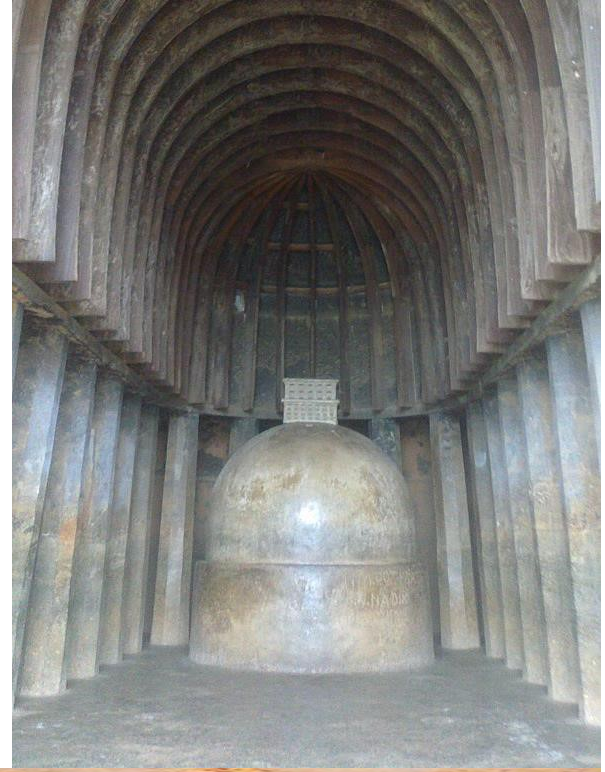


History of the Art of India, Part I: Origins to Mughals



OLLI
Spring 2024

Week 2



Post-Mauryan Buddhist Art: Chaityas, Viharas, and Stupas

Post-Mauryan Buddhist Art...

- A. Introduction**
- B. Bhaja**
- C. Karli**
- D. Ajanta**
- E. Sanchi**

A. Introduction

A1. End of the Mauryan empire

A2. Terms (Buddhist monuments)

A3. Rock-cut caves

A. Introduction

A1. End of the Mauryan empire

- 232 BCE. Ashoka died; parts of empire began to break away
- 185 BCE. Last Mauryan emperor assassinated by general Shunga
- Next 112 years of Shunga dynasty, Buddhism lost influence to Brahmanism (though still strong)

A. Introduction

A2. Terms (Buddhist monuments)

- **Chaitya** = place of worship, chapel, shrine
- **Vihāra** = residence for monks
- **Stupa** = dome-like mound or structure to honor relics or a sacred site (originally a funeral mound)

A. Introduction

A3. Rock-cut caves

- Caves carved into rock
- Begun in earnest during Ashoka's reign, e.g., in NE India at Barābar (Lomas Rishi) and Nagarjuni (Gopika) hills (from week 1)
- Then south into **Deccan** and elsewhere
- Continued for over a millennium by **Buddhists** and **Hindus**

B. Bhaja

B1. Evolution of the chaitya hall

B2. Chaitya hall at Bhaja

B3. Vihāras at Bhaja

B4. Steps to Bhaja cave

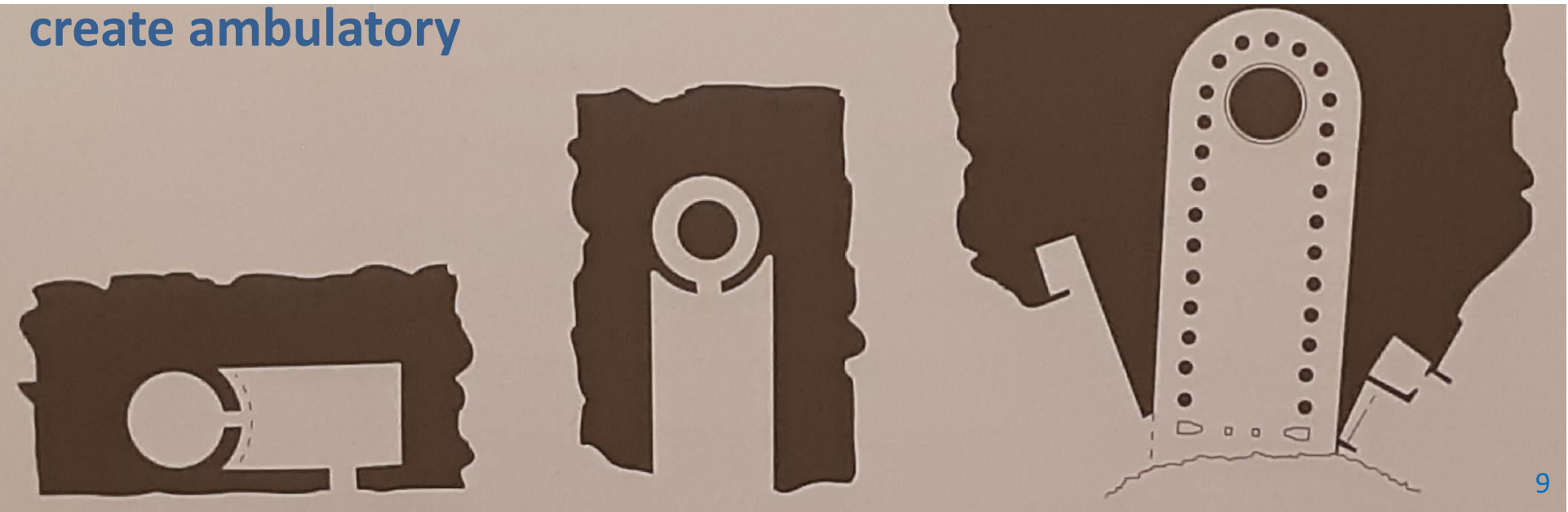
B. Bhaja

B1. Evolution of the chaitya hall

Left, ca.250 BCE, Lomas Rishi cave: Hall parallel to rock face, turn left to “walled” chaitya

Ctr, ca.150 BCE, Kondivte cave: Hall perpendicular to rock face, straight ahead to “walled” chaitya

Right, ca.100 BCE, Bhaja cave: Hall perpendicular, straight ahead to chaitya w/ walls removed creating “apse,” columns added create ambulatory



B. Bhaja

B2. Chaitya hall at Bhaja

Late Shunga or early Sātavāhana,
ca.100 BCE

B2a. Entrance and arch

B2b. Interior

B2c. Exterior facade

B2d. Building techniques



B. Bhaja

B2. Chaitya hall at Bhaja

B2a. Entrance and arch

- Large entryway with arch above
- Under the arch, stone representations of wooden beams
- Originally a wood façade in front of the opening (mortise holes present)
- Ambulatory



Bhaja cave,
ca. 100 BCE, Maharashtra, entrance

B2. Chaitya hall at Bhaja

B2b. Interior

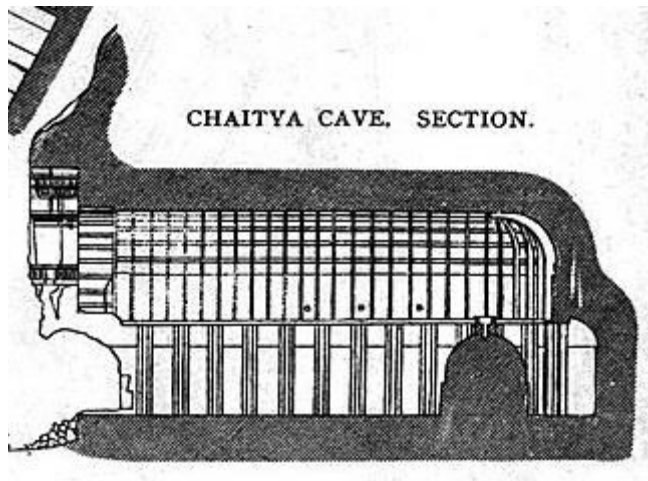
- Cave extends 55 ft into the mountain
- Hall is 26 ft wide
- **Barrel-vaulted ceiling** is ca. 29 ft from floor
- At “**apse**” end of hall is a rock-cut stupa
- ~ **Roman basilica**, developing around the same time

Bhaja cave, ca. 100 BCE, Maharashtra,
interior with stupa



B2b. Interior (cont'd)

- Columns demarcate a path for ritual circumambulation of the stupa
- Columns slope inward slightly (5"): stone imitates wooden prototype



B2c. Exterior facade

- external façade on mountainside with architectural details
- Carvings mimic arch. elements of wealthy mansions
- Reproduction in miniature of the entrance arch



Bhaja cave, ca. 100 BCE, Maharashtra, exterior facade of chaitya & viharas

B2. Chaitya hall at Bhaja

B2d. Building technique

- **Craven:** ...not really caves in the true sense, they're sculptures... builders... associated them with caves in which yogis and monks meditated
- Master craftsman outlined the opening on the face of the rock wall
- Workers started at top and moved into the hall, cutting an opening that would be the ceiling
- Then worked downward to the floor with iron picks
- Finished the subtle details with small chisels

B3. Vihāras at Bhaja

- Outside the doorway of one of the vihāras is a relief sculpture of—surprisingly—a Hindu subject
- Originally brightly painted



Bhaja cave,
ca. 100 BCE,
Maharashtra,
relief
sculpture on
exterior
facade

- **RT: Indra, mounted on elephant**
- **LT: Surya, rides his chariot, subduing forces of darkness**
- **Both gods move in toward the doorway**
- **SO: Buddhism's tolerance of other views, or perhaps accommodating local popular Brahmanism**



Bhaja cave,
ca. 100 BCE,
Maharashtra,
relief
sculpture on
exterior
facade

B. Bhaja

B4. Steps to Bhaja cave (Just for beauty's sake!)



C. Karli

C1. Façade and courtyard

C2. Façade and relief sculptures

C3. Interior

C4. Patronage

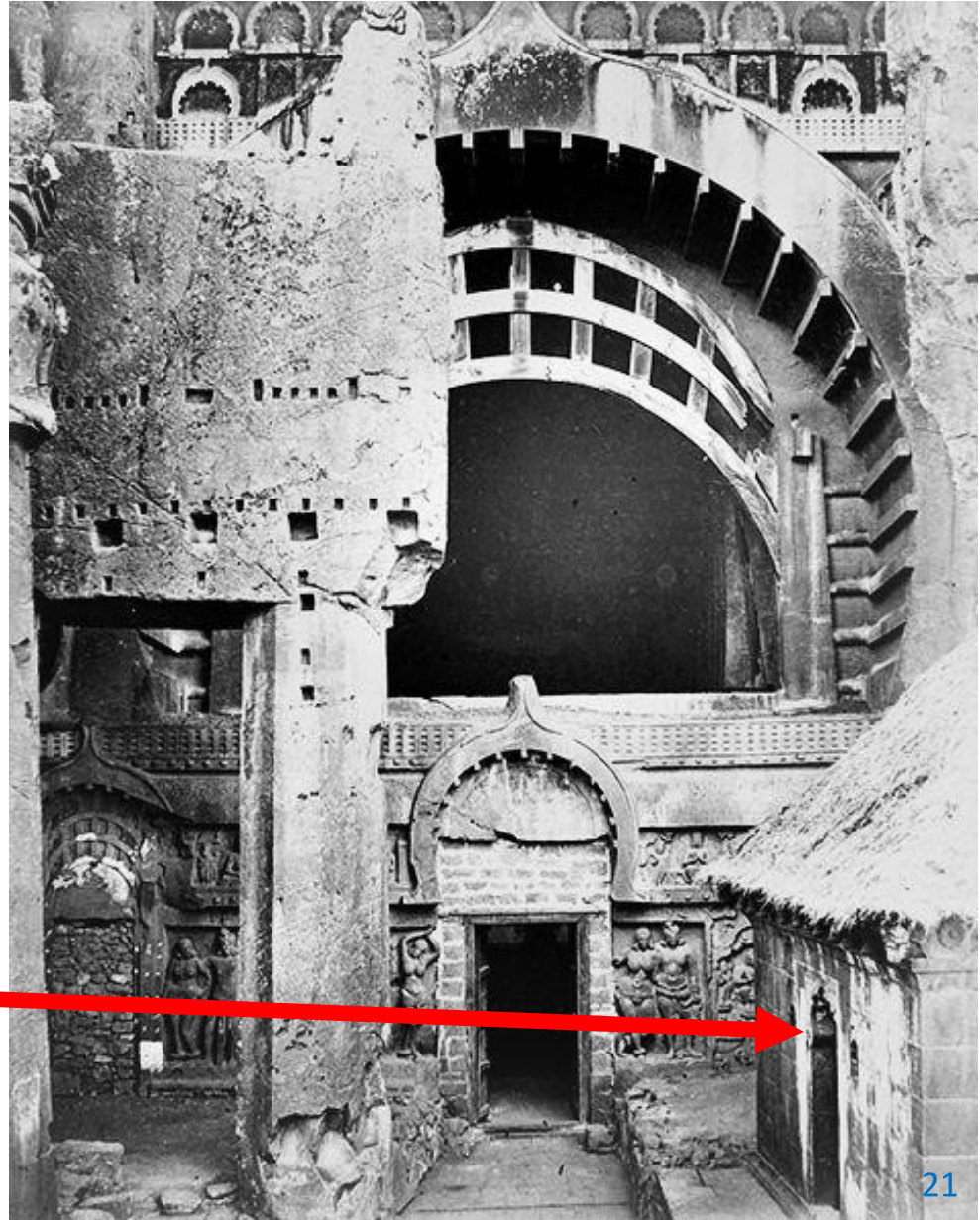


C. Karli

C1. Facade and courtyard

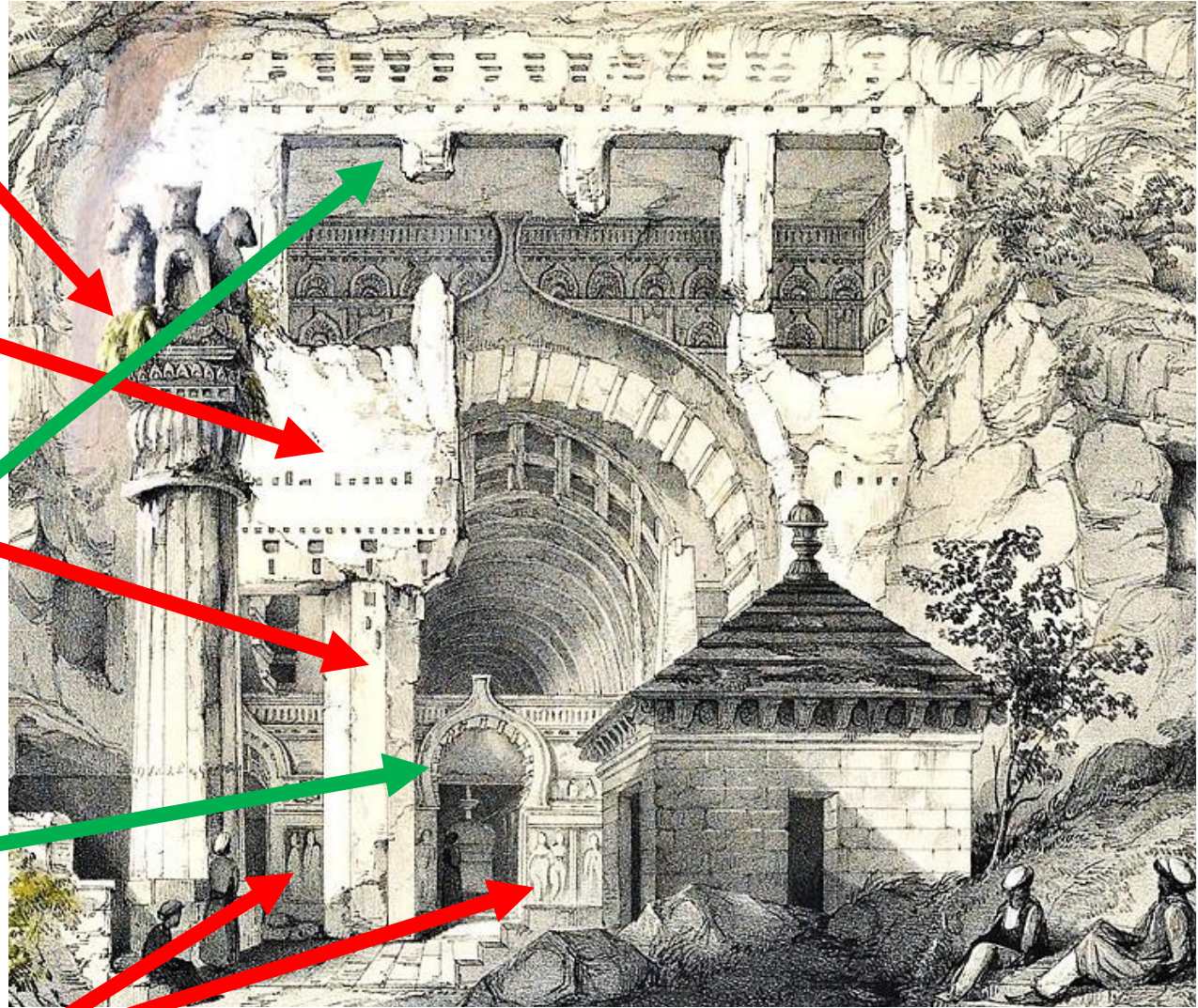
- Work of the Sātavāhana dynasty (week 3), 1C CE, ca. 100 mi SE of Mumbai (ca. 4 mi N of Bhaja)
- Enlargement of interior apsidal plan (from Bhaja) with an expansive courtyard
- Approach to façade now partly blocked by modern Hindu shrine

Karli chaitya facade with main door, photograph, 19th C, artist unknown



C1. Façade and courtyard

- 1 of 2 columns remains
- Stone screen w/ supporting columns & clerestory
- Main façade w/ horseshoe shaped window over doors
- Relief sculptures on wall



Karli chaitya facade, full view, drawing,
James Fergusson, 1845

C1. Façade and courtyard

Column

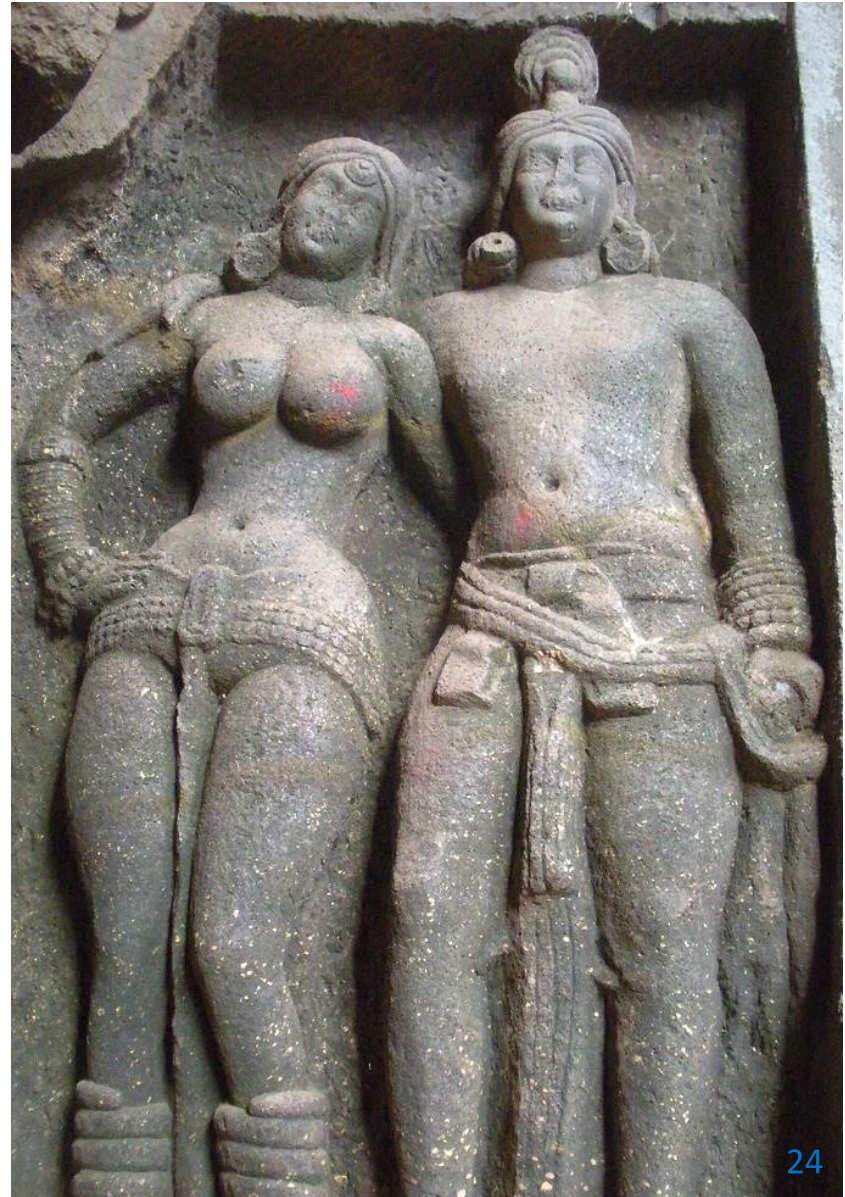
- 38 ft high (1 of 2 originals remains)
- Capital with:
 - Lion motif
 - Bell-shaped abacus
- Originally a wheel on top, total height 50 ft
- SO: reminiscent of lion capital from Sarnath



C. Karli

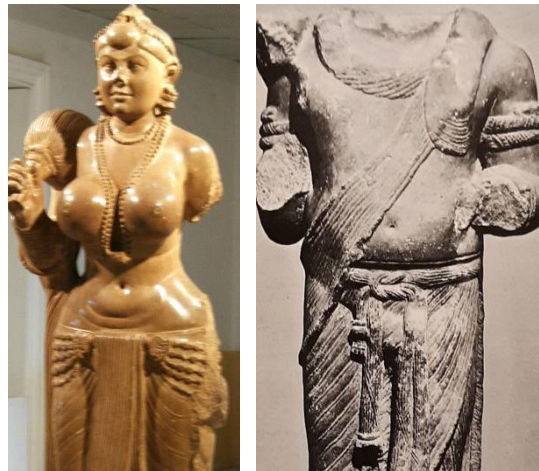
C2. Façade and relief sculptures

- Entrance doors separated by relief sculptures
- Relief of 2 over-life-sized figures... previously considered donors, but now mithuna couple (erotic couple)
- Form probably derived from earlier yakshis and yakshas...



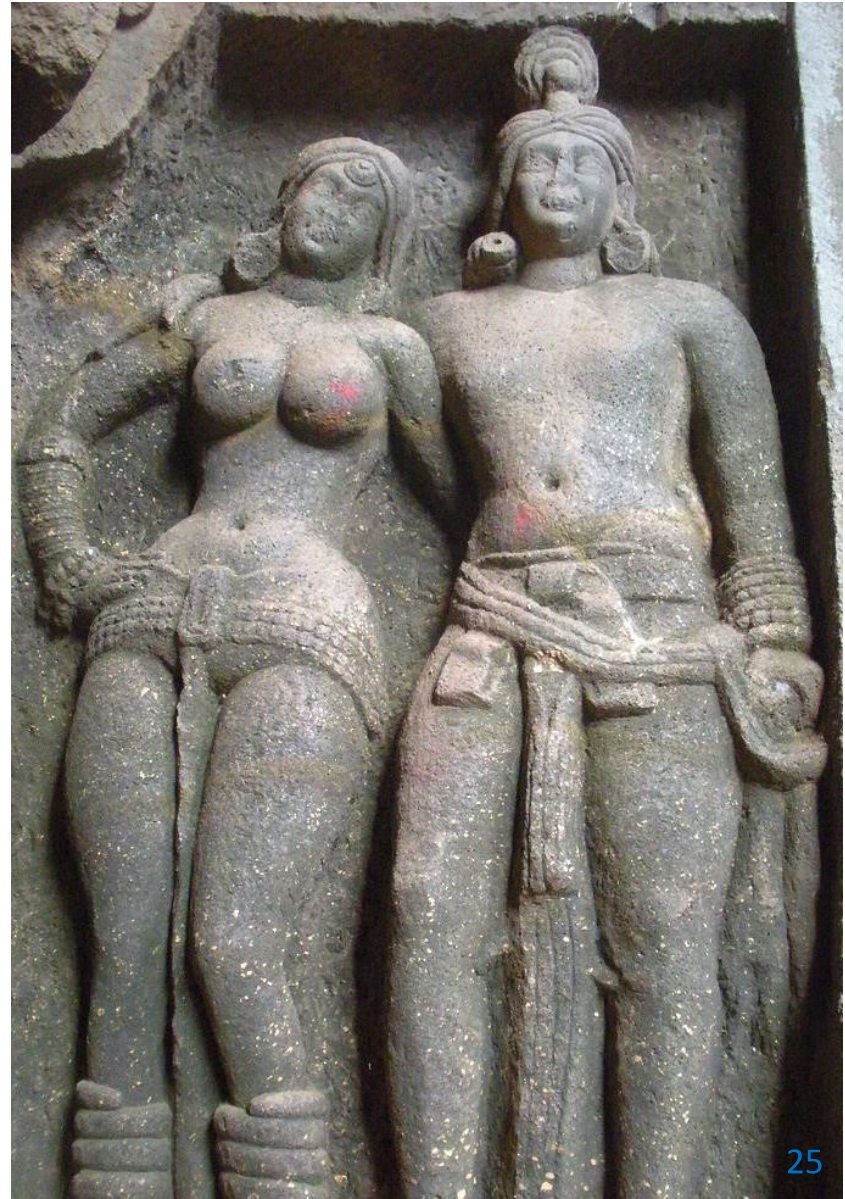
Karli chaitya
facade, high relief
sculpture,
mithuna couple, 1C
CE >

< Mauryan, ca. 200
BCE



C2. Façade and relief sculptures

- **Craven:** idealized, fully figured, firmly fleshed... found from now on in Buddhist and Hindu art...
- Such figures shocked Victorian art critics and led them to denigrate Indian art
- Surprising subject in Buddhist monastic context... perhaps r/t fertility



C2. Façade and relief sculptures

- At one side of facade: elephants and Buddhas

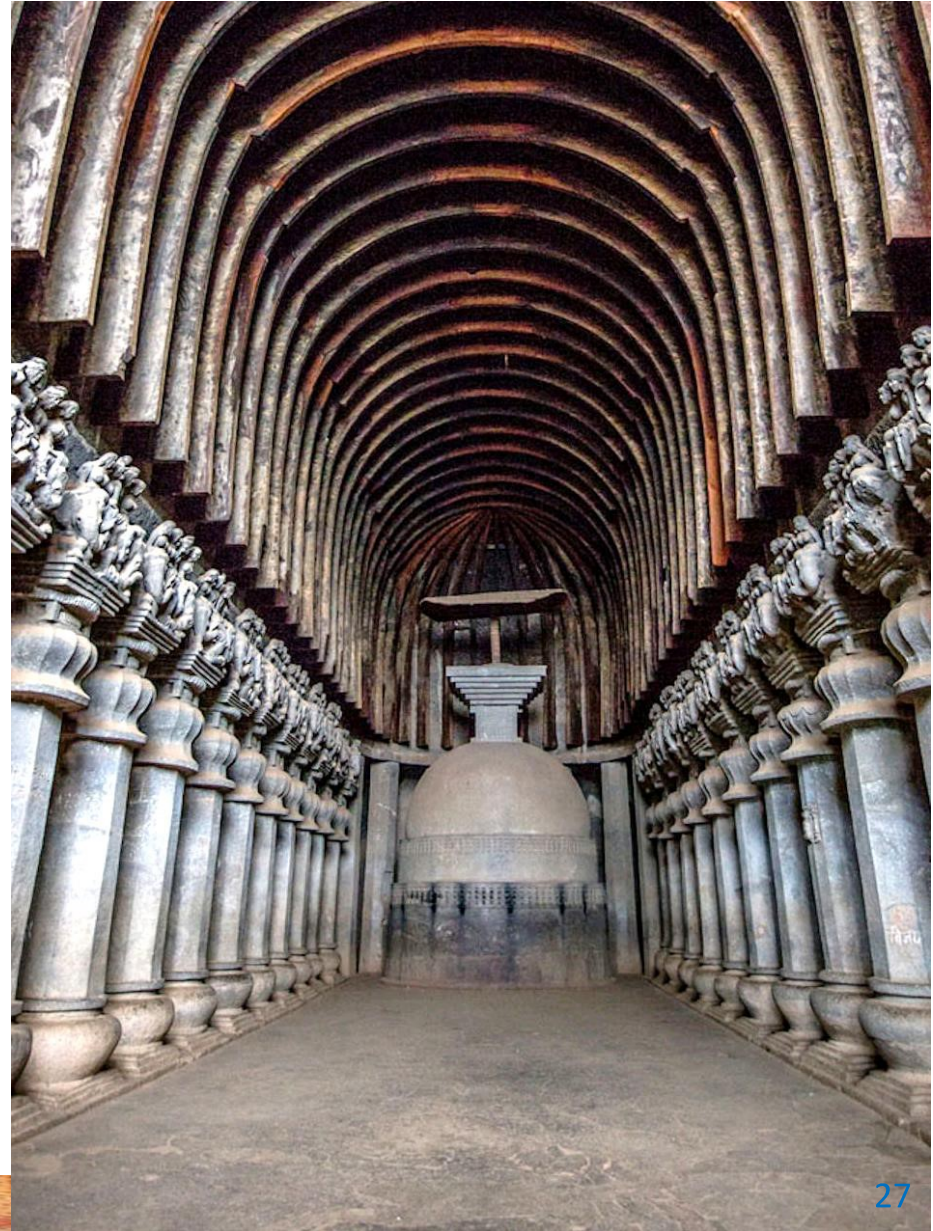


Karli chaitya facade, high relief sculpture, elephants and Buddhas, 1C CE

C. Karli

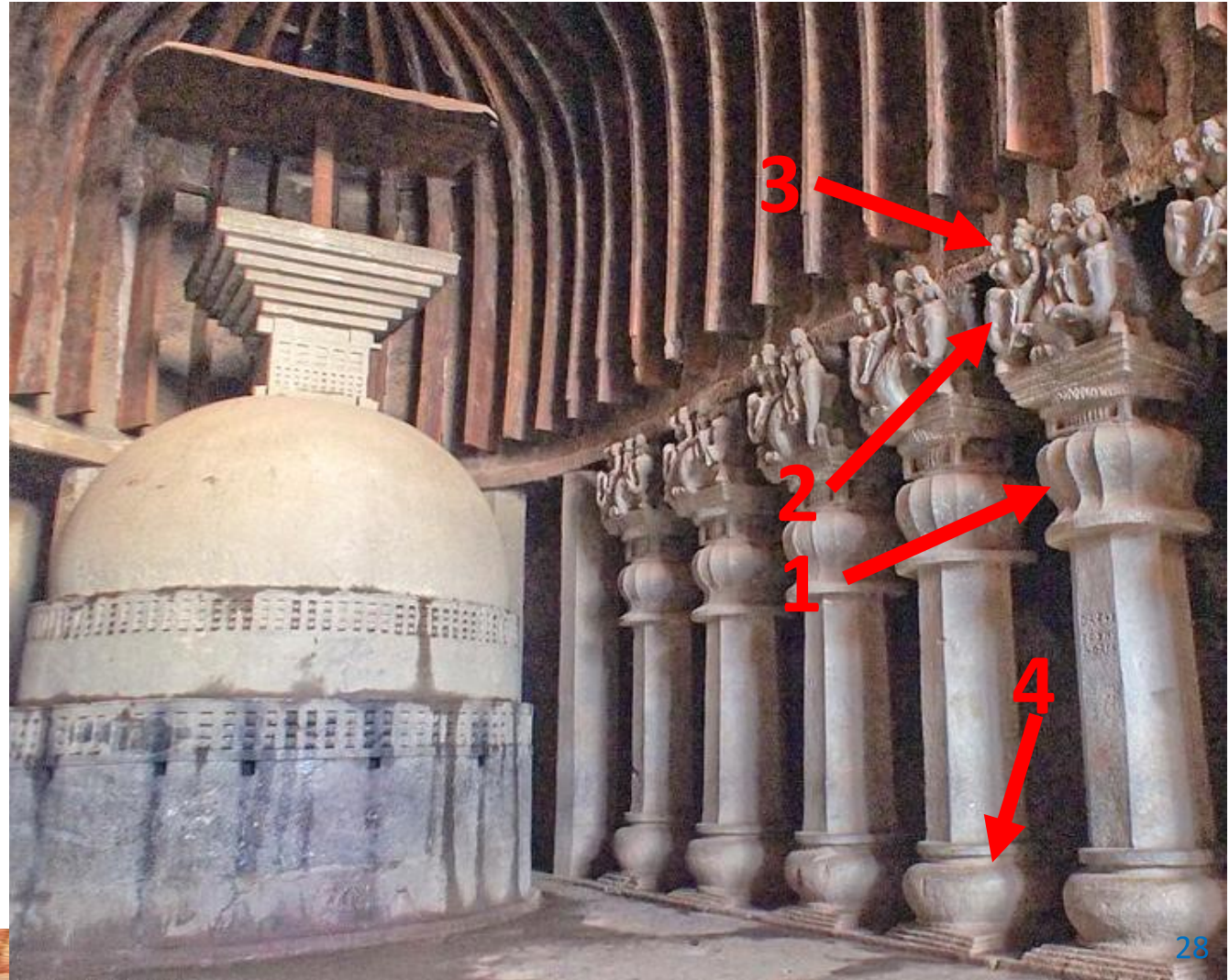
C3. Interior

- 45 ft H, 124 ft long, 47 ft W (cf. Bhaja, 29 H, 55 L)
- Nave flanked by 37 octagonal columns that run around the stupa at apse
- Columns are straight, not slanted (cf. Bhaja)
- **SO:** decorative, rather than pseudo-structural, function is recognized
- Barrel vault



C3. Interior

- 30 columns have capitals and vase-shaped bases (4)
- Capitals composed of faceted bell-shaped abacus (1), topped by kneeling elephant (2), further topped by royal couples (3)



C. Karli

C4. Patronage

- **Dehejia:** Chaitya interior and façade are really sculpture... no architectural principles at work, e.g., no calculation of loads on columns
- Financed by both individual and collective donations... from merchants, guilds, fishermen, housewives, monks and nuns, etc.
- Wealth in a mercantile age, increasing trade...
- Monks located communities along trade routes where rich merchants would be sure to pass
- E.g., inscriptions on 7 columns at Karli indicate that they were donated by **yāvanas** (i.e., Greeks)

C4. Patronage

- An interesting example of this trade: Carved Indian ivory figure of naked woman found in the ruins of Pompeii

Ivory figure of naked woman, India, before 79 CE,
Archeological Museum, Naples



C. Karli

Again... just for natural beauty...



D. Ajanta

- 29 vihāras & chaityas at Ajanta (Maharashtra), begun probably 2C BCE
- By 5C CE, patronage shifts from commoners to aristocracy and Hindu kings
- Paintings from 5C CE... (postpone till Guptas, week 4)

E. Sanchi

- E1. Mauryan stupa, 3C BCE**
- E2. Shunga stupa, 2C BCE**
- E3. Sātavāhana stupa, 1C BCE**
- E4. East gateway narrative reliefs**
- E5. West gateway narrative reliefs**
- E6. Female bracket figure**
- E7. Artists and patronage**

E. Sanchi

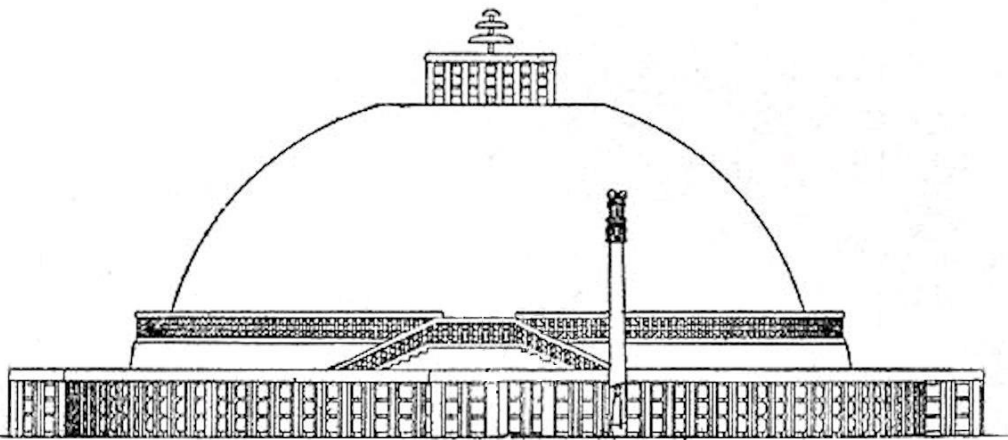
E1. Mauryan stupa, 3C BCE

- Free-standing stupas... not in chaitya halls
- Ashoka supposedly erected 84,000 stupas in 3C BCE
- Sanchi, central India, ca.29 mi NE of Bhopal, in Madhya Pradesh
- Ashoka's stupa, mid-3C BCE: 60 ft dia, 25 ft high, with wood railings
- Monastery on a hill
- Buddha's relics buried inside... no interior to the stupa... relics not intended for viewing (as Christian relics) but for being in proximity of

E. Sanchi

E2. Shunga stupa, 2C BCE

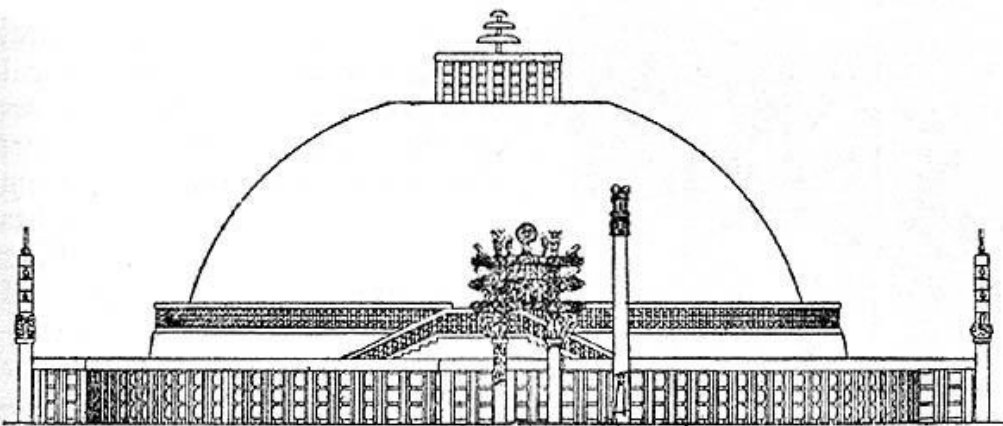
- Stupa was doubled in size, wooden railings replaced by 9-ft high stone railings
- Ambulatory passage added around the stupa's base or drum
- **SO:** monument construction across dynasties



E. Sanchi

E3. Sātavāhana stupa, 1C BCE

- Sātavāhana kingdom in W India extended control across India, 1C BCE, and began major renovations
- Now called the Great Stupa (other stupas at Sanchi)



E3. Sātavāhana stupa, 1C BCE

- Railing added to create a path for pradakshina (ritual circumambulation)
- **Craven:** Original form of stupa as burial mound here transformed into “world mountain”
- Added 4 gateways (Skt toraṇa), ca. 34 ft high
- 4 gateways = 4 quarters of universe
- “Umbrella” on top of stupa (destroyed) = sacred tree to heaven

Great Stupa, Sanchi, South
(main) entrance, 1C BCE



E3. Sātavāhana stupa, 1C BCE

- Devotee entered through the E gate and circumambulated in clockwise direction, as though walking a 3D mandala (sacred diagram)
- Gateways of fine sandstone mimicked wooden structures, 2 square pillars connected by 3 lightly curved architraves
- Jointing makes sense for wood, not stone
- Entire gateway covered w/ narrative relief sculpture: scenes from Buddha's life and past lives (*Jatakas*)



E. Sanchi

E4. East gateway narrative reliefs

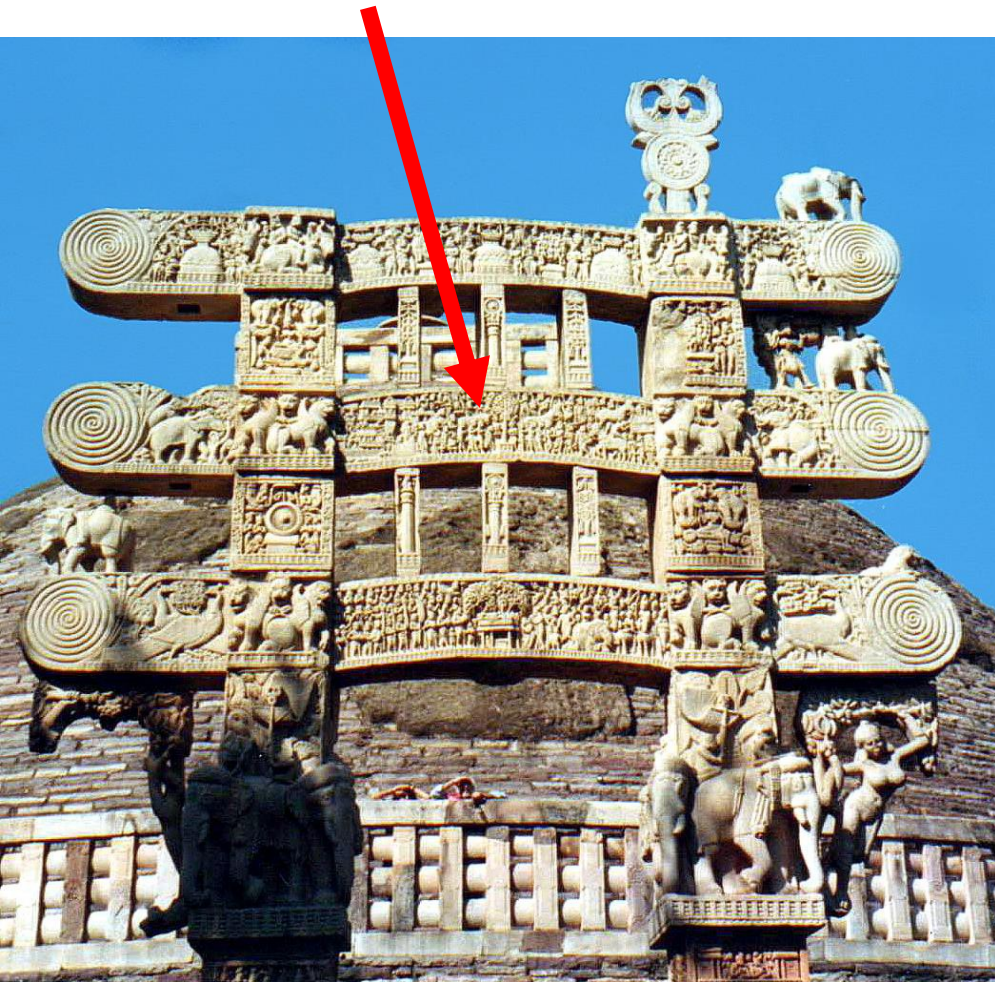
- Full view of front side of east gateway (torana)
- Note that there are missing carvings and statues among the gateways.

Great Stupa, Sanchi, East Gateway, full view, front side, 1C BCE



E4. East gateway narrative reliefs

- Front (LT) & back (RT) sides carved, w/ different narratives
- We'll examine one narrative: front, center, story of the Great Departure



E4. East gateway narrative reliefs

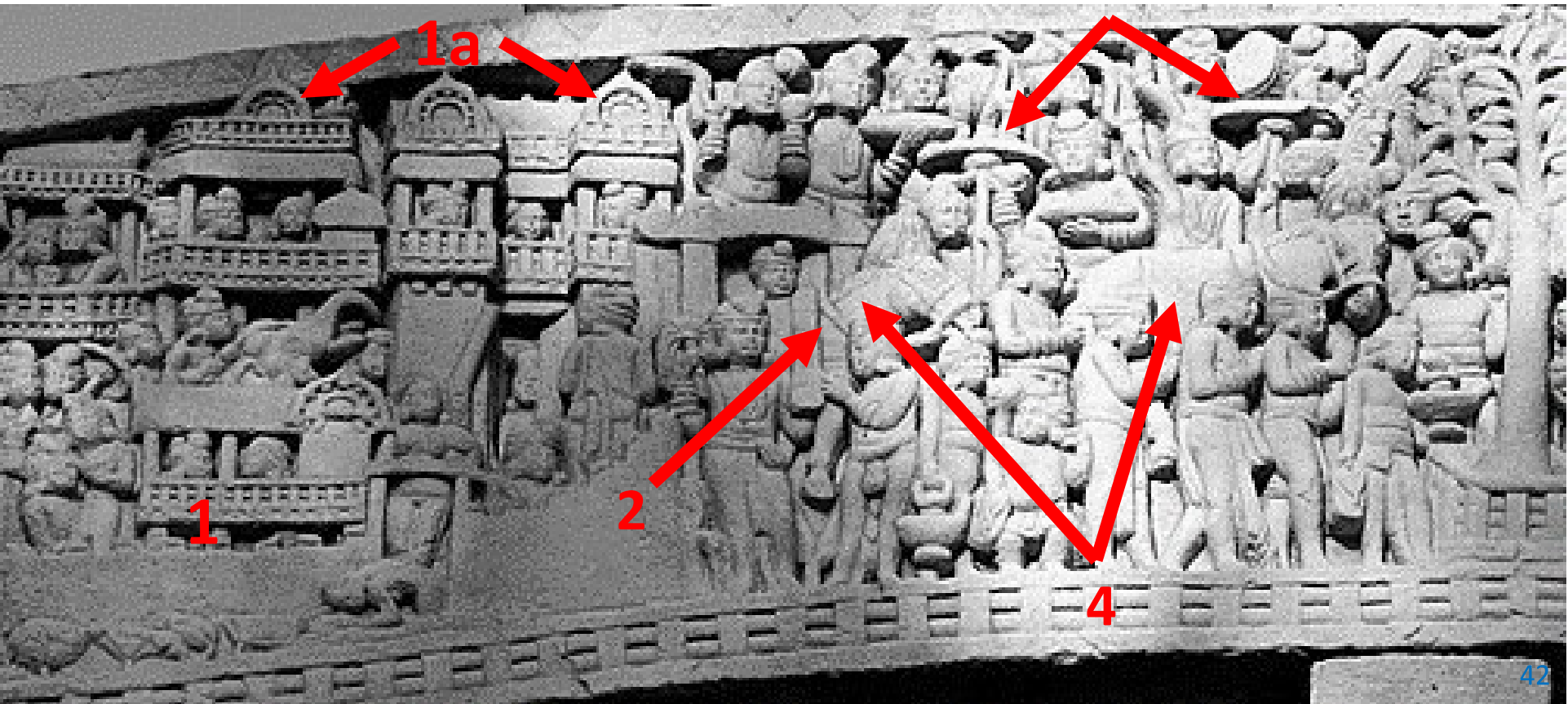
E4a. The Great Departure (on architrave)

- Buddha's image not yet depicted in visual art (improper)
- Use abstract symbols: footprints, parasol, empty seat, long path
- Low relief on 8-ft long middle architrave, front side
- Continuous narration in a single image, left to right... one mode of storytelling



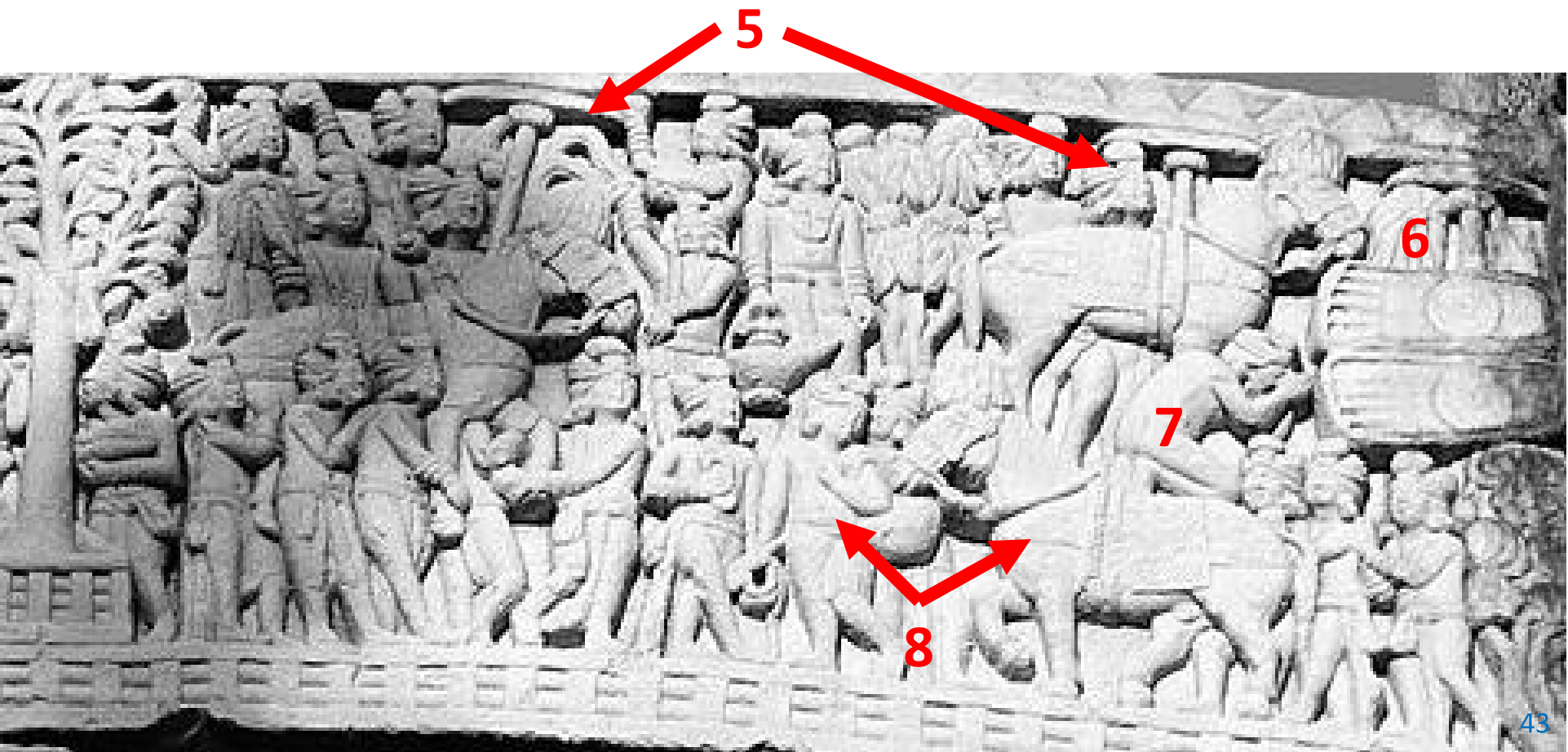
E4a. The Great Departure (on architrave)

- Palace (1) w/ window arches (1a)... Siddhartha emerges from the palace on his horse, held up by the gods (2) ... S's presence is symbolized by an upheld parasol (3)... horse repeated as journey proceeds (4)



E4a. The Great Departure (on architrave)

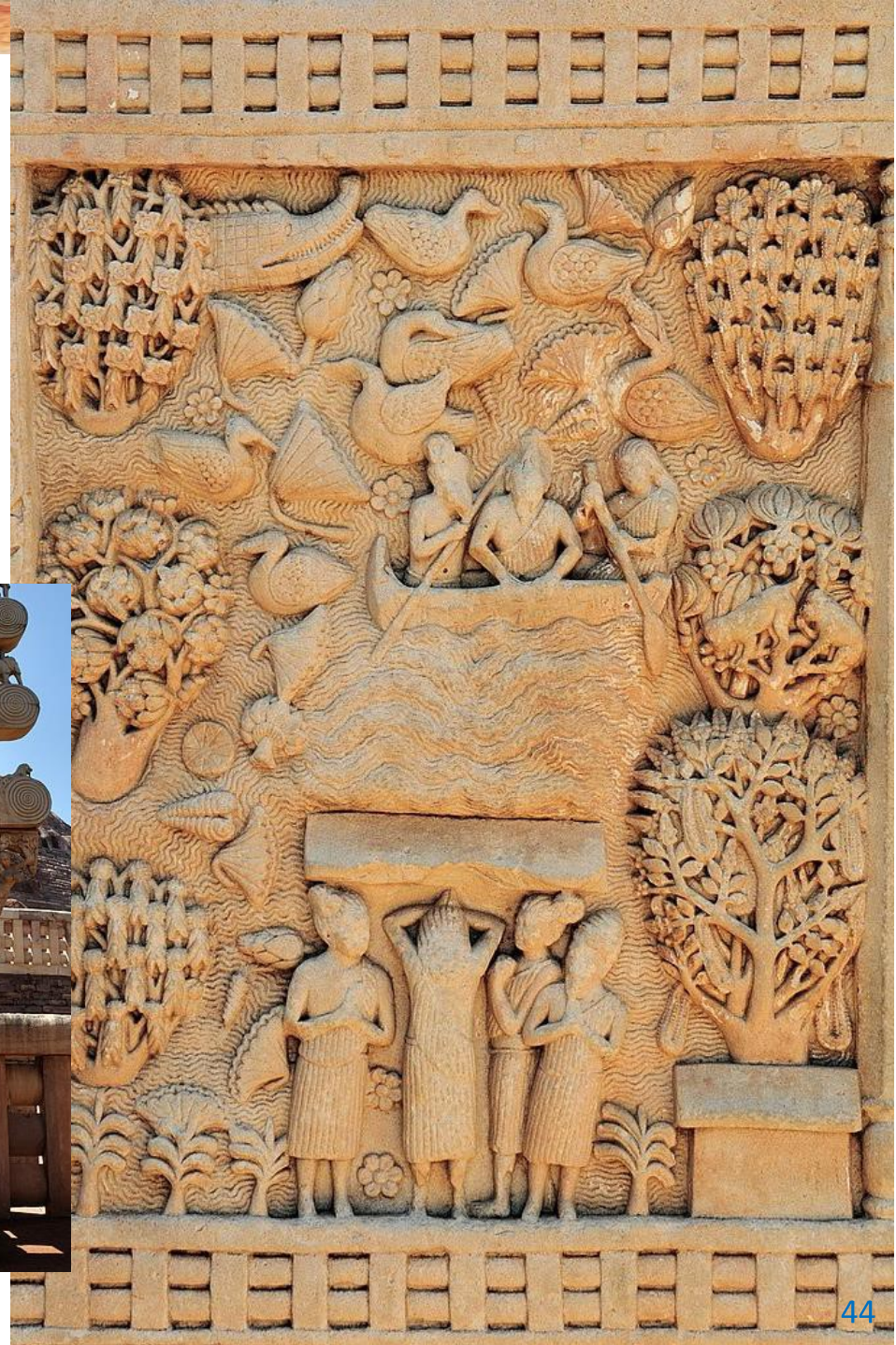
- Horse and parasol (5)... S arrives at end of journey (footprints) (6)... groom Chandaka kneels at Buddha's feet (7)... horse returns riderless, led by Chandaka (8)



E4. East gateway narrative reliefs

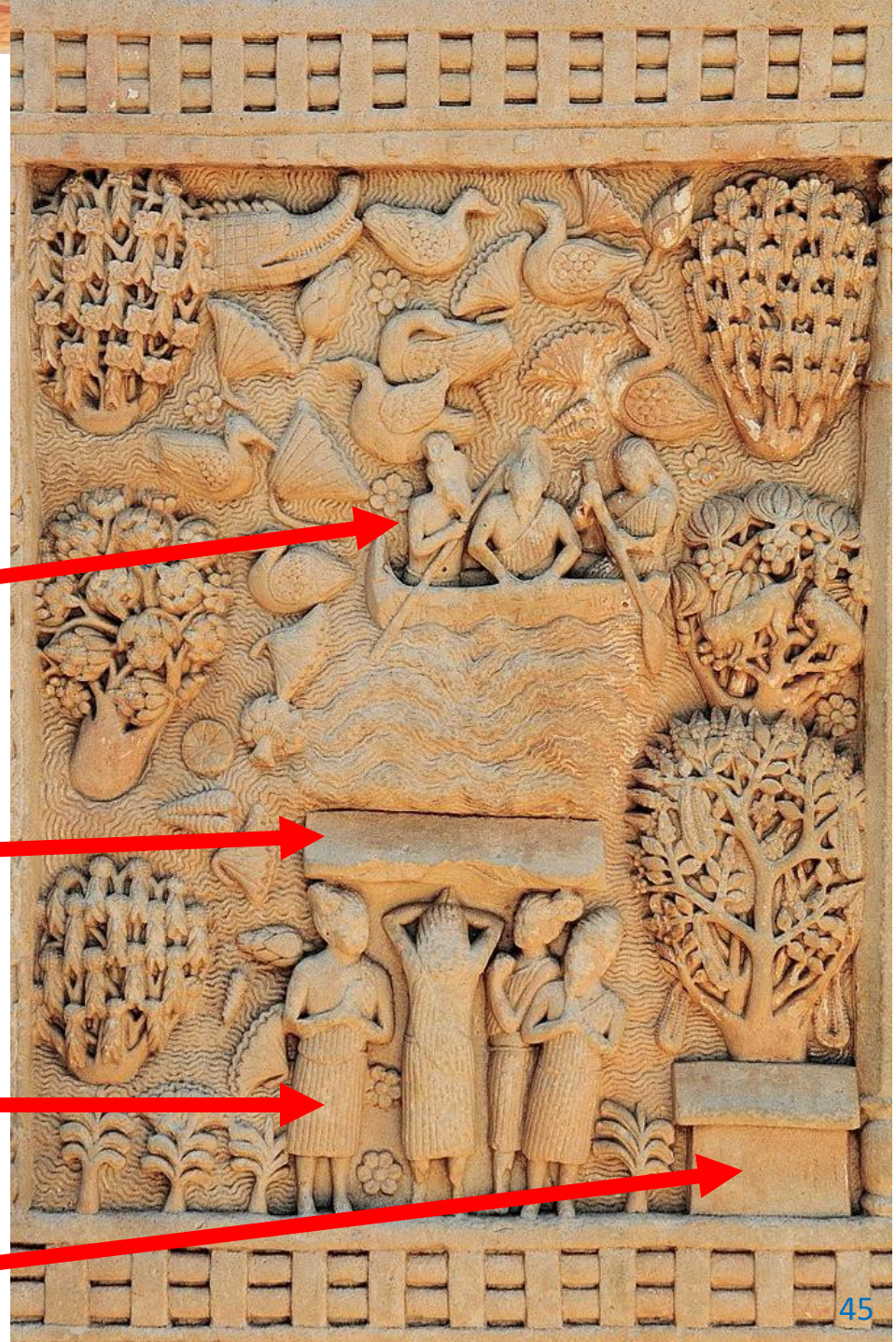
E4b. Miracle of the Buddha Walking on Water (on pillar)

- Left pillar
- One panel in a series of narrative panels



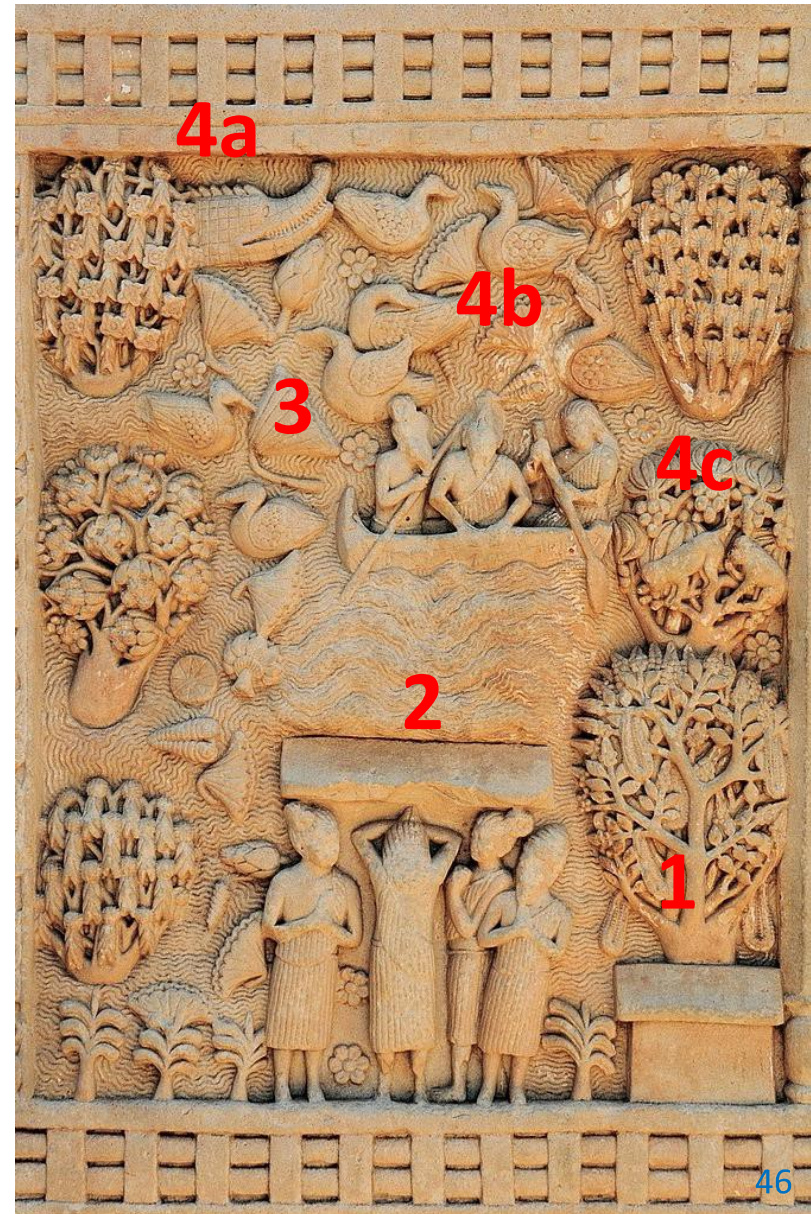
Story

- Buddha embarked on a river journey before a flood.
- Unbelieving Kasyapa brothers set out in a boat to rescue him.
- They find him walking on the water (symbolized by slab of stone).
- On land again, they accept the supremacy of the Buddha (symbolized by empty seat under tree).



Style

- More compressed storytelling
- Multiple perspectives
 - Eye level (trees...) (1)
 - From above (walking path...) (2)
 - From below (flowers...) (3)
- Small objects (e.g., leaves) shown large: ease of readability
- Emotion conveyed by gesture (not expression)
- Delightful animals (4a,b,c)
- Convention:
 - Figures lower in image are closer
 - Figures in BG & FG same size



E. Sanchi

E5. West gateway narrative reliefs

- Front (LT) & back (RT) sides carved, w/ different narratives
- We'll examine one narrative: rear, bottom, story of the Buddha's Temptation and Enlightenment



Great Stupa, Sanchi, West Gateway, full view, front and back sides, 1C BCE

E5. West gateway narrative reliefs

Buddha's Temptation and Enlightenment

- Ctr: shrine w/ pipal tree (representing Buddha)
- RT: Mara's demon army attacks Buddha, fail to distract
- Far RT: Fearful demons flee away
- LT: Gods appear serenely & offer greetings to the enlightened one



E5. West gateway narrative reliefs

Buddha's Temptation and Enlightenment

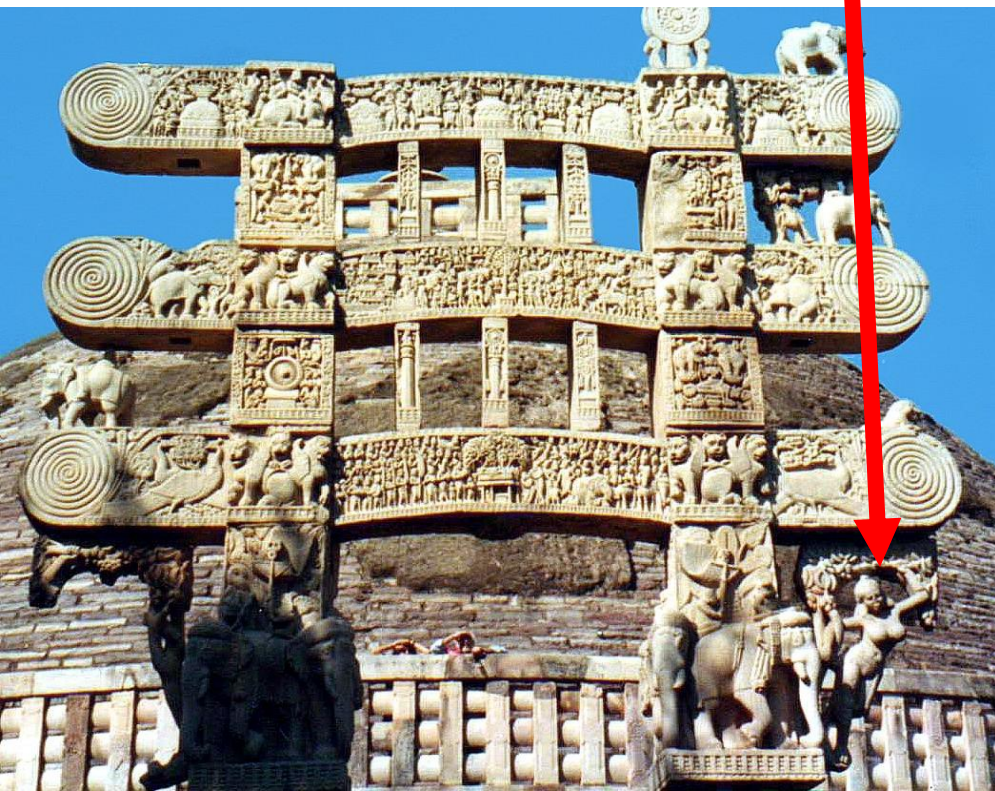
- Cf. RT: agitated style of carving **VS** LT: precise and regular
- Differs from Great Departure in E gateway:
 - Order of presentation (center outward)
 - More discrete episodes
- Similar to...: Symbolic Buddha



E. Sanchi

E6. Female bracket figure

- Continued depiction of **yakshi** fertility figures
- Each gateway originally had sculptures in the round of female figures as brackets between pillar and architraves



- 6 such figures, 2 large ones below the lowest architrave, smaller ones below the other architraves

Great Stupa, Sanchi, East Gateway, front side, 1C BCE

E6. Female bracket figure

- Nude fml figure, one arm around a mango tree, other reaching for a mango
- More realistic than earlier yakshis... perhaps a woman rather than a yakshi
- **Tribhanga pose**... characterized Indian sculpture henceforth
- Unexpected in monastic context: Women were considered a distraction to monk's meditation
- Here, reference to popular belief that by her touch, a woman could cause a tree to blossom

Yakshi or woman, bracket figure from Great Stupa, Sanchi, East Gateway, front side, 1C BCE



E. Sanchi

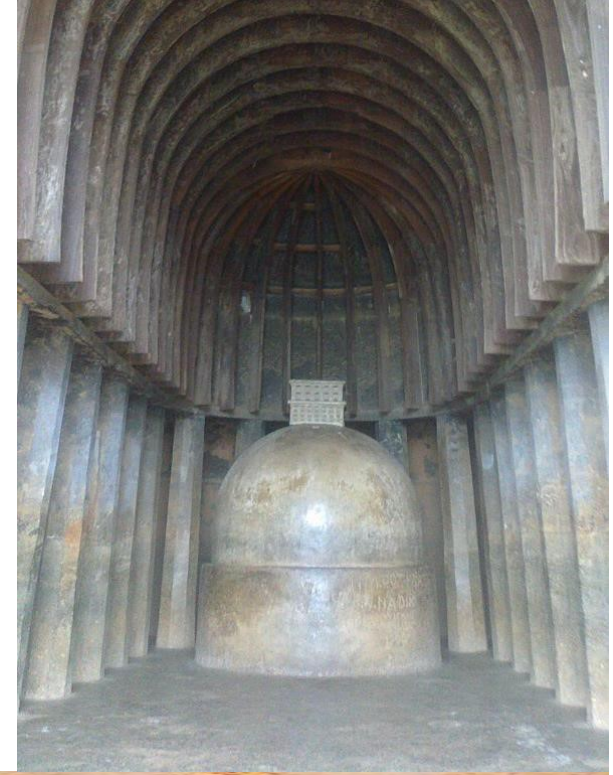
E7. Artists and patronage

- Most of the artists were probably Hindu
- **Dehejia:** Best described as Indian art in the service of Buddhist religion (artistry across faiths)
- Funding came from local sources, not necessarily aristocracy; 631 inscriptions of donations:
 - “Ordinary folk” ...
 - Artisan’s guilds
 - Monks and nuns, i.e., from their family wealth
- Sanchi monks toured nearby villages asking for donations

E7. Artists and patronage

- Economic success due to mercantile enterprise (recall Karli caves)... Sanchi close to land and river trade routes
- No overall theological program for the decoration. Each donor selected a scene or theme that he or she preferred. Hence duplication of themes:
 - Buddha's Enlightenment depicted 4 times,
 - Great Departure depicted twice

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Art: Chaityas, Viharas,
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