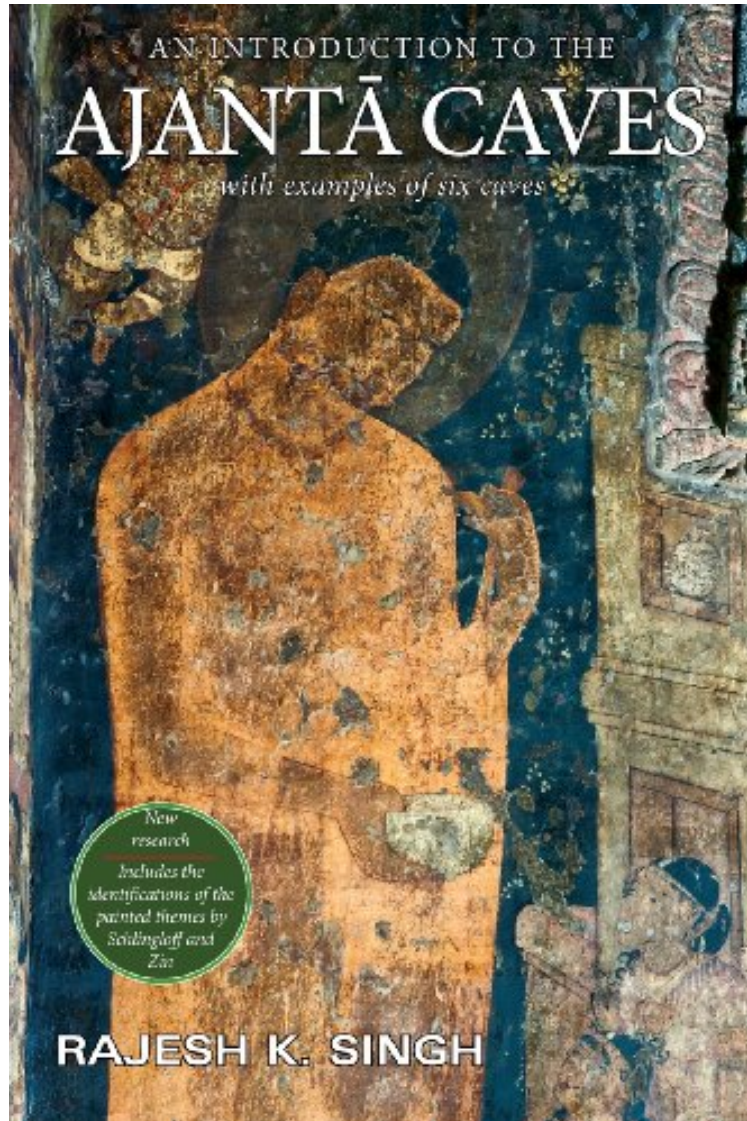


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## An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves: With Examples of Six Caves

*Rajesh Singh*

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**Rajesh Singh : An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves: With Examples of Six Caves** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves: With Examples of Six Caves:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Wonder that is India...yet more confirmation...By John P. Jones III The Ajanta caves are located approximately 100 km from Aurangabad, in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Overall, there are 29 caves, with work in all performed by Buddhist devotees and patrons. The first five caves were developed

and occupied over a 400 year period, from approximately 228 BC to 224 AD, as determined by at least one Western calendar. During this period, the Satavahana dynasty was the rulers in the area. There was also a considerable flurry of activity during the Vakataka dynasty, over a two decade period, from 460-480 AD, when of the other caves were developed, although many remain not fully complete. Purportedly, according to Wikipedia, John Smith re-discovered these caves for the Western world while on a hunting trip in 1819, but the author cites numerous earlier "discoveries" by westerners (as always in such cases, the local people were always aware of their existence.)Rajesh Kumar Singh has produced the essential guide book for the Ajanta caves, not the result of one quick visit, as so often happens, but rather years of laborious research and work. He has combined at least two or three excellent qualities, besides dedication. He is a photographer, who ensures that the light is right... which normally means artificial light inside a cave, always a more demanding proposition. The book contains 280 high-quality pictures, which do proper justice to both the paintings as well as the carvings in stone. He is also a researcher and a good writer. Singh readily acknowledges the work of a leading Ajanta scholar, Professor Walter M. Spink of the U. of Michigan, whose own book on the subject *Ajanta: History And Development* 1. *The End of the Golden Age* (Handbook of Oriental Studies: Section 2; India) might be a bit pricey for the average reader. Singh also provides lucid explanations of the competing religious influences within Buddhism, for example, Mahayana (the Greater Vehicle) and Hinayana (the Lesser Vehicle), as well the competing scholarly explanations for what we can observe today. The author focuses his attention on caves #1, 2, 9, 10, 16 and 17. Reading the book on the regular Kindle Reader will not do it justice, due to the numerous photographs and drawings. So, I utilized the Kindle "Cloud" function was able to thoroughly enjoy it on my computer. I also utilized the "magnification" function to examine some of the more detailed drawings. I was fortunate to visit the caves in 1971, as part of a seven week-long trip from northern India to Madras. At the time, accommodation was difficult, as was transportation. We stayed in Aurangabad, and traveled by bus for what could have been only a 2-3 hour visit at the site, with only a few people there, and poor lighting supplied by a few local "entrepreneurs." I was woefully unprepared for such a visit, with no real guide other than A.L. Bashem's *Wonder That Was India*. Happily, UNESCO has now declared it a world heritage site, which should aid in its preservation and restoration - there have been long periods of neglect. Now the truly authoritative guide is available, thanks to the work of Rajesh Singh, and should be a must purchase PRIOR to a visit. And shouldn't the 100 million or so Indians of the "middle class" be seeing their own country before racing off to see the Tower of London et al? As for non-Indian visitors, Ajanta should be on a rung not much below the Taj Mahal. 5-stars. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Very Impressive But Beware-- You'll Want To See The Caves For Yourself Once You See The Photographs! By Ann de Vries I have long been interested in India and I have enjoyed many of the BBC programmes on India. Therefore, when I saw "An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves", I was immediately interested. I know absolutely nothing about the Ajanta Caves, so I am not sure how valuable my review will be. I do have some observations that might be of help to someone in deciding whether or not to purchase this book. The book is written in a scholarly style, but is accessible to the general reader. Sources are credited and differing conclusions/interpretations of various scholars, as well as those of the author, are given. This allows the reader to learn some of the various schools of thought, how conclusions were reached, and where conclusions based on the evidence differ, and why. As to the usefulness or accuracy of the textual content, I have no way of assessing it since I am unfamiliar with the topic, but I found the text to be very interesting, extremely well written, and very informative. The highlight of the book, though, was the photographs. There were indeed a lot, they displayed well on my iMac, some were breathtaking, and they definitely gave a feel for what the Ajanta Caves are like. The craftsmanship that went into creating the caves was remarkable and the photographs captured a lot of the artistry and grandeur. Some of the photographs were small, but most were large enough to capture the full effects of the subject. I am giving this book a 5 star rating because I really liked it; I liked the writing style, I loved the photographs, I thought the research seemed valid, and I liked the fact that the author provided information based not just on his own work, but on that of other scholars in the field. The book presented an excellent and well rounded overview of the subject, and I was impressed by it. Perhaps other scholars in this field will have a different opinion, but I can only evaluate it on my reaction to it, as someone with little knowledge of the topic, but with some familiarity with scholarly historical writing. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Useful introduction By Bill V For the first-time visitor a practical introduction. A brief synopsis of the other caves and a detailed map of the site would have been useful. It's a pity that almost all photos lacked clarity.

This is the most up to date book on the art, architecture, and history of the famous Ajanta caves. It includes chapters on political background, religious background, and epigraphy. It includes a summary of the latest research carried out in the last few decades. It brings together critical information from scholarly books and periodicals. There are 284 colour photographs depicting architecture, paintings, sculpture, and decorative motifs in comprehensive detail. For the first time at least one photograph of all the narrative themes of the Ajanta paintings have been printed in a book. The identifications of the painted themes by James Burgess, A. Foucher, James Griffiths, Dieter Schlingloff, and Monika Zin have been included to create a collective up-to-date corpus. On historical matters, the timeline of Walter M. Spink for the Ajanta caves has been included. In order to satisfy the curiosities of the general reader and invoke research

interest in advanced learners, an account of how the excavation progressed step-by-step in some of the caves has been included. By the same author: Anonymous (ed.), *Ajant : A Digital Encyclopaedia* [CD-Rom] (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, 2004). Rajesh Kumar Singh, The Early Development of the Cave 26-Complex at Ajant , *South Asian Studies* 28.1 (London: BASAS and Routledge, March 2012), 37-68. Buddhahadras Dedicatory Inscription at Ajant : A Review , in *Pratnakrti: Recent Studies in Indian Epigraphy, History, Archaeology, and Art*, 2 vols, Professor Shrinivas S. Ritti Felicitation volume, ed. by Shrinivas V. Padigar and Shivanand V. (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 34-46). Ajant Cave No. 26: Oriented to the Sunrise of Dhamma Day ( h a P r i m ), and Inaugurated on 14 ha, 384 aka Era (27 June 462 CE)? in *Buddhist Rock-cut Caves of India*, ed. by Shrikant Ganvir, in press). Numerating the ailag has at Ajant , *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai* (2009) 82, 122-26. Ajant Cave 8: Historiography and Fresh Look on the First Mah y na ailag ha, *J na-Prav h Research Journal* (2009) 12, 68-80. Some Problems in Fixing the Date of Ajant Caves, *Kal , the Journal of Indian Art History Congress*, ed. R. D. Choudhury (Guwahati and Delhi: Indian Art History Congress and Sharda Publishing House), 14 (2009), 69-85. Role of Stella Kramrisch in Indian Art History, *East West* (2003) 53.14, 127-48.