

From son to father:
genealogy matters in the Kailaasanaatha of
Kaa~ncipuram (with specific reference to the
Original *Skandapuraa.na*)

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Founded by a Pallava king at the very beginning of the 8th century, the Kailaasanaatha of Kaa~ncipuram is a landmark in the history of iconography and epigraphy in South India. It is there that we encounter some of the first known versions of several forms (*muurti*) of “Siva not only in South India but in the whole subcontinent. This god takes shape on the walls of this temple. The paper will focus on the contribution of “Siva’s son to such a modelling. In the inscriptions of the founder of the Kailaasanaatha, as well as in the representations adorning the Kailaasanaatha itself, Skanda plays a fundamental role. On the one hand we see the invention of the complex image of the Somaskandamuurti, destined to a long life through later centuries; on the other hand we have representations which are unique in the field of Indian iconography, the birth of Skanda and his wedding. Perhaps the “Guha” of the foundation-inscription of the temple could thus be the son defining a “father” (from a *guru* to an ancestor).

The paper is based on a project on Pallava material, undertaken with Emmanuel Francis (University of Louvain-la-Neuve) and Valérie Gillet (EFEO). It intends to suggest a “royal” model to contrast it with Brahmanic ones which controlled, at least in part, the production of epic, puranic and Aagamic texts that can be related to the images of the Kailaasanaatha. This temple has been planned for a king for whom genealogy matters. The iconographic program, as well as the content of the Sanskrit inscriptions of his

founder, was ordered accordingly and it allows for a broader reflection on the relation between Skanda and “Siva. Is there a king without a son? But what about a “Siva without a Skanda? The “Siva of the Kailaasanaatha appears as a teacher, an ancestor, an ascetic and a warrior: in the presentation of all these facets of the god-king, Skanda plays his part. As they provide a new insight for such issues, passages of the Original *Skandapuraa.na* will be among the most important of the textual parallels and echoes considered.