

Terms: Angkor Thom Webinar

Airvata: three-headed elephant, mount of Indra.

Amitabha: one of the five supreme Buddhas of Mahayana Buddhism and the spiritual father of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

amrita: the nectar of immortality, churned from the Ocean of Milk by the devas and asuras.

Angkor Thom: the “Great City,” built by Jayavarman VII in the late 12th century.

Angkor: meaning royal city, designates the Khmer capital from 802-1431.

apsara: celestial nymph born of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk.

asura: a divine demon figure.

Avalokiteshvara: “Lord who looks down from above,” also referred to as the bodhisattva of compassion.

axis-mundi: a cosmic axis that connects heaven with earth. In Khmer architecture, this is represented by a mountain-like tower such as those seen at Angkor Wat or the Bayon Temple.

baray: diked reservoir; a symbol of the cosmic ocean.

Bayon: Buddhist temple mountain at the center of Angkor Thom, built by Jayavarman VII in the late 12-early 13th century.

bodhisattva: within Mahayana Buddha, a being who has achieved enlightenment but who foregoes their own nirvana in order to help others achieve spiritual liberation.

Buddhism: a religion founded in India sometime in the 6th century BCE by the historical Buddha Shakayamuni.

Champa: territory of the Chams in central Vietnam, and one of the earliest states in Southeast Asia.

Churning of the Ocean of Milk: a Hindu cosmogonic myth in which the devas and asuras, using Mt. Mandara as a pivot, and the naga Vasuki as rope, release the nectar of immortality (amrita).

deva: divine figure, foe of the asura.

devaraja: “god-king.”

Indra: king of the gods, also known as lord of rains and storms and guardian of the east.

Jayavarman VII: king of the Khmer empire from 1181-1218. He was the patron of the city of Angkor Thom.

Mahayana Buddhism: “the great vehicle,” which transports more sentient beings to enlightenment. Emerges in India c. 100 CE. Enlightenment can be achieved through the aid of bodhisattvas. Practiced today primarily in East Asia and Vietnam.

mandala: diagram of the universe that is used by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

Mt. Meru: cosmic mountain and home of the gods, symbol of the axis mundi.

naga: serpent, symbol of water and fertility; associated with Khmer origin myths.

nirvana: nothingness, extinction of the cycle of existence (samsara).

Prajnaparamita: the perfection of wisdom, and the spiritual mother of all Buddhas.

prasat: tower sanctuary found in Khmer architecture.

Preah Khan: “Sacred Sword”; a temple built by Jayavarman VII in 1191 in honor of his father; the temple is dedicated to Avalokiteshvara.

stele: inscribed tablet, usually made of stone.

Ta Prohm: the “Ancestor Brahma”; a temple built by Jayavarman VII in 1186 in honor of his mother; the temple is dedicated to Prajnaparamita.

Theravada Buddhism: “the School of the Elders”. Considered the most orthodox of the Buddhist schools. Practiced primarily today in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka.

Tonle Sap: river and lake in Siem Reap that reverses course during the monsoon rains

Vajrayana Buddhism: also referred to as Tantra. Grew out of Mahayana Buddhism around the 6th-7th centuries CE. Derives its name from texts called “tantras,” which describe elaborate universes, practices and rituals. Enlightenment is possible in a single lifetime through the help of a teacher.

Zhou Daguan: Chinese emissary who visited Angkor in 1296-7 and wrote *The Customs of Cambodia*, which describes the city of Angkor Thom and the royal court of Angkor