

BUDDHIST SITES OF WESTERN INDIA IN  
THE AFTERMATH OF THE SĀTAVĀHANA-KṢAHARĀTA WAR:  
DYNASTIC GEOGRAPHIES AND PATTERNS OF PATRONAGE,  
RENEWAL, AND ABANDONMENT

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Early Buddhist caves of the western Deccan may be characterized as an architectural corpus patronized and enriched by a diverse array of peoples and institutions. Exploring distinct cultural influences present in the region, especially the period of the first century CE, may assist in revealing why early Buddhist caves are so varied in the styles of their sculptures, morphologies of ornament, and architectural components, in addition to providing a context for the diverse identities of donors identified in cave inscriptions. During this tumultuous era, states along the western Indian coast engaged in lucrative maritime trade via the Arabian Sea, sustaining local economies and contributing to the development of thriving Buddhist cave sites situated on land routes (Ray 1986: 107–159; Neelis 2011: 215–226). Consequently, profound political disturbances, at least partly the result of regional competition to exploit profits from this trade, led to the influx of various populations into the western Deccan. As merchants and those in other occupations profited directly and indirectly, they donated caves and other gifts to various Buddhist settlements.

In this era, the Kṣaharātas, situated in Gujarat and southern Madhya Pradesh, annexed traditional Sātavāhana territories as they exerted control southward along coastal India. Eventually, the Sātavāhanas recovered their kingdom and routed the Kṣaharātas from the western Deccan. Numerous caves from around this era of the first century are unfinished, especially those surrounding the ancient city of Junnar in vicinity of the Nāṇeghāt pass, an important route linking hinterland and coastal areas of Mahārāṣṭra state. Other caves display signs of abandonment and subsequent completion spanning the first and second centuries CE. Among them, two caves – one well-known, one less so – display evidence of appropriation and

complex developmental histories bridging the Sātavāhana-Kṣaharāta war into the era of Sātavāhana reconquest.<sup>1</sup> They are the *caitya* hall at Kānherī (cave 3), and cave 20 at Nāṣik, a monastic residence.

The *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, a Greek text likely written by an Egyptian involved in maritime trade, includes descriptions of a particular dynasty holding dominion over Gujarāt and further south along the western coast into the Konkan, thereby monopolizing access to ports engaging in global commerce (*Periplus*: 41–52). Corroborating evidence reveals this dynasty to be the Kṣaharātas, ruled by the *kṣatrapa* Nahapāna.<sup>2</sup> Their presence coincides with patrons at Buddhist cave sites identifying themselves by the cultural and ethnic categories of *śaka* and *yavana*. The former denotes a person of Indo-Scythian descent.<sup>3</sup> The latter, despite its more general sense of “westerner” later on, referred originally to a person belonging to a Hellenized population or lineage (Ray 1988: 312). Inscriptions of these two groups occur at three major sites or areas: the caves at Nāṣik, known in their post-Buddhist phase as the Pāṇḍulena caves; excavations in the region of Junnar, including at Mānmoḍī and Śivnerī; and also Kārle, especially within its enormous *caitya* hall (fig. 1).

The revival of Sātavāhana power in the Deccan inaugurated a new phase of patronage distinct from either the Kṣaharāta occupation or the preceding era of Sātavāhana hegemony. Epigraphy from Nāṣik, Kārle, and Kānherī, as well as an isolated example in the vicinity of Nāṇeghāt,<sup>4</sup> attests to rock-cut activity during the resurgent Sātavāhanas. Inscriptions

<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a larger study acknowledging the myriad factors on the development of early Buddhist caves during the eras of Sātavāhana and Kṣaharāta rule. The conflict between the two dynasties was likely a protracted one, involving numerous battles and shifts in power that spanned the reigns of Sātavāhana monarchs in the first century CE. Thus, reference to the Sātavāhana-Kṣaharāta war is inclusive of the complexities underlying events of the first century. The attempt here is to explore the effects of Kṣaharāta rule upon the history of the western Deccan, rather than viewing Sātavāhana hegemony as a necessary condition of cultural developments in the region, or the era of Kṣaharāta rule as merely a brief hiatus during periods of Sātavāhana dynastic rule.

<sup>2</sup> See Boyer 1897: 130–38. Boyer was the first to identify Nahapāna of the Kṣaharātas with the ruler Manbanos of the *Periplus*, whose extensive empire controlled a large swath of western coastal India. For a more recent affirmation, see also Casson 1989: 198.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion of the origin of the *śakas* and their migrations into the South Asian cultural sphere, see also Neelis 2007: 56–63.

<sup>4</sup> See Indrajī 1882: 313–314. The inscription records the gift of a cistern by a householder in the thirteenth year of Vasiṣṭhīputra Catarapana Sātakarṇi.



Fig. 1. Early Buddhist cave sites in western India. Included in this map are the sites of Lenyadrī, Mānmoḍī, Śivnerī, and Tuljā Leṇā, all in the vicinity of Junnar; Kānherī; Kārle; and Nāṣik.

indicate that the Sātavāhanas attempted to replace and supplant Kṣaharāta patronage through focused land grants and continuation of work on cave 3 at Nāṣik, an excavation matching the generosity of the previous dynasty embodied by nearby cave 10. Features of cave 3 suggest that the Sātavāhanas used a preexisting cave of modest dimensions to fashion one of the largest monastic residences hewn from stone.<sup>5</sup> Other caves from this era, including cave 20 at Nāṣik and cave 3 at Kānherī, the *caitya* hall, lend direct epigraphical evidence of revisiting and completing excavations left unfinished and abandoned by earlier patrons. The geography of patronage, and of the reconstituted Sātavāhana state in the politically tumultuous western Deccan, may be ascertained by examination of such evidence, including inscriptions of patrons and sectarian groups, abandoned and appropriated caves, and the evolution of architectural vocabularies coeval with the transition from the declining Kṣaharāta state into the reconquest.

### **Developments at Nāṣik and Dated Epigraphy from Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi and Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi**

Nāṣik's importance spanned the Sātavāhana and Kṣaharāta eras. Royal and non-royal patronage resulted in considerable construction activity after the victory of the Sātavāhana dynasty over the Kṣaharātas. Amid a conglomeration of ruins known collectively as cave 23, an inscription records an act of generosity by a patron named Dhaṇama and his parents in the second year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi (Senart 1905–06: 94–95). In cave 2, which seems to have been a pair of cells fronted by a veranda before significant recutting in the fifth or sixth century, a fragmentary inscription commemorates an act of patronage in the sixth year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi (Senart 1905–06: 59). Mention of patron and bequest has not survived, although its location suggests an epigraph recording the gift of

<sup>5</sup> Additional details regarding this argument, based on arrangement and architectural features, occur in Spink 1954: 157–59. See also Dehejia 1972: 95–96; Nagaraju 1981a: 261–63. Dehejia theorized complex phases of excavation that transformed a cave of relatively modest dimensions during the reign of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi into a cave surpassing that of cave 10 in the second decade of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi's rule. Nagaraju, in contrast, accepted the complex history of the cave at least spanning the reigns of the two monarchs but disputed Dehejia's theory regarding the transformation of the cave. He did not account for its anomalous features.

the cave. This record may indicate that rock-cut activity occurred at Nāṣik in the early years of his reign. We can speculate that the funding derived from the cultivation of royal lands given by his predecessor, Gautamīputra Śrī Sātakaṛṇi, and his grandmother, Gautamī Balaśrī, provided means for the site to thrive by both lending support to the monastic community and providing stability that, in turn, attracted patronage from other donors.

One of the great masterpieces of Sātavāhana architecture, cave 3 at Nāṣik, progressed to its final dimensions during the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi. Its dedicatory inscription, eulogizing the deceased savior of the Sātavāhanas, Gautamīputra Sātakaṛṇi, dates from the nineteenth year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra and may reflect the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of renewed Sātavāhana hegemony at Nāṣik.<sup>6</sup> Gautamī Balaśrī and her grandson are both listed in it, but a reference to the cave as the “*devi-leṇa*” highlights the Queen Mother’s identity as a great patron and her special relationship to the cave first inscribed during the reign of her son. In this inscription, the deceased monarch is praised as one who destroyed *śakas*, *yavanas*, and *pahlavas*, and rooted out the Kṣaharāta race. It also records a land grant for embellishments to the cave (Senart 1905–06: 60–65). Whether these are painted embellishments that no longer remain or sculptures visible today is uncertain. Thus, work on this cave continued with generous dynastic patronage even after its dedication. Both the late dedicatory inscription and a subsequent inscription mention the monks of the Bhadāyaniya sect as recipients of these gifts, serving as one example of Sātavāhana royal generosity aimed at Buddhist sectarian interests. (This sect will be discussed further in relationship to developments at Kānherī.) The latest inscription in the cave dates to the twenty-second year, reflecting continued interest in the cave by replacing yet another tract of land for one that had grown fallow (Senart 1905–06: 65–71). It omits mention of Gautamī Balaśrī, suggesting that she may have died before the monarch bestowed this final recorded gift to the Bhadāyaniyas at Nāṣik.

<sup>6</sup> Among the inscriptions in cave 3, the earliest surviving donation record of Gautamīputra Sātakaṛṇi dates from his eighteenth year. Another record dates from his twenty-fourth year, which contradicts *purāṇic* accounts claiming that the monarch ruled 21 years. If Gautamīputra Sātakaṛṇi’s reign ended approximately in his twenty-ninth year, then the nineteenth year of his successor would signal 30 years of a presence at the site, and likely would commemorate the wresting of the Nāṣik region from the Kṣaharātas.



Fig. 2. Exterior view of pillars and veranda. Cave 20, Nāṣik, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, with additions datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Cave 20 at Nāṣik readily yields evidence of a problematic history of excavation straddling the era of the Kṣaharātas and its subsequent phase. Its exterior resembles both cave 10 at Nāṣik, completed under the Kṣaharātas, and cave 1 at Mānmoḍī (Junnar, see below) in the morphology of its pillar capitals and bases, as well as in the absence of a parapet visible on late Kṣaharāta and Sātavāhana examples (fig. 2).

Its inscription, housed in the veranda, is the latest dated inscription at Nāṣik from the Sātavāhana era. Recorded in the seventh year of Gautamīputra Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, it states that the Mahāsenāpatnī Vāsu, wife of the Mahāsenāpati Bhavagopa, completed the cave begun by Bopaki, an ascetic, and that it had been left unfinished for many years (Senart 1905–06: 93–94). Subsequently, modifications in the fifth to sixth centuries transformed the cave into one of the largest interiors at Nāṣik. This feat was accomplished by enlarging the depth of the hall, increasing the number of



Fig. 3. Remnants of a back wall projecting from the right wall (visible between entrances to chambers). Cave 20, Nāṣik, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, with additions datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

monastic cells and rooms arranged around it, and adding an ornate *gandhakuṭī* with sculptures in back of the excavation. These post-Sātavāhana alterations obscure the relationship between the cave abandoned in its initial phase and its completion by the *mahāsenāpatnī* during late Sātavāhana rule in the western Deccan. By the seventh year of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, it likely consisted of a hall with approximately five or six cells arranged around each of its lateral walls, with additional cells excavated in back. The additional cells and back wall were later removed to extend the depth of the cave (Nagaraju 1981a: 275–76). Just past the sixth chamber on either side of the hall, the remnants of the back wall that once defined the depth of the hall are visible (fig. 3).

An elevated ceiling behind this feature indicates further cutting of the hall in the post-Sātavāhana era, as does a Sanskrit inscription carved near the entrance to a cell along the wall providing access to the *gandhakuṭī* (Senart 1905–06: 93). An unusually rough patch of stone that escaped later refinements forms the bench along the left side of the wall towards the front of the cave (fig. 4). This feature, the pillar capitals of the veranda



Fig. 4. Left side wall of cave. Note the rough patches on the bench towards the front (left) of the excavation. Cave 20, Nāṣik, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, with additions datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century.



resembling Kṣaharāta-era ornamentation, and the inscription mentioning the passage of time between its initial phase and dedication all point to a complex history spanning a turbulent period in which the cave was initially abandoned and then brought to completion by different patrons.

Two additional details of this cave deserve mention. An enormous crack traverses the ceiling of its inner hall, and water percolates from the rock into a monastic cell, subsequently turned into a cistern, on the left side of its veranda. These flaws may have contributed to the reasons for its initial abandonment, although they did not prevent later patrons from completing it. Curiously, many ambitious caves located in the region of Junnar display architectural features roughly contemporaneous with the early phase of excavation at cave 20. Several, as well, possess flaws sometimes blamed for their incomplete state.

## **Junnar**

The cave sites and subgroups around Junnar signal the presence of a foreign dynasty in the region and its inevitable decline in the first century CE. In this region, one finds inscriptions recording patronage by distinct ethnicities, such as *yavanas* and *śakas*, and unfinished and incomplete excavations at Buddhist cave sites serving as artifacts of political and social instability in the shifting fortunes during eras of Kṣaharāta and Sātavāhana control. The remains among the Buddhist complexes at Junnar include architectural features unique to this region while also sharing characteristics of style, ornament, and patronage visible at Nāṣik and at the *caitya* hall at Kārle. The cave clusters around Junnar also express the frenzied activity during the short-lived expansion of the Kṣaharāta state eastward into the heartland of the Deccan.

## **Mercantile and Dynastic Geographies**

Although distant from urban areas today, Junnar was once a significant ancient town, judging from the remarkable assemblage of Buddhist rock-cut complexes carved into its nearby hills.<sup>7</sup> Four Buddhist caves sites lie in

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, considerable investment and construction are occurring in and around Junnar to develop it for domestic tourism.

its close vicinity (Leṅyādrī, Mānmoḍī, Śivnerī, and Tuljā Leṅā), with three divisible into groups or clusters of caves along the faces of basalt outcroppings encircling the town. Thus, Leṅyādrī consists of the main complex of caves and a so-called “isolated” group of excavations; three groups, Bhīmāśaṅkar, Ambā-Ambikā, and Bhut Leṅī, comprise Mānmoḍī; and the site of Śivnerī encompasses six clusters that vary in orientation and altitude along the cliffs of Śivnerī hill.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous scholars have contributed to the study of this ancient site. Vasant (Jadhav) conducted an extensive survey of the caves around Junnar in an unpublished dissertation (S. V. Jadhav 1980). In this work, he reported the nearby find of an egg-shaped alabaster bowl with a cupid-like figure attributable to Mediterranean culture, which has also been remarked upon by Deo (1991) and Taddei (1998), as well as other scholars. Dehejia (1969) and Williams (1970) directed their attention to caves around Junnar and their chronology. Both Shreekant Jadhav (2006) and Shinde (2013) have reported on archaeological excavations undertaken near to Junnar at Agar village on the bank of the Kukadi River. The location of the modern town over sites of ancient habitation often frustrates attempts to excavate in this region.

The town of Junnar owes its existence to a steep mountain pass of profound mercantile and strategic importance in premodern history. Known as Nāṅeghāṭ, this high navigable corridor lies approximately twenty-five kilometers from Junnar and links coastal towns with inland cities and commercial centers, which in the eras under study included the Sātavāhana capital of Pratiṣṭhāna and Tagara. Nāṅeghāṭ served as a vital artery for trade and communication in the ancient western Deccan; donkey caravans plying this route attest to its continued use in the modern period.<sup>9</sup> Control over Nāṅeghāṭ was once a strategic imperative of any dynasty or power, and safeguarding it was necessary for the maintenance and regulation of regional trade.

The earliest dynastic remains in the area are Sātavāhana and appear at Nāṅeghāṭ rather than at Junnar. More intriguingly, these remains demonstrate royal patronage of rock-cut architecture beyond the support of

<sup>8</sup> A detailed account of the six clusters comprising Śivnerī may be found in Nagaraju 1981a: 174–90.

<sup>9</sup> See Kosambi 1955: 68–69.

monastic Buddhist complexes and are datable to the first century BCE. Among approximately twenty minor excavations, primarily cisterns and a few obliterated forms, a ruinous hall shelters a pair of extensive inscriptions carved on the lateral walls of the cave. After the invocation of various *vedic* and *purāṇic* deities, the inscription on the left wall details sacrifices offered and gifts given to Brahmins. Unfortunately fragmentary, it dwells upon the generosity and piety of a queen, the mother of Vedisiri (Vediśrī) and Sati (Śakti), and wife of a king whose name ends with “...*siri*.” Bühler provides a cogent accounting for this figure in the Sātavāhana chronology and identifies her as Queen Nāyanikā, wife of King Sātakarṇi, on the basis of other epigraphical evidence in the hall (Burgess and Bühler 1883: 65–74). The inscription on the right, also fragmentary, seems to continue the left inscription and enumerates a list of additional gifts and sacrifices. Six inscriptions on the back wall of the cave served as labels for now-destroyed sculptures of Sātavāhana family members (Burgess and Bühler 1883: 64). Their names are Śimuka, the presumed founder of the Sātavāhana kingdom; Queen Nāyanikā and King Sātakarṇi; a prince whose name is partly obliterated; the Mahāraṭhi Tranakayira, a figure of high rank in the kingdom; Prince Hacusiri (Hakuśrī); and Prince Sātavāhana. Still visible are the feet of several statues emerging from the floor of the cave.

The purpose of the cave and series of excavations is somewhat obscure. Without question, the Nāṇeghāṭ excavations are not Buddhist. They served political purposes intersecting the religious identity of the Sātavāhana ruling family. The cave with inscriptions may have functioned as an ancestral family shrine, although Bühler’s attempt at epigraphical reconstruction would imply that sculptures of living members of the Sātavāhanas populated its interior alongside the deceased.<sup>10</sup> Its location in this strategic pass expresses the power and authority once held by the Sātavāhanas over the local geography by utilizing the same stone matrix that directed and determined the flow of trade through the kingdom. Furthermore, the inscriptions housed within the main hall record the piety of this dynasty and their close ties to Brahmins from nearby communities. The Sātavāhanas

<sup>10</sup> A recent discussion of the site in relationship to royal portraiture may be found in DeCaroli 2015: 102–5. For further discussion of this inscription’s historical importance, see Ollett 2017: 28–35. See also the contribution by Alice Collett in this volume.

safeguarded this pass to serve their strategic, mercantile, and administrative interests, and the cisterns may have provided an amenity to merchants, travelers, or government officials making the trek along this arduous route.

The royal shrine at Nāṇeghāṭ is key to assessing the critical importance of this region to the Sātavāhanas, just as the cave complexes around Junnar speak to the strategic emergence of the town under the Kṣaharātas. Among the thirty-four epigraphs at the four Buddhist sites surrounding Junnar, no Sātavāhana inscriptions are found, and none refers to the reign of a Sātavāhana king as part of its donation record. In contrast, its rich epigraphy documents gifts provided by *śaka* and *yavana* patrons and includes an inscription of a Kṣaharāta minister to Nahapāna, the latter having ascended to the rank of *mahākṣatrapa*. The consequences of these records to our understanding of political and mercantile geography are obvious. Not only did the Kṣaharātas exert control over access to international trade through the conquest of the coastal Deccan, but they also managed to gain control of Nāṇeghāṭ and utilize Junnar in its quest to isolate Pratiṣṭhāna, the Sātavāhana capital lying further east of the pass, thereby disrupting its status as a mercantile and administrative center. Junnar may have been an obscure settlement during the early Sātavāhana era that thrived under the Kṣaharātas, only to once again lose much of its relevance with the reassertion of Sātavāhana power.

The present name of the town, a contraction of Juṇṇa-nagara (Old City), suggests a loss of identity and importance in the remote past remarked upon by numerous scholars who have attempted to relate urban settlements near the cave sites to cities named in classical sources or Indian epigraphy.<sup>11</sup> In his study of *yavana* inscriptions, Laeuchli (1981–84) argued that the former names of Junnar were both Dhenukākaṭa and Umehanākaṭa. Evidence is more compelling for the latter. Umehanākaṭa is a city mentioned in a donative inscription on a pillar inside the *caitya* hall at Kārle. It records the gift of the *yavana* Ciṭsaṃgata.<sup>12</sup> At Śivnerī near Junnar,

<sup>11</sup> The earliest known reference to the city by this name is found on an inscribed copper plate of Sinda Ādityavarman in Śaka 887 (965 CE). It records a grant of land along the Indra (Indrāyanī) River while Ādityavarman was residing in Junninagara. See Mirashi and Dikshit 1939–40.

<sup>12</sup> Vats read the patron's name at Kārle as Viṭsaṃgata. Kosambi was first to correct the reading. Regarding this issue, see Kosambi 1955: 66–67; Laeuchli 1981–84: 208–209.

an inscription inside cave 64 records a donation by a *yavana* with the same name (Burgess 1883: 94). Because the city was mentioned in the inscription from Kārle but not the one from Śivnerī, Laeuchli inferred that Umehanākaṭa was a city close to Śivnerī, i.e. at Junnar, as its mention in the latter case would have been unnecessary. The author argued convincingly that Umehanākaṭa is the same city mentioned and transliterated in Ptolemy's Geography as Omenogara, located in the general region with Baithana (Pratiṣṭhāna) and Tagara (Ptolemy and Majumdar 1927: 175–78). Furthermore, it is situated in the vicinity of the physical feature Ptolemy identified as the Nanaguna River. The author interpreted this feature as the Nāṇeghāt pass and reasoned that since Umehanākaṭa “cannot be explained as an Indian name,” then an alternative Indian moniker, Dhenukākaṭa, was employed for the same locale (Laeuchli 1981–84: 216).

Whether or not Junnar was ancient Dhenukākaṭa, its strategic and mercantile significance led to the development of the various sites and sub-groups of caves in its vicinity. While most remains to be surveyed in this article indicate developments roughly contemporary with or slightly later than evidence of the Kṣaharāta presence in the Deccan seen elsewhere, such as at Nāṣik, the early presence of the Sātavāhanas at Nāṇeghāt around the time of Sātakarṇi or his successor would suggest an early phase of Junnar as it developed into a center for international commerce. Therefore, the probability exists that early Buddhist rock-cut remains span the three phases of Sātavāhana and Kṣaharāta control surveyed in this study.

### **Mānmoḍī: Bhīmāśaṅkar**

Mānmoḍī, known to the ancient world as Mānamukūḍa, displays the clearest evidence of Kṣaharāta-era patronage among its cave groups. Bhīmāśaṅkar, the grouping on the hill to the southeast, consists of a loose conglomeration of approximately twenty caves and cisterns carved into stone. Cave 7, an otherwise plain *maṇḍapa* (rectangular hall) with a bench running along the lateral and back walls, houses a donation record in the year 46 by Ayama, a minister of the Mahākṣatrapa Nahapāna. This is the latest year attested in any cave inscription mentioning Nahapāna, and it is the only one that refers to him as *mahākṣatrapa* rather than *kṣatrapa*.



Fig. 5. Exterior view of pillared veranda. Cave 1, Mānmoḍī (Bhīmāśaṅkar), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

The most embellished of the excavations among the Bhīmāśaṅkar group lie furthest to the southeast. Caves 1 and 2 both utilize pillars with curvilinear capitals surmounted by square planes arranged in a reverse stepped pyramid. In the shape of its pillar capitals and pot-shaped bases, cave 1 at Mānmoḍī especially resembles cave 10 at Nāṣik, the latter known for donations by Nahapāna's daughter and son-in-law, except that the pillars are less ornate and without animal imagery (fig. 5). Engaged pillars deeply carved and nearly in the round flank the entrance to the veranda at these and other Kṣaharāta-era caves. Cave 1 is considerably smaller than its royal counterpart at Nāṣik, consisting of a veranda providing access to three chambers rather than a large-scale monastic residence organized around a central hall. It lacks a donative inscription, although its size paired with the modesty of its ornamentation would preclude royal patronage on a scale seen at Nāṣik. Instead, resemblances to cave 10 at Nāṣik are the result of roughly contemporaneous phases of excavation.

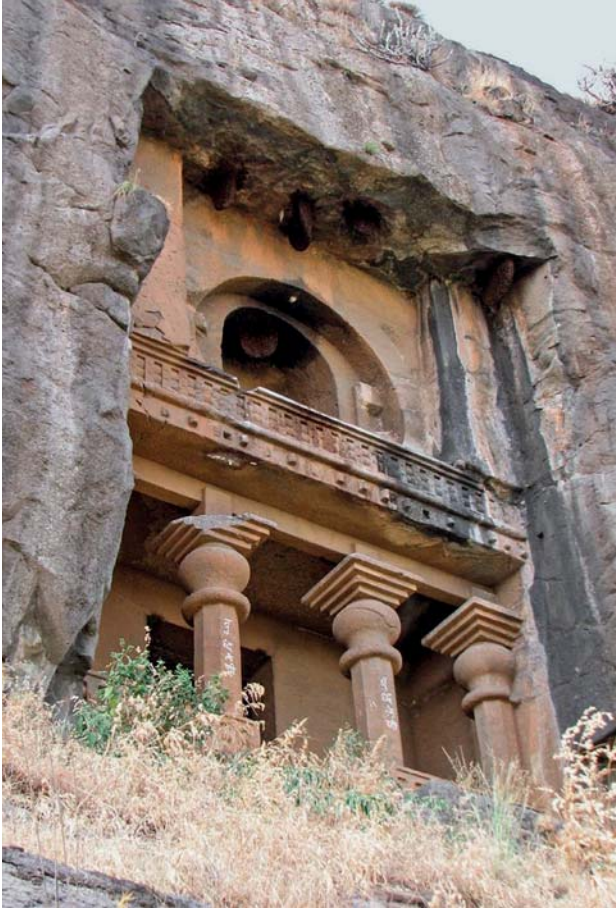


Fig. 6. View of façade with fictive *caitya* window above pillared veranda.  
Cave 2, Mānmoḍī (Bhīmāśaṅkar), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

Cave 2, a *caityagr̥ha*, employs pillars with capitals carved into a low-running wall ornamented with a railing pattern on the exterior (fig. 6). The pillar capitals of cave 2 at Mānmoḍī are of a shape comparable to Kṣaharāta-era excavations at Nāṣik, and cave 1 at Mānmoḍī, suggesting it predates the completion of cave 3, the Sātavāhana-patronized cave at Nāṣik. Just as in cave 1, engaged pillars carved in high relief flank the veranda.

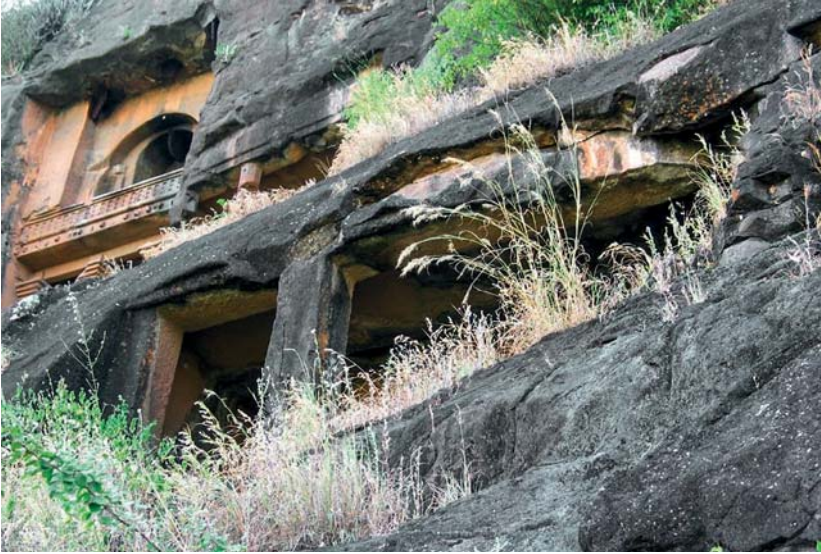


Fig. 7. Exterior view of veranda with roughly hewn pillars.  
Cave 4, Mānmoḍī (Bhīmāśaṅkar), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

This *caityagrha* garners the most attention among the group due to its unique morphology and illusory *caitya* window. The façade of the cave evokes the appearance of a *caitya* hall with a barrel-vaulted ceiling. However, its “window” is actually a carved niche, and the interior possesses a flat roof that does not aspire to the height of the cave’s façade. Not based upon structural architecture, it evokes the extroverted grandeur of the *caitya* hall theatrically, conjoining an impressive façade and a comparatively modest interior. Perhaps this approach was to reduce the excavation costs for its patron, who is identified as a singular lay Buddhist (*upāsaka*) in a fragmentary inscription outside of the veranda.

The cave is unfinished.<sup>13</sup> Nagaraju noted that water percolates from the right side of the cave close to the stone mass that would have become the *stūpa* and cites this flaw as the reason for its abandonment. Even so, the interior appears serviceable, either with modifications to suit its original

<sup>13</sup> See also Dehejia and Rockwell 2016: 138–40.



purpose as a *caityagr̥ha* or some other use, yet work on the upper storey of the façade ended abruptly, as well. Various caves at Junnar, some monumental or highly ornamented, others comparatively modest, were neither completed nor developed beyond their original phase of carving by later patrons. Among them, cave 4 in the Bhīmāśaṅkar group never developed beyond a veranda fronted by a pair of roughly hewn pillars (fig. 7).

### **Mānmoḍī: Ambā-Ambikā**

The Ambā-Ambikā group at Mānmoḍī lies to the northwest of Bhīmāśaṅkar. Its name originated in the site's post-abandonment era and refers to a former monastic residence, cave 30, converted into a Jain shrine with sculptures carved into its walls, including images of Ambā, Ambikā, and Ambalikā.<sup>14</sup> Originally Buddhist in affiliation, The Ambā-Ambikā group comprises a cluster of approximately twenty-four excavations. Like Bhīmāśaṅkar, it possesses incomplete or abandoned caves. Cave 19 expresses an abortive attempt to excavate a pair of cells into the cliff-face. Caves 29 and 31 are each shallow interiors resembling verandas (fig. 8).

A pair of pillars once fronted cave 29, and the lower shafts of these architectural members were never fully carved. The remains of capitals display the reverse stepped-pyramid and a rectangular element directly above it projecting from the horizontal beam, two features also seen at cave 2, the *caityagr̥ha* in the Bhīmāśaṅkar group. Engaged pillars on either side provide more evidence of capitals with their characteristic rounded shape, although they, too, are unfinished. Based on evidence of its ornamentation, cave 29 appears to be contemporaneous with the *caityagr̥ha* in the Bhīmāśaṅkar group. Cave 31 exhibits roughly hewn rectangular pillars that do not yield a precise dating based on morphology, but one may surmise a nearly simultaneous abandonment of these two caves at similar stages of excavation. Cave 30 (presently employed for Jain worship) displays a rectangular niche on its exterior suggesting, due to the orderly placement of carved doorways, that it was originally meant to serve as an entrance to a chamber, but it was never completed (fig. 9).

<sup>14</sup> For their relationship to Durgā, see Bhattacharya 1974: 103–104.



Fig. 8. Shallow interiors fronted by damaged and incomplete pillars. Cave 29 (top) and cave 31 (bottom), Mānmoḍī (Ambā-Ambikā), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

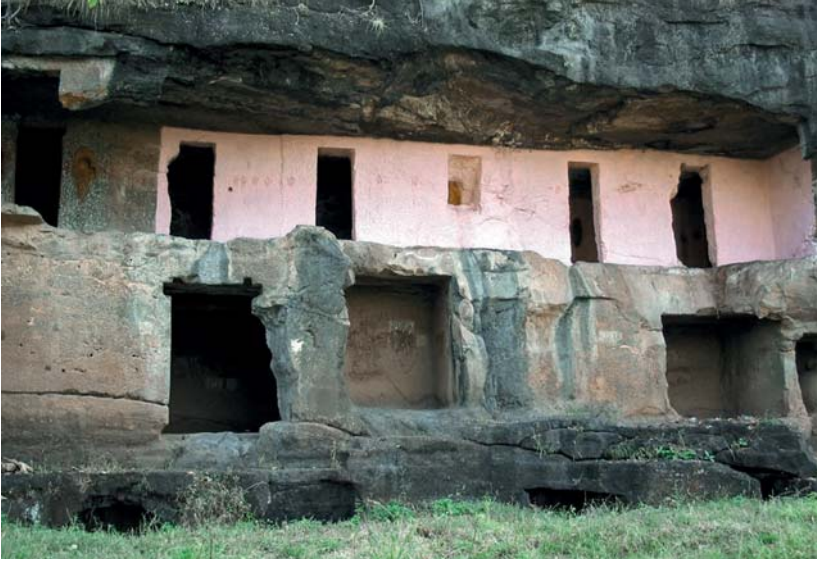


Fig. 9. Former monastic residence presently employed as a Jain shrine (top).  
Cave 30, Mānmoḍī (Ambā-Ambikā), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

Cave 26, the most ambitious excavation in the Ambā-Ambikā group, is an unfinished *caitya* hall with a pillared veranda. The hall is roughly apsidal with the form of a *stūpa* emerging from the stone mass in the back of the hall (fig. 10). The excavation is fronted by a pair of colossal pillars restored in the modern era; however, engaged pillars on either side (the left nearly obliterated) display the common decoration employed on capitals at Mānmoḍī, with the undulating contours of a rounded mass topped by a reverse stepped pyramid, apparent among Kṣaharāta-era caves at Nāṣik (fig. 11). Bases in the shape of pots ornament the pillars. The façade wall inside the veranda is plain, and the carving of the *caitya* arch around the window is incomplete. A molding divides the wall into upper and lower sections. The façade and veranda most resemble that of the *caitya* hall at Beḍsa, as it, too, employs colossal pillars, a broad molding beneath the *caitya* window, and box-like lateral projections extending vertically. Had ornamentation of the veranda continued as at Beḍsa, the surfaces of the veranda would have been covered with *caitya* windows, rail patterns, and gratings.



Fig. 10. Unfinished hall and *stūpa*.  
Cave 26, Mānmoḍī (Ambā-Ambikā), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.



Fig. 11. Veranda with restored pillars.  
Cave 26, Mānmoḍī (Ambā-Ambikā), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

Instead, inscriptions haphazardly cover much of the façade of cave 26.<sup>15</sup> They date from the period after work on the cave ended and initial patronage ceased. Of the eight inscriptions, none records the donation of the cave, and several are inscribed on rough, poorly prepared wall surfaces inside the veranda (Burgess 1883: 96–98; Gokhale 1981–1984). They document gifts of land given to the monastic community and may span the period of abandonment in the era of Kṣaharāta decline into the early years of Sātavāhana reconquest. One inscription records the donation of land by a *śaka* named Āḍuthuma on the lateral wall of the box-like projection at the height of the *caitya* window (Burgess 1883: 96). A second inscription wedged between this inscription and the *caitya* arch describes the locations

<sup>15</sup> For a recent discussion of this incomplete excavation, see Dehejia and Rockwell 2016: 86–87, 140–42.

of fields donated to the monastic community (thus also providing the ancient name of Mānmoḍī, Mānamukaḍa),<sup>16</sup> indicating that the intrusive inscriptions record the gifts of local landowners (Burgess 1883: 96–97). These epigraphs scrawled upon the unfinished and unprepared wall highlight, on the one hand, disruption in the excavation of the cave and, on the other hand, continued patronage at the site. The analysis of these epigraphs contributed to Dehejia’s chronology placing the monuments at Mānmoḍī in the era of Sātavāhana reconquest and the dating of cave 26 to the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi (Dehejia 1969: 153–54). However, they are later intrusions inscribed on wall surfaces after plans for sculpting architectural adornments on the façade had been abandoned. Dehejia in this earlier study noted the epigraphs on the façade of the unfinished *caitya* hall post-dated those on neighboring caves – of which several are dedicatory inscriptions – further supporting the conclusion presented here that the commencement and halting of work on cave 26 occurred previous to the recording of donations on its unadorned façade.

Bands of unstable stone in the vaulting are typically blamed for the abandonment of cave 26 (Nagaraju 1981a: 147). However, one should note that the central hall was carved from the vaulting down to the floor, suggesting that its excavation continued despite this alleged problem.<sup>17</sup> Other excavation projects were abandoned and patronage ceased at Ambā-Ambikā, seen in the unfinished excavations discussed above, such as caves 19, 29, 30, and 31. These other caves did not suffer from any significant flaws. Was the site forever deserted because its *caitya* hall was deemed incapable of being repaired? Remains at the site indicate that any abandonment was temporary.

<sup>16</sup> Several of these inscriptions make no explicit mention of gift recipients; however, there is an exception. See Gokhale 1981–84. A record inscribed on the moulding above the entrance to this cave list donations, including plots of land, to the Ḡṛdhravihāra and to the Sāhmitīya sect. Interestingly, Gokhale notes in her analysis the association of this sect with Ujjayinī in Pāli literature. Cave 27 in the same group bears an inscription, discussed later in this section, recording a donation by brothers from Bhṛgukaccha, an important port that once served Ujjayinī.

<sup>17</sup> See also Dehejia and Rockwell 2016: 142. According to the authors, “It is intriguing to note that the carvers did not abandon the project on their initial encounter with the large diagonal fault in the stone but continued cutting to the very end of the planned interior space.... While the fault provides a patent reason for not finishing the *caitya*, the way the interior spaces have been carved out suggests that the geological fault was not the reason for stopping.”

The location of a modest *caityagr̥ha* and the morphology of its *stūpa* demonstrate a continued Buddhist presence at Ambā-Ambikā. Cave 24 was carved so uncomfortably close to the unfinished *caitya* hall that one of the engaged pillars of the latter, now severely damaged, once bracketed the entrance of the modest excavation (fig. 12). Without question, the entrance postdates the carving of the neighboring *caitya* hall. Features of the *stūpa* housed within this simple rectangular cave, such as the tapering of the circular drum and an *aṇḍa* (dome) that is orb-like in shape rather than hemispherical, indicate its post-Kṣaharāta carving, likely during the era of Sātavāhana renewal in the Deccan. This intrusive excavation demonstrates a continued interest in the site after the initial phase of excavation, even after many of the caves original to the group were forsaken, remaining incomplete.

Cave 28 at Ambā-Ambikā adds to the curious remains from this group with an inscription ending in mid-sentence (Burgess 1883: 95). This cave, a two-chamber cluster, appears complete, and the rectangular surface of the wall prepared for the epigraph displays no sign of damage, despite the abrupt end to the second line of the inscription. The first line of the inscription is indented, likely due to the practice seen among other inscriptions of inserting an auspicious symbol at its beginning. The symbol was never carved, and the oddity of spacing confirms a halt in the inscribing of this epigraph rather than subsequent mutilation.

Finally, an inscription in cave 27 relates this series of caves to the geography of Kṣaharāta-era patronage. Carved into a wall providing access to a pair of chambers, the inscription records the gift of the cave by two brothers, Buddhāmita and Buddhārakhita, who were inhabitants of Bharukacha (Bhrgukaccha) (Burgess 1883: 96). This famous port in Gujārāt, described in the Periplus as within Nahapāna's realm and identified as his capital in Jain literature,<sup>18</sup> receives no mention in other surviving inscriptions located in traditional Sātavāhana territories, except for an inscription in cave 10 at Nāṣik belonging to the Kṣaharāta royal family (Senart 1905–06: 75–81). Its presence at Mānmoḍī demonstrates a network of patronage made possible by the inclusion of Junnar and the western Deccan into the Kṣaharāta state, a network that was precarious and dependent upon the

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Balbir 1990: 60.

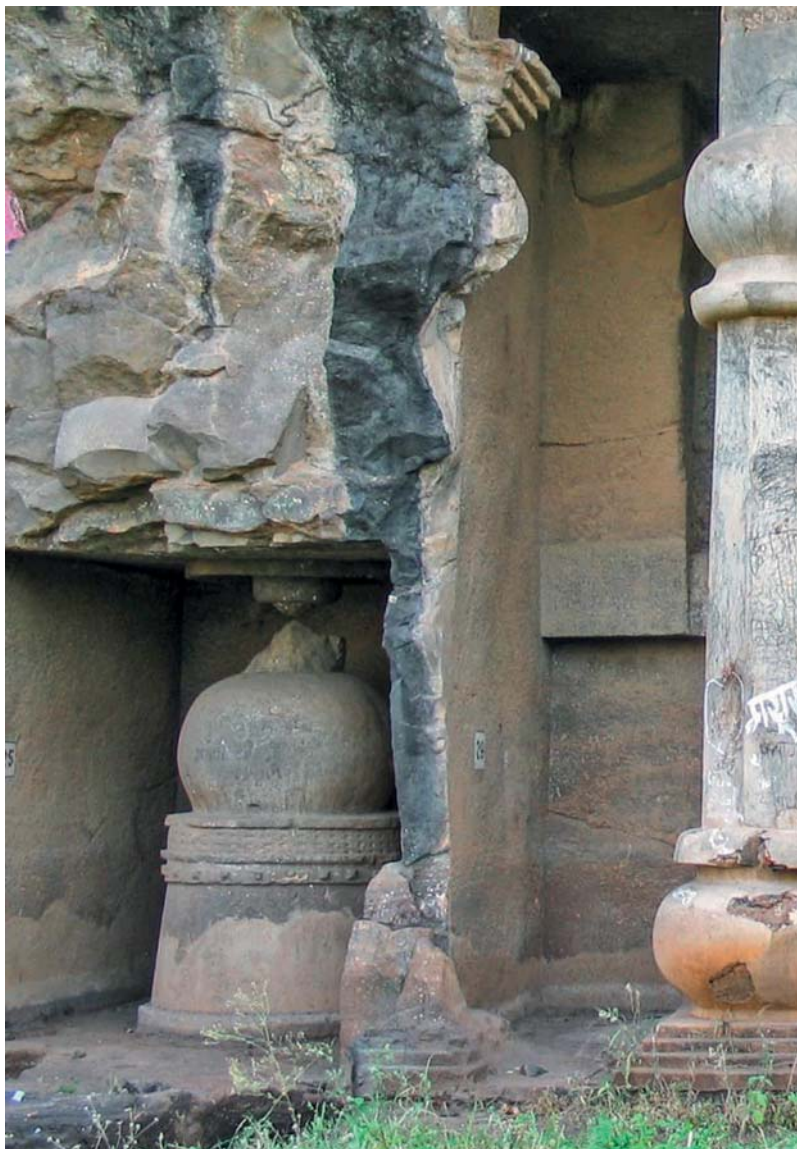


Fig. 12. Exterior view illustrating the relationship between cave 24 (left) and cave 26 (right). Mānmoḍī (Ambā-Ambikā), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.



hegemony of foreign control in the brief period of expansion in the first century. Intriguingly, this inscription consisted originally of two lines of text, but a third is interpolated between the two in smaller characters. This line reads “*asasamasa putāṇa*,” identifying the brothers as the sons of Asasama. Removed from its context, this detail would be little more than a curiosity, as would a nearby unfinished inscription, or surrounding caves left in various stages of incompleteness. However, the inscription may add to evidence of a chaotic phase in the site’s history, and to a rushed effort requiring a hastily added correction to its donation record.

### **Mānmoḍī: Bhut Leṇī**

The Bhut Leṇī group at Mānmoḍī shares similarities to the groups of Bhīmāśaṅkar and Ambā-Ambikā, especially in its unrealized program of excavations and corroborating evidence of Kṣaharāta-era patronage. Its major excavation, a *caitya* hall, never reached completion (Dehejia and Rockwell 2016: 142–144). Thus, the abandonment of major rock-cut excavations occurs at all three cave groups at the site. The *caitya* hall at the Bhut Leṇī group, numbered 40 among the excavations found throughout Mānmoḍī, bears an inscription carved onto its closed *caitya* window. It records the gift of the façade by Caṁda, a *yavana* (Burgess 1883: 95). Thus, the inscription mentions a particular group associated with a foreign presence and Kṣaharāta control in the Deccan, as corroborated by the Sātavāhana inscription eulogizing Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi as their destroyer. *Yavanas* as patrons are also identified in inscriptions at Kārle and among other excavations around Junnar at nearby Śivnerī.

The façade of cave 40 is a remarkable document of Kṣaharāta-era art and architecture (fig. 13). The cave employs a closed or “blind” *caitya* window. Unlike cave 2 at Bhīmāśaṅkar, a vaulted ceiling is situated behind it. An imaginative relief of Gaja-Lakṣmī with rhythmically posed figures fills the semicircular field of the closed window. The goddess, elephants, and figures are each situated within petals of a lotus in a radial arrangement. Male and female figures around the design stand in poses with hands clasped above their heads in a gesture of worship depicted at several sites from this era, including a façade at Tuljā Leṇā (cave 8), cave 10 at Nāṣik, and the *caitya* hall at Kārle.



Fig. 13. View of upper façade. Cave 40, Mānmoḍī (Bhut Leṇī), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

The façade, although near completion, reveals the stage at which work ceased. Units consisting of arched windows and railings enframe the upper façade, and untouched rectangular masses at the height of the *caitya* window to either side signal an unrealized intention to continue adornment. The left side of the façade is barely distinguished from the prominent *caitya* arch, while the corresponding area to the right of the arch displays a relief in progress depicting a tree and flying figure (fig. 14). The tree is sacred, denoted by the garlands hanging on its branches, an object set in front of it resembling an altar, and an umbrella over it. Partially carved, the figure appears as an irregular stone mass radiating appendages. With it nearly complete, work on this sculpture ended abruptly, just as elsewhere among the excavations along Mānmoḍī hill.

The interior of cave 40 is also unfinished, with the intention of carving a pillared *caitya* hall with a *pradakṣiṇa-patha*. Once again, soft rock is



Fig. 14. Detail of façade with relief depicting a sacred tree and flying figure.  
Cave 40, Mānmoḍī (Bhut Leṇī), 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

given as the reason for abandonment.<sup>19</sup> Even so, the *stūpa* appears fully carved within a central hall. Despite claims of soft rock, the process of excavation created an interior space stretching from a high vaulted ceiling to a level floor. Roughly hewn octagonal pillars on the right side of the hall separate the central area of the cave from a nascent ambulatory never completed. The pillars on the left side appear only as rectangular masses emerging from the stone.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Nagaraju 1981a: 152. In contrast to Nagaraju’s analysis, Dehejia and Rockwell (2016) referred to cave 40 as the “most complete” of the *caitya* halls they surveyed from Junnar and did not remark upon any apparent flaw to account for its unfinished state, referring to its lack of finish as “a mystery” with a cause unrelated to the carving process.

### Incomplete Excavations

Seventeen caves among the sites near Junnar possess incomplete features (Table 1). Many of these caves exhibit attributes datable to the Kṣaharāta era, and the rest are clustered among other excavations with such features. With little evidence for an early Sātavāhana phase of rock-cutting among the Buddhist sites in the vicinity of Junnar other than at Tuljā Leṇā, the locale appears to have become important focus for patronage rather suddenly around the period of Kṣaharāta rule, during which a significant program of excavation took place among Buddhist rock-cut sites. The partially completed excavations seen around Junnar were an unintended outcome of an

Site	Cave	Unfinished and Incomplete Features
Leṇyādrī (isolated)	<i>caitya</i> hall	interior features
Leṇyādrī	2	pillars
Leṇyādrī	6	unpolished stone and ornament below doorway
Leṇyādrī	7	pillar capitals in the veranda
Mānmoḍī	2	interior features, exterior ornamentation
Mānmoḍī	4	interior, pillars
Mānmoḍī	19	interior
Mānmoḍī	26	interior features, exterior ornamentation
Mānmoḍī	28	inscription (partial and unfinished)
Mānmoḍī	29	interior, pillars
Mānmoḍī	30	doorway
Mānmoḍī	31	interior, pillars
Mānmoḍī	40	interior features, exterior ornamentation
Mānmoḍī	44	exterior ornamentation
Śivnerī	20	interior
Śivnerī	21	interior
Śivnerī	64	bench along interior wall

Table 1. Unfinished and incomplete features among Buddhist cave sites near Junnar.

incredible but short-lived burst of patronage in this region and era, including works commissioned by patrons self-identifying as peoples foreign to the region in donative inscriptions. Remains previously begun, for whatever reasons, were left in their incomplete and, in some cases, unusable condition, even while new patrons donated caves around Junnar.

One may question if a breakdown in patronage alone caused the abandonment of an incomplete cave. Williams (1986) and Parker (2001) have reflected upon the prevalence of unfinished works in the broad archaeological and architectural corpus of South Asia, exploring the degree that Western attitudes towards completeness may interfere with our understanding of the tradition. This approach has also been advanced by Dehejia and Rockwell (2016). According to these scholars, patronage in South Asia, at least in some periods and in some aspects of its vast history, may comprise an ongoing ritual process in which religious works unfolded organically without the necessary outcome of completed monuments. Thus, flexible attitudes towards finish and completion were accepted and governed the degree that monuments reached, or did not reach, the final stages of production and refinement.

If present, evidence of such an attitude among some remains of South Asian architecture need not diminish the validity of historical explanations for incomplete monuments, particularly during eras of shifting political fortunes. In fact, all of the authors mentioned above have been careful to note that interruptions of patronage were responsible for unfinished works of South Asian art and architecture in specific periods and circumstances.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Williams made a critical distinction between unfinished works that are “inadequate” for the purpose for which they were created

<sup>20</sup> Parker 2001: 53. Parker stated, “There are, of course, specific cases of incompleteness that may be due to the collapse of patronage. This general approach has been widely taken to be the most practical or reasonable by scholarly disciplines operating through Western conceptions of history. And this has proven to be a productive and compelling approach that I do not wish to disparage.” Certainly, modern and contemporary Asian scholarship rightly affirms the notion that patronage and its disruptions affect the creation, development and realization of works in artistic traditions. Similarly, Williams mentioned the overthrow of a dynasty as cause for interruptions in sculptural production (1986: 90). See also Dehejia and Rockwell 2016: 63. The authors stated, “No doubt, explanations of a singular nature, revolving around historical circumstances, satisfactorily explain some of this incomplete work.”

and those merely “executed in less detail than those around [them]” (1986: 103–5). In the former case, the unfinished work never advanced to a stage in which it could be employed for its purpose, while in the latter case, a complex work of architecture or an object may be nearly complete, except for some rough areas or passages. Buddhist cave sites around Junnar possess incomplete works of both types. Reliant upon gifts of individual patrons, unfinished and, it would seem, completely abandoned caves were the result of more than merely aesthetical considerations.

Regarding Buddhist monuments and merit specifically, Gregory Schopen’s studies of monasticism and early patronage may apply to issues surrounding the desirability of completed architectural projects. Schopen’s work, although focused more on the region of northwestern South Asia, may reflect practices also current in the Deccan given the presence of sponsors from northern regions during the Kṣaharāta occupation.<sup>21</sup> According to his characterization, merit produced for patrons did not arise solely from the accomplishment of architectural projects *per se* but in their perpetual service to Buddhist communities (Schopen 2004: 27–36). Such an attitude would imply that an abandoned monastery would not accrue as much merit for its patron as would a thriving monastery. Thus, one may surmise that an unfinished cave would be of little value to its patron if it remained unused by the monastic community. Conversely, well-maintained, well-decorated, and visually appealing works would have been considered preferable to the degree that they would have attracted and inspired additional donations. This state of affairs, at least ideally, encouraged the completion of caves, including robust iconographic programs when economically feasible. Furthermore, Schopen emphasized not only building projects but also gifts to maintain or provide for monks as essential to the flourishing of monastic complexes. Completion of a cave to a usable state would not be enough to ensure a thriving monastery. A catastrophic event of an economic or strategic nature leading to the abandonment of a cave when still in progress also would have prevented the flow of funds for maintenance or provisions for the community, thus discouraging a continuous monastic presence at the site.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to inscriptions recording acts of patronage by *yavanas*, *śakas*, and an inhabitant from Bṛḡgukaccha, an epigraph inside cave 17 at Nāṣik lists a patron from Dattāmitrī in northwestern South Asia.

Interruptions in patronage alone need not be the sole cause for the unfinished status of caves around Junnar. A similar outcome would have resulted from any sort of disturbance causing artisan populations to flee the region, whatever stage their work might have been left, or a breakdown in social or economic bonds due to conquest or economic hardship. Prominent caves from the Kṣaharāta era exhibit flaws in the stone matrix from which they were carved, most significantly among abandoned caves from the Mānmoḍī hill groups (Bhīmāśaṅkar, Ambā-Ambikā, Bhut Leṇī). Presuming all of these flaws were evident at the time the caves were created, the complete abandonment of sites due to geological anomalies in the early Buddhist period seems a primarily Kṣaharāta-era phenomenon limited to the geography of Junnar. Few, if any, early Sātavāhana excavations display signs of abandonment for this reason. At Pitalkhorā, perhaps the greatest example of a monastic site carved into an unstable geological formation, a complex system of channels diverts percolating water away from cave 4, an early monastic residence (Deshpande 1959: 74). Blocks found outside caves 3 and 4 at this site imply their use as stone pieces inserted into rock-cut pillars weakened by faults and splits, a practice also observable in the *caitya* hall at Nāṣik.<sup>22</sup> The excavation of Thanale-Nadsur continued to completion despite the presence of red bole running through caves at the site, including its largest monastic residence and its *caityagrha*.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the *caitya* hall at Kārle, completed during the Kṣaharāta era, exhibits faults necessitating stone attached to the matrix using mortises and tenons to complete its iconographic program (fig. 15). Such additions or amendments were employed as needed; mortises carved into a pillar fronting cave 10 at Nāṣik may demonstrate a use of this contingency for a cave under direct Kṣaharāta sponsorship away from Junnar and its environs.

Why, then, are there so many abandoned caves in and around Junnar, and fewer of such examples elsewhere? Multiple sources of evidence

<sup>22</sup> The sixth pillar on the left side of the hall displays a rectangular void facing the *stūpa*.

<sup>23</sup> Rather than abandoning the excavation, the main monastic residence at the site was apparently redesigned to accommodate the flaw. Entrances to monastic cells are raised upon a narrow platform running the length of three sides of the cave. This feature helps to elevate the semicircular arches above entrances to the cells, so that they rest directly above the problematic geological stratum.



Fig. 15. Detail of flaws in the stone necessitating an ancient repair to the pillar capital. Cave 8 (*caitya* hall), Kārle, 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

point to the short-lived presence of a foreign state and its loyal supporters before the city itself experienced a significant reversal of fortune. In some cases, a lack of familiarity with local geology or hasty judgment when carving into the trap rock around Junnar may have prevented the rapid and straightforward completion of rock-cut excavations. Whether due to ignorance, haste, or expediency, these excavations reveal splits and fractures requiring exigencies that local industry was either ill-suited to utilize and deploy or unable to provide. Warfare and instabilities affected patronage at Buddhist cave sites around Junnar, although issues go beyond merely an interruption of funding. Not only a hiatus of patronage but also the mass exodus from the Deccan by those loyal to the Kṣaharātas may have transpired after the fall of the dynasty. One may speculate that displaced artisan populations and a collapse of the local economy due to warfare or economic concerns contributed to their demise. Peoples who were foreign to the region would never return, and in many cases, the fortunes of patrons would have suffered confiscation. Typically, monastic



communities are viewed as immune from dynastic reprisal; however, one wonders what may have happened during the reconquest if the *yavanas*, *śakas*, and *pahlavas* cast as antagonists to Sātavāhana power in Gautamī Balaśrī's inscription, as well as their allies, constituted not only former patrons of rock-cut architecture but also members of the *saṅgha* receiving their donations and inhabiting these caves. Notably, an inscription at Nāṣik from the Sātavāhana reconquest era records the settlement of a specific monastic group at the cave site, which would suggest a changing population at the monastery in the aftermath of the Sātavāhana-Kṣaharāta war (Senart 1905–06: 65–71). In any case, the carved evidence at several of the sites around Junnar indicates caves arrested at various developmental stages that were not revisited, never completed, and probably located in groups that did not thrive in the era of renewed Sātavāhana power.

The physical remains of incomplete caves may also be understood in light of the status of Junnar under Kṣaharāta versus Sātavāhana rule. While uncertainty remains whether or not Junnar was ancient Dhenukākaṭa, their fates appear to be linked with the decline of patronage by *yavanas*. Umehanākaṭa eludes mention in extant inscriptions from the Sātavāhana reconquest. Dhenukākaṭa receives scant mention in this period, as well. An inscription from cave 65 at Kānherī records the donation of a cave, cistern, and permanent endowment by Sapa, a nun from Dhenukākaṭa (Gokhale 1991: 91). An inscription at Śelārvāḍi provides the only extant record of patronage by a lay inhabitant of Dhenukākaṭa perhaps datable to the Sātavāhana reconquest (Burgess 1883: 92). These rare mentions in later inscriptions indicate that Dhenukākaṭa endured the reestablishment of Sātavāhana rule in the Deccan but may not have retained the importance it once had under the Kṣaharātas. As the economy of Junnar contracted with the decline of *yavana* patronage, caves abandoned in the vicinity of Junnar remained so, long after the fall of the dynasty. Subsequently, patronage appears to have shifted to groups at Śivnerī which survived into this latter phase, even as unfinished Kṣaharāta-era excavations nearby were left abandoned.

One may note how Nāṣik may have resembled sites around Junnar if patronage in succeeding periods had not revisited incomplete excavations. In fact, other excavations at the site were abandoned and never fully



Fig. 16. Exterior view of pillars and veranda. Cave 9, Nāṣik, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

revisited. Cave 1 never progressed beyond a roughly hewn *maṇḍapa* fronted by a veranda with unfinished pillars, despite a later attempt to carve a rock-cut *buddha* into the back of the hall during the fifth-sixth centuries that was also unsuccessful. Cave 4, heavily restored in the modern era with pillars of an exaggerated width, suggests a date of abandonment late in the Kṣaharāta era. Its relatively modest dimensions combined with splits and fissures visible in the façade and hall made it an unlikely candidate for refurbishment by later patrons. Both caves 3 and 20 reached stages akin to completion during the reigns of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi and Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, respectively. Had cave 20 not been revisited, one could argue that an enormous crack traversing its ceiling or the percolation of water into the cell on the left side of the veranda proved its unsuitability for monastic habitation, just as similar claims focus upon flaws among some of the unfinished excavations at Junnar. New excavations also commenced at Nāṣik during the era of Sātavāhana reconquest, such as cave 9, an excavation consisting of cells fronted by a veranda displaying pillar capitals with an inverted pot-like shape strikingly similar to examples on cave 3 (fig. 16). Therefore, a date

of completion during the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi is a reasonable estimation. Sātavāhana support through land grants and direct patronage leading to the completion of cave 3 helped this site to thrive, thus attracting new patrons to the site as the Sātavāhana economy strengthened under Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi and his successors.

### **Kānherī and Developments in Post-Kṣaharāta Rock-Cut Architecture**

Presuming the existence of approximately 1200 surviving rock-cut caves in India,<sup>24</sup> nearly ten percent of this vast number belong to the sprawling site of Kānherī. More than half of the caves at Kānherī arose in the eras examined in this study, with the rest dating to the post-Sātavāhana era of western India.<sup>25</sup> Its epigraphical remains point to a rich history of inhabitation, continuous in all likelihood, through the Traikūṭaka and Śīlahāra periods to at least the early eleventh century CE, during which dated inscriptions in Middle Indic, Sanskrit and Pahlavi were recorded.

Kānherī flourished in the post-Kṣaharāta era alongside the maritime ports of Kalyāṇ, Sopārā, and Caul, as well as other nearby coastal towns mentioned in donative inscriptions. The precise date of its founding, like most sites, is unknown. Scant evidence would indicate its foundation in the first century CE at the earliest. These early physical remains are situated just south of its *caitya* hall, cave 3. Known collectively as cave 2, they consist of several poorly preserved excavations arranged laterally along the rock face, including three modest rectangular *caityagṛhas* (fig. 17). Due to later amendment in the fifth century, sculpted images of *buddhas* adorn their walls. Two *stūpas* from these rectangular excavations, one consisting of a plain drum and hemispherical dome, the other more extensively carved with *vedikā* patterns, a superstructure, and *chattra* attached to the ceiling, are datable to approximately the first to second century CE. The northernmost section of cave 2 consists of an alms hall or refectory with early inscriptions recording donations by inhabitants of Nāṣik and Kalyāṇ. The analysis of orthography, especially the characters of what may be the

<sup>24</sup> For this oft-quoted number, see Mahaley 1973: 4–5.

<sup>25</sup> A survey of these excavations relevant to the era of the Sātavāhanas may be found in Nagaraju 1981a: 190–221.



Fig. 17. Rectangular hall and *caityagṛhas* arranged laterally.  
Cave 2, Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, with 5<sup>th</sup>-century sculptures.

dedicatory inscription,<sup>26</sup> would indicate its carving in the late first century or second century (Gokhale 1991: 47).

The earliest inscription at the site mentioning a monarch appears above two cisterns in a shallow excavation known as cave 5 (Gokhale 1991: 62). While partly illegible, it provides crucial evidence of matrimonial diplomacy between the Sātavāhanas and the Kārddamakas, successors to the Kṣaharātas ruling to the north. It relates that the queen of Vasiṣṭhīputra Śrī Sātakarṇi, a ruler not listed in *purāṇic* accounts but attested in coin inscriptions (Sircar 1968: 107–25), was descended from a Kārddamaka monarch. His name, though obscured, has been reconstructed as Rudradāman. This king’s inscription at Junāgaḍh may allude to the familial relationship between the two dynasties when noting his refusal to destroy “Sātakarṇi, Lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha” due to their close connection (Kielhorn 1905–1906:

<sup>26</sup> The inscription records the donation of a “*sata*” which can be interpreted variously as a seat or an alms hall. Nagaraju and Gokhale prefer the latter.



Fig. 18. Interior of the *caitya* hall. Cave 3, Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

42–47). At Kānherī, the inscription also mentions the minister Śāteraka and the gift of a cistern. Despite the modesty of its location, the inscription records the generosity of the queen in this Buddhist site and this significant alliance between two dynasties.

### The Completion of Cave 3, the *Caitya* Hall

The *caitya* hall at Kānherī, the largest completed excavation at the site, is a stunning yet flawed document of rock-cut architecture that elicits comparisons to the great *caitya* hall at Kārle, the latter completed with conspicuous *yavana* patronage (fig. 18). Approximating the width of the great *caitya* hall, this excavation possesses a significantly shallower interior (26.36 m versus 37.87 m).<sup>27</sup> Even so, it seems to have been the most

<sup>27</sup> See Nagaraju 1981a:193. The width of the hall at Kānherī is 13.66 m, while at Kārle the width is variable, ranging from 13.7 m in back to 14.6 m in front.

ambitious cave completed in the resurgent Sātavāhana kingdom. Nearly all features apparent at Kārle find their equivalent at Kānherī: a carved courtyard, exterior pillars, a stone screen with mortises suggesting a wooden entryway, a veranda adorned with *mithuna* and other decorations, doorways providing separate entry to the central hall and the *pradakṣiṇa-patha*, pillars in the interior with ornamented capitals and pot-shaped bases, evidence of wooden timbers used in the ceiling, as well as other features common to all *caitya* halls, such as a barrel-vault and apsidal design. Despite these similarities, sculptures and architectural ornament of the *caitya* hall at Kānherī indicate developments in style and morphology between a half-century and century later than the *caitya* hall at Kārle. The morphology of pillar capitals in the *caitya* hall at Kānherī displays a pronounced flattening, a vertical compression even greater than the ones fronting cave 3 at Nāṣik datable to the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puṣumāvi (see figs. 21 and 22). This shape, beginning to resemble the *āmalaka* ornament in later Indian architecture, still retains some semblance of the inverted bell-like form with its overhanging lip visible just above the shaft of the pillar. These features demonstrate the degree that the *caitya* hall at Kānherī imitates aspects seen at Kārle even while analyses of sculptural and architectural ornament betray a significantly later date for its completion.

The *caitya* hall at Kānherī was abandoned at an early phase, and then completed in the second century CE, as seen in idiosyncrasies in its execution, a fragmentary yet illuminating dedicatory inscription, as well as its resemblance to a first-century prototype despite possessing late Sātavāhana architectural ornament and sculptural stylistic features. Nagaraju's account of its development, while subject to amendment in this study, noted the cave's many anomalies that he attributed to three distinct phases of excavation. To provide evidence for a division into three phases, Nagaraju (1985) interpreted the dedicatory inscription of the *caitya* hall as referring to three groups of donors whose contributions are listed in succession. Unfortunately, this epigraph is poorly preserved, and the number of phases enumerated is questionable. Nevertheless, Nagaraju astutely observed its implication that the cave remained unfinished at some stage of its development before work resumed and the *caitya* hall attained its present state. The inscription consists of twenty-three lines, with the greatest damage occurring at the beginning (Gokhale 1991: 51). The first line refers to the reign

of a king, partially legible and reconstructed as Gautamīputra Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, based upon mention of a donor, Aparenuka, in the nineteenth line whose name also occurs in another inscription dated to the sixteenth year of this monarch in cave 21. In the first few lines of the inscription of the *caitya* hall, merchants are mentioned, as are two brothers, Gajamita and Gajasena. Nagaraju interpreted the merchants and the brothers as being separate sets of donors, while Gokhale considered Gajamita and Gajasena to be the merchants' names. The inscription mentions the *caitya* as a gift to a sect, the Bhadāyānīyas. The last eight lines of the inscription lists various figures responsible for the completion of the cave, presumably donors and artisans, including Aparenuka, mentioned above, and Bhadamta Dhammapāla, also named in an inscription in nearby cave 4.

Sculpted features critical to reconstructing what happened to the *caitya* hall at Kānherī are the pillars flanking the hall deep in the interior that depart from the decorative program (namely, those lacking bases, or lacking both capitals and bases)<sup>28</sup> and the courtyard set askew from the axis of the hall. Regarding the latter, there is no doubt that the presence of cave 4, a *caityagrha* of modest dimensions set next to the *caitya* hall, required changes to the orientation of the courtyard (fig. 19). While one might view the *caityagrha* as an intrusion inserted after the commencement of the cave, synchronisms between the dedicatory inscriptions of cave 3 (the *caitya* hall) and cave 4 suggest that the redesigned courtyard accommodated and even included this new excavation into its design. The latter epigraph, carved in four lines on the reverse-stepped pyramid below the rock-cut umbrella, identifies the *stūpa* of Bhadamta Dhammapāla as a gift of Sivapālitanikā, wife of Dhamanaka (Gokhale 1991: 62). The relationship of Dhammapāla to both caves is clear from the epigraphical evidence and verifies Nagaraju's account of the development of the courtyard.

The author's explanations regarding the lack of adornment on several pillars inside the hall are more problematic, as he claims the unadorned pillars were part of the original phase of excavation, while embellishments on other pillars inside the hall indicate a later phase of rock-cutting. While

<sup>28</sup> On either side of the hall, the first six pillars have ornamented capitals and bases, but the next five pillars on the left side have only capitals, while the corresponding ones on the right side possess neither capitals nor ornamented bases.

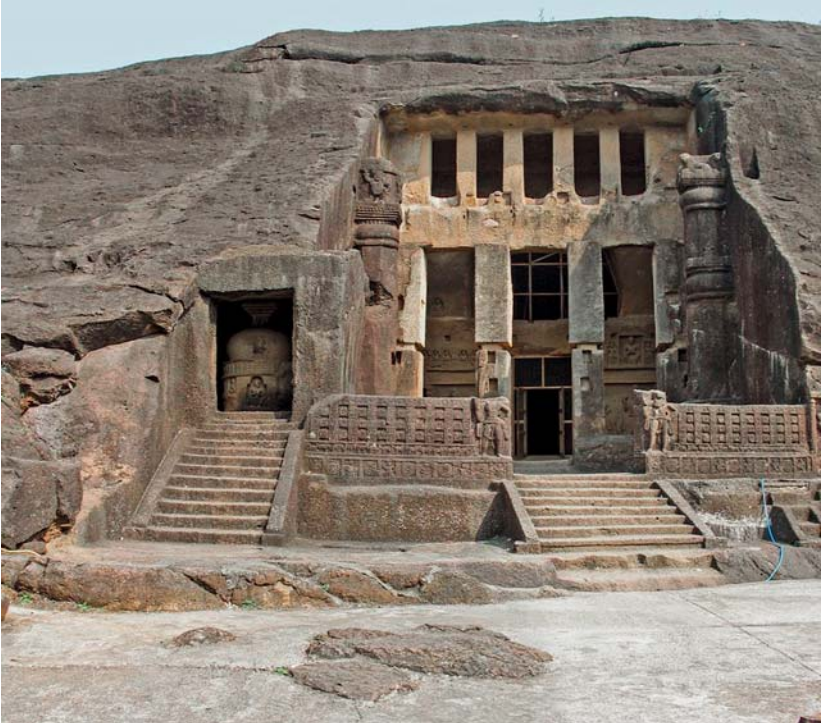


Fig. 19. Exterior view illustrating the close proximity of the nearby *caityagṛha* and the courtyard of cave 3 (*caitya* hall). Cave 4, Kānherī, 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

one may point to early examples of *caityagṛhas* that display unadorned pillars and later examples with copious ornamentation, the presence of pillars consisting of shafts octagonal in cross-section without capitals and bases represent a decision regarding the degree of ornament employed. Dating unadorned pillars earlier than those with embellishments is precarious, especially when the pillars are present in the same cave. In *caitya* halls, unadorned pillars are commonly deployed in the apsidal termination of the cave even while supports arranged linearly in the hall exhibit ornamentation. At Kānherī, the vast majority of caves feature unadorned pillars fronting their verandas and typically date posterior to caves 3 and 10 at Nāṣik, two monastic residences with richly ornamented pillars prominently displayed on their facades. Morphological sequences of ornamentation,



such as the shape and configuration of capitals, provide an effective means of charting the development of architectural ornamentation, but the omission of such adornment, except in limited cases, thwarts inclusion into such a sequence and severely limits the extent that it assists in building chronologies.

The location of these allegedly early pillars casts suspicion, as well. Unfinished *caitya* halls, such as at Bhut Leṇī at Mānmoḍī (cave 40) or Garbhgiri near Tīsgāon (S. Jadhav 2015: 430–31), exhibit pillars completed and well-developed towards the front of the hall, while examples deeper inside are barely blocked out or have yet to be liberated from the stone matrix. The excavation of the *pradakṣiṇa-patha* beginning near the entrance and progressing towards the ends of the hall would seem to be the reason why work on the pillars developed along this vector. Nagaraju’s theory concerning the presence of plain pillars claims the exact opposite: excessive stone cutting deep inside the cave along the sides of the hall led to the fashioning of unadorned pillars. This account would lead us to believe that since later excavators had greater amounts of stone with which to complete the rest of the hall, they intentionally sculpted capitals and bases on pillars wherever possible, even when doing so violated aesthetic principles of consistency and symmetry.<sup>29</sup>

A tantalizing alternative to Nagaraju’s account exists: the *caitya* hall was not merely arrested in an early phase, it was a “failed” excavation abandoned amid the chaos of the declining Kṣaharāta state due to difficulties experienced during its excavation. According to this alternative theory, the *caitya* hall at Kānherī stands alongside other major excavations left incomplete, such as the partially carved *caitya* halls along Mānmoḍī hill at Junnar, but for reasons related to its preferred location in the vicinity of coastal ports of trade and the rise of Kānherī as a major site in the resurgent Sātavāhana dynasty, new patrons lavished resources on the difficult undertaking of excavating this cave, prevailing where others failed. The dedicatory inscription, as mentioned previously, refers to this succession of patronage. Despite significant problems when attempting to revisit the

<sup>29</sup> One should note that Dehejia and Rockwell offered the inverse of this theory (2016: 65). They attributed the cutting of unadorned pillars deep in the cave to a later phase, and the lack of adornment in this advanced era to restricted funding. However, their account underestimates the effects of natural flaws and fractures in the stone matrix, which are featured prominently in this study of the *caitya* hall.



Fig. 20. Right side of the hall with crack extending diagonally from the vaulting and intersecting the unadorned seventh pillar (partly filled in with cement but still visible). Note also the cavity or depression above the ninth, tenth and eleventh pillars present on the left side of the photograph.  
Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

cave, new patrons were able to bring the *caitya* hall to completion, a cave that is one of the largest early Buddhist excavations ever realized but the least regimented in its decorative program.

Splits and fissures in the stone matrix are visible throughout the courtyard, veranda, and interior of the *caitya* hall at Kānherī. The two most ominous faults in the stone traverse diagonally along either side of the vaulted ceiling deep inside the cave. Oddly symmetrical in their locations, they appear directly above the pillars that deviate from the iconographic program in back of the hall. On the right side, the crack splits the top of the seventh pillar (fig. 20). That the seventh pillar begins the sequence of supports on the right side lacking capitals and bases is no coincidence, and one may interpret the end of sculptural embellishments on this side of the cave as an intentional response to the poor quality of stone. Further along the right side above the ninth, tenth and eleventh pillars, the crisp



Fig. 21. Fourth through ninth pillars on the left side of the hall, with crack traversing diagonally from the vaulting (upper right of photograph). The bases of the fourth, fifth, and sixth pillars display recent attempts at restoration in this photograph. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

edge of the vaulting falters to reveal a pitted depression or cavity.<sup>30</sup> In light of these flaws, only the capital of the eighth pillar could have been executed between the fissure intersecting the seventh pillar and the gouge affecting the ninth pillar on the right side. Wisely, strict adherence to the iconographic program was abandoned, and all pillars beyond the sixth on the right side are plain shafts without sculpted imagery.

Ornamented capitals were fashioned successfully on the corresponding pillars of the left side because the quality of stone was adequate for carving, although far from ideal (fig. 21). The crack in the left side of the wall intersects the extreme upper left quadrant of the seventh pillar capital but did not prevent the sculpting of the ornament (fig. 22). The capital of the eighth pillar exhibits a rough appearance due to stone of an inferior quality inside the cave (fig. 23). Given this attempt at consistency, the sculpting of

<sup>30</sup> This fault in the stone above the ninth, tenth, and eleventh pillars along the right side of the hall is clearly visible in both figs. 20 and 25.



Fig. 22. Capital of the seventh pillar on the left side of the hall. Note the crack intersecting the head of the elephant on the left corner and proceeding diagonally above the capital. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.



Fig. 23. Roughly hewn capital of the eighth pillar on the left side of the hall.  
Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.



Fig. 24. Pillar bases and shafts on the left side of the hall. The fifth and sixth pillars display shafts and bases hewn from poor-quality stone (before modern restoration). Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

pillar capitals likely commenced on the left side before inadequacies of stone on the right side of the hall mandated the sculpting of plain pillar shafts.

Pillars on the left side omit sculpted bases due to the poor quality of rock. Previous to modern restoration, the fifth and sixth pillars displayed misshapen bases attempted deepest inside the cave (fig. 24). Roughly formed and partially disintegrated, they revealed stone of a heterogeneous composition and mottled appearance that challenged ancient sculptors. Bases of the fifth and sixth pillars were carved the latest before geological issues mandated abandoning the decorative program. Mottled stone, evident on the shafts of these pillars and ones further inside the cave, led to the inelegant but necessary decision to fashion pillars that omitted bases. In contrast, the pillars on the right side, while exhibiting stone of questionable suitability, do not indicate issues as profound as seen on the lowermost section of the shafts on the left side. Therefore, the decision to end the sculpting of pillar bases on the right side was to match the morphology



Fig. 25. View of the interior with deep furrows carved into the ceiling.  
Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

of pillars on the left side, thus retaining some semblance of balance, although other concerns mentioned above thwarted a symmetrical arrangement of pillar capitals.

Eccentricities in the vaulting of the *caitya* hall seem to reflect anxieties about the strength of the stone matrix to bear the weight of wooden timbers. While several examples of *caityagṛhas* possess a flat horizontal band sandwiched between the pillars and vaulting,<sup>31</sup> Kānherī is uniquely configured with deep furrows or grooves carved into the ceiling that alternate with sections of stone flush with the vault (fig. 25). The heights at which these furrows begin are exceedingly variable and, therefore, do not imply a level band around the interior of the *caitya* hall. Their erratic placements vertically (contrasting with even spacing horizontally) indicate

<sup>31</sup> When this area is ornamented, either with sculpted reliefs or paintings, scholars may refer to it by employing the term “triforium” adapted from European religious architecture. More often, this usage appears in scholarship on later Buddhist architecture, as well as with the *caitya* hall at Aurangābād. For example, see Brown 1942: 60–61.



Fig. 26. Pillars attached to the northern wall (left) and southern wall (right) of the courtyard. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

an attempt to distribute the weight of wooden timbers at different heights inside the hall, perhaps to mitigate stresses on fissures and splits in the stone. Patterns of stains and accretions along the apsidal termination would imply that pairs of timbers were set into the edges of these furrows on either side.<sup>32</sup> Many, but not all, of these grooves display a recessed dentil on which timbers may rest. Not explained in Nagaraju's analysis, their presence reveals an ingenious strategy to compensate for flaws and weaknesses in the rock-cut medium. As such, their presence derives from the era mentioned in the dedicatory inscription in which the excavation was revisited and the cave completed.

Flaws in stone also account for the pillars in the courtyard differing in design. Nagaraju noted but did not explain their differences. An ornament resembling a capital divides the pillar shaft attached to the right or southern wall into segments, while the pillar attached to the left or northern wall omits this feature (fig. 26). In the latter case, the stone reveals an

<sup>32</sup> Rectangular mortises aligned vertically underneath the edges of the grooves also indicate the placement of wooden timbers in this fashion.





Fig. 27. View of the upper façade inside the veranda. Note the cracks, most visible on the left side of the *caitya* window, and the remains of wooden timbers projecting from mortises between window and ceiling. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

enormous gouge where this ornament should be. The likely reason for their disparity is that the southern pillar was completed first, but its segmentation could not be replicated at the same height on the northern pillar due to the unpredictable quality of stone, and so it appears much closer to the top. In addition to the flaws already mentioned, other cracks running along both lateral walls of the courtyard traverse the surface of the pillars. These pillars, unlike those designed for the *caitya* hall at Kārle, remained fully attached to the lateral walls as a means to compensate for the poor quality of stone affecting their integrity.

A major element distinctive from other *caitya* halls due to the presence of flawed stone is the façade inside the veranda. Its upper storey lacks rock-carved ornamentation completely (fig. 27). Ornament typical to this context but omitted at Kānherī include miniature architectural elements and a rock-cut arch encompassing the *caitya* window. The presence of an enormous split in the stone, most obvious to the left of the window but running the entire width of the upper façade and diagonally along the side walls of

the veranda, may have discouraged the original excavators from completing the cave and inspired its later patrons to solve the cave's aesthetic shortcomings by alternative means. Jagged ends of timbers emerging from mortices above the *caitya* window designate where artisans installed a wooden ornament rather than sculpting one from stone to complete the cave. This solution, unprecedented among the corpus of rock-cut *caitya* halls, would mask a flaw in such a prominent location and compensate for sections of stone ill-suited for carving.

Lastly, two of the alleged anomalies discussed by Nagaraju need not relate to chronology and, therefore, can be dismissed. First is his claim that differences between the pillars enframing the *mithuna* in the veranda and the *nāga* relief on the front parapet indicate two separate phases of excavation. The pillars depicted in the veranda consist of shafts octagonal in cross-section with capitals possessing animal imagery similar to those inside the hall and pot-shaped bases, while the *nāga* panel displays pillars of rounder shape in cross-section flattening out towards the floor and capitals with the inverted jar and prominent lip but no depicted animals (fig. 28). Despite these differences, the morphologies of the capitals are similar enough to be considered contemporaneous, and all seem appropriate contextually, with the ones sculpted along the spatial boundaries of the courtyard differing more so from the pillars inside the *caitya* hall, and those flanking the *mithuna* positioned inside the veranda more consistent with ornamentation in the interior. Furthermore, the engaged pillars inside the courtyard possessing square-shaped bases also display ornaments that in shape resemble the capitals of pillars inside the hall, indicating that many if not all of these elements date from the latter stage described in the donative inscription. Second, Nagaraju stated that differences between the rock-cut *stūpa* and depictions of *stūpas* inside the hall (namely, from reliefs adorning the second pillars on the left and right sides) point to separate phases of execution. His argument, though, seems to rely on a visual comparison employing the main *stūpa*'s appearance presently, noting that it lacks a *harmikā*, superstructure, and decorative bands visible in the *stūpas* depicted atop pillars.<sup>33</sup> While this observation is correct,

<sup>33</sup> Neither the *stūpa* nor representation of relic monuments on pillars possess the *vedikā* pattern common to early Buddhist *stūpas*, which would strongly suggest that they are

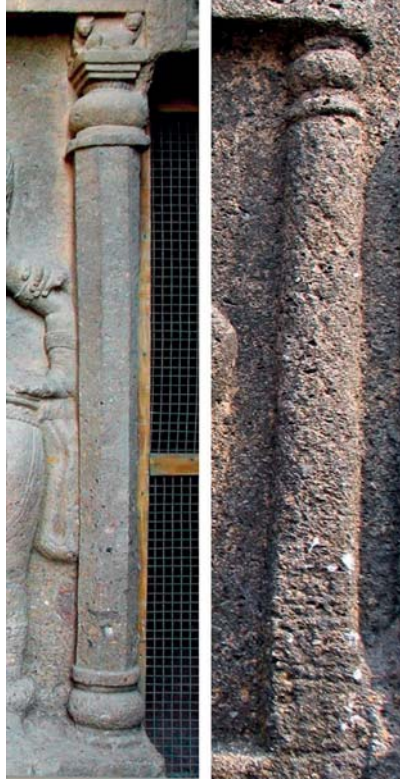


Fig. 28. Pillars sculpted in the veranda (left) and the *nāga* relief on the outer parapet of the courtyard (right). Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

the *stūpa* in its current form is as much the result of its preserved elements as it is morphology and excavation. Fragmented remnants of the superstructure are present, and the *stūpa* possesses bands that, although unsculpted, may have been ornamented in paint or other materials. In addition, the *stūpas* depicted on pillar capitals may refer to monuments at other Buddhist sites, whether nearby, such as at Sopārā, or other locations of Buddhist pilgrimage, much like the reliefs at Sāñcī seem to depict

roughly contemporaneous and date from the later period just previous to the consecration of the cave during the reign of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi.



Fig. 29. Capital of pillar with relief depiction of a *stūpa* (left) and *stūpa* inside the hall (right). Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

*stūpas* from other pilgrimage sites (fig. 29). In this regard, exactitude between the rock-cut *stūpa* and relief depictions is unnecessary for them to be contemporaneous.

According to my analysis, the excavation of the cave and sculpting of features dating from the Sātavāhana-Kṣaharāta eras occurred in two distinct phases. Given the close relationship between the *caitya* hall at Kārle and this cave, most obvious in the similar width of the interior hall and sculpting of an external stone screen, efforts at Kānherī likely began after the conclusion of work at Kārle. Inscriptions at the *caitya* hall at Kārle record considerable support from *yavanas*, as well as a Kṣaharāta inscription on its façade serving as the earliest dynastic inscription at the site. An enticing possibility is that its counterpart at Kānherī was an ambitious project begun previous to a period in which caves were abandoned in the chaos surrounding the fall of the Kṣaharātas and overwhelming problems prevented a rushed attempt at their completion. Only later, perhaps not until the reign of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi, did new patrons revisit the cave, armed with strategies to mitigate, avoid, or conceal its myriad faults. Given that no other caves on this scale were attempted during the later Sātavāhana dynasty, it is unlikely that the initial phase began under Sātavāhana rule.

In the first stage, laborers cut a pathway through the courtyard to excavate the veranda and central hall. As with most caves of this type, the façade was pierced at the height of the *caitya* window to provide access to the interior and for excavation of the hall to commence through the vaulting. Because any features in place arose from of the stone matrix, this

pathway was narrow enough to facilitate the sculpting of the stone screen fronting the veranda. While excavation of the interior took place, so did the cutting of the veranda and the removal of stone in the courtyard to begin blocking out the screen. No adornment dates from this early phase. The screen possesses supports rectangular in cross-section rather than octagonal as at Kārle, the veranda displays no clear signs of ornamentation from this time, and the excavation of the hall did not advance far enough for the sculpting of pillars. In this stage, the interior of the *caitya* hall reached something close to its present dimensions. Sufficient rock had been cut away to begin the *pradakṣiṇa-patha* near the entrance to the cave to define its width, but excavation deep in the cave abruptly stopped, perhaps after work revealed profound flaws inside the hall below which pillars lacking capitals or bases would eventually be fashioned, thus explaining the hall's truncated depth despite comparable breadths of it and the *caitya* hall at Kārle.

The second stage commenced approximately a century later during the second century CE. Most refinements appear during this stage. The *pradakṣiṇa-patha* was completed, as well as the fashioning of a rock-cut *stūpa* and pillars. Rock-cut adornment emerged in this phase, with the sculpting of pillar shafts, capitals, and bases where suitable, but difficulties with the stone mentioned above necessitated the asymmetrical distribution of ornaments. Grooves carved in the vaulting allowed for the insertion of wooden timbers to mask brittle areas of stone. In the veranda, wood ornamentation hid unsightly cracks in the upper storey, while *mithuna* reliefs carved from stone flanked the entryway. The screen, partially roughed out already, achieved its final form. During this stage of work, Dharmapāla, one of the monks involved in the renovation, may have died, leading to the addition of cave 4 just north of the courtyard to serve as his memorial. The courtyard displays a shift in axis towards the southwest to accommodate this modest *caityagṛha*, and the positions of other features, such as the parapet, steps, and engaged pillars reflect this modification in orientation.

Later additions occurred centuries after the consecration of the *caitya* hall. Sculpted *buddhas* and *stūpas*, some with accompanying inscriptions, date from approximately the fifth century CE (Gokhale 1991: 52–56). The uninscribed monumental sculptures of *buddhas* carved into either side of the veranda also date from this era. A painted inscription on one of the pillars suggests a tenth century date (Gokhale 1991: 56). These



Fig. 30. Colossal sculpture of a *buddha* on the left wall of the veranda. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century, with 5<sup>th</sup>-century sculptures.

additions in the post-Sātavāhana era indicate a trend of later additions carved and painted inside early Buddhist caves,<sup>34</sup> visible inside *caityagṛhas*

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of remains of this type found among Buddhist cave sites in the western Deccan, see Morrissey 2013.



Fig. 31. Images of *buddhas* carved above a *mithuna* relief in the veranda. Cave 3 (*caitya* hall), Kānherī, 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century, with 5<sup>th</sup>-century sculptures.

and other caves throughout the site of Kānherī, as well as occurring at the *caitya* hall at Kārle. While the veranda at Kārle displays *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* of modest sizes carved into tiers of pre-existing architectural ornament, each lateral wall of the veranda at Kānherī features a colossal sculpture of a *buddha* (fig. 30). This ambitious and late sculptural program may suggest that the surfaces of walls were left plain or, more likely, painted but lacked plastic adornment during the second stage due to the same flaw in the stone that caused considerable problems on the upper façade. Similarly, the *buddhas* and other figures arranged sequentially around the *mithuna* reliefs on the façade do not intermingle with carved architectural features, another indication of a prior existence of painted rather than sculpted ornament during the reign of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi when the *caitya* hall was consecrated (fig. 31).

### **Bhadāyaniyas in the Reconstituted Sātavāhana Dynasty**

The renewal of this abandoned cave project coincided with sectarian Buddhist interests in the era of Sātavāhana reconquest. The dedicatory inscription mentions the *caitya* hall as a gift to the Bhadāyaniyas. Nagaraju (1985; 1981b) notes other prominent references to this sect in two inscriptions from cave 3 at Nāṣik, mentioned above, both from the reign of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi. Found on the back wall of the veranda near the entrance, the first inscription dates from the nineteenth year of the monarch, is dedicatory in nature, and identifies the Bhadāyaniyas as recipients of royal patronage. The second inscription, separated from the first by a *svastika* and dating from the twenty-second year of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi, identifies the monks dwelling in the cave as Bhadāyaniyas who are from a particular locale, with “Benākaṭa” or “Dhanakaṭa” as possible readings.<sup>35</sup> Nagaraju preferred “Dhanakaṭa” and suggests it refers to Dhānyakaṭakā, the eastern capital of the Sātavāhanas situated today in Āndhra Pradesh. However, an inscription of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi from the same cave mentions Benākaṭaka in Govadhana, which lies in the vicinity of both Nāṣik and the hill where the caves are located.

The Sātavāhanas directed their gifts to the monastic communities of Bhadāyaniyas and Mahāsāmghikas at Nāṣik and Kārle, respectively. One may contrast the Sātavāhana practice of specifying Buddhist sectarian groups as recipients in inscriptions to the practice of the Kṣaharātas who preferred a more formulaic expression of gifts to monks irrespective of sect. Inscriptions by other donors during the Sātavāhana dynasty correlate an established sectarian geography, such as at Kārle with an inscription recording a lay-worshiper’s gift of a residential cave to the Mahāsāmghikas also during Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi’s reign (Senart 1902–03: 71–73). An inscription from cave 50 at Kānherī dated to the third century CE records gifts to the Bhadāyaniyas, indicating their continued habitation at Kānherī throughout the later Sātavāhana period (Gokhale 1991: 86–88). In contrast, an inscription during the reign of the Ābhīra king in the post-Sātavāhana era echoes Kṣaharāta sentiments in Nāṣik’s cave 10 by omitting mention of sectarian interests, even at this late date (Senart 1905–06: 88–89).

<sup>35</sup> See especially the discussion provided in Senart 1905–06: 68.



The Bhadāyaniyas, who received royal support at Nāṣik, revisited the abandoned excavation at Kānherī to complete and consecrate a *caitya* hall rivalling, but not surpassing, the *caitya* hall of Kārle, itself controlled by the Mahāsāṅghikas. The Sātavāhanas in their reconquest of the western Deccan exhibited an awareness of and assistance to Buddhist sectarian movements, as inscriptions during this era are the first to distinguish and discriminate between monastic recipients in this manner, even, and perhaps especially, at sites where their predecessors did not do so. The *caitya* hall at Kānherī, which displays no evidence of receiving royal patronage, indicates the growth of a Buddhist sect that formerly received royal support as the dynasty reasserted itself in the western Deccan, with caves 4 and 50 also asserting this sectarian identity. In the case of cave 4, it may embody not only a memorial of a deceased monk but also a prerogative of Bhadāyaniya elders to enshrine their remains in the vicinity of the *caitya* hall. The series of low walls throughout the courtyard may have provided some system of organizing the placement of so-called “votive” *stūpas* for similar purposes. Remains of *stūpas* are attested in front of the cave and below it in a nineteenth-century report, but they may date from eras throughout the site’s protracted history (Bird 1841; Gokhale 1991: 59–62).

### Concluding Remarks

The patronage of rock-cut architecture during the later Sātavāhana era was neither continuous with the Kṣaharāta era of rule in the Deccan nor a simple return to a status quo upset by the brief intercession of a foreign power. Rather, one may note the abandonment of caves relatable to the chronology of the Kṣaharāta presence in the western Deccan that remained abandoned, or, in a few cases, were adopted by new patrons in the reconstituted Sātavāhana Empire. The patronage of *yavanas*, the utilization of architectural elements similar in form to cave 10 at Nāṣik (under direct Kṣaharāta royal patronage), and other evidence, such as the donation of brothers from Bhṛgukaccha in a cave group at Mānmoḍī, assist in the construction of a Kṣaharāta phase of rock-cut architecture in the first century CE. Sectarian interests arose in the epigraphical record, with gifts given specifically to Mahāsāṅghikas at Kārle and Bhadāyaniyas at Nāṣik and Kānherī.

Inscriptions and remains from particular caves support the notion that some of the largest and most highly ambitious cave projects after the Sātavāhana reconquest had complicated developmental histories. While the sites around Junnar remained littered with unfinished caves and abandoned projects from the Kṣaharāta era, Nāṣik and Kānherī experienced documentable renovations and revisittings of previously halted excavations. Intriguingly, few other projects on an immense scale occurred in this period. The grandiose *caitya* halls developed in the early Sātavāhana and Kṣaharāta eras, with the last example at Kānherī completed upon a pre-existing excavation and resembling the mid-first century *caitya* hall at Kārle, despite its consecration in the reign of Śrī Yajña Sātakarṇi. Considerable rock-cut activity commenced during this period, but the development of elaborate and grand examples of Buddhist rock-cut architecture would not reappear until the fifth century, with the rise of Vākāṭaka and Aśmaka patronage at Ajañṭā, another episode of dynastic rivalry documented in the remains of Buddhist cave sites.

### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Andrew Ollett for organizing the panel “Buddhism in the Sātavāhana Empire” at the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Congress of IABS in Toronto, and for his helpful comments and clarifying questions regarding the issues discussed in this article. I would also like to express my appreciation for the care the anonymous reviewers displayed in pointing me to recent scholarship and discussing the merits and challenges of disentangling the chronology of Buddhist caves during periods of Sātavāhana and Kṣaharāta rule. Thanks also to Shreekant Jadhav, whose assistance throughout my research trips is greatly appreciated, as is his friendship over the years. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Archaeological Survey of India, Mumbai and Aurangabad Circles, for allowing me to visit and photograph sites under their jurisdiction.

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#### ABSTRACT

Conflict characterized the period of the mid- to late-first century CE in the western Deccan region of India, during which the Kṣaharātas, a satrapy to the north, annexed traditional Sātavāhana territories as it exerted control southward along coastal India. Donations at early Buddhist cave sites dating from this general period do not adhere to the same patterns of patronage existing during the era of the early Sātavāhanas, or their reconstituted empire after their victory over the Kṣaharātas. At these sites, patronage by *yavanas* and by other individuals and groups from locations to the north, such as Bhṛgukaccha (Bharuch) in Gujārāt, indicate a short-lived source of donations during Kṣaharāta rule alongside examples of unfinished and abandoned excavations. Caves from the mid-first to second centuries CE, such as cave 20 at Nāṣik and cave 3 at Kānherī, the *caitya* hall, lend direct epigraphical evidence of revisiting and completing excavations left unfinished and abandoned by earlier patrons. Inscriptions of patrons and sectarian groups, abandoned and appropriated caves, and the evolution of architectural

vocabularies contemporaneous with the transition from the declining Kṣaharāta state into the reconquest assist in elucidating the donation and execution of early Buddhist caves in this era, and in developing a clearer picture of dynastic geographies under Kṣaharāta and subsequent Sātavāhana rule. Rather than a continuous period of excavation/creation at cave sites, the effects of waves of patronage and particularities of dynastic geography on early Buddhist cave sites characterize developments at early Buddhist cave sites amidst this upheaval and return to Sātavāhana rule.