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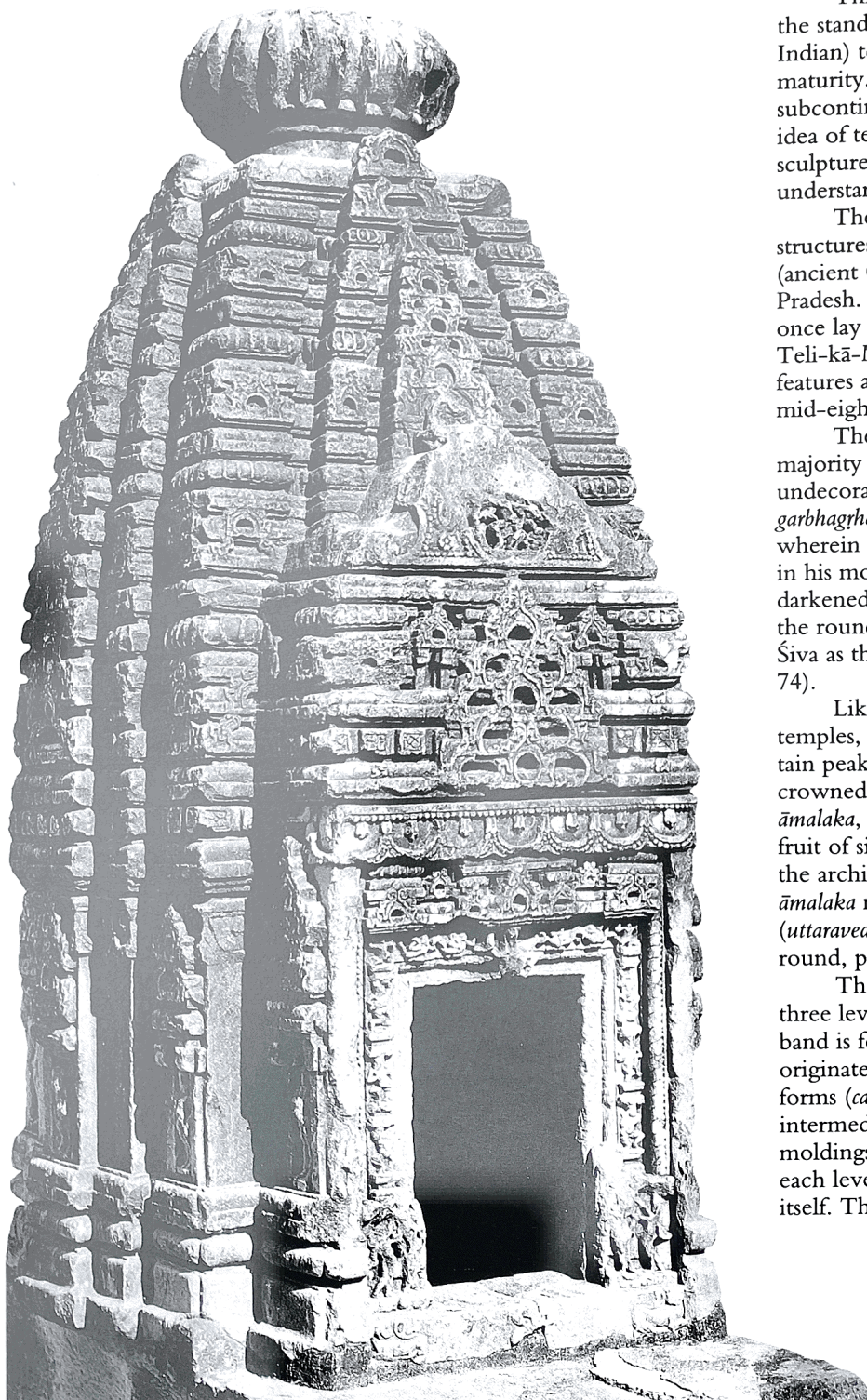
Small Shrine

Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh
(Gopādri)

About A.D. 750–775

Sandstone; 184 x 98 cm

Central Archeological Museum, Gwalior; 449



This detailed miniature shrine shows all the standard features of a small *nāgara* (north Indian) temple of the “period of early maturity.”¹ Short of a visit to the subcontinent, it gives the clearest possible idea of temple format and the integration of sculpture and architecture crucial to an understanding of all objects in this exhibition.

The shrine is one of three² similar structures found in the fortress at Gwalior (ancient Gopādri) in northwestern Madhya Pradesh. According to local memory, they once lay in the area around the famous Teli-kā-Maṇḍir, and their architectural features accord well with the probable mid-eighth-century date of that monument.

The shrine interior, as in the vast majority of temples, is a square and undecorated sanctum. It is termed the *garbhagrha*, (“seed” or “womb house”), wherein the manifesting deity often appears in his most abstract form. The austere and darkened cube once likely enclosed a *liṅga*, the rounded, pillarlike “mark” of the God Śiva as the Infinitely Expanding (Nos. 73, 74).

Like the majority of north Indian temples, a tall curving tower (*śikhara*, “mountain peak”) rises above the sanctum. Its top is crowned by a great bulbous ribbed stone, the *āmalaka*, whose name is taken from an Indian fruit of similar form although the origins of the architectural element are likely solar. The *āmalaka* rises from the flat upper slab (*uttaravedī*, “upper altar”) of the tower on a round, pillarlike shaft.³

The curved tower projects forward in three levels. The central tapering vertical band is formed of a web motif, which originated as intertwined round window forms (*candraśālās*). The corner and intermediary bands display levels of multiple moldings separated by squared-off *āmalakas*, each level a simplified replica of the tower itself. The moldings continue in the narrow

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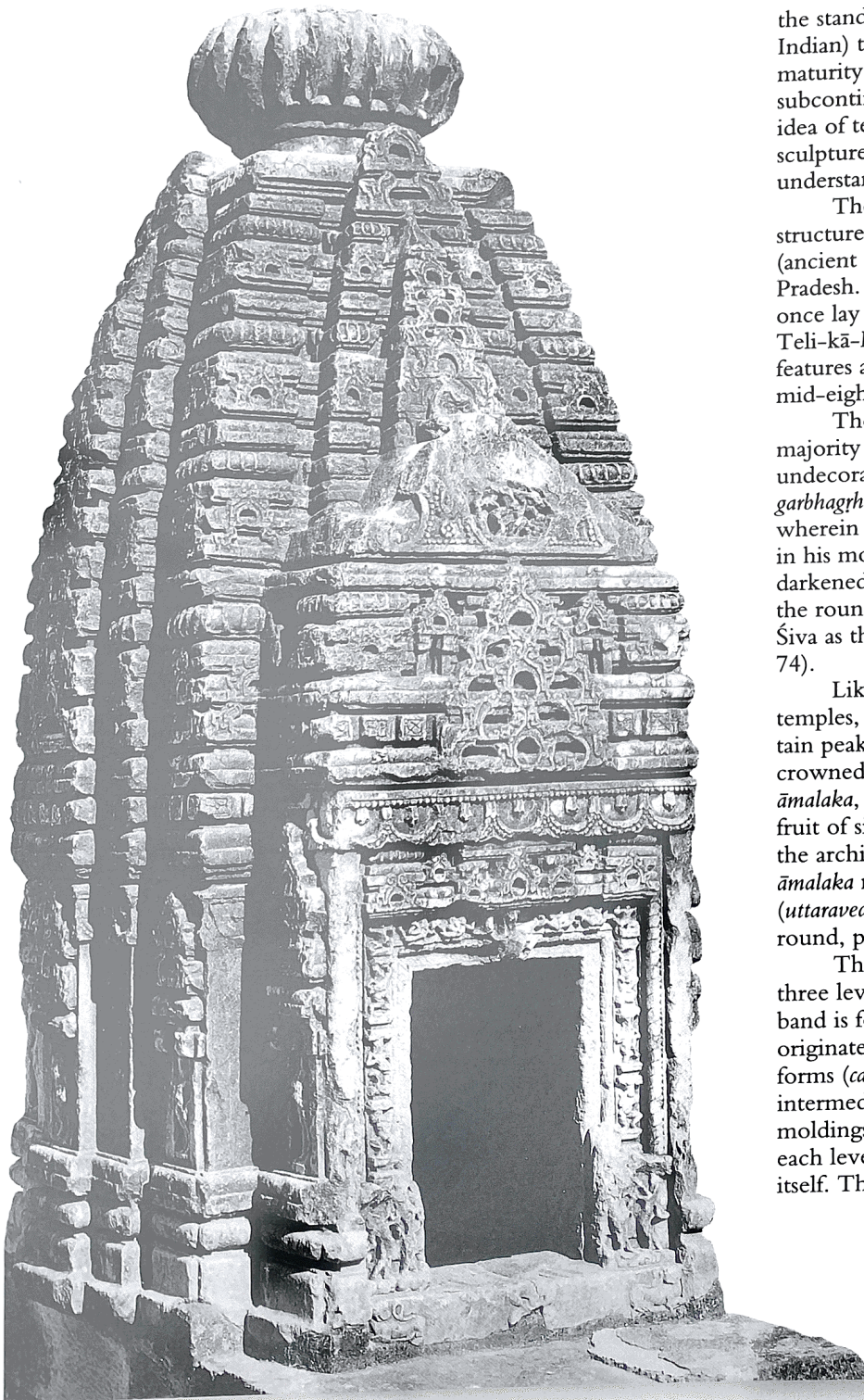
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