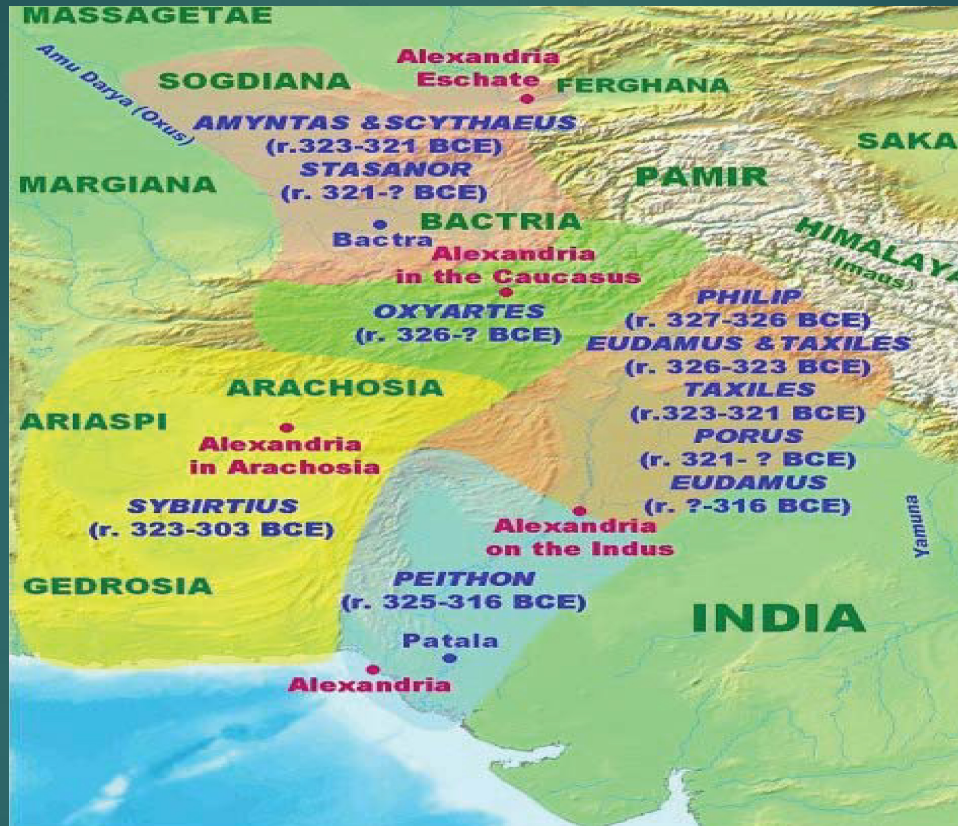


Mauryan Art



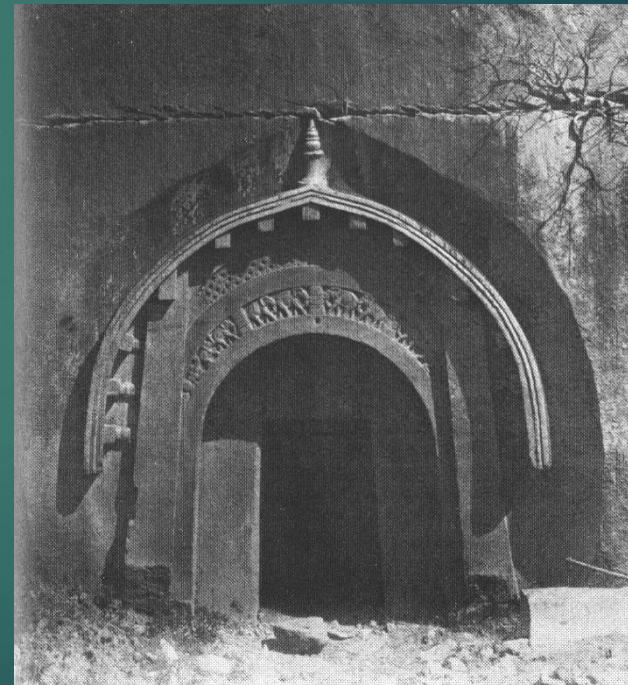
Dept. of History, Patna
University

An Overview...

- Mauryan art encompasses the arts produced during the period of the Mauryan Empire (4th to 2nd century BCE)
- Represented an important transition in Indian art from use of wood to stone



The Lion Capital of Ashoka from Sarnath that is now the National Emblem of India

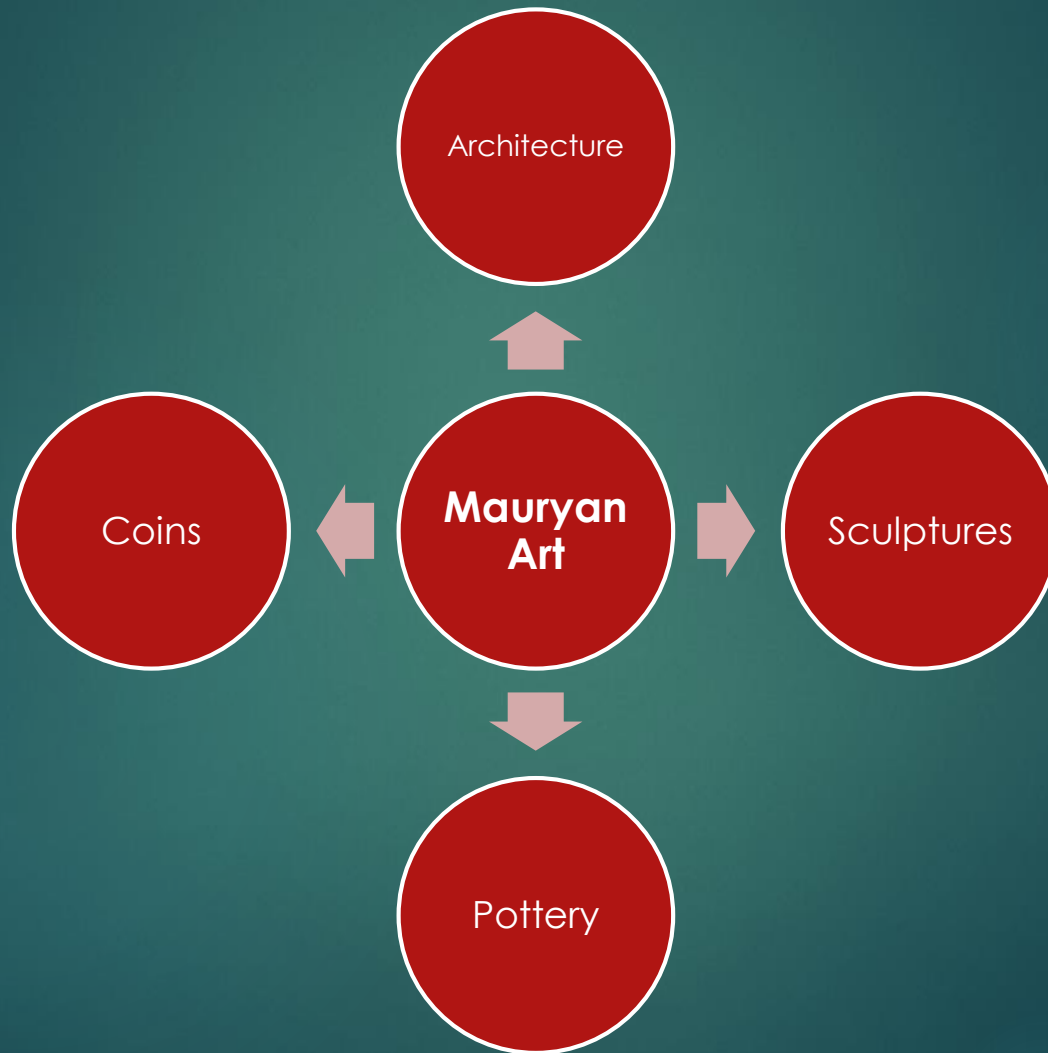


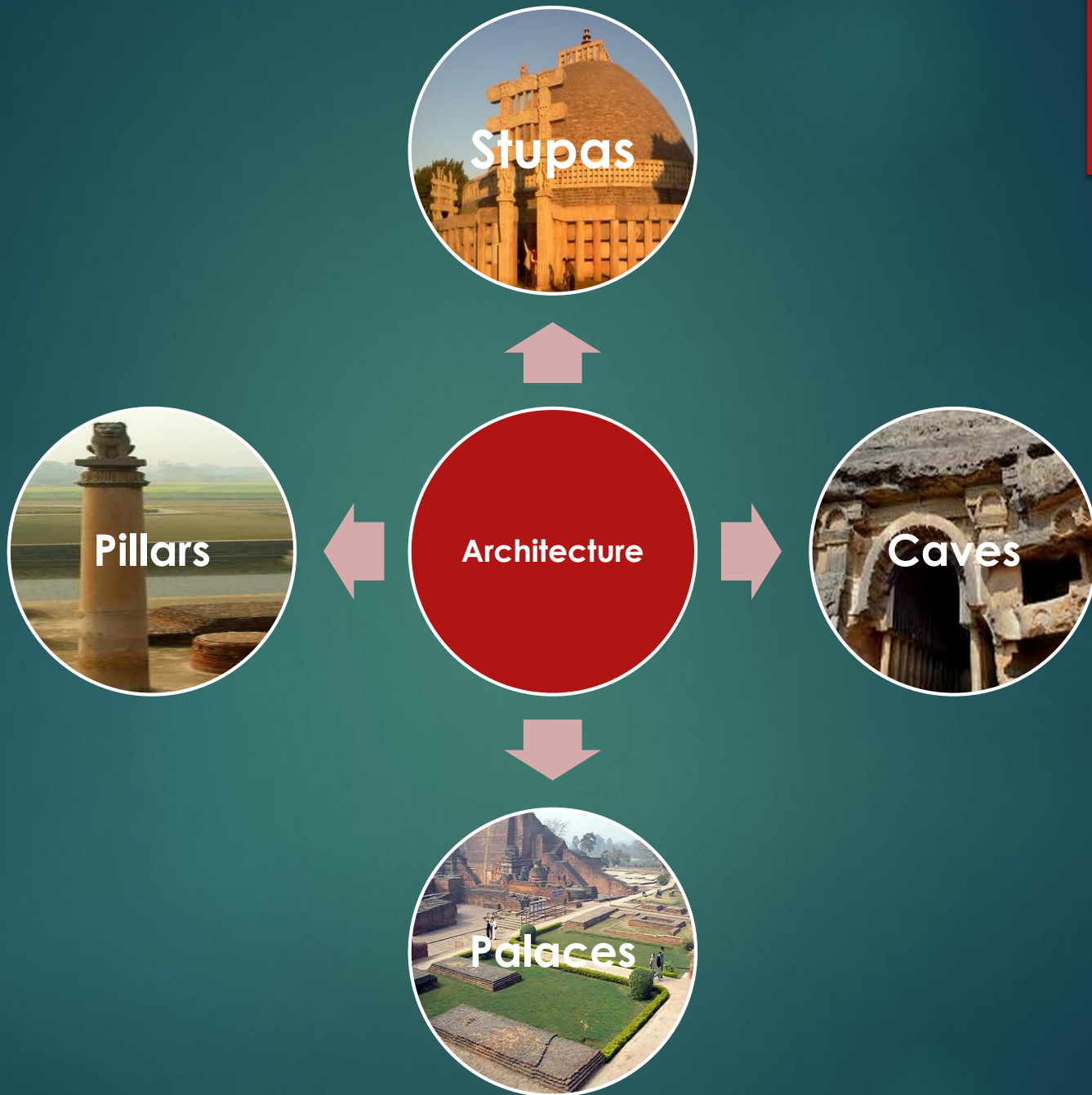
Mauryan architecture in the Barabar Mountains.

An Overview...

- Said to exhibit three main phases
 - The first phase was the continuation of the Pre-Mauryan tradition, which is found in some instances to the representation of the Vedic deities
 - examples are the reliefs of Surya and Indra at the Bhaja Caves
 - The second phase was the court art of Ashoka
 - typically found in the monolithic columns on which his edicts are inscribed
 - The third phase was the beginning of brick and stone architecture
 - stupa at Sanchi, the small monolithic rail, ornamented façade at Barabar caves, reproducing the forms of wooden structure

An Overview...





Mauryan Architecture

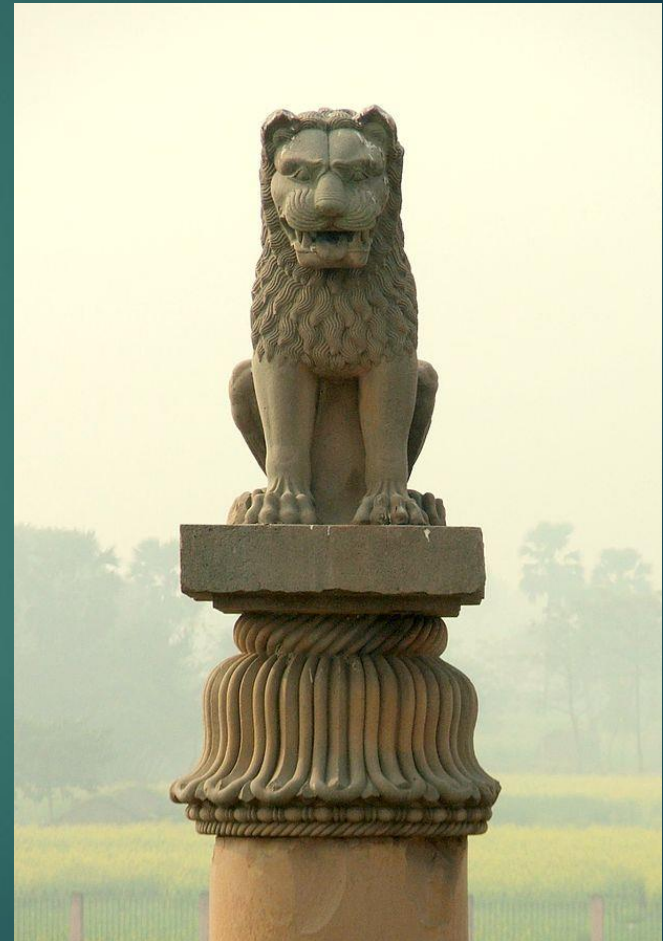
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➤ **Mauryan Pillars**

- Free standing columns and were not used as supports to any structure
- Two main parts: the shaft and the capital

➤ **Mauryan Stupas**

- Solid domes of brick or stone
- Constructed to celebrate the achievements of Gautama Buddha



Single Lion capital at [Vaishali](#)

➤ **The Sarnath**

- Adopted as the emblem of the Modern Indian Republic
- World knew in the Third Century B.C
- Two main parts: the shaft and the capital

➤ **Mauryan Palaces and Residential buildings**

- Gilded pillars adorned with golden vines and silver birds
- Fa-Hien remarked that “no human hands of this world could accomplish this.”



An example of a Stupa

Mauryan Art – Sculptures, Coins, Pottery

Mauryan Sculpture

- This period marked a transition from wood to stone as a medium
- The artwork can broadly be classified into
 - 1) Court art
 - 2) Popular art
- Court art was done mostly in the form of pillars
- Materials used
 - 1) white sandstone from Mathura
 - 2) buff-colored black-spotted sandstone from Varanasi
- Uniformity in style
- Inscribed with edicts of Ashoka on Dharma or righteousness
- Popular art consisted of sculpture not commissioned by the emperor
- Patrons were local governors
- Technically fashioned with less skill than pillar capitals

Ashoka pillar

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- Placed by emperor Ashoka at buddhist site of Sarnath in about 250 BC
- Carved in single block of polished sandstone
- Four Asiatic lions are mounted on an abacus featuring elephant, bull, horse and lion separated by chariot wheels with everything sitting on a lotus
- Symbolizes spread of dharma and the extent of Mauryan empire in all directions



Yakshi Didarganj

11

- It is 64" inches carved out of a single piece of sandstone
- Done in 300 BC and excavated in 1917
- She has a fly whisk in her right hand
- Her pose is 'tribanga' which shows her bending at the neck, waist and hip



Pottery

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- ▶ Use of the potters wheel became universal



NBP (Northern Black Polished Ware)

- ▶ Hallmark of the preceding and early Mauryan periods
- ▶ Made of finely levigated alluvial clay (grey & red)
- ▶ Peculiar lustre and brilliance
- ▶ Glaze ranges from jet black to deep grey or metallic steel blue
- ▶ Was used largely for dishes and small bowls
- ▶ Found in abundance in Ganges Valley
- ▶ Was more expensive ware than other varieties

Coins



- ▶ The coins issued by the Mauryans were mostly silver and a few copper pieces of metal in various shapes, sizes and weights and which have one or more symbols punched on them.
- ▶ The most common symbols were the elephant, the tree in railing symbol and the mountain.

Coins

- ▶ These symbols are said to have either represented the Royal insignia or the symbol of the local guild that struck the coin.
- ▶ The technique of producing such coins was generally that the metal was cut first and then the device was punched.
- ▶ Some coins had Shroff (money changer) marks on them indicating that older coins were often re-issued.

Notable works...

16



Female terracotta figure,
northern India, c. 320-200 BCE



2nd-century statuette

Notable works...

17



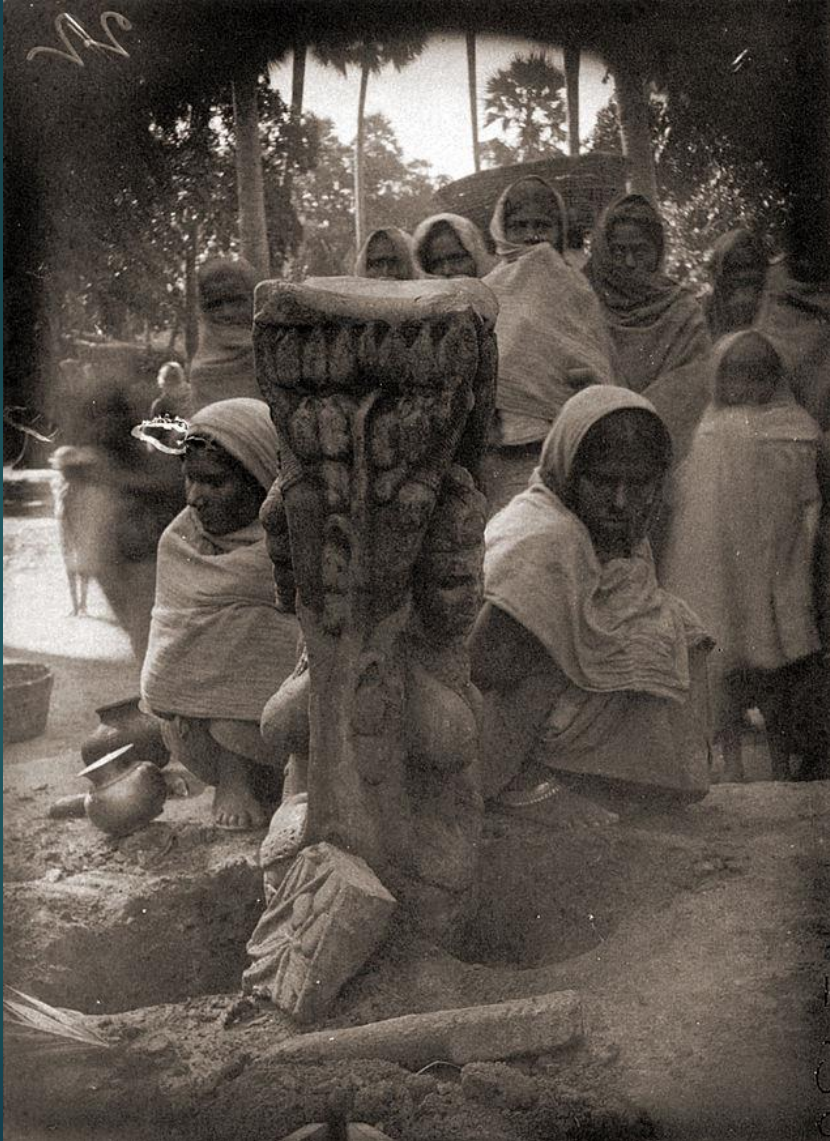
A standing pillar



Fragment of the 6th Pillar
Edict of Ashoka (238 BCE), in
Brahmi, sandstone, British
Museum

Notable works...

18



- Statue of Matrikas found near Agam Kuan, Patna
- Matrikas is a group of Hindu goddesses who are always depicted together
- Since they are usually depicted as a heptad, they are called Saptamatrika(s) ("seven mothers"): Brahmani, Vaishnavi, Maheshvari, Indrani, Kaumari, Varahi, Chamunda and Narasimhi

In a gist...

- ▶ We see that the Mauryan art was characterised by nobility of design, fine technical accomplishment and cultured form of expression.
- ▶ Thus the art and architecture of the Mauryan Empire constitutes the culminating point of the progress of Indian art.
- ▶ In India the establishment of such vigorous dynasty ruling over wide dominions has invariably resulted in the application of a strong stimulus to the development of man's intellectual and artistic power

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Thank you!