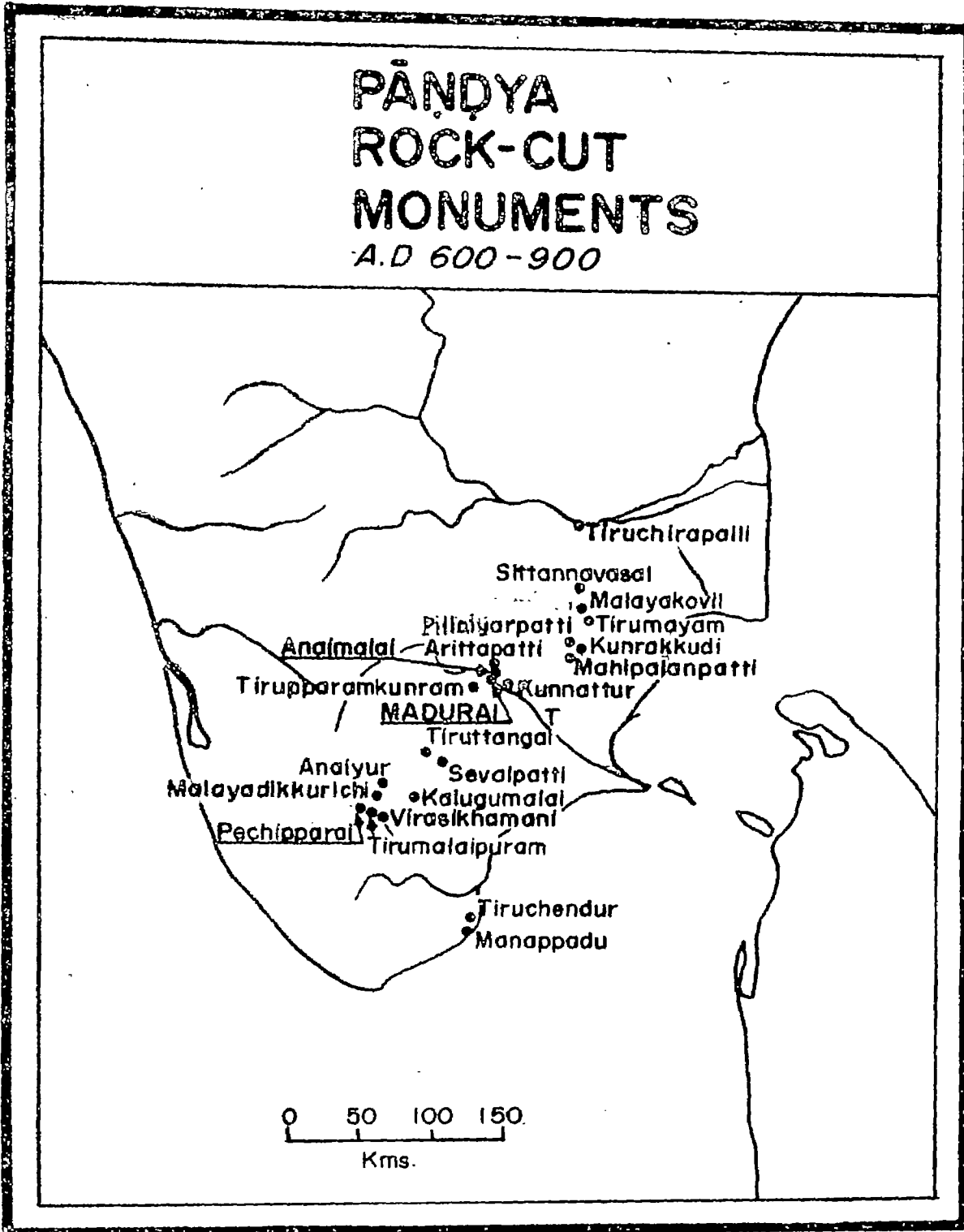


CHAPTER IVROCK-CUTMONUMENTSBACKGROUND:-

Of the architectural innovations of ~~the~~ Pāṇḍinādu, the rock-cut excavations or, 'mandapas' as they were familiarly known, deserve our attention first. The archaeologists, in recent times, have discovered a number of rock-cut shrines in the Pāṇḍya mainland. The total number of such shrines or cave-temples is far more than those attributed to the Pallavas. The rock-cut shrines of Pāṇḍinādu not only show a remarkable stylistic growth among themselves but also display, for the first time in many instances, a number of new innovations. Above all, we have, at least, one example of a monolithic temple, though unfortunately incomplete, at Kalugumalai which has no parallel anywhere in this part of the country.



Map 11

The chief problem that confronts one in the study of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut excavations is that they, barring a few, do not supply us any specific evidence as to the actual date of their excavation or to the patrons who caused their excavation. Scholars, however, have hitherto postulated a theory that none of the Pāṇḍya rock-excavations can be dated earlier than the period of the Pallava king Mahēndravarmaṇ I (c.A.D. 580-630) on the supposition that he was the pioneer of rock-cut mode of excavation in the extreme southern part of India. Mahēndravarmaṇ I has also been credited with the inauguration of a new tradition in rock-cut mode of architecture - 'both in its material and technique'¹ - which is further said to have been faithfully followed not only by his successors but also by his contemporaries. This claim made on behalf of Mahēndravarmaṇ mainly relies upon the contents of a single inscription - i.e. Mandagapattu cave inscription² - for its strength where king Mahēndra, with an almost child-like enthusiasm, declares to have made a brickless, timberless, metalless and mortarless abode for the Hindu Trinity. Hence the above claim needs to be thoroughly examined in all its perspective before we proceed further.

1. K.R. Srinivasan, "The Pallava architecture of South India" in Ancient India, Vol.XIV, p.116.

2. Ep. Ind., Vol.XVII, pp.14-17.

"The most important information conveyed by it", in the words of T.A.G. Rao, the editor of the inscription, "is that before the time of Vichitrachitta, bricks, timber, metal and mortar were the common temple building materials"³. Further he observes that one can easily concede the title 'Vichitrachitta' (which means curious or inventive minded) to the king Mahēndravarmān I for, "he avoided bricks, etc., commonly used by all in the construction of their buildings and devised quite a new path, namely the cutting out of rock-temples, which needed neither bricks, timber nor mortar"⁴. And finally he concludes, "That he was the first to introduce into Southern India the method of excavating temples in the solid rock is certain; for we do not find a single rock-cut shrine which belongs to a time before the reign of Mahēndravarmān"⁵.

3. Ibid., p.15.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. Almost all the later writers on Pālava art have followed Rao. However it is interesting to note that C. Sivaramamurti, cautiously avoids the word south and says, 'It was Mahēndravarmān who first introduced the art of excavating cave temples in the Tamil country', (Kalugumalai and early Pāndyan rock-cut shrines, p.13) whereas T.V. Mahalingam goes a step further and says, 'It was during Mahēndravarmān's reign that rock-cut shrines came to be made for the first time in Tondaimandalam' (Kānchīpuram in early South Indian History, p.71).

Of late, K.R. Srinivasan has made an attempt to improve upon the significance of this inscription. According to him, "The fact of excavating a temple or a habitation for a monk into the rocks could not have been unknown in south India, which was in live contact with the other parts of India, where such excavations had been common, particularly the Buddhist excavations"⁶. In support, he also cites the caves of a sepulchral nature found in the west coast which can be linked with the Iron age megalithic monuments elsewhere in India. References to structures comparable to those excavated into or carved out of rock are, he agrees, met with in early Tamil literature. But in spite of these observations, he, apparently unwilling to discredit Mahēndravarmaṇ, draws out the conclusion that the text of the Mandagapattu inscription should refer to the fact of his having chosen the hardest of rocks rather than the mere introduction of rock-cut cave temples in the south. "The novelty", he writes, 'therefore, of Mahēndravarmaṇ's work would lie primarily in his first tangible achievement, viz. the excavation into the hard local rock"⁷.

6. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, p.28.

7. Ibid. K.R. Srinivasan further thinks that, "perhaps,... They (Pallavas) thought that the local hard rocks were more durable and an altogether new material not tackled by their compeers and rivals, the Chālukyans, or even their predecessors" (Ibid., p.26)

It may, however, be noted that the emphasis on the hard stone in contrast to the soft-stone varieties used elsewhere has no relevance to the contents of the inscription. The inscription under reference does not even state the word, 'stone' explicitly, leave alone specifying it as hard or soft. The simple and the only reason for the Pallava rock-cutters to work on hard granite rocks could very well be the absence of softer rock-cliff in their area.⁸ This reality of the situation compelled not only the Pallavas but also other Tamil patrons of rock-architecture, including the Pāṇḍyas, to work on the hard granite rock.

Finally it is said, "Though these later kings (of the Pallava dynasty) made innovation of their own, their adherence to the traditional type initiated by Mahēndra, who first wrought in the hard stone of south India, was perhaps the result of sampradāya. Not only the successors of Mahēndra, but the contemporary Pāṇḍyas, the Muttaraiyas, the Adigaimāns and rulers of other dynasties have faithfully respected the sampradāya and have followed the type and style initiated by Mahēndra in their cave-temples with certain modifications".⁹

8. When the question of erecting structural temples came, the Pallavas, it may be noted, switched over to soft stone varieties as was the custom with their compeers and rivals, the Chālukyans.

9. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, pp.39-40.

The above theory does not seem to be a very convincing one in view of several factors. At the outset, any work of art, however creative and original it might be, cannot be a self-generated one; nor can it be entirely devoid of any kind of external influences. As Dubreuil rightly says 'it is always connected with contemporary works and explained by anterior works'. If sampradāya could be so effective and enduring with the later kings, it should be remembered that it equally applies to Mahēndravarmaṇ as well. So the question before us now is, how far the so-called Mahēndra type of monuments is connected with the contemporary works and explained by the anterior works? Or, in other words, to what particular tradition (i.e. sampradāya) the Mahēndra type of monuments actually belongs?

The chief characteristics of the so-called Mahēndra type of rock-cut shrines are: "On plan, they consist of a large mandapa with one or more smaller square shrine-cells. Often, in addition to the row of pillars and pilasters on the facade, there is a second parallel row inside the mandapa, thus dividing it into ardha- and mukha-mandapas. In the absence of the dividing row of pillars this demarcation is often indicated by the difference in the floor-level of the two sections.

The equidistant pillars are divided into square sections on top and base with an octagonal section in between.

The pilasters in the earlier examples are not so shaped but are uniformly tetragonal from base to top...."¹⁰

In fact, the above in substance, were the characteristics not only of the Mahēndra type of mandapas but almost of all the Hindu rock-cut shrines excavated in different regions of south India beginning with sixth century A.D. Of them, the Western Chālukyan caves at Bādāmi are datable from A.D. 550.¹¹ On the eastern coast at least some of the caves in Undavalli and Bhairavakonda region are assignable to a period not later than the end of sixth century A.D.¹² Again, in the Pāṇḍinādu, there is, at least, one rock-cut shrine at Malayadikkurichi which can certainly be assigned to the early decades of the seventh century A.D.¹³

10. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, p.38.

11. Gary Tarr, Ars Orientalis, Vol.VIII, 1970, p.184. ✓

12. O.C. Gangoly, The Art of the Pallavas, p.8.

13. R. Nagaswamy is inclined to place the Pillaiyarpatti cave-temple in Ramanathapuram district to about fifth century A.D. on palaeographic consideration. "As for the Maṇḍagapattu", he says, 'a more reasonable interpretation of Mahēndra's statement is that most of the earlier temples in the Tamil country had been built of all five materials, including stone; the Pallava king merely claimed that he had at Maṇḍagapattu used stone only, dispensing with the other four" - Artibus Asiae, Vol.XXVII, 1964, p.268.

Conceptually the rock-cut shrines of all the above regions were the same; their constructional and functional properties were by and large alike. Besides, the rock-cut shrines particularly of the Tamilnadu and Andhra regions display similarities in several other respects too. Shrines having three cells on the back wall of the mandapa are common in all the above regions. The rectangular-shaped mandapas with their longer side running along the lateral side of the cliff are also to be found in the Krishna-Gōdāvari delta, Tōṇḍaimaṇḍalam and in the Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam as well.¹⁴ Though the mandapas are provided with pillars and pilasters, the roof, as a rule, is flat in all the above regions. Similarly the interior walls of the earlier ones, barring exceptional instances, are usually left plain. Again, the frequent design adopted for the pillars especially in the lower Krishna valley, Pallava and Pāṇḍya examples is square at the top and bottom with an octagon mid-region and often, circular medallions are seen occupying the sides of the upper and lower cubes of the pillars as well as the pilasters. In

14. The Pallava caves, especially the earlier examples, show a remarkable similarity in their plans and features with the caves of the lower Krishna valley which we cannot dwell at length here. For a detailed account of the same, reference may be made to M.S. Mate, 'Origin of Pallava art - The Undavalli caves', East and West, Vol.20, No.1 and 2, pp.108-116.

some of the cave-shrines, the dvārapālas are seen on either side of the facade in deeply-cut rectangular niches. These similarities between the rock-cut shrines of the eastern and southern regions of south India only prove that what had been described above as the characteristics of the 'Mahendra type' were, in core and substance, the fundamentals of the southern type of Brahmanical rock-cut excavations which found itself expressed in different regions under different patrons.¹⁵ Dissimilarities among them are found only in certain ramifications of the decorative elements which are but natural and logical in any art movement which had so widely spread in terms of time and space.

Then, the question arises, what could be the source out of which the southern 'archetype' was evolved? There cannot be two opinions as to the fact that the Hindu rock-cutters of south drew their inspiration mainly from the Buddhist and Jain rock-excavations of the earlier centuries. But from which one of them exactly? Different theories have been put forward suggesting the possible source from which the southern Brahmanical archetype might

15. It is noteworthy that notwithstanding the progress made during the time of Mahendra's immediate successors, cave-shrines of this archetype were continued to be excavated as late as the period of Narasimhavarman II (A.D. 700-728).

have been evolved. J. Fergusson and J. Burgess,¹⁶ O.C. Gangoly¹⁷ and K.V. Soundararajan,¹⁸ while writing on the cave-temples of the lower Krishna-valley looked upon the rock-cut caves of the Western India as the possible source from which the southern Hindu rock-cutters received the impetus. But the drawback of the theory is that the rock-cut caves of Andhra and also of Tamilnadu present more dissimilarities in comparison to what they have in common with the western Indian caves. In their elaborate design, in the treatment of the facade and pillars and in their interior decoration, the western Indian examples are quite different from the Krishna-valley caves and more so from the cave-temples of the Tamil-speaking region. The second theory aims to connect the eastern Indian rock-cut caves and thereby suggest a southward course of artistic ideas and techniques along the eastern coast from Kalinga to Andhra and further to Tamilnadu.¹⁹ M.S. Mate observes, "...the

16. J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, The Cave Temples of India, p.97.

17. O.C. Gangoly, The Art of the Pallavas, p.8.

18. K.V. Soundararajan, Architecture of the Early Hindu temples of Andhra Pradesh, p.20.

19. Fergusson and Burgess were the first to suggest the resemblance between the Undavalli cave in Andhra and Kani Gumpu in Orissa (J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, op. cit., p.98) and also between the Bagh Gumpu near Cuttack and the Yali-mandapa at Saluvankuppam near Mahabalipuram (Ibid., p.155). M.S. Mate has elaborated this in an illuminating article on the 'Origin of Pallava Art - The Undavalli caves', East and West, Vol.20, Nos.1 and 2, pp.108-116.

rock-cut architecture of the Pallavas belongs to and flows from the tradition of rock-cut monuments first cut in the lower Krishna region. The latter region in its turn had its roots deep in the artistic tradition of the Kalinga land".²⁰ This is, indeed, a tempting postulation. But it is, perhaps, too early to concur with this theory and more certain links are still wanting to prove the artistic propinquity of the above regions beyond any doubt.²¹

The truth, however, seems to lie somewhere in between. Taking their cue from the eastern and western rock-cut traditions, the Brahmanical rock-cutters of ^{the} south, in accordance ^{with} to their religious requirements, seem to have devised a pattern of their own which found itself manifested in different centres of the south with distinct stamp of the local variations.

It is against this background that one has to view the rock-cut monuments of the Pāṇḍinādu.

20. M.S. Mate, East and West, Vol.20, Nos.1 and 2, p.116.

21. The stepped arrangement of the upper storeys of the Undavalli cave in Andhra and of the Vaikunta and Rani Gumpā in Orissa, no doubt, presents a striking similarity between them. But it may be noted that the stepped arrangement in Orissan examples is a planned architectural design whereas in Undavalli, it is more due to the natural, slopy formation of the rock (Pl. No.I).

PĀNDYA ROCK-CUT SHRINES:-

Now to turn to the Pāṇḍinādu. All the rock-excavations of the Pāṇḍya country fall under a common genri called, 'maṇḍapa' or 'maṇḍakam' in Tamil.²² Instances are not wanting wherein they have been mentioned as stone-temples²³ also. Structurally, 'maṇḍapa' is a pillared hall with shrine cells at the back or at the centre or sometimes on the lateral side. The simplest type, nowever, presents a square cell into the rock without a verandah or porch in front. The maṇḍapa type of structures formed an important part of the later-day south Indian temple complexes and were termed variously such as, the Utsavamāṇḍapa, Nrittamāṇḍapa, Kalyānamāṇḍapa etc. Such structures were also commonly erected on the highways and on the banks of the rivers and tanks for the convenience of the pilgrims to stay or to

22. The Sanskrit word, 'maṇḍapa' means an open pillared hall. The Tamil equivalent 'maṇḍakam', usually considered as a Tamilized form of the Sanskrit word, is, perhaps, of Tamil origin meaning, 'gathering hall' (mandu+akam). K.R. Srinivasan suggests that the word 'maṇḍakam' is derived from 'maṇṇakam' (Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, p.30, f.n.2).

23. The Tamil inscriptions of the Malayadikkurichi (AR. II., 1959-60, No.358 and p.24), Anaimalai (SII., Vol. XIV, Nos.1 and 2) and Tirupparankunram (Ibid., No.3) cave-temples mention them as 'Kartirukkōil', 'Karrali' and 'Tirukkōil' respectively.

perform the religious rites. Though mandapa type of structures, at a later period, came to be associated more with religious architecture, the early literary evidences²⁴ suggest that it was a common building type used for the secular purposes as well during the early centuries. The Manimēkalai,²⁵ for instance, gives a vivid description of a golden mandapa used by the king as his occasional resort. The mandapa was a combined effort of the Magadha artists,

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24. Mānir-vēli-vacchira-Nannāttu-k
Kōṇṭrai-koduttha-korrap-p-pandarum
Magadha-Nannāttu-vālvāy-Vēndan
Pagai-purattuk-k-kodutta-Pattimandapamum
Avanti-Vēndan-uvanthanān-kodutta
Nivanthōngu-Marapil-thōranavāyilum

ivaitām
Orungudan-punarntānguyarntōr-Ēttum
Arumperan-marapiin-mandapamanriyum --

- Silappadikāram, Puhārkādam, Indira-vilavūredutta-kāḍai, ll. 99-110, (ed.) S.I.S.S.W. Publishing Society, Tinnevely, 1969.

25. Magadha-Vinaiṅgarum-Marātta-k-kammarum
Avanti-k-kollarum-Yavanth-taccarum
Tantamil-vinaiṅar-tammōdu-kūdi-k
Kōṇḍinithu-iyarriya-kānkavar-cheyvinai-p
Pavalath-tiralkāl-Panmani-p-pōtikai-t
Tavala-nittilat-tāman-tālnta
Kōnach-canti-mānvinai-vitānattu-t
Tamaniyam-veynda-vagaiperu-vaṅappin
Paiṅchēru-melukā-p-pasumpon-mandapattu
Indira-tiruvan-chenru-initu-ēralum.

- Manimēkalai, Chiraikkōttam Ārakkōttam Ākkiya kāḍai, ll. 107-116, (ed.) S. Rajan, Madras, 1957.

Marāta balckmiths, Avanti goldsmiths, Greek carpenters along with the Tamil artists. The pillars of the mandapa as well as the pōtikā (corbel) were decorated with precious stones. Perhaps having made of perishable materials such as brick, wood, etc., these structures failed to withstand the test of time and therefore, no vestiges of them are to be found now. The practice of carving mandapa structures out of live-rock, as noted earlier, gathered momentum in the Tamil country from the seventh century A.D. onwards.

Material and technique:-

The rock-cutters of the Pallava and Pāṇḍya regions had to work on the hard rocks as there are no softer rock-cliffs in their area. As a result, the technique of excavating shrines in the above regions differed from that of the other areas where the excavated rock materials were of more softer types. A close scrutiny of the unfinished caves left in different stages of completion in the Pallava and Pāṇḍya regions indicate the technique of carving roughly as follows:-²⁶ At the outset the chosen rock-cliff was shaved so as to give a perpendicular scarp or surface of desired height. Then, the vertical scarp was marked into several blocks of large square size

26. Pls.Nos.IV and XXa.

and grooves were cut around each of them, making them into projecting slabs. These projected slabs were subsequently chiselled cut and the process was repeated again. As the inward progress of quarrying the rock was on, the pillars and the other parts which were to be left intact or to be carefully dressed later, were also roughly marked out (Pl.No.XXa). Simultaneously with the inward progress, as indicated by the examples, the detail of the top, bottom and inner portions were worked out and finished. As a result, the carving was carried on the entire rock face uniformly and evenly at all stages of progress. Thus the technique adopted by the rock-cutters of the extreme south was one of much laborious, involving enormous amount of time and patience.

In fact, the hardness of the rock material which demands greater skill and patience explains best why all the early rock-cut excavations of the extreme south are comparatively of moderate proportions in their depth, height and width. The same could also be the reason for the very limited quantity of sculptures and other embellishments at least in the earlier examples. It is true that unlike the early Pallava examples, even the earliest dated Pāṇḍya cave-shrine (i.e. Malayadikkurichi cave) show traces of bold relief sculptures adorning its walls. But

they occupy only particular regions of the entire excavation and are seldom allowed to affect the architectural effect of the interior. Likewise the pillars and the facade of the early examples are also left without much embellishment in direct contrast to their counterparts in Deccan.

It has been rightly pointed²⁷ out that all the Brahmanical rock-excavations in the Tamil country are invariably found in association with an irrigation tank (tatākam) or river bank (tīrta) or at the places which had already become popular pilgrim centres. The Anaimalai and Tirupparankunram inscriptions clearly state²⁸ that the cave-temples were excavated along with a tank (tatākam) nearby. Likewise the Pāṇḍya cave temples at Anaimalai, Tirupparankunram, Kalugumalai, Arittapatti, Aivarmalai, Virasikhamani, Kunrakkudi and Sitamnavasal are situated near or at the very sites where Jains had already established themselves.²⁹ It is also possible that some of the already

27. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, p.31.

28. SII., Vol.XIV, Nos.1,2 and 3.

29. Stone-beds, Brahmi inscriptions and bas-relief sculptures of the Jaina faith are found on the rocks of all the above sites. The excavation of the Narasimha cave-temple at Anaimalai which was, perhaps, a noted Jaina resort, is even interpreted as symbolic of the triumph of Hinduism over the heterodox systems.

existing Jaina caves were converted into Saivite shrines during this period. K.R. Srinivasan, for instance, is of the opinion that the cave-temple at Malayadikkurichi was originally a Jaina cave which was later converted into a Saivite one.³⁰ Again, the Tirupparankunram inscription³¹ specifically states that the cave-temple and the tank were, 'reappropriated' by a certain Sāttan̄ Gaṇapati.

General characteristics of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines:-

Notwithstanding the fact that they represent only the regional manifestation of a widely spread architectural movement, the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines, nevertheless, present notable features which distinguish them from those of their contemporaries, especially the Pallavas. As regards the plan, the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines show as many as five distinct types, each one being a further advancement over the other architecturally. The extant examples under each type are considerable in number providing an interesting scope of study. Besides, the sanctum cells of all the Pāṇḍya cave-temples, except the one at Malayadikkurichi, contain a rock-cut linga in the case of Siva cave-

30. K.R. Srinivasan's unpublished paper on 'Malayadikkurichi cave-temple', read in the 'Pāṇḍyan Seminar' held in Madurai University, 1971.

31. The text reads:- 'Tiruttuvittatu Tirukkōilum Sritna tākamum' (SIL., Vol.XIV, No.3). The term 'tiruttuvitta' means 'reappropriated' or 'corrected'.

temples or the image of the principal deity in the case of other examples. The Yōganarasimhā cave-temple at Anaimalai, for example, has a furious representation of Narasimha in the sanctum and the adjacent cave, locally known as Lāḍaṅ kōil, has high-relief sculptures of the principal deities inside the sanctum which are identified as the images of Lord Subrahmaṇya and his consort Dēvasena. In view of the fact that the early Pallava cave-temples do not contain any sculpture or even a rock-cut liṅga in their sanctum-cells, this may, indeed, be said as the special feature of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines. In the case of Śiva cave-temples, sometimes, the Nandi figure is also cut on the same rock in front of the sanctum as seen in the cave-temples at Tirumalaipuram, Malayakkovil etc.

It is noteworthy in this connection that in the earlier centuries stone as a material for making the images of the principal deities of the temples was not in common use in the Tamil country.³² All the available early literary

32. Stone, it seems, was preferred as a material only for memorial constructions. The Tolkāppiyam, the earliest extant Tamil work, speaks about the tradition of erecting stone slabs in memory of the heroes who died in war.

'Kāṭchi-Kālkōl-Nīrppaḍai-Naḍutal
Chīrta-Marabil-Perumbadai-vāḷttal'

-Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷ, Puram 5, 1.19-20.
(ed.) S.I.S.S.W. Publishing Society, Tinnevely, 1969.

evidences³³ indicate that the principal deities which occupied the sanctum in both Saiva and Vishnava shrines were painting or painted stucco or wooden reliefs set on a platform against the back wall. This tradition seems to have been so strong that even ^{by} the seventh century A.D., when the occupation of the sanctum cells by stone images had become common elsewhere, it was a thing yet to be popularized in the Tamil country. When and by whom exactly this tradition was first broken is a difficult thing to say at present. However it is worth mentioning here that even the earliest known Pāṇḍya cave-temple at Malayadikkurichi which can be safely dated to the first half of the seventh century A.D. has a stone liṅga installed inside the sanctum.³⁴

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33. i) Ittikai-nēduṅcuvar-vittam-viḷḷḍena
maṇi-p-purā-t-turanda-maraṅcōr-māḍattu
eludani-kadavul.....
- Ahanānūru, No.167.
- ii)Kēlkola-k
kālpunaintu-iyarriya-vaṅṅappamai-Nōṅcuvarp
Pāvaiyum-paliyenap-perā.....
- Ahanānūru, No.369.
- iii) Avar-Avar-tām-tām-Arindavarū-ētti
Ivar-Ivar-emberumān-enru-Cuvarmisai-ch
charttiyum-vaithum-toluvār.....
- Poygai Alvār, Malayira Divya Prabhandam,
Mudal Tiruvandati, V.14,
(ed.) P.B. Annangaracharya Swamy, 1967.

34. No clear references to the stone liṅga are found in the Tēvāram hymns of the contemporary Saiva saints viz. Appar and Tiruṅānasambandar. For references to the liṅga form in the Tēvāram hymns, K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, p.35.

The līngas, in the Pāṇḍya cave-shrines, occupy the middle of the square sanctum, leaving enough space around for circumambulation. The pranālas are not usually found but in many cave-shrines there is a cistern cut into the floor of the sanctum, below the spout of the līnga to receive the abnīshēka water.³⁵

The pillars on the facade of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples are comparatively short, heavy and plain resembling to a large extent the pillars of the early cave-shrines of the Pallava region. Generally they consist of two cubical parts, one at the bottom and the other at the top, with a chamfered mid-region of an octagonal shape.³⁶ In some examples, however, they are comprised of only two parts

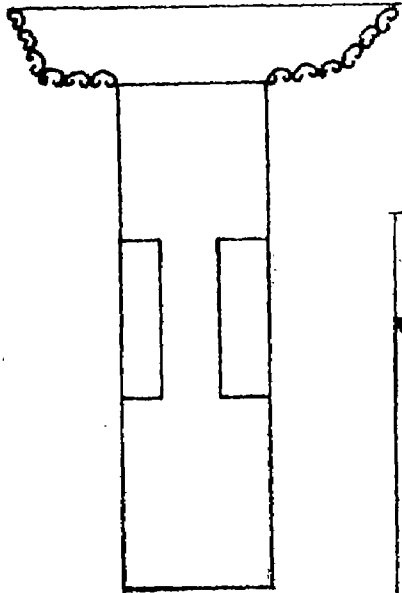
35. The contemporary Pallava cave-shrines and even their early structural temples do not have any original water outlet in the sanctum.

36. The cubical parts are called 'saduram' and octagonal section 'kaṭṭu' in Tamil. The extant examples suggest that there was no uniform proportion between the three parts of the pillar. Generally the lower cube is bigger in size than the upper and middle parts as seen at Malayadikkurichi and Kunrakkudi cave-temples; in some examples the lower cube is smaller than the upper one as in the Pillaiyarpatti cave-temple; at Lādan kōil (Anaimalai) the octagon mid-region is slightly bigger in size than the top and bottom cubes whereas in the cave-temples at Tirupparankunram the same is much reduced in size and is almost compressed in between the top and bottom cubes.

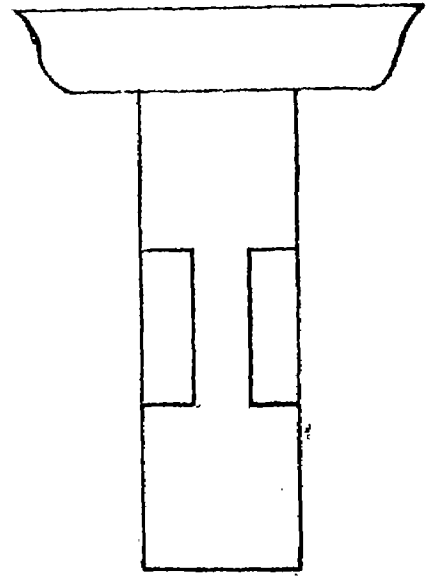
viz. a square base and an octagonal shaft above as found at Tiruttangal and Kalugumalai (fig.1). The corbels (pōtikā) over them, in proportion to the massiveness of the pillars, are massive blocks with arms either curved or angular in profiles. The under arms as well as the bevelled faces of the corbel brackets are often ornamented by a series of roll-mouldings called tarāṅga. A plain median band is shown in the middle of the roll-mouldings as if holding them together. Occasionally the median band is decorated with linear patterns as seen in the Satyagīriśvara cave-temple at Tirumayam. The bevelled faces of the octagonal mid-region usually form sharp right angles with the projecting corners of the top and bottom cubes. In the Yoganarasimha cave-temple at Anaimalai, however, the corners of the cubes are slightly drawn over the bevelled faces of the mid-region in the form of bud-like projections. Thus the early examples do not show the demarcation of the various members of the typical south Indian order. However this simple form underwent changes subsequently. The lower cube (saduram) was retained as the base of the pillar while the octagonal mid-region (kaṭṭu) was slightly tapered and prolonged in shape so as to form the shaft portion. The upper part including the top cube along with its abacus was multiplied into several parts viz. phalaka, padma,

PĀNDYA CAVE TEMPLES
PILLAR TYPES

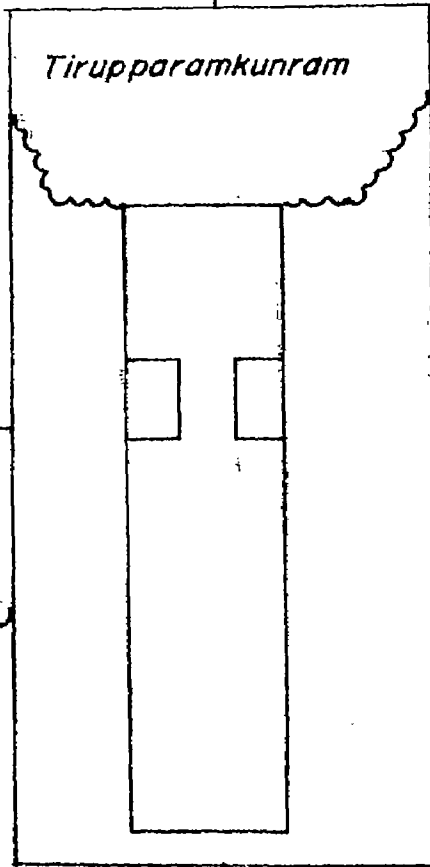
Malayadikkurichi



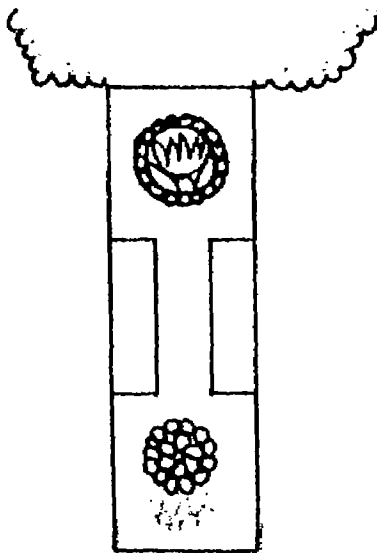
Anaimalai



Tirupparamkunram



Tirumalaipuram



Kahugumalai

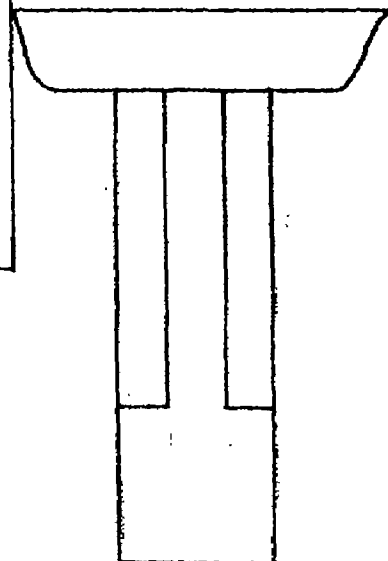


Fig. 1

kumbha, tāḍi, kalaśa etc., representing the various members of a typical south Indian order. The example of this fully-evolved type is seen in the pilasters which occupy the recessed niches on either side of the sanctum entrance in the Lāḍaṅ kōil at Anaimalai.

Another noteworthy feature of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples is that they lack the usual cornice decoration over the facade. The cornice, as seen in many of the examples, is a rough projecting ledge of the rock, often crude and irregular in outline. In some of them, however, they are well-dressed and occasionally decorated also with a row of circular bosses as in the cave-temple at Chokkampatti. On the interior, the cella front wall in many instances shows a well-moulded plinth comprising several horizontal courses. Often the prastara (entablature) is also slightly projecting from the mandapa wall.

Further many of the Pāṇḍya cave-shrines, for instance at Anaimalai, Kunrakkudi, Virasikhamani, Tirupparankunram etc., display a number of high-relief sculptures on the walls of the mandapa. The images of the dvārapālas are usually found on either side of the sanctum entrance. In some of the cave-temples sculptural representations of other divinities such as Ganeśa, Kārtikēya etc., occupy

the deeply-cut niches carved on either side of the facade as seen at Mahipalanpatti and Arittapatti. While high-relief sculptures, either single or in group, are frequently found, the low-relief sculptures or the relief-compositions comparable to the relief panels of the Pallava cave-temples at Mahabalipuram are almost absent in the Pāṇḍya cave-temples. Perhaps with the lone exception of the Subrahmanya cave-temple at Tirupparankunram which has low-relief sculptures on either side of the facade, no other Pāṇḍya cave-temple has any relief-composition whatsoever.³⁷

The dvārapālas of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples are all two-armed and usually face the front. Sometimes, one of them is shown in profile. In every instance they are carved in various attitudes with different attires. For instance, both the dvārapālas in Kurakkudi cave No.1 are shown as heavily leaning on a huge club and the one on the right, has, in addition, horns of large size.³⁸

37. Fine bas-relief carvings belonging to the Jaina faith are found on the rock-boulders at Kalugumalai, Anaimalai etc. but they do not form part of any architecture.

38. Horned dvārapāla images are found commonly in the Pallava cave-temples and also in the cave-temples at Mogalrajapuram and Bhairavakonda. As the horned dvārapālas are found in association with particular forms of Siva, it has been suggested, that they represent the Nandi. AR.SIE., 1921-22, Pt.i, pp.3 and 4.

Of the images of the divinities of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples, the Śiva-Natarāja, Lingōdbhava, Harihara, Vishnu, Brahmā, Durgā, Gaṇeśa and also Kārtikēya are noteworthy. Of them, again, the image of Gaṇeśa seems to be more common as it is found carved on the mandapa walls of the Pillaiyarpatti, Tirumalaipuram, Tirupparankunram cave-temples and also in the side niches of the facade at Mahipalanpatti and Arittapatti. Iconographically the head of the Gaṇeśa image of the Pāṇḍya cave-shrines looks less conventionalised and resembles more that of an elephant. Other images are generally presented with their specific iconographic fixations. Taken as a whole, the figures of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples are flatly conceived and the general treatment is rather heavy. As a result, their bodily features show an archaic tendency and the expression is, rather, blunt due to the thick and heavy lips and noses of the images.

PROBLEM OF DATING:-

Of all the Pāṇḍya cave-excavations that have come to light so far the Maṇādēva cave-temple at Malayadikkurichi may, perhaps, be considered as the earliest one. It has a foundation-inscription³⁹ which is dated in the 17th regnal

39. AR.IE., 1959-60, No.358.

year of Sēndaṅ, the third ruler of the early Pāṇḍya dynasty. Sēndaṅ, as discussed already, ruled probably during the first half of the seventh century A.D. Hence, in the Pāṇḍinādu, the practice of excavating shrines out of live-rock may be said to have had its beginning, if not earlier, atleast by the first half of the seventh century A.D. On the other hand the end of the ninth century A.D. is generally considered as the 'terminus adēquūm' of rock-cut mode of architecture in the whole of India. By about tenth century A.D., as S.K. Saraswati eloquently puts it, "The structural method with its immense scope and possibility placed unlimited powers in the hands of the builders who had already been acquainted with its advantages over the rock-cut method. It is not surprising therefore, that with the rapid progress of the structural buildings, this archaic rock-cut mode in spite of its long use and its peculiar advantages would in the end become obsolete".⁴⁰ Thus, having A.D. seventh century and A.D. tenth century as the upper and lower limits, we may tentatively assign all the rock-cut excavations of Pāṇḍinādu to the three intervening centuries. Here again, barring the Yōganarasimha cave-temple at Anaimalai and the

40. R.C. Majumdar (ed.), History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol.III, Classical Age, p.449.

Subrahmanya cave-temple at Tirupparankunram which have foundation-inscriptions quoting the Kali era., the precise date of the excavation of other cave-temples is not possible to determine at present. Hence the study of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines cannot be made on a strict chronological order. In the absence of chronological order, the only reliable way to study them is to apply a particular art historical methodology involving a precise analysis of the development of their plans.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PĀṆDYA ROCK-CUT TEMPLES:-

Broadly speaking, all the rock-cut shrines of the Pāṇḍinādu fall under two broad categories viz:-

- A) Shrines excavated in granite stone and
- B) Cells excavated in sandstone and used generally for the residential purposes.⁴¹

The extant examples of the first group are, indeed, many in number showing varied types of plans and features. The examples of the second group are comparatively few -

41. The practice of excavating cells on the rock for residential purposes was first started by the Buddhist and Jain people all over India. As monastic establishment was alien to the early Brahmanism, the brahmanical rock-cutters didnot favour the idea of excavating cells out of rock. However the cutting of cave-resorts was not absolutely unknown in the extreme south, as proved by these examples found in the Pāṇḍinādu. All these cells were probably used by Saivite sanyāsīs.

their total number being only six - and all of them are located in the particular region of Tiruchendur taluk.

It has been suggested⁴² that all the granite cave-temples of the Pāṇḍinādu may be classified into five distinct types, as given below, on the basis of their plan and lay-out (Fig.2).

Group A

Type I - Cave-temples consisting of a simple squarish sanctum sometimes with a semblance of a porch or verandah in front.

Type II - Cave-temples consisting of a simple squarish sanctum with a well-defined pillared porch or mukha-mandapa⁴³ in front.

42. H. Sarkar, Damilica, Vol.I, pp.78-79.

43. Sometimes this front pillared porch is called the ardhamandapa as it immediately precedes the sanctum. However the Tamil inscriptions at Anaimalai and Sittannavasal rock-cut temples, which are datable to A.D. 770 and to the middle of the ninth century A.D. respectively, mention the front pillared porch as the mukha-mandapa even though it is immediately in front of the sanctum (SII., Vol.XIV, Nos.1,2 and 45). Further the term ardhamandapa seems to be more appropriate only when there is a mandapa preceding it in front as in the Type III. Hence the term mukha-mandapa or the front mandapa is preferred to describe the front pillared porches of the rock-cut cave-temples.

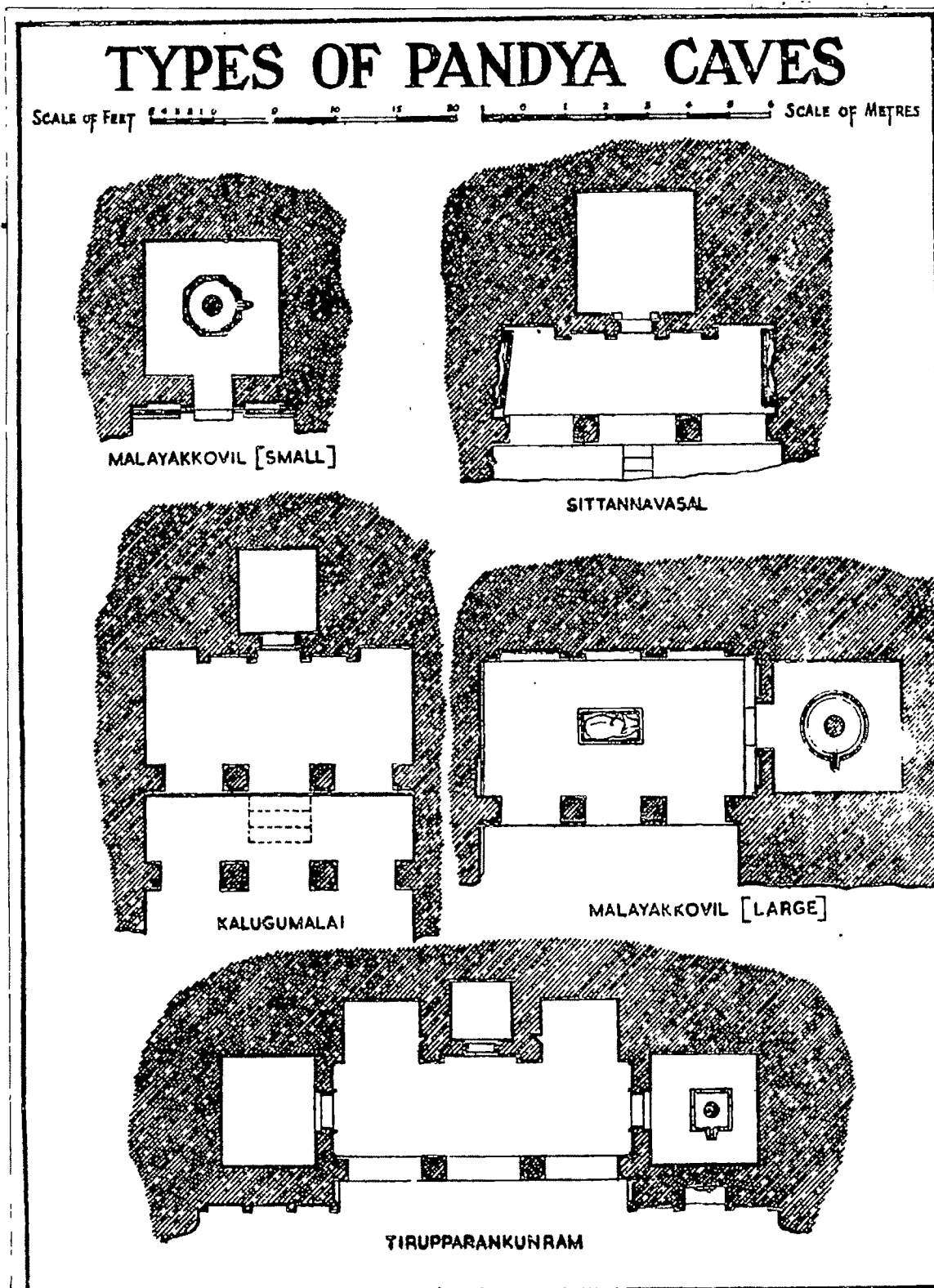


Fig. 2

- Photostat copy from
 H. Sarkar, *Damila*, Vol. I,
 fig. 3 (facing p. 80). 79
 Copyright: Archaeological
 Survey of India.

Type III - One celled shrine in the centre of the excavation with well-defined ardha- and mukha-maṇḍapa and having four pillars arranged variably.

Type IV - Cave-temples consisting of an oblong front maṇḍapa with a shrine at one of its shorter sides.

Type V - Cave-temples consisting of an oblong front maṇḍapa with shrine cells on all the three sides.

Group B

The plan and lay-out of the extant examples of the sandstone cave-resorts are fundamentally different from those of the Group A and hence they may be taken to represent an altogether distinct type.

The order in which the types have been given above, however, does not mean any chronological sequence between the examples of each type. Thus, for instance, all the examples of the Type I are not to be taken as preceding in date to the subsequent types. Some might have preceded; some are obviously not. The earlier types were continued to be excavated even after the subsequent development of the forms and plans. For instance, barely an interval of three years separates the two important dated Pāṇḍya rock-cut temples viz. the Yōganarasimha temple

at Anaimalai (A.D. 770) and Subrahmanya temple at Tirupparankunram (A.D. 773); yet the former is an example of the Type II while the latter represents the Type V which is the most evolved of all the types of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples. Similar instances could be multiplied which would only suggest that the rock-architecture did not progress strictly in an evolutionary order in the Pāṇḍinādu.⁴⁴ with this background we may now proceed upon to the Type-wise description of the monuments.

T Y P E I

Cave-temples consisting of a simple squarish cell sometimes with a semblance of a porch in front are commonly found in the southern region of the river Kāvēri. Examples of this type in the Pāṇḍinādu are found at Mahāpalaupatti, Tiruchuli and Piranmalai in Kamanathapuram district; Malayakkovil and Tirumayam in Pudukkottai district; Kunnattur and Arittapatti in Madurai district. Similar type of cave-temples are also found at Malayadipatti, Marattamalai

44. In fact the Pāṇḍya rock-cutters had a number of 'models' before them in the contemporary Pallava and Chālukya cave-temples. Hence they could pick and choose their own without having the necessity to go through the various developmental stages by themselves. Their only problem was the tackling of the hard rock-material upon which they had to work. When once they succeeded in it, from cut-in cave-temples they could straight away think of carving out a monolithic temple at Kalugumalai without going through the intermediate 'ratha' stages.

etc., in the Muttar^aiyar region and also at Bhutapandi, Tuvarangudi and Alagiyapandipuram (all in Kanyakumari district) in the ancient Āy territory.⁴⁵ In the Pallava region, this type is rare and is represented by only two examples at Kilmavilangai and Vallam.⁴⁶

Turning to the examples of the Pāṇḍinādu none of the above mentioned examples has any epigraphical evidences with which their actual date of excavation can be precisely fixed. However the simplicity of their plan and the elementary design are quite tempting to consider them as the early experimentations in the rock-cut mode of architecture in the Pāṇḍinādu. Architecturally, these one-celled shrines do not conform to the popular mandapa type of the cave-temples. Their importance, however, lies in the fact that they simulate more or less the elementary type of structural shrines having a square sanctum with or without a porch.

KULASEKHERĒŚVARA CAVE-TEMPLE AT MAHIPALANPATTI

Mahipalanpatti is a small village situated at a distance of approximately 10 kms from Tiruppattur on Tiruppattur-Chevvur

45. For a brief account of the cave-temples of the Āy territory reference may be made to H. Sarkar, Monuments of Kerala, 1973, pp.20-22.

46. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, pp.130, 132 and 134.

bus route in Ramanathapuram district. The small and simple shrine of Kulasēkherēśvara (Pl.V) at Mahipalanpatti is found excavated on one of the rocky hillocks lying on the roadside at a distance of 1.5 kms from the village. Facing the west, the cave-temple has been excavated on a huge rock boulder.

The vertical surface has been obtained by cutting the rock to a depth of approximately 1.5 metre at the top and 1.2 metre at the bottom. The top ledge of the overhanging boulder, has been left without further cutting and serves as the cornice. The total height of the facade is approximately 1.8 metre. The entrance to the sanctum is obtained by a small flight of three steps flanked by parapets. The wall of the sanctum shows altogether four pilasters, two on either side of the entrance forming a shallow recession between them. The pilasters are square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region and are capped by simple bevelled corbels. The base of the wall shows a well-moulded plinth comprised of horizontal courses. The entrance to the sanctum is cut in between the two inner pilasters, the pilasters thus forming the door-jambes and the beam over them, the lintel. The pranāla (i.e. the water outlet) is cut at the

bottom of the right wall.⁴⁷ Inside the square sanctum the centre is occupied by a rock-cut linga on a square base.

On the exterior, the cutting of the grooves in a triangular shape forming a sort of roof over the shrine, at once, recalls the Draupati ratha at Mahabalipuram. Evidently the above shape is a rock-version of the thatched structures of the village communities. On the right side of the cave-temple, a seated image of Ganesa is carved and housed in a highly-recessed niche on the rock.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLE (EASTERN) AT MALAYAKKOVIL

Malayakkovil is a small hamlet situated at a distance of 10 kms from Namanasamudram Railway station and 2 kms from Nachchandupatti in Tirumayam taluk. Two rock-cut shrines - one small and the other large - are found excavated on the rocky hillocks lying scattered at this site. On plan, the smaller one conforms to the Type I of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples whereas the other belongs to the Type IV.

The small cave-shrine, dedicated to Śiva, is excavated on the eastern face of a huge rock-boulder which rises almost perpendicularly. Hence no deep cutting has been required to

47. The term right and left are used in this work from the point of view of the monuments and not from the point of view of the spectator who stands opposite to the monument.

obtain the vertical surface. On plan and features, this cave-shrine resembles very much the Mahipalanpatti cave-temple described above. The total height of the facade is 2.4 metres with an entrance door-way in the centre. On either side of the sanctum entrance, the wall surface shows a pair of pilasters forming a shallow recession between them. The pilasters are square at the top and bottom with an octagon mid-region. At the basement the sanctum wall shows a few courses of horizontal mouldings.

The shrine entrance is cut in between the two inner pilasters which form its door-jambes also. Inside the sanctum the centre is occupied by a rock-cut linga. It is noteworthy that the lingapītha is not the usual square but octagon^{al} in shape. To the left of lingapītha is cut a cistern on the floor. On the exterior grooves have been cut over the shrine in a triangular shape as seen at Mahipalanpatti. On the right wall of the cave-temple there is a label and also a fragmentary inscription, both engraved in early characters.⁴⁸

ŚIVA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUMAYAM

The next example of the Type I is found at Tirumayam which is a taluk head-quarter in Pudukkottai district. At

48. Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai state (Texts), No.4.

this town there is a rock-fort, locally called the 'Umalıyyaṅ Kōṭṭai'. There are altogether three rock-cut excavations inside the rock-fort, all of which are assignable to the period of our study. Of them, the Śiva cave-shrine found at the top of the fort falls under the Type I of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples.

This single-celled cave-shrine has been excavated on the western face of a steep rock-boulder at a height of more than 4.5 metres from the ground level. How this height was originally negotiated to approach the shrine is not known at present.

The plan of the shrine consists of an almost square sanctum with a rock-cut liṅga occupying its centre. The sanctum measures approximately 2.8m x 2.7m. As the rock face itself is almost perpendicular no chiselling has been required on the exterior face of the rock. All that is carved on the exterior is an entrance (measuring 1.9 metres in height and 0.9 metre in width) around which runs a course of straight band parallel to the line of the door-jams and the lintel. Further to this straight band, on either side of the entrance, are seen two rows of narrow grooves cut vertically at regular intervals. At the bottom of the groove lines on either side is carved an architectural motif.

Inside the sanctum the square base from which the līṅga emerges has interesting features. It consists of several courses of horizontal mouldings similar to the jagatī, kumuda, kanṭha and the pattikā. On the right side of the āvudaiyār a gana figure is carved below the spout of the līṅga and down below a cistern is cut on the floor to receive the ceremonial waters.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLES AT KUNNATTUR

The village Kunnattur is situated at a distance of 18 kms from Madurai on Madurai-Sivaganga bus route. Two rock-cut shrines, both of them dedicated to Siva, are found excavated on the rock-boulders which lie on the road-side between Varichiyur and Kunnattur.

The cave No.1 (Pl.VI), locally known as Asthagiri, is excavated on a rock which lies just on the road-side, facing the east. The vertical surface is obtained by cutting the rock to a depth of approximately 2 metres at the bottom and 0.68 metre at the top and the projecting upper ledge of the rock forms the porch to the shrine. The sanctum wall, as in the cave-temple at Mahipalanpatti, has four pilasters, two on either side of the sanctum entrance. The pilasters consist of two cubical parts at the top and bottom with an octagon mid-region. The cubical parts of the pilasters carry

circular medallions on them. The entrance to the sanctum is cut in between the two inner pilasters. The interior of the square sanctum houses a rock-cut līṅga on a square pedestal. To the left of the līṅga, a cistern is cut on the floor to receive the abhishēka water. On either side of the sanctum entrance, the images of dvārapālas are seen in the shallow recessions formed by the pilasters. Both of them stand on crossed legs. The dvārapāla on the right is shown resting both his hands on a huge maze while his counterpart on the left is shown with folded hands. On the right wall of the porch in front is seen a damaged image of Ganesa in a shallow recession. Opposite to the sanctum is seated a Nandi figure carved out of a separate stone.

The cave No.2 (Fig.3, Pl.VII), locally known as Udayagiri, is not far from cave No.1 and it marks a notable advancement on plan over the latter. Here the vertical surface of the rock has been obtained by cutting it to a depth of about 2.5 metres at the bottom and 0.3 metre at the top. Owing to the bulging of the rock, the cutting has been deeper on the northern side. Facing the west, the plan of the cave-temple consists of a square sanctum (measuring 2.6 metres a side) and a small porch in front measuring 0.43 metre in

SIVA CAVE TEMPLE-2.
KUNNATTUR

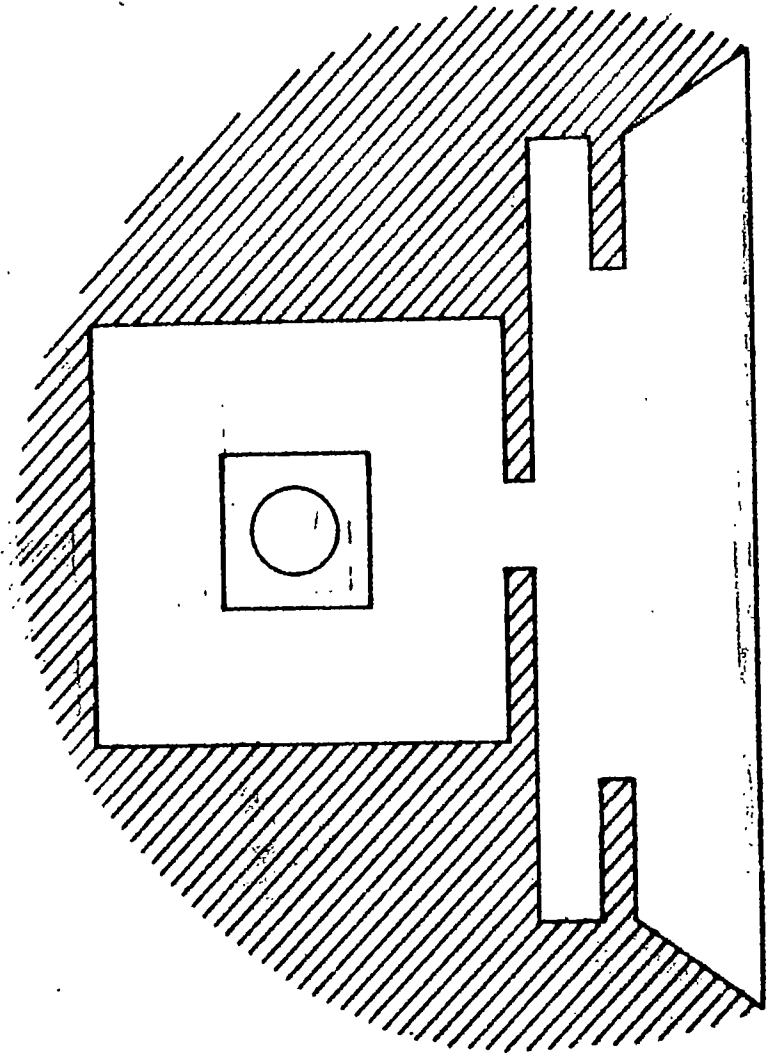
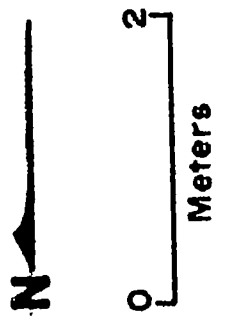


FIG. 3

width. The facade is formed of two pilasters in antis of which the northern one is, as usual, square at the bottom and top with a chamfered mid-region and is provided with a curved corbel of tarāṅga type. The southern pilaster, on the other hand, is plain from the bottom to top and is capped with a plain curved corbel. Over the corbels are seen a pair of well projected mouldings running horizontally of which the outer one forms the cornice of the facade. On the northern side of the facade, the rock surface has been decorated with an architectural replica which is rather an unique feature not to be met with in any other example of the early Pāṇḍya cave-temples. The replica shows a shrine with a moulded plinth and a two-tiered superstructure supported by a pair of pillars. The corresponding side on the south also shows recessed spaces on its surface but the work seems to have been left incomplete here. Another noteworthy feature of this cave-temple is that on either side of the sanctum entrance are seen several courses of vertical bands running parallel to the door-jambes. The interior of the sanctum has a rock-cut liṅga on a square pedestal. No cistern or pranāla is found inside the sanctum. The cave-temple has no sculptures but as in the previous example a detached Nandi figure is seen in front of the sanctum.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLE AT ARITTAPATTI

Arittapatti is a small village situated at a distance of 20 kms from Madurai and 8 kms from Chittampatti which lies on Madurai-Melur high road. To the west of Arittapatti, at a distance of one kilometre, are found a group of rocky hillocks surrounded by green paddy fields and lakes. Against the picturesque background, the Siva cave-temple is found on the western face of a huge rock-boulder on one of the hillocks.

The cave-temple at Arittapatti (Fig.4; Pl.VIII), locally known as 'Idaichi Maṇḍapam', is a well-preserved example of the Type I of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples. As the rock itself rises almost perpendicularly, no deep cutting has been needed to prepare the surface for the execution of the cave-temple. The facade of the cave is formed of a pair of pilasters facing the front and supporting a well-marked beam or architrave over them. The pilasters are tetragonal in section. On either side of the pilasters is seen a deeply-cut niche containing the seated images of Kārtikēya (?) and Gaṇeśa on the northern and southern sides respectively. The niches are formed by two pilasters which support a plain lintel over them. Above the lintel runs a thin moulding which bounds it at the top. A little interior to the pilasters

SIVA CAVE TEMPLE
ARITTÄPATTI

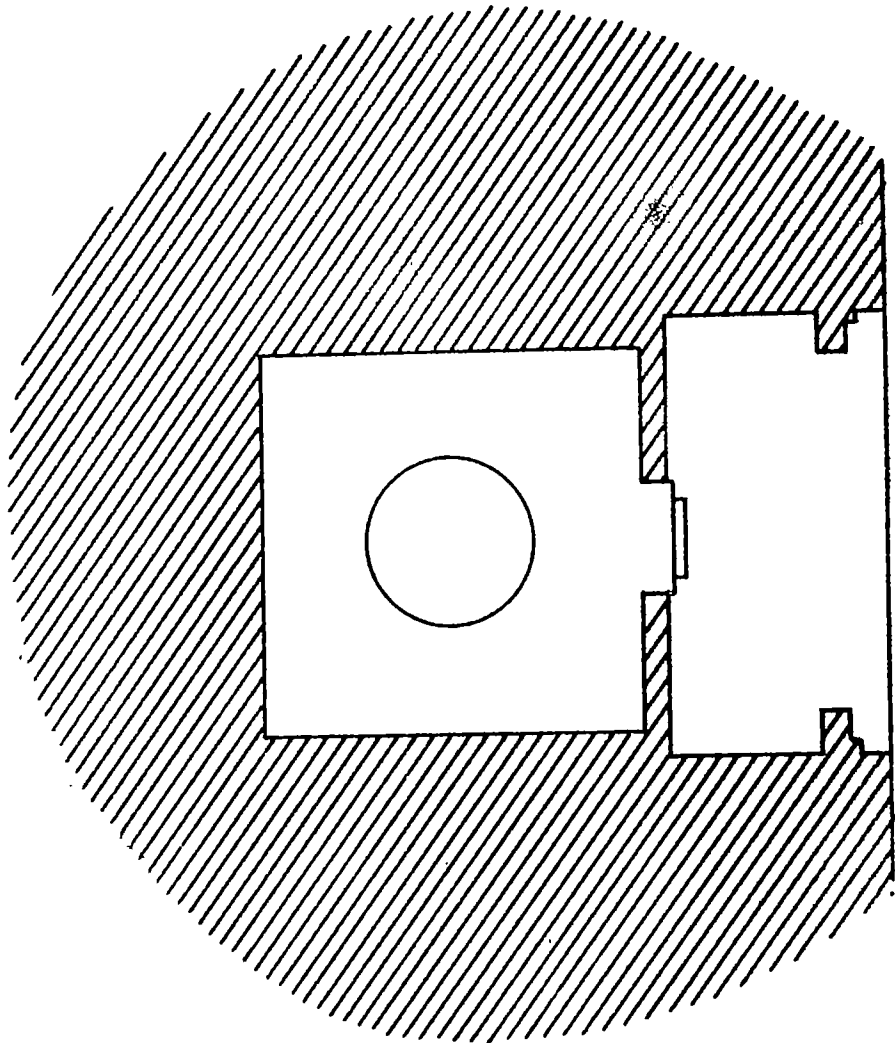
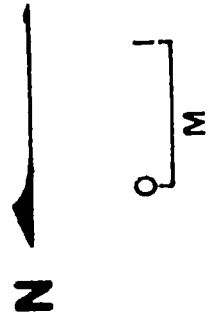


Fig. 4

of the facade are seen, again, a pair of pilasters in antis. These pilasters are also tetragonal in section but are provided with taraṅgapōtikā. In the middle of the roll-mouldings runs a median band (paṭṭa) as if holding them together. The corbels support a well-dressed beam which is bounded at the top by a thin projected moulding. This moulding runs along the sides also as a demarcating line between the outer and inner pilasters of the facade.

On plan the interior consists of a square sanctum with a well-defined oblong porch in front (measuring 3m x 1.5m). The entrance to the sanctum is obtained by a door-way which is flanked on either side by a pair of neatly executed dvārapālas. The sanctum interior shows a rock-cut līṅga on a circular base. To the right of the līṅga, a small cistern is cut on the floor from which a narrow drain runs out cutting through the sanctum front wall and the porch. On the exterior, about 0.6 metre above the facade is cut a row of mortise holes and over the line of these holes is cut a chase upon the centre of the facade.⁴⁹ The purpose of these holes is not clear. Further a set of five iron hocks are seen inserted on the rock at regular intervals o/?

49. The Vasanteśvaram cave-temple at Vallam has a similar row of mortise holes over the facade. K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, Pl.XI.

immediately below the line of the holes.

As regards the images of the divinities, both the figures which occupy the niches on either side of the facade, are carved in very high relief. Of them, the image of Ganesa is shown as seated in padmāsana. The deity is four-armed with its proboscis turned to the right and is adorned with yajñōpavita and udarabandha. The image on the northern niche is seated in sukāsana with the left leg resting on the seat and the right hanging down below. The right hand is kept on the right thigh whereas the left holds a danda. A thick yajñōpavita runs over the right hand and the left shoulder. The other ornamentation of the image includes elaborate ear-rings, anklets and the jatāmakuṭa.

T Y P E II

The cave-temples consisting of a squarish sanctum with a well defined pillared porch or mukhamandapa in front have been a popular type in all the regions of the south and in the Pāṇḍinādu also, this is the most dominating type ^{g?} of all. In the cave-temples of this type, often the floor level on which the pillars as well as the pilasters of the facade are set is few centimetres higher than the level of the front mandapa. This difference in floor level demarcates

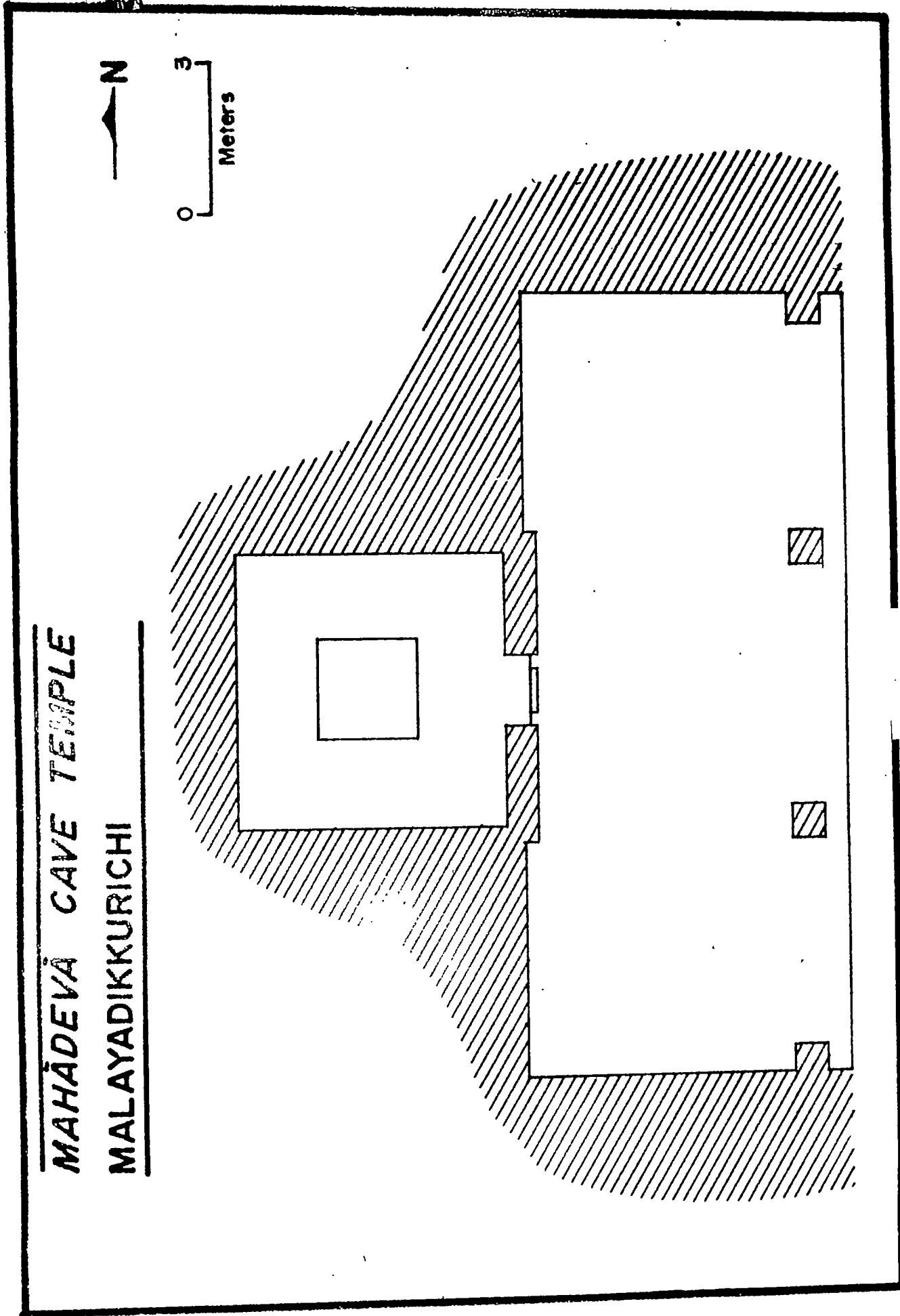
the mukhamāṇḍapa from the narrow platform in front.

Important examples of this type in the Pāṇḍinādu are found at Malayadikkurichi, Anaimalai, Kunrakkudi, Virasikhamani, Anaiyur, Tiruttangal and also at Sittannavasal and Tirugokarnam. Of them, the last mentioned two sites are located in the peripheral region of the traditional Pāṇḍya country. Fortunately three of the above mentioned cave-temples contain important epigraphical records of the early Pāṇḍya kings which are particularly helpful to fix the probable date of their excavation. For the convenience of study we may first deal with those cave-temples which are datable on the basis of inscriptional evidences and then pass on to other examples of the same type.

MAHĀDĒVA CAVE-TEMPLE AT MALAYADIKKURICHI

Malayadikkurichi, as indicated by the name, is a small village situated at the foot of a hill, at a distance of 10 kms from Sankaranainarkoil in Tirunelveli district. The cave-temple of Siva is found excavated on the hill near the village.

In any study of the Pāṇḍya rock-architecture, the importance of the Malayadikkurichi cave-temple (Fig.5; Pl.IX) can hardly be over-emphasised on account of the fact that the earliest inscription of the early Pāṇḍyas known so far,



MAHĀDEVĀ CAVE TEMPLE
MALAYADIKKURICHI

Fig. 5

is found in this cave-temple only. The inscription⁵⁰ which was discovered in the year 1959, is engraved on the corbel of the southern pillar of the cave-temple. It is dated in the 17th regnal year of the Pāṇḍya king Māraṇ Sēndaṇ, the third ruler of the Vēlvikuḍi grant, who probably ruled in the first half of the seventh century A.D. As to the contents of the inscription, it states that the 'stone temple'⁵¹ was caused to be made by a certain Sāttaṇ Ēraṇ who had the title Pāṇḍimaṅgala-vaḍiarasaṇ as the headman of Sevur, under the orders of Māraṇ Sēndaṇ. Hence the date of excavation of the cave-temple at Malayadikkurichi may safely be assigned to a period not later than the second quarter of the seventh century A.D.

The cave-temple has been excavated on the eastern face of a whale-back shaped rock on the hill. As the scarp is more or less vertical, the cutting of the rock has not been very deep to obtain the even surface required for the excavation of the cave-temple. The cave-temple has been added with a structural mandapa in recent times and hence, it is difficult to ascertain how the facade appeared

50. AR.IE., 1959-60, No.358.

51. Ibid., 1959-60, p.24.

originally. However there seems to have been no cornice (kapōta) decoration over the facade.

The facade of this moderately proportioned cave-temple, is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are equidistant. They are comprised of three sections namely, square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. The lower cube is slightly more in height than the upper one. Except the inner sides, all the other sides of the upper cubos of both pillars and pilasters are decorated with circular medallions. The pillars as well as the pilasters are provided with curved corbels. The curved arms of the corbels are decorated with roll-mouldings. The roll-mouldings, at either end, are fastened into a loop pattern.

On plan the interior consists of a sanctum (measuring 1.65m x 1.5m) fronted by a rectangular mandapa. The sanctum front wall which projects a little into the mandapa shows a well moulded plinth comprised of several horizontal courses. On either side of the sanctum entrance are seen two narrow, rectangular niches which are bounded at the top by a pair of expanding mouldings and surmounted by a drooping cornice above. Over the cornice is seen a recessed moulding decorated with rafter-like projections at regular

intervals. This recessed moulding is bounded at the top by a thin projected moulding. The niches show traces of two standing images, probably of dvārapālas, which have been erased out completely. The lintel over the sanctum entrance is extended well beyond the door-jambes on either side and is decorated with a foliated tōraṇa design. The foliage is shown as spanning from a ring in the centre of the lintel and extend well beyond the door-jambes on either side. Inside the ring and on the curves of the foliage on either side are seen altogether three tiny seated figures in bas-relief. The tōraṇa design, undoubtedly, adds elegance to the entire scheme of sanctum entrance. On either side of the sanctum front wall are seen traces of two relief sculptures on the back wall of the mandapa which however, for reasons unknown at present, have been completely erased out making their identification almost impossible.

The entry into the sanctum is obtained through a small flight of steps. A liṅga placed on a square pedestal occupies the centre of the sanctum and it is not rock-cut but intact. This is rather unusual in view of the fact that the principal image which occupies the sanctum in the

Pāṇḍya cave-temples is always cut on the same rock itself.⁵² Likewise no original water outlet is found inside the sanctum, nor even the usual cistern cut on the floor of the sanctum as found in many of the Pāṇḍya cave shrines.

Notwithstanding these unusual features, the Mahādēva cave-temple at Malayadikkurichi is undoubtedly an important landmark in the history of rock-cut architecture of the Pāṇḍinādu. In its balanced proportion, in the pleasing treatment of the pillar capitals, in its decorative features and above all in its good finish, the Malayadikkurichi cave-temple clearly testifies to the fact that the rock-cut mode of architecture had its beginnings in the Pāṇḍinādu much earlier than the second quarter of the seventh century A.D.

CAVE-TEMPLES AT ANAIMALAI

Approximately 10 kms to the east of Madurai city is found a small hillock called the 'Anaimalai'.⁵³ The place

52. Further the foundation inscription does not mention the name of the God which is mentioned only in the later inscriptions of the cave-shrine. And also all the sculptures inside the shrine have been erased out. On account of these reasons, K.R. Srinivasan is of the opinion that it was first excavated probably as a Jain cave-temple and later converted into a Saivite cave-temple. His unpublished paper on 'Malayadikkurichi cave-temple' read at the Pandyan Seminar held at Madurai University, 1971.

53. As the hillock appears in the shape of a seated elephant with its trunk stretched in between the front legs, it is popularly called as 'Anaimalai'. Anai in Tamil means elephant and malai means mountain.

seems to have been a prolific centre of the Jains during the early times. This is indicated by the presence of Jain caverns adorned with bas-relief sculptures of Jain pantheon and also by the early Brāhmi inscriptions found engraved on the hill. On the steep northern side of this hillock, are found two rock-cut shrines, excavated side by side. Of them, one is dedicated to Vishnu and enshrines the image of Yōganarasimha and the other, locally called the Lāḍaṅ-kōil, is probably dedicated to Subrahmaṇya.

YŌGANARASIMHA CAVE-TEMPLE

Of the two cave-temples, the Vishnu cave-temple (Pl.Xa) deserves our attention first on account of the fact that it contains two foundation-inscriptions,⁵⁴ of which one mentions also the date of its excavation. The two related inscriptions - one in the early Grantha script and the other in the Tamil Vaṭṭeluttu - are found engraved on the niches on either side of the sanctum entrance. The Kali year 3871 (equivalent to A.D. 770) is quoted in the Sanskrit inscription for the Pāṇḍya king whose name is mentioned as Parāntaka and also called as Māraṅjadaiyaṅ in the Tamil inscription. This Parāntaka alias Māraṅjadaiyaṅ, as already discussed (ante. p.36), is identifiable

54. Ep. Ind., Vol.VIII, pp.317; SII., Vol.XIV, Nos.1 and 2.

with Jaṭila Parāntaka Neduñjaḍaiyaṅ, the donor of the Vēlvikudi grant. An important landmark is, thus, provided by these two inscriptions in the chronology of the early Pāṇdyas. Incidentally this is the second rock-cut shrine of the Pāṇḍinādu which can definitely be attributed to royal patronage. Chronologically this cave-temple is separated from the Malayadikkurichi cave-temple by a margin of more than hundred years and with regard to the monuments of the intervening period, we are unfortunately still kept in dark.

As to the contents of the inscriptions, it is stated that a certain Māraṅgāri alias Mūvēndamaṅgalapēraraiyaṅ, a Vaidya of Karavandapura (alias Kaḷakkuḍi) who was the uttaramantri of the Pāṇḍya king began the excavation of a rock-cut temple for Vishnu. But as he died subsequently, the work was completed by his brother Māraṅ Eyiṅaṅ alias rāṇḍimaṅgalavisaiaraiyaṅ who succeeded him in the office of the minister. Māraṅ Eyiṅaṅ is said to have added the mukhamāṇḍapa and also performed the consecration ceremony.⁵⁵

Facing the west, the cave temple has been excavated on the rock at a height of about 1.2 metre from the ground level. In order to obtain the vertical surface the rock has been cut to a depth of 2.1 metre at the bottom and

55. Ibid.

0.75 metre at the top. The cave-temple has subsequently been added^v with structures such as mandapas and portico^{to} and as it stands to-day, the entire cave-shrine forms the garbhagriha and ardhamandapa of the larger temple.

The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are massive and thickly set. The pillars and pilasters are placed at equal distance. As usual they consist of three sections namely square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. It is noteworthy that the cubical sides of the pillars as well as the pilasters, unlike those at Malayadikkurichi, are devoid of the circular medallions and are left plain.⁵⁶ Similarly the pillars are provided with simple and plain curved corbels resembling the shape of a boat. The corbels, however, are not in proportion to the size and massiveness of the pillars. Over the facade in overhanging ledge of the rock forms the cornice.

The interior of the cave-temple consists of a square sanctum and a rectangular mandapa in front. The sanctum front wall shows a well moulded plinth comprised of several

56. It is rather surprising that the Anaimalai Vishnu cave-temple which was excavated nearly 130 years after Malayadikkurichi cave-temple, instead of showing further advancements, displays a retrogradation in matters of decorative details. This, however, is one more instance of the stylistic anomaly found among the dated Pāndya cave-temples. at ves

horizontal courses. On either side of the sanctum entrance are seen two shallow niches which carry the Sanskrit and the Tamil inscriptions on the right and left sides respectively. The entrance to the sanctum is obtained through a small flight of steps from the mandapa. The sanctum has a forceful representation of Vishnu in Yōganarasimha form which is carved in bold relief against the back wall.

LĀḌAṆ-KŌIL OR SUBRAHMANYA CAVE-TEMPLE

The Lāḍaṇ kōil or Subrahmanya cave-temple (Pls.Xb and XIa), found adjacent to the Yōganarasimha cave-temple is also assignable to a period not much later than the latter.

Though resembling the Yōganarasimha cave-temple in its plan and general lay-out, the Lāḍaṇ kōil, nevertheless, displays many new features, some of which are rather unique. The vertical surface has been obtained to excavate the cave-temple by cutting the rock approximately 2.1 metres at the bottom and 0.6 metre at the top. The floor of the cave-proper is cut at a height of approximately 1.5 metres from the ground level. This height is negotiated through a double stairway (sōpana), each side of which consists of five steps and both meet at a level on par with the floor level of the mandapa. The exterior wall of the staircase

shows a niche in the centre containing the image of Ganesa. Though many of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples are found excavated at a considerable height from the ground level, none of them shows a similar type of access to their mandapas.⁵⁷ And in this respect, the double stairway approach of the Lāḍaṅ kōil stands out as an exception.

The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are, as usual, square at the bottom and top and octagon in the mid-region. All the cubical sides of the pillars as well as the pilasters are decorated with circular medallions. The corbels over them are of bevelled type and the bevelled faces are ornamented with roll-mouldings (taraṅga) along with a median band running in between them. Over the facade is cut a horizontal groove line which forms the cornice of the cave-temple.

The interior of the shrine consists of a rectangular sanctum fronted by a mandapa which is also rectangular in dimension. The sanctum front wall is projected into the mandapa and shows a well moulded plinth with several

57. In fact some of them do not have any arrangement at all, not even the usual flight of steps. However, the Orukal mandapam at Tirukkalukkunram which is attributed to the period of Narasimhavarman I Mamalla, has a similar type of double stair-case arrangement K.R. Srinivasan, Cave-Temples of the Pallavas, Pl.XXVII.

horizontal courses. The basement supports a pair of pilasters on either side of the sanctum entrance and they rise upto the level of the lintel forming a rectangular recession on the wall between them. The pilasters are square at the bottom, octagon in the mid-region with squat figure of dwarfs occupying their top. The cubical sides are decorated with circular medallions. The recessions between the pilasters on both sides contain two more pilasters which show all the component parts of a fully-evolved south Indian order such as the kalāśa, tādi, kumbha, padma, palagai etc. The palagai (abacus) over the left pilaster is occupied by a peacock while a cock is seen over the palagai of the right pilaster. All the sides of the oblong mandapa are also adorned with figure sculptures. On the back wall of the mandapa are seen two images probably of devotees in deeply cut niches. The image (Pl.XIb) on the left is a little stout and holds a bunch of flowers in the right hand while the left arm rests on the hip. The figure on the right (Pl.XIIa) is scantily dressed and holds a bunch of flowers in the left hand while the right hand rests on the hip. On the left wall of the mandapa is seen another figure (Pl.XIb) which is kneeling down on its right leg and the right hand is

pointing to the deity inside the sanctum. Opposite to it, on the right wall is seen a much mutilated image of which nothing can be made out at present.

Inside the sanctum, against the back wall, there runs a narrow stone bench on which the principal deities, identified⁵⁸ with Lord Subrahmanya and his consort Devasena, are seated (Pl.XIIb). On the northern face of the rock, there is a Tamil Vaṭṭeluttu inscription in eighth century characters. According to its contents, the cave-temple was renewed by a saint called Nambirāṅpaṭṭa Sōmāsi Parivirājakar of Vaṭṭakkurichi.

ŚIVA CAVE-TEMPLES AT KUNRAKKUDI

Kunrakkudi, also known as Kunnakkudi, is a small village, situated at a distance of 12 kms from Karaikkudi in Ramanathapuram district. In the centre of the village is found a small hillock on the top of which is situated one of the famous temples of Lord Subrahmanya. This hillock was, perhaps, once a Jain resort and this is borne out by the presence of stone beds and Brāhmi inscriptions on the rocks at the top. At the foot of this hillock are found

58. C.Sivaramamurti, Kalugumalai and Early Pandya Rock-cut Shrines, p.35. In fact, the presence of the peacock and cock on either side of the sanctum entrance give strong support to this identification as the above birds are the vāhana and flag-symbol of the Lord.

three rock-cut cave-temples, all excavated in a row and dedicated to Śiva. The cave-temples have been subsequently added with a structural pillared mandapa erected at a later period (Pl.XIII).

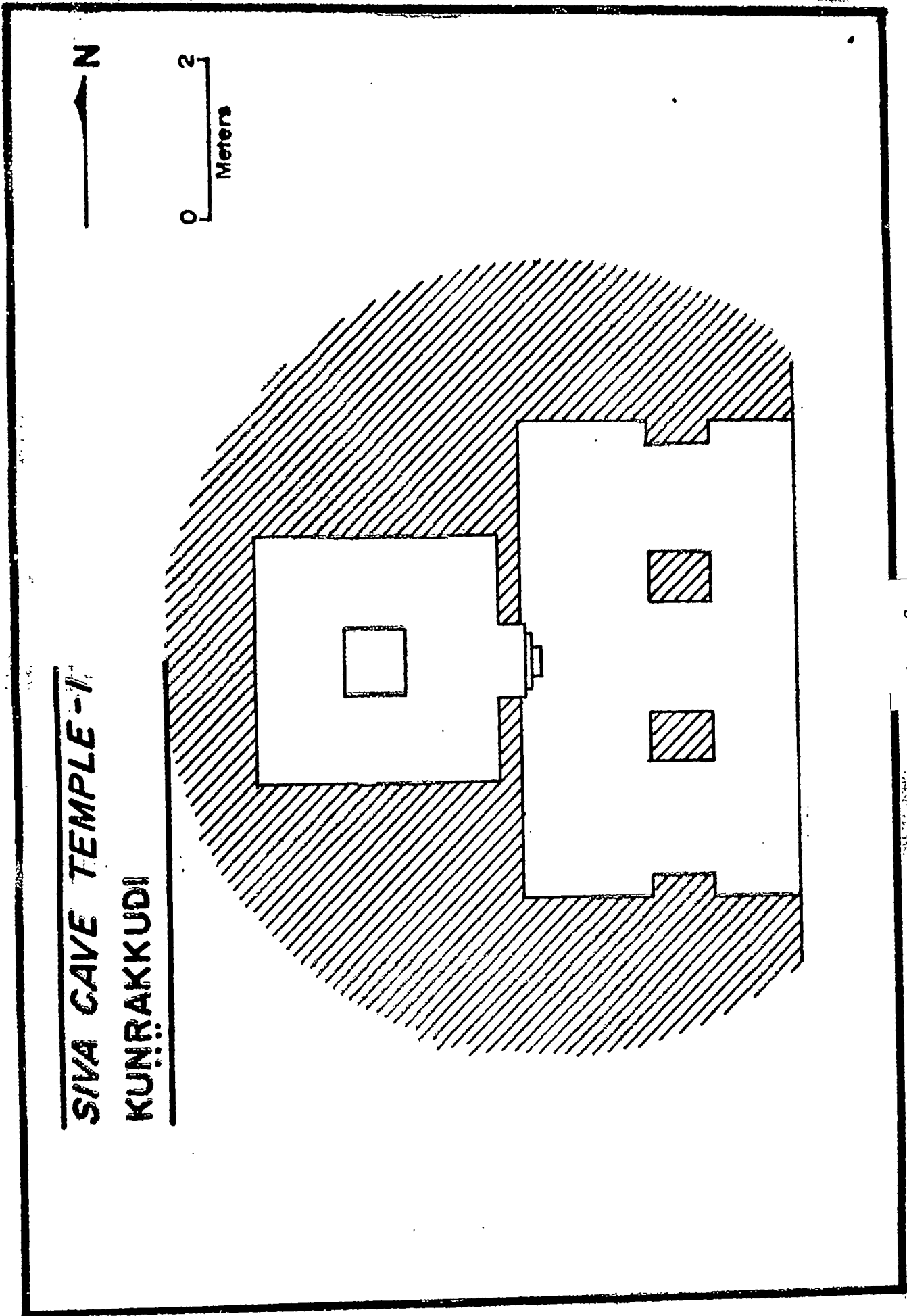
Sentence
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Consisting of a square sanctum with a rectangular mandapa in front, all the three cave-temples at Kunrakkudi fall under the Type II of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples. Of them, the cave No.1 (Fig.6), on account of its superior finish and decoration deserves our attention first. To obtain the vertical surface, the rock has been cut to a depth of approximately one metre at the top and bottom. The overhanging ledge of the rock, having been left without further chiselling or decoration gives the appearance of a porch in front. The under surface of the ledge is, however well dressed. On either side of this porch are seen a pair of dvārapālas, both facing each other. Both the images are sturdy and heavily ornamented and are shown resting their right hand on a huge mace and the left over the hip. Of them the one on the left is horned also. A little further to the east of the dvārapāla on the right side is seen a standing figure with four arms (Subrahmanya?). On the opposite, in the same position is found the image of Ganeśa.

at

n/51

The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of



pillars and pilasters placed at equal distance. They are set on a level which is ^a few centimetres higher than the floor level of the platform in front and this difference in level forms the demarcating line between the front mandapa and the porch. The pillars, as usual, are square at the top and bottom and octagon ^{or} in the mid-region. The pilasters, on the other hand, are uniformly square in section from the base to top. The corbel over the pillars is a massive block of stone with arms angular in profile.

The interior of the mandapa is replete^d with a number of high-relief sculptures on all the sides of the walls. On the right wall of the mandapa is carved the panel of Garudāntika. The Vishnu is shown with four hands; the upper ones are carrying sankha and cakra; the lower right hand is on the hip; the left elbow rests on the shoulder of the attendant Garuda. On the back wall of the mandapa, ^d to the right of the sanctum entrance, is depicted the Great Triad with Lingapūrṇadēva in the centre and Brahmā ^a and Vishnu on either side. To the left of the sanctum entrance are carved two sculptures namely an eight-armed Durgā ^a standing on a Buffalo-head and an image of four-armed Harihara. On the left wall of the mandapa, is found an excellent representation of the eight-armed Siva-Natarāja. ^a

The right leg of the dancing God is bent and held on tip-toe behind the left leg. There is no apasmāra beneath the foot. Unfortunately, all the above sculptures are crudely plastered and painted over in recent times.

The entrance to the sanctum is obtained by a small flight of steps from the mandapa and the square sanctum which measures three metres a side, is occupied by a huge rock-cut liṅga on a square pedestal in the centre. No pranāla is found inside the sanctum.

The cave-temple No.2 resembles very much the cave-temple No.1 in its plan and other features but the sculptures are far less in number here. Besides a pair of dvārapāla images on either side of the front porch, there is only one panel of Garudāntika on the right wall of the mandapa. The cave-temple No.3, again, is much the same as the above two but it has no sculptures whatsoever, not even the dvārapālas. All the three cave-temples contain donative inscriptions belonging to the time of the later Pāṇḍya rulers.⁵⁹

KAILĀSANĀTHA CAVE-TEMPLE AT VIRASIKHAMANI

Virasikhamani is a small village located at a distance of 2 kms from Sendamaram in Tirunelveli district. The rock-cut shrine of Śiva (Pl.XIV) is found excavated on the

59. SII., Vol.XIV, Nos.204,217,219 and 266.

eastern face of a small hillock lying near the village. Not very far from Virasikhamani is found another important rock-cut shrine at Tirumalaipuram which falls under the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines.

Facing the east, the Śiva cave-temple at Virasikhamani, on plan and features, resembles the other examples of the Type II described above. The vertical surface of the rock has been obtained by cutting it into a depth of approximately 0.9 metre at the bottom and about 0.3 metre at the top. The floor level of the mandapa is cut at a height of 0.9 metre from the mean ground level. The base thus formed is decorated with recessed horizontal mouldings. The entrance to the mandapa is obtained through a small flight of four steps flanked by parapets. On either side of the steps runs a platform of about 0.6 metre in width. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters. The floor level on which they are set is slightly higher than the level of the platform. The pillars are heavy and as usual, show cubical parts at the top and bottom and an octagonal mid-region. All the sides of the cubes are decorated with circular medallions. On the left pilaster is found a donative inscription⁶⁰

60. SII., Vol.XIV, No.136.

in Tamil Vatteluttu script which belongs to the period of the Chōḷa-Pāṇḍya viceroys.

The interior of the rectangular mandapa (measuring approximately 5.4m x 4.8m) shows altogether five sculptures including the two dvārapālas flanking the sides of the sanctum entrance. On the right wall of the mandapa there is a much-mutilated figure of a saint (?) of which only the head remains. On the left wall are seen two more figures which are also very badly damaged. Fortunately, the images of dvārapālas are found in a much better state of preservation. The dvārapāla, on the right, rests his whole body on a huge club creeped by a ^{snarvled?} snake. The left leg is held slightly bent in a relaxed attitude. The other image on the left is shown with his right arm thrown sideways while the left rests on the hip. Both of them wear jaṭābhara, a thick roll of yajñōpavīta, a broad necklace and armlets. The dvārapāla on the right, in addition to jaṭābhara wears a crown.

In front of the cave-temple, a Nandi is placed on a high structural platform. Both the Nandi as well as the platform seem to have been the work of a later date, possibly, during the time of Chōḷa-Pāṇḍya viceroys.

CAVE-TEMPLE AT ANAIYUR

Anaiyur is a small hamlet situated at a distance of 4 kms to the north of Sankaranainarkoil in Tirunelveli district. Near the village are seen a group of rocky hills and the cave-temple is excavated in one of them which is the nearest to the village.

Excavated on the western slope of a whale-shaped rock, the cave temple (Fig.7; Pl.XV), on plan, consists of a sanctum the sides of which measure differently⁶¹ and a disproportioned rectangular mandapa in front. Hence it may be grouped under the Type II. To obtain the vertical surface, the rock has been cut to a depth of 0.9 metre to 1.5 metres at the bottom and 0.9 metre to 1.2 metres at the top. Owing to the irregular surface of the rock the cutting on the right is ~~more~~ deeper than the left. The cut-in portion has been left without further chiselling and as such it forms the porch to the facade. The width of the porch is 1.5 metres at its widest point and 1 metre at its narrowest point. The facade of the cave-temple is, however, formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are cubical at the top and bottom and octagonal in the middle. All of them are provided with

61. Its sides measure 2.1m, 2.2m, 1.9m and 2.3m respectively. The floor level is also not even; it is slopy and inclining upwards.

ROCK-CUT CAVE TEMPLE
ĀNAIYUR

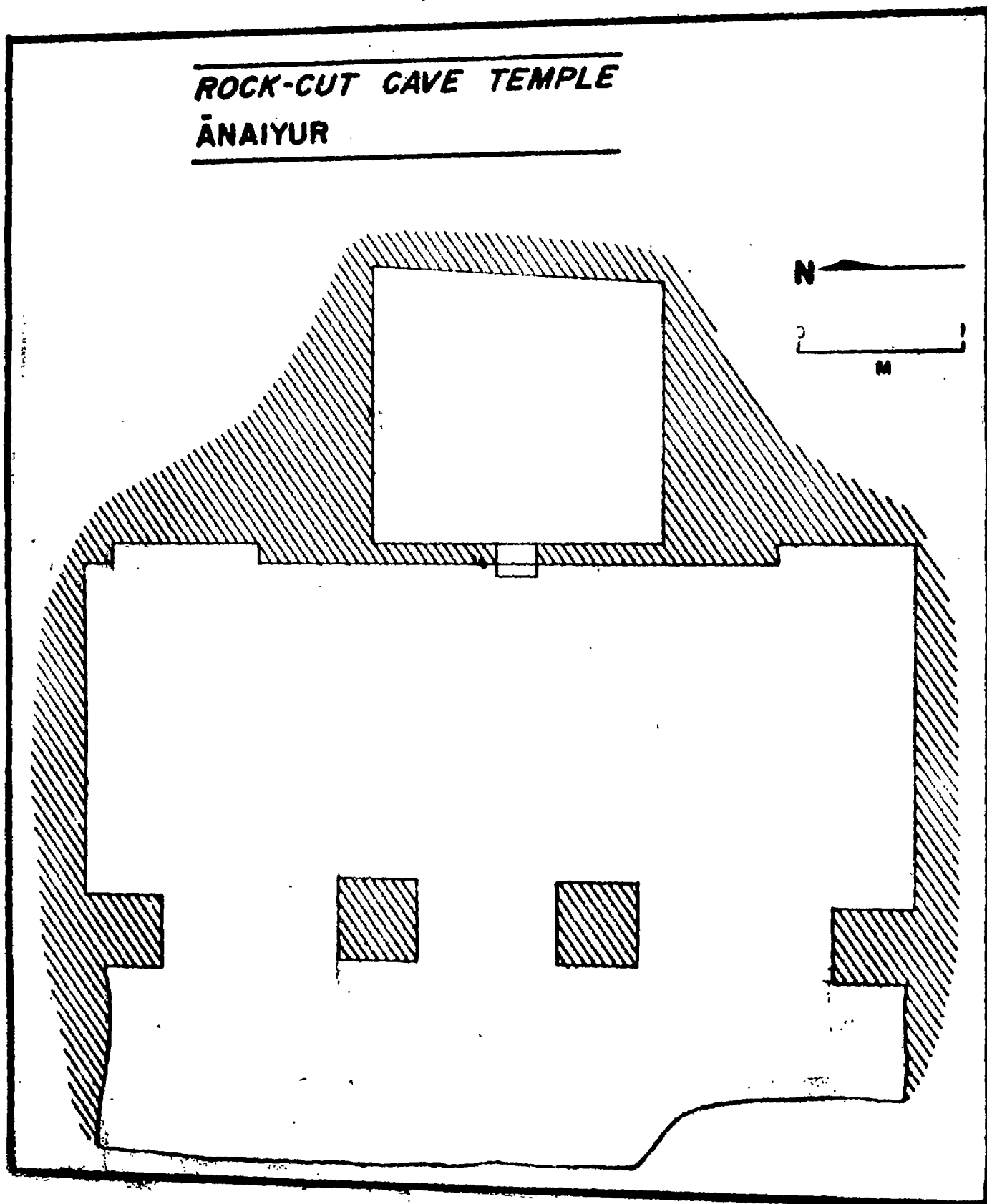


Fig. 7

tarangapōtikā with a wide median band running between them. The median bands are decorated with linear designs. Circular medallions are found on all the sides of the upper cubes except the inner ones facing the interior. It is noteworthy that the inner sides of the pilasters are more deeply cut than the outer ones.

The interior of the mandapa is in the form of an irregular rectangle. The measurements of the opposite sides do not tally mainly due to the uneven cutting of the surface of the walls. At the back of the mandapa a doorway provided with a small flight of two steps leads to the sanctum. The sanctum front wall projects a little into the mandapa and it shows a couple of coarse moulding at the base. On either side of the sanctum entrance are seen a pair of pilasters which form a recession between them. The recessions house the images of dvārapālas. The inner pilasters serve as the door-jambes. The corbels over the outer pilasters are provided with arms projecting on all the three sides. Of the dvārapālas, the one on the right is slightly leaning; both his hands are resting on a huge maze. His counterpart on the left is shown with his right hand raised at his elbow with open palm; his index finger is pointing to the sanctum; his left hand rests on the hip.

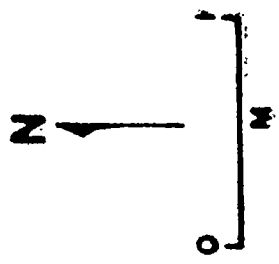
The sanctum interior is also of irregular dimensions and it has no rock-cut image inside.⁶² However the carving of Nandi figure in one of the medallions suggests that it was meant to be a shrine of the Saiva persuasion.

Considering the irregular and uneven chiselling of the sanctum and the front mandapa and also the absence of any rock-cut image inside the sanctum, it may be surmised that the work in the cave temple at Anaiyur was left incomplete.

RANGANATHA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUTTANGAL

At Tiruttangal near Sivakasi in Ramanathapuram district, is found a rock-cut shrine excavated on one of the rock boulders lying in the heart of the town. Dedicated to Ranganatha the cave-temple (Fig.8), on plan, consists of a square sanctum and a rectangular mandapa in front. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which consist of only two component parts namely a square cube at the bottom and an octagonal shaft which rises upto the corbel. The corbel is of a plain bevelled type. The pillars and pilasters are set on a level which is few centimetres higher than the level of the mandapa. The interior of the mandapa is also plain and its walls, have been plastered over with cement in recent times. A door-way cut on the back wall of the

62. A small stone image of Ganesa occupies the sanctum at present.



RANGANĀTHĀ CAVE TEMPLE
TIRUTTANGAL

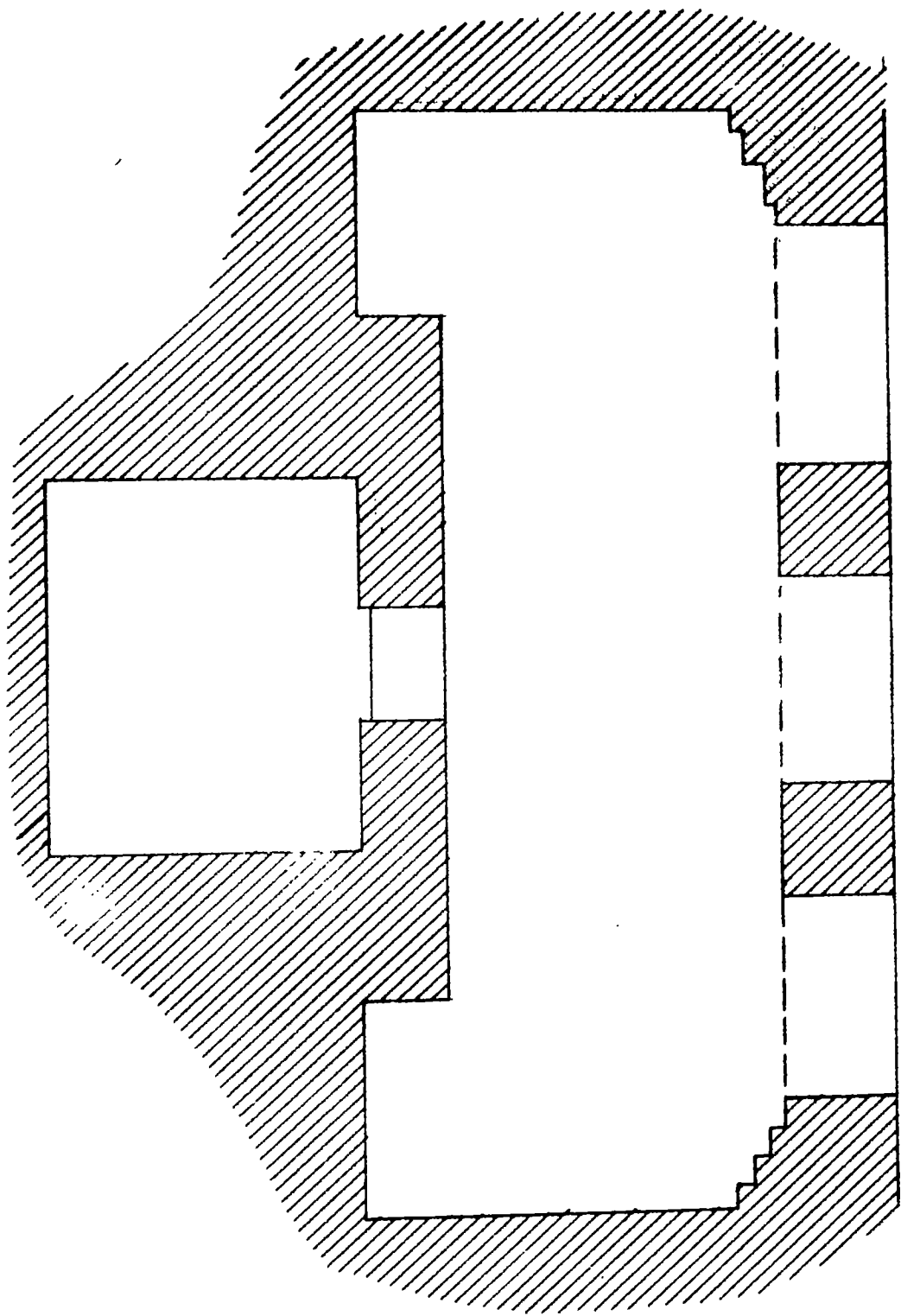


FIG. 8

mandapa with a small flight of steps leads to the sanctum. The sanctum front wall is projecting to a length of 0.45 metre into the mandapa. It shows a pair of pilasters on either side of the entrance of which the inner ones form the door-jamb.

The sanctum interior houses the image of Anantaśayana ३१ Vishnu carved against the back wall. The Vishnu is reclining on five-hooded Ādiśeṣha with Bhūdēvī and Srīdēvi ५१ ८१ seated at his feet.

The entire wall surface, ceiling as well as the chief deities of the sanctum are painted over in recent times; this obliterates the original features.

JAINA CAVE-TEMPLE AT SITTANNAVASAL

The village Sittannavasal is situated at a distance of about 16 kms to the north west of Pudukkottai. Since the early centuries of the Christian era the place Sittannavasal seems to have been a flourishing Jaina centre.⁶³ On the western side of the hill near the village, is found a Jaina rock-cut temple, facing the north-west (Fig.9; Pl.XVI).

63. There is a natural cavern in the rock where 17 beds with pillow arrangements are found. Obviously used by the Jaina monks, most of the beds are inscribed and, at least, one inscription found on the first bed is datable to the third or second century B.C. as it is written in Tamil Brahmi characters (Lalita Kala, No.9, April 1961, p.30).

Notwithstanding the fact that the place Sittannavasal is not located within the traditional territorial limits of the Pāṇḍināḍu, a discussion of the cave-temple at Sittannavasal becomes necessary in this work on account of the fact that it has an epigraphical record⁶⁴ which states that the cave-temple was extensively renovated by a Jaina ascetic of Madurai under the patronage of the early Pāṇḍya king Srīmāra Srīvallabha (A.D.830-860).

As to the contents of the inscription which is in the form of a Tamil verse, it states that one Iḷaṅ-Gautaman, an Acharya from Madurai, by the grace of the Pāṇḍya king Srivalluvan, renovated the 'agamaṇḍapa' and built anew the, 'mukhamāṇḍapa' in front of the temple of the Arhat (Arivar kōil), in the village of Anṇal-vōil.⁶⁵ The Pāṇḍya king Srivalluvan who is also called as Avaṇipāsēkhara in the inscription is obviously identifiable with Srīmāra Srīvallabha of Larger Sinnamanur and Daḷavāyppuram plates who probably ruled in between A.D. 830-860. This presupposes the existence of the cave-temple even before the middle of the ninth century A.D., but it is difficult to say under whose patronage it was excavated first. However, as the

64. SII., Vol.XIV, No.45 and also Lalit Kala, No.9, 1961, p.36.

65. SII., Vol.XIV, No.45, ll. 16-17.

JAIN CAVE TEMPLE
SITTANNAVĀSAL

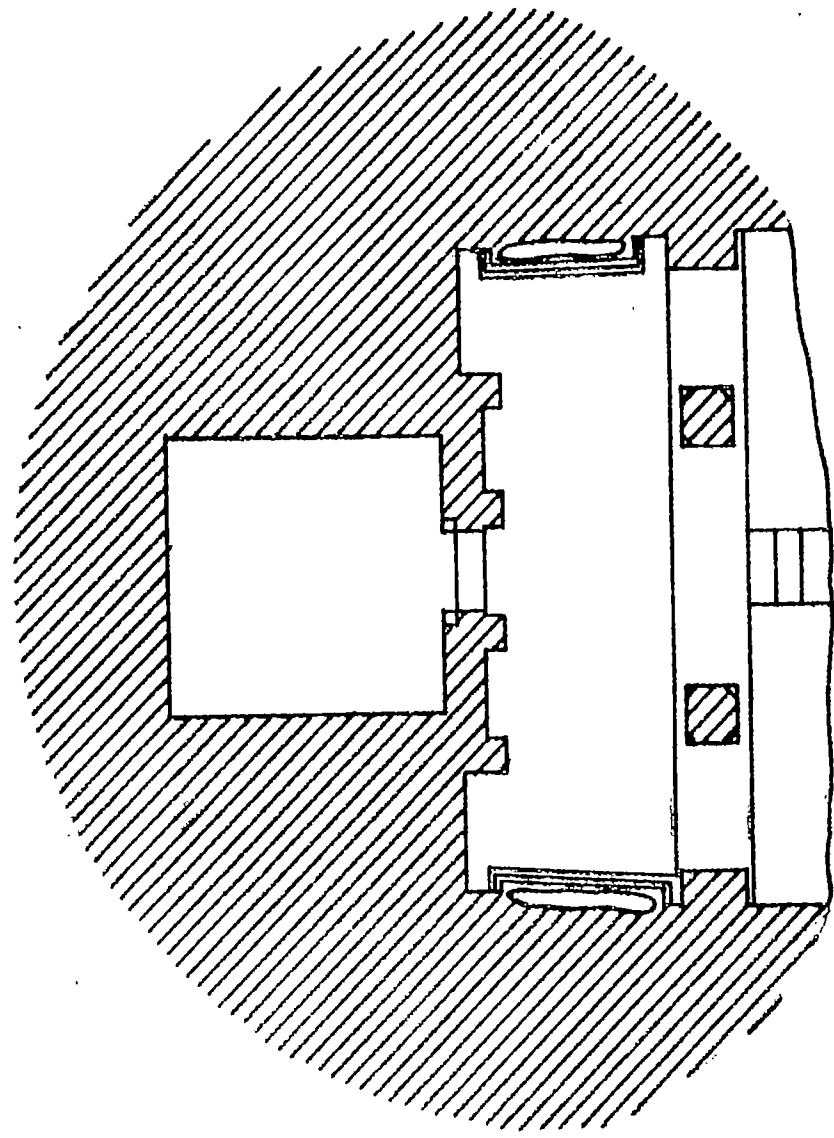
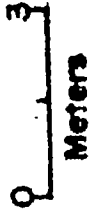


Fig. 9

renovation of the agamandapa and the excavation of the mukhamandapa have taken place through the grace (aruḷāl) of Srīmāra, the cave-temple may rightly be included under the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines.

On plan the cave-temple consists of a square sanctum and an oblong mandapa in front. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of equidistant pillars and pilasters which are, as usual, show three sections namely square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. The corbels over them are bevelled and their arms are decorated with taranga mouldings. In front of the row of pillars and pilasters runs a platform which is 0.8 metre in width at its widest point and 0.45 metre at its narrowest point. The platform is provided with a flight of three steps which leads to the mandapa. Over the facade the projecting ledge of the rock forms the cornice. The level on which the facade pillars are set is little higher than that of the mandapa and the platform in front.

The interior of the rectangular mandapa has a pair of seated figures in the deeply-cut niches on either side of the walls. The niches are formed of a well-moulded plinth which supports a pair of pilasters above. The pilasters which are provided with bevelled corbels, in turn, support

a lintel over them. The recessed space of the pilastered framework is occupied by the seated images. Of them, the image on the southern niche is nude and seated in dhyāna with a five-hooded serpent above the head. The image is identified as Parśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrtaṅkara.⁶⁶ The niche on the northern side contains another image, also seated in dhyāna under an umbrella.⁶⁷ s tht

The entrance to the sanctum is obtained through the doorway which is provided with a small flight of two steps flanked by parapets. The sanctum front wall which projects into the mandapa shows a well-moulded plinth comprised of several horizontal recessed mouldings. The plinth supports altogether four pilasters, two on each side of the sanctum entrance. The pilasters which form a recession on the wall between them are formed of three sections namely square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. Their upper cubes are decorated with circular medallions. The corbels over them are of bevelled type decorated with tarāṅga mouldings (Pl.XVI).

The sanctum interior shows a row of three seated images of Tīrtaṅkaras carved in high relief against the back wall.

66. T.N. Ramachandran, 'Cave Temple and Painting of Sittannavasal', Lalit Kala, No.9, April 1961, p.33.

67. T.N. Ramachandran suggests that the image represents probably the āchārya who renovated the cave-temple (Ibid.).

Of them, two are shown with triple umbrellas over the head and the one on the south has only one umbrells. The ceiling of the sanctum is decorated with a large dharmacakra with a well projected hub in the centre.

The ceiling of the sanctum, the front mandapa, the pillars, the corbels and the beam of the cave-temple at Sittannavasal are decorated with painting which has been studied in detail.⁶⁸

GÖKARNEŚVARA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUGOKARNAM

A brief mention may also be made here of another rock-cut shrine found at Tirugokarnam which forms a part of Pudukkottai town. Dedicated to Śiva, the cave shrine is, at present, enveloped in a vast structural complex and is known by the name Gōkarneśvara temple. On plan and features, the cave-temple resembles very much the other Pāṇḍya cave examples described under the Type II and its location is also not far from the traditional boundary of the Pāṇḍinādu. Further the cave-temple has yielded one Māraṅjadaiyaṅ inscription⁶⁹ dated in his 17th year.

The cave-temple has been excavated on the eastern face of a huge rock boulder lying at the site. The vertical

68. T.N. Ramachandran, 'Cave Temple and Painting of Sittannavasal', Lalit Kala, No.9, April 1961, pp.30-54.

69. SII., Vol.XIV, No.25.

surface has been obtained by cutting the rock to a depth of nearly 1 metre at the bottom and about 0.3 metre at the top. The facade, is formed of a pair of massive pillars and pilasters which are as usual, square at the top and bottom with an octagon mid-region. All of them are provided with tarāṅgapōtikā with a median band running between them.

On plan the interior consists of a square sanctum and a rectangular mandapa in front. On the two shorter sides of the mandapa are carved the images of seated Gaṇeśa and Gaṅgādhara in high relief on the right and left respectively. The image of Gaṅgādhara is shown with four arms and a little above to his left, the Gaṅga is shown as falling on the spread out jaṭā of the lord. The back wall of the mandapa shows altogether four pilasters, two on each side of the sanctum entrance. The pilasters which are square from top to bottom form a shallow recession on the wall between them. The two inner pilasters form the door-jambs of the sanctum entrance.

The entry to the sanctum is obtained through a small flight of steps and its interior shows a rock-cut liṅga placed on a square pedestal.

On the exterior to the right of the cave's facade are carved the figures of saptamātrika flanked by Ganesa and Vīrabhadra on either side.

T Y P E III

The cave-temples consisting of a square sanctum with a well defined ardhamandapa and mukhamandapa and also having four pillars arranged variably constitute the Type III of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines. Examples of this type in the Pāṇḍinādu are found at Kalugumalai, Pillaiyarpatti, Tirukkalakkudi, Mangudi etc. Of them the cave-temple at Pillaiyarpatti is slightly different as it has a mukhamandapa running north-south and the sanctum and ardhamandapa in east-west orientation.

KALUGĀCHALAMŪRTI CAVE-TEMPLE AT KALUGUMALAI

Kalugumalai lies exactly in between Kovilpatti and Sankarankoil in Tirunelveli district. Since early times the place seems to have been an important religious centre first of the Jains and later of the Hindus. Rock-beds used by the Jaina monks, bas-relief sculptures of Jaina Tīrtan̄karās (Pls. XXIXa, b and XXXa) and also two rock-cut excavations of the Hindus including the famous monolithic rock-cut temple are found on the hill at the village. The place has yielded two inscriptions,⁷⁰ belonging to one Māraṇjadaiyaṇ which are dated in his 23rd and 7 + 35th years. The name of the village is mentioned in the inscriptions as 'Tirunechchuram'.

70. SII., Vol. XIV, Nos. 31 and 42.

On the western side of the hill is found excavated a rock-cut shrine which is a veritable example of the Type III of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut temples. The rock-cut temple (Fig.10) is dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya and popularly known by the name 'Kaḷugāchalamūrti' temple.

The cave-temple has been excavated on the rock at a height of 0.9 metre from the ground level. On plan the cave-temple consists of a square sanctum fronted by a rectangular ardhamandapa and mukhamandapa. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which, unlike the usual Pāṇḍya types, consist of only two parts namely cubical base and an octagonal shaft over it. The basement of the facade shows several horizontal mouldings which seem to have been cut at a later date. The pillars and pilasters are provided with simple curved corbels. The over hanging ledge above the facade forms the cornice. However the under surface of the overhanging ledge is cut into a concave curve. It is noteworthy that the roof of the mukhamandapa is not flat but inclined. The ardhamandapa is approached through the doorway cut at the centre of the back wall of the mandapa. Parallel to the row of pillars and pilasters of the facade is seen another row of pillars and pilaster in the ardhamandapa.

**SUBRAHMANYA CAVE TEMPLE
KALUGUMALAI**

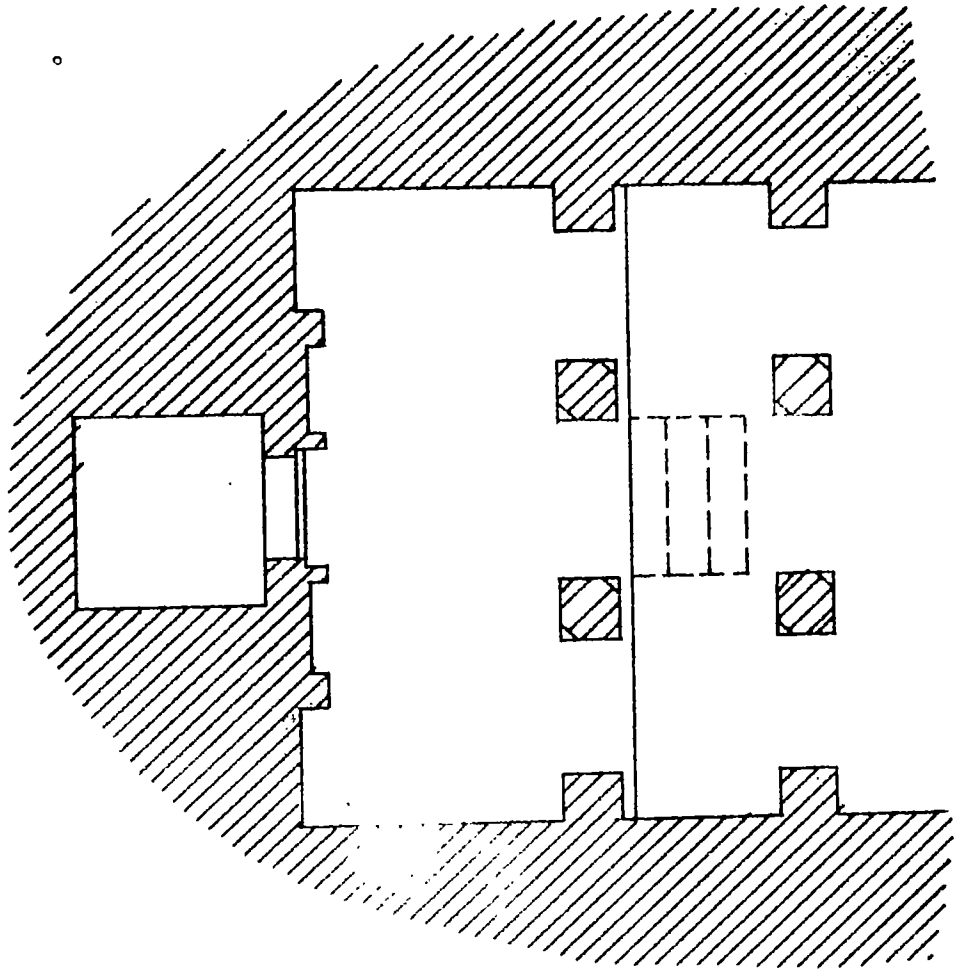
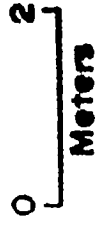


Fig. 10

The sanctum front wall which projects a little into the ardhamandapa shows a pair of pilasters on either side of its entrance. The pilasters are as usual composed of three sections namely two cubes at the top and bottom and an octagon in the midregion. A small doorway cut in between the two inner pilasters leads to the sanctum interior.

The sanctum interior contains a loose sculpture of Subrahmanya flanked by his two consorts Valli and Devānai on either side. The God is shown with one head and six hands which is rather an uncommon iconographic form of the deity. The peacock, his vāhana, stands at the back of the Lord.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLE AT PILLAIYARPATTI

Pillaiyarpatti is a small village located at a distance of 3 kms from Kunrakkudi in Ramanathapuram district. To the south of the village is found lying a huge rock boulder on which the rock-cut shrine has been excavated. Though the sanctum enshrines a linga, the cave-shrine is popularly called the 'Karpakavināyaka temple', after the name of the image of Vināyaka (Ganeśa) which occupies the side wall of the front mandapa. The entire rock-cut shrine has been completely enveloped by a structural temple of Śiva, apparently constructed at a later period. Consequently the cave-temple, as seen today, forms but a part of the larger temple.

The plan of the Pillaiyarpatti cave-temple (Pl.XVII) is slightly different from the other Pāṇḍya cave-shrine described above. To obtain the vertical surface, the rock has been cut to a considerable depth at the top and bottom. The top ledge of the overhanging boulder has been left without further cutting and it forms the cornice over the facade. On plan the interior consists of a sanctum and an ardhamandapa ^{the} in front ^{s of} both of which are ??
1 facing the east while the entrance to the cave-temple is through the north. As a result the rectangular mukhamandapa which is, strictly speaking, only a porch, is running north-south while the sanctum and the ardhamandapa have an east-west orientation. A set of three pillars and a pilaster divides the mukhamandapa and the ardhamandapa. Both pillars and the pilaster are square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid region. The lower cubes are smaller in dimensions than the upper ones. All the cubical sides of the pillars and the pilaster show circular medallions. The corbel, in proportion to the size of the pillars, is a massive block of stone with arms bevelled in profiles (Pl.XVII). The bevelled arms are decorated with taraṅga mouldings and a median band runs in the middle. The sanctum which is slightly apsidal at the back houses a rock-cut liṅga on a circular base.

Opposite to the main entrance, on the south wall of the mukhamandapa is carved the image of Ganeśa. A little further to the image of Ganeśa, on the south wall of the ardhamandapa is carved another image of a deity flanked by two attendants on either side. The central figure wears a jaṭāmakuta, heavy ear rings, long necklace and a thick yaṅnōpavīta. The right hand shows varadamudra and the left rests on the hip in akimbo pose. As the figure wears a hybrid hair-do, the suggestion⁷¹ that it might be the representation of Harihara, seems to be acceptable. On the exterior side of the north wall of the sanctum is carved another figure, resembling very much the central figure of the panel described above. As the image is shown as emerging out of a linga, it may be surmised that it is the representation of Lingōdhbhava.

The pilaster on the left side of the sanctum contains a few Vaṭṭelettu scripts of an 'archaic' type.⁷² On palaeographic consideration, R. Nagaswamy is inclined to date the inscription to the fifth century A.D. and therefore assigns the same period as the probable date of the excavation of

71. R. Nagaswamy, Artibus Asiae, Vol. XXVII₃, p. 266.

72. AR.SIE., 1935-36, No. 45 and p. 76; also referred in AR.SIE., 1936-37, pt. ii, para 6.

the cave-temple also.⁷³ This date rather seems to be too early considering the presence of the cult images such as Ganeśa, Harihara and Lingōdhabhava in the interior of the cave-temple. Hence it would not be far off the mark if we assign the seventh century A.D. as the probable date of its excavation.

T Y P E I V

The cave-tem^ples consisting of a rectangular mandapa with a square sanctum on one of its shorter sides form the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines. The cave excavations of similar plan are not altogether unknown in the early Indian rock-architecture. Even as early as the third century B.C., during the reign of Emperor Asoka, caves of this type were excavated at Barabar (in Bihar) for the use of Ājivika monks. Of them, for instance, the Sudama cave consists of two apartments of which the outer one is rectangular and the inner one is an empty circular chamber where usually the votive chaitya is placed. A solid wall with a narrow passage connects the two compartments and the main entrance is at one end of the broader side. The Pallava examples of this type of cave-temple are found at Dalavanur and Tiruchirappalli (upper-cave).

73. R. Nagaswamy, Artibus Asiae, Vol. XXVII, p. 266.

In the Pāṇḍinādu, however, this type seems to have been more common and the examples are found at Malayakkovil, Tirumayam, Sevalpatti, Tirumalaipuram and Tirupparankunram.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLE (SOUTHERN) AT MALAYAKKOVIL

Mention has already been made of the eastern Siva rock-cut cave-temple belonging to the Type I at Malayakkovil. The second cave-temple which is also dedicated to Siva is found on the southern side of the hillock. Locally known as Malailingam temple, this cave-shrine is added with a structural mandapa erected at a later period.

The cave-temple (Fig.2) has been excavated on the southern face of a huge rock boulder. The vertical surface has been obtained by cutting the rock to a depth of 0.75 metre at the top and 1.5 metres at the bottom. The facade is formed of a pair of massive pillars and pilasters which are, as usual, square at the top and bottom with an octagonal midregion. They are set on a level which is a few centimetres higher than the floor level of the mandapa. The total height of the pillars is 2 metres and the lower cubes are bigger in size than the upper ones. Both pillars and pilasters are provided with tarāṅgapōtikā with a median band running in the middle of the tarāṅga mouldings.

On plan the interior consists of a rectangular mandapa

(6m x 5m) with a square sanctum on its eastern side. Parallel to the pillars and pilasters of the facade, four more pilasters are carved on the back wall of the mandapa which form three shallow recessions on the wall between them. Like the outer ones, these pilasters are also composed of three sections including an octagonal midregion and are capped with tarāṅga type of corbels.

On the western wall of the mandapa is seen an image of Ganesa carved near the facade. The elephant-headed deity is seated and shown with four hands. The trunk of the elephant-face is curled to the right at its end (valampuri). The centre of the mandapa is occupied by a seated Nandi.

On the eastern wall is the doorway leading to the square sanctum. The basement of the sanctum wall shows a pair of horizontal mouldings. On either side of the sanctum entrance are seen a pair of split pilasters which form a shallow recession between them. The two inner pilasters serve as the door-jambs to the entrance and the beam over them, the lintel. The sanctum interior houses a rock-cut liṅga on a circular base at its centre.

SATYAGIRĪŚVARA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUMAYAM

The Satyagirīśvara cave-temple at Tirumayam is another well preserved example of the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines. Excavated on the southern side of the hill inside the Umaiyyan fort, this cave-temple is perhaps the largest of all the Pāṇḍya cave-temples under the Type IV.

The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of massive pillars and pilasters which are 2.4 metre in height and 0.6 metre in width. They are square in section at the top and bottom and octagon^d in the middle portion. All of them are provided with tarāṅgapōtikā with a median band running in the middle of them. The median bands are embellished with linear patterns. Similarly all the cubical sides of the pillars and pilasters are embellished with circular medallions of different patterns. The level of the mandapa proper is at a height of nearly 0.6 metre from the ground level and this height is negotiated through a pair of steps which runs along the entire length of the mandapa. The construction of the steps seems to be a later addition which has covered the original basement mouldings of the cave-temple. A part of the original mouldings is still visible at the left end of the facade.

On plan the interior consists of a rectangular mandapa

(8.1m x 5.1m) and a square sanctum on one of its lateral sides. The back wall of the mandapa shows four pilasters on a line parallel to those of the facade. These pilasters are set on a level which is few centimetres higher than the level of the mandapa. The recessions formed by the pilasters are left plain. However, on the wall opposite to the sanctum is carved ^{a/} an imposing figure of Lingodbhava which rises up from the floor to the entire height of the mandapa. Rising to a height of more than 2.7 metres, the Lingodbhava image at Tirumayam is undoubtedly one of the greatest representations of the deity in the whole of the Tamil speaking region. In the middle part of the huge linga is carved the figure of Siva upto his thighs. The centre of the mandapa is occupied by a Nandi carved on the same rock.

On the western side of the mandapa a small flight of steps leads to the sanctum entrance. The basement of the sanctum front wall shows prominent mouldings such as jagatī, kumuda, kañña and pattikā. On either side of the entrance are seen a pair of pilasters forming a shallow niche in between them. The niches contain the images of dvārapālas. The dvārapāla on the right is horned and both his hands are placed on a maze. The guard is shown with moustache,

thick yajñōpavīta¹ and a necklace. The left leg of the image is held at the back on tip-toe posture. His counterpart on the left has his right hand thrown upwards and the left resting on the hip. He wears a necklace and a thick yajñōpavīta composed of pearls.

The sanctum interior houses a rock-cut liṅga on a circular base. On the left side a cistern is cut on the floor to receive the ceremonial water.

On the north wall of the mandapa is engraved a label inscription⁷⁴ which reads the same as in the eastern cave-temple at Malayakkovil. There is, however, another important inscription⁷⁵ which is found engraved on a balustrade lying on the western side of the prakara in between the Satyagīrīśvara cave-temple and the adjacent Satyakīrtiperumāḷ (Meyyan) cave-temple. As to the contents of the inscription, it states that a certain lady Perumbiḍugu-Perundēvi, mother of Sāttan Māraṇ, a Muttaraiyar chief, renovated (pudukki) a structure, the name and the details of which are not given. K.G. Krishnan, however, assigns the record to the first half of the eighth century A.D. and identifies the

74. Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State (Texts), No.5.

75. Ibid., No.13.

'renovated' temple with the nearby Vishnu cave-temple.⁷⁶

However the fact that the lady 'renovated' the temple presupposes the existence of the cave-temple before the middle of the eighth century A.D.

CAVE-TEMPLE AT SEVALPATTI

Sevalpatti or Sevallipatti is located approximately 18 kms to the south of Sivakasi in Ramanathapuram district. A rock-cut shrine belonging to the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples is found on the rocky hillock near the village.

Facing the west, the cave temple (Fig.11; Pl.XVIII) has been excavated on a rock boulder which is sloping down with a concave curve. Hence to obtain the vertical surface the rock has been cut to a depth of 1.8 metre and less than 0.3 metre at the right and the left bottom respectively and approximately 0.9 metre at the top. The over-hanging ledge of the rock is left without further cutting and it forms the cornice. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. They are provided with tarāṅgapōtikā and a median band runs in the middle of the roll-mouldings. Except the inner ones, all the other cubical sides of the pillars and decorated with

76. K.G. Krishnan, 'The Muttaraiyar', JAIH., Vol.V, pts.1-2, 1971-72, pp.90-91.

**ROCK-CUT CAVE TEMPLE
SEVALPATTI**

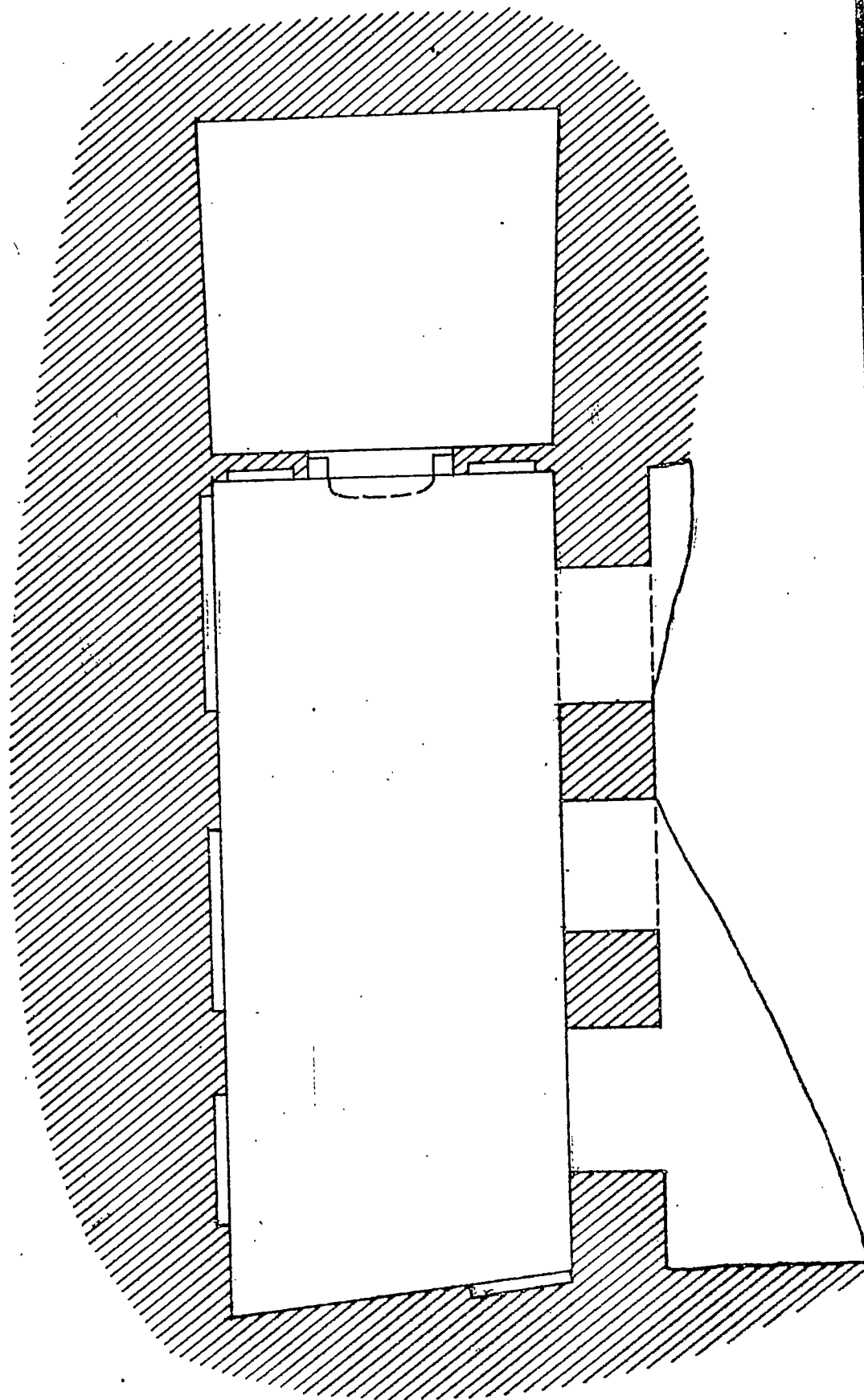
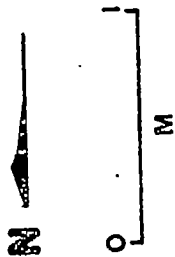


FIG. 11

circular medallions. The central circles of the medallions are occupied by bas-relief sculptures of the swan, lion, bull and the nāgā deities.

On plan the interior consists of an oblong mandapa of irregular dimensions and a sanctum on its southern side. The sides of the sanctum also measure differently on each side. Further the cutting of the floor as well as the walls of the mandapa are not even. All these only suggest that the work on the interior was left incomplete. However on the back wall of the mandapa are seen two complete pilasters and a half pilaster which form three recessions on the wall between them. On the southern most recession is carved a seated figure of Ganeśa. The deity is shown with two hands which are kept on his lap. The proboscis of the elephant-head is twisted to the right near the chest. The next recession which has been cut more deeply houses the image of Viṣṇu in standing pose. The four-armed Viṣṇu looks snort and sturdy; his upper hands hold cakra and saṅkha and the lower right is held near the waist with the palm upturned; the lower left is kept on the hip (akimbō). The deity wears an elongated head-crown, heavy ear-lobes, armlets and a thick yajñōpavita. The recession on the northern end is very shallow and empty. On the north wall

of the mandapa is carved a dancing figure, probably of Siva. The figure has four hands; the upper hands hold a fire-pot and a book; the lower left is held near the chest in abhayamudrā; the lower right is thrown to the right side. The right leg is held at the back in tip-toe posture.

The sanctum on the southern side is entered through the doorway which is provided with a small flight of steps. On either side of the sanctum entrance are seen a pair of split pilasters of which the inner ones form the door-jamb and the beam over them, the lintel. The recessions between them contain the images of dvārapālas. Both of them are standing in profile, facing each other. They are shown with elaborate hair dress, thick moustaches, heavy kundalas, necklace, yajñōpavita and udarabandha. The dvārapāla on the right holds an axe in his left hand while the right rests on the hip. His counterpart on the left is slightly leaning in front resting his hands on a huge maze.

The sanctum interior has no image at present. However the cutting of a square platform at the centre of the sanctum floor suggests that it was meant to be a Siva cave-temple. There is a small cistern cut on the floor of the sanctum.

SIVA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUMALAIPURAM

Tirumalaipuram is a small village situated approximately at a distance of 8 kms from Kadayanallur in Tirunelveli district. Near the village is found a rocky hillock which has two rock excavations, one on the eastern and the other on the western side of it. At the top of the hillock is a Roman Catholic Church constructed in recent times. Of the two rock-cut shrines the one on the eastern slope of the hill is incomplete whereas the other on the western side is a well preserved example of the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya rock-cut shrines. The cave temple (Fig.12; Pl.XLX) not only contains some of the finest examples of the Pāṇḍya rock sculpture but also shows trace of early painting on its ceilings.

Though the shrine has been excavated on the western slope of the hillock, it is facing the north-west mainly due to the peculiar formation of the rock at the point of excavation. To obtain the vertical surface, the rock has been cut to a depth of 0.9 metre at the bottom and about 20 centimetres at the top. The floor level of the cave proper is at a height of 0.6 metre from the ground level. In front of the facade is cut a platform with a pair of steps at its centre. The width of the platform

SIVA CAVE TEMPLE
TIRUMALAI PURAM

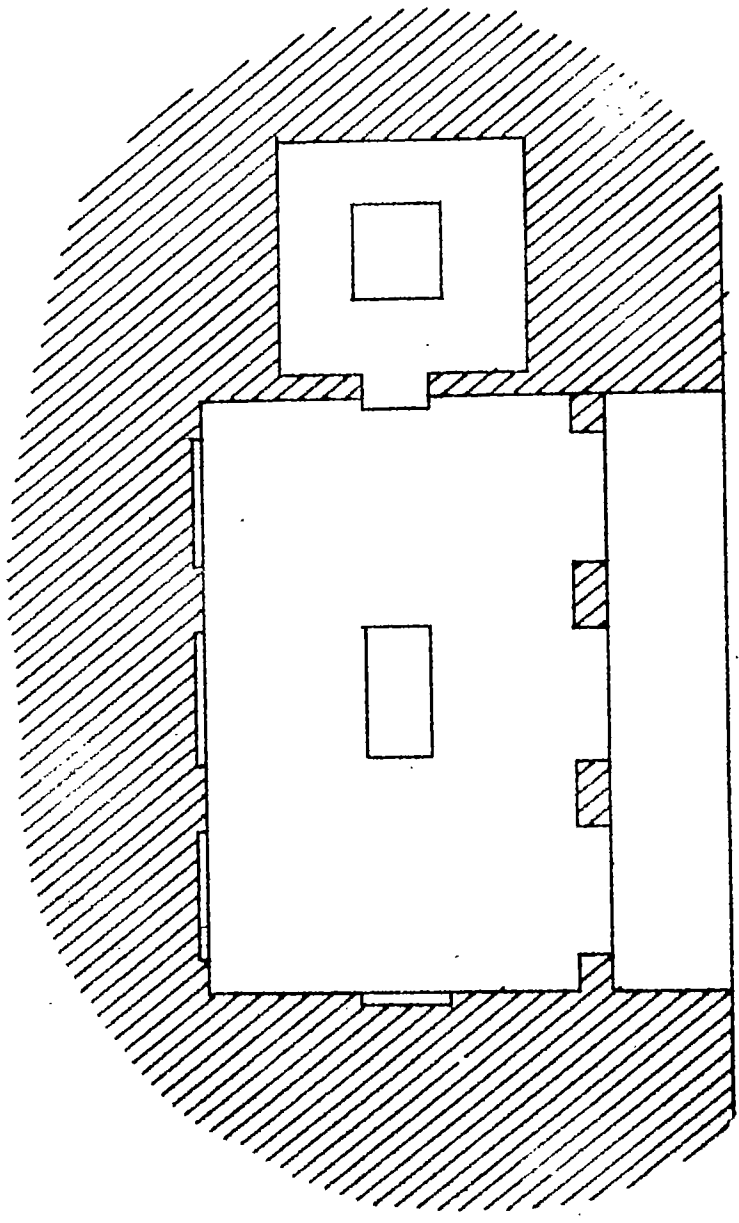
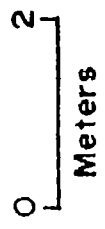


Fig. 12

is about one metre. The facade is formed of a pair of short but massive pillars and pilasters which are square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. All the cubical sides of the pillars and pilasters are decorated with circular medallions. They are set on a level which is slightly higher than the platform in front. Both pillars and pilasters are provided with bevelled corbels. The wider arms of the corbels are decorated with taraṅga-mouldings and a median band runs in the middle. The corbels support a beam over them which is bounded at the top by a thin moulding. This moulding runs down vertically on either side bounding the pilasters. Above the facade is cut a chase which runs along the entire length of the facade.

On plan the interior consists of a rectangular mandapa with a square sanctum on one of its shorter sides. The back wall of the mandapa is sectioned by a pair of pilasters and the recessed spaces between them are occupied by the images of the divinities. On the north wall also is found a niche enshrining the image of Brahmā¹. At the bottom of ā the niches runs a thin horizontal moulding which is bounded at the top and bottom by thin fillet-mouldings. On the southern side of the mandapa is cut the doorway which leads to the sanctum. The sanctum entrance is flanked on either

side by a pair of dvārapālas. The interior of the sanctum which is a square measuring 2.25 metres a side, houses a rock-cut linga on a square pītha in the centre. Opposite to the sanctum is seen a much mutilated Nandi figure cut on the same rock in the centre of the mandapa.

Now turning to the sculptures, the image of four-armed Brahma in standing pose on the northern niche of the mandapa is undoubtedly one of the finest works of the Pāṇḍya rock-cutter. The image of the Creator (Brahma) holds a book and the water vessel in his left pair of arms and probably the akshamāla in his upper right hand. The deity wears a well decorated head-crown, a thick yajñōpavita, a thin necklace and a udarabhanda. Well proportioned and neatly finished, the Brahma figure is clearly a reminiscence of the classical tradition of the Indian plastic art. The niches on the longer side of the mandapa contain the representations of Śiva-Natarāja, Vishnu and Gaṇeśa. The image of Śiva-Natarāja is depicted in chatura pose with his left upper hand thrown upwards and the head slightly bent towards the left. The deity is ornamented with udarabhanda, kaṭisutra, yajñōpavita, heavy kundalas, armlets, necklaces and jaṭābhāra. On either side of the image are seen two dwarfs, probably gaṇas. The next panel shows Vishnu standing in samabhaṅga and flanked by two dwarfs on either side. The

upper pair of the arms are carrying śaṅkha and cakra while the lower arms are rested on the hips. A heavy cylindrical crown, kundalas, a thick roll of yajnopavita, udarabhanda, kaṭisutra are among the ornaments of the deity. The hem and the central folds of the lower garment of the image are spread out on both sides in an anchor shape. The last panel contains the image of Ganeśa. The trunk of the elephant-headed God falls vertically over the body and is slightly curled towards left at the end. Of the four arms, the upper pair holds pāśa and probably aṅkusa and lower right arm holds mōḍaka and the lower left rests on the belly. The deity is shown with a single tusk and is ornamented with udarabhanda, aṅgada and bracelets.

The images of dvārapālas which flank the sanctum entrance are two armed and are shown with heavy mass of hair carrying a well decorated crown. Their ornaments include aṅgadas, udarabandha and kundalas. Their attenuated posture and tubular shaped legs draw a close parallel with the contemporary Pallava sculpture. } ?

The ceiling and the walls of the mandapa shows traces of paintings which have been studied in detail.⁷⁷ On the

77. T.N. Ramachandran, Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Vol. IV, no. 1, 1936, pp. 65-71; C. Sivaramamurti, Ibid., pp. 72-74.

octogonal side of the left pillar is found a Tamil inscription⁷⁸ of a later Pāṇḍya ruler of the twelfth century A.D.

The rock-cut shrine on the eastern side of the hillock is incomplete (Pl.XXa). The facade of the cave-temple, as usual, is formed of a pair of pillars which are tetragonal in section. On the southern side of the facade is seen a recessed panel occupied by an unfinished sculpture. The interior is divided into two sections by an intervening block of rock which has not been cut away. On the walls rectangular niches have been cut in outline. The ceiling is also left unfinished.

UMAIYĀNDĀR CAVE TEMPLE AT TIRUPPARANKUNRAM

Approximately at a distance of 2 kms from Tirupparankunram Bus stand is found a rock-cut shrine excavated on the southern side of the Tirupparankunram hill. Locally known as 'Umaiyaṅḍār temple' (Pl.XXb), the cave-temple on plan consists of a rectangular maṅḍapa and a sanctum excavated on one of its shorter sides. Hence it falls under Type IV of the Pāṇḍya cave shrines. A close scrutiny of the plan of the cave-temple, however, reveals that the original plan was to be a different one. The present plan, it seems, is largely the outcome of the efforts taken subsequently when

78. AR.SIE., 1915, No.592.

the cave-temple was put into use again.⁷⁹

As the rock face itself is very steep and almost perpendicular, only a few centimetres of cutting has been required at the top and bottom to obtain the vertical surface for the execution of the cave-temple. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters consisting of three sections namely square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. However the proportionate measurements of the component parts are noticeably different here. The octagon mid-region occupies only a small part of the pillar and it is virtually compressed in between the top and bottom cubes.⁸⁰ All the cubical sides are decorated with circular medallions. The corbels over them is of simple curved type. The pillars and pilasters are set on a level which is slightly higher than the floor level of the mandapa. In front of the row of pillars and pilasters, the facade is provided with a small platform and the basement of the platform is decorated with well marked mouldings such as jagatī, kumuda, kanṭha and paṭṭikā. At

79. The cave-temple seems to have suffered very much due to the religious animosities and the restoration of the cave-temple to the present condition seems to have taken place during the late medieval period.

80. The total height of the pillar is 2.4m in which the lower cube rises to a height of 1.5m, the octagon mid-region 0.3m and the top cube 0.6 in measurements.

the top the projecting ledge of the rock forms the cornice. Over the facade, however, grooves have been cut in a triangular shape which give the appearance of a false roof.

The interior of the rectangular mandapa has a raised level on the floor which is 0.6 metre in width and running through the entire length of the mandapa dividing it into two segments. Traces of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are parallel to the line of the pillars and pilasters of the facade are found on this raised level. The pillars are completely missing whereas the pilasters as well as the corbels of the pillars still remain. As the second row of pillars in the interior of the mandapa is not to be seen in any other example of the Type IV of the Pāṇḍya cave-temples, it may be surmised that this cave-shrine was perhaps originally designed to be a cave-temple of the Type III and was later reappropriated to the present form. The unusual position of the sanctum which is not cut at the centre of the shorter side as seen in the other examples of the Type IV, also lends support to this conclusion.

The doorway leading to the sanctum is cut on the western side in between the two rows of pillars and pilasters. The sanctum interior measures 2.7 metres x 2.5 metres and on its back wall is carved an image of Ardhanārīśvara standing near the bull in high-relief (Pl. XXIb).

Similarly on the northern wall of the mandapa are seen the images of Siva-Nataraja and Subrahmanya with his consorts (Pl. XX Ic). All the images are badly mutilated. On the exterior, on the either side of the facade are carved the images of Ganesa and other divine and ascetic figures in low relief. These sculptures, however, seem to have been the work of a later date.

T Y P E V

The cave-temples consisting of an oblong front mandapa with shrine cells on all the three sides represent the Type V of the Pandya cave-temples. The examples of this most evolved type are found at Tirupparankunram and Chokkampatti.

SUBRAHMANYA CAVE-TEMPLE AT TIRUPPARANKUNRAM

The Subrahmanya cave-temple at Tirupparankunram is one among the six celebrated abodes (Paḍaivīḍu) of the Lord Subrahmanya or Muruga and it ranks one among the popular pilgrim centres of Tamil Nadu. Excavated at a considerable height on the hill, the cave-temple architecturally represents the most evolved type of all the Pāṇḍya cut-in cave-temples.

~~The important factor about this cave-temple is that~~ ✓

The important factor about this cave-temple is that it has two foundation-inscriptions,⁸¹ of which one is dated in the Kali era. The first inscription is engraved in archaic Vaṭṭelettū script and is found on one of the pillars of the maṇḍapa. It is dated in the 6th regnal year of one Maṛaṅjaḍaiyaṅ who is identifiable with Jaṭila Paṛāntaka Neḍuṅjaḍaiyaṅ of the Vēlvikuḍi grant. As to the contents of the inscription, it states that a certain Sāttan Gaṇapati, a resident of Karavandapura who belonged to Vaidya caste, caused to excavate the shrine (Tirukkōil) and the tank (Srītaṭākam). As to his occupation, it is said that he was a mahāsāmanta of the king and wore the title, 'Pāṇḍiamrita-maṅgalavaraiyaṅ'. Further it is stated that the shrines of Durgādēvi and Jyesthadēvi were constructed by Nakkaṅ-korri who is described as the dharmapatni obviously of the mahāsāmanta. The second inscription found on the lintel of the Durga shrine quotes the Kali year 3874 which is equivalent to A.D.773. As the name of Sāttan Gaṇapathy appears in this record too, it has been suggested that both the inscriptions were perhaps engraved in the same year and therefore, the year A.D.773 (equivalent to Kali 3874) may be equated with the 6th

81. SII., Vol. XLV, No.3; AR.IE., 1951-52, App.B. No.143.

regnal year of Mārañjadaiyañ alias Jaṭila Parāntaka Neduñ-
82
jadaiyañ.

Facing the north, the plan of the cave-temple consists of a rectangular mandapa with shrine cells on all the three sides (Fig.13). The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are comprised of three parts namely, square at the top and bottom and octagon in the mid-region. The octagon mid-region, as in the Umāiyāṇḍār cave-temple of the same place, occupies only a small part of the entire pillar. Both pillars and pilasters are provided with tarangapōtikas with a median band running between them. On either side of the facade, on the rock-face are carved a pair of dvārapālas facing each other.

The interior of the rectangular mandapa has shrines on all its sides. On the western side is the shrine of Sōmāskanda facing the east; on the eastern side is the shrine of Vishnu. On the south wall of the oblong mandapa, parallel to the row of pillars and pilasters of the facade, is found another row of pilasters which are flanking two deeply-cut recessions on either side and a shrine entrance in the centre. The recessions on either side contain the images of Subrahmanya and Ganesa on the east and west respectively;

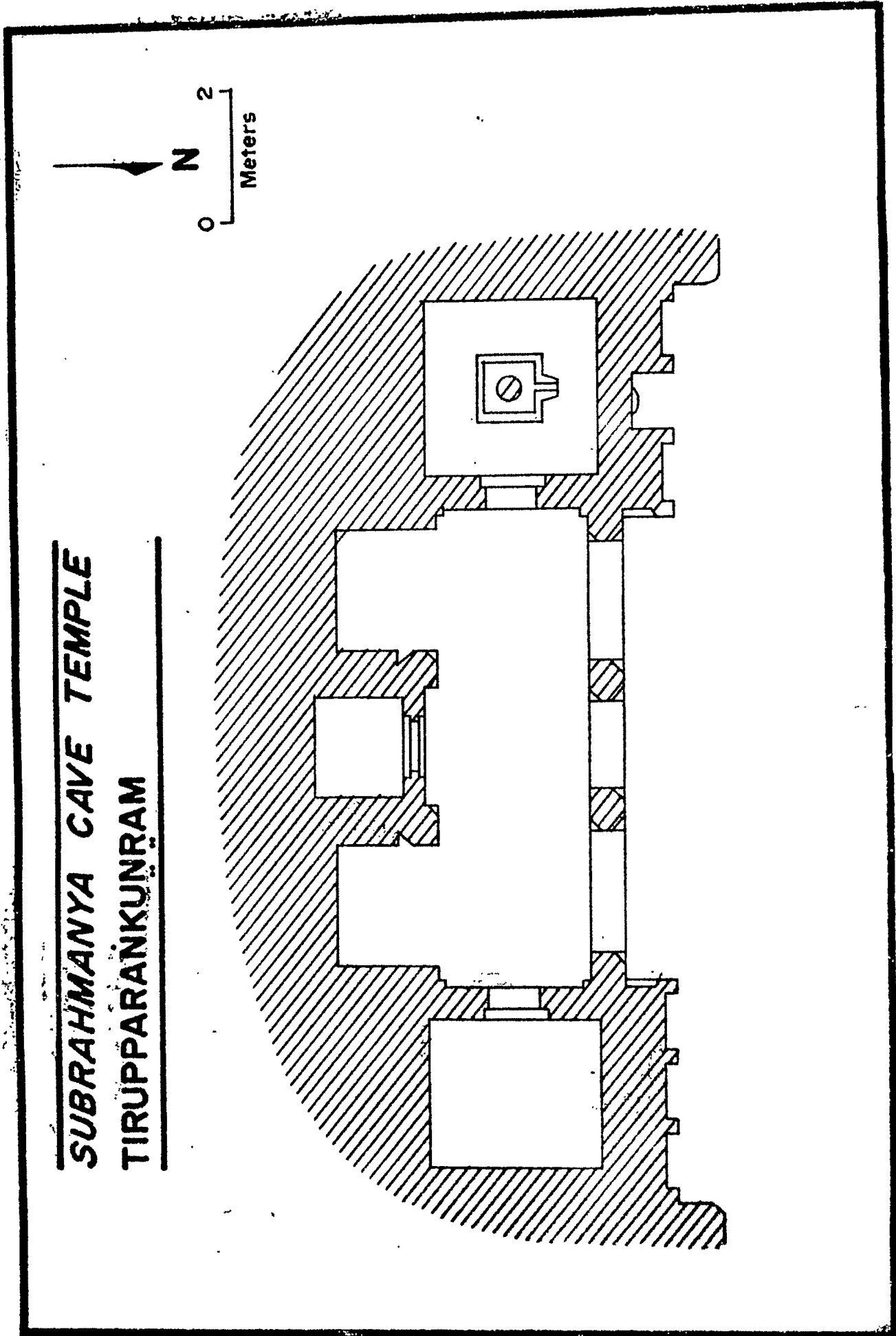


Fig.13

the centre is occupied by the shrine of Durgā. The entry to the sanctum squares of Sōmāskanda, Vishnu and Durgā is obtained through a small flight of steps leading to the doorways. The adhishthāna of their front walls show well-marked mouldings consisting of the jagatī, kumuda, kanṭha, paṭṭika etc.

On either side of the sanctum entrance of the Sōmāskanda and Vishnu shrines are seen the images of dvārapālas. The dvārapālas are housed in the shallow recessions formed by a pair of split pilasters on either side. The inner pair of the split pilasters form the door-jambes to the shrine and the beam over them, the lintel. Over the lintel runs a drooping kapōta with a pair of kūḍu arches engraved on them.

On the exterior, on either side of the cave's facade are seen several relief panels containing the images of various divinities. On the left side of the facade is depicted the scene of the dance of Siva. The Nandi is playing the mridaṅga while the Goddess Pārvati is standing near the bull and obviously enjoying the dance of her Lord. All around the ganas are seen playing various instruments. On the right side of the facade are seen three rectangular panels depicting the depicting the different avatāras of Vishnu. In the first panel Vishnu is seen in his boar-form

rescuing the earth Goddess, in the second Vishnu is seen in seated posture and in the last panel is depicted the theme of Narasimha killing Hiranyakasipu.

PĒCHIKŌIL CAVE-TEMPLE AT CHOKKAMPATTI:

The next example of the Type V is found at Pechipparai near Chokkampatti in Tirunelveli district. The cave-temple (Fig. 14; Pl. XXII) has been excavated on one of the off-shoot ranges of the Western ghats and is located at a distance of 4 kms from Chokkampatti on Karuppanadhi Dam route.

The cave-temple which is partly incomplete and partly mutilated, has been excavated on the southern slope of a huge rock boulder and hence the facade of the cave-temple is facing the south. To obtain the vertical surface, the rock has been cut to a depth of 1.8 metres at the bottom and 0.9 metre at the top. On either side of the rock face are found a pair of niches in antis. The niche on the right contains a female figure in standing post whereas the niche on the left has a male figure which is finished only upto the thighs.

The floor level of the cave proper is at a height of about one metre from the ground level. This height has been negotiated through a double-staircase (sōpana) arrangement in front of the facade. The sōpana is 0.75 metre in width

PĒCHIPPĀRAI CAVE TEMPLĒ
CHOKKAMPATTI

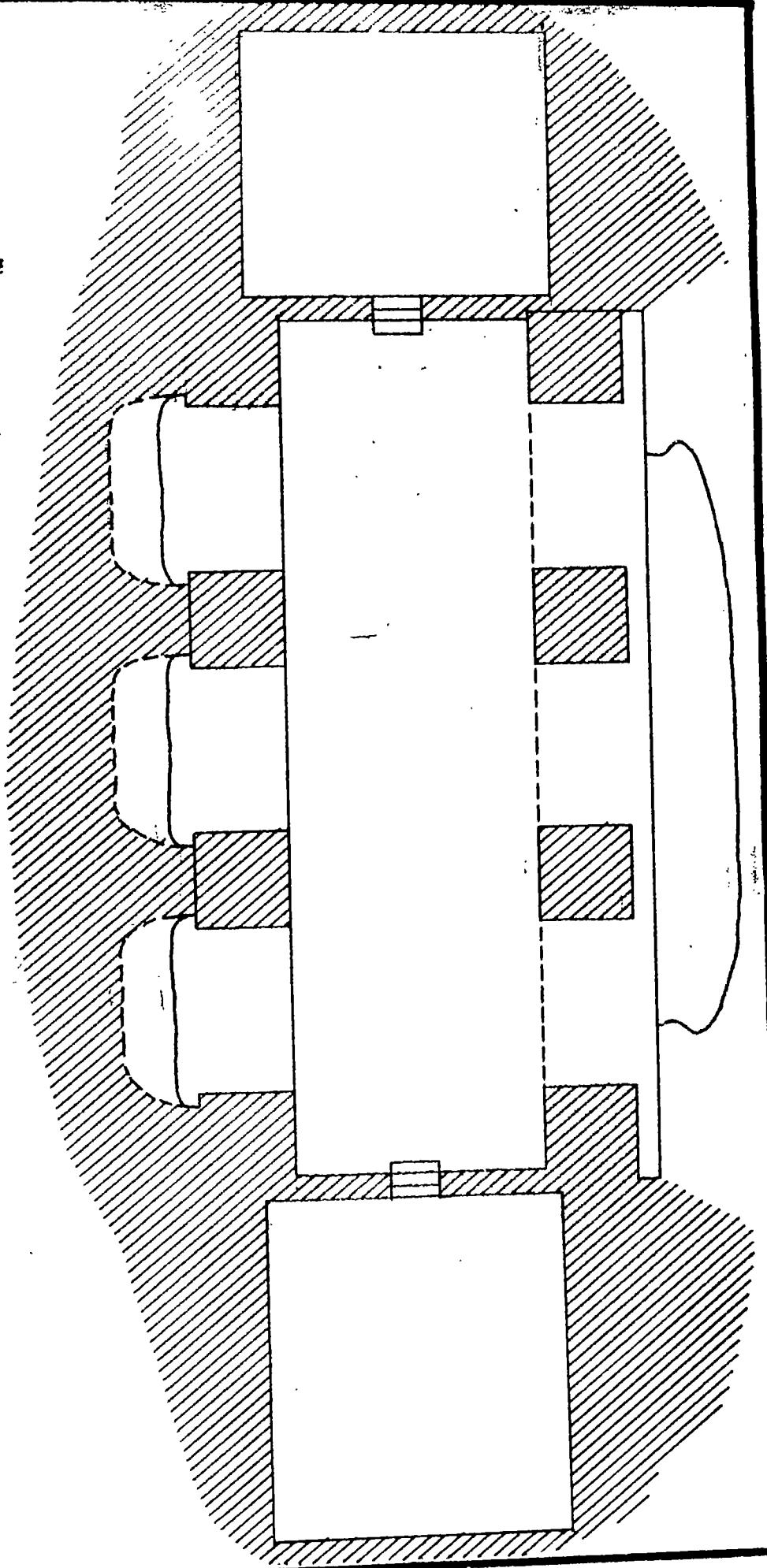
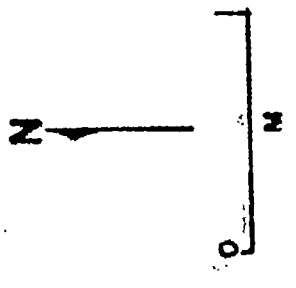


Fig.14

with steps on either side. But the entire arrangement is unfortunately very much mutilated. The facade of the cave-temple is formed of a pair of pillars and pilasters which are tetragonal from the base to top. The pillars and pilasters are provided with bevelled corbels. Over the facade, the over-hanging ledge of the rock forms the cornice and along the edge of the over-hanging boulder is carved a row of circular bosses. The inner side of the boulder has also been chiselled into a concave curve and it forms a sort of projected roof to the facade.

On plan the interior consists of a rectangular mandapa with shrines on all the three sides. Parallel to the row of pillars of the facade there is another row of engaged pillars and pilasters inside the mandapa. The work on the inner row of the engaged pillars is not complete. However these pillars and pilasters are also tetragonal in section. On the western and eastern walls of the mandapa are seen doorways leading to the sanctum. On the western side a much mutilated flight of steps leads to the sanctum. The basement of the sanctum consists of several horizontal mouldings such as upāna, jagatī, tripaṭṭa-kumuda, kaṇṭha and paṭṭikā. Two split-pilasters are seen flanking the door-jambes of the sanctum. Further

to them are found the images of dvārapālas. Over the corbels of the pilasters run the beam and a convex moulding decorated with bhūtaganas at regular intervals. Over this bhūtavalabhi runs the drooping kapōta with a pair of circular kūdus carved at either ends. The circular kūdus are decorated and human heads are shown in them. Over the kapōta runs another horizontal moulding decorated with rafter-like projections at regular intervals. The interior of the sanctum square which measures 2.2 metres a side, is empty now.

The front wall of the shrine on the eastern side also displays similar features but the basement has only one moulding. Similarly the split pilasters on either side of the entrance are not finished completely. The sanctum interior measures approximately 2m x 1.7m and contains an image seated on a platform cut against the back wall of the sanctum. The image unfortunately is very much disfigured and all that remains now is a kneeling figure at the feet of the chief deity.

On the back wall of the mandapa are seen three shrine-cells in between the inner row of pillars and pilasters of the mandapa. Each shrine contains a figure cut on the rock and seated on a platform against

the back wall. Unfortunately all the figures are very much mutilated beyond recognition.

Of the sculptures of the cave-temple only the images of dvārapālas and the two figures carved in the niches of the facade are found in a better preservation. All the four dvārapālas are almost similar in their appearance. All of them stand on one leg while the other is slightly bent and kept at ease touching the floor with its toe. One of their hands is kept on a pillar while the other is held near the chest with open palm and the index finger pointing upwards. As regards the figures near the facade, the male figure wears a three-headed serpent crown. The right hand holds a lotus and the left elbow is kept on a small pillar. The female figure on the right wears a necklace, kundalas and armllets.

GROUP B - PĀNDYA ROCK-CUT CELLS

The examples of the Pāndya rock-cells, excavated in sandstone, are all found in and around the Tiruchendur town which is located at a distance of 60 kms from the district headquarters, Tirunelveli. The most impressive

example of what we may tentatively call the 'Tiruchendur group' is found at Manappadu, a sandy village on the eastern coast situated at a distance of 5 kms from Kulasekharapattinam in Tiruchendur Taluk.

The Manappadu cave (Fig. 15) is excavated on a sandstone rock lying very near to the coast, with its opening facing the east towards the sea. On plan the cave consists of a main pillared hall and a vestibule fronted by a porch all of which are placed axially and running to a total depth of 9.6 metres. The front porch and the vestibule has no pillars and consequently the roofs over them have almost given way. The main hall is divided by four pillars arranged in two rows. The pillars are plain and rectangular in section. The arched beams which are running over the pillars and the shallow depressions found on the northern, eastern and western sides seem to have been the effect of recent renovation. ⁸³ As the original plan does not show a shrine cell or embellishment

83. During the time of St. Francis Xavier's stay (i.e. towards the middle of the 16th century A.D.) in this area, the Manappadu cave was converted into a Christian church. The bilingual (English and Tamil) stone inscription found just outside the cave reads, "This cave (once the dwelling of a Saivite Sanyasi) has been sanctified by the prayers and penances of St. Francis Xavier".

ROCK-CUT CAVE
MAᅆAPPĀDU

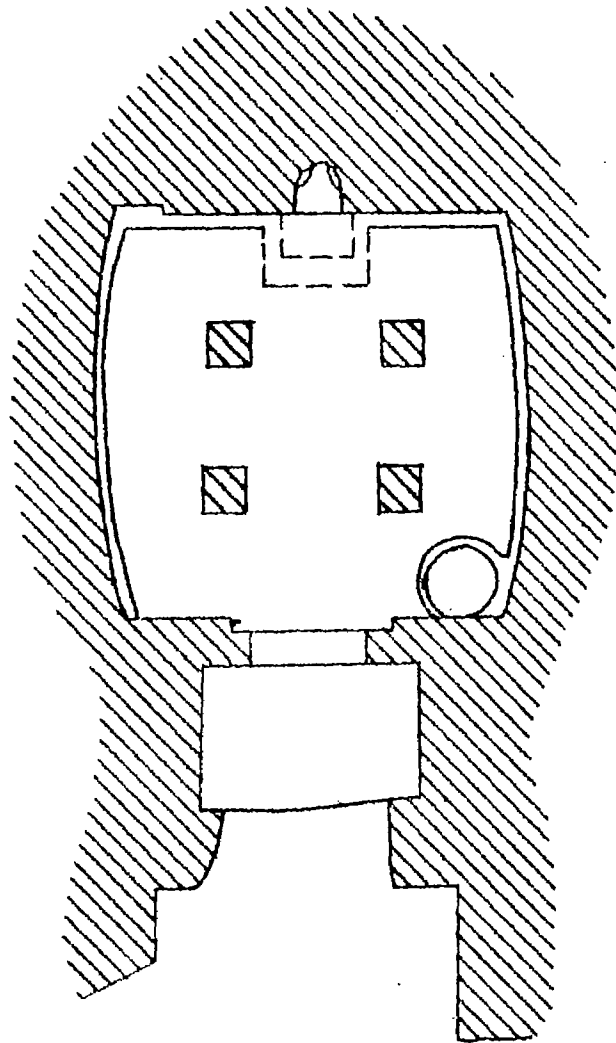
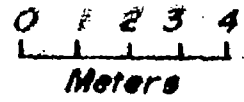


Fig.15

of any kind, the suggestion that it was used for residential purposes seemstto be very probable. An unusual feature of the cave is that it has a circular well at the north-eastern corner of the hall.

At Tiruchendur, near the famous Subrahmanyaswāmi temple, is found excavated a small cave, locally known as "Vallī's cave". The plan of the cave (Fig.16) shows a partially excavated hall and an inner cell approached through an L-shaped passage. Originally, the excavation consisted of a cell with its entrance on the north. Owing to the presence of buttress-like projections on the southern sides which are conspicuously absent on the northern face of the unexcavated mass of rock in the centre of the hall, H. Sarkar suggests⁸⁴ that an attempt might have been made subsequently to work on the unexcavated part which has resulted in the formation of an ambulatory passage all round the unworked mass.

Besides these two examples, there are a few more excavations in and outside the temple complex at Tiruchendur. Of them, the cave shrine of Anantasayana Vishnu situated on the outer prākāra, facing south, retains much of its rock character. It measures 3 metres in width and 2.1 metres in depth with a height of about 1.2 metres. The Pañcha-

84. H. Sarkar, Damilica, Vol.I, p.77.

VALLI'S CAVE TEMPLE
TIRUCHENDÜR

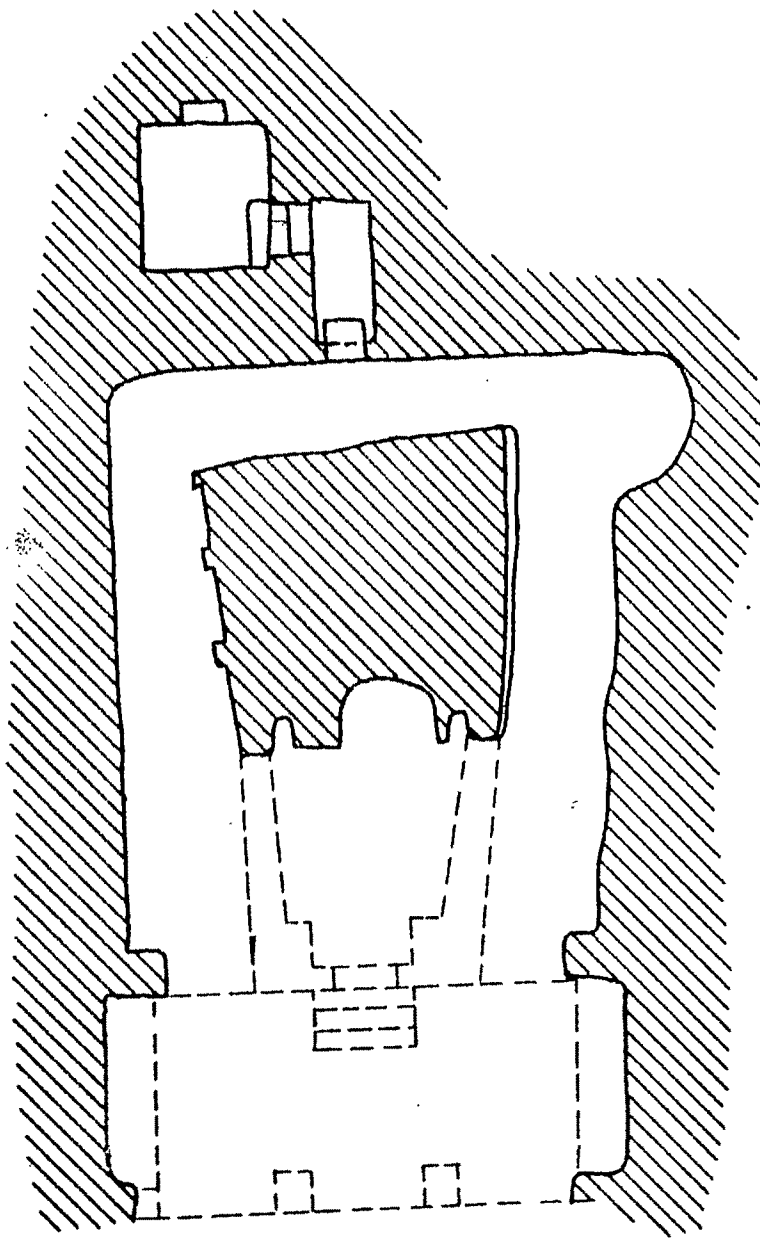


Fig.16

lingēśvara shrine on the left side of the main sanctum was originally a rock-excavation but subsequently covered by masonry work. Besides, ruins of as many as three rock-excavations are found on a slightly higher level to the Valli's cave described above. Facing the north-west, all these excavations are very small in size and probably used as cave-resorts.

Architecturally the caves of this group are fundamentally different from the granite rock-excavations found elsewhere in the Pāndya country. However, it has been suggested that the Manappadu cave, the most important example of this group, "vaguely recalls the Type III"⁸⁵ of the granite rock cave-temples.

In the absence of any definite evidence, the dating of the Tiruchendur group of caves seems to be a difficult task. Though the main temple at Tiruchendur finds references in the Saṅgam works,⁸⁶ no account as to the type and material of the earlier structure is available to us.

85. Ibid., p.80.

86. Tiruchendur is one among the six celebrated principal abodes (Paḍaiviḍu) of the Lord Muruga in the Tamil country. The place is referred to as Sendil in the Purananūru (No.55) and in the Silappadikāram; and as Alaivāi or Tiruchiralaivā in the Ahananūru (No.266) and in the Tirumurugāruppadai (1.125) respectively.

The earliest inscription found in the Tiruchendur temple belongs to the reign of the Pāṇḍya king Varaguna II (acc.862).⁸⁷ The inscription, engraved on two slabs set up in the temple, registers a gift by the king for maintaining the various annual requirements of the temple of Subrahmaṇya Bhatārar. Hence the rock shrines, found inside the temple, may also be dated to a period not later than the middle of the ninth century A.D. although the possibility of a much earlier date cannot be ruled out altogether. As the mode of excavating rocks had become obsolete by the tenth century A.D. the Valli's cave as well as the cave cell at Manappadu are also assignable to a period not later than the tenth century A.D.

87. SII., Vol.XIV, No.16A; also Ep. Ind., Vol.XXI, pp.101-116.