

on the right, pleading for their brother's life, while a cow spouting the holy Ganges from her mouth is on the left. In India, it is quite rare to find the physical embodiment of a local myth associated with the creation of a place, at the place itself. The Daityasudana-Lavanasura story is derived from two popular narratives of Vishnu, the Vamana avatara and the Narasimha avatara. These two stories contain a common Hindu trope where Vishnu, as the ultimate savior of the world, appears in human form to vanquish troublesome demons to save the day.

The mythological narrative of Lonar, depicted through sculpture and literature, and reiterated through folk tales, encapsulates people's perception and comprehension of the crater. It provides insights into the formation of the sacred geography of the Lonar crater. Beyond Hinduism, like many other multivalent sites in India, Lonar is also frequented by people practicing different religions. Several locations at the sites have different stories that resonate with multiple cults and faiths. Prominent among this is the connection between Lonar and the Mahanubhava sect that rose to prominence during the thirteenth century. The preceptor of this sect, Chakradhara Svami had visited Lonar during his pilgrimage and happened to meet the ruler of the Yadava dynasty, Kanharadeva (Krishnadeva). This is the only instance where Chakradhara Svami met anyone from the ruling Yadava polity. The sect regards pious all the locations where Chakradhara visited, sat, touched or resided. Therefore, around the site of Lonar, near the Dharatirtha, are several places that are sacred to the Mahanubhavas. The crater has a Muslim Sufi *dargah* (a shrine or tomb built over the grave of a revered figure) and is deemed sacred by its worshippers.

### The Many Layers of Place-Making

The Lonar crater is a fine example of how geological phenomena are often overlaid with mythological meaning. The archaeological evidence allows us to construct a timeline for this human attempt at explaining and comprehending a landscape.

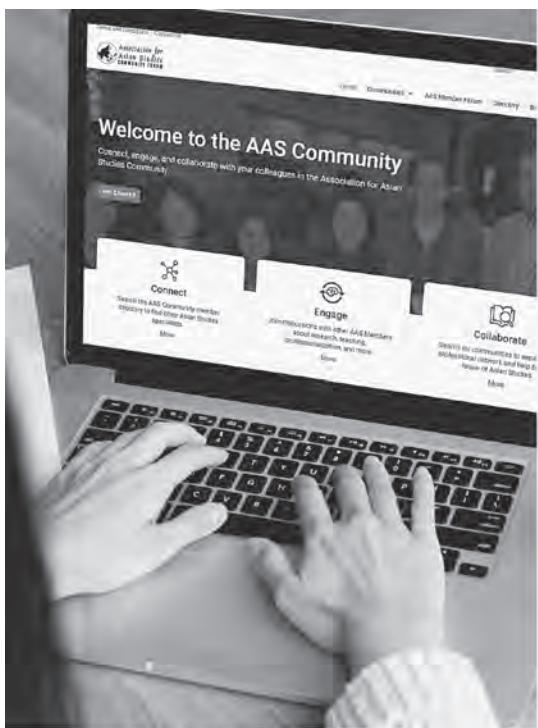
Geology is understood through natural materials and forms, while mythology is recovered through a literary study of stories and texts. Archaeological evidence comprises man-made artifacts physically recovered on the site. The identity of Lonar lies at the intersection of these three layers and the meaning assigned to its creation; thus transforming a mere geographical place to a cultural and religious space. ♦

### NOTES

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