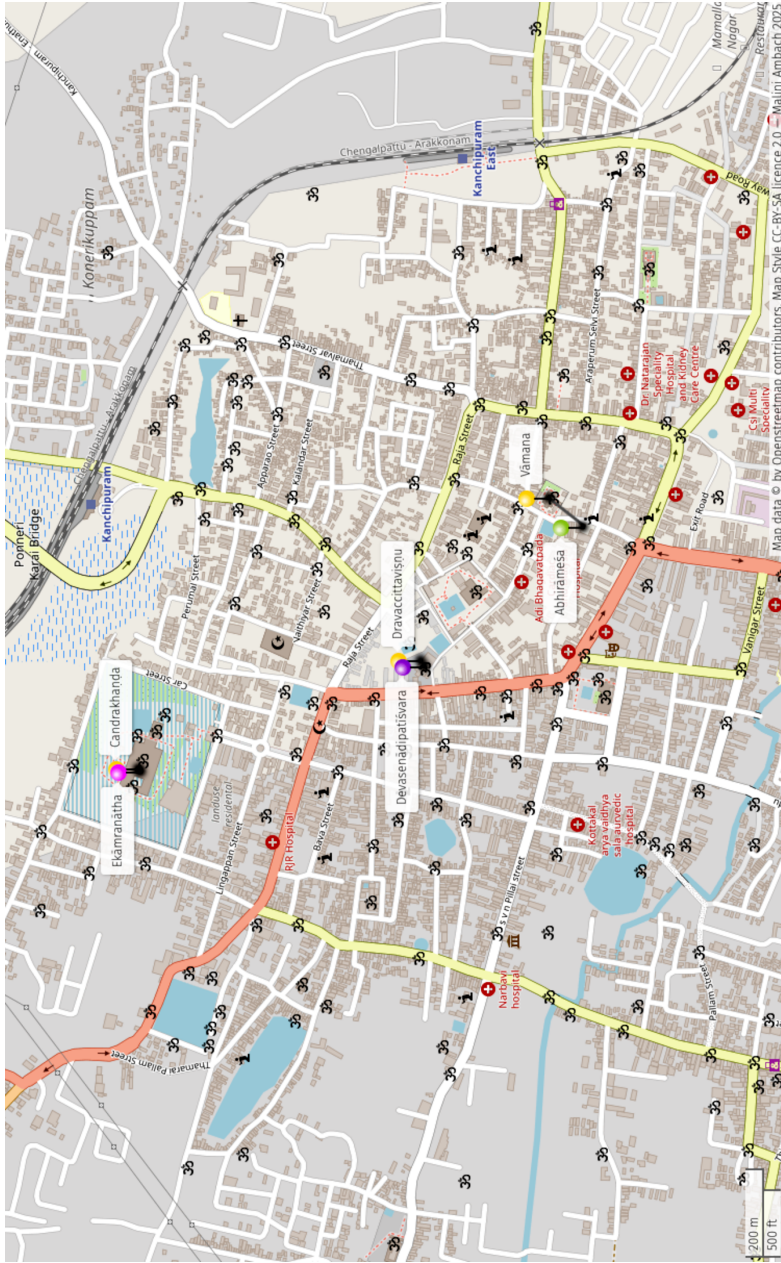


Fig. 4.16 Viṣṇus (yellow) in Kāñcī's northwest in the KM(Ś), in relation to the śivāṅgas (pink/purple/green) with which their stories are connected.

distance to these two Viṣṇus but the link in terms of content—Brahmā as the main character—is essential in this case.¹⁶⁵ A similar structural connection by a combination of spatial proximity and name reference also seems to apply in the case of Aṣṭabhuja (Aṣṭapuja Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 12.1–7b), linked to the *liṅga* Aṣṭabhujeśvara (identification uncertain), Dīpaprakāśa (Viḷakkoḷi Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 12.7c–18), which is introduced once more and connected to Ādipiteśvara (Ātipatiśvarar), and Narasiṃha (Aḷakiya Ciṅka Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 12.19–22, 22.1–20b), which is said to be located at the site of Nārasimheśvara (identification uncertain).

Shifting to the cluster 2 and to the west of Kanchi, there is Viṣṇu Pāṇḍavadūta (Pāṇṭavatūta Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 15.16–19b), connected to the *liṅga* Pāṇḍavadūteśvara (identification uncertain), said to be west of Pāṇḍavadūta. Again, there is a connection embedded in the name and supposedly also in spatial closeness between the Vaiṣṇava site and the *liṅga* as its reference place. In cluster 3, further six Viṣṇus are introduced in a multilayered narrative starting from the story of origin of Virāṭṭahāseśvara (Virāṭṭāṇeśvarar; KM(Ś) ch. 31). Chapter 31, still embedded in a story about the *liṅga* and containing the expected element of Viṣṇu's worship of Śiva, has a different character due to the foregrounding of Vaiṣṇava sites and the prominent role of the multiple forms of Viṣṇu in the myths. It further characterises the site of Kāmākṣi and it is the goddess instead of Śiva that instructs the other characters on how to attain their desired aim (see pp. 137–140).¹⁶⁶ All of the six Viṣṇus whose origin is told in the continuous narrative are located in the surroundings of Kāmākṣi's site, Kāmakoṭi (see figure 4.15). They are Śyāmaṅgaḷ (Paccaivaṅga Perumāḷ) and Pravaḷaviṅgaḷ (Pavaḷavaṅga

165 In the KV and the KM(V), the motif of Brahmā's sacrifice is mainly linked to another site, namely Varadarāja. Both Yathoktakārī and Dīpaprakāśa are part of his myth of origin in both these texts, whereas the KM(Ś) seems to separate their origin from the Varadarāja myth (Buchholz, forthcoming-a). Furthermore, the episode in the KM(Ś) briefly hints at two more Viṣṇus in passing that are also part of the myth about Varadarāja from the KV and particularly the KM(V) (see subsection 6.4.3). These are the Viṣṇus at the Raṅkanāta Svāmi temple in Thiruparkadal and the Uttira Raṅkanāta Cuvāmi temple in Pallikonda.

166 Also noteworthy, KM(Ś) chapter 31 ends with a Vaiṣṇava *phalaśruti* section promising union with Viṣṇu after hearing or telling this story about Viṣṇu (KM(Ś) 31.130c–f). As if to avoid a discrepancy with the rest of the Śaiva text praising Śiva, there follows a last verse in which the story of Viṣṇu is framed in the opening story on the *liṅga* Virāṭṭahāseśvara. It would be certainly worthwhile to have a closer look at this chapter from a text-historical angle and compare both the existing manuscripts of the KM(Ś) and its Tamil rendering, the *Kāñcippurāṇam*, as Kāmākṣi's site is also described in the same chapter.

Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 31.18–60), Corasthitaviṣṇu (Kaḷva Perumāḷ; first *prākāra* of the Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ temple) as well as Niṣaṇṇa-, Śayāna-, and Asura-druhaviṣṇu (collectively referred to as Pūtanikraha Perumāḷ; outer *prākāra* of the Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ temple; KM(Ś) 31.61–131).¹⁶⁷ Virāṭṭāṇēsvarar is not the closest *liṅga*, but again the myth forms the link. In the first of the interwoven stories of the chapter, Viṣṇu worships the *liṅga* and the other episodes continue with the focus on Viṣṇu without revisiting the connection to Virāṭṭahāseśvara.

Located not far away from Kāmākṣī's site but linked to other *liṅgas* of cluster 3 there are further Vaiṣṇava sites which are mentioned in the KM(Ś) (see figure 4.16). These are Trivikrama (Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 32.72–83), associated with the nearby *liṅga* Abhirāmeśvara (Apirāmīsvarar), Dravaccittaviṣṇu (Urukumulla Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 34.1–52), connected to the *liṅga* Devasenādipatīśvara (Tevaceṇāpatīcvarar) that is located merely a few metres away in the same—the first—enclosure of the Kumarakōṭṭam temple, and Candrakhaṇḍa (Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭa Perumāḷ; first *prākāra* of the Ēkāmparanātar temple; KM(Ś) 33.1–14b), whose story tells of Viṣṇu who is black (*kṛṣṇa*) and worships a *śivaliṅga* in Kāñcī that is accordingly called Kṛṣṇeśvara (Kaṇṇēsvarar).¹⁶⁸ The KM(Ś) does not hierarchise the Vaiṣṇava sites among themselves but subordinates them as a category to the places of Śiva. Based on spatial proximity between a Vaiṣṇava site and its Śaiva reference site, the narrative ultimately determines to which *śivaliṅga* the story about a particular Viṣṇu is attached.

167 Stories about the origin of Pūtanikraha Perumāḷ are found in the KV (13.1–58) and KM(Ś) (31.106–131) but not in the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. In the myths, Viṣṇu defeats one (KM(Ś)) or two (KV) spirits (*bhūtas*) on the orders of the goddess Kāmākṣī. As he defeated the spirit(s) in a standing, sitting and lying position, he is said to abide there in three forms. Accordingly, Pūtanikraha Perumāḷ is depicted in three forms in three shrines, arranged one above the other on site. The episode in the KM(Ś), though, starts with detailing the presence of Kaḷva Perumāḷ there. Viṣṇu is said to eavesdropped on a conversation between his wife Lakṣmī and Kāmākṣī, hiding like a thief before he was discovered by the goddesses. Hence, the Śaiva text refers to him as Corasthita (the one who stood like a thief). This association is reflected in the Tamil designation of the place (not the deity) as Kaḷvaṇūr; for *kaḷvaṇ* in Tamil means thief (TL, s.v. *kaḷvaṇ*).

168 The last Vaiṣṇava site, Virarāghava (identification uncertain; KM(Ś) 17.1–52), is linked to the *liṅga* Virarāgheśvara (Virarākavēsvarar; cluster 3).

Goddesses

Apart from places of Viṣṇu, sites of Devī (the Goddess) are mentioned in the KM(Ś) as another category of non-Śaiva sacred places. Several goddesses appear as characters in the narratives about the *śivaliṅgas*, but only very few are specifically located in Kāñcī by the Śaiva text. The characters and framing of these goddesses are very different and so far I have not been able to identify a consistent pattern—neither spatial nor textual—that explains why one goddess is located and another is not. In the KM(Ś), two goddesses represent the ferocious character of Devī, two the gentle form. As a fierce local form, Bhinnodarī (Mākāliyamman) appears in the story about the *liṅga* Phaṇāmaṇīsvara (Paṇāmaṇīsvarar; KM(Ś) 9.113–116). Both shrines are adjacent to each other on site—Mākāliyamman to the north of Paṇāmaṇīsvarar—reflecting the text’s usual pattern of linking a subordinate site to a *liṅga* nearby in one story. Bhinnodarī represents an independent, that is, unmarried, form of the goddess Kālī, who often functions as regional or village goddess.¹⁶⁹ Smaller shrines of the Goddess in her fierce form are found in various places in Kanchi, often in less exposed locations in residential areas and around larger temples where they are considered as guardian goddesses. Most probably, greater significance was attached to Mākāliyamman either because of her attributed powers, the history of the site, or her location in the urban evolution of Kanchi, which, however, are not clear in the Māhātmya.¹⁷⁰ The second form of the ferocious Kālī appears in Ekāmranātha’s myth. The goddess Bhadrakālī / Praḷayamandā (Piraḷaya-kālī Amman; second *prākāra* of the Ēkāmparanātar temple) is a companion of Pārvatī when the latter worships Śiva as sand-*liṅga* in Kāñcī and is asked by Ekāmranātha to stay in front of him (KM(Ś) 45.108–113).¹⁷¹ Her ferocious

169 For a case study with a focus on Kanchipuram, see Ilkama 2012 on the goddess Reṇukā-Māriyamman, a regional goddess commonly known to cure pox and very popular in Tamil Nadu.

170 Jonas Buchholz (pers. comm., January 2022) suspects an early origin of this place of Goddess worship since the street leading up to the temples of Mākāliyamman and Paṇāmaṇīsvarar is named after the goddess—not the Śiva—and called Mahaliamman Koil Street. Naming the street after the temple is frequently found in Kanchi and Emma Stein observes that this system usually applies to ancient sites in the city (2021, 60–61).

171 Bhadrakālī holds up the waters sent by Śiva to test Pārvatī’s devotion to the sand-*liṅga*. From her bowl, the waters are eventually released to form Sarva-tīrtha (Carvatīrttam). The connection of this *tīrtha* at the western end of Kanchi with Ekāmranātha implied by this motif is still reflected today in the ritual

nature, though, is not specifically emphasised, it is rather her name that indicates her character.

As for the gentle type of goddesses who often appear as consorts of a god, there is, on the one hand, Viṣṇu's wife Lakṣmī (Saundaryalakshmi; in the Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa of the Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ temple¹⁷²), who is said to stay south of the door of the cave Kāmakoṭi (Kāmākṣī's site), left of the goddess there (= Kāmākṣī) and together with Viṣṇu (Kaḷva Perumāḷ; KM(Ś) 31.69–130). On the other hand and with a far more central significance, there is Kāmākṣī (Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ) herself. In a multilayered narrative that also introduces six of Viṣṇu's manifestations in Kāñci in the same area (see pp. 130–136), Kāmākṣī is characterised through a description of her abode Kāmakoṭi (KM(Ś) 31.61–104b). While Kāmakoṭi is clearly understood as a sacred place in the KM(Ś), this text passage does not contain a separate myth about the origin of the goddess residing at that place (see also pp. 63–66). This approach stands in contrast to the other episodes on sacred sites of deities in the Māhātmya. Moreover, the description of Kāmakoṭi is composed in a praising style similar to the passages about other significant features related to Ekāmranātha's myth, such as the single mango tree or the Kampā river. Thus, Kāmākṣī is conceptualised differently from other places and additionally closely linked to Ekāmranātha.

The KM(Ś) seems rather vaguely to identify the goddess Pārvatī as the central character in Ekāmranātha's myth with Kāmākṣī (KM(Ś) chs. 39–45). In this context, however, she is not assigned a separate site in Kāñci nor given a specific local name.¹⁷³ The fact that Pārvatī is not explicitly located, could reflect the lack of a separate shrine with a *mūlamūrti*, a stationary

tradition of the Ēkāmparanātar temple when the concluding bath of the annual temple festival is carried out there (Schier 2018, 34, 65; also Seshadri 2003, 144).

172 The Gāyatrīmaṇḍapa is the specific designation of the sanctum sanctorum of the Kāmākṣi Ammaṇ temple (see n. 206). Among Kāmākṣī's accompanying deities therein are two forms of Lakṣmī. One is Arupalakshmi (represented by a mirror; Ute Hüsken, pers. comm., August 2023) and the other is Saundāryalakṣmī. The latter is found next to Viṣṇu called Kaḷva Perumāḷ (also known as Ādivarāha) at a right angle and considered his consort. It is thus clear that the Māhātmya refers to the goddess Saundāryalakṣmī.

173 In fact, presenting a local deity as a representation or manifestation of a pan-Indian deity at a specific place is essentially the basic motif in the Māhātmyas when telling of the origin of a specific deity with a particular local name found at a local place. For example, Ekāmranātha in Kanchi is a local form of Śiva, who reflects certain notions of pan-Indian Hindu mythologies and religious concepts.

image, for Ekāmranātha's consort at the Ēkāmparanātar temple.¹⁷⁴ However, the Māhātmya mentions that Pārvatī stays in Kāñcī after marrying Ekāmranātha, which indicates a place where the residing goddess is understood to be Ekāmranātha's consort (see also pp. 63–66). Given the designation as Ekāmranātha's consort is repeatedly used for Kāmākṣī throughout the Māhātmya, it is this goddess that appears to be identified with Pārvatī in her role as Ekāmranātha's wife. Following this understanding, Kāmākṣī's origin could be considered to be adequately described within Ekāmranātha's myth as a local representation of Pārvatī so that there is no need to revisit the topic in the characterisation of Kāmakoṭi.

Within the spatial layout of the KM(Ś), the arrangement of the sacred sites likely accounts for the separate framing of Kāmākṣī's site in relation to Ekāmranātha's. Since the Kāmākṣī Amman temple is situated around 1 kilometre away from the Ēkāmparanātar temple, the sections on Kāmākṣī and Ekāmranātha are separate from each other and not intertwined either. The spatial separation can again be seen as an allusion to Kāmākṣī's independent character, which is not explicitly questioned in the text despite her subordinate connection to Ekāmranātha. In my view, the seemingly intentional indistinct and unique presentation of Kāmākṣī is again an attempt to follow the general spatial concept of the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*: on the one hand, it acknowledges the famous local goddess of Kanchi and the importance of her place independent of Ekāmranātha; on the other, the goddess is integrated into the text's underlying Śaiva-centric approach, interpreted as a part of the Śaiva tradition in general and linked to Ekāmranātha in particular. Such appropriation of deities is a common element in the often sectarian Māhātmya literature, which serves to accentuate one's own perspective, presumably aiming at interpretive sovereignty.¹⁷⁵

Altogether, the KM(Ś) includes a limited but diverse selection of sites of the Goddess, although no recognisable pattern is evident. Kāmākṣī and her place seem to be treated from an ambiguous perspective, both reflecting the

174 At times, the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali is presented as Ekāmranātha's consort. She has a shrine with only a festival image in the second enclosure of the Ēkāmparanātar temple (see pp. 63–66). In the ritual re-enactment of Ekāmranātha's divine marriage during the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram festival at the Ēkāmparanātar temple—according to textual sources, with Kāmākṣī—the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali represents Ekāmranātha's bride and is associated with Kāmākṣī in different ways (Schier 2018, 175–190, 187). She is then regarded as Ekāmranātha's consort (Schier 2018, 138–152).

175 Further analysis of the different perspectives on Kāmākṣī would be desirable, since the majority of the overlapping passages from the KM(Ś) and the KV also revolve around Kāmākṣī's role (see subsection 3.3.4).

significance of Kāmākṣī with her own Śākta tradition and her identification with Ekāmranātha's consort. Just like Viṣṇus, sites of other non-Śaiva deities, and *tīrthas*, places of the Goddess are linked to *śivaliṅgas* within their sequential arrangement according to the locations of the historical sites in Kanchi's religious landscape. In addition to the relevance of spatial proximity of the non-Śaiva site to the reference site, the linking narrative about the origin of both places determines to which *liṅga* in the close surroundings the story about the non-Śaiva is connected.

4.4 In a Nutshell

In its outline of the sacred geography of Kāñcī, the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* starts from the geo-spatial aspect of the city and its surroundings. It builds on the layout of the religious landscape in the historically grown city with its many temples and refrains from adding a detailed interpretative layer to the geo-religious space of Kanchi. The understanding of Kāñcī as a city of Śiva and Ekāmranātha's site as its centre reflects its basic interpretative perspective. The space defined as the city Kāñcī is the primary frame of reference and nearly all sites mentioned in the text are found within it, indicating an intentional alignment of the dimensions of Kāñcī with the locations of the sites referenced in the *Māhātmya* (see figure 4.2). The *śivaliṅgas* are considered the main sites and this concept is expressed on the structural and narrative level. On the whole, all such components represent the partiality of the *Māhātmya* towards Śiva rather than merely a simple choice of sacred places introduced in the text. The concept of the Pāṭal Perṛa Stalams, though, does not seem to be a factor in the selection of sites in the KM(Ś), although the *Māhātmya* mentions all five places in Kanchi lauded by the Nāyaṅmār (see their names in n. 60). Besides, many places from the text that are located in the larger region with a view to contextualise Kāñcī are counted among those canonised in the *Tēvāram*.

Places of Śiva are used as reference sites to locate other sacred sites in the text in an arrangement that appears to be constructed (almost) as a continuous route through Kanchi where non-Śaiva places are considered as secondary. Due to its orientation towards the geo-spatial conditions of Kanchipuram, the *Māhātmya* arranges the sites along these aspects and forms clusters of *śivaliṅgas* through which the spatial focus is gradually shifted from the southeast to the northwest in Kanchi. The result is a coherent,

consistent descriptive account of Kāñcī that catalogues sacred places while prioritising the geographical dimension over the mythical.

In fact, the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* could well be used as a guide to the shrines and temples of contemporary Kanchi. Most of the sacred sites mentioned in the *Māhātmya* may be identified with historical sites that still exist; they may be found on contemporary maps and on sites where the *Māhātmya* locates them. One reason for the high degree of correspondence of the sacred sites from the text with the existence of historical sites and the geospatiality of the historically grown cityscape may be grounded in the narrative perspective of the text. The KM(Ś) understands the places—as well as the city of Kāñcī—as already in existence and tells of their origin in retrospect. Thus, it clearly references the city's religious landscape at a particular point in history, and places the stories in a mythical past in order to establish the origin of the places in that very past.