

CONTRIBUTION OF THE PANDYAS ON ART AND ARCHITECTURE AT KAZHUMALAI VETTUVAN KOIL IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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Abstract- The present study makes an attempt to highlight the contributions of the Pandyas on Art and Architecture and Sculpture embellishments of the Vettuvankoil at Kazhumalai in Thoothukudi District Tamilnadu, India. Vettuvankoil one of the monumental work of the Pandyas in Tamizh country. The cave temple of Lord Siva is an important for its Art and Architectural value and beauty. Once upon a time this place was one of the important Jainism centre. Both Vettuvankoil and Jain Sculpture refers the two religion Jainism and Saivism may flourished well with each other. Now this monument place attracts the devotees, tourists and historians.

Dravidian Art and Architecture is of the indigenous origin¹. During the 7th century rock-cut shrines originated at Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram. In Tamilnadu the evolution of art and architecture classified into many stages.

The first stage belongs to Pallava dynasty (600-900), the second stage belongs to The Cholas (850-1150) the third stage belongs to later Chola and The Pandyas (1150-1350) the fourth stage belongs to The Vijayanagar / Nayaks (1336-1600) and The fourth Stage started the arrival of The Europeans(1600)².

This study brings out the contribution of The Pandyas on Art and Architecture in the "Then Pandya region" (the modern district of Ramanathapuram Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Thoothukudi) at *Kazhumalai* in Thoothukudi District.

There is a rock-cut temple in the name of Vettuvankoil and Kazhugasalamoorthy, situated on the road bridging Kovilpatti and Sankarankoil. It is just 18 kms away from Kovilpatti and 50 kms away from Tirunelveli and 50 kms away from Tirunelveli and 70 kms away from district Headquarter, Thoothukudi. During the period of the first Pandyan Empires the Kazhumalai was called as "Nerchuram". Nel means paddy churam means field³. This temple is famous for its architectural beauty and Jainism flourished. There is a massive dome of rock, some 300 in height. Kazhumalai literally means "The Hill of Vulture"⁴. It is a rich abode of historical monuments of Kazhugasalamoorthy temple, Vettuvankoil and Jain relics. There are different types of art and architecture, monuments and sculpture. The early Pandyas were encouraged the temple construction as equal to the Pallavas. They contributed many cave temples, monolithic and constructive temples in then Pandya region particularly *Kazhugumalai*. Their contribution continued upto 1500 AD. The influence of Jainism and Buddhism in extreme south also such threw momentum in the development of both art and architecture and Tamil literature.

The Pallava period itnessed a transition from rock-cut to free standing temples. The Mahendravarman-I (580-630 AD) started rock-cut temple, popularly known as "Mahendravarman Style"⁵. The monolithic style initiated by The Narasimhavarman and constructive temple style introduced by Narasimhavarman-II, who was the pioneer of structural temple in Tamilnadu. The seashore temple at Mahabalipuram is the oldest structural temple in South India. They used blocks of rocks instead of whole rock as earlier. He also constructed the Kanchi Kailasanathar Temple⁶. Nandivarman-II used cut-stones rather than carved out of caves at Mamallapuram. It has two shrines for Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu.

The Tamil Dravida tradition exemplified by rock-cut monuments such as Pancha Pandava Rathas namely, Dravupadi ratha, Dharmaraja ratha, Arjuna ratha and Nagula-Sahadeva ratha⁷. The out of hills of the rathas, especially of Arjuna, Bima and Dharmaraja are decorated with niches and motifs. The niches have the sculptures of Gods and Goddesses, Kings and scenes from mythology. The Arjuna penance carved on the dace of a granite Boulder is a magnificent relief measuring approximately 100 feet long by 45 it high.

Rock-cut caves in Pandya Country

The early Pandyas and were the contemporaries of the Pallavas⁸. Both the early Pandyas and later Pandyas much contributed in the Art and Architecture in Southern district of modern Tamilnadu. Such as Pillaiyarpatti rock-cut temple in Sivagangai District, cave temple in Malaiyadipatti, Thiruppanankundram caves temple in Madurai District, lower cave temple in Tiruchirappalli, Puramalai and Thirumalai caves in Sivagangai District, Arittapati Cave, Thirumalapuram Cave in Sankaran Koil, Selvepatti Cave, Thirumayan Cave, Kudrakudi Cave, Thirumayam Cave, Kudumiyannalai Cave, Umaiyandar Cave, Chockampatti and Senthmaram Caves are the best example for the contribution of Pandyas.

These caves were dedicated to Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma. In the Lord Siva temple of Pandyas the Siva linga is carved out of the mother rock. The figure of Nandhi is also carved out of the rock. The Siva lingam in the sanctum is installed in the centre with enough space all round it. They are divided into three parts and are of the different sites. The pillars have no uniform ornamentation⁹. The back side walls are divided into four niches on which the bas-relief images of Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, Goddesses Durga, Ganapathy, Subramaniya, Surya, Lord Brahma and Goddesses Saraswathi are carved out¹⁰. The Dwarabalaga (guards) figure on either side of sanctum.

Rock-cut and structural temples are significant part of the Pandyan art and architecture. The illustrious example for rock-cut style is unfinished in Kazhumalai Vettuvan Koil in Thoothukudi district¹¹. The Vettuvankoil is a monolithic style carved at Kazhumalai¹² is hewn out of huge Boulder on four sides. At the top of the Temple, Sculptures of Umamaheswarer, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu and Brahma are found¹³.

The walls of the caves are beautifully decorated with bas relief of the God's and Goddesses. In the case of structural temples, the walls of the sanctum Santorum are free from image decorations¹⁴. Instead of the super structures and pillars have the sculptures. The sculptures took majestic, having elaborate shoulders, slim bodies, beautiful ornaments and high crowns.

Thuruparangkundram, Anaimalai temples have the bas relief of many deities namely; Ganspathy Subramaniya, Siva Vishnu, Brahma, Parvathy and Dakhinamoorthy. These are some remarkable images of the cave Temples. Many of the early Pandyas images unearthed from Madurai and its surroundings area, now preserved in Tirumalai Nayak Mahal Museum in Madurai¹⁵.

Monolithic and Sculpture

Above all from the cave monolithic and constructive temples were built during the early period of the Pandya Kings. At the same time the above said temples are damaged and remodeled. Remaining collected sculptures are preserved in Thirumalai Nayaks Museum in Madurai. The Pandyas temples were given information about the study of their contribution on Sculpture and support to the Jainism in 3 century¹⁶.

Later Pandyas are also patron of the Jainism and carved Jain Sculpture in the rock in and around of the then Pandya region during the period of 8 and 9 the century AD¹⁷. The sculptures of Jain Theerthankaras namely; The Mahavir Parsavanthas, Yakshi and Kometeswara are beautifully carved in Kazhumalai. More than hundred Theerthangaras images are carved in the Kazhugumalai¹⁸.

This monolithic rock-cut temple popularly known as Vettuvankoil facing east consists of a tiny Sanctum Sanctorum¹⁹. It is called as Southern Ellora because of the artisans beautifully cut out the granite rock into three parts. It shows 30 feet in height and 48 feet in length and 30 feet in width(48×30×30)²⁰. There is a square type of Vimana with three tiers. There are four God's carved out Lord Siva and Goddesses Parvathi seated in top, facing east. Dakshinamoorthy facing south, Narasimha facing west and Brahma seated on lotus facing north with the support of two elephants. Each corner Bull adorn the four sides²¹.

Paintings of Pandyas

Caves at Sittanavasal 15 k.m away from Puttukottai and Thirumalapuram in Sankaran koil, Tirunelveli District²², have outstanding early Pandyas paintings. Sittanavasal was a residential cave of Jain monks. They painted the walls with frescos paintings. Unfortunately, we have lost many of those paintings. Among the surviving ones, the lotus pond is notable for its excellent execution of colors and exposition of the scene. The images of the lotus flowers leaves, spread all over the pond, animals, elephants, buffalos, swabs and a man who plucks the flowers look brilliant²³. The Sittanavasal paintings have similarities with the Ajant paintings. Tirumalapuram, from where we get early Pandyas paintings are in a damaged condition²⁴.

Conclusion

The art and architecture is of indigenous origin. Both Pandyas and the Pallavas were the pioneer of the development of art and architecture, sculpture and paintings in Tamilnadu. Till now The Mahapalipuram speaks about the contribution of The Pallavas while the Then Pandyan kingdom namely; Th Kazhumalai Vettuvan koil, Tirumalapuram Pillayarpati and Sittanavasal stands for the memorable work of both early and later pandyas.

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