

6.3 Rock-Cut Architecture of Gupta India :: Southeast Asia and Southern India - Cosmic Models

- 1) **Gupta Dynasty** - reconstituted the empire about 400 CE
  - The previous Mauryan Dynasty had dissolved about 200 BCE
  - Gupta examples exist from between 200 BCE and 400 CE
  - Gupta dynasty based on a non-hierarchical mix of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, allowing for multiplicity of divinities
  - Gupta excelled in rock-cut **chaitya** halls (prayer halls)
  - **Mount Meru** is the cosmological origin Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism - much symbolism in the temple structures and pyramids is focused on **Mount Meru**
  - Principal Hindu gods: Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu
- 2) Vocabulary
  - **chaitya** - prayer hall (CHET-ya) cut into the solid rock
  - **stupa** - mound-like smooth domical shrine that may contain relics. The stupa is the main focal point of the chaitya
  - **shalas** - barrel vault roof forms
  - **gavakshas** - horseshoe arches
  - **mandapa** - hypostyle hall in Indian architecture
  - **ratha** - symbolic procession of carts carrying the gods
  - **parkara** - the sacred precinct, basically a **temenos**
  - **shikhara** - the tower element of the temple or pagoda
  - **gopura** - the entry gateway, basically a propylaea
- 3) Examples
  - **Bhaja** rock-cut (cave) temple (Buddhist) with chaitya and stupa - simpler (50 BCE)
  - **Karli** rock-cut (cave) temple (Buddhist) with chaitya and stupa - much fancier (120 CE). Note fake wooden structure inside.
- 4) Core of the temples (and beneath the pyramids)
  - **garbha girha** - the womb-like chamber at the center where the **lingam stone** is. These symbols of the womb and of the phallus symbolize **generative power, cosmic unity, and universal mystery** of the Buddhist/Hindu/Jain religions
- 5) Southern India - small scale examples
  - **Mahabalipuram** in Tamil Nadu built by the Pallava dynasty (Hindu)
  - **Pandava ratha at Mahabalipuram** (Hindu) 650 CE - a sequence **five temples** units or pagodas lined up like a procession called a **ratha**. They are intricately carved to simulate wood construction. They contain all sorts of shrine-like elements, and aedicules. The culminating piece of the ratha is a tiered pyramid with a **garbha girha** inside.
  - **Shore Temples of Mahabalipuram** (Hindu) 720 CE - Two more pagodas or temples a short walk from the other five that are right on the seashore. These are tiered pyramids with similar details. Total number of pagodas is seven.
  - The **shikhara** (towers) of the north (Nagaran) are convex. The **shikhara** towers of the south (Dravidan) are tiered pyramids.
- 6) **Kailasanantha** temple (Hindu) 760 CE
  - Half rock-cut and half freestanding. Has all the elements: **shikhara, garba griha, lingam stone, gopura, mandapa**
- 7) Java and Cambodia (Southeast Asia)
  - Temples based on the geometric designs of the **mandala**, which is a representation of the cosmos in the form of a symbolic microcosm.
  - **Boropudur** temple, perhaps the largest in the world - Sailendra dynasty (770-862 CE). Like a three-dimensional mandala, five concentric redented rectangular levels topped by three levels of circular rings of stupas crowned by a large stupa overall. Each of the upper stupa contained a large statue of the **Buddha Dhyani** who has reached enlightenment.

The purpose of Boropudur is for people to have to follow the path uphill (like a mandala) entering and departing the world of **desire**, the world of **form**, and finally achieving the world of **formlessness** (enlightenment) at the top. It's a journey.

Based in part on eight-square and nine-square grids of geometry.

- **Angkor. Banteay Srei** 968 CE (terrace temple) and **Angkor Wat** 1150 CE (pyramid temple). The huge, overall city of Angkor is based on (1) grand waterworks, (2) ancestor temple, and (3) pyramidal temple as mausoleum. The places were based on the **mandala designs** of geometric and concentric precincts and galleries and pavilions.

Note the use of the typical elements we've seen: **gopura, mandapa, parkara, garbha girha, lingam stones, moats, and shikhara** (pyramidal towers)

Angkor Wat: Suryavarman II (1150 CE)

A later part of Angkor was the complex **Angkor Thom** - much larger than Angkor Wat - also surrounded by a moat with all the typical elements we've discussed. Its central tower piece, symbolizing an **axis mundi** was called the **Bayon** about 1200 CE.

8) Southern India (again) - large scale examples

- **Rajaresvaram** (1010 CE) Chola dynasty in Tamil Nadu. Typical elements similar: a **parkara** surrounded by a **moat**, with **gopura** gateways, hypostyle **mandapas**, and a final central pyramid **shikhara** with a **garbha girha** inside housing the **lingam stone**.
- **Khajuraho** (954)

**Lakshmana Temple** - five towers symbolizing the five peaks of Mount Meru

**Kandariya Mahadeva Temple**