

5800.1

# New Acquisition



Scene from the *Ramayana*: Hanuman showing Rama's signet ring to Sita in the Ashoka Woods  
Northwest India (Nacharkhera, Haryana State, East Punjab)  
Gupta Period, fifth century A.D.  
Terra cotta tile, 31 x 54.6 cm  
Gift of the Jhamandas Watumull Acquisition Fund. 1988 (5800.1)

During the Gupta Period (ca. 300-550 A.D.), many brick temples were built throughout India. The temples built in northern India, both Hindu and Buddhist, were decorated with terra cotta tiles with high relief sculpture. The Academy recently acquired a magnificent example of such a tile with income received from the Jhamandas Watumull Acquisition Fund.

The Academy's tile comes from a Hindu temple of the fifth century and depicts a scene from the epic, the *Ramayana*. Terra cotta panels illustrating this work survive in large numbers from the Gupta period. The *Ramayana* describes the heroic activities of the Hindu god Rama and his monkey cohorts, led by Hanuman, king of the monkeys. In the scene portrayed here, Hanuman, on the right, shows Rama's signet ring to Rama's wife, Sita, in order to prove that he is a bona fide messenger from the deity.

closed by a rectangular frame, the two figures are sculpted in soft terra

cotta clay with fluid contours. The bodies are realistically portrayed, and the faces have marvelously animated expressions. In this mythical scene, the king of the monkeys and Rama's half-nude wife are strikingly characterized in high relief. The typically Gupta interest in realism also extends to the trees depicted to either side, with their broad, rounded leaves individually applied in clay. The acquisition of this superb example of Gupta sculpture adds an important dimension to the Academy's collection of Indian art.

C.N. 10/90 —Stephen Little

## Scene from the *Rāmāyaṇa*

India, Northwest India, Gupta period, 5th-6th century  
Terra cotta

Purchase, 1988  
(5800.1)

In this scene from the epic Indian tale, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā, who has been abducted by the evil Rāvaṇa, is being shown a ring by the noble king of the monkeys, Hanuman. The ring is from Sītā's husband, Rāma, and is a sign of his unending love for her. This panel would likely have been placed on the exterior of a temple among other reliefs from the *Rāmāyaṇa*.