

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the scope and method of present study. It begins with a detailed statement of the problem investigated, which is followed by the justification of this work for advancement of knowledge. After this, a detailed history of research conducted in this region and status of present problem is discussed. This is followed by a statement regarding the sources of data and method of procedure of this research. Finally, a short summary of results achieved by this work is presented.

The study envisaged in this thesis deals with the Buddhist monuments of Devanimori. These monuments have been unearthed by excavations of four seasons conducted by The Department of Archaeology and Ancient History of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, from 1959 to 1963. This thesis undertakes mainly the study of the problems of art and architecture of the excavated structures such as stupas, viharas, and other antiquities yielded by these excavations, and which are, therefore, related with this subject.

The term 'Buddhist' is implied to convey that this site belonged to the Buddhist religion. The term 'monuments' is used in a wide connotation. Under the head of this term are classified not only the structural antiquities of the

excavated area, but other antiquities from the vicinity of Devanimori^{also} which are related to the subject under investigation, either directly or indirectly. Some minor antiquities from these excavations are also included in this study because they are helpful for relative chronological perspective.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES :

The foremost objective of this thesis is to make a detailed study of the Art and Architecture of the Stupa, the Vihara and other structures. The study of these monuments includes their characteristics and chronological position, as well as origin and extension of their style. To put it in a nutshell the origin, evolution and expansion of this style ^{are} ~~is~~ studied.

For chronological study evidences of stratigraphy supported by inscriptions, coins, pottery and other antiquities are considered reliable. Stylistic studies and comparative analysis of architecture as well as art are also considered equally reliable. Actually, it is planned to combine the concrete evidence of stratified archaeological antiquities and stylistic study in such a way that valid conclusions could be drawn with utmost possible accuracy.

JUSTIFICATION OF PROBLEM :

The study of these monuments was necessary, or rather imperative, because it opened a new chapter in archaeology

and art-history of not only Gujarat but of Western India also. The discovery of such a site which revealed not only the Buddhist Stupa but the reliquary casket of Dashabala (Buddha)¹ also, has considerable importance. Moreover, this study is significant from the view point of Art-history, because it is for the first time that a structure having Gandharan influence in Western India has provided an epigraphic evidence. The inscription on the casket can help solve the chronological problem of the later Gandharan Art and can ultimately settle the problem of southern extension of this art from its original centre in North Western Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, fresh material of terracotta art belonging to early centuries of Christian Era demands a special study.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS :

For the sake of clear understanding and a convenient approach, this thesis is divided into various chapters on such a plan that first the geographical and historical background of the problem is described and then gradually various aspects of the problem proper are tackled.

Chapter II deals with geography and political history of Gujarat in general and this region (Devanimori) in particular. It tries to explain how the geographic factors have affected the political history, cultural development and external contacts of this region. Thus, this chapter provides a good background of the whole study. After this

background, chapter III deals with excavations. This chapter gives a detailed account of how these monuments were exposed by excavations. At the end of the chapter, a short summary of the results of the excavations is given. The detailed studies of architecture and art of Devanimori are incorporated in chapters IV and V. These chapters form the nucleus of the whole study. Chapter VI describes the caskets, in details, and other antiquities such as pottery, coins etc., in general. Chapter VII discusses the problems of contacts and co-relations of the architectural and art traditions of Devanimori. Chapter VIII is the concluding chapter where conclusions are drawn from the study as a whole. The appendix deals with the study of a brass statuette of Atlas discovered from a nearby site about 200 yards from the excavated area.

PREVIOUS WORK :

The archaeological importance of Devanimori and Shamalaji was first brought to the notice of the archaeologists and art-historians by late Shri P.A.Inamdar, Director of Public Instructions and Archaeology of the then Idar State (North Gujarat)². His small informative book named "Some Archaeological finds in the Idar State", published in 1936, brought to light the sculptural wealth of this area. His work introduced to the archaeologists the rich material of the region. Shri Inamdar noted that he collected these sculptures from the Shamalaji area. He further mentioned that "In November 1935 some jaw bones, a shoulder blade and pieces of ribs of

some early giant or animal were unearthed near Devanimori - a village in the vicinity of Shamalaji"³. No other reference to Devanimori is made in this publication. Later on, after some time, Dr.H.Goetz visited the area to the west of Shamalaji (The Devalio Dharo). He noted that by the side of a ravine "In the midst of the jungle, along a small brooklet coming down the hill side there are a large number of small brick temples with usual simply moulded Gupta plinths and a plain rectangular Cella....."⁴. After the merger of Idar State with the State of Bombay, the sculptures collected by Shri P. A. Inamdar, (which were deposited at Himatnagar) were transferred to Baroda Museum where they were studied in details. Dr.Goetz noted that some of these sculptures were collected from the vicinity of Devanimori. He studied these sculptures in details and assigned them to 6th century A.D. He classified these sculptures as 'barbaric', especially the figures of Ganas with caps resembling Central Asian types and obviously betraying Huna influence. He thought that these sculptures were carved in the style of fifth century A.D. in 'Baroque' style following the classical Gupta art. Further, he suggested some Iranian influence in them.⁵

Dr.U.P.Shah carried this study in further details. He made an analytic study of treatment of human figures and their costumes as well as ornaments etc. He compared these sculptures with other known specimens of Gupta period from Deogarh, Bhumara and other sites. On stylistic analysis, interpretation and

comparison he dated these sculptures to fifth century A.D.⁶. In his latest publication "Sculptures from Shamalaji and Roda", he suggested that there was an 'Ancient Western School of Art' which was referred to by the famous Buddhist scholar Taranath⁷. He suggested that "It would be better to assign these sculptures to the latest phase of Kshatrapa rule in Western India, or better to the age of transision from Kshatrapa art to Gupta art"⁸. He even pointed out that "The influence of Gandhara as far south as North Gujarat is not impossible. It went as far east as Mathura during the Kushana rule. During the rule of the Western Kshatrapas, contact with Gandhara in the north or north west can easily be understood".

But what appeared 'Baroque' to Dr.Goetz in some of the best sculptures from Shamalaji was "in fact" a harmonious blending of the Kshatrapa - Kushana traditions and indigenous oriental Indian tradition of Bharhut Sanchi and Mathura with the Gupta ideal of spiritual awakening and bliss.⁹

Dr.Shah even suggested to the present writer the possibility of rich archaeological sites near Devanimori. In his above mentioned book, he laid much emphasis on the importance of an archaeological excavation on the mounds of Devanimori.

With all these valuable information about a rich archaeological wealth, it became imperative for the present writer to

explore the area around Devanimori as a part of his Ph.D. thesis. Subsequently, this site was explored by the present writer in 1956-57. A lofty conical mound and a low rectangular one with a depression (90' x 90') in its centre - both formed on the ruins of some burnt-brick structures - were conspicuous. On examining their sections, it was felt that the conical mound might turn out to be a solid structure - perhaps a Stupa. The close proximity of such conical and a rectangular structures hinted at a possibility of a Stupa and a Vihara. Moreover, the surrounding area was also strewn with brickbats and potsherds. The brick measurements (16" to 17" x 10" to 11" x $2\frac{1}{2}$ " to $2\frac{3}{4}$ ") of these structures corresponded to the brick measurements of the Kshatrapa structures exposed in excavations at Baroda¹⁰, Akota¹¹, Vadnagar¹² etc. On the basis of these preliminary evidences, it was assumed that this site might belong to the Kshatrapa period. But as no direct evidence was available to support this theory, it was decided to tackle the problem by an archaeological excavation.

The urgency of such an excavation was imperative because this area was going to be submerged by the Shyama Sarovara (Reservoir) Project of river Meshvo. Therefore, to settle this problem, excavations at Devanimori were undertaken by The Department of Archaeology and Ancient History of The M. S. University of Baroda. The excavations were conducted by late Prof. B. Subbarao, Dr.R.N.Mehta and the present writer. The

preliminary results of these excavations were announced in the annual numbers of Ancient India¹³. A preliminary note on the study of these monuments was published by the present writer in the Journal of The Oriental Institute, Baroda¹⁴. The excavations of last season (1963) culminated in the discovery of the relic casket of Dashabala (Buddha). Results of this discovery were published in the Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda¹⁵, and Gujarati periodicals Kumāra¹⁶ and Vidyapītha¹⁷.

During the course of excavations, Dr.R.N.Mehta re-explored the whole valley and located about twenty earthen bunds with rubble and brick revetment. On the basis of brick measurements, sculptures on the site and other relative evidences, he established that "this tradition is at least as old as the first millenium of Christian Era¹⁸."

DATA AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE :

As already mentioned earlier, this thesis deals with the Buddhist remains of Devanimori along with other important antiquities from this site which are related to this subject. Therefore, the data of this thesis are comprised of all explored and excavated material from Devanimori and its vicinity. The main structural remains such as Stupa, Vihara I, Vihara II, apsidal ended structure, votive stupas and protection walls are studied in this thesis with all their functional and decorative features. This is accomplished by first hand field

study on the site and study of their plans and elevations. The technical details of the construction such as types of bricks, masonry and bonding etc., are also tackled.

The inner construction of the Stupa is studied in complete details by putting the details of every course in a tabular chart. This chart was essential because every course was to be studied with details of its level, alignment and bonding of brick courses and antiquities if found any. This technique of recording was developed by Dr.R.N.Mehta, which proved to be very helpful.

This recording provided a clear picture of not only the constructional features but also the phases of construction and some technical aspects of masonry.

The method of study adopted in art pieces such as Buddha images, arches, medallions, pilasters, capitals etc., is based on forms, their components, and their decorations. Decorative features are studied from view point of basic motifs and their patterns, variations and compositions. This is done by two methods. Origin of every form is traced and its peculiarities are brought to light. This is followed by an analytic study of its decorative patterns etc., in a tabular form. After this, a comparative study is made. This gives a clear understanding of the distribution of all motifs. It also points out their peculiar positions, decorative value and functional purpose.

The terracotta Buddha images are first studied from view

point of general characteristics. The details of hairstyle, peculiarities of facial features and style of drapery are studied in further details. By this method, their characteristics are exposed and they can be classified into groups having peculiar common elements.

Besides these objects, coins, pottery, terracotta objects, metal objects and other miscellaneous finds are described and classified according to their form, function and characteristics.

The chronology and correlation of all the antiquities as well as monuments is based on stratigraphic evidence. For this purpose, procedure followed in archaeological studies has been adopted. The inscription on the relic casket provides most valuable information. Hence, its detailed study is done. The evidences of coins, pottery and other antiquities are also mustered in support of this epigraphic evidence.

The excavations of Devanimori revealed the remains of a big Mahayana Buddhist Stupa and Viharas belonging to early centuries of Christian Era. The excavations culminated in the discovery of the relic casket which contain^{ed} the relics of Buddha. The discovery of another Vihara (Vihara II) to the east of Vihara I and wide-spread archaeological site littered with brickbats and pot-sherds indicate that this site was a nucleus of Buddhist religion covering a wide area.

Thus, the present chapter provides a clear picture of the history of research and present status of the problem under investigation. The explanation of approach and method of procedure has clarified the form of the whole thesis.

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