

The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad: The Impact of the Laity

THE PRESENT STUDY of the caves at Aurangabad owes much to the enlightening work of Professor Walter Spink, who has unfolded the history of Ajanta and related centers.¹ It is from what he calls “the period of disruption” at the Ajanta caves that I intend to begin my survey of the Buddhist complex at Aurangabad, addressing the development of this poorly understood site² in terms of patronage, audience, and function. Through an analysis of the distribution of space and imagery from the end of the fifth century onward, I hope to shed light on the site’s specific role as a sanctuary rooted in lay devotional practices rather than in the exclusive monastic tradition.

Located on a slope of the Sihyachal range between the Kaum River and the Devgiri basin, the Buddhist caves at Aurangabad are divided into two main groups (figs. 1 and 2), with a third unfinished cluster of later structures to the north.³ The oldest structure at the site, part of the western group, is the severely damaged *caitya* Cave 4, which dates to the beginning of the Common Era. Surprisingly, no early *vihāra* attached to this structure can be identified, unless it was built in perishable materials at the foot of the hill or, as seems likely, carved to the east of the *caitya* along part of the escarpment that has now collapsed. Another significant feature of the religious complex at Aurangabad is the absence of dedicatory or commemorative inscriptions, in contrast to other cave complexes in the region.⁴

After this first phase of excavation, a revival of patronage occurred in conjunction with the later Vākāṭaka’s activity at Ajanta, as Walter Spink has brilliantly shown.⁵ In fact, units 3 and 4a and the unfinished excavation 1 at Aurangabad display strong ar-

chitectural and artistic affinities with Caves 1, 2, and 26 at Ajanta.⁶ The so-called Mahāyāna phase of patronage at Aurangabad was inaugurated with the richly decorated Cave 3, which occupies the most privileged position next to the older *caitya*. This new cave is a small, perfectly designed unit (figs. 3 and 4), complete with sculpture and paintings—the latter surviving only as a few traces on the ceiling.⁷ The existence of a wealthy patron with great vision can be certainly detected behind the carefully organized space of this structure. In fact, from an accurate planimetric analysis of Cave 3 it has been possible to individuate the architectural module on which the spatial distribution of the cave was probably based—a unit equal to the radius of the columns (40 cm).⁸ The imagery and the profusion of ornamentation within Aurangabad Cave 3 seem to confirm the existence of a planned design that was fully realized thanks to the unbroken support of the sponsors. While the outer façade is ruined, the inner square area is intact, defined by twelve lavishly decorated columns and flanked on either side by two cellae and a rectangular chapel. Opposite the entrance door, on a sculpted frieze above the columns, is a depiction of the princely *Sutasoma jātaka*. A porch leads into the shrine, where a *pralambapādāsana* Buddha is flanked by two bodhisattvas in the Ajanta “style,” preceded by two unique rows of life-size sculpted kneeling devotees (figs. 5 and 6). The strong affinities in design, imagery, and sculptural details between Aurangabad Cave 3 and some of the latest caves at Ajanta (26 and 2) indicate that a few of the same hands might have worked at both sites. Nevertheless, Aurangabad Cave 3 displays a more “baroque” visual language (fig. 7), possibly a conscious manipulation of the Gupta-

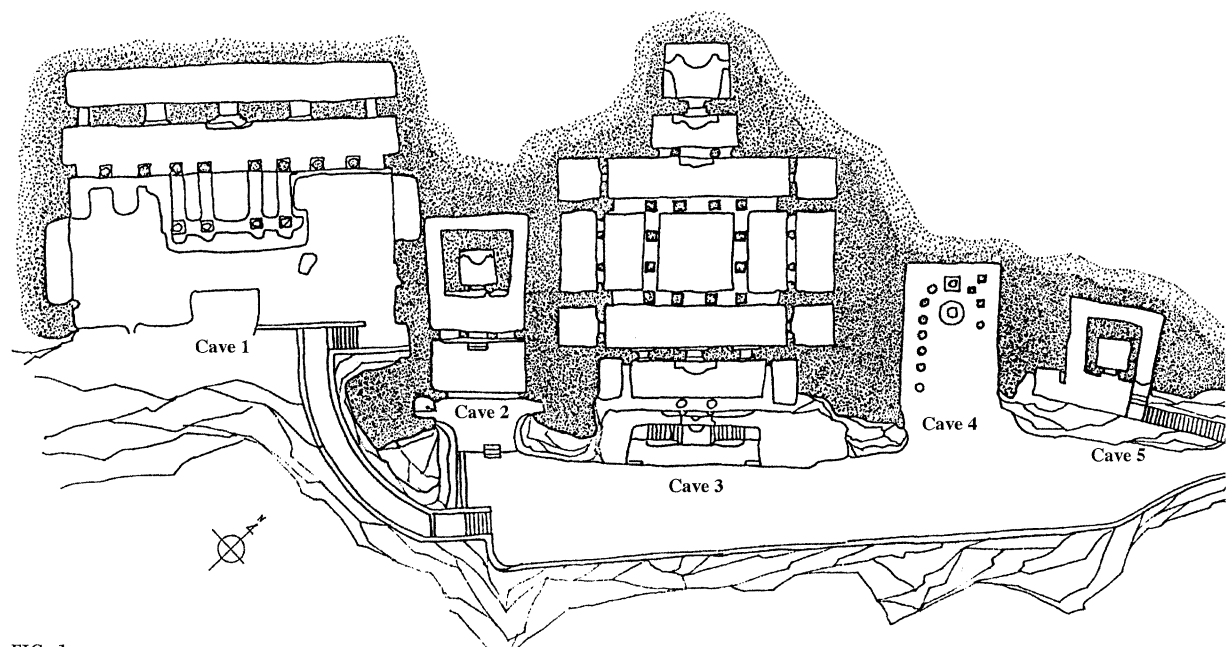


FIG. 1.
Plan of the western group of caves at Aurangabad. By Dr. Giuseppe Monzo.

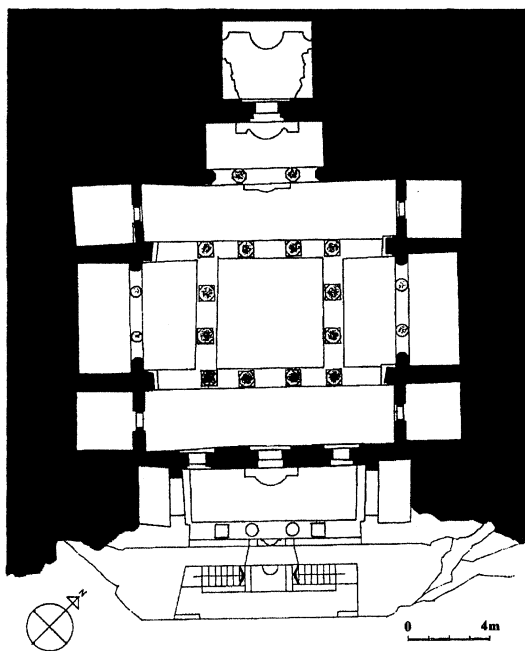


FIG. 3.
*Plan of Aurangabad Cave 3.
By Dr. Giuseppe Monzo.*

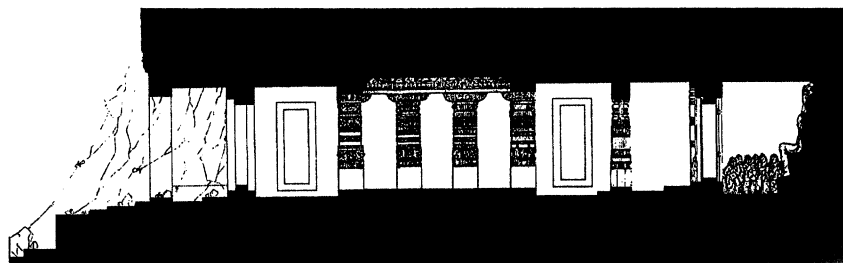


FIG. 4.
Cross section of Aurangabad Cave 3. By Dr. Giuseppe Monzo.



FIG. 5.
Aurangabad Cave 3, shrine, devotees, eastern wall. After C. Berkson, The Caves at Aurangabad (New York, 1986).

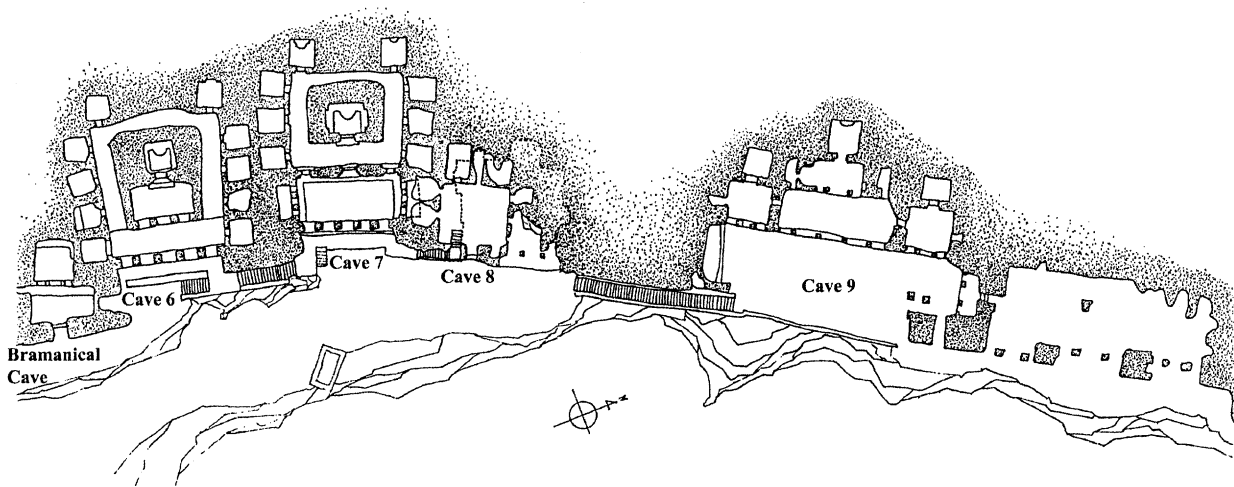


FIG. 2.
Plan of the eastern group of caves at Aurangabad. By Dr. Giuseppe Monzo.

Vākāṭaka artistic idiom, which can be interpreted as a statement of power by the new Aurangabad patrons wanting to outdo the imperial productions at Ajanta. Thus, Cave 3 at Aurangabad appears to be deeply connected with the local political landscape, perhaps sponsored by the same feudatories that took over this territory after the collapse of the Vākāṭaka empire.⁹ It seems that the new local kings excavated Aurangabad for political reasons, in order to create continuity with practices of patronage initiated by their illustrious predecessor. To do so they chose a new center with no imperial connections where they could glorify themselves and the Buddha. Aurangabad was

the most logical choice for this site—overlooking a vast plain crossed by trade routes, easily accessible, and already established in the local religious tradition with its earlier Buddhist *caitya*.



FIG. 6.
Aurangabad Cave 3, shrine, devotees, western wall. After Berkson, Caves at Aurangabad.



FIG. 7.
Aurangabad Cave 3, interior, detail of column. Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies.



FIG. 8.
Aurangabad Cave 4a.
After Berkson, *Caves at Aurangabad*.

Unfortunately, no donative inscriptions survive from Cave 3, and one wonders whether they ever existed. In fact, the patrons of Cave 3 at Aurangabad did leave a different kind of long-lasting signature to their *dāna* (gift) in the form of the life-size kneeling devotees sculpted in the sanctum. Such unique figures, almost *a tutto tondo*, are located along the two sides of the sanctum converging toward the monumental Buddha image. They are certainly not generic devotees, since they appear to be individually characterized members of a royal group, and it seems likely that the male and female figures at the head of each row are the actual patrons of the cave.¹⁰ Their impressive and portraitleike appearance might justify the absence of inscriptions, as the princely patrons would have left behind a powerful trace of their donation in these figures eternally in devotion, as perennial receptacle of merit. In a circumstance of political instability such as the collapse of the Vākāṭaka's empire, it is conceivable that local feudatories seek-

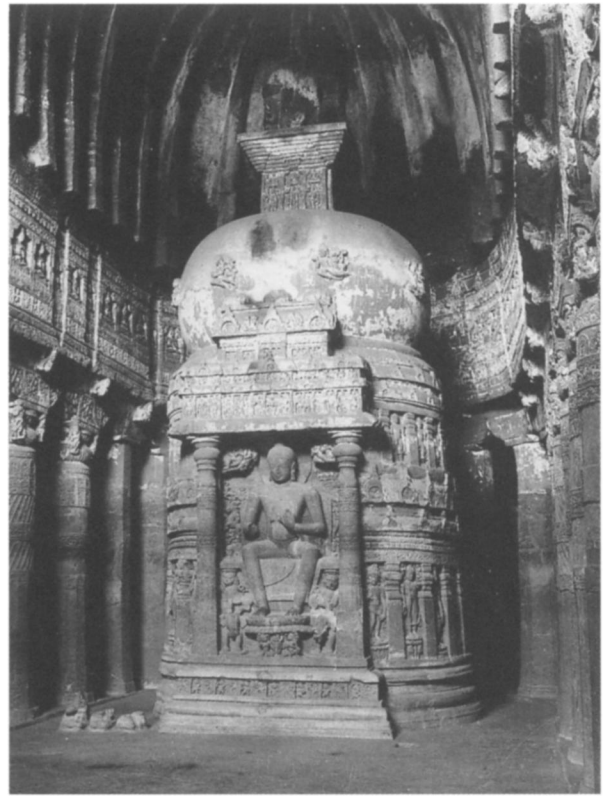


FIG. 9.
Ajanta Cave 26, interior.
Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies.

ing recognition would opt for such visually powerful solutions rather than poorly visible inscriptions to obtain both legitimation of their power and merit for themselves.

The fact that these individualized figures of lay devotees were represented inside the sanctum, the holiest of places, raises questions about the function of the Aurangabad caves and about the possibility of ritual access to the main image by *śrāvakas*, who were not members of the *saṃgha*.¹¹ In this case the depiction of worshippers of royal rank could also be taken as a reference to the direct connection between the spiritual *cakravartin*, the Buddha, and the temporal *cakravartin*, the king. Nevertheless, I believe that the occurrence in such a privileged position of images representing not gods or monks but lay devotees can be interpreted as an indication of the prominent secular nature of the complex at Aurangabad. In contrast to the monastic emphasis at Ajanta, Aurangabad seems to have been more open to laity, emerging as a

religious sanctuary serving primarily the nonordained members of the community.

The lack of residential structures for monks, especially in the western group of caves, confirms this hypothesis (see fig. 1). Even Cave 3, which was visually and conceptually modeled after Ajanta Cave 2, seems to have clearly abandoned the *vihāra* pattern so recurrent at the imperial Vākāṭaka complex. Only four residential-like cells showing scarce traces of use¹² were excavated along the side walls of Aurangabad Cave 3, as the planners chose to omit additional cells and to introduce two axial rectangular chapels.

Immediately to the right of the earlier *caitya* hall is an open shrine, Cave 4a—also dating to the late fifth century—that attests to the lay activity at Aurangabad because of its prominence and accessibility (fig. 8). Currently very damaged, this deep niche in the basaltic rock, once framed by four small columns, contains a majestic image of a Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* seated on a highly decorated throne that is flanked by two bodhisattvas. It is surprising to find such an elaborate image in an independent outdoor shrine, barely protected by a ledge of rock, as all other comparable images of this type are always carved in the most sacred cores of the caves. In fact, Cave 4a's image is very similar in style and decoration to the one carved in the body of the stupa of Ajanta Cave 26 (fig. 9) or the one in the dark sanctum of Cave 3 at Aurangabad. Here the focal iconography of the large caves crosses the threshold of the inner shrine to be easily approached and viewed in the 4a chapel at the entrance of the complex. This small and independent structure containing only a main image is an unprecedented architectural solution¹³ that illustrates the innovative spirit of lay patronage and audience at Aurangabad. It is possible that a wealthy individual sponsored this public unit in conjunction with the princely patronage of Caves 1 and 3.

The secular organization of the Buddhist cave complex at Aurangabad, which was intimately connected with lay patronage and devotion, continued beyond the end of the fifth century. The next phase of excavation at the site is characterized by the diffusion of new cave plans focusing on an increased use of public space. The innovative designs appear to reflect the ritual needs of the lay community and indicate a differently mediated approach to the deity.

Cave 2¹⁴ (see fig. 1) shows a distinctive plan consisting of a simple shrine chamber enclosed within a corridor for circumambulation, which in turn was approached through a small, now collapsed, *maṇḍapa*. This structure, squeezed into the last available rock within the western group of caves, has a central sanctum containing the usual seated Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* flanked by two bodhisattvas. The entrance to the cella is guarded by Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara, both attended by *nāgarājas*. The stylistic idiom of these figures is far from the late Vākāṭaka one at Ajanta or Aurangabad and seems to be in line with the sixth- and seventh-century Kalacuri Brahmanical cave sculpture found at sites such as Elephanta, Jogesvari, Mandapesvar, Mahur, and Ellora.

What is particularly interesting in Cave 2 at Aurangabad is that the corridor surrounding the shrine is literally filled with a multitude of heterogeneous panels sculpted on the walls (fig. 10). Most of them display an established iconographic format, with the Buddha seated on a lotus throne and flanked by two bodhisattvas. In many of these images, the “triad” pattern intersects with the so-called depictions of the Miracle of Śrāvastī, when the Tathāgata multiplies himself on lotus flowers. To explore the source of this imagery is beyond the scope of the present article, but it is sufficient to point out that such an iconographic pattern occurs invariably in votive panels donated by individuals in the Buddhist caves of the Deccan during the so-called Mahāyāna phase. At Ajanta, Walter Spink has suggested that these “intrusive” panels were added during the disruption of the site, when the Vākāṭakas lost control over the caves and patronage suddenly collapsed prior to the abandonment of the complex.¹⁵

Conversely, at Aurangabad Cave 2 the design of the cave seems to have been conceived in order to accommodate these attestations of individual devotion, as the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* was left undecorated to make space for such imagery.¹⁶ A singular feature that betrays the popular votive origin of this body of imagery is the frequent depiction of worshippers at the bottom register of these panels: they are mostly lay people, often women, and rarely members of the *saṅgha*. Further, in Cave 2, images of a squatting female, commonly identified as Lajjā Gaurī holding



FIG. 10.
Augangabad Cave 2, interior, detail of the western pradakṣiṇapatha wall.
Courtesy American Institute of Indian Studies.

a lotus,¹⁷ occur in four instances in association with representations of the Tathāgata's epiphany (fig. 11). The emergence into the Buddhist imagery of such a figure tied to the world of local and ancestral beliefs seems to confirm the lay devotional matrix of this unit and its sculpted panels.

The whole conception of Cave 2 at Aurangabad seems to respond to the devotional necessities of the *śrāvakas*, which is not surprising at a site that showed a strong lay orientation since the inception of the so-called Mahāyāna phase of patronage. The plan with a central sanctum certainly allowed for easier access to the deity and the performance of devotional practices. Of particular significance is the fact that the core of the shrine is projected forward to meet the needs of a larger community. This architectural format appears sporadically in many parts of the Buddhist world in conjunction with structures located outside the exclusive monastic areas and generally associated with lay devotional practices. Besides Central Asia,¹⁸ relevant examples of such shrines can be found in Sri Lanka in association with the *patimaghara*, or "shrine receptacle of the image of the Buddha."¹⁹ It is interesting to observe that such a structure, identified in Pali also as *phāsāda* or palace, the residence of



FIG. 11.
Aurangabad Cave 2, interior, detail of a votive panel.
After Berkson, Caves at Aurangabad.

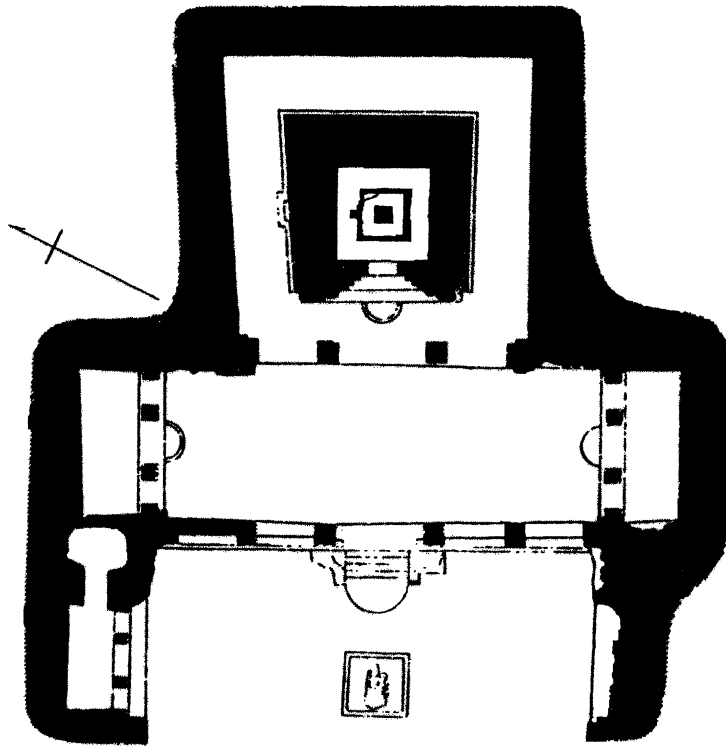


FIG. 12.
Plan of Ellora Cave 21.

the Buddha, was central only to the suburban *ṣabbata vihāras*—religious complexes with a more distinct devotional purpose.

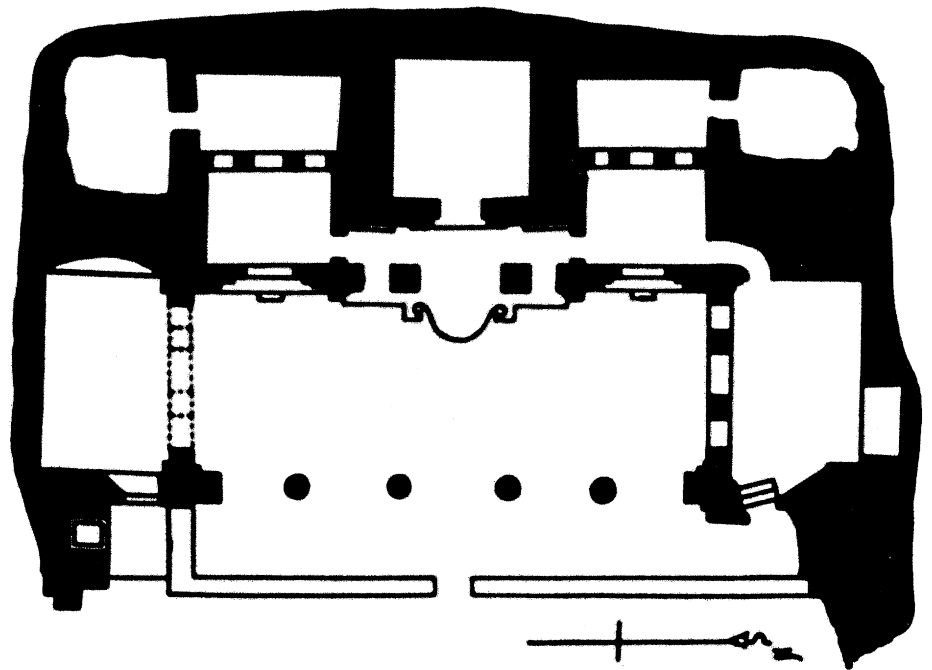
At Aurangabad, the plan with a central sanctum and *pradakṣiṇapatha* is also found in Cave 5. Further, it occurs with some additions in Caves 6 and 7 of the eastern group,²⁰ providing us with a useful parameter in support of a chronological framework for the second phase of activity at the site. A comparable layout appears in a Brahmanical context at Ellora Caves 14, 20, and in particular Cave 21, the so-called Rameśvara cave (fig. 12). The architecture and sculptural evidence seems to indicate that Caves 2, 5, and the entire eastern complex at Aurangabad belong to the same phase of patronage as the above-mentioned excavations at Ellora,²¹ which Walter Spink has attributed to the Kalacuri kings,²² who probably controlled these parts of Maharashtra.²³

With the excavation of Caves 2 and 5, all the rock available around the Hīnayāna *caitya* at Aurangabad was exhausted. Thus, a new cluster of units was initiated to the east with Caves 6 and 7 (see fig. 2), still in keeping with the devotional orientation of the site. During the last phase of activity at Aurangabad the space accessible to public devotion was maximized,

and new ways of approaching the deity appear to have been in practice.

The unfinished Cave 9 represents the next and final stage at Aurangabad—in which the expansion of the public space makes the structure even more physically and emotionally accessible to devotion. The unusual plan of this cave (see fig. 2), with three sancta opening onto a large, rectangular porch, has been generally attributed to its hasty completion, as patrons tend to finish the main Buddha images to gain merit before abandoning a site. Contrary to what we would expect in a similar rushed situation, the Buddha in the central shrine, likely the focal icon on which the most effort would converge, was only roughed out, while the main images in the two side sancta were fully carved. It seems possible that the various shrines had different patrons, who interrupted their work in the cave at different times. Nevertheless, I believe that the uncommon layout was part of the original plan, and the abrupt interruption of work at the site did not change the basic organization of space. The large rectangular *mandapa* was probably part of the original design, as it functioned to unify and allow more direct access to the images in the sancta. In Caves 5 and 6 at Aurangabad we

FIG. 13.
Plan of
Mandapesvar
Cave.



already notice an increasing emphasis on the *maṇḍapa* as a bridge between the outer world and the inner sacred space of the cave. Cave 9 represents the ultimate development of this concept, in which the barriers between the two spheres are almost removed and the *maṇḍapa* becomes the cave. It marks the climax of the prominent lay orientation of the site that grows in keeping with the devotional needs of the *śrāvakas*. The presence of a large *parinirvāṇa* scene carved on the western wall of Cave 9, usually a popular devotional icon, supports the hypothesis that the structure was conceived as a place for collective worship. In fact, such images are generally located in more accessible shrines like the *caitya* Cave 26 at Ajanta.

The cave layout, with three shrines opening on a *maṇḍapa*, is a pattern that occurs elsewhere in Kalacuri architecture. The Śaiva temple at Mandapesvar in Konkan (fig. 13), attributed to Kalacuri patronage and also thought to be the result of a hasty excavation as it was never completed,²⁴ is surprisingly similar to Cave 9. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that Mandapesvar might have had some impact on the planning of Cave 9 at Aurangabad.²⁵

While innovative in format, with its ample *maṇḍapa* leading directly into the most sacred units of the structure, the basic three-sancta type adopted

at Aurangabad 9 had already emerged in the Buddhist world. Within the same region it occurs in the fifth-century cave of Ghatotkacha²⁶ and in the unfinished Cave 21 at Ajanta.

In conclusion, I hope that this brief survey of the development of cave planning at Aurangabad has shed light on the function of this complex as a center oriented toward popular devotion and secular patronage. Its so-called Mahāyāna phase appears to have been intrinsically connected with the collapse of imperial Vākāṭaka and their patronage at Ajanta. Aurangabad rises in response to this exclusive monastic center, controlled by imperial patrons, to testify to the triumph of the regional powers and local popular Buddhist forces at the end of the fifth century. The accessibility of the site, the small number of cells for the *saṃgha*, and the presence of life-size depictions of lay devotees, probably noble donors, in the sanctum of Cave 3 certainly indicate the growing importance of the “secular” at Aurangabad.

Its life and prosperity continued to be strongly rooted in the world of lay devotion and patronage through time, as illustrated by Cave 2 and related structures datable to the Kalacuri period. The strong linkage of the site with popular religiosity is particularly evident in Cave 2, with its central sanctum and *pradakṣiṇapatha* for circumambulation left

undecorated to display a number of individually commissioned votive panels. Finally, in the eastern group of caves, the unusual and unfinished structure 9, with three shrines on a wide *maṇḍapa* and the *parinirvāṇa*, seems to mark the culmination of the popular tendency at the site, reducing even further the distance between the common devotees and the holiest of images. □

Notes

1. It would be impossible to cite here all the significant contributions by Walterji to the understanding of Ajanta and other rock-hewn religious centers in the western Deccan. I would like to remember his *Ajanta to Ellora*, which appeared as a special issue of *Marg* in 1967, and some of his most recent articles: "The Great Cave at Elephanta: A Study of Sources," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. B. Smith and E. Zelliot (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 235–82; "The Archaeology of Ajanta," *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991): 67–94; "Before the Fall: Pride and Piety at Ajanta," in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. B. Stoler Miller (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 65–77; finally his booklet *Ajanta, A Brief History and Guide* (Ann Arbor: Asian Art Archives, University of Michigan, 1994).
2. Surprisingly the caves at Aurangabad have scarcely been investigated by scholars. A first description of the complex appeared in 1858, in Dr. Bradley's *Account of Statistics of the Sarkar of Paithan*, done on behalf of the Nizam's government. More scientific was the approach of James Burgess in his *Report of the Antiquities in the Bidar and Aurangabad Districts, 1875–76* (London: W. H. Allen, 1878). The more recent and scarce bibliography on Aurangabad, besides guidebooks, includes: G. Yazdani, "The Rock-Hewn Temples of Aurangabad: Their Sculpture and Architecture," *Indian Art and Letters* 1 (1936–37): 1–9; R. S. Gupte, "An Interesting Panel from the Aurangabad Caves," *Marathwada University Journal* 3.2 (1963): 59–63; D. Brown-Levine, "Aurangabad: A Stylistic Analysis," *Artibus Asiae* 38 (1966): 175–88; A. Ray, *Aurangabad Sculptures* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1996); K. N. Dikshit, "A Newly Discovered Buddha Image from Aurangabad Caves," in *Madhu: Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History*, ed. Nagaraja Rao (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1981), 235–36; J. Huntington, "Cave Six at Aurangabad: A Tantrāyana Monument," in *Kalādarśana: American Studies in the Art of India*, ed. J. Williams (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 47–55; C. Berkson, *The Caves at Aurangabad* (New York: Mapin, 1986); R. Brown, "A Lajjā Gauri in a Buddhist Context at Aurangabad," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 13.2 (1990): 1–16; D. Qureshi, *Art and Vision of Aurangabad Caves* (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 1998).
3. We do not know the ancient name of the complex, though it has been suggested that the site was known as Rajatalaka based on an early inscription found at Kanheri. S. Gokhale, "Ajanta: The Center of Monastic Education," in *The Art of Ajanta, New Perspectives*, ed. R. Parimoo (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1991), 52.
4. Donative epigraphic records appear at most of the Buddhist cave sites of the Deccan, such as Bhaja, Karli, Pitalkhora, and Ajanta. See J. Burgess and I. Bhagwanlal, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India* (Delhi, 1880) or V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vakatakas, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* 5 (Ootacamund: Government Epigraphist for India, 1963).
5. Walter Spink has traced the connections between Aurangabad and Ajanta since his 1967 study *Ajanta to Ellora*.
6. The later *caitya* Cave 26 at Ajanta shows columns and decorative elements comparable to the ones occurring in Aurangabad.
7. Remnants of painted medallions that survive in the antechamber to the sanctum are almost identical to the one found at Ajanta Cave 17.
8. This study has been conducted in collaboration with the architect Dr. Giuseppe Monzo. See P. Brancaccio, "Il Complesso Rupestre di Aurangabad" (Ph.D. dissertation, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, 1994), appendix 1.
9. According to Walter Spink, the local kings, the Aśmakas, controlled the region after the fall of the Vākātakas. See W. Spink, "The Vākātakas' Flowering and Fall," in *Art of Ajanta*, 71–99.
10. On portraits in ancient India, see V. Dehejia, "The Very Idea of a Portrait," *Ars Orientalis* 28 (1998): 41–47. For the visual idioms and meanings behind patron's portraits, see P. Kaimal, "Passionate Bodies: Constructions of the Self in South Indian Portraits," *Archives of Asian Art* 48 (1995): 6–16.
11. Figures in devotional attitude already appear at Ajanta, sculpted on the bases of the main Buddhas' thrones. They are small, never acquire a prominent position in the sancta, and often seem to make reference to the audience witnessing the First Sermon at Sarnath. The presence of devotees by the feet of the Buddha in the shrine seems to become more established during what Spink recognizes as the later excavation phase at the site (A.D. 475 onward), culminating with nine small figures carved on the pedestal of the Buddha's throne in Cave 1 sanctum. In this light the impressive life-size lay devotees at Aurangabad represent the culmination of a tendency that had already emerged in *nuce* at Ajanta.

12. Only two inner cells show, in the upper part of the door frames, traces of a door hinge, usually taken as indicating use of the chambers.
13. We do not come across comparable isolated chapels at Ajanta with such elaborate shrine-type icons. They are always attached to larger caves, such as the side wings of Cave 26.
14. Cave 2 is located between the earlier units 1 and 3, at the same level as Cave 3.
15. See Spink, "Checklist of Sculptured Intrusions at Ajanta," in *Ajanta, A Brief History and Guide*, 36–37.
16. Donative panels were primarily located in visible areas of the structure. It seems likely that some of them might have also been painted, as at Ajanta, and simply have not survived at Aurangabad.
17. Robert Brown, "A Lajjā Gaurī," identifies this image as related to the Buddhist goddess Vasudharā.
18. A survey of the square type of plan appears in H. G. Franz, "Ambulatory Temples in Buddhism and Hinduism," *South Asian Archaeology 1979*, ed. H. Härtel (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1981), 449–58. The layout with a central cella that could be circumambulated became very popular at the cave temples of Kyzil, Kumtura, Bazaklik, and Qutchā. A. Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch Turkestan* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1912); A. von Le Coq, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan. An Account of the Activities and Adventures of the Second and Third German Turfan Expeditions* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1928).
19. R. Prematilleke and R. Silva, "A Buddhist Monastery Type of Ancient Ceylon Showing Mahayanist Influence," *Artibus Asiae* 30.1 (1968): 61–84; S. Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).
20. In these caves there are, in addition to the central shrine and *pradakṣiṇapatha*, small cells lining the side walls.
21. The chronological issues related to the later phase of patronage at Aurangabad are too complex to be included in the present paper. It is probably enough to remember that the affinities between the Kalacuri caves at Ellora and the later units at Aurangabad, in particular Cave 7, were already put forward by W. Spink, "Ellora's Earliest Phase," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Benares* 1 (1967): 10.
- The Brahmanical rock-cut caves at Mahur and Dhoke, with a central shrine, also represent interesting comparisons for the units excavated in the later phase of activity at Aurangabad. For Mahur see Soundara Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1981), 164–67; for the cave at Dhoke see G. Tarr, "The Siva Cave Temples at Dhokesvara," *Oriental Art* 15.4 (1969): 260–80. I do not entirely agree, however, with the author's interpretation of the Kalacuri structure at Dhoke.
22. For the chronology of these caves at Ellora, see Spink, *Ajanta to Ellora*.
23. Unfortunately, we do not have a clear picture of the historical developments in the region after the collapse of the Vākāṭakas. It seems reasonable to suggest that after a conflict between the Traikūṭakas and the Viṣṇukūṇḍins, the Traikūṭakas briefly controlled the area. Finally at the end of the sixth century the Kalacuri seem to have established their supremacy. For a review of the various historical issues, see Brancaccio, "Il Complesso Rupestre di Aurangabad," 21–29.
24. Spink, "The Great Cave at Elephanta," 243.
25. Although it is hard to establish secure chronological sequences with regard to the structures in consideration, it seems reasonable to suggest that the caves in Konkan represent the first stage of Kalacuri patronage in Maharashtra.
26. With three shrines on the back wall, the central one with the main Buddha icon and the side ones probably subsidiary chapels with painted images. See W. Spink, "Ajanta and Ghatotkacha: A Preliminary Analysis," *Ars Orientalis* 5 (1966): 135–56.