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A UNIQUE SCULPTURAL PANEL OF NAYANMARS AT KUDUMIYANMALAI

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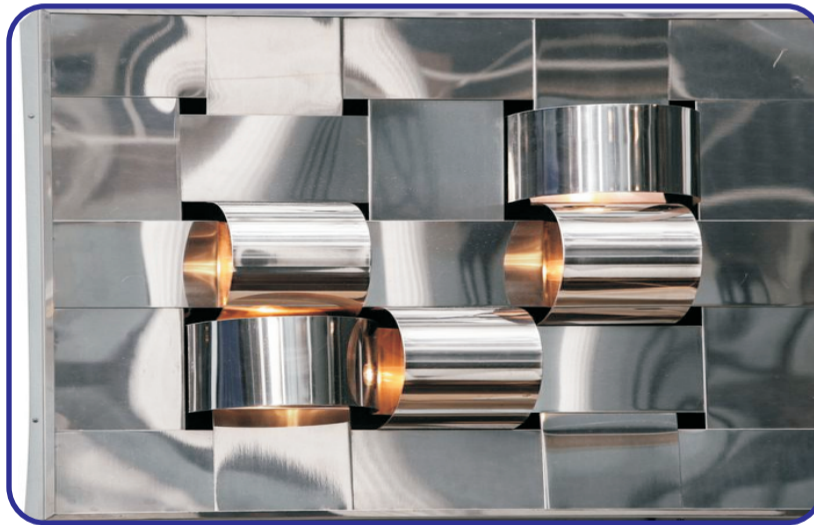
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ABSTRACT

Kudumiyamalai is situated 12km from the Pudukkottai town in a road leading to Kodumbalur. This ancient historical place consists of a Jain rock-cut with Pallava Grantha which reads "A treatise in Pallava-Grantha character, on Hindu music said to have been composed by an unnamed king who was a disciple of one Rudracharya". Various stages of temple construction process that Kudumiyamalai was acted as a centre of various religious and social activities, from ancient period onwards Whether the rock-cut technic was

continued in the Vijayanagara period or not? This is to be gleaned through the study of Saiva Saints rock Panel of Kudumiyamalai. This paper highlights the rare Sculptural Panels of 63 Nayanmars carved at this place.

KEYWORDS :Unique Sculptural Panel , temple construction process, social activities.



INTRODUCTION

Kudumiyamalai is famous for hoary past monument belonging to the early Pandya period. In the olden days it was called as Tirunalak-kundram. The oldest part of the Kudumiyamalai temple is the rock-cut cave shrine called the *Melaikkoyil*, or *Tirumerrali*, the idol which is referred to in inscriptions as the *Mahadeva* of *Tirumerrali* scooped out in the early 7th century

A.D. Besides, the architectural style expresses its period of creation in the 7th century A.D. An earliest record refers to the gifts of Koccadaiyan Ranadhira Pandya also called Sadayan Maran (C.710-740 A.D) to the God of *Tirumulattanam*.

In the reign of Parantaka I, when the attendants of prince Kodandarama who camped at Kudumiyamalai during his Madura campaigns made gifts to the idols of *Tirumulattanam* and *Tirumerrali*, both are different names of the God in rock-cut shrine. The original *garbhagraham* and *ardhamantapam* of *Sikhanata* shrine emphasizes the early Chola structures.

The early Chola inscriptions in this temple are found engraved in the *Melaikkovil* and in the

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walls of the second *prakram*, and not in the main shrine of *Sikhanata*. This factor implies that the shrine was remodeled in later period. The tradition attributes the remodeling of the temple to the time of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I. Princes and devotees who remodeled the temple have re-inscribed, on the *prakaram* and kitchen walls, the more important grants of the earlier sovereigns that they had to remove or obliterate in the course of reconstruction.

Kudumiyamalai was a prosperous town during the reign of later Cholas. Two divisions of the army were stationed here, and they interested themselves in the civic affairs of the town, and co-operated with the assembly of the Nadu in maintaining charitable endowments. The *munruppadai porkoyil kaikkolar* (three divisions of golden temple kaikkolar) was a part of the royal army receiving pay from the treasury, while the *nattupadai paliyili ainnurruvar* was another part of the local or popular militia which had in its ranks members belonging to the famous trade-guild or corporation, the *ainnurruvar*. During this period, large structural additions were made to the temple. The *maha-mandapam* in front of the cave-temple was put up in the reign of Kulottunga Chola I (1106 A.D). The earliest inscription that refers to the principal Amman of this temple is dated 1196 A.D. in the reign of Kulottunga III. Among the donors to the temple was Kulottunga Chola Kadambarayan.

Stylistically the second *praharam* built in the 12th century A.D. to the south-west of this *praharam* is another *mandapam* known as *anivottikkal-mandapam*, also called *Nayaka-mandapam*. The *garbhagrham* and *ardhamantapam* of the main Amman shrine dedicated to Sri Akhilandesvari are next earlier structure apart from two shrines dedicated to Siva.

The remodeling of the *Sikhanata* shrine is attributed to Maravarman Sundara Pandya I in a verse in Sanskrit which mentions that the *vimanam* of Sri Akhilandesvari was constructed by the 'hero Sundaresa' 'to shine as an ornament to the Pandya country'. It is probable that the king referred to was Maravarman Sundara Pandya I. The *sabha-mandapam* and its annex are of later Pandyan architecture, and their construction is attributed to Gangaiyaraya vassals of the Pandyas. The successors of Maravarman Sundara Pandya also evinced great interest in the growth of the temple. For half a century from about 1215 to 1265 A.D., the old *mandapams* were renovated, and additional structures were put up.

The different authorities took several steps to enlarge the temple premises by collective effort which are very interesting. An inscription registers that an agreement drawn up by representatives of the *nadus*, *nagarams*, *urs* and *padaipparrus* of Konadu to provide funds for the renovation of this temple in 1228 A.D. This meeting fixed the quota to be paid by every person living within 24 *kadams* (one league) of the village, and empowered the temple authorities to collect contributions in money and in kind. The temple authorities augmented their funds by selling lands to a dancing woman of the temple named Umaiyalvi Nacci, also referred to as the daughter of Durgaiyandar, for 73,300 current gold coins. This woman was a philanthropist, and built the Amman shrine adjoining the cave temple, and consecrated there the goddess Malaiyamangai or Saundaranayaki.

The only inscription in the Subrahmanya temple on the top of the rock is dated 1317 A.D. The temple may have been built in the 13th century. The earliest inscriptions of the walls of the present *garbhagrham* of the Sikhanatha shrine mention Pillai Pallavarayar dated 1457 A.D., and dated 1510 A.D, Pillai Pallavarayar was a local chief.

A pond is built on the southern side of the outermost *prakaram*, which takes off from the extremities of the thousand-pillared *mandapam*. In front of it are a *mahamandapam* and an *antaralamandapam*; the latter belongs to the 'Madura style' and on its floor is a hexagonal stone slab, 12x18 on which the Tondaiman rulers of the State, following the practice of Pallavaraya chieftains, performed their coronation.

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Nurrukkal *mandapam* (Thousand and four pillars hall) and Ayiramkal *mandapam* (Thousand pillars hall) constructed by the Nayaks in the 17th century A.D.

Far above the rock-cut shrine, a little to the north of it, cut in the vertical surface of the rock and approached by a narrow and dangerous ledge are figures of the 63 Nayanmars or Saiva saints and in the middle Uma-Maheswaramurti .

IMAGES OF NAYANMARS IN A NARROW OF ROCK

The Nayanars, a group of 63 Saiva saints (also saint poets) are found represented in the vertical surface of the rock and approached by a narrow and dangerous ledge. The Nayanars who have been born and grown up from various backgrounds including Channars, Vellalas, oil mongers, Brahmins and nobles are represented equally in the panel. The first Nayanmar was Sundaramurti Nayanar and the last Nayanmar was Isaijnaniyar Nayanar. Right from 8th century A.D. down to 19th century A.D. Various Nayanmars were born in the different Centuries and from different regions which are listed below

1. Sundaramurti Nayanar
2. Tiru Neelakanta Nayanar
3. Iyarpahai Nayanar
4. Ilayankudi Mara Nayanar
5. Maiporul Nayanar
6. Viralminda Nayanar
7. Amaraneedi Nayanar
8. Eripatha Nayanar
9. Enadinatha Nayanar
10. Kannappa Nayanar
11. Kungiliya Kalaya Nayanar
12. Manakanchara Nayanar
13. Arivattaya Nayanar
14. Anaya Nayanar
15. Murthi Nayanar
16. Muruga Nayanar
17. Rudra Pasupati Nayanar
18. Tiru Nalai Povar Nayanar
19. Tiru Kurippu Tonda Nayanar
20. Chandesvara Nayanar
21. Tiru-Navukkarasar Nayanar
22. Kulacchirai Nayanar
23. Perumizhalai Kurumba Nayanar
24. Karaikal Ammaiyar
25. Appuddi Nayanar
26. Tiruneelanakka Nayanar
27. Nami Nandi Adigal
28. Tiru Jnana Sambandar
29. Eyarkon Kalikama Nayanar
30. Tiru Mula Nayanar

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31. Dandi Adigal Nayanar
32. Murkha Nayanar
33. Somasira Nayanar
34. Sakkiya Nayanar
35. Sirappuli Nayanar
36. Sirutonda Nayanar
37. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar
38. Gananata Nayanar
39. Kootruva Nayanar
40. Pugal Chola Nayanar
41. Narasinga Muniyaraiyar
42. Adipatta Nayanar
43. Kalikamba Nayanar
44. Kalia Nayanar
45. Satti Nayanar
46. Aiyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar
47. Kanampulla Nayanar
48. Kari Nayanar
49. Ninra Seer Nedumara Nayanar
50. Mangayarkarasiyar
51. Vayilar Nayanar
52. Munaiyaduvar Nayanar
53. Kazharsinga Nayanar
54. Seruthunai Nayanar
55. Idangazhi Nayanar
56. Pugazh Tunai Nayanar
57. Kotpuli Nayanar
58. Pusalar Nayanar
59. Nesa Nayanar
60. Kocengat Chola Nayanar
61. Tiru Neelakanta Yazhpanar
62. Sadaya Nayanar
63. Isaijnaniyar

The 63 Nayanmars with Uma-Maheswaramurti is a longest sculptural panel in which six saints are sitting in posture, and other 57 saints are standing, in a lengthy row . There are three women Nayanmars and the other 60 Nayanmars men.

In the right side of the Lord, 32 Nayanmars are appearing in *anjali* posture. Like that, in the left side, 31 Nayanmars are appearing in the same posture. They wear uniformly the lower garment only. Besides, They wear *kritamakuta* or *Karanta makuta* in their head .

The Uma-Maheswaramurti has been represented under a Tiruvasi which is supported by two Pilaster, one each at both side with well developed *puspapotigai* in Vijayanagara style has been erected clearly at the place of capital in Pilaster. Image Uma-Maheswaramurti is popularly represented in the Siva temples of South India. In Kudumiyamalai also, it is exhibited in a special visualized context in the form of rock art .

UMAMAHESWARAMURTI

Siva and Uma are seated in *sukhasana* posture on the back of the bull that is standing and facing towards south. The garlands of bells decorate in both images . The right leg is bended at knee and placed on the back of the bull, and the left leg is hanging down. The back right and left hands keep the *parasu* and the *mriga* ; whereas the front right and left hands are in the *abhaya* and *simmhacarna* poses. Among the two hands of Devi she bears a lotus flower in the right hand and her left hand is kept resting on the knee .

The cloth, which spreaded on the back of the bull, is visualized by the artist.Siva is having *jatamakuta* on his head with the crescent moon struck in it. He is having four hands. Uma is having a handsome bust and hip.

The figures of Siva and Uma from this temple are sculptured very beautifully.

It is believed by the people that Lord Siva and Uma resided at sky where assembled the 63 Nayanmars without any discrimination to worship them. The Uma-Mahesvaramurti and 63 Saiva saints assembled on the sky like height at Kudumiyanmarlai has been created artificially by the artist. This highly attracts the devotees and audience .

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that, the fashion of the rock art has been continued. The creation of the rock-cut cave has been introduced by the Pallava king Mahendravarman I in Tamil Nadu. The culture of the scooping out the rock – cut caves was popularly practiced in the whole Tamil Nadu including Pudukkottai region from 6th century A.D to 18th Century A.D. Scooping out the rock-cut cave during reign of the imperial Chola was out of fashion. Following the re-entry of the later Pandyas, scooping out the rock-cut cave and its extension was re-entered at Narttamalai*. Again it becomes unpopular. However the tradition of the rock-art continued till the end of Vijayanagara and Nayaka rule . The Uma-Mahesvaramurti and 63 Saiva Saints assembled on the sky like height at Kudumiyanmarlai is a Unique Panel which cannot be seen anywhere in India.

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*Narttamalai is a cave temple known as Vishnu temple in the 12th year (A.D.1228) of the reign of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I. It was called Padinenbhum Vinnagaram after the eighteen towns of the corporation of Ainnurruvar .

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