

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



OLLI
Spring 2024

Week 3



Sātavāhana and Kushan Art and Architecture

Sātavāhana and Kushan Art and Architecture

- A. Sātavāhana: Sanchi
- B. Sātavāhana: Amarāvati
- C. Kushan: History, Trade, Buddhism
- D. Kushan: Gandhara
- E. Kushan: Mathura

B2a. Narrative reliefs... pillars

- **Another pillar (2C) narrates events from Buddha riding his horse in the Great Departure (center)**
- **Buddha in human form**
- **Top scene is missing**

The Great Departure..., carved relief on Great Stupa, Amarāvati, ca. 9 ft. 2C CE



- Lower section, CTR: Buddha leaves the horse and groom... Buddha in human form sitting in center (1)
- RT: Buddha's first sermon after enlightenment... Buddha symbolized by throne (2)
- SO: Buddha both human and symbolic... theological and devotional implications



B. Sātavāhana: Amarāvati

B3. Statues

First example

- Few free-standing sculptures of the Buddha from Amarāvati
- **Dehejia**: robust, solemn, monastic robe with right shoulder bare, swag at lower hem
- Distinct from northern images (Kushans)

Buddha, limestone statue from Amarāvati stupa, 66", 2C CE, British Museum, London

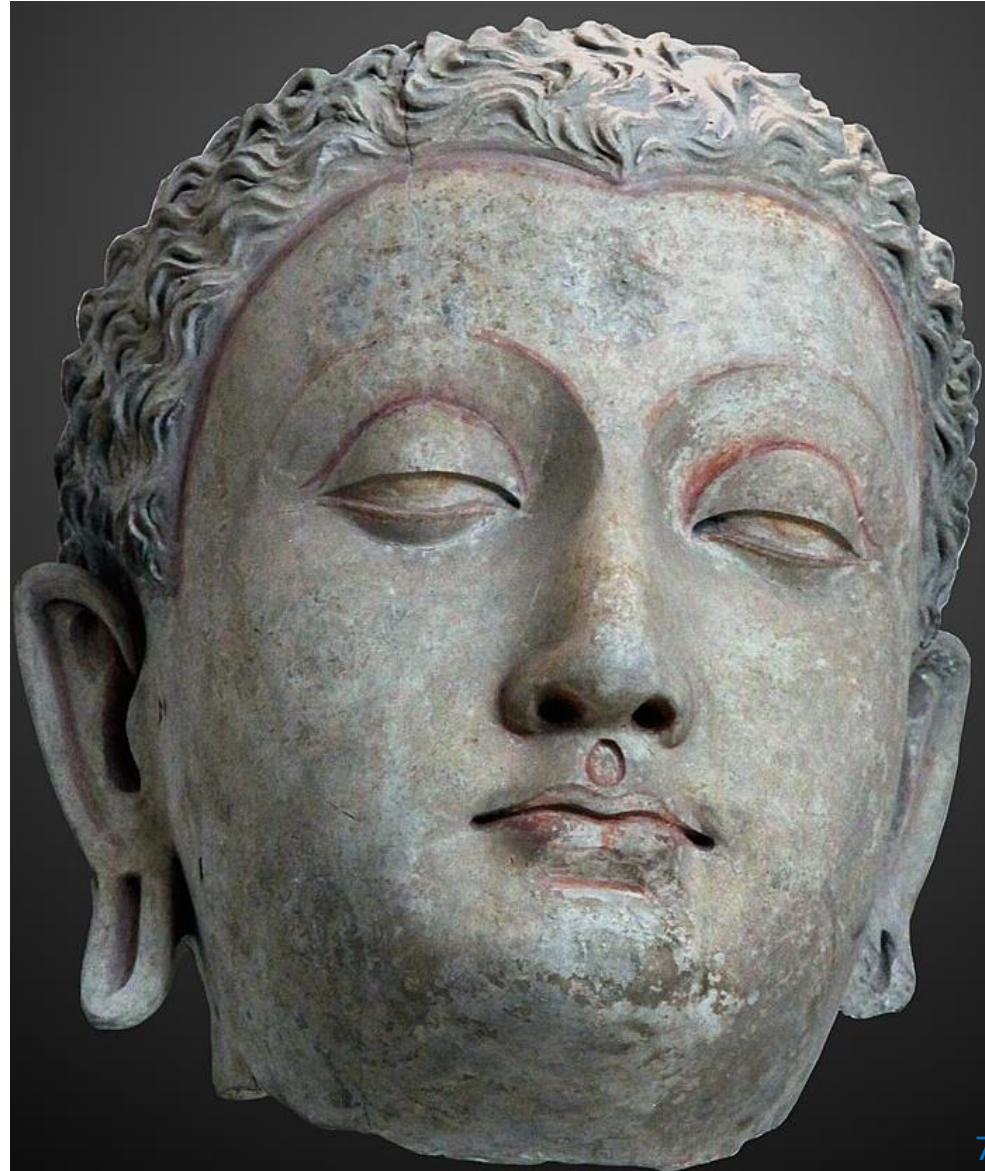


B3. Statues

Second example

- Plaster head of Buddha, Amarāvati
- **Craven: very lifelike**
- Well... not entirely: stylized ears, eye brows, eye ridges, and philtrum (medial cleft)
- Traces of paint;
SO: painted statues

Head of the Buddha, plaster, 3C CE,
Musée Guimet, Paris



C2. Kushan Trade

C2a. International art objects

- **Bust of Goddess Athena, imported (from Greece or Hellenistic provinces?) bronze (paperweight?), mid-3C, found in Begram hoard**

Bronze weight from Begram hoard, Bust of Goddess Athena, mid-3C CE, ca.4 3/4",
Musee Guimet, Paris

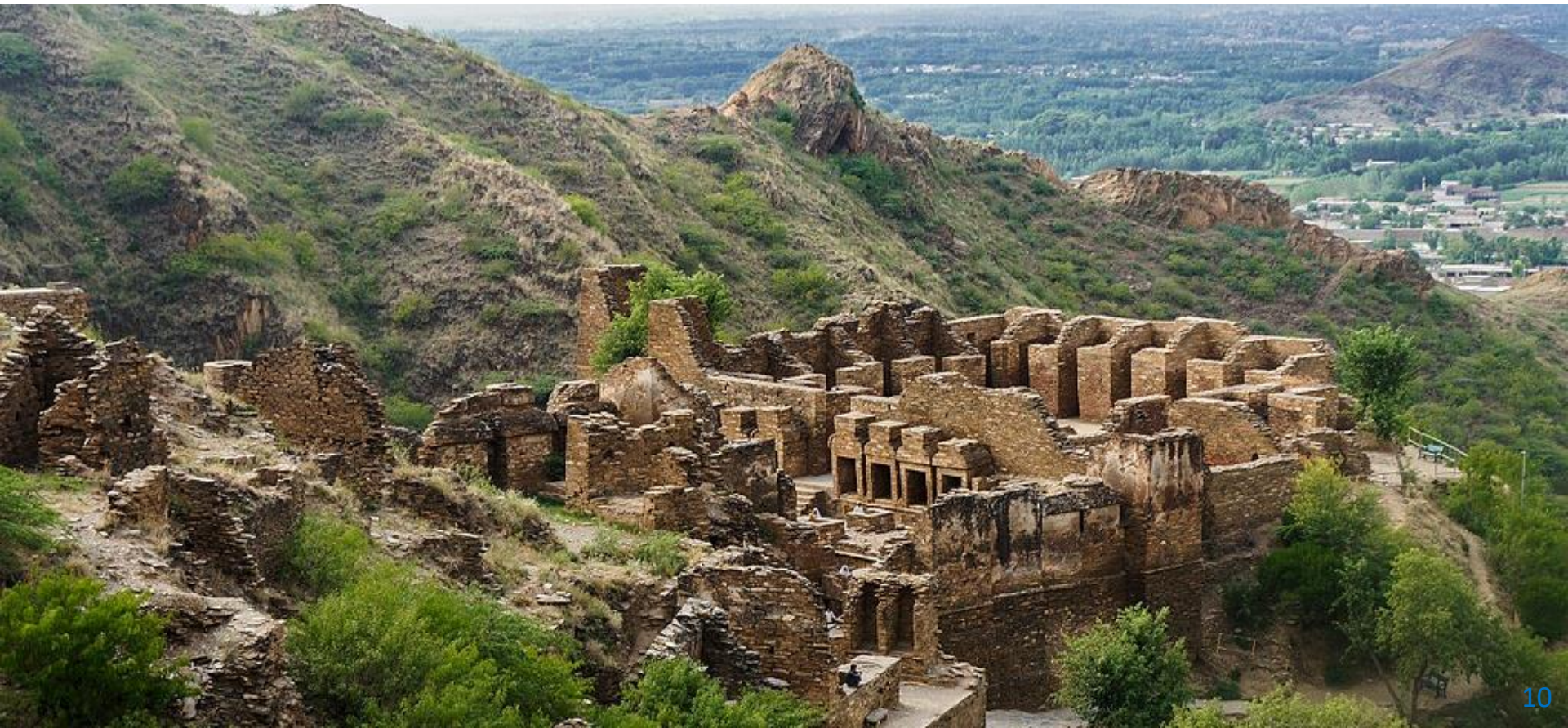


C2. Kushan Trade... C2b. Coins

- **Kanishka's tolerance and diplomacy revealed in his coinage:**
 - **W part of empire, summer capital Begram (Afghanistan):** coins featured Iranian and Greek deities and Buddha, used local Karoshti script derived from Aramaic
 - **E part of empire, winter capital Mathura (plains of India):** coins featured Buddha and Hindu gods, used Sanskrit
- **An aside on trade:**
 - **From a gnostic Christian story from late 2C:** Young prince describes the wonders of his father's palace and mentions "stones, chalcedonies of India and agates from Kushan."

C3. Buddhism in Kushan Empire

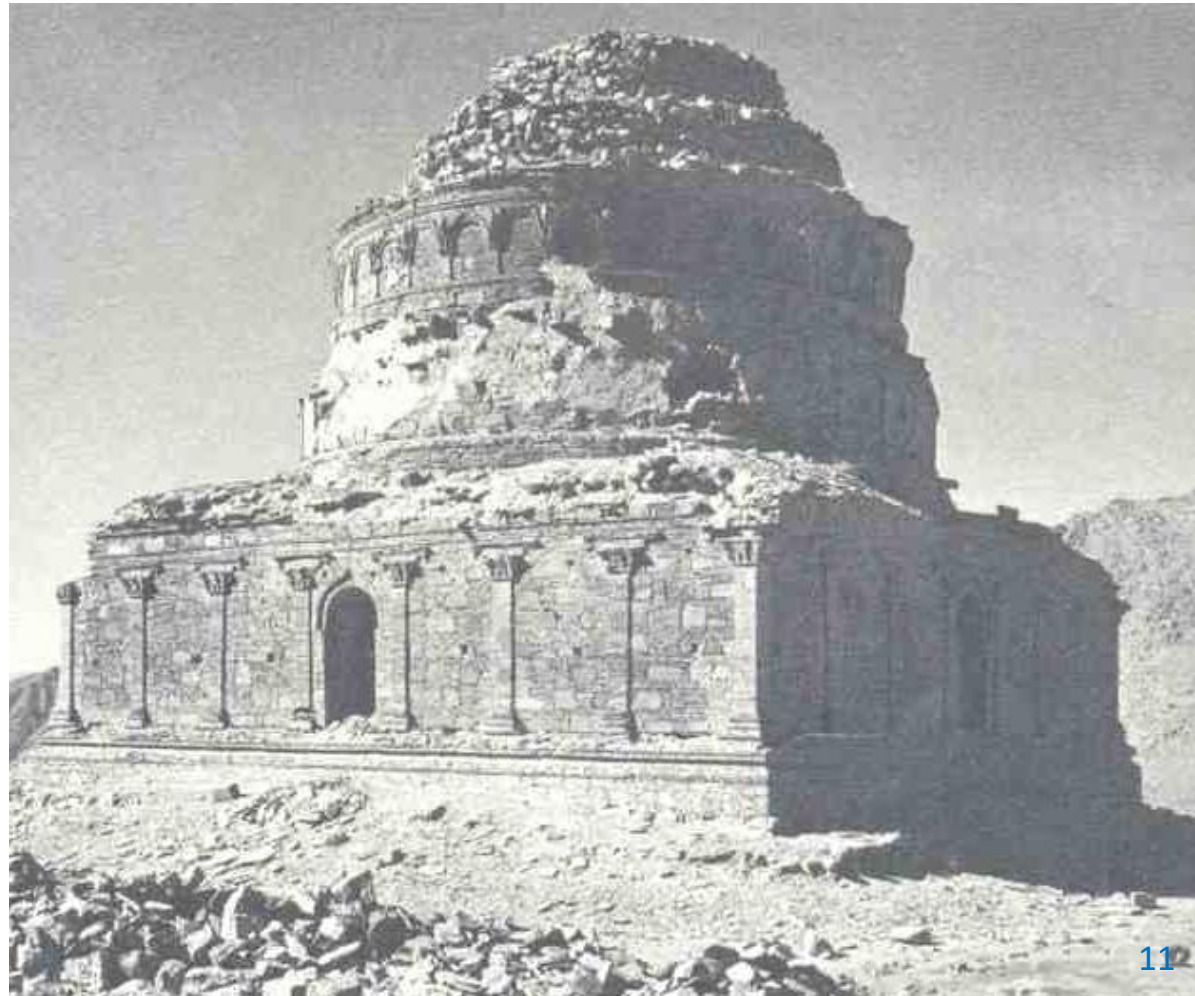
- Kanishka's stupas built inside complexes, or monasteries
- Not large in circumference but tall in height
- e.g., Takht-i-Bahi monastery, ca. 33 mi NE of Peshawar



D. Kushan: Gandhara

D5. Gandharan stupas and reliquaries

- Kanishka an ideal Buddhist monarch (cf. Ashoka)... built large stupas
- e.g., stupa at Guldara (near Kabul)... ruins that suggest opulence



Stupa ruins at Guldara
(Afghanistan), 1C CE

D5. Gandharan stupas and reliquaries

- Stone sculpture of votive stupa suggests what the real stupa might have looked like
- Note the “umbrella”; cf. Sanchi Great Stupa
- Difference of Gandhara stupa from Sanchi stupa: Taller dome, enlargement of the umbrella unit

Votive stone sculpture of stupa, Swat Valley (Pakistan), schist, 4' 9", Indian Museum, Kolkata



D. Kushan: Gandhara

D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

- **Mid 3C, E-W trade interrupted when Sassanians conquer Peshawar and Taxila (Gandhara)... Kushan power weakened... but Buddhism persists**
- **Worse: White Huns ravage Gandhara in 5C...**
- **But second school of “Gandharan” art lingers in 8C in Afghanistan and Kashmir**

D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

- Buddhist monastic center flourished in valley of Bamiyan, hemmed in by rock cliffs below the Hindu Kush
- Sacred grottoes with sculptures and paintings... along caravan route
- Two colossal rock-cut high-relief Buddhas in niches in cliffs at Bamiyan, 5C



D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

- Larger Buddha is 175 ft high, 5C CE
- Paintings above the figure's head ~ Ajanta (5C)
- Buddha sculpture ~ to Gupta style of 5C
- Gupta style grew out of Kushan Mathura style
- (later discussion) **SO**: here a later influence from **S > N**

Buddha, rock-cut high relief covered with lime plaster, 175 ft, early 5C, Bamiyan, Afghanistan



D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

- Stringlike folds in the robe cling close to the body
- Covered with lime plaster and paint (originally)
- Monumental simplicity
- Calm and inner tranquility, spiritual other-worldliness

Buddha, rock-cut high relief covered with lime plaster, 175 ft, early 5C, Bamiyan, Afghanistan



D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

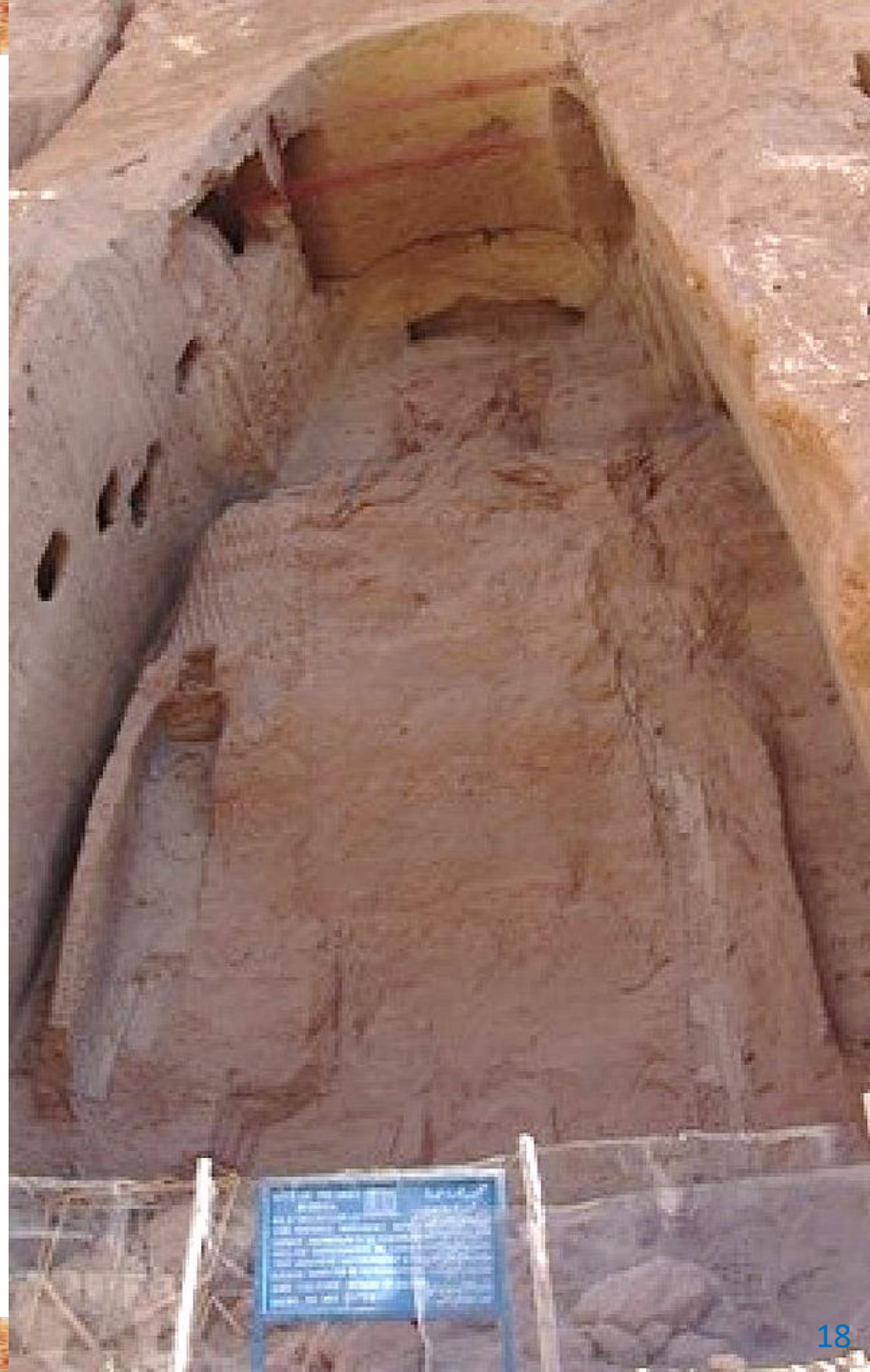
- Smaller Buddha is 120 ft high, paintings at the top of the niche
- Figure was covered with plaster and paint
- 16C, Mughals fired canon at these Buddhas

Buddha, rock-cut high relief covered with lime plaster, 120 ft, early 5C?, Bamiyan, Afghanistan



D6. Second school of Gandharan art and Bamiyan

- **Destroyed by Taliban in March 2001:**
 - **Fired anti-aircraft guns and artillery**
 - **Set off anti-tank mines at bottom**
 - **Placed dynamite in holes in the statues**
 - **Launched rockets at the statues**



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