

of past generations induce to place memorial statues of ancestors at nearly inaccessible sites? The only answer to this question at hand is that they were obviously very anxious to preserve statues of this kind for a long time to come. Hence, they had to select sites at which the statues would for ever be safe from an eventual desecration or demolition, either by human beings or wild animals, especially, by wild elephants.

## 8. Shrines and Religious Centres

### 8.1 Shrines

Ālu Kuṛumba shrines are marked, either by one or, in certain cases, by three upright stones. Such shrines are found all over the past and present settlement areas of the Ālu Kuṛumbas, *e.g.*, at the edges of forests, inside dense forests, on hill tops, by the banks of rivulets and rivers, and so on. When located at the edge of a forest, the shrine is dedicated to Aruvu or Aruguru, the tutelary spirit of the forest, its inhabitants and produces, *i.e.*, the "Lady of the animals";<sup>99</sup> at other sites, to deified mythic ancestors, such as Kuṛupaḍe-Tāyi (in the Kundā area) or Gumba-Dēvaru (in the Kōtagiri area); to Munirāvaḷa, a powerful fierce spirit which is propitiated annually by the sacrifice of a buffalo; and, finally to Munispura, the guardian spirit or tutelary deity of the Ālu Kuṛumbas, who takes charge of the well-being of the tribe, provided that, once a year, he is duly propitiated by the sacrifice of a goat. It is in the two latter cases that the shrine may as well consist of three upright stones, the central one of which thereby being the tallest.

### 8.2 Religious Centres

In a forest above the ghat road leading from Barliyār down to Mēṭṭuppālaiyam, there is a religious centre which has long since been given up, as I was informed by my guides. It is the

same site where also the grave of the former chieftain, named Malla, is situated (see 6.4).

On the far left, there are aligned five (partly broken) clay images, obviously meant to represent an ancestress (Kuṛupaḍe-Tāyi?), with five upright stones standing before them. A long and curved (rusted) knife which must have been used ritually, for killing animals to be sacrificed, is fixed in the ground upright in front of the stones (see Fig. 13a).



Fig. 13: Religious centre (Kenjukūru)

- a) Five clay images, obviously representing an ancestress, with stones and a knife planted before them
- b) Three upright stones and a spear planted close to them

To the right of this former sacrificial place, three upright stones, each being of a different

<sup>99</sup> For some information concerning Aruvu or Aruguru, cf. Kapp 1983: 723, sub. 2.1.4.