

Music Iconography portrayed in South Asian Buddhist arts (based on Ajanta Buddhist caves)

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This study explores the iconographical evidence of music depicted in the Ajanta Buddhist caves and its significance in the history of Indian music. By applying descriptive and historical approaches to the iconographical evidence, the research focuses on the identification, analysis, and interpretation of the musical icons in Ajanta. The study addresses the following research question: What iconographical evidence of music is presented in the Ajanta caves, and how does it contribute to our understanding of India's musical history? The research examines the characteristics of the musical instruments in Ajanta, including their structure, playing techniques, and performance contexts, as well as comparisons with similar depictions at other locations. This study meticulously surveys literary sources and archaeological findings qualitatively. The musical instruments depicted in Ajanta can be categorized into four types: string instruments (*Tata*), such as Lutes or Veena; percussion instruments (*Avanaddha*), including Drums and Cymbals; solid instruments (*Ghana*), referring to solid or metallic instruments; and wind instruments (*Sushira*), such as Flutes and Conches. The study concludes that the Ajanta caves provide significant evidence of music during the relevant historical period, contributing to the historical evaluation of the musical instruments and offering insights into the Buddhist perspectives on music.

Keywords: Ajanta caves, Evidence of Music, History of Music, Iconography, Musical instruments

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