TIRUMAYAM FORT OF SIVA & VISHNU TEMPLES - A STUDY ON ITS HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Abstract
Tirumayam is a place of historical importance located about 20 km south of the town of Pudukkottai in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. There is a huge hill known as Satyagiri in this village that has three rock-cut cave temples, of which two are excavated on the southern face of the hill and the third one cut into the vertical scarp of a whale back rock on top of the hill. Two of those Temples are dedicated to Siva and one to Vishnu. There is a fort almost encompassing the hill and also a citadel on its summit constructed during the 17th century. Famous freedom fighters Veerapandiya Kattabomman and his brother Umamaheswarar hid in a fort at Tirumayam, after their fight against the British during 17th century. Tirumayam is from the word Thiru-meyyam which means place of truth in Tamil Nadu. The lord Vishnu is also called by the name of Meyyar. Since it is believed that he stayed in that village it is called by the name Thirumeyyam. Thiru-means ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ and is traditionally used in front of names in all parts of Tamil Nadu.

**Keywords:** Tirumayam, freedom fighters, The lord Vishnu, fort, inscriptions, Cave-Temple

Tirumayam fort
Miles before reaching the town, one can see a fort atop a large hill. In past centuries, the fort was much larger than what now obtains; this is affirmed by the fact that the main entrance to the old fort lies about one kilometer south of the present-day fort. This entrance to the old fort still stands; it has a courtyard with pillared corridors and shrines of various deities. The sculptures on the pillars are truly beautiful. As one enters the town through the road which connects it with the highway, one finds a small temple dedicated to Bhairava (the Bhairavar-koil). This temple, which faces the main road, is a favorite with vehicle-owners who traditionally halt and pray there for a safe journey. This temple was actually built on the outermost wall of the old fort. There are two famous rock-cut shrines Sathyagirisvarar and Sathyamoorthi, one of Siva and the other of Thirumal, Adjacent to each other. The Siva temple, which stands to the west of the Vishnu temple, is the older of the two. These are located at the foot of a hillock on the south side of the town. The rock cut Shiva temple is situated on a hill amid the relics of another ancient and ruined fort. Near this example stands one of the largest rock inscriptions in Tamil Nadu. The inscriptions are of particular interest since they deal with music, a rare subject for inscriptions. The Thirumal temple contains an octagonal sacred tank called 'Satya-pushkarani'.

Lower Siva Cave-Temple
The Satyagirisvarar is perhaps the largest cave-temple in this area excavated on the southern scarp at the foot of hill and is immediately to the west of the Vishnu cave-temple. The entire length as also the portion immediately to the west of it appears to have recuperated preliminary preparation by way of the clumping off of the undulating surface. Further it has been cut into a depth of about 1.06m uniformly on all sides in order to get a vertical scarp for the facade. The facade thus obtained measures 7.68m wide east-west and 2.86m high. They are also more widely spaced apart. The intercolumniation between the two middle pillars is 1.88m, whereas the interval or bay between the western pilaster and its adjoining pillar is 1.84m and between the eastern an upana-like platform, which has been chiseled later in order to maintain the same level.
of the mandapa floor behind. The pillars and pilasters have the basal and terminal saduram with an intervening kattu. The basal sadurams are not quite square in plan, their lateral (north-south)sides measuring 60cm at the base, 58cm at the middle and 56cm at the top while the front and hind faces(east-west)measure 66cm at the bottom, 64cm at the middle and 62cm at the top. The height is about 87cm. The kattin is of unusual height measuring 94cm, each side of the octagon measuring about 25cm. The front and back faces of the top sadurams measure about 62cm whereas their lateral sides measure 56cm. The height of the top saduram is about 65cm. All the four faces of the bottom and top sadurams of the pillars are adorned by medallions, which are mostly usual lotus type. The pilasters have half medallions on their sides and the east face of the western pilaster and west face of the eastern pilaster have full medallions. These features are found both on the lower and top sadurams of the pilasters. The medallion consists of a circular full-blossomed lotus with four serrate petals, the two outer expanding while the inner two converge round the central torus. This is framed inside a square formed of 3 concentric lines. The corners between the innermost square and the outer rim of the lotus engraved inside are occupied by patralata or kodikkarukku design.

The lower saduram of the western pillar has on its western face a different pattern of medallion. The medallion engraved inside a square formed of three concentric lines has a brim of a prominent circle enclosing seven nilotpala flowers (water-lilies) with stalks arrayed round a central circle with small buds in between. On the northern side is found the usual type of medallion i.e. circular full- blossomed lotus with four serrate petals, the two outer expanding while the inner two converge round the central. On the eastern side of the western pillar, the lower saduram has a group of five nilotpalas inside the circle but the intervening buds are smaller with longer stalks, the corners between the circle and the square here as well as on the western side contain the same type of kodikkarukku design. On the southern face the conventional type or lotus medallion similar to the northern face is found. The same scheme is repeated on the four faces of the top saduram, viz, the two usual lotus medallions on the inner northern and outer southern faces and the grouping of four instead of seven nilotpalas round a central rhomboid projection without the intervening buds on the eastern and western faces. In case of the eastern pillars the western face of the lower saduram contains the usual type of lotus medallions but with prominent as also its northern face. Its eastern face shows a grouping of eight nilotpalas with intervening buds round a circular central rosette. The southern side also has the usual lotus medallion. The four faces of upper saduram of eastern pillar do not repeat the scheme found in the lower saduram as in the case of the other pillar. The northern face shows a more conventional type of lotus medallion less prominently incised with all the petals spread out resembling more rosettes arraying than a padma. The eastern face in consequence with what obtains below on the same side shows a scheme of four fully opened nilotpalas with four half opened flowers of the same kind in between and not buds as in the lower face, the whole displayed round a central circle. The southern face of the upper saduram shows the usual lotus medallion while on the western face is shown a lotus medallion with closer petals, the three outer series expanding and the innermost in folding round the central torus.

The eastern pilaster shows on the three sides on its lower saduram the same type of lotus medallions, 3/4th of medallions of inner and outer faces and full one on the western face. The upper saduram repeats the same on all thee faces. The western pilaster also shows on its lower Saduram, half medallion on the front and hind faces, and full medallion on the eastern face. They are the usual type of lotus medallions i.e. circular lotus with four serrate petals, the outer two expanding while the inner two converge round the central torus. The top saduram of the pilaster contains similarity two half medallions one each on the front and hind face and a full one in the eastern face similar to the medallions below. The inner (northern face) is covered by a thin layer of plaster with painting evidently subsequent in date. The facade of the mandapa shows a large mouded adhishtana the bottom moldings of which have been concealed by the flat stones of the maha-mandapa. The concealed portion apparently is the jagati, and the lower half of the rounded and kumuda the upper part of the kumuda is visible above it, are a prominent kampa and a taal kantha with another kampa and a thick pattika on top. The kantha is relieved at places just below the pillars and pilasters of the facade grantha and Tamil characters on the vritta- kumuda.
and kantha portions which are partly exposed at the western end and the rest of them have been completely hidden by the modern steps constructed at a later stage. Except for this small bit of this adhishtana exposed at the western end, the rest is entirely convened up by the pattika alone being visible. There is a possibility of rock-cut steps in between the two are centre pillars, which has been perhaps completely camouflaged by the structural addition in front.

The corbels on the top of the pillars and pilasters are of tarange type. The corbels (i.e., two arms and central block) are thrice the length of the side of the top saduram and each arm of the corbel being equal to the side of the top saduram with the central block of the same dimension in between. The width of the corbel is also the same as the width of the top saduram. Each arm of the corbel has 9 taranga rolls, of which lowermost one is smallest and the fourth one at the angle is largest. Rolls are bound by a media patta, its width being 1/3rd the width of the corbel. The patta has a bold kodikkarukku relief or creeper ornamentation bordered by a pair of lines one on either side. The corbels are thinner in proportion to their sides as also the beam above. The height of the corbel is about 17cm, which is also the height of the uttira (beam) above. Such a thin beam and corbel are not found in early mehendra type cave temples, though in later mahendra type cave-temples of Paramesvaravarman and Rajasimha periods, they are common.

Externally, over the beam runs a vajana and the under surface of the projecting ledge is dressed smooth with a slight downward slope from back to front suggesting a kapota. Since the maha- mandapa has constructed abetting to the overhanging ledge, the original shape and nature of the cornice is not visible at present. Most probably, it would have been plain without any form or ornamentation such as kuduarches, etc., as this is the general trend noticed in this area. The flanking surfaces of the cutting are also smoothly dressed. Beyond the western flank leaving a short strip of natural surface, there is again a large prepared surface for the reception of the Grantha musical notation. Only the fragments of the musical inscription, such as sadja, pancama, Madhyamam, Dvaita, Gandhara, etc are visible. The rest of the surface is obscured by a large palimpsest inscription of a later Pandya times recording the finding of a tribunal in the settlement of a dispute between the trustees of the two adjoining temples namely the Tirumeyyattu Mahadeve temple and Tirumeyyyattu Ninraruliya Peruman temple of this place. This inscription extends up to the western flank of the cutting and also to the front face of the base of the western Saduram below the lotus medallion.

Behind the facade is a large rectangular Mandapa measures 8.32m east-west and 4.26m north-south. Four pilasters are cut on its hind wall (northern wall) corresponding to the pillars and pilasters of the facade. These pilasters stand over a low Upana- like platform. The front faces of the lower and upper Sadurams of the entire four pilasters show lotus medallion with slight variations in design and detail. The side faces are left plain. The corbels and the beam over it are of the same type as those of the facade. Over the beam runs a Vajana course extending over both the sidewalls and continuing on the inner side of the beam of the facade; thus framing the smoothly finished ceiling. The ceiling is covered for the most part with old stucco and paintings. The central portion of the painting now visible though much faded is that of a carpet canopy or Chitra- Vitana, occupying the central ankana. The extant of the painting fragment of Vitana design on either side indicates that this design is painted all over the ceiling. The hind wall showing between the inner set of pilasters is dressed smoothly and in the eastern most portion and almost near the eastern pilasters is a large double lined-rectangle frame with the Grantha label “Parivadinida” deeply incised in large character.

The eastern sidewall of the mandapa has been cut back about 656cm from the line where the outer and inner pilaster joins to its north and south, in order to get sufficient rock material for the relief of a large Lingodbhava. In the centre of this wall is found a slightly projecting and convex column in which is shown the Lingodbhava, the column itself having been itself having been smoothly curved though flat to simulate a linga. It has a projecting rock-cut ablation platform also at the base in its centre. The flame design is shown all along the column on its sides which perhaps indicates that the column represent a pillar of fire. The upper half of the cylindrical stele shows a large ventricular opening containing in-side the emerging form of Siva who is shown up to his thigh. He is two-armed as in all early sculptures, the right in Varada and the left in Kati. He wears a Kati-bandha, which resembles a belt of phalakas with two tassels hanging down one over
each thigh. In addition he wears two loose twisted cloths round the hip and falling to his thighs with a knot and a tassel on the left side. Above the Kati-bandha, he wears an Udara-bandha, which is also of the type of rosette shape Phalakas. He wears a chord-like Yajnopavita in the nivita fashion and round his neck Kantha-bharana in a chaplet of beads including garland of beads. His wrists are adorned by and the upper-arms by coiled keyuras. In the dangling ear-lobes are prominent Kundalas, touching both his shoulders. The head is adorned by fine Jataa-makuta with loose-tresses hanging on either side, the original damaged in part owing to the exfoliation of the rock and repaired in stucco. The form of Siva is quite slim and graceful and the face benign. The shine and the pose is tri-bhanga. His right arm is stretched and held up palm facing front (more or less in tajana hasta), the thumb alone slightly spread out. His left is in Kati, as if resting on the loose sash (loose pleated cloth) on his top. His vaster reaches up to just below the knees and much above the ankle with a central pleated fold, the hem of the Vastra showing a slight curt up it is secured at the waist by a tight pleated Kati-bandha with a central knot and loop to the right and two tassels on the left of the central knot. In addition, he wears another loose pleated cloth dangling round his thighs knotted on his left side and hanging down into pleated folds almost reaching the same point as the main Vastra. Round his belly he wears an udara-bandha of beads set on a flat strap. His yajnopavita is a Rudraksha mala in the upavita fashion. His little fingers have rings and there are Kankanas and valayas at the wrists and coiled keyuras round the elbows. He wears a heavy Jata-bhara and touches the shoulder. The left ear-lobe, which is shorter, has a flower bud stuck into the faction of a koppu, a ornament even today common in the locality. Over the jata-bhara a small part of the hair is done up with a conical ushnisa on top of the head.

The sanctum inside is 3.85m square, the height slightly shorter than the sides. The floor of the shrine-chamber is raised by about 65cm from the floor-level of the ardha-mandapa the walls, ceiling and floor are evenly dressed. Occupying the centre of the floor is a large rock-cut circular avudaiyar with a diameter of 1.65m. A large cylindrical linga, the crest of which is slightly above the transverse middle line of the shrine-entrance, is cut over the avudaiyar, the avudaiyar is molded with a jagati, a round kumuda, kampa, kantha, kampa pattika and prati, the prati forming the brim of the shallow depression around the base of the linga with extensions over the short spout enclosing a channel. The short spout is supported by a sejant vyala, squatting on its haunches with the front legs planted straight. Notwithstanding, the vyala is found carved below the pranala of the rock-cut Siva-linga in the eastern cave-temple at Malayakkoyil, the latter differ from the former in many respects. In the case of Tirumayam the Vyala feature is found only in the front side (i.e. facing to the entrance) but not in the rear side. The height of the Siva-linga is almost the same as the height of the pitha below. The pujya-bhaga of the Siva-linga is marked with the sutra design. The parallel brahma-sutra of this linga has ascended somewhat above the parsiva-sutra (sideline) and the parsiva-sutra joins the brahma-sutra below the peak of the latter. This feature is found on the pujya-bhaga of the lingas datable between the second half of the 7th century and the first half of the 8th century. The linga is shown with domed apex, a characteristic feature of early lingas. Curiously enough, the ceiling does not show the vajana, on the floor below the spout there is a square rock-cut cistern now covered up by stone slabs. The cistern was originally intended for receiving the abhishaka water. At present a shallow channel cut above the covering slab and running forward to the centre of the skill, takes off the abhishaka water to a drain cut in the floor of the ardha-mandapa.

It seems the cave-temple has received constant attention from the devotees and royal people since its consecration and this is exemplified by the lot of alterations and additions in the form of sub-shrines, prakara, gopura, etc. The god of the cave-temple is known in the inscriptions as Tirumeyyattu mahadevar, Tirumeyyadevar srimulasthanamutaiya to mahadevar, Tirumeyyattu malayalan, etc. The cave-temple appears to represent a combination of a well-known early Pallava features as well as the contemporary immediately collateral Pandya and Muttaraiya elements. It is noted that the circular linga-pitha relatively being less in number compared to the square and octagonal pithas found in this area. Again the character of the vritta-kumuda moldings is itself suggestive of a variant structure as different from the tripatta-kumuda that is already well adumbrated in structural temples of the period. The comparatively simple character with a typical devotee form depicted by the side of the entrance is well known in the Pandyan caves, as
at Tirukkolakkuti, Virasikamani, Tevarmalai and this would suggest that there has been a direct impact of the Pandyan elements on this cave-temple. The nature of the corbel is not in any way against such an impact and is itself a typical Pandyan feature. Stylistically, it would be appropriate to take this cave-temple towards the latter part of 8th century CE. It is worthy to note here that this cave-temple. Carries the well-known musical inscription as found at kutumiyanmalai and Malayakkoyil Hence it is reasonable to presume that the Siva cave-temple at Tirumayam is not very much far removed in time from the cave-temples at Kutumiyanmalai and Malayakkoyil.

Vishnu Cave-Temple

It is located to the east of the Siva rock-cut cave-temple, Tirumayam. This cave-temple is interesting as it is the only example of a natural cavern enlarged and fitted with columns so as to present the appearance of rock-cut cave-temple. The study of this cave would show how a small natural cavern was enlarged leaving enough rock material at the base for the carving of a rock-cut Sopana and a platform behind it, a large composite bas-relief of Vishnu as Anantasayi with attendant deities above, below and sides and for cutting a beam with corbels on the roof which separating the garbha-griha and the ardha-mandapa. The depth of the cavern is about 9.25m from the north-south, the width 8.86m and the height 4.42m. At a distance of about 2.44m from the edge of the floor is cut a sopana of three steps with a large Chandra-sila forming the fourth basal step. The semi-circle of the Chandra-sila is turned at either and into two curved parapets flank the three upper steps and each parapet has a terminal upturned curve suggesting the trunk of an elephant. The rock on either side of this sopana has been lowered but this part has been built up with brick masonry.

Behind the top tread of the sopana is the second higher rock-cut platform running the entire width. Recessed about 91cm from its edge is the next platform. It is on the edge of this platform the two pillars and two pilasters have been fixed. The top most plat form extends behind the facade of two pillars and two pilasters as the floor of the garbha-griha about 2.44m wide. Immediately behind the floor all the available rock has been utilized for the very large sculpture of Vishnu recumbent on the serpent, which rises to a height of 1.53m from the ground level and occupies a length of about 6.70m. The Vishnu sculpture itself is measuring about 4.27m. The hind wall, which is flat at the middle and a little curved at the corners, is utilized for the other sculptures of Madhu, kaitabha, Vasus, Kinnaras and the rishis etc. The side figures are shown in almost life-size forms while the back wall figures are all comparatively smaller, though with a sharpness of outline.

The roof over the Grabha-griha is rendered flat and even. The rock forming the roof just over the line of the pillars and pilasters has been cut into a wide flat beam with flat Taranga corbels below. Beyond this beam, it extends as the roof of the ardha-mandapa and steps down by about 30cm towards the entrance of the cave-temple. Near the extremity of the dripping line a heavy uttira has been provided across the entire width of the mandapa. This is obviously an attempt to divide the cave-temple into three sections, the cellar or sanctum, the ardha-mandapa and the mukha-mandapa. The eastern rock face in front of the entrance of the cave-temple has inscription are concealed by the ceiling slabs of the front structural mandapa. The visible portion of the inscription refers to a donation for the supply of rice for the food offering (tiru-amiru) to the kitantapiran i.e., the deity inside this cave-temple. The inscription found on a transverse parapet records that perumpituku peruntevi, the mother of Vitelvituku Vilupperatiaraican alias Cattan Maran repaired (the temple) and granted a village as unnalikaip-puram. The inscription is in archaic Tamil characters of about the 8th century CE. It is not clear to which temple this inscription referred to. Since this inscription is found very close to this cave-temple perhaps it may refer to the Vishnu cave-temple.

The two pillars in front of the sanctum are unusually high and made up off separate pieces inserted against the rock-cut corbels on the top. The piece of stones is also inserted below the pillars which act as a plinth of the pillars. The actual pillar portion is made up of two sadurams of equal size. The height of the lower saduram is 68cm and its width 46cm. The height of the kattu is 1.07m. The top saduram is as high as the bottom saduram. The two pieces making the base of
the pillar measure together 79cm. The corbels on top are very flat about 9cm high and their arms on either side are of the same width as the top saduram. The rock cut beam is wider than the corbels. The lower and upper sadurams are not perfect square in plan. Their front (47cm) and hind widths (41cm) are greater than the lateral sides, as in pillars of later Pallava period. The flat corbels show four large tarangas, the terminal portion being slightly incurved as in the chalukyan corbels and the lowermost part being square (it looks like six tarangas including the upper and lower terminals).

A fingure in jata-makuta playing on cymbals is seated kneeling behind the hood of Adisesha. He appears to be singing a tune to the accompaniment of cymbals. He wears elaborate jata-makuta. He cannot be Chitrargupta as the local people suppose him to be. He is most probably Markandeya. Behind him at the corner stands Garuda with both his arms crossed against his chest and both the four fingers in tarjani. He is also two - armed and like the seated figure in front; he also wears the Yajonopavita in Upavita fashion. He wears a heavy jata-bhara hanging down on either side of the head below the kirita-makuta. He wears enormous patra-kundalas and naga-keyuras among other ornaments. The wings of the Garuda are shown prominently on either side of his shoulders in between him and the figure playing on the cymbals is another two-armed figure, holding a sword or club in his right hand and his left in adoration. He may be Vishvakrsena. Below him is a small cavity as if doing penance inside a cave are three figures, one bearded rishi and two other figures behind him. One of the two figures behind rishi wears a kirita-makuta and the other a jata-matuta. From the navel of Vishnu ascends a lotus stalk along the back wall expending - napumsaka tarangas kirita among other ornaments. The upper right holds the amrta-kalasa or the kamandalu, the upper left holds sruk (ladle), the lower right in kataka or more precisely in chin-mudra, the lower left placed on the lap, palm upwards as if in dhyana. These is an umbrella over his head and on either side of the umbrella are shown the figures with a ram’s head and on either side of the umbrella are shown the figures with a ram’s head suggesting Daksha and Agni. The latter is shown with a crown of flames and holding a bowl of fire with both his hands. The presence of Daksha here is one of the prajaptis. Since Daksha is a prajapati and in effect a creation of brahma, he is shown by his side. On either side of brahma is shown the personified form of ayudha-purushas of Vishnu as if flying. The hand Gestures of all the ayudha-purushas namely kaumodaki (the club or gada), Sarnga (the bow or dhanus), Nandaka (the sword or Khadga), sudarsana (the wheel or chakra) and panchajanya (the conch or sankha) express the defensive attitude and swiftness. The Vaishnave agamas mentions that in the yogasayana form of vishnu all the attributes must be depicted in personification next to brahma. The kaumodaki(club)is to be portrayed in female form and the sarnga (bow) in napumsaka (hermaphrodite) form. The sudarsana (chakra) is to be represented in male form, whereas the panchajanya (conch)in the form of bhuta or dwarf. Two of the ayudha-purushas are shown to the right (i.e., west side) of brahma and the other are to his left side (i.e., east side). The dwarfish panchajanya is the western most one in this group and the eastern most figure i this group is kaumodaki, who is shown immediately in front of the demons. All the other ayudha-purushas are depicted in between them.bearded and behind them all is a female figure in anjali or probably clapping to mark time.

Since the female figure has a halo behind her head and also shown, close with chandra, she may represent Rohini. The western end figure on the hin wall of the sanctum is chandra, also shown flying.he is two-armed holding lotus with long stalk in his right arm and left arm and left arm is in adoration. The huge nimbus is shown behind him. As stated elsewhere the lady in anjali pose and also having halo behind her head is shown just in front of him.To the left of brahma beyond the three ayudha-purushas are rishi-like seven figures with beards and jata-makutas in postures of anjali and offering. probably by their number they represent the sapta-rishis. Beyond them is shown surya has a circular background or prabha behind. Like chandra on the western end, he is also two armed holding lotus with long stalk in his left arm and right arm in adoration. Below him are madhu and kaitabha shown in treat attacked by the flames are shown on the back wall below the ayudha-purushas and rishis and above the left leg of Vishnu. They appear to move in the direction of the two asuras. The depiction of the poisonous flame(visa-jvala) in the form of barbs emanating from the hooded sesha towards Madhu and kaitabha is quite interesting. These
visa-jvaas according to the vaikhanasagama are intened to throw Madhu and kaitabha into unconsciousness, when they set tdemons the attack seshavayi, apparently taken as slumberous. Of the two demons the nearest one holds a dagger in his right hand and is rubbing his back by his left hand. The other demon with face turned back registering fright and defiance.on the eastern side walls on the top are two figures in anjali. Seated on the side of the coils of sesha below the left foot of Vishnu is Bhudevi kneeling with bent right leg knee up and the left leg bent down, the left thigh resting on the left foot, a pose resembling utkutika. Her hands are in and there is no kuchabandha round her breasts.  

The Anantasayiving at Tirumayam is unique not only as it representing the uttama class of this form, but also on account of the exquisite style of its carving. It is in this panel that the artist has shown great ingenuity in carving almost all the subsidiary figures associated with the reclining form of Vishnu. The particular text that this sculpture followed is not quite clear. But the local version is that on the approach of Madhu and Kaitabha, se sha loathe to disturb the lord, himself emitted poison against the enemies and subsequently in remorse for having attacked the enemies without the knowledge of his master threw back his hood and the lord who knew this, though in yoganida consoled him by patting him. All the sculptures particularly that of Vishnu and sesha are covered by black stucco like compostion almost similar to that of the paste applied to the Ranganatha image at srirangam. The ceiling right above Vishnu shows a design of a painted canopy with large circle against a red background and with borders. But the painting is much darkened by soot and age.  

Upper Siva Cave-Temple  

The upper rock-cut Siva cave-temple is located within the citadel. This is hardly more than a simple rock-cut cell cut into the vertical scarp of a whale back rock on top of Tirumayam hill, overlooking a ravine below which is about 6.20 m deep. The excavation for this cave-temple is made on the western face of the rock running north-south. Right on the vertical face of the rock is cut a rectangular opening of 1.98 m high and 93 cm wide.Externally the vertical face is bordered by three series of offsets (sakhas) with intervening recesses simulating an over door of the simple type, more elaborate examples of which are found in early chalukyan cave and structural temples. The outermost offset shows a series of cross-frets which divides the offset vertically into different parts. The other two inner offsets are notwithstanding the three offsets are apparent on either side, the door-jambs on either side is a shallow rectangular bordered panel surmounted by a plain arch-like kudu in continuation of the upper limb of the rectangle. This recells similar devices that are exuberant in the chalukyan region.  

There is a recangular meant formed by two concentric lines found to the north of the doorframe. This probable meant to accommodate a single Grantha label inscription as found at Malaiyakkoyil(eastern Siva cave-temple), Kutumiyanmalai and the Satyagirisvara cave-temple at Tirumayam itself. The label inscriptions mention “parivadiniye” or its variant. However there is no inscription found within the rectangular frame. Immediately behind the door-jambs, the opening widens out a little more thus throwing the door-jambs into relief. The sanctum although looks like square, it is not perfect square. It measures 2.84m north-south and 2.73 m east-west and the height is 1.99m. the walls, floor and ceiling of the sanctum are evenly finished. The fine grimed white granite is susceptible of an even finish. There is no Vajana course above the wall. The ceiling shows the traces of old plaster in thin section with faint paint line here and there indicating that the interior wall was covered by thin painted stucco.  

Occupying the centre of the floor is a rock-cut avudaiyar with a cylindrical linga cut-out of rock. As in man of the cave-temples in this area, the avudaiyar is square and its sides are roughly 1/3rd the sides of the cave-temple.it measures 95cm square at the base and 93 cm square at the top. The avudaiyar is finely moulded with a jagati, cylindrical kumuda, kampa, tall kantha relieved by pilasters four contouring the corners and four more are on each cardinal side. Over the kantha is cut a second kampa course carrying a pattika and prati. The faceted prati moulding is shown bordering the shallow pit at the base of the linga and the channel of the short waterspout or pranata projected from the northern side of the pitha. In the place of the cardinal pilaster stump on the northern alse is cut almost into a round kneeling bhuta with its two legs.
planted firmly on the kumuda below and its head abutting against the bent knees as if straining under the weight. The jata-bhaga is parted and covering on either side of the face as is typical in sculptures of the period. The bhuta has got a slight pot-belly.

The cylindrical linga is 63 cm high and the siva-linga is marked with the sutra design. The combined brahma and parsva-sutras ascend to somewhat a greater height. The parsva-sutra(sideline) forms a dome, encircling the two vertical lines of the brahma-sutra of this linga. This feature is found on the lingas datable to 6th - 7th century elsewhere. Moreover the linga is shown with domed apex, a characteristic feature of rectangular cistern cut apparently for the reception of the abhisheka water. It measures 55cm east-west and 51cm north-south and depth of the cistern is about 40cm.

The chemical treatment of sculpture in different locations of this temple involved the removal of thick coat of lime using 10%solution of glacial acetic acid and removal of sooty and greasy accretions with aqueous solutions of ammonia and non-ionic detergent in the ratio of 3:1 the accretionary free stone surface coat applied a preservative coat of 3% solution of puma in toluene. The buried basement of the temple was exposed, the cracked capital of one of the pillars was secured by iron bane and the uneven granite floor was set right. The compound-wall was rebuilt on the old alignment group of monuments, thirumayam, the guns were re-erected, and patch plastering and pointing were done to the walls. The walls of the palace were plastered at places. The leaky terrace over the rock-cut cave was rendered watertight.

References
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