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Coorganised by
Charlotte Schmid (ESEO) & l'atelier thématique
"Regionalism & Cosmopolitanism: South India" (CEIAS)

Padma KAIMAL

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Same, Same, but Different: Present and Past at a Hindu Temple

April 30th 2014 | 02:00 - 04:00 pm

Grand salon de la Maison de l'Asie
22, avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris

One of the many temples that the ancient south Indian city of Kanchi is famous for is clearly much older than the rest, and it looks like it has not changed at all since it was built around the year 700 AD. No one has encircled the exquisitely beautiful Kailasanatha temple complex in the many courtyards, high walls and tall gateways that surround the most famous ancient temples of the south. Its sculptures preserve very early iconographic forms. Its eighth-century inscriptions are written in archaic alphabets.

And yet this monument has been the object of constant renovations, renewals, and transformations. It had to be to survive, but survival also means transformation. You cannot have any monument at all without conservation, but conservation will prevent you from having the same monument. Buildings fall apart without continual maintenance, and worship encourages the faithful to show their love by tending, fixing, and keeping fresh the deity's home.

Padma Kaimal will show some of the changes that have been wrought upon the Kailasanatha temple complex since its construction, some assiduous, some arrogant, some devout, some scientific, some hideous, some lovely, some invisible. When are we looking the ancient in the face? When are we witnessing layers of intervention?



Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram, North-West view, 1900
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