In 468, the various caves gradually were reaching the point—even if none were yet completed—where the monks could move in. And happily, a workable, even if hardly ideal, mode of fitting the doors was now finally developed, after years of making just plain openings with no provisions for closure. This innovation was the B mode, in which a monolithic projection at the top, matched with a hole at the doorway base, held the pivoting door.¹ For anyone trying to puzzle out the development of the site, the B mode fitting gives essential clues, because it had just come into use when the Hiatus—caused by the Risika/Asmaka strife—caused the stoppage of work on the majority of caves at the site. Since many of the B mode fittings were never used, or were later replaced, one can often determine that work on the caves involved broke off at this very point, providing a useful benchmark in the site’s development.²

Of far greater interest to those concerned with the site’s religious development, as opposed to that of technological features, another startling change is taking place at this point. This is the transformation of the projected (but not realized) shrines from ones planned with a stupa in the center, to ones where (at least at first) a Buddha image would be carved on the front of the (now useless!) central block. In fact, as suggested earlier, it is reasonable to conclude that every shrine underway up until 468 was originally going to contain a stupa. However, in the end only one shrine actually does have a stupa in it. This is Cave 11, probably the first shrine to have been started (in 467/468). Cave 11’s stupa was clearly its original focus.³ But it is equally significant that this stupa was never finished. In fact, it was abandoned in favor of an image carved from the same matrix, which is composed in such a way that its untypically large halo in fact hides the unfinished stupa. This

¹ Actually, the B mode, as well as the C mode, were used centuries before in the Hinayana caves, but were not replicated in the earliest Vakataka caves.
² For extended explanation and discussion of the various doorway modes, see Volume V, 228–230 and Fig. 36. Also Volume VI, forthcoming.
³ For arguments that Cave 20’s shrine was the first undertaken, see Volume V; Cave 20.
would seem to represent the moment of transition from stupa to image. The stupa was apparently started in normal course sometime in 468, but was abandoned when the Buddha image was started, probably in early 469.

This same transformation had taken place in the development of Ajanta’s caitya halls slightly earlier; and appears to have sparked a virtual revolution throughout the site. However, such a sudden conceptual shift from the stupa to the Buddha image could not have happened without the involvement and approval of the Buddhist sangha, for such a change must have required new rituals both on the part of the monks themselves, as well as for the public. There is no way to know whether the monastic authority at the site was powerful enough to facilitate this drastic change, or whether the authorization as well as the encouragement came from the Vakataka capital or other cities. However, we can well imagine that the powerful Buddhabhadra himself was responsible for initiating such changes in the caves under his jurisdiction, perhaps with the advice of other monks, including “the monks Dharmadatta as well as—my good pupil Bhadrabandhu” (Cave 26 inscription, vs. 14) In any case, the development of the stupa alone in his cave, over the course of less than two decades, is revealing. When Cave 26 was first undertaken, its “caitya” was probably nothing more that a plain stupa, as in all previous caitya halls throughout India. It was probably not until about 467 or even 468 that an image was planned to front the stupa. But as explained elsewhere, this was probably a standing Buddha, never in fact carved. The present seated figure was not cut until a decade later, in 477/478.

When the impressive caitya halls at the site, Cave 19 and Cave 26, were started, it is reasonable to assume that they were to have nothing more than stupas—plain stupas, without their present images fronting them—as their focus. This was traditional for such halls, and even in the slightly earlier “transformed” vihara 2 at Bagh (and also in the related vihara 4) the stupa had no figure attached to it; that came only later, in Bagh 7, surely under the influence of what was happening at Ajanta. Indeed, as noted above, the plans conceived (but not yet realized) for the first shrines at Ajanta, starting in about 466, also suggest that they were traditional stupa shrines—the stupa located at shrine center—with no provision for fronting images.

\footnote{See Volume V, Ch 5, Cave 11.}