

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2019
The Architecture of Asia: From Baghdad to Beijing, Kabul to Kyoto and Tehran to Tokyo
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Bakong Temple and Sacred Mountains & Landscapes in Khmer Architecture

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This lecture starts with a look at the larger role of SE Asia in the world economy. The drying out of Inner Asia and its depopulation meant the end of the Silk Route tradition. Economic energy moved to the south, to India and thus to SE Asia, which quickly become one of the great wealth-creating regions of the world. This was one of the main contributing factors for why SE Asia prospered so much between 400 and 1200, but in particular after the 9th century. This lecture introduces the Khmer and their first capital Hariharalaya. It was a bold experiment in hydro-engineering mixed in with an equally bold experiment in designing a sacred landscape. Hariharalaya would set the tone for the emerging Angkor Empire. The purpose of the creation of a sacred landscape was simple. To attract devotees into the remote and sparsely-settled forest to serve as rice farmers. Rice was grown not as a food, but as a commodity export. In that sense, Hariharalaya was a geo-political project from the start, requiring roads, bridges and canals to connect it to the outer world. The design of Hariharalaya followed the SE Asian temple city model, except that the builders integrated the plan of the city with a temple known as Bakong, a mandala temple that fuses different themes into a single design. There can be no doubt that Hariharalaya was one of the great urban foundations of the century. It is on par with Baghdad, founded more or less at the same time, both cities in a sense reaching to the new economy of the south.

PEOPLES

Khmer

Srivijayan Empire

Jayavarman II (770-850)

Dali Kingdom (936-1254)

Mongolians

CONCEPTS

Indianization

Mandala

Arupadhatu (the world of formlessness)

Baray

The Churning of the Milky Ocean

Temple/city

PLACES

Śrī Kṣetra (Hmawza), Myanmar (Burma)
Borobudur, 800, Island of Java
Straits of Malacca
Dali
Hariharalaya (City of Vishnu and Shiva), 802
Mahendraparvata ("Mountain of the Great Indra" - Mt. Meru)
Indratataka (The Sea of Indra)
Siem Reap
Bakong, 802
Angkor Wat (Vrah Vishnukol), ca. 1125

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BAKONG TEMPLE (805)

