

BEGINNINGS OF SCULPTURAL ART IN SOUTH-EAST INDIA : A STELE FROM AMARAVATI

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1. INTRODUCTION

THE STELE DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED HERE WAS DISCOVERED AT THE FAMOUS *stūpa*-site of Amaravati (lat. 16° 34' N.; long. 80° 17' E.), District Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, in the course of clearance, mostly around the *stūpa*, undertaken by Dr. R. Subrahmanyam, Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India, and his staff in the year 1958-59.¹ The operation uncovered many unknown features of the *stūpa* and brought to light a large number of loose sculptures and architectural fragments, including uprights and cross-bars of more than one railing, many of them bearing donative inscriptions in characters of the second century B.C. and later,² which are under study and will be published in due course. These finds, together with the inscriptions published earlier,³ bespeak a

¹ The results have been briefly noticed in *Indian Archaeology 1958-59—A Review* (New Delhi, 1959), p. 5.

² Many of these inscriptions have been noticed in *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy 1959-60* (Delhi, 1963), pp. 47-50. Some of those on the present stele appear on p. 50 as nos. 54 to 57.

³ *Epigraphia Indica*, XV (1925), pp. 258-75; C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum* (Madras, 1956), pp. 271-304.

pre-Christian origin of the *stūpa*, and the recently-discovered pillar-fragment with a Mauryan, almost certainly Aśoka, inscription on it¹ tends to point to Aśoka as the author of the nucleus of the *stūpa*, which underwent additions and embellishments during the next five centuries or so. All this makes it difficult to accept Barrett's 'short chronology' for the *stūpa* (second century and first half of third century A.D.).² In bulk, the discoveries are of value for the reconstruction of the history of the *stūpa*; taken singly, the present stele is the most important of them because of the early sculptures and inscriptions it bears and therefore deserves separate publication.

The position of the stele in the architectural scheme of the *stūpa* is not known.

2. PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE STELE

The stele³ (pl. XXXIX) is of greenish limestone, known as Palnad marble, which is the material of all Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda sculptures. Its top is missing and so is one of its sculptured faces, which has obliquely broken off, giving its upper part a triangular profile when viewed from two sides (cf. pls. XL and XLII). While its original dimensions are thus not available, its maximum extant height is 1.84 m., including the lower undressed part (98 cm.). To judge from its second face, which is largely intact horizontally, it was 52 cm. square.

3. THE SCULPTURES AND INSCRIPTIONS

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The three extant faces of the stele depict Buddhist scenes, almost all of them bearing inscribed explanatory labels; there is no means of knowing what was the subject-matter of the fourth face. A three-barred railing ran at the base of the finished part of the stele all round, and the sculptured part, as can be guessed from the second face, was framed by a double row of bead-and-reel border separated from each other by a plain strip.

We shall now proceed to describe the sculptures and inscriptions on each face. The faces have been numbered first, second, third and fourth (the last missing) in a clockwise direction.

B. FIRST FACE: FROM VAIŚĀLĪ TO KUŚĪNAGARA (pl. XL)

(i) *The biographical background*

The sculptures and inscriptions on the first face are the most interesting and pertain to the last three months of the life of Buddha, from his stay at Vaiśālī to the *parinirvāṇa* at

¹ *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXV (1962), pp. 40-43.

² Douglas Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* (London, 1954), pp. 40 ff. Philippe Stern and Mirelli Bénisti recognize four phases in the Amaravati art, ranging in time from between Bharhut-Sanchi on the one hand and Nagarjunakonda on the other, *Évolution du Style Indien d'Amaravati* (Paris, 1961), and this is not inconsistent with the now-available evidence derived from railing-architecture and inscriptions.

³ Along with other recent finds, the stele is housed in the local Archaeological Museum of the Archaeological Survey of India and bears field no. 304 and accession no. 441-1.

Kuśīnagara, depicted chronologically from the bottom upwards. To understand their full import it is desirable to recall a few relevant happenings in Buddha's life during the period, as recorded in the *Mahā-parinirvāna-suttanta*.¹

Buddha arrived from Nāḍikā at Vaiśālī where he resided in Āmrāpālī's grove. Thence he shifted himself to Beḷuva near Vaiśālī but returned to the latter place, where he stayed this time at Chāpāla-chaitya.² There Māra called on him and asked him to pass away, and Buddha informed Māra that he would die within three months. Relating this incident to Ānanda, Buddha added: 'Thus, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has today at Chāpāla-chaitya consciously and deliberately rejected the rest of his allotted term of life.'³

From Chāpāla-chaitya Buddha resorted to Mahāvana-kūṭāgāra.⁴ One day he entered Vaiśālī for alms; before leaving the place he gazed at it 'with an elephant's look' and said to Ānanda that that was going to be his last look at Vaiśālī.⁵

From Vaiśālī Buddha and his disciples proceeded to Pāvā, visiting many places on the way. At Pāvā he partook of the meals offered to him by the smith Chunda, which made him fall sick on his way to Kuśīnagara. He went aside from the path to the foot of a tree, where Ānanda prepared a seat out of a four-folded *saṅghāṭī* for him to rest on. He wanted to drink water, but as the adjoining streamlet was dirty, five hundred carts having crossed it just then, Ānanda requested him to walk over to the river Kakutthā to get pure water. But on Buddha's insistence Ānanda went to fetch water from the muddy streamlet, and lo! the streamlet began to flow clear. Ānanda took water in a bowl and Buddha quenched his thirst. From his seat Buddha converted a young Malla called Pukkasa, a disciple of Āḷāra Kālāma, who presented to Buddha a pair of robes of cloth of golden hue.⁶

Buddha and his party then walked over to the Kakutthā, where Buddha bathed and drank water. He was tired when he crossed the river and his disciple Chundaka made a seat for him out of the robe given by Pukkasa.⁷ Thereafter the last stretch of the track was covered and Buddha reached Kuśīnagara on the other side of the Hiranyavatī. As is well-known, he attained *parinirvāṇa* there.

¹ Text: *Dīgha-Nikāya*, ed. T.W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, Pali Text Society (P.T.S.), II, (London, 1903), pp. 72-168; Translation: T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Suttas*, Sacred Books of the East, XI (Oxford, 1881), pp. 1-136. Referred to below as Text and Translation respectively. The Pāli words have been Sanskritized as far as possible.

² Chāpāla-chaitya is enumerated by Buddha as one of the beautiful spots of Vaiśālī: Text, p. 102; Translation, p. 40; *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, V, *Mahāvagga*, ed. M. Leon Feer, P.T.S. (London, 1898), p. 259; *Ānguttara-Nikāya*, IV, ed. E. Hardy, P.T.S. (London, 1899), p. 309.

³ Text, p. 114: *Idāṃ' eva kho Ānanda ajja Chāpāle chetiye Tathāgatena satena sampajānena āyu-saṃkhāro ossaṭṭho' ti*; Translation p. 54. Important from our point of view is the word *ossaṭṭho* (Sanskrit *av-ot-spiṣṭa*), 'rejected', 'renounced', a variant of which occurs in our Inscription B (below, p. 171). This incident was regarded as one of the great events in Buddha's life, as it is ranked with his Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Death in the *Kathā-patthu*, ed. Arnold C. Taylor, P.T.S., II (London, 1897), p. 559, where the word in question is repeated: *Chāpāle chetiye āyu-saṃkhāro ossaṭṭho*. The Māra incident is related in slightly varying versions by Fa-Hien and Hsien Tsang, Samuel Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London, 1906), I, pp. liii-liv, and II, pp. 69-71.

⁴ Text, p. 119; Translation, p. 59.

⁵ Text, p. 122: *nāg-āpalokitaṃ Vesālīṃ apaloketvā āyasmantaṃ Ānandaṃ āmantesi: idaṃ paṇchchhi-makaṃ Ānanda Tathāgatassa Vesālī-dassanaṃ bhavissati*; Translation, p. 64. Note the word *nāg-āpalokitaṃ*, which is echoed in our Inscription C (below, p. 172).

⁶ Text, pp. 128-33; Translation, pp. 73-80.

⁷ Text, pp. 134-35; Translation, pp. 82-83.

After this somewhat long but necessary digression we return to the stele.

(ii) *First scene: Bahuputra-chaitya*

DESCRIPTION.—The first scene occupies the lower part of the left corner (dexter of the stele), where stand three trees. The bases of two of them are each enclosed by a three-barred railing. The one to the right, the most prominent of the three, is worshipped by two devotees, one of them with folded hands and the other holding a child in the outstretched left hand. Each wears long hair, a three-stringed beaded girdle and a *dhotī*, the folds of which are indicated by curly lines. The inscription below, in two lines, reads :

INSCRIPTION A (pl. XLIII A).—(L. 1) *Bahu'puta-chetiya Vesālakāni* (l. 2) *chetiyāni*.
'Bahuputra-chaitya (and) the *chaityas* of Vaiśālī.'

COMMENTS.—The word *chaitya* here no doubt means a 'sacred tree'. Though the *Mahā-parinivvāna-suttanta* does not mention Bahuputra-chaitya as one of the places resided at by Buddha during his last visit to Vaiśālī, it had been one of his favourite resorts during his previous stays.² According to Buddhaghosha, there was here a many-branched tree where people prayed for sons;³ that would explain why one of the devotees holds out a child towards the tree.

The words *Vesālakāni chetiyaṇi* may be regarded as a general label for the scene.

(iii) *Second scene: Chāpāla-chaitya*

DESCRIPTION.—To the right of the first scene (sinister side of the stele) is a kneeling figure with folded hands before a pair of feet (*Buddha-pāda*) placed on a low pedestal, over which is the fragment of a rectangular object. The person has a grotesque face and a knobbed head-dress; his *dhotī* is indicated by oblique parallel lines. The inscription below runs as follows :

INSCRIPTION B (pl. XLIII B).—*Chāpāla-chetiya Mārō yāchate ossaḥ-ita(ti)*.
'In Chāpāla-chaitya Māra begs renunciation (of life).'

COMMENTS.—The story of Māra exhorting Buddha to die and its importance have been related above (p. 170). The worshipper here may represent Māra. *Ossaḥ* is no doubt the same word as Pāli *ossatṭha* (above, p. 170, n. 3).⁴ Buddhaghosha says that Chāpāla-chaitya was once the residence of the *yaksha* Chāpāla, but a *vihāra* was erected here for Buddha.⁵ It is referred to in the *Divyāvadāna*.⁶ Fa-Hien mentions it as the *stūpa* of deposited bow (cf. *chāpa*) and clubs; Hiuen Tsang also saw a *stūpa* there.⁷

¹ The letter *hu* is malformed.

² Cf. Text, pp. 102 and 118; Translation, pp. 40 and 58. It is called Bahupatraka in the *Divyāvadāna* (Darbhanga, 1959), p. 125.

³ G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* (London, 1960), II, p. 273, quoting the *Udāna Commentary*, p. 323, and the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, II, p. 128 (references not checked by us).

⁴ But while *ossatṭha* is a passive past participle, that form is not grammatically justified here.

⁵ Malalasekera, *op. cit.*, I, p. 863, quoting the *Udāna Commentary*, pp. 322 f. (reference not checked by us).

⁶ *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 125 and 128.

⁷ Beal, *op. cit.*, I, p. liii, and II, p. 69.

(iv) *Third scene: Mahāvana-kūṭāgāra-śālā*

DESCRIPTION.—Over the human figure of the second scene is the *chaitya*-arched entrance, frontally depicted, of a structure with a roof of the shape of a three-pinnacled vault. Through the door is seen a shrine, the curved roof of which is marked with oblique and vertical straight lines as if representing its bamboo-frame. Inside, at the bottom, is a pair of *Buddha-pāda* over which is a throne, its front with a beaded border, surmounted by an umbrella. There is a two-line inscription in the left upper corner over the roof-vault:

INSCRIPTION C (pl. XLIII C).—(L. 1) [*Vesa*]liya(ḡe) viharati Mahāvane kuṭāgā[ra]-
(l. 2) [sā]lāya.¹

¹ (The Lord) dwells in the *kūṭāgāra*-cottage in Mahāvana at Vaiśālī.²

COMMENTS.—As stated above (p. 170), Buddha went from Chāpāla-chaitya to Mahāvana-kūṭāgāra, depicted here. According to Buddhaghosha the pinnacled *śālā* stood on pillars. The whole *saṅghārāma* came to be known as *kūṭāgāra-śālā* after it.³ Fa-Hien saw a two-storeyed *stūpa* here.⁴

(v) *Fourth scene: the 'elephant's look'*

INSCRIPTION D (pl. XLIII D).—Over the figure holding a child in the first scene occurs the following inscription: *nāg-ā[pa]logana*.

¹ 'The elephant's look.'

COMMENTS.—This represents the site of the last look of Buddha at Vaiśālī, *nāg-āpalogana* of our inscription corresponding to *nāg-āpalokita* of the Pāli text (above, p. 170, n. 5). Both Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang saw a *stūpa* on the spot.⁵

(vi) *Fifth scene: the miracle of clear water*

DESCRIPTION.—Going further up, over Inscription D, we see the depiction of flowing waters with a handled bowl over it. Beside is an oblong seat below a tree, with a second tree to its left. An indistinct object, perhaps an aquatic animal, is seen in the waters at the right edge.

COMMENTS.—In the absence of any explanatory label, which might have existed in the now-missing right-hand portion, the stream has to be identified with any one of the three crossed by Buddha on his way from Vaiśālī to Kuśinagara: (1) the rivulet beside

¹ The letters *Vesa* in l. 1 and *sā* in l. 2 are clear in the photograph, pl. XL, but indistinct in the impression, pl. XLIII C.

² The formula sounds like an exact quotation from the Pāli texts which abound in such passages.

³ *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, P.T.S., I (London, 1886), pp. 309-11. The words *kappikāṇi yojetvā* have been translated above as 'pinnacled'; cf. Sanskrit *kaṇṭhaka* or *kaṇṭhika*, 'lug', 'round protuberance'. Elsewhere Buddhaghosha says that *harmya* is nothing else but a *prāsāda* with a *kūṭāgāra* on the top under the sky, *hammiyan ti upariākāsa-tala-patitṭhita-kūṭāgāro pāsādo yeva*, see the *Samanta-pāsādikā*, ed. J. Takakusu and Makoto Nagai (London, 1947), VI, p. 1215, implying the existence of pillars or poles as support for a *kūṭāgāra*. According to his description of Mahāvana-kūṭāgāra and his definition of *harmya*, the *kūṭāgāra* was a *harmya*, though its present representation does not show supporting pillars or posts.

⁴ Beal, *op. cit.*, I, p. lii.

⁵ This letter, lost in the crack of the stone, could have been *va*.

⁶ Beal, *op. cit.*, I, p. liii, and II, p. 69.



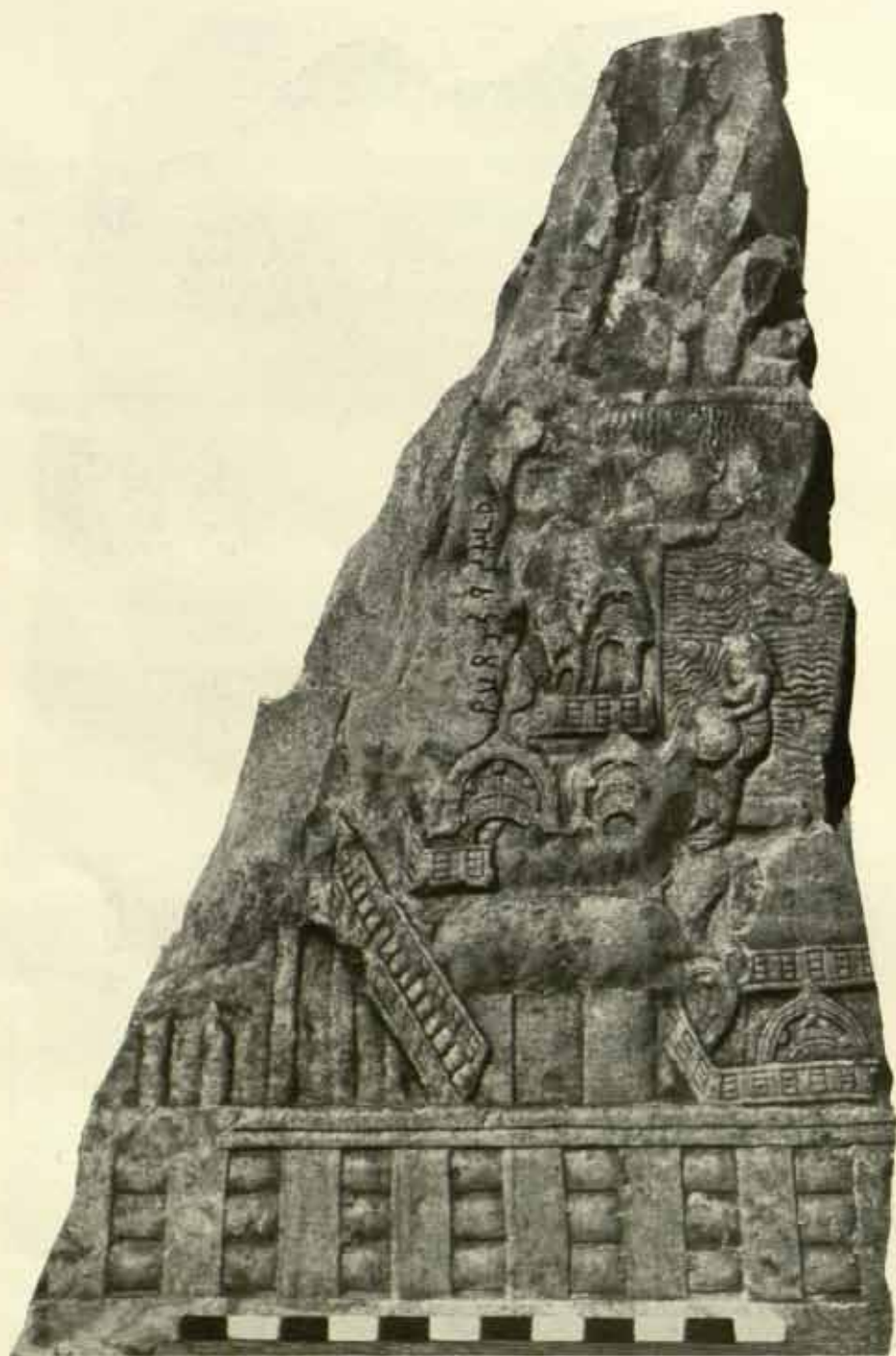
Amaravati: stele as excavated. See p. 169



Amaravati: stele, first face. Scale of inches. See p. 169.



Amaravati: stele, second face. Scale of inches. See p. 173



Amaravati: stele, third face. Scale of inches. See pp. 169 and 175



A



B



C



D



E



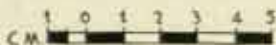
F



G



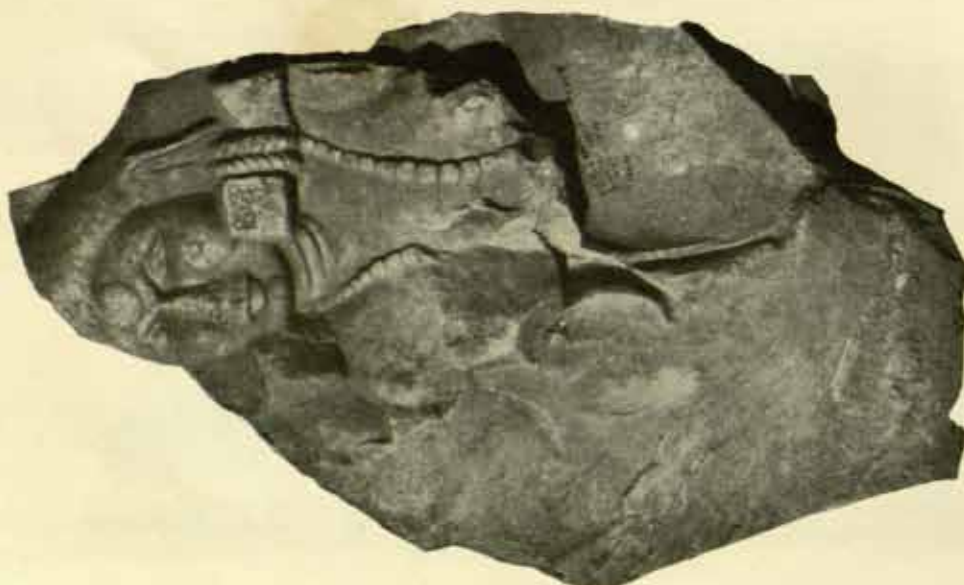
H



Amaravati: inscriptions on stela. See pp. 171-75



B



A

Amaravati: yakshis (H., A, 51 cm., and B, 67 cm.). See p. 177

which Ānanda prepared a seat for him under a tree, (2) the Kakutthā on the farther bank of which Chundaka spread out the golden robe, and (3) the Hiraṇyavatī. We have no hesitation in holding first identification as the correct one, for significant events, in the form of muddy water turning crystal-clear and a conversion, took place on the first rivulet. There Ānanda is specifically stated to have prepared a seat under a tree and to have fetched water in his bowl. The depiction of a tree with a seat below and the bowl on the river establish the identification beyond doubt. It may be noted that unlike two of the trees in the first scene, this tree has no railing around it, probably indicating that it had not the status of a *chaitya*.

(vii) *Sixth scene: parinirvāṇa*

DESCRIPTION.—A fragment of the last scene occurs at the top. Here we find a sad figure squatting with folded hands and part of the back of another figure. Above, near the extant top of the stele, is the following inscription in two lines :

INSCRIPTION E (pl. XLIII E).—(L. 1) [*sā*]lavane' bhagavato (l. 2) *parinivute*.

'The extinction' of the Lord in the *śāla*-grove.'

COMMENTS.—Here, then, is the scene of the *parinirvāṇa*, including the conventional representation of one of mourners with his back turned.³ It would have been interesting to have the other details of the scene, particularly to know if the death-scene was represented by a *stūpa*.⁴

C. SECOND FACE: ŚRĀVASTĪ AND JETAVANA (pl. XLI)

(i) *First scene: Śrāvastī*

DESCRIPTION.—In the lowest part of the face, in the centre, are the pinnaced domes of three structures, the lower parts of which are not seen. The following inscription is recorded on the middle one :

INSCRIPTION F (pl. XLIII F).—*Sāvathi*.

'Śrāvastī.'

COMMENTS.—The inscription, as it were, ushers the visitor into the city of Śrāvastī.

¹ The vertical stroke below *na* seems to be adventitious.

² *Parinivute* may be taken as a verbal noun.

³ Such a figure occurs in the *parinirvāṇa*-scenes at other places, e.g. Ajanta (Cave 26), Sarnath and Kuśinagara: *Ajanta*, pt. IV (Oxford University Press, 1955), pl. LXXX; Daya Ram Sahni, *Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sarnath* (Calcutta, 1914), pl. XIX; D.R. Patil, *Kuśinagara* (Delhi, 1957), pl. VIII. In all these instances there is beside the figure a tripod made of sticks (*tri-daṇḍa*) with a pot suspended from it. Sahni, *op. cit.*, p. 185, says that the figure must be identified with the recluse Subhadra, the last convert of Buddha, as would appear from the *tri-daṇḍa*; but the Tibetan tradition says that Subhadra died even before Buddha, W. Woodville Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha* (London, 1884), p. 138. No tripod is seen in our sculpture, and it is not known if one existed to the right of the figure, beyond which the stele is broken.

⁴ At Bharhut and Sanchi simple *stūpas* have been taken as representations of the *parinirvāṇa*-scene, but in the absence of any typical Kuśinagara association, e.g. twin *śāla*-trees and mourners, such *stūpas* should be regarded as just sacred objects.

(ii) *Second scene: a structural complex*

DESCRIPTION.—The scene occurs in the left lower corner of the face. In the foreground is a pavilion having a curved roof with a pinnacle and surrounded at the base by a three-barred railing. The pavilion is approached by a flight of eleven steps flanked on either side by a balustrade made of uprights, eight in the front and ten in the back and three cross-bars. The isometric projection of the steps and balustrade is skilful. Behind the steps and partly hidden by it are five posts or pillars supporting a structure with a three-pinnacled vaulted roof¹ and a railing around. Though the structure is depicted somewhat obliquely, we have a frontal view of its *chaitya*-arched door.

COMMENTS.—The most significant part of the scene is the structure standing high up and connected with the ground by a stair-case. The edifices may represent the gateway-complex with a room over it, erected by prince Jeta at Jetavana at an enormous cost.² Or else they may represent a complex of houses at Śrāvastī.

(iii) *Third scene: another structural complex*

DESCRIPTION.—In the foreground of the third scene, to the right of the first one, occurs a tree which partly conceals the view of five posts or pillars supporting a vaulted structure with the usual railing. The structure is shown laterally, but its door is frontal.

COMMENTS.—This complex may be part of the monastic buildings of Jetavana; in fact, the presence of the tree at the entrance makes the identification probable, for we are told that in front of the gateway of Jetavana Ānanda planted a Bodhi-tree (Ānanda-Bodhi) with great ceremony and the king 'erected a gate-chamber of the seven precious things.'³ Alternatively, it may be the depiction of another house of Śrāvastī with a tree in front.

(iv) *Fourth scene: purchase of Jetavana*

DESCRIPTION.—A low enclosure-wall, with a small gateway in the centre, separates Jetavana proper, the fourth scene, from the lower three ones. This scene depicts the familiar incident of Anāthapiṇḍika purchasing land at Jetavana in Śrāvastī from prince Jeta. As at Bharhut, we find here a tilted cart loaded with coins, mostly square but five or six round. A couchant bullock of the cart is seen at its fore near by. Over the cart is a mutilated pavilion with a railing, standing on pillars, also enclosed by a railing. The pillars are not parallel to each other and the pavilion is twisted; either it is intended to be shown as a dilapidated structure, or its delineation is an ill-attempted isometric projection. On the right are two persons engaged in spreading coins, which appear everywhere except in the chipped-off central part. Close by are two standing figures, one of which, seemingly directing the workmen, may be Anāthapiṇḍika. Towards the top, which is much

¹ This would be a *harmya* in Buddhaghosha's terminology, see above, p. 172, n. 3.

² *The Jātaka*, no. 229, Translation, ed. E.B. Cowell, P.T.S. (London, 1957), II, p. 152. Elsewhere, *Vinaya-Pitaka*, ed. H. Oldenberg (London, 1880), II, *Chullavagga*, p. 159, we are told that Jeta erected a *koṭṭhaka* (Sanskrit *kosṭhaka*) on the land near the entrance of Jetavana which had been left uncovered by Anāthapiṇḍika's coins: *atha kho Jeto kumāro tasmim okāse koṭṭhakam māpesi*; *Vinaya Texts*, III, Sacred Books of the East, XX (Oxford, 1885), p. 189.

³ *The Jātaka*, no. 261, Translation, III, pp. 222-23, and no. 479, IV, p. 143. The planting of the sapling produced a miracle, as the tree immediately sprang to a height of fifty cubits and shot forth five great branches of fifty cubits each.

mutilated, is a flight of three steps, perhaps leading to another part or an upper storey of the monastery. The inscription below the cart and on the enclosure-wall runs as follows:

INSCRIPTION G (pl. XLIII G).—*Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍika ārāmo.*

'The *ārāma* of Anāthapiṇḍika in Jetavana'.

COMMENTS.—This representation of the Jetavana story is much more extensive than the well-known and oft-illustrated one on one of the Bharhut medallions. The structural complex in the first three scenes adds interest to the story and brings out the magnificence of the great monastery, which Anāthapiṇḍika lavishly provided with dwelling-rooms, retiring-rooms, store-rooms, etc.¹ Fa-Hien says that Jetavana had seven stages.²

D. THIRD FACE: DHĀNYAKATAKA (pl. XLII)

DESCRIPTION.—This face has suffered great damage and it is not possible to identify individual scenes on it. At the lower bottom, we find five tall uprights and a stair-case leading to a missing structure which the uprights must have supported. On the right are two short but massive pillars carrying a heavy vault, and further to the right is another structure with a *chaitya*-arch enclosed by a railing, square on plan. In the upper part is a twin structure, also with *chaitya*-arches and perhaps jointly enclosed by a railing, only part of which has survived. Further up is a pavilion with a round railing. On the right and above are waters, with streams flowing in two directions, within which are seen indistinct aquatic animals; some portion of the waters is shown enclosed by an embankment. A woman with a knotted mass of hair hanging on her back draws water from the river with a pitcher. No sculpture survives in the heavily-damaged uppermost part. There is an inscription written vertically to the left of the uppermost pavilion:

INSCRIPTION H (pl. LXIII H).—*Dhamñe³kaḍa Vamda-nāma goṣṭhi.*

'The *goṣṭhī* called Vanda at Dhānyakataka'.

COMMENTS.—This face no doubt represents a scene at Dhānyakataka⁴ (Amaravati), but owing to its fragmentary condition it is difficult to identify the scene. The waters are of the river Krishna, on the right bank of which Amaravati is situated. Even today the river takes a sharp turn near Amaravati: this may explain the dichotomic representation of the stream. The embankment may be that of the harbour that existed at the place. The word *goṣṭhī*⁵ may mean a committee or association, which may have had an important role in the construction or reconstruction of the *stūpa* and the establishments of which may be depicted in the buildings sculptured here.

¹ *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, II, p. 159.

² Beal, *op. cit.*, I, p. xlv.

³ The e-mark may be accidental.

⁴ The word occurs in other inscriptions as Dhamñakata, Dhamñakataka, etc., and in Sanskrit Buddhist literature as Dhānyakataka, e.g. *Ārya-Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa*, ed. T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, no. LXX (Trivandrum, 1920), p. 88. Its modern representative is Dharanikota, half a kilometre to the north of the *stūpa*-site, on the bank of the Krishna, where there are extensive ruins of a fortified city.

⁵ The word occurs in some inscriptions of Sanchi and Bhattiprolu, *Epigraphia Indica*, II (1894), pp. 99, 100, 102 and 327 and 329. Bühler is inclined to regard *goṣṭhī* as 'a committee of trustees in charge of a temple or of a charitable foundation', *ibid.*, p. 92. Cf. *goṣṭhika* and *goṣṭhika*, 'member of a *goṣṭhī*', occurring respectively in a Mathura (second century) inscription and in a Pehowa (ninth century) inscription, *Indian Antiquary*, XXXIII (1904), pp. 104-05, and *Epigraphia Indica*, I (1892), pp. 184-90.

E. FOURTH FACE

As stated above (p. 167), the fourth face of the stele has entirely disappeared.

4. OTHER REMARKS

From the foregoing it will be seen that the stele is important from more than one point of view: depiction of scenes not represented elsewhere; interesting illustrations of architecture; and representations of the earliest phase of Amaravati art.

Artistically, the sculptures on the stele are affiliated to the early central Indian school in spite of the great distance separating Amaravati from the centres of that school; the typical Amaravati school was still to come. An *inter se* comparison of the sculptural art is difficult on account of the relative paucity of human and animal sculptures on our stele, but, on the whole, while the artist of the Sanchi gates shows greater assuredness in his carving, those of Bharhut (rail-stage) and Amaravati (as seen here) had, as it were, still to overcome their diffidence. The presence of labels on Bharhut rail and here, as if to explain Buddhist stories, till then not very popular, and their absence at Sanchi and Bodh-Gaya indicate, along with other factors, the chronological proximity of the stele to Bharhut (rail-stage) and its priority to Sanchi and Bodh-Gaya.

On the other hand, the depiction of edifices on the stele seems to mark an advancement over Bharhut, for whereas at the latter place the buildings are invariably shown either laterally or frontally, an attempted combination of both the views and even isometric projection are noticeable here. A date slightly earlier than the rail-stage of Bharhut and the gate-stage of Sanchi, perhaps late second century B.C., is thus indicated for the stele.

All this is not inconsistent with the evidence of the inscriptions. Palaeographically, the following points may be noted. The serif is entirely absent over all letters, as it is over those on the Bharhut *stūpa*-rail; its rudiments are seen on the Bharhut gate, and it further develops on the Sātakarṇi gate of Sanchi. Both the early forms of *a*, the one with open curved arms and the other an angle meeting the vertical in its centre, appear simultaneously, cf. Inscription G. The letter *ta* has the peculiar form of a vertical line with a curve issuing out of its centre, instead of the usual angle or arc hanging from a vertical stroke. The verticals of *pa* have a tendency of becoming equal to each other, as in the Bharhut and Sanchi gateways, but not in the Bharhut railing. The lower limbs of *ma* and *va* are invariably circular and not triangular (contrast the Sanchi gate), cf. Inscriptions B, C, G, and H. The *i*-sign over letters which do not end in a vertical right limb is a single vertical stroke, e.g. *thi* and *ṭhi* (Inscriptions F and H). *Ya* is usually of the notched variety.

Phonetically, the change of the surd into the respective sonant and of the surd aspirant into the respective sonant aspirant in *kuṭāgāra*, *logana*, *Anādha* and *Dharmakeṭṭa* (Inscriptions C, D, G and H) requires mention. Grammatically, we may note the *e*-ending of the neutral noun in the nominative in *parivute* (Inscription E). The verbal noun form in the word is also noteworthy.

¹ Such scenes are: Bahuputra-chaitya, Chāpāla-chaitya and the 'elephant's look' at Vaiśālī, the miracle of clear water and the *parinirvāna*—all on the first face and a scene of Dhānyakaṭaka on the third. There is no scene pertaining to Vaiśālī at Bharhut; only the offering of honey by monkeys appears at Sanchi.

Hardly anything in the script and language shows any provincial features. Artistically, as we have seen, the affinities of the sculptures with central India are manifest. Nevertheless, the stele was definitely a local product carved out of the local material and thus marks the beginnings of art at Amaravati in particular and south-east India in general. Once initiated, the *atelier* must have produced many a sculpture, of which not many early examples have survived; but opportunity is taken here of illustrating two available ones, each a *yakshī* (pl. XLIV), found in the same operation as the stele (above, p. 168) and of approximately the same date. In the course of next four centuries or so the Amaravati sculptor developed his own idiom and gave rise, during late Sātavāhana days, to what is known as the Amaravati school.¹

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