

The So-Called Kalacuri Monuments

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE SO-CALLED
KALACURI MONUMENTS
OF THE DECCAN AND KONKAN

By

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ABSTRACT

Western India is home to a set of Śaiva and Buddhist rock-cut monuments which, according to several art historians, date to sometime in the sixth century, though the precise circumstances of their creation is a matter of debate. The majority of these cave temples belong to the early period in the development of the Hindu temple and a period of intense creativity in Indian Buddhism. These excavations have long interested both art historians and scholars of Indian religion. In this thesis I propose to look afresh at the problem of who built the earliest Śaiva temples and why, using insights from the study of many medieval inscriptions and an art historical analysis of particular aspects of the caves.

I attempt to show that this single stylistic development was not due to the influence of one set of dynastic patrons, as many scholars argue, but might have been due to the migration of groups of artisans from Northwest India to the West coast and then to Central India. I believe that some dynastic patronage was present because several of the caves contain shrines to the Seven Mothers, the embodiment of the power of several prominent Hindu gods, who were also believed to be the protecting deities of Indian kings. Such patronage, however, was more indirect than must be assumed in models which focus on patronage as a function of dynastic history.

v.

merā nasīb hai jo mere yār ne hamsake pyār se
bekhudi me divānā merā nām rakha diyā

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AA</i>	Artibus Asaie.
<i>ABORI</i>	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
<u><i>AE</i></u>	Spink, Walter. Ajanta to Ellora.
<i>ALB</i>	The Adyar Library Bulletin.
<i>ARASI</i>	Annual Report Archaeological Survey of India.
<u><i>Aspects</i></u>	Sharma, R. S. Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India.
<i>BIS</i>	Berliner Indologische Studien.
<i>CII</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.
<u><i>DHI</i></u>	The Development of Hindu Iconography.
<u><i>DKD</i></u>	Fleet, J. F. The Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts of the Bombay Presidency.
<u><i>EHD</i></u>	Das, Dipakranjan. Economic History of the Deccan.
<i>EI</i>	Epigraphia Indica.
Elephanta	Spink, Walter. The Great Cave of Elephanta: A Study of Its Sources.
Ellora	Spink, Walter. Ellora's Earliest Phase.
<i>EW</i>	East and West.
<i>FEQ</i>	The Far Eastern Quarterly.
<i>Gazetteer</i>	Gazetteer of The Bombay Presidency.
<u><i>HD</i></u>	Yazdani, G., ed. The Early History of the Deccan.
<i>IA</i>	The Indian Antiquary.
<i>IESHR</i>	The Indian Economic and Social History Review.
<u><i>IF</i></u>	Sharma, R. S. Indian Feudalism.

<i>IHQ</i>	The Indian Historical Quarterly.
<i>IHR</i>	The Indian Historical Review.
<i>IIJ</i>	Indo-Iranian Journal.
<i>JAOS</i>	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
<i>JAS</i>	Journal of Asian Studies.
<i>JBBRAS</i>	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
<i>JBRS</i>	Journal of the Bihar Research Society.
<i>JGJRI</i>	Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute.
<i>JIH</i>	Journal of Indian History.
Jogeśwarī	Spink, Walter. Jogeśwarī: A Brief Analysis.
<i>JPS</i>	Journal of Peasant Studies.
<i>JISOA</i>	Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.
<i>JOIB</i>	Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda.
<i>JRAS</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
<i>LK</i>	Lalit Kāla.
Mahākūṭa	Fleet, J. F. Mahakuta Pillar Inscription of Mangalesa.
<i>Pro. IHC.</i>	Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress.
<i>SI</i>	Mirashi, V. V. Studies in Indology.
<i>SSP</i>	Social Science Probings.
<i>VIJ</i>	Vishveshvarand Indological Journal.

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent volume on patronage in Indian culture the editor, Barbara Stoler Miller, makes the following comments on patronage:

what has emerged from our work is a definition of patronage as a multi-dimensional, sometimes loosely codified network of exchanges involving not only the production of art and literature, but also its performance, transmission, reinterpretation, and preservation. The giving and receiving may take place between individuals, or between groups or institutions. The groups are often specialized communities of craftsmen, ritualists, or scholars whose lineages preserve trade secrets of their virtuoso techniques. Exchanges usually involve relations of social disparity which are manifested in the exchanging of material wealth for a tangible product or an intangible process. Such exchanges bestow status on both the giver and receiver, as well as religious merit where the exchange involves donation to a religious institution. Patronage, like gift-giving, characteristically binds relationship with obligation, in contrast with more impersonal market exchanges, where there is no obligation of immediate return. The objects produced in patronage exchanges often have high aesthetic value and also a special symbolic quality that transcends the limits of formal exchange. To some extent at least, what we call patronage recreates the ideological context of contemporary history and projects the individual or group into posterity; it inevitably involves both wish-fulfillment and self-announcement.¹

1. Miller, Barbara Stoler, ed., The Power of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 3.

Such a definition suggests that the patron in Indian history was a significant force in the creation of art objects; however, the patron was still only part of a nexus of relations--especially in donations to religious institutions--which operated in the creation of objects of art.

Much art history done on Indian subjects has begun with the premise that it was the will of the patrons that was the first consideration in the creation of art objects and the artists' place was simply to fulfill the patrons' desires. This often leads to a narrowed view of how the art objects came into being. As Romila Thapar says in the volume edited by Miller,

the concept of patronage is usually restricted to the relationship between the patron and the recipient of patronage--often visualized as the king and the artist who works for him. But the relationship created through the act of patronage can vary considerably according to the form of patronage. The patron, artist and the object are pointers to each other and are deeply inter-linked. Art historians of India generally looked for an individual patron and this in part explains the frequency with which monuments are labelled by dynasty and rarely by the name of the architect even when it is known. Further, the recipient is often regarded as subservient to the patron since the former is dependent for his livelihood on the latter. This focus obstructs the consideration of what the patron receives in return for extending patronage.²

Art historical analyses which take the actions of the patron as their point of departure are based on certain presuppositions. First, it is supposed that only the most politically

2. Thapar, Romila, "Patronage and Community," in Miller, ed., 1992, p. 19.

powerful, generally thought to be the crown, could patronize great monuments; therefore, when a monument cannot be attributed to certain patronage then it is automatically assumed that the rulers of that region in the period to which the monument is assigned must have been its patrons. Second, in assuming the artists' subservience to the patron, the spread of artistic styles is believed to be a function of political events; that is, the spread of the political influence of the (royal) patron results in the spread of artistic styles. Recent studies have called these presuppositions into question.

In the following I review the case of the so-called Kalacuri monuments. The primary excavations designated as Kalacuri are the Jogeswari, Mandapeśwar and Elephanta caves in the Konkan region of India's West coast, and the Dhumar Lena and Rāmeśvara at Ellora in the Deccan, or Central India. Many scholars believe that these Hindu cave-temples belong to the sixth century of the Common Era. In the absence of direct evidence to determine who patronized these caves theories have been evolved which are based on the presuppositions I have discussed. These theories are based on the premise that these caves were created directly as a function of the political events in Western India in the sixth century. Furthermore, presupposing that only a great royal family could foster such a stylistic development, they are based on an history which makes the Kalacuri family far more influential than the

available evidence warrants. I argue that, though the Kalacuris may have been participants in the excavation of some of these caves, the creation of these monuments was the result of several other factors relating to the religious climate in Western India and the activities of several artisanal groups at this time. That the Kalacuris were only one influence in the creation of these caves is the logical conclusion from my analysis of the sixth century history of Western India which, I believe, shows that the Konkan and the Deccan were distinct political territories in this period. If the Konkan and Deccan were ruled separately at the time that the caves were excavated, then Kalacuri hegemony over Western India could not have been the fundamental impetus for the creation of these monuments.

Hindu rock-cut architecture was a peculiar experiment that preceded the fuller developments of structural architecture; it might have reflected the primacy of sculpture in the creation religious sanctuaries. Before the rock-cut idiom was entirely abandoned in favour of the structural temple, its craftsmen had left behind some of the finest examples of Indian art ever seen.

Rock-cut architecture was initially confined to the excavation of cave-temples, mostly Buddhist, with fewer Jaina and Hindu examples. However, in a later phase live rock was carved to give the appearance of a free standing temple, suggesting the ascension of the elaborate structural temple

over the idiom of the earlier cave-temple.³ The cave-temple was developed to meet the monastic and later devotional needs of the Buddhist *saṅgha* and lay congregations respectively. In this respect it was not so well suited to Hindu devotional practices which did not centre around an order of organized mendicancy.

The Buddhist excavations began in the second and third century B.C.E. with the *vihāra*, or monastery, floor plan (Plate I). This design persisted through most of the Buddhist phase. The opening consisted of some sort of facade and the interior was plain and open except where pillars might have been employed. Along the remaining three walls were the doorways of several cells which were excavated to house the monks resident at the site. *Caitya* halls, large apsidal and pillared chambers containing stupas which could be circumambulated, were also excavated from an early date (Plate I). The rise of full-fledged Mahāyāna Buddhism led to some amalgamation of these two styles in several excavations which combined the *vihāra* plan with an enshrined Buddha image at the back, with or without an ambulatory passage (Plate II).

Hindu excavations were based on this combined format. That Hindu (and Jain) cave-temples are few and were excavated over a short period of time might indicate that something in their design was not entirely suitable to the practices and

3. The Kailāśanatha temple at Ellora (eighth century) and the temples of Mahaballipuram represent this type: rock-cut temples in the southern style.

sentiments of Hindus (and Jains). George Michell suggests that technical inexperience with structural stone work cannot entirely explain why the cave-temple idiom was employed and that it was only reluctantly that Hindu architects gave up the cave as a form of the temple.⁴ However, problems with the *vihāra* format and increasing confidence with structural methods might have also have contributed to the demise of the cave-temple.

The primary excavations follow two basic floor plans and appear to have been excavated in the following order: the Jogeswarī cave (Plate III) is considered to be the earliest of the caves and follows the large floor plan, and the Maṇḍapeśwar cave (Plate IV) was excavated near the same time, but following a smaller plan; Elephanta (Plate V), on an island between the peninsula which is Bombay and the Indian West coast, was excavated next and on an improved large floor plan; the Dhumar Leṇa (Plate VI) at Ellora has a floor plan almost identical to that of Elephanta; the Rāmeśwara (Plate VII) follows the small plan and was excavated near the same time as the Dhumar Leṇa. All of these caves are Śaivite dedications and appear to have been dedicated to the obscure Lakulīśa-Paśupata sect.

Scholars have long recognised the stylistic and religious connections between these monuments, but it is primar-

4. Michell, George, The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Form, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 69-70.

ily through the work of Walter Spink that these caves are associated with the Kalacuri family, whose inscriptions place them in the Deccan in the sixth century. Based on stylistic evidence, Spink arrives at the order for the creation of these monuments which I have given above. In the context of the entire history of rock-cut architecture, Spink places these caves after the Buddhist caves of Ajanta (c. 460-480 C.E.) and into the period of the Chālukyan cave-temples in Karnataka (c. 560-578 C.E.). Spink concludes that it was only the Kalacuris who were present in Western India within that span of time and had the wherewithal to undertake such projects. Furthermore, the Kalacuris call themselves in their inscriptions *parama-māheśvaras*, or Śaivites of the pāsūpata sect, suggesting a particular religious interest on the part of the Kalacuris for these undertakings. I review all the evidence which Spink has marshalled for his analyses as well as introduce other evidence not cited by Spink to show that a Kalacuri connection between the five Hindu monuments is far from certain.

The association of these caves with the Kalacuris, in the absence of concrete evidence, seems to presuppose too narrow a view of patronage in this period. Assuming a greater nexus of patronage relationships, I attempt to show that the stylistic connections between the monuments may have been more a function of the movement of particular artisans from the area around the border between modern Gujarat and Rajasthan, to the Konkan and then to the Deccan. Sara Shastok has

provided strong arguments for a stylistic development originating in the village of Śāmalājī, in the modern state of Gujarat, which spread to the caves in the Konkan and then to the caves in the Deccan. It is almost certain that there was no political connection between the territory which includes Śāmalājī and the Konkan or Deccan in the period in question; and my own historical analysis shows, I believe, that the Konkan and Deccan were politically distinct as well. Therefore, I must conclude that if such a development spread from Śāmalājī to the five primary caves, it was only by the artists' own volition. The religious association between the five caves may be related to the Śāmalājī connection, for that village is less than 100 miles from Karvan, the seat of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect. These monuments are among the earliest surviving dedications to the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect. I also believe that my analysis reasonably explains the emergence of this sect in greater India from the sixth century.

In the first chapter I review the history of Western India from the collapse of the Vākāṭaka Empire to the ascendancy of the Chālukyas.⁵ What emerges from this analysis is that the major political powers in this period were not of the same order as the Vākāṭakas or the Guptas, but were smaller

5. As I am primarily concerned with the Western Chālukyas of Bādāmi (Vātāpi) in this discussion and not other branches of this family I will generally omit the designation 'Western' throughout.

powers without great networks of vassals and without much power beyond their own frontiers. Most importantly, this analysis shows, I feel, that the Konkan and Deccan were independently ruled in this period, the former by the Mauryas and the latter by the Kalacuris. The Chālukyas appear to have defeated each house, but their inscriptions indicate that they defeated the Mauryas apart from any defeat they may have inflicted on the Kalacuris. The Mauryas may have been a Kalacuri feudatory which ruled independently for a time at the defeat of their overlords--and then Kalacuri hegemony in Western India could be called upon to explain the links between the caves--but I believe this is unlikely.

Following the presentation of the history surrounding the caves, I begin to consider the caves themselves. After a brief review of some previous scholarship on the caves I describe the caves individually. It must be noted that many scholars including Spink believe that several other caves in the Deccan also date to the period of the Hindu caves. Several caves at the Buddhist site of Aurangabad have much in common with the Hindu caves and for that reason they are also considered. Spink includes several excavations at Aurangabad in his list of "Kalacuri" monuments in his earlier work, though they are emphasized less in his later work which focuses on the five primary excavations. Many of these caves are of the same stature as the Hindu caves; therefore, if they date to the sixth century, then by Spink's model, some

Kalacuri participation must be assumed. The "provincial" Dhokeśvara Śaivite cave has less in common with all the other caves, but for reasons I outline, it too will be discussed.

It is necessary to discuss these other caves as well for I believe a model of patronage of the cave-temples of the Deccan from the sixth century must attempt to account for as many of the excavations of that period as possible. If the Kalacuris did patronize Buddhist sites, then their religious affiliation is not sufficient to establish that they patronized any one of the Hindu sites. If the Dhokeśvara cave is a sixth century monument and is linked to the better excavations, even if such links are slight, then a model of the patronage must account for these connections.

It is necessary to consider the Chālukyan Hindu cave-temples as well, because of the common idiom, but also because of the historical links which their patrons shared with the Kalacuris. At least one of the Chālukyan caves can be attributed to royal patronage on the basis of its dedicatory inscription. I discuss the first phase of patronage attributed to the Chālukyas of Bādāmī (Vātāpi), though in a more limited way. This patronage is interesting for the nine excavations which were done are limited in geographical area to the sites of Bādāmī and Aihole; "Chālukyan" patronage, on the whole, rarely went beyond the limits of the Bādāmī-Paṭṭaḍakal region. This fact, I believe, makes it difficult to accept that the Kalacuris were capable of patronizing

excavations in two regions as far removed from each other as the Konkan and the Ellora-Aurangabad region 275 kilometres away.

The Parel Stele is a curious object found near the village of Parel north of metropolitan Bombay. It is an important piece of evidence, along with several other loose finds from the area, which links the activity in Śāmalājī with the Konkan and then the Deccan. I also discuss Sadashiv Gorakshkar's theory about the so-called Shivadi workshop, where Gorakshkar alleges the stele was carved, and its ties to Śāmalājī and the Hindu cave-temples.

In what follows I offer a preliminary reconstruction of the creation, particularly concerning the patronage, of the so-called Kalacuri monuments. Generally, I believe that patrons had a less than hands-on interest in their projects and they offered just that degree of support to a given site as was necessary to meet their obligations there. Thus, at a site like Dhokeśvara, its patrons--the Kalacuris themselves I will argue--provided only as much support as was necessary to insure the loyalty of certain groups there. More specifically, I believe that the links between these monuments were the result of the movement of several artisanal groups who moved south to take advantage of patronage opportunities under the Mauryas and other groups in the Konkan and then they moved east to take advantage of patronage under the Kalacuris and others in the Deccan.

It can be seen that I agree with Spink's analyses on some fundamental points, though I disagree as to the nature and extent of Kalacuri support in the creation of these caves. I still accept the idea that a great deal of royal support went into these caves. However, I believe that a model based solely upon Kalacuri hegemony in Western India, which presupposes the artists' subservience to the patrons, cannot account for the patronage of all the caves--and Spink does not make such a claim for his model. If Kalacuri ambitions are used to explain, at the very least, the continuity between the five primary caves, then that model must also explain the stylistic continuity between the "Kalacuri" caves as well as the many other caves, and I argue that it cannot. A network of interrelationships including the royal patrons, some other unknown patrons, the artists and certain religious authorities must be assumed to account for all the caves; all these parties had a measure of influence in the creation of the monuments. The stylistic continuity crossing over political and religious boundaries must be due to the influence and ambitions of the artists who actually made the caves.

I believe that royal participation in these caves can be documented because some of the caves contain shrines to the *saptamātrikās* or Seven Mothers. These seven goddesses are usually thought of as the personification of the energies or *śaktis* of some of the major gods of the Hindu pantheon. From around the period of the Hindu cave-temples these goddesses

became absorbed into the pantheon of the god Śiva. In their association with the god Skanda, the adopted son of Śiva, the Mothers were believed by many royal families in the period of the cave-temples to be responsible for royal prosperity and victory in war. Through an analysis of literary and epigraphical evidence I show how the Seven Mothers took on the role of royal protectors.

The *saptamātrkās* in the cave-temples are confined to shrines subsidiary to the monumental temples. This leads me to believe that the royal families who ruled the areas around the caves may have patronized some of the cave-temples, but that their personal religious interests were most clearly reflected in the shrines of the *saptamātrkās*; the Śaivite orientation of the caves was a function of other factors relating to the general religious climate. This seems to be confirmed by the presence of the *saptamātrkās* in Aurangabad's Cave 13. It is peculiar that Hindu deities should be represented in a cave which is obviously Buddhist at a site which is exclusively Buddhist. I believe that this peculiarity is best explained by supposing royal participation at Aurangabad in at least this cave; royal religious interests were directed towards preservation of the kingdom and less towards any supposed sectarian affiliation. Royal support of the caves was just another activity by which the mutual obligations, which existed between the crown and its subjects, were fulfilled. The temples served the general religious needs of

the whole population, including the crown; but, ancillary to that, the specific religious needs of the royal patrons--the preservation of the kingdom--were fulfilled through the creation of special precincts within the caves housing the *saptamātrkās*.

The Lakulīśa-Pāśupata connection though, is still an important consideration in a discussion of the creation of these monuments. Reiterating my remarks about the connection between Śāmalājī and the caves, I suggest that it was this spread which brought the iconography of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect to the Konkan and then the Deccan, which must have already been strongly Śaivite. After all, Śāmalājī and Karvan, the seat of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect are only about 100 miles apart.

In the conclusion I summarize my results. As well, having argued for a different scheme of patronage for the so-called "Kalacuri" monuments than scholars such as Spink, I offer some tentative suggestion as to the nature of patronage in the period. If all these monuments, which show unmistakable stylistic links, cannot be said to have been created through the patronage of a single group or set of closely related groups, then I can only assume that this entire stylistic development owes its existence to some group directly related to the actual production.

I conclude that the artisans who created these caves had some relationship with the Shivadi and Śāmalājī artisans.

This entire group of artisans must have been very powerful as they were capable of migrating from their northern home to the Konkan and to the Deccan. Either by their own volition or by the influence of representatives of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect, they transmitted the iconography of the sect, and presumably the sect itself, to greater India from its northern home in Karvan, very near to Śāmalājī. Artisanal groups and guilds were very powerful in medieval India; they had become nearly independent units of political power with the power to make their own decisions which the king was enjoined by Hindu law to enforce. That they had the ability to move from region to region is proven by inscriptions by guilds like the Maṇḍasor silk weavers.

Having de-emphasised the role of the patron and assumed a greater amount of influence for other groups with an interest in artistic production, I must conclude that patronage was a *jajmani*-like network of exchanges where patrons met their political and social obligations to the artisans who created the religious edifices, to the religious authorities who managed them, and to the public who used them. The patron receive the merit that came from patronage, which translated into reinforced political and social status. The patrons' need to meet their various obligations was carefully balanced against expenditure on such projects. The Dhokeśvara cave appears to have been a royal dedication, yet it is clearly a second-rate excavation. If its patrons were also the patrons

of the finer caves at Aurangabad and Ellora, i.e. the Kalacuris, then they appear to have devoted the minimum of funds to that cave which were required to meet the obligations the patrons had to the people in that area.

In this thesis I argue patrons provided the funds for religious projects, such as the so-called Kalacuri monuments, but that was as far as their participation went in the creation of those caves. Patronage was a response to the needs of various groups who had a closer relationship with the monuments: artisans, religious functionaries and devotees. The wants and needs of the patrons were subordinate to the wants and needs of those who directly participated in the creation and use of the temples. The patrons' participation in the creation of these caves was less than hands-on; the excavations were not necessarily directly due to the will of the patrons. This is not to say that patrons, particularly if they were royal, did not participate in temple activities; the *saptamātrkā* shrines in several of the caves suggest royal rituals for prosperity and success in battle. However, the ancillary position of these shrines suggests that royal rituals were distinct from regular operations of the temples.

EARLY MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF THE DECCAN

R. S. Sharma, the Marxist historian, has described the end of the sixth century as a watershed in Indian ethnic history.⁶ Art and literature had achieved new heights through Vākāṭaka and Gupta patronage and these trends continued despite the decline of these great empires. The beginnings of Hinduism as we now know it date to this time. The cults of Śiva and the Goddess, as will be discussed later, were developed and expanded in this period, as was the cult of Viṣṇu.

What historians call the "Classical Age" begins with the founding of the Gupta Empire in 320 C.E. and ends with the rise of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.⁷ The period 320 to 467 represents the "Imperial" Gupta age; it closes with the death of Skandagupta, and the beginning of a decline for the Guptas. It was not long after this that the Vākāṭaka Empire collapsed. In the period after 467 the foreign invaders who plagued the Gupta Empire were finally victorious, setting up a short lived kingdom in North India, and several ruling houses came and went, few as powerful as the earlier empires.

6. "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History," *IHR*, 1/1 (1974), p. 7.

7. The Classical Age, p. vii.

In the following I will discuss the historical events which surrounded the rise and fall of the Early Kalacuris. It will be necessary to discuss several other powers within the region for the sake of continuity in the narrative as well as to develop a fuller picture of the distribution of power in early medieval Western India.⁸ The history of the Deccan and West coast from the fall of the Vākāṭakas to the paramountcy of the Chālukyas of Bādāmī will be reviewed here.

Generally speaking, the evidence for the history of Western India in the sixth century reveals that numerous powers were active at this time, but that their influence was confined to the areas around their respective centres of power. No power was capable of substantial empire building with the exception of the Chālukyas, who seem to have extended their hegemony across most of the Deccan including the West coast. This was, however, not until at least the second quarter of the seventh century.

In the consideration of the cave-temples of the Konkan and the Ellora-Aurangabad region, it seems reasonable to assume that the Kalacuris could not have been the responsible for the excavation of the monuments in both the Konkan and the Deccan, for Kalacuri rule appears to have been confined to a portion of the Deccan while the Mauryas seem to have been lords of the Konkan for at least part of the sixth century.

8. See the charts of the Dynasties of Early Medieval India.

It is still speculative to suggest that it was under Mauryan rule that the Great Cave at Elephanta and the Maṇḍapeśwar cave were excavated; however, I believe that any argument about the patronage of these caves must take into account the Mauryan presence in the Konkan in the sixth century. If the Kalacuris were not responsible for some of the caves on the West coast and, at the same time, some of the caves in the Deccan, then it will be necessary to find another explanation for the stylistic links shared by the caves in both regions. This I try to do in the subsequent chapters.

The bulk of historical evidence comes from the inscriptions of several ruling dynasties. Many of those inscriptions are in the form of land grants inscribed upon small copper plates.⁹ The apportioning out of land at several levels seems to reflect a largely decentralized administration. The grantees were given virtually autonomous control over that land. However, these grants were also largely given out to brāhmaṇas; the purpose of these grants seems to have been the legitimization of kingly authority by gifts to the priestly class.¹⁰

9. Land grants to brāhmaṇas began in the first century of the Common Era but did not become wide spread until the fourth century. See Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History," *op. cit.*, p. 2.

10. The parcels of land granted to various Brāhmaṇical groups was often at a great distance from the place where the grant was issued. This seems to indicate that the purpose of this kind of patronage was to legitimate the authority of the king or his feudatories in regions removed from the centre of royal power. See Map 2 Distribution of the Kalacuri and Other

That the king's power was very precarious is attested to by the status of the *sāmantas* in the early medieval kingdom. While the term referred only to a neighbouring king in the time of the Mauryan Empire, by the medieval period it denoted a subordinate ruler.¹¹ The power of such a subordinate could be considerable, for *sāmantas* had the power to make their own land grants.¹² The *sāmantas* periodically asserted themselves and either broke free of their overlords¹³ or were brought under control by force. Other houses which might have been powerful and independent at one point could be subjugated by yet another house. The family might retain some authority over the territory or be replaced by a family more to the liking of the new overlords. Defeated kings often became feudatory rulers under the victor, yet they retained much of their power--rights over land and the right to grant it being the most important.¹⁴ It seems that a

Inscriptions.

11. Gopal, Lallanji, "Sāmanta--Its Varying Significance in Ancient India," *JRAS*, 1963-4, pts. 1-2, p. 25; Sharma, *IF*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1965, p. 24.

12. Gopal, "Sāmanta," *op. cit.*, p. 25; See also Sunaokala Plates of Saṅgasimha (541 C.E.), *CII*, IV, No. 11.

13. The Maitraka family of Saurashtra or Gujarat governed their territory on behalf of a Gupta overlord, but as that Empire declined the Maitrakas dropped the reference to an overlord in their land grants and assumed independent status (*The Classical Age*, pp. 60-63).

14. Feudatories could make land grants and yet make no reference to a sovereign (Sharma, R. S. *Aspects*, p. 254). The Sunao Kala Plates of Saṅgamasimha of 541 C.E. (*CII*, IV, No. 11) is one such instance which shows that feudatories retained

victorious king could place a feudatory chief of his own liking in charge of a region, as is suggested by the "Ābhoṇa Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa: (Kalacuri) Year 347" (597 C.E.) which states that Śaṅkaragaṇa "reinstated royal families, which had long been dethroned [and] ... exterminated such as had risen too high."¹⁵

The conquered were then obliged to offer particular services to the overlord, such as paying tribute, giving daughters in marriage and rendering various kinds of homage.¹⁶ However, the exaction of regular taxes seems to have been a rare occurrence; the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa says that Harṣa took taxes from his vassals,¹⁷ but the fact that land was usually granted free of regular taxation might indicate that taxation on the whole was relatively light. This fact might explain why so few kingdoms grew to the size of empires, for without substantial regular revenue a king could not afford to keep a large standing army.¹⁸

The details of the decline of the Gupta empire are

the power to make land grants and therefore potentially held a lot of political power. I will argue later that if Saṅga-siṃha belonged to a powerful feudatory in southern Gujarat, then Kalacuri influence could not have been substantial on the West coast, if they had any influence there at all.

15. *CII*, IV, No. 12.

16. *IF*, pp. 26-27.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

18. Harṣa was said to have possessed a vast army, but the *Harṣacarita* indicates that it was formed by occasional military service given by many rājās (*ibid.*, p. 29).

uncertain as are so many things in medieval India. It seems clear that with the end of the reign of Skandagupta the fortunes of the empire were in decline. Near the end of Kumārāgupta's (Skanda's father) reign some unknown enemy attacked the empire. Skanda was the general who went out to meet that enemy. Just before this (foreign) enemy was thwarted, Kumārāgupta died and a war of succession might have followed. War or no war, Skanda took over the empire and it was not long before new invaders threatened the empire. This time the Hūṇas invaded only to be defeated by the Emperor; but invasions by foreigners would resume.

After the death of Skandagupta, the state of the empire becomes less certain; however, it appears to have crumbled rapidly near the close of the fifth century. Several kings on the periphery of the empire emerged as independent monarchs: the Parivrājakas in Bundelkhand, King Jayanātha in Uchchakalpa, King Lakṣmaṇa somewhere around Allahabad, and King Subandhu of Mahiśmatī all issued grants without reference to any other sovereign.¹⁹ The Maitrakas in Gujarat and other families became independent within a few years.

Following the death of Budhagupta (c. 500 C.E.) renewed foreign attacks began and this time they were more successful. Toramāṇa descended from North West India into India as far as Eran. He may have been a Hūṇa; at the very least, his coins attest to his foreign origins. He was

19. The Classical Age, pp. 30-31.

succeeded by his son Mihirakula. Hsuan-tsang, the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (a chronicle of Kashmir), Sung-yun (a Chinese ambassador), and Cosmos Indicopleustes (an Egyptian monk), all attest to the strength of the Hūṇa empire.²⁰

The Vākāṭakas were a powerful family ruling to the south of the Gupta domains. Their power was checked by the Guptas which resulted in a marriage alliance by which Skandagupta's sister became the Vākāṭaka queen. However, the Gupta's troubles in the north gave the Vākāṭakas a certain amount of breathing space. Parallel to the main branch of the Vākāṭaka house, the Vākāṭakas of Vatsagulma ruled the Western Deccan. It was under this family that the Ajanta Buddhist excavations were undertaken. Whatever the circumstances which led to the downfall of the Guptas, the same circumstances seem to have led to the demise of the Vākāṭakas as well. By the end of the fifth century both branches of the Vākāṭakas had disappeared.

The Early Kalacuris emerged from obscure origins after the fall of the Vākāṭakas and apparently took over the better portion of the Deccan, from Nasik in the south to parts of Malwa in the north, near the middle of the sixth century. Without indisputable references to a strong power in the Konkan in the sixth century, it is assumed that the Kalacuris directly ruled there (from early in the sixth century) or

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

ruled through a weak feudatory.²¹ However, there is little evidence to support direct Kalacuri rule in the Konkan.

The centre of Early Kalacuri power is unknown. Later literary works declare Māhiṣmatī²² to have been the Kalacuri capital. Māhiṣmatī, according to ancient sources, lay on the highway from Paithan to Ujjayani, which also goes through Aurangabad, that is, through Ajanta and Ellora.²³ If Māhiṣmatī was the Kalacuri capital and if there was royal support for the sixth century caves at Ellora and Aurangabad, then that support would have been from the Kalacuris.

The later link between the Kalacuris and Mahiṣmatī appears to be an anachronism based upon the later Kalacuris' adoption of a *paurāṇic* genealogy down from the Haihaya King Arjuna, son of Kṛtanīrya, who was a legendary king of Māhiṣmatī.²⁴ The Kalacuris are believed by some to have been part

21. CII, IV, pp. xliii-xliv.

22. For the purposes of this discussion the debate over the location of Māhiṣmatī is unimportant; scholars are divided between Oṃkār Māndhātā and modern Maheshwar, but evidence seems to come down more in favour of Maheshwar. As Dr. Spink points out, they are only thirty miles apart ("Elephanta," p. 259n).

23. Sankalia, H. D. "Māhiṣmatī and Maheshwar," in Gupta, S. P. and K. S. Ramachandran, eds., Aspects of Indian History and Archaeology, Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1977, pp. 218; 226.

24. CII, IV, p. xliv; The Classical Age, p. 194; Sankalia, *op. cit.*, p. 219. The adoption of a genealogy based on a solar or lunar dynasty was a necessary part of establishing legitimacy in this period according to Burnell (Elements of South-Indian Palaeography from the Fourth to the Seventeenth Centuries A. D., New Delhi: Indological Book House, 1968, originally published 1878, p. 110).

of a wave of foreign invaders which included the Gurjaras and the Hūṇas.²⁵ The Kalacuris might have simply assumed a *paurāṇic* genealogy in keeping with their original location of settlement, for it is difficult to understand why they would adopt such a genealogy, centred around Māhiṣmatī, when they had moved east of there by that time. The Mahiṣmatī connection might also have simply been a function of the later Kalacuris' desire to be connected with the legendary Haihayas. Subandhu's grants were issued from Māhiṣmatī and if there was a connection between him and the Kalacuris, as Spink suggests,²⁶ then it is reasonable to assume that Māhiṣmatī was the Kalacuri capital. Regardless of any connection between the Kalacuris and Subandhu, or the Kalacuris and Mahiṣmatī, the family's records indicate that they ruled much of the Deccan from along the Narmadā River.

Our knowledge of the Early Kalacuris is limited to five of their own records²⁷ dated between 595 and 610 C.E., some stray coin finds, and several references in the inscriptions of the Chalukyas of Bādāmi. The content of the inscriptions, particularly the dates, plus the coin finds on the

25. The Classical Age, p. 194.

26. "Elephanta," p. 259.

27. Lap'kamaṇa Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa: 595 C.E., Tri-pāthī, Chandrabhāl, BIS, Band 1-1985, pp. 21-34.
 Abhona Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa: 596/7 C.E., CII, IV, No. 12.
 Saṅkheḍa Plate of Śaṅkaragaṇa: (no date), CII, IV, No. 13.
 Vadner Plates of Buddharāja: 609/10 C.E., CII, IV, No. 14.
 Sarsavṇi Plates of Buddharāja: 609/10 C.E., CII, IV, No. 15.

islands of Salsette, Bombay, and in the Nasik and Satara districts are the primary evidence which led Mirashi to suggest that the Kalacuris were responsible for Elephanta.²⁸ Subsequent coin finds on Elephanta and at Ellora plus the stylistic links led Spink to fill out Mirashi's basic statements and extend them to the other monuments.

Spink believes that Subandhu of Māhiṣmatī²⁹ was the father of Kṛṣṇarāja, the Kalacuri patriarch, and therefore, Subandhu's Barwani Plate should be dated in the Gupta era and not the Ābhīra era; this view is shared by D. C. Sircar.³⁰ If Subandhu was Kṛṣṇarāja's father then this might explain why Subandhu would make grants without reference to a sovereign as there was no imperial power in the region in 486 C.E. (Gupta year 167); whereas, he would have been obliged to the Vākāṭakas had he been at Mahiṣmatī in 416/7 C.E. (Ābhīra year 167). As well, descent from Subandhu would centre the Kalacuri reign in Māhiṣmatī. However, any link between the early Kalacuris, Māhiṣmatī and Subandhu is, for a lack of hard evidence, purely speculative.

If Subandhu was Kṛṣṇarāja's father then, according to Spink, he was responsible for the excavations at Maṇḍapeśwar and Jogeśwarī. However, if Subandhu was the illustrious

28. *CII*, IV, p. clxvii.

29. Barwani Plate of Subandhu: Year 167, *CII*, IV, No. 6; Bagh Cave Plate of Subandhu: (no date), *CII*, IV, No. 7.

30. The Classical Age, p. 194.

ancestor of the Kalacuris and great patron, then it is odd that he should be left out of their later inscriptions.³¹ The earliest Kalacuri self-reference of any import comes from the Abhona Plates of Śāṅkaragaṇa in 597 C.E. The only ancestor mentioned is Śāṅkaragaṇa's "illustrious father," Kṛṣṇarāja, who "from his very birth, was devoted to Paśupati." Surely, if Subandhu was the founder of the Kalacuris or at least Kṛṣṇarāja's father, then he would have been a regular part of the family's genealogy. As Kṛṣṇarāja is said to have "revived the prosperity of his family" and his ancestors go unnamed it must be concluded that he was the founder of the family and Subandhu was no relation. Therefore, I must conclude that Kalacuri power originated in the Deccan near the middle of the sixth century and any influence it exerted on the west coast was not through direct rule.

Kṛṣṇarāja was devoted to Paśupati (Śiva) from his birth and Śāṅkaragaṇa, his son, and Buddharāja, his grandson, called themselves *paramamaheśvaras*, which many identify with the Pāśupata Śaivas. Spink uses these facts to support his argument for Kalacuri patronage at the various sites of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata caves; however, as I will argue, the use of the designation *paramamaheśvara* by the Kalacuris and others did not strictly determine the patterns of their patronage.

31. Furthermore, why would the Kalacuris, with an alleged founder of the stature of Subandhu, change from dating their grants in the Gupta era to the Kalacuri era upon a dynastic succession?

Inscriptional evidence indicates that, despite declared religious affiliations, several kings patronized a variety of religious groups. The Kalacuris may have patronized several Buddhist caves; therefore, the Śaivite religious affiliation of the Kalacuris is not sufficient to establish that they patronized all the Hindu caves in question.

We know little about Kṛṣṇārāja besides what is found in the inscriptions of his son and grandson; we have none of his own grants. However, several coins have been found which appear to have been minted by this king. Notably, a silver coin of Kṛṣṇārāja's was found in the courtyard of the Rāmeśwara cave at Ellora, which Spink cites as proof of Kalacuri patronage. As well, several of these silver coins have been found on the islands of Bombay and Salsette and a find was made near Nasik.³² Copper coins of Kṛṣṇārāja's have been found on Elephanta.³³ These copper coins are suggestive of Kalacuri influence to the West coast, but still they do not connect the Great Cave with the Kalacuris. The coins might simply indicate commercial ties between the Kalacuris of the Deccan and a power in the Konkan; or, in the case of the coppers found at Elephanta, they might have been offerings left by pilgrims who had travelled across the Ghats to visit the site. The silver coin at Ellora was found in debris

32. The Classical Age, p. 195.

33. See Malandra, Geri Hockfield, "The Buddhist Caves at Ellora, Vols 1-3," Ph. D. Diss. University of Minnesota, 1983, p. 36; "Elephanta," p. 236.

cleared from in front of the cave and therefore, there was no stratigraphic reference to which the find might be assigned.³⁴ Thus, this coin find cannot be considered to be positive evidence for Kalacuri support of the Rāmeśvara.

In any case, the rise of the Kalacuris remains quite obscure as we have no direct references to them, as said above, of real historical value until the Abhona Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa in 597 C.E. The grant was issued from Ujjayani (modern Ujjain) in the Avanti region north of the Narmadā River. It records the granting of a parcel of land in the Bhogavardhana region to the east of the region between Ajanta and Ellora. Śaṅkaragaṇa is described as one who "by the might of his arms, [had] acquired the fortunes of powerful kings; to whom the circle of neighbouring princes [had] submitted" and one, as was said earlier, "who had reinstated royal families, which had long been dethroned [and] ... exterminated such as had risen to high."

Two other grants made with reference to Śaṅkaragaṇa offer little extra historical evidence except for references to certain locations which would have been under Kalacuri sway: the Saṅkheḍā Plate, issued by Śāntilla, a military officer, at the behest of Śaṅkaragaṇa, records a grant of land in the region south-west of Broach and was issued from a place near by; the Lap'kamaṇa Plates are dated 595 C.E., early than the Abhona Plates, but provide little information save their

34. Malandra, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

geographical details which refer to places near those in the Saṅkheḍā Plate.

The Matvan Plates of the Traikūṭaka king Vikramasena (533 C.E.) contain the earliest known reference to the Kalacuris.³⁵ This grant is problematic for it is, in virtually every respect, a Traikūṭaka grant and yet it was issued from victorious Aniruddhapura of the Kaṭachchuris (who may be assumed to be the Kalacuris). The grant copies the first seven lines from the Surat Plates of Vyaghrasena and Matvan Plates of Madhyamasena, both Traikūṭaka grants.³⁶ Therefore, Gokhale and Mirashi conclude that the Kalacuris took the Konkan from the Traikūṭakas and that Vikramasena was the last Traikūṭaka king in that region. The Matvan Plates of Madhyamasena, c. 506 C.E., were issued from victorious Aniruddhapura of the Traikūṭakas. Therefore, many conclude that the Kalacuris took over the Konkan some time between 506 and 533 C.E.

However, the phraseology of the Matvan Plates of 533 C.E. is peculiar, in that Vikramasena is called Mahārāja and yet he appears to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Kalacuris. Gokhale does not see this as a problem, but Mirashi does. He proposes a colourful solution, arguing that it was a grant that had been made, but not ratified, by royal charter

35. Gokhale, Shobhana. "Matvan Plates of the Traikuta-ka King Vikramasena K. 284." In Mate, M. S. and G. T. Kul-karni, eds. Studies in Indology and Medieval History: Professor G. H. Khare Felicitation Volume. Poona: Joshi and Lokhande Prakashan. 1974.

36. CII, IV, No. 9.

and that the political upheaval caused by the Kalacuris prevented that ratification.³⁷ The grantee took it upon himself to have the copper charter engraved, but substituted the Kalacuri name for the Traikūṭaka name to describe the city of Aniruddhapura. Mirashi cites an analogous example where the charter was issued long after the initial grant was made; the grantee died so his successor also put his name on the grant.

Be that as it may, Mirashi's solution to the Matvan anomaly is speculative. We have no way of knowing why this peculiarity exists in the grant. We must accept the grant at face value, in which case the Traikūṭakas were a Kalacuri feudatory for a time, or assume that there is some other context, which we will never know, which explains the anomaly. At the very least it may be said that the Kalacuri victory over the Traikūṭakas happened sometime between 506 and 533. If Vikramasena made a grant without issuing a charter and was then deposed, any number of events or amount of time might have passed by the time the charter was issued.

The previous grants of the Traikūṭakas place them in the Konkan north of Bombay. Aniruddhapura has not yet been identified. Therefore, any alleged defeat of the Traikūṭakas by the Kalacuris might have occurred anywhere in the northern

37. Mirashi, V. V., "The Riddle of the Māṭvan Plates of the Traikūṭaka King Vikramasena: Ābhira Year 284," in Literary and Historical Studies in Indology, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

Konkan as far north as Surat.

The Sunaokala Plates place Saṅgamasimha in Broach, just north of Surat, in 541 C.E. The inscription does not give a dynastic affiliation for Saṅgasiṃha, but he may have been associated with the Kalacuris in some way, for his territory bordered on the Kalacuri territory along the Narmadā. Furthermore, the Kalacuris controlled the region around Broach by 595, for Śaṅkaragaṇa granted several parcels of land in that area, and Buddharāja also made a grant in the area in 610. However, as I will show in reference to the Gurjaras, the rulership of the region around Broach from 541 to 629/30 is a contentious issue. The Kalacuris and Gurjaras may have had a lengthy dispute over this region which was eventually settled by a marriage alliance between the two houses within the feudatory family ruling there.

The Traikūṭaka territories also bordered on the Broach region though they appear to have been eliminated by the time of Saṅgasiṃha's grant. Conceivably, it was Saṅgamasimha or his predecessor who defeated the Traikūṭakas on behalf of the Kalacuris. Regardless of the circumstances which led to the end of the Traikūṭakas, their territories did not seem to include the area around Bombay--that was held by the Mauryas as I will argue shortly--and therefore, the Matvan Plates of Vikramasena (533 C.E.) do not establish Kalacuri supremacy throughout the Konkan.

Several other dynasties found their way to power as a

result of the decline of the Vākāṭaka-Gupta imperial pattern. Several of them must have had some kind of relationship with the rising Kalacuris. The Gurjaras in southern Gujarat began as a feudatory power under an unknown sovereign, but when the Chālukyas reached the River Kim, between Broach and Surat, the Gurjaras may have submitted to the Chālukyas rather than submit to Harṣavardhana of Kanauj.³⁸ The family originated in the north-west in Rājputāna and after a generation the family split into at least two branches, one remaining in the north and the other moving south.

Our evidence for the Gurjaras comes from the grants of Dadda II and his successors which date between 629/30 and 735/6 C.E.³⁹ These grants were issued from Nāndīpura which has been identified as modern Nandod on the Narmadā River. Thus, by the time of the Chālukyan paramountcy, the Gurjaras had taken over most of the Kalacuri domains in southern Gujarat and, no doubt, they had possession of Broach.

The founding king of the southern Gurjaras, Dadda I, appears to have carved his domain out of southern Gujarat; but we know that the Kalacuris had some claim over the region around Broach from at least 595.⁴⁰ At the same time, Saṅga-siṃha made a land grant near Broach in 541. Mirashi believed that the Gurjaras owed allegiance to the Kalacuris from the

38. The Classical Age, pp. 66-67.

39. *CII*, IV, Nos. 16-24.

40. See p. 32.

time of Kṛṣṇarāja.⁴¹ If Saṅgasimha was a feudatory chief of the Kalacuris, then the Gurjaras may have displaced his family to become the new lords of Broach under the Kalacuris; with the fall of the Kalacuris, the Gurjaras then swallowed up much of the Kalacuri kingdom.

However, another grant from 595 suggests that the region around Broach was controlled at that time by a family with ties to both the Gurjaras and the Kalacuris. The two plates of a grant by a prince named Taralasvāmin were separately discovered at Saṅkheḍā and nearby Māṅkāṇi.⁴² The grant states that Taralasvāmin was the son of Ṇaṇṇa by Daddā, who may have been related to *Sāmanta* Dadda I of the Gurjaras.⁴³ The grant describes Ṇaṇṇa as the light of the house that was the family of the Kalacuris. Sircar took this to mean that either, Ṇaṇṇa was a scion of the Kalacuri family or, Ṇaṇṇa's mother was a Kalacuri princess.

If it is assumed that Taralasvāmin's mother was a

41. *CII*, IV, p. lii.

42. *The Classical Age*, p. 197. Mirashi dismissed the grant as spurious as its dating is in decimal notation which did not become common in Northern grants until the eight century. As well, Mirashi was suspicious of the fact that Taralasvāmin does not name a suzerain and the description of Ṇaṇṇa is very extravagant for a mere feudatory (see Mirashi, V. V., "A Note of the Māṅkāṇi Grant of Taralasvāmin," *JGJRI*, vol. 1. part 4, pp. 390ff). However, the grants of feudatories may often contain extravagant descriptions of the donor and his family and exclude any reference to an overlord (see pp. 20-21). The decimal notation does suggest that the grant may be spurious; however, I side with Sircar in reserving judgement on the grant (see *The Classical Age*, p. 197).

43. *The Classical Age*, p. 197.

Gurjara princess and Nāṇṇa's mother was a Kalacuri princess, then it might be suggested that the rulership over the Broach region was settled by a marriage alliance between the Gurjaras and the Kalacuris. Taralasvāmin and Nāṇṇa might have been in the lineage of Saṅgasiṃha, in which case, the area around Broach was in the hands of this feudatory family from the mid-sixth to early seventh century. At the same time, Taralasvāmin could have been related to Śāntilla, Śaṅkaragaṇa's military officer who issued the Saṅkheḍā Plate. In any case, it appears that southern Gujarat was controlled by a feudatory family and not directly by the Kalacuris, though the Kalacuris retained enough power there to make land grants. If the Kalacuris did not rule directly southern Gujarat to the West coast, then it is unlikely that they ruled south of there in the Konkan and patronized the Hindu caves around Bombay.

While events in southern Gujarat were uncertain, but seemed to proceed without intense conflict, events in the southern Deccan were overtly confrontational. The Chālukyas of Bādāmī became a major power in the second quarter of the sixth century. Though the records refer to his father and grandfather as powerful monarchs, Pulakeśin I (c. 535-566 C.E.) was the real dynastic founder who moved the capital to modern Bādāmī and began construction of a fort there.⁴⁴

Pulakeśin I had two sons. The first, Kīrttivarman I

44. Raghunath Bhat, H. R., "Early Chalukya Rulers to Pulakesi I," in Rao, ed., 1978, p. 49.

(c. 566/7-597/8), was "the night of death to the Naḷas and the Mauryas and Kadambas" according to the Aihole Meguti inscription (634/5 C.E.) of his son Pulakeśin II.⁴⁵ The Kadambas were a family ruling out of Banavāsi to the south of the Chālukyan domains. The Naḷas appear to have been a power to the east of the Chālukyas. The Mauryas ruled in the Konkan as may be seen below.

Upon the death of Kīrttivarman I his (half) brother assumed the throne, rather than Kīrttivarman's own son. This ruler, Mangaleśa, is better known than his predecessors, for many of his inscriptions are available. Most significant is the Mahākūṭa Pillar Inscription of 601/2 C.E.⁴⁶ According to that record, Mangaleśa defeated the northern king Buddha and "having taken possession of all his substance" was desirous of setting up a pillar of victory, but he thought it best to first put up a pillar of religion. Therefore, he declares the purpose of the grant:

The wealth of the Kalatsūri [Kalacuri] has been expended in the idol procession of the temple of (our) own god. And (therefore) this property, which at (their) own idol-procession was assigned by our father and elder brother to (the god) Maṇiśvaranātha, supplement it, by (bestowing the) enjoyment of ... ten villages.⁴⁷

The implication appears to be that not only did Mangaleśa

45. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. LV," *IA*, vol. VIII (Sept. 1879), p. 243.

46. Fleet, J. F., "Mahakuta," *IA*, vol. XIX (Jan. 1890), pp. 7-20.

47. *Ibid.*, L. 13.

defeat the Kalacuris, but his brother and father might have also done so. The extent of the defeat or defeats cannot be ascertained, for Buddharāja assumed the Kalacuri throne after Kīrttivarman I had died and, after the date of the Mahākuṭa Pillar Inscription, Buddharāja continued to rule as is known from the Vadner and Sarsavni Plates.⁴⁸ Admittedly, we cannot say what kind of shape the Kalacuri empire was in, but we can say for certain that the Chālukyas did not drive the Kalacuris from the Deccan before 610. Mangaleśa claims to have driven out Buddharāja in the Nerūr grant,⁴⁹ but that record is not dated. The Chālukyas exercised no sovereignty over the northern Deccan before the Lohaner grant of 629/30.

The acquisition of Kalacuri wealth by the Chālukyas is an instance of the common medieval practice of looting as part of an overall military strategy. These references are vague so it might be assumed that the wealth taken could only be in the form of portable commodities like cows, grain, or maybe gold. By analogy to the more structured plundering activities of the Coḷas (tenth and eleventh centuries), I might cast doubt upon the strong claim that the Chālukyan victories over the Kalacuris, alluded to in the Mahākuṭa Inscription, were great routings. However, the Chālukyas' ability to enter these domains, which must have been on the southern periphery

48. *CII*, IV, Nos. 14 and 15.

49. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. XL," *IA*, vol. VII (July 1878), pp. 161-164.

of the Kalacuri empire, shows how fragile was the grip of Kalacuri power in those areas.

Plunder was a regular part of kingly rule in India even in the ancient period,⁵⁰ but it did not become a highly institutionalized activity until later in the medieval period; with the arrival of the Muslims it became the exclusive source of revenue for raiders who had no interest in empire-building in India. Several Coḷa inscriptions are quite specific about their raids for plunder, describing the variety of objects seized and how they were distributed within the government. This wealth of information has permitted Richard Davis to discuss the institution of looting as

a common signifying practice or strategy within more general projects of establishing and representing asymmetrical political relations and cultural hegemonies.⁵¹

As well, Davis sees looting as

materially consequential: in dislodging objects from their initial settings, it allows for their circulation, commoditization, collection, and display, not only as emblems of victory but also often (through another transvaluation) as objects of fine 'art'.⁵²

Thus, Davis views plunder in ideological and material terms. The latter approach is the one which George Spencer

50. Manu considered booty to be rightfully appropriated on the field of battle. See Davis, Richard H., "Three Styles in Looting India," Paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Meeting 1992, p. 3.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

52. *Ibid.*

exclusively follows in his analysis of the same material.⁵³ Seeing objects of plunder as signifying "asymmetrical political relations and cultural hegemonies" depends upon the specific details of the events and looted objects to signify the relations of power. The lack of this kind of information in the Chālukyan inscriptions does not prove that the raids against the Kalacuris were minor affairs, yet it is suggestive.

In the Coḷa inscriptions a number of objects are listed as booty from various campaigns. Some are handed over to temples and others are distributed among secular parties. In addition, objects of symbolic value were taken. Such things as "banners, yaktail fans, umbrellas, crowns, thrones, drums and images" were taken, not as materially valuable, but as symbols of the sovereignty of defeated parties.⁵⁴ Davis says of these objects that "appropriating them on the field of battle would be equivalent to 'plucking out' the opponent's sovereignty and incorporating it into one's own."⁵⁵

Thus, materially and ideologically, the victorious sovereign might demonstrate his own power over other sovereigns and we might expect those relationships to be clearly expressed in the inscriptions. The references to Chālukyan

53. Spencer, George, "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon," *JAS*, Vol. XXXV, No. 3 (May 1976) pp. 405-419.

54. Davis, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

plunder at the expense of the Kalacuris have none of the ideological marks found in the Coḷa inscriptions, save the claim of "having taken possession of all of [Buddharāja's] substance." That in itself does not prove that the Chālukyan victories were not great. However, if the booty of these raids had included anything ideologically consequential to Kalacuri sovereignty would not the inscriptions say so? The Chālukyas did not, in all likelihood, encounter the Kalacuris themselves, but attacked an undefended or locally defended region over which the Kalacuris had some claim.

We know that within a century of the Mahākūṭa Pillar Inscription the Chālukyas understood the discourse of plunder as Davis formulates it, for in 700/1 C.E. Vijayāditya, the Chālukyan crown-prince, marched against an unknown northern kingdom

acquiring for his father the tokens of the (river) Gaṅgā and the (river) Yamunā and *pālīdhvaja*, and the insignia of the *dhakkā* drum and the *mahāśabḍa*, and rubies and elephants, &c.⁵⁶

Each of these items is a symbol of sovereignty. The events narrated in this inscription clearly refer to an expansive raid or *digvijaya* and its success appears to be measured in Davis's terms.

Spencer's analysis of the same Coḷa material as in Davis's analysis provides an economic explanation for institutionalized plunder. Plunder, for Spencer, was part of a

56. Fleet, J. F. "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. LXXVII." *IA*, vol. IX (May 1880), pp. 125-130.

strategy designed to sustain the flow of resources to the court.⁵⁷ Spencer envisions a continuum of the exaction of resources with taxation at one end as the most rational form of exaction--based upon the enumeration of goods and produce--and plunder at the other end as the most irregular and violent form of exaction. Tribute is somewhere in the middle as an indirect exaction based upon negotiation with various intermediary rulers. The violence of exaction is directly proportional to the distance of a region from the imperial centre.

If it is accepted that, according to the Davis model, the Mahākuṭa Inscription is inconclusive as to the extent of Mangaleśa's victories over the Kalacuris, then, by the Spencer model, it might be concluded that those raids were simply exactions of income from a region near the Chālukyan domains and on the periphery of the Kalacuri empire. Mangaleśa, probably got the upper hand on Buddharāja, but we do not know conclusively when before 629/30 C.E., the date of Pulakeśin II's Lohaner Inscription, the Chālukyas secured their holdings of the greater Deccan.

I belabour this point because Spink's chronology for the sixth century caves is intimately tied to the alleged Chālukyan defeat of the Kalacuris. Spink believes that the "Kalacuri" phase of patronage at Ellora ended around 600 C.E. due to the political instability in the Kalacuri kingdom

57. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

created by the Chālukyas attacks.⁵⁸ If these attacks were merely periodic raids into undefended territory, and bear an uncertain relationship to the end of Kalacuri rule in the Deccan, then Kalacuri patronage cannot be considered to be so closely tied to these events.

While there is no evidence for Chālukyan campaigns through the Deccan proper, save for the vague references in the Mahākuṭa and Nerūr Inscriptions, there is evidence to trace Chālukyan military expeditions up the West coast through the territories of the Mauryas, the Lāṭas, the Mālavas and the Gurjaras. According to the Aihole Meguṭi Inscription, Mangaleśa, after his attack on the Kalacuris, took the island of Revatīdvīpa on the coast due west of Bādāmī. The inscription does not say whom Mangaleśa defeated in the southern Konkan; Mangaleśa's Nerūr grant says that upon killing King Swāmī, "who was born in the family of the Chalikyās [the Chālukyas]," Mangaleśa gave the village Kuṇḍivāṭaka to a pious brahman. King Swāmī might have been the enemy that Mangaleśa defeated to take Revatīdvīpa, for the assassination and the taking of Revatīdvīpa are described immediately after the attack on the Kalacuris in the Nerūr and the Aihole Meguṭi Inscriptions respectively; as well, Kuṇḍivāṭaka lies just north of Revatīdvīpa in the southern Konkan.

It must be mentioned that the Chālukyas seem to have engaged in a civil war around this time as Mangaleśa and

58. "Ellora," p. 21.

Pulakeśin II fought for control of the realm. Pulakeśin II prevailed and Mangaleśa lost his life as is known from the Aihole Meguṭi Inscription. Mirashi suggests that this event permitted Buddharāja to regroup after his defeats at the hands of the Chālukyas and therefore he was able to make the Vaḍṇer and Sarsavṇī grants.⁵⁹

However, if Mangaleśa drove out Buddharāja, as is claimed in the Nerūr Inscription, then where did he drive Buddharāja from? The Vaḍṇer Plates were issued from the "victorious camp" at Vidiśā, on the periphery of the empire no doubt, but they granted a village near Nasik, in the heart of the Deccan. This is proof of Kalacuri influence in the region where no comparable proof for Chālukyan influence is to be found before 629/30 C.E.

The Sarsavni Plates were issued two and a half months later from the "victorious camp" at Anandapura near modern Ahmadabad. Buddharāja might have been marching to the west to meet some threat from the north-west. Anandapura and the village granted in the Sarsavni Plates were well within the region over which the Gurjaras had dominion under Chālukyan sovereignty. Therefore, Buddharāja might have marched to the sea to meet the Gurjaras and/or the Chālukyas--as we shall see below, the Chālukyas might have possessed a very large navy.

At any rate, the Kalacuris were likely driven from the Deccan by the time of Pulakeśin II's Lohaner grant of 629/30

59. *CII*, IV, p. xlviii.

for it records the donation of a village in the area around Nasik by Pulakeśin II. The Aihole Meguṭī Inscription (634/5) states that Pulakeśin II, having taken control of southern Gujarat and Malwa, Pulakeśin II claimed sovereignty over the three Mahārāṣṭrakas. It seems unlikely that Pulakeśin ejected the Kalacuris for he does not make that claim. Perhaps the new feudatories in southern Gujarat were responsible for the final defeat of the Kalacuris.

According to the Aihole Meguṭī Inscription, Pulakeśin II's general Chaṇḍaḍaṇḍa ejected the Mauryas from the Konkan. These Mauryas must have been those to whom Kīrttivarmān was "the night of death." Spink says that Kīrttivarmān's victory over the Mauryas could have occurred between anywhere in the Konkan and Aihole and therefore, the region of the Konkan they ruled was not necessarily the area around modern Bombay. This is admittedly true. However, the description of Pulakeśin II's victory makes it clear that the Mauryas finally had to be subdued at sea; Chaṇḍaḍaṇḍa "was besieging that city [Purī], which was the goddess of the western ocean, with hundreds of ships that had the resemblance of elephants mad with passion." If the Chālukyas controlled the West coast to at least Revatīdvīpa when they made their sea attack against the Mauryas, then Purī must have been on the coast some distance north of Revatīdvīpa. This suggests that the Mauryas ruled near the Bombay area. Further evidence provided below supports this contention. Sadashiv Gorakshkar goes so far as

to identify Purī with Ghārapurī, which is the traditional name of the island of Elephanta.⁶⁰ If this is so, then this explains why the Mauryas had to be finally defeated at sea, and this means that the Mauryas controlled the Konkan as far north as Bombay from at least 578, the time of Kīrtivarman I. At the very least, the battle between the Chālukyas and the Mauryas must have been somewhere between Goa and Bombay.

Spink objects to the suggestion that these Mauryas might have been responsible for the Bombay-area monuments on the grounds that they are even more obscure than the Kalacuris; if they were responsible for the Konkani caves then they must have been quite powerful. The family does not appear to have been as powerful as some of the greater families of the time, but there is good evidence to show that they might have held the area around Bombay at the time that the caves were excavated. M. A. Dhaky suggests that the Mauryas held Purī, Bombay and some other islands in the Bombay area while the Traikūṭakas were limited to Salsette,⁶¹ but a greater kingdom must be granted to the Traikūṭakas by virtue of their inscriptions. According to the *Gazetteer*, a stone

60. Gorakshkar, Sadashiv V., "A Harihara Image Recovered from Jogeswari, and the Problem of Dating Gharapuri (Elephanta)," in Rao, ed., 1981, p. 249.

61. Dhaky, M. A., "Beginnings of North Indian Style: Kuṅkaṇadeśa Style c. A. D. 540-610," in Meister, Michael W., M. A. Dhaky and Krishna Deva, eds., Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture: North India Foundations of North India Style c. 250 B.C.-A.D. 1100, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 25.

inscription of Suketuvarman of the Mauryas was found near Thana, but it is without a date and, furthermore, I can find no other scholarly work corroborating the existence let alone the content of this epigraph.⁶²

Stronger evidence showing a Mauryan presence in the Konkan is provided by two grants found in Goa. The first grant records a donation by a king named Candravarman dated in the tenth regnal year of that king.⁶³ The second grant records a grant by a king named Anirjitavarman of the Mauryas.⁶⁴ The grant of Candravarman is missing part of the family name, however, D. C. Sircar has convincingly argued that the portion present should be taken as "Maurya." Others argued that it was a Kadamba grant. However, this grant has nothing in common with the records of the Kadambas.⁶⁵ This grant is thought to be earlier than the grant of Anirjitavarman on palaeographical grounds. Anirjitavarman's grant is palaeographically and stylistically linked to the grants of the Bhoja family. Each records a donation in the Goa area.

Gai and Sircar argued that the Mauryas must have defeated the Bhojas for it was not the Bhojas, but the Mauryas

62. Vol. XIII, pt. 1, p. 420.

63. Sircar, D. C., "A Note on the Goa Copper Plate Inscription of King Candravarman," *ABORI Silver Jubilee Volume* (1942), pp. 510-514.

64. Gai, G. S., "No. 53 Bandora Plates of Maurya Anirjitavarman, Year 29," *EI*, vol. XXXIII (1960), pp. 293-297. CHECK

65. Sircar, 1942, *op. cit.*, pp. 510-511.

who stood in the way of the Chālukyas;⁶⁶ the Chālukyas made no claim to having defeated the Bhojas. The Mauryas must have moved south to conquer the area around Goa, for the Bhoja territories must have bordered on the territories of one of the great powers of the south. Kīrttivarman might have battled the Mauryas somewhere in the former Bhoja territories.

On palaeographical grounds the records of the Bhojas and the Mauryas date to the sixth or seventh century according to Sircar.⁶⁷ However, the dating of the Mauryan records must be confined to the sixth century, for Kīrttivarman I (c. 566/7-597/8) battled only the Mauryas in the north; therefore, the Bhojas must have been defeated before 597/8. The Mauryas must have been in power for a period before they entered Goa, which pushes their reign back to a time close to Spink's proposed date for the Konkan caves. The history of the Mauryas remains slightly more obscure than that of the Kalachuris; however, they appear to have been a strong power as is attested to by the tremendous naval forces which it was claimed the Chālukyas required to eject them from the Konkan. The evidence for the presence of the Mauryas in the Bombay area--and therefore the evidence for their patronage of the caves--is circumstantial. However, if a sixth century date is proposed for the Hindu caves around Bombay, that proposal must also take into consideration the presence of the Mauryas on

66. Gai, *op. cit.*, p. 294; The Classical Age, p. 192.

67. The Classical Age, p. 191.

some part of the West coast in at least the last half of the sixth century. That the Mauryas remained in the Konkan after the defeat of the Kalacuris in the Deccan attests to their relative independence from the Kalacuris, if they were in fact linked at all.

Following the description of the seige of Purī, the Aihole Inscription goes on to describe the extent of Pulakeśin II's power: "being subdued by his prowess, the Lāṭas and the Māḷavas and the Gūrjaras became, as it were, worthy people, behaving like chieftains brought under subjection by punishment." Then Pulakeśin II declares his sovereignty over the three Mahāraṣṭrakas. It is not until this reference in 634 that any Chālukyan claimed sovereignty over the greater Deccan. The Kalacuris appear to have been eliminated before this time. Pulakeśin II's victories were along the West coast, then in southern Gujarat, then towards the East in Malwa; only after the conquest of these regions did Pulakeśin II claim sovereignty over the greater Deccan. The Lohaner Grant places the Chālukyas in the Deccan in 629/30, prior to the Aihole Meguṭī Inscription (634/5). However, the Aihole Meguṭī Inscription provides a lengthy list of Pulakeśin II's campaigns, including his war with Harṣa and his return to Bādāmī after his *digvijaya* in which he captured the territories of the Mauryas, Lāṭas, Māḷavas and Gurjaras, which must have taken a number of years to complete. The Lohaner Grant could have been issued at anytime during Pulakeśin II's

campaigns. I would argue that the grant was made no earlier than the conquest than the conquest of Purī, for we know that the Konkan was taken by sea and not by an attack through a pass in the Ghats. Nasik, the site of the Lohaner grant, lies on the east side of a pass through the Ghats. The grant may have been made when the Chālukyas took the Konkan, for then they would have had control of the mountain passes, or it may have been made when the northern territories were captured for the Gurjara territories were just north of Nasik.

It is possible that the Chālukyas extended their domains by proceeding up the coast of Western India, taking the Konkan by sea, then Gujarat and turning inland from there. At some point in this time period the Kalacuris were finally driven from the Deccan to parts east and rendered inert. The difficulties involved in reaching the Konkan through the major passes in the Sahyadris or Western Ghats--if it is supposed that the Chālukyas were lords of the Deccan at the time of the battle with the Mauryas--would also explain the necessity of a battle at sea. The protection afforded by the Ghats would support my contention that the Mauryas were nearly autonomous of Kalacuri sovereignty. It might have been the failure of the Kalacuris to secure the Konkan which led to their downfall, for as Himanshu P. Ray points out, the fortunes of the Konkan and the Deccan proper have been interrelated throughout the history of India; the coastal ports were dependent upon goods travelling from the interior through the three natural

passes in the Western Ghats and the hinterland needed the support of those ports to move their goods.⁶⁸

It may be seen that the history of the Deccan, from the fall of the Vākāṭaka-Gupta imperial complex to the paramountcy of the Chālukyas is neither clear nor simple. What becomes apparent is that several powers were active in Western India throughout the sixth century. These powers were not of the order of the Guptas or the Vākāṭakas, but were relatively small and their influence was confined to small regions. Some may have had feudal type power with a network of subordinate vassals, but not on the order of the earlier Gupta-Vākāṭaka imperial complex.

The available evidence suggests that, some time in the first half of the sixth century, the Kalacuris came to power along the Narmadā River. Their centre of power is uncertain; however, if some cave temples in the Ellora-Aurangabad region were excavated in the last half of the sixth century then they were undertaken under Kalacuri rule. Though it is far from certain, there is a substantial amount of evidence to warrant the speculation that the Mauryas had control of the Konkan from early in the sixth century. If this was so, then it was under Mauryan rule that the Konkan cave-temple developments of the sixth century were initiated.

From the premise that the sixth century cave-temples

68. Ray, Himanshu P., Monastery and Guild: Commerce Under the Sātavāhanas, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 16ff.

of the West coast and those of the Ellora-Aurangabad region were excavated while each region was under distinct political rulership, the task remains to find another explanation for the single stylistic development which these caves represent. In the next two chapters I will review the stylistic evidence to show how this stylistic development was a function of several other factors in addition to the political events outlined in this chapter. This particular stylistic development may be seen to be part of certain other developments which originated at Śāmalājī in modern Gujarat; religious influences from that area were delivered south as part of this stylistic development. Thus, the Śaivite orientation of the caves may be explained in terms of a prevailing religious climate among the population as a whole which was expressed through the activities of a group who shared some association, perhaps a guild association and or contact through physical mobility. All this does not entirely deny the influence of the political authorities; their hand may be seen as well in these caves, but this is understood as part of a set of interrelationships which worked to create these caves.

I will begin my reconstruction of this stylistic development with descriptions of each of the principal caves and other related monuments and images. Then I will discuss the important religious issues associated with the caves.

THE SO-CALLED KALACURI MONUMENTS

The realisation that the five principal Hindu excavations in the Konkan and the Deccan, and several of the caves at Aurangabad, represent a single stylistic development is a fairly recent discovery. From late in the nineteenth century, the connection between the major excavations, Joges̄wari, Elephanta and the Dhumar Lena, was understood. It was only recently that the connection was made between the major excavations as well as the smaller caves, including the Maṇḍapeśwar cave, the Rāmeśvara, several other caves at Ellora and the Aurangabad caves, and it was also only recently understood that these caves represented a brief period of patronage in the sixth century. However, Elephanta was an object of great interest as far back as the early presence of the Portuguese on India's West coast.

Early descriptions of Elephanta by Portuguese and British visitors are full of inaccurate descriptions and fanciful interpretations due to the limited knowledge of the observers. However, they deserve mention if only because they show how long this monument has been known to the modern world. A Portuguese account records a visit made by Diogo de

Counto around the middle of the sixteenth century. In the account, de Couto mentions an inscribed stone which was removed from the island. This reference has led many to hunt for this stone and the reference seems to be called up by several scholars as if it lent some validity to their claims. This is similarly done with a mysterious pair of copper plates, reportedly found on the island in the early nineteenth century. However, these pieces of evidence are not forthcoming and there is little point in speculating as to their contents. There is no direct inscriptional evidence pertaining to the identity of the patrons of Elephanta or the other sixth century caves in the northern Deccan.

James Burgess and James Fergusson authored the first serious and learned analyses of the Western Indian cave-temples. They synthesized all their earlier work in The Cave Temples of India (1880). Scholars have rejected the dates and chronologies proposed by Burgess and Fergusson for all the sites. Yet, this work showed a more thorough and learned spirit than had been present in earlier accounts. Burgess and Fergusson recognized the connection between the largest Hindu excavations: Elephanta, Jogeswari and the Dhumar Lena. However, they believed that the Dhumar Lena was first, Elephanta second and Jogeswari last, representing the decay of artistic style through the history of these monuments.

Through the first half of the twentieth century much scholarship was dedicated to the proper identification of the

reliefs at Elephanta and other caves and temples, by reference to mythological and iconological texts in Sanskrit. Agreement was more or less reached concerning the identification of the reliefs.

The reliefs were then subject to a number of interpretations based on the particular identifications of the reliefs. This was especially so with the massive Maheśvara at Elephanta (Plate XI). Much of the best work done on these monuments ignored the question of chronology, and was content to assume dates which were derived by other scholars. T. A. Gopinath Rao was the first to identify the relief as *Maheśa-mūrti*, however he relied on the *āgamas* to make this point, which are later texts of South Indian origin.⁶⁹ Stella Kramrisch agreed with Rao in essence. She used a *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* passage to identify each of the faces in the relief.⁷⁰ According to that work, Mahādeva or Maheśa is the fully manifested form of Śiva with five faces. Those faces are given two sets of names. The faces are known as *Īśāna*, *Tatpuruṣa*, *Aghora*, *Vāmadeva*, *Sadyojāta*. According to Kramrisch, the last four were represented at each of the cardinal directions while *Īśāna* was not carved or was represented as

69. Banerjea, J. N., "The So-Called Trimūrti of Elephanta," *Arts Asiatiques*, 2 (1955), p. 122.

70. Kramrisch, Stella, "The Image of Mahādeva in the Cave-Temple on Elephanta Island," *Ancient India*, vol. 2 (1946), pp. 4-8.

the central *līṅga* on images known as *pañcamukhaliṅga*.⁷¹ The other names are as follows: *Sadāśiva*, *Nandi*, *Bhairava*, *Umā*, *Mahādeva*. Kramrisch identifies the faces of the Elephanta relief as *Aghora* on the left, *Tatpuruṣa* in the middle and *Vāmadeva* on the right. *Sadyojāta* must be the non-visible face at the back of the relief, for *Īśāna*, according to Kramrisch, is the central root pillar which joins the three faces together and extends into the crown and hair of the central face.⁷²

J. N. Banerjea accepted Rao's identification, however, he originally could not find any textual passage referring to iconography to substantiate those conclusions;⁷³ later he found a *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* passage which proved his point and illuminated the mistakes made by Kramrisch.⁷⁴ With this passage Banerjea was able to identify the central face of the image as *Sadyojāta-Mahādeva*, who is identified with earth, the left face as *Aghora-Bhairava*, identified with fire, and the right face as *Vāmadeva-Umā*, identified with water. *Tatpuruṣa-Nandi* is not visible due to the nature of the image,

71. *Ibid.*, p. 6. The correspondence of names is given here according to Kramrisch's original 1946 article though they are corrected in the version of the same article found in Miller, ed., 1983.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

73. Banerjea, 1955, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-126.

74. Banerjea, J. N., "A *Viṣṇudharmottara* Passage and the 'So-Called Trimūrti' of Elephanta." *Arts Asiatiques*, 3 (1956), pp. 130-133.

while Īśāna-Sadāśiva is on top and invisible, as it is "beyond the ken of even ascetics."⁷⁵

An historical interest in these sites was renewed by the epigraphist V. V. Mirashi. He was the first to suggest that the Kalacuris patronized Elephanta.⁷⁶

Walter Spink has defined the state of the art for these and most other Western Indian cave-temples and much more will be said about Spink's arguments in the following pages. For now, I will merely outline Spink's chronology for the Hindu caves.⁷⁷ Spink analyzes the Western Indian caves, from the caves of Ajanta to the last phase at Ellora, along a continuum where stylistic influences worked their way through various sites as a function of historical circumstances. At the fall of the Vākāṭaka empire around 486 C.E., the Traikūṭaka dynasty took control of a portion of the Konkan as is evidenced by the Surat plate of Vyāghaseṇa (c. 490), which calls this ruler "Lord of Aparanta," i.e. the Konkan. The Kanheri plates of 493/4-494/5 C.E. and the Matvan plates of 506 C.E. further attest to Traikūṭaka rule in the northern Konkan.

Sometime after this Spink says the Jogeśwarī and Maṇḍapeśwar excavations were begun. We read in the Matvan plates of 533 C.E. that the Traikūṭaka Mahārāja Vikramaseṇa,

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

76. *CII*, IV, p. cxlvii.

77. See p. 41.

Lord of Aparanta, issued the grant from victorious Aniruddhapura of the Kalacuris. Spink and V. V. Mirashi⁷⁸ conclude that this was issued just before the complete end of Traikūṭaka rule. Just after the close of Traikūṭaka rule the Great Cave at Elephanta was begun (c. 540 C.E.), according to Dr. Spink.

For some reason, Dr. Spink, Kalacuri power shifted east in the mid-sixth century to the Deccan proper and another phase of Kalacuri patronage began in the Ellora-Aurangabad region.⁷⁹ The Dhumar Leṇa, Rameśvara and several lesser caves were then excavated at Ellora; several caves at Aurangabad were begun as well and others followed shortly thereafter. Spink also says that the Dhokeśvara Cave, south of Aurangabad, was contemporary with the Ellora excavations; however, he offers no suggestions as to its patrons.⁸⁰

At this time, the Chālukyan power at Bādāmi was on the rise and before 602/3 C.E. had begun to cause grief to the Kalacuris. The Kalacuris held on until at least 610 C.E., but after that nothing more is heard from the Early branch of this

78. Mirashi, V. V., "The Riddle of the Māṭvan Plates of the Traikūṭaka King Vikramasena: Abhira Year 284," in Literary and Historical Studies in Indology, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

79. At one point Dr. Spink says that the Konkana Mauryas might have caused the Kalacuris to move eastward (AE, p. 9).

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

family. By about 634 C.E. the Chālukyas had advanced at least as far north as the Narmadā River.

Spink has derived this order for the creation of these monuments based upon stylistic factors. The stylistic continuity between the monuments, which Spink has clearly established, as well as Spink's overall chronology are assumptions which I retain; however, Spink attributes this stylistic continuity to a continuity of patronage through one family, namely the Early Kalacuris, which I reject. Admittedly, if I reject the idea of a continuity of patronage through the Kalacuris, then I face some difficulty in accounting for the unmistakeable continuity between the monuments; however, as I argued in the first chapter, the history of this period does not permit the conclusions made by Spink.

Although the evidence gathered is suggestive of Kalacuri patronage and stylistic factors suggest a strong relationship between the monuments, the evidence from the available inscriptions points to a less focused political milieu than must be assumed in a schema which connects the rise and fall of the Kalacuris with the Aurangabad Buddhist, and the Ellora and Konkan Hindu monuments. As well, the circumstantial nature of much of the remaining evidence make it difficult to accept that the Kalacuris were directly responsible for the creation of all the monuments in question.

The monuments follow two basic floor plans. Jogeswarī, the Great Cave at Elephanta, and the Dhumar Lena are

massive excavations based upon a large pillared main hall containing a *līṅga* shrine as the focus of devotion. The lesser excavations are single-entranced from an open forecourt to a pillared portico. From the centre of the portico one looks directly into the shrine chamber with ambulatory, and to the left and the right are subsidiary shrines pillared at the entrances. Maṇḍapeśwar, Rāmeśwara and the east wing of Elephanta share this plan. Caves 6 and 7 at Aurangabad have similar plans, though they contain Buddha shrines and have several cells along three walls like a typical *viḥāra* (Plate VIII). No attempt has been made in previous scholarship to explain this difference in scale among the monuments where links are proposed between at least some of the monuments. Later, I will propose a model which can explain the relationship between the monumental and smaller excavations in at least some of the excavations.

Artistically, the caves are marked by decoration in the form of large sculptural panels in high relief in niches along the walls. The panels at Elephanta are the most impressive, while those at Ellora have a certain stiffness, which Spink says is the result of the decay of the regional style.⁸¹ The sculpture at Jogēśwarī and Maṇḍapeśwar is much ravaged by time and the elements.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 10. Compare the Elephanta and Rāmeśwara Naṭarājas (Plates XIII and XIV) and the Elephanta Mahāyogi (Lakuliśa) and the Lakuliśa from the Dhumar Leṇa (Plate XV).

Another striking feature of these caves, particularly in the large excavations, is the pillars of the main halls (Plate X). From the floor to near the centre of the pillars the shafts are unadorned and square, tapering slightly up from floor level to just above the midpoint. Upon this square base the shafts continue, though now round and fluted. On top of these shafts are carved large "mushroom" or "cushion" capitals which then meet ceiling brackets. The pillars of Elephanta and the Dhumar Leṇā are truly 'monumental' while Jogeswari's seem to have been carved with a mind to retaining the proportion of wooden prototypes which would have supported far less weight.

Now I will describe the caves individually and highlight the peculiarities of each excavation. I will take the caves in the chronological order suggested by Spink. I derive my remarks on style from Spink's exhaustive discussions.

Jogeswari

This cave is located near Amboli on Salsette island in the greater Bombay area. It has the distinction of being the longest cave-temple in India, measuring 250 feet, excluding the entrance and exit passages.⁸² The main hall is ninety-

82. All dimensions are taken from Burgess and Fergusson, *op. cit.*

two feet square, nearly the same dimensions as the main halls at Elephanta and the Dhumar Leṇa. This cave introduces a number of strange twists into the *vihāra* plan: it has a long verandah on the south side, virtually, inaccessible from outside the cave (Plate XVIII:b) which leads to a long portico followed by a single entrance through a windowed wall. Spink describes it as the "missing link" between the excavations at Ajanta and the medieval caves which follow it.⁸³ The desire for subsidiary shrines to house sculptural reliefs combined with the cave's single axis forced the excavators to string the shrines along the entrance corridor and to a lesser extent at the exit corridor. The desire to retain the *vihāra* format resulted in the confused plan of the south court.⁸⁴ Thus, the plan, though monumental, can be seen to be similar to the later smaller caves in that subsidiary shrines are found perpendicular to the entrance prior to the hall containing the main shrine. The initial shrine-set at Jogeswarī is separated from the temple-proper by an unfinished open court. At the exit is another set of small shrines.

The sculpture of this cave is much worn by centuries of flooding and exposure to the other elements. However, the reliefs are virtually all recognizable. Many of the sculptural themes of Jogeswarī are found in the other excavations. The large excavations have six panels in common. At the east

83. "Jogeswarī," p. 1.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

entrance to Jogeswarī one finds above the door a badly damaged representation of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailasa. Jogeswarī has two dancing Śivas, one in the open east court and one in the west vestibule. Śiva as Lakulīśa is portrayed four times: on the east and west sides of the shrine, above the entrance to the main hall (Plate XVI) and in the west vestibule. The Lakulīśa images connect the caves to the obscure Lakulīśa-Pāśupata Śaiva cult of which more will be said later. The east vestibule also contains reliefs of the marriage of Śiva and Parvatī and *Umāmaheśvaramūrti*. On the south porch there is a sculpture of the *Andhakāsuraavadhamūrti*. Spink says that the disarray of the sculpture indicates a lack of purpose within the program.⁸⁵ Additional reliefs are also scattered throughout the subsidiary shrines. Mahiṣāsura-mardīnī, a large Ganeśa, Kārttikeya and a *matṛkā* panel are contained within the first set of eastern shrines. Absent from the program are the Maheśvara, Gaṅgādhara and Ardanārīśvara scenes which are also absent at the Dhumar Leṇa, but are very prominent at Elephanta. A loose and badly damaged image of Harihara found at Jogeswarī is styled like several loose images from Elephanta and the Parel Stele. These links lead Sadashiv Gorakshkar to suggest the existence of a workshop in the area of Parel which supplied these images.⁸⁶ This workshop was a link between the work at Śāmalājī, in Gujarat, and the Konkan monuments.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

86. See below.

Maṇḍapeśwar

This cave is also on Salsette Island near Borivli. It has the peculiar distinction of having been converted by the Portuguese into the Notre Dame de la Misericorde church. Some of the panels were merely plastered over while others were destroyed. The *maṇḍapa* measures fifty-one feet by twenty-one and the shrine is sixteen feet square. The Portuguese constructed a brick wall to fill in the space between the columns in the facade wall. Preservation work by the Archaeological Survey revealed a badly damaged Dancing Śiva. The plan of the cave differs in some respects from the other lesser excavations, but it is essentially of the same type.

Elephanta

An island in the Thana bight was named Elephanta by the Portuguese owing to the great stone elephant found there which now resides in the Victoria Gardens in Bombay. Locally the island is known as Ghārāpuri which has led to the conclusion that this is the Purī, the Mauryan capital, known from the Mahākuṭa Pillar Inscription.⁸⁷

At Elephanta, many of the problems which the Jogeswari architects could not work out were resolved. From the *vihāra*

87. See p. 43.

format, the Elephanta architects created a bright vast open pillared space:

at Elephanta, remarkably effective and major changes are made in the overall conception of the monument, reflecting both the brilliance of the architect and the temper of the times--times which were energetically fostering new architectural and iconographic formulations, which were to provide a secure basis for future developments.⁸⁸

The plan is consciously put together; the reliefs are placed in well defined niches of the same proportions, with the exception of the Ardhanariśvara-Maheśvara-Gaṅgādhara triptych on the south wall. That aspect along with the north entrance confuse the focus somewhat, though the presence of the *līṅga* shrine along the east-west axis makes it clear that this axis is primary. The triptych is carved out of the surface in the direction of the hill side--an entrance here would have involved the carving of a very deep court like that found at the north entrance of the Dhumar Leṇa. The hill side wall surface in the Dhumar Leṇa is incomplete, though niches are carved out. Spink speculates that the same three reliefs which are exclusive to Elephanta were to be carved in these spaces. Elephanta's massive *Maheśamūrti* is among the most impressive examples in Indian sculpture. The recess into which this image is carved is ten and a half feet deep by

88. "Elephanta," p. 245.

twenty-one feet, six inches wide, and, from a 33 inch base the relief itself rises another seventeen feet ten inches.⁸⁹

The *maṇḍapa*, unlike the square one of Jogeswari, is a "star-shaped" plan of thirty-six squares plus the *liṅga* shrine symmetrically arranged in rows of 3,5,7,7,7,5,3. This plan is retained in the Dhumar Leṇa. The sculptural niches are placed at the entrances perpendicular to the direction of each entrance.

The reliefs here take on truly monumental proportions and are of a much higher quality than those of the earlier excavations. They have been described as the peak of the Gupta style;⁹⁰ and here, Spink says, "Indian sculpture achieved a complexity of special organization and a subtlety of composition which it never equalled again."⁹¹ At the north entrance Śiva as Naṭarāja faces Śiva as Lakulīśa/Mahāyogi. At the west entrance the *Andhakāsurvadhamūrti* faces *Kalyānasundaramūrti* or the marriage of Śiva and Parvatī. At the east entrance Rāvaṇa shaking Kailasa faces *Umamaheśvaramūrti*. Eight colossal *dvārapālas* guard the *liṅga* shrine.

The east wing of Elephanta is like the porch types found in early Buddhist excavations and is a refinement of the Maṇḍapeśwar plan. This plan is virtually copied in the

89. Shastri, Hiranand, A Guide to Elephanta New Delhi: Saheed Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1978, pp. 31-32.

90. AE, p. 52.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Rāmeśwara and Aurangabad 6 and 7. The east wing is attached to the main cave by a court yard fifty-five feet wide. The right side chapel contains a *māṭṛkā* panel flanked by Śiva-Vīrabhadra/Kārttikeya at one end and Gaṇeśa at the other. The left side chapel is empty, but Spink reasonably suggests that the loose image of Durgā found at Elephanta, now in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay might have gone in this shrine; then the program of this shrine would exactly parallel the program of the first eastern shrines at Jogēśwarī.⁹² The *līṅga* shrine has an ambulatory, unlike the earlier Maṇḍapeśwar, and its entrance is guarded by two leogryphs similar to the ones which guard the main entrance of the Dhumar Leṇa (Plate XVIII:a). A pair of *dvārapālas* flank the *līṅga* shrine.

The Shivadi Workshop

Generating as much interest as the Elephanta *Maheśa-mūrti*, the Parel Stele (Plate XII) is an important piece of evidence in any consideration of the Hindu caves of the Konkan. The image was found in 1931 while municipal workers were digging a road from Parel to Shivadi, north of Bombay. The image is a colossal monolith comprised of a central figure with six other figures emanating from the shoulders of the central figure. Five musicians are gathered around the legs of the central figure. The image is Śaivite as can be seen

92. "Jogēśwarī," p. 17.

from the third eye on the three vertical figures and the presence of the crescent moon on the top and bottom figures.⁹³

Sadashiv Gorakshkar identifies this image as *Śiva-Aṣṭamūrti* or Śiva with eight forms; the eighth emanation is represented by the stele itself as a kind of *līṅga*.⁹⁴ Gorakshkar recognizes a similarity between the Parel Stele, the loose figures found at Elephanta, several recent finds in the Parel area, and especially the Harihara torso found at Jogeśwarī. These images have certain affinities with the sculpture from Śāmalājī as well. From this evidence, Gorakshkar speculates that there was a workshop at Shivadi which was influenced by Śāmalājī and supplied the loose images to the Konkan monuments.

Sara Shastok in her work on Śāmalājī, discusses the so-called Shivadi images and offers a chronology for these images within the context of the Śāmalājī images and Hindu caves in the Konkan.⁹⁵ Shastok proposes a chronology which places the Śāmalājī sculptures in the first half of the sixth century. She documents how that style evolved over the first couple of decades of the sixth century and then began to

93. Gorakshkar, Sadashiv V., "The Parel Mahādeva Reassessed and Two Newly Discovered Images From Parel," *LK*, 20 (1982), p. 16.

94. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

95. Shastok, Sara L., The Śāmalājī Sculptures and 6th Century Art In Western India, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985, pp. 49-56.

influence the Konkan by about c. 525-530 C.E.⁹⁶ The Jogeswarī Harihara and the Parel Stele are styled after Śāmalājī and are thought to be roughly contemporary. Some of the loose images from Elephanta must be later owing to their stylistic differences from the Śāmalājī images, but they appear to be earlier than the Great Cave. Influences from the North came to the coast near the middle of the century and made their presence felt in the Great Cave.

The extension of this influence from Śāmalājī south into the Konkan is significant and will be mentioned again in relation to the spread of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect. It is a curious coincidence that the earliest known monuments associated with this sect (the Konkan caves) are contemporary with the influence of Śāmalājī art on these monuments. The birth place of this cult appears to be in Karvan, 18 miles from Baroda in Gujarat, not 100 miles from Śāmalājī.

The Dhumar Lena

This cave at Ellora is virtually a copy of the Great Cave at Elephanta. However, the orientation was shifted to keep the focus on the *līṅga* shrine within the dual axis plan. Thus, the *līṅga* is placed along the axis which faces into the hill side. As at Elephanta, large reliefs are found in niches perpendicular to the three entrances.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 52ff.

As was said earlier, Walter Spink suggests that the three hill side panels found at Elephanta were intended for the unfinished niches behind the *līṅga* shrine of the Dhumar Leṇa.⁹⁷ The *Maheśamūrti* at Elephanta is separated from the other two panels by pilasters on which are carved *dvārapālas*; at the ends of the triptych are partial pillars carved like the rest of the cave's pillars though they are only a quarter of a true pillar's circumference, carved as they are from the perpendicular intersection of two walls (see Plate XI). All of the four "demi-pillars" separating the incomplete recesses at the back of the Dhumar Leṇa are the cushion capital type like the rest of the cave's pillars. The middle two are not pilasters, and are carved as if they were to be completed and free-standing as true pillars as at an entrance. Informants told me that there was some evidence of rock work on the hill side above the cave at this point, perhaps indicating an attempt to excavate another entrance. The architects had as much of an excavation problem with the prospect of an entrance here as they did with the north entrance where they dug out a courtyard nearly eighty feet deep. Yet, an entrance excavated at this point might have made the entire cave unstable; therefore, Dr. Spink might be right in suggesting that some kind of sculptural relief was intended on the east side, though any theory concerning this unfinished portion of the cave can only be speculative.

97. *Supra*, pp. 62-63.

As for the reliefs, across from the Naṭarāja is a panel which, owing to the erect phallus and the club in the left hand, can only represent Lakulīśa. Many cite this relationship between these Lakulīśa and Naṭarāja panels to identify the relief across from the Naṭarāja at Elephanta as Lakulīśa. The remaining reliefs are the typical Śaivite themes which are found also at Elephanta and in some of the other caves.

The cave is technically better executed than Elephanta: the pillars are more uniform as is their alignment. The sculpture is stiff compared to Elephanta. I wonder if it might not simply be a matter of the personnel who worked on the excavations; Spink does admit this as a possibility.⁹⁸ The sculptors at Ellora might have been more technically accomplished--sons and grandsons of the workers at Elephanta or not--than Elephanta's very artistically talented workers. For, after all, they were all rock carvers distinguished only by the degree of fineness which their respective tasks required, from rough quarrymen to fine detailers for pillars and reliefs. Perhaps the sculptors at Ellora who were responsible for the fine work were accustomed to more structural tasks, walls and pillars and the like, which would explain the "iconic" quality of the sculpture.⁹⁹

98. "Ellora," p. 18.

99. AE, p. 67.

Rāmeśwara

This cave is very rich in sculpture compared to the other caves. It has five reliefs in common with the greater excavations. As well, it contains the *mātrkāś*, Kārttikeya, and six other sculptures. On the whole it is considerably more ornamented than the other caves (Plate XVII). The pillars on the facade are of an ornamental type found at Ajanta and other earlier Buddhist excavations. The interior pillars are the cushion capital type, though with Ellora's own extra ornamentation. The doorway "exemplifies another and more ornate trend in mid-sixth century portal design."¹⁰⁰

Walter Spink's "Ellora's Earliest Phase" (*Bulletin of the American Academy of Benares*, vol. 1, pp. 11-22) is dedicated to several small Hindu caves which he believes represent the first work done at the site. The earliest phase was in two parts. The first part is represented by Caves 28, 27, and 19. The second part includes the Rāmeśwara and the Dhumar Lena. The Rāmeśwara represents the climax of this phase; its influence was then felt in the later Hindu phase represented by Cave 14 or the Ravan ka Khai.¹⁰¹

The first caves are, according to Dr. Spink, "all modest and rather clumsy affairs."¹⁰² The influence of the

100. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

101. "Ellora," p. 17.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Konkan was not felt at Ellora until the time of the Dhumar Leṇa and Rāmeśvara. If the phase of patronage which includes the Konkan monuments as well as the later caves in 'Ellora's earliest phase' was due to the spread of Kalacuri hegemony from the West coast to the Deccan, then how can such a model account for the first part of the sixth century patronage at Ellora, which does not partake of direct influence from the Konkan? The first phase of patronage at Ellora may not have resulted from the shifting of Kalacuri power from the Konkan to the Deccan, but may represent the initial rise to power of the Kalacuris in the Deccan. After a time, some of the artisans from the Konkan caves moved to the Deccan to take advantage of the new Kalacuri patronage there. Thus, the first part of Ellora's earliest phase began under Kalacuri rule though without direct influence from the Konkan, and then the phase represented by the Rameśwara and Dhumar Leṇa, which show the direct influence of the Konkan caves, was undertaken.

It must be mentioned that of all the (Śaiva) caves at Ellora, prior to the Dhumar Leṇa and the Rāmeśvara, only Cave 19 seems to have a Lakulīśa-Pāśupata affiliation since it contains an inscribed Lakulīśa image.¹⁰³ The first part of Ellora's earliest phase, which supposedly resulted from a shift of Kalacuri power to the area, really seems to have had no affiliation with the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata cult. If we argue,

103. The inscription has not been read nor published (*ibid.*, p. 13).

like Dr. Spink, that the Kalacuris' Pāśupata inclination informed their religious patronage, then we must conclude that either the excavations at Ellora prior to the Dhumar Leṇa and Rāmeśvara were sponsored by some party without any direct Kalacuri participation or influence, and/or that patronage at Ellora, under Kalacuri sovereignty, began prior to any significant contact with the Konkan.

I would emphasise the latter conclusion. The initiation of Hindu excavations at Ellora parallels the rise to power of the Kalacuris in the mid-sixth century under Kṛṣṇarāja. In the absence of hard data, I can only conclude that some groups, not necessarily royal groups, initiated a phase of patronage at Ellora in the new political climate that was created by Kalacuri rule. This is not quite the same as saying that this patronage was a function of Kalacuri hegemony. Politically, the excavations in the Konkan and later in the Deccan were independent, but they were artistically linked by the mobility of craftsmen. Patronage at Ellora began with the early caves and after some contact with the Konkan the more sophisticated excavations were begun. More able artisans and architects must have come to the Deccan from the Konkan and with them they brought, not only their more advanced skills, but also the iconography of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata cult.

Dhokeśvara

The Dhokeśvara cave, located sixty miles south of Aurangabad, is of much poorer quality than the other sixth century excavations in the Deccan. Spink does not fit this cave into his analyses of the caves except to date it as contemporary with the Rāmeśvara.¹⁰⁴ It seems that the inferiority of the excavation has made Spink leave this cave out of his more thorough analyses; thus it is excluded from Spink's "Kalacuri" monuments.

The poor quality of the Dhokeśvara cave leads Gary Tarr to call it "a provincial example of an art that was reaching higher peaks elsewhere;"¹⁰⁵ yet, the cave shares many of the features of the Aurangabad Caves and the Rāmeśvara. The River Goddesses and ornamental pillars on the facade are the strongest links with the Rāmeśvara and Aurangabad, though the presence of the *mātrkāś* is another feature which links it to the Rāmeśvara.

If this cave dates to the third quarter of the sixth century, then its patronage is difficult to explain with the Spink model. There is nothing in Spink's model of patronage for the "Kalacuri" caves, as a function of Kalacuri supremacy in Western India, to explain the existence of the Dhokeśvara cave. The Spink model assumes that the sixth century caves were predominantly created with royal funds, for it is assumed

104. *AE*, pp. 5-6.

105. Tarr, Gary, "The Śiva Cave-Temple of Dhokeśvara: The Development of the Nidhi Image," *Oriental Art* (new series), XV/4 (Winter 1969), p. 273.

that only royal families had the wherewithal to sponsor such projects; royal families, by status and influence, had exclusive access to the best artisans. The lesser stature of this monument, like several of the Ellora monuments, might indicate lower strata of patronage compared to the Konkan and other Ellora monuments. However, it seems arbitrary to attribute the most elaborate structures to royal support, while all other efforts should be attributed to lesser groups. Despite the parochial status attributed to this monument I shall consider it as a royal, specifically Kalacuri, dedication owing to the presence there of the *mātrkāś*, the protecting deities of the throne.

The incompleteness of (all) the caves in question suggests royal or political patronage which was subject to the verities of lean times; war perhaps, or a conflict of dynastic succession ended or slowed work at each cave. The patronage of something like semi-independent religious groups and/or craft guilds by royalty or a bureaucracy with a less than a hands-on or participatory interest in the excavations is a possibility. Thus we can assume, a patron or patrons put just that degree of support into the site, which was required to insure the loyalty or meet perceived obligations the patron had to the people or priesthood of that region.

Thus, if Spink's chronology is accepted as well as his insistence on royal patronage, then the few caves which are not fully accounted for in his model must also be interpreted

according to that model of patronage. As the Dhokeśvara cave is contemporary with the so-called Kalacuri monuments, it must play a part in any analysis of those caves. A model based upon strong royal patronage cannot account for the "provincial" Dhokeśvara cave as, presumably, royal patrons employed only the best artisans. I accept that the Dhokeśvara cave was a royal dedication on the basis of the presence of the *sapta-mātrkās* in that caves. However, in associating the Dhokeśvara with the "Kalacuri" monuments, I am forced to reconsider the relationship between artisans and patrons. The patrons' motivations had less to do with their own wants and needs than they had to do with the obligations which the patrons had to the artisans, religious functionaries and the devotees in a given region.

Aurangabad

It must be added at this point that Spink has suggested that work on the Buddhist sites of Kanheri and Kondivte in the Konkan continued in the sixth century under Kalacuri support.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Spink says that Caves 2, 5, 6, 6A, 7, 8, and 9 at Aurangabad were also Kalacuri excavations. Cave 7 certainly bears the marks of caves like Rāmeśwara, Maṇḍapeśwar and Elephanta's East Wing. However, the cave is Buddhist as are all the Aurangabad Caves. Aurangabad's loca-

106. "Jogeśwari," p. 13.

tion--very close to Ajanta and Ellora--would suggest "Kalacuri patronage" if these caves belong to the last half of the sixth century. But, the fact that these are Buddhist caves undermines the premise upon which many accept the Kalacuri patronage for the five major Hindu monuments: namely, that the Kalacuris were Pāśupatas and the caves are Pāśupata dedications. If the Kalacuris were Pāśupatas and they patronized Buddhist sites, then their personal religious affiliation did not necessarily motivate any of their patronage. Therefore, the Kalacuris' religious affiliation might not necessarily connect them to all of the Hindu caves.

Cave 13, or Cave 6A in Spink's scheme, at Aurangabad (Plate IX) is a peculiar cave which was contemporary with Caves 8 and 9, and slightly later than Caves 6 and 7. The peculiarity lies in the fact that it is a Buddhist cave at a Buddhist site, but it also contains a *saptamātrkā* panel as well as Gaṇeśa and Śiva-Vīṇādhara images, that is, Hindu images. Katherine Harper says that its sculpture is so closely related to Elephanta and the Rāmeśvara that it must have been done around the same time if not by the same artisans,¹⁰⁷ though Spink places its initiation a few years later than the initiation of the first phase of Hindu caves at Ellora. The presence of Hindu deities within a Buddhist cave

107. Harper, Katherine Anne, Seven Hindu Goddesses of Spiritual Transformation: The Iconography of the Saptamatrikas, Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p. 114; AE, pp. 5-6.

requires explanation. As I will show in the next Chapter, the *māṭṛkās* were royal deities. I will also argue that their presence in the sixth century excavations in the Ellora-Aurangabad and Konkan regions should be interpreted as an indication of royal patronage.

The Chālukyan Cave-Temples

Rock-cut temples were also excavated under Chālukyan rule. At the two sites of Bādāmi and Aihole nine cave temples were excavated between c. 550 and 578 C.E.¹⁰⁸ These excavations are of interest, for many scholars agree that they are nearly contemporaneous with the Hindu monuments in the Konkan and Deccan, and the Chālukyas were directly involved with the Kalacuris. I will comment on 'Chālukyan' architecture generally and then specifically on the cave-temples.

In addition to the nine cave temples, over one hundred structural temples have been identified as belonging to the period of the Early Chālukyas, but to a period of time following the rock-cut monuments.¹⁰⁹ It is significant that the majority of these edifices are in the area of the main centres

108. These caves are more easily dateable owing to the inscription of 578 C.E. found in Cave III at Bādāmi which, incidently, shows that the Chālukyas directly participated in the excavation of at least this cave (see IA, Vol. VI, pp. 354-366). I accept the chronology and most of the stylistic analyses proposed by Gary Tarr ("Chronology and Development of the Chālukya Cave Temples," *Ars Orientalis*, 8, pp. 155-184).

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

of Chālukyan power: Bādāmī, Aihole and Paṭṭaḍakal, which are very close together on the banks of the Malaprabhā River.

This extensive patronage (over centuries) with the participation of one family, the Chālukyas, confined as it is to a limited geographical area, leads me to doubt the claim that the Kalacuris, with their capital at Mahiṣmatī, patronized the Konkan monuments and then, as their power shifted west, patronized the Ellora-Aurangabad caves. The fundamental assumption behind such an argument appears to be the assumption an ubiquitous kingship whose religious patronage in newly conquered territory was part of a programme to legitimate its authority over that territory. The Chālukyan pattern of patronage would indicate that patronage in this period was not an attempt to legitimate power in newly acquired domains, but served particular interests within the region of the ruling family's greatest influence.

At Aihole, the Rāvaṇa Phadi is the most significant cave for my purposes. Tarr identifies it as earlier than the Bādāmī excavations, because of its small size and irregular plan.¹¹⁰ It is more similar to the first two Bādāmī excavations and less similar to the third. Therefore, Tarr proposes a date of c. 550 C.E. for the Rāvaṇa Phadi; that is, he assumes that it was undertaken just after the Chālukyas came to power.¹¹¹ The cave's plan has much in common with the

110. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

small Kalacuri excavations: "the type seems to develop out of the interior spaces found in the Buddhist excavations of the Vākāṭakas, where enclosed spaces lead through pillared openings to shrines, niches and cells."¹¹²

'Chālukyan' sculpture is a unique tradition without firm antecedents in the North or the South.¹¹³ However, the initial phases of rock-cut architecture show some influence from the north. As slight as this influence is, any model which attempts to account for the stylistic continuity among the so-called Kalacuri monuments must also account for their links with the caves in the Chālukyan domains. I will summarize my tentative attempts to account for such continuities in the conclusion. I may assume that artisans had enough freedom of mobility in this period to accept employment by patrons from regions beyond the frontiers of their homeland.

The themes found in the Rāvaṇa Phadi which bear upon the later Kalacuri excavations are worth mentioning and will be discussed in more detail later. Accompanying Śiva as Naṭarāja is a unique *mātrkā* panel. The mothers are standing and placed along both sides of the intersection of two walls in a corner of the main hall. This feature alone clearly distinguishes this cave from the northern caves.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

113. Huntington, Susan L., The Art of Ancient India, New York: Weatherhill, 1985, p. 283.

The Bādāmī caves are a much more impressive collection which follow floor plans much more like the *vihāras* of the Vākāṭaka caves. The first three Bādāmī caves are the most important as they make up a single stylistic unit. Cave III is the most important owing to the dedicatory inscription which fixes the date of this cave at c. 578 C.E. By the period of the Bādāmī Caves, the Chālukyans had followed their own unique Southern architectural idiom. However, it must be noted that the colonnades of Cave II have their antecedents in the Rāmeśvara.¹¹⁴ Even such a slight influence must be accounted for in any model of patronage, for such influence across the boundaries of empires must surely indicate some freedom of mobility for the craftsmen who created these caves.

In summary, it is clear that a strong continuity exists between the Konkan Hindu monuments and certain Hindu monuments at Ellora. In addition, several caves at Aurangabad appear to share certain architectural and stylistic elements with these Hindu caves. This brief description of each of the monuments shows that the caves show a continuity in the evolution of their designs, and many of their iconographical themes are continuous in their programmes and composition.

Art historians, particularly Walter Spink, have reconstructed a history of the sixth century which accounts for this continuity through the hegemony, and thus the patronage, of the Kalacuris in Western India. I have tried to

114. "Ellora," p. 14n.

show that the known history of the period does not readily allow for the theory that the Kalacuris controlled the Konkan, and thus patronized the monuments there, and when their power shifted towards the greater Deccan, they patronized several monuments in the Ellora-Aurangabad region. Based upon my reconstructed history, I concluded that the Mauryas were the paramount power in the Konkan after Traikūṭaka power there collapsed, and therefore, that they must have patronized some of the caves there. I granted that the Kalacuris were the paramount power in the Deccan when the Ellora and Aurangabad monuments were excavated and therefore, they must have participated in those excavations to some degree.

In the next chapter I will show that the excavation of many of these caves must have been the result of royal patronage, not necessarily because these caves are extravagant, but because they include shrines to the *saptamātrkās* who were often associated with royalty and war. The affiliation of the five primary caves with the Lakulīśa-Paśupata sect might be a key to their patronage, but if the Buddhist caves at Aurangabad were patronized by groups who also patronized some of the Hindu caves, then that affiliation bears an uncertain relationship to patronage.

Without the Lakulīśa-Paśupata connection or a theory based on Kalacuri rule throughout Western India to account for the stylistic links between the caves I must search for an alternative explanation. My tentative conclusion is that the

families of artisans who worked on the Konkan caves in the early sixth century were free to move into the Deccan proper and took advantage of the new Kalacuri patronage at Ellora and Aurangabad in the last half of the sixth century. The Śaiva orientation of the Hindu caves was not a function of Kalacuri patronage, but was due to other factors. Perhaps the influence of Śāmalājī, which was in the heartland of the Pāśupata-Lakulīśa cult, felt as it was through the Shivadi workshop, brought the iconographic themes associated with that cult to the Konkan and subsequently to the Deccan proper.

SPECIAL ICONOGRAPHY OF THE SIXTH CENTURY CAVES

The iconographic programs at the so-called Kalacuri monuments and other related excavations have been well described and analyzed by numerous scholars. Walter Spink and many others following his lead have used the apparent Lakulīśa-Pāśupata connection of the Konkan and some of the Ellora Hindu caves to prove that it was the Kalacuris who patronized these caves as they were *paramaheśvaras* or Śaivites belonging to the Pāśupata sect. This connection becomes problematic if it is granted that the Kalacuris also patronized Buddhist sites, particularly Aurangabad, for then we cannot assert that the Kalacuris' personal religious preferences necessarily motivated their patronage.

One iconographic feature which links most of these sites and which has been little emphasized by art historians is the presence of the *saptamātrkās* at Jogeswari, Elephanta, the Rameśvara, Dhokeśvara, and Aurangabad 13. The Chālukyas also had a *saptamātrkā* panel carved in the Rāvaṇa Phadi cave at Aihole. By an analysis of the literary, inscriptional and archaeological evidence for *mātrkā* worship from the time of the *Mahābhārata* to the period in question I will show a strong royal/warrior association for the *mātrkās* particularly in

their association with Skanda. This association does not fix the specific patrons for these caves, but it does strongly suggest a royal motivation for patronage.

The Lakulīśa-Pāśupata connection between the Konkan and Ellora monuments is still an important fact in a consideration of the excavation of these monuments. I will briefly discuss the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata cult and attempt to show how this sect was dominant in Western India at this time and spread beyond this region later. I shall suggest that the Pāśupata excavations were therefore a reflection of the religious inclinations of the population at large, rather than the religion of the patrons alone. I will then discuss the *saptamātrkās* to show how royal religious needs were also met at the same time as the religious needs of the local populace at the "Kalacuri" sites.

Lakulīśa-Pāśupata

Lakulīśa iconography was patterned on the images of the Buddhist Sravasti miracle, though some standing Lakulīśa images do exist.¹¹⁵ Lakulīśa is portrayed seated in a yogic posture on a lotus seat held up by nāgas or some other figures (Plates XV, XVI). Lakulīśa is usually attended by his four chief disciples. These images are distinguished from other similar figures by the presence of the erect phallus and a

115. "Jogeśwarī," p. 18.

club held in one hand. There are no iconological texts which describe Lakulīśa images.

Jogeśwarī has four Lakulīśa images strung along its main axis. The first is on the lintel of the doorway into the main shrine within the east vestibule (Plates III:G, XVI). Two more are on the lintels of the shrine proper, one on the east side and the other on the opposite west side (Plate III:J,L). The final image is in the south subsidiary shrine of the exit portico (Plate III:N).

It is claimed that Maṇḍapeśwar has a Lakulīśa image, however the image is too badly damaged to permit certain identification. So too, the two yogic-seated figures at Elephanta are commonly identified as Lakulīśa, but the absence of the club and erect phallus prevents sure identification. The one panel on the left side of the north portico is missing both its arms. Sadashiv Gorakshkar identifies the attendant figures as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Yama, who he says, could only attend upon Śiva; therefore, Gorakshkar identifies the figure as Śiva-Mahāyogi.¹¹⁶ However, if Lakulīśa is Śiva incarnate then it might be possible for him to be attended by those Gods. The other image is found in the west wing. It too lacks the emblems of Lakulīśa.

116. Gorakshkar, Sadashiv V., "A Harihara Image Recovered from Jogeswari, and the Problem of Dating Gharapuri (Elephanta)," in Rao 1981, p. 249.

A relief in the north portico of the Dhumar Leṇa (Plates VI:E, XV:a), though not attended by the four chief disciples, must be identified as Lakulīśa due to the presence of the club and erect phallus. If that relief is Lakulīśa, and it lies opposite to the Naṭārāja relief, then it seems safe to identify the Elephanta panel as Lakulīśa by virtue of the fact that it too lies opposite to the Naṭārāja--despite Gorakshkar's argument. The Rameśwara too has a Lakulīśa at the centre of its facade.

The origins and history of Pāśupata Śaivism and its (apparent) sub-sects, Lakulīśa-Pāśupata, the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas, are obscure. The *Mahābhārata* describes five systems of philosophy: Sāṅkhyā, Yoga, Pāñcarātra, Veda and Pāśupata. Patāñjali describes the *Śivabhāgavatas* as having practices similar to those associated with the later Pāśupatas. This led Banerjea to associate the *Śivabhāgavatas* with the Pāśupata sect.¹¹⁷ Those same practices later became associated with the sub-sects which declared their lineages through Lakulīśa.

According to the *Mahābhārata*, Śrīkaṇṭha was the teacher of the Pāśupata doctrine. He might have been a historical personage;¹¹⁸ however, the *Mahābhārata* also declares him to have been Śiva himself and this was his

117. *DHI*, p. 450.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

accepted status in the Lakulīśa cult.¹¹⁹ Therefore, Śrī-kanṭha might simply be a mythical personage.

The Pāśupata pantheon included Śiva-Aṣṭamūrti (Śiva with eight forms) and the pañcamukhaliṅga which links, at least, the Parel stele and Elephanta--the Maheśamūrti being a pañcamukhaliṅga--with Pāśupata Śaivism.

The earliest references to Lakulīśa are found in Vāyu and Liṅga Purāṇas. They declare Lakulīśa to have been an incarnation of Śiva who was born in the town of Kāyārohaṇa or Kāyāvatāra which was to become a famous tīrtha by virtue of the incarnation.¹²⁰ The Purāṇas also name Lakulīśa's four pupils: Kuśika, Mitra, Garga, and Kauruṣya. This understanding dates to at least the seventh century; the Vāyu Purāṇa appears to pre-date Bāṇa's Harsacarita as it is quoted in that work.¹²¹

The Pāśupata Sūtras¹²² might date to as far back as

119. Pathak, V. S., Śaiva Cults in Northern India from Inscriptions (700 A.D. to 1200 A.D.), Varanasi: Dr. Ram Naresh Varma, 1960, p. 6.

120. Lorenzen, David N., The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, p. 177; Bhandarkar, D. R., "An Ekliṅgi Stone Inscription and the Origin and the History of the Lakulīśa Sect," *JBBRAS*, XXII (1905-1907), p. 153.

121. Bhandarkar, "Ekaliṅgi," *op. cit.*, p. 156.

122. The Pāśupata Sūtras are primarily concerned with the ritual and philosophy of the Pāśupata sect. Charles Collins uses the Pāśupata Sūtras, Pañcārtha-bhaṣa and other later Pāśupata texts to relate Pāśupata ritual to the reliefs at Elephanta. Collins may be right that the cave's design demands the counterclockwise circumambulation which the Sūtras enjoin Pāśupatas to perform; however, his premise that the

the first to second centuries.¹²³ Kaunḍinya's *Pañcārtha-bhaṣa* on the *Pāśupata Sūtras* dates to the Gupta period.¹²⁴ The *Pāśupata Sūtras* are traditionally attributed to Lakulīśa and this led R. G. Bhandarkar to dismiss Śrīkaṇṭha's alleged founding of the sect as myth.¹²⁵ Kaunḍinya considered only some unnamed *ācārya* or *bhāgavata* to be the founder of the *Pāśupata* sect; but his account of the incarnation of the sect's founder agrees with the *paurāṇic* accounts of the incarnation of Lakulīśa.¹²⁶

The dates for Lakulīśa, based upon the *Mahābhārata* evidence and the evidence from *Patāñjali*, appear to be before the turn of the Common Era. However, that assumes that *Patāñjali*'s *Śivabhāgavatas* were connected with the *Pāśupatas*, and that Lakulīśa was the founder of that sect. From an

reliefs have a ritual purpose is questionable. The reliefs are almost all common to Śaivite mythology and they are truly narrative without any suggestion of iconic purpose. As well, if this cave was done with a mind to *Pāśupata* ritual then the other caves which relate to it must also be shown to have similar purposes. The program at Jogeswari is too confused for such suggestions and the Dhumar Lena retains many of Elephanta's themes, but in a different order. Also, the lesser excavations are of an entirely different order of monument. The *Sūtras* themselves were written for an audience of practitioners. The caves were obviously public temples without facilities for adepts of the order. See Collins, Charles D., The Iconography and Ritual of Śiva at Elephanta, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

123. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

124. Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

125. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

126. Lorenzen, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

analysis of the "Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II: G.E. 61" (381 C.E.), D. R. Bhandarkar established that Lakulīśa could only date to sometime in the first or second century C.E.¹²⁷ In that inscription a teacher, named Uditāchārya, is said to have been tenth in succession from Kuśika. The "Cintra Praśasti of the Reign of Sarangadeva" (late thirteenth century) informs us that Lakulīśa's four disciples founded lineages of their own;¹²⁸ therefore, Bhandarkar identifies Kuśika of the Mathurā Inscription as none other than the pupil of Lakulīśa. If Lakulīśa dates ten or eleven generations from the Mathurā Inscription, then according to Bhandarkar, he lived about 105-130 C.E., allowing 25 years per generation.

To explain the apparent anomaly between the claim of the Paśupata sect, that Lakulīśa was its founder, and the evidence that Lakulīśa lived in the second century C.E., J. N. Banerjea suggested that Lakulīśa was merely the systematiser of the doctrine which dated to at least as early as Patāñjali's time.¹²⁹

At the turn of this century, D. R. Bhandarkar found a local *Māhātmya* in the village of Kārvāṇ, 18 miles from Baroda,

127. Bhandarkar, D. R., "No. 1.--Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II: G. E. 61," *EI*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, pp. 1-9.

128. Büler, G., "The Cintra Praśasti of the Reign of Saragadeva," *EI*, I (1892), pp. 271-287.

129. Banerjea, J. N., "Lakulīśa--The Founder or Systematiser of the Paśupata Order," *Pro. IHC*. 1950, p. 33.

which described the incarnation of Śiva as Lakṣṭapāṇīśa, who must be Lakulīśa. The *Māhātmya* describes how Śiva incarnated in Kāyāvarohaṇa, which it also calls Kārohaṇa, in the Kaliyuga for the benefit of Bhṛgukṣetra, which it notes, is the country around Broach.¹³⁰ The correspondence between the feature of the village of Kārvaṇ and the description of the place of the incarnation in the *Mahātmya*, plus the etymological similarity between "Kārohaṇa" and "Kārvaṇ," led Bhandarkar to the conclusion that this was the place of the incarnation to which the *Purāṇas* referred.

R. N. Mehta further investigated the site and declared it to be the very seat of the Lakulīśa sect.¹³¹ He assumes that the village was once on the high road from Ujjain to Broach. This road was the major artery connecting the northernmost domains of the Kalacuris. Mehta discovered in Kārvaṇ a *Mahiṣāsura-mardini* which he thought was stylistically connected to the loose *Mahiṣāsura-mardini* found at Elephanta.

The Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect was firmly rooted in the region which became the Kalacuri empire in the sixth century and it spread in the following centuries. The examples of the representation of Lakulīśa found in the sixth century Hindu caves are among the earliest in Indian history. After that

130. Bhandarkar, D. R., "Lakulīśa," *ARASI*, 1906-07, p. 182.

131. Mehta, R. N., "Karavan--The Seat of the Lakulīśa Sect," *Pro. IHC.*, 1950, pp. 71-77.

time such representations are found in the south and in Orissa.¹³²

The development of this cult in the Gupta and post-Gupta period might indeed be attributed to royal patronage such as has been suggested for the Kalacuri monuments. However, that does not necessarily mean that its patronage was motivated by the patrons' personal religious preferences. The strong presence of the cult in Western India might have prompted patrons to support the cult. The influence of Śāmalājī on the monuments of the Konkan might have been responsible for the particular Pāśupata iconography in these caves. The Parel Stele appears to be a Pāśupata icon and Shivadi was the conduit by which the Śāmalājī influence made its way south. The cult of Śiva must have been popular in the area (and throughout India) at this time, but Lakulīśa-Pāśupata worship grew due to the influence from near its seat in Kārvaṇ, which is less than 100 miles from Śāmalājī.

If the Pāśupata affiliation of the Hindu caves in the Konkan and in the Deccan was the result of a strong Śaivite presence in the region (which Spink says was the case¹³³) and the religious preferences of patrons did not limit their patronage, then we are hard put to infer royal patronage simply on the basis of Pāśupata sculptures in the caves. However, the little emphasized presence of the *saptamātrkās* in

132. *DHI*, p. 465.

133. "Elephanta," p. 241.

these caves might indeed indicate royal patronage owing to the association of these goddesses with royalty.

The *Saptamātrkās*

The presence of *mātrkā* panels at some of the so-called Kalacuri monuments and the Chālukyan Ravana Phadi cave is not unusual given that they are Śaiva excavations and by this period the Mothers were invariably associated with Śiva. The unusual presence of *mātrkās*, Ganeśa and Śiva-Vīrabhadra at the Buddhist Cave 13 at Aurangabad will be discussed below. However, I will attempt to show that the *mātrkās*' ancillary position at Elephanta and Jogeswari, and their presence in the smaller caves might be a surer indication of royal patronage at these sites than the presence of Pāśupata iconography. The monumental nature of these excavations indicates patronage of a high economic order, but the smaller *mātrkā* shrines indicate royal purposes more surely than the larger--more public--temples.

After a brief background discussion of *mātrkā* mythology and iconography, and the particular caves in question I will review the evidence for the associations of royalty with the *mātrkās* and the association of the *mātrkās* with the Śaivite pantheon. The proximity of the shrines of royal cult figures to the major excavations, I believe, indicates how special precincts were created in association with the great

public temples to accommodate the very specific religious needs of the royal patrons of these sites.

The *saptamātrkās* in sixth century sculpture are, generally speaking, seven figures usually exhibiting the same pose, either standing/dancing or seated. They are recognisable by the presence of the emblems or vehicles of their male counterparts. The mothers may be depicted with children. The general scheme of mothers depicts, from the left when facing them, *Brahmāṇī*, *Maheśvarī*, *Kaumārī*, *Vaiṣṇavī*, *Vārāhī*, *Indrāṇī*, and *Cāmuṇḍā*. This order corresponds to the *Devīmāhātmya* account except for the fact that *Cāmuṇḍā* is not one of the manifested *śaktis*, the seventh place being taken up by *Narasimhī*.

It is not possible here to analyze fully the myths of the *saptamātrkās* save to show how they were associated with Skanda and how that association became integrated into the greater Śaiva pantheon which is expressed in the panels in question. Leaving aside the apparent Vedic origins of the mothers, we begin with the *Mahābhārata*.¹³⁴ In the Epic two groups of women become the surrogate mothers of Skanda who is the son of Śiva, carried by Agni. These two groups are the wives of seven seers and the Pleiades (*Kṛttikās*). The Mothers of Skanda possess both terrible and benign aspects and are considered to be the sources of various childhood maladies.

134. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.

In the Epic the names and number of the Mothers are never fixed; they are always thought of as a group and they are generally benevolent.¹³⁵ As the Mothers of Skanda, chief of the divine army, they are the slayers of foes; they are blood thirsty and uncontrollable once on a rampage; they are often described as ugly and they haunt inauspicious places. The *Mahābhārata* enjoins acts of pacification of the group of Mothers.

The last chapter of the *Devīmāhātmya* relates the battle between the Goddess and the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. The *Devīmāhātmya*, from the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, illustrates this battle and several others to glorify the goddess. In the great battle that ensues the gods manifest their respective *śaktis* to aid the Goddess in battle. In the end, all the demons are destroyed except Śumbha; he requests that the Goddess fight him alone. The Goddess absorbs the *śaktis*, illustrating the theological point that she is the single source of power in the universe, and then the demon is destroyed in battle.

An episode much like the *Devīmāhātmya* account is found in the *Varāha Purāṇa*. Here however, a Śaivite affiliation is apparent in the creation of the mothers. The mothers are still the *śaktis* of the gods, but they are created to help Śiva destroy Andhakāśura who, each time he is cut, produces a

135. Tiwari, J. N., Goddess Cults in Ancient India (with special reference to the first seven centuries A.D.), Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1985, pp 123ff.

new demon from the falling drops of blood--much like the demon Raktabīja in the *Devīmāhātmya*. Other *Purāṇas* relate many of the same stories, but there are certain differences as to the identity and number of the mothers; for the purposes of this discussion this problem need not be discussed, as we will be dealing with the general significance of particular panels and not with their variations from each other and from literary accounts.

Concerning *saptamatr̥kā* iconography, Varāhamihira states that the *matr̥kās* should be portrayed as seven and with the emblems of their male counterparts.¹³⁶ Pre-Gupta panels show Skanda as leading the Seven Mothers, but by the period of the panels in question Śiva and Gaṇeśa regularly framed images of the Mothers. Varāhamihira also says that images of the Mothers should be installed by one versed in *maṇḍala-krama*, or the rules for making magical diagrams, which might indicate a Tāntric association by this period.¹³⁷

I will now briefly describe the panels and their particularities of placement and order at the six sites. I will then discuss the literary and epigraphic evidence for the royal worship of Skanda and the mothers.

The *saptamātr̥kā* panel at Jogeśwarī has been rendered almost unrecognizable by the elements. However, it can be seen that the panel contained eight mothers plus Śiva-Vīra-

136. Harper, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

137. Tiwari, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

bhadra and Gaṇeśa. The female figures are seated. The panel is located in the shrine on the south side of the corridor just past the entrance steps. The opposite shrine contains images of what appear to be Mahiśāsura-mardini, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. These two shrines are removed from the main temple by an open incomplete courtyard. These shrines are thus removed from the main temple in a way analogous to Elephanta and its East Wing.

Elephanta's East Wing contains a *mātrkā* panel flanked on the left by Skanda, and on the right by Cāmuṇḍā, Gaṇeśa and a skeletal figure, which many identify as Kāla. The figures are standing with staffs which have their respective emblems on them, though the staff of the goddess which is in Vārāhī's place is missing its emblem. The East Wing's separation from the main temple, yet containing its own *liṅga* shrine, suggests some exclusive liturgical purpose.

The *mātrkā*s in the Rāmeśvara at Ellora cover the three walls of its chapel. The chapel does not contain a Skanda image. The *mātrkā*s take up the central wall flanked by Viṇādhara (Śiva the lute-bearer) and Gaṇeśa. On the left wall is a Naṭarāja relief similar in many respects to the Naṭarāja in Cave 1 at Bādāmi and the dancing scene from Cave 7 at Aurangabad. On the right wall are Kāla, Kālī and a kneeling skeletal figure.

The Dhokeśvara *mātrkā*s are flanked by Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa. All the figures are seated. Tarr relates this panel

to that of Elephanta and Aihole as the mothers and Gaṇeśa are two armed; he also points out its other features which are common with the Rāmeśvara.¹³⁸ Like the Aihole panel, and unlike the Elephanta and Ellora panels, these mothers are to the left when one faces the ambulatory.

In Cave 13 at Aurangabad, those responsible for its execution took the unusual step of carving a *mātrkā* panel in this Buddhist cave, which is at an exclusively Buddhist site. On the right wall are two Buddhas, the one flanked by Bodhisattvas while a devotee kneels before the other. On the main wall Gaṇeśa is flanked by a four-armed Dūrgā and a four-armed Cāmuṇḍā. On the left wall stand Śiva-Viṇādhara and the Seven Mothers. Evidence of children or emblems is now wanting due to damage.

Harper explains the presence of the mothers in a Buddhist context as part of the general Indian tendency to syncretization or as part of a proselytizing effort.¹³⁹ However, I suggest that it might be a function of the continuing (Hindu) royal patronage at this site. It is universally agreed that certain excavations, particularly Caves 6, 7 and 9, were mid- to late-sixth century excavations and therefore, Kalacuri-sponsored according to Spink's model. The presence of a *mātrkā* panel might suggest an accommodation to a patron's religious preference at an exclusively Buddhist site.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

139. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

The Rāvaṇa Phadi cave at Aihole (c. 550 C.E.)¹⁴⁰ has little sculpturally in common with the northern examples cited thus far. It does owe its floor plan to northern antecedents. The *mātrkā* panel is located in the south chapel. The figures are all standing (in fact dancing) figures and are dressed in the fashion of other examples of Southern sculpture. The depiction covers three walls as at Ellora, but it clearly takes its subject matter from the Andhakāsura episode, for in the centre of the panel is Śiva as Naṭarāja with Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya at his feet. Śrī stands to the left of Śiva and Parvatī to Śiva's right, and three goddesses are portrayed on each of the side walls.¹⁴¹

I believe the Rameśvara stands in relation to the Dhumar Leṇa in a way analogous to the relationship between Elephanta and its East Wing; the Rāmeśwara itself maybe a subsidiary shrine to the larger Dhumar Leṇa. The proximity of the smaller Rameśwara to the monumental Dhumar Leṇa might explain the absence of subsidiary wings at the latter, and thus the absence of the mothers there as well. The first entrance shrine at Jogēśwarī, which contains the *mātrkā*s, removed as it is from the main temple by the (incomplete) open courtyard, may also illustrate the same relationship. Cave 13 at Aurangabad might stand in the same relation to Caves 6 or

140. Tarr, "Chronology and Development," *op. cit.*, p. 175.

141. Meister, Michael W., "Regional Variations in *Mātrkā* Conventions," *Artibus Asiae*, XLVII, 3/4 (1986), p. 240.

7 which are its contemporaries. This model is not complete though, for I cannot then analogously account for Maṇḍapeśwar (which has no *mātrkā* panel), nor Dhokeśvara which stand alone. I must assume that Maṇḍapeśwar was patronized by some non-royal group while the Dhokeśvara cave stood alone as a royal dedication.

The presence of the Mothers in the East Wing of Elephanta and its separation from the rest of the cave-temple lead me to conclude that this was a royal precinct for the Great Cave. This part of the cave was reserved by the architects for the sake of the local or regional lords. Below I will outline the evidence for the association of the mothers and Skanda with royalty and war. If the *saptamātrkās* (with or without Skanda) were conceived of as the power behind the throne, so to speak, for many Hindu kings of Western India in the early centuries of the Common Era, then we might be justified in assuming that some sort of royal interest was at work in these particular excavations with their prominent *mātrkā* panels.

I will now turn to additional literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidence for the history of the *saptamātrkās*, their association with Skanda, and the association of Skanda and the mothers with royalty and royal power. The Kuṣāṇas and their feudatories provide a great deal of evidence for Skanda worship and his association with a number of female figures. Inscriptions from the Gupta period give further

evidence for Skanda worship and a little for the Mothers. More inscriptions from the south suggest a royal cult dedicated to Skanda and the mothers. This includes the Chālukyas who we know were in conflict with the Kalacuris.

A number of Kuṣāṇa reliefs are preserved which depict Skanda with three to seven females.¹⁴² Without clear emblems to identify the female figures, they might be any group of females associated with Skanda such as the wives of the seven seers or the *Kṛttikās*. One panel is preserved which depicts a guardian figure with a spear beside seven females. Agrawala surmises that this guardian is Skanda as it conforms to other depictions of him from Mathurā art.¹⁴³ Several other fragmentary panels are preserved which show several animal-headed mothers but Skanda is absent. The mothers depicted conform to various pre-*Devīmāhātmya* myths. Tiwari has cast doubt upon Agrawala's contention that the animal headed figures may represent particular *mātr̥s* of the *Devīmāhātmya*, for the Mothers could assume any form according to earlier references; therefore, Tiwari calls this stage "emergent iconography" as opposed to the later standardized examples, based as they are on the *Devīmāhātmya* and the *Purāṇas*.¹⁴⁴

142. Agrawala, R. C. "Mātr̥kā Reliefs in Early Indian Art," *East and West*, vol. 21, nos. 1-2 (March-June 1971), pp. 79-89.

143. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

144. Tiwari, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Skanda's association with several ancient royal families is clear from their coinage and inscriptions. The great king Huviśka put Skanda on his coins.¹⁴⁵ Banerjea notes that Huviśka was the only early Indian king of foreign origin to put Skanda, under various titles, on his coinage.¹⁴⁶ A gold coin of Huviśka's has been found which portrays two guardian-figures each with a spear and showing the *abhayamudrā*; Agrawala identifies these two guardians as Skanda and his twin brother Viśākha.¹⁴⁷ The Yaudheyas, a feudatory of the Kuṣāṇas, issued coins in the second century with the legends "of Brahmaṇya [Kārttikeya], the divine Lord of the Yaudheyas" and "of Kumāra, the Lord Brahmaṇadeva;" according to Banerjea, the use of the genitive case, "of Brahmaṇya" and "of Kumāra," indicates that the coins were issued in the name of the god and thus, he was the temporal ruler of the kingdom.¹⁴⁸ A terracotta seal of Mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛśadhvaṇya is unusual in that it states that the Mahārāja made his kingdom over to Kārttikeya. Asim Kumar Chatterjee, following Marshall, suggests that making one's kingdom over to the favoured deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) was a pious custom.¹⁴⁹ This

145. Chatterjee, Asim Kumar, The Cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya in Ancient India, Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1970, pp. 32-33.

146. DHI, p. 144.

147. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

148. DHI, pp. 141-142.

149. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

reference, at any rate, indicates a clear association between Skanda-Kārttikeya and royal power.

The Guptas had some association with Skanda as can be seen from their names like "Kumāra" and "Skanda," and the portrayal of the peacock and Kumāra on the coins of Kumāragupta I.¹⁵⁰ In 415/6 C.E. Kumāragupta I made additions to a Skanda temple.¹⁵¹ From this time separate shrines dedicated to Skanda become rare, as he was absorbed into the Śaiva pantheon.

The developing relationship between Skanda and Śiva can be seen in Udayagiri Cave 4 and 6. The former is undated while the latter contains an inscription from 401 C.E.¹⁵² Cave 4 contains a *mātrkā* panel with Skanda, but without Śiva. Cave 6 contains images of Viṣṇu, Mahiṣāsura-mardini, Kārttikeya and then two contiguous *mātrkā* panels perpendicular to the other images. Harper describes another *mātrkā* panel in a cave she calls 6B in which the mothers are flanked by Skanda and Śiva on one side and a figure on the other side which might be another Śiva, Skanda or simply a guardian.¹⁵³

The Gaṅgdhar Stone Inscription of Viṣvarman from c. 480 C.E.¹⁵⁴ contains an unusual reference to the mothers.

150. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

151. *CII*, III, No. 10.

152. *Ibid.*, No. 6.

153. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

154. *CII*, III, No. 17.

Mayuraksaka, a minister to Prince Viṣvarman, a contemporary of Kumāragupta I, had built a shrine to Viṣṇu and a

very terrible abode, (and) filled full of female ghouls, of the divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts of joy, (and) who stir up the (very) oceans with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion.¹⁵⁵

Banerjea clarified Fleet's translation saying that the term *ḍākiṇī* should remain untranslated and the abode itself could not be terrible, but that expression must refer to the rites performed there.¹⁵⁶ The reference to magic rites seems to show a Tāntric association. Though the mothers here are not explicitly associated with war and political affairs, Tāntric rituals include rites for victory in battle.¹⁵⁷ Skanda is well known as a war god and his leadership of the Mothers must have meant some transfer of his attributes to them.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the *Devīmāhātmya* promises that the enemies of devotees of the goddess will perish.¹⁵⁹

To find a clearer association between Skanda and the Mothers and the royal importance of that group we must turn to the South. The Kadambas were a dynasty south of the Chālukyan territories, but their dates are uncertain as their grants are

155. *Ibid.*, l. 35.

156. Banerjea, J. N., Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion (Early Phase), Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966, p. 127.

157. Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

158. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

159. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

dated only in regnal years.¹⁶⁰ As was seen earlier Kīrtivarman I (c. 566/7-597/8 C.E.) of the Chālukyas was said, in his family's records, to have been "the night of death to the Naḷas and the Mauryas and the Kadambas."¹⁶¹ The inscriptions go on to elaborate that "the mighty Kadamba-tree which was the confederacy of the mighty Kadambas, was broken to pieces by him, the mighty one, a very choice elephant of a king."

The legendary founder of the Kadambas, Mayūraśarman, was said to be favoured by Skanda and the Mothers and was anointed general by them according to the Tālaguṇḍa Inscription.¹⁶² Later in the history of this dynasty they divided into two branches. Several records remain of the so-called younger branch¹⁶³ of the Kadambas. In a record of Kṛṣṇavarman, the founder of that line, it is said that he was "consecrated by having meditated on the assemblage of the mothers of Svāmi Mahāsenā [Skanda]."¹⁶⁴ Mrgeśavarman, brother of Kṛṣṇavarman, continued the "elder branch" of the Kadambas. He too "was consecrated by having meditated on the assemblage of the mothers &c.," but he acknowledges this debt in an endow-

160. DKD, p. 291.

161. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. LV," *IA*, vol. VIII (Sept. 1879), p. 244.

162. The Classical Age, pp. 271-272.

163. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

164. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. XXXV," *IA*, vol. VII (Feb. 1878), pp. 33ff.

ment made for various Jain religious activities!¹⁶⁵ Harivarman, grandson of Mr̥geṣavarman, also acknowledged Skanda and the mothers in giving an endowment to a Jain temple built by his grandfather.¹⁶⁶

The Chālukyas said that they "meditated on the feet of Svāmi Mahāsenā" from late in the reign of Mangaleśa; from the time of Pulakeśin II's sons the inscriptions say that they "have been preserved by seven mothers ... have attained uninterrupted continuity of prosperity through the protection of Kārttikeya."¹⁶⁷ The addition of the mothers to the Chālukya inscriptions of the mid-seventh century might reflect the expansion of the Chālukyan territories into the Deccan proper under Pulakeśin II, whereby the Chālukyas adopted religious tendencies in keeping with this region, or they adopted a royal religious cult which they found prevalent among the several royal families who they defeated. By the time of the Miraj Grant (1077/8 C.E.)¹⁶⁸ the Chālukyas had a very complicated theology of sovereignty describing themselves as

the birthplace of jewels of kings ... who acquired the white umbrella, and other signs of

165. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. XXII," *IA*, vol. VI (Jan. 1877), pp. 22ff.

166. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. XXV," *IA*, vol. VI (Jan. 1877), pp. 22ff.

167. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: XLI," *IA*, vol. VII (July 1878), pp. 163-164.

168. Fleet, J. F., "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions: No. L," *IA*, vol. VIII (Jan. 1879), pp. 10-21.

sovereignty, through the excellent favour of Kauṣiki;¹⁶⁹ who were preserved by the seven mothers ... who acquired the banner's of the peacock's tail and the spear through the excellent favour of Kārttikeya; who had the territories of hostile kings made subject to them on the instant at the sight of the excellent sign of the boar, which they acquired through the favour of the holy Nārāyaṇa.

The grants of the Chālukyas of Gujarat, who ruled on behalf of the Chālukyas of Bādāmī, conform to those of the main branch of the family as regards the Seven Mothers and Kārttikeya.¹⁷⁰ The Chālukyas of Gujarat began to refer to themselves as *paramamāheśvaras* from about 640/41 C.E.¹⁷¹ In the Navsari Plates of Pulakesiraja (739 C.E.), every member of the Chālukya family, from Kīrtivarman I to Pulakesiraja, is attributed with the title *paramāheśvara*.¹⁷²

It is interesting that the Chālukyas should adopt this title once they were established in the North and North-West. The first three Maitrakas chiefs of Saurāṣṭra were also *paramamāheśvaras*,¹⁷³ as were many of the kings of the main

169. Kauṣiki was the auspicious emanation of Pārvatī in various legends associated with that goddess (see Coburn, Thomas B., Devi-Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984). Kauṣiki, according to the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, was attended upon by eight Mothers, the traditional Seven Mothers plus Śivadūti (see Dev, Usha, The Concept of Śakti in the Purāṇas, Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1987, pp. 65-66). Therefore, the invocation of Kauṣiki in the Miraj Grant may indicate that she was believed to have powers like those associated with the Seven Mothers.

170. CII, IV, Nos. 27-29.

171. *Ibid.*, No. 29.

172. *Ibid.*, No. 30.

173. The Classical Age, *op. cit.*, pp. 60ff. However, Dhurvasena, the fourth ruler of the Maitraka house is called *paramabhagavata* in the same inscription in which his father

branch of the Vākāṭakas.¹⁷⁴ As we have seen, this was the religious title adopted by the Kalacuri family. The use of this religious epithet might simply have reflected the religious inclinations of the population at large with which the royal houses sought to associate themselves.

Royal titles of a religious nature do not necessarily reflect the patterns of patronage of those kings. The Chālukyas were dedicated to Skanda and Viṣṇu's boar avatar was their ensign, but they patronized Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Jain temples. Therefore, the fact that the Kalacuris were *paramamāheśvaras* is in no way sufficient to establish the fact that they were the patrons of the sixth century Hindu caves at Ellora and in the Konkan.¹⁷⁵

On the other hand, dedication to the Mothers and/or Skanda did not limit the activities of patrons. As we have seen, the Kadambas declared an affiliation to Skanda and the Mothers, yet those same records often refer to Jain endowments. However, I suggest that, unlike epithets like *paramamāheśvara*, the inscriptional references to the Mothers and Skanda do make a royal connection between dedications to the mothers and devotion to them; they describe the relationship between the royal devotee, and the Mothers/Skanda, whereas epithets like *paramamāheśvara* leave no indication as to the

and older brothers were called *paramamāheśvara*; and Dhara-
paṭṭa, the younger brother of Dhurvasena is called *paramādit-
yabhakta* (CII, III, No. 38).

174. "Jogeśwarī," p. 33n.

175. *Ibid.*, p. 2; "Elephanta," p. 242.

nature of the affiliation. From an early period we have Skanda as the temporal ruler of kingdoms. The Seven Mothers become associated with Skanda and pick up such political features.¹⁷⁶ Also, the Tāntric association of the Mothers might link them to magic rites for the attainment of victory in war.¹⁷⁷ This religious association which transcends the aspects of particular cults--as far as the royal patrons were concerned--is perhaps suggested by Aurangabad 13.

Devotional expressions like *paramamāheśvara* in inscriptions do not leave any hint as to what devotees thought the deity did for them. However, the Kadambas devotion to the Mothers "consecrated" them, presumably, on the throne. By the

176. Here I would mention the *mātrkā* panel from the Kailasa temple at Ellora (eighth century). It is located in a separate shrine and is considered by scholars to belong to the last phase of the excavation of the temple. It is located in its own shrine. By virtue of the fact that that shrine is locally known as the *Yajñasālā* or Hall of Sacrifice, R. Sengupta tries to show how--presupposing a royal/warrior association for the mothers--the shrine is constructed in a way analogous to the sacrificial enclosure of the Angiṣṭoma, which is the Vedic sacrifice for success in battle. Sengupta relates the excavation of the Hall of Sacrifice and its *mātrkā* panel to particular battles in the history of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III. A figure on a wall perpendicular to the mothers is an unidentified woman whom Sengupta suggests might be a representation of Govinda's wife, who would have had to be present at the sacrifice but was perhaps unavailable; in the *Rāmāyana*, Rāma had an image of Sītā prepared as a substitute for ritual purposes. See Sengupta, R., "The Yajñasālā of Kailāsa at Ellora and Identification of Some of its Sculptures," *IHQ*, March, 1960, pp. 58-67.

177. Teun Goudriaan has suggested that the development of magic and practical rituals for individuals and the community at large was a means by which Tāntric priests promoted their cult. There are six acts of magic in Tantra which give a ruler, for example, the power to pacify, subjugate, or immobilize a victim, cause two parties to come into conflict, drive people from their homes, or liquidate enemies. See *Hindu Tantrism*, Hanbuch Der Orientalistik Zweite Abteilung 4. Band, 2. Abschnitt, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979, pp. 34-35.

seventh century, the Chālukyas, having moved into the greater Deccan, had their family "preserved" by the Mothers and "attained uninterrupted continuity of prosperity through the protection of Kārttikeya." Later, the Chālukyas add that Kauṣikī, an emanation of Pārvatī, was also partly responsible for their sovereignty.

The association of Skanda-Kārttikeya with war and royalty is very old. So too is Skanda's association with multiple female figures. By the Gupta period both Skanda and the Mothers had become virtually absorbed into the Śaiva pantheon. It is then that we arrive at the panels from the sixth century. Worship of Skanda and the Mothers was certainly not strictly the prerogative of royal families. However, we might assume that the small chapels adjacent to larger temples at Jogeswarī, Elephanta, Ellora, and Aurangabad were used for special liturgies which, on the basis of the presence of the *mātrkāś*, involved local or regional lords.

The relationship between the smaller or subsidiary caves--which I have suggested are the truer reflections of royal patronage at the sites--and the monumental excavations leads me to certain speculations concerning the nature of religious patronage in this period. The existence of the excavations, on the whole, I believe is a function of the prevailing religious climate in those regions--Pāśupata-Śaiva or Buddhist. The royal patronage at these sites, generally speaking, reflected the need by the powers that be to support the people's religious inclinations or the priesthood of those

sects. So too, the king supported the craft guilds which worked on the caves.

Patronage was not an attempt by a king to establish his authority in newly conquered territory, but represented the fulfilment of the king's responsibilities to his subjects at the very heart of his empire. The king's needs were only ancillary to the work--he therefore, was less than a hands-on supervisor. Royal (religious) needs were accommodated, not in the main excavations, but in the subsidiary caves as I have outlined in this discussion.

CONCLUSION

The question of religious patronage in the early medieval period is difficult to resolve because of the lack of hard data. Art Historians may trace the development and spread of artistic styles. The next step is to understand the historical circumstances which led to such developments. In the absence of hard evidence, that history is often reconstructed with an emphasis on the identity of the patrons of key monuments. The motivations of the patrons are assumed to be the most significant factors in the creation of art objects, and little reference is made to the many interrelationships which must have existed between the patrons, artists and religious authorities, in the case of religious donations. The most substantial artistic developments are assumed to have been possible only under the growing hegemony of a great imperial house. Hence, artistic production is labelled by royal or dynastic title according to the period to which such production belongs. The motivations of any intermediate strata of patrons or the influence of other groups involved in the production, such as the artisans or religious authorities, are usually not considered. Michael

Meister has recognised the arbitrary nature of many such identifications:

we have had a tendency to link art in various periods in India to dynasties having a centralized position--Kuşāṇa, Gupta, Pratihāra--without recognizing the generating vitality of local patrons. Only as such "local" patrons have become "imperial" dynasties ruling "states" in the "medieval" period (as earlier "imperiums" declined)--with *praśāstis* to match--have we credited them with the ability to maintain distinctive production. Our models are probably wrong.

Much scholarly work must continue if we are to define the relation of region to power in the Indian context. "Lineage society" and "state formation" continued to be generative formulations well into the period of Hindu "medievalism" and their consequences for patronage (not simply the building of buildings or making of sculptures, but society's multiple reasons for doing so) have hardly yet been worked out.¹⁷⁸

This thesis in its analysis of the so-called "Kala-curī" monuments has attempted to show the problems with making such a connection between the "imperial" Kalacuris and the sixth century cave-temples of the Konkan and Deccan. In conclusion I will summarize my history of the sixth century in Western India and how that relates to the creation of these cave temples. Accepting the stylistic continuity between these various sites, I will make a few brief suggestions to account for this continuity.

178. Meister, Michael W., "A Recently Discovered Step-Well and Questions of Cāhamāna Patronage in the Eighth Century A.D.," in Bhattacharya, Gouriswar, ed., Aksayanivi: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Admiration of Her Scholarly Contributions, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica No. 88, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 198.

With the fall of the Vākāṭakas and the Guptas, the lesser powers throughout Northern India were freed from imperial hegemony. Early in the sixth century the Mauryas on the West coast became a significant power taking over the former territories of the Bhojas around Goa and ruling as far north as Bombay. Before 550 C.E. the artistic traditions of Śāmalājī began to make their way south to the Konkan. This influence was felt by the artisans of the Shivadi workshop who passed that influence on to the newly initiated Jogeśwarī, Maṇḍapeśwar and Elephanta cave-temples in the Konkan.

In the middle of the sixth century the Kalacuris came to power along the Narmadā river. Soon they controlled the territory in southern Gujarat. The Mauryas, perhaps in the name of the Kalacuris, or a feudatory of the Kalacuris in southern Gujarat, eliminated the Traikūṭakas. The Mauryas might have accepted Kalacuri sovereignty, but this is not certain; we know that they were relatively independent of the Kalacuris, for they were defeated by the Chālukyas independently of any Chālukyan conflict with the Kalacuris.

Near the time of the rise of the Kalacuris in the Deccan, new Buddhist excavations were begun at Aurangabad and Hindu excavations were begun at Ellora. Regardless of the relationship between the Kalacuris and the Mauryas, the artistic influences which were at work in the Konkan caves spread to the Ellora-Aurangabad region. New excavations were begun at Aurangabad and the great excavations at Ellora,

particularly the Rāmeśvara and Dhumar Leṇa, were begun. Shortly after this time the "provincial" Dhokeśvara was begun south of Aurangabad.

The presence of the *saptamātrkās* at Jogeswarī, Elephanta, the Rāmeśvara and Aurangabad 13 suggests royal participation in these caves. However, in keeping with Meister's warning, it might be improper to suggest that all the sixth century caves owe their creation to royal support. This discussion has introduced a number of caves all excavated over a short period of time, but at a few sites. Several other groups beside the crown no doubt had a hand in their creation. This might explain the absence of the *mātrkās* at sites like Maṇḍapeśwar. The presence of the *mātrkās* at the Buddhist site of Aurangabad suggests the existence of royal patronage at this site, probably in conjunction with the patronage of some of the other caves.

In my analysis I have tried to address precisely the points which Meister has made concerning the arbitrary association of patronage and imperial political power. I have also tried to show that the strict association of artistic developments with the fortunes of any royal power, regardless of its degree of influence, might be equally arbitrary.

I believe that the history of the sixth century, as I have outlined it, shows that the cave-temples of the period were the result of localized efforts, for large imperial powers did not really exist in the period. The Mauryas and

Kalacuris were both significant powers, but not of the order of the Vākāṭakas or Guptas.

At the same time, the inscriptions of the period indicate that several intermediaries, below the throne, held a significant amount of political power. Feudatories held considerable power as is evidenced by the Sunaokala Plates of Saṅgasimha (541 C.E.); as well, the king delegated a lot of power to his officers, as can be seen in the Sankheda Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa which were issued on that Kalacuri king's behalf by one of his military officers.

The guilds and other professional associations of the period appear to also have held a great deal of power. These associations became "virtually independent units of political power."¹⁷⁹ They were responsible for their own affairs to such an extent that the king was enjoined to enforce their rules and decisions. The rise of such associations appears to have been the result of the gradual feudalization of the economy: "economic retrogression, emergence of self-sufficient units of production and a growing trend towards decentralisation as well as localisation were the characteristic features of the Gupta and post-Gupta times."¹⁸⁰

179. Thakur, Vijay Kumar, "Role of Guilds in Ancient Indian Urban Administration (c. 200 B.C.-A. D. 600)," in Ray, Amita, S. C. Ray, and H. Sanyal, eds., Indian Studies: Essays Presented in Memory of Prof. Niharranjan Ray, Delhi: Caxton Publishers, 1984, p. 221.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

The relative independence of professional associations suggests that there were other strata in the economic hierarchy with the means to undertake large-scale religious patronage; in addition, in the case of the guilds of artisans, significant political power meant that these groups must have been able to extend their influence independently of other authorities. This might include moving entire families or guilds of artisans to new regions in the attempt to find new lines of patronage. Many guilds had their own religious affiliation; by changing locations, artisans and craftsmen would spread the traditions associated with their guild or family which would include their religious biases. That the guilds had the freedom to change locations is known from the inscription of the Maṇḍasor silk weavers, who relocated to the Maṇḍasor area.¹⁸¹

If the monuments in the Deccan and the Konkan were created without a dynastic connection between the two regions then the unmistakable stylistic unity between the caves in each region must be explained. Freedom of mobility for the artisans who worked on the sixth century cave-temples must be assumed. At the very least, the mobility of artisans might have been the result of tribute arrangements which involved the temporary transfer of artisans retained by a regional

181. Thapar, Romila, "The Social Role of Craftsmen and Artists in Early India, in Meister, Michael W., ed., Making Things in South Asia: The Role of Artist and Craftsman, Proceedings of The South Asia Seminar, IV, 1985-86, Philadelphia: Department of South Asia Regional Studies, 1988, p. 14.

power and sent to an overlord for a time. Such mobility could also explain the spread of stylistic and religious sectarian (Lakulīśa-Pāśupata) influence from Śāmalajī to Parel to Elephanta, and then the spread of that influence to the greater Deccan. Similarly, the slight similarity which exists between the early Chālukyan caves and the Ellora caves can be explained in this way.

Of patronage in Indian history Romila Thapar says that there emerges a nexus between the patron, artisan, and the object, with artisan lending prestige to the patron by making a beautiful object, though the patron's recognition of its beauty remained deeply embedded in the aesthetics of the community."¹⁸²

Given the power which artists and patrons each possessed, the creation of religious edifices, such as the monuments under discussion, must have served to legitimate the status of both parties.

Therefore, the most important consideration for the patrons in the creation of the monuments, I suggest, was not their own desires, but their need to legitimate their status by patronage of artisans, and the support of the religious inclinations of the community. The patrons--particularly if they were royal--were required to insure that the artisans supported them politically, for the professional associations to which artisans belonged were significant political groups. So too, the priesthoods of particular religious denominations

182. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

must have been a significant political force by virtue of their relationship to the people at large. The patrons' own religious needs were met in the sixth century caves, but these were ancillary to the public religious needs which the caves met overall. Royal needs were met through the *saptamātrkā* shrines which were often located in separate shrines, possibly employed in royal liturgy. That the *saptamātrkā*s had the power to confer and preserve royal prosperity was a belief that appears to have been universally accepted throughout India in this period.

The relationship of the patrons to the excavations was far more loose than models such as Spink's propose. In the "nexus" of patronage the patron's first responsibility was to the creators and users of the temples; patronage did not represent the legitimation of new conquest, but was the fulfilment of *jajmani*-like responsibilities. In exchange the patron received the merit which such undertakings provided, which, among other things, translated into reinforced political and social status. The patrons, no doubt, attempted to maximize the power of their patronage to legitimate their political authority by balancing that against their expenditure. The presence of the *saptamātrkā*s in the Dhokeśvara cave suggests royal patronage. However, this "provincial" cave was a modest expenditure in that locality which only required the use of second rate artisans in a region which required only a modest show of religious and economic support.

These cave-temples do not seem to represent the legitimation of ubiquitous sovereignty, but represented the interrelationship of several groups--artisans, religious groups and the local political authorities--strictly at the local level. The areas around the cave-temples must have represented the foci of the regional political powers. The Jogeswarī and Elephanta caves must have been at the centre of Mauryan power, while the Rāmeśvara, Dhumar Leṇa, Aurangabad 13 and Dhokeśvara caves were in the immediate vicinity of Kalacuri sovereignty--the *saptamātrkās* in each indicating that these caves were done with royal support. Maṇḍapeśwar, several caves at Aurangabad and the earlier Hindu caves at Ellora may have been undertaken by royal patrons, but the absence of any hard evidence of royal support (like the presence of the Mothers) leaves open the possibility of any number of non-royal patrons at these sites.

These suggestions as to the nature of the relationship of patron and artist in early medieval India are tentative and speculative. They are based on the hypothesis that the spread of artistic influence in this period was a function of the mobility of artisans across political boundaries, rather than unified imperial patronage. In this limited study it was not possible to pursue a thorough enquiry into the nature of patronage in this period except beyond the limited evidence offered by the "So-Called Kalacuri Monuments." An analysis of available inscriptions from various sites over various periods

of time, plus an art historical study of those sites would hopefully reveal something more of the patterns of patronage which I have suggested.

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DYNASTIES OF EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

Kalacuris

Subandhu
(486)
?
Kṛṣṇarāja
(c. 500-40)
|
Śaṅkaragaṇa
(c. 540-600)
|
Buddharāja
(c. 600-10)

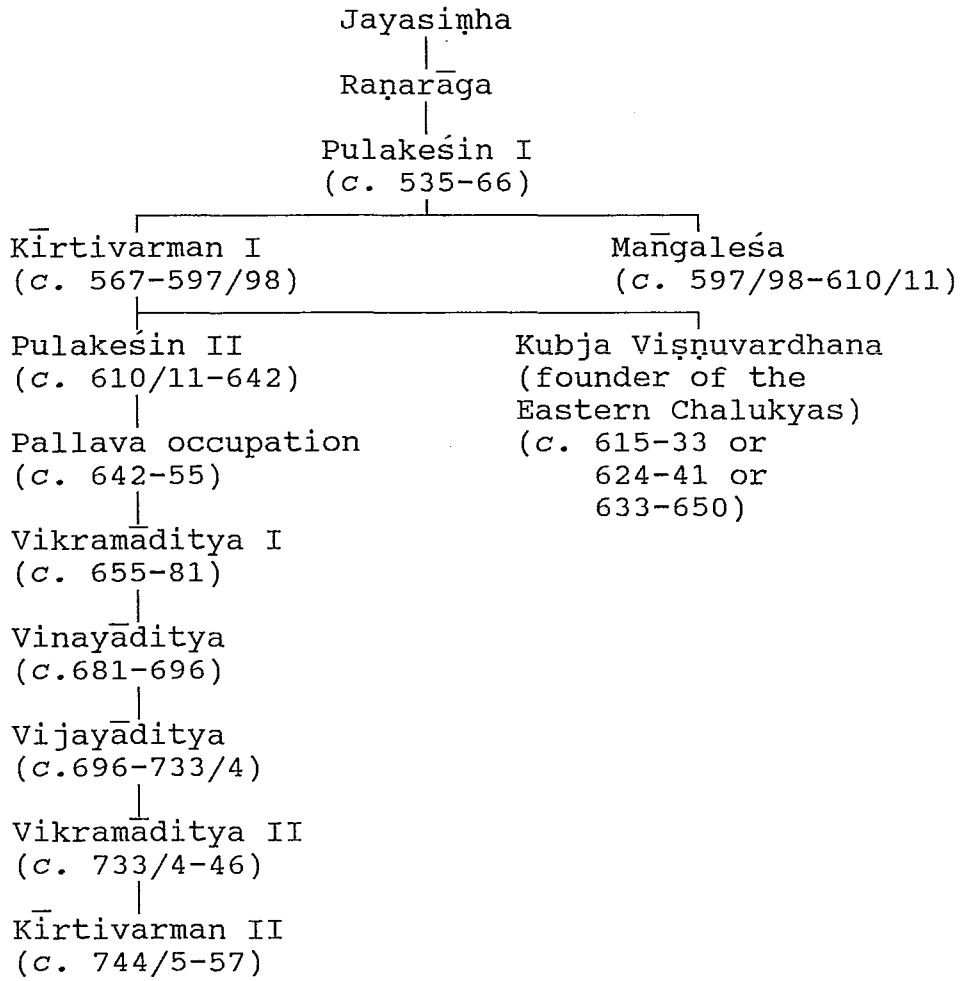
Traikūṭakas

Indradatta
(c. 525)
|
Dahrasena
(c. 455)
|
Vyaghrasena
(c. 489)
|
Madhyamasena
(506)
|
Vikramasena
(533)

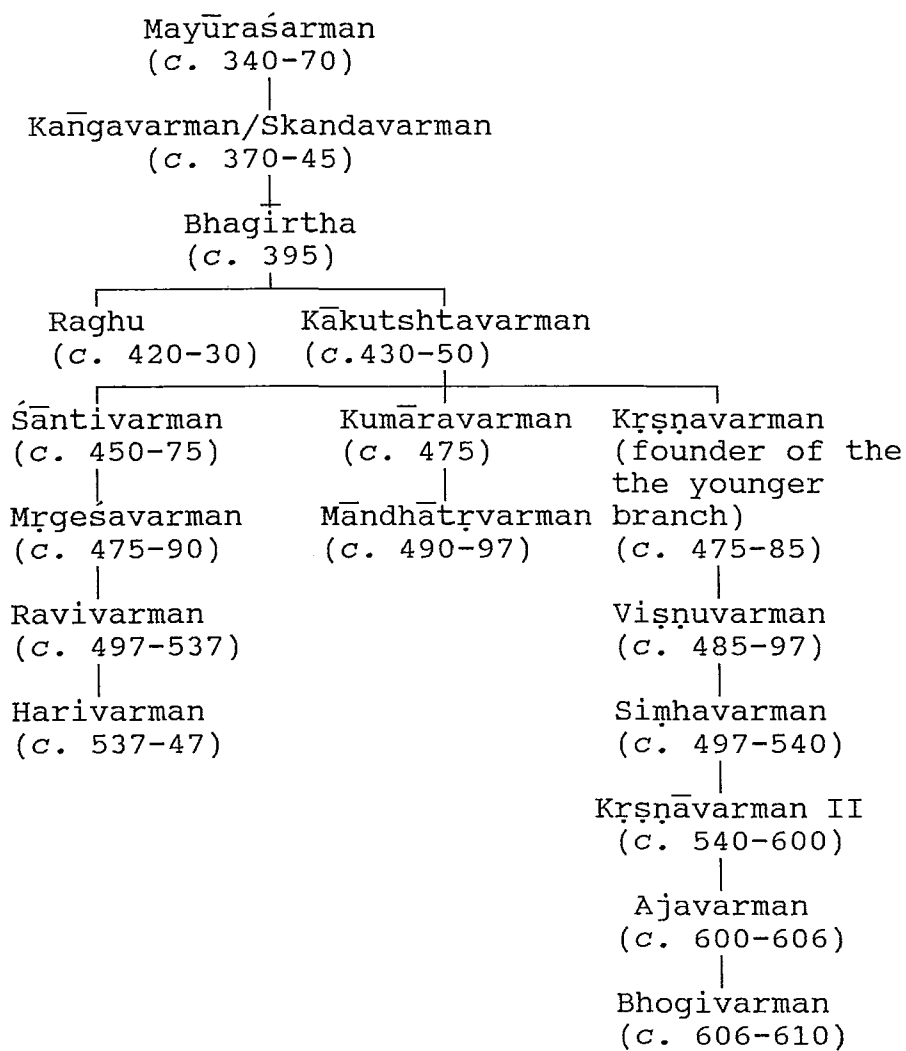
Gurjaras of Nāndīpurī

Dadda I
(c. 575)
|
Jayabhaṭa I
Vitarāga
(c. 600)
|
Dadda II
Praśāntarāga
(629-41)
|
Jayabhaṭa II
(c. 650)
|
Dadda III
Bāhasahāya
(c. 685)
|
Jayabhaṭa III
(c. 700)
|
Ahirola
|
Jayabhaṭa IV
(c. 735)

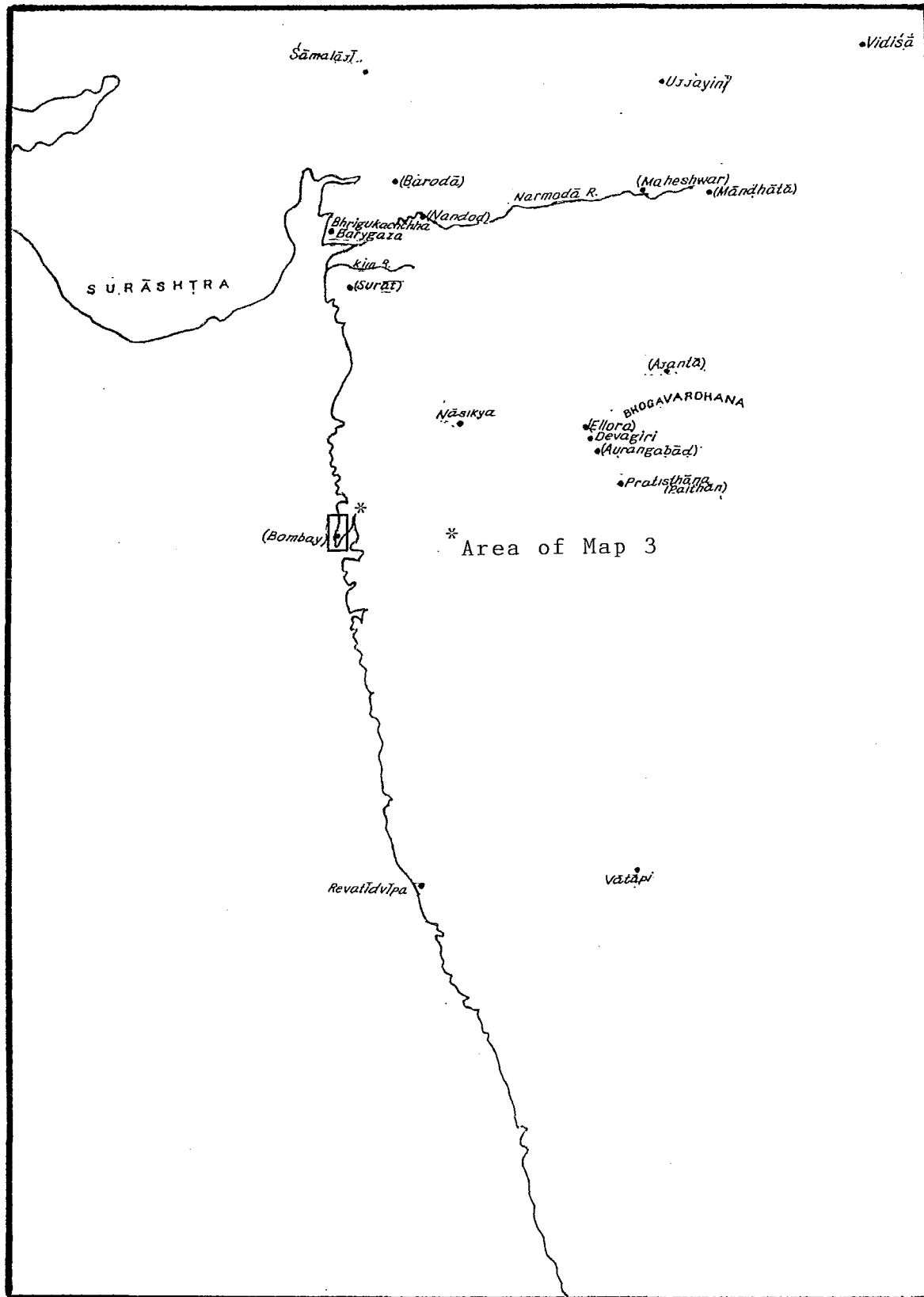
Chalukyas of Bādāmi



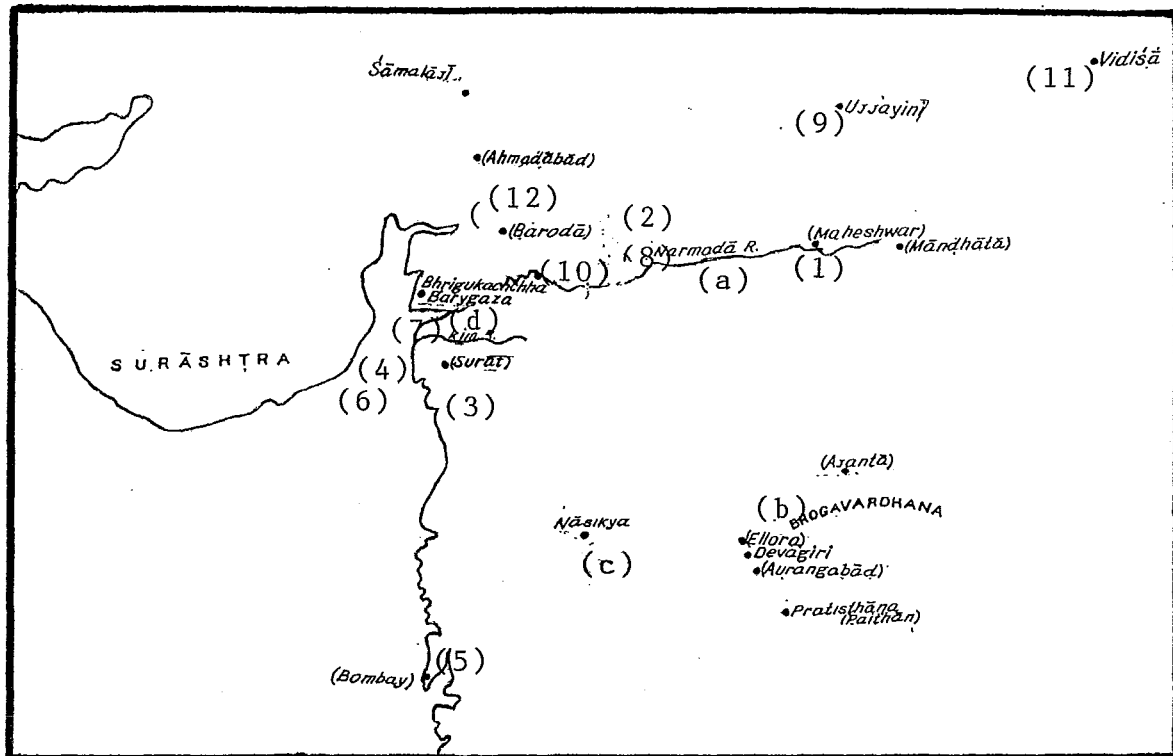
Kadambas



MAP 1 EARLY MEDIEVAL WESTERN INDIA



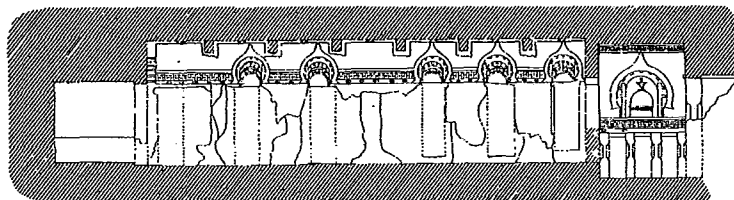
MAP 2 DISTRIBUTION OF KALACURI AND OTHER INSCRIPTIONS



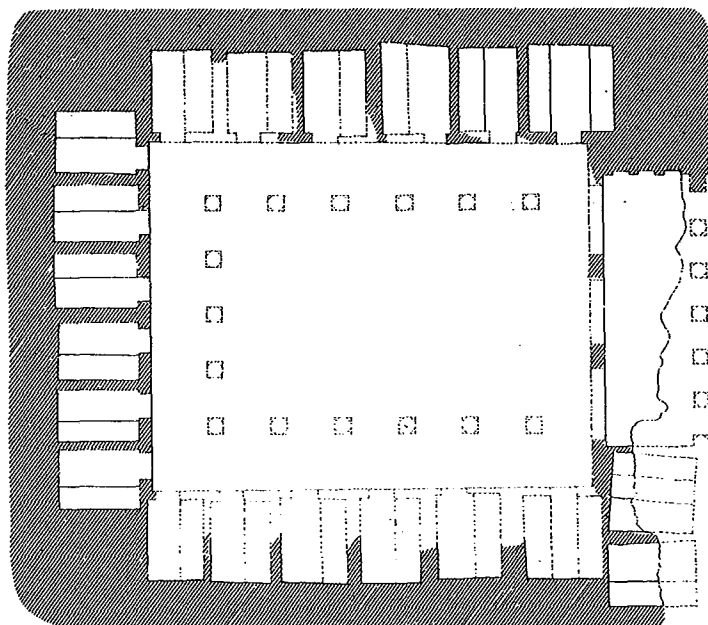
- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Barwani Plate of Subandhu
issued at Mahismati 486 C.E.
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 6
grant land in area of
(a) Udumbaragarta, in
Barwani District | (7) Sunaokala Plate of
Sangasimha
541 C.E.
grant a village 18
miles outside Broach
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 11 |
| (2) Bagh Cave Plate of Subandhu
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 7 | (8) Lap'kamana Plate of
Sankaragana
595 C.E. |
| (3) Pardi Plate of Dahrasena
456 C.E.
found at Pardi, 50 miles
south of Surat
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 8 | (9) Abhona Plate of
Sankaragana
597 C.E.
issued from Ujjayini
(b) grant a village in
Bhogavardhana District
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 12 |
| (4) Surat Plate of Vyaghrasena
489 C.E.
issued from Aniruddhapura
Hultsch identified it with
Sopara
Mirashi said it was in
Southern Gujarat | (10) Sankheda Plate of
Sankaragana
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 13 |
| (5) Kanheri Plate of the
Traikutakas
493 C.E.
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 10 | (11) Vadner Plate of Buddharaja
610 C.E.
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 14
issued from Ujjayani
(c) grant land in
Vadner, Nasik District |
| (6) Matvan Plate of Vikramasena
533 C.E.
issued from Aniruddhapura
"of the Kalacuris" | (12) Sarsavni Plate of Buddharaja
609/10 C.E.
<u>CII</u> , IV, No. 15
issued from Anandapura
(d) grant land in
Broach District |

KONDANĒ.

I. SECTION OF VIHĀRA.

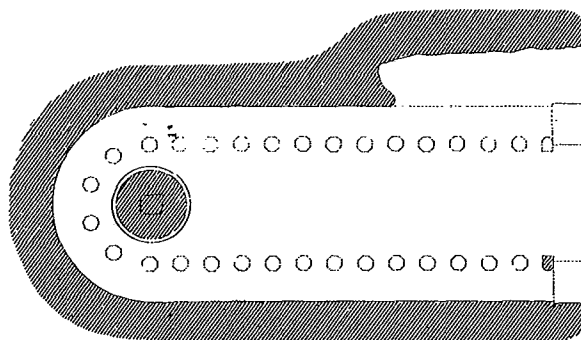


2. PLAN.



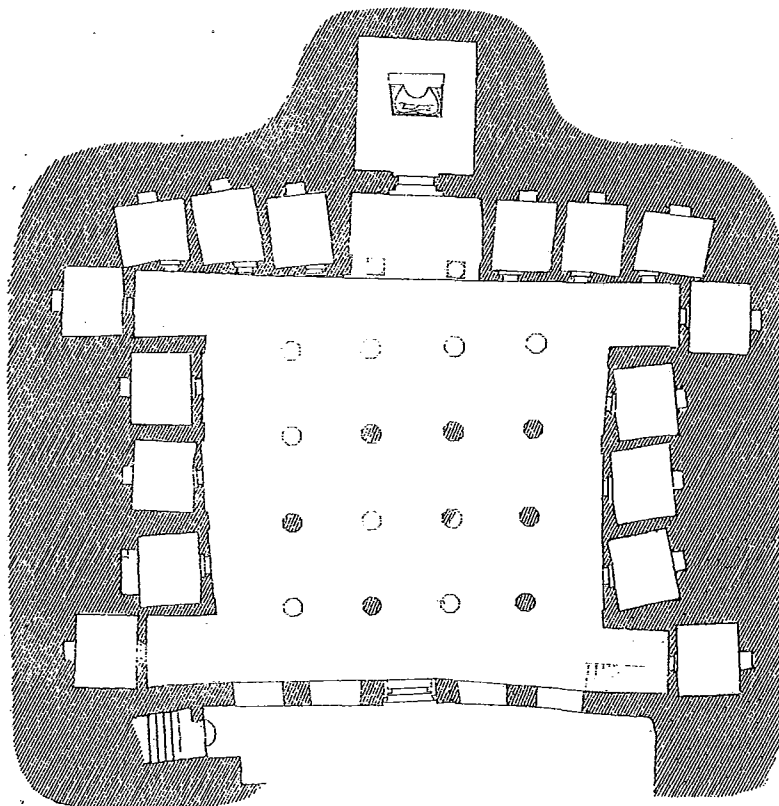
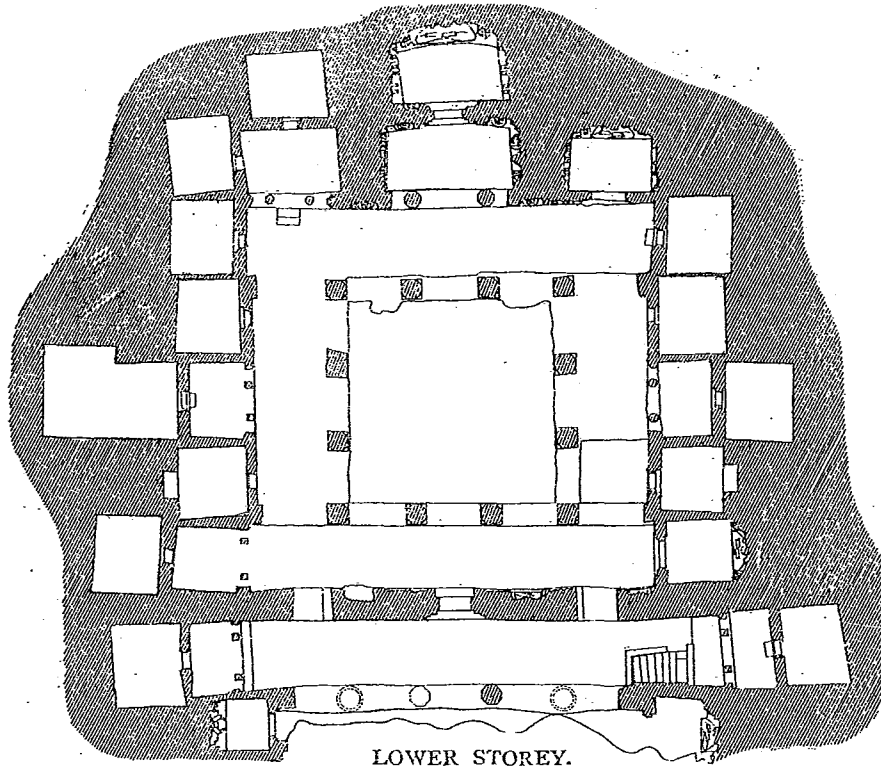
Scale of 10 0 10 20 30 40 feet.

3. PLAN OF CHAITYA.

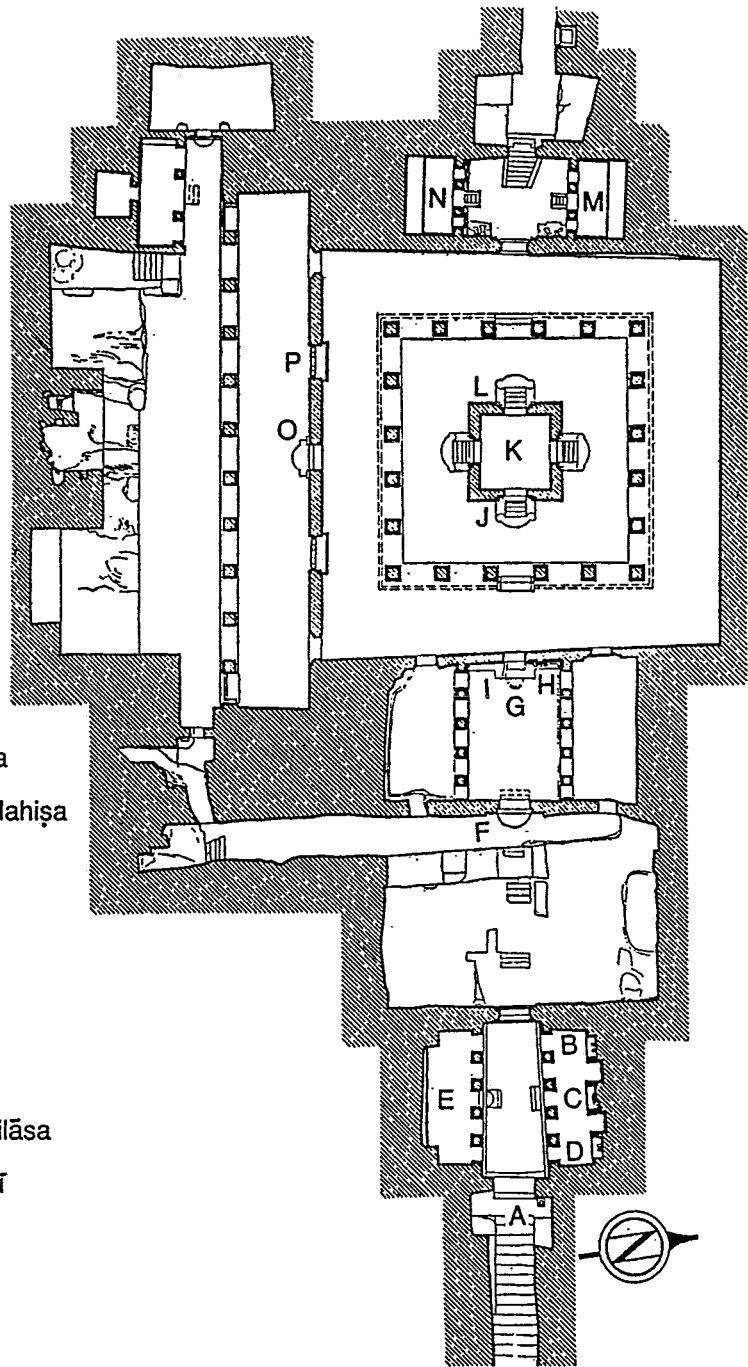


Scale of 10 0 10 20 30 40 feet.
W. GRIGGS, PHOTO LITH. LONDON. S. E.

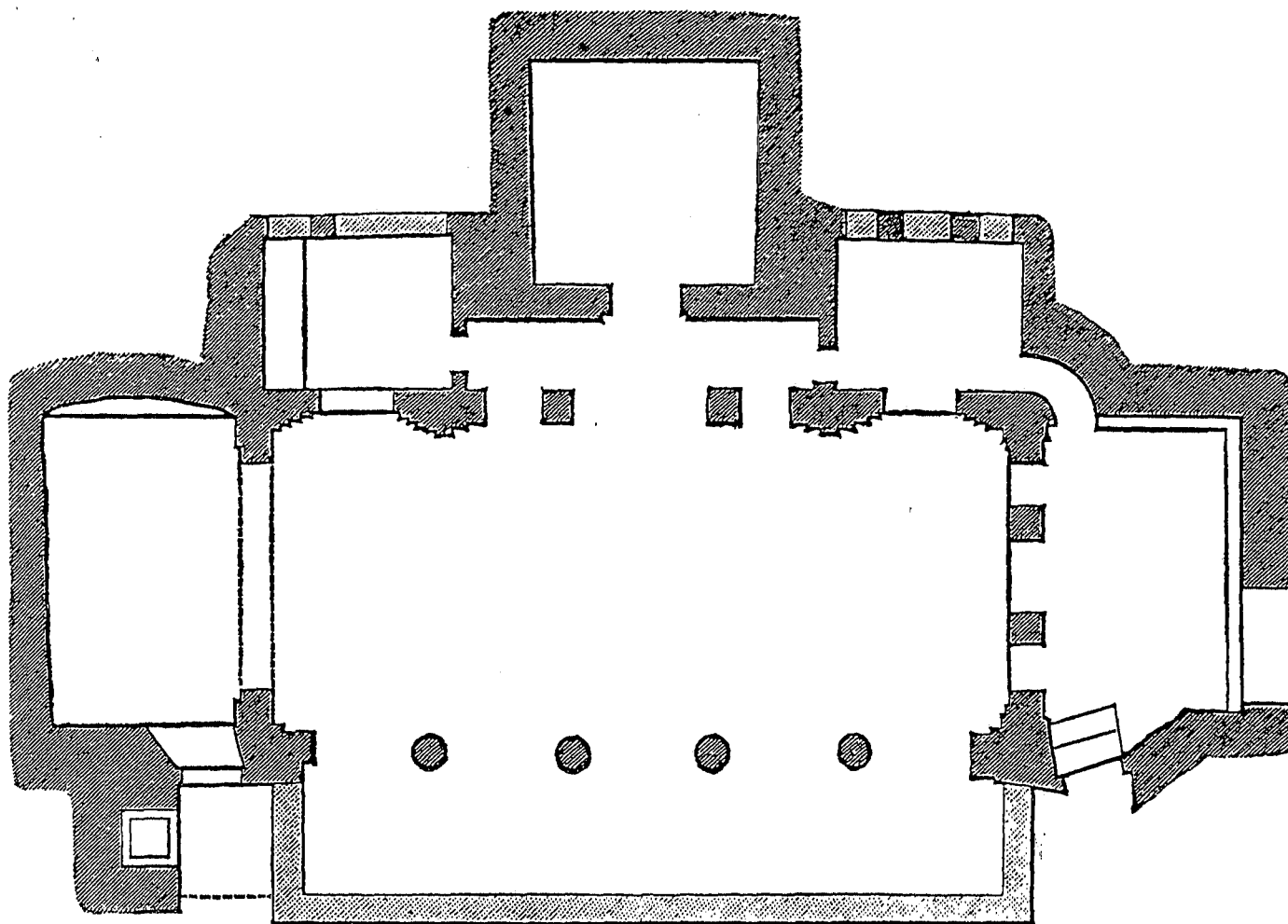
AJANTA: CAVE VI.
UPPER STOREY.



- A-Rāvaṇa shaking Mt. Kailāsa
 B-Durgā slaying the demon Mahiṣa
 C-Gaṇeśa
 D-Kārttikeya
 E-Mātṛkāś
 F-Śiva dancing
 G-Śiva as Lakulīśa
 H-Śiva and Pārvatī on Mt. Kailāsa
 I-Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī
 J-Śiva as Lakulīśa
 K-shrine
 L-Śiva as Lakulīśa
 M-Śiva dancing
 N-Śiva as Lakulīśa
 O-ekamukhaliṅga
 P-Śiva slaying Andhaka; Durgā



SCALE OF 3 0 3 6 9 12 METRES
 SCALE OF 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 FEET

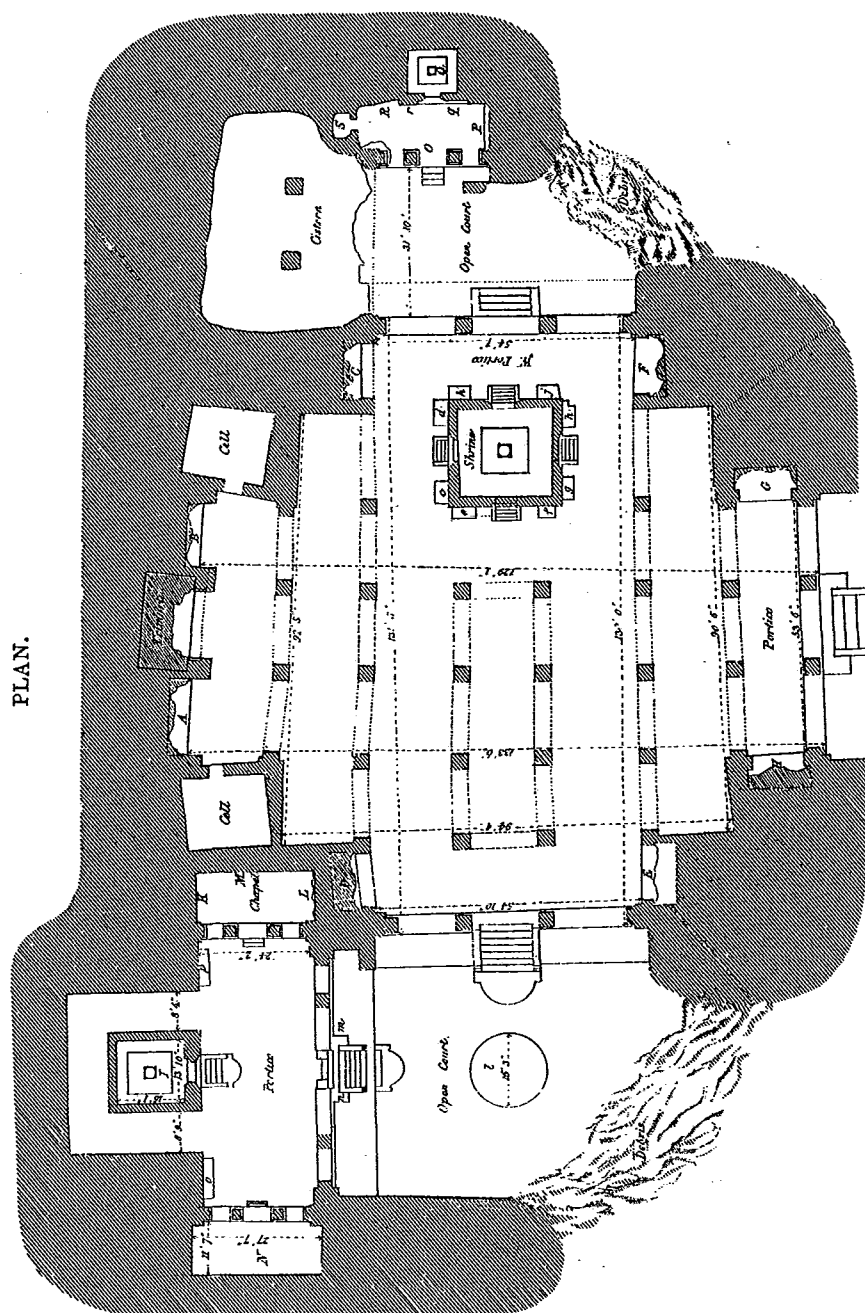


Scale of 0 5 10 20 30 feet

No. 72. Notre Dame de la Misericorde, Mandapeswar.

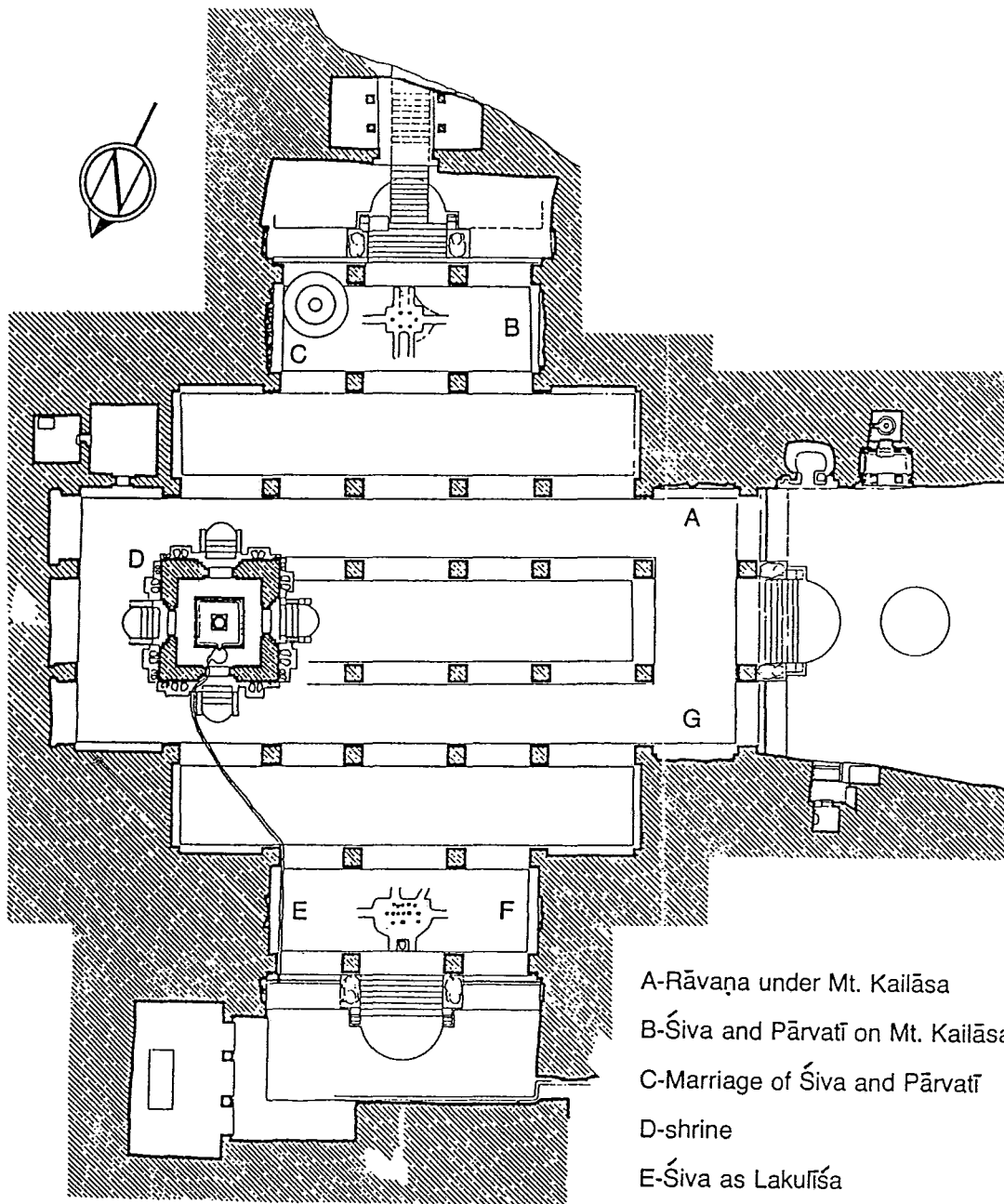
ELEPHANTA ROCK TEMPLE.

PLAN.



Scale of 10

 W. GRIGGS, PHOTO LITH. LONDON, S. E.

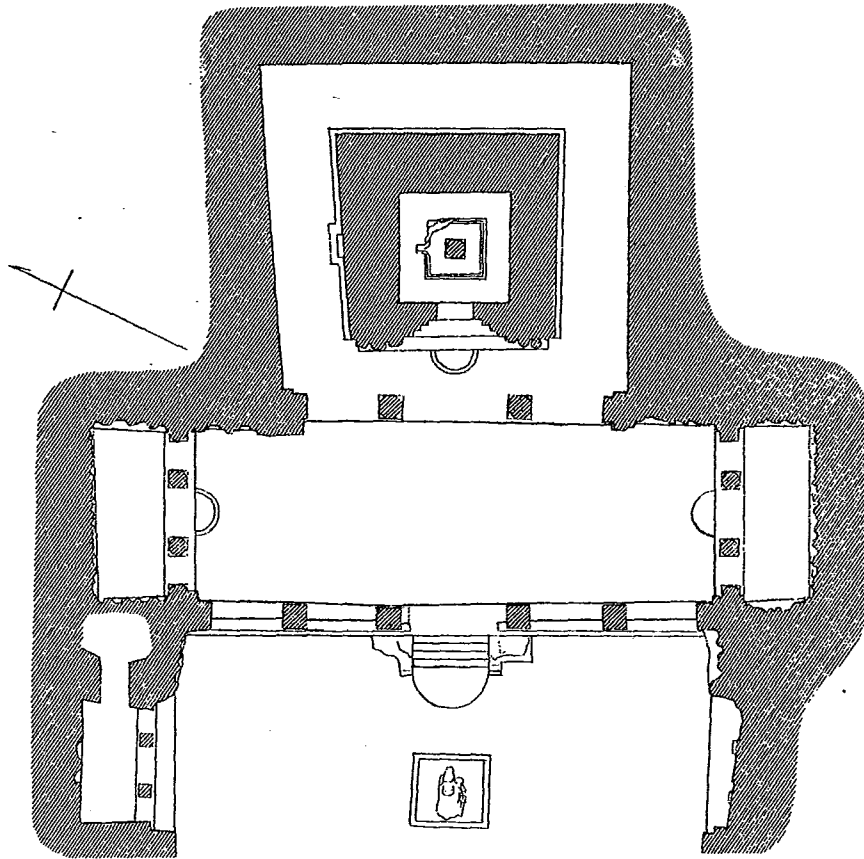


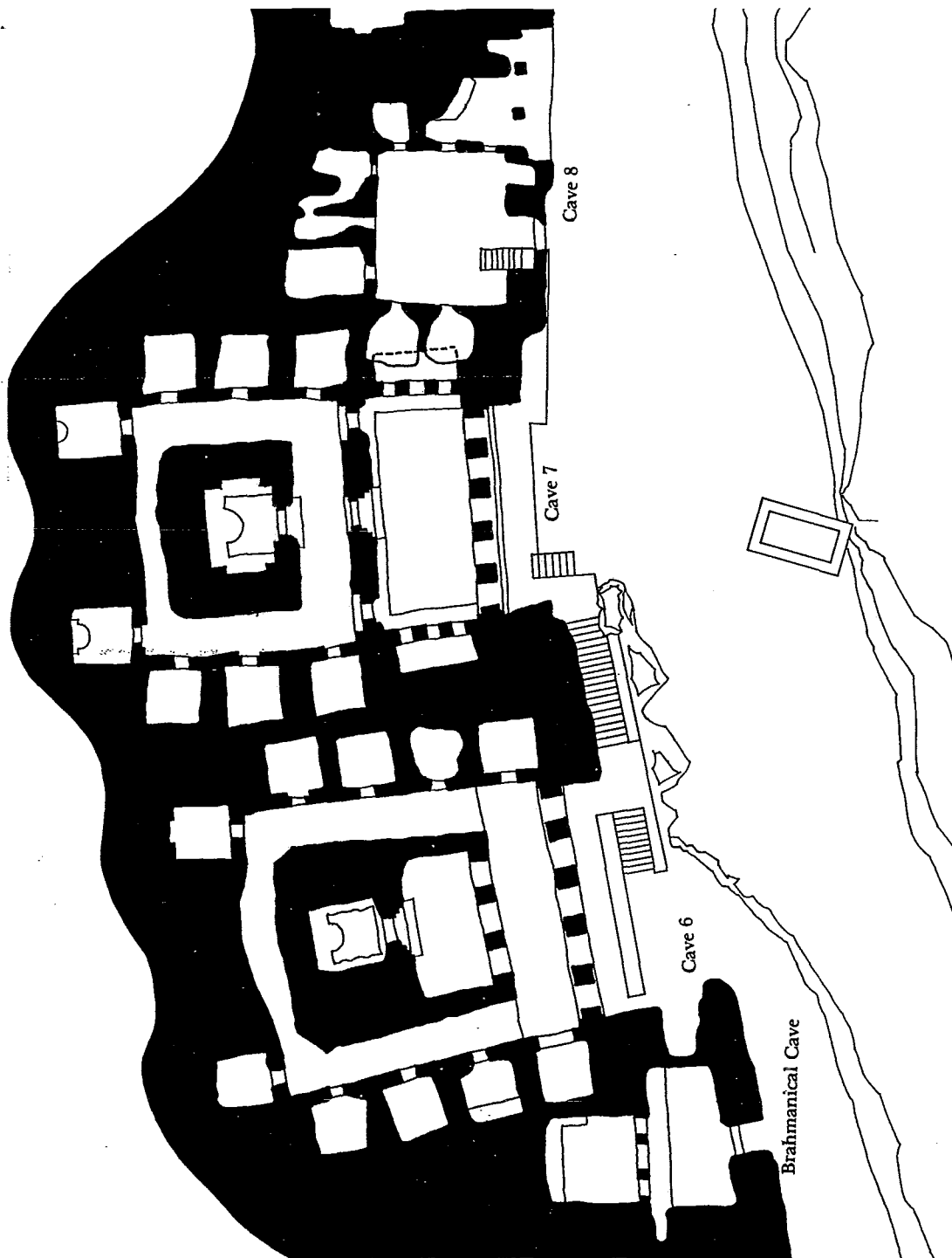
- A-Rāvaṇa under Mt. Kailāsa
- B-Śiva and Pārvatī on Mt. Kailāsa
- C-Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī
- D-shrine
- E-Śiva as Lakṣmīśa
- F-Śiva dancing
- G-Śiva slaying Andhaka

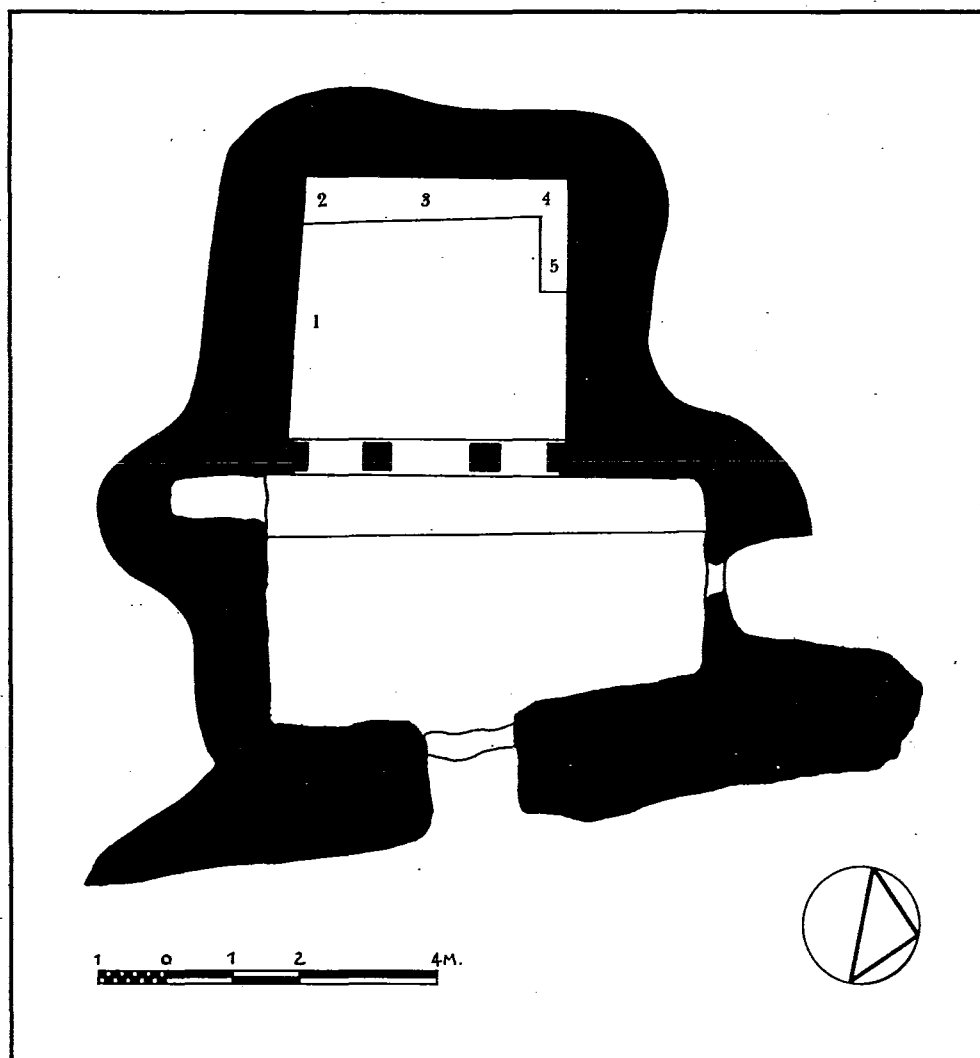
SCALE OF 4 0 4 8 12 16 20 METRES

SCALE OF 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 FEET

ELURÂ.
I. PLAN OF RAMÉSWARA.







Brahmanical Cave

1. Sapta matrikas
2. Chamunda
3. Ganesa
4. Durga
5. Buddha

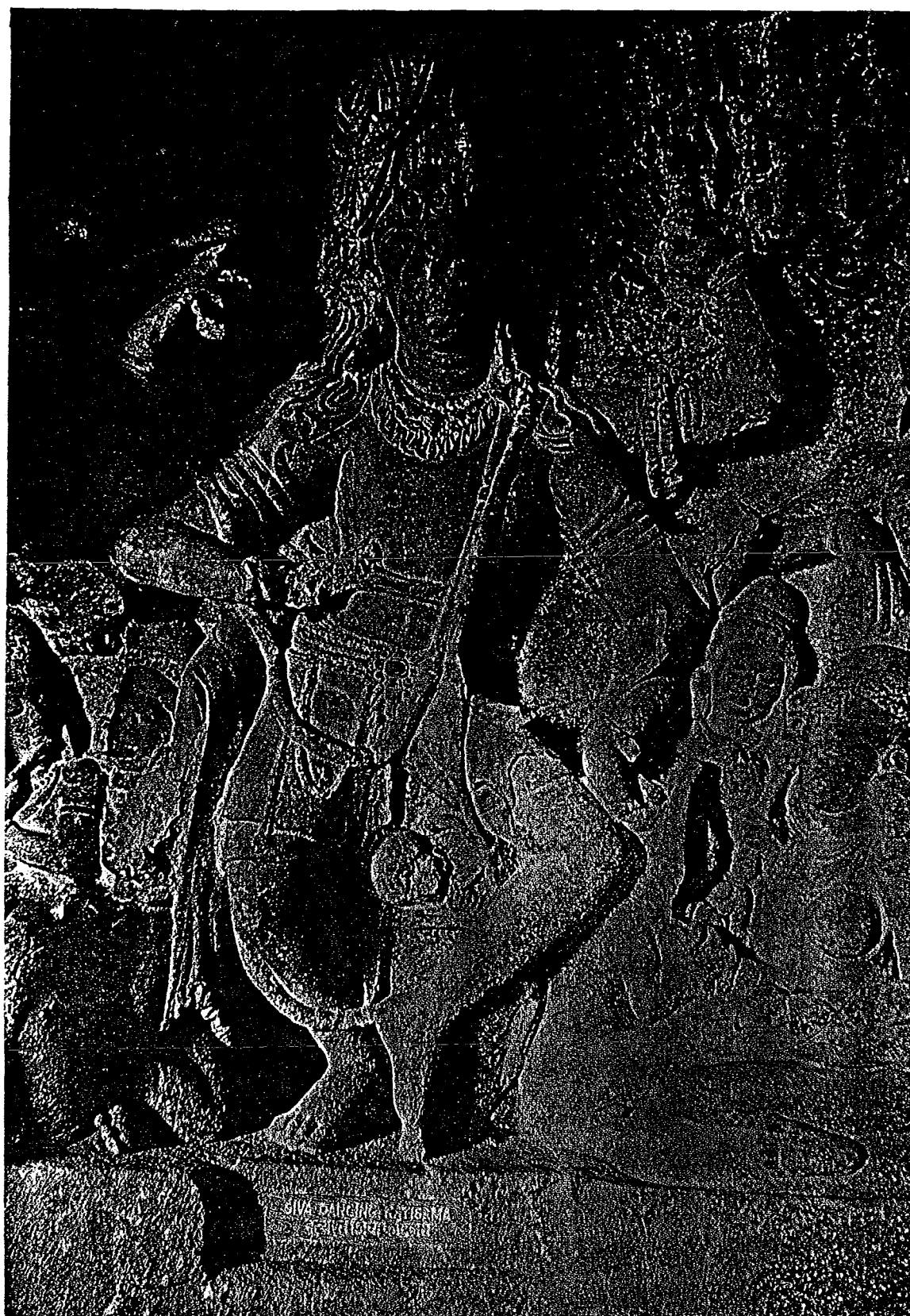




Elephanta Cave 1, Interior, south wall, Mahādeva with Ardhanārīśvara (left) and Gaṅgādhara (right);
(extreme wide-angle view causing distortion)





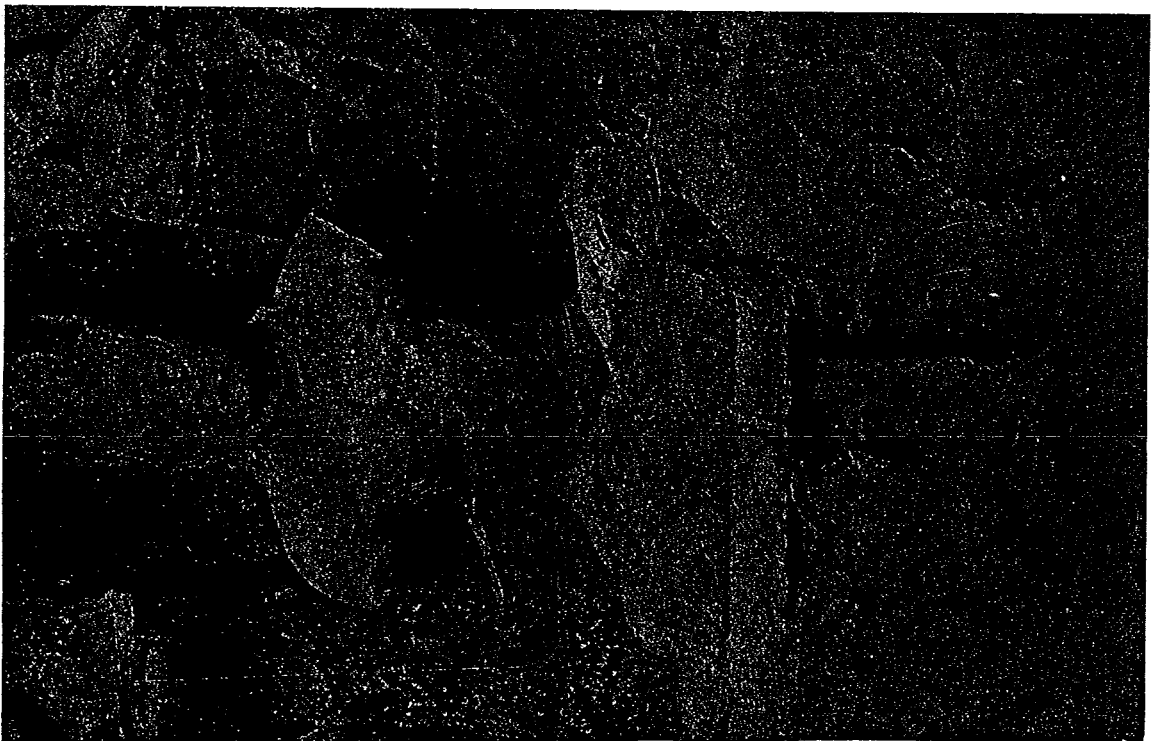


(a)

Plate XV



(b)

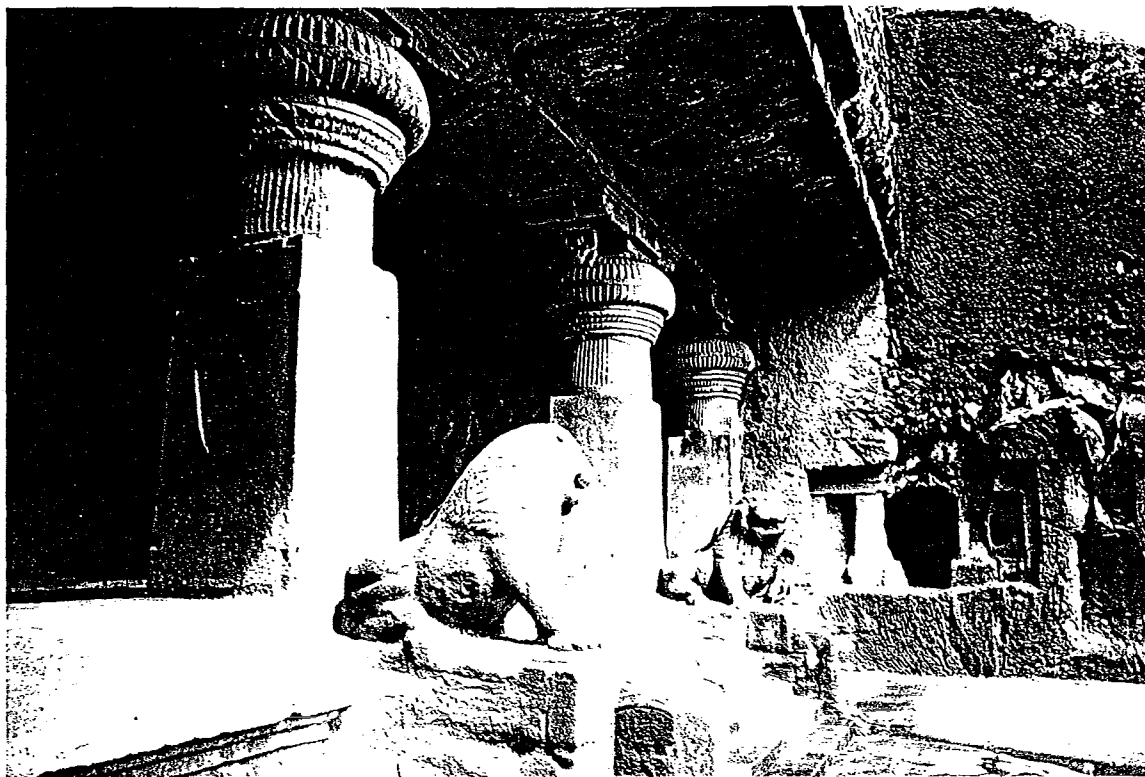






(a)

Plate XVIII



(b)

