Groups of Buddhist cave-temples
near Nāsik and Junnar

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A historical sketch of Western and Southern India in
the 2nd and 3rd centuries A. C.

About the middle of the first century B. C. the Śātavāhana swayed
power over Āndhra, South India. Their capital was Pratiṣṭhāna,
present Paithan on the upper Godāvari. Their realm included
Śūrpara (now Sopara), Surāśṭra (Kathiawād), Ujjainī, and Vidiśa.
After some time the Śakas invaded their territory from the west
and came to possess these districts. The Śakas in Ujjainī i. e. the
western Kṣatrapas were known since the latter half or the end of the
1st century A. C. The Śakas in Surāśṭra under Nahapāna's family
seem to have settled there in 78 A. C. Annexing a part of the Āndhra
territory, he became powerful. Nahapāna penetrated as far as Nāsik.
A cave temple dedicated by him will be seen later.

Gotamiputra Śrī Śatakarpi of Āndhra defeated those barbarians in
106. The cave No.3 near Nāsik has an inscription to the effect that
Gotamiputra defeated Khakharatas, Śakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas.
His land included Assaka (Āsmaka on the Godāvari), Mūlaka (Paithan
district), Surāśṭra (Kathiawād), Aparānta (North Konkan), Nanupa (near
Māhismati on the Narmadā), Vidarbha (Berar), Akala (Vidiśa) and
Avanti (Ujjainī), and it was far vaster. His date is regarded approxi-
mately to correspond to 106 to 130 A. C. Most of the kings of the
Śatavāhanas including Gotamiputra were Hindus but protected Bud-
hism by dedicating caves and temples for the Buddhists.

On the other hand there were new enemies of the Āndhra and they
were the dynasty of the Śakas founded by Caṣṭana, whose portrait
statue was found at Māt near Mathura. His dynasty are known as
western Kṣatrapas. The kinship of the Kṣatrapas and the Kuśāna is
known. Being Śakas, they used the Śaka era, the first year of which
corresponding to 78 A. C. The number of years in their inscriptions
range between 41 and 310, which correspond to 118 to 387 A. C. It
seems that the dynasty lasted down to the date of Candragupta II
of the Guptas (the end of the 4th century). The rock of the Aśokan edicts near Girnar bears an inscription of Kṣatrapa Rudradāman, who reigned in 52, Śaka era (129 A.C.) According to the inscription he was a grandson of Caśtana, and occupied Suraśtra, Avanti, Vidiśa, the former territory of the Sātavāhanas and twice defeated the forces of the Sātavāhanas. The defeated king was Vasiṣṭhiputra-Pulumāyi, son of Gotamiṣṭhuta. Since that time the dynasty was confined in the Dekkan.

Inscriptions on the sculptures from Amarāvati include the following three names of Andhra kings: Śri Pulumāvi, being identified with Vasiṣṭhiputra-Pulumāyi, is assigned to 130 to 159 approximately. Śri Śivamakasāta has been identified with Śiva-Śri-Śatakarni of the Purāṇas. Prof. Rapson who studied Andhra coins regarded him as a brother of Pulumāyi. According to the record that his reign lasted for 4 or 7 years, it lasted from 159 to 163 or 166. Mr. Vincent Smith surmised for his date circa 170. The next king Śri Yajña was a most powerful sovereign. His reign lasted for 29 years. So he might have been on the throne from 166 to 195. Besides the inscriptions, coins of those kings have been found. On the western side of South India the Chutus, a branch family of the Śatavāhanas reigned. They were called the Andhrabhṛtyas.

Chapter 1 Cave-temples near Nasik

Nasik, the town on the upper Godāvari, with a magnificent hill at the back, is called the Banaras of western India. Mentioned as "Nāsika" in the book of Ptolemy, it has been a religious center since very old time. It is one of the seven sacred places of the Hindus. There are 24 Buddhist caves lying from S.W to N.E on the side of a hill near the city.

Dr. James Burgess explored these caves and published the results in "Cave temples of India" in 1880 and "Indian and Eastern Architecture" 1910. Prof. Sentaro Sawamura (沢村秀太郎) made a description of the cave No.3 and published it in his "東洋美術史の研究" (Studies in the history of Oriental arts), No.3 (Gotamīputra Cave).

No.3 was dedicated by Gotamīputra. So it is called after him. Let us describe it from the front to the interior. This is a vihāra cave (dwelling rooms of monks). But it has such ornaments as were never found in older (pre-Christian) bhiksugrihas. The ornamentation is mainly concentrated in the front part of the cave. On the architrave
is engraved the railing pattern in relief which was a so common design in early Indian architecture. The coping has half médaillons of full lotus, garlands and inverted lotus buds as seen in profile. Each post of the railing has full lotus médaillons and each cross-bar similar but smaller ones. Elephants, bulls, lions and makaras are arranged coupled with a creeper on the plinth. The bas-relief is very much weather-worn.

In front of the cave, on the ground, there is a railing with a similar decorative designs as mentioned above. It is more worn and a portion is broken off. The lotus médaillons now look like so many buttons but they must have been exquisitely finished. It is not mere coincidence that the railing as a whole resembles the ornate railings of the Andhra school, for both were almost contemporary and in the same sphere of political influence. The difference between the railing on the ground and that over the architrave is that six Atlantes-Yakṣas appear on the ground. They are nude and much damaged. They have round eyes and wide lower eye-lid. These Yakṣas remind us of the male figures of the Kuśāṇa period from Mathura. The execution of the details is not refined but rather rough. A certain vigour is thereby obtained. The architectural ornament mentioned above follows the ancient style, and the details have no novel elements. Not a statue of the Buddha has yet appeared. Compared with the bas-reliefs on the gateways of the Stūpa no. 1 at Sānci, these sculptures show a style which was developed in accordance with the vigorous spirit of the age.

The most conspicuous among the ornaments in front of the cave are pillars which stand on the verandah inside the railing and support the architrave. The pillars are 6 in all, 3 each on either side of the stairway leading to the doorway. As for the two on the right side only the capitals are preserved. They are of the form of an octagonal pillar set in a water-jar. The shaft tapers. The capital consists of three parts: the lowest part that was developed from the older bell-shaped member, the bulb-shaped member in a

Fig. 1 The facade of the Gotamiputra cave (No. 3) Nāsik.

- 79 -
square frame and square boards superposed one on another. The capital is surmounted with pairs of lions, elephants, and bulls set back to back. Each pair carry riders. The architrave is supported by the animals. This type of the octagonal pillar with water-jar base was prevalent throughout India in ancient time. This was the commonest type of pillars that appeared in the bas-reliefs of ancient monuments. The sculptures from Mathura dating from the Kušāṇa period which are nearly coeval with this cave temple show only this type of pillar. Not only at Mathura but everywhere else this type was certainly used in the architecture. It lasted until a later age though in a slightly changed form. These pillars of Nasik caves are examples that have been preserved by happy chance. The shaft being shorter, they are, as compared with those of Bedsā caves, somewhat stouter. The bell-shaped member which had been formerly embellished with flower petals lost its original meaning and was changed into such form as reminds us of a water-jar, but inverted, just like the base. We have many parallels in the cave-temples near Junnar which will be mentioned below.

A semi-pilaster on the wall at the left end of the colonnade is, just as a railing post, adorned with a full lotus medaillon and lotus buds. We shall see a highly developed feature of such a lotus medaillon in later caves at Ajantā and other places. This is a transitory phase between the older lotus design on the railings of pre-Christian period and that of the Gupta period. The ornamentation of a vihāra cave by means of pillars, pilasters and an ornate gateway is, as pointed out by prof. Sawamura, a feature which is more developed than in older caves and is on the way of proceeding toward the dazzling adornment of the caves of the Gupta period.

In the upper part of the left end of the verandah (facing the cave), and above the window on the left of the doorway are inscriptions, which inform us that this cave was excavated by the donation of Gotamiputra Śatakarpī. If the date of the king is assigned, as mentioned already, to 106 to 130 approximately, the date of this cave can be roughly fixed. Mr. Burgess regarded it about 130. The inscription bears the name of Pulumāyi, son of Gotamiputra. This cave was maintained with the pious gifts of the royal father and son, and the monks belonged to the Bhadrāyaniya school.

Prof. Sawamura observed the details of the cave not without perspicacity. He was, however, only too credulous of the older opinion of Dr. Burgess in assigning the cave to the former half of the 4th century A.C., which was so late as the beginning of the Gupta period. If such was the case, it is incomprehensible why this cave should follow the older tradition so faithfully and the statue of the Buddha should
not appear at all. Anybody who has a general notion of the history of Indian art would not admit his chronology. Only in the period when it was not long since the statue of the Buddha began to be made even at Mathura, the manufacturing center of the Buddha image, such a situation was possible in West India which was not yet influenced by Mathura art. It is not only from the inscriptions of Gotamiputra but because details of this cave confirm our opinion that we assign this cave to the first quarter of the 2nd century A.C. We are convinced of it.

Around the doorway leading from the verandah to the hall is engraved a torana in bas-relief. It is similar to the one in Q.2 of the Mathura museum. The door jambs correspond to the posts of a torana. They are divided into many small, square panels with many figures. Going up from the bottom upward, we see many subjects unsuitable for the Buddhist shrine: Atlas-yakṣas supporting the upper structure with their raised right hand, standing figures of a couple, a female leaning on a tree and a bird, an amorous couple with the hand on the other’s shoulder, a female and a child, and a male holding up a female. Recollecting the domestic scenes in the bas-reliefs from Mathura, we can understand that such was rather common in this period. They are, so to speak, la peinture de genre of the Kuṣāṇa period. The figures are not technically refined.

Two architraves of torana are represented above the doorway. The lower one is filled with a row of lower halves of full lotuses, while the upper one is covered with open lotuses and lotus buds seen in profile. Between the two architraves are represented a stūpa, a dharmačakra, a Bodhi-tree and persons worshipping them. All these are time-honoured symbols. The two extremities are made into spirals as at Sānci, but not Makaras. Below each of the ends of the lower architrave is a bracket in the form of a leaping lion. We see a parallel case in Q. 2, Mathura Museum.

On both sides of the doorway are dvārapālas, the guardians of the door. One of their hands which is raised has several stalks of the lotus, and the other is on the waist. The head-dress is the same as is seen in the statues of the Kuṣāṇa period made at Mathura. The statue is rather short, stout and full of vigour. The eyes are round. The style of the whole is similar to, but not so refined as, that of the male figures of Mathura and Andhra.

This is not the first specimen of the dvārapāla set in the entrance of a vihāra, for we know much earlier parallel at Bhājā etc. So its origin should be looked for in a remote antiquity. As we visit Udayagiri of the 5th century, Ajantā of the 6th century, Elephanta of the 8th century one by one, we realize how the dvārapāla increased the
stature. Compared with those later companions, how simple and small they are represented and yet how full of dignity they are!

Though the front of the cave abounds in such remarkable ornaments, the inner hall is almost plain. The hall is square of which each side measures more than 12 meters. It has no pillars, nor an ornament of any sort on the wall. It has 5, 6 and 6 cells respectively on the right, left and back walls. Besides these there are two more at the ends of the verandah, amounting to 19 in all. The floor of the cells is more elevated than that of the hall. Each cell has a stone bed or bench about 60 cm, high at the back.

This vihāra follows the traditional type in being a hall without pillars and the beds. It is different from the vihāras of the Gupta period which had many beautifully adorned pillars and no beds. What distinguishes this cave from the pre-Christian vihāras is that there are neither arched windows nor railing designs. But in the center of the back wall is a bas-relief representing a stūpa. This is the object of worship, center of the cult in this cave. Indeed, it was to this stūpa that all the ornamentation in the front was dedicated. The older caves that contained a stūpa were not square in plan but apsidal temples with semi-circular back walls. Seldom do we meet with square caves with a stūpa. The latter type of cave temple is found exclusively at Šailarwadi, Kudā and Junnar in Western India. We have reason to suppose that this form of the cave was probably of an Āndhra origin and was likely excavated since the 1st century B.C. Some of the square caves have a large arched window in the façade instead of ordinary, square doors and a solid stūpa at the back. The stūpa in the no. 3 near Nāsik supplies a more simplified form. Its lower part shows an inward curve just as the stūpa in the no. 9 at Ajantā and some caves at Junnar. On either side stand the figures of Yakṣi. The one on the left joins her hands toward the stūpa and the other on the right bears a camari. Above each of them are a lion, a dharmacakra and a Gandharva (flying devatā) with a garland. The stūpa is surmounted with three canopies of umbrellas. No figure of the Buddha was represented; all that we see here are antique motifs. The corpulent Yakṣis are so vigorous as the couples of donors at Kārli and figures of Yakṣis from Mathura.

In short, this cave is structurally a vihāra with cells and a flat ceiling, and at the same time is a caitya with a stūpa in relief at the back and a torāṇa and railing in the front complying with the stūpa. This is in fact a caitya-vihāra, a forerunner of so many subsequent vihāras with cult images. In other words, this is a bridge spanning the gap between the ancient period and the Gupta period. The date known from the inscription agrees so well with the details of the cave.
We have described no. 3 minutely because it is roughly of the same form and age as the caves near Nasik as well as Junnar to be mentioned below. Before proceeding to no. 10, the next important cave, we shall describe nos. 1 to 9 briefly.

**No. 1**

The ornament on the perpendicular face is badly weather-worn. Four pillars in the verandah were not yet completed but only cut into square pillars. The cells at both ends of the verandah began to be excavated but suspended halfway by some reason or other. The cells around the hall were not yet commenced. This cave seems to be later than the cave no. 3, but probably dates from the second century.

**No. 2**

This is a small cell without any ornament. It contains an inscription engraved in the sixth year of Vasiṣṭhiputra Puḍumāyi (circa 136 A. C.)

**No. 4**

The 2 pillars in front are of the same type as those in no. 3. They are surmounted with elephants and male and female riders. The style is somewhat feeble. There is a railing pattern over the architrave, but the lithic representation of wooden rafters is omitted. The doorway is broken. This is probably slightly later than the no. 3.

**No. 5**

A totally broken cell has nothing to be mentioned.

**No. 6**

The front part is very much broken, leaving only 3 cells. There is a railing pattern over the façade. A triśula symbol is also noted. The date may be the same as no. 3. The top of an octagonal pillar is preserved.

**No. 7**

Only a cell. It has a high bed on the right. The lower part of the wall has crumbled away.

**No. 8**

It consists of a verandah and a cell. There were slender octagonal pillars in the verandah. A cistern in front of this cave has water still fit for drinking.

**No. 9**

It consists of a verandah and four cells. The verandah has 2 octagonal pillars. Their capital is of the inverted water-vessel type. They are surmounted with an elephant and a bull respectively. This
cave is probably contemporary with no. 3.

**No. 10 Nahapâna cave**

Both in the arrangement and the dimension the cave no. 10 is very similar to no. 3. Both caves resemble each other very closely in the pillars and the stūpa on the back wall of the hall. The difference distinguishing no. 10 from no. 3 lies in the lack of the ground railing in front and of the decoration of the gateway and the pilasters, and in the existence of a statue carved in a subsequent period on the stūpa at the back almost effacing the stūpa. So the ornament of the façade consists of 6 octagonal pillars only, of which shape and proportion are similar to those of the cave no. 3. The only difference is that the inverted water-jar of the capital is a little longer and more elegant than that of no. 3. The inverted water-jar was originally a member of the capital representing petals of a flower. Pillars appearing in all the bas-reliefs from Mathura in this period were furnished invariably with petals of a flower. Such is the case at Kārli, too. For the first time do we find here the type without petals. The form of the whole is more antique than that of no. 3.

As mentioned above, the dome of the stūpa in relief on the back wall is almost effaced by a figure carved subsequently, rendering it impossible to compare it with that of no. 3. But the remaining harmika and three umbrellas are exceedingly similar. Here are no lion, no dharmacakra nor flying Gandharvas. The statues of Yakṣīs are very similar to those of no. 3. Thus this cave is no doubt contemporary with no. 3, but probably slightly earlier than that. It was this cave indeed that supplied no. 3 with a prototype.

There are inscriptions above the gateway and a window. They say that the cave was excavated by the gift of Nahapāna. A Śaka as he was, he was a devout Buddhist. It was about the beginning of the second century that he came to Nāsik. The cave must be approximately of that age. Comparing with no. 3, this cave is slightly earlier, for there is no ornament except the pillars and the capital is of a
more antique type. As we have said already, specimens of the caitya-viśvāmina with a stūpa inside a square hall are found in a few other places. One of them at Śailarwadi bears an inscription saying that a man from the capital of Andhra built it. So this form of cave-temple which is not found in any other part of India must be attributed to the Andhra origin.

A Śaka by birth, Nahapāna probably ordered some architects well versed in the Andhra style to excavate a cave worthy of a mighty prince. Having seen this cave which had been made by his enemy, Gotamiputra probably wished to excavate a cave outshining it. The architects of the cave no.3 were not content only by copying no. 10 but added the railing on the ground and the torana at the doorway. It seems that Dr. Burgess (or Fergusson) was right when he assigned this cave to about 100 A. C. It is well preserved and is a representative cave in the early second century A. C.

No. 11

No. 11 is a small cave consisting of 3 cells, with beds near the back wall. There is no ornament. It is far older than a clumsy Buddha carved near the gateway.

No. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

These are small caves that are very much damaged and ruined. No. 15 has some seated statues of the Buddha and others of about the eighth century are in the first sermon. No. 16 is a cell of which the front has crumbled away. Now it is approached by means of a ladder. It has a statue of about the eighth century.

No. 17

No. 17 is an unfinished cave of a comparatively big dimension. The mode of structure is the same as no. 3 and no. 10. There are 4 pillars in the front, and 2 square pillars at the back of the hall. The latters bear elephant and human figures in relief. Four cells are on the right side and two on the
left. In view of the incomplete excavation, this cave seems to be slightly later than no. 3 but probably dates from the same century, say the latter half of the second century.

No. 18

This is the only caitya cave on this hill and is far older than the caves hitherto mentioned. This cave is almost of the same dimension as the caitya at Bedsä. Due to crumbling of the rock above the cave, the side walls of the front part have been lost. There is only one doorway in the middle of the façade. On the door lintel, in the center, are engraved designs of the trīśula, the so-called shield, and on either side, a makara with a gana, an elephant, a winged horse etc. Though very much worn, the door-jambs, slanting slightly inward, have beautiful motifs of the lotus and ganas. On both sides of the doorway there are standing statues of the Dvārapālas. The right one is almost completely damaged. The left one is also damaged but has preserved an old fashioned turban. To the right and left hand of the great arched window above the gateway is a railing pattern, above which octagonal pilasters and stupas are alternately arranged in bas-relief. The capital of the pilaster is neither of the older bell shape nor of the inverted water-jar type, but of an intermediate form. A Nāga is engraved near the great arch. Four miniature arches make an ornament at the top.

Inside the cave there are 14 octagonal pillars set in the water-jar bases, 3 of which are broken off. The two pillars nearest the doorway are not octagonal but square with a projection on the inner side as the ones in the corresponding position of the Bedsa cave. A pillar on the right side, near the back, has a dedicatory inscription with a donor's name. The ceilings of both the nave and the aisles are domed. The ribs of the ceiling were wooden. So nothing is preserved. Comparing, for example, the stūpa in this cave and that in the Bedsa cave, they are so similar that they must be contemporary. I am of
opinion to assign them to the former half of the first century B.C. An inscription in this cave bears the name of Mahā Hakusiri, probably a royal one.

No. 19
There must have been a cave that belonged to no. 18 and that is our no. 19. It is situated a little lower than no. 18 and to the left of it. It is a vihāra of an ordinary type. In front of the verandah there are two slender pillars which are square at the lowest portion, octagonal in the middle, and square again at the upper part, which is a common feature of pillars in ancient India. Though weather-worn, they are engraved with half lotus flower and a running bull. The hall inside has 2 cells on each side, that is to say, 6 in all, which have stone beds. The entrance to each cell is adorned with an arch. The form of the arch is similar to that of no. 12 at Ajantā and of the vihāra at Bedsā. Two latticed windows are noticed here just as at Bhājā, Bedsā, Ajantā, and Pithalkora.

No. 20 (Sri Yañna cave)
This is, as no. 3 and no. 10, one of the important vihāra caves here. The plan and the arrangement of construction resemble those of no. 10. But the hall is elongated and of an irregular square. The trace of subsequent addition can evidently be noticed. The 4 pillars in the front are similar to those of no. 3, but later. The lower part of the wall near the doorway has crumbled away. There is no pillar in the hall. As is clear from the plan, the size and the direction of the cells are not regular, and a shrine is provided in the back wall, where are enshrined seated statues of preaching Buddha with attendant Bodhisattvas on either side and flying Gandharvas above. These statues are of the same period as those in the Buddhist caves at Ellora, i.e. early Mediaeval period. The square pillars in front of the shrine are contemporary, too. So the shrine was certainly additionally excavated in about the 8th century.
In consequence, the length of the hall was very much elongated. Later cells can be distinguished from the older ones. For example, the two cells near the back are different in size and orientation, which means that they are additions in the later period when the number of bhikṣus must have increased. The original back wall was in front of them. The stone beds that had long been in the cells on the left side were broken off and the cells were lengthened.

The date of the foundation of this cave can be guessed from the pillars in the verandah approximately. But we can know it more precisely by the inscription fortunately preserved: it says that this cave was made by the gift of Vāsu, wife of a general under Śrī Yajña of the Āndhra dynasty, that it was completed in the seventh year of his reign, and that it had been commenced by a certain ascetic by the name of Vopaki. It cannot be very much prior to Vāsu, in view of the style of the pillars. Dr. Vincent Smith regarded YajñaŚrī's enthronement as 184 A. C. Subramanian surmised his reign to have been from 166 to 195 A. C. In any case this cave can be assigned to the latter half of the second century.

No. 21 is an incomplete cave with pillars and a cell.

No. 22 is a small cell.

No. 23 It consists of five small rooms arranged irregularly. Statues of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas of the Mediaeval period are engraved on the wall. This cave was excavated anew in that age.

No. 24 It consists of 2 cells, the lower part of which crumbled. But a railing pattern is noticed above the architrave. So this must be an old cave. There is an inscription above the wall inside.

Now we have seen all the caves near Nāṣik. With the exception of no. 18 and no. 19 which date from the former half of the 1st century B. C., most of the caves date from the 2nd century A. C. They all belonged to Buddhists. They should be compared with other caves, specially those near Junnar. A slight addition was made in the 8th century. The caves excavated by the gift of the kings are by far more splendid than the other caves which were probably excavated by no less pious gift of the common people.

(To be continued in a subsequent number.)