**A) IDENTIFICATION**

Bien proposé : Grottes d'Ajanta  
Lieu : Etat du Maharashtra  
Etat partie : Inde  
Date : 15 Octobre 1982

**B) RECOMMANDATION DE L'ICOMOS**

Que le bien culturel proposé soit inscrit sur la liste du Patrimoine Mondial au titre des critères I, II, III et VI.

**C) JUSTIFICATION**

Le site fameux d'Ajanta comprend une trentaine de grottes creusées au flanc d'une falaise surplombant un méandre de la rivière Waghora. Ces grottes sont aujourd'hui desservies par un chemin en terrasse qui court à mi-pente mais elles étaient jadis reliées au bord de l'eau chacune par un escalier. 

Il s'agit d'un établissement bouddhiste comprenant cinq sanctuaires ou Chaitya-grihas (grottes n°9, 10, 19, 26 et 29) et des locaux monastiques, sangharasas ou viharas. Un premier noyau de grottes fut aménagé dès le IIe siècle av.J.C. : les chaitya-grihas s'ouvrent dans la paroi rocheuse par des portes surmontées d'une baie en fer à cheval. Le plan est de type basilical: des piles séparent la nef principale des bas-côtés qui se rejoignent dans l'abside pour permettre la circumambulation. 

**B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION**

That the proposed cultural property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II, III and VI.

**C) JUSTIFICATION**

The famous site of Ajanta comprises thirty caves cut into the side of a cliff which rises above a meander in the Waghora River. Today the caves are reached by a road which runs along a terrace midway up the cliff, but each cave was once linked by a stairway to the edge of the water.

This is a Buddhist community comprising five sanctuaries or Chaitya-grihas (caves 9, 10, 19, 26 and 29) and monastic complex, sangharasas or viharas. A first group of caves was created in the second century B.C. : the chaitya-grihas open into the rocky wall by doorways surmounted by a horse-shoe shaped bay. The ground plan is a basilical one: piers separate the principal nave from the side aisles which join in the apsis to permit the ritual circumambulation behind the stupa (commemorative monument). This
rupestral architecture scrupulously reproduces the forms and elements visible in wooden constructions.

A second group of caves was created at a later date, the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., during the gupta (gupta) and post-gupta periods. The earlier architecture formulas were re-employed but treated in an infinitely richer and more ample manner. The decoration attained, at this time, an unequaled splendor. The statuary is numerous (it was already permissible to represent Buddha as a human, these representations are found both on the facades and in the interior); finally, the wall painting, profuse and sensitive, constitutes, no doubt, the most striking artistic achievement of Ajanta.

Under the impulse of the Goupta dynasty, Indian art, in effect, reached its apogee. The Ajanta Caves are generally decorated with painted or sculpted figures of supple form and classic balance with which the name of the dynasty has remained synonymous. The refined lightness of the decoration, the balance of the compositions, the marvellous beauty of the feminine figures place the paintings of Ajanta among the major achievements of the Goupta and post-Goupta style and confer on them the ranking of a master piece of universal pictorial art.

- Ajanta is a unique artistic achievement (criterion I)
- the style of Ajanta has exerted a considerable influence in India and elsewhere, extending, in particular, to Java (criterion II)
- With its two groups of monuments corresponding to two important moments in Indian history, this rupestrial ensemble bears exceptional testimony to the evolution of Indian art, as well as to the determining role of the Buddhist community, intellectual and religious foyers, schools and reception centers in the India of the Goupta and their immediate successors (criterion III)
- Finally, Ajanta is directly and materially associated with the history of Buddhism (criterion VI).
THE SITE PLAN OF
AJANTA CAVES
AJANTA: Wall painting, Cave n°2