

History of the Art of India, Part I: Origins to Mughals

Week 4. Gupta Art

Important points covered:

- Overview of the history of the Gupta empire
- Some styles and typical images from the Gupta sculpture workshops in Mathura and Sarnath
- The existence of metal and terracotta sculpture in the Gupta empire
- The rise of Brahmanical (Hindu) art in the Gupta empire, its co-existence with Buddhist art, and eventual superseding Buddhist art
- Brahmanical stone relief sculpture in the Udayagiri caves, its predominantly Vaishnava character, but also its expression of Shaivite and Shakta religiosity
- Some elements of the iconography of Vishnu at Udayagiri
- Iconography, theology, and artistic style of other sculpture near to and contemporary with that at Udayagiri
- Hindu patronage of the Buddhist site of the Ajanta caves
- Impact of Hindu art on the Buddhist frescoes at Ajanta
- Iconography, narrative, and artistic style of Buddhist frescoes at Ajanta

A. Gupta: History and Buddhist sculpture

A1. History

MAP: Gupta empire

A2. Buddhist art style and workshops

MAP. Gupta empire with Mathura and Sarnath highlighted.

A3. Mathura workshop

IMAGE: Standing Buddha, installed by Buddhist Monk Yasadinna, red sandstone, ca. 5C, Jamalpur Mound (Bihar), Government Museum, Mathura

TERMS: abhaya mudra, ushnisha

A4. Sarnath workshop

IMAGE: Seated Buddha preaching the law, Gupta Sarnath, 5C, tan sandstone, 5' 3", Archeological Museum, Sarnath

TERM: dharma chakra mudra

IMAGES: Compare: Seated Sarnath Buddha & Reprise (from week 3): seated Kushan Buddha

A5. Metal sculpture

IMAGE: Standing buddha from north India, bronze, dedicated by a nun from Nepal in 591 CE; small, 18 5/16" with base, Cleveland Museum of Art

A6. Terracotta

IMAGE: Head of Buddha, terracotta, Devni Mori, Gujarat, 8" x 5" x 5.5", 375-400 CE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

B. Gupta: Brahmanical art

B1. Introduction

TERM: Brahmanical

B2. Udayagiri cave 5: Vishnu relief

IMAGE: View of Udayagiri hill and surrounding countryside

IMAGE: Plan of Cave 5 with location of Vishnu varāha avatāra relief

IMAGE: Vishnu varāha avatāra, high relief, Udayagiri cave 5, 401-402 CE, 12' 8"

TERM: varāha avatāra

B3. Udayagiri cave 6: Vishnu reliefs

IMAGE: Udayagiri caves; full view of Cave 6 entrance reliefs

IMAGE: Udayagiri Cave 6, interior view, 402 CE

IMAGE: Udayagiri Cave 6, standing Vishnu with anthropomorphic attributes, medium relief

TERM: shrivatsa

TERM: Vishnu's attributes

IMAGES: Compare: standing Vishnu with anthropomorphic attributes & standing Vishnu with non-anthropomorphic attributes

B4. Udayagiri caves 4, 6: Various deities

IMAGE: Udayagiri Cave 6, Mahishasuramardini, medium relief, 402 CE

TERMS: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism

TERM: Mahishasuramardini

IMAGE: Udayagiri Cave 4, Shiva linga on altar, early 5C C

TERM: Shiva linga

IMAGE: Udayagiri Cave 6, Ganesha, medium relief, 402 CE

B5. Other reliefs

example 1

IMAGE: Goddess Ganga standing on makara, lintel of doorway at temple of Beshnagar (Vidisha, 30 mi NE of Bhopal), sandstone, ca.500 CE, 30", Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (photo from Craven, Fig. 78 on p.119)

IMAGE: Reprise (from Week 2): yakshi figure from Sanchi gateway

TERM: yakshi

TERM: makara

TERM: tribhanga

example 2

IMAGE: Daśāvātara temple at Deogarh, 5C (completed ca.500 CE), Gupta

TERM: Daśāvātāra

IMAGE: Vishnu anantaśāyana, high relief on wall of Daśāvātara temple, Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, ca.425

TERM: Vishnu anantaśāyana

IMAGES: Compare: Reprise (from earlier slide): Vishnu anantaśāyana & Reprise (from earlier class): standing bodhsattva from Mathuran Sarnath

C. Gupta: Ajanta

C1. Introduction

IMAGE: Ajanta caves. Panoramic photograph

MAP and PLAN: Ajanta caves

TERM: rāja

IMAGE: Ajanta, Cave 19 chaitya facade

IMAGE: Compare: Reprise (from week 2): Bhaja cave, exterior chaitya façade

C2. Technique, style, and other points

TERM: fresco

TERM: Hierarchic scaling

TERM: Jataka tales

C3. Cave 1 paintings

IMAGE: Ajanta, Cave 1. Plan.

IMAGE: Ajanta, Cave 1. Wall with 4 paintings and shrine w/ Buddha statue

IMAGE: Ajanta, Cave 1. Painting. Prince Mahajanaka bathing

IMAGE: Ajanta, Cave 1. Painting. Compassionate Bodhisattva Padmapani with lotus

TERM: Tribhanga

C4. Cave 17 paintings

Example 1. Above door lintel

IMAGE: Ajanta, painting, Cave 17, series of Buddhas and couples

Example 2. Prince Vishvantara and queen

IMAGE: Ajanta, painting in Cave 17, Prince Vishvantara and queen in a pavilion, 5C

IMAGES: Compare: Reprise of Prince Vishvantara and queen & Ajanta, Cave 19, high relief of king and queen