



influenced India in this respect. On the whole the explanation of the phenomenon is probably the prosaic fact that the trap rocks which overlie the country and form the hill sides everywhere in the West are exceptionally well suited for the purpose. They lie everywhere horizontally. Are singularly uniform in their conformation, and have alternating strata of harder and softer rocks which admit of caves being interpolated between them with singular facility, and they are everywhere impervious to moisture.

With such a material it is little wonder that once it was suggested, the inhabitants of the Western Ghâts early seized upon the idea of erecting permanent quasi eternal temples for the practice of the rites of their new religion, in substitution for the perishable wooden structures they had hitherto employed, and once the fashion was adopted we ought not to be surprised it became so generally prevalent nor that it continued in use so long.

At the same time it may be observed that under the circumstances the amount of labour expended in excavating a rock-cut temple in so suitable a material is probably less than would be required to erect a similar building in quarried stone. If we take, for instance, even such an elaborate temple as the Kailasa or Elurâ, it will be found that the cubic contents of the temples left standing is about equal to the amount of material quarried out of the pit in which it stands. It is at the same time evident that it would be much less expensive to chip and throw out to spoil this amount of material, than to quarry it at a distance and carry it to the temple, and then hew it and raise it to the place where it was wanted. The amount of carving and ornament being, of course, the same in both cases. It is not so easy to make a comparison in the case of a Chaitya cave or a vihara, but on the whole it is probable that excavating them in the rock would generally prove cheaper than building them on the plain. If this is so, it is evident that the quasi eternity of the one offered such advantages in such a climate over any ephemeral structure they could erect elsewhere, that we ought not to be surprised at its general adoption. The proof that they exercised a wise discretion in doing this, lies in the fact that though we have in the west of India nearly a thousand rock-cut temples belonging to the Buddhist, Brahmanical, and Jaina religions, we have only one or two structural examples erected in the same region at the very end of the period of time to which these caves belong.



There are in Western India upwards of fifty groups of rock-excavations, belonging to the three great sects,—Buddhists, Brahmans, and Jains,—and of these the great majority are within the limits of the Bombay Presidency, or on its immediate borders. Besides these there are a few insignificant groups in Sindh, the Panjáb, Beluchistán, and Afghanistán.

Geographically the Cave-Temples are distributed very irregularly, but the principal localities in which they exist may be enumerated as follows:—

1. In the province now known as Kâthiâwar—the ancient Saurâshtrâ, forming the peninsular portion of Gujarat, between the Gulfs of Khambay and Kachh,—there are about half-a-dozen groups of caves scattered along the ranges of hills that run parallel to its southern coast. In these groups there are about 140 separate excavations.

2. In the islands of Salsette and Elephanta close to Bombay there are at least 130 caves,—all within 9 miles north or south of the head of the Bombay harbour at Trombay, where stood the old town of Chémula—probably the great mart known to the early Alexandrian merchants as Semylla or Timula.<sup>1</sup>

3. Not quite 80 miles from Bombay as the crow flies, a little to the north of east, is the old city of Junnar—probably the Tagara of Ptolemy and the *Periplus*,—round which are several groups containing not less than 120 separate caves, while at Harischandragad, Pulu Sonala, and Nânâghat, about 16 miles to the west of it, there are together about 25 more.

4. About 50 miles east of Bombay and 42 south-west of Junnar is Kârlé, where there exists one of the finest Buddhist Cave Temples in India, and within a radius of little more than 20 miles from it are about 60 caves, several of them of special interest.

5. A line drawn southwards from Poona nearly parallel to the Western Ghâts or Sahyâdri Hills, passes through groups at Sirwal Wâi, and Karhâd, embracing about 80 caves.

6. Along the Konkan, on the western side of the same range, between the hills and the sea, at Kudâ, Mhâr, Chipalun, &c. the number of caves may be estimated at 60 more.

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<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy (*Geog.* VII. i. 6; VIII. xxvi. 3) writes Σήμελλα, and (I. xvii. 4) Τίμουλα; and the author of the *Periplus Mar. Æryth.* (§ 53) Σημέλλα; see below, p. 205.)