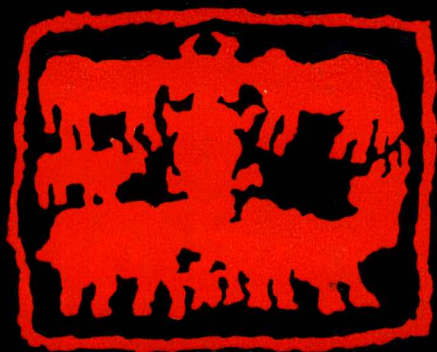
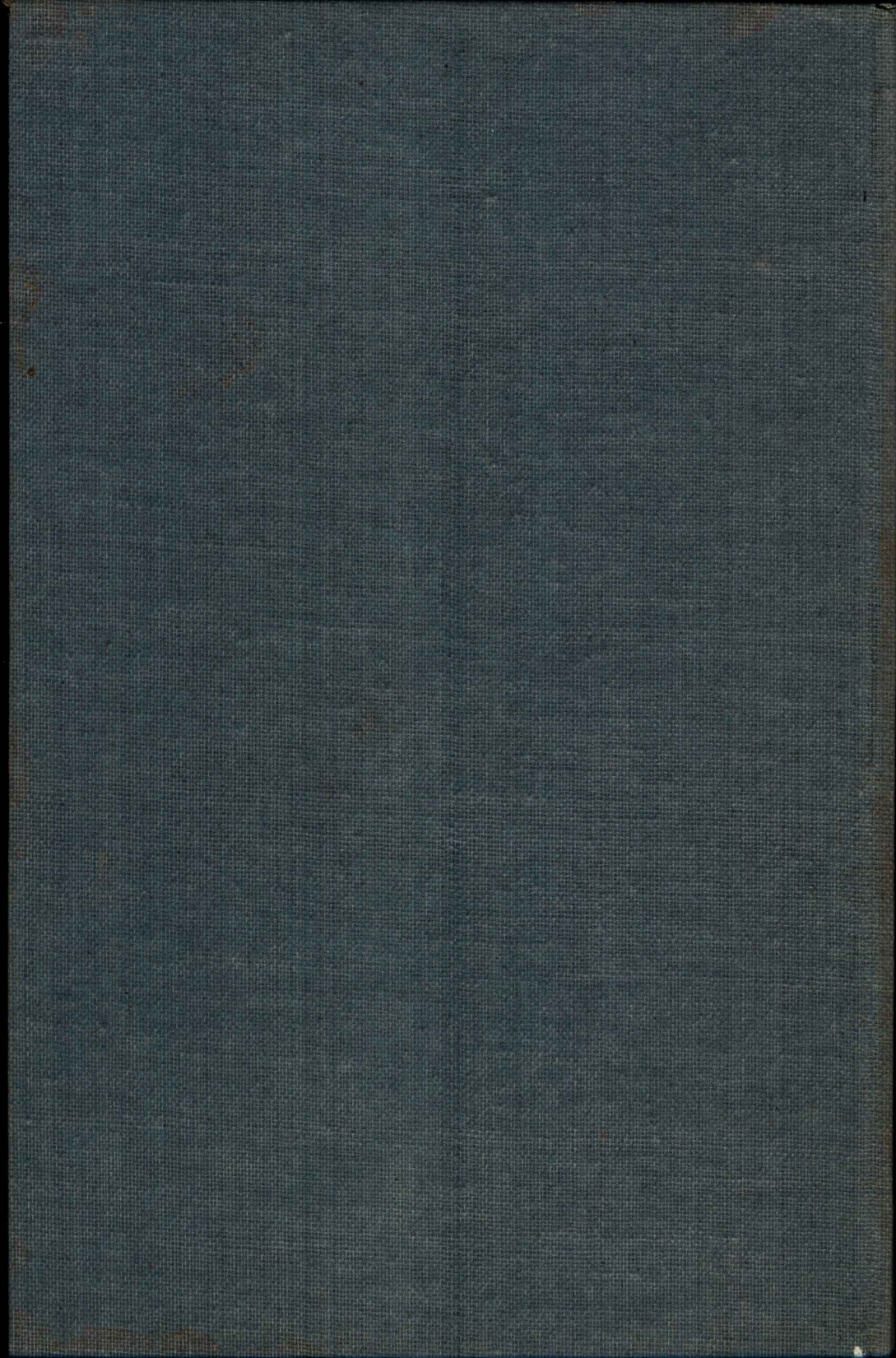




**ANCIENT
ARTISTS
AND
ART-ACTIVITY**

R N MISRA



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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY SIMLA

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Preface

THE diversity or the similarity in the artistic nuances of Indian sculpture and architecture in different regions and their evolution has been an important poser to the art-historians. The early studies were mostly dependent on field studies. But with the progress of studies in this field, the canons on *śilpa* also came to light gradually, so that the vast material thus made available was sought to be related to the extant remains of architecture and sculpture. A synchronisation of iconic or architectural tradition of ancient times with the extant remains has greatly helped in establishing the *śilpa* tradition on a more formal and temporal basis. But even these studies have failed in comprehending the role of artisans in the realm of art-activity. The scholars who attempted to define the regional and provincial styles have ignored the extent of artisans' participation in the evolution of such provincial styles. Theoretically speaking, the task of defining such regional trends and standardising them with the help of textual authority, the monuments, and art-remains may not be possibly achieved unless artisans are also included within the ambit of such studies. The treatises of *śilpa* offer a highly advanced and technical terminology and the aesthetic formulations as well as the measures to achieve them. They inculcate a regimen whose importance cannot be minimised. But the credit of perfecting the form, style, and the regimen as well as the total external effect of the monuments and sculptures should appropriately go to the artisans. They shaped the monuments according to their training and skill and in the process affected innovations and changes within the framework of canonical prescriptions. And if the whole system of the art-activity were to be structured with regard to the respective roles of its various con-

stituents, the artists would obtain a place next only to the *śilpaśāstras*. In fact, the *śilpaśāstras* too were sometimes composed by the practitioners of the craft.

Keeping these points in view, this monograph seeks to define the craftsmen associated with different monuments vis-a-vis, their respective regions of operation and various other aspects concerning them, such as the origin of a distinct class of workers-in-stone, their expertise in *śilpa*, their organisation, and various categories in a hierarchical setting. The first two chapters in the monograph deal with these problems within a certain chronological framework from the Vedic times to the pre-Gupta period in the first instance, and from the Gupta-Vākāṭaka age to the mediaeval dynasties. The Appendix deals with Taranath's testimony concerning the artisans of the different regions.

This monograph is a byproduct of my project on the Kalachuri sculptures at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. In writing this I have depended mainly on the material which was immediately available. A further exploration regarding the artisans and their contribution to the regional art-movements may define more clearly the evolution and growth of regional art styles. If this monograph helps in undertaking such studies its purpose would have been amply served.

I am grateful to Professor S C Dube, the Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study for encouraging me to write this monograph. His interest in it was a source of constant inspiration to me. My thanks are also due to the Director, National Museum, Delhi and the Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India for providing me with the photographs used in the monograph; to Mr S K Vashist for preparing the typescript; to Mr Ashok Kumar Sharma for his help in going through the proofs; and lastly to Bina, my wife for her great patience and constant learned help.

R N Misra

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Chapter One

Artists and the Early Art-activity

THE art heritage of India has been widely studied in terms of its contents, motifs, and chronology, to explicate its evolution as well as its various chronological phases and their aesthetic brilliance. No less important in the art-history is the role of artisans who lived during various phases of art-activity and who, in fact, were responsible for bringing them forth. A meaningful correlation of the social aspect of the art-movement vis-a-vis the movement itself may perhaps be of greater significance in comprehending the creative activity on a wider scale. Art-activity in ancient India involved different sections of society: artisans for raising monuments, patrons for financing the projects, priests for consecrating the monuments, and so on. This multilateral process has to be comprehended in its totality and in its segments too, in order to bring out a profile of artisans and patrons and their interaction in relation to the creation of the works of art.

Artist in ancient India was not an isolated institution; in the social hierarchy he belonged to a general class of artisans engaged in various crafts. Historically, therefore, his position and his craft has to be related to a kindred group of artisans and their occupations. An enquiry into the existence, function, and organisation of artist in ancient India ultimately leads to a body of data in which different categories of artisans are found clubbed together in one general group called *śilpin*. Likewise, the term

śilpa is of a wide connotation and it includes within its ambit various crafts, skills, and occupations. This necessitates an enquiry into various crafts in relation to the word *śilpa* with a view to making a brief survey of some aspects of crafts along with its practitioners, in a historical perspective.

The earliest occurrence of the word *śilpa* is found in the *Saṁhitās*¹ and *Brāhmaṇas*.² In these it has been used to define a variety of acts or activities such as manual arts and crafts, ceremonial acts and rites, artistic work, and so on. In the *Naighaṇṭuka* (III.7) it connotes a form or a shape. In the *Brāhmaṇas*, the word is used in the sense of work of art, e. g. "they recite *śilpas*. These are the works of art of the gods; in imitation of these works of art, here is a work of art accomplished—an elephant, a goblet, a garment, a gold-object, a mule-chariot are works of art".³ In the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* (XXIX. 5) are enumerated as the three-fold *śilpas*—dancing, music, and singing. The *Panchaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* has the word *śilpatva* indicating a state of being variegated or decorated.⁴ These diverse usages of the word *śilpa* clearly indicate that the acts requiring skill in certain performances as singing, dancing, compiling hymns, and the other diverse art-activities were broadly known as *śilpa*. Even in the realm of dramatic arts, the word has significance in a form of drama which was known as *śilpaka*.⁵

The term *śilpa* designates "ceremonial act" in the *Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra* (VIII. 4, 5-8; IX. 10 11; XI. 2), and in this sense it is close to *kāru* (from the root *kri*) which in the Vedic contexts stands for a maker or an artisan, a singer of hymns, or a poet. In a reference in the *Rigveda*, Viśvakarmā, a god of creation, is mentioned as *dhātu-karmāra*, while *karmāra* alone refer to artisans and artificers.⁶ Viśvakarmā is supposed to create things

¹ *Kāṭhaka*, 2.3; 37.9; 48.1; *Paippalāda* I. 92.2; 4.3.2; *Taittiriya*, 1.2.2.1; 6.1.2.3; 5.5.22.1; *Kaṭha*, 1.15; *Mādhyandin*, *Śukla Yajurveda*, 4.9; 24.5; 29.58; *Maitrāyaṇī*, 1.2.2.

² *Satapatha*, 14.9.9.33; 1.1.4.3; 3.2.1.5; 14.9.4.32; *Aitareya*, 6.27; 38; *Gopatha*, 2.6.7.9; *Sāṅkhāyana*, 25.12, 13, 29.5; *Taittiriya*, 2.7.15.3; 3.33.2.1; *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, 1.7.1; *Tāṇḍya*, 16.4.3; 8; 9.15.2.

³ *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VI.5, 27.

⁴ cf., Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, *Śilpatva*; Bhattacharya, T.P., *A Study of Vāstuvidyā*, (Patna, 1947) p. 26.

⁵ cf., Monier-Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 468.

⁶ *Rigveda*, X, 72.2; *Atharvaveda*, III, 5.6; *Manu*, IV, 215.

out of *dhātu*, "raw-material", which act is known as *sanghamana*.⁷ The process of cutting, shaping, and painting has been often explained in the texts by the *takṣ*.⁸ For instance, Tvashṭri is sometimes described as a god who *tataḥṣa*, "sharpens", the *vajra* of Indra.⁹ The correspondence of Indra and Tvashṭri in creation of some forms is mentioned in the early texts. Indra creates a form by his inner power, while Tvashṭri brings forth a form by chipping and carving which act has been described as *rūpa-piṁśana*. These activities may significantly be taken under the wider connotations of *śilpa*. Besides, these references also shed some light on the practical aspect of the skill required in the practice of crafts.

As regards the types of occupations or *śilpas* ("crafts"), the *Saṁhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* have preserved relevant material. The *Vedas* bring out in clear profile craftsmen like *takṣaka*, "carver"; *rathakāra*, "chariotmaker"; and *karmāra*, "blacksmith". The list of occupations and crafts grew in the post-Vedic period. Whereas the *Rigveda* knew only of the *karmāras*, *takṣakas*, weavers, tanners and the *rathakaras*,¹⁰ the later Vedic texts enumerate many other occupations. The *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā* XXX. 6.21) and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* refer to various categories of artisans: chariot-makers, carpenters, potters, smiths, jewellers, herdsmen, etc. Such increase in the categories of trades, which fall generally under *śilpas*, "crafts", indicates a greater degree of economic activity which brought about such development. The growth in the number of crafts as well as their practitioners continued even in the post-Vedic period.

During the early Vedic phase, it seems that even though the social status of some of the artisans, particularly *takṣakas*, and *rathakāras*, tended to vary, the artisans as a class enjoyed a respectable position in the society. The *Atharvaveda* (III. 5. 6) cites that some of those engaged in various crafts belonged to the *viś*, "the Aryan community". The special place of *takṣakas*,

⁷ *Rigveda*, X,72.2; quoted by Agrawala V.S., *Indian Art*, p.40

⁸ cf., *Rigveda*, I, 162.6; *tashṭri*, *Ibid.*, I,61.4; 105-18, 130.4; *rathakāra* who used wood for joining and making of chariot, is called *takṣaka* in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*, IV, 3.8.

⁹ *Rigveda*, I,32.2; I,85; X,48.

¹⁰ cf., *Rigveda*, IV,35.6; 36.5; VI,32.1 *takṣaka*; X,72.2; VIII, 5.38.

¹¹ cf., Sharma, R.S., *Sūdras in Ancient India*, pp.27-8; 49;70 ff.

rathakāras, and *karmāras* and their administrative responsibilities have been indicated in certain other texts. They were designated as *ratnins* and assigned important roles in the coronation ceremonies of kings.¹² Moreover, the agricultural Vedic society found immense use to the products of various crafts in agriculture and in war. As a result, the craftsmen must have commanded respect. The crafts during this stage were neither restricted to *śūdras* as happened later nor was their practice stigmatised.¹³ These points among other things, define some of the fundamental traits of crafts during the Vedic period.

When stone came into use, the *takṣakas* of the Vedic times transformed their techniques and helped in the growth of art-activity. During the early stages, they were primarily concerned with wood-craft. As regards the other *śilpas*, as pointed out earlier, they grew in number in the post-Vedic times. The Buddhist texts enumerate various occupations. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* (I. 85), their number is twelve. The *Dīgha Nikāya*,¹⁴ the *Mahāvastu*,¹⁵ and the *Milinda Pañho*¹⁶ have long lists of occupations and indicate organisation of craftsmen's guilds. About classification of crafts as high or low, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* says:¹⁷

craft (*sippa*) mean: there are two kinds of crafts: low craft and high craft. Low craft mean: the craft of basket-makers, the potters craft, the weavers craft, the leather-workers craft, the barbers craft or whatever is disdained... despised in these districts—that means low craft. High craft means: reckoning on fingers (*muddā*), calculation (*ganaṇā*), writing (*lekhā*), what is not disdained... what is esteemed in these districts—this means high crafts.

¹² Ibid., pp.49 ff. *rathakāra* and *karmāra* were close to king according to a passage in the *Atharvaveda*, (III,5.6) but later on *karmāra* was replaced by *takṣaka* "carver or carpenter". In terms of antiquity *takṣaka* was older than *rathakāra*, for the *rathakāra* came to fore mainly in the later Vedic period.

¹³ Ibid., p.28; also *Vājasneyi Samhitā*, XVI, 27; *Kāṭhak*, XVII, 13; *Maitrāyaṇi*, II,9.5; *Taittiriya*, IV,5.4.2.

¹⁴ I,51

¹⁵ *Mahāvastu*, (tr.) Jones J.J., III,pp 112 ff; 443 ff.

¹⁶ Horner, I.B., (tr.) *Milindas Questions*, 331, mentions a list of about eight crafts and occupations.

¹⁷ Horner, I.B., (tr.) *Book of Discipline*, II, 176 f.

The *Dīgha Nikāya* (I. 51) includes all crafts except that of the leather-worker under the *puṭhu*, "ordinary", crafts, and the list includes in *puṭhu* crafts even *ganaṇā*, *muddā*, *lekhā*, etc., which have been mentioned in the *Suttavibhāṅga*¹⁸ as high crafts. *Dīgha Nikāya*¹⁹ has a distinction also between those who were regarded low by birth and those who followed low professions. But on the basis of such random statements, which are often contradictory, it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line to delineate a distinction of birth between those who followed different types of crafts.

While in the Buddhist texts a complete correspondence of crafts with lower castes is difficult to establish, the Sūtras take a position of almost an exclusive association of crafts with Śūdras. The Sūtras rule that in the absence of any other means of livelihood the Śūdras may take to various *śilpas*. Gautama holds this view while dealing with *śilpavritti*, "practice of *śilpa*", as a means of Śūdras' livelihood.²⁰ The artisans seem to have started losing their pre-eminent position in the post-Vedic period and eventually the craftsmen such as *rathakāras* and *taṣṣakas*, who were of supreme importance during the Vedic age, lost their prerogatives and were relegated to the ranks of Śūdras.²¹ By about the sixth century B.C., the *Śūdras* seem to have got largely associated with diverse types of *śilpas*, "occupations", and it became customary to designate individuals according to the crafts they practised. Fick has classified the practitioners of various crafts under the "despised castes" but he indicates a state of society which admitted of certain casteless professions, particularly those which had a better guild-organisation.²²

¹⁸ Ibid., II, 176.

¹⁹ cf. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, 100, 102, "one may cite here the case of *rathakāra* and *chammakara*, 'leather-worker'. *Chammakara*, occurs in the *Suttavibhāṅga*, (Book of Discipline, II, 176) among the low crafts, while *rathakāra* is among low kinds of birth; and there seems to be no correspondence between kinds of low births and kinds of low crafts such as would enable one to say that a man of such and such birth follows such and such trade". Horner, I.B., op.cit., p. 173, fn. 7.

²⁰ *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, X, 60, Manu, X, 99, 100; Pāṇini in certain *sūtras*, e.g. IV, 2.62, V, 4.95, also refers to *śilpi*, *kāruśilpi*, and *chāruśilpi*; *Arthaśāstra*, I, 3.8. (Kangle, R.P. ed.)

²¹ Sharma, R.S., op.cit., pp. 27-8; 48-51.

²² Fick. R., *The Social Organisation in the North-East India*, ch. X-XII,

However, it will be far from correct to assume that the practice of crafts was limited only to persons in the lower strata of society. There are instances of persons of higher castes practising crafts. A Jātaka has the anecdote of a Brāhmaṇa who earned his living from making carts, and thus plied the trade of a *vardhakī*, "carpenter".²³ The Sūtras usually frowned upon such cases of individuals belonging to higher castes taking to professions of lower castes. Baudhāyana, in this connection, has ruled that a Brāhmaṇa tending cattle or living by trades, or by working as a artisan should be treated like a Śūdra.²⁴ Such disapprobation notwithstanding, one notices a fluidity in respect of the practice of crafts by groups of people, high or low in social hierarchy. In a growing society, the artisans had enormous utility and various *śilpas* had special roles in the growth of economy as well as in the urban patterns of life. In the circumstances, it is no wonder that quite often one meets with the instances of people of various social ranks practising different crafts. The Buddhist texts offer evidence to the extent that *gahapatis*, "householders", were engaged in various crafts.²⁵ In their social status, the *gahapatis* of the Buddhist texts were equivalent to the Vaiśyas of the orthodox *varṇa* system. The *Anguttara Nikāya* (III. 363) refers to a *gahapati* who earned his living by *sippādhiṭṭāna*, "practice of arts and crafts". The institution of *gahapatis* itself seems to have come up as a result of the prosperity of artisans, several of whom swelled the ranks of *gahapatis*.²⁶ Such cases clearly indicate the upward social and economic mobility of the artisans. In Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* among the virtues of a *nāyaka*, "cultured man", the knowledge of various *śilpas* gets a

²³ IV, 207.

²⁴ I.5.10.24; cf., *Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, II,27; *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, X-67. Haradatta, commenting upon Gautama (X,67) recognises the social equivalency of Śūdra and a Brāhmaṇa performing an occupation allotted to Śūdra. But he adds that a Śūdra doing his allotted work should not be despised by those who follow the non-Aryan occupations. Such injunctions implicitly indicate that occupations were identified with Śūdras. But at the same time, they indicate that situation was flexible enough to admit persons of higher castes into the professions which were identified with the Śūdras.

²⁵ for *gahapatis*, cf., Fick, R., op.cit., 253 ff; *Luders List*, 193, 201 202, 449.

²⁶ cf., *Digha Nikāya*, III, 281; *Jātaka*, III,281; *Uvāsagadasāo*, p. 184, quoted by Sharma, R. S., op.cit., p. 88.

special mention. The *nāyaka* was supposed to be adept in *śilpas*.²⁷ Reference to the need of having a solitary place where a cultured man could practise his skill in carving various objects, indicates the popularity which certain *śilpas* enjoyed amongst the higher sections of society.²⁸ The *Lalitavistara*, likewise indicates that proficiency in *śilpas* was inculcated amongst the princes of ruling families. Reference is made in the text to the hesitance of Śākya Daṇḍapāṇi in giving his daughter in marriage to the prince Siddhārtha as the latter was not proficient in *śilpas*.²⁹

In the works quoted above, the word *śilpa* has different connotations, covering occupations, skills, and crafts. These references also establish a close relation between the artisans practising different *śilpas*. In fact, the mutual correspondence of artisans is vividly expressed throughout the ancient social history. At a later stage, this correspondance of different *śilpīs* was formalised. A parable in the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* (I. 10) relates how as a result of a blessing from Brahmā, Viśvakarmā, who was born in a Brāhmaṇa family, married the Apsarā Ghritāchī, who was reborn as a milkmaid; and out of this union came such *jātis* as tailors, potters, carpenters, as well as the *jātis*, adept in the *tantra-vidyā*. This parable in the *Purāṇa* thus seeks to interpret a common descent as well as the equivalence of different craftsmen.

How did the sculptors and the architects fare in this general class of *śilpis*, and when did they come to have a distinct class of their own is another important question. The question may be answered by splitting it into parts relating to the pre-Mauryan and the post-Mauryan times. To a great extent, the evolution of a distinct class of stone-masons must have depended upon the extensive use of stone for building purpose, which happened sometime during the rule of the Mauryas. Before the Mauryas, monuments are scarce and evidence meagre and it has been

²⁷ *Kāmasūtra*, VI.1.12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I.4.4. cf., also, III.3.16; pp. 83 ff;

²⁹ When Śuddhodana asked for the marriage of Daṇḍapāṇi's daughter to Siddhārtha, Daṇḍapāṇi is described as having said: "asmākaṁ chayam kuladharmāḥ śilpajñāsya kanyā dātavyā na śilpajñasyeti; kumārascha na śilpajño...tat kathama" śilpajñāham duhitaram dāsyāmi; cf., *Lalitavistara*, Leffmann, (ed.), p.143.

surmised that wood, ivory, and other materials of perishable nature must have been in use for art-activity. In this activity, the *takṣakas*, *vardhakīs*, and *karmāras* must have played an important role.³⁰ With the coming into use of stone for building, these artisans, might have transformed their techniques to suit the new requirements. This surmise is confirmed by references to the *takṣakas* and *vardhakīs* in the canons of iconography written during the mediaeval period.³¹ For instance, the *Mayamataṁ* (V. 13-14) refers to four types of *śilpīs*, "artisans": *sthapati*, *sūtragrahin*, *takṣaka*, and *vardhakī*. Elsewhere, the same text defines *takṣaka* as an artisan who was required to fashion stone, wood, or bricks in the construction of buildings.³² Such references clearly point towards transformation of techniques and medium of artists, even though their designations continued to be the same.

That such artists as smiths and carpenters were involved in the art-activity is proved by other references too. A Jātaka story refers to a prince who invited a *kammāra-jettḥaka*, "chief of goldsmiths", to make a female figure out of a quantity of gold.³³ The *vaddhakīs*, "carpenters", and their activity find mention in several Jātakas. The *Alinachitta Jātaka* (II. 18) refers to a *vaddhakīgāma*, "a village of carpenters", with 500 such carpenters. These carpenters, it is said, collected wood from forests, made "things" out of these for use in various types of buildings, including the multi-storeyed, to the choice and satisfaction of their clients. After completing a particular job, these carpenters started the cycle of collecting raw material and further work, all over again.³⁴ Specific references to workers-in-stone, during the pre-Mauryan period are very scarce. Agrawala, however, has indicated their existence as well as their participation in the building activity of the Achaemenian king Darius.²⁵ Agrawala says that the artists of Gandhara find mention in an Achaemenian

³⁰ cf. Sharma, R.S., op.cit., p. 49-51; 27-8.

³¹ cf., also, *Mahābhārata*, V, 255, *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 80.2; Quoted by Acharya, P.K. *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture*, (Henceforth abbreviated as *Encyclopaedia*), VII, *Stapati*, p. 581.

³² *Mayamataṁ*, V, 20

³³ *Jātaka*, V, 282; quoted by Fick, R., op.cit.

³⁴ cf. *Jātaka*, II, 405, IV, 159, for *Vaddhakīgāmas*. The *Samuddavāṇijja Jātaka* refers to a village of 1,000 carpenters in which each 500 had a chief.

inscription which acknowledges their contribution in building a palace at Susa.³⁵

More positive evidence about the stone-masons is forthcoming from the Mauryan times. The *Arthaśāstra* is of great use in this respect. It refers to various types of artisans engaged in building-activity, their remuneration and protection by the state; other information concerning artisans is also available in this text. It gives details concerning artisans' remuneration which varied according to the skill of the concerned person. According to this scale, a salary of two hundred *paṇas* for the *vardhakī*, "chief-architect", appears to be equivalent to that of a physician or a *rathakāra*.³⁶ The *Arthaśāstra* also has a term *kāru*, which generally designates artisans, whose different classes find mention in the text.³⁷ These references are of great assistance in identifying an independent class of artisans, specifically connected with architecture and sculptural art. The *Milinda Pañho* (330) specifically refers to a "city-architect" who lays out and raises a city and "when the city was fully developed he might go away to another district". This reference to the architect's mobility is important and to some extent may explain why in the Buddhist texts although various other *śilpīs* have been often mentioned, architects and sculptors in particular do not get a proportionate mention. It may also be surmised that probably these artists did not have such guild-organisations as other craftsmen had. This lack of organisation amongst artists might have been due to their mobility. And in the circumstances, references to them are not as frequent as to those who were better organised.

With the acceleration in the tempo of building-activity during the Mauryan period the artists received greater attention. The

³⁵ cf., Agrawala, V.S., *Studies in Indian Art*, p. 121. About the origin of stone-architecture in India, cf., Bhattacharya T.P., *The Canons of Indian Art*, pp. 300 ff.

³⁶ *Arthaśāstra*, V,3.12; V,3.16; the text prescribes two hundred *paṇas* for *vardhakī* and only one hundred and twenty *paṇas* for *kāruśilpīs*, 'artisan'. also MacCrindle, J.N., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes* (Calcutta, 1926) p. 86, fragment 34. In the section on *kārukara-rakṣaṇām* the *Arthaśāstra* (IV,1.2-4; IV,1.65) lays down rules protecting artisans or guarding troubles from them, cf. also *Arthaśāstra*, IV, 2. 18.

³⁷ *Arthaśāstra*, IV,1; IV,1.65.

workers-in-stone no longer remained anonymous or completely aligned to the kindred group of craftsmen. They seem to have obtained a distinct niche in the class of artisans, which probably helped in salvaging their trade from obscurity. The emergent socio-economic situation following the Mauryan rule must have added its share in the coming up of artisans specialising in building-work. The control on economy, production, and crafts as well as the growing inland and overseas trade during the Mauryan-Sātavāhana era opened up new avenues for crafts and craftsmen. The religious fervour of the newly affluent classes of such urban centres as Mathurā, Sanchi-Vidiśā, and Nasik, led to raising religious edifices. All these developments had their natural consequences on the tone of building-activity and on the craftsmen engaged in it.

The accent now was on the use of stone for building edifices or sculptures.

The vast administrative organisation of the Mauryas had successfully harnessed the skill of craftsmen on a grand scale. The introduction of stone revolutionised the art-activity. The impact of such transformations was felt in various parts of the country and the epigraphs available from Mathura, Bharhut, Sanchi, Gaya, and western and eastern coastal India, help in understanding the degrees of such impact and the consequent transformation in the techniques and medium of artists. The epigraphs have expressions like *silākarmanta* or *śailakarma* indicating that the activity had come to be known as "stone-work",³⁸ in contra-distinction to work in wood, ivory, or metals. The sculptors are mentioned as *rūpakāra*, *śailavardhakī*, *aveśanī rūpadakṣa*, etc., which all define the new factors of growth obtaining in the realm of art-activity. The inscriptions also offer prolific references to dedication of small and big excavations, constructions or carvings, such as setting up of caves (*selaghara/leṇa*) or the facades of caves (*gharamugha*), stone-pillars (*śilā-lashṭi*) or their bases and so on.³⁹ Much more

³⁸ *Luders List*, 687, 350

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1087; 1090; 962; several other objects are mentioned in the inscriptions, e.g., tank (*pushkariṇī*); reservoir (*udapana*), garden; *gambhāra*; *pūja-śilā-prākāra*, "stone-wall", *chakrapaṭa*, "slabs with a wheel", *pādukāpaṭa*; *svastikapāṭa*, "slabs with a *svastika*"; *harmya*, "temple". *Luders List*. 82; 6; 1253; 1217; 1282; 1287; 23; A Sanchi inscrip-

important and extensive excavations than merely the single small structure also find mention e.g. caves; *upasthānaśālā* "hall of reception"; cells and quadrangular dining hall; this is in addition and complementary to such smaller things as "benches for sitting", "walk", etc.⁴⁰ Sometimes the donors took pride in commissioning works which they regarded as "marvellous" and which indeed are so. Thus an inscription from the Buddhist cave at Karla records the "establishment of the cave-dwelling, the most excellent on the Jambūdīvīpa".⁴¹ Besides the edifices and their architectural components mentioned above, the inscriptions also record setting up of images,⁴² or stone-pieces decorated with carvings—the latter described as *śailarūpakarma*.⁴³ The exclusiveness of the stone-worker has been conveyed by qualifying him as *śailavardhakī*, which probably purports to indicate the distinctiveness of this stone-mason in comparison to the ordinary *vardhakī*, "carpenter". The use may alternatively indicate the transformation of techniques and medium of the craftsmen, with the change in the medium of art.

In addition to the evidence from epigraphs, that from the texts also suggests the growth of different classes of artists. The *Mahāvastu* refers to various classes of artists and their fields of specialisation. Those figuring in its list are: *chitrakāraka*, "painters"; *vardhakī-rūpakāra*, "carpenters"; *kārupatrika*, "carvers"; *pustakāraka*, "the modellers of clay"; *pustakarmakāraka*, "plasterers", *lepaka*, "decorators"; and *sthapati-sūtrakāra*, "architects".⁴⁵ These different terms signify that in the realm of stone-carving and architecture, different classes of artists formed specialised groups. The *Manu Samhitā*⁴⁶ attempts

tion (*Luders List*, 350) contains an imprecation against him "who takes away or causes to be taken away the stone-work... or causes it to be transferred to another temple...".

⁴⁰ cf. *Luders List*, 988

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1087

⁴² *Ibid.*, 114, 115

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1045

⁴⁴ *Mahāvastu*, (tr.), Jones, J.J., III 112; also p. 443 where this list occurs with certain modifications.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

⁴⁶ VI. 47-8. cf., *Artibus Asiae*, Vol XXXI, 4 p. 308., editor's note to the paper "Sri Yugandhar—A Master Artist of Ajanta", by M.K. Dhavalikar.

to fix up a hierarchy of artists of the building-activity and mentions *sthapati*, "master-architect"; *sūtragrāhin*, "surveyor-designer"; *taṣṣaka*, "sculptor"; carpenter; and painter in relation to each other. In this hierarchy *sūtragrāhin* has a special relationship to the master-architect in the sense that he has either to be the son or a disciple of the latter. We have two terms here, *sūtragrāhin* and *sūtrakāra*, which are important and indicate a designation which was to become more important in the post-Gupta times. The word *sūtragrāhin* has been explained as surveyor-designer⁴⁷ while, *sūtrakāra* has been sometimes explained as meaning "(cotton-) spinner".⁴⁸ However, on the analogy of the Sanskrit *sūtrakarma*, "rule-work" or "carpentry", it has been suggested that the whole compound in the *Mahāvastu*, would seem to mean "a builder working by rule" or a "builder-carpenter".⁴⁹ It may be added here, that "working-by-rule" was a phenomenon limited not only to the carpentry; it was used by the stone-masons also. The use of stone, brought about a transformation in the material, not so much in the methods. The liberal use of wood in the early monuments, as in the cave temples of western India, or even the principles of construction (e.g. pillars like wooden posts, or pillars tilted inwards at the top as it were to support the overhanging roof, and so forth) indicate a continuation of the older experience.

It has been surmised that some of the schools of *śilpa* had started taking shape in the early centuries of the Christian era. But the role of artists in evolution of such schools is not clearly defined. On one hand, the information as derived from the canons of iconography seems to relate the evolution of such schools to the prominent *āchāryas*, or to the craftsmen like Maya and Viśvakarmā.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Tārānāth, relates the development of the schools of art to the Nāga- and Yaksha-

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ cf. S.B.E. XXXVI, 201; *Milinda Pañho*, 331.

⁴⁹ cf. *Mahāvastu*, III, p. 112; also *sūtrādhyakṣa* in the Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, II, 23.1. ff. *sūtrakriḍā* in *Kāmasūtra* 1.3.15. The epigraphic evidence tends to indicate that *sūtragrāhin* was eliminated, and a new class, that of *sūtradhāra* came into being in the post-Gupta era.

⁵⁰ Bhattacharya discusses the earliest nature of *Vāstusāstra* and the originators of the different schools of architecture and art. cf. Bhattacharya. T.P., *The Canons of Indian Art*, p. 87 ff., *Encyclopaedia*, SV., *sthapati*.

artisans who, he says, were employed by the Mauryas for building their edifices.⁵¹ The relevant passage from Tārānāth reads as follows:

In the ancient period, the human artists possessed miraculous power and their artistic creations were astounding. In the *Vinaya Vastu*, etc., it is clearly said that the statues made and pictures drawn by them created the illusion of being real objects. For about a hundred years after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Teacher (i.e. the Buddha), there were many artists like them.

As afterwards there was none of them any more, the celestial artists appeared in human guise and made eight wonderful images for worship in Magadha, like those of the Mahābodhi and Mañjuśrī-duṇḍubhīśvara (an epithet of Buddha Amoghasiddhi). The *caityas* of the eight sacred places and the inner boundary wall of *vajrāsana* were built by the Yakṣa artists during the period of Aśoka and the Nāga artists built many (images) during the time of Nagarjuna.⁵²

Evidently, the information as given by Tārānāth is anachronistic in matters of images as mentioned by him, for these images are untraceable in Indian art, till the time of the Kushāṇas. However, the tradition about the artists of the Mauryan period cannot be dismissed summarily. There is independent evidence, from Patanjali (middle of the second century B.C.) also about the Mauryas' involvement in making images for collecting money.⁵³ That the making of images was a source of livelihood is indicated also by the *sūtra* of Pāṇini and the commentaries on it.⁵⁴ The Mauryas popularised (animal) sculptures and their making, and along with the artists came to have a permanent place in the legend of sculpture-making, which is important,

⁵¹ *Tārānāth's History of Buddhism in India*, (ed.), D.P. Chattopadhyaya, p. 347.

52 Ibid.

⁵³ *Mauryaiḥ-hiranyā-rthabhitaiḥ-archā-prakalpitāḥ*, cf. Banerjee, J.N. *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Pāṇini, *Jivikārthe-chā-paṇye*. V. 3.99, Banerjea, op.cit., p. 391 says, "on the authority of commentaries, the *Mahābhāṣya* and the *Kāśikā* we can assume that these objects which were meant for livelihood, but at the same time were not for sale...".

even though the specifics of Tārānāth's statement may not be true. It has been suggested that the *nāgara*, "northern", style may have stemmed from the innovations by the Nāgas.⁵⁵

Apart from what is known from the literary texts, a fair amount of information about the artisans and their role in the building-activity, is available in the ancient inscriptions. A large number of such inscriptions are from Mathura, Bharhut, Sanchi, and many regions of western and eastern India (viz., Kuda, Kanheri, Karla, Amaravati, Jagayyapetta, etc.). Most of these places were flourishing urban centres and served as important trading posts for overseas or inland trade in various commodities.⁵⁶ The consequent prosperity and affluence explains the circumstances responsible for evolution of art and architecture at such places. It seems that in the evolution of local idiom of art, the resident artists of different places helped in accomplishing a major breakthrough. In fact the art-evidence clearly indicates the development of local styles which evolved into distinct schools of sculpture, for instance, the Mathura school, or the western Indian school or the Amaravati school and so on. A comparison of motifs of arts as well as the sculptural styles clearly indicates that though there were distinct schools at different centres, mutual influences in respect of motifs, subjects of reliefs, the technical aspect of relief-carving, the practice of accompanying labels with the reliefs, etc., among the various schools are clearly discernible.

We thus have a phenomenon in the realm of architecture and sculptural art which accommodates the cognate styles as well as distinct ones. This leads to the conclusion that experiments and the skill obtained at one particular place did not necessarily remain localised to the place of origin. On the other hand, the skill spread to far and wide regions.⁵⁷ This in its turn is indicative of some sort of organisation of the artists which probably included both the resident and the itinerant artists. The epigraphs afford evidence regarding both the types of

⁵⁵ Bhattacharya, T.P., op.cit., p. 309 f. His reasons are different.

⁵⁶ cf. Shastri, K.A.N., (ed.), *Comprehensive History of India*, pp. 430 ff.

⁵⁷ For the Bharhut and Mathura, and western and eastern Indian early idioms of art and their cognate character, cf., Dikshit, M.G., *Indica* VIII, (i) pp. 1. ff; also Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 27; Codrington, D.B. *Ancient India*, p. 27, plates 22a.

artists. The localisation of activity at different centres such as Mathura and Bharhut may indicate the existence of resident artists, and such artists may ultimately have led to the organisation of the kindred group on a more efficient basis even as the itinerant artists may have helped in the dissemination of the art-idiom. The epigraphic data suggest that such classes of artists working in stone had come into existence by the second century B.C. As regards the resident artists, an inscription from Mathura⁵⁸ records the dedication of a *śilāpaṭṭa*, "stone-slab", in the temple of (the Nāga) Dadhikarṇa "by the sons... of *sailalaka*,⁵⁹ "stone-masons", (of) Mathura". These artisans are praised as Chandaka brothers, chief among them was Nandibala. The inscription offers information regarding the artists of Mathura. Another artisan of Mathura was Gomataka, a pupil of Kuṇika, who claims to have made the famous Parkham Yaksha image.⁶⁰ Yet another pupil of Kuṇika, Nāga is known from another Mathura inscription, as the maker of an image of Yakṣiṇī Lāyāva.⁶¹ These inscriptions show that artists' occupation was already in the process of specialisation. In the case of the Chandaka brothers, it was practised by all the brothers, although Chandaka, the eldest among them was the most reputed for his craft.⁶² Similarly, in the case of Kuṇika and his disciples—Gomataka and Nāga—the phenomenon of specialisation may be inferred from their teacher-disciple relationship. Further evidence about such relationship, is available from the other regions also and will be mentioned at the relevant

⁵⁸ cf. *Luders List*, 85; This temple of Dadhikarṇa Nāga finds mention in another inscription from Mathura (*Luders List*, 63.), which records "dedication (of the pillar) by Devila, the servant (or priest) at the temple of Dadhikarṇa...".

⁵⁹ Luders translates *selālaka* as "actors"; so does the *Amarakośā*, *Sūdra-varga*, II, 12. This translation is not borne out by the context of the above inscription at Mathura, and has the sense of stone-mason; cf., *Mahāvastu*, II, p. 444, fn.7 Edgerton. F., *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*.

⁶⁰ *Luders List*, 150

⁶¹ cf. Chanda, R.P., *ASI, AR*, 1922-23 p. 165; Agrawala., V.S., op.cit., p. 118, Buhler says that a sectarian distinction among artists of Mathura cannot be established and it is possible that the same set of artists were commissioned to create the stone-work related to different sects, e.g. Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu.

⁶² *Luders List*, 345

places. Among the resident artists, reference may also be made to the ivory-carvers (*daṃtakāra*) of Vidiśā mentioned in a Sanchi inscription. This inscription records that the *rūpakamma*, "carving", on a portion of the south gate was done by the *Vedisaka* workers in ivory.

Of greater number and importance are inscriptions pertaining to the itinerant artists, and such inscriptions have come to light from Sanchi, Ramgarh, and Jagayyapetta. One of the earliest of such inscriptions has come from Ramgarh (Jogimara cave) and it refers to a *lūpadakha*, "sculptor", Devadina (Devadatta) who was a native of Vārāṇasī and a lover of Sutanukā, a temple-servant (*devadasikye*).⁶³ An inscription from Sanchi⁶⁴ refers to an artisan (?)—Visakama (Viśvakarmā), a native of Ujjayinī. Another Sanchi inscription,⁶⁵ on the top-architrave of the south gate of the main *Stūpa*, records that the work was the gifts of Ānanda who was the foreman of the artisans of *rājan* Siri-Sātakarṇi. This architrave has an outstanding depiction of the story of *Chhaddanta* Jātaka, the like of which in style could not be achieved on any other gate of the Sanchi *stūpa*. Sanchi was under the rule of the Sātavāhanas whose centre of power during this time seems to have been located in the western part of the Maharashtra and in the case of Ānanda we have a clear evidence of the artist who belonged to another region, but accomplished his work at Sanchi.

Evidence regarding the itinerant artists also comes from certain inscriptions of Jagayyapetta, in Andhra Pradesh. These inscriptions refer to an *āveśani*, "the foreman among artisan", namely Siddhārtha who made a gift of five entrance pillars at the *dāra*, "door", of the *Mahāchetiya* at Velagiri.⁶⁶ Siddhārtha was a resident of the village Mahākamdurura while his father Nāga-chandra, who also was an *āveśani*, resided in Nadatura in the district of Kammaka. Besides indicating that the artist's profession was hereditary, the inscription also indicates their mobility in the sense of physical movement from one place to another.

⁶³ Ibid., 921.

⁶⁴ cf., Cunningham, A., *Bhilsa Topes*, p. 151 no. 12; *Luders List*, 173.

⁶⁵ cf. Marshall and others, *Monuments of Sanchi*, Vol. I, inscription No. 398: "*raṇosiri Sātakanis avesaniśa Vāsīthiputrasi Ānāmdas dānaṃ*".

⁶⁶ cf. *Luders List*, 1002. Jagayyapetta Buddhist Pillar Inscription of the time of Rājan Mādhariputa Siri Virapurisadatta of the Ikṣvākus; cf. also Ibid., no. 1203-4.

There are inscriptions which refer to artists alone without any reference to the places which they belonged to; like *rūpakāra*, “sculptor”, Budharakhita of Bharhut.⁶⁷ Similarly, inscriptions of Sanchi refer to two such artisans—Artha and Abhaya.⁶⁸ These cases are unlike an Amaravati inscription which refers to an artist (whose name has disappeared), who was a native of Virapura and son of Dharmadeva.⁶⁹ There are several other cases in which the artists find mention, e.g., the *vaḍhakī*, “carpenter”, Svāmin of Dhenukāṭaka who made the *mugha*, “door”, of the cave at Karla;⁷⁰ of Baluka (or Balaka) at Kondane.⁷¹ Some of these inscriptions indicate that craftsmen belonging to other fields like ivory-carving, carpentry, etc., joined the ranks of stone-masons.

Information is also available regarding the artists’ set-up and organisation. Individual artists, as we have seen above, were known as *rūpakāra*, *rūpadakṣa*, *karmika*, *śailālaka*, etc. Sometimes they are designated as *śailavardhakī*.⁷² These terms might also have designated their occupational class, just as work on stone was known as *śailakarma*.⁷³ Among the artists of authority, the *navakarmikas*⁷⁴ and *āveśanins*⁷⁵ figure prominently. A Sonari inscription (*Luders No. 157*) refers to the *navakarmika*, “over-seer”, Dharmagupta, a pupil of Ārya-Prasannaka; a Bharhut inscription mentions the *navakarmika* Ārya-Rishipālita who

⁶⁷ C.I.I., II(ii), p. 36; *Luders List*, 857; This *rūpakāra* may have had something to do with the “creation of a gateway (*torāṇa*) and stone-work (*śilākammanṭa*) by Dhanabhūti...” which finds mention in another Bharhut inscription, cf. C.I.I., II (ii), p. 11 ff.; *Luders List*, 687.

⁶⁸ Marshall, J., op.cit., inscription numbers 199, 448; Both find mention as *karmika*, which like *navakarmika*, “architect”, may have some relevance in relation to artisans.

⁶⁹ *Luders List*, 124

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1092; cf., also *sela-vaḍhakī*., *E.I.*, XX, inscription: F., line 4, p. 22; *iṭṭhakā-vaḍḍhakī*: ‘brick-mason’, *Mahāvamsa*, XXIX, 5, 30.

⁷¹ *Luders List*, 1071.

⁷² Ibid., 987;

⁷³ Ibid., 350; also *E.I.*, XX, p. 22; *Luders List*, 1045 (*śailarūpakarma*); 345 (*rūpakarma*); 687 (*śilākammanṭa*); 1087 (*selaghara*); also *E.I.*, XX insc. nos. B4 *E.I.*, for *sela-khambha*, and *śaila-maṇḍapa*.

⁷⁴ cf., *Luders List*, 154, 773, 987, 1250; *E.I.*, XX, p. 17 ff.; inscription number: C.1; C.2, F.

⁷⁵ The different forms of the word *āveśanin*, occurring in the inscription are *āvesani*, *āvesani*, *avesani*, cf., *Luders List*, 1202-4, 346, 1298, in the inscription from Jagayyapetta; Sanchi and Amaravati.

is also styled as *bhadanta* and *bhāṇaka*, “preacher”. A Kanheri inscription gives a long list of *navakaramikas*, “overseers”, describing them as monks and elders—*bhadanta*; their names are: Achala, Grihala, Vijayamitra, Bodhika, and Dharmapāla. The merchant Apareṇuka also occurs in this list of overseers, but his role cannot be exactly established. The inscription adds that the work of excavating the cave was “executed” by *bhadanta* Bodhika, the pupil of *bhadanta* Seumla, and that in this work he acted as overseer (*uparakhita*) of the *sela-vaḍhakin*, “stone-masons”, the *nāyakamisa*; the *kaḍhichakas*; the *mahākaṭakas*; the *miṭhika*, “polisher”; and the *khadaraki*. This inscription is invaluable in explicating the functions of different types of artists engaged in the completion of an monument. An Amaravati inscription refers to a *thera*, “elder”, styled as *bhadanta* Buddharaṣita, who was *navakamaka*, of the Chaityakas (a Buddhist sect) and who lived at Rājagiri.⁷⁶ The Nagarjunakonda inscriptions of the time of the Ikṣvākus similarly refer to certain *navakarmikas*, e.g., student Ānanda, a *navakarmika*, who knew the Dīgha—and Majjhima—Nikāyas “by heart” and who established the foundation of the *Mahāchetiya*;⁷⁷ the three *theras* “elders”—*navakarmikas*, viz., Chaṇḍamukha, Dhammanandi, and Nāga, who supervised the work of building such edifices as a *chaitya* and a *vihāra*, a *bodhi*-tree, shrine, cells, pillars of a *maṇḍapa*, a hall for religious practice, a tank, a verandah and other things at different places. The inscription also mentions that the work was accomplished by the stone-mason Vidhika: “*selavaḍhakisa Vidhikasa kamman ti*”.⁷⁸

These records indicate that the work of excavating the Buddhist edifices was supervised by the members of the Buddhist Church and that these members of the Church sometimes functioned as pupils of other *theras*, who might have been master-architects in their own right. In any case, the latter proposition indicates a situation conducive to specialisation of crafts and to the development of individual schools of sculpture and architecture.

⁷⁶ Luders List, 1250

⁷⁷ E.I., XX, p. 17; inscription no. C.1; also p. 20, inscription. no. C.2;

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 22, inscription. no. F., line 4.

In the *Mahāvamsa* (xxx. 98), an overseer of work is designated as *kammādhitṭhāyaka*. The appointment of the *navakarmikas* by the Church, may have been necessary for the purpose of observing ecclesiastical specifications in the Buddhist edifices and also for the simple reason that person so appointed may have possessed the requisite technical skill for the job. Evidence suggesting both is available. The *Chullavagga*⁷⁹ specifies rules regarding the buildings and the objects of use by monks and nuns; the ecclesiastical supervision might have been enforced to ensure proper adherence to these norms. As regards the eligibility of monks in supervising the building-work, etc., they seem to have earned it on account of their skill in this area of activity. Artisans were seeking and getting admission into the Buddhist Church and such artisans-converted-monks might have continued practising their skill even after joining the Buddhist Church. The status of such monk-artists in the Church was in no way inferior to any other member. In the texts the specificities of speech-usage have been defined and it is ordained that a monk's former occupation ought not to be mentioned to humiliate him.⁸⁰ A passage in the *Samaññaphala-Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*⁸¹ also indicates that persons of different occupations⁸² were joining the Buddhist Church, to escape the rigours of the Brahmanical caste system. The passage records a dialogue between the Buddha and Ajātaśatru in which the latter asks the Buddha of the advantages in becoming a recluse; the Buddha describes the advantages and interposes whether a monk, even though he might have earlier been the king's slave, would or would not receive respect from the king, to which Ajātaśatru replies that he would be respected. Such craftsman-turned-monks as mentioned in the *Dīgha-Nikāya*, might have come handy in the building of the Buddhist monuments.

The overseer of work or its "executer" was appointed besides by the Church, by other authorities or persons also. In a

⁷⁹ Horner, I.B., (tr.), *Book of Discipline (Vinayapiṭaka)* V. *Cullavagga*, p. 204 ff; also *Sutta-Vibhanga*, Bhikkhuni Vibhanga, I, in the *book of Discipline*, III, p. 156.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II. 173; Reference is made here to various crafts, though not specifically to sculptors or masons.

⁸¹ *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I. pp. 68 ff; pp. 76 ff.

⁸² Occupations are enumerated here.

Banavāsī inscription⁸³ of the time of *rājan* Viṣṇukaḍa Chuṭukulānanda Sātakarṇi, mention is made of a princess who donated a *naga* (?), a tank and a *vihāra*; and of the *kamāntika*, "superintendent of work" in this case a minister—Skandsvāti. Similarly, the Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradāman cites the instance of the minister Suviśākha who executed the work of restoration of the Sudaraśana lake after a storm.⁸⁴ From these two examples it follows, that if the work undertaken by some person required independent execution, that was possible and in such a case, the Church may not have had the responsibility of supervising the project.

Āveśanins also occur in the inscriptions as artists of authority. In the Sātavāhana-Īkṣvāku inscriptions this term occurs six times, once in the case of Ānanda, at Sanchi; thrice in the case of Siddhārtha, an Īkṣvāku artisan and his father Nāgachandra; and once in the case of an artist whose name has disappeared from the inscription.⁸⁵ Siddhārtha in his inscription gives the details of his family also. The *āveśanin* Nāgachandra and Nagilā, were his parents, Samudrā his wife; Buddhi his brother; Krishṇā his brother's wife; Mūlaśrī, his son; Nāgabuddhā his daughter; and Nāgaśrī, Chaṇḍaśrī, and Siddhārtha his brother's progeny. The relevant inscriptions mention only Nāgachandra and his son Siddhārtha as *āveśanins*; and there is no direct evidence whether their occupation was followed by all the male (and female) members of the family. But there is sufficient evidence in the inscription to suggest that the profession was hereditary. This information is equivalent to the one relating to the teacher-disciple relationship amongst the *navakarmikas* mentioned above.

The term *āveśanin* has been usually translated as "foreman among the artisans"; the lexicons explain *āveśan* as *śilpīśālā*, manufactory, (or workshop). On the analogy of *akṣaśālā* mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra*⁸⁶ and in its commentary, the word *āveśani*

⁸³ Luders List, 1186

⁸⁴ Ibid., 965

⁸⁵ Ibid., 346; 1202-4; 1298.

⁸⁶ Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, II.13.1, *akṣaśālāyām suvarṇādhyakṣaḥ*; the commentary explains *akṣaśālā* as *akṣaśālā-eti-suvarṇa-ādi-parikarma-āvasthanasya samajñā*, i.e. *akṣaśālā* is the name of the chamber in which artistic work of gold and other metals is carried out, cf., *E.I.*, XXIV, p. 182. *akṣaśālīn* as an officer finds mention in several inscriptions from eastern India., *Bhandarkar's List*, 1497, 1498, 1500-2.

may be explained as manufactory. Alternatively, *āveśanin* may imply a title or position acquired by an individual who possessed great artistic merit. The resourcefulness of *āveśanin* is supported by the fact that atleast in two of the cases where reference has been made to them, they are mentioned as having been involved in making an important structure. Ānanda, the *āveśanin* at Sanchi was associated in making the *torāṇas* when the work was started.⁸⁷ Likewise, the *āveśanin* Siddhārtha of Jagayyapetta inscription is associated with the making of five *āyaka* pillars on the eastern gate of the *Mahāchetiya* of the Buddha at Velagiri.⁸⁸ In any case, the reference to *āveśanin*, i.e., chief-artist, points towards the existence of *āveśan*, “manufactory”, for the training of artisans or making of objects of arts, as commissioned by the royal or other donors. Such workshops find mention elsewhere also. The *Brihatsamhitā* of Vārāhamihira refers to *śilpālaya*; the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇa* to *śilpagriha*; and the commentary of Kullūka on Manu, to *śilpageha*.⁸⁹ The *Kāmasūtra* has the information that persons of taste who practised *śilpa* in their own houses, used to have such workshop—*ekāṃta cha takṣataksaṇa-sthānam*.⁹⁰

The task of building edifices or excavating monuments was well organised. The extant monuments usually indicate a premeditated design and its execution in which probably every single architectural part, including motifs and reliefs, was predetermined and made according to the lay-out previously defined.⁹¹

Before starting the actual work on some edifice, it was possibly customary to prepare a design. An instance of this is found in the *Mahāvamsa*.⁹² Similarly in the *Thūpavamsa*⁹³ there is the

⁸⁷ Dahejia discusses the dates and sequence of the different *torāṇas* of the main *stūpa* at Sanchi and expresses some doubts as to the priority of the south gate in relation to the dating of other gates, cf., *Early Buddhist Rock Temples*, p.187 ff.

⁸⁸ *Luders List*, ff 1202; of the time of the Ikṣvāku Mādhariṇputra Śrī Virapurisadatta (third quarter of the 3rd century).

⁸⁹ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, SV.

⁹⁰ *Kāmasūtra*, I.4:4; *śilpi-śālā* finds mention in the *Mayamata*, LXVIII 50.

⁹¹ Dahejia, V., op.cit., p. 135 f; She also describes the process of cutting the cave from start to its finish and the time taken in such work, cf., p.136 f.

⁹² *Mahāvamsa*, XXVII, 10, 18.

⁹³ Law, B.C. *The Legends of the Topes*, p. 64

instance of the king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya who expressed a desire to build a "palace similar to a celestial mansion". He assembled the Order of Monks and asked them to prepare a "drawing of a mansion made upon a linen cloth...". Thereupon, the Order sent eight Bhikkhus who went to the abode of thirty-three *devas* and saw "a jewelled palace, twelve *yojanas* high and forty-eight *yojanas* in circumference, which was adored with thousand pinnacles, was nine-storied, and provided with a thousand chambers ... and which floated in the air". They made a drawing of it with virmillion upon a linen cloth, and on their return gave it to the Order of Monks, who sent it to the king. When the king saw it, he was glad at heart and had the "Brazen palace" (*lohapāsāda*) built in the style of drawing.⁹⁴ It is said that the design for *lohapāsāda* was prepared by *theras*, "elders", after the *vimāna*, "palace", of a *devatā*, namely *Vīraṇi*.⁹⁵ Such designs find mention as *varṇaka* or *hastalekha* in the texts of the Gupta or post-Gupta times. The *Naishadha Charita* says that the entire feminine world created by Brahma is a *hastalekha*, "preliminary attempt", to the final shaping of the beauty of Damayanti.⁹⁶ However, more important are the details in the *Mahāvamśa* and *Thūpavamśa* which set out the whole process of making of certain buildings, including the great *stūpa* and these details are of invaluable significance.

These texts relate that artisans were collected on drum-beats and a skilled mason was selected from among various masons who were properly interviewed regarding their capacity to undertake the work. The king's men and the *theras* went around places collecting the necessary metals, stones, and bricks for use in the construction of the *stūpa*. All the work was paid for, and if somebody stealthily contributed something, he was detected and amply compensated for his gift. The above texts also deal with the motifs and legends carved on pillars and railings of the *stūpa*. These details give a comprehensive idea about the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 64 ff.

⁹⁵ cf., *Mahāvamśa*, XXVII. 10,18; also Law, B.C., op.cit., p. 64 ff.

⁹⁶ *purākritis sainam imam vidhātum abdhu vidhātuḥ kila hastalekhāḥ*; cf., Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture* p.9. For *hastalekhā*, cf., *Naishadhacharita* vii. 59; 72; 221.68; The other synonyms of *hastalekha* are: *varṇaka*, *hastolaka*, and *pāṇḍulekha*. cf., Sivaramamurti, op. cit., p. 9 pl 2: In the temples of Khajuraho, there are miniature representations of pillars or *mandapas* etched on the surfaces, for the reference of artisans.

mode of construction of the *stūpa* as well as its decoration and the roles of different types of participants (e.g., the chief-architect, masons, donors), the motifs of decoration, the mobilisation of men and money for collecting the necessary building material and so on.⁹⁷ The elder Indagutta "who was gifted with six high faculties, most wise, directed all this, being the superintendent of the building".⁹⁸

In the early reliefs sometimes artisans-at-work are also depicted. One really wonders whether only the ordinary chisel and hammer as depicted; were the important tools of sculptors and masons. *Takṣaka* and *vardhakīs* used their *sūtra*, "threads", for measuring. A *vardhakī-kāṣṭha*, a measure of forty-two inches finds mention in texts.⁹⁹ In the reliefs of Bharhut, however, we have a depiction of two figures of *rūpakāras*, "sculptors", carrying "dagger-like" chisels in their hands; they seem to be clearing irregular rocks preparatory to some excavation. One of them stands on the flat ground, while the other stands on a nail pierced through rock, which serves as his working platform. Both the persons are shown, carrying on their back baskets which contain their other tools (Plate I). The coping stone depicting the scene, was acquired from Bhatanwara in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh and is now in the National Museum, New Delhi.¹⁰⁰ A figure of a scribe, in relief, is known from Nagarjunakonda.¹⁰¹ The figure here holds a similar iron stylus having a large, round head for a convenient grip. Sivaramamurti identifies him as a royal scribe "shown here as casting the horoscope of Siddhartha..."; the relief might as well represent a sculptor.

The *Thūpavaṃsa*¹⁰² gives the details of making of the relic chamber. These details throw some light on the process of raising edifices. When the king asked the skilled *iṭṭhakā-vaḍḍhakī*, "brick-mason", as to how will he make the relic chamber, the

⁹⁷ Law, B.C., op.cit., pp. 73-84.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 84; *Mahāvamsa*, XXX, 98-9.

⁹⁹ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, SV.

¹⁰⁰ Museum antiquity no. 68.163; cf., Agrawala, R.C. "Unpublished Bharhut Reliefs in the National Museum, New Delhi", *Lalit Kala*, 14, p. 54, pl. xx, fig. ii.

¹⁰¹ cf., Sivaramamurti, C., "Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Scripts", *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, 4, p. 33, fig. 13

¹⁰² Law, B.C. op.cit., p. 73.

mason replied, "...I shall pound (the sand) in mortar, and have it sifted with winnowing basket, and crushed in mill, and then I shall do the work with a hundred workmen, throwing down only one *ammaṇa* (a measure of capacity) of dust in one day".¹⁰³ Elsewhere, in the same text, is an account of the starting of work on a *stūpa*. It describes different stages of work and the various articles of use in the preliminary stages of the work. Such process as clearing the place and laying of stone by the king's soldiers inside an elephant-wall (i.e., a basement-work or a platform supported by elephants in relief); breaking of the stone into pieces, which were "stamped down by great elephant's with their feat encased in heels"; spreading of butter-clay on the pounded stones; spreading of bricks over it; "over the bricks, a rough cement, over that cinnabar stones, over that a network of iron, over that sweet-scented sand..."¹⁰⁴ and so on are described. The description is no doubt exaggerated, for, the excavated *stūpas* in India hardly reveal such material in the order described above; but there is enough in the description to show that the edifices were raised with meticulous care and effort.

As regards the artisans of lower categories, engaged for routine work, mention may be made of the *sela-vadhakī* "stone-mason"; *mahākāṭaka*;¹⁰⁵ *kaḍhichaka*,¹⁰⁶ and *miṭhika*, "stone-polisher"—all these words occur in a Kanheri inscription cited above. In a Sanchi inscription is a reference to *karmika* (labourer?), which juxtaposed to *navakarmika*, may explain itself as a worker of lower ranks, engaged in the construction of buildings. Quite often labourers had to be employed if the task to be accomplished was big. The *Thūpavaṃsa* cites the case of a skilled mason who wanted to employ 500 workmen for achieving his task. The *Mahāvaṃsa* refers to *iṭṭhakāvadhakī*, "brick-mason".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 69

¹⁰⁵ Probably an artist or artists engaged in ivory-work, *kaṭaka*=ivory;

¹⁰⁶ The word is difficult to explain. Buhler has pointed out that in Gujarat, a word *Kaḍiyo* (which is close to *Kaḍhichaka*) is still in use for brick-layers; cf. *A.S.W.I.*, IV, p.76 *kaḍhichaka*, may alternatively be derived from *kaṭhi*, kaolin, which may help to explain *kaḍhichaka* as a stone-cutter, stone-painter, or stone-polisher.

¹⁰⁷ cf., Geiger, W., *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times*, (ed.), Heinz Bechert, p. 92. The workmen in building trade in Ceylon

The existence of such specialised classes in different departments of building activity, indicates that crafts were becoming more and more inverted leading to specialisation. In this specialisation, many factors like acquisition of greater skill through the successive stages of the practice of crafts, or teacher-disciple relationship, or hereditary factor, may have contributed their share. One often wonders that in the early inscriptions, the various terms designating the artists, are not identical to those which occur in the texts. Whereas, the texts mention such classes of artisans as *sthapati* and *sūtragrāhin*, the inscriptions have an entirely different set of terms. However, on several terms, e.g., *karmāra*, *karmakāra*, *vardhakī*, etc., the texts and inscription complement each other. It may be suggested, that since the inscriptions relate to the actual activity, and texts offer evidence mostly on the theoretical aspects, the former should be taken as more important in defining the practical aspects of the ancient art-activity.

In plying their trade, artisans came in contact with individuals belonging to various sections of society. The composition of these sections and their relations with artists are examined below. The donative inscriptions from different places, like Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura, offer evidence regarding donors, their ranks and social status, the region they came from as also their share in making of the relevant monuments or parts thereof. Several hundred such donative inscription relating to the gifts of such monuments as caves, *stūpas*, *vihāras*, etc., as well as their parts or decorative motifs, indicate how the people competed with each other for receiving the merit of participation in the construction of a monument. In terms of commissioning of new edifices the donors belonging to different social or professional strata in society stood as equal partners in the ventures, which were executed by workmen and their superintendents. The evidence regarding the donors as found in the early epigraphs seems to suggest that the building activity gathered momentum, encouraged not by any

were known by a collective name *vardhakī*”, ...but within this group there are several sub-groups: the carpenters (*dāru-vaḍḍhakī*), the brick-layer (*ittḥakā-vaḍḍhakī*), the worker in stucco (*cunṇa-vaḍḍhakī*), and the worker in stone (*silā-vaḍḍhakī*). They seem to have been organised as a caste-like body of artisans with a *nagara-vaḍḍhakī* at the head”, Ibid., p. 921.

single resourceful class in society, but as a result of a ubiquitous interest of different classes of people towards a common end. In a situation like this, the artists, who did the actual work and enlivened the aspirations of the devotees, must have risen in status, even though they belonged to a lower strata of society. Their relation with different classes of people is clearly established in the inscriptions, which besides indicating the enthusiasm of persons of different social standing, in building or excavating monuments, also point to combining of different sections of society at the same level, ignoring thereby the caste and class distinctions. And as such the social implications of such religious fervour and enthusiasm are enormous.

The evidence regarding the donors may be examined on two planes—an over-all general survey with regard to the classes of donors and their donations at different centres of art-activity, and the specific donor-monument equation. With regard to the first, we find references to the participation of different sections of society, including kings and chiefs and the members of their families and administration; of caste-men, like Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas; persons of middle ranks occupationally, viz., bankers, chiefs of occupational guilds—*śreṣṭhis*; and the commoners like ploughmen, perfumers, smiths, carpenters, sculptors, etc. Sometimes, such donations represented corporate gifts which were meant both for small and big works. Thus a Junnar Buddhist cave inscription¹⁰⁸ refers to the gift of a seven-celled cave and a cistern by the guild of corn-dealers. In another case, Sivama and the members of his family commissioned a cave in which different members of the family took credit for different work e.g., stone-carving through the gift of his sons, pillars through the gift of his daughters, etc.¹⁰⁹ Among the smaller gifts of corporate type in which more than one person were involved, reference may be made to an Amaravati Buddhist inscription which records the "gift of a slab with a filled vase (*punaghadaga paṭa*) by the leather-worker Vidhika... and by his son Nāga, together with their relatives". Any number of such examples may be quoted here, these two instances being only indicative. Besides the corporate gifts, there are scores of examples of gifts by individuals combined with guilds or those

¹⁰⁸ *Luders List*, 1180.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1045. (Kuda cave Inscription).

by the individuals alone. Thus we have the recorded instances of such individual donors as kings, the members of their families, and the members of administration (like ministers, commanders, royal scribes, royal physician, etc.).¹¹⁰ In the construction of the *stūpa* of Bharhut, we have references to the donations of *torana*, "gateway"; *vedikā* "railing"; and *śilākarma*, "stone-work" by the royal personages.¹¹¹ The Nagarjuna cave inscriptions of the Mauryan king Daśarath refer to the gifts of the *Vāhiyaka*, *Gopikā*, and *Vadathika* caves to the Ājīvika monks.¹¹² In western India which was under the rule of the Mahārāṭhis and Mahābhōjas, who were the feudatories of the Kṣaharātas and the Sātavāhanas, there are inscriptions indicating the chiefs' munificent gifts, as well as those of their families. It is interesting to observe that sometimes the important personages combined with other classes of people and made a corporate gift for excavation and maintenance of some monuments. Thus a Kuda inscription records the gift of a cave by three persons—two of them belonged to the royal family of the Bhōjas and the third one was a *lekḥaka*, "scribe", of the Mahābhōja.¹¹³

Among the individual donors of lesser ranks, mention¹¹⁴ may be made of a *gaṇikā* named Vasu, (daughter of the courtesan Loṇaśobhikā) who set up a shrine, an *āyāgasabhā*, a reservoir and stone-slabs; a metal-worker, member of a guild, who set up an image of Sarasvatī; and a ploughman; a gardener; a perfumer; a weaver; a dyer; and so on.

The categories are diverse, and seem to include persons of all possible professions and social ranks. Sometimes, the members of lower occupational classes joined with merchants to make a donation, as did a perfumer along with the merchants in making a gift of a pavilion at Amaravati.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1253 (minister); 1266 (general); 271,1045; (royal scribes) 1190, 1191 (royal physician); cf., also the Yavana Heliodorus (the ambassador of Antialkidas an Indo-Greek King of North-West), who set up a Garuda pillar at Besnagar; *Luders List*, 669.

¹¹¹ cf., *C.I.I.*, II (ii), inscription nos. 1,2,3,4,12.

¹¹² *Luders List*, 954-56.

¹¹³ Ibid., 1079, (Bhaja) 1100 (Karla), 1021,1186; 1052 (Kuda) IV (Bedsa) 1054, 1186, also 943-4 (Pabhosa inscriptions).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., inscription nos. 1037, 102, 54, 1084, 1121, 756, 1210, 1230, 38, 39, 331, 32, 1230.

From such instances it clearly emerges that in raising of monuments, the activity was not limited only to upper classes; in fact, the financial status mattered more. There are instances of men of various occupational classes being instrumental in the excavation of caves, while other instances relate how the more important personalities sometimes took credit only for partial excavations, like a cistern. It seems that different occupations (*śilpas*) were becoming quite remunerative, and a class of traders practising various *śilpas* had emerged more resourceful and at the same time willing to contribute to such activity. The Kanheri inscriptions seem to support this suggestion.¹¹⁵ In them the largest share in such donations goes to the merchant's class. Of the class-wise break-up of the donative inscriptions here, two epigraphs refer to a princess of Mahābhoja family; one each to a minister, a physician and a jeweller; six to the community of monks, nuns, *theras*, and *therīs*; and all the rest to the *gahapatis*, "householders", merchants and traders, and the members of their families. Many of these inscriptions record corporate gifts in the sense that either more than one person combined to raise the monuments, or that the work was financed so that the merit might be incurred by more than one member. The Kanheri inscriptions also suggests that all the donors did not belong to the same region; in many cases they came from such places as Sopārā, Chaula, Dhenukāṭaka and Kalyāna.¹¹⁶

The interaction of the different classes of people for building specific edifices, indicates the same pattern as detailed earlier. To be more clear on the point, we may refer here to the evidence from the Karla inscriptions.¹¹⁷ Of the twenty inscriptions from the Buddhist cave at Karla, two refer to the Sātavāhana kings, Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, and Vāśiṣṭhīputra Sri Pulumāvi. One inscription records the gift of Rishabhādatta, the son of Dinika and son-in-law of the Kṣatrapa King

¹¹⁵ Ibid., *Luders List*, inscription nos. 984-1034

¹¹⁶ This analysis of Kanheri inscription is based on the *Luders List*, inscription nos. 984-1034, and takes into account those cases where the details of donors are accurately mentioned. The period of the Kanheri caves and their inscription in the Hinayana phase, is roughly AD 90-181, cf., Dahejia, V., op.cit., p. 184.

¹¹⁷ For the inscriptions of the Buddhist Cave at Karla, cf., *Luders List*, 1087-1107.

Nahapāna; while another records the gift of a pillar by Mitra-deva, the son of Rishabhadatta. Of the inscriptions concerning the Mahārathīs, the local chiefs, one records the erection of a lion-pillar, a gift of Mahārathī Agnimitra, son of Gaupṭī; while the other gives details of the gift of a village and a cave to the local *samgha* by Mahārathī Somadeva. Other epigraphs indicate that the *selaghara*, "cave-dwelling", "the most excellent one in Jambūdvīpa" was "established" by the banker Bhūtapāla who hailed from Vaijayantī. The contributions for different parts in the cave came from several persons, e.g., the perfumer Simhadatta commissioned the making of the *gharamugha*, "cave-door" (this was made by the *vadhakin*, "carpenter" Svāmin, the son of Veṇuvāsa, an inhabitant of Dhenukāṭaka); the elephant-motif and the upper and lower *vedikā*, "rails", before the elephant, were carved through the gift of the *thera* Indradeva; the two pairs of figure-sculptures and another pair of the same were donated by the monk Bhadrasena; another *vedikā*, made by Nandika, was donated by a woman whose name has not been specified; the pillars were excavated through donations from the Yavanas Sihādaya and Dharma, both from Dhenukāṭaka; and the other pillars were the gifts of such individuals as Bhāyila, the mother of the householder Mahādevanaka, and the preacher Svātimitra. There are two more epigraphs, one records some unspecified gift by a nun and the other refers to a female disciple of a *bhadanta* who paid for a cistern.

From these inscriptions it is easy to find out the extent of participation of different classes of people in the excavation of the Karla Buddhist cave. Those who contributed included the local chiefs, the king's relatives, bankers, householders, *theras*, nuns, foreigners, and artisans. Here also we have the information that the people who helped in excavating the cave, in many cases, came from distant places. The banker belonged to Vaijayantī, the perfumer to Dhenukāṭaka from where also came the carpenter who made the cave-door. The two Yavanas and Mitradeva belonged to Dhenukāṭaka, while the preacher Svātimitra hailed from Sopārā. Examples of such contributions at the centres of art-activity, by persons coming from different places are available at most of the ancient art centres.¹¹⁸ This evidence coupled with that of the mobility of artisans from one place to

¹¹⁸ cf., Dahejia, V. op.cit., p. 142.

another, might be profitably evaluated for explicating the pattern of spread of art styles and idioms. It seems that the work executed at one place, did not represent only a local movement; it had the participation of people living far beyond the region of its growth and such people, including both donors and artists, in the course of their movement might have helped in dissemination of the art-idioms developed at the original districts of art-activity.

In the following chapter we will deal further with the evidence available on different categories of artisans in the post-Gupta times, and examine the extent to which this evidence could be utilised in connection with the art-activity under various regional dynasties.

Chapter Two

Artists and the Art-activity During the Gupta Times and Later

THE Gupta-Vākāṭaka phase and the period following it were very important in the development of architecture and sculpture in India. A general survey of the art-activity in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period indicates an interesting situation in which the sculptural art seems to have achieved a high degree of sophistication while the architecture of cave-temples and structural edifices continued to have an uneven growth (compared to sculpture). In this period polarisation of style of sculptural art into provincial idioms is fairly discernible. In recent years, art-critics have indicated the existence of a "North-Indian" style of sculptures as distinct from the "Dekkan-Gupta" style or the "Western-Indian" style, all existing during almost the same period. It has been suggested that during the rule of the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas, the predominant regional impacts shaped the different art-idioms in different parts of the country and these distinct mannerisms of style cannot be combined under a single title of the "Gupta-art". The antecedents of such stylistic variations are definable and it seems that the North-Indian Gupta style was influenced to a great extent by the Mathura School; the Dekkan-Gupta style seems to have derived its form from the idiom prevalent in Maharashtra and which in the process of its development seems to be nearer to the art-idiom of the Ikṣvākus of Andhra Pradesh. The art of Ikṣvākus itself, in its early associations, developed from a com-

bination of factors that prevailed in the central India, the western coastal India, and the Vengī region.

The decline of the Guptas marks the end of an era and heralds a new phase distinguished by the rise of different dynasties in different parts of the country. The regions under these dynasties perfected and advanced the artistic tradition which they had inherited. But the immensity as well as the diversity of this heritage and its evolution have created a situation which tends to defy any universally accepted model of classification and critical study. Some art-historians have tried to comprehend the sculptural tradition in segments by presenting it within the framework of the different regional dynasties. Others have tried to adjust the different motifs of art within a chronological or iconographic framework. Still others have tried to periodise the total evolution of sculpture on stylistic basis. For instance, Kramarisch divides it into three phases—primitive, classical, and mediaeval. These models of study have their inherent limitations for a sculptural type or an idiom of art may cut across the regions and dynasties or be anachronistic within the framework of dynasties or chronology. For instance, we have the “Gupta-art” with its three parallel idioms, or one may also refer to the classical trends in sculptural art having an altogether different course of evolution and dissipation in different regions of India.

In an overview of the artistic situation within the parameters of time and space, some questions may have to remain unanswered, but a study which may take into account the critical factors which formulated distinct idioms of sculpture in different regions is necessary.

While scholars have comprehended the different nuances and mannerisms of style in the thematic contents of sculptural art of the different regions, the factors responsible for such diversification have not been given much serious thought. The immensity as well as the quality of art-activity however pre-supposes the existence of a body of expert artisans whose experiments in sculpture and the standardisation of such experiments may have been responsible for polarisation of style in different regions.

In the foregoing chapter an analysis of some of the determinants of art activity has been attempted to indicate that

monuments came up as a result of a wider participation in which the artisans' share was significant. We will attempt to define it further now within a chronological phase extending from the time of the Guptas to the mediæval times.

Certain new categories of artists came to occupy the scene now. Although direct evidence on the guilds of artists is scarce, the tempo of activity suggests such a possibility. Moreover, the changed political situation led to a shift in the activity from the earstwhile centres; the emergence of new centres of activity suggests mobility of artisans like in the earlier times. Artists even during this phase may be divided into two groups: resident and itinerant. The patronage provided to them seems to have always led to a spurt in the activity as proved both by the extant monuments and the epigraphic references to donors who commissioned such work. The ruling princes seem to have taken great interest in such activity and contributed personally both in term of resources and ideas. For instance, in the Mandagapattu inscription of Mahendravarmana Pallava, the King is called *vichitrachitta*, "of inventive mind", and he takes credit for building a *lakṣita-āyatana*, "a very special temple", without the use of conventional materials like bricks, metals, and stone. The inscription evidently implies the rock-cut caves which did not require use of such building-materials.¹ Another interesting information coming from the Pallava administrative system refers to the provision of payment of taxes by artisans.² This indicates the lucrateness of professions as well as that the practitioners of such professions sometimes permanently resided in villages.

The Nagari plate of Anangabhīma III (Śaka 1151-1152 refer to a village which was inhabited by artisans practising various crafts—merchants, perfumers, workers in conch-shells, goldsmith, braziers, sellers of betel, florists, weavers, etc.—and the *śilpis*, "craftsmen", find a separate mention in the list.³ The village in which these artisans lived is described as having several buildings of different types.⁴ And by combining the information

¹ E.I., XVII, 14f.

² Ibid., XXIV, inscription no. 43, lines 18-19.

³ Ibid., XXVIII, lines 127ff; XXII, p. 259.

⁴ "prākāra mukhamandapa sahita nripagrihatulya griha-chatusśataye nānā-purajana-sameta trīśadgriha nirmīta-trīśad-vāṭī-parimīta-bhūmikān

about *śilpīs* and the other categories of artists relevant to art-activity on one hand and the temples and edifices mentioned in those epigraphs on the other, it is possible to obtain an idea of the roles of different participants in such activity.

It must be pointed out here that there are certain inherent limitations of inscriptions as a source to find out details concerning artists. These inscriptions recorded only the acts for which they were commissioned to be engraved. Hence, in them a definite scheme regarding the mention of artists is conspicuously absent. Sometimes the artists who designed the buildings and the edifices get credit to that effect in epigraphs;⁵ sometimes the *sūtradhāra*, supposed to be the designer and executor of such tasks, finds mention merely as the engraver of the record;⁶ and in such cases his role in the act may be implicitly accepted. There are, however, certain records exclusively by *sūtradhāras* which define their role properly and in which these artists find specific mention as the designers and the executors of the monuments⁷ as well as the engravers of the inscriptions.

The epigraphs of the post-Gupta period reveal the emergence of a new class of artists, *sūtradhāra*, which was destined to play a significant role in the building-activity. But, like in the earlier times there still remains a hiatus between the information as gleaned from the epigraphs on the one hand and the texts on the other, in respect of different types of artisans, their role, and the work-charge. The texts continue to refer to the *sthapati*, *śūtradhāra*, *vardhakī*, etc. The *Mānasāra* (II. 11-12; 17-20) refers to the origin of divine architects—Viśvakarmā, Maya, Tvashṭri, and Manu from the four faces of Brahmā and further elucidates that the sons of these architects were respectively *sthapati*, *sūtragrahin*, *vardhakī* and *taṣṣaka*.⁸ As regards the areas of their activity a proficiency in painting was regarded essential for *vardhakī*, of draughtsmanship for *sūtragrahin*, and of

nagaram...". Apparently, the resident *śilpīs* must have been the builders who were settled in the locality and may also have helped in the building of the local Jagannāth temple which finds mention in the verse 27 of the inscription.

⁵ C.I.I. IV (ii), p. 317.

⁶ Bhandarkar's *List*, 1683.

⁷ C.I.I., IV, p. 558; E.I., XI, p. 47f.

⁸ cf., Acharya, P. K., *Encyclopaedia*, VII, S.V., *Stapati*.

carpentry for *sūtradhāra*.⁹ The same text accords to *sthapati* a rank of “the director-general” and “consulting architect”, and to *sūtragrahin*, a status of supervisor over *vardhakī* and *takṣaka*. These injunctions to some extent clarify the role relationship of different types of artisans in the scheme of art-activity as set out by the canons of art and architecture. However, the available epigraphic material does not seem to support the textual prescriptions particularly about *sthapati* and *sūtradhāra*.

The *sthapati*'s pre-eminent position amongst the artisans has been stressed in the *Śilpaśāstra*.¹⁰ The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes a *sthapati* as one who is conversant with architectural design and foresees (everything), and is skilful, industrious, and a “champion in architectural matters”.¹¹ The *Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra* of the Paramāra King Bhoja describes in detail the qualifications of a *sthapati* and warns against choosing a wrong person for building edifices.¹² To be a true *sthapati* was a formidable job. The text requires him to be proficient both in the precepts and the practice of architecture and the sculptural art. Just as a knowledge of astrology, astronomy, the science of numbers, *chhandas*, crafts, the mechanical devices (*yantras*), and plans was necessary for a *sthapati*, it was also essential that he knew painting, carpentry, masonry, stonework, metal-work, etc.¹³ The *Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra* enjoins that merely a skill in the *śāstra*, “theory” and its *karma*, “application”, was not enough in a *sthapati*; *prattyutpanna-mati*, “a ready wit”, modest behaviour; and honesty were equally important for him in the practice of his skill. Elsewhere, the same text¹⁴ says that *sthapati* should be worshipped in order to

⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁰ Acharya, P. K., *Indian Architecture*, p. 137-8,

Mayamataṁ, IV. 13-14; *Vāstu-vidyā*, ed. Ganapati Śāstri, I. 12-15.

¹¹ cf., Acharya, P. K. *Encyclopaedia S.V.*, *Sthapati*; p. 580.

¹² *Samrāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra* (G.O.S., 25, Baroda 1966), ch. 44.

¹³ Ibid., 44.3; 20-1; 44. 11-12; The crafts had got standardized under the head of *śilpa*. The commentary on *Kuṭṭanīmataṁ* explains *śilpa* to be of eight kinds, e.g., *ālekhyā*, *lekha*, *dārukarma*, *chitikarma*, *pāshāṇa-karma*, *raupya-karma*, *devakarma*, and *chitrakarma*, cf., Bhattacharya, T.P., *The Canons of Indian Art*, p. 371.

¹⁴ *Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra*, ch. 37. The verses 36-7 enjoin that workers (*parikarmakaras*) should also be pleased by offering gold, cloths, etc., and by addressing them nicely.

please Tvashṭri, the divine architect. This again indicates the importance given to *sthapati* in the canons of *śilpa*.

This pre-eminent status of *sthapati* notwithstanding, the inscriptions relating to the raising of edifices, usually refer to the *sūtradhāras*, *śilpīs*, and *rūpakāras*, and seem to ignore *sthapatis* in those contexts. Epigraphic mentions of *sthapatis* are very rare. A *Sthapati-samrāt* occurs alongwith other royal officials, e.g. *bhogika*, *uparika*, etc., in the Karitalai copper plate of the Uchhakalpa King Jayanāth;¹⁵ the Vasantagarh stone inscription of Pūrṇapāla (A.D. 1042) refers to a *sthapati* Nāga as the designer of a fort in the ancient city of Vaṭa.¹⁶ Two *sūtradhāras*, Deuka and his son Śivapāla, also find mention in this record alongwith the *sthapati* Nāga. The Peshawar Museum inscription of Vanhadatta (A.D. 1461) refers to the *sthapati* Simgalī Kārgī, the son of Kālī, as the builder of a pond.¹⁷ These are some of the instances, where a *sthapati* does occur, but compared to the inscriptions referring to the other categories of artists, particularly the *sūtradhāra*, these instances, in fact, are too few to support *sthapati's* predominant position as set out in the *Śilpaśāstras*.

The prominence of *sūtradhāras* compared to *sthapati* in the inscriptions and the opposite of it in the canons creates problems in explicating their relative importance and status in artisans, hierarchical set-up. The canons and the epigraphs appear to reflect two extremes but the latter may be regarded as more authentic owing to their close relationship with the edifices. Since the charters referring to the *sūtradhāras* and other artisans were usually engraved at the conclusion of work, they are apt to create an impression that those artisans (e.g. *sūtradhāras*) who were closer to the building activity found mention in them while others like *sthapati* who as designers were remote might have been ignored. Hence, a greater importance to *sūtradhāras*. The canons do reflect such a situation of proximity and remoteness when they sometimes refer

¹⁵ C.I.I., III, p. 118. The word has been translated as "Chief of architects".

However, it has been remarked that it may mean "Superintendent of attendants of the women's apartment", Ibid., p. 120, fn. 5.

¹⁶ E.I., IX, 6, 12-15.

¹⁷ Ibid., X, 80-1.

to *sthāpaka*¹⁸ as the actual worker. A system like this may have helped in elevating the roles of actual workers.

Like the *sthapati* who has been defined in texts as a theoretician as well as a practitioner in architectural matters, the *sūtradhāras* too claim, in the epigraphs, a proficiency in both the areas of *śilpa*.¹⁹ Some attempt has been made to explain this anomaly regarding the roles and status of *sthapatis* and *sūtradhāras* and it has been suggested that the former fail to find mention in the inscriptions because with the growth of building activity they were displaced by the institution of *sūtradhāra*. As regards the *sthapati's* important status in the texts, it has been suggested that texts record an earlier tradition which may have become non-existent when the texts were actually committed to writing.²⁰ In any case, a dichotomy, between the two (the *sthapati* and *sūtradhāra*) in designing and execution of work is difficult to establish. A synchronism of roles regarding the theory and practice of crafts in *sūtradhāra* may ultimately have made the *sthapati* redundant, although canons continued to beat the line previously established.

The *sūtradhāra* had come to occupy a special place amongst the artisans. The texts and particularly inscriptions from the sixth century onwards refer to him consistently. One of the earliest references²¹ to a *sūtradhāra* is found in an inscription in the Ajanta cave (No. XV) and in the inscriptions of the Pāṇḍuvamśī kings of South Kosala. The term and its variants were *sūtrabhrit*, *sūtradhātri*, and *sūtradhārin*; reference is also made to *sūtradhāra-pitāmaha*, "the very best amongst the artisans" and to *gajadhara* as synonymous to *sūtradhāra*.²² It may be of use to enquire into the circumstances which led to the emergence of *sūtradhāra* in the realm of art-activity. The available evidence indicates a close affinity of dramatic arts with the building-arts.²³ And this affinity may suggest that the role

¹⁸ cf., Acharya, P.K., *Encyclopaedia*, VII, S.V., *Sthāpaka* "one who instals, actual worker, perhaps the principal assistant to the "*sthapati*".

¹⁹ cf., C.I.I., IV (ii), p. 555.

²⁰ cf., Dhavalikar, M.K., "Sūtradhāra", *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, III (i-iv) 1971, (pub. 1972), p. 218.

²¹ Dhavalikar M.K., "Sri Yugadhara—A Master Artist of Ajanta", *Artibus Asiae*, XXXI. 4, (1969), pp. 301-8.

²² cf., Sircar, D. C., *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, (1969), p. 329, 108.

²³ It is of significance that *lakṣaka* has been explained by lexicographers

as well as the designation of *sūtradhāra* in art-activity was borrowed from dramatic arts. There were certain other sources too of such borrowings as shown below.

The roles of *sūtragrahin* and *sūtrakāras* have been properly defined in the Epics, the *Manu Samhitā* (IV. 47-48) and the *Mahāvastu*. It may be suggested that in the development of his total profile, the *sūtradhāra* combined the tasks of *sūtragrahin* and *sūtrakāras* of the earlier times on one hand and the executive role of *sūtradhāra*, as in the dramatic performances, on the other. A close correspondence of art-activity, vis-a-vis the dramatic activity is clearly definable in terms of roles and functions of some of the performers. In the Sanskrit plays, a prologue was necessary and in this prologue which was outside the story, the *sūtradhāra* welcomed the audience, gave information about the author and play, and the context in or the reason for which the play was to be performed.²⁴ This he did either alone or along with his assistants, or *naṭīs* and *vidūśaka* and thus in a way, acted as a producer.²⁵ Such a *sūtradhāra* and the whole range of his activity in the domain of drama has been compared to that of *sūtradhāra* and his function in the realm of art-activity. Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Harsha-Charita* indicates a similarity between temples and drama with the help of three paronomastic clauses in a verse which says that Bhāsa gained as much splendour by his plays with introductions spoken by the manager (*sūtradhāra*), full of various characters and furnished with startling episodes, as he would have done by erecting temples created by architects (*sūtradhāra*) adorned with several stories and decorated with banners.²⁶ (A parallel between the *sūtradhāras* in drama and the one in a building-act can be clearly seen from the above.) It may be surmised on basis of

as *sūtradhāra*, or a speaker in the prelude to a drama. c.f., Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* S.V., *takṣaka*. It may be inferred that during the post-Gupta phase, when a standard terminology regarding artists in the field of building-activity, was in the process of formulation, terms defining their role and functions were accepted from Drama for the obvious reasons of the identity of functions. Such words as *takṣaka*, *sūtradhāra*, and *sthāpaka* may be cited as instances here.

²⁴ cf., Rangacharya, A., *Introduction to Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra*, pp. 66; 24-6.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 24-6.

²⁶ *Harsha-Charita*, (ed. Kane, P. V., 1965), I, 15.

such evidence, that the institution of *sūtradhāra* came to be adopted in art-activity, as a result of shifts of roles or due to convergence of various functions into one personality *sūtradhāra*—after a similar functionary in the domain of drama.

The *sūtradhāra* finds mention in the *Śilpaśāstras* where he ranks fourth besides *sthapati*, *sūtragrāhin*, and *vardhakī* in that order.²⁷ The *Mānasāra* lays down that the *sūtradhāra* like all the other must be well-versed in the Vedas and Śāstras; in addition to this, he should also possess an expert knowledge of carpentry. In the *Śilpa-dīpikā* the qualifications of a *sūtradhāra* have been described as follows: "One who is of good behaviour, clever, skilful, learned, free from lust (excessive desire of gain), can forgive (rivals), and belongs to the twice-born class, is called the *Sūtradhāra*".²⁸

In view of such references in the texts to the *sūtradhāra*, it will be useful to examine his functions as spelled out in the epigraphs. By far, the most frequently mentioned act of *sūtradhāra*, according to the epigraphs, was to engrave the grants or charters of kings or individual donors. It was customary for king and other donors to employ a *lekhhaka*, "scribe", to record the donations on a copper plate or on a stone-slab, and the *sūtradhāras* used to engrave such letters by a stylus, after the alphabet had been written by *lekhhakas*. The processes of writing as well as the various stages through which a royal charter had to pass before it was engraved, find frequent mention in epigraphs. For instance, an eleventh century plate of Nettiabhanja Tribhuvana-Kalaśa is described as having been approved by an officer Bhaṭṭa Arkadeva, registered by the seal of Queen after which it was taken to the donee's place and executed (*praveśita*) by a *pratihāra*, "attendant". The grant was further assented by a *vārgulī*, "bearer of the king's betel-box". This document was written by a *sāndhivigrahika*, "a minister", and engraved by the *akṣaśālīn*, "goldsmith", Nāpā.²⁹ Sometimes the kings also wrote on a plate, whereafter it was passed on for engraving. Thus in the case of Takkali plates of Mahārāja Umāvarma, the king is mentioned both as the writer

²⁷ cf., Acharya, P.K., op.cit., pp. 137-8; also *Encyclopaedia S.V.* *sūtragrāhin*, *sūtradhāra*, *sūtradhārin*.

²⁸ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, S.V. *sthapati*. p. 580.

²⁹ *E.I.*, XXVIII, 279.

and the executor of the charter which was engraved by Keśavadeva, a *vāstavya* who was resident in the village of Pishṭapur.³⁰

An emphasis on the role of *sūtradhāra* as engraver of charters does not imply that no other ranks of artisans or craftsmen were available to do this job. The nature of their artistic skill automatically rendered artisans such as *śilpī*, *viññānika* and *rūpakāra* a likely choice for engraving letters on stone or on copper plates. There is the example of a *śilpī* engraving letters of a *praśasti* "as a lover would paint the portrait of his mistress".³¹ In another instance, the letters engraved by Mahīdhara are compared to "stars in the sky".³² Mahīdhara was a *sūtradhāra*. Some inscriptions like these shower praises on engravers for their skill in engraving. There are other inscriptions which besides praising such skill also dwell upon the engravers' other qualities. Thus, a *śilpī* named Kaṇabhadra is referred to as "one whose engraving was neat and who was intelligent, courteous and an accurate workman".³³ Sometimes engravers rendered the letters ornately in the forms of creepers, birds, and animals. It is said about a Canarese sculptor Sovarasi that he could entwine "forms of elephant, lion, parrot and many other forms" that would "shine among letters", and a suggestion is made whether anyone could be so mad as to "compete with such a sculptor, Sovarasi".³⁴

Sivaramamurti has pointed out that the artist's "boast is not empty" and his claim is borne out "from such ornamental letters found engraved in some of the Canarese inscriptions".³⁵ There are several other examples of such ornamental letters as used in the inscriptions. In the Rājīvalochana temple at Rajim in Madhya Pradesh, a pillar has the name of Śrī Pūrṇāditya engraved in an extremely ornamental design.³⁶

³⁰ Ibid., p. 298.

³¹ E.I., XIII, 295.

³² C.I.I., IV (i), p. 317, verse 37.

³³ E.I., II, 354: *Kaṇabhadreṇa bhadreṇa śilpinā-alpabuddhinā tāmram-vinayanamreṇa nirmitaṁ sādhu karmaṇā*.

³⁴ *Epigraphia Carnatica*, XI, 47.

³⁵ Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Epigraphy and South India Script*, p. 34, fig. 14.

³⁶ Cunningham, A., *Archaeological Survey of India, Reports*, XVII, pl. X, p. 19; also, Sivaramamurti, C., op. cit., 36-7 fig. 17.

The inscriptions from this area offer several names of local artists and *sūtradhāras*, e.g., Durgahastin, Goṇṇāsiva (also as Ārya Goṇṇa), Droṇasimha Golasimha. These artists were the engravers of the records of the early kings of south Kosala.³⁷ It is likely that *pūrnāditya* whose signature occurs on a pillar in the Rājīvalochana temple, might have been the maker of the pillar and might have belonged to the line of some of the *sūtradhāras* of the region.

Sūtradhāras thus figure prominently as engravers. It is likely that owing to their pre-eminent position in their realm of activity the *sūtradhāras* decided upon either doing the job themselves or deputing other ranks of artisans such as *śilpī*, *rūpakāra*, etc., for it. Inscriptions sometime refer to such a relationship between *sūtradhāra* and other ranks of artisans. We have the instance of Nīlakaṇṭha who is said to have engraved the Chandrehe inscription of Prabodhaśiva, a Śaiva ascetic (A.D. 973) on the command of the *sūtradhāra* Sūrāk.³⁸ Another Kalachuri inscription says how an artisan Mahīdhara engraved the letters of an inscription after the *sūtradhāra* Pīṭhe had worked out the relative proportions of the text of the inscription and the rock on which it was to be engraved.³⁹ In the act of engraving records, the *sūtradhāras* stood in close relationship to the *lekhakas*, "scribes", who find mention in inscriptions as early as the beginning of the Christian era.⁴⁰ The scribes find mention alongside the *sūtradhāra* and the other *śilpīs*—*suvarṇakāra*, *lohakāra*, "smiths", *akṣaśālīn*, "goldsmiths", etc.—in the inscriptions of the Gupta period and later.⁴¹ Sircar has described the practice that was prevalent with regard to writing and engraving of records. He says that the mason started the work by dressing the stone and drawing letters on it with ink under

³⁷ E.I., XXXI, 36 (Vasuguṇa), p. 198 (Prabhākara); XXXI (Dronasimha); p. 316 (Golasimha; in the record of Sudeva); *Bhandarkar's List*, 1882 (Gonnaśiva).

³⁸ C.I.I., IV (i), p. 204

³⁹ Ibid., p. 317.

⁴⁰ *Luders List*, 271, 1045, 1148; A Kalachuri record refers to a *śilpī* Sarvānanda as *karaṇika* (an officer) who wrote a record which was engraved by Vidyānanda. cf., C.I.I., IV (i) p. 259.

⁴¹ The profession of scribes finds mention among higher crafts together with *gaṇanā* "counting" and *muddā*, etc. The word *lekhā* occurs in the *Udāna* 32; *Milinda-Paṇho*, 59, 178;

the supervision and guidance of the writer. Sometimes the professional writer himself copied the text of the document for the guidance of the engraver. Several inscriptions refer to this practice.⁴² Sometimes the *sūtradhāra* himself wrote and engraved the letters, as in the case of *sūtradhāra* Kālaḍa, son of Prahlāda-Govinda, who wrote and engraved the Kodinara (Baroda State) inscription.⁴³

The mediæval inscriptions usually provide the details concerning the composers of texts, and their writers and engravers. Sometimes the writer and engraver was the same person.⁴⁴ However, among the writers or scribes are encountered a galaxy of officers who specially wrote the inscription, in their capacities as *sāndhivigrahika*, "minister of peace and war"; *mantrins*, "ministers"; *karaṇikas*; *vāstavyas*, "keepers of records"; etc.⁴⁵ Although the *sūtradhāras* usually figure as engravers of records, others also did this job, and among them mention may be made to the *akṣaśālin*⁴⁶ or *suvarṇakāra*⁴⁷, "goldsmith"; *ṭaṭṭhakāra*⁴⁸, "metal-workers"; *lohāra*⁴⁹, "blacksmith"; or *vaṇik*⁵⁰, "trader". The fee for doing such job was regulated. For instance, according to the Kendupatna plates of Narasimha II (Śaka 1217), the engraver of the plates, the coppersmith Paṇṇadi (who was also the writer of the first set of the Kendupatna plates), received "one *vāṭikā* (a measure) of mixed homestead and water-covered land" (i.e. irrigated land), as his fees for doing the job.⁵¹ Sometimes we come across inscriptions which recorded only the name of engravers without any reference to their occupation, making it difficult to properly evaluate their significance in relation to artisans.⁵²

This analysis shows that one of the important tasks of the

⁴² Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 85.

⁴³ Bhandarkar's *List*, 577.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 579

⁴⁵ cf., *E.I.*, XXVIII. 279; Bhandarkar's *List*, 611, 371.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1479, 1496-1498; 1500-1502.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1490, 1493, 1786-1787. Sometime the goldsmith is mentioned as *vaṇik-suvarṇakāra*, 'merchant-goldsmith'; *Ibid.*, 1492; *E.I.*, XXVIII, 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴⁹ Bhandarkar's *List*, 362, 368.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1701, 2057

⁵¹ *E.I.*, XXVIII., 189.

⁵² cf., Bhandarkar's *List*, 1386, 1703.

sūtradhāra was to engrave the records although quite often other functionaries also performed this job. Apparently a *sūtradhāra* was employed for such work owing to his skill in incising letters on rock or copper-plates. But this must have been one of his peripheral jobs for he had a proven skill in carving intricate patterns on stone. There were other classes of artists besides the *sūtradhāra*, who engraved records mainly because they were expert carvers and workers on stone. We will make a digression here and mention about the *śilpīs* and *rūpakāras* in this connection and then come back to the *sūtradhāras*. Amongst the *śilpī*-engravers, epigraphs refer among others, to Pūṇasimha, the son of Nāhaḍa, as engraver of the Chintra *praśasti* "eulogy";⁵³ to *śilpī* Rāmadeva the son of the *rūpakāra*, "sculptor", Sihaka who engraved the Dhar *praśasti* of Paramāra Arjunadeva;⁵⁴ to the *rūpakāra* Kānhaḍa who engraved a charter of the Paramāra Jayavarmana.⁵⁵ The Silimpur (Bogra District) stone inscription of Jayapāladeva of Kāmarūpa was engraved by Someśvara, a Magadhan artist—"śilpāvin Māgadhaḥ". The inscription records that "just as a lover (paints) with rapt attention his own mistress by means of colour decoration, so did Someśvara, the Magadhan artist (*śilpī*), incise (with rapt attention) this *praśasti* by means of a division of letters".⁵⁶ The Deopara inscription of the Sena King Vijayasena similarly refers to the Rāṇaka Śūlapāṇi "the crest-jewel of the artist-guild of Vārendra, the son of Brihaspati and the grandson of Mānadāsa", as the engraver of the record.⁵⁷ Such illustrious artists-*śilpīs* and *rūpakāras* obviously engraved the records as a side-job, and the flattering details of their expertise and status as given in the epigraphs hardly leave any doubt about their overall proficiency in *śilpas* which they practised. It may be suggested here, that kings usually employed

⁵³ E.I., I., 287

⁵⁴ Bhandarkar's List, 1660, This *praśasti* contains two acts of a play: *Pārijātamañjarī*.

⁵⁵ E.I., XXXII, 156; Bhandarkar's List, 559.

⁵⁶ *śilpāvin-Māgadhaḥ-kāmī-tana-māna-varṇabhaktibhiḥ*, Someśvaro 'alikhad-iyam *praśastim-iva-priyāyām*'. There is a pun in the words *varṇabhakti* and *alikhata*; *varṇa* is both a 'pigment for painting' and 'letter'; *bhakti*, 'variegated decoration' and 'division'; the root *likh* means both 'to paint' and 'to inscribe'. cf., Basak R.G., E.I., XIII, p. 295.

⁵⁷ "Vārendraka *śilpī goshtḥi-chūdāmaṇi-rāṇaka Śūlapāṇi...*", cf., Mukherji, R.R. and M. K. Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, p. 249, verse 36.

skilled artisans to operationalise the construction work and such artists, even as they did more important jobs, also looked after smaller tasks like engraving the grants or the charters of their employers.

In view of the above, it would be naive to regard such skilled artisans merely as engravers of records and nothing more. They had greater responsibility and skill which showed itself in their accomplishments pertaining to the building-activity on a larger scale. And it will be worthwhile to find out how closely the *sūtradhāras* and other classes of artisans were connected with the building of temples and their sculptural decoration and the special role of *sūtradhāra* at various stages of such activity.

There are inscriptions which vividly refer to the *sūtradhāras* and their specific participation at various stages of construction. We also come across a large number of sculptures which carry the names of *sūtradhāras* or other artists who designed them. Some inscriptions mention certain individual artists—*śilpī*, *rūpakāra*, etc.—who carved the sculptures either independently or under the supervision of *sūtradhāras*. There are also a large number of inscriptions in which donors have referred to raising up of monuments and the names of *sūtradhāras* in them appear only as the engravers of the records. Since the *sūtradhāra* was not meant merely for such small tasks, it may be assumed that in the constructions mentioned in such epigraphs, the *sūtradhāras* might have been intimately associated in raising up of the building, even though specific credit, due to them was not specified either by default or for some other reason.

The *sūtradhāras* had the requisite qualification for the job by their knowledge of the theory of craft. This is proved by the cases of *sūtradhāras* who wrote on *Śilpaśāstra*. Several such texts are available. We have the *Vāstu rājavalabha*, the *Devatāmūrti-prakaraṇa* and the *Rūpamaṇḍana* ascribed to the *sūtradhāra* Maṇḍana. The text written by the Paramāra King Bhoja on architecture and iconography is entitled *Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra*. The *śilpī* Piṅgala and the *sūtradhāra* Ahidhara (Ahiva) find mention in the *Bhuvanapradīpa*, a canon of Orissan architecture.⁵⁸ This evidence reinforces the supposition that a *sūtradhāra* was not merely an engraver and his knowledge and

⁵⁸ cf., Bose, N.K., *Canons of Orissan Architecture*, p. 8.

skill extended to much higher level.⁵⁹ As an active practitioner of his trade, he was required to have special qualifications in it. This can be seen from an epigraph concerning the *sūtradhāra* Chhītaku. The epigraph informs that he was an expert in *śilpaśāstra*; adept in the art of carving statues in wood, stone, and gold; equally proficient in carving creepers and plant-motifs. In addition to this, Chhītaku claims to have been well-versed in the *jantra-vidyā* and *mahāvidyā* (evidently related to *Śilpaśāstra*); in the intricacies of iconometry (relating to the *sapta-tāla* and *nava-tāla* proportions of images); and in the playing of certain types of *vinās* such as *vanka* and *trivanka*.⁶⁰

The proficiency of many other *sūtradhāras* in the canons of architecture and iconography is a subject of reference in several other epigraphs. An excellent artist Stotākāchāri is described as "of Viśvāmitra-gotra, supreme lord of Lankādvīpa-pura,... versed in all śāstras, sought after to construct ornamental buildings and upper storeys, adorned with all good qualities of head..., distinguished in giving advice, of Hammigade (i. e., belonging to) house created by Manu, Maya, Māṇḍabya and Viśvakarmā...".⁶¹ The *sūtradhāra* Pīthe claimed proficiency in the *Viśvakarma-śāstra*.⁶² And many more such instances confirm the fact that the *sūtradhāras* were well-versed in the theoretical aspects of their crafts, and consequently took active part in executing the work expected of them. There are specific instances to prove the latter too.

The epigraphs of the Kalachuris of Tripuri and Ratanpur afford information about several of the *sūtradhāras* who, in their individual capacity or hereditarily, were connected with the

⁵⁹ A *śilpi*-composer of a text on iconography and architecture is known from *Śilpa-Prakāśa*. The copyists note on the colophon of the text describes that it was "composed by the excellent *śilpi* who belonged to the Udgāta family". The name of the *śilpi* was Bhaṭṭāraka Rāmachandra Mahāpātra who is mentioned as "devoted to Kaulāchāra". cf. *Śilpa-Prakāśa*, p. 60; for more details, Ibid., pp. 129-30.

⁶⁰ C.I.I., IV (ii), p. 555

⁶¹ *Epigraphia Carnaticae*, V. (i), p. 530, transl. p. 237; cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 581., no. 9.

⁶² C.I.I., IV (i), pp. 307, 317; also 561; *E.I.*, p. 44 ff; For a discussion on the *vidyās*, "knowledge", of *sūtradhāras*, etc. cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 589 ff.

different ruling kings of the above dynasty.⁶³ Almost similar phenomenon is evident in other regions of the country, and there is a clear evidence of the artists and *sūtradhāras* taking credit for works executed by them. An inscription of the early Chālukyas refers to Śrī Guṇḍa, the *sūtradhāra* "who made the temple of the Queen of Vikramaditya II..."⁶⁴ This inscription, found on the eastern gateway of the courtyard of Virūpākṣa temple at Pattadakal, tells that the temple was constructed for Lokamahādevī to commemorate her husband's conquest of Kanchi.⁶⁵ Yet another inscription of these early Chālukyas, found on the east face of the Pāpanāth temple of Pattadakal, refers to a sculptor Chattare Revadi Ovaḥja as "one who decorated the whole southern country with his temples".⁶⁶ The inscription is of great value as it offers information about the *Sarva-Siddha-āchāryas* who seem to have represented probably some guild of architects or builders. Chattare Revadi Ovaḥja was one of the *Sarva-Siddha-āchāryas* and was acquainted with the "secrets of Śrī-Silemudde" (probably the name of some particular guild of stone-masons).⁶⁷ A *Sarva-Siddha-āchārya* finds mention in one of the Canarese inscriptions as "the asylum of all virtuous qualities, the *pitāmaha*, the maker of many cities and houses; he whose conversation is entirely perfect and refined, he who has for a jewelled diadem and crest jewel the houses and palaces and vehicles and seats and couches (that he has constructed), the (most eminent) *sūtradhārī* of the southern country".⁶⁸ The builder of the temple of Lokamahādevī mentioned above has the title *Sarva-Siddha-āchārya*.⁶⁹ The Chola records also corroborate

⁶³ C.I.I., IV. (i-ii), pp. 224, 557, 561, 585

⁶⁴ cf., *Indian Antiquary*, X, p. 164, notes 6-10.

⁶⁵ cf. *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 585-6, inscription nos. 34 and 35.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 586. inscription no. 37. It is interesting to find mention of a Rayaṇa Ojha and his son Saṃgrāma, in the records of the Somavamśī King of Orissa and Andhra. cf., *Bhandarkar's List*, 1557, 1560. This is indicative of the mobility of artisans as well as the continuity of the same line of artists for a considerable period of time.

⁶⁷ *Encyclopaedia*, p. 585, inscription no. 35.

⁶⁸ Reference is also made in some of these inscriptions to the banishment and readmission into the caste of the artisans of the locality, of skilful people; import of this is not clear. cf., Fleet, J., *Indian Antiquary*, X, p. 164.

⁶⁹ In the South Indian inscriptions, *chārī*, *āchārya*, *āchārya*, *Ojha* are fairly recurrent as titles for *sūtradhāra*. cf., *Encyclopaedia*, 586.

the role of artists in their constructional achievement as well as the artists' awareness of *Śilpa-sāstras*. The great Chola sculptor Ravi is said to have been well-versed in different *śilpa* texts, and capable of constructing different kinds of *vimānas* "temples"; *gopuras*, "gateways"; and *maṇḍapas*, "halls".⁷⁰ In this connection, some of the inscriptions of the Guhila King Rāṇā Kumbhākarna are of great interest for not only supplying information about the names of different *sūtradhāras* and their role in making some edifices of the king, but also for specifying the details of the canonical sources in reference to architectural matters.⁷¹ These inscriptions repeatedly refer to a *sūtradhāra*, Jaita, the son of Lākhā and his five sons Nāpā, Puṁjā, Bhūmi, Chuthi, and Pomā. Jaita and his two sons—the first two listed above—find mention in an inscription (of A.D. 1430) as visiting the Samādhiśvara temple at Chittor.⁷² These three architects are mentioned again in another Chittorgarh inscription in which they claim to have made the *kīrtti-stambha*, "victory-tower", of the Rāṇā Kumbhā. This claim is repeated in another inscription which specifies the names of the artisans, Nāpā, Bhūmi, and Chuthi, who executed the job. Puṁjā however, fails to occur in this inscription. Another inscription records the "creation of the *mahāmeru śrī kīrttistambha* and the *śrī-ṛaṇapoli*, "royal ward", near the *mahā-pratoli*, "main-gateway", by the *sūtradhāra* Jaita along with his sons Nāpā, Puṁjā, and Pomā. It is no wonder that such a long association of this family of the *sūtradhāras* with the reigning king was amply rewarded. On the Kumbhalaśvāmī Vaishṇava temple at Chittor, constructed in the middle of the fifteenth century, the architect Jaita, along with his two sons, figures amongst the decorative portrait sculptures adorning the temple.⁷³

Thus, as regards the primary function of *sūtradhāras*, although the texts of *śilpa* reserved for them the joiners' task in building temples and the epigraphs referred to them usually as engravers,

⁷⁰ cf., Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Sculpture*, p. 4.

⁷¹ Bhandarkar's *List*, 1860, 769, 789, 804, 811, 803, 819.

⁷² This temple is now known as Advadji or Mokajji temple; it was originally built by the Paramāra King Bhoja and named after him as Tribhuvana-Nārāyaṇa, which was also one of the titles of the king. Yet another name later ascribed to this temple was: '*Bhoja-Svāmīdeva jagatī*', cf. *Rajputana Museum Report*, 1924-25 pp. 3.4.

⁷³ cf., Sivaramamurti, C., op.cit. p. 7.

a number of inscriptions indicate that their responsibilities were far greater. Many inscriptions clearly explicate his role in building temples, etc., owing to his knowledge as well as the practice of *śilpa*. The evidence discussed above, shows that he was responsible for execution of work from designing to the completion. He probably served as a general supervisor, and maintained a liaison with the donor whose financial help and religious fervour were mainly instrumental in the raising of a monument. The *sūtradhāra*'s role as a supervisor and the executor of such tasks is confirmed by his description in the *Harshacharita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa,⁷⁴ and is further corroborated by an allegorical reference to the god Gokaṛṇeśvara mentioned as a *sūtradhāra* in an inscription from Carnataka, e.g., Gokarnasvāmi: *sakala-bhuvana-nirmāṇaika-sūtradhārasya*, "the sole architect for the creation of all the world".⁷⁵

Although the *sūtradhāras* were usually employed by the kings, instance of other categories of persons employing them exclusively for their works are also known. The Jhalarapatan Varāha image inscription of c. ninth century contains information about a Lakuliśa saint Īśānajamu and his artisan the *sūtradhāra* Sīhaṭa—*tasya karmakaro bhrityaḥ sūtradhārotra Sīhaṭaḥ*.⁷⁶ Bhandarkar has suggested that this Śaiva saint may have been the head-priest of the local Sītaleśvara Mahādeva temple, "the shrine-door of which...has a figure of Lakulī on the dedicatory block".⁷⁷ If this conjecture is correct it emerges that even though the *sūtradhāra* Sīhaṭa stood in a special relationship to the Śaiva priest Īśānajamu, he carved a Vaishṇava image and that a strict sectarianism was not the goal of the professional practitioner of *śilpa*. The employment of the *sūtradhāra* by the temple priest or the Śaiva saint may have been due to the fact that sometimes they also financed raising of temples. Many such instances are known from the Kalachuri epigraphs. It may be pointed out that the *sūtradhāras* were as proficient in carving of sculptures as they were adept in the science of architecture. A typical example of such adeptness may be inferred from the inscription on the Sarasvati

⁷⁴ *Harsha-charita*, I, 15.

⁷⁵ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 583.

⁷⁶ cf., Bhandarkar, D.R., *J.B.B.R.S.*, XII, p. 151 ff.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

image from Dhārā, now deposited in the British Museum, London. This image, according to the inscription on it, was engraved by the *sūtradhāra* Mamthala the son of Sahira: *sūtradhāra Sahira-suta Mamthalena ghaṭitam*.⁷⁸ These instances do not leave any doubt as to the true role of the *sūtradhāras*. On the basis of this evidence it may be argued that their main task related to building edifices for which they were eminently suited by their theoretical and practical knowledge.

In the execution of their jobs the *sūtradhāras* had the assistance of equally capable associates like the *śilpīs*, *rūpakāras*, etc. An examination of their role vis-a-vis the *sūtradhāra*, may help in understanding the organisational or the hierarchical set-up of artists. The *sūtradhāra* appears to have been the overall incharge of the construction activity probably in the fashion of *navakarmikas* of earlier times. The other categories of artisans were *śilpī*, *rūpakāra*, *chitrakāra*, *karmika* etc. These different classes of artisans may have existed parallel to the *sūtradhāra* or as is more likely worked under his supervision. There is enough epigraphic material concerning different categories of artisans and the areas of their skill.

The term *śilpī*, denoted in a special sense a "sculptor". Besides fashioning images, the *śilpīs* also engraved records of kings whenever they were called to do so. In fact, *śilpa* and *śilpī* are words of wider connotation and include different types of craftsmen dealing with sculpture or architecture. In the *Śilpa-prakāśa* (I. 5-9) a twelfth century treatise on architecture and sculpture, the *śilpavidyā* has been defined as a knowledge of wood-work, stone-work, iron-work, gold-work, and painting. In the *Maya-matam* (v. 13-14), another work on *śilpa*, four types of *śilpīs*—*sthapati*, *sūtragrahin*, *taṣṣaka*, and *vardhaki*—are referred to. This would indicate that the terms *śilpī* and *śilpa* included all the different categories of artisans and craftsmen. The epigraphic evidence, mostly from the mediaeval inscriptions, however, sometimes signifies special association of *śilpa* or *śilpī* with the sculptural art and architecture, and this connotation is wide enough to cover the whole country. The contents of some relevant inscriptions may explicate this point. The Methi inscription of the Yādava Krishṇa (dated Śaka 1176) refers to

⁷⁸ cf., Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Sculpture*, p. 5, plate 39.

the *śilpī* Hemadeva who engraved the record. In addition, it also refers to another person—Siddha Sārasvata of Kaśyapa family—who cut the stone slab for inscribing the record.⁷⁹ The last verse of the inscription states that the god's image was fashioned according to the *tālamāna*, "rules of iconometry". The Chirwa inscription of the Guhila King Someśvara Siṃha (v.s. 1330) was engraved by Kelisimha with further help from *śilpī* Delhaṇa".⁸⁰ In the Dhār *praśasti* reference is made to *śilpī* Rāmadeva the son of *rūpakāra* Sihaka.⁸¹ These titles seem to reflect the different levels of expertise according to which different titles such as *śilpī* or *rūpakāra* were applied. The word *rūpakāra* traditionally signified a sculptor,⁸² and a proximity of word *śilpī* is clearly established with the former when the two occur in the cases of father and son. Furthermore, it also denotes that the occupation was hereditary. There are instances of *śilpīs* "sculptors", who carved images and sometimes recorded the fact on their creation. An image of Sūrya from Bengal, now in the British Museum, bears in the Nāgarī characters of tenth century the inscription reading "(this image) has been carved in stone by the wise and good *śilpī* (sculptor), Amrit a pupil of Indranīlamanī".⁸³ One of the pillars of the famous Lal Darwaza at Jaunpur, bears the name of a *śilpī* Kamau, the son of Viśadru.⁸⁴

Sivaramamurti has collected information regarding the various sculptors of South India whose skill is portrayed by the sculptures carved on the temples at Belur, Somanathpuram, etc. Of these skilled artisans, Dasoja was famed as a smiter of the

⁷⁹ *E.I.*, XXVII, 320, ff; The inscription is engraved on the lintel of the entrance hall of a Viṣṇu temple; the record also describes the temple (verse 9). Kullkarni (*Samśodhana*, a Marathi Journal, Vol. VI. no. 3, pp. 214-17) identifies this Hemadeva with the famous Hemādri, the writer of *Mayamataṃ*; the suggestion however is not acceptable to P. B. Desai, cf., *E.I.*, XXVIII, p. 313 fn. A *śilpī* belonging to the Kaśyapa family is mentioned in another inscription of sixth-seventh century A.D. cf., *E.I.*, XXXII, p. 296-7. Kaśyapa was one of the originators of a school of *śilpā* named after him *vide*, Bhattacharya T.P., *Canons of Indian Art*, p. 178.

⁸⁰ *Bhandarkar's List*, 579.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1660.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 559.

⁸³ cf., Chanda, R.P., *Indian Sculpture*, p. 66, pl. xx.

⁸⁴ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 582

crowd of titled sculptors; his son was like a "Śiva to the cupids" i. e. the titled sculptors, or a *bheruṇḍa* to the *śarabhas*, i. e. rival sculptors. Chikka Hampa bore the title of "champion over rival sculptors"; Malliyana, a "tiger amongst sculptors", was also like "a thunderbolt to the mountains", i. e. rival titled sculptors.⁸⁵ Many such famed artists are known from other regions also. In the inscriptions from Bengal, reference is made to the *śilpīs* Mahīdhara and Śaśidhara of Posali, a traditional home of artisans. Several other *śilpīs* "artists", of this place are known from inscriptions, e. g., Pushyāditya; Chandrāditya; and the *śilpi* Śaśideva the son of Hri (da) deva.⁸⁶

Besides the *śilpīs* there were also other classes of artists such as *rūpakāra*, *karmika*, *chitrakāra*. The title *rūpakāra* occurs often in the records of the ruling dynasties of central India. Amongst the *rūpakāras*, "sculptors", who worked for the Paramāras reference may be made to Sīhaka and Kānhaka (or Kānhaḍa).⁸⁷ The Mandhata plates of Paramāra Jayavarmana refer to the *rūpakāra* Kānhaka, while the Godarpur plates of the same king mention Kānhaḍa. It has been suggested that the two may be the same, although it appears somewhat difficult to believe that the engraver would commit a mistake in engraving his own name. A number of other *rūpakāras* figure in the Chandella records. There is a *rūpakāra* Lāhaḍa, the son of Rāma; Lāhaḍa is said to have made the image of Nilakaṇṭha—Śiva;⁸⁸ *rūpakāra* Tālhaṇa, the son of Pālhaṇa, belonging to the reputed Kokāsa family of artisans is mentioned in the Jabalpur plates (now in Nagpur Museum) of the Kalachuri Jayasimha.⁸⁹ The Ratanpur stone inscription of Vāhara (Vikrama year 1552) refers to the

⁸⁵ Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Sculpture*, p. 4 ff.

⁸⁶ Mukherji R.R. and M. K. Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, p. 197; *Bhandarkar's List*, 1632; *E.I.*, XXIX, pp. 5, 13, 57; for other reference to *śilpīs*, cf., *E.I.*, XXXI, p. 248 ff; line 154 (the Ganga *śilpi*: Lokāyī); *E.I.*, II, 342, 383 (*śilā-śilpi*); *Ibid.*, IV, 272, 277.

⁸⁷ *E.I.*, XXXII, p. 156; *Bhandarkar's List* 559, Sīhaka's son Rāmadeva is also mentioned as *śilpi* in the inscription. A *sūtradhāra* Rāmadeva is referred to in a Chandella record, (cf., *E.I.*, XXXI p. 166), which records that this *sūtradhāra* added a *maṇḍapa* to the Nilakaṇṭha temple at Kalanjār., cf., also Cunningham A., *A.S.R.* XXI, p. 350, he also refers to *rūpakāra* Rāmadeva of Khajuraho.

⁸⁸ *E.I.*, XXXI, p. 166; Cunningham, A., *A.S.R.*, XXI, pp. 34-5 pl. XC.

⁸⁹ *C.I.I.*, IV (i), p. 329.

rūpakāra Dityan who was "praised for his knowledge of sciences and all other) merits".⁹⁰ These references make it clear that *rūpakāra* was a term denoting a sculptor or a worker-in-stone.

The term *kammīna* (*karmin*) denoted almost the same. In the inscriptions from certain areas of Himachal Pradesh, reference is made to a *kammīna*, "artist", Gugga⁹¹ who exhibited his skill in preparing the inscribed metal images of Lakṣaṇadevī (Mahishamarddini) Śaktidevī, Gaṇeśha, and Nandī. These images have come from the temples of Brahmaur and Chatrarhi in Chamba and represent the early art of Kashmir. The inscriptions indicate that the work was conducted under the orders of king Meruvarman sometime in the eighth century.

Like *kammīna* and *rūpakāras*, reference in the same sense is found to the *chitrakāras* also. One such *chitrakāra* "sculptor", was Śrī Sātana. His son Chhitanaka was the maker of the famous Mahoba Bodhisattva image and has been described as "well-versed in the science of all fine arts". His wife, was equally adept in the art of image-carving; she made a beautiful image of Tārā which carries the inscription informing that its maker was the daughter-in-law of the *chitrakāra* Śrī Sātana.⁹² The treatises on iconography, as well as the other texts, clearly indicate that the title *chitrakāra* was synonymous to sculptor.⁹³

These different categories of artists existing contemporaneously could not probably have flourished in isolation. It is likely that they had some mutual relationship since the profession required a high degree of skill. However, totally individualistic patterns of growth may not be completely ruled out. But this was possible only where smaller individual works of commission, like sculptures, were concerned. On a larger scale all important individuals probably combined together for building bigger monuments. With increasing experience probably the artist's status also tended to rise. What were probably the different steps in promotion are indicated by the case of a Chandella artist Pālhaṇa. His functions in different capacities with the passage of time indicate that some norms probably existed to decide the artists' status as they acquired greater

⁹⁰ Ibid. IV (ii), p. 557.

⁹¹ Bhandarkar's List, 1813, 1815, 1816.

⁹² cf., Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Sculpture*, pp. 5-6.

⁹³ cf., Bhattacharya, T.P., *The Canons of Indian Art*, p. 371 ff.

skills. It seems that the title *śilpī* was not applied to a craftsman until he became an expert in his line. Till then, he may have worked as a *rūpakāra*, *chitrakāra*, or *karmin*, known by the nature of his work. Instances of expert *rūpakāras* adept in their work are not lacking, e.g., Dityan quoted above, who was adept in all the *vidyās* concerning the *śilpa*. With a greater recognition of his merit a craftsman probably became a *śilpī*. Pālhaṇa, the engraver of the Semra plates (of v.s. 1223) is described merely as a *pīṭalakāra*, "brazier". Five years later, however, when he engraved the Icchhawar plates (v.s. 1228) he had become a *śilpī* and is described as *varṇa-ghaṭana vaidagdhī*, "expert in carving letters". A further experience of about two more years made him a *viññānin*, as is claimed in the Mahoba plates (of v.s. 1230). This process of acquiring recognition by Pālhaṇa continued further and in the Pachar plates (of v.s. 1233) and the Charkhari plate (of v.s. 1236), the same Pālhaṇa finds mention as *vaidagdhī-Viśvakarmaṇā*, "expert in the craft of Viśvakarmā", i.e., in the *śilpaśāstra* of the Viśvakarmā school.⁹⁴ Probably by this time he had reached a stage in his career when his knowledge was not confined to the bare technicalities of the craft, but embraced a wider field including the aesthetic aspect of the craft.⁹⁵ In any case, the successive stages of Pālhaṇa's rise specify the craftsman's hierarchial mobility in the order starting from *pīṭalakāra* to the *śilpī*, and *viññānin*. Such differences in the categories of artists are indicated in other cases also; e.g., Rāmadeva and Sihaka, the Paramāra artists who were titled as *śilpī* and *rūpakāra* respectively.⁹⁶

It may be added here that a Pālhaṇa as father of *rūpakāra* Tālhaṇa finds mention in a Kalachuri record of 1167 (K.E. 918) which specifies that Tālhaṇa belonged to the Kokāsa family of artists.⁹⁷ The dates of the Chandella and Kalachuri epigraphs referring to Pālhaṇa and Tālhaṇa correspond and it may be suggested that the artists of the same family were working for

⁹⁴ cf., Bhandarkar's *List* 359, 371, 1913; *E.I.*, XX, 131 ff; VI, 170; *Indian Antiquary*, XXV, p. 208; *E.I.*, X, 49;

⁹⁵ cf., Mitra, S.K., *The Early Rulers of Khajuraho*, p. 180. As regards Pālhaṇa's proficiency in engraving letters, Hirālāl observes no improvement in the plates engraved by him over the years. cf., *E.I.*, XX, 128.

⁹⁶ Bhandarkar's *List*, 1660.

⁹⁷ *C.I.I.*, IV (i), p. 331.

the two dynasties ruling conterminuously in central India. A Pālhaṇa finds mention in a record of the Paramāras of Chandrāvati.⁹⁸ In fact, the occurrence of such names as Kānhaka (or Kānhāḍa), Delhaṇa Sajjana, Ālaḍa Nāhaḍa, Vāhaḍa, Sātana, Chhitanaka Chhītuka, in the records of the rulers of central and western India indicates some sort of a linial or guild-bound relationship among these artists. If accepted on a more formal basis proximity among artisans may also sometimes explain the proximities of styles in the regions of the artisans' operation. References to the Kokāsa family are found from the twelfth to about fifteenth century. The Alhāghat inscription of the year 1159, (v.s. 1216) refers to the *sūtradhāras* and artisans such as Kamalasinha, Some, Kokāsa, Pālhaṇa, and Dalhaṇa.⁹⁹ A reference to the artists belonging to his family is found centuries later in an inscription of the fifteenth century, which speaks also of Manmath, Chhītaku, Maṇḍana, and Dityan.¹⁰⁰

Coming back to Pālhaṇa, it may be said that although he has been addressed by various titles and his skill and knowledge of *śilpaśāstras* has been specially eulogised, he fails to find mention as a *sūtradhāra*. His title *viññānin* is also interesting, for this title was in use for sculptors in the eastern or south-eastern region.¹⁰¹ It is likely that this title for sculptors might have come in to central India from the eastern region and this may help in explicating the role of artists in determining the transmission of style and idioms of art. The title *viññānin* was not restricted to the Chandella artists alone. It occurs also in the Paramāra inscriptions.¹⁰²

It thus seems possible to establish some sort of a hierarchical scheme amongst the artisans in which the *sūtradhāra* figures at

⁹⁸ Bhandarkar's List, 454 (dated A.D. 1209).

⁹⁹ C.I.I., IV (i), p. 324

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., IV (ii), pp. 527, 551 ff, 561.

¹⁰¹ cf., Bhandarkar's List, 1565, 1568, 1569; E.I., XXXIII, 268. This last inscription refers to a *viññānin* Sankhuka who is called "*suvarṇavithī svannahī viññānin*"; Sircar (op.cit., p. 273) says that Vaheru and Mangaka who engraved the Balijhari plates are described in that record as *suvarṇavithī viññānin*, i.e. an artist who lived in a locality called *suvarṇavithī* which may literally mean 'goldsmiths' quarters'. From this inscription it appears that *svannahī* or *sunnahī* was the name of an area in the *suvarṇavithī*.

¹⁰² cf., the Paramāra *viññānin* Sūmak; E.I., XXXI, 54.

the top, followed by such categories of artists and workmen as *vijñānin*, *śilpī*, *rūpakāra*, and *karmin*. In addition to these there must also have been a labour-force to assist the expert artisans in manual work needed in executing bigger jobs. A sculptured panel in the Khajuraho museum shows a *śilpī* engaged in cutting a piece of rock with the help of a hammer and a chisel. The panel also depicts ordinary labourers bringing a stone capital (Plate III). In the *śilpa* texts sometimes a distinction has been drawn between the one who executes the works and the rest of artisans. The *Mānasāra* describes the former as *sthāpaka* "the actual worker". Acharya has suggested that perhaps he was the principal assistant to the *sthāpati*, "chief architect", while the master was known as *kartā*.¹⁰³

Certain exceptions in such a hierarchical scheme may also be indicated here. A Kalachuri inscription says that the temple of Bilvapāṇi was constructed by Devagaṇa who is described as *rūpakāra śiromaṇi*, "crest-jewel among the sculptors". The inscription refers to a *sūtradhāra* Sāmpula also, but merely as the engraver of the record. Here is a case where the *rūpakāra* has been regarded as more important than the *sūtradhāra*; but it is of interest again that in another inscription of slightly later date Sāmpula is mentioned not as a *sūtradhāra* but as a *rūpakāra* and eulogised as: *aneka-śilpa nirmāṇa-payodheḥ pāradriśvanā*, "one who has seen farther shores of the ocean of various crafts".¹⁰⁴

Guilds of artists must have been an important factor in building-activity. Although references to such guilds are few, nonetheless, the scale of activity together with the hereditary practice of some craft in the same family or the *āchārya*-disciple relationship among the craftsmen make a strong case for the possibility of existence of guilds. Moreover, since other artisans of different crafts such as metal-workers, were organised in guilds and many such guildsmen are mentioned as engravers of

¹⁰³ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 592, S.V., *Sthāpaka*. On the analogy of Drama it may be suggested that the offices of *sūtradhāra* and *sthāpaka* may have been represented by one and the same person; *sūtradhāra* till the activity was in the planning-stage and *sthāpaka* when the actual work started. For *sthāpaka* as the same persons as *sūtradhāra* in Drama, cf., Rangacharya, A., op.cit., pp. 24-5.

¹⁰⁴ cf., *C.I.L.*, IV (ii), pp. 490, 515.

records, it is likely that artists had also formed guilds of their own and worked on monuments as and when commissioned to do so. Of some definite instances of such guilds, the one concerning the *Sarva-Siddha-āchāryas* and their special knowledge of the "secrets of *Śrī śilemudde*" (probably the name of some guild of stone-masons) has already been quoted. The other instances come from Bengal. The Deopara inscription of Vijayasena refers to a master-craftsman Rāṇaka Śūlapāṇi who was the "crest-jewel of the *goshṭhī*, (guild), of *śilpīs* of Vārendra".¹⁰⁵ The evidence about the artists of Pośali¹⁰⁶ quoted above also indirectly points to the artists who all came from the same place and seem to have been in great demand obviously due to their skill. Besides such guilds of artists, located at one place, there probably were the itinerant families of artists also as indicated by the mobility of the artists of the Kokāsa family. Artists have often traced their descent from the ancient sages or divine or semi-divine craftsmen like Kaśyapa, Viśvakarmā, Nārāyaṇa or have claimed adeptness in the theory of these early exponents of *śilpaśāstras*. Inscriptions refer to a Siddha-Sārasvata of Kaśyapa family.¹⁰⁷ Sri Viraṇāchārya is addressed as Tvaṣṭri in the Krishnapuram plates of Sadaśivarāya.¹⁰⁸ The artist Viśvanāth, (the architect of three worlds, son of Bāsavachāriya who was the son of Vedeyappaya considered to be a *jagadguru*) claims to have belonged to the family of Viśvakarmā.¹⁰⁹ As distinct from such claimants of a high pedigree there were artists who claimed proficiency in particular schools of *śilpa*, named after their exponents. Viśvakarmā and his theory of *śilpa* is most frequently mentioned in the north Indian records. For instance, the *sūtradhāra* Chichha who built a Khajuraho temple was *viññāna-viśvakartā*.¹¹⁰ The *sūtradhāra* Chhītaku was well-versed in the precepts of Nārāyaṇa, and his family-deity was Viśvakarmā.¹¹¹ There are many such instances besides those relating to particular families which produced artists in succession. Tārā-

¹⁰⁵ *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, p. 249, verse 36.

¹⁰⁶ For the identification of Pośali, cf., Sircar, D.C., *E.I.*, XIX, 6.

¹⁰⁷ *E.I.*, XXVIII, 30; XXII, 296-7, refers to a *śilpi* of Kaśyapa family. This record dates about sixth-seventh century A.D.

¹⁰⁸ *E.I.*, IX, 339

¹⁰⁹ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 584, inscription no. 32.

¹¹⁰ *E.I.*, I, 146, verse 60.

¹¹¹ *C.I.I.*, IV (ii), p. 557.

nāth, the Tibetan historian of Buddhism, lays great stress on the schools of art which developed in different regions through various individual artists. He adds that the artists belonging to such schools were known after the schools themselves, irrespective of their places of operation or of birth.¹¹²

The practice of the same craft in one family for two generations or more is often inferred from the epigraphic references to artists. This indicates a trend towards specialisation. Whether such profession admitted persons from other walks of life is another important question. It must be stressed again that the class of *śilpis* included different types of craftsmen; smiths, painters, carpenters, etc., were all the members of the wider group of artisans. At the elite-level, i.e., that of the *sūtradhāra*, the artists' class may have attracted persons from diverse fields. The *sūtradhāras* status was, without doubt, respectable and such respect arose out of his skill and its recognition by people. The expert craftsmen were often close to the elite, particularly the ruling princes and others who had the resources to commission the temples, etc. This may have helped in their achieving greater recognition. There are references to the "king's own *sūtradhāra*"¹¹³ or to *sūtradhāra-pitāmaha*, "chief among the *sūtradhāras*"¹¹⁴ or to the titles they enjoyed, e.g., *āchārya*,¹¹⁵ which prove their respectable position in society. Occasionally some *sūtradhāras* might have come from higher *varṇas* also, although this must not have been a general rule. It has been said that "The social position of architects is not quit clear... But from the functions assigned to each of the four architects (as in the texts), it would appear that the first three, namely *sthapati*, *sūtragrāhin*, and *vardhakī* belong to the higher class".¹¹⁶ This statement may be true in the case of *sūtradhāra* also since he is often mentioned as proficient in *śāstras* and *vidyās* which included *śilpaśāstra*, astronomy, and science of numbers. The nature of his work demanded a knowledge of myths and legends about gods and goddesses which he needed particularly in the *dhyānas* after which images were fashioned. However,

¹¹² Chattopadhyaya, D.P., *Taranath's History of Buddhism*, pp. 347-9.

¹¹³ *Epigraphia Carnatica*, V (i) no. 123, p. 168.

¹¹⁴ *Indian Antiquary*, XIX.

¹¹⁵ cf., *Encyclopaedia*, p. 586.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 591-2.

the theory of art and aesthetics as well as the planning of edifices had a wider appeal. That is one of the reasons why there are instances of persons other than artists, writing treatises on architecture or iconography, e.g., *Samarāṅgaṇa-Sūtradhāra* of the Paramāra King Bhoja. Also, there are instances of persons, who did not belong to the fold of traditional *sūtradhāras*, but who acted like *sūtradhāras* in the matters of building edifices or engraving records. The following instances will elucidate this points. A South Indian inscription refers to Mallavijaya, the son of a *daṇḍanāyaka*, "a minister", as a *sūtradhāra* responsible for enlarging a town.¹¹⁷ Amongst the persons other than *sūtradhāras*, who figure as engravers of records, reference may be made to Nāgapāla, the son of *paṇḍita* Uhila "belonging to the *pañchakulika* caste; to Jayatasimha the son of *paṇḍita* Yaśodhara; to Sarvachandra the son of a *bhogika*, "an officer of state".¹¹⁸

It seems that *sūtradhāras* were usually drafted from amongst the traditional craftsmen and in such recruitment, the artist's skill would have been the deciding factor. Some others might also have reached the rank of *sūtradhāra* owing to their higher social status coupled with their proficiency in the theory and practice of fine arts. This suggestion is based on the case of Mallavijaya, the son of a minister, quoted above. And such promotion to the rank of *sūtradhāra* might have ultimately helped many in the upward movement in the social hierarchy. In any case proficiency in the theory and practice of the crafts must have been the most important condition for attaining the stage of a *sūtradhāra*, and caste and social status probably were

¹¹⁷ *Epigraphia Carnatica*, V (i) no. 194, p. 433. translation, p. 187.

¹¹⁸ cf., *E.I.*, XXX, 248; XXXII, 304; *Bhandarkar's List*, 2048. There are some *simha*-ending names of engravers and *sūtradhāras* e.g. Kelisimha and Karmasimha etc., *Bhandarkar's List*; 578, 610. In the former, a record of V.S. 1330, Kelisimha is said to have engraved the record with the further help of *śilpi* Delhaṇa; in the second record (V.S. 1342) he finds mention as a *sūtradhāra*. Another *simha* ending name is that of Droṇasimha, cf., *E.I.* XXXI, 106, 316. But, too much reliance ought not to be placed on such names and their obvious conclusion regarding artisans' caste. There are instances in which the first generation of such artists has names like Nāhaḍa and Vāhaḍa and their sons change over to such names as Pūṇasimha and Kumārasimha, cf., *Bhandarkar's List*, 611, 491.

not so important. We sometimes have cases of even petty officers of state designing and executing edifices in which the *sūtradhāras*, who otherwise were traditionally required to do such work, have been ignored. This indicates the openness of the profession.

We have so far discussed primarily the evidence pertaining to various types of artists and particularly the *sūtradhāras*, where they occur as makers of monuments or images. On the positive side, this evidence helps in appreciating their specific role in building of edifices and other related works. However, there are instances where these artists are described merely as the engravers of records in which specific mentions to the raising of temples, etc., have been made. In such instances, their participation may be regarded as implicit. For, accepting the *sūtradhāras* merely as engravers of the records, makes a mockery of such master-craftsmen as Rāṇaka Śūlapāṇi, the "crest-jewel of the guild of *śilpīs* of Vārendra", who was son of Brihaspati, grandson of Mānadāsa and obviously was proud of his distinguished family as well as his skill and the guild to which he belonged. And he is mentioned in the Deopara inscription merely as the engraver of the record. The contents of the Deopara inscription clearly indicate a possibility of the artist's cooperation in building the Pradyumneśvara temple, described there in detail. The inscription mentions the making of the temple as a "great deed". The temple is eulogised as "the unique place of manifestation of Lords Viṣṇu and Śiva, where the King (Vijayasena) brought about 'an interchange of the inhabitants of heaven and earth', (for) by the construction of lofty house of god (=temple) and by the (the excavation of) extensive lakes, the area of both heaven and earth were reduced and they were made similar to each other".¹¹⁹ The inscription also gives the details of the architectural elements of the Pradyumneśvara temple in highly technical terms, referring to such parts as *śākhā*, *mūla*, *kāṇḍa*, *madhya*, and *antarīya*.¹²⁰ The central image of the temple deity is described as "in the representation of the sculpture, due to the apprehension of the

¹¹⁹ Majumdar, N.G., *Inscription of Bengal*, III (Rajashahi 1929) p. 50. verses 25-8. Majumdar has explained that the 'interchange' of the inhabitants of heaven and earth was brought about by setting up of images of gods in the temple which stood on earth; *ibid.* p. 54, fn. 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55 fn. 1.

cessation of embrace, the goddesses Umā and Lakṣmi, have taken stand between their lovers and thus somehow interfered with the complete union of the bodies (of Hari-Hara)".¹²¹ The Deopara inscription which very graphically describes the temple and its images makes a mention of Rāṇaka Śūlpāṇi only as the engraver, although theoretically speaking most likely he alone would be knowledgeable about such sophistications in the temple and its sculpture.¹²²

There are other inscriptions also with vivid details of temples and sculptures, but in reference only to the donor. One such record describes a person Pantha "who erected at a considerable cost...a beautiful image of Bhavānī". The image is described as "fierce-looking, awe-inspiring owing to the garland formed of gruesome human-heads hanging from her neck, with limbs encircled by crawling snakes and with dry flesh pierced on axe; delighting in a sporting dance, and rolling eyes". The inscription further relates that "not satisfied with the 'erection' (carving) of this image only, the pious man (Pantha), desirous of bliss, caused to be built a shrine of Bhavānī which was joined with a very adhesive and bright cement, resplendent with sound of bells, lovely, attractive...and decorated with lofty flags and yak-tails".¹²³ These details are significant architecturally and iconographically, but credit goes for this to the donor Pantha; the name of either the builder or even the engraver of the record has not been specified. This peculiar apathy in not recording the architect's share may have been due to the religious zeal of the donor who did not want to mention the other people associated with the temple lest it may partly take

¹²¹ *yatrāṅgana-bhagna-kātarataya-sthītvāntare, kānta-rorddevib ham-katha-māpya bhinnatanutā śilpenta-rāyaḥ kritaḥ.*

¹²² Some scholars have tried to relate this evidence concerning Śūlpāṇi and the artisans' guild with Taranath's account of the Vārendra artists. An account corresponding to Tārānāth's is found in the *Pag-Sam-Zon-jang* also, as reported by Majumdar. He however, is sceptical about the evidence concerning the *goshṭhī*, 'guild', and says "...no definite evidence is yet forthcoming which justifies us to take the expression *Vārendraka-śilpa-goshṭhī* in the restricted sense of a 'guild' properly so-called of the artists of Bengal. The word 'goshṭhī', I have taken here in a general sense meaning 'multitude', although it is not impossible that the word really denotes a guild". About the artists of Bengal, cf., Kumar, "A note on the Bengal School of Artists", *J.A.S.B.*, 1916, pp. 26-7.

¹²³ *E.I.*, IX, 60 ff.

away the religious merit from him and bestow its share on those who were mentioned. This may be one of the reasons why there are records which sing the glory of edifices commissioned by the donors without mentioning the architects who made them.

As regards the donors and their contributions towards architectural activity, one observes a change compared to pre-Gupta times. A survey of Brahmi inscriptions from north India indicates the growing prominence of individual donors, mostly kings or their priests or the other affluent members of society. A democratisation of the type as found earlier in the Buddhist monuments is of a very rare occurrence. Individual images were quite often commissioned by less affluent donors¹²⁴ too, but the raising of temples or the larger architectural activity, which involved greater resources in men and money, were mostly financed by the kings¹²⁵ or the members of their families¹²⁶ or their priests¹²⁷ and officers,¹²⁸ etc. It also became customary to name the temples after their donor-builders.¹²⁹

An idea of the roles of different participants in raising edifices and consecrating them can be obtained by the following three examples, selected at random. The first relates to the excavation of a tank, financed by Malayasimha, a feudatory chief of the Kalachuri Vijayasimha of Tripurī. The Rewa inscription of this chief informs that he excavated a tank at the cost of 1500 *tankakas* (stamped with the figure of Bhagavat, i.e., the Buddha). Vidyādhara, a *vāstavya*, was superintendent of the work. Another *vāstavya*, Purushottam designed it. Rāmchandra performed five sacrifices (to consecrate the tank). The inscription was incised by the *sūtradhāra* Anant, the son of Galhana. The inscription also refers to the King's doorkeeper

¹²⁴ *E.I.*, XXVII, 140-41; 340 XXVII, 25 fn. 2; Dikshit. M.G., *Tripuri*-1952, p. 12. A record refers to the gift of a Pāṇḍya king to a temple alongside that of another person, which shows how sometimes gifts were accepted from different sections of society for the same temple.

¹²⁵ *E.I.*, XXVI, 49 ff; XXVII, 235 ff.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 180 ff; 184.

¹²⁷ *C.I.L.*, IV (i), 305-9; *E.I.*, XXVIII, 114 f.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 98 ff; VIII. 208 ff; 219 ff; *Bhandarkar's List*, 487-89, 491-507; 510-24.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 182-83; 218; *C.I.L.*, III, 288; Sircar D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, p. 283.

Ralhaṇa the son of Dalhaṇa. Although Ralhaṇa is described as "capable of executing responsible work", his exact role in excavating the tank has escaped mention.¹³⁰ The Rewa plates indicate a process of designing, excavation, and consecration of a tank in which various persons carried out their defined tasks and the major credit of work goes to the *vāstavyas*.¹³¹

Another inscription is from Batihagarh (Damoh District, Madhya Pradesh) and dates to the year 1328. It records that a local Muhammedan ruler Jallāl, son of Isāk, caused a *gomāṭha*, a step-well, and grove to be made at Batihādīm. Dhanau, a servant of Jallāl was the manager of these institutions. The principal architects of this work were Bhojuka, Kāmādeva, and Hala of a *śilāpaṭṭa* family and the inscription was engraved by Vasu of Mathura.¹³²

The third inscription is from Rajasthan and it describes the building of a white marble temple. It was provided with lofty *maṇḍapa* and stone seats in front and fifty-two Jina-shrines on its side. Also built here were the statues of various members of the family of Tejaḥpāla. The inscription was engraved by Chandeśvara, son of Dhandhala and grandson of Kelhaṇa, and the consecration of the temple was done by a Jaina priest.¹³³

These inscriptions define the roles of the different participants in designing and raising of edifices, their management, and consecration. The inscriptions definitely indicate that it was customary to incise the records immediately after the construction was completed. The artisans' work did not conclude with the conclusion of a particular work. There is evidence to suggest that sometimes artisans were appointed to look after the maintenance of the work.¹³⁴ New *sūtradhāras* were appointed

¹³⁰ C.I.I., IV (i), pp. 357-58.

¹³¹ This as well as many other such instances suggest that *vāstavyas* (and *karaṇikas*) were possessed of the requisite knowledge and skill in raising monuments and many such *karaṇikas* and *vāstavyas* may have adorned the rank of *sūtradhāras*.

¹³² E.I., XII, 46. Hiralal has stated that Silāwaṭ caste still exists in the vicinity of Damoh.

¹³³ Bhandarkar's List, 488. Mount Abu inscription of the time of Vaghela Viradhaval and Paramāra Samar Siṃha.

¹³⁴ E.I. XXVIII, 210 f: Teli inscription of Korai Ravi refers to the administration and maintenance of a temple in which besides the officials, managers, dancers, actors, and painters the sculptors also find

if extensive repairs or renovation were thought necessary.¹³⁵

Having examined the nature and function of the *sūtradhāras* and the other categories of artists in raising monuments, as also the participation of the other classes of people in the total activity, we will now attempt to spell out a region-wise distribution of the *sūtradhāras* and other artists. This is with a view to suggest that while making a study of provincial art-idioms the artists who helped in bringing them forth, must also be kept in view. A systematic and unanimously accepted classification of style-zones in the architecture and sculptural art has not been finally worked out yet. The stress mainly has been on establishing a parity between the details of *Śilpaśāstras*, and the actual monuments and sculptures. This exercise can be made more purposeful by introducing to it a new dimension—the role of the practitioners of this specialised craft. The inclusion of craftsmen and their role within the system of study may hopefully define the growth of activity and its variable forms (from one monument to the other through successive *sūtradhāras* and artists), in which such factors as artists' mobility and skill, their acculturation to particular schools of *śilpa*, etc., will have to be borne in mind for their obvious conclusions. A mere comparative study of motifs and art-forms in the same or different regions tends to ignore the factors instrumental in their making. A study of artists with regard to the regions where the relevant material is available, may be of use in defining the domain of particular regional styles as well as their wider links. The mediaeval inscriptions have enough material to indicate that the *sūtradhāras* and other artists cannot be ignored. Their precise contribution however, remains to be studied. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made in the following to describe a region and dynasty-wise distribution of artisans within a chronological framework starting from the seventh century. The information as detailed here relates mostly to north India.

A historical survey of different parts of India indicates the existence of several regional dynasties during the period starting

mention. Reference to *śirpāchāri*, 'śilpa-āchārya', attached to South Indian temples is also found in several inscriptions.

¹³⁵ cf., Gaya Inscription referring to the *sūtradhāra* Haridāsa, employed for repairing the temple of Dakṣiṇāditya. *Indian Antiquary*, XX, p. 165.

from about the sixth century.

More prominent among these were the Pushyabhūti and the Gurjara-Pratihāras in the north; the early Pālas and the early Kalingas (Śailodbhavas and Bhaumas) in the east; and the Maitrakas in the west. The other prominent dynasties of the north were the Varmanas, Karkoṭas, and Utpalas. The Gāhaḍavālas also figure in the list of the important north India dynasties. In central India, there were five dynasties ruling more or less conterminously in different parts. They were: the Chandellas; the Kalachuries of Tripurī and Ratanpur; the Kachhapaghāṭas of Gwalior and Narwar; and the Paramāras of Malva. In the eastern part of India, upto Andhra—there were the Soma and the Ganga Kings of Orissa and Andhra; the Pāla and Senas of Magadha; and the Chandras of Assam. Of the several dynasties of western India the major ones, were, the Guhilas, Pratihāras, Chāhmānas, Saindhavas, and Vaghelas. The epigraphs of many kings of these dynasties supply information about the *sūtradhāras* who probably were associated with the monuments raised in their respective regions. An idea of this may be obtained from the following details of the dynasties and the artisans connected with their kings.

The Pāṇḍuvamśis and the Śarabhapura Kings. Historically the word *sūtradhāra* finds one of the earliest mentions in the inscriptions of the Pāṇḍus of South Kosala. The Pāṇḍus were contemporaries of the Maukharis of north. Of the artisans serving the Pāṇḍus, we find reference to there: Ārya Gonna (or Gonnasiva), Prabhākara, and the *sūtradhāra* Vasuguṇa, the son of Rishigaṇa. They all occur as the engravers of the records of the Pāṇḍuvamśī King Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna, who had an unusually long reign of about sixty years starting from the middle of the seventh century.¹³⁶ Ārya Gonna occurs as the engraver of record which refers to the erection of a Viṣṇu temple by Vasatā, the Queen mother. Another inscription refers to the qualifications of the *sūtradhāra* Vasuguṇa.¹³⁷ The epigraphs of Sudeva, a Śarabhapura king refers to some engraver-artisans—Droṇasiṃha and Golasiṃha.¹³⁸ The Rājīvalochana

¹³⁶ cf., Bhandarkar's List, 1654, 1882, 1884, E.I., XXXI, 198.

¹³⁷ He is described as: *sūtradhāra-sakalā-karma-kirtti-kirttana-guṇagaṇa-onattimāna*, E.I., XXXI, 36 ff.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 106, 316.



PLATE I Artisans at work, Bharhut
(© National Museum, New Delhi)

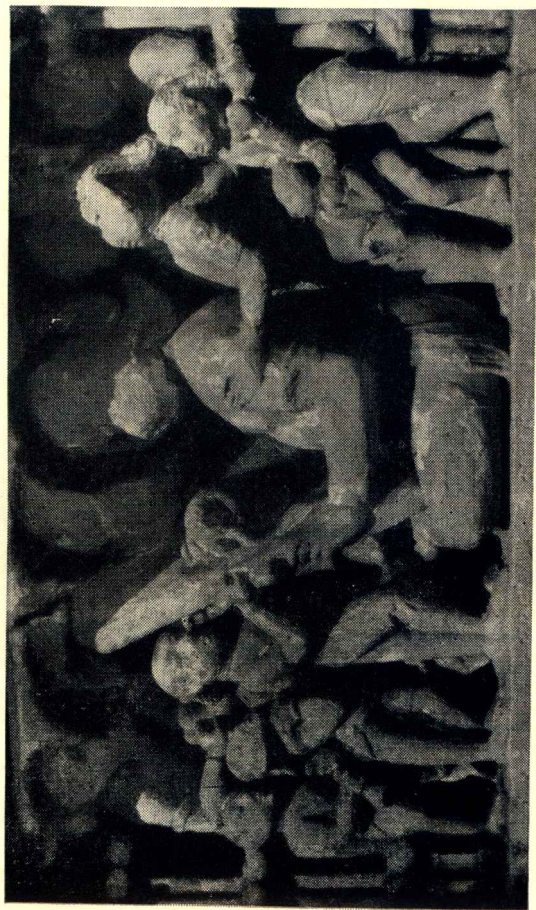


PLATE II *Śilpisala*
Khajuraho
(© Archaeological
Survey of India,
Government of
India)



PLATE III A *Silpi* carving a stone, Khajuraho Museum
(© Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India)

temple at Rajim has an inscription engraved by Durgahastin.¹³⁹ And as has been mentioned earlier, a pillar of this temple has the name "Śrī Pūrṇāditya", incised in ornamental letters. Pūrṇāditya and Durgahastin might have been instrumental in the raising of the Rājīvalochana temple of Rajim.

The Kalingas (Bhaumas, Karas, and Sailodbhavas). The records of the kings of eastern India offer the names of such artisans as Deva, Paṇḍi, Śivanāga, Padmanābha, Sivagaṇa, Dagadeva, and Mālaka. Most of them were the goldsmiths who engraved records of various Bhañja Kings.¹⁴⁰ Sthaviraviddha and Vijayadeva (the son of Ānandjīva) figure as the engravers of certain other eastern Indian records.¹⁴¹ It is not certain whether they had any contribution in the construction work commissioned by their kings. Although they do figure in royal records as engravers their roles in raising different edifices are not clear.

The dynasties mentioned above ruled during the post-Gupta phase, in parts of central and eastern India. Although some of the finest monuments came up in their regions of power, not much is known regarding the artisans in their employment. The existence of different schools of artists in different parts of India during this time and also later is indicated by Tārānāth (whose account is given in the Appendix). However, from the ninth century onwards, the information about *sūtradhāras* and the other categories of artists grows in volume.

The Gāhaḍavālas. The building activity of the Gāhaḍavālas¹⁴² of Kanauj is attested to by several epigraphic references.¹⁴³ The Gāhaḍavāla records have usually supplied the names of their writers. The royal records refer to the *śilpī* Vāmana who engraved the Sarnath inscription of Kumāradevi. The inscription gives the details of building of a Buddhist monastery at

¹³⁹ Bhandarkar's List, 1883.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1490-93; 1502, 2057.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2041, 2044, 2057.

¹⁴² Before the Gāhaḍavālas, the Gurjara Pratihāras were ruling in the mid-India. A Gwalior epigraph refers to certain trader's guilds which functioned during their rule; among these guilds, one consisted of that of the stone-cutters, cf., *E.I.*, I, pp. 167-68; 174-78.

¹⁴³ Ibid., IX, 200; I, 186, 188; 157-59 (*ramye' smin ekaśile Viṣṇuḥ-bhaktiyā-pratiṣṭhito bhavane*); *E.I.*, XIV, 199.

Sarnath by this queen.¹⁴⁴ Besides the *śilpī* Vāmana, reference is also made to Śrīpati, the engraver of one of the Kamauli plates of Govinda-Chandra; to *lohāra* "blacksmith", Someka; and to the *sūtradhāra* Haleka.¹⁴⁵ The Chandrāvātī plate of Chandradeva (V.S. 1156) has a description of the temple of Chandra-Mahādeva. The engraver of the record, Mahādeva, "the son of illustrious Gangādhara" claims that he made the image of the "illustrious Chandra-Mahādeva which put to shame the other images".¹⁴⁶ The Gāhaḍavāla charters often refer to *karaṇikas* as the writers or engravers of royal charters. It is likely that some *śilpīs* assumed the charge of *karaṇikas*, i.e., the officer who was responsible for documentation of royal charters. There is an instance of such transformation of roles in a Kalachuri record, which refers to a *śilpī* Sarvānanda acting as a *karaṇika*.¹⁴⁷ On this analogy, it may be surmised that some of the *vāstavyas* (equivalent to *karaṇikas*) of the Gāhaḍavāla inscriptions may have been artists too.¹⁴⁸

The Chandellas, Kalachuris, and Paramāras. Information regarding artisans of the different central India dynasties is more profuse. Two inscriptions from Gwalior and Chanderi region¹⁴⁹ refer to the *sūtradhāras* Dhanauk and Bhīmadeva. The former occurs in the Narwar inscription of the time of Gaṇapati (V.S. 1355). The inscriptions of the rulers of the Chandella dynasty refer to Śrī Kana; to *chitrakāra* Śrī Sātana; and to his son Chhitanaka, and the latter's wife.¹⁵⁰ From the Chandella inscriptions of Kalanjār, Ajaygarh and Khajuraho, and some other places more information regarding the different classes

¹⁴⁴ *E.I.*, XIV, 196 which refers to the scribe Hridayadhara the son of Sivastambha, who wrote the copper-plate "smooth like fresh leaf adorned with lines in which lettering is quite clear".

¹⁴⁵ cf., *E.I.*, XVIII, 223; *Bhandarkar's List*, 292; *E.I.*, IV, 126, 128; XVIII, 223.

¹⁴⁶ *E.I.*, XIV, 199 (line 24).

¹⁴⁷ *C.I.I.*, IV (i), p. 259. Likewise, the writer of another Kalachuri epigraph (*C.I.I.*, IV (ii), p. 470), claims an adeptness in crafts: *śilpaprakarsah*.

¹⁴⁸ Several such *karaṇikas*, some of them mentioned as *kāyasthas* of *vāstavya* family, are mentioned in the Gāhaḍavāla records, e.g. Kithaṇa, Ulhaṇa Jalhaṇa Vasudeva, Sahadeva, Gagguka, Viṣṇu, Śrīpati, Kusuma-pāla, etc., cf. *E.I.*, IV, 101-24.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XXXII, 346; XXXIII, 33.

¹⁵⁰ Sivaramamurti, C., *Indian Sculpture* p. 5.

of artisans—*rūpakāra*, *śilpī*, *viññānika*, and *sūtradhāra*—is available. One of the Kalanjar inscriptions refers to the artist Padma who was as “able” and “superior to all artists”, as was his “eminent” father. “Padma was the King’s favourite artist”, so says the inscription; and this artist figures as the engraver of a Kalanjar inscription which informs that his brother Deoka helped him in engraving the record.¹⁵¹ Another Kalanjar inscription refers to a *rūpakāra* Lāhaḍa, the son of the *sūtradhāra* Rāma. The *rūpakāra* Lakṣmīdhara also finds mention along with Lāhaḍa.¹⁵² As regards Rāma, he is mentioned both as a *rūpakāra* and a *sūtradhāra*,¹⁵³ and he is credited with the task of having made the Nīlkaṇṭha temple of Kalanjar; the image of Nīlkaṇṭha-Mahādeva, in this temple was made by Rāma’s son Lāhaḍa. Lākhana and Devarāja, the latter was the son of Somarāja,¹⁵⁴ were the other Chandella *rūpakāras*. Another son of Somarāja, Mahārāja,¹⁵⁵ is also referred to as the engraver of an inscription. This inscription describes the raising of two temples, one dedicated to Viṣṇu and the other to Śiva, by Sallakṣaṇa, a minister of the Chandella Paramarddideva. In certain other Chandella records Palhaṇa, Jayasimha, and Pratāpasimha are mentioned as *śilpīs*.¹⁵⁶ Jalhaṇa, Palhaṇa (the son of Rājapāla), and Uhenō are mentioned as *viññānikas*. Uhenō, in one of the records, is referred to as a *rītikāra*, “brazier”, too.¹⁵⁷

Other artisan-engravers of the Chandella rulers were Bhānu and an unnamed artisan who was the son of Kūkem and grandson of the *ayaskāra*, “black-smith”, Dage (Gaṁge).¹⁵⁸ The Chandella sculptures of Khajuraho and other places have certain names inscribed on them and Cunningham has suggested that these may represent the mason’s names, of which he has given a list.¹⁵⁹ However, it may be indicated here that although

¹⁵¹ Cunningham, A., *Archaeological Survey of India, Reports*, XXI, p. 38.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, *E.I.*, I, 325-30, 152-53; XXXI, 166; Cunningham, A., *A.S.R.*, X, 34-5.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XXI, 72, 73.

¹⁵⁵ *E.I.*, I, 207 ff.

¹⁵⁶ *Indian Antiquary*, XV; XVII, p. 235; *E.I.*, XX.

¹⁵⁷ *Indian Antiquary*, XVI, pp. 202-7; *E.I.*, XX, 131 (*utkīrṇa varṇaghaṭana vaidagdhi Viśvakarmanā*; XXI, respectively).

¹⁵⁸ *Indian Antiquary*, XVII, p. 235; *Bhandarkar’s List*, 1785.

¹⁵⁹ Cunningham, A., *op.cit.*, XXI, p. 62 f.

the Chandella records supply names of various artisans and their ranks, the *sūtradhāras* are rare in them. Amongst the *sūtradhāras*, Rāma and Suprata occur in the inscriptions of Kalanjar and Ajaygarh respectively.¹⁶⁰ Rāma, the builder of a well and the *maṇḍapa* at the Ajaygarh fort, during the reign of Vīravarma, is described as *vaidagdhī*, "skilled in his craft".¹⁶¹ The *sūtradhāra* Chiccha who built a Khajuraho temple was "proficient in the *śāstra* of Viśvakarmā", according to the Khajuraho stone inscription (V.S. 1059).¹⁶² For the purpose of explicating the role of artists in the growth of the Chandella art and architecture the information quoted above may be of immense value. It can at least define the choice and distribution of motifs and sculptures in relation to the monuments raised by respective artists which may help in a greater understanding of the Chandella art and architecture as a whole.

The Kalachuri inscriptions too have prolific information regarding the artists employed by the donors of various monuments in the region. The material available in this respect indicates that such engraver-artists were sufficiently proficient in *śilpa*, and were known by their different titles. These artists were proficient particularly in the Viśvakarmā's *śilpa*. For instance, we have Mādhava, the son of *sūtradhāra* Maheśvara, described as "able and adept in Viśvakarmā's craft". Another artist (whose name unfortunately is not available), says an inscription made an image of a goddess by the grace of Viśvakarmā. The artist Mahīdhara, who claims proficiency in the *śāstra* expostulated by Viśvakarmā, is also described as "crest-jewel of artisans", by his son, the *sūtradhāra* Nāmadeva, in a later inscription. Mahīdhara had the distinction of being the son of Bālasimha who has been mentioned as the "foremost amongst *sūtradhāras*". Besides these more prominently mentioned artists, the Kalachuri inscriptions refer also to Nīlakaṇṭha who engraved a *praśasti* on the orders of the *sūtradhāra* Sūrāk; to Nonna, the son of the excellent *sūtradhāra* Sangama; to Some, Kokāsa, Pālhaṇa, Ulhaṇa, and Kamalasimha; to Siruka; and to the *lohāras* Kuke and Kīkaka. Kuke is referred to

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 35, 49.

¹⁶¹ E.I., I, 228 (verse 22)

¹⁶² Ibid., 146, (verse 60)

as *vi nānī* which obviously is a mistake for *viññānin*, which occurs as a title of certain Chandella and Paramāra artists.¹⁶³

Kalachuri inscriptions offer valuable information about the *sūtradhāras*; eleven of them are mentioned in the records. Of these Sangama is referred to as an "excellent" *sūtradhāra*; Sāmbhūka and Śreṣṭhī respectively are mentioned as executor of a Viṣṇu temple and maker of a white *maṇḍapa*, attached to a Śāntinath temple. Bālasimha was regarded as "foremost among the *sūtradhāras*", while *Pithe* is eulogised as "conversant in the Viśvakarma-śāstra" and "planner of several edifices". Others who are mentioned only as *sūtradhāras* are Sūrāk, Kamalasimha, Nāmadeva, Ananta, the son of Galhaṇa, and Maheśvara.¹⁶⁴

In the above list, it is found that sometimes the father is an ordinary craftsman while his son reaches the rank of a *sūtradhāra*. There is also an interesting case of *śilpī Sarvānanda* who was appointed a *karaṇika* and wrote a eulogy which was engraved by Vidyānanda.¹⁶⁵ The two, Sarvānanda and Vidyānanda, may have been related to each other. In another Kalachuri inscription there is reference to a superintendent of writing who had his statue installed.¹⁶⁶

The kings of the Ratanpur branch of Kalachuris also were great builders and their inscriptions or those of their region offer quite a few names of artists employed for engraving records or building temples and other edifices. Of these artisans Hāsala is described as "intelligent and repository of all the *śilpa-vidyā*".¹⁶⁷ Lakṣmidhara and his sons Dharaṇīdhara and Chāndārka also find mention in these epigraphs.¹⁶⁸ Amongst the *rūpakāras* of this region, reference is made to Pālhūka, Ratnapāla, and Dityan. The *rūpakāra*, "sculptor", Devagaṇa had a very special place, as he was the "foremost amongst sculptors" and his eminence was recognised to the extent that the *sūtradhāra* Sāmpula served under him when they made a temple

¹⁶³ For the details of these artists mentioned in the inscriptions of the Tripuri branch of the Kalachuris, cf., *C.I.I.*, IV (i), pp. 230, 251, 307, 336, 317, 204, 224, 324, 374, 343, 363.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 204, 224, 230, 235, 311, 317, 324, 336.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 401, 407.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 477, 461, 483 (also 494), 631.

of Bilvapāṇi Mahādeva. Sāmpula himself is first mentioned as a *sūtradhāra* and then in a later inscription he is referred to only as a *rūpakāra*. However, his merit and skill in his craft was enviable and the inscription eulogises him as one "who has seen the farthest shore of the ocean of various crafts".

In the inscriptions of the Kalachuris of Ratanpur branch, Dhanapati and Īśvara find mention as "skilful" and "best" *śilpīs*. Jātū is described as the knower of *śilpa-vijñāna*, the "science of *śilpa*". Chhītaku is also described similarly. He had an excellent pedigree, and is said to have belonged to the Kokāsa line of artists. The artists of the Kokāsa family "had attained a mastery in many crafts and (were) experts in the art of sculpture". Chhītaku's father Manmatha, and brother Maṇḍana, "a reader of scriptures", were far-famed artists in the fifteenth century and they claim their participation in the building of monuments of Ratanpur. The Kalachuri records (as well as others which are dated in the Kalachuri era) refer also to certain other *sūtradhāras*—Nāmadeva, Ratnadeva Dharaṇīdhara, and Nāmala.¹⁶⁹

The Paramāras of Malwa were one of the important dynasties of central India and their inscriptions indicate the existence of various categories of artists like *rūpakāra*, *śilpī*, *vijñānin* in their realm. References to some of them have been made earlier.

The Dynasties of Eastern India. In the eastern India, including the north-east and the south-eastern regions under the Somavāmśis and the Gangas, artists flourished under the rulers' patronage. In the inscriptions of the Pālas and Senas, the engravers and the artists who find mention are: Taṭaṭa; the *śilpī* Mahīdhara (son of Vikramāditya of Posali); the *śilpīs* Śaśīdhara, Pushyāditya (son of Chandrāditya) Śaśideva (son of Hriddeva), all of Posali; Amrit, the pupil of Indranīlamanī; Rāṇaka śūlāpaṇi, the "crest-jewel of the *śilpī*-guild of Vārendra"; Bhavanakadasa; and Tathāgatasara.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ For the above-mentioned artists, cf., *C.I.I.*, IV, pp. 441, 456, 556 f; 490; 515, 511, 543, 556 ff.; 561, 573, 579, 586, 652. For the other engraver-artists from central India, cf. *Bhandarkar's List*, 1329, 1876, 1887.

¹⁷⁰ cf. *Bhandarkar's List*, 1610, 1625, 1632, 1637, 1639, 1683, *E.I.*, XXIX, pp. 5, 13; XIX, 57.

The other ruling dynasties of eastern India—the Chandras, the Bhauma-Pālas, and the other kings of Assam—also had their own artists. Among these the most eminent seems to have been Someśvara who is addressed as a *śilpāvin-Māgadhaḥ*, “Magadhan artist” in the Silimpur stone inscription of the time of Jayapāladeva of Kamarupa.¹⁷¹ Incidentally, this inscription attests to the extent of mobility which the artist of Magadha achieved in going over to Kāmarūpa. And irrespective of this physical mobility, the artist claims his association with Magadha, a point stated by Tārānath about the individual artists and their loyalties to their schools. The other engraver-artists mentioned in the records of this region were Vinīta, a *takṣakāra*, Ratoka, and Madhusūdana.¹⁷²

The inscriptions of the Soma and the Ganga kings of Orissa and Andhra refer to several engravers and quite often they are titled as *viññānin*. This epithet, as pointed out earlier, is found in the cases of certain Chandella, Kalachuri, and Paramāra artists also. It is likely that it was applied to artists who were *viñña*, “proficient”, in *śilpa-viññāna*, and in rank, were superior to *śilpīs*, as seems to be suggested by the case of Pālhaṇa, a Chandella artist. Sircar defines *viññānin* as “an artisan; same as *śilpī*; epithet of an artisan who is usually the engraver of an inscription”.¹⁷³ This epithet is also found in cases of the engravers of the records relating to the Rāṇakas of Bihar and Orissa, to the chiefs of the former Baudh State of Orissa, as well as to the Soma and the Ganga Kings. In the galaxy of such artists occur such names as *vaṇik suvarṇakāra*, “goldsmith”, Śivanāga, the son of Paṇḍi; Lokanāth; Harivardhana.¹⁷⁴ The inscriptions of the Somas of Orissa refer to Samgrāma, the son of Rayaṇa Ojjha; to the *viññānin* Mādhava, the son of Vasu; to the *thakkura* Panaka; to the *viññānins* Vasuka, Madhumanthana, Śankhuka, Vaheru, and Mangaka,¹⁷⁵ etc. The records of the Ganga kings likewise offer several names

¹⁷¹ Bhandarkar's List., 1727.

¹⁷² Ibid., 2062, 1519.

¹⁷³ Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 373.

¹⁷⁴ Bhandarkar's List, 2055, 2102; E.I., XXIX, 219.

¹⁷⁵ Bhandarkar's List, 1557, 1560, 1565, 1567-69; E.I., XXXIII, 268. It is likely that artisans lived in their well-defined localities, consisting of lanes and streets, cf., Sircar, D.C., E.I., XXXIII, 273.

of the engravers who sometimes enjoyed position of authority in the administrative system. For instance, there is a reference to an engraver Sarvachandra who was the son of a *bhogika* Chandichandra; or the *akṣāśālin*, "goldsmith" Khaṇḍimalla who is sometimes mentioned as a *sāmanta*, a "feudatory chief".¹⁷⁶ The Ganga records also refer to a *śilpī* Lokāyī; to *viññānin* Devapila; to *sūtradhāras* Nāmakāñcheyemācharin and Śivakara; to the *tāmrakāra*, "brazier", Pannadi-rāṇā; and to artisans without any such title like Karaki Mentoja.¹⁷⁷

The Dynasties of Western India. Some scholars have defined certain strains of style in the temple architecture of India, and have tried to fix them within a reasonable chronological framework.¹⁷⁸ The exercise could be carried further by including the evolution of sculptures within those strains of architectural growth. It has been suggested that in the western region the scheme of architectural and sculptural compositions tends to conform to certain texts such as *Vāstusāra* and *Vāstuvidyā*.¹⁷⁹ The epigraphic evidence available, seems to confirm this supposition. It is likely that monuments raised over the centuries in this area, as well as others conformed to the prevalent traditions of *śilpa* which at some point of time were recorded in the form of canonical texts such as above. For instance, a Chittorgarh fragmentary inscription of the time of the Guhila King Kumbhakarna¹⁸⁰ specifies various types of pillars and quotes two authorities, Jaya and Aparājita, on the subject. There is some evidence available about the *sūtradhāras* of the time of Kumbhakarna to whose time the above inscription belongs. These *sūtradhāras*, Jaita and his five sons referred to earlier, were responsible for constructing temples, a fort, and other edifices for Kumbhakarna. In these constructions the canons available might have been made use of. An inscription of the

¹⁷⁶ Bhandarkar's List, 2048; E.I., XXX, 26.

¹⁷⁷ Bhandarkar's List, 1091, 2068, 2066, 1526, E.I., XXXI, 248 f. (line 154); XXX, 26.

¹⁷⁸ Dhaky, M.A., *Bulletin of the American Academy of Benaras*, I, p. 35 and notes.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Bhandarkar's List, 1860.

reign of the Guhila King Rāyamalla of Mendapāṭa branch, refers to the *sūtradhāras* Govinda and Isaṁde, the son of *sūtradhāra* Maṇḍana.¹⁸¹ It is not certain whether this Maṇḍana was the same as the composer of several *śilpa* texts, but it does indicate a tendency amongst the artisans, following a particular school, naming the members of their family after the progenitor of the school. This too would suggest a compatibility of schools of artists with the canons of *śilpa* prevalent in the regions of their currency.

In the records of western India, reference to the *sūtradhāras* abound and the information corresponds to the prolific building-activity in the region. In the records of the Chālukya (Vaghela) rulers of Gujarat are several references to the *sūtradhāras* and their patrons. We know of Bhimadeva II and his *sūtradhāra* Ālaḍa; of Mahārāja Vīra-Dhavaladeva and his *sūtradhāra* Kālaḍa, the son of Prahlada-Govinda; of Pūṇasimha the son Nāhaḍa.¹⁸² The similarity in the names of these artists suggests the possibility of existence of the same family of artists serving successive masters.

The epigraphs of the time of the Guhilas of Rajasthan similarly, have references to the *sūtradhāras* existing parallel to the kings of the dynasty. The Paldi inscription of Guhila Arisimha (V.S. 1173) refers to the *sūtradhāra* Kesarin. This record also mentions building of a temple at Paldi. It was consecrated on completion by an astrologer and had an officer-in-charge for general arrangements relating to the construction.¹⁸³ The Chirwa *praśasti* of Samarasimha was "engraved by Kelisimha with further help from *śilpī* Delhaṇa".¹⁸⁴ Besides these artisans, there were others also, like Sajjana; the *sūtradhāra* Karmasimha; and *sūtradhāra* Bhaila, the son of Rājuka. Bhaila is mentioned as the engraver of the Chatsu inscription of the Guhila Bālāditya, in which there is a reference to the raising of Murārī temple.¹⁸⁵

The *sūtradhāras* working under the Chāhmāna rulers of Naḍḍula, Śākambharī, and Raṇathambhor were eminent in

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 1536.

¹⁸² Ibid., 452, 491, 577, 611.

¹⁸³ E.I., XXX, 8 f.

¹⁸⁴ Bhandarkar's List, 579.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 583, 610, 1537.

their work. There is definite evidence in case of some of them regarding their contribution to the architectural activity. The Nadlai stone inscription of the Naḍḍula Chāhmāna King Kelhaṇa refers to the building of a *maṇḍapa*, an *akṣasama*, and *dāma* in the temple of Bhivaḍeśvara. This work was done by Pāhini the son of *sūtradhāra* Mahāḍuā whose wife was named Jasadevī. In this work, Pāhini was assisted by the *sūtradhāras* Mahīdarā and *Imdarāka*. The inscription further relates that these constructions cost 330 *drammas* and were made of stones and bricks.¹⁸⁶ In the inscriptions of the region reference is also made to the *sūtradhāra* Jisavarin, the son of Jisapāla; and to Bhīmasimha the brother of Gugga. Amongst the engravers, we have Goshasimha; Devala, the son of Nana; and Gajuka, the son of Trivikrama.¹⁸⁷ The *sūtradhāra* Chaṇḍeśvara is mentioned in an inscription of the Paramāras of Chandrāvati, which also refers to the *sūtradhāra* Palhaṇa. Chaṇḍeśvara himself was the son of Dhandhala and grandson of Kelhaṇa.¹⁸⁸ Kiradu in Rajasthan is famous for its Vaishṇava and Śaiva temples and a local inscription of the year 1161 refers to a *sūtradhāra* Jasodhara, who may have contributed in building of these temples.¹⁸⁹ In the inscription, however, he appears only as an engraver. Some other inscriptions from Rajasthan refer to Śilāśrī, son of Daṇḍi; to Bhīmasimha; and to Gajuka, son of the *sūtradhāra* Trivikrama.¹⁹⁰

The region-wise documentation of material concerning the *sūtradhāras* and the other categories of artisans clearly indicates that they were in great demand and were spread over in different parts of the country. This evidence is in no way small enough to be ignored. It clearly spells out the existence of classes of artists parallel to the kings and dynasties, and implicitly as well as explicitly suggests their interaction in the domain of art-activity. However, merely a study of the distribution-pattern of these artisans will not be useful in itself unless it is utilised to explain their rôle in the evolution of the

¹⁸⁶ *E.I.*, XI, 47. The *Sūtradhāra* Mādhava (Mahāḍuā) finds mention again in another record. cf., *E.I.*, XI, 67.

¹⁸⁷ *Bhandarkar's List*, 561, 581, 590, 592, 625.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 454, 488.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 564, 817, 623; *E.I.*, XXXI, 54; XIX, 52.

styles in their respective regions. With a documentation on these lines, attempts at relating the distinctive features of edifices with the artisans of the regions will be necessary. Such studies on a micro-level may help in establishing the advent and growth of distinctive styles and their different strains in which the interaction of the canons of art and their practitioners as well as their correspondence or the lack of it, will have to be precisely made out. As it happens, various field studies have usually attempted to establish a synchronism of the canons and monuments to the degrees possible without seeking to define the contributions of artisans who, manually and through their skill, were instrumental in flowering of the art-activity. In the wider perspective of defining the parallel or linear growth of art-activity, reinforced with its distinct or hybrid idioms and mannerism, it is necessary to comprehend the practitioners of the craft and their total role.

Chapter Three

Artists as Depicted in Reliefs

THIS chapter deals with more of the panels in which artists have been depicted as engaged in their work. Some such panels have already been described in the previous chapters, particularly the one from Bharhut. Two such panels are known from Khajuraho. Of these, one on a wall of a side-temple in the Lakṣmaṇeśvara temple complex, represents a scene of a *śilpīśālā*, "artisan's workshop", where the chief-*śilpī* is shown sitting surrounded by smaller figures of the apprentices. While the *śilpī* engraves on a slab of stone, with rapt attention, his apprentices surrounding him seem to be watching his action (Plate II). In the other panel, now preserved in the Khajuraho Museum, the *śilpī* is depicted as engaged in giving the required shape to a block of stone, on which he is shown seated. He holds a pick in his left hand and his raised right hand holds hammer intended to depict the motion required for hammering. His torso is drawn and taut and conveys the feeling of action meant here. Immediately behind him is a female figure, defaced, looking at the action. There are two more figures behind her. In front of the *śilpī* are six figures of *karmikas*, "labourers", carrying a finished block of stone, probably a capital of a pillar, which is suspended with ropes from a pole shown across the shoulders of the labourers. Behind the labourers is a couple in an amorous pose, intended for

decoration of the panel. The couple do not seem to have any bearing on the rest of the composition (Plate III).

A panel from the Surya temple of Konark in Orissa has been identified by Bhattacharya as representing a community of artists along with the King Narasimhavarmana. Khandalavala, however, disagrees with this identification and refers to it as a depiction of the King with a community of poets and writers of his court.¹

¹ Khandalawala, K. J., *Lalit Kala*, 8, p.88.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF THE

EMPEROR OF THE

WESTERN

EMPIRE

BY

JOHN

WILKINS

Appendix

The History of Image Makers According to Taranath*

IN THE ancient period, the human artists possessed miraculous power and their artistic creations were astounding. In the Vinayavastu etc., it is clearly said that the statues made and pictures drawn by them created the illusion of being the real objects. For about a hundred years after the parinirvāṇa of the Teacher, there were many artists like them.

As afterwards there was none of them any more, the celestial artists appeared in human guise and made eight wonderful images for worship in Magadha, like those of the Mahābodhi and Mañjuśrīdubhīśvara. The chaityas of the eight sacred places and the inner boundry walls of Vajrāsana were built by the Yakṣa artists during the period of Aśoka and the Nāga artists built many (images) during the time of Nāgarjuna.

The (images) thus made by the Devas, Nāgas and Yakṣas created the illusion of the real objects for many years. In the later period, under the influence of time such creations were no more and there remained practically none with the knowledge of the technique concerned.

After that, for a long time there developed the traditions of different artistic techniques depending of the individual talents of various artists. There remained no uniform tradition of the technique (of image-making).

Later on, during the period of king Buddhapaṅkṣa there lived an artist called Bimbasāra, who produced the most wonderful architectural sculptures and paintings: these could be compared to those of the celestial artists of the earlier period.

Numerous artists became his followers. This artist was born in Magadha. Therefore, the artists following his school were said to belong to the school of the madhya-deśa art, wherever they might have been born.

During the period of king Śīla, there was an extraordinarily skilled icon-maker called Śrīgadhara, who was born in the region of Maru. He made many sculptures and paintings in the tradition of the Yakṣas. The school following his technique is known as the school of old western art.

* From *Tārānath's History of Buddhism in India*, edited by D. P. Chattopadhyaya.

During the time of king Devapāla and Śrī Dharmapāla, there lived a highly skilled artist called Dhīman in the Vārendra region. His son was called Bitpala. These two followed the tradition of the Nāga artists and practised various techniques like those of metal-casting, engraving and painting. The tradition of the technique of the father became different from that of the son. The son used to live in Bhaṁgāla. The cast-images made by the followers of both of them were called the eastern icons, wherever those followers might have been born.

In painting, the tradition of those that followed the father was called the tradition of eastern paintings, while those who followed the son were known as belonging to the school of the madhya-deśa painting, because this was widespread mainly in Magadha.

In Nepal also the earlier tradition of art was similar to the old western (style of Indian art). The paintings and bell-metal castings (of Nepal) of the middle period are said to belong to the Nepalese school, though these resemble the eastern (Indian art). No distinct (tradition) is found (in Nepal) in the later period.

In Kashmir also was followed the tradition of the early central art and of the old western (Indian art). In the later period one called Hasurāja introduced new technique both in sculpture and painting. It is now called the art of Kashmir.

Skilled image-makers abounded in every place wherever the Law of the Buddha flourished. In the regions that came under the influence of the mlecchas declined the art of image making and the regions under the influence of the tirthikas had only inferior image-makers. That is why, practically nothing survives today of the tradition of those mentioned above.

In Pu-khan and southern India still thrives the tradition of image-making. But it is clear that their tradition of art did not reach Tibet in the past.

In the south, there exist numerous followers of the three, namely Jaya, Parajaya and Vijaya.

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