

SOUTH ASIA

INDIA AND THE OTHER COUNTRIES OF SOUTH ASIA — PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH, NEPAL, BHUTAN —HAVE WITNESSED SOME OF THE LONGEST CONTINUOUS CIVILIZATIONS ON THE PLANET. BY THE END OF THE FOURTH CENTURY BC, THE FIRST MAJOR CONSOLIDATED CIVILIZATION EMERGED IN INDIA LED BY THE MAURYAN EMPIRE WHICH NEARLY ENCOMPASSED THE ENTIRE SUBCONTINENT. LATER KINGDOMS OF CHERAS, CHOLAS AND PANDYAS SAW THE RISE OF THE FIRST URBAN CENTERS. THE GUPTA KINGDOM BEGAN THE RICH DEVELOPMENT OF BUILT HERITAGE AND THE FIRST MAJOR TEMPLES INCLUDING THE SACRED STUPA AT SANCHI AND EARLY TEMPLES AT LADH KHAN. UNTIL COLONIAL TIMES, ROYAL PATRONAGE OF THE HINDU CULTURE CONSTRUCTED HUNDREDS OF MAJOR MONUMENTS INCLUDING THE IMPRESSIVE ELLORA CAVES, THE KONARAK SUN TEMPLE, AND THE MAGNIFICENT CITY AND TEMPLES OF THE GHF-SUPPORTED HAMPI WORLD HERITAGE SITE.

PAKISTAN SHARES IN THE RICH HISTORY OF THE REGION WITH A WEALTH OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AROUND ISLAM, INCLUDING ADVANCED MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE. GHF'S CONSERVATION OF ASIF KHAN TOMB OF THE JAHANGIR COMPLEX IN LAHORE, PAKISTAN WILL HELP PRESERVE A STUNNING EXAMPLE OF THE GLORIOUS MOGHUL CIVILIZATION WHICH WAS ONCE CENTERED THERE. IN THE MORE REMOTE AREAS OF THE REGION, BHUTAN, SRI LANKA AND NEPAL EACH DEVELOPED A UNIQUE MONUMENTAL FORM OF WORSHIP FOR HINDUISM. THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF CONSERVATION IS THE PLETHORA OF HERITAGE SITES AND THE LACK OF RESOURCES TO COVER THE COSTS OF CONSERVATION. AS THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM AND THE WEALTH OF THE REGION RISE, INCREASED FUNDING AND TRAINING CAPACITY FOR CONSERVATION WILL HELP REVERSE THE CURRENT RAPID DETERIORATION OF THESE MAJOR HISTORICAL MONUMENTS.

29° 24' N, 71° 47' E



UCH MONUMENT COMPLEX Pakistan
AD 1480 – 1520
Delhi Sultanate (Sufi)

33° 46' N, 72° 53' E



TAXILA Pakistan
600 BC – AD 500
Mauryan, Bactrian, Scythian, Kushan

31° 52' N, 78° 37' E



NAKO TEMPLES India
AD 1000 – 1200
Buddhist

26° 52' N, 70° 55' E



JAISALMER FORT India
Founded AD 1156
Bhatti Rajput

27° 9' N, 78° 0' E



AGRA FORT India
Constructed AD 1565 – 1857
Moghul

24° 46' N, 67° 54' E



THATTA Pakistan
AD 1340 – 1739
Summa, Arghun, Tarkhan, Moghul

27° 40' N, 85° 20' E

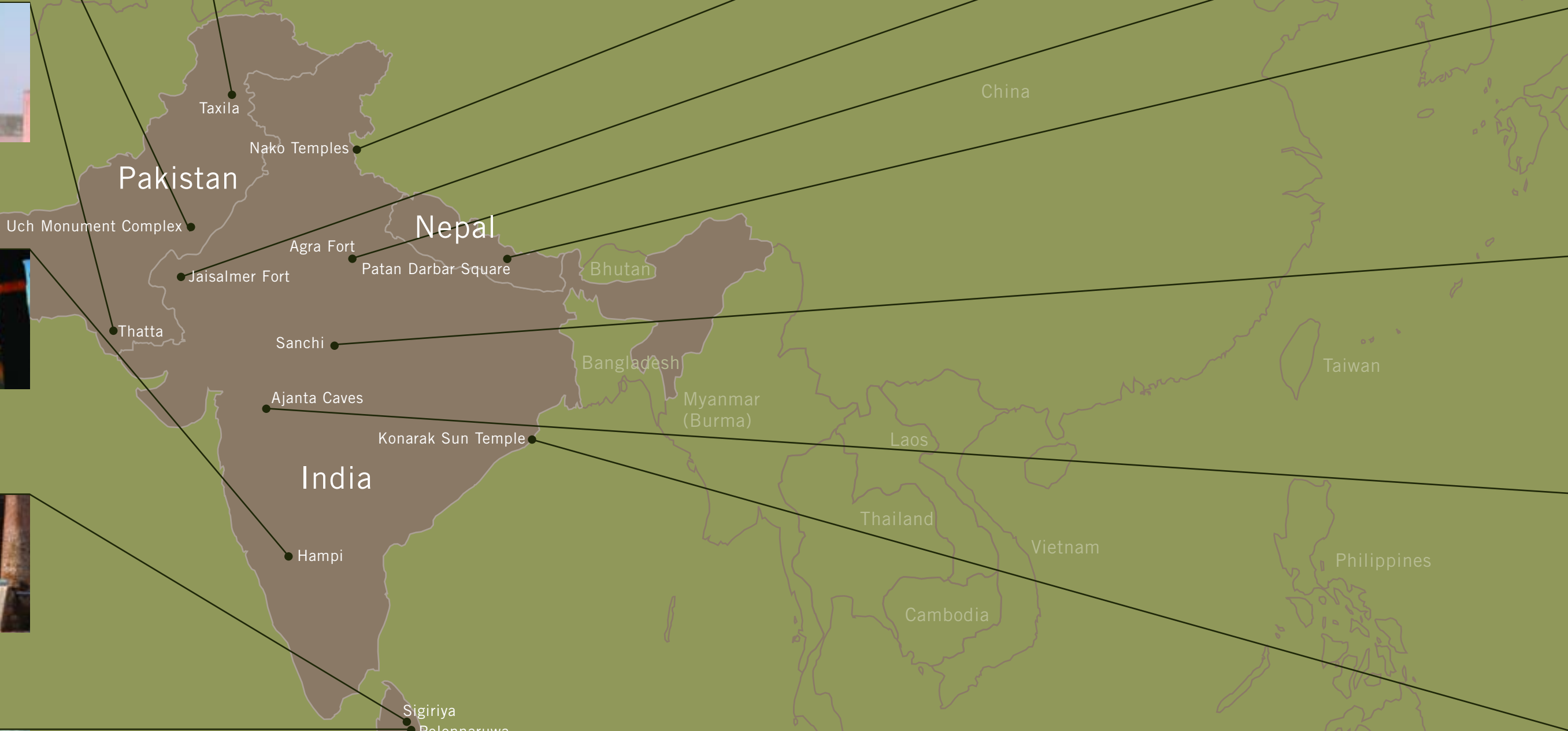


PATAN DARBAR SQUARE Nepal
200 BC – Present
Kirati, Lichchhavi, Thakuri, Malla, Saha

15° 2' N, 76° 30' E



HAMPI India
AD 1336 – 1565
Vijayanagara Empire



23° 38' N, 77° 42' E



SANCHI India
300 BC – AD 1200
Maurya, Kashtrapa, Andhra, Gupta

7° 57' N, 80° 45' E



SIGIRIYA Sri Lanka
AD 400 – 500
Tamil, Sinhalese

20° 30' N, 75° 48' E



AJANTA CAVES India
200 BC – AD 650
Gupta, Vakataka

7° 54' N, 81° 0' E



POLONNARUWA Sri Lanka
AD 600 – 1300
Chola, Sinhala

19° 53' N, 86° 10' E



KONARAK SUN TEMPLE India
AD 1250 – 1300
Ganga Dynasty

**AGRA FORT** India

Constructed AD 1565 – 1857
Moghul

Located near the gardens of the Taj Mahal, the imposing Agra Fort, with its massive red sandstone walls, stands as a testament to the power of the Moghul lords. The fort was originally constructed as a military establishment by Akbar in AD 1565, but was eventually converted into a palace and court by his grandson, Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal. A preservation plan is needed to maintain not only these structures, but also the superb gardens — the quintessential image of Moghul glory.



AJANTA CAVES India

200 BC – AD 650
Gupta, Vakataka

The magnificent cave art at Ajanta depicts scenes from the life of Buddha. Intricate rock carvings, sculpture and paintings decorate a series of thirty caves, incorporating both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist styles of representation. Conservation efforts at this UNESCO World Heritage Site have been surrounded by controversy, with some experts fearing that current restoration techniques accidentally remove painted details while cleaning the paintings of layers of soot.



HAMPI India

AD 1336 – 1565
Vijayanagar Empire

The ruins of Hampi, located in southern India, are a testament to the greatness of the Vijayanagar Empire. The empire spanned four dynasties and stretched over at least three states — Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. The site contains many Hindu and Jain temples, an audience hall of the king, throne platforms, and other secular structures. Hampi is surrounded by more than 500 large and small temples still frequented by worshipers from all over the world. Each of these temples differs in style and architecture. Buried in the sand until just a few decades ago, the ruins at Hampi symbolize the last stronghold of Hindu art and architecture — the last time in history when the Hindu style was paramount. Today, ancient site materials are removed daily for use in nearby construction projects, while new roadways and buildings illegally encroach on the archaeological zone.



JAISALMER FORT India

Founded AD 1156
Bhatti Rajput

The ancient city of Jaisalmer was founded in AD 1156 by the Bhatti Rajput chieftain Rawal Jaisal. According to local legend, Lord Krishna foretold of the walled city's construction. Today, Jaisalmer is a vibrant city with many inhabitants in both the modern quarter and the ancient fort town. It is also a thriving tourist center, attracting thousands of visitors each year. Unfortunately, this has put the preservation of the ancient town in serious jeopardy. The increased consumption and waste of water by a growing population has put unbearable pressure on the city's ancient infrastructure. Of the 469 historic buildings, 87 have completely collapsed and close to 150 others have partially crumbled to the ground. In addition to man-made water damage, monsoons have also caused ongoing devastation.



KONARAK SUN TEMPLE India

AD 1250 – 1300
Ganga Dynasty

Situated on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, the remarkable Sun Temple at Konarak (also called the Black Pagoda) was built as a representation of Surya's heavenly vehicle — the chariot. The temple, built by King Narasimhadeva (AD 1238 – 1264) in the middle of the 13th century, is one of the most famous Brahman sanctuaries in India and marks the culmination of the Orissan architectural style. Over the centuries the structures have been battered by sea winds carrying both salt and sand, eroding many of the superb sculptures and causing one of the biggest structures to collapse. Hundreds of sculptured stones lie in piles around the site.



NAKO TEMPLES India

AD 1000 – 1200
Buddhist

The seven Buddhist temples at Nako are all that remains of this once thriving center of Tibetan Buddhism. The monasteries are among the oldest continuously functioning Buddhist monuments in the region and contain some remarkable artwork, including mural cycles and clay sculptures. The temples have been greatly damaged over time by the severe climatic conditions of the Himalchal Pradesh region as well as a 1975 earthquake.



SANCHI India

300 BC – AD 1200
Maurya, Andhra, Gupta

The city of Sanchi is home to the magnificent world-renowned Great Stupa, erected by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka, and the site of exquisite works of art documenting the rise and fall of Buddhism over a period of 1500 years. Strategically located five miles from the prosperous city of Vidisha in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Sanchi provided an idyllic sanctuary for Buddhist meditation. Despite political upheaval and numerous changes in government leadership, Sanchi remained a thriving center of Indian Buddhism for more than a thousand years until it sank into obscurity in the 12th century AD.

PATAN DARBAR SQUARE Nepal

200 BC – Present
Kirati, Licchhavi, Thakuri, Malla, Saha

Located in the heart of Patan city in the Kathmandu Valley, Patan Darbar Square is rich with exquisite ancient pagoda temples, palaces, shrines and stone statues. Patan rose to fame as the capital of the Kirati Dynasty, and by the 7th century AD became one of Asia's foremost Buddhist cities. The exceptionally beautiful Krishna Mandir temple, built in honour of Lord Krishna, is the most superb example of Nepalese stone architecture in existence, while the Hiranya Varna Mahabiliar, or Golden Temple, is home to some of the finest metal sculptures and paintings in the country.





TAXILA Pakistan

600 BC – AD 500
Mauryan, Bactrian, Scythian, Kushan

Taxila, in northwestern Pakistan, is one of the most important archaeological sites in all of Asia. Ideally located near a branch of the Silk Road, Taxila was strongly influenced by the goods and ideas that were carried along this route from Rome to India to China, passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Damage to the site has been both man-made and natural. The drainage system is in dire need of repair and the few structures that remain are neglected. Recently, a football stadium was built over the archaeological remains of Bhir Mound. UNESCO is trying to remove the stadium and restore the site. UNESCO has also been involved in further projects including the installation of a proper drainage system, examining the walls of many structures, training of conservators, and preparing an exhibition space for artifacts.



THATTA Pakistan

AD 1340 – 1739
Summa, Arghun, Tarkhan, Moghul

For centuries Thatta was the capital of Sind Province in southern Pakistan and a center for Islamic arts and learning. During that time it was the seat of four successive Muslim dynasties: the Summa (1340-1520), the Arghun (1520-1555), the Tarkhan (1555-1592) and the Moghul (1592-1739). The remains of this once great city now include superbly crafted tombs, mausoleums and mosques. One of Thatta's most prominent rulers was the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan (1628 to 1658), a great patron of the arts. His significant projects include the Shah Jahan Mosque, a masterpiece of Moghul architecture combined with the excellence of local tile work. Construction began in 1644 and was completed fourteen years later by Shah Jahan's successor, Aurangzeb. The structures at Thatta are very dilapidated and require immediate conservation intervention.



UCH MONUMENT COMPLEX

Pakistan

AD 1480 – 1520
Delhi Sultanate (Sufi)

Uch, once an important Sufi center during the time of the Delhi Sultanate (AD 1210 – 1526), is home to a series of dazzling mausoleums. Dating back to approximately 500 BC, this small town, which sits upon a hill overlooking the confluence of the Sutlej and Chenab rivers, is thought to have been one of the many cities founded by Alexander the Great (356 – 323 BC). In the early 19th century a major flood damaged all of the tombs, large portions collapsed and the remaining structures were left seriously weakened. Recent repair efforts have caused greater harm as the use of inappropriate materials is generating further deterioration.

POLONNARUWA Sri Lanka

AD 600 – 1300
Chola, Sinhala

The ancient lakeside city of Polonnaruwa, located 134 miles southeast of Anuradhapura, exemplifies the glory of medieval Sri Lanka. It is renowned for its masterful Buddhist sculpture and the ruins of a magnificent garden city constructed in the 12th century AD by King Parakramabahu I. The city became the primary country residence of the Sri Lankan Kings between the 7th and 11th centuries AD. After its establishment as the capital city of the island, Polonnaruwa excelled in agricultural development. Following the death of King Maha Parakramabahu in 1186 AD, the Sinhalese Kingdom was plagued by civil war, leading to the eventual decline of Polonnaruwa in the 13th century AD.



SIGIRIYA Sri Lanka

AD 400 – 500
Tamil, Sinhalese

Standing proudly atop the 1200 foot high Lion's Rock, in the district of Matale, is the majestic fortified palace of Sigiriya. Built by King Kassapa I in the 5th century AD it is one of the earliest surviving palaces in Sri Lanka, and the most immaculately preserved Asian city from the first millennium. The palace buildings are intertwined with intricately designed water gardens, cave and boulder gardens and terraced gardens. Only fragments remain of the immense Apsara paintings that once covered an area 460 feet long by 130 feet high. The surviving sections, depicting heavenly maidens in various settings, are located about 330 feet above ground level. At the entrance to the palace is the massive Lion's staircase that initially stood 460 feet high. Only two immense stone paws remain from this once magnificent brick and limestone structure.

