

# CELEBRATION OF PLACE: Processional Rituals and Urban Form

by

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**ABSTRACT**

The celebration of processional rituals of festivity is a significant, dynamic, social and temporal dimension of the static form of the built environment. This study endeavors to understand the means by which meaning was added to the form, space and character of the built environment by these processional rituals.

Processional rituals influence and are influenced by various aspects of the spatial framework. This study analyzes those spatial aspects that play a significant role in the relationship between processional rituals and urban form in general and then examines how these analytical principles work in the three specific case studies examined in the Indian subcontinent. The first case, that of the South Indian temple cities, focuses on the religious processional rituals; the second, Delhi is important for consideration of political and ceremonial processions; and the third case, Bhaktapur has both the religious as well as the political dimension working together.

This thesis shows that processions do have a tremendous impact on urban form and spaces - some of which lose meaning and character without the rituals they were meant to house. Even when the original processional ritual is changed, urban spaces have a determining role in the creation of new rituals.

**Thesis Supervisor: Julian Beinart  
Professor of Architecture**

## **Acknowledgments**

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Pinti.

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**“All our hopes center on the fact that underneath the hectic movement of our civilization there dwells a marvelous power, which arouses itself mightily only at a certain grand moment then sinks back to dream again of the future”**

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are many ways of understanding urban form. My interest is to analyze the form through the medium of processional rituals of festivity. More than an abstract diagram, the built form can be looked at as an ensemble of meanings. One of the ways in which the meaning is reflected is through events. Festive events, though they can be recorded by history, draw heavily on the realm of memory to create a freer, more evocative and non-parametric view of the past. This makes them a fascinating distillation through which to examine the built form. It is evident that, in many cases, the spatial organization and layout were choreographed with the ritual movements.<sup>1</sup> The built form was the static and permanent container of the processional ritual that is the dynamic and temporary event.

All rituals convey certain meanings that relate to the significance of the place wherein they are staged. For instance, the meaning of a place is either recognized or counteracted in the meaning of the ritual. This is especially so when one looks at processional rituals. The meaning of places could be derived from significant events in the urban development, from their social setting or from their architectural features. Ritual serves as a mediator of meaning underlying a larger configuration. This is achieved by linking separate places which are at times made spatially manifest in a ritual tour of all of them.

Today these rituals of festivity become specially important in terms of urban renewal. As E.V. Walter

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<sup>1</sup>Jan Pieper and Neils Gutschow have shown this in their studies of festive rituals in South Indian Cities and Nepal respectively. Neils Gutschow, "Squares of Bhaktapur", in AARP 17, (March 1980). Jan Pieper, "Ritual Movement and Architecture", in AARP 11: Stadt and Ritual, (June 1977).

puts it "we are living through the end of an era, experiencing the demise of modern architecture, a revulsion from 'futurism,' skepticism about planning, and a reaction against the urban renewal programs."<sup>2</sup> Today, many people yearn for renewal with a holistic perspective. It is thus important to understand what renewal meant in the past. Then, one of the ways in which the renewal of a city was encountered was, in terms of an emotional and mental transformation experienced through rituals of festivity.

Rituals, festivities and celebrations have been studied extensively by anthropologists and sociologists, but unfortunately less has been done so by architects and urban designers.

This thesis is divided into three sections; the first one deals with the understanding of terms like ritual, festival, celebration, the manner in which these three are related to one another and the role of time within them. They are important in the shaping of the urban environment and in their influence in the non physical dimension of the urban setting. They also play a significant role in creating the image and identity of a place. The second section investigates processional rituals and the role they play in shaping urban form in different places in the world. The third section examines three case studies in the Indian sub-continent, each of which has a different ritual pattern. The first case, which is the South Indian temple cities, is significant for the religious processional festivals; the second, Delhi is important for the political and ceremonial processions; and the third case, Bhaktapur has both the religious as well as the political dimension

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<sup>2</sup> E.V.Walter , Placeways, (Chapel Hill & London, 1988), p.2.



working together. Here an attempt will be made to apply the spatial parameters reviewed in the general description of the first section.

**A public celebration is a rope of knotted symbols strung across an abyss. We make our crossings hoping the chasm will echo our festive sounds for a moment, as the bridge begins to sway from the rhythms of our dance.**

***Ronald Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies***

## 2. RITUAL

### 2.1 Ritual - a discussion:

The adjective's ritual, ceremonial and customary have often been used interchangeably. Ritual is not just ceremonial or liturgical but is essential to basic human existence and thus a social need.<sup>3</sup> One does not talk of repetitive everyday behavior as ritual, it is more of a habit. Ritual is a socially agreed upon and socially relevant form of behavior, with an extra degree of fervor, passion and intensity. This could be due to its function as a link between the sacred and the profane, since it does address forces or entities that might be termed supernatural or mystical. One could even say that the very act of ritual sanctifies the most prosaic aspects until they achieve a reverential standing. Though a form of communication (as the "ritual as language theorist" would argue) it does to a certain extent portray beliefs and is an expression of them.

Ritual serves to revive and express the memory of a myth associated with an event, person or place. It may take the form of selective remembrance or the recapitulation of an event. Thus it is inextricably linked to memory. Ritual could thus be said to be a formal recreation of collective memory or celebration of collective memory beyond a functional level. If ritual is a means of recreating the myth and it forces people to transcend their shortcomings and indirectly 'exalts' people. Then, anything that surmounts life, even the way tea is served becomes a ritual. This ritual behavior of people is in a sense been employed to manipulate and deal with the 'critical' moments that

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<sup>3</sup>James Shaughnessy in Roots of Ritual, (Grand Rapids, 1973) has referred to ritual as a state in metaphoric terms about the paradoxes of human existence.

require greater elaboration than expected of other occasions, these moments can vary to a great extent depending on the culture and society. Thus, the essence of ritual is to heighten the meaning of the same ritual to a particular critical event of previous experience. This is important to the awareness of the ritual that should be conscious but not overtly conscious. Since ritual is an expression of cultural and social continuity and its expression is in some ways the ability of the people to draw on their own, memories of those around them, the total alteration of a ritual throws the people who participate in it out of gear and go against its very meaning and essence. It is by this very act that a sense of continuity is achieved and which in turn assures a sense of security.

Aldo Rossi makes an interesting relationship between monuments and ritual, both being the 'permanent conserving element of myth' and both thus being linked to the idea of retrieving the memory of the past. The fact that at times monuments are transformed and adapted is what he calls 'permanences.' Both these aspects can be thought of as ways of reviving the memory of the past, one in the static and permanent dimension and the other in the dynamic and temporary dimension.

Whether one considers ritual as a formal recreation of collective memory or the celebration of collective memory beyond a functional level as mentioned earlier, ritual is always directly or indirectly linked with celebration and festivity.

## 2.2 Festival:

The term festival comes from two Latin words; Festum, which means public joy, merriment, revelry and Feria, which means abstinence from work in honor of gods. Both these words were used in the plural, thus one sees the element of play involved in the first one and the feeling of ritual in the second. "Play inverts the social order and leans towards license, ritual confirms social order and is regulated."<sup>4</sup> These two facets are both complementary as well as contrasting and each of them prepares one for the enjoyment of the other. It is the combination of these two that lends the celebration its liveliness and power, and is very important in generating the charged atmosphere. According to Johan Huizinga, the Platonic identification of play and holiness does not defile the latter by calling it play, rather it exalts the concept of play to the highest regions of the spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Festival means a cyclically recurrent social occasion, exhibited through events, in a multitude of forms, involving direct or indirect participation of people at various levels who might have different things in common ranging from religion, community, geographical location, language to world view.

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<sup>4</sup>Frank Manning (ed.), The Celebration of Society, (Bowling Green, 1983), p.7.

<sup>5</sup>J. Huizinga, Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture, (Boston, 1955), p.19.

### 2.3 Morphology of festival events as rites:

The entire festival could be formed of a number of events each of which could be a ritual in itself, thus one festival could be a series of rituals. There are cases as Madurai in India where each of the festivals forms a part of the whole which at the end of the year re-creates the mandala on which the city is based. This shall be explained in the case studies. "A complete festival morphology will correspond to the complete festival cycle and several of its parts will form the configuration of each of the actual festive events."<sup>6</sup> Thus the morphology of festivals must indicate their minimal units and their possible sequences. Van Gennep divides these rituals into three stages-the 'preliminal', which demarcates sacred space-time from mundane space-time, 'liminal', which is central to the ritual process and which forms the heart of the celebration, and thirdly, 'postliminal', which is desacralization of the entire situation. According to him, "it is in liminality that one enters a ritual time and space that are betwixt and between those ordered by the categories of the past and future mundane social existence."<sup>7</sup>

Since the total gamut of festive celebrations is so wide and varied, many scholars have tried to classify them topologically relying mainly on the sacred/secular dichotomy discussed first by Durkheim. It is extremely arduous, however, to draw this distinction since one normally finds an overlapping of the two. Falassi has also referred to a similar idea in his book, 'Time Out of Time'. According to him religious

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<sup>6</sup>Alessandro Falassi (ed.), Time out of Time, (Albuquerque, 1987), p.6.

<sup>7</sup>Victor Turner (ed.), Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual, (Washington DC., 1982), p.202.

festivals have evident secular implications, and secular ones invariably resort to metaphysics to gain solemnity and sanction for their events or for their sponsors.

Festivals played a significant role in ancient and medieval times. The festival could be termed as one of the highest expressions of culture and mode of collective enjoyment, participation and assertion of solidarity. At epochs of great restructuring of society, like the French Revolution, we see that festivals resume their social and aesthetic function. According to Alessandro Falassi in the present day world too "the primary and most general function of the festival is to renounce and then announce culture, to renew periodically the life stream of a community by creating new energy, and to give sanction to its institutions, the symbolic means to achieve it is to represent the primordial chaos before creation, or a historical disorder before the establishment of the culture, society, or regime where the festival happens to take place."<sup>8</sup>

It is important to understand festive rituals in terms of the workings of memory. Rossi talks of these workings primarily in two modes, that of actualization and of interpretation, which in his view depend on time, culture and circumstances. On analyzing the role of festive rituals, one realizes that these events are a combination of all the three above stated factors within which one can discover the maximum reality. The role of festive rituals is an important aspect of the union between the past and the present recurring within the urban context. This constitutes an

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<sup>8</sup>Falassi , Time Out of Time. p.3.

important facet of the union between the past and the future that exists in the very idea of the city comparing it to the flow of memory in the life of a person.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, (Cambridge, 1982), p.131.



## 2.4 Celebration:

Celebration is a combination of play and ritual. There is not a subject and object in the celebration, it is an entire totality and one cannot detach the participant from the event they participate in. The manifestation of these festive rituals is in their celebration wherein the spatial context is equally important as the temporal nature of the festive ritual, this shows the unique relationship of the memory of the place and the event.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the act of celebration is recurring, collective, publicly exhibited, that it uses the public environment to be enacted, and reinforces the collective consciousness of the place and the people, makes it an important aspect of the collective memory and the built form.

Celebrations could be referred to as connected with predictable, culturally shared events, such as life experiences, work seasons, religious beliefs, etc.<sup>11</sup> But there is an important distinction between rites of passage and seasonal/calendrical festivals, "since life-crisis rituals emerge in situations of already heightened emotion and energy, the task of ritual is to 'provide an organizing set of principles, traditional ways of binding for the moment the opposing forces within the community and tying together the past with

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<sup>10</sup>According to Victor Turner to celebrate is to perform ritual publicly and formally....rituals celebrate or commemorate transhuman powers which, though invisible, are regarded by believers as the first and final causes of natural and cultural phenomena.

<sup>11</sup>Manning in *The Celebration of Society*, describes celebration as, "in its interpretive role, celebration is a distinctive part of the cultural repertory through which a people gain perspective on their situation. Celebration is fun, but it is also a performative statement, or "metastatement" about the social order. In its instrumental role, celebration is an important, often crucial, means through which people proclaim their identity and fashion their sense of purpose. These two roles tend to be particularly significant in contemporary societies and among those whose lives have been substantially affected by the complex and contradictory forces of modernization." p.x (Prelude).

the present.' Festive celebrations have, on the contrary, to generate their own energies. They often begin, literally, 'with a bang' using pyrotechnic and percussive means."<sup>12</sup> What I would be concentrating on would thus be festivals that are religious, political or both and not individual life events though they may be celebrated in a communal manner.

The frame, stage or space for the celebration to occur is of extreme importance since it is that which dictates the general ambiance and many other qualities, visual as well as experiential aspect of the ritual. No frame is devoid of meaning, a space is made sacred, upon it a shrine is built, on or near that an event is held. Different types of frames also involve different emotional moods and 'atmospheres'. At times the experience of a place, and the very identity of a place is based on the rituals enacted there. Rossi gives an interesting dimension to the understanding of ritual in relation to the city. He calls ritual one of the modes of expression of the collective memory and thus becomes of extreme importance in understanding the implications of the founding of the city and of transmission of ideas in the urban context. Ritual, like poetry, may even take ordinary things and through metaphor heighten their meaning above the mundane.

The most prosaic of urban spaces can be totally transformed to an unrecognizable degree during a ritual. In this case the place definitely exists first. But there are many instances when one sees that important cities were planned taking into consideration the ceremonial/ ritualistic event.

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<sup>12</sup>Turner (ed.), *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, p.27.

If one thinks of interpretation of memory as one of the most challenging tasks then festive rituals are a significant and successful way of dealing with it.

## **2.5 Role of time:**

Celebration of place is very closely bound to the celebration of time. Since ancient days the passage of time has been celebrated through festive rituals. Throughout the world rituals have celebrated time in different ways: in terms of time of day, time of season, time of phasing of the moon, time of human events and so on. Kevin Lynch expresses this very well, he says that people “look for social image of time which enlarges, celebrates, and vivifies the present, while increasing its significant connections with the past and especially with the future.”<sup>13</sup> A celebration that is well oriented in time will also include a deeper emotional sense of how the present moment is linked to the near or distant past and future. Environmental forms & sequences, natural processes, activity rhythms, signs, and most of all celebrations and rituals are very useful in anchoring and extending our temporal orientation.

### The aspect of transition as shown in festive time:

A great deal has been written about time in terms of experiential aspects as well as of the dimensional aspect of time. What is of importance is the link between experiential time and place that gives the event its special character. The festive rituals denoting the transitions in nature and the passage of seasons, be it harvesting or planting, new year or equinox, demonstrate the imperative transitoriness of the festive phenomena. This also reveals that their very spirit and power is achieved by the passage of time. According to Van Gennep, rituals “accompany transitions from one situation to another and from one

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<sup>13</sup>Kevin Lynch , What Time is this Place?, (Cambridge, 1972), p.134.

cosmic or social world to another.”<sup>14</sup> This transition from the day to day mundane world to the unique ephemeral world of the festive occasion in itself demonstrates the distinctive time. Every transition brings its own set of memories of what it transits from, and they play an important role in the rituals that accompany celebrations. Falassi phrases this extremely well in the title of his book on the essays in festivity- he calls it “Time out of Time”.

A festive ritual is a cyclically recurrent social occasion. Thus, the very act of recapitulation of an event shows in itself the passage of time and exhibits the notion of ‘past’ and ‘present’. Ritual is also an expression of cultural and social continuity. “Practically all rituals of any length and complexity represent a passage from one position, constellation, or domain of structure to another. In this regard they may be said to possess ‘temporal structure’ and to be dominated by the notion of time.”<sup>15</sup>

Festive rituals were linked to the notion of time in the pre-industrial age. They could even be thought of as markers of time. Unlike the single directional modern day experience the notion of time in traditional ritual was cyclical. In this, ritual recognized the recurrent phases of nature. Modern ritual adds the further dimension that it is basically progressive. With its preoccupation with the future, modernity adds to the cyclical and onward going impetus.

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<sup>14</sup>Turner(ed.), Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual, p.202.

<sup>15</sup>Victor Turner , Dramas, Fields and Metaphors, (Ithaca, 1974), p.238.

### Festive time as 'Time Out of Time':

It is necessary to reiterate the question of what is festive time and how is it different from ordinary time, since there is a definite difference in the two. One realizes that the essential difference is in the experiential aspect, that is, in the minds of the people celebrating and participating in the event. It is finally the way they experience the ritual that makes it special and to be looked at in a different light. Thus the comprehension and the perception of the participants are what makes the event "time out of time". Kevin Lynch describes it as a time when one feels alive in the fullest sense, separated by background periods of imprecise duration and slower tempo.

Festive time is definitely distinct from everyday time and is hence qualitatively different. It is for this reason that it permits social action that would be inconceivable beyond the boundaries of the festival. This crucial difference between ordinary, mundane time and festive time grounds the essence of the festive ritual. It is due to this alternation and distinction that intermittence in social life is established and social time created.

It is interesting to understand the calendrical notions in relation to concept of festive time in different cultures. Clifford Geertz has demonstrated how in Balinese society the cultural machinery for demarcating temporal units reflects this. According to him, they are generally used not to gauge the lapse of time or to emphasize the uniqueness and irreversibility of the ephemeral moment, but to distinguish and order the qualitative modalities that are manifested in the human experience by means of time. "The Balinese calendar cuts time up into

bounded units not in order to count and total them but to describe and characterize them, to formulate their differential social, intellectual and religious significance.”<sup>16</sup> These types of calendrical notions are also found in different parts of the world, they don't tell you what time it is; they tell you what kind of time it is.

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<sup>16</sup>Clifford Geertz , The Interpretation of Cultures, (New York, 1973), p.391.

.....shall I attempt to describe Zaira, city of high bastions. I could tell you how many steps make up the streets.....The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past.....the festoons that decorate the course of the queen's nuptial procession....As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past.

*Invisible Cities*  
*Italo Calvino*



### 3. PROCESSIONS

#### 3.1 Processional Rituals of Festivity:

The intention in this thesis is to look at the rituals of festivity through the physical aspects(frames) of the place where they occur in order to understand their relationship to the urban forms. Processional festivals seem to be best suited for this purpose since they involve most the collective and participatory aspects of movement. The procession circulates through the settlement rather than certain festivals that involve just the notion of gathering at one place. The festivals that involve gathering emphasize one particular location whereas to the processional festivals that involve the entire settlement as well as significant places within them. In the latter case, the whole is important.

Scholars have tried to distinguish between parades, corteges, and processions,<sup>17</sup> but for the purpose of this study I am considering all the activities that are processional in nature. All of them, be they religious, political, civil or military, fall within the realm of processional rituals of festivity celebrated in the built environment. Each of them constitutes a part of ritual in general and an aspect of rite in particular.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>For more details refer Louis Marin, "Notes on a Semiotic Approach to Parade, Cortege, and Procession" in Falassi Alessandro(ed.), Time out of Time, (Albuquerque, 1987), p.222.

<sup>18</sup>Marin, "Notes on a Semiotic Approach to Parade, Cortege, and Procession", p.222.

According to him, "*Cortege, parade, and procession* contain the repetitive structure characteristic of ritual systems, whether the system be syntagmatic or paradigmatic. In other words, the rite in question may correspond to the calendar time, such as, for example, the Corpus Christi procession which takes place in the Catholic world on the Sunday following Trinity Sunday, at the end of May or in early June, the military parade on July 14 in France, or the Fourth of July celebration in the United States. In the second, paradigmatic situation, the rite corresponds to a series of occasional circumstances and is performed according to a determined paradigm. Examples of this type includes processions in fields to prevent drought and the ceremony of the royal entry into a Western European city as practiced from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries."

The idea of pilgrimage and procession is comparable in many respects, both involve a journey from one spot to another with great significance attached to the termination of the journey, in fact in Nepal the word for festival, 'Jatra' finds its root in the Sanskrit texts that is also used for pilgrimage. This term, 'Jatra' describes the route that the pilgrim or the devotee follows during procession or place of worship. For pilgrimage it refers more to the journey involved. Thus, the word itself suggests the dynamic nature of the act. It also shows the importance of the journey to reach the goal.

The relationship between festival and pilgrimage is exhibited in the form of procession within the urban environment. A pilgrimage at a regional level becomes a procession at an urban level the difference being that the former could be an individual occurrence while the latter has to be a collective participatory event. It is interesting to note the movement within the city of Rome being developed following the pilgrims path, this was the overriding idea of street building.



*3.1.1 An engraving by Antoine Lafréry in 1575 shows the ancient walls of Rome and the seven churches which were the object of the pilgrimage.*

The procession in itself is formed or takes shape due to the coming together of individuals, thus there can in fact be no procession without collective participation since the group in itself is a type of body moving through a particular space with particular orientation and in certain order. Due to this fact all processions can be perceived as a group of proceedings that, while manipulating space, engender space specific to each stage according to determined rules and norms. These put a constraint on the processions while enhancing their temporal value as experiences.

The notion of processional movement is significant since, in spatial and formal perception, it enhances our awareness of the external extensions and manifestations of meaning. It combines both the passages of time through movement and the transitoriness of the successive experiences of spatial forms due to it. One of the most significant dimensions of a procession lies in its repetition, which revives a story in a certain way, not so much by telling it but by reliving it. It re-establishes the past, legitimizing it by recapitulating it. It thus becomes an apparatus in the art of memory.<sup>19</sup>

A procession arranged in chronological time is structured according to its own particular temporality. Through this structuring, a specific time period is required for the processions that both interrupts and establishes chronological time. Processions produce time and space of a special symbolic quality. There is an internal logic that governs parts within the processional movement. Since the perambulatory event chooses a series of locations and a particular route touching them, it creates “spaces” and organizes them into “places”.

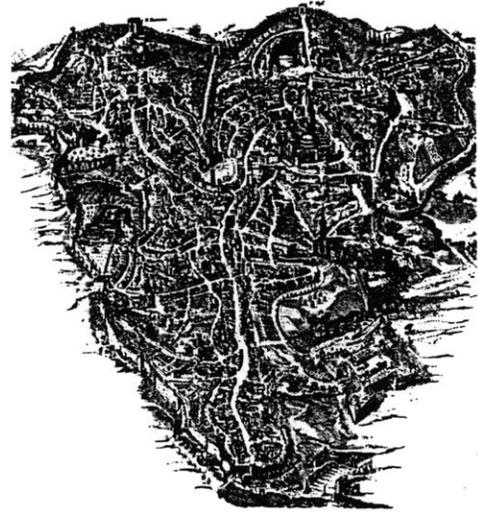
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<sup>19</sup>F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, (London, 1966).

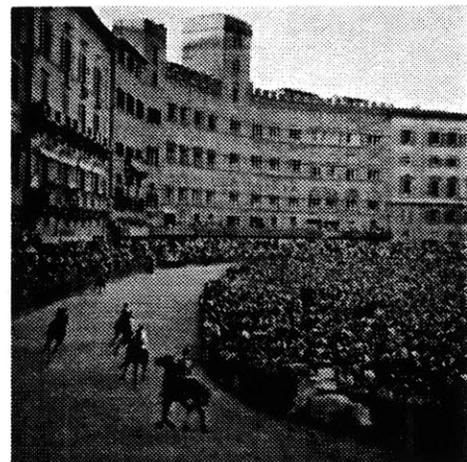
### 3.2 Spatial Manifestation of Processions:

Processional rituals of festivity are specially important to the form of many settlements since they often shape the physical environment and give a particular movement and gathering pattern to the urban context, adding character to its streets and squares, as in the case of Siena in Italy where the Palio festival is held every year. They can link various focal points of importance, whether religious or political, for example, the Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem. In the latter case the route was important since it was believed to have been taken by Christ, and different events on the way were marked by formal structures. Processional rituals can set limits to the city, like those in ancient Rome, where the runners would go around the boundary. They can determine the zones of hierarchy, for example, as in the case of some of the ancient Chinese festivals where the social hierarchy was reflected in the gates through which each group passed. They can link various parts of the city, making of them into a coherent entity at a particular time during the festival. This aspect is apparent if one looks again at the Palio in Siena; the positioning of the Campo where the races are held does not fall in any of the three regions of the town but unifies them. In doing so it brings together all the 17 *contrade* wards that compete. In the early days, the race was run right through the entire town,<sup>20</sup> thus physically linking various parts of the city. For the last four centuries, however it has been held at the Campo. But even today, prior to the actual race, from the end of June, men from different *contrade* go around each others' wards with the drummer and the banner

<sup>20</sup>Titus Burckhardt mentions this in his book on *Siena: The City of the Virgin*. (London, 1960), p.120.



3.2.1 *Bird's-eye view of Siena showing the location of Campo unifying the town. Engraving after a painting by Rutilio Manetti, beginning of the 18th century.*

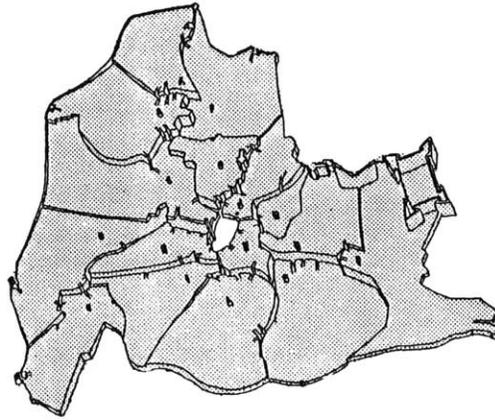


3.2.2 *The Palio Race on the Campo.*

men displaying acrobatics with the flags.<sup>21</sup> Thus the idea of unifying the town symbolically begins much earlier than the actual Palio event itself.



**3.2.3** *Banner men or comparsa as they are called displaying the contrade flags.*



**3.2.4** *The contrade divisions in relation to the Campo*



**3.2.5** *View of the Campo during the Palio horse-race and the procession of the comparsa on the 2nd July 1717. From a contemporary engraving printed by Domenico Rossi in Rome. City Museum, Town Hall, Siena.*

Following Choisy and Le Corbusier, Fritz Schumacher has referred to the importance of movement in architecture for the aesthetic evaluation of space. According to these ideas the experience of architecture

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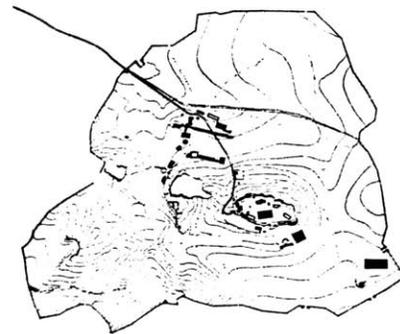
<sup>21</sup>Aldous Huxley mentions this in the numerous articles written about the Palio.

is emphasized by bodily movement. We will see how, in the Indian context the correspondence between architecture and movement is reflected and manifested explicitly in the processional rituals of festivity.

One of the most splendid examples of processional rituals of festivity affecting the built environment is the Panathenaic festival in ancient Greece, Herbert Parke in his book 'Festivals of the Athenians' calls the procession "one kind of public ceremony which was particularly frequent and important in Greek ritual."<sup>22</sup> According to him the Greek word for procession, 'pompe', meant 'a sending', and sending an offering to the deity was the most important factor in the procession. The procession was always along a traditional route with specific rituals performed on the way. Thus the importance of a prescribed route and ritual halts at specific spots as shrines are significant to note here. It occurred every year and in an extremely glorious manner every four years as a major civic event. According to Edmund Bacon the degree to which this procession was important in the collective consciousness of Athens is shown by the end of the Oresteian Trilogy of Aeschylus.<sup>23</sup> Here both actors and audience created the last scene, moving together out of the Theater and down the city of Athens along the Panathenaic Way to form a procession. There was a precisely marked route from the Dipylon Gate of the city up to the slope of the acropolis to the statue of the goddess Athena. If one analyzes the development of Athens the influence of the Panathenaic processional way is obvious. The



600-479 B.C.

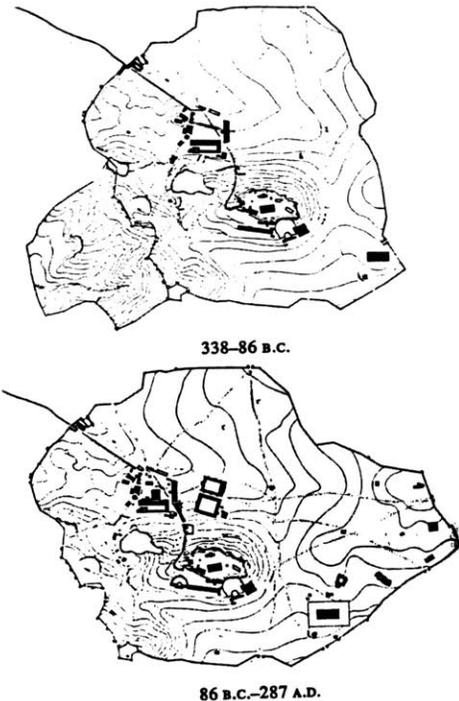


478-339 B.C.

**3.2.6-7 Maps showing the development of the major buildings along the Panathenaic Way in Athens.**

<sup>22</sup>H.W.Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, (Ithaca & London, 1977), p.22.

<sup>23</sup>Edmund Bacon, Design of Cities, (New York, 1967), p.51.



**3.2.8-9** *Development of the Agora buildings along the festival route in Athens.*

development of the Agora and the buildings within it and of those along the way could all be explained as enhancing the celebration of events during the Panathenaic Festival. All the additions in various periods served to mark events within this sequence of movement. The importance of processions in the public worship of the Athenians is well illustrated by the fact that they erected a special building in connection with these events. Called the Pompeion (Procession Building), it occupied the space between the Sacred Gate and the Dipylon Gate in the Kerameikos. This was the traditional starting point for the great processions such as those of the *Panathenaia* heading inwards to the Acropolis or of the Mysteries heading outwards to Eleusis.

Similar characteristics may be observed in the relationship of baroque Roman processional festivals to the urban spaces. Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's descriptions of the carnival in Rome during 1787-88 are interesting to read in this regard. He presented the carnival as the modern derivation of the pre-Christian pagan Saturnalia. For him the Roman carnival was a festival that was not given to the people, but which people gave themselves. He describes the manner in which preparations are made for the celebration, in the decoration of public spaces and streets, and in the dressing up of the people. His description goes as follows;

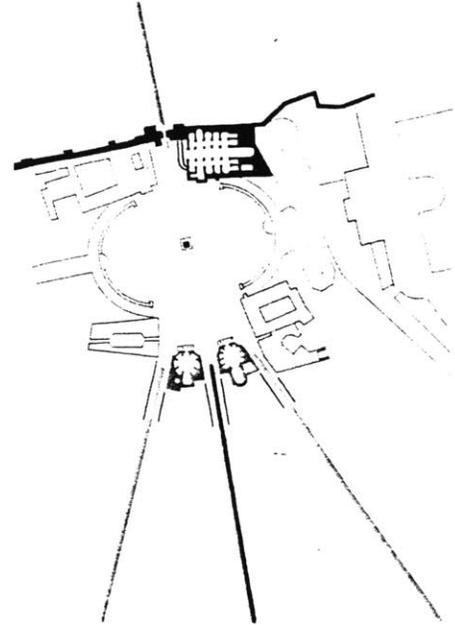
*"The Roman carnival collects in the Corso. This street limits and determines the public celebration of these days. Anywhere else would be a different sort of festival.....Like several long streets of Italian towns, it derives its name from the horse races which conclude the entertainment of each Carnival evening, and with which too, in other places, other festivals, such as that of the patron saint or the consecration of a church, are ended. The street runs in a straight line from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia; about three thousand five hundred paces long and enclosed by high, mostly splendid buildings. Its breadth is not proportionate to its length, nor to the height of its edifices... The obelisk on the Piazza del Popolo is, during the*

*Carnival the extreme limit of this street at the lower end, the Venetian Palace at the upper...<sup>24</sup>*

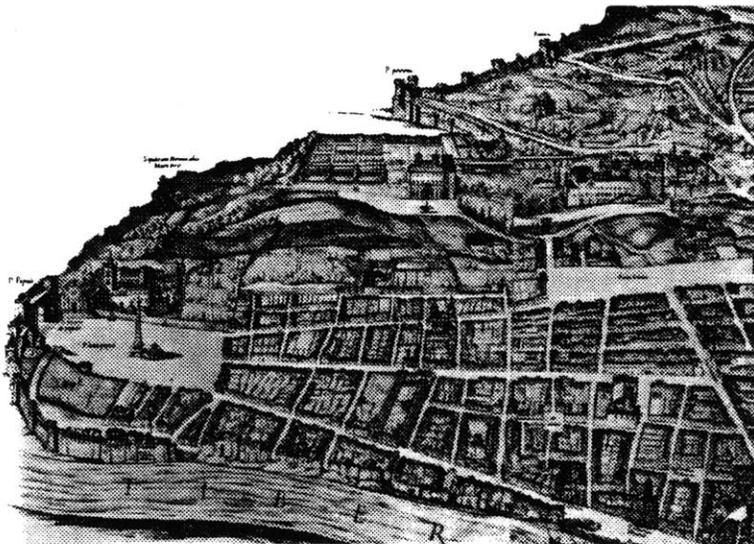
If analyzed from a spatial point of view this description shows the significance of the Corso, the prescribed route of the festival, the importance of the termination spaces, the presence of squares and other elements like the obelisks marking the processional route. All these physical forms are an important dimension to the experience of the festival and are all apparent in the description.

The Indian subcontinent too, since ancient times, has had its own share of processional rituals of festivity some of which have continued to this day. In the second section some of these cases will be looked at in greater detail.

Processional rituals of festivity thus involve movement in space and time. They could also celebrate a particular temporal dimension (seasonal or yearly).



3.2.10 *Plan of Piazza del Popolo in Rome showing the Corso with the termination spaces and obelisk points.*



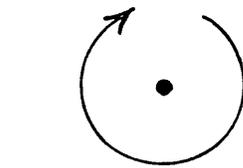
3.2.11 *Aerial view of Piazza del Popolo and the setting for the Carnival at Rome.*

<sup>24</sup>Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, "The Roman Carnival" in Falassi Alessandro(ed.), *Time out of Time*, (Albuquerque, 1987), p.15-16.

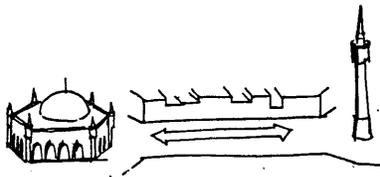


Analytical Principles:

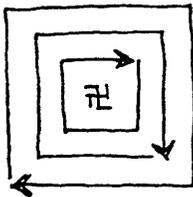
In looking at various processional festive rituals in the world from ancient times, certain factors regarding their relationship to urban form could be understood in spatial terms;



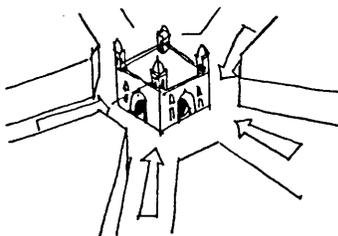
1a.



1b.



1c.



2.



3.

1. The circulation route is prescribed

- a) circumambulatory---due to the presence of a significant point or area
- b) axial---due to the presence of two or more focal points
- c) based on a fixed diagram which could be cosmic in origin.

One could even think of these as:

(a) the closed circuit, whose movement encloses and excludes, that tends to eliminate the special value of beginning and ending points; (b) the one-way route that signifies irreversibility and focuses on a cathartic final point; (c) the round trip that attaches special meaning to "pendular" reversibility and stresses the turning point, which is an end and a beginning at the same time.<sup>25</sup>

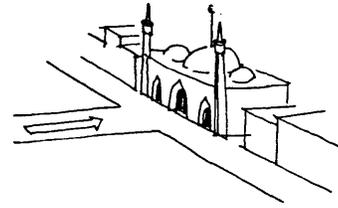
2. The presence of a center forming a reference to the circulation route. This need not be a geometrical center and could be in the form of a focal point.

3. The circulation route is marked by particular elements of form giving rise to sequential ritual movement as well as gathering places. These could be due to locations of significance that are exalted, by the

<sup>25</sup>Marin, "Notes on a Semiotic Approach to Parade, Cortège, and Procession", p.224.

introduction of shrines, water bodies, gateways, triumphal arches, statues, etc.

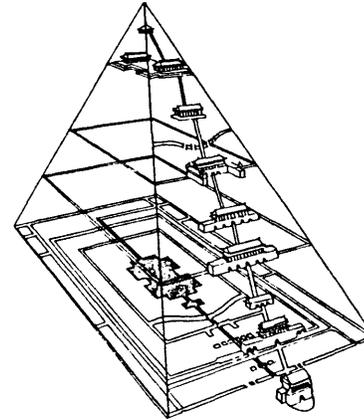
4. The circulation route is terminated in a significant location that may or may not have a provision for gathering.



4.

5. The circulation route is organized according to a hierarchical system. Here the spatial system might follow the social setup or reverse it during special festivals.

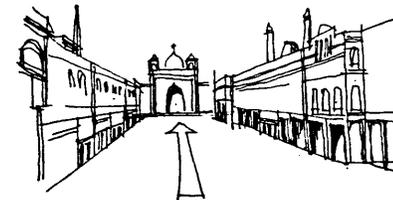
- hierarchy in terms of zones
- hierarchy in terms of movement



5.

6. The circulation route is framed

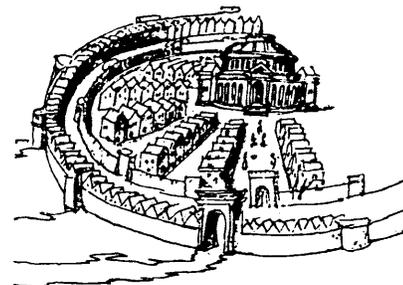
7. The circulation route sets limits to the city. This not always necessarily so, but rather reminds one of the historical boundaries.



6.

### 1. The prescribed route of circulation:

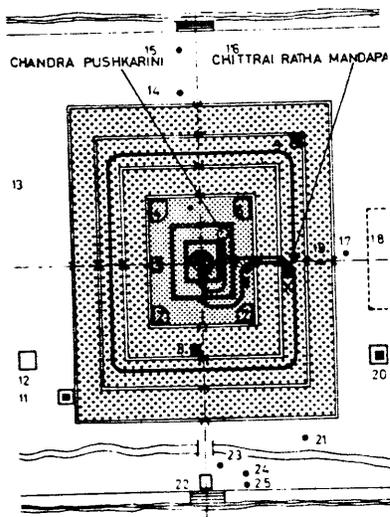
The prescribed circulation route is probably the most important factor in the ritual use of space within an urban form. It is extremely significant as a way of reviving the memory of an event, and in doing so encapsulates part of the essence of the ritual. There could always be spontaneous processional route, but in order for it to be used ritually it becomes prescribed. The processional route always refers to some spatial entity. It also often refers to the power structure. At times the dominant processional route also commemorated the founding of the city. Annual festivals took place along the route, and the foundation was permanently commemorated in monuments whose presence anchored the ritual to the soil and to the



7.

3.2.12 (1-7) Analytical Principles

physical shape of streets and buildings. This idea is exhibited historically in Greek and Roman rituals too, and is most ubiquitous in the Indian sub-continent. The prescribed circulation routes served to revive the myths related to the ritual event commemorating the foundation. Herbert Parke in his book 'Festivals of the Athenians' shows how in the ancient times there would be seasonal ceremonial processions on the Acropolis having a prescribed traditional route and pauses along it at 'meaningful locations' to perform specific rituals.<sup>26</sup> Such a prescribed route and designated places for pausing were important devices recalling to the minds of the people the mythology and the history of the city. Joseph Rykwert has also referred to the same idea in the Roman cities. The prescribed route of circulation could be circumambulatory, axial, following a magical diagram or having no apparent setting.



3.2.13 Circumambulatory route on the day of the 'Chittrai' car festival in the South Indian temple city of Srirangam.

a) The circumambulatory or closed circuit route:

The processional movement in a circular or closed circuit route encloses space by creating an imaginary limit, this could be real or ideal which in a way protects the enclosed space symbolically or makes it sacred in relation to the outside one that is considered profane. This type of processional route is apparent in the South Indian temple cities that shall be discussed in depth in the second section.

This type of route can also "lock - up" the enemy, symbolically forbidding any escape. Such was the parade of the ancient Hebrews around the walls of Jericho. Their march can be understood as an effort to

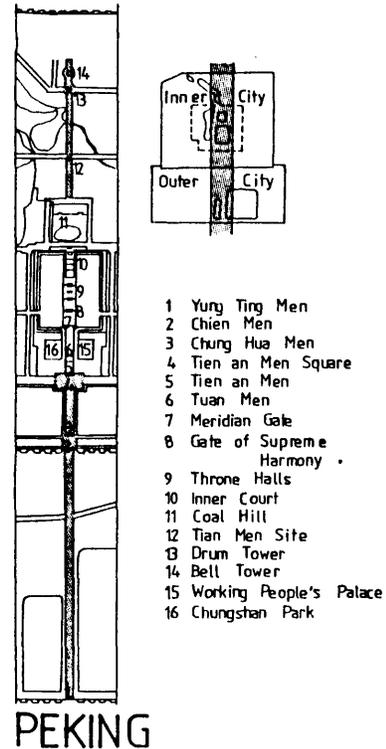
<sup>26</sup>Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*, p.22.

substitute for “real” walls a symbolic encirclement that became conquest and destruction.

b) An axial or one-way route:

In many instances the axial route has been used to connect two focal points of equal significance as seen in the case of Delhi which shall be examined in the second section. The idea of centrality is important in the concept of the focus - even if it is not exactly at the center. In most cities that are of political significance, centrality has been used in combination with an axial relationship with the focus. Centrality was also used in imperial and royal manifestations, as in China, but the ritual movement was never circumambulatory. The use of circumambulatory ritual movement is generally restricted to religious centrality.

Routes can take on - and convey - the political connotation of the events of the procession, as in the political demonstration routes in Paris, Louis Marin has given examples of left-wing, right-wing, and “erratic” routes in Paris, showing how the names of places chosen for inclusion in the route recount their own different stories about political ideologies. “In recent years, most political demonstrations by the Left, starting from the Place de la Nation and going to Place de la République, used the streets of Faubourg St. Antoine and Boulevard Beaumarchais via the Place de la Bastille, whereas the few demonstrations of the Right took place between the Tuileries and the Place de l’Etoile using the Champs Elysées. Onto the order of places is superimposed an order of names, and the naming is rarely arbitrary. Sometimes the place transfers its history to the name as in, for example, the street of Faubourg St. Antoine whose name is semantically charged by the revolutionary and



The North-South Axis

- 1 Yung Ting Men
- 2 Chien Men
- 3 Chung Hua Men
- 4 Tien an Men Square
- 5 Tien an Men
- 6 Tuan Men
- 7 Meridian Gate
- 8 Gate of Supreme Harmony
- 9 Throne Halls
- 10 Inner Court
- 11 Coal Hill
- 12 Tian Men Site
- 13 Drum Tower
- 14 Bell Tower
- 15 Working People's Palace
- 16 Chungshan Park

3.2.14 Axial relationship to the center in Peking.

controversial activity that has taken place there since the sixteenth century. Sometimes the place is named for its history as in the case of the Place de la Bastille, where the prison fortress of the Bastille was built during the fourteenth century and later burned by the Parisians on July 14, 1789. Still other names are semantically charged by their names, such as the Place de la Nation or Place de la République.”<sup>27</sup>

The one-way direction assumed by most processions signifies irreversibility of movement. In political processions the end point might represent a symbolic victory over ideas or persons defied by the march.

c) A round trip or route based on a fixed diagram:

A round trip emphasizes a reversible movement. In arrival and departure, the turning point or location is heavily invested with significance, since it is both the end and the beginning, the origin of “retrogradation”. This duality helps to free a round trip from chronological forms of temporality and from the succession of events, allowing it to become a “presentation of places” through repetition. Similarly the point of departure is locally identical to the arrival point, but is not identical spatially, or in terms of the space created by the route. Since it occurs after the departure, a march “legitimizes” the point by reaching it again at the end.

In terms of routes based on fixed diagrams it is the symbolic significance of the diagram that lends special importance to the processional route. In places like India this is very much the case in the temple cities laid out on the mandala pattern. These shall be

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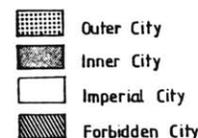
<sup>27</sup>Marin, “Notes on a Semiotic Approach to Parade, Cortege, and Procession”, p.225.

analyzed in depth in the second section. All settlements based on a cosmic pattern exhibit this aspect since the fixed form involves specific ritual routes. This theme is apparent in Chinese cities likewise.

## 2. The presence of a center:

The very idea of the center has been explored by several scholars who have held different point of views, any one of which could be probable. According to Yi Fu Tuan it is the tendency to perceive the world with "self" as the center, whether individually or collectively.<sup>28</sup> The qualities of egocentrism and ethnocentrism are manifested in spatial terms through the idea of centrality.

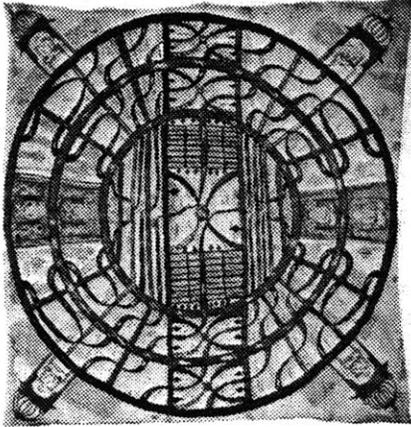
The concept of the *axis mundi* is apparent in different cultures. In China it was taken to be the seat of secular authority. In *Chou-Li*, the book of rites in ancient China, it is explained how the official calculated the precise position of the *axis-mundi*, which is there characterized as "the place where earth and sky meet, where the four seasons merge, where wind and rain gathered in, and where *ying* and *yang* are in harmony."<sup>29</sup> There are numerous parallels to this



3.2.15 *The idea of centrality as exhibited in the Chinese capital of Peking.*

<sup>28</sup>Yi- Fu Tuan in *Topophilia*, (New Jersey, 1990), p.30, refers to the concept of egocentrism and ethnocentrism in the following manner- "Egocentrism and ethnocentrism appear to be universal human traits, though their strengths vary widely among individuals and social groups. Although egocentrism is a strong bias of human nature, it can be fully achieved only on rare occasions. this is because a person is clearly dependent on others for biological survival and for psychological comfort; and also because the self is directionally biased: what lies 'ahead' is not equivalent to what lies 'behind'. Egocentrism is a fantasy that manages to survive the challenges of daily experience. By contrast, ethnocentrism (collective egocentrism) can be fully realized. Unlike the individual, a group can be self-sufficient; at least delusions of self-sufficiency are easier to sustain."

<sup>29</sup>*Chou-Li*, chüan 3, f.14, verso referred by Paul Wheatley, *Pivot of the Four Quarters*, (Edinburgh, 1971).



3.2.16 *The idea of centrality as represented in 17th. century diagram from West India. The expanding world is centered on the axis of Mt. Meru.*

belief in various parts of the world,<sup>30</sup> the Greek belief that the omphalos of the world was in Delphi, in Hindu mythology this was replaced by mount Meru, for Islam it was the Ka`ba in Mecca, while for the Jews it was Jerusalem. Refer to section 2.1 for the symbolism associated to the center in South Indian temple cities.

During ancient and medieval times the center was occupied either by a castle/palace (that could be thought of as the administrative center), a market place (that can be called the “commercial crossroads” function), or a temple (i.e., a place for collective religious rituals). According to Jean Gottmann, if the settlement was to grow to urban size, the central place needed to combine at least two and often all three components concerned with the symbolism of centrality. Thus collective rites appear essential to the genesis of most towns.

The notion of centrality plays an important role in that it gives rise to the idea of circumambulation around the center. This is true of all the South Indian Temple cities which shall be dealt with in the second section.

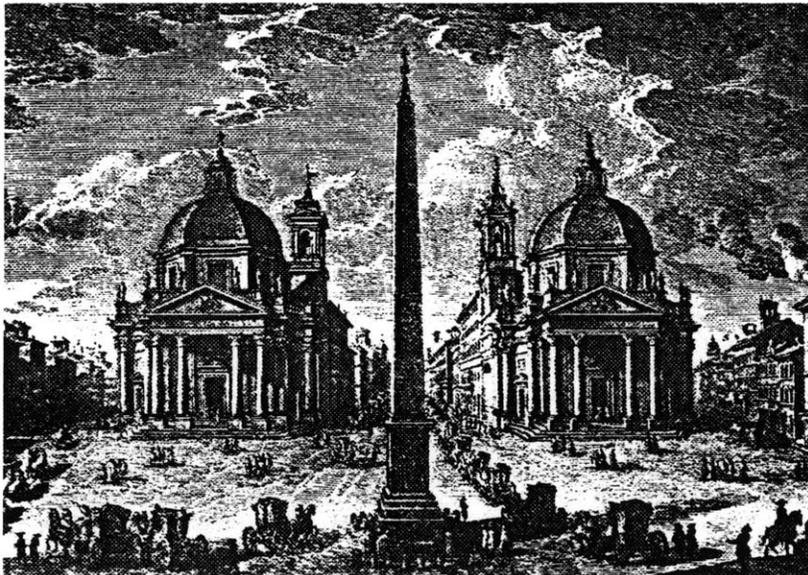
<sup>30</sup>Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters*. (Edinburgh, 1971), p.428. “The Icelandic pilgrim Nicholas of Thverva, for example, in the 12th century reported that at Jerusalem (which was built on the rock that constituted the navel of the earth) ‘on the day of the summer solstice the light of the sun falls perpendicularly from Heaven’. Peter Comestor preserved an analogous tradition that the sun at summer solstice cast no shadow on Jacob’s Fountain, near Gerizim, as a result of which, ‘sunt qui dicunt locum illum esse umbilicum terrae nostrae habitabilis.’ We may note in passing that the Pole Star is also situated directly above Meru, the sacred mountain that constitutes the axis mundi of Indian mythology, as indeed it surmounts Sumbu, the holy axial mountain of the Uralo-Altaic peoples, the Haraberezaiti(Elburz), sacred to Iranians. A similar conception that first took form among the Western Semites in very ancient days was eventually absorbed into the traditions of Islam, for we find at al-Kisai of Kufah, early in the 9th century, arguing that the Kabah constituted the culmination of terrestrial topography because, being below the Pole Star, it was consequently ‘over against the center of Heaven’. In this instance the concept of the omphalos had become fused with the idea that the axis of the world was the point where earth most nearly approached Heaven, a belief which found expression in the Muslim tradition that prayer was likely to be more efficacious, because more easily heard, at Mecca, the center of the universe.”

### 3. Formal elements on the circulation route:

The circulation route is marked by particular elements of form that give rise to sequential ritual movement. What these elements are can vary from culture to culture and depends on the kind of ritual being celebrated. One finds triumphal arches, temples and shrines in Roman cities marking the processional ways. There have been many descriptions of triumphal arches being constructed to mark the processional routes, for example in Bologna, the triumphal entry of Pope Julius II after his defeat of the Bentivoglio faction and the recovery of the city for the Papal states was marked by thirteen triumphal arches along the route.<sup>31</sup> Similarly during the carnival in the 18th century it was the obelisk on the Piazza del Popolo that marked the extreme limit of the route along the Corso at the lower end, while the Venetian Palace marked it at the upper end.



3.2.17 A remarkable engraving published in Rome in 1612 and based on the one made by Lafréry shows the significance of the formal elements and buildings along the processional pilgrimage route.



3.2.18 Copper engraving of the Piazza del Popolo with the central obelisk by Giuseppe Vasi.

<sup>31</sup>Bonner Mitchell , Italian civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance, (Florence, 1979), p.15.



In southern Indian cities the markers could be temples or water tanks. At times, the processions use the existing built structure and accommodate themselves to it. At others, they modify it to suit their special nature. But there are many cases where a specific order of places is created, that both determine the route and are implied by the route. This idea is evident in the Stations of the Cross, a religious procession re-enacting the Passion of Jesus Christ. The processional route, through the re-enactment of Christ's path, shifts the order of sanctuary places into another specific area. Here the procession also reveals the starting and concluding points as notably distinct "since they constitute the epiphanic places" of the procession.

In most cases the formal elements along the route incorporate gathering spaces, but this is not always necessarily so. These gathering and dispersion points are especially important, being "liminal" areas where the passage into and from the special ritual dimension may take place. In the case of political processions they could even, through a disorder, ignite unforeseen, potentially explosive behavior. In Italy the processions link a series of piazzas that form the gathering spaces along the route. In Bhaktapur one sees a similar attitude, the processional route connects the network of squares in the city. In the South Indian temple cities, the elements along the route are in the form of water-tanks and temples. These two examples shall be discussed at length in the second section.



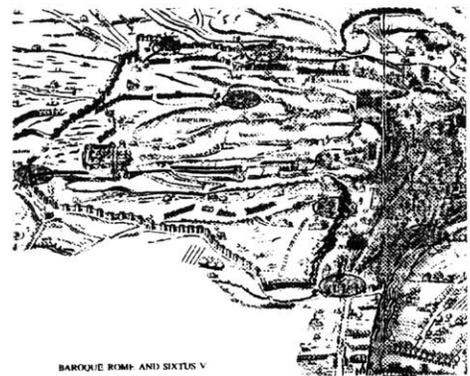
3.2.19 *Processional route connecting the network of squares at Bhaktapur in Nepal.*

#### 4. Termination spaces:

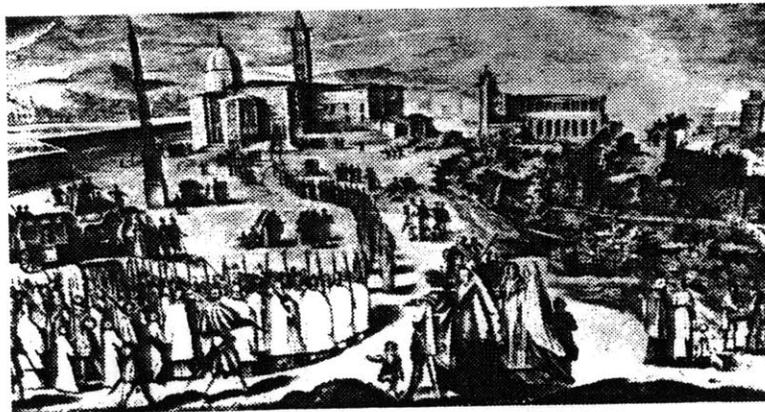
Processional rituals are frequently terminated at places of great significance either physical or metaphysical. These are generally connected to the

seats of power whether religious, political or economic. The termination spaces are customarily meant for gathering purposes. In the religious rituals in South Indian temple cities, the termination is normally back in the center. Mircea Eliade has referred to this idea as the myth of eternal return. In political processions there is a great symbolic significance attached to where the parade or procession terminates.

The reverse can also be true-the termination of the processional route becomes a significant location in the urban form. This is reflected in the Sixtus V's planning of Baroque Rome, where the important religious terminations were linked by axial roads. The painting from the Sistine Library in the Vatican showing the procession of pilgrims over the open terrain to Santa Maria Maggiore exhibits the importance of the church as the termination point that is later incorporated in the plan of Sixtus V for as the termination of one of the channels from the Piazza del Popolo as seen in the painting also from the Sistine Library.



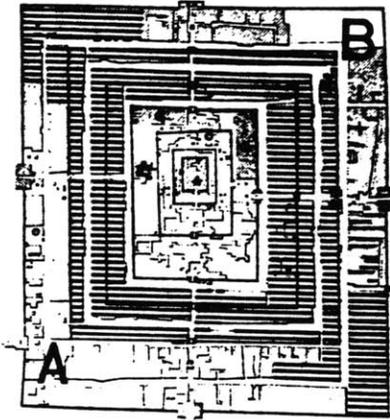
**3.2.20 Pilgrim halts in Rome converted into termination points along the axial streets.**



**3.2.21 Painting from the Sistine Library in the Vatican showing the procession of pilgrims over the open terrain to Santa Maria Maggiore .**



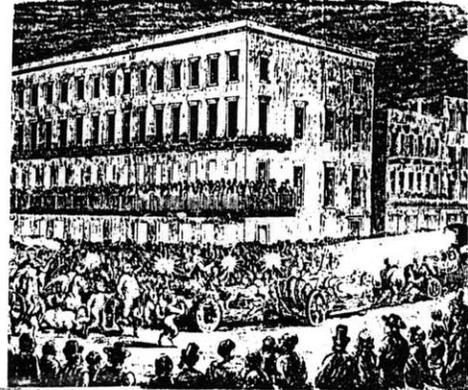
**3.2.22 Sixtus V's plan incorporating the pilgrim route terminating at Maria Maggiore**



3.2.23 *Social hierarchy as reflected in the South Indian temple city of Srirangam. The hatched sections represent the higher castes, A-workers & artisans, B-farmers.*

5. The hierarchy of zones & movement:

This particular aspect is more evident in societies that have a pronounced social hierarchy, since it is frequently reflected in the built environment. The hierarchy is manifested to the highest degree during events of collective participation, such as processional rituals of festivity. In societies like India the procession was an event which reflected the rigid caste hierarchy that was observed in day to day life. This is obvious in the zoning of the built environment that also plays an important role in the routing of the festive procession.



3.2.26 *The procession of the Mystick Krewe of Comus, New Orleans, 1858.*



3.2.25 *Carnival in Cologne, 1854.*



*3.2.26 Dawn breaks one of Rio's huge Escolas de Samba as the last of these big Samba schools passes the judges stand some 18 hours after the grand parade the previous afternoon.*



3.2.27 *Carnival floats in Rio making a mockery of important political figures.*

The aspect of hierarchy is exhibited in a reverse manner during the carnival in medieval and early renaissance Rome. This festival was a way of acting out social and political relations since it was in some ways organized by the people as counteracting the church's ritual power. It used consciously perceptible hierarchy of spaces to express a desired message of power.<sup>32</sup> A similar aspect is evident in the Carnival in Rio today, the carnival is set apart from ordinary historical time, even the time of extraordinary secular events. Many writers like Victor Turner have mentioned it as 'a time that is no time' which creates 'a place that is no place'. Since, though celebrated in the heart of the city every year at a fixed time, it reverses the daily processes. The streets and avenues, instead of being channels for automobile traffic are sealed off during the period of the carnival. They are completely taken over by people drifting in a festive mood. The

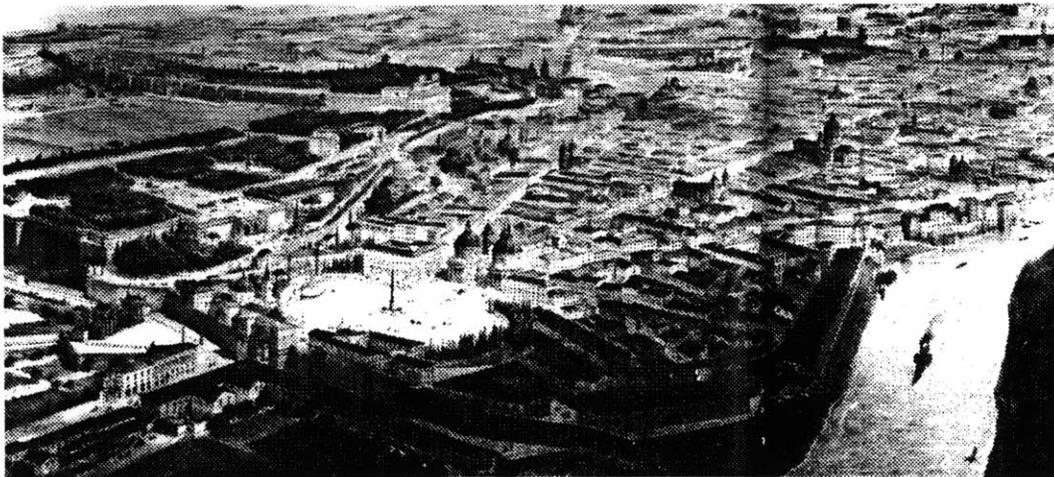
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<sup>32</sup>The traditional route through the Forum and the Monti district drew upon the scenographic possibilities of the ancient ruins for associations with the ancient republic and Roman Empire, while the Monti territory gained a distinct identity as the land of the republican classes. This procession posed a contradiction to the Church's authority and was finally abolished in mid-sixteenth century. It was at the same time that the Monti district became a promised land of urban planning through which the building of a new infrastructure based on straight streets helped reshuffle the territorial claims.

urge to reach offices and businesses at a particular time is no longer existent. According to Victor Turner, "what we are seeing is society in its subjunctive mood...it is a mood of feeling, willing, and desiring, its mood of fantasizing, its playful mood: not indicative mood, where it tries to apply reason to human action and systematize the relationship between ends and means in industry and bureaucracy."<sup>33</sup>

#### 6. The framing of the route:

The importance of framing is evident in Goethe's description of the Roman Carnival where he talks of the street that runs from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia, the Corso, as enclosed by high and mostly splendid buildings. Goethe particularly describes the height of these edifices as important to the event.



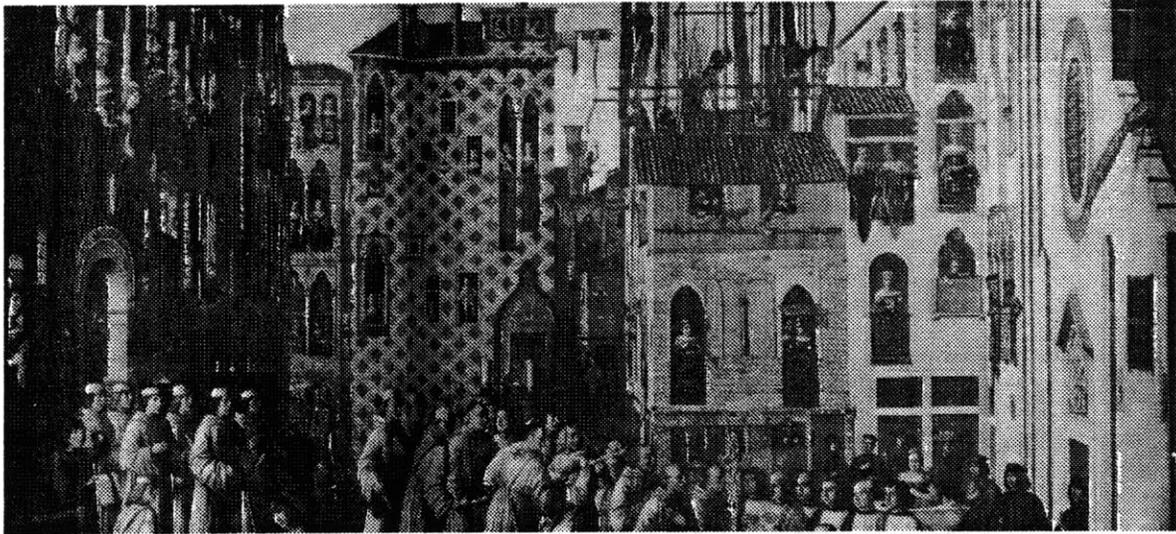
Givonni Mansueti's painting "The Miracle of the Cross" - only a part of which is shown here - records a street procession in which the buildings framing the street are given as much importance as the street itself.

*3.2.28 The Corso running from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza di Venezia with splendid buildings framing it.*

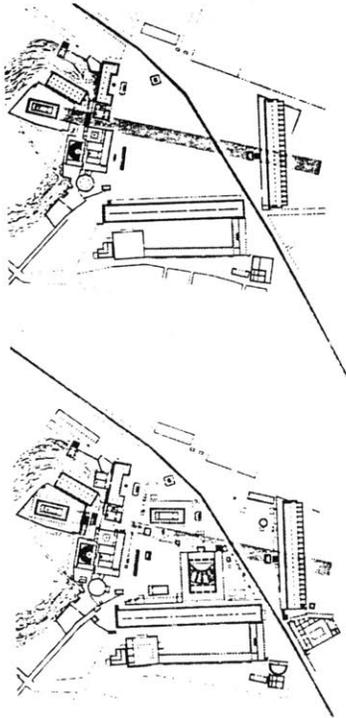
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<sup>33</sup>Victor Turner, "Carnival, Ritual, and Play in Rio de Janeiro", in Falassi Alessandro(ed.), *Time out of Time*, (Albuquerque, 1987), p.76.

This shows the significance attached to framing the processional route in medieval and renaissance times.



3.2.29 Giovanni Mansueti's painting "The Miracle of the Cross"-note the detail in which the facades of the surrounding buildings is painted.



3.2.30-31 Buildings of the Agora along the Panathenaic Way framing the Processional Route.

The manner in which buildings came to be built along the Panathenaic Way in Athens exhibits as shown earlier very much the same idea, since all of the buildings were designed so as to frame the processional route.

The aspect of framing is dealt with in a unique manner during the World Series Bull fighting in Pamplona, a town in the hills of Navarre in Spain. Here it is the human frame that is important. The bulls are released from their corrals in the far side of the city and are channeled through the narrow streets with the double wooden fence crowded with people into the bull ring. In many other festivals elsewhere in the world, the role of spectators, police, barricades, crowds in the framing of the processional route is a

significant aspect. This is evident specially in political processions involving presidents and other important figures waving out to the crowds along the route.

### 7. Limits and boundaries:

It is difficult to say whether boundaries or rituals came first. They customarily go hand in hand. This aspect is often connected to the extent to which the circulation route is closed. Rituals associated to urban forms always occur within the urban boundaries. There is evidence that, in ancient times, rituals conducted to set the boundaries of a town or city were celebrated every year in the memory of the original foundation event. Fustel de Coulanges describes the Roman festival of the city enclosure, 'amburbalia', and that of the territorial limits, 'ambarvalia' as follows:

*"On those days the citizens formed a grand procession, clad in white, and crowned with leaves; they made the circuit of the city or territory, chanting prayers; at the head walked priests..."*<sup>34</sup>

In Rome it was the 'Luperci' ritual that purified the city (Rykwert has gone into details regarding this aspect)<sup>35</sup> and that fixed the route associated with the founding of the city. This was a special festival wherein the runners ran around the old boundary to purify the city territory they were concerned with.<sup>36</sup>



3.2.32 *The ancient Ambarvalia being performed today in the form of the ceremony 'beating the parish bounds.' An oil painting of 1848 shows the Rogationing party assembled at the remains of a cross-a typical mark point on a parish boundary.*

<sup>34</sup>Fustel De Coulanges, The Ancient City, (New York, 1873), p.159.

<sup>35</sup>Joseph Rykwert, Idea of Town, (Princeton, 1976), p.93. According to him, "The 'Luperci' purified the city. Practically all ancient writers agree on this . The city was also purified in other ways and at other times throughout the religious year, but the Luperci are specially interesting since the shrine which they served and the route they followed were particularly connected to the founding of the city, and the aetiological myth of the ritual again tied it back to the foundation myth. The festival took place on 15th Feb."

<sup>36</sup>The whole festival suggests a celebration of pre-legal virulence which the myth implied, and the passage to a civilized, an agricultural state through the adoption into the order of a hero king.



There was also an element of protecting the city involved in this ritual, the area inside the boundary was safeguarded by repeating this ritual every year. Boundaries were specially created with the use of ritual to exclude undesirable forces, and once having demarcated the boundaries, the bounds of the area were kept alive in the memory of the people by ritual perambulations on certain sacred days of the year. The ancient Ambarvalia, a Roman festival dedicated to this idea survives to this day in form of the ceremony 'beating the parish bounds'.<sup>37</sup>

During the 15th and 16th century, there have been numerous records of entry ceremonies that were celebrated at the city gates.<sup>38</sup> The walls and gates of the city were important not only for defensive purposes but also ceremonial reasons. During the Renaissance Rome the major points of access were from the north and the gate at Piazza del Popolo and the gate near St. Peter's became the major foci of entry rituals. The city gate was the most significant part during an entry ritual.<sup>39</sup> From the arrival point itself the visitor had to go through prescribed ritual actions.

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<sup>37</sup>Pennick Nigel, *The Ancient Science of Geomancy*, (London, 1979), p.56-57. He refers to, "At the Ambarvalia, the Magister Pagi, an annually appointed official invested with powers of priestly office, led the local inhabitants in a procession along the boundary line, visiting holy groves, stones, altars which marked the way....In north Europe, the Roman sacrifice to Ceres were paralleled by the sacred circuit of the holy island of Walcheren....similar processions were held in honor of Frey by the Norse priesthood. Terminus, the Roman protector of boundaries, was honored at the Terminalia festival.....When pagan worship was banned by emperor Theodosius in AD. 391, the perambulation of boundaries became incorporated into Christian ritual, thus the Ambarvalia became transformed into the Rogationtide ceremony which redefined the parishes of the new churches- 'beating the parish bounds,' a ritual still observed in many places."

<sup>38</sup>Refer Mitchell, *Italian Civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance*, for more details.

<sup>39</sup>Krautheimer. R, *Rome. Profile of a City*, 1977.

And what have kings, that privates have not too,  
Save ceremony, save general ceremony?  
And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?  
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more  
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?  
What are thy rents? what are thy comings in?  
O ceremony, show me thy worth!  
What is thy soul of adoration?  
Art thou aught else but place, degree and form,  
Creating awe and fear in other men?

*Henry V, Act iv, Scene i*

#### 4. CASE STUDIES

#### 4.1 The South Indian Temple Cities:



4.1.1 Location of the three temple cities in South India.



4.1.2 Plan of Madurai.



4.1.3 Plan of Suchindram.

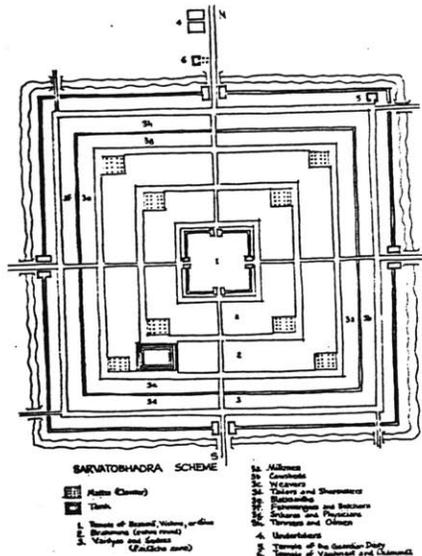
In this section I am dealing mainly with the three South Indian temple cities of Madurai, Srirangam & Suchindram. These three cases are examined together since their essential urban features and rituals are essentially similar in nature, and are also characteristic of many other temple cities in the region. In these cities similar cosmic diagrams (mandala) determined the plan from the very beginning. It is important to examine them because they were least affected by outside influences as compared to other northern cities, and are important religious centers and follow more or less the same ritual patterns as in the past. Thus making them significant from the point of view of the religious ritual diagram.

In the South Indian cities, most important rituals are linked together in space following the Indian tradition. All significant occasions from birth to death are celebrated and performed with specific rituals at specific places. The first solid morsel of food given to a child is done at a certain place with certain rituals; on event of a death, the body of the person is taken out of the town on a prescribed route to a prescribed place of cremation; when a deity is worshipped, the idol, the temple, the town, even the entire region is circumambulated. This fact shows the subtle relationship between processional rituals and the form of the city.

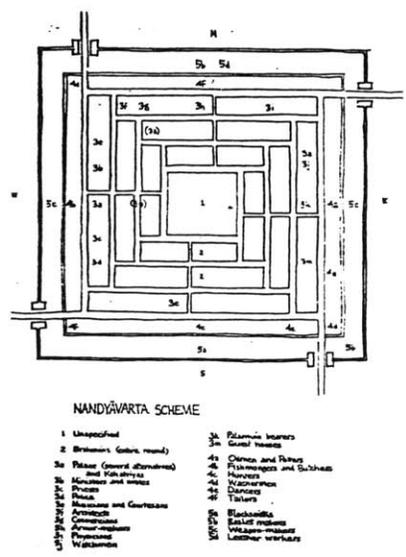
#### Brief history:

The South Indian cities analyzed here emerged in the early Middle Ages as an assertion of the political





4.1.6 Sarvatobhadra scheme.



4.1.7 Nandyavarta scheme.

existence<sup>40</sup> in the phenomenological world to bring about order from chaos. The vastu-purusha mandala can be drawn in 32 ways according to vastu-shastras that are the ancient manuals of architecture. Thus, in India, architecture and town planning are based on an ideal pattern of primordial cosmic order. One can even claim that besides myth and ritual, architecture is the most significant medium to re-present this cosmic order. This is expressed particularly in the form of the settlements, orientation of individual buildings, and the restriction of social groups and their activities to certain directions and areas in the ritual field of force.

There are various types of mandala layout, but in these temple cities the 'Sarvatobhadra' and the 'Nandyavarta' schemes seem to be used. These schemes particularly represent the concentric hierarchy. The ancient texts are ambiguous in their descriptions, but there has been much scholarly work

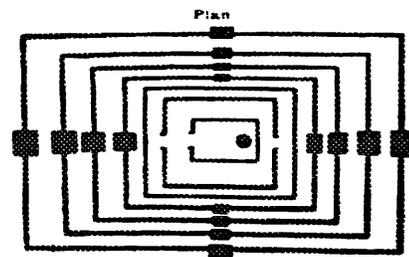
40 As A. Volwahasen, *Living Architecture-India*, (London, 1969), p.44, says, "The geometric form of the vastu-purusha mandala can be explained by reference to the Vedic sacrificial rite, during the performance of which the Aryans carried braziers from one altar to another. A round altar symbolizes the terrestrial world and a square one the celestial. A circular shape symbolizes movement, the cyclical movement of time. A square cannot be moved of itself, but is a final and unequivocal form. As a perfect form, it is used by the Hindus to indicate the Absolute. If one considers the earth merely from its physical, external form it is depicted as a circle; if, however it is regarded as the manifestation of the supreme principle, Brahman, it is rendered as a square, fixed by the cardinal points (points of the compass). Vastu-purusha is thus pressed into the form of a square. All existence is reflected in this magic square. It is an image of the earth, which is a square derived from a circle; at the same time it is also the sacrificed body of the primeval being, Purusha. Man and earth correspond to one another in this image. Time enters the mandala by co-ordinating the signs of the zodiac, and space does so by orienting the square towards the four (or eight) cardinal points. The quarters or small squares, called 'padas', which are covered by the individual gods, are grouped around a central Brahma-sthana comprising several such small squares. Important gods cover the innermost ring, and in the outer rings there follow the gods of lower rank in the celestial hierarchy. strangely enough, the central square is no longer assigned to the 'unformed' Brahman, but expressly to the god Brahma."

done regarding their visual interpretation.<sup>41</sup> Both these schemes have streets that circumscribe the central 'Brahmasthan'. The 'Nandyavarta' scheme, though is more interesting, since it suggests movement within it, which is of course an important aspect of processional festivals. The concentric streets are associated with religious car festivals, though their allusion in the texts as 'rathya' (here 'ratha' probably mean's chariot or the car that is used in the procession referring specifically to religious processional cars) is uncertain.

2. The presence of a center as a reference point in processional rituals:

The symbolism associated with the center made it the most sacred point; thus, it was here that the temple was situated. The center was thought to be the focus of creative force where the communication among the three planes- earth, heaven and the underworld- was most easily achieved. This was the metaphysical point through which the axis of the world passed. The power generated here flowed out through the cardinal points, thus they possessed heightened symbolic meaning that was expressed by the excessive, massive construction whose size far exceeded the necessary. According to David Shulman, the ritual ordering of the universe within the confines of the shrine creates an ideal opposed to the disorderly world of nature. At the heart of the shrine lies a concentration of sacred power; but this power is restricted, channeled, forced into an inherited pattern of symbolic relations. Chaos is

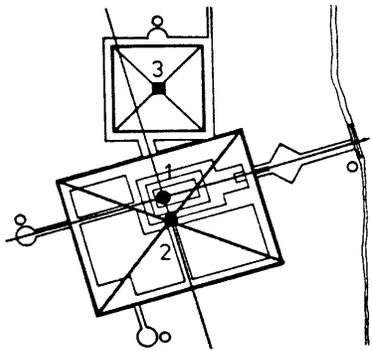
<sup>41</sup>From Manasara Shilpa-Shastra IX. Ram Raz in Essay on Architecture of the Hindus in 1834 summarized the Shilpa-Shastra texts for the first time and drew diagrams of the village plans. E.B.Havell emphasized the north-south and east-west axis in 1915. P.K. Acharya also worked on the Shilpa-Shastras and the visual interpretation to his work was done by S.C.Mukherji.



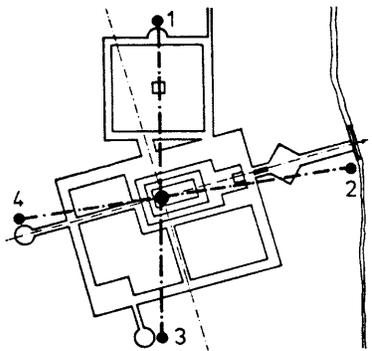
4.1.8 *The axial symmetry of the gopurams, walls & concentric zones in relation to the sacred temple in the center.*



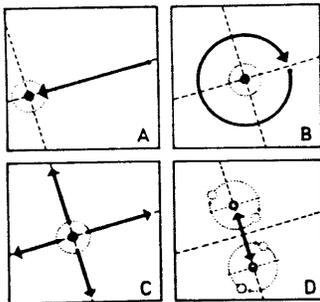
4.1.9 *Diagrammatic sketch of the three dimensional system, showing the decreasing height of 'gopurams' towards the center.*



4.1.10 Center places in Suchindram: 1. main temple 2. Ganesh temple, center of town 3. mandapa in the center of water.



4.1.11 Four Amma temples in the four corners of the town centered on the 'mulasthan' or the position of the deity in the main temple at Suchindram.



4.1.12 Processional movements in relation to the center.

represented through symbols that reflect its subjugation: the primeval water of the flood, the water that threatens to destroy the created universe and out of which the universe has emerged, exists within the shrine or in its vicinity in form of a temple tank, a river, or the sea.<sup>42</sup> This symbolism generates the essential elements that are integral to a South Indian Temple City - namely the central temple, the gopuram gates in the cardinal directions, the walled temple enclosures, etc. These towns have been laid out on what can even be called 'inward directed geometrization' and the center that is all important and sacred and gives rise to all ritual and festive activity like the processional circumambulation. Circumambulation in this case always refers to the center.

Processional movements in relation to the center:

The movements during the festive rituals in urban space are always related to the center. They can be basically summed up into four types:

- a) There are movements towards (or into, through and across), for example, the east-west ceremonial axis in Suchindram or for that matter in any of the temple cities the movement at the end of the procession or the termination is back to the beginning, which is towards the center in the temple.
- b) Movements around it, this is essentially the circumambulation which in spatial terms is the concentric processional streets surrounding the four sides of the temple and forming a series of enclosure.
- c) Movements away from (or out of), this could be thought of in terms of the cardinal streets leading out

<sup>42</sup>David Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, (Princeton, 1980), p.26.

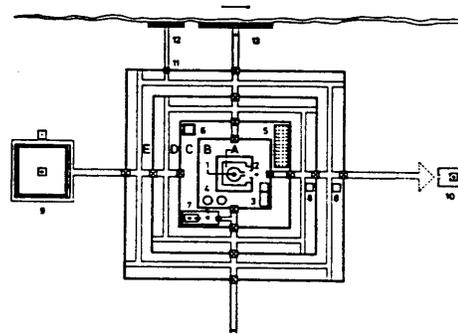
from the central temple and the beginning of any processional ritual in which the deity is taken out of the temple complex.

d) Movements beside a spatial entity which is around the tanks and water bodies.

These movements show how closely the circulation route is linked to the presence of the center and other formal elements. The processional rituals are basically the elaboration of these four elementary forms of movement that shall be discussed in depth further. Thus, the movements during the processional festive rituals make the spatial organization a significant aspect of these temple cities.

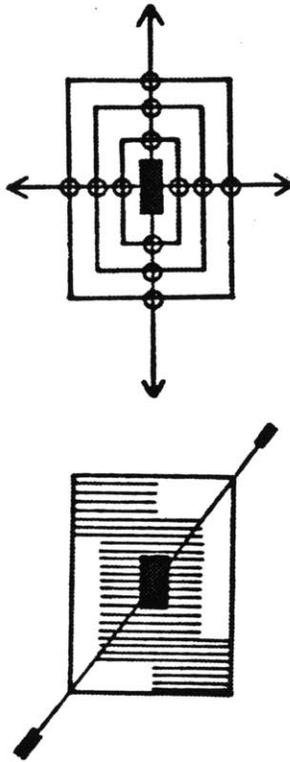
### 3. The importance of the spatial layout and formal elements:

The spatial layout of these towns could be considered in three levels. The first is the repertoire of basic urban elements, these could be thought of as the temple, the water bodies, the gopurams, walled enclosures, as well as the residential areas, the market place etc., all of which form the fabric of the city. The second is the manner in which these elements are arranged to obtain a particular spatial configuration. Here a specific hierarchy is followed with the temple occupying the center of the town, the eight water bodies in the cardinal and intermediate directions, the gopurams in the cardinal directions and the fabric of the city following the mandala layout. The third is the elaboration and refinement of this spatial configuration by a system of spatial mediation achieved by the specific placement of the streets that accommodate the festive rituals, the diminishing

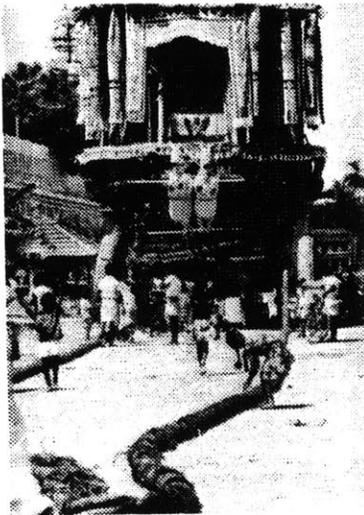


4.1.13 Schematic diagram showing the elements of a South Indian temple town. 1. The inner sanctum 2. Flag pole 3. Pavilion of vehicles (chariots) 4. Store rooms 5. Thousand pillared mandapa 6. Tank for ceremonies 7. Shrine of the goddess 8. Place where temple chariots are kept 9. Teppakulam (water-tank) 10. Temple of smaller related deity 11. Funeral gate 12. Cremation ghat 13. Bathing ghat.





4.1.14-15 *The symmetric principles which dominate the spatial structure of Srirangam 1. Axial symmetry of gopurams, walls and concentric zones 2. The social topography, symmetrically arranged to the NE-SW diagonal.*



4.1.16 *View of a chariot at rest during one of the festive processions.*

height of the gopuram towers as one goes towards the center and so on.

Jan Pieper describes this spatial structure of the city as a refined geometrical balance of the laws of two superimposed symmetrical systems, the whole being an elaboration of the bi-polarities: "axial symmetry of the walls, gates and zones - diagonal symmetry of the ring road pattern; concentric system of sacred zones - diacentric system of caste distribution."<sup>43</sup> The circulation route strictly follows the social hierarchy, there is no reversal of hierarchy in that sense.

Circumambulation:

The 'mandala' plans in the ancient manuals of architecture show 'processional ways' that run continuously around the settlement. According to Volwahren, this is in keeping with the ancient Aryan tradition, during the sacrificial rite the vedic altar was venerated by being carried clockwise in procession. This takes the form of chariot processions in the South Indian temple cities.

The processional festive rituals in these cities indicating the travels of the deity capture the subtle essence of the cosmic diagram - the mandala. On observing the rituals of festivity in these places one realizes that every spatial gesture is in some way linked to the manner in which these events are celebrated. The ceremonial axis, the positioning of the tanks, the car streets, even the small alleys around their corner, the widening of the diagonal corners could be all attributed the specific rituals of festivity.

Taking the case of Suchindram;

<sup>43</sup>Jan Pieper, "Ritual Movement and Architecture", in AARP 11: Stadt and Ritual,(June 1977), p.84.

*"The spontaneous, individual experience of the spatial sequence along the east-west axis is ritualized in a procession which marks the end of almost all festive days, when the idols return ceremonially into the temple. For these processions, palanquins are used, and when approaching the gopura, the idols are carried in a line. In the evening processions they halt almost before every house on the way out. At the turning point they stop, facing the river, and then they return without interruption, halting only once in front of the mandapa where they are arranged perpendicular to the axial direction, as if in response to the widening of the street. The main idol receives a gift of flowers before they all pass, one after the other, through the mandapa, across the wide street and disappear inside the temple. At the end of important processions, a red Bengal fire is lit before entering the temple, involving another halt before the gopura. Morning processions are different in that they proceed without a stop towards the rising sun, and on the way back halt before the houses for the fire waving ceremony."<sup>44</sup>*

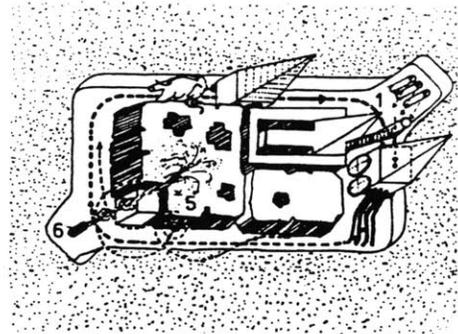
This description of the festive processions demonstrates the ritual use of the ceremonial axis making it an architectural setting for dramatic processional rituals.

The rituals of festivity related to circumambulation are extremely elaborate, making those streets in which they take place very significant. The large number of these processions in itself exhibits this; in Suchindram alone during the three major festivals there are 72 grand circumambulations, and 216 during the lesser events. "The rathas allow the deity to circumnavigate his shrine: this, it may be suggested, is the extent of the god's freedom. The local lord is allowed to complete an orbit around the center to which he is still felt to be irrevocably tied."<sup>45</sup>

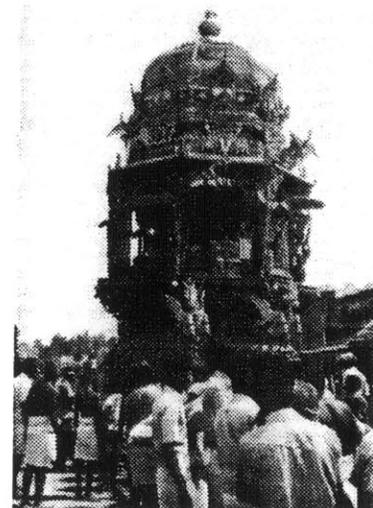
Srirangam's urban fabric is composed of seven concentric walled enclosures, of which the inner four constitute the temple proper, while the outer three are residential quarters. The entire complex is organized

<sup>44</sup>Jan Pieper, "The Spatial Structure of Suchindram", *AARP* 17, (March 1980)p.73.

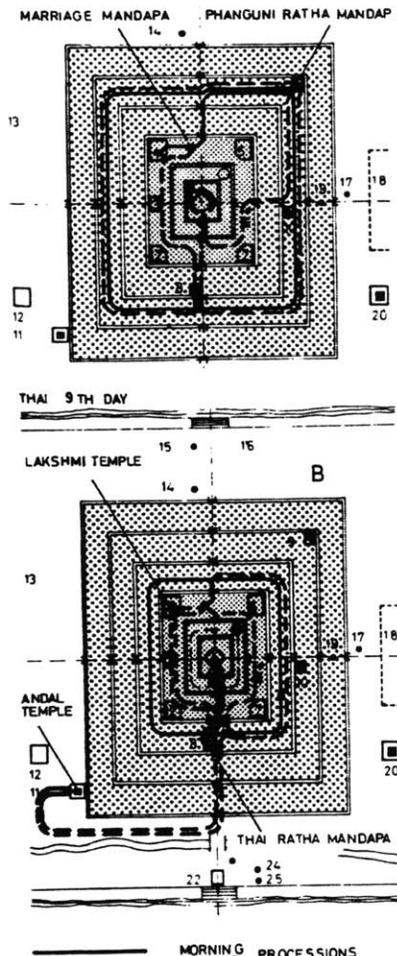
<sup>45</sup>Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, p.53.



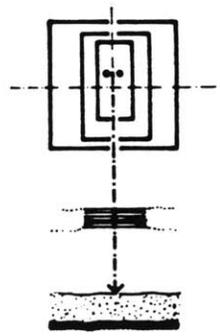
4.1.17-18 Ritual circumambulation on the car street in Suchindram-note the widening at the diagonal corners



4.1.19 Processional chariot in Srirangam.



4.1.20-21 Circumambulatory processions on the day of the Thai and Phanguni car festivals in Srirangam during different months



4.1.22 Srirangam, the north-south ceremonial way linking the ghats to temple.

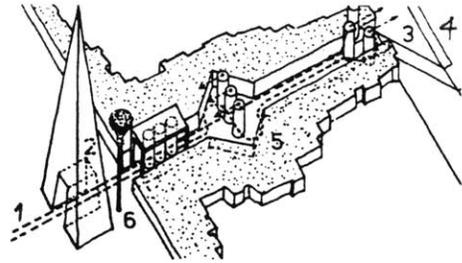
around two oriented axial streets, crossing at right angles. This is not only discernible in its plan but also perceived in its spatial structure, with the sequence of the gopuram gates at every enclosure that are distinctly evident from every part of the town, showing the spatial nodes of the layout. Another important aspect in relation to the spatial organization of Srirangam is that related to the water bodies. There are eight tanks surrounding the town in the cardinal and intermediate directions for ritual purposes and due to the location of the town on the Kaveri river (on the end island which gives it special significance), the ghats are linked by a straight exactly north-south oriented ceremonial way. There are eight festivals that usually vary between nine and eleven days and two one day festivals that could be called processional rituals in the case of Srirangam.

In the South Indian temple towns, the concept of circumambulation is so dramatic, impressive, elaborate and so intrinsically choreographed that it becomes a central feature of public life, the gods are taken out in their vehicles or chariots that are spectacular, these are not just chariots but in fact a kind of mobile temple architecture.

The chariot festivals play a significant role in exhibiting the spatial organization of the built environment. In some ways they represent the fixed aspect of the physical space by means of the moving dynamic aspect of the festive procession. These festivals are essentially religio-social in character.

What is of great interest is that there are narrow dead alleys at the sharp corners of the streets on which the chariot is circumambulated, and when the chariot

reaches a corner, wedges are placed under the wheels and it is pushed into the blind alley to allow it to turn. These blind alleys provide the necessary spaces and are therefore vital. This minor detail is very interesting since it proves that the entire town was meticulously and consciously laid out with the festive processions in mind.



In the town of Suchindram, it is interesting to note how the car streets at the north-east and south-west corners are widened for a particular ritual in the circumambulations; during the festive rituals when the rathas (cars) reach these corners the carriers lift and lower the vehicles while dancing in a spiral form covering the entire widening of the square.



The spatial relevance of these chariot festivals is its processional play with the concept of center and periphery with the inside taken around its own void.

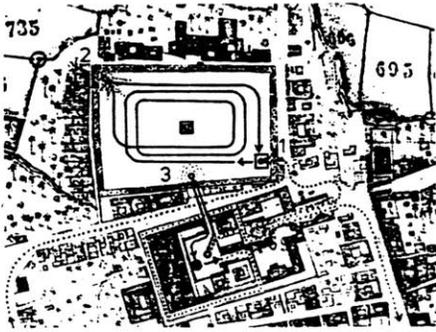
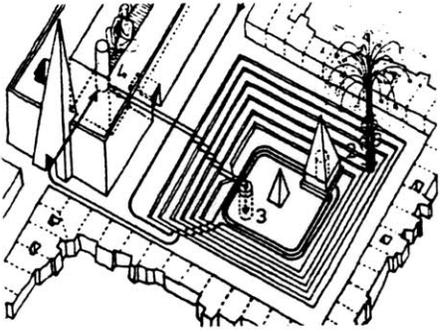
4.1.23-24 *Ritual correspondence of the spatial layout of the ceremonial axis in Suchindram. 1. Firing of squibs as the deity leaves the temple 2. Halt of idol at gopuram 3. Idols facing the river at the turning point 4. Collecting water 5. Idols facing the temple 6. Lighting of fire.*

Spatial elements in form of water tanks and shrines as a significant aspect of processional rituals:

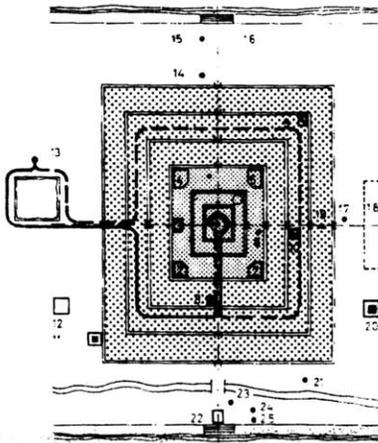
Water is an essential part of the basic repertoire of urban elements in a conventional South Indian temple city. In the form of 'kulam' or tanks along with shrines and smaller temples it is an important formal element in the processional rituals of festivity. In most cases it forms the boundary of the town. Normally there are at least eight tanks surrounding the city in the cardinal and intermediate directions with one in the center within the temple complex. These play an important role in the ritual bathing that is a meaningful component of any festive occasion. Ritually once a year the deity travels on water in a special festive ceremony, and therefore these towns



4.1.25 *View of 'teppakulam' with the central pavilion.*



4.1.26-27 *Rituals underlying the spatial correspondence between temple and tank. 1. Installation of idol on float 2. Fireworks in the N-E corner after three rounds in water.*



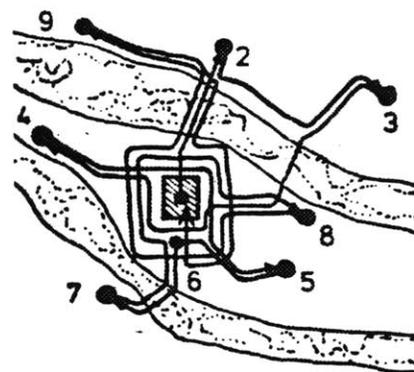
4.1.28 *Processional route taken in Srirangam on the day of the floating festival.*

have at least one large water tank 'teppakulam' reserved for this purpose. This tank, which is square in plan, is normally located at one end of the main axis leading to the temple gates and has a central pavilion also used for special ceremonies during the festivals.

Suchindram is slightly different from temple cities like Srirangam and Chidambaram in this respect. Here, instead of eight tanks surrounding the town, there is only one large tank. In Suchindram, as in other temple cities, there is a festival involving circumambulation in relation to the large tank - this is the floating festival. This, in a different sense show the analogy drawn between the temple and the tank. Just like the chariot circumambulating the temple, this float moves clockwise around the land with the pavilion in the center of the tank. Like the two diagonal corners of the car street being specially designed to take into consideration the dance ceremonies and the fireworks in the south-west corner on the night of the 5th day, so also during the floating festival there are special ceremonies performed in the south-east corner of the tank associated to the installation of the idol, and after the third round on water fireworks is staged in the north-west, thus in a way mirroring the diagonal symmetry of the chariot festival. Jan Pieper portrays this particular aspect of Suchindram as the juxtaposition of the temple and tank which he recounts as of solid and void, of the male 'upper town' around the Shiva temple in the center facing the east, and a female 'lower town' and the tank with the devi (goddess) temple, facing north. The floating festival is concluded by a bathing procession with the ritual walk from the temple to the tank and back.

Srirangam as well as Chidambaram have tanks surrounding the town in the cardinal directions purely for ritual purposes. The pilgrims take their ritual bath in them in a prescribed sequence along with the one inside the temple complex which is normally the first one they are expected to have their ritual bath in and circumambulate the town on their way three times. In the case of Srirangam the tank on the west is the one that has the floating festival described earlier in Suchindram. These tanks not only have a religious significance and are related to innumerable myths but are important in the form that the town takes as well as the land use pattern, since land around the tanks is normally given to religious institutions as in Chidambaram. The water bodies demarcate the sacred boundary and take on the role of city walls and gates found in other regions. In Srirangam the organization of the spatial pattern is such that the ceremonial route has the temple at one end and ghats on the Kaveri river on the other end. The spatial linking of the ghats on the Kaveri river to the ceremonial north-south axis connecting the river to the temple is important, since in the very first month of the year the festival of the goddess Kaveri is celebrated wherein a ritual procession takes the dowry from the god in the temple which is immersed in the waters of the Kaveri river.

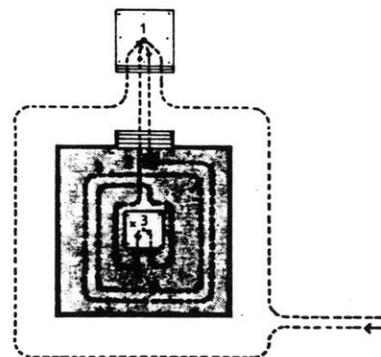
Thus, on analyzing the role of water tanks within the spatial organization, it is obvious that they did not just happen to be there for other functional reasons and accommodated the rituals, but were specially constructed for these rituals.



4.1.29 Srirangam, sketch showing the bathing sequence in tanks during festive rituals.



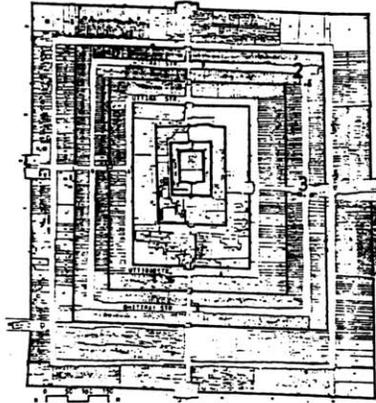
4.1.30 Chidambaram, plan showing the tanks surrounding the temple town in the cardinal and intermediate directions.



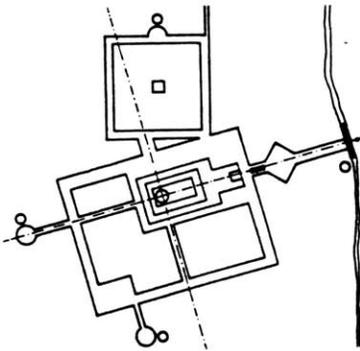
4.1.31 Processional route around the tank and the movement of float in water.

### Role of Time and Memory:

The role of 'Time' and 'Memory' is evident at every stage of the festive ritual. The notion of time is apparent in its spatial manifestation, it is represented in the naming of the streets where the festive processions are held. In Madurai, Srirangam, Suchindram and many other South Indian temple cities, the streets surrounding the temple complex, which forms a layered enclosure, are named according to the month on which the each is used for the festive processions.



4.1.32 Like Madurai, in Srirangam too, the naming of the processional streets is according to the months when the festive processional circumambulates them. Chitrai (April-May) is the first month of the Tamil year and so on. Nos. 1,2,3 indicate the location of the chariots on the Uttiram and Chittrai streets.



4.1.33 Schematic sketch showing the shift in the east-west orientation in Suchindram commemorating the event of the installation of the idol.

In Suchindram it is interesting to note the how the system of recalling the primordial memories works. In this case the collective memory of the foundation of the town, which is done by the installation of the idol, is brought into play. Here the east- west orientation shows a shift of  $15^\circ$  from the geographical east. This is supposed to be due to the tradition that the orientation towards the cardinal points is fixed by the direction of the idol and this direction is determined by the sunrise on the day of the foundation of the temple and the installation ceremony. There is also another dimension added in this respect to the urban layout, which is 'time', since there is a basic reference to the rhythm of sunrise and sunset and the seasonal cycle. Thus it is important that our perception of the urban form is not just that of relation with the cardinal points but that of the primordial, archaic expressions of the foundation of the town, too, in relation to it. This is apparently also the case in other temple cities of South India.

The ritual sequence and circumambulation followed in bathing at the different tanks during specific festive

rituals is important since it signifies one's place in space and time; moreover it also reminds one of his location within a larger context of the city form.

In Srirangam the year is divided into two kinds of festivity, the first half, or more precisely the first three months, are for the theatrical festivities that include circumambulation, gathering as well as the ritual bathing. The second half of the year begins with four vehicular festivals that occur from the seventh to the tenth month, and the cycle is completed with two theatrical festivities in the eleventh and twelfth month.

In the case of Madurai it is extremely interesting to observe how the festive processions which are celebrated every month, although each has its own identity, contribute to one's experience of the place and create a complete mandala by the end of the calendar year. The names of the concentric streets - Adhi, Chitrai, etc.- are the names of the Tamil months associated with their respective festivals. The concept of time and memory is all important in this regard, the cycle of the year is not simply a general scheme that can be repeated anywhere, but is infused with the local condition, the history of the city in time and is related to the origins of the city.

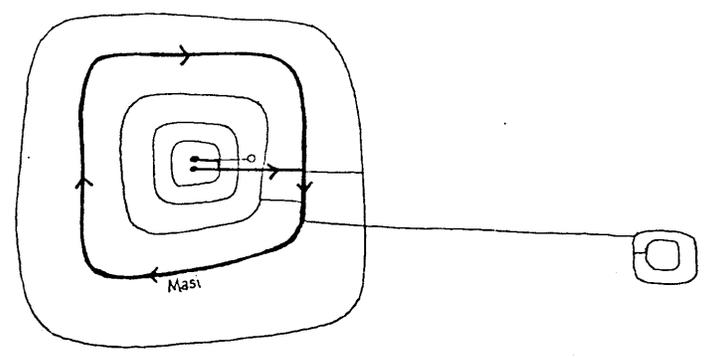
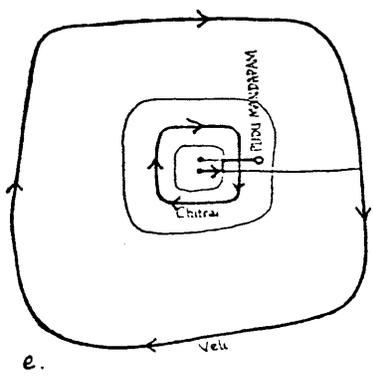
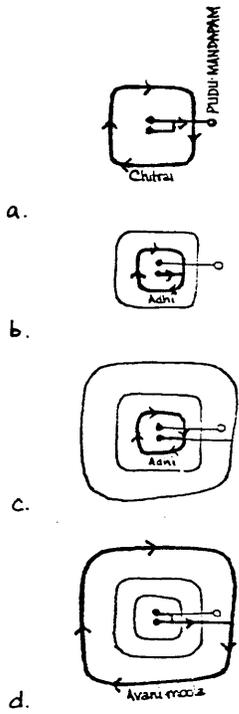
The following is a description from Julian Smith's thesis on Madurai:

*"In Vaikasi (May/June) the processional deities are installed in the Pudu-mandapam, the extension of the temple eastward into the city fabric. The bustle of the normal occupants is interrupted for ten days....In the evening, at sunset, they are taken in procession along the Chitrai Street. In Ani (June/July), the deities reside within the temple. In Adhi (July/August), Meenakshi is taken in procession along Adhi Street, within the temple wall. In Avani (August/September), Shiva's part in a joint rule of the city is affirmed, after Meenakshi has ruled alone as queen for the four months after her coronation in Chitrai. the procession follows Avanimoola Street. In Puratassi (September/October), the Navarathi (nine-nights),*

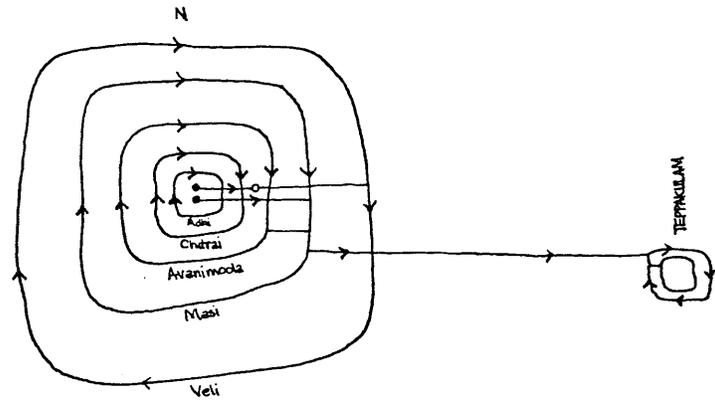


4.1.34 View of a processional chariot during circumambulation.





4.1.35 (a-f) All the above diagrams show the festive processions in Madurai during various months.



4.1.36 Sketch showing the re-drawing of the mandala diagram at the end of the year by the festive processions in Madurai.

festival is celebrated.....In Japassi (October/November) the procession follows Adhi Street. In Kardikai (November/December), again the route is along the Adhi Street. In Margali (December/January), Meenakshi returns to grace the Pudu-mandapam, and is taken in the evening along the Chitrai Street. And in addition there is a single circumambulation along the Veli Street, the path that used to be outside the city walls....In the next month of Thai (January/February) the deities are taken to the huge 'teppakulam' (tank) on a specially constructed float, where the deities become waterborne for an evening and move slowly clockwise around the tank. On the preceding days, the processions follow on the Chitrai Street. In Masi (February/March), the festival is again on Chitrai Street. There is a discrepancy here between the month and the street name. Apparently this was originally the occasion for the large car-festival on Masi Street but the king interchanged the Chitrai and Masi festivals to allow the popular Alagar festival in the month of Chitrai to coincide with the car-procession. So the names remain out of phase (ref. Dennis Hudson, *Two Citra Festivals in Madurai*, p.38-39). In Panguni (March/April), the festival once more follows Chitrai Street. In Chitrai (April/May), the first month of the Tamil year, the cycle reaches its climax for the "Chitrai Festival" lasting twelve days....with major processions on the Chitrai and Masi streets.."

This description demonstrates the spatial marking of time in relation to the festive events. The spatial gesture validates a controlled space within the larger universal realm and also marks its extent in the four cardinals and four intermediate directions. Similarly the temporal gesture controls the seemingly random flow of time by structuring and marking it through the festive events and establishing the yearly cycle in turn.

#### Continuity and Change:

It is important to note that the ritual events described here are celebrated to this day in more or less the same manner as they were during the 17th and 18th century. This is probably due to the fact that this particular region in South India was politically not so volatile and was not greatly influenced by other religions, particularly Islam, as were other regions in India.

Modern-day changes, such as the coming of the railway during the British times, the breaking down of the boundary walls, uncontrolled growth of the city, and so on, make the spatial layout of the city quite indiscernible, but these rituals of festivity bring to light its spatial subtleties.

All the issues raised here regarding the spatial organization and the rituals of festivity bring us to the fundamental question; were the rituals accommodated within a particular spatial organization or did they influence or generate the city form? As far as these South Indian temple cities are concerned, it seems that the rituals and the spatial organization are in perfect harmony-and thus, cannot be disassociated. It is evident that the static and permanent configuration of



4.1.37 *Pulling of the chariot during one of the processions.*

these temple cities is totally dependent upon the dynamic and temporary activities they were built to accommodate. The festive rituals are a conceptual prerequisite. Kevin Lynch has described the city form in his explanation of the “nested-city” model in which according to him “ritual and form are inseparable.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Kevin Lynch, A Theory of Good City Form, (Cambridge, 1981), p.385.



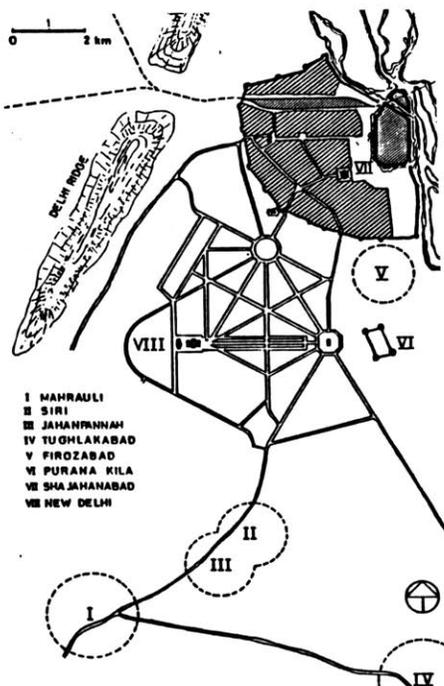
## 4.2 Delhi:

This section would examine the Mughal capital, i.e., the walled city of Shahjahanabad as it was designed and used in the 17th century, and the later British one, commonly referred to as New Delhi. Delhi is interesting as a case study, since it has been associated with the seat of power from ancient times and is the capital of the country today. There were seven cities prior to the British settlement in the Delhi region.



4.2.1 Locational Map

In Delhi, it is the political ceremonial processions that are significant in the ritual pattern. In the modern day it is interesting to see how the spatial organization and physical structure of both these cities have been incorporated for new celebrations, in the religious as well as in the political sense. But, since Delhi was and is a capital city the political ones have always been more significant. Both the Mughal and the British cities were designed taking into account the processional ceremonial rituals.



4.2.2 Map showing the location of the eight cities in the Delhi region.

### Shahjahanabad:

One of the main reasons proposed for shifting the capital from Agra (the capital of Akbar and Jahangir) to Delhi was that the streets of Agra were winding and narrow, which proved a hindrance to frequent royal processions and military parades.<sup>47</sup> This demonstrates the importance of the ceremonial ritual in the Mughal court and its relation to the spatial organization, specially the street form.

<sup>47</sup>Muhammad Salih Kanbo Lahauri, *Amal-i-Salih*, ed. G. Yazdani, 3 vols., (Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1870-3), vol.3, p.26-27.

The walled city of Shahjahanabad was laid out in 1639<sup>48</sup>, and a great deal has been written about the actual design and planning, the implementation, the partial destruction and changes inflicted by the British, the process of designing the new imperial capital by the British to counter the importance of the old walled city and the memories associated with it. An interesting aspect today is to see how the old walled city and the imperial British developments have been combined in many symbolic gestures since independence for various political celebrations. The alterations and demolitions in the Mughal walled city have also permitted new religious buildings and open spaces with their own set of festivals and celebrations.



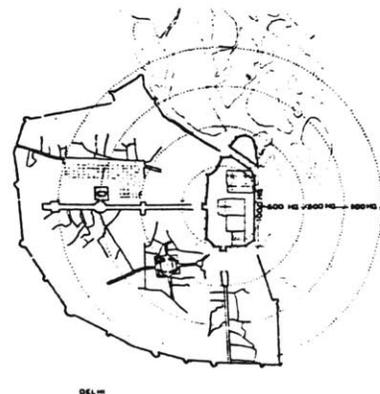
4.2.3 Plan of the walled city of Shahjahanabad.

Shahjahanabad has gone through many ruptures that have altered the rituals of festivity and the urban form drastically, since the Delhi region was, and is, of extreme political importance to the country.

Spatial Organization:

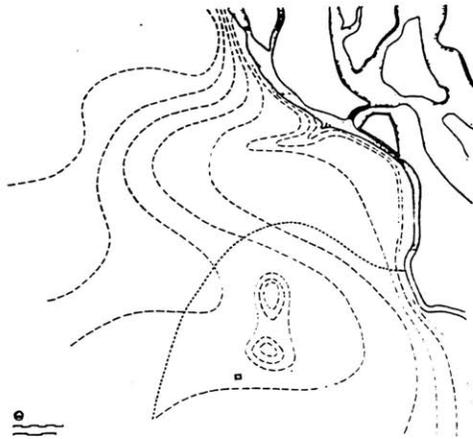
It is important to examine the spatial layout of the walled city in order to understand its relationship to the processional rituals of festivity.

Delhi was thought of not only as a seat of power but was also a pilgrimage center in the subcontinent, since it housed the tombs and graves of saints and holy men. Thus on selecting Delhi area as the site for the new city in the seventeenth century, the Mughal emperor Shahjahan had to work with complex ideas about religious and political centrality. This is reflected in the hyperbolic manner in which Muhammed Salih, an

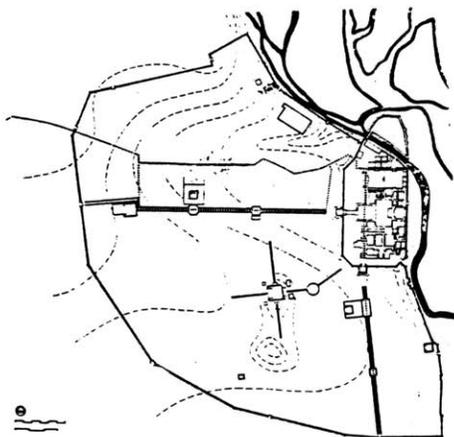


4.2.4 Geometrical reconstruction of Shahjahanabad showing it to be the center of the world.

<sup>48</sup>Muhammad Salih, *Amal-i-Salih*, p.27.



4.2.5 The original site of Shahjahanabad.



4.2.6 The designed elements of Shahjahanabad, map showing the palace, mosque, and ceremonial axes.

official historian of Shahjahan's reign reveals his understanding of the two-fold significance of Shahjahanabad: "[It] was always the *dar al-mulk* [seat of the empire] of the great sultans and the center of the circle of Islam [*markaz-i-dairah Islam*]...Its four walls...enclosed the center of the earth [*markaz-i-khak*]." <sup>49</sup>

The construction of the new city of Delhi began in 1639, while the capital was shifted on the 8th of April 1648\*. The major designed elements of the walled city included the Red Fort, which was the royal palace complex, the main Friday mosque, the two ceremonial ways- Chandani Chowk and Faiz Bazaar, and some institutional buildings, such as the caravanserais, royal gardens etc. The remainder was left to be filled up by the population according to strictly prescribed conditions. Since the major political/royal, religious aspects of the new city and its the institutional buildings were planned, the processional circulation route must have been an important consideration.

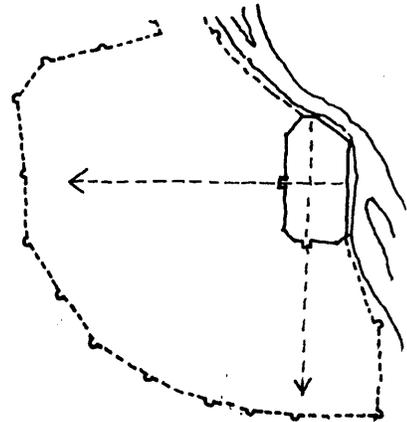
On analyzing the spatial organization of Shahjahanabad in relation to the ceremonial rituals, certain aspects of axial planning are evident. Let us begin first with the boundaries of Shahjahanabad. It has been asserted that the enclosing walls were not very important and that originally old Delhi's walls followed the natural topography and the ruins of the earlier settlement, and had to be rebuilt since they were built of mud that collapsed after the first rains.<sup>50</sup> It

<sup>49</sup>Stephen Blake , "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739" edited by Frykenberg R.E, in Delhi Through the Ages, (New York, 1966),p.155.

\* All the dates mentioned are referred from H.K. Kaul(ed.), Historic Delhi, (New Delhi, 1985).

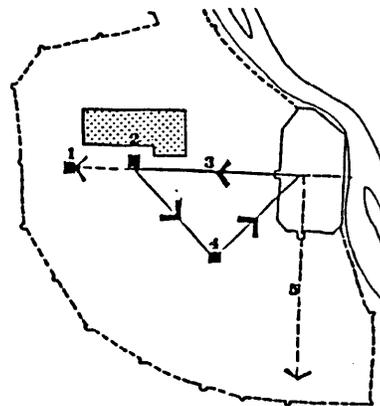
<sup>50</sup>Samuel Noe , "Old Lahore and Old Delhi: variations on a Mughal scheme", Ekistics 295, (July- August 1982), p.314.

seems difficult though to believe that in those days the defenses of the city was not planned carefully. Although the boundary seems to be of some significance in the planning of the city, there is no reference to any kind of celebrations commemorating it, or of processional festivals going around the city walls and gates. Some historians claim that the planning is based on the ancient *vastu-shastras* dating to c.AD. 400-600 which listed a semi-elliptical design called the *karmuka* (bow) shaped settlement pattern<sup>51</sup> that was supposed to be best for a site fronting the river. In a city laid out according to the Karmuka plan, the most auspicious spot was the juncture of the two cross streets. In the Hindu town this spot was occupied by the temple. In Shahjahanabad the palace-fortress of the Emperor stood at this location, the meeting of Chandani Chowk and Faiz Bazaar.<sup>52</sup>



4.2.7 The bow shaped plan with the royal palace at the junction of the two axes.

Another pattern of organization is seen in a walled medieval Islamic city: it would have the fortress or royal complex at the edge. Though this was an old pattern, it was revived and widely applied from the 12th century onwards. In any case, the idea of boundary and center in this case is related to the imperial royal power in place of the religious, and all the important processional rituals started from this center.



4.2.8 The focal points of Shahjahanabad  
1. Fatehpuri Masjid 2. Begum Bagh 3. Chandani Chowk 4. Jama Masjid 5. Faiz Bazaar.

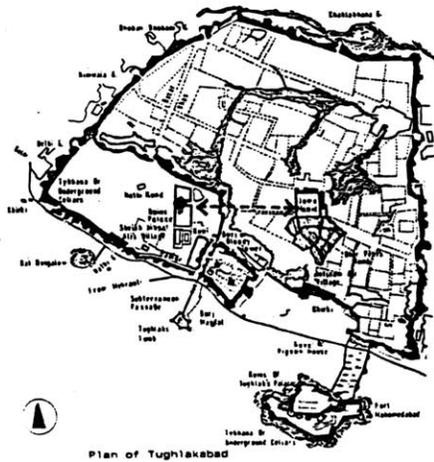
The interesting point here is that the major design decisions show the importance of the ceremonial axis connecting the two important points, the religious and the political.<sup>53</sup> From the old documents available it

<sup>51</sup>Blake in his article "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739" describes that the at least a part of the plan seems to have been guided by the Karmuka design, p.157.

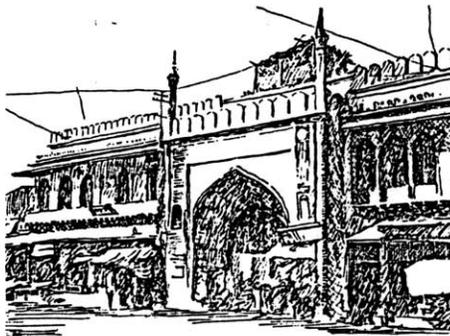
<sup>52</sup>Blake, "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739", p.157-8.

<sup>53</sup>According to Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped*, (London, 1991), p.174, says, "Axiality is commonly used in association with an overall

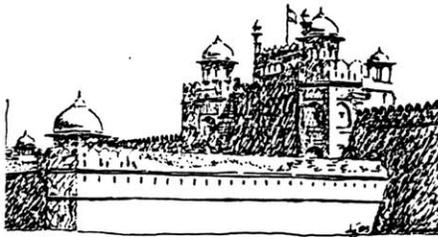




**4.2.9 Plan of the Tughlakabad ruins showing the Jama Masjid opposite the royal palace with the ceremonial axis connecting the two.**



**4.2.10 Sketch showing the front facade of Fatehpuri Masjid at one end of the Chandani Chowk.**



**4.2.11 Sketch of the Red Fort forming the termination of the ceremonial axis on one end**

seems that the Fatehpuri Masjid was constructed earlier as compared to the Jami Masjid (construction of the Fatehpuri Masjid, Faiz Bazaar & the Akbarabadi Masjid is supposed to be 1650, the foundation stone of the Jami Masjid is said to have been laid on 6th Oct. 1650). There have been descriptions of the emperor's ceremonial processions from the Red fort to the Fatehpuri mosque. This approach of having two important points, one of political supremacy and the other of religious supremacy being linked by a ceremonial way is evident not only in the Mughal layout but also in the third city of Delhi that was Tughlakabad (1321-1323), this ruined city shows the royal palace and the mosque in opposition with what appears to have been the ceremonial way linking the two.

The twin foci of the new city of Shah Jahan are normally referred to as the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid, while the positioning of the Fatehpuri Masjid is not given prime importance in most of the contemporary writing. Though topographically the Jama Masjid is on a higher level and is of the Padshahi rank, it is important to note that it was built after the Fatehpuri Masjid. Moreover, if Shahjahan was influenced by the Persian axial planning as many scholars claim<sup>54</sup>, the locational significance of the Fatehpuri Masjid opposite the Red Fort must have been a preordained decision. An old drawing from the Mughal libraries (probably done during the construction of Shahjahanabad) shows the Chandani Chowk with the Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid at

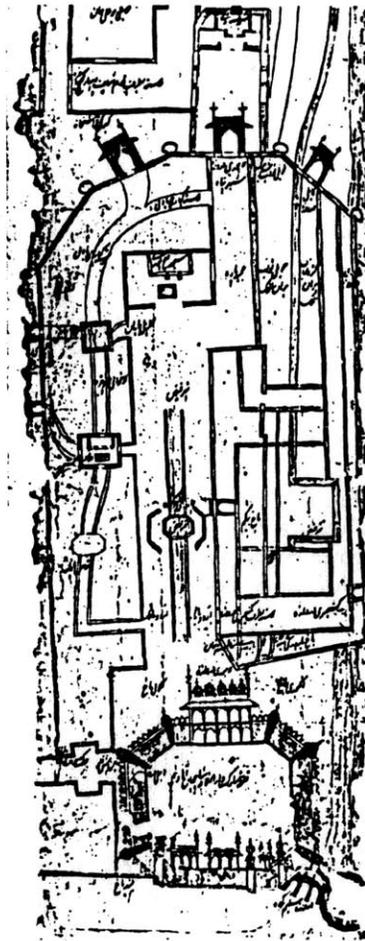
urban diagram that upholds its premises and highlights its effects. It depends on one of the two inducements: cosmology, and physical and cultural topography."  
<sup>54</sup>Samuel Noe, "What Happened to Mughal Delhi?: A Morphological Survey", edited by Frykenberg.R.E., Delhi Through The Ages, (New York, 1966), p.237-238.

either end and other important buildings, gardens and boundary wall with gates which justifies the preconceived decision of the Fatehpuri Masjid opposite the Red Fort. Many historians and travelers have described the splendor of the royal processions from the palace complex to the mosque. Niccolao Manucci, who was in the Mughal capital during Shahjahan's rule, describes the royal processions every week to the Jama Masjid.<sup>55</sup>

The axes of the Red Fort are precisely aligned with the cardinal points of the compass, emphasizing the power and the magnificence of the Mughal Court. The Faiz Bazaar and the Chandani Chowk form two orthogonal axes of the city that is in the shape of a quadrant of a circle. At the junction of these is placed the Red Fort, demonstrating with compelling symbolism to all subjects of the realm that the throne was placed at the *center* of the city, the Empire and the Universe.

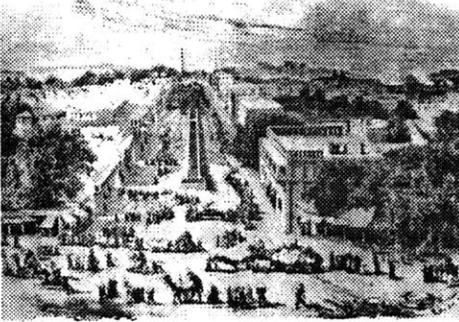
On examining the Chandani Chowk one realizes that there are, in fact, two opposing notions; symmetrical and balanced perspective, and the exaggerated width of the street. These clearly demonstrate its function as a processional way. Attilio Petruccioli explains these differing and contradictory tendencies by the lapse of time required to develop a new physical context for the new ceremonial based on the person of the king in movement. It is interesting to note the manner in which Petroccioli describes the contemporary representation of Mughal celebrations. According to him "Mughal representations are partial in that the show is put on for the benefit of the actors, and the populace, the potential spectator/accomplice, is

<sup>55</sup>Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, translated by William Irvine, 4 vols., London, 1907.

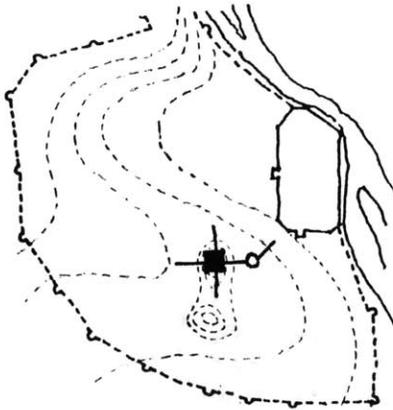


4.2.12 Sketch of Chandani Chowk from early Mughal route map, note the two focal points on either side.

absent"<sup>56</sup>. This is exactly in keeping with the theory of rituals of festivity in the sense that there is no spectator, and everybody is a participant in some form or another. Thus in Mughal town planning the public spectacle demonstrates and celebrates the exalted nature of the emperor. That the King was accepted by the populace in a symbolic manner as divine could have created some kind of resistance from the ulema. In order to pacify strife in case there was any, the concept of axially comes into play with the ceremonial axis of the Chandani Chowk, terminated by the mosque and the palace on either side, as well as the idea of spiritual focus in the form of the Jama Masjid.



4.2.13 *Chandani Chowk in 1857.*



4.2.14 *Plan showing the topographic situation of the Jama Masjid on the hillock.*

Topography is used in a very symbolic manner here. The Jama Masjid is located on one of the two hills within the site of Shahjahanabad. This creates a vertical point of reference in contrast to the horizontal one of the fort and its radiating axes. There seems to be always an underlying opposition of the mosque and the royal fort and the ceremonial axis linking it. Though there were innumerable mosques in the walled city, the Jami Mosque dwarfed the other mosques in its sheer size and magnificence. This would constitute the first rank or stratum, consisting of a single mosque, belonging to the Padshahi (Sovereign) rank.<sup>57</sup> Next in hierarchy were those constructed by other members of the royal family and the noblemen which brings in another aspect of religious structures being constructed for political reasons. Though these mosques were not as large as the Jami Masjid they were quite imposing and occupied prominent positions. If one were to look at their locations, the importance of the central street as

<sup>56</sup>Attilio Petruccioli , "The City as an Image of the King", *Marg.* (1987), p.58.

<sup>57</sup>Muhammad Salih, *Amal-i-Salih*, p.51-55.

a significant ceremonial space would be obvious. Shahjahanabad had eight such mosques and their positions not only reflect this aspect but also their importance in the social structure.

Mosque	Builder	Date	Location
Fathepuri Masjid	Nawab Fathepuri Begum	1650	Chandani Chowk
Akbarabadi Masjid	Nawab Akbarabadi Begum	1650	Faiz Bazaar
Sirhindi Masjid	Nawab Sirhind Begum	1650	Lahori Gate of city
Aurangabadi Masjid	Nawab Aurangabadi Begum	1703	Lahori Gate of city
Zinat al-Masjid	Zinat al-Nisa Begum	1707	Riverbank south of fortress
Sonari Masjid	Raushan al-Daulah	1721	Chandani Chowk
Masjid Sharif al-Daulah	Sharif al-Daulah	1722	Dariba Bazaar
Fakr al-Masjid	Fakr al-Nisa Khanum	1728	Kashmiri Gate

*(From Stephen Blake, Cityscape of an Imperial Capital: Shahjahanabad in 1739 in Delhi Through the Ages edited by Frykenberg R.E., 1966),*

Except for the Zinat al-Masjid, all the important mosques are either positioned at the city gates or on the ceremonial axes, thus they in a way form one end of the axis from the royal palace and are on the major thoroughfares. Thus any royal procession from the palace to the mosques followed an axial pattern of movement.

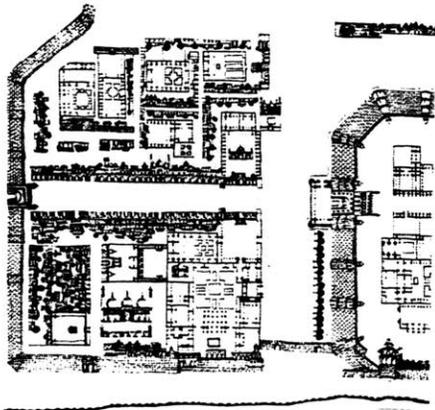
The Chandani Chowk was provided with monumental visual termini at both ends. Between those points the boulevard was punctuated by two small open spaces or *chowks*. The idea of movement and integration during the ceremonial rituals is amply reflected in the fundamental layout of the Chandani Chowk. Attilio Petruccioli expresses this well in his description of Chandani Chowk.



4.2.15 Faiz Bazaar from an old miniature dated 1810.



4.2.16 Bazaar Chitli Qabar as drawn by an Indian artist shows the buildings framing the processional route from the Jama Masjid.

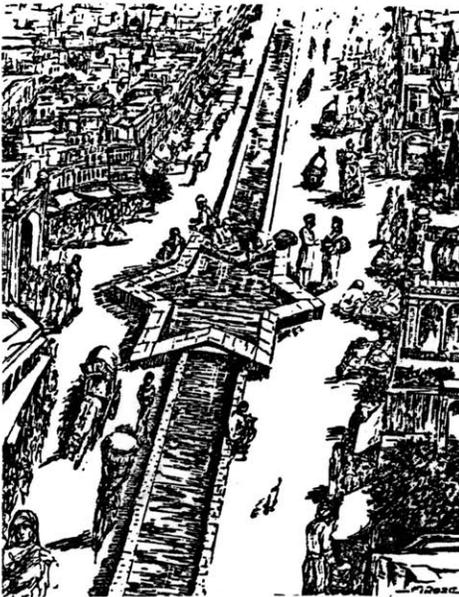


4.2.17 Faiz Bazaar redrawn from an old manuscript.

*"The palace was the Theater of the World. The two porticoed avenues project the movement of the King of Kings into the heart of the Mughal city, where on the occasion of the principle religious and civil feasts (particularly the New Year or the feast of Nauruz, and the emperor's birthday), the population amassed under the porticoes or on the terraces of the houses, participated in a baroque and theatrical ceremony: the slow progress of the Divine 'Presence' of the ruler that dominated the entire procession."*<sup>58</sup>

This description and old sketches and drawings of Chandani Chowk and Faiz Bazaar before the British demolitions also demonstrate how the processional route was framed with controlled building facades and heights.

There have been instances where several scholars have looked at the streets of Jaipur that was built later in 1725 in order to get an idea of the character of these Delhi streets, since very little remains of the original bazaars and structures; Jaipur is thought by some to have been influenced by Shahjahanabad to a certain extent. Although its planning is supposed to follow the ancient Sanskrit models, in my view Jaipur seems to have more of the characteristics of planning based on ceremonial and festive rituals, specially the manner in which street facades are treated with the numerous pavilions and the viewing grandstands.

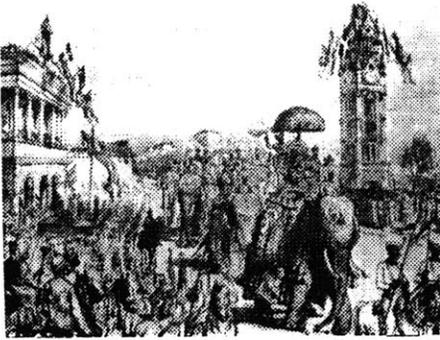


4.2.18 Canal with reflecting pool in Chandani Chowk from early paintings.

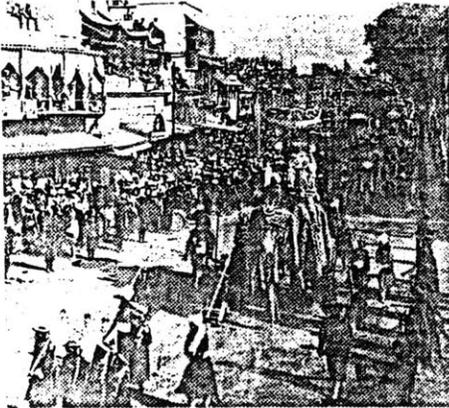
Formal elements along the processional routes are more intimate in scale than those of British Delhi. There are two squares in Chandani Chowk, and in the old days there were reflecting pools in them, gardens and institutional buildings around these squares. Water was employed to enhance the ambiance of the ceremonial axis. A tree-lined marble canal, called the *Nahr-i-Bihisht* (Canal of Paradise), flowed through the center of the Chandani Chowk while a branch of this canal flowed in the middle of the Faiz Bazaar.

<sup>58</sup>Petruccioli, "The City as an Image of the King", p.68.





4.2.21 *The Vice-Regal procession passing the Clock Tower and Delhi Institute in Chandani Chowk, 1877*



4.2.22 *Durbar procession passing through Chandani Chowk in 1903.*



4.2.23 *Durbar procession outside the Red Fort in 1911.*

utilized by a large number of other 18th century Hindu and Muslim rulers. The location of these Durbars was near the ridge which had symbolic significance due to the memories of the great British victory there during the mutiny. This significance was also subtly impressed on the native rulers and the people who attended the durbars.

Through this entire event of the 1877, Lord Lytton wanted to represent the nature of British rule as it was conceived by [him]- "order and discipline, which was in [his] ideology part of the whole system of colonial control"<sup>60</sup> There are ample descriptions of the celebrations, including the vicegerial dais with all the decorations and its symbolic significance, but what is more consequential here was the route followed by the procession of Lord and Lady Lytton riding an elephant. "The procession, led by troops of cavalry, moved through the city of Delhi to the Red Fort, circled around the Jama Masjid and then proceeded towards the north-west to the camps on the ridge".<sup>61</sup> In this description, it is important to note the use of the Mughal ceremonial axis of Chandani Chowk to represent authority. The other significant factor apparent here is that this was the first instance where a procession went from one place of political significance to another (Shahjahanabad to the ridge). A similar thing happens today, where the republic day parade starts at the British capital and terminates at the Red Fort-Mughal capital. The durbar in 1877 was meant to proclaim Queen Victoria as the Empress of India and those in 1903 and 1911 to celebrate the coronation of the new occupants to the throne. These Durbars provide the

<sup>60</sup>Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India", edited by Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, 1983), p.198.

<sup>61</sup>Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India", p.202.

most extensive examples in modern times of the ceremonial process.

#### British period from 1911 to 1947:

It was during the 1911 Durbar that King George V proclaimed his decision to shift the capital back to Delhi (the British capital was in Calcutta until then) There have been many instances of Englishmen who have thought the walled city to be “ceremonial” enough not to justify the making of a new capital. Valentine Prinsep, who went to India in 1876 to paint Lord Lytton’s Durbar, had the following to say:

*“.....the Anglo-Indian goes by the general report, and never troubles himself with artistic impressions, nor does he see the beauties close under his Anglo-Indian nose. I am sore on the subject and naturally so. Here these people could have chosen the front of the Jumma Masjid, about forty steps rising to a magnificent plateau, which overlooks a wide maidan or plain, backed by the ancient fort containing the palace of the old Mogul Emperors. From this position the Viceroy could indeed declare the commencement of the new “Raj”! But instead the Anglo-Indian has chosen a bare plain, and builds his Brummagen dais with no surroundings or any historical association.....”* 62

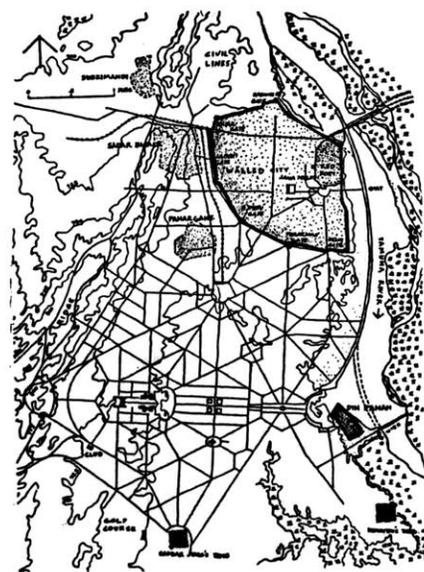
The new scheme took into account all the other aspects of erasing the Mughal memory and followed the tradition of all the earlier dynasties in Delhi from the pre-Islamic to the Mughal ones. Every ruler had established his own city. Moreover the new imperial image that the British wanted to portray then was also an important factor in the making of New Delhi.

#### Spatial Organization:

The spatial organization of New Delhi has some of the features of the walled city. The new site was *bounded*

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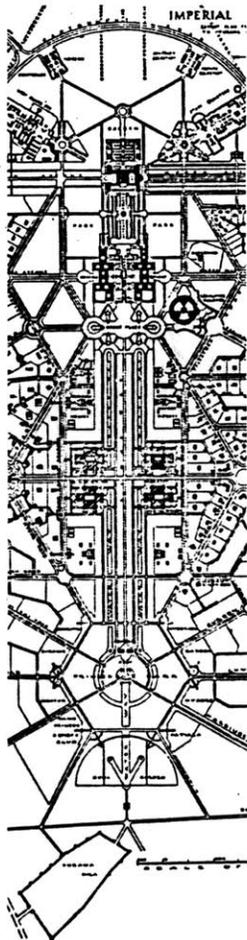
<sup>62</sup>Michael Alexander , Delhi and Agra: A Traveler's' Companion, (London, 1987), p.95.



4.2.24 Lutyen's preliminary plan for New Delhi, 1912.



with important monuments and topographical features which took the place of the boundary wall that existed in the older days. North of the site was the walled city of Shahjahanabad, the eastern side was enclosed by the Yamuna river, the western side was formed by the ridge, while on the south there was as a marker Safdarjung's tomb. The focus of this plan is the Raisina acropolis comprising of Government House with an integral council and secretarial blocks which the report made by Lutyen, declares as "the keystones of the rule over the Empire India; this is place of Government in its highest expression".



4.2.25 Plan of the central vista.

The largest mass of rock was chosen as the focus of the city. Twenty feet of it had to be blasted to create a great platform. From this focus led the processional way, which was then called the Kings Way (presently called Raj Path), ending at the legendary city of Indraprastha of the Mahabharata and the citadel of Humayun, while the other processional way at an angle of 60° having the visual link to the Jama Masjid. Crossing the 440ft. processional Kings Way at right angles was the Queens Way (presently called Janpath) terminating in the new railway station on the north and the Anglican Cathedral on the south. All the important institutional buildings were on these ceremonial routes. The creation of axial vistas was an important aspect in the ceremonial character of these routes. All these features are very similar to the way the Mughal city was thought to have been organized. Lutyen identified major historic monuments to terminate the axes of the Imperial city and to provide strong visual accents. All the vistas were grand in their spatial layout and ranged from 60ft. to 300ft. in width with the main ceremonial axis being 400ft. Thus the width, the focus the terminations all show how the idea of

ceremonial rituals was being exhibited in the design process.

The importance of formal elements along the Processional Way and terminating it are evident in Sir Herbert Baker's own description:

*"The Processional Way leads on through high railings, between fountains and trees, to the privileged Viceroy's Court; in its center stands a column of great height given by the late Maharaja of Jaipur, terminating in the Star of India.....At the end stand the majestic building of the Viceroy's house. The great steps and raised-columned portico of the state entrance flanked with statues of their Majesties, face and command the view eastwards, past the column, through the double row of columned porticoes and the two domes of the Secretariat, down to the far avenues and water channels of the Maidan, to the vast arch, the War memorial of the Indian Armies, and to the gate-turrets of Indrapat and the distant Jumna."*<sup>63</sup>

This description makes it clear that elements along the route ranging from fountains, pools, triumphal arches, War memorials, and the columns were important and that the route itself was framed by the high railings gradually changing to the tree lined avenues.

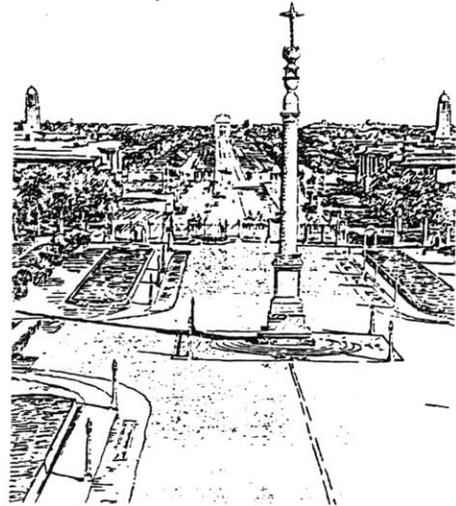
### Continuity and Change:

In the modern day, there is no place for any royal or imperial power. But the memories of Mughal and British rule are evident in the manner in which the spatial organization designed by them is adapted to the modern political ceremonies.

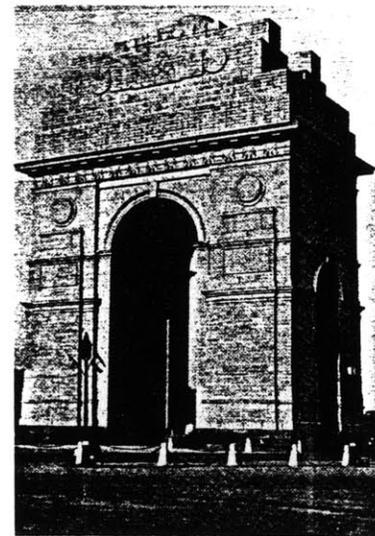
Historically there have been a number of references by travelers describing the beauty of Chandani Chowk as the ceremonial axis and the celebrations and processions on it. What is of great interest today is that the same place, in spite of all its lost glory and beauty still retains its symbolic significance. It is a very

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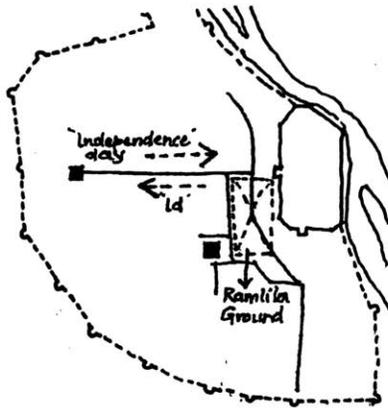
<sup>63</sup>Herbert Baker, India: A reprint of the special India number of "The Times of India", 18th February 1930, (London, The Times Publishing Co., 1930), p.163-9.



4.2.26 The central vista or King's Way.



4.2.27 View of the India Gate on the Ceremonial Axis.



4.2.28 People facing the Red Fort on the Independence Day and the Fatehpuri Masjid on the occasion of 'Id'. Note the 'Ramliila' ground- the area between the Jama Masjid and Red Fort used for political rallies.



4.2.29 The central vista continues to serve as a setting for ceremonial. The Republic Day parade held annually on January 26.

busy commercial street with none of its imperial character. It is devoid of all its original trees and water channels and is not very pleasing to look at, but on the festive occasions, such as the 'Id', it is totally transformed and becomes charged with life. On the occasion of Id, the Chandani Chowk is closed for traffic and the entire road becomes a prayer place with thousands of people facing the Fatehpuri Masjid, while on Independence Day this direction is reversed and the people face the Red Fort, where the Prime Minister of the country delivers his annual address to the Nation.

The selection of Red Fort for the Prime Minister's national address on the Independence day is in itself a very symbolic act, indirectly associating the present to the past memories of Indian glory on Independence Day. During this century there have also been important Gurudwaras and other temples built on this street. These generate a number of processions celebrating different religious festivals, at which times the street becomes again a processional space. Thus if one compares it to the original design intention that was an imperial, ceremonial street, to the modern transformation, it has altogether changed the 'atmosphere' of the place and incorporated not only one but several religious as well as political and other secular festivals.

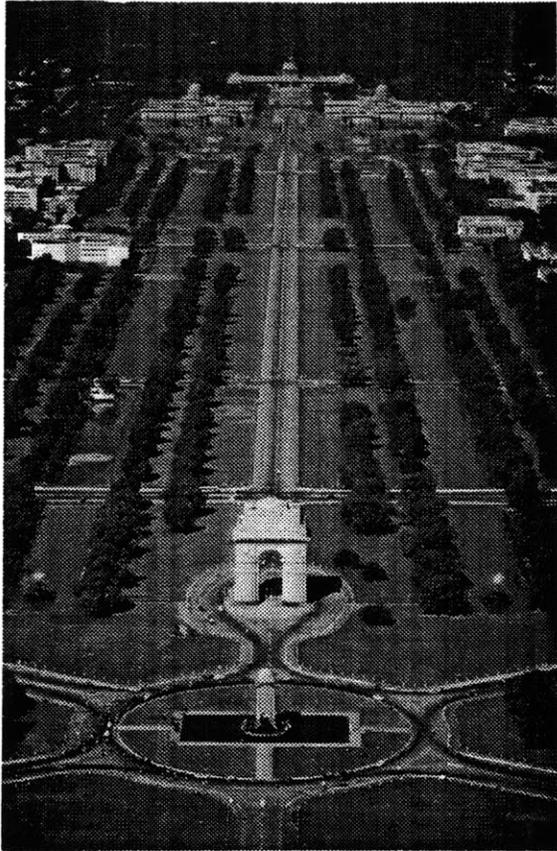
Even if we consider the republic day parade that takes place in the British designed part of the city, we see that the attribute of British power ends at the Red fort, the seat of Mughal power, in a symbolic gesture. This parade begins at the *Rashtrapati Bhavan* or the old Viceroy's House on the Raisina hills, follows the ceremonial axis laid out by the British and ends at the

ceremonial axis laid out by the Mughals. Today India is a democracy and the British or the Mughal play no role, but it is interesting to see how the memories of the British and Mughal rule are used in a symbolic manner during the major festivities of political significance. The area between the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid which was demolished by the British to clear the firing range has become the political ritual center of India today and is also adapted as a Ramlila ground, where the festival of Dusherra is celebrated with great fervor.

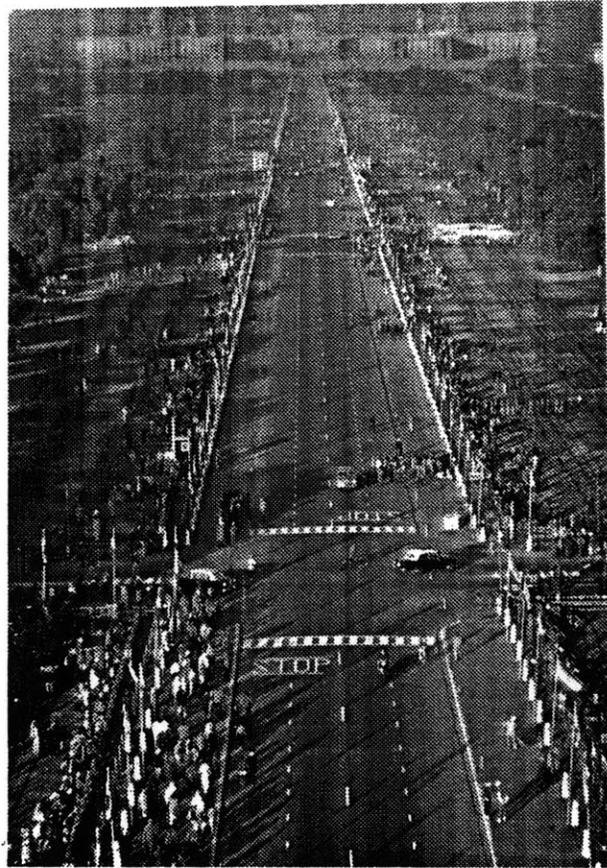
While in the South Indian Temple cities circumambulation had an important role and defined the route, in Delhi, it was the linear or axial movement that played a significant role. This may suggest that a religious-ritual diagram could be follow circumambulatory pattern identifying the sacred ground, whereas to represent the political-ceremonial diagram it was the axial pattern leading the people in hierarchical fashion to the seat of power that was important.



*4.2.30 Plan of Shahjahanabad showing colonial and post-colonial development.*



*4.2.31 View of the Central vista today with the President's Houe and the India Gate.*



*4.2.32 View of the Central vista on the Independence Day with festoons and flags.*



*4.2.33 The ceremony of 'Beating of the Retreat' held near the secretariats on the central axis.*

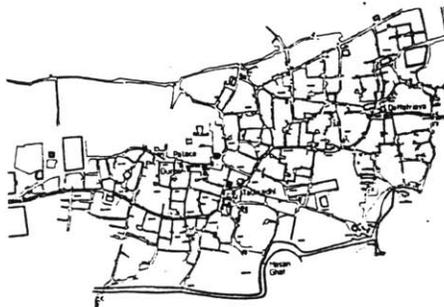


### 4.3 Bhaktapur:



4.3.1 *Location of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu valley, Nepal.*

Bhaktapur in Nepal is a fascinating place to compare with the South Indian temple cities and Delhi since it is an example wherein both the religious and political festivals play an important role in the urban form. Bhaktapur was the ruling kingdom of the valley until the 18th century, and the kings built numerous temples goddesses Taleju believing that she bestowed power upon them. Though the present political center of Nepal is Kathmandu, the processional rituals in Bhaktapur even today have both the political and religious dimension linked to them. Bhaktapur's festive rituals have not been transformed much from the 17th century probably due to the policy of isolation in Nepal that kept out all foreign influences for a long time. On the other hand, in India, through the constant process of colonization and modernization urban life has completely changed, and the traditional urban configuration at times has become quite meaningless while at other times has adapted to incorporate the changes in an extremely interesting manner.



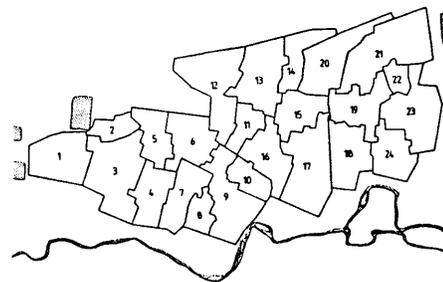
4.3.2 *Plan of the town.*

The Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group of the Newars had built smaller settlements along the trading route from Tibet to India since the first millennium BC, and by the end of the first millennium AD, Newar settlements had developed into three the Nepali towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. They underwent a constant Hinduization process since then, and from the 14th century this was intensified and promoted by the ruling dynasty. While Patan, and to a certain extent, Kathmandu preserved their Buddhist character in the spatial structure, Bhaktapur was more dominated by Hinduism.

Kirkpatrick, one of the earliest European historians working in Nepal, has described the Valley as having nearly as many temples as houses, and as many idols as inhabitants. Just as every sphere is sanctified by an altar or shrine so also almost everyday in the year is marked by a festival or religious ceremony. Each facet of life, whether political, cultural or historical can be connected with the legend of gods that dominated the past and still motivate much of the drama of daily life. Gods seem to be omnipresent here-in the water, sky, plants, rocks and even human beings. They are both loved and feared. They are worshipped constantly in rituals and festivals.

Spatial Organization:

Looking at the town as a whole, one realizes that Bhaktapur is divided into 24 wards (this particular number had assumed some symbolic significance)<sup>64</sup> and each of the wards has its own set goddess. Each of the 24 wards have a central square to house the open shrine (*pith*), temple (*dyogah*) and the god house (*dyochem*). An interesting aspect of the festivals in this town is that, though they are processional in nature and entail circumambulation, the processions pass through the important squares and the wards, thus unifying the worship of all the diverse gods and goddesses.



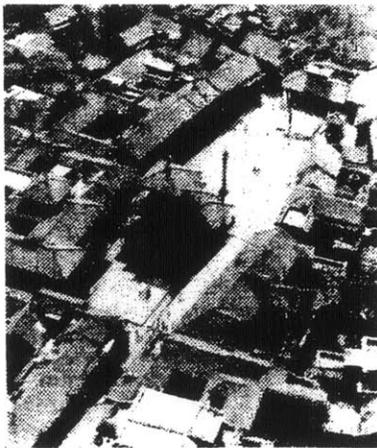
4.3.3 Division of the town into 24 wards.

<sup>64</sup>Neils Gutschow, "Squares of Bhaktapur", in *AARP* 17, (March 1980), p. 60. According to him, "Legend and tradition tell us of the division into 24 wards, the 1853 census also shows this, whereas there is no doubt of the 20 wards, the remaining 4 vary according to the source." The idea of this phenomenon however prevails though the meaning of this number is not yet clear. Neils Gutschow however thinks that the number 24 represents the essential symbolism of time & space- time being based on 12 months of the year and space being based on the 8 cardinal and intermediate directions.



The festivals here are a unique combination of religious, political, seasonal etc. which make them exceptionally fascinating to study. The overall spatial configuration of Bhaktapur in relation to the aspect of rituals of festivity could be understood in terms of four dimensions- the east west axis, the squares, the bathing ghats, the holy route of circumambulation. The east-west axis which is the main spine was the ancient trade route along which the settlement developed. It approximately adheres to the contour lines running parallel to the Hanumante river. Streets were later added at right angles to this spine forming more or less regular blocks.

The early center of Bhaktapur was probably to be found around the eastern square. This was shifted in the 15th century due to the transfer of the palace (*darbar*) towards a outlying location in the west. This not only changed the urban structure and caused the social and ritual restructuring of the town but also generated a center to balance the two halves. This spatial restructuring is reflected every year in the celebration of the New Year festival at the Taumadhi square which is described in detail further. Thus, the urban structure reflects these three squares as the most significant among the network of squares. They also form the focal points of the town.



4.3.4 View of the Nayapol pagoda in the Taumadhi Square.

It is important to note that the festive rituals involve circumambulations which pass through these squares and run within the urban space linking the important areas. The role of circumambulation should be understood with the idea to link - it is an integrating force. By circumambulation the town achieves unity through ritual. The periphery of the town is signified by the presence of shrines and water tanks that are

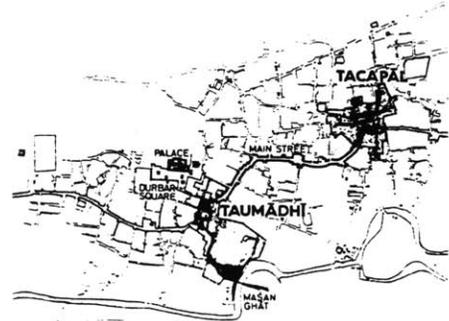
especially important during the rituals of festivity. The symbolism associated with the center is evident in Bhaktapur too, and the circumambulation is in reference to it. The Taumadhi square that forms the center of the town has the sacred 'Naytapol'(pagoda) and the Bhairava temple. The idea of approaching heaven is achieved here by raising the 'Naytapol' on a platform, this base keeps reducing as one goes up and so does the pagoda marking the connection with heaven.

The urban rituals here are bound to the festive calendar of the year, which mainly marks the events of agricultural importance. They often continue for a fortnight and sometimes an entire lunar month. The pace of these festive rituals accelerates during the agricultural lulls and slows down during harvest and planting times.

The New Year festival is especially important in terms of urban renewal, since in its very idea it is the re-creation of the beginnings from the primordial chaos. It is remarkable to see the nature of the festival rituals and the manner in which urban spaces are exercised to reflect them. The New Year festival is normally held in mid-April.

The ritual as described by Neils Gutschow goes as follows:

*"During the New Year festival the divine couple-Bhadrakali and Bhairava - come down from their god houses to be carried on pagoda - shaped chariots from Taumadhi square down to the large open square (Yahsimkhel) along the river side, opposite the cremation grounds. A wooden pole is raised to mark the beginning of the New Year, the people take a purifying bath in the river (at Chupin ghat), and worship the gods and then enter the town to begin the New Year.....At the beginning of the festival hundreds of farmers try to drag chariots to their parts of the city.....The competition usually ends in fighting and by the end of the festival the chariots return to Taumadhi as battered wrecks."*

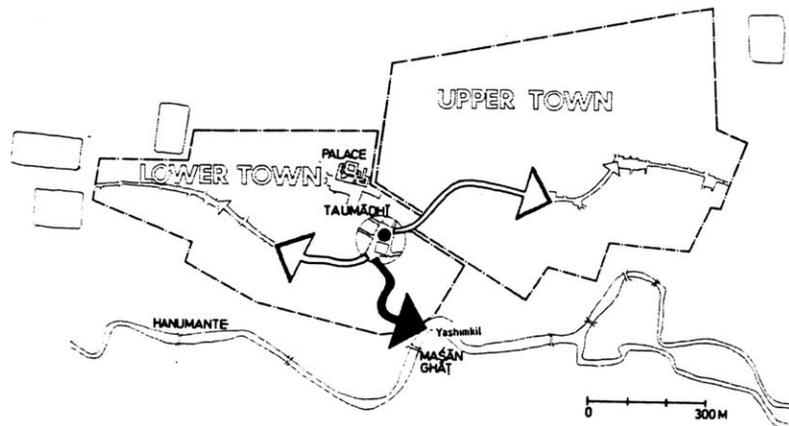


4.3.5 Location of the three important squares with the Taumadhi square forming the center.



4.3.6 Dragging of the chariots during the New Year celebrations.

On analyzing the entire festival in relation to its positioning in the city form of Bhaktapur many important aspects of it are made evident. Taumadhi square is the fulcrum of the town, it works like a pivot between the upper and the lower town, thus it is this aspect of centrality that makes it an important space for the New Year celebrations. The movement of the procession from the Taumadhi square to the Yahsimkhel that is next to the cremation grounds and besides the quarter of the untouchables shows the manifestation of the concept of temporary destabilizing the 'established order' in the physical sense.



**4.3.7 The Ritual Axis during the New Year celebrations.**

In Irwin's words it is as a 'momentary return to the undifferentiated state of chaos before the act of creation' and the New Year festival cyclically re-enacts this.

This festival is extremely dynamic in character specially with the chariot contest where the Taumadhi square serves as an excellent frame for the festival ritual. The competition of chariot dragging also reflects the underlying antagonism between the eastern upper half of the town and the western lower half, this could be due to the physical shifting of the palace in the 15th century from the Tacpal square with

the Dattatreya temple to a peripheral western location (this act could be seen as a change in the political center of the town). The winner of the competition is symbolically supposed to rule the other half of the town for the next year. The actual processional rituals follow two axes; the east-west, when the chariots are dragged between the Durbar and the Tacpal square, and the north-south when the procession goes from Taumadhi square to Yahsimkhel. Both these movements follow an axial ritual pattern between two focal points.

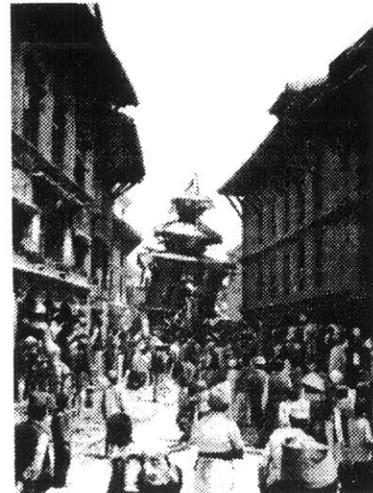
With the change of the political center, the development of the Durbar (Palace) square is also significant. With the magnificent temple of the Supreme Mother Goddesses and the surrounding



4.3.8 A 19th. century lithograph showing the Durbar square.

residences of priests and courtiers, it was dominated by the rituals of the Court until the 18th century. According to Neils Gutschow, the "Taumadhi square and the cremation ground, however, which mark the limits of the most important ritual axis, which was substantially re-shaped by King Bupatindra-Malla, who by 1700 had built several pagodas to provide the spatial background for the enactment of the New Year ritual(Bisket-Jatra)."<sup>65</sup> This is important since there was a conscious attempt to structure the city form to accommodate the ritual.

During this festival the religious ritual introduces in idea of centrality, but its political significance could be thought of as due to the inherent axially created by the opposition of the old Durbar position and the new location. Thus one can actually see the combination of the two earlier cases in Bhaktapur.

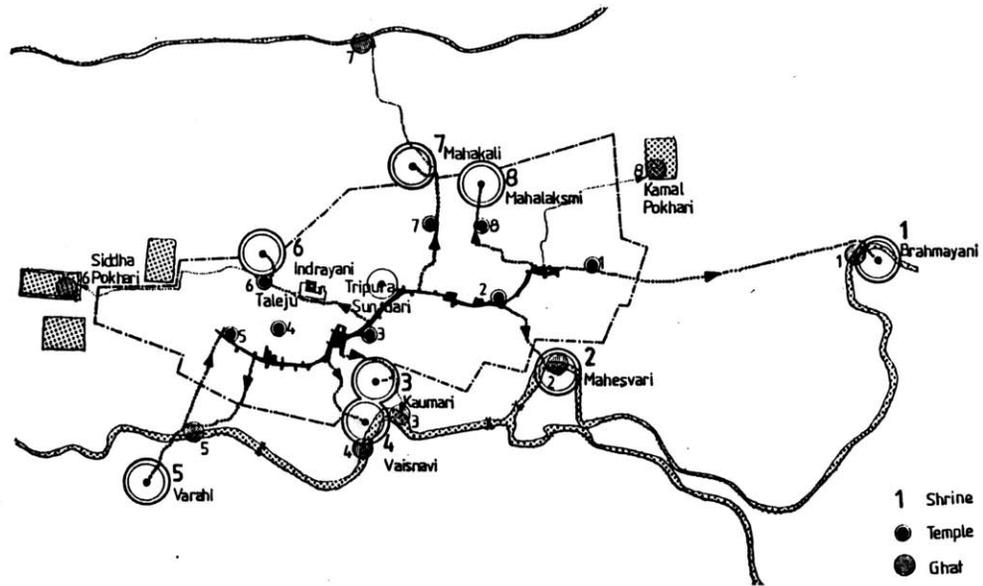


4.3.9 View of the New Year procession.

<sup>65</sup>Gutschow, "Squares of Bhaktapur", p. 60.

The other important festival, 'dasaim', occurs in autumn and marks the beginning of the harvest. Though this could be termed a seasonal and cyclic festival, as in all other Hindu festivals it is also linked to religion and is said to mark the victory of the goddess over the demon and her return to the town. The use of water tanks and bathing ghats is also significant during this festival. The actual festival ritual is described as follows:

*"It lasts for 10 days, reaching its climax with the return of Navdurga goddesses as masked dancers. During the first eight days, however, the population of Bhaktapur takes ritual baths at different bathing places(bathing ghat) along the river or at tanks which surround the town. Correspondingly eight Mother Goddesses (Ashtamatrikas) are worshipped at their respective shrines in aniconic forms.....finally on the last day of the festival, the whole population goes along the main road towards the eastern most ghat to worship Taleju, the Supreme Mother, in her temple next to the palace."*<sup>66</sup>



4.3.10 The sequence of ritual bathing followed during the 'dasaim' festival in Bhaktapur.

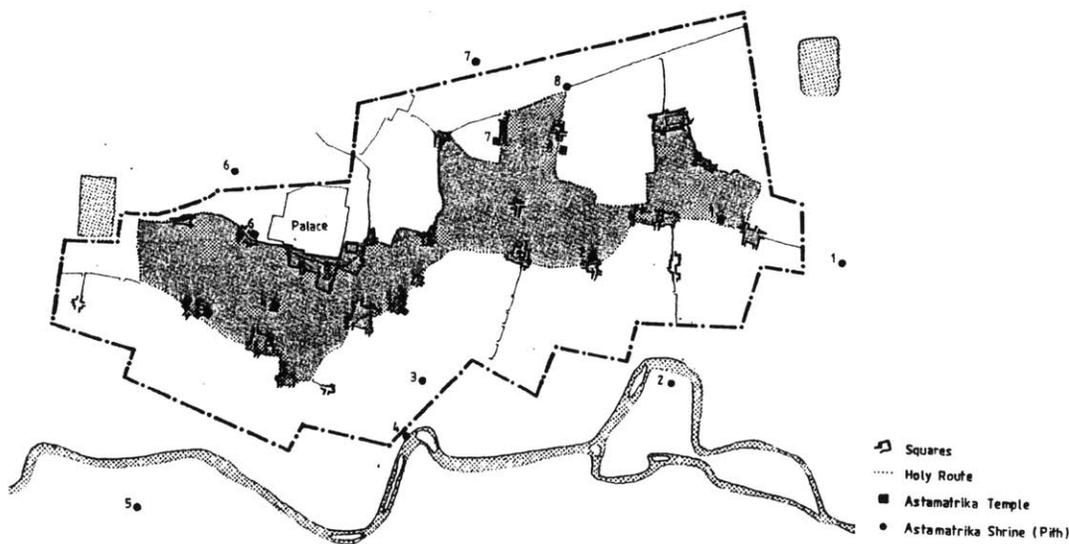
Here one realizes the importance of the ritual use of water, its significance in the urban layout and its value in the shaping of festival rituals. A similar



4.3.11 Circumambulation route during the dasaim festival.

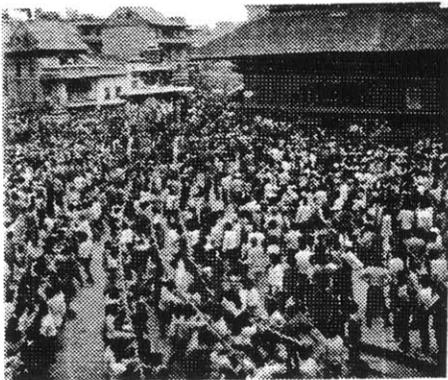
<sup>66</sup>Gutschow, "Squares of Bhaktapur", p. 62.

concept is also evident in the South Indian towns of Srirangam and Chidambaram, where the center of the town is the main temple with its tank and the periphery of the town is marked by different tanks in the cardinal and intermediary directions. In Bhaktapur, during this festival there is a particular sequential order that is followed, on the 1st day devotees bath at the Brahmayani and on the 10th day the cycle is completed by bathing again at the Brahmayani, between that by visiting 8 ghats and 8 shrines representing the basic cardinal and intermediate directions spatial order is activated and experienced through ritual. The main road serves as a spine through which all other points of ghats branch out, thus making the spine as the main ritual axis linking the upper town to the lower, the Old Palace square (Tadpal square with the Dattatreya temple) to the New Palace square with the temple of the Mother Goddess and linking various tanks with the eight mother goddess temples to one another. The procession in this case follows the circumambulatory ritual pattern.



4.3.12 The circumambulatory path linking the various squares of the town.

On analyzing these festivals, it becomes apparent that the shifting of the political center has generated certain major changes in the New Year festival (Bisket Jatra), since without the Palace square in opposition to the Tacpal square the very existence of the Taumadhi square and its central importance is questionable. For whatever political/religious reasons the Palace was shifted, it generated a definite change in the festival ritual process and it was not the manner of celebration which gave the city its form. While on the other hand there is an unequivocal evidence to show that there was a substantial reshaping done by the Malla King who built several pagodas to provide a spatial background for the enactment of the New Year festival. Thus in this particular case there is an equal relationship of the festival being shaped by different conditions of change in the urban form and the urban form being shaped by the festival.



4.3.13 *View of the New Year processional chariot.*

After looking at the festive rituals celebrated in Bhaktapur and addressing the question of the relationship between rituals and memory in the context of the built environment some interesting relationships between them are evident. At times like the New Year festival it is the change in the built environment which has given meaning to the ritual, this is a good example of Halbwachs's theory that "the group not only transforms the space into which it has been inserted, but also yields and adapts to its physical surroundings."<sup>67</sup> The other festival, 'dasaim', as described earlier is also significant in demonstrating the importance of festive rituals in linking urban spaces, unifying and making the city into a coherent entity within a particular time frame. It reminds the

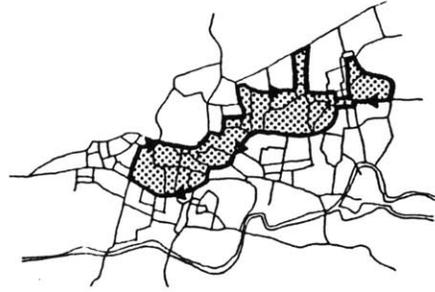
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<sup>67</sup>Maurice Halbwachs , The Collective Memory, (New York, 1980), p.130.

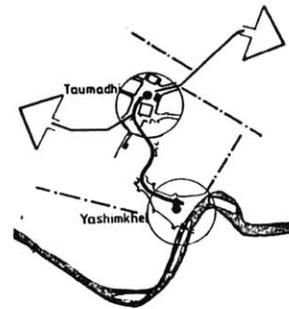
participants at specific places of the entire urban structure and the linkages, re-enacting the city form in the mind during those ten days due to sequential ritual bathing at particular positions within the city.

The combination of the religious and the political diagram is evident in the manifestation of rituals through the spatial organization. The New Year festival has definite political overtones and this is evident in the axial ritual pattern that is followed by the processions. The Dasaim festival is basically a religious celebration and the ritual pattern conforms to the aspect of circumambulation. Thus in the case of

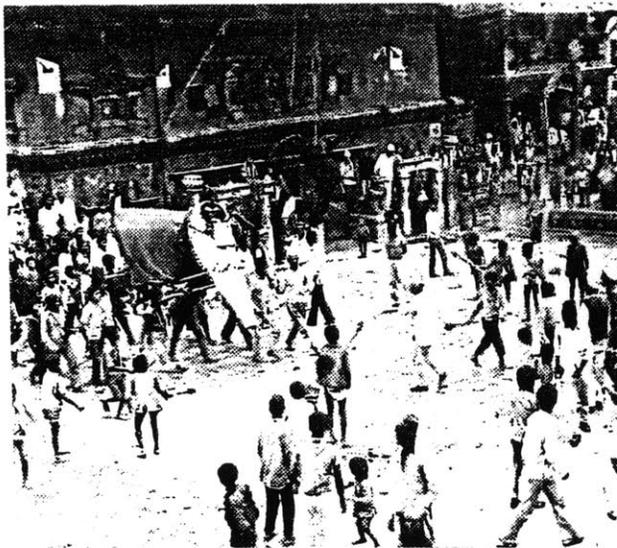
Bhaktapur there is an association with the religious ritual diagram seen in the South Indian temple cities as well as the political ritual diagram examined in Delhi.



4.3.14 Circumambulatory pattern followed during the 'dasaim' festival.



4.3.15 The east-west and north-south ritual axis followed during the New Year festival.



4.3.16 Procession through the Tacpal square.



4.3.17 Other processional rituals passing through the Taumadhi square.



**SPATIAL ATTRIBUTES OF PROCESSIONAL RITUALS IN THREE CASE STUDIES:**

<u>South Indian Temple Cities:</u>	<u>Delhi:</u>	<u>Bhaktapur:</u>
<p><b>Prescribed route of circulation:</b></p> <p>The prescribed route of circulation is circumambulatory around the central temple complex and based on the fixed cosmic diagram of the mandala.</p>	<p>The prescribed circulation route followed the axial pattern in the old walled city of Shahjahanabad as well as British Delhi. During the Mughal times in Shahjahanabad Chandani Chowk was the ceremonial way and in the British time it was the Kings Way that took the place of the ceremonial route. In modern times, both of them that take on the role if the ceremonial route.</p>	<p>The prescribed circulation route follows a closed circuit pattern and circumambulates the center. This center itself comes into being due to the opposition of two axial points-the Tacpal and the Durbar squares.</p>
<p><b>Presence of a center:</b></p> <p>The presence of the central temple complex is significant since it is the main focal point and gives a reference to the circulation route.</p>	<p>There does not exist a single center, rather the royal or political center is always balanced by another one in opposition. In Shahjahanabad the royal palace and the mosque formed the two focal points between which the ceremonial processions were staged, while in the British settlement it was the Indrapat and Humayun's fort that formed the termination of the King's Way on one side, while the Government House formed the culmination on the other side. In the modern times the political parades use the Red Fort and the Government House as the two focal points.</p>	<p>The presence of the center is an important aspect of the celebrations here. The New Year festival is celebrated here while the Dasaim festival circumambulates it.</p>
<p><b>Formal elements:</b></p> <p>Formal elements like the water tanks, shrines, gopuram towers in the cardinal and intermediate directions are important spatial aspects of ritual significance in the procession.</p>	<p>The formal elements in the processional route totally change their character from Shahjahanabad to the British Delhi. In Shahjahanabad the ceremonial axis had two squares with reflecting pools, while the ceremonial axis of the British capital is interspersed with fountains, triumphal arches and statues. There are no gathering squares and the whole scale is such that it is it allows only for ceremonials and parades.</p>	<p>Formal elements and gathering places along the processional route are squares and water-tanks with shrines and temples.</p>

<p><b>Termination spaces:</b></p> <p>The temple complex is the beginning and end of the processional rituals. The formal elements form minor termination points along the route of the processional rituals but the major termination is the beginning itself which is the central temple complex.</p>	<p>Termination spaces are extremely significant. In Shahjahanabad the royal processions were normally held from the palace to the mosque, here the termination point was of metaphysical importance. In British Delhi, the termination point for ceremonial parades was the India Gate, while today the parades start at the Government House of British Delhi and end at the Red Fort in Mughal Delhi, all of which has tremendous symbolic significance.</p>	<p>The minor termination spaces are at the formal elements along the processional route at the water-tanks, shrines and temples, while the major ones are either at the central Taumadhi square or one of the other two focal points-the Tacpal and the Durbar squares. Both these are significant due to their political and religious character.</p>
<p><b>Reversal of Hierarchy:</b></p> <p>The circulation route follows the social hierarchy, there is no reversal of hierarchy in that sense. There is only one instance in Suchindram where one could call it a reversal of social hierarchy when the deity is at the gopuram gate on the way to the water-tank, here there is an orgiastic tongue trill of the non-Brahmin women. The major reversal of hierarchy, though, in all these processions is that the deity steps out of the temple complex and goes to the people unlike normal routine of the people going into the temple to offer respects.</p>	<p>There is no reversal of hierarchy, except the fact that in Shahjahanabad, this could be represented by the king going out of the palace.</p>	<p>Hierarchy is not reversed in social terms during any of the festivals described, except for one instance when the procession of the New Year ends next to the Cremation grounds next to the quarter of the untouchables. This shows the manifestation of the concept of temporary de-stabilizing the 'established order' in the physical sense.</p>
<p><b>Framing:</b></p> <p>There is no real framing of the circulation route, except in terms of the people lining the route and the built residential fabric of the town. This is quite low key in character and not imposing.</p>	<p>Framing of the processional route in the Mughal capital was through controlled facade design of the buildings along the route while in the British capital it is the tree lined avenues. Today it is more in terms of barricades, people and the police.</p>	<p>Framing of the processional route is done by the people participating in the festival and by the built fabric in the form of residential buildings along the route which open out into small and big squares with temples.</p>
<p><b>Boundaries:</b></p> <p>The processional route does trace the boundaries and sets limits, specially during the ritual visits to the water tanks in the cardinal and intermediate directions.</p>	<p>Limits and boundaries not given importance in ritual processions probably since the area they demarcate is not the same as religious places and hence not sacred.</p>	<p>The limits and boundaries are recapitulated in the memory of the people during the festivals since the shrines and temples of particular gods and goddesses surrounding the town are visited. For particular festivals like the dasaim, ritual bathing is performed at the water-tanks and ghats which surround the town.</p>

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

My aim in this thesis was to examine and attempt to understand urban form through the medium of processional rituals of festivity in three specific cases in the Indian subcontinent.

The accompanying matrix summarizes the spatial attributes of processional festivals in the three case studies of this thesis. Some conclusions regarding the relationship between the case studies and processional rituals have been summed up, and general observations which might be made are as follows:

- In processions involving religious rituals, in South Indian temple cities and at Bhaktapur in the north, the prescribed route of circulation is circumambulatory; while in political processions, as studied in Delhi and Bhaktapur, the processional route is axial. One might hypothesize from this that the power structure of the city finally decides the ritual structure affecting the spatial pattern of the urban form. If the examined case is primarily a political center, then processional movement is normally axial, and so is the spatial pattern. On the other hand, if the examined case is a religious center, then the processional movement apparently gives rise to circumambulatory structures. However, whether the main function of the examined case were political or religious, processional festivals still involved the proclamation of a power structure through ritual means. Thus processional rituals satisfy the representation of a values, myths or symbols in the urban setting.

- In all the processions examined in the case studies, the significance of a center is evident. This is not necessarily manifested as a geometric center, but may take the form of a focal point. One could probably

deduce from this that a focal point of authority, either religious or political, is an important aspect of processional rituals. The focal points, whether a temple, palace, government buildings, etc., form the beginning and termination of processions. It is at these points that the major movements occur. This aspect is reflected in the development of urban form too, since it is one of the most concrete manifestations of human dreams and aspirations.

- Unlike carnivals, such as that in Rio de Janeiro or the traditional Mardi Gras, both the religious and political processions examined in the case studies show no real reversal of hierarchy in social terms, probably due to the fact that India is culturally an extremely hierarchical society.

- In South Indian temple cities and in the northern case of Bhaktapur the processional rituals trace the limits & boundary of each of the ritual areas. This is not so in the example of Delhi. One may make a general inference based on this that religious processional rituals demarcate some kind of a sacred ground, while this is not the case in political processions.

- In places where religion is still one of the dominating aspects of life, despite the impact of modern change, processional rituals have more or less continued in the same manner as they did in the past, since that is generally more permanent than political power. This is well illustrated in the South Indian cities, where in spite of all modern changes, with automobiles running on the peripheral roads, on the days of the processional rituals the character of the cities is totally transformed. In other cities too, most of

the continuing old rituals are those related to religious power, since that is generally more permanent than political power. The other significant factor in the cases studied is that major changes, whether in the urban form as in the case of Delhi, or in processional rituals, affect and influence each other. Here the changes and demolitions made by the British have given rise to new political rituals, and both the Mughal and British city have been used to generate new symbolism in modern political processions.

There is a view today that ritual is something that belonged to the past and was rooted in the age of superstition. Many people thus question the significance and influence of ritual in the modern world. But, we are still affected by ritual to a large extent. Power is still cherished, expressed and augmented by rituals, and the latter demand spatial settings, be they represented through monumental vistas in capital cities, special parade routes, significant landmarks, or by other means. We might reject the rituals associated with power and the means to portray them, but we still have to accept that they play an important psychological role and relate to the deeper emotions and instincts within humans by reinforcing the sense of stability and continuity with the past.

Finally, that we still celebrate the sheer joy of life since time immemorial shows that processional rituals transcend the immediacy of their urban, historic, or commemorative contexts to represent a higher human function or need. Clifford Geertz describes a further important aspect of processional rituals: for him "not all the rituals [whether of politics or religion] are instrumental activities - functional activities in a very narrow sense. They are a way of expressing what

the participants- that is us- think that polity is all about, what we think politics [or religion] is.....Rather [they have] something to do with sustaining belief in authority; why people do the things they do without coercion much of the time, how authority is devolved, and so on.”<sup>68</sup>



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<sup>68</sup>Miller.J.(ed.), States of Mind, (London, 1978), p.205-206.

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