

Fall 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Forging New Connections: Asia in the First Millenium of the Common Era
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**Celestial Palaces, Axial Mountains, and Cosmic Seas:
Ancient Khmer Temple Architecture**

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Reign dates of select Angkor kings:

Jayavarman II, reigned ca. 790–835 CE
Indravarman I, r. ca. 877–ca. 886
Yashovarman I, r. 889–ca. 915
Jayavarman IV, r. ca. 928–ca. 941
Rajendravarman, r. ca. 944–968
Jayavarman V, r. 968–ca. 1000
Suryavarman I, r. 1002–1049
Udayadityavarman II, r. 1050–1066
Suryavarman II, r. ca. 1113–1149
Jayavarman VII, r. ca. 1182/3–1218 CE

Temples/sites mentioned:

Prasat Phnom Chhngok, ca. late 6th–early 7th cent.
Sambor Prei Kuk, 7th cent. and later
Prasat Aram Rong Chen, early 9th cent.
Preah Ko, 880 CE
Bakong, 881 CE
Baksei Chamkrong, early to mid-10th cent
Pre Rup, 961/62 CE
Banteay Srei, 967 CE
Ta Keo, late 10th–early 11th cent.
Wat Phu (Vat Phou), ca. 7th–12th cent. (mainly 11th cent.)
Preah Vihear, ca. late 9th–mid-12th cent. (mainly 11th cent.)
Baphuon, 11th cent.
Kbal Spean, Phnom Kulen, ca. mid-11th cent.
West Mebon, ca. late 11th–early 12th cent
Prasat Hin Phimai, ca. late 11th–early 12th cent. with later additions
Prasat Phnom Da, ca. early 12th cent.
Prasat Phnom Rung, mainly 12th cent.
Angkor Wat, first half 12th cent. with later additions
Neak Pean, late 12th cent.
Preah Khan, 1191/92 CE
Angkor Thom, late 12th–13th cent.
Bayon, late 12th–13th cent.

Key Terms

- ***abhisheka*** – a water-sprinkling ritual for the consecration of a king; an anointing ritual for a deity-image / icon
- **Anantashayana** (“lying upon Ananta”) – Form/representation of the Hindu god Vishnu reclining upon the world snake Ananta (“infinite”)
- **Anavatapta** (“without or free from heat”) – according to Buddhist cosmology, the lake at the center of the world and the source of the rivers of the four cardinal directions; its water is associated with healing properties
- **axis mundi** – a concept of an “axis of the world,” which marks sacred sites and denotes a link between the human and celestial realms
- ***baray*** – reservoir created by excavation and embankment, sometimes associated with cosmic ocean
- ***deva*** – deity / ***devata*** – secondary divinity
- ***dvarapala*** (“door keeper”) – door/gate guardians placed at the entrances to temples, shrines, and sacred precincts; they are apotropaic and often have a fierce appearance with fangs, extravagant hairstyles, etc. Their iconography (gender, number of arms, attributes, etc.) typically relates to the deity enshrined in the shrine
- ***kala*** (“time”, “death”, “black”) – an architectural motif that occurs over temple doorways/niches as a “monster mask” with bulging eyes, bared fangs, etc. It has multiple symbolic & mythological associations: to repel evil (“apotropaic”), afford protection, and signify upper/celestial worlds.
- **Krishna Govardhana** – epithet of the Hindu deity Krishna (i.e. “Vishnu”) holding aloft Mount Govardhana with his right hand
- ***linga*** (“sign, marker, symbol, or emblem”) – form/representation of the Hindu god Shiva as a pillar or cosmic axis, sometimes phallic in appearance
- ***makara*** – a mythical aquatic and crocodilian creature often shown with an elephant’s trunk, fangs, tusks, and a fish or foliated tail; symbolizes auspiciousness and water, primal source of life
- ***mandala*** (“circle, circular magical diagram”) – cosmic diagram for meditation in which the devotee experiences divinities in the outer areas of the diagram before moving inwards to concentrate on the deity at the center. Ancient Indian architectural texts stipulate that cities and temples should be laid out according to a *mandala* plan.
- ***naga*** (masc.) / ***nagini*** (fem.) (“snake”) – serpent divinities, typically represented as cobra-like, who are guardians of subterranean treasures and often symbolize water and fertility; they are associated with the mythical origins of the Khmer people
- ***prasat*** – temple, tower shrine
- ***vimana*** – aerial car or chariot of the gods, sometimes a throne, sometimes a palace (also sometimes used to refer to a temple as a whole and, in southern temple, to the shrine portion of a temple and its superstructure)
- ***vnam* / *phnom*** – mountain, hill
- ***wat* / *vat*** – temple
- Terms used in Angkor-period inscriptions to refer to icons or deity-images: ***pratima*** (statue, “reflected image”, etc.), ***arca*** (worship), ***rupa*** (form, shape, etc.), ***murti*** (manifestation, embodiment, etc.), ***linga*** (see above)

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