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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**A RELOOK ON THE MUSICAL INSCRIPTION OF KUDUMIYANMALAI IN PUDUKKOTTAI DISTRICT**

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**Abstract**

*Natya Sastra* the oldest available musical treatise deals with the Indian musical system. Among 100 inscriptions found in this rock cut cave temples of Kudumiyamalai the most ancient one is belongs to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. during the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I Pallava on Music, which is quite fascinating. This famous musical inscription is carved on the south of the rock cut shrine described in this article. The inscription is divided into seven sections, each section consists of a collection of groups of four notes (svaras), arranged in sub-sections of sixteen. This paper portrays the musical notes of the Tamils, which belongs to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

**Key words:** garbha graha, ardha mandapa, maha mandapa, sabha mandapa, anivettikal mandapa and ayirakkal mandapa

**Introduction**

Sama Veda in fact is based on music. Bharata Muni's *Natya Sastra* is perhaps the oldest available musical treatise, which deals with the Indian musical system elaborately. The history of ancient Tamils music is as old as the Vedas. It is interesting to note that the term *Sruti*, which denotes Vedas, 'the one which is heard' also refers to the quality of pitch in the music. There are two historic rock cut cave temples located at top a hill in a small village of Kudumiyamalai about 20 km from Pudukottai town and the District headquarter, Tamil Nadu, the larger

one is called Sikkathaswamy temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and the small one is Melakovil.

Antiquity of the village goes back to prehistoric period as attested by various megalithic burial sites and cairns in vicinity. During the early centuries of the present era, Kudumiyamalai was an important Jain center as attested by the rock cut beds for Jain monks found in a natural cavern on the south western side of the main hill. A Brahmi inscription <sup>1</sup> of 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. in this cavern states that it is most ancient one.

The temple complex was built in phases by the Pallava, the Chola and the Nayak rulers. There are 100 inscriptions on the temple walls. The most ancient one is belongs to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. during the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I Pallava on Music is quite fascinating. Apparently, many of them date back to the Pallava dynasty including *maha mandapa* that has 1000 ornate granite pillars. The rock inscriptions on Carnatic music in the small cave temple is recognized as one of the earliest surviving sources of Indian music notation and they outlay the grammatical notes of Carnatic music. Not quite well known outside Pudukkottai district, it is one of the fine places of worship with a host of well carved sculptures;

### **Kudumiyamalai**

Kudumiyamalai is a village in Pudukkottai district of Tamilnadu, a large Siva temple named Shikhanatha or 'the lord with the kudumi' and a rock cut shrine, the latter is suggested of Jain origin. The gazetteer also mentions that the village was also of interest as the place where the earlier Thondaiman of Puthukottai went for their coronation.<sup>2</sup> In the inscriptions of the early Pandya and the Chola period, the village is referred as Tirunalakkunaram, "the scared and prosperous hill".

From the twelfth century CE, the village started being referred as Shikhanallur, evidently because of the temple of lord Shikhanatha. The present name, Kudumiyamalai, is first found in a seventeenth century CE record of Mallappa Pallavarayar<sup>3</sup>. The etymology behind the name Kudumiyamalai is explained in the Pudukkottai State Manual<sup>4</sup>. The name suggests that the village got its name after the Early Pandya King, Palyaga Mudukudumi Peurvaluti (Palyāka Mutukuṭumi Peruvalūti). This Pandya King is known from various references, including the Velvikudi grant of the Pandya King Varagunavarman I (765-815 CE). Except the similarities in names, there is no definitive connection between the village and the king. Provided that Kudumiyamalai has an inscription of the Pandya King Varaguna varman I referring the village as Tirunalakkunram, we may safely assume that the village was not named after the Pandya King Palyaga Mudukudumi Peurvaluti.

### **Musical inscriptions**

Immediately to the south of the rock cut shrine's façade is inscribed the musical inscription. To its immediate south is carved a niche housing idampuri Ganesha with his trunk turned to his left. In his upper arms he is holding an ankusha and pasa while one lower arm is broken tusk and the object held in lower left arm is not identifiable. Dayalan mentions that the sculpture can be later than the cave temple whereas Minakshi<sup>5</sup> believes that both the Ganesha sculptures probably belong to the same period, the Pallavas. This rock-cut cave temple was extended by Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman (1686-1730), the King of Pudukkottai, by building a *mandapa* in front of it. On the external facade of the cave, little north of the cave, are carved figures of sixty-three nayanars with Shiva with Parvati and Nandi standing in the middle.

**Shikanatha Temple** This is the main temple of the town. The present temple is the outcome of a continuous growth and extensions carried out in different periods. It consists of a *garbha graha*, *ardha mandapa*, *maha mandapa*, *sabha mandapa*, *anivettikal mandapa* and *ayirakkal mandapa*. There are also two portrait sculptures of chieftains belonging to the Nayaka period.<sup>6</sup>

The next is *sabha mandapa* entered through a door flanked by two huge *dwarapalakas*. This *mandapa* is built in Pandya style and has exquisite bronze collection. There is also a stone image of Nataraja, about 6 feet high. In its bronze collection are found Chandikeshvara and 18 Somaskanda.<sup>7</sup> The next is *maha mandapa* where more bronze statues are kept, Ganesha, Subramanya, Subramanya as Shashta, Sapta matrikas, Shiva as Bhikshatanamurti. There are two nayanars, Sambandar and Manikka vachakar as well among the bronzes. A doorway flanked with two *dwarapalakas* of Chola period leads in to *ardha mandapa*. The original structure of the *ardha mandapa* with its attached *garbha graha* was built during the Chola reign of tenth century C.E, however it has been renovated at later periods. A covered pradakshina path is provided around the main shrine. On its inner walls are installed Lingodbhavar, Sapta matrikas, Jyestha, Subramanya, Gajalakshmi and Saiva saints (nayanars). These images are from different periods.

The niche of the main shrine house Dakshinamurti in the south, Vishnu in the west and Brahma in the north. The temple commanded quite an importance in later period.

In 1730 Raja Vijaya Raghunatha Tondaiman was crowned here. In 1773, his military chiefs Lingappa and Raghunatha Servaikaar, dug out tanks for public benefit. In 1872, Raja Ramachandra Tondaiman did a kumbhabhishekha of two of its shrines.

**Subsidiary Shrines** In this temple complex, two more shrines are constructed, Akhilandesvari Amman Shrine and Soundara nayaki Amman shrine. The first one is located in the pradakshinapath of the *maha mandapa* of main temple. There is a *rashi mandapa* in front of this shrine, where on the roof are carved twelve zodiac signs. Its entrance is topped with an exquisite makaratorana enclosing an image of Gaja Lakshmi. Soundaranayaki Amman shrine is located south of the cave temple and was built by danseuse of Kudumiyamalai. As per an inscription dated in thirteenth century CE and eleventh regnal year of the Pandya King Jatavarman Vira Pandya, a devadasi UmaiyalviNachchi, referred to as the daughter of Durgai-aandar, bought some of the temple's lands for gold coins. She also built Amman shrine dedicated to the goddess Tirukkamakkottathu Nachiar Arivudaya Malayamangaiar or Soundara Nayaki. This shrine is consisted of *garbha graha*, *ardha mandapa* and *mukha mandapa*. Above the hill is located a Subramanya shrine which seems to be the Pandya construction of thirteenth century C.E.

There are more than 120 inscriptions discovered in and around these two temple complexes. Many of these inscriptions are published only with their original texts 20 but no translations. This famous musical inscription is carved on the south of the rock cut shrine described above. It is carved on 13 feet by 14 feet wall and is in good state of preservation. This inscription is written in the Grantha script and Sanskrit language. This inscription was first mentioned by Rao Saheb H Krishna Sastri in 1904 and first edited by Rao Bahadur P R Bhandarkar in Epigraphia Indica volume XII. The inscription is divided into seven sections, each section consists of a collection of groups of four notes (svaras), arranged in sub-sections of sixteen. Each sub-

section takes up one line of the inscription. In all these sections, musical notes are arranged in a specific manner and mentioned under specific heading, Madhyama grame chatsprahara svaragamah, Shadja grame chatsprahara svaragamah, Shadave chatsprahara svaragama, Sadharite chatsprahara svaragama, Panchame chatsprahara svaragama, Kaisika madhyame chatsprahara svaragama and Kaisike chatsprahara svaragama. At the end are two colophons, one in Sanskrit and one in Tamil. Sanskrit colophon reads, "Texts of notes made for the benefit of pupils by the King, who is devotee of the Supreme Lord (Siva) and a pupil of Rudracarya (sic)"<sup>6</sup>. Tamil colophon reads, "These are appropriate to eight or seven"<sup>7</sup>. A single label, also written in the Pallava Grantha script, is inscribed near this musical inscription. This label reads, 'Parivadinida', taken by various scholars for a musical instrument, probably a type of vina.

The inscription is written in the Grantha script, also popularly known as Pallava Grantha as used mostly by the Pallava Kings for their inscriptions. However, this script is also used by the Muttaraiyars and the Early Pandyas. Two Pandya grants are known to be written in the Grantha script, Velvikudi grant<sup>8</sup> and Madras Museum grant.<sup>9</sup> Krishna Sastri, while editing the Velvikudi grant, mentions that paleographically, the Grantha characters in these two grants differ however both of these are to be attributed to the Pandya King Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan alias Varaguna varman (765-815 C.E.).

Here it is interesting to know the date of the execution of this rock cut cave temple. The inscription is not dated therefore its dating is primarily on paleographic studies. P R Bhandarkar,<sup>10</sup> who first edited this inscription, assigns it to seventh century C.E. mentioning that it closely resembles with those of the early Chalukyan period. Same dating is accepted by K R Srinivasan.<sup>11</sup> K R Venkata Rama<sup>12</sup> dates it to eighth century C.E. and K V Soundara Rajan<sup>13</sup> agrees with him stating that the cave temple should not be later than the middle of the eighth century C.E. Dayalan<sup>14</sup> is of opinion that the cave temple precedes the musical inscription, the former was excavated during the first half of the eighth century C.E. while the latter in the second half. The earliest dated record found in the cave temple belongs to the Pandya King Varaguna varman I

(765-815 C.E.), dating 787-88 C.E. As it is not a foundation inscription therefore the cave temple existed prior to this inscription<sup>15</sup>. Therefore it would be safe to date the temple and musical inscription of this temple belongs to eighth century C.E., probably to the first half of the century.

## **Conclude**

In this concluding part the inscription reveals that it is interesting to know the date of the execution of this rock cut cave temple. The colophon at the end of inscription reads, "Texts of notes made for the benefit of pupils by the King, who is devotee of the Supreme Lord (Siva) and a pupil of Rudracarya." Two persons are mentioned in the inscription, Rudracharya and his pupil who composed the inscription. The composer is also said to be a King, however this is based a conjecture made over the damaged word of the inscription. In all probabilities, this conjecture might be the best possible match or reconstruction of that damaged word. It is under the 3 control of the ASI the Archaeological Society of India. It is listed as one of the important monuments in the state of Tamil Nadu. There are 100 inscriptions on the temple walls. The most ancient one is belongs to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. during the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I Pallava on Music is quite fascinating. Apparently, many of them date back to the Pallava dynasty including *maha mandapa* that has 1000 ornate granite pillars. The rock inscriptions on Carnatic music in the small cave temple is recognized as one of the earliest surviving sources of Indian music notation and they outlay the grammatical notes of Carnatic music. This famous musical inscription is carved on the south of the rock cut shrine described above. It is carved on 13 feet by 14 feet wall and is in good state of preservation. This inscription is written in the Grantha script and Sanskrit language. The inscription is written in the Grantha script, also popularly known as the Pallava Grantha as used mostly by the Pallava Kings for their inscriptions. However, this script is also used by the Muttaraiyars and the Early Pandyas. Two Pandya grants are known to be written in the Grantha script, Velvikudi grant and Madras Museum grant. The Velvikudi grant, mentions that paleographically, the Grantha characters in these two grants differ however both of these are to be attributed to the Pandya King Parantaka

Nedunjadaiyan alias Varaguna varman (765-815 C.E.) Therefore earliest dated record found in the cave temple belongs to the Pandya King Varaguna varman I (765-815 C.E), dating 787-88 C.E. From this it reveals that it would be safe to date the temple and musical inscription of this temple belongs to eighth century C.E., probably to the first half of the century by Pandya King Varaguna varman I (765-815 C.E), dating 787-88 C.E.

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