

STYLE OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE KONGU REGION TEMPLES IN TAMILNADU

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Conclusion

CONCLUSION

Sangam architecture can be well understood as it developed during the Pallava Period. The prevailing maritime contacts with the regions of the east in the Indian Ocean, which were actuated more by trade and emigration than by motives of political aggrandizement, lent much to the contemporary makeup of the religion, culture, art and architecture of these lands. South Indian temple architecture, sculpture and iconography did play a great role in the emergence of contemporary art.

According to historical records, that Kings built temples for Shiva, Perumal. The presence of Jain temples shows the religious harmony of that period. Hinduism came to possess many of its features. It could be concluded that Shiva and Kali, the worship of 'Linga', the worship of tree, spirits and other features of popular Hinduism, were well established in India long before the Aryans came. Many religious conceptions and forms of worship owe their existence to a pre-Aryan culture.

During the construction of the temple, there are some methods such as selecting the site, its direction, knowing about the underground water, determining the structure of the temple, choosing the construction materials etc. It can be known from books like Nedunalvadai, Silapathikaram etc. Many texts like Manasaram, Mayamadham, Vishwakarmiyam, written on the art of architecture, were also used. This helps our understanding of the history of architecture, especially temple techniques in Tamil Nadu. The reference to how the carpenters who built some of the temples were called and the reference to the fact that some of their idols were placed in the temples, is an expression of the esteem enjoyed by artists in Tamil Nadu.

The oldest remaining temples in Tamil Nadu date back to the Pallava Period. The earlier ones have been transformed over time through renovations. The rock-cut shrines at Mahabalipuram, from the Seventh Century, are the earliest examples of Tamil Dravidian

architecture. Temples made of rock, were replaced by free standing structures during the Pallava Era. Mahendravarman, a Pallava king, is credited with introducing rock cut architecture. The first temple he built out of rock was Mandagapattu. Narasimhavarman II of the Pallavas constructed the Shore Temple, known as the Seven Pagodas, in Mahabalipuram. It is South India's oldest structural temple. The inner walls of the Kanchi Vaikuntha Perumal Temple were carved with images of the king and his deeds. There are inscriptions under them which help us to know the history of the period.

The Pancha Pandava Rathas, which include Draupadi Ratha, Dharmaraja Ratha, Bheema Ratha, Arjuna Ratha, and Nagula Sahadeva Ratha, are rock cut monuments that serve as examples of the Tamil Dravida tradition.

The temple at Dadapuram close to Tindivanam in Tamil Nadu, is a standing testimony to the Early Chola Art. The two magnificent temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Chozhapuram reveal the maturity attained by Chola architecture. The Later Chola temple of Tharasuram, close to Kumbakonam, is rich in architectural splendour, dedicated to Iravatheswara and it was built by Rajaraja II. The fact that the sculpture of the Chola period was more developed than the sculpture of the Pallava Period, can be inferred from the rare sculptures in the Big Temple of Thanjavur, Gangai Konda Chozhechuvaram, Airavadesuvara Temple in Tharasuram and Shiva Temple in Tribhuvanam. Among the paintings of the Chola Period, the big temple paintings of Thanjavur are remarkable.

Pandya kings during the Pallava Period, supported Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism, just like Pallavas. Maravarman Arikesari (A.D.640-670) built a Shiva temple in the town named after him (Arikesari at Nallur). Arikesari Nallur is known as Chinnamanur.

The Velvikkudi inscriptions state that Arikesari Parangucha Maravarman (A.D.710-765), the grandson of Avrivikesari Pandya, bequeathed the gold and multi-layered instrument to the Thirupandi Kodumudi Shiva temple in Kongu Nadu.

His son, Nedunjadaya Paranthagan (A.D.765 – 790), was a great Vaishnava devotee. Periyazhvar lived in Pandya Nadu during his reign. Seevara Mangala Cheppedu records that the king built a temple for Thirumal in Kanchvai Perur in Kongu Nadu.

There are more than fifty cave temples, scattered throughout the Pandyan Empire. The most significant ones can be found in Tiruchirappalli, Anaimalai, Tiruparankundram and Malaiyadikurichi. Siva, Vishnu and Brahma were housed in these caves. The unfinished Kazhugumalai Vettuvankoil Temple is an impressive example of the rock-cut style. Sculptures of Uma Maheswarar, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu and Brahma can be found on the temple's roof. Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli and Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai are two examples of Pandya's architectural splendour.

The Later Pandyas made a notable contribution to South Indian art. A prime example is the 13th Century cave temple at Pillayarpatti close to Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu. Siddhannavasal paintings give an insight into the development of Pallava painting.

Examples of the Vijayanagara Period construction include the Kalyana Mandapams at the Varadaraja Perumal Temple in Kanchipuram and the Jalagandeshwar Temple in Vellore. The Pudumandapam is the most well-known of these mandapams in the Madurai temple complex.

The main characteristics of the Vijayanagar and Nayak architecture, from the 15th to 17th Centuries, include decorated mandapas, ornamental pillars, life size statues, gopuras, prakaras, music pillars, floral works and stone windows. The temples are affixed with tanks. Massive gopurams are used to build in all the four entrances. Other notable examples include the porch of the Nellaiyappar Temple in Tirunelveli and the southern

festival mandapam of the Adinatha Temple in Azhwar Tirunagari. Pillared hall at Perur Patteshwarar Temple, Coimbatore and temple at Thadikombu near Dindigul are best examples of temple architecture in Kongu nadu.

As the feudatories of Madurai Nayaks, the Sedhupathis ruled Ramanathapuram and made contributions to the design of the Ramanathaswamy Temple. Three sets of corridors run through the temple, and they reveal amazing workmanship.

Sculptural rocks were a feature of the Pallava Era. Rock cut and structural temples are significant features of Pandyas. Grand Vimanas marked the early Chola Era. Gopurams from the Later Chola Period are famous for their beauty. Mandapam is a distinctive aspect of the Vijayanagara Period and corridors gained prominence during the modern era.

Kongu region of Tamilnadu has its unique features in temple architecture. Namagiri or Namakkal mountain has two cave temples. Inscriptional evidence indicated that Atiya king, Gunasila, had close contacts with the Pallavas. The assuming of birudas and the engraving of these on the monuments, are very suggestive of Pallava inspiration. Sculptural evidence indicates an undoubted influence of Pallava carvings, particularly in the depiction of tall and slender figures in the “Southern” style. Architectural inspiration from the same source is quite clear. A complete mastery of the art of stone relief sculpture is displayed at Namakkal.

Perur Pattishwara Swamy Temple in Coimbatore District is about 1800 years old. There are many sculptures in this Temple, which present a beautiful view. They are very elaborate. The sanctum sanctorum was built by the Chola king, Karikala, in Second Century A.D. The Coimbatore Mavatta Kalvettukal, published by the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department, lists 30 of the 82 inscriptions, that were found in the Temple. These inscriptions belong to Kongu Chozhas, Veera Rajendran (1222, 1223, 1236 A.D),

Vikrama Chozha-II (1259 A.D), Vikrama Chozha (1294 A.D), Kongu Pandya Veera Pandiyar (13th Century), Veerakeralar Karikala Chozhan (13th Century), Hoysala King Veera Vallalan (13th - 14th Century) and Kemba Nayak (16th Century). Shrines were erected on the outer walls of the hall and Nayanmar sculptures are housed in them. The names of Nayanmars are engraved at the bottom of the shrine. Sculptures in Tharamangalam Temple are designed like sculptures in Perur. Thus, the Hypothesis No.1 The evolution of temple architecture can be studied with the help of inscriptions has been explained.

In the 8th and 9th Centuries, Jainism spread from Pandya Nadu to Kongu Nadu via Palani. At that time in Tamil Nadu, they gave up the habit of cutting beds and made relief sculptures. The 9th Century Tirthankar images are located at Thirumurthy Hill. There is an image of Jain Tirthankar in the Aditheswarar Temple in Periya Karanthi and an image of Tirthankar in Devanam Palayam of Pollachi Circle. 10th century Jain sculptures are found in Palladam circle in Pongalur.

Vijayamangalam was once a place where Jains lived in abundance. There is an ancient Jain temple, which is found in the campus of Adinathar Temple and Chandraprabha Tirthankar Temple. Statues of five of the Sangam poets seated with scrolls in their hands, are also found in the temple. This temple has been the head of all Jain temples in Kongu Nadu. It is mentioned as “Veera Sangatha Perumpalli” in inscriptions. Jain sites, around Vijayamangalam, are Ivar Malai, Vellode, Poonthurai, Thingalur, Senkapalli, Chinapuram, Nirambai and Arasanna Hill.

According to the inscriptional evidence, it was from about A.D.300 to A.D.900 there were brick and stone temples in Tamil Nadu. They belonged to Saivism, Vaishnava and Jainism. They were patronised by the king and the public, and many people donated to the temple. Religious work was done from monasteries next to some temples, hymns

were recited in temples and Poojas and ceremonies were held in a special way. The kings protected all religions even though they belonged to a particular religion. Thus, the Hypothesis No.3 Temples in Kongu region are examples of social integration, has been sustained.

Epics like Bharat, Ramayana and mythological stories were read and explained to the public in the temples, in a way that was useful for both educated and uneducated. Due to such religious education, the public gained ethical values, without reading epics. The places where religious leaders stayed, were known as mutts (monasteries). They acted like schools. These monks were great scholars and moralists. People had worked in various departments from village councils during Pandya rule. Vedic schools existed in the Chola Period as well as in the Pallava Period. Education was taught in Jain schools. Buddhists also undertook educational work. The Chola Emperors developed vernacular language education well.

In conclusion, Temples are known to have been wonderful centers of art and religious knowledge. In short, it is appropriate to say that the development of the temple in ancient times was the development of the Socio-economic formations in Tamil society. Thus, Hypothesis No. 2 The Socio-economic formation, in and around the temple can be identified with the help of inscriptions, has also been justified.

Findings of the Study

- Hindu and Jain temples are found in the Kongu region. The architectural style of both temples is the same. Nagara, Vesara and Dravidian style of vimana and gopurams are found in this region. It is amazing to find cave temples in the Kongu region.
- Inscriptions of the temple help us to know the history of Kongu Nadu. During Veera Rajendran's reign (A.D.1207-1256), many areas were

deforested and converted into agricultural land. Many temples were built. Construction of lakes and ponds was undertaken. Irrigation was regulated. The best proof of that is the Perur inscription. These inscriptions are widely available in both North Kongu and South Kongu. Veerapandian (A.D.1265-1285) was the first Kongu Pandyan to rule. He ruled for 20 years. His inscriptions were discovered in the Kariyamanikka Perumal Temple at Vijayamangalam and Thondeeswarar Temple in Erode. He renovated the lake in Vijayamangalam and named it “Veerapandiya Pereri”.

- There are two inscriptions on Jain bed in Arachalur Hill, Erode District and these inscriptions, contain musical syllables, that are identical when read from left to right and vice versa, as well as when read from the top of a column to the bottom and vice versa. The organisation of musical syllables by “Maniyan Vannakkan Devan Sathan” is evident in these two inscriptions. This inscription is centuries older than the “Kudumiyamalai inscriptions” on music and it is from the same era as Silappadikaram.
- Temples are the centres to promote economic and social integration in Tamilnadu.

Suggestions

- Kongu Nadu has its unique architectural features. It should be known to the world. Spreading awareness about these monuments and their importance among people is essential, to realise the great tradition of Tamil Nadu.
- Jain sites around Vijayamangalam are Ivar Malai, Vellode, Poonthurai, Thingalur, Senkapalli, Chinapuram, Nirambai and Arasanna Hill. The

Government must take measures to safeguard and protect the sculptures and statues of these temples. Little effort on our side can create a radical change that will make the temple bright and pleasant.

- The Government must evolve a strategy to prevent vandalism of these art treasures.
- Regular cleanliness drives must be undertaken as part of the “Adopt a Heritage” initiative.
- It is the duty of every citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of the temple.