

Spring 2025 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Visualizing the Divine
Sponsored by the *Society for Asian Art*

Lives of Khmer Sculpture from Past to Present

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March 28, 2025

Chronology of Cambodian history:

Pre-Angkorian period, ca. 6th–8th cent.

Angkorian period, 9th–ca. 15 cent.

Middle (Post-Angkorian) period, ca. 15th–19th cent.

French colonial period, 1863–1953

Kingdom of Cambodia, 1953–1970

Khmer Republic, 1970–1975

Democratic Kampuchea, 1975–1979

People’s Republic of Kampuchea, 1979–1989

State of Cambodia, 1989–1993

United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), 1992–1993 (Second)

Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993–present

Selected key terms and names:

- *abhiṣeka* - anointing, consecrating, inaugurating by a sprinkling of water; bathing of a divine image
- *arcā* - image, object of worship
- *boramei* - spirit guardian
- *deva* / *devatā* - deity
- *liṅga* (“sign, marker, symbol, or emblem”) - form/representation most commonly of the Hindu god Shiva as a pillar or cosmic axis, sometimes phallic in appearance
- *mūrti* - incarnation, manifestation, embodiment of divinity
- *neak tā* - ancestral tutelary spirit/deity; genies of territories and rural communities
- *pratimā* - statue, image, icon, figure, reflection, likeness
- *pratiṣṭhā* - ceremonies for installation and consecration of images
- *rūpa* - form, shape, representation, image, figure
- *unmīlita* - eye-opening ceremony in the consecration of images
- *yaśaḥśarīra* - “body in the form of fame” or “body of glory”

Selected names of kings of Angkor:

- Yashovarman I, r. 889–ca. 915
- Jayavarman IV, r. ca. 928–ca. 941

- Rajendravarman, r. ca. 944–968
- Suryavarman II, r. ca. 1113–1149
- Jayavarman VII, r. ca. 1182/3–1218 CE

Other noteworthy individuals:

- Norodom I, king of Cambodia (r. 1860–1904)
- Mongkut / Rama IV, king of Siam (Thailand) (r. 1851–1868)
- Henri Mouhot (1826–1861), naturalist, explorer
- Louis Delaporte (1842–1925), explorer, artist, author
- André Malraux (1901–1976) and Clara Malraux (1897–1982), art thieves (etc.)
- George Groslier (1887–1945), curator, painter, author, historian
- Henri Marchal (1876–1970), architect, Curator of Angkor
- Norodom Sihanouk (1922–2012), king and prime minister of Cambodia

Recommended Reading:

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- Grant Ross, H. “The civilizing vision of an enlightened dictator: Norodom Sihanouk and the Cambodian post-independence experiment (1953–1970).” In *Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission: From Decay to Recovery*, edited by Michael Falser, 149–178. Cham: Springer, 2015.
- Hang, C.S., “Stec Gamlañ’ and Yāy Deb: Worshipping Kings and Queens in Cambodia Today,” In *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*, edited by J. Marston & E. Guthrie, 113–26. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004.
- Harris, Andrew, Tina Tin, Rachna Chhay, and Phirom Vitou. “Broken Buddhas, Burials, and Sanctuary-Adjacent Sanctuaries: The Ancestral Animist Archaeologies of Angkor’s Ancient Places and Things.” *World Archaeology* 55, 2 (2023): 167–88.
- Hendrickson, Mitch, Miriam Stark & Damian Evans, eds. *The Angkorian World*. London: Routledge, 2023.
- Jacques, Claude & Philippe Lafond. *The Khmer Empire: Cities and Sanctuaries, Fifth to Thirteenth Centuries*. Bangkok: River Books, 2007.
- Jessup, Helen Ibbitson. *Art and Architecture of Cambodia*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2004.
- Jessup, Helen Ibbitson and Thierry Zephir, eds. *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory*. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1997.
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