

PWC No 4804

No 18320 d/7th July/87

Govt. of (1887) Madras.

PUBLIC.

Recorded in continuation
of G. O. No. 1305 W d/12th
May 1887.

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Issued

Recd.

Encl.

G.O., 11th June 1887, No. 803.

No 18320 17th July 1887

JUNE.

Archæology.

Recording, with remark, progress report by
Mr. Rea, of the Archæological Survey, for the last
two months.

Supp: Engrs D Circle

With order

for reasons stated.

With order

3-27-6-87 R. 4-7-87 13 Jan 1887

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.
PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper :—

From A. REA, Esq., M.R.A.S., First Assistant, Archæological Survey Department,
to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 19th May 1887,
No. 172.

In continuation of my previous letter to the Director-General, Archæological Survey of India, dated Virinjipuram, 19th March 1887, No. 74, embodied in G.O., dated 20th April 1887, No. 583, Public, I have the honor to forward a report on the work of the past two months, concluding the field season, 1886-87.

2. From my camp at Virinjipuram I visited any surrounding villages reported to be of archæological interest. Among other places visited was Pallikonda. The principal temple there, though somewhat

Pallikonda.

large, is an inferior specimen of 16th century work. I am told it receives a grant of Rs. 1,200 annually from Government: but from all appearances the amount might be better expended. The building is not in the state of repair which one would consider desirable, and the principal source of expenditure seems to be whitewash. The temple is said to have ample funds of its own, and there is little or no need why Government should pay a subsidy to a temple that little deserves it, archæologically or otherwise. A considerable financial saving might be effected, if Government discontinued these annual payments to this and other similar temples, which probably mostly go for the support of a number of lazy Brahmans. This kind of grant seems rather anomalous, when it is considered that Government declines to sanction funds from the conservation grant for the repair of such temples when used for worship; the principle which applies in the one should hold good in the other case also. If the payment of such annual grants is still to be continued, there are numerous temples of a better class which at present have nothing, but are more deserving of grants—which might be applied to their preservation—than such comparatively inferior structures as the one under note.

3. On completing the survey of the large temple of Virinjipuram, I proceeded to Tirumalai, nearly 30 miles south of Vellore. This village, which is chiefly occupied by Jains, is built at the base of a

Tirumalai.

steep, precipitous mass of huge rocks. It is charmingly situated, and the surrounding country is pleasantly varied by dense masses of jungle and hills on all sides. Several miles to the east is Devikapuram, in the

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Arni jaghir, and on the borders of the Pólúr taluk. It has a temple in a walled enclosure on the summit of a hill, and another very large one at the base, similar in size and style to the temple at Virinjipuram.

4. All the antiquities at Tirumalai are Jaina, and are scattered about the face of the huge rock which overlooks the village. The largest is the temple, built on a series of platforms ascending from

Antiquities at Tirumalai.

the base of the hill some distance up its side. The principal shrines are two in number, and situated on the west side of the rock.

Temples.

The first, or outer one, has its entrance from the east, and is a complete temple in itself, with entrance *gopura*, porch, shrine and tower. A large courtyard wall

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(True Extract.)

H. E. STOKES,
Ag. Chief Secretary.

To the Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India.

„ A. Rea, Esq.
„ the Public Works Department.
„ the Revenue Department.
„ the Editors' Table.

No 1832 w a / 7th July 1887

Recorded in continuation
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12th May 1887.

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Supy. Engle & Birch

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encloses, not only this shrine, but another larger one which is placed almost in a line to the west of it, but on a platform about 25 feet higher up the hill. This last temple is at present being completely restored. The two buildings, though comparatively large, are of no great importance archaeologically. They evidently, in parts at least, date from Chola days, or about the 11th century; but as they are very similar to others already examined, it was scarcely necessary to survey them.

5. The chief objects of interest are the rock-cut Jaina sculptures, paintings and rock inscriptions. Close behind the temple, the rock shelves inwards, forming a series of natural caves. In one of these,

Rock sculptures.

some chambers have been built up in brick, forming a number of rooms, which were probably once on a time the residence of the Jaina priests attached to the temple. The brickwork of this portion seems from all appearances to date from about the 15th century. The walls are built entirely under the overhanging rock, which has subsided slightly, and seems in danger of crushing them. The building is extensive, going inwards beneath the rock for a depth of about 45 feet, and extending along its face for over 90 feet; none of this has been excavated, the whole being a natural cavity filled in with brickwork. On the left, a stair leads up to a first storey, containing a small

Rock-sculptured panels.

panels; these cover a surface of 12 feet by 4 feet 6 inches. The left panel shows a standing female figure richly jewelled, grasping in her left hands, what appears to be, a plantain palm 6 feet high; her left foot rests on the head of a lion. Four smaller figures occupy the back ground. The panel on the right has a typical Jaina figure standing on a lotus, with a snake beside him, and branches rising up in front. A female figure stands on each side. The next panel has a figure sitting cross-legged; chowrie bearers and ornament occupy the back ground. A standing figure with snake hood and attendants occupy the panel on the extreme right.

6. On the right of this range of buildings, another stair leads to the upper storey of the *Vihara*, as it may be called. The most of the rooms are on this level. The brick walls, both internally and externally,

Vihara.

have once been completely coated with plaster, and this has been used as the ground-work for a series of remarkable paintings, which have evidently covered their whole surface. Those on the exterior have

Paintings.

mostly disappeared through the scaling off of the plaster, but in the interior, some remain in fairly-good preservation. The ceiling of the upper storey is formed by the under side of the overhanging rock, and this also has been decorated with some pleasing designs in colour. Two distinct periods of painting are observed, for in one place some painted plaster has scaled off, and shows another set of paintings on a plaster surface beneath it. The best of the *frescoes* is a circular panel about 3 feet in diameter with a Jaina figure occupying a disc in the centre; from this radiate a number of lines subdividing the panel into a set of smaller ones. Each of these is occupied by different figures variously grouped; one shows a number of worshipping nuns with white hoods, another lions, elephants and other beasts, and so on. As a rule, the other paintings are very fragmentary, having mostly either scaled off, or been partially destroyed by the damp. The geometrical and floral designs on the ceilings are bright and effective in their coloring, and are in fairly-good preservation.

7. Almost on the summit of the same side of the rock, at a height of nearly 100 feet from the ground, is a brick porch with

Colossal figure.

a small cupola, built on a ledge or natural platform on the hill face. It shelters and forms the shrine for a remarkable, rock-cut, Jaina sculpture, representing Sigamani Nathar. The image is a large one, being 17 feet in height; the hands measure 2 feet 6 inches, the arms 9 feet 6 inches in length, and the breadth across the chest and arms is 6 feet 9 inches.

Inscriptions.

8. There are a number of lengthy inscriptions in old Tamil characters cut on various parts of the hill.

9. In addition to the rock sculptures, there are a number of fine Jaina images in different parts of the place.

Images.

Close to the west side of the hill is a fine tank, and a mound with some stones, marking the site of a previous temple. Some large sculptured stones are near; one stands upright, it measures 4 feet 6 inches in height above the ground, and 7 feet 3 inches broad. It represents an armed warrior with two females standing on each side, and may possibly be a *sati* stone.

10. At Tirumalai; elevation, section and plans were made of the *Vihara*; a few of the best paintings, including the circular panel aforementioned, were copied

Drawings.

in colour; and drawings of the rock sculptures and other images were completed. The inscriptions, which are in Chola Tamil of about the eleventh century, were copied by Dr. Hultzsch, who accompanied me thus far.

11. The rock sculptures are in much the same style of art and apparent date as those lately examined at Vallimalai. No attention is now paid by the people to the

Style of sculptures.

sculptures at the latter place; but those at Tirumalai are regularly worshipped.

12. The head draftsman, while working at Sholinghur, surveyed six temples, all large. Two of them, evidently from

Sholinghur.

peculiarities of the site, show some very unusual arrangement in their plans; the outer walls are polygonal, and some other interesting features make them specially worthy of note.

One temple has some carved pillars rivalling in intricacy of workmanship and design the fine piers in the *Kalyana Mandapa* at Vellore.

Another pillar in a *mandapa* is of a rather original design, and quite different in style of architecture from the building in which it now is. It is not unlike, in some respects, some of the elaborate piers seen in a few of the northern caves.

13. The rock-cut temple at Mahendravadi was also surveyed. It is cut out of a single boulder, but is not designed so as

Mahéndravádi rock-cut cave.

to form the outline of a structural building, like the *rathas* at Mámallapuram. One side only is excavated, so that in plan it is exactly like the plainer and earlier rock-cut caves at Mámallapuram. The boulder measures 32 feet across the front, and 19 feet in height. The vestibule has four massive piers, and the same number of responding pilasters on the side walls. The shrine is a small rectangular chamber, and enters directly from the vestibule; a *dvārapala* is sculptured on each side of its door. On one of the pilasters are four lines of an inscription in archaic characters.

14. The style of this excavation is identical with similar works at Mámallapuram, Mámandúr, Narsapálaiyam, Siyamangalam, Pallāvaram, and other places.

Style of Mahéndravádi and other Pallava caves. As I expected, its examination fully supports my theory—advanced after I discovered in 1885 that the Mámandúr caves were the work of the Pallavas—that all these rock-cut temples are the work of the ancient dynasty which in the early centuries ruled over the greater portion of the Southern Peninsula.

Head Quarters.

15. The members of the Survey staff returned to Madras at the end of April.

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