CHAPTER II

Political Background

Buddhism has had a history of over one thousand years in Maharashtra. During this long period of Buddhism, certain political powers have played important role in the spread and prosperity of the religion in Western India. The political powers which are mentioned in the inscriptions will be dealt with one by one in a chronological order.

A. The Mauryas

The earliest dynasty to claim Western India as a part of its empire was that of the Maurya. The first clear evidence of their rule over the Bombay and konkan region comes only during the time of Asoka (c. 274-232), the last ruler of the dynasty. A fragment of his eighth rock edict was found at Sopara which may have been one of his district headquarters. Other than this, no Mauryan inscription has yet been found in the Western Indian caves. But it is a well-known fact from his other edicts that Asoka was not only a royal patron but himself was a devout Buddhist. So, the religion found a very favourable condition for widening its territory. As a result, it got rapidly spread in Western India during Asoka's rule and continued to flourish in the same region for over a thousand years.

B. The Satavahanas

The Mauryan dynasty was succeeded by the Satavahana dynasty in the Deccan. This dynasty is the first known historical dynasty in Maharashtra. From the time the Satavahanas rose to power we begin to obtain political history, administrative system, the religious,
social and economic conditions of Maharashtra, its art and architecture, literature and coinage. The dynasty is not only the oldest in Maharashtra, it is the foremost in its achievements. Their rule extended not only to a major part of the peninsula, it spread also to some part of central India for some time. They gave liberal patronage to religion and literature, encouraged art, architecture and sculpture, promoted trade and commerce and made their subjects happy and prosperous.

1. The original home of the Satavahanas

The Satavahanas described themselves as "lord of Dakshinapathapati," "lord of Benakataka," and "lord of Navanagara," and their inscriptions are found at Nasik, Nanaghat, Karle, Kanheri and Visapur. Besides the inscriptions, their early coins have also been found in the region between Nasik-Junnar-Paithan area. These are the sure proof for the original home of the Satavahanas as the western Maharashtra and not the Andhra country. The belief that the Satavahanas had their origin in the Andhra country by the early historians was based on the Puranic account which referred to the Satavahanas as Andhrabhrityas. However, there is no epigraphic evidence to show that the early Satavahanas ever ruled in this region before the second century AD. The Puranic called them as Andhrabhrityas because when the Puranas were written the centre of the Satavahana power was in Andhra. On the contrary, the Andhra country was the last home of the Satavahanas and not the original home. They moved from Western India to the Andhra country and while they were strong in that region the Puranas were written.

In this work, only those kings whose names got mention in the inscriptions will be dealt with and the chronology as given by D.C. Sircar. No argument is made on chronological problems.
2. Satavahana

From some recently discovered coins, we have come to know that Satavahana was the name of an ancient king and his descendants were known as Satavahanas just as the descendants of King Gupta became known as the Guptas. The Satavahanas were Brahmanas by caste. But they married Naga and even Saka women.

3. Simuka

Although the Puranas stated and though it has been generally accepted that Simuka was the founder of the Satavahana family, he was only a descendant of Satavahana. The latter was the real progenitor of the dynasty. His coins have been found in Vidarbha, Western Maharashtra and Marathwada. He extended his rule far and wide and brought prestige to the family. He bore the title "Daksinapathapati" meaning lord of the Deccan. This is why his descendants were known after him. If Simuka had been the founder of the Satavahana dynasty, the name of the dynasty itself would have been a different one. No inscription of Simuka has yet been found though he is referred to as illustrious in the Nanaghat inscription.

4. Krishna

He succeeded his brother Simuka. An inscription in Nasik cave XIX mentions that the cave was donated by one Mahamatra Samana during Krishna's reign. All the Puranas referred to him as the brother of Simuka and the second king of the dynasty. This seems highly probable. The omission of his statue in the Nanaghat chamber may have been due to his having been the brother of Simuka, as copperplate and other inscriptions usually omit to mention brothers. He might have exerted his rule from Nasik as the inscription therein acknowledged his rule.
5. **Satakarni I**

Krishna was succeeded by his nephew, Satakarni I, who married a Nāga princess and through the inscription of his wife he is known to us. He was addressed as illustrious king Satakarni and his wife as Devi Nāganika in the figure label inscription at Nanaghat chamber. Satakarni I was a powerful king. He seems to have invaded Vidisa and occupied it for some time. This is shown by the inscription on an architrave of the Sanchi Stūpa. But later, he himself faced an invasion by Kharavela, King of Kalinga (Orissa), whom he turned back.

Satakarni I was as religious minded as he was brave. He performed several Vedic sacrifices and made gifts of thousands of cows, hundreds of horses, elephants, garments, karshapana coins and heaps of grains to Brahmans, servants and others. He performed two Asvamedhas, besides many others and thereby established his supremacy in the country. He issued silver coins, potin and lead coins of different types. The silver coins are jointly issued with his wife.

As Satavahana was the progenitor of this family, it became known as Satavahana-kula, but after Satakarni I, the family came to be designated by his name, individual kings adding their proper names to it. So, we have Gautamiputra Satakarni, Vasishthiputra Satakarni, Skanda Satakarni, Yajña Satakarni, Kumbha Satakarni, etc.

6. **Vedisiri and other princes**

After the death of Satakarni I, Vedisiri seems to have come to the throne as indicated by the Nāganika inscription at Nanaghat. It is presumed that princes Bhayala, Hakusiri and Satavahana ruled as viceroys in different places while Vedisiri ruled as a king.

There is an inscription in Nasik cave XVIII which says that
Bhatapalika was the grand-daughter of Maha-Hakusiri. This Hakusiri might have been the same Kumara Hakusiri of Nanaghat figure-label inscription as suggested by the high positions of both Bhatapalika's father and husband. Her father was a Rajamata while her husband was both a Rajamata and Bhandagarika.

7. **Gautamiputra Satakarni**

Some time between the reigns of Satakarni I and Gautamiputra Satakarni, the Sakas annexed parts of the Northern Konkan. The inscription of Usvadatta testifies that his father-in-law, the Kshaharata Mahakshatrapa Nahapana, had annexed and ruled over the Maval region as well as the Nasik area. Gautamiputra had in mind the lost territory when he succeeded his father Svati Satakarni in 106 AD. So he consolidated his rule and increased his military power for the first fifteen or sixteen years of his reign. He then resolved to free his country from foreign domination. So, he first invaded Vidarbha, an outlying province of Kanishka's empire, and occupied its chief city Kusavati (Pauni) on the Bena. He then marched against Nahapana. He defeated him in a fierce battle fought in the vicinity of Govardhana near Nasik. Nahapana fled to the hilly region of Mavala. At this time, Gautamiputra visited the Buddhist caves near Nasik and donated a field to the Buddhist community there.

Two weeks after this victory, Gautamiputra again pursued his arch-enemy, Nahapana, to the hilly tract of Mavala in the Sahyadri range and completely exterminated him and his family in another decisive battle fought near Karle in the Poona district. He then visited the Buddhist Sangha at Karle and donated the village of Karajaka to the Sangha there.
These two incidents took place in the 18th regnal year of Gautamiputra Satakarni, corresponding to 124 AD. Nahapana seems to have suffered a disastrous defeat in the second battle. So in a Nasik record of Pulumavi, in 149 AD, Gautamiputra is described as "the exterminator of the whole Kshaharata family". After his total victory over Nahapana, Gautamiputra Satakarni called back all the silver coins of Nahapana and after stamping them with his own symbol, he allowed them to be circulated. The same re-struck silver coins have been discovered at Jogaltembi in Nasik district. It is in a large hoard numbering 13,250.

Encouraged by these splendid victories, Gautamiputra resolved to embark on a digvijaya, and soon conquered several countries one after another in a whirlwind. He became king over:

Saurashtra (Kathiawad), Kukara (South-east Rajputana),
Akaravanti (Eastern &W.Malwa), Anupa (Indore & Nemad dist. of MP),
Aparanta (North Konkan), Rishika (Khandesh),
Asmaka (Ahmadnagar dist.), Mulaka (region near Paithan), and
Vidarbha mountains such as Vindhya, Sahyadri, Manchagiri, Malaya,
Rikshavat (Satpuda), Pariyatra (Abu), Krishnagiri (Kanheri),
Sristana (Srisaila), Mahendra (Eastern ghat), Setagiri (Svetagiri),
and Chakora were included in his kingdom.

He is also said to have defeated the Sakas, Yavanas and the
Pahlavas. So his skirmishes with them must doubtless have occurred in the regions of Malwa, Kathiawad and Rajputana. Gautamiputra's kingdom extended from the southern part of Rajputana, Kathiawad and Malwa in the north to the Krishna in the south and from the Arabian Sea in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east. Thus, the inscriptions refer to him as the king of kings, obeyed by circle
of all kings on earth, equal in strength to Mt. Himavat, Mt. Meru and Mt. Mandara, whose feet were saluted by all provinces, who conquered multitudes of enemies in battles, whose victorious banner was unvanquished, and whose charges had drunk the water of three oceans.

Gautamiputra Satakarni was indeed a great military commander. It is almost incredible that he could make so much achievements within the period of six years. But he did it. So the inscription of his son refers to him, further, as the king who restored the glory of Satavahana family, the unique controller, the unique archer, the unique hero, in prowess equal to Rama, Kesava, Arjuna and Bhimasena. Through his great achievements he raised his family to high fortunes.

Gautamiputra was also a great social reformer. The record describes him as one who stopped the contamination of the four varnas, one who crushed down the pride and conceit of the Kshatriyas and who levied taxes in conformity to justice.

Besides all these, he was handsome like opened lotus, his face was lovely and radiant like the orb of the full moon, his gait was beautiful like the gait of a choice elephant, his arms were muscular and rounded, broad and long as the folds of the lord of serpents.

Gautamiputra was also very religious. He is described as a unique Brahmana. He obeyed his mother fully. He sympathised fully with the weal and woe of people. He was the refuge of the virtuous, the asylum of fortune, and the fountain of good manner. He was liberal on festive days in unceasing festivities and assemblies.

His last donation to the Nasik Buddhist Sangha was a monks' land of 100 nivartanas in his 24th regnal year, i.e. 130 AD.
8. Gautami Balasiri

Although Gautami Balasiri, mother of Gautamiputra Satakarni, did not reign as a ruling queen, she played very important role in the affairs of the kingdom. She, therefore, cannot be forgotten. She was a devout Buddhist. She began her patronage of the Nasik Buddhist Community in AD 124, when her son caused Nasik cave III to be excavated for her. As the result the cave was rightly known as Devi-lena (the Queen's Cave). The cave was dedicated, 25 years after the excavation started, in the 19th year of her grandson Vasishthiputra Pulumavi. As Gautami Balasiri was very old when the cave was dedicated, she had the tumultous grief springing up in her heart for her great son, Gautamiputra Satakarni, who predeceased her. So she cause to be inscribed the memorable good deeds and great achievements of her son.

The record says that Gautami Balasiri was delighting in truth, charity, patience and respect for life. She bent on penance, self-control, restraint and abstinence. She worked out fully the type of a royal Rishi's wife.

9. Vasishthiputra Pulumavi

Gautamiputra Satakarni was succeeded by one of his four sons, Vasishthiputra Pulumavi in 130 AD. The other three sons were Skanda Satakarni, Vijaya Satakarni and Vasishthiputra Satakarni. In the early part of his reign, Vasishthiputra Pulumavi lost the provinces, conquered by his father, to Chashtana and his grandson Rudradaman. Pulumavi's coins have been found over an extensive territory in the Sangli district of Western Maharashtra, in Vidarbha, at Kondapur in the former Hyderabad State and in Andhra. Though he lost his North Indian provinces to the Western Kshatrapas, he made up for the loss by extending his rule far and wide.
in Deccan. Western Maharashtra, Karnataka, Asmaka, Mulaka, Kosala and Andhra were included in his kingdom. He was the first king of Satavahana dynasty who extended Satavahana power over the Andhra country. His liberal attitude towards the Buddhist religion is indicated by the many inscriptions engraved during his reign, which are the records of some gifts given to the Buddhist Sangha. The inscriptions incised during his reign are as follows:

In his 2nd regnal year, i.e. 132 AD 1 inscr. in Nasik cave XXIII.
In his 6th regnal year, i.e. 136 AD 1 inscr. in Nasik cave II.
In his 7th regnal year, i.e. 137 AD 1 inscr. in Karle Chaitya.
In his 19th year, i.e. 149 AD 2 inscr. in Nasik cave III.
In his 24th year, i.e. 154 AD 1 inscr. in Karle cave XV.
In his 25th year, i.e. 155 AD 1 inscr. on Visapur cistern.

These are the inscriptions which refer to Vasishthiputra Pulumavi's reign. Of all these inscriptions only one (Nasik 3:3) is his. This inscription records his gift of a Monks' land at Samalipada to the Bhadrayaniya sect for the welfare of all the monks living on Mt. Tiranhu. In the inscriptions, he is designated as raño siri, raño svami and Navanagara svami.

10. Vasishthiputra Satakarni

No inscription of this king has yet been found. But there is one inscription in Kanheri cave V, where he is referred to in connection with a donation of Paniyabhajanam by his wife (queen), the daughter of Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman of the Kardamaka family. Vasishthiputra Satakarni was the brother of Vasishthiputra Pulumavi.

11. Yajña Satakarni

His records have come to notice in Andhra, Nasik and Kanheri. His potin coins were included in the Tarhala hoard. His lead coins with a double-masted ship were current in Andhra. His silver coins
have been recovered from Kathiawad, north Konkan and Besnagar in Central India. But it would be wrong to infer them that all these were included in his kingdom. Aparanta was undoubtedly comprised in it for his inscriptions are noticed in the caves at Kanheri. In the inscriptions he is designated as rano svam Sirī Satakarnī.

12. Chatarapana Satakarnī

There is no identification for this king. A Nanaghat inscription, incised in his 13th year, says that he was the son of Vasistha.

13. The end of the Satavahana rule

The last Satavahana kings, vi., Vijaya, Chandra, Rudra and Pulumavi were all ruling in Andhra. So at the end of Satavahana age, the centre of their power was shifted from Western Maharashtra to Andhra. Hence, though they had their original home in Western Maharashtra, they are designated as Andhras in the Puranas.

C. The Western Kshatrapas

The word "Kshatrapa" denotes a provincial governor. The Kshatrapas were Sakas but all the Sakas were not Kshatrapas. Saka is a racial name while as Kshatrapa is a designation or a title. The Sakas were the central Asia nomadic tribe of Scythians who came from Kashgar. They occupied the valley of the Helmand in the first century BC. The Helmand valley to this day is known after them as Seistan, from Sakastan, i.e. the land of the Sakas.

1. The Sakas in the inscriptions

Apart from the Kshatrapa families, the Sakas in general are referred to in the inscriptions for five times. Three times in Nasik and one each in Kanheri and Junnar. In Nasik cave XXIV, Saka Damachika Vudhika (130 AD) is recorded as a writer from Dasapura.
He donated the cave and two cisterns. Another inscription in cave X says that the investor of 3500 karshapanas to certain guilds at Nasik was Vishnudatta the *sakani* (257 AD), daughter of Agnivarman the *saka*. This inscription is important for three reasons: firstly, it reveals that the women of the Saka race were known as Sakani, secondly, it throws certain light on the function of the guilds to which money were invested as it is being done in the modern commercial banks, and lastly, it mentions that the interest of the invested money were to be used for the purchase of medicines for the monks in Nasik caves. In Nasik cave III Gautamiputra Satakarni is recorded to have destroyed the Sakas, the Yavanas and the Palhavas. Here, the Sakas obviously means the *kshaharata* family of Nahapana and not the whole Sakas for we know that there were still many Sakas in Western India centuries after Gautamiputra claimed to have destroyed. Some of them made certain donations to the then existing and strong religion like Buddhism. For instance, it was Aduthuma the *saka* who donated 29 nivartanas of land for the plantation of Karanja and banyan trees to the Buddhist Sangha at Junnar.

2. The Kshatrapas

The Kshatrapas and Mahâkshatrapas were governors appointed by foreign emperors to rule over the provinces of their empire. The foreign emperors were the Kushanias. Their empire in the last quarter of first century AD comprised Anupa, Gujarat, Kathiawad and Malwa in North India and Konkan, Western Maharashatra and Vidarbha in the south.

There were two main groups of Indian Kshatrapas. Some were ruling over the Punjab and the adjoining region of Mathura. They
are known in ancient Indian history as the "Northern Kshatrapas". Others who wielded power in Maharashtra, Konkan, Saurashtra, Malwa and Gujarat are designated as the Western Kshatrapas. These became virtually independent in around 150 AD but they did not discard their previous designation. So they still called themselves as Kshatrapas. Of the Western Kshatrapas the inscriptions yield us two distinct families, viz., Kshaharata and Kardama.58

a. The Kshaharata family

Nahapana is the only Kshaharata king mentioned in the inscriptions of Western India. Yet no inscription of Nahapana himself has been discovered. The inscriptions which refer to him come from Nasik, Karle and Junnar caves. They were caused to be engraved by his daughter, Dakkhamita; his son-in-law, Usavadata and his minister Ayama. All these records refer to Nahapana's family as Kshaharata.

The Nasik records furnish us with his regnal years, viz., 41, 42 and 45 and his title as "Rajan Kshatrapa" while in Junnar we get his regnal year 46 and his title "Rajan Mahâkshatrapa Svami". This shows that Nahapana became a Mahâkshatrapa in his 46th year, i.e. 124 AD, just before he was defeated and exterminated by the great Satavahana King, Gautamiputra Satakarni.

What Nahapana had contributed to the Buddhist Sangha is not exactly known. But his daughter Dakkhamita is recorded to have donated two cells in Nasik cave X. This cave was donated by Usavadata, the husband of Dakkhamita and the son-in-law of Nahapana. This cave is popularly known as Nahapana's cave though it actually is Usavadata's. Usavadata has four inscriptions: three in Nasik cave X and one in Karle Chaitya-Hall. One of them specifically calls him as a Saka.
Usavadata

Usavadata, as he is known from his inscriptions, seems to have been a very religious minded man. He patronized the then existing major religions. He made charitable gifts both to the Brahmanas and the Buddhist monks.

**His good deeds for the Buddhist Sangha**

He donated Nasik cave X, which is one of the biggest caves in Western India with 16 cells, and some cisterns for the use of the Buddhist Sangha on mt. Tiranhu, i.e. where the caves are. Not satisfying with his provision of a big rock-cut shelter for the Sangha, he bought a field with 4000 karshapanas for the procurement of food for the Sangha. Further, he gave 32,000 stems of cocoanut trees to the congregation of Charakas (Buddhist monks) at Pinditakavada, Govardhana, Suvarnamukha and the Ramatirtha in Sopara. Three years later in 123 AD, he gave 8000 more stems of cocoanut trees to the Sangha at Chikhalapadra village in Kapura district. Besides these, he also made a perpetual endowment of 3000 karshapanas, which he invested to the weaver's guild at Govardhana, for the purchase of clothes, food, beds and seats, and for medicines. He also gave the Karajika village for the support of the Karle Buddhist Sangha.

**His good deeds for the Brahmanas**

He gave 300,000 cows in total to the Brahmanas. He gave 16 villages to the gods and Brahmanas and caused 100,000 Brahmanas to be fed the whole year. Rekapura, Anugami, Ujeni, Chechinna, Sakha and Dahanuka might have been the centres of the Brahmanas to whom Usavadata donated cows and money. He gave 8 wives to the Brahmanas at the religious tirthas of Prabhasā. He went to Pokshara tanks, bathed there and gave 3000 cows and a village to the Brahmanas. He also made gifts of money and tirthas on Barnasa river.
Usavadata's good deeds for the public

He made quadrangular rest-houses at Bharukachha, Dasapura, Govardhana and Soparaga. He also made wells, tanks and gardens. He established free ferries by boats on the Iba, Parada, Damana, Tapi, Karabena and Dahanuka rivers. Usavadata also erected shelters for meeting and distribution of water on the banks of these rivers.

His political achievements

The places mentioned in the record point to the wide extent of Nahapana's kingdom. Usavadata is said to have rescued the chief of Uttambhadra from the Malayas and made the Malayas prisoners of Uttambhadra. Apart from this, we have no knowledge of his political career. But the extensive nature of his donations seems to suggest that he held a high position in the affair of the state, so much so that he could grant villages on his own. One has to note that he was the son-in-law of Mahákshatrapa Nahapana. So the possibility of Usavadata holding a high post in the government is far from wrong.

b. The Kardamaka family

No inscription in the Western Indian caves can be attributed to the Kardamaka family of the Western Kshatrapas. The name of this family occurs just once in a Kanheri inscription. The record says that the queen of Vasishthiputra Satakarni was the daughter of Mahákshatrapa Rudradaman of the Kardamaka family. What this inscription says is in perfect harmony with the Junagarh rock-inscription of Rudradaman I (130-150 AD) which says that he did not exterminate Vasishthiputra Pulumavi during his invasions as the latter was the brother of his son-in-law, Vasishthiputra Satakarni.
D. The Mahārathis and Mahābhōjas

The Mahārathis and Mahābhōjas came into prominence during the Satavahana age. Their inscriptions are found at Bhaja, Bedsa, Kanheri, Karle, Kuda, Mahad, Nanaghat and Visapur. This shows the large area in which these dignitaries played an important political and economic role. They were great feudatories who could issue coins in their own names.

1. Mahārathis

There are eight inscriptions which can be attributed to the Maharathis. Five of them belong to one and the same family, i.e. the Kosiki and are found in three places, viz., Bhaja, Karle and Visapur. Except the earliest reference, i.e. Mahārathi Tranakayiro in the Nanaghat figure chamber, the others are mentioned in relation to certain donation. The fact that Mahārathi Tranakayiro was given the same honour as the Satavahana kings in the Nanaghat figure chamber shows that he must have been a very important person and most probably a governor under the Satavahana lordship. Mahārathi Tranakayiro might have ruled some time in the middle or a little later in the first century BC. He is the first known Mahārathi who served as a governor under the Satavahana lordship. After him, there seems to have been other Mahārathis who ruled continuously in the Poona district for about two centuries at the least as it is indicated by our inscriptions. The following references will make this point very clear.

The Mahārathis also made a great deal of contributions to the Buddhist church. One of the most notable donations that they made was the huge lion-pillar in front of the Karle Chaitya Hall. It was gifted by Goti, the son of Mahārathi Agimitranaka.
some time in the ending part of first century BC or the beginning of first century AD. Then other gifts followed. In the 7th year of Vasishthiputra Pulumavi, i.e. 137 AD, Mahārathi Somadeva donated a village to the Karle Buddhist Sangha. A few years later another Mahārathi named Vinhudata made a cistern at Bhaja and three cisterns at Visapur. One of the gifts at the latter site is dated as the 25th year of the same king as above. This is the last known date of the Satavahana king Vasishthiputra Pulumavi. Both Mahārathi Mitadeva, father of Mahārathi Somadeva, and Mahārathi Vinhudata seem to have been brothers as they both are described as Kosikiputras in the inscriptions. Just as the kingship of the Satavahanas was hereditary the Mahārathiship of their provincial governors was also hereditary.

2. The Mahābhojas

Just as the Mahārathis, the Mahābhojas also had eight inscriptions to their credit. They were also minor rulers under the Satavahana sovereignty. They held the present Thana and Raigad districts of Maharashtra State. Their inscriptions cover the period of over two hundred years, i.e. 100–310 AD.

The earliest reference to them occurs at Bedsa where a daughter of a Mahābhoja is recorded to have donated a cistern in c. 100 AD. Two decades later, Vijayanika, daughter of Mahābhoja Sadakara Sudamsana, donated Kuda cave XIII. In the same decade another Mahābhoji is stated to have given Kuda cave XI. Then in the middle of second century AD, Kuda cave XV and two cells were meritoriously donated by one Ramadata during which Mahābhoja Mandava Velidata, son of Kochi, was ruling. A century later, Venhupalita, prince of Kanabhoha, made his charitable gifts of a cave, a chaitya-hall,
two cisterns, eight cells and a path to the Mahad Buddhist Order. Half a century later in c. 300 AD, during the reign of Mahabhoja Mandava Khandapalita, his writer named Sivabhuti made a grand donation of Kuda cave I as his memorable gift and his brother Sivama, made Kuda cave VI as his everlasting gift. These references show that the Mahabhojas were not anti-Buddhist religion but staunch supporters. During the continuous feudalship, the religion enjoyed in receiving a series of gifts from their own hands as well as from their subjects. Like their counterpart the Maharathis, the Mahabhojas also ruled in successions one generation after another. They seem to have ruled from their seats at Mandava, Sadakara and Sadageri. Though not identified these places must have been located close to Kuda, Bedsa and Mahad.

3. Contact between the Maharathis and Mahabhojas

As they both were feudal lords under the same sovereign, they seem to have had a close relationship with each other. They must have held considerable political authority and economic power since they made grants of villages to some of the Buddhist establishments. They were a tightly knit group connected with each other by matrimonial relations. For instance, the donor of Kanheri cave IXVI was Nāgamulanika (300 AD) whose father was a Maharathi king and mother a Mahābhōji queen. The donor of a cistern at Bedsa was Mahādevi Maharathini Somadinika whose father was a Mahābhōja. Her mother's name is not given but applying the metronymic law, which was a very current practice at that time, her mother must have been a Maharathini as her designation Maharathini seems to indicate. These groups rose to power in the Satavahana times and continued to do so until the Rashtrakuta times, some six hundred years after the Satavahanas declined.
E. The Abhiras

They were the latest comers to India. They are placed in the southern and south-western divisions. According to Periplus, their country comprised southern part of Gujarat including Surat. They probably represent a foreign people, who immigrated into India from some part of eastern Iran in or before the second century BC. The route of their migration to Konkan and Aparanta lay through the region between Jhansi and Bhilsa which is consequently known as Aahirwar. In the third century AD they founded a kingdom comprising the Northern Konkan and the Nasik region. They were successors of the Satavahanas.

The earliest epigraphic reference to the Abhiras is in Kuda cave XV. It records that the donor of the cave and two cells was one Ramadata who was the son of an Abhira (150). The record does not specify whether the donor was from a royal lineage or not. Probably he was not. References to Ishvarasena, the grandson of Madhari Abhira, occur in a Kanheri record and in a Nasik record. The former refers to the 8th year of Ishvarasena while the latter refers to the 9th year.

It is generally accepted that Madhariputra Ishvarasena was the founder of the Abhira. He appears to have been in possession of a large territory comprising Konkan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The so-called Kalachuri-Chedi era of AD 248 is held to have begun with the accession of Ishvarasena. The Abhiras continued to enjoy a significant position in the north down to the fourth century AD. The Abhiras' contribution to the Buddhist church might not have been as much as other political powers that have been dealt with as we do not come across the mention of gifts by them.
F. The Trikutakas

They succeeded the Abhiras. Their name was derived from the Trikuta Hill in Aparanta and their kingdom comprised areas formerly held by the Abhiras as well as territories east of the ghats. They continued the era begun by the Abhiras. They may have been the feudatories of the Abhiras.

A Copper Plate Inscription of Buddharuchi at Kanheri refers to the 245th year of the Trikutakas which corresponds to 493 AD. This seems to suggest that they were still ruling in Aparanta by the end of the fifth century AD. This record was, perhaps, the last known record which refers to them while they were ruling. The Trikutakas were subdued by the Vakataka king Harisena in the beginning of the sixth century AD.

G. The Vakatakas

The Vakatakas ruled the northern Deccan between the third century and the rise of the Chalukyas in the sixth century AD. Their capital was at Purika, then Nasik and later on Pravarapura. They gave their patronage to the sculpture and the graphic arts, and endowed with equal liberality Hindu and Buddhist shrines. They are to be accounted among the most glorious of the contemporary dynasties of the Deccan, and deserve a high place honour among them. An inscription in cave XVI of Ajanta records the dedication of the edifice by Varahadeva, minister of the last Vakataka ruler, Harisena (c. 500-520). It gives a list of the Vakataka kings with their achievements. The kings listed in the inscriptions are as follows: Vindhyasakti (285-310 AD), Pravarasena (310-345 AD), Rudrasena (345-360 AD), Devasena (475-500 AD) and Harisena (500-520 AD). The record omitted the names of four kings who ruled
between 360 and 475 AD. When Varahadeva made his gift to the Ajant Buddhist Sangha, the region seems to have been under the Vakataka rule. Harisena, the king under whom Varahadeva served as a minister, appears to have swayed his power to various territories as the inscription speaks of him as the lord of Kuntala, Avanti, Kalinga, Kosala, Trikuta, Lata and Andhra. No gift has been recorded which could be attributed to the Vakataka kings.

H. The Asmakas

D.C. Sircar identified the Asmakas with the Vatsagulma branch of the Vakatakas who ruled over the southern most region of Berar and the northern part of old Hyderabad. The Asmaka, according to D.D. Mirashi, lays to the south of the Godavari and probably comprised parts of Ahmadnagar and Bhir Districts. Names of the Asmaka kings in a perfect order is given by one of their ministers named Achintya in his inscription in Ajanta cave XVII which aims to record the minister's gifts of a stupa, a vihara, a gandha-kuti and a reservoir. The names of the Asmaka kings as given in the inscriptions are:- Dhratarashtra the founder, Harisamba, Saurisamba, Upendra-gupta, Kacha, Bhishudasa, Niladasa, Krishnadasa and Ekadhipati, who killed his brother Ravisamba but repented and acquired the supreme knowledge by faith in the Buddha. It was under Ekadhipati that Achintya made his donations to the Buddhist Sangha at Ajanta.

I. The Rashtrakutas (750-973 AD)

A number of minor Rashtrakuta families ruled in the Deccan from the fifth century AD. One flourished in the Satara region. Another ruled in the first half of the seventh century over a small principality with the capital at Ellichpur in Berar. This branch had once been vassals of the Chalukyas until Dantidurga (733-755)
threw off the Chalukya alliance, asserted his independence and founded the Rashtrakuta dynasty. It is thought that he was responsible for the excavation of the Elephanta caves.\textsuperscript{98}

Three inscriptions in caves X and LXVIII of Panheri refer to the third Rashtrakuta ruler Jagatturigadeva (Govinda III) and his successor Amoghavarsha I in relation to the Silaharas. The inscriptions do not give anything about these rulers except their titles and the fact that they were ruling over the Silaharas. Their common title is Paramabhattaraka, Mahārajadhiraja Paramesvara and Prithvivallabha.\textsuperscript{99} This dynasty was succeeded by the re-established ChaluKyas in 973.

J. The Silaharas

As many as ten families of the Silaharas are known to have ruled in Mahārashtra and Karnataka as evidenced by their inscriptions. They were Kannada-speaking people. Tagara from which all branches of the Silaharas migrated lay then in the Kannada-speaking region, though its modern representative Ter is now included in Mahārashtra. The territory under their rule comprised three regions: North Konkan, South Konkan and Kolhapūr.

The Silahara kings as furnished by the three cave inscriptions are as follows:

1. Kapardin I (800-825). He was the founder of the North Konkan branch and rose to power during the reign of Rashtrakuta emperor Govinda III. He was awarded with the rulership of North Konkan. No record of his reign has yet been found.

2. Pullasakti (825-850). He succeeded his father Kapardin I. He is designated as Mahasamanta and Konkanavallabha and is described as the lord of the whole Puri-Konkan country.
3. Kaperdin II (850-878). He succeeded his father Pullasakti. He was also designated as Mahamanta and Konkana-vallabha.

These Silaharas and their successors ruled from their capital Sthanaka in modern Thana district. They ruled for over four and half centuries, i.e. from 800-1200 AD. Their territory comprised the modern districts of Raigad and Thana.

The contemporaneous reign of the Rashtrakutas and the Silaharas as given in the inscriptions is shown as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rashtrakuta Emperors</th>
<th>cont. reign</th>
<th>Silahara Kings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govinda III, 793-814</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Kapardin I, 800-825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amoghavarsha I, 814-878</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Pullasakti, 825-850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>Kapardin II, 850-878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

K. The Yavanas

In the early Christian era, the term Yavana was used to mean the Greeks. The word was derived from the old Persian form Yauna signifying the Ionian Greeks but later all people of Greek nationality. Ultimately, still later in the medieval times, it meant any foreigner. The Yavanas came to India soon after Alexander's conquest of north-western India in 327-325 BC. The Yavanas got settled in India and later they became Indianized by adopting Indian names, religious beliefs and customs and ultimately absorbed in the Indian population. Their rule in Bactria stretched from c. 250 to 125 BC. Of all the Yavana kings of India, Menander alone has found a prominent place in Indian Buddhist tradition as a scholar and patron of Buddhism. His dominions appear to have comprised the central parts of Afghanistan, North-west frontier Province, the Punjab, Sind, Rajputana and Kathiawad.
The Yavanas and Buddhism

When the fanatical Brahman Pushyamitra tried to stop the Buddhists in favour of Brahman religion, it was the Greeks who fought him because they wanted what he wanted. Both sought for control over the huge derelict empire and war between them was inevitable. Obviously anyone who was an enemy of Pushyamitra might become a friend to the Greeks. So did the Buddhists. Though there had not been war between Buddhism and Brahmanism, to the Indian Buddhists, the Greeks came as friends and saviours. So, the Yavanas gave liberal patronage to Buddhism. It was not strange for the Yavanas to immediately patronize the Buddhist religion in India because they themselves were Buddhists. It was to them, the Ionians, that Thera Maharakhita was sent to preach soon after the Third Council. As a result many of the Ionians (Yavanas) got converted into Buddhism. And Alexandria in Ionia country became the headquarters for the Buddhist monks and there attended three thousand monks at the Foundation Ceremony of the Maha Thupa in Menander’s time.

It is probable that a good number of Buddhist Yavanas came to Western India in the wake of the Kshatrapa invasion in the first century AD. A marked influx of them in the first and second century AD is evident from their donations at Junnar, Karle and Nasik. As many as five Yavanas from Dhenukataka donated a pillar each in Karle Chaitya Hall. Two Yavanas from Gata country donated two cisterns and a dining hall at Junnar while a Yavana family from Dattamitri, a town in Sind, donated a chaitya griha, a cave and a cistern at Nasik. Another Yavana from Umebanakata gifted a pillar at Karle while the last donor made a hall-front as his gift at Junnar.
It is noteworthy that none of the Yavanas made mention of his occupation. It appears that the Yavanas were very much contented with their nationality that they always addressed themselves only as the Yavanas and nothing more. The reason for not mentioning their occupations or other designations is not known to us. Probably, as they were very wealthy merchants they were well-known among the public that they did not feel it necessary to mention their occupations but only their nationality.

Besides these Yavanas, who got mention in the inscriptions, there were numerous other Yavanas particularly the Gandhara Yavanas to whom Buddhism is indebted. It was the Gandhara Yavanas who innovated the portrayal of the Buddha as a man. This resulted in the great mass of Buddha-statues in rocks, bronzes and silvers though all traces of the Yavana influence have long died out.

Administrative Set Up

A. The King

The position of the king was always supreme. He was not an autocrat. He was not a law maker, but his rescripts and injunctions had the force of law. The king was the most important element in administration. He exercised his executive authority through a set of officers forming the central executive councillors which carried on the administration of the country. They advised the king in the affairs of the kingdom and after proper deliberations the orders were carried out. The inscriptions in Nasik cave III were engraved in a great precision according to the verbal order of the king. The person who wrote down the king's verbal order and the person who engraved on the stone are not the same. Therefore, a great precision was required on each person.
Royal titles mentioned in the inscriptions

While the Satavahanas were fond of such titles as Siri, Rano Siri, Rano Svami, Rano Siri Svami and Dakshinapathapati the Kshatraps were delighted in calling themselves as Kshatrapa, Rajan Kshatrapa and Rajan Mahakshatrapa Svami. The Rashtrakutas styled themselves as Maharajadhiraja, Paramesvara, Prithvivallabha and Paramabhattacharya. The emperor used to adopt three of the four titles. The other royal designations which were common to the Silaharas are Mahasamanta, Mahasabdas and Konkanavallabha.

B. The Ministers

The chief qualifications of a minister were his birth in the country, higher learning and the favour of the king. The ministers were appointed by the kings. They were the pillars of the state and were regarded as trustees of the people's interests.

1. Mahamatra

The Mahamatras appear to be the highest among the ministers. They were selected from those amatyas who had withstood the tests of allurements. They assisted the king in administrative matters by offering him counsel in examining the work of the amatyas, accompanying him to the battle field and giving encouragement to the troops. Nasik cave XIX is the donation of one of such Mahamatras. The record says that the cave was donated by Mahamatra Samana during the reign of the Satavahana king, Krishna.

2. Rajamatya

A Rajamatya is an executive officer. In Medieval India, he ranked the fourth in order from the king: Rajan, Rajanaka, Rajaputra and Rajamatya. He is a minister closely attached to the king. A Nasik record furnishes us with the names of two such
Rajamatyas of a Satavahana King. Another Rajamatya (Rajamacha) of a Mahābhōja ruler is also noticed at Kuda.

3. Amatya and Mahāsenapati

Amatya has a connotation including both councillors and executive heads of departments. In a few cases it denotes chief of the ministers. A Mahāsenapati is the chief commander of the arm forces. He is skilled in every kind of tactical and strategical role in actual warfare. Two such men are noticed in Nasik. The inscriptions provides the following officers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Site: Cave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 BC</td>
<td>Mahāmatra Samana</td>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 AD</td>
<td>Rajamatya Agiyatana</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 AI</td>
<td>Rajamatya Arahalaya</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Rajamacha Hala</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mahābhōja</td>
<td>Kuda:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Amatya Vinhupalita</td>
<td>Gaut. Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Amatya Sivagupta</td>
<td>Gaut. Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Amatya (Purugupta)</td>
<td>Gaut. Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Karle:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Amatya Samaka</td>
<td>Gaut. Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Amatya Sivakhalida</td>
<td>Vasis. Pulumavi</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Mahasena. Medhuna</td>
<td>Vasis. Pulumavi</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Amatya Sateraka</td>
<td>Vasis. Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Kanheri:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Mahāsenas, Bhavagopa</td>
<td>Yajña Satakarni</td>
<td>Satavahana</td>
<td>Nasik:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td>Amatya Bhaviraja</td>
<td>Upendragupta</td>
<td>Asmaka</td>
<td>Ajan:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>Amatya Tevaraja</td>
<td>Kacha</td>
<td>Asmaka</td>
<td>Ajan:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480</td>
<td>Amatya Hastibhoja</td>
<td>Devasena</td>
<td>Vakataka</td>
<td>Ajan:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Amatya Achintya</td>
<td>Skadhipati</td>
<td>Asmaka</td>
<td>Ajan:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>510</td>
<td>Amatya Varahadeva</td>
<td>Harisena</td>
<td>Vakataka</td>
<td>Ajan:16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Matronymic Practice

As polygamy was fairly common, especially in the upper classes, the practice of matronymic became necessary in order to correctly designate a person. The purpose was to distinguish a person from his step-brother and a king and also from his predecessors bearing the same name. The marriage in ancient India did not involve the change of the wife's paternal gotra to that of her husband. On the contrary, the offsprings were particularly called as the son of so and so (wife's name + putra). But the practice of matronymics went out of fashion in the early medieval period.

Examples from our inscriptions are as follows:

Svati wife Gautami Balasiri
   ↓ son
   Gautamiputra Satakarni wife Vasishthi...
      ↓ sons
      Vasishthiputra Fulumavi
      Vasishthiputra Satakarni

Examples from Kanheri and Bedsa are also very clear.

Mahārathī wife Mahābhōji
   ↓ son
   Mahabhoja Ahija Dhenasena

Mahābhōja wife (Mahārathinī)
   ↓ daughter
   Mahārathinī Somadinika

5. Distribution of inscriptions according to dynasties

The Satavahanas...........22 inscriptions
The Kshatrapas.............8 inscriptions
The Mahārathis.............8 inscriptions
The Mahābhōjas.............8 inscriptions
The Abhiras.................3 inscriptions
The Trikukakas.............1 inscr.
The Vakatakas..............2 inscr.
The Asmakas.................2 inscr.
The Silaharas..............3 inscr.
The Yavanas.................10 inscr.
Notes and References


2. There is no unanimity among scholars about the date of the rise of the Satavahanas. One group (Bhandarkar, Raichaudhuri, Sircar, etc.) places that event in the second quarter of the first century BC while the other group (Nagaraju, Mirashi, etc.) places in the first quarter of the third century BC.


5. Nasik inscription, Ibid., 67, 68.


7. Ibid., pp. 13f.


23. Rajamatyas are those who were included in the king's ministry.
24. Bhandagarika is an office in charge of the royal treasury.
31. Ibid. 32. Ibid. 33. Ibid. 34. Ibid. 35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., pp. 73-74. 37. Ibid., pp. 67,68.
38. Supposing that Gautami Balasiri had her son, Gautamiputra Satakarni, in her 16th year and the latter came to the throne at the age of 24 and ruled for 24 years, she is (16+24+24) 64 years old when Satakarni died in 130 AD. So in the 19th year of her grandson, Vasishthiputra Pulumavi, she was (64+19) about 83 years old.

66 AD Gautami Balasiri was born.
82 AD Gautamiputra Satakarni was born.
106 AD Gautamiputra Satakarni was crowned.
124 AD Gautamiputra Satakarni began his conquests. Karle and Nasik were visited.
130 AD Gautamiputra Satakarni died, V. Pulumavi was crowned.
149 AD Devi-lena of Nasik dedicated, Gautami Balasiri 83 yrs. old.
155 AD Last known date of Vaisshthiputra Pulumavi.
159 AD Vasishthiputra Pulumavi died.
42. Ibid., p. 200 note 2. Navanagara may have been a new city near the old capital Pratishthana.
43. Kanheri inscription (5:12), ASWI-V, 78.
44. Siri Yajna Satakarni's reign is referred to in the inscriptions of Kanheri caves III and XXI. See ASWI-V, 75, 79.
45. Mirashi, V.V., 1981, op. cit., p.41f.
47. Kanheri inscription (3:5), Ibid., 75-76.
53. Ibid., p. 89. 54. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
56. Mirashi, op. cit., p. 30. 56. Ibid., p. 59
57. Nahapana's inscriptions at Karle, Nasik and Junnar.
58. Kanheri inscription (5:12), ASWI-V, 78.
60. Junnar inscription (Man. 7:17), ASWI-IV, 103.
62. Ibid., p. 85.
63. Ibid., p. 78. A field bought with 4000 karshapanas in c.120 AD must have been very large indeed. So the produce of the field must have sufficed the needs of the monks on mt. Tiranhu.


   a. Prabhasa is Somnath Pathan in Kathiawad.
   b. Barnasa is probably Banas river, a tributary of Chambal.
   c. Bharukachcha is modern Broach.
   d. Dasapura is Man-Easor in Gwalior State.
   e. Govardhana is a village near Nasik.
   f. Sorparaga is Sopara, near Basin in the Thana district.
   gg. Iba is possibly the Ambika river near Jalalpur in Surat.
   h. Pavada is Far river in the Surat Zilla.
   i. Damana is the Damanganga.
   j. Tapi is the Tapti, near Surat.
   k. Karabena is not yet identified.


71. Karle inscription (8:14), Ibid., p. 61.

72. Bhaja inscription (16:11), ASWI-IV, 83.

73. Visapur inscription, I, II, III. See Appendix.

74. Fedsa inscription (5:2), CTI, 26-27.

75. Kuda inscription (13:19), Ibid., p. 15.


77. Kuda inscription (15:22), Ibid., pp. 16-17.
78. Mahad inscription (8:1), LL 1072.
79. Kuda inscription (1:1), CTI, 4.
81. Kanheri inscription (66:29), ASWI-V, 86.
82. Kuda inscription (7:14), CTI, 13.
86. Kuda inscription (15:22), CTI, 16-17.
91. Kanheri Copper Plate inscription, ASWI-V, 57-59.
92. Ajanta inscription (16:26), CTI, 72.
94. Ajanta inscription (16:26), CTI, 72.
96. Mirashi, V.V., EI-XXXVII, 18.
97. Ajanta inscription (17:27), CTI, 76.
100. Ibid., p.i.
101. Ibid., pp. 1-8, 51, i, viii-x.
103. Ibid., pp. 173-176, 180.


106. Junnar inscriptions, ASWI-IV, 93-94.


120. Nasik inscriptions, EI-VIII, 67-68, 94.


122. Kanheri inscription (66:29), ASWI-V, p. 86.

123. Bedasa inscription (5:2), CTI, 26-27.