

Naganika's inscription at Naneghat:with special reference to Vedic sacrifices.

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In early lithic inscriptions, particularly those prior to Christian era, there are few records of the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. Of these Pu^oyamitra Œunga performed the Aœvamedha sacrifice,¹ and Khârvela performed the Râjasuya². In the later period we know that kings of dynasties like the Gupta, Vâkâtaka, Pallava, etc performed many *Sàuta* sacrifices. Of these, one of the most important is that of Queen Nâganikâ of the Satavahana dynasty, who engraved a large inscription in one of the caves at Naneghat.(Fig. 1A). Unfortunately, the inscription is extremely mutilated, but even then in the extant record there are references to nearly nineteen sacrifices. However, before dealing with the inscription, I shall briefly describe the environs and antiquarian remains at Naneghat.

The path which leads from Ghatghar towards Naneghat has a last milestone for Naneghat which is marked as 17 miles (27.2 km) from Junnar and 72 miles (115.2 km) from Pune, Maharashtra (India). On either side of this milestone, there are some ruined remains of modern buildings which were constructed in the last century. On the right side of the path, there is a large platform paved with astylar masonry. Near the parapet is a great jar (*rânjan*) hewn out of the rock. It is 1.52 m high with a large mouth. It is said that the toll-money was collected in the jar, but how far this is true cannot be ascertained. On the opposite hill is a small rock-cut shrine. To the southwest of the shrine are a number of rock-cut cisterns (Fig.1B).

There is another large, unfinished excavation near the above ruins or about 450 m to the southeast of the inscribed cave (Fig.2B).It reveals the beginning of a large cave. It has four pillars and one pilaster each on either side and is about 2.15 m high. The unfinished pillars on its front are squarish. The width of the excavation is 8.72 m which coincides with the main inscribed cave at the site, and suggests that the latter had pillars which in due course of time were ruined. There are five recesses and four pillars. The pillars are not separated from the rear wall as the excavation remains unfinished. The span between the two pillars shows that in each bay one craftsman could have easily carved the area allotted to him by the *sûtradhâra*. Thus in this excavation we can say that at least five craftsman may have worked. All this suggests how the division of labor might have been done at a cave site.

In front of the main cave and on the other side of the cliff of the pass, there are two minor unfinished excavations. The large one is an unfinished hall 6.70 m wide and 5.15 m deep. The small excavation to the left of the above, which is filled with silt, is probably a cistern. Along the zigzag winding path of the pass which descends into the Konkan region (in the Thane district), there are several rock-cut cisterns of which two are inscribed.