



MEDIEVAL SCULPTURES FROM DABHOI TALUKA, VADODARA DISTRICT, GUJARAT

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Abstract: *The present work documents, characterises and comments on the present condition of the sculptural remains found during the exploration of sites located in Dabhoi taluka of Vadodara district, in Gujarat. Forty sculptures, of various Brahmanical deities and hero stones were found from three sites, namely Sathod, Puda and Nada. The sculptures are made from sandstone and carved in relief. Stylistically, they can be dated to the medieval period ranging from tenth century C.E. to thirteenth century C.E.*

Keywords: *Dabhoi, Vaghela Brahmanical, Sathodara, Hero stones*

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Introduction

The Dabhoi taluka (22°8'2.39"N, 73°24'55.30"E) is located in the eastern part of Vadodara district, Gujarat (Fig.1.11) It was historically known as Darbhavati and is first mentioned in the sixth century C.E. astronomical treatise *Romaka Siddhanta*. The town and its surroundings were under Chavda, and later under the Chaulukya rulers who built few structures and temples from the ninth century C.E. In the thirteenth century C.E., the town came under Vaghela rule. (Saxena: 2000: 354-368).

During the course of exploration, forty sculptures of various Brahmanical deities and hero stones were found from Puda, Nada and Sathod (Fig.1.2). The sites of Puda and Nada have not been previously reported, whereas Sathod was previously explored by Prof. R.N. Mehta (Mehta: 1957:92). All the sculptures are made of sandstone and carved in relief like the majority of the sculptures previously documented in the region.

Earlier Explorations

In 1954, Prof. R.N.Mehta of The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda explored and reported Prehistoric, Historic and Medieval sites in Dabhoi *taluka* as part of his Ph.D. thesis. He was able to report nine sites. (Mehta:1957: 92-98)

The state Archaeology department of Gujarat during their explorations brought to light ten new sites in the Dabhoi *taluka* (Joshi:1993: 16). G.T. Shindey and his assistants, from the excavation branch of Archaeological Survey of India, Vadodara Circle, discovered remains of Medieval period belonging to the Katakchuri rule from Kuvarwada (Shankar:1997: 32). Earlier scholars have till now reported a total of twenty sites from the Dabhoi *taluka* details of which are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Sites reported by Prof. R.N. Mehta

Site	Time period of remains
Dabhoi	Medieval
Chandod	Medieval; Late Medieval
Banaiya	Medieval
Bhilapur	Medieval
Anguthan	Medieval
Sathod	Historic; Medieval
Karnali	Prehistoric; late medieval
Thuvavi	Medieval
Ten Talav	Medieval

Table 2: Sites reported in Indian Archaeological Review (1987-88; 1992-93)

Site	Time period of remains
Bamboj	Medieval
Bhimpura	Prehistoric
Karali	Medieval
Karner	Prehistoric
Kukad	Late Medieval
Naranpura	Medieval
Navi Mangrol	Medieval
Pargam	Medieval
Sitapur	Prehistoric; Medieval
Vadaj	Medieval; late Medieval
Kuvarwada	Medieval

Site Description

Sathod is located (22°5'19.76"N, 73°22'56.82"E) seven km. south of Dabhoi. Prof. R.N. Mehta

earlier reported a group of 20 memorial stones. Photographic documentation and characterisation of the hero stones was not done. It is considered to be the place of origin, of the branch of the Nagar Brahmins known as the Sathodara Nagars. It was destroyed by invaders in the fourteenth century C.E. (Mehta 1957: 92)

Six sculptures, previously not reported were found during the current exploration. Four of these sculptures are located outside the modern Hatkeshwar Mahadev temple (22°5'20.52"N, 73°23'6.37"E). One sculpture each of Brahma and Mahisasurmardini and two sculptures of Lajja Gauri can be identified, one of which is highly eroded. Two sculptures of Ganesha are located in a field, 400 meters north-east of the village (22°5'43.50"N, 73°23'17.82"E). The field is currently under cultivation (Fig.1.3).

Puda is located (22°10'13.55"N, 73°22'33.96"E) 7.5 km. north-west of Dabhoi. Six sculptures and four hero stones are found on a mound 250 meters south of the village. The mound has been destroyed due to cultivation and the sculptures are presently found at three different locations in close proximity, at places which are not cultivated (Fig.1.4). Mound 1 (22°10'5.55"N, 73°22'42.29"E) has a Shiva *linga*, along with sculpted panels usually found in temples and two eroded sculptures (Fig.1.5). The mound itself has bricks measuring 25cm x 20cm x 6cm. Mound 2 (22°10'4.11"N, 73°22'41.67"E) is also situated on the same agricultural field (Fig.1.6). It has the sculptures of Hanuman, Kubera and four hero stones. Mound 3 (22°9'55.25"N, 73°22'53.29"E) is located slightly south-east of the previous two mounds; only one sculpture of Mahisasuramardini has been found from it and from the same mound bricks of 38cm x 28cm x 8cm were found (Fig.1.7).

Nada is located (22°7'35.90"N, 73°22'9.09"E) 5 km west of Dabhoi. Four sculptures made of sandstone are found in a closed space behind a small Shiva temple, which itself is located in the complex of a modern and bigger Shiva temple named Bhutnath (22°7'40.59"N,

73°22'20.99"E) (Fig.1.9). The sculptures are in a bad state of preservation. Two sculptures of Vishnu and one sculpture each of Shiva and Ganesha were found.

Vishnu

Vishnu iconography shows him either in standing pose, seated in a *yoga* posture, or reclining. The items he holds in his four hands are lotus (*padma*), mace (*kaumodaki*), *chakra* (*Sudarshan*), conch shell (the *Panchajanya Sankh*). The hands which hold these items vary, giving rise to twenty-four combinations of iconography, each combination representing a special form of Vishnu. (Rao:1914: 227)

The sculpture found in Nada is eroded and only some of its features can be identified (Fig.1.10). It measures 40cm x 15cm x 60cm. In this statue the upper right hand holds a mace and the upper left hand holds a *chakra*, whose top part is broken. Other features which can be noticed in the sculpture are crown (*kiritamukuta*), ear rings (*kundala*), necklace (*hara*) and a garland of flowers (*vanamala*).

Among the twenty-four forms mentioned, in two of them (Trivikrama and Upendra), Vishnu is shown holding mace and *chakra* in upper right and left hands respectively (Rao: 1914: 229). They differ in the items held by lower hands, which is not possible to ascertain in this sculpture as the lower hands are broken from the elbow.

A small sculpture of Vishnu (Fig.1.11) measures 38cm x 10cm x 32cm. This sculpture is in even a worse condition than the previous one. Vishnu stands in a *tribhanga* posture (body bends at three points). On the right and the left side of the Vishnu, Shridevi and Bhudevi can be seen respectively. None of the items carried in the hands are identifiable, however, *kiritamukuta* and *vanamala* can be seen.

Ganesha

In the case of the seated image, Ganesha should have his left leg folded and resting on a seat, while the right leg has to be bent and make it rest

vertically on a seat. His image may have four, six, eight, ten or even sixteen arms; but the majority of such images have only four arms. On the chest has to be thrown a snake in the form of the sacred thread (*vajnopavita*); and another snake should serve as a belt going round the belly. He carries axe in the upper right arm, his own broken tusk in the lower right arm, a sweet in his lower left arm which he is shown as tasting using his trunk, which is turned towards left and a noose in his upper left arm (Rao:1914: 49-50). The sculpture of the Ganesha found from Nada measures 35cm x 18cm x 40cm. Due to erosion, none of the objects which Ganesha holds can be identified. There are four attendees, two on either side of the sculpture (Fig.1.12).

Two sculptures of Ganesha found from Sathod (Fig.1.13) are partially broken. One of them measures 55cm x 20cm x 70cm, and the other measures 55cm x 20cm x 220cm. In the smaller sculpture the battle-axe in the upper right arm can be seen. In both of the sculptures, a sweet probably jackfruit or mango can be seen in lower right arm. In the bigger sculpture (on right), Ganesha can be seen sitting on the pedestal.

Durga Mahisasurmardini

Mahisasurmardini is a form of goddess Durga, in which she is shown killing Mahisasura, with various weapons wielded with her eight or hands. These include the *chakra*, conch, bow, arrow, sword, javelin, *trisula*, shield, and a noose. The sculpture however not always shows all the hands and weapons, and varies in time and space. (Rao:1914: 345-346)

In Puda, the sculpture of Mahisasurmardini (Fig.1.14) is shown with four hands holding sword, *trisula*, shield and noose. The sword is held above her head, the *trisula* is used to kill the demon, shield is held by the upper left hand and noose by lower left hand. The headdress, necklace and earrings can be seen. The sculpture measures 60cm x 15cm x 95cm.

The items held in the sculpture of Mahisasurmardini from Sathod (Fig.1.15) are

similar to that of Puda. The sculpture found here measures 60cm x 15cm x 115cm. Here, the sculpture has been painted by the locals (Fig.1.15).

Hanuman

In Iconography, Hanuman is either shown independent or with the central characters of Rama, Sita and Lakshman. When shown with other characters, he is shown as kneeling down with Anjali *mudra*. When shown as an independent figure, he is shown as having two hands. In one he is holding mace and in the other he is holding the Hill containing the *Sanjivini* that saved Lakshman's life. Sometimes he is also shown as having eight hands and five faces, known as Panchmukhi Hanuman (Jones & Ryan: 2006: 177-178).

The Hanuman sculpture from Puda measures 58cm x 25cm x 100cm. Hanuman is only identifiable because of the tail. Right hand goes behind the head. Mace and mountain are not identifiable because of erosion. The sculpture is currently worshipped by the locals, who have rubbed ash all over the sculpture (Fig.1.16).

Kubera

Kubera is often depicted as a dwarf, a big belly adorned in golden clothes and ornaments, symbolizing his wealth. He wears an armour and a necklace down to his large belly. Kubera holds a mace, a pomegranate, or a money bag in his hand. He may also carry a sheaf of jewels or a mongoose with him. (Jones & Ryan: 2006: 250)

Kubera sculpture from Puda measures 65cm x 20cm x 90cm. Only certain features can be identified in the sculpture, as most of it is eroded. One can see the necklace around the neck and necklace which goes down to the belly. Headdress and earrings can also be seen (Fig.1.17).

Shiva

Shiva is worshipped in a number of anthropomorphic forms, as also in the symbol of Linga. The more common representation is the latter. Lingas are broadly divided into two classes, namely the *chala-lingas* (movable) and

the *achala-lingas* (immovable). (Rao:1916: 75)

The *achala-lingas* are according to the *Suprabhedagama*, classified under nine heads, namely the *Svayambhuva*, the *Purva*, the *Daivata*, the *Ganapataya*, the *Asura*, the *Sura*, the *Arsha*, the *Rakshasa*, the *Manusha*, the *Bana Linga*. (Rao:1916: 79)

The *manusha lingas* are made up of three parts, the lowest part is called *Brahmabhaga*, the central part is called the *Vishnubhaga* and the top most circular part is called the *Rudrabhaga*. The lengths of these parts vary with different classes within the *manusha linga*. Among these classes, in the *Varddhamana Linga* the proportion of the different sections of the *lingas* are in ascending order of caste. The ratios of 4:5:6 is prescribed for Brahmanas; 5:6:7 is prescribed for Kshatriyas; 6:7:8 is prescribed for Vaisyas and 7:8:9 is prescribed for the Sudras (Rao:1916: 86-88).

The diameter and height of the Shivalinga from Puda measures 90cm. The *Bhramabhaga* measures 24 cm, the *Vishnubhaga* measures 30 cm and the *Rudrabhaga* measures 36 cm. These measurements give the ratio of 4:5:6 which is a type of *Varddhamana Linga* among the *Manusha Linga* and are prescribed for the Brahmins. Along with the *Shivalinga*, four fragments of sculpted panels and two sculptures of unidentified deities has been found (Fig.1.18). These indicate that this place might have been a Shiva temple.

Uma Maheswarmurti is one of the anthropomorphic forms of Shiva in which he is joined by his consort Uma. This form of Shiva is also called Gauri Shankar. He carries *trisula* in his right hand. One of the left hands should be thrown on the shoulder of Uma and there should be a snake in the other left hand. Umadevi should have her right hand thrown in embrace on the shoulder of Shiva and should hold a mirror in the left hand. (Rao:1916: 132-133)

The sculpture of Gauri Shankar found from Nada (Fig.1.19) measures 45cm x 15cm x 40cm. In the sculpture, out of four hands of Shiva only his upper left arm holding *trisula* can be identified. Umadevi is only partially identifiable.

Lajja Gauri

Lajja Gauri is a lotus-headed Hindu goddess associated with abundance, fertility, sexuality and modesty. She is sometimes shown in a birthing posture, but without outward signs of pregnancy. She is shown with stretched out hands holding flower buds. She wears a necklace on her neck. (Shivaram: 1987:12)

Two sculptures of Lajja Gauri from Sathod are highly eroded and therefore hard to identify. One of them has been painted by the locals. Both of the sculpture measures 55cmx15cmx100cm. Both of them show the goddess in birthing posture with a lotus head and wearing a necklace. Her hands are either broken or not represented in the sculpture (Fig.1.20 & Fig.1.21).

Brahma

Brahma is shown standing on a *Padma pitha*. On his head should be a *Jata-mukuta* and he should be adorned with ornaments; there should be on his chest a white *yajnopavita*. He should be wearing a garland of white flowers. A waist-band (*Katisutra*) should go round the loins. There should be golden or ruby *kundalas* in the ears. He carries rosary (*akshamala*) in the lower right hand, book in the upper right hand, *Kamandal* in the lower left hand and a ladle (*Sruk*) in the upper left hand. (Rao:1916: 503-505)

The sculpture of Brahma from Sathod measures 60cmx20cmx140cm. The sculpture is in good condition and is painted by the locals. He is shown carrying *Akshamala* in his lower right hand, a *Kamandal* in his lower left hand, a *Sruk* in his upper left hand. Ornaments such as golden ruby, *Katisutra*, garland and a *Jata-mukuta* on the head are visible (Fig.1.22).

Hero Stones

The memorial stones found in Gujarat are commonly known as *Paliyas*. Hero stones were commemorated in the memory of a person who lost his life doing some heroic deed. (Doshi: 1982:165-166). The *Paliya* is generally divided into three parts. The top panel has the sun and moon motif on it. There are different interpretations as to what they symbolise. The most accepted one is

that they symbolize eternity. The other common symbols found are lotus flower and geometric patterns. (Thapar: 2000: 699-701)

The second panel has the main sculpted relief which has the depiction of the hero commemorated. The hero is generally shown in standing, walking, seated on horse, camel or a bullock cart. The hero is generally shown holding various weapons including sword, dagger, quiver, spear, sheath etc. (Doshi:1982: 167-168)

The third panel or the bottom panel contains engraved inscriptions, which talks about the name and family of the hero, the cause and nature of their death. It may also contain floral or geometric patterns instead of inscriptions. (Doshi:1982: 167)

Hero stones were found from Sathod and Puda. On all the hero stones found here there is absence of sun and moon motifs on the top panel.

At **Sathod** a group of 20 memorial stones were found in front of The Barnath Mahadev temple. A few of them contain traces of fragmentary and worn-out inscriptions. According to R. N. Mehta, they could be dated to mid-fourteenth century C.E. as read from an inscription (Mehta:1957: 92). The second panel or the sculpted part shows in all of them a standing warrior in *alidha* posture (left leg extended and right leg bent). They carry a straight sword in the right hand and a large shield in left. These bejeweled figures have large beards and heavy hair knots. All of them are scantily dressed by small loin cloth. (Fig.1.23&1.Fig.1.24)

The top panel differs slightly in some of them. Eighteen of them have one canopy on top, whereas one of them has three canopies and one has a *torana* shaped top (Fig.1.23). Size also differ, five of them are small in size as compared to others (Fig. 1.25).

At **Puda** four hero stones were found from Puda. These are stylistically similar to that of Sathod and therefore belong to the same time period. Two of the hero stones are exactly similar, the top panel consists of three canopies (Fig.1.26). The sculpted part shows a foot soldier carrying sword in the right hand and round shield in the left. The sword is raised above his head horizontally. They put on small loin cloth and many ornaments.

The third hero stone only differs from the first two in having single canopy in the top panel instead of three (Fig.1.27). The sculpture itself is less eroded and hence its features are more visible. One can see the ornaments and the loin cloth more clearly as compared to the first one. A small dagger is also visible on the left side of the waist.

The fourth hero stone shows the warrior on a horse with his attendee (Fig. 1.28). The warrior is carrying a sword in his right hand and holding the horse with his left hand. The horse is saddled and ready for the battle. It also contains an inscription which is broken and highly eroded.

Discussion

Most of the sculptures found during the course of exploration were in a bad state of preservation and many of them could only be partially identified. In the Solanki period, the sculptures were made more angular with sharp and pointed edges rather than reproducing the actual body (Kramrisch:1993:106). The sculpture of Mahisasurmardini found from Puda has slender limbs which are bent at sharp angles, as compared to all the other sculptures found. Also, the measurement of the bricks, found on the mound 3 on which the Mahisasurmardini sculpture is located, is larger than the one found

in mound no. 1. Therefore, we can say that this sculpture might belong to tenth or eleventh century C.E. Other sculptures mentioned above do not have angular limbs and shows degeneration in terms of ornamentation and other bodily features. These features indicate that they belong to the end of thirteenth century CE during the rule of Vishaldev Vaghela.

Large numbers of hero stones found during exploration and those found previously, are dated to the second half of the thirteenth century CE which shows that there was no political stability in the Dabhoi region. The reason for that might be the vanishing power of the Vaghela dynasty and increased instances of invasions by the Delhi Sultanate. The mounds in Puda need to be excavated to get a better understanding of the cultural chronology of this region.

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Illustrations



Fig.1.1: Location of Dabhoi Taluka.

(Source: Maps of India)

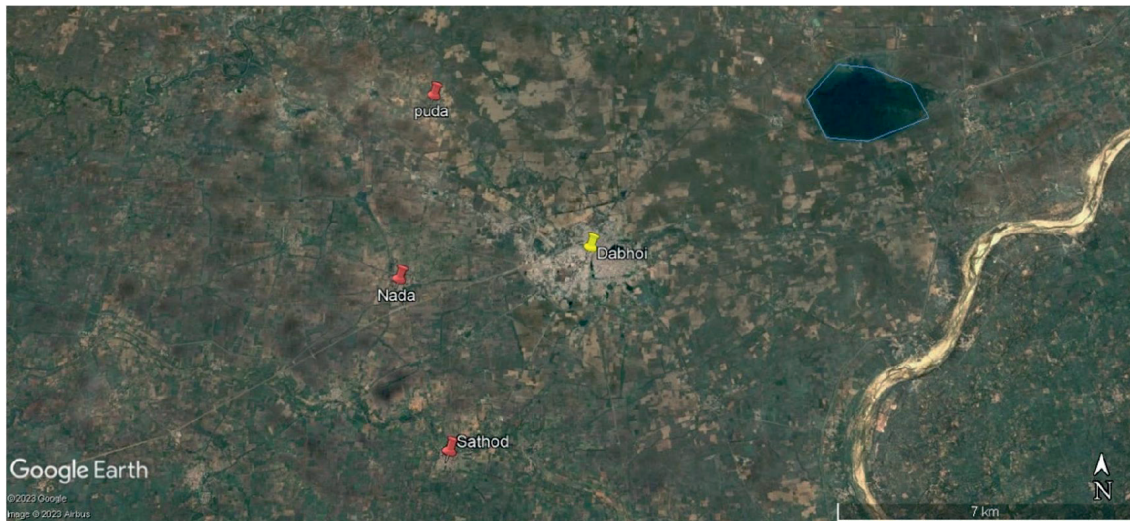


Fig. 1.2: Location of the sites. (Source: Google Earth)

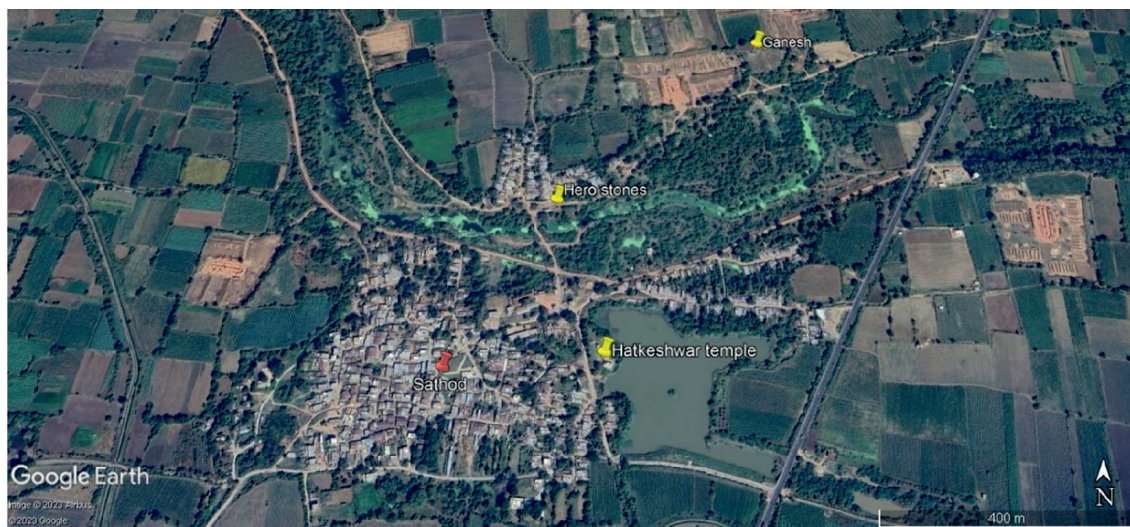


Fig. 1.3: Location of sculptures in Sathod
(Source of Map: Google Earth)



Fig. 1.4: Location of sculptures in Puda
(Source of Map: Google Earth)



Fig. 1.5: Mound 1



Fig. 1.6: Mound 2



Fig. 1.7: Mound 3



Fig. 1.8: Location of sculptures in Nada

(Source of Map: Google Earth)



Fig. 1.9: Bhutnath temple



Fig. 1.10: Vishnu from Nada



Fig.1.11: Smaller sculpture of Vishnu from Nada



Fig. 1.12: Ganesha from Nada



Fig. 1.13: Ganesha sculptures from Sathod

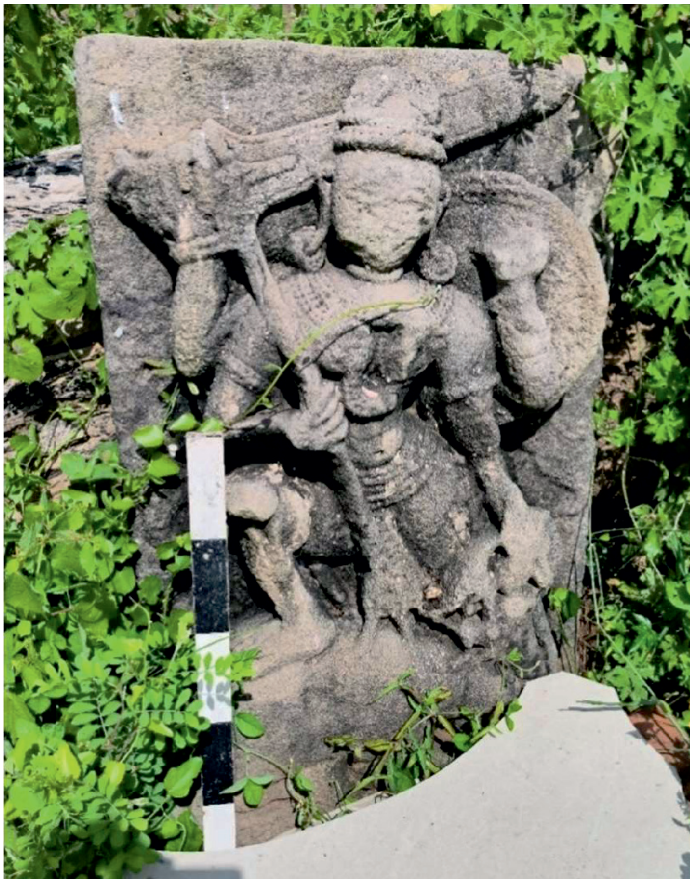


Fig. 1.14: Mahisasurmardini from Puda Fig.1.15: Mahisasurmardini from Sathod

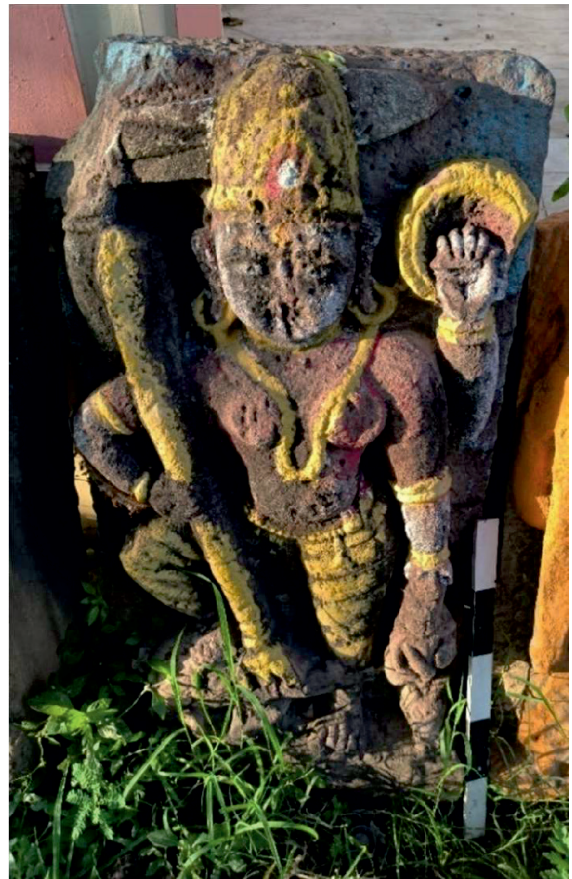


Fig. 1.16: Hanuman from Puda



Fig. 1.17: Kubera from Puda



Fig. 1.18: Shivalinga and associated sculptures from Puda



Fig. 1.19: Gaurishankar from Nada



Fig. 1.21: Lajja Gauri from Sathod, no.2



Fig. 1.20: Lajja Gauri from Sathod, no.1



Fig. 1.22: Brahma from Sathod



Fig. 1.23: Hero stones from Sathod, no.1



Fig. 1.24: Hero stones from Sathod, no.2



Fig. 1.25: Smaller size hero stones



Fig. 1.26: Hero stones with three canopies



Fig. 1.27: Hero stone with one canopy



Fig. 1.28: Warrior on horse

Notes and References

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