

NEH Summer Institute
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Buddhist Art of India: A Few Topics
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After his final cessation
The Blessed One isn't is
(isn't isn't) isn't is and isn't
isn't isn't is and isn't. –Nāgārjuna
(trans. Beyer, *The Buddhist Experience*, 214)

Style, Iconography, Formal analysis, Art as a solution to a problem
George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962; 2011 reprint).

Part 1: Reading Visual Narratives in Buddhist Art of India
Vidya Dehejia, "On modes of visual narration," *The Art Bulletin* vol. 72, no.3 (1990), 374-392.

Parinirvana/Nirvana at Kushinagara (modern day U.P.)
śarīra (*śarira*, lit. body, dead body): relic
stūpa: Buddhist relic mound
jātaka: stories about the previous lives of the Buddha
Theravāda: doctrine of elders (also *Hinayāna*)
Mahāyāna: Great way or Great vehicle

Distribution of the relics

Ten stupas of the original relics: eight portions of the Buddha's relics, the funeral urn, and the ashes from the funeral pyre
King Ashoka (r. 272-231 BCE)'s 84,000 stūpas

Stupa as the symbol of the absent Buddha

pradakṣiṇa: clockwise circumambulation, keeping one's right shoulder to the object of veneration
torāṇa: gateway
vedika: terrace or platform
aṇḍa: dome
harmikā: rectangular vessel on top of *aṇḍa*
yasti: pole
chatra: umbrella

Topic 1: “Aniconic”-iconic representation of the Buddha

“aniconic”: “symbolizing without aiming at resemblance”

aniconism: practice of avoiding anthropomorphic representation of Buddha and using symbols as substitutes for Buddha’s presence

Susan Huntington, “Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism,” *Art Journal* 49 (Winter 1990), 401-08.

Vidya Dehejia, “Aniconism and the multivalence of Images,” *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991), 45-66.

Topic 2: The First Buddha Images- Gandhara and Mathura

Early debate on the origin of the Buddha images

- Alfred Foucher (1865-1952)

Alfred Foucher, “The Greek Origin of the Image of the Buddha,” in *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art and other Essays in Indian and Central-Asian Archaeology* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1917), 111-37.

- Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947)

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, “The Origin of the Buddha Image,” *Art Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (1927), 287-328.

Part 2: How to read Buddha Images

Gupta period (c. 320-647 CE)

Bodhisattva: 1) Buddha-to-be, a term referring to the Buddha before enlightenment as prince Siddhartha in early Buddhist texts, 2) “enlightened being”—postpones entrance into nirvana to help others, important concept in Mahayana (Great vehicle) Buddhism

32 major signs (lakshanas) and 80 minor signs of the great man (*mahapurusha*)

Stylistic Canon of Indian Sculptures

Two important Buddhist sculptural schools (centers) of the Gupta period: **Mathura** and **Sarnath**

Sarnath: site of the Buddha’s first sermon at deer park

Topic 3: Images of the Buddha in late Indian Buddhism

Janice Leoshko, “About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India,” *Archives of Asian Art*, vol.52 (2000/2001), 63-82.