The hindū temple in the west: from original traditions to contemporary planning guidelines
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To dedicate one’s degree thesis to the planning of a Hindū sanctuary in the West entails studying the possible interrelations between two architectural contexts which are very different as well as being vast and varied.

The study was inspired by the reality of immigration in Italy and by the recent activity of the Hindū religious community which built its place of worship in the Savona region: the Gītānanda Aśram.

Observing the architectural product of the immigrant community means entering into contact with an entirely different way of conceiving architecture, formed throughout the millennia.

In order to try and understand religious Hindū architecture, known as Vāstuvidyā, various fields of study were used, from the analysis of Hindū architectural complexes from various times and different countries, to the interpretation of respective plans through typological research, without neglecting the study of very specific architectural treatises.

The thesis proposes both a comparative survey of the various holy constructions deriving from the European and North American Hindū diaspora, and an articulate basis of information aimed at the project, useful for those intending to build a Hindū sanctuary within the current European context.

The thesis deals separately with five points:

- The expressions of Hinduism outside India and particularly in Europe, where over 900 different religious Hindū groups are settled. Many of them, throughout the years, have built sanctuaries or religious multifunctional centres, which are very similar to the typical architectonic structures of their countries of origin. It is also so for Gītānanda Aśram, a religious complex which hosts the Giris’ sankarian monastic community and the Śrī Lalita Tripurasundarī temple.
- **Outlines of sacred hindu architecture in the Indian subcontinent.** From the Vedic hut (from over 4000 years ago) to timber rupestrian architecture carved in rocks. From 500 A.D., with the Gypta age, the Hindū temple in stone blocks or masonry with three different regional characterizations takes shape: in the north the nāgara tradition, in the south the drāvida one; vasara in central India, a mixture of the two.

- **Analysis and typological interpretation of sacred architecture.** The cell which generated the temple is the mūrti’s (the main god’s) chapel, the garbha grha (shrine). Throughout the centuries, as the religious practices became more complex, new functions and new spaces were added to it, to the extent of becoming real city-temples. The constant elements which characterize the constitutive structure of the temple, even in its different regional expressions, were identified, based upon the typological criteria. The various functional units and the system of distributive itineraries of the most meaningful examples are shown in the plan.
Analysis and typological interpretation of pañcayatana temple

- Treatises of reference. Vāstuvidya takes shape from the Hindū religious texts, Smṛti, and from the literary tradition, Śruti. It's a planning and building process, which is described in a very large series of treatises, generally known as Vāstuśāstra, which goes from the executive detail to the city. Its realization is entrusted to initiation castes of workers in charge of building the temple; it is their task to apply the Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala the planning instrument which is valid for any building activity.
Individuating the planning guideline according to the clients, the consumers and the professional figures involved. Taking into consideration the main typologies – the sanctuary and the multifunctional religious centre – the constructions of India and North America are compared. In this comparison different tendencies, or sometimes even contrasting or opposite ones can be observed. To emphasize different approaches to the same topic and to promote the continuity of architectural traditions in the different situations applying to different places, allows one to more fully define a planning guideline.

In reference to individuating planning guidelines for the Hindū temple in the West, and more precisely within the European context, it is useful to suggest both a careful rereading of the rules still existing within the Vāstuśāstras, as well as the usage of technologically advanced materials, within the limits of their compatibility with ancient traditions.
The itinerary followed brought to the recognition of unexpected corrispondences between the ancient Indian solar constructions and the current tendencies of sustainable architecture; furthermore it highlighted interesting similarities between the Vitruvian treatise and the Vāstuśāstras. In the light of the principles of Agenda XXI, Vāstupuruṣaṁandaṇḍa a is a planning system which could be fruitfully used with sustainable planning. The hypothesis that in the past there may have been greater relations between the building traditions in India and in the West than has been estimated up to now, suggests the possibility of studying the subject in further depth. However at present greater knowledge in the West of Indian architectural traditions and consequently a reassessment of Vitruvius’ work is desirable.

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