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elaborately-carved gateways, were added to Stūpas 1 and 3.

The political vicissitude which northern India went through immediately before and after the Christian era, when the Scytho-Parthians and Kushans invaded and annexed a large part of the land, had perhaps its repercussions at Sanchi as well, resulting in a slackening of structural activities. The establishment of a foreign power in the Malwa region under the Kshatrapas, engaged in chronic warfare, hardly provided any incentive for the dormant workshop. However, like the contemporary Buddhist centres of north and south-east India, Sanchi freed itself, during the period, from the earlier aniconic tradition, but its contribution to the evolution of the image of Buddha was nil, and it depended for such images on imports from Mathura.¹

After a prolonged period of stagnation and lassitude under the Kshatrapas, there was a revival of sculptural activity at Sanchi during the reign of the Guptas who, after conquering the Kshatrapas (*circa* A D 400), provided peace and prosperity essential for the growth of artistic pursuits. The discovery of a few images in

¹Of such imported Mathura images, mention may be made of a seated Bodhisattva image dated in the year 28 of the Kushan king Vāsishka (*Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sanchi*, no. A 82), the pedestal with feet of a standing image containing an inscription dated in the year 22 of Vaskushāṇa (*Muts. Cat.*, no. A 83) and the fragment of a pedestal with one foot of an image bearing an inscription which records the installation of Maitreya (*Mus. Cat.*, no. A 84). The first two (Acc. nos. 2715 and 2785) are on display in the Museum.

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the Mathura sandstone, executed in the early Gupta tradition (*Mus. Cat.*, no. A 19, Acc. no. 2791; and Acc. no. 2790), proves that Mathura continued, even in the fourth century A D, to meet the demand of the clientele of Sanchi. But soon afterwards the local art of Sanchi once more came to the fore, and to this period belong the four images of Buddha seated under canopies against the berm of Stūpa 1 facing the four entrances.¹ But even in the best days of the Guptas the figures of Buddha from the *ateliers* of Sanchi fell short, in standard and number, of their counterparts at such Buddhist centres as Sarnath.

The Gupta period, which ushered in a new epoch in the history of Indian temple-architecture, saw at Sanchi as well as resuscitation of structural activity. In Temple 17 (p. 50), which has withstood the ravages of time, we find one of the earliest Gupta temples noted for their well-balanced proportion, restraint in ornamentation and elegance.

After the glorious days of the Guptas centrifugal forces became once more rampant. And then came the shock of the Hūṇa invasions, which resulted in the seizure of a large part of western and central India by that tribe. But that occupation was short-lived, to be shattered by Yaśodharman's victory over

¹From the evidence of a record inscribed on a cross-bar of the ground balustrade of Stūpa 1, it is certain that the images were already installed before the Gupta year 131 (A D 450-51), when an endowment was made by the female lay-worshipper Harisvāminī in favour of the Buddhist community residing in the monastery of Kākanādabota as well as for maintaining lamps in the jewel-house and at the places of the four Buddhas.

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their chief Mihirakula in the first half of the sixth century.

On the ashes of the Gupta empire rose a number of small kingdoms, none of which was powerful enough to bring any large part of India under its aegis, till Harshavardhana (A D 606-647) achieved some sort of political unity in northern India. His espousal of the cause of Buddhism brought a fresh lease of life to that religion. The vestiges of the seventh and eighth centuries, which saw at Sanchi the building of several monasteries and temples, reveal a prosperous condition of the Buddhist community at the place. The number of the images of Buddha made during the period was fairly considerable; executed in late Gupta tradition, they, however, lack the charm and grace of their prototypes and are almost lifeless and mechanical.

After the death of Harsha, northern India once more became a prey to the ambitions of different dynasties. The Pratihāras, who had established themselves in the Malwa region by the eighth century, were followed by the Paramāras in the next century. But Sanchi seems to have been hardly affected by these political changes, as the existence of a number of medieval monasteries and temples testifies to a period of continued prosperity. Temple 45 (p. 53), for example, which is now a mere shell bereft of its original splendour, has the same architectural pompousness and exuberance of decoration as would characterize the contemporaneous north Indian architecture. From the find of such images like Vajrasattva and Mārīchī, it is abundantly clear that Vajrayāna did extend its roots here as well.