

Spring 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Gifts of Rivers and Resources: Art and Power in Ancient Asia
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Ancient Empires and Art of South Asia Beyond the Ganges: On Rivers, Gods, and Kings
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Key locations

Sanchi, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh ( Betwa River, a tributary of the Yamuna)

Amaravati, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh

Nagarjudakonda, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh

 Krishna River

Kanaganahalli, Sannati, Karnataka

 Bhima river, a tributary of the Krishna river

Ahichchatra, Uttar Pradesh


 Bhagirathi river

Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu


Elephanta Island, Mumbai, Maharashtra

Rajaona/Ashokdham, Lakhi Sarai, Bihar

Mathura, Uttar Pradesh – Kushan dynasty's winter capital

 Yamuna river

Udayagiri, near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh

 Betwa River, a tributary of the Yamuna

 Narmada River, often designates North-South dividing line

Ajanta caves, Maharashtra

 Wagora river

(See [Google Earth](#) marking these sites)

Names and Terms

stupa: Buddhist relic mound marking the presence of the absent Buddha

torana: gateway

Gaja-Lakshmi

makara: mythical aquatic creature

vyala: leogryph, mythical lion

naga: snake, supernatural serpentine beings/ *nagini*: female naga

Naga Muchalinda (Mucilinda) protects the Buddha during post-enlightenment meditation at Bodhgaya

Three River Goddesses: Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati

Kailasa: Shiva's abode in the Himalayas

Shiva: One of the main Hindu gods, an ascetic god who resides in Kailasa in the Himalayas, well known for the dance of fire, often surrounded by ganas (mischievous dwarf-like assistants)

Gangadharamurti – Descent of the Ganges

Arjuna's Penance/ Descent of the Ganges sculpted tableaux, Mamallapuram

Kalachuri dynasty, c. 550-620 CE

Gupta Empire, Guptas ruled much of northern India c. 300 CE-515 CE (-657 CE)

***Meghaduta*, cloud-messenger, lyric poem by Kalidasa (c. 4th-5th century CE)**

Candragupta II r. c. 375/380 CE-415 CE

Udayagiri, lit. hill of sunrise, Madhya Pradesh, India: a rock formation with carved sanctuaries of the Gupta period near Vidisha and Ujjain near the Betwa river

Vishnu: one of the main Hindu gods, preserver of the universe, many epithets (a.k.a) and avatars

avatar: incarnation, often refers to the ten different forms that Vishnu takes to address dangers of the universe

Narayana: a common honorific name of Vishnu

Narasimha: Vishnu's half-human-half-lion incarnation, one of the ten avatars of Vishnu

Varaha: Vishnu's boar incarnation, one of the ten avatars of Vishnu

Prthvi or Bhudevi: earth goddess

Hiraniyakashipu: lit. golden clothed, name of the demon destroyed by Narasimha

Hiranyaksha: lit. golden eyed, name of the demon destroyed by Varaha

Vakataka Empire, c. mid 3rd century – late 5th century CE

Harisena, c. 460-477 CE

Campeya (Champeyya) jataka

Shravasti Miracle

Nagaraja of Ajanta

Suggested Reading and further references:

Hans T. Bakker and Peter C. Bisschop, "The quest for the Pāśupata weapon," *The Gateway of the Mahādeva temple at Madhayamikā (nagari),* *Indo-Iranian Journal* 59 (2016): 217-258.

Hans T. Bakker, *The Vakataka Heritage: Indian culture at the crossroads*. Egbert Forsten, 2004 (Gonda Indological studies 13).

Robert DeCaroli, "Snakes and Gutters: Nāga Imagery, Water Management, and Buddhist Rainmaking Rituals in Early South Asia." *Archives of Asian Art* 69, no. 1 (2019): 1-19.

Padma Kaimal, "Playful Ambiguity and Political Authority in the Large Relief at Māmallapuram." *Ars Orientalis* 24 (1994): 1–27.

Jinah Kim. "Reading Time: The Sarnath Buddha and the Historical Significance of Donor Portraits in Early Medieval South Asia." *South Asian Studies (Society for South Asian Studies)* 36 (2) (2020): 190–215.

Sir James Mallinson trans. *Messengers Poems by Kālidāsa, Dhoyī & Rūpa Gosvāmin* (2006).

Joanna G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province*. Princeton, 1982.

Michael Willis, *Archaeology of Hindu ritual: Temples and the establishment of the gods*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

-----, "Later Gupta History: Inscriptions, Coins and Historical Ideology," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Series 3*, 15 2 (2005): 131-150.

[Digital Humanities Project](#) with timeline of dynasties, rulers, and key events