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Temple consecration rituals in ancient India: Text and archaeology

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Preface

My first encounter with the Kāśyapaśilpa took place between rows 4 and 5 on the first floor of the Kern Institute Library in Leiden – a wonderful location for anyone interested in South Asia. I was browsing through the section containing the Sanskrit treatises on art and architecture. Pained by the fact that the study of ancient treatises on art was for a long time not particularly popular among scholars of Indology, I was tempted to translate one of such texts in order to make it available to the public and – surely – become famous. The Kāśyapaśilpa seemed perfect for the purpose – it was a complete book, it had not been translated and it was possessed by our library, so the study could be started right away. Luckily, when I mentioned the idea to my guru, Prof. Karel van Kooij, he quickly made me realise that, while translating the Kāśyapaśilpa is certainly a noble thing which would make my name connected with it forever (for good or for bad, depending on the quality of the translation), at the same time it is a very hard and long job.

Slightly discouraged, I still considered the Kāśyapaśilpa an interesting text and could not part from it so easily. Browsing through it, I came across a chapter curiously entitled ‘*garbha-nyāsa-vidhi*’, which can roughly be translated as ‘the rule for the placing of the embryo’. The chapter happened to have nothing to do with conception or conception rites, but everything to do with the building of a Hindu temple. Intrigued by the title, I was willing to find out more about it, but the information found in the secondary literature proved very limited. And so, speaking in the language of the architects, the foundation for the present study was laid. This dissertation is the fruit of the ‘embryo’ encountered on that day.

On the happy day of delivery, I would like to thank everyone who helped me in my study. I want to thank the chief librarian of the Kern Institute Library, Dr. Dory Heilijgers, for providing miraculous solutions at times when a so-much-needed book could not be found or when the number of books I needed just that very moment was considerably higher than I was allowed to borrow. I want also to thank Drs. Pauline Lusingh Scheurleer for her remarks concerning certain parts of the present dissertations, Dr. Janice Stargardt of the University of Cambridge for her willingness to read and comment on my chapter on archaeology, Dr. H.I.R. Hinzler for allowing me to publish some of the photographs from her collection, and my colleague Véronique Degroot for our long discussions on *peripih* and Javanese temples and for the help in reading Indonesian archaeological reports. I want also to express my gratitude to Prof. Bruno Dagens and to the directors and employees of the French Institute of Indology and the École Française d’Extrême Orient in Pondicherry, India, for giving me the opportunity of studying in their institutes and copying several manuscripts of the Kāśyapaśilpa and related texts, and to Dr. Christophe Pottier from the École Française d’Extrême Orient in Siem Reap, Cambodia, for allowing me to take photographs of the deposit stones preserved at the Conservation d’Angkor. I want also to thank all the people, in

Europe, India and elsewhere who, by means of a smile, a simple gesture or a word of support helped me to accomplish this study.

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