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Special Issue

Adalbert J. Gail
Serpents in Angkor
Apotheosis of a Decorative Motif

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During four visits to Angkor and other archaeological sites in Cambodia – between 2007 and 2012 – many friendly Khmer smoothed my way. The drivers were a cautious and helpful class of their own.

The Freie Universität Berlin was and is a podium that allows me to discuss problems and questions before I have to write down the results of my research. The exchange of ideas with students has been for more than 40 years a source of inspiration and encouragement to me.

Varying a famous word of Heinrich von Kleist – "Über das allmähliche Verfertigen der Gedanken beim Reden" (written in 1805/6) – I should say that the *gradual making of thoughts* also applies to lecturing on a particular problem. The necessary practice of concentrated thinking while teaching is sometimes able gradually to solve a problem.

Finally I would like to express my deepest feelings of thanks towards my friend Jaroslav Vacek, director of the Institute of South and Central Asia at the Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University in Prague – where I have been lecturing as a *professor hospes* since 1995 – and general editor of Pandanus.

Prof. Vacek kindly accepted my serpent studies as a special issue of *Pandanus* and accompanied the final steps with passion and competence. Magnam gratiam habeo.

The outstanding research that French archaeologists carried out since 1899 in Angkor is an extremely valuable treasure for all scholars. Angkor studies without the support of these French achievements cannot be imagined.

Budweis, 15th August 2012 Adalbert J. Gail

Introduction

This study not only investigates the various aspects of the magnificent *nāga* motif in Khmer art, but also it

- confirms, by means of expanding upon the development of the *nāga* fan (Chapter 3) the – recently again challenged – sequence of main monuments in Angkor , namely the Angkor Wat erected under Sūryvarman II (1113–1150 AD), and the Bayon erected under Jayavarman VII (1181–1219 AD)
- clarifies the identity of several regents of the directions of space (Chapters 1 and 9) in Khmer art and discovers the 10th regent Śeṣa / Ananta in the Great Gallery of Angkor Wat (Chapter 9)
- tries to elaborate a clear distinction between *akroteria* and *antefixes* in order to to give some system to a significantly diverging terminology on the part of scholars (Chapter 5)
- replaces, last but not least, the so called Tārakāmaya war (*saṃgrāma*) as the narrative background to one of the most beautiful panels of the Great Gallery of Angkor Wat with a new and, I hope, more fitting explanation (Chapter 9).

Traces of serpent worship can be found all over the Indian subcontinent, either directly or mirrored by other Indian religions. While in India the *nāga* motif may rightly be called a fertile motif in the religious arts, in the Khmer empire it is of extraordinary, unsurpassed importance and allows the conclusion that both religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, when reaching Cambodia encountered an atmosphere where any *nāga* myth and *nāga* décor in the arts was more than welcome.

Whether the Nāga tribe in Assam – in the event that their name has anything at all to do with serpents = *nāgas* – can be taken, in the past or now, as bearers of *nāga* worship must, at the moment, be cautiously denied.

To give only two important sources: J. Ph. Vogel who carefully collected an enormous mass of testimonies on serpent worship in India[1] does not give any hint of this possibility, and Fürer-Haimendorf, who spent thirteen months with the Assamese Nāgas,[2] evidently did not observe any particular serpent cult among these people. Milada Ganguli does not give any hint at *nāga* worship among the Nāgas of the Indo-Burmese borderlands either.[3]

Julia Shaw, however, observes a relation between a local Nāga clan and *nāga* sculptures as agricultural deities in the Sāñcī area, Madhyapradesh.[4]

As with the cult of spirits (*bhūta, yakṣa) nāga* worship seems to have remained prevalent in India as a basic religion of the common people that was never entirely displaced by the so called *high religions* such as Buddhism and Hinduism but preserved an important role in popular belief and imbued the imagination of the people.

It should be kept in mind that the supreme gods such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Devī are worshipped in order to ensure the salvation (*mokṣa*) of their believers. The minor gods are propitiated for practical purposes: in order to avoid their malevolent actions and to secure their benevolent behaviour. In the case of the *nāgas* it is above all protection against drought or arrival of rain that is sought.

The main features that seem to be responsible for the widespread relevance of serpents in Indian thinking have been impressively collected by J.Ph. Vogel.

"If we wish to explain serpent worship, we must start from the animal itself. Which among a primitive population is so suitable to be regarded as a demonic being endowed with magical power? The snake is unlike other animals, owing to its peculiar shape and its swift and mysterious gliding motion without the aid of either feet or wings. In addition to these most conspicuous properties the snake possesses other strange features such as the power of fascination of its eye, its forked tongue (of which the

1 *Indian Serpent Lore*, London 1926.

2 *Die nackten Nagas*, Leipzig 1947.

3 *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas*. New Delhi 1984.

4 She underlines three times that the *nāga* sculptures "doubled" as symbols of the Nāga clan (2004, pp. 7, 11, 53). I am grateful to Z. Renner for the reference to this work. – On the Nāga dynasty and the Vākaṭaka kingdom, see Bakker 1997, pp. 15–17.

Mahābhārata offers a mythical explanation), and the periodical sloughing of its skin which is referred to in Vedic literature. The serpent is, indeed, the uncanniest of all animals. Above all things it is the deadly poison of certain snakes that causes the whole species to be looked upon as demoniacal beings which are to be dreaded and to be propitiated. There is an Indian proverb which says: 'Even a great man is not worshipped, as long as he has not caused some calamity: men worship the Nāgas, but not Garuḍa, the slayer of Nāgas.'"[5]

Particularly narrow is the affiliation of the *nāgas* to early and later Buddhism (see also Zin 2003, pp. 121–130).[6]

Although the Buddha himself was three times born as a *nāga* – i.e. Campaka, Śaṅkhapāla, and Bhūridatta (Vogel 1926, p. 133) – animals including *nāgas* who are able to adopt human shape are a priori excluded from ordination.[7]

The *nāgas* appear as fervent worshippers of the Buddha and of the *stūpas* on the one hand, as faithful guardians of Buddhist sanctuaries on the other hand. The report on the distribution of the relics is not free from contradictions. One of the eight shares of the relics has been, according to unanimous tradition, obtained by a *kṣatriya* clan (Krauḍyas or Koliyas). Another passage, however, says that the eighth part of the relics was left in the hands of the *nāgas* in Rāmagrāma (Waldschmidt 1948, p. 330f. and Waldschmidt 1950, p. 450).

The Mahāvaṃsa, on the other hand, reports that the *stūpa* of Rāmagrāma was destroyed by the floods of the Ganga (Mahāvaṃsa XXXI, 25; Geiger 1958, p. 247, Geiger 264, p. 211), the reliquary floated to the mouth of the river and was then worshipped by the *nāga*s in *nāgaloka* – i.e. beneath the surface of the human world –, and finally came into Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's newly built great *stūpa* (*Mahāthūpa*) on the island of Laṅkā (*Laṅkādīpe*)

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5 Otto von Böthlink, *Indische Sprüche.* 2nd ed. 1870, vol. 1, p. 7, No. 39.

6 M. Zin's article "The Buddha's relics and the Nāgas – an attempt to throw light on some depictions in the Amaravati School" will be published in the volume of papers of the EASAA Conference, Paris 2012.

7 The Vinaya reports that deceit is hardly possible since during sexual intercourse and while sleeping the *nāgas* assume their animal shape (Mahāvagga I, 63, see Mahāvagga I–IV, 1881).

(Mahāvaṃsa XXXI,19; Geiger 1958, p. 246, Geiger 1964, p. 210). This report superbly connects Singhalese Buddhism with the earliest Buddhism comparable to the tradition that Anuradhapura's *bodhi* tree goes back to an offshoot of the original *bodhi* tree.

A beautiful panel from Bharhut depicts the *nāgarājā* Elāpatra worshipping the Buddha. The king of the serpents can be seen thrice: first as a five-hooded animal coming from the waters, then in human form with cobra hoods (*nāga-phaṇa*), accompanied by his two female consorts, and finally kneeling before the throne of the Buddha (Vogel 1926, Pl. III; Coomaraswamy 1956, p. 48, Pl. VIII, deuxième panneau).

One of the most impressive results of Herbert Härtel's excavation at Sonkh near Mathura from 1966 to 1974[8] was the foundations of the apsidal temple No. 2 that seem to have belonged to a Kuṣāṇa stratum. On account of various *nāga* carvings – among them a four-sided block and a splendid architrave that depicts a *nāgarājā* with his wife and entourage, Härtel believed that the temple itself must have been a *nāga* sanctuary (Härtel 1993, pp. 425–427). But this is by no means certain. Close to the north side of the temple remnants of a monastery were found that would rather indicate a Buddhist context (Härtel 1993, p. 419, drawing p. 417). Härtel himself gives several inscriptions providing evidence that the *nāgas* were as a matter of preference worshipped in tanks as open-air sanctuaries, comparable to the Yakṣas whose places of worship were often beneath trees.[9] It cannot be ruled out that a *toraṇa* embellished with these *nāga* sculptures represented just the guardians of that temple which, however, was dedicated to another cult, possibly Buddhism.[10]

In this respect we have reason to take a look at Amaravati. Fergusson had published impressive photos and drawings already in 1868, where we see zoomorphic *nāga*s protecting a Buddhist *stūpa* (Fergusson 1873, Pl.

[8] Härtel 1993. – The author of these lines was happy to have had the chance to take part in the last campaign in spring 1974.

[9] Freestanding *nāga* sculptures were mostly found near water reservoirs and tanks in the Sāñcī area (Shaw 2004, pp. 22ff.).

[10] A beautiful panel from the site museum at Amaravati shows three functions of the *nāga*s: adorning (dome of the *stūpa*), protecting (entrance to the *stūpa*) and worshipping the *stūpa* (Stern/ Bénisti 1961, Pl. LXVIII a).

LXXVIII), the Buddha seated on the coils of a *nāga* and sheltered by his hoods (ibid., Pl. LXXVI), and medallions with *nāga*s worshipping the Buddha (ibid., Fig. 2). A medallion depicting a relic-casket on a throne and *nāga*s as main worshippers (Vogel 1926, Pl. X) looks like an illustration of the report of the Mahāvaṃsa about the worship of the relics in *nāgaloka* (Mahāvaṃsa XXXI,18–19; Geiger 1958, p. 246).

A slab from later Amaravati (2nd/3rd century AD) shows intertwined zoomorphic *nāga*s adorning the dome of the *stūpa* and other serpents which protect the drum of the *stūpa*. Further the slab displays four anthropomorphic *nāga*s, walking or flying, which pay homage to the *stūpa*. Most probably the image of the *stūpa* on the slab refers to the *stūpa* of Rāmagrāma (Fig. 1).[11] Taking these features together it seems that the *nāga*s fulfil a subordinate function in relation to Buddhism. This seems also probable with respect to the situation at Mathura.

An additional argument is provided by the Buddhist *stūpa*s and *stūpa* houses (*cetiyaghara*) in Sri Lanka. Here, from the very beginning at Mihintale and Anuradhapura (Figs. 2f.) down to the grandiose buildings at Polonnaruwa, *nāga*s, both as snakes or as human beings, appear as protectors of the Buddhist sites. The *nāgarājā* of Vaṭadage is, extraordinarily, flanked by a yakṣa *couple* (Figs. 4f.). The *nāgarājā* stelae that flank the staircases of the *stūpa* halls are, as with the moonstones, a trademark of Singhalese craftsmanship. A magnificent piece from Anuradhapura was excavated as recently as 1988 (Figs. 6f.).

"The day of the Snake Gods falls during the monsoon rains on the fifth of the brightening lunar fortnight late in July or early August [Śrāvaṇ, G.], actually within the Buddhist holy month of Gunla" (Anderson 1977, p. 87). While the festival is known to most northern Indian countries, it is exceedingly prominent in the Kathmandu Valley, and hence of particular

[11] The right side of the slab – seen from the onlooker – seems to have been partly re-cut after a damage in full length. From the original upper flying figure (*nāga*) only the contours are left. The middle and lower figures are secondary. The middle figure stands in an almost dancing position, it is slim and seems to balance, almost according to the Coḷa manner, an object (bunch of flowers?) on the fore- and the middle-fingers of his right hand. The diadem and the canopy are much different from those of the original figure on the panel's left side. The human female kneeling below exhibits, in contrast to the original worshipper who has put together her hands, the *vandana-mudrā* with her right hand.

significance in the religious arts. Anderson (ibid., p. 85) points out that "an angered, unappeased serpent deity can cause drought and famine, death from snake bite and disease, loss of possessions, and that awful calamity, the collapse of homes and buildings".

"Notwithstanding the complementary roles of other rain givers such as Indra, Matsyendranātha, and Bālakaumārī, it is the *nāga*s upon whom the Nepalis most depend, for the annual, timely and copious dispensation of rain" (Slusser 1985, Vol. 1, p. 354). In addition to the vital rains the snakes "grant increased wealth and give protection for jewels and treasures."[12]

Many idols of gods and kings, temples and shrines (see below), water taps and sunken ponds and even homes and shops are embellished with serpents (Anderson 1977, p. 85). Their residence is Pātālaloka beneath the terrestrial world, where they inhabit the lowermost of seven storeys (Kirfel 1920, pp. 146f.). The jewels on their hoods illuminate the darkness of those subterranean regions.

The most spectacular *nāga*s in the Kathmandu valley are two large sculptures depicting Viṣṇu on Śeṣa, one of them at Budhanilkanth (642 AD, Fig. 41; see also Gail 2004), the other one in the Balaju gardens. This type of sculpture, in reduced form, can also often be found at the river banks (*ghāṭ*), inserted in the floor (Fig. 8). Śeṣa, both in human and zoomorphic shape, forms part of the magnificent Viśvarūpa image in the Cāṅgunārāyaṇa compound (Pal 1974, Fig. 113; see below Fig. 136). Another masterpiece is the Kṛṣṇa Kāliyadamana preserved in the Hanuman Dhoka palace (ibid., Figs. 90f.).

Royal baths are the proper place for *nāga* arrangements. In the palace garden of Bhaktapur the bath is not only framed by *nāga*s, but also a beautiful *nāga* pole marks the centre of the pond (Fig. 9). The later *śikhara* temple in the Kathmandu Valley (Gail 1988, pp. 28–43) equips the sanctum with a band of intertwined *nāga*s that erect their upper human bodies near the four doors facing the four cardinal points. Sometimes the *nāga*s are paired with the regents of the directions of space (*dikpāla*). The particularly attractive set on the wall of the Jagatnārāyaṇa temple in Shankhamul (1860 AD), Patan, was torn down and stolen in the 1990s (Figs. 10f.).

[12] In the Ajanata wall paintings (5th century AD) we find *nāga*s wearing sapphires on their hoods.

The backrest of the throne of the Malla kings in Patan (1666 AD), now exhibited in the Palace Museum, is composed of wildly intertwined *nāga* coils that run into a nine-hooded canopy (see Hagmüller 2003, p. 104; Bühnemann 2012, p. 345, Fig. 4).

Although the *nāga* motif is doubtless very prolific in Indian sacred architecture, its triumph seems to be unsurpassed in the tradition of Orissa (Gail 2010). In the beginning the *nāgarājā* appears inside the temple, as documented by the *maṇḍapa* of the Vaitāl deul temple in old Bhubaneswar (Fig. 12). The anthropomorphic figure with *nāga* hood holds a jewel-pot in his hands. The next step exhibits the *nāga*s effectively as an architectural embellishment, above all in niches (Gail 2010). Our specimen is taken from a screen-wall of the Buddhist *vihāra* 1 at Ratnagiri (Fig. 13). A *nāga* couple beautifully encircles the almost fully round entrance pilasters of the Vārāhī temple of Chaurasi (11th century AD; Fig. 14). United on one and the same pilaster the two *nāga*s make up a loving couple (*maithuna*) on the wall of the great sun-temple (Padmakeśara) at Konarak (Fig. 15). Here the motif leads to its final apotheosis in India. Five *nāga*s invigorate just one pilaster. A kissing couple with anthropomorphic upper body appears on top, there is a *nāgī* at the foot of the pilaster, and two zoomorphic creatures appear between them in the middle of the pilaster (Fig. 16).

Indian art in general operates with three different types of *nāga*s: full human body with *nāga* hood; upper body human, lower body theriomorphic – this variety does not exist in Khmer art –, and the pure animal variety. All three variants can be seen in the cleft of the great relief at Mamallapuram, a relief that can be interpreted in two ways, either (*śleṣavat*) as Arjuna's penance (Kirātārjunīya) or as the descent of the Ganges (Gaṅgāvataraṇa; Fig. 17).

In the Khmer tradition – in order to emphasize this in advance – the zoomorphic variety clearly dominates.

The snake-goddess Manasā whose name, however, is rather controversial was worshipped above all in Bengal (Fig. 18). It is possible that the dynasty of the Senas brought her from their home area Karnataka to Bengal. Mostly seated in *ardhapralambapāda* she is depicted with a full human body and a multi-headed *nāga* hood behind her head (G. Bhattacharya 2008).

The adoration of snakes, however, is not limited to the past. It is still a living practice, particularly by women who want to become pregnant. In South India so called *nāgakal*s (*nāga* stones) as cult-objects can be seen beneath trees etc. (Figs. 19f.).

In Cambodia, today, it is not only the past of Angkor that emphatically directs our attention to *nāga* worship and *nāga* décor. Serpents are an important economic factor in the country as well. Cambodia has 62 species of snakes, many of them poisonous. Annually about four million water snakes are captured in the vast Tonle Sap lake. Poor fishermen take them as their food, and they are fed to crocodiles in various farms.

There can be hardly any doubt that the Indian tradition of *nāga* worship found a particularly fertile response in Cambodia where, under Khmer guidance and conspicuously in Angkor, the *nāga* motif celebrated a triumph in sculpted stone that surpasses all comparable data in Asia.

1. The *nāga* lintel

The Khmer lintel is among the most studied features of Khmer architecture. Scholars like Stern (1934), Coral Rémusat (1934), Dupont (1952), Bénisti (1970, 2003) et alii have meticulously collected the material and in particular tried to find links between Indian prototypes and the Khmer transformations. The main areas of observation in India were naturally eastern sites such as Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in Andhra Pradesh and the Pallava settlements near the Coromandel coast. Yet Karnataka with its famous sites (Badami, Aihole) also plays a significant role within these comparisons, no less than Maharashtra in terms of the rich Buddhist sculptural tradition at Ajanta and the huge sacred complex of Ellora (Maharashtra).

The results of these studies are very often divergent. Bénisti, for example, rejects Coral Rémusat's idea that the later Amarāvatī School is the predecessor of both Pallava art and that of the Khmer in the 7th century AD.[1]

Questionable, however, is Bénisti's use of the term lintel (1970, pp. 63–73; 2003, pp. 100–115). In all cases the Indian *makara* arches are no embellishments of lintels. They constitute a special device of pediment / fronton, i.e. the tympanon or *toraṇa* (Dhar 2010, pp. 58–60). If – e.g. in Pallava rock architecture – a lintel is featured at all (*uttaraṅga*), it is blank, crowned by the *toraṇa*.

Taking into account the development of later Dravidian architecture, (early and middle Coḷa temples) this difference between *uttaraṅga* and *toraṇa* remains not only evident but becomes more and more pronounced (see Harle 1987, Illustrations 233–235, and Dhar 2010, p. 99).

Yet this distinction between lintel and *toraṇa* by no means excludes comparisons between the Indian *makaratoraṇa* and the Khmer *makara*

[1] Bénisti (1970, pp. 66–72). At Ajanta she sees "les premiers exemples de complexes indiens qui puissent évoquer les formes khmères" (ibid. p. 66).

lintels from Sambor Prei Kuk (Dupont 1952, Figs. 4–7; Angkor 1997, Cat. 17). Later, from the 10th century onwards, Angkor produces a variety of *makaratoraṇas,* their heads, however, turned outside in order to swallow (or vomit) *nāga*s (Figs. 95f.).

Bénisti's exhaustive studies on the situation in the pre-Angkor period leave little doubt that *nāga*s encircling the whole door frame do not occur on pre-Angkor monuments. Even in the Angkor period this type of frequent Indian embellishment of doors does not appear in Khmer art. The lintel with a scaly serpent body, however, can be encountered at least once at Sambor Prei Kuk S. 1 (Boisselier 1966, Fig. 33b; Bénisti 2003, Fig. 9). This rather meagre evidence of an Indo-Khmer relationship is by no means typical since Bénisti found quite a number of motifs, e.g. miniature architecture above the temple door, that link temples from Aihole, Karnataka, with those from Sambor Prei Kuk in Cambodia (Bénisti 2003, pp. 130f.; Fig. 225). More to the point: if the architecture reliefs on the lintel of the Durgā temple at Aihole are really related to similar designs on Sambor Prei Kuk lintels, one is surprised that the beautiful *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa motif on the lower part of the lintel (Bénisti ibid., Fig. 225) has never been an inspiration for the Khmer craftsmen.

Although some dependence upon Indian patterns cannot be denied, the modifications carried out by Khmer artisans are remarkable. An adequate specimen for our comparison is the northern lintel of the southwest temple of Lolei (ancient Hariharālaya, 9th century AD; Fig. 21). Kāla[2] – in Indian terminology *kīrti-* or *grāsamukha*, whose tongue is connected with a set of three tiny *nāga* protomes, embraces two upper bodies of *nāgas* whose animal bodies change into plantal scrolls like garlands undulating towards each end of the lintel. The plantal design of the *nāga* bodies becomes a trademark of early Angkor art. They are ambiguous, *śleṣa*-like, in such a way that they can always be read both as garlands and as serpents. Although the Indian mind has a certain predilection for *śleṣa* (ambiguity), both in literature and art, in this case the Indian tradition firmly adheres to the scaly design of the zoomorphic body of the *nāga*s. A good example is the full figure of an anthropomorphic Garuḍa in the centre of the lintel

[2] That the term exists is testified to by the Preah Khan stela inscription (Cœdès 1942).

of the Gauḍarguḍi temple in Aihole, Karnataka, who holds the tails of two *nāgas* in his hands (Meister / Dhaky 1986, pp. 28–31, pls. 54 and 59). From here these serpents encircle with scaly bodies lintel and side frame (*śākhā*) of the temple door. The upper bodies, however, in well known Indian fashion, turn the *nāga*s into human beings whose busts are displayed at the entrance of the temple (Figs. 22 and 23).

Another lintel from Lolei, located in the northwest temple on the east side, replaces Kāla with the head of a bird, most probably Garuḍa (Fig. 24). His mouth swallows two garlands, the animal nature of which is still more hidden than on the Kāla lintel (Fig. 21), since their *nāga* heads are missing (already swallowed?). As with the Kāla lintel a tiny *nāga* trio can be seen beneath the mouth of Garuḍa.

A fully evolved *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa lintel appears in the eastern group of Preah Ko temples, in the northern temple on the south side (Figs. 25f.) The upper body of a crowned Garuḍa holds the (scaly?) tails of two *nāga*s in his hands. The animals turn their skins into scrollwork and return to their scaly body just ahead of their hoods, five of which are spread on both extremities of the lintel. A virtual duplicate of this lintel can be seen just opposite to this temple, i.e. on the northern side of the central temple on top of a false door (*ghanadvāra*). Here the decorative plaques beneath the *nāga* hoods (Fig. 25) are replaced by squatting figures. A third variant of this type appears on the south side of this temple. The Bakong temple complex (881 AD) offers only one lintel that is suitable for our puposes, but it is one of the utmost importance since it seems to represent the scaly body design of the *nāga*s that is in the tradition of Sambor Prei Kuk, and that means in the Indian tradition as well. A crowned male sits in the yoga position on a conical seat. Protected by three *nāga* hoods with expressive faces, he holds two of them in his hands. Disconnected from this ensemble both sides of the lintel are filled with entwisted *nāga*s. Each *nāga* is equipped with three heads, and their bodies, before ending with a floral design, are each interrupted by a further set of three heads (Figs. 27f.). Although the right side (from the perspective of the onlooker) of the lintel is seriouly damaged, we can confidently count an original number of 27 *nāga* heads.

The Musée Guimet and the National Museum Phnom Penh preserve two splendid *nāga* lintels. One of them (*Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer* 1997,

Cat. 32) is closely related to our Fig. 25, with the difference that the floral garland runs into three instead of five *nāga* heads on both sides. The faces of the *nāga*s still show that friendly expression that characterises the pre-Angkor Wat period. They wear jewels on their heads. Garuḍa in the centre of the composition stands on a *viśvapadma* socle and carries a kneeling, four-armed Viṣṇu on his shoulders. A further difference is the circumstance that the undulating floral *nāgas* in the Guimet sculpture are interrupted by impressive Kāla heads which vomit elaborate tassels. The second specimen (ibid., Cat. 49) is carved in the exuberant and minute style of Banteay Srei (967 AD). In the centre appears Garuḍa with hidden legs. He supports Viṣṇu on his shoulders, whose right leg falls down before Garuḍa's breast. Viṣṇu is four-armed, equipped with the usual emblems in Khmer art (earth / *mahī,* disc / *cakra,* conch / *śaṅkha,* club / *gadā*). Disconnected from this group, two *garlands* undulate on both sides of the lintel. They begin with volutes and end with volutes that are crowned by protomes of Garuḍas who swallow three-headed *nāga*s. Here the garlands have almost lost their serpentine nature. This lintel represents a late blossom from the flourishing time of the *nāga* (–cum-Garuḍa) lintel in Khmer art.

The Preah Ko can be taken as the high point of the *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa lintel period. The lintels of the 10th century AD, best studied in the Eastern Mebon complex, begin to replace the *nāga* subject with depictions of the regents of the directions of space (*dikpāla*) and by mythological topics.

First of all we have to examine a type of lintel within the Eastern Mebon complex which seems to continue the *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa lintel from Hariharālaya (Roluos) (Figs. 25f.). The northern *gopura* exhibits a lintel where a beaked and crowned male stands between two floral garlands that undulate from the centre to the sides. The figure is clad in a pointed leaf apron (Fig. 29). At first glance one could think that the subject of the lintel would be Garuḍa with *nāga*s. Meanwhile the relevant lintel on the southern side of that *gopura*, the female counterpart of the male figure of the northern lintel (Fig. 30), seems to rule out the idea of Garuḍa. Instead, a *kinnara-kinnarī* couple here seems to guide the visitor to the temple. The side temple in the northeastern corner of the Eastern Mebon complex repeats the *kinnara* subject on its western lintel (Figs. 31f.) with one characteristic feature: the fleshy floral garlands end on both sides with

three tiny *nāga* heads, a design that again serves the ambiguous intention of the artist (Fig. 33).

It is evident that the *nāga* garland can be connected not only with Garuḍa, but also with Kāla or a *kinnara.*

The Eastern Mebon decoration is still partly enigmatic. Nevertheless we can confidently say that we find here, possibly for the first time, a full set of four regents of the directions of space (*caturdikpāla*) in Khmer art, distributed on the lintels of the four sides of the main temple: Indra, wielding a *vajra*, on the three-headed elephant Airāvata in the east (Fig. 34), Yama, holding a staff (*daṇḍa*), rides a buffalo (*mahiṣa*) in the south (Fig. 35), Varuṇa with noose (*pāśa*) on a goose (*haṃsa)* in the west (Fig. 36), and Kubera supported by two lions in the north (Fig. 37). For our purpose, and particularly for the interpretation of a certain carving in Angkor Wat – see Chapter 9: *The regents of the directions of space including zenith and nadir* – it is important to keep in mind that Varuṇa's vehicle, in accordance with earlier Indian tradition, is a goose (*haṃsa*), not a crocodile (*makara*) or any other animal.

2. Cosmology – Viṣṇu Anantaśayana

The most popular narrative of the origin of the world, both in India and in Cambodia, became connected with Viṣṇu who, after the cosmic night, wakes up on his serpent bed (Ananta / Śeṣa) in order to create the world anew (see e.g. Bhāgavata-Purāṇa III,8,10–9,44). From Viṣṇu's navel grows a lotus in which Brahmā is born[1] who sees Viṣṇu as *the only* man on the bed formed of the coils of long Śeṣa who is white as lotus fibres.[2]

By order of Viṣṇu Brahmā creates the world. Some versions of the myth point out that the huge lotus is the material basis of the world, the transformation of which constitutes the infrastructure of the universe (Gail 2009, pp. 85–87).

Earlier versions of the story still fully acknowledge Brahmā as the only creator (e.g. Padma-Purāṇa, see Kirfel 1927, pp. 15–20), while the first step of a Viṣṇuization of the account of creation simply says that it is Viṣṇu, in the form of Brahmā (*Brahma-svarūpa-dhṛk Viṣṇur …* Brahma-Purāṇa 233,10 and Viṣṇu-Purāṇa VI,4,10), who creates the world anew after the cosmic night.[3]

The fully evolved Vaiṣṇava form of the myth, i.e. the birth of Brahmā from Viṣṇu's lotus navel, can – in terms of textual history – be located between the Brahma- and Viṣṇu-Purāṇa on the one hand and the Matsya, Varāha, Vāmana and Bhāgavata on the other hand (Gail 2009, pp. 83–91). Accordingly, the earliest date of this version should be the 6th/7th century AD.

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1 *tasmin svayaṃ veda-mayo Vidhātā …so 'bhūt* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa III,8,15).

2 *mṛṇāla-gaurāyata-śeṣa-bhoga-paryaṅka ekaṃ puruṣaṃ śayānam* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa III,8,23a).

3 The fact that even Vaiṣṇava versions of the myth adhere to the idea that one cosmic cycle (*kalpa*) is identical with a night and a day of Brahmā's life (which lasts 100 years), makes clear that the whole idea is originally a Brahmaitic one (Viṣṇu-Purāṇa I,3). This background is unfolded by the Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa (e.g. Kirfel 1927, p. 15). The contemporaneous *kalpa* is the first day of the second half of Brahmā's life.

Regarding art history, it is highly probable that artistic representations of this idea are earlier than textual references (ibid., p. 89). It is in the Gupta era, 5th century AD, that we find, for the first time, images of Viṣṇu resting on Ananta and giving birth to Brahmā on a lotus that is supposed to originate from Viṣṇu's navel (Bhitargaon, see Rowland 1953, Pl. 78 B; Udayagiri, Madhyapradesh – see below Fig. 38; and Deogarh, Madhyapradesh – see below Fig. 39).[4]

In South India the earliest specimen seems to appear as a beautiful rock-cut sculpture in the Mahiṣamardiṇī cave at Mamallapuram (Srinivasan 1964, pp. 155f.; Pl. XLVIII, Fig. 40), an image that can confidently be attributed to the middle of the 7th century AD.

The oldest Anantaśayana in Nepal also dates from the 7th century AD. It is a large, 6m long stupendous figure that lies in an artificial pond in Budhanilkanth at the northern fringe of the Kathmandu valley. In November during the bright half of the month of Kārttik, the festival of *Haribodhinī ekādaśī* takes place. Crowds of worshippers from Nepal and India assemble in order to celebrate the awakening of Viṣṇu at the beginning of a new cosmic cycle (Fig. 41; Anderson 1977, pp. 175–182). The huge bronze of Anantaśayana, fragments of which have been found in the Western Baray of Angkor and which are now exhibited in the National Museum of Phnom Penh, might have served a similar purpose (*Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* 2006, Kat. 51).

In the 7th century AD, again, we meet the oldest depictions of the subject among the Khmer, lintel images that have carefully been studied by Giteau (1951), by K. Bhattacharya and by Bénisti (1965). Hence I can concentrate here on a few selected specimens which deserve further investigation for various reasons.

One of the oldest lintels, the origin of which is obscure, is a specimen that reduces the theme to a minimum: leaving aside Lakṣmī, Garuḍa and the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha etc., the lintel shows only a four-armed Anantaśayana on the coils of a seven-hooded cobra and Brahmā who sits on a lotus that rises on a needle-like stalk from Viṣṇu's navel (*Angkor – Göttliches*

[4] This particular origin, viz from Viṣṇu's *navel*, is not always executed by the artists – most probably for aesthetical reasons.

Erbe Kambodschas 2006, Kat. 27; see below Fig. 42). One of his left arms almost disappears behind this stalk, the other follows the contours of his body. The two right hands seem to visualize the very moment of Viṣṇu's awakening, since one hand is still stretched out in a relaxed manner while the other one supports the god's head. Both these gestures could refer to Indian models: the stretched arm in Mamallapuram, the supported head in Aihole and Ellora (Soundara Rajan 1967). On the other hand, however, it has to be admitted that the Khmer artists based their own compositions from the very beginning on inventive Anantaśayana forms. Here a flat arch, interrupted by Brahmā in the middle and two flanking cartouches, vaults the reclining god. Two worshippers seem to rest on seats in a flying position. Decorated with flaming cartouches they frame Viṣṇu's head and feet.

From the Pre-Angkor period we jump to the flourishing period of Angkor: Banteay Samre and Angkor Wat.

Banteay Samre depicts the myth of creation twice, once on a pilaster embellishing the main temple (Fig. 43), and once on a western fronton of the so called northern library (Fig. 44).[5]

In the former case the motif appears at the lower end of a pilaster that is otherwise decorated with scrollwork. Śeṣa has turned into a veritable dragon comparable to many other Śeṣas in the Angkor Wat period. Brahmā is altogether missing, but Lakṣmī keeping Viṣṇu's feet on her lap – a motif that gained popularity thanks to Kālidāsa (*Śriyaḥ … aṅke nikṣipta-caraṇam,* Raghuvaṃśa 10,8) – is present.

The Anantaśayana that fills the space of a fronton is, from an aesthetic point of view, not a very successful one. The upper body of Viṣṇu is distorted in a rather crude manner. The god holds a pillar-like lotus in his hands from which spring additional branches with figures and which is crowned by Brahmā (Fig. 44).

From various specimens in the Angkor Wat temple we select a lintel from the heart of the sanctuary that corresponds with another lintel depicting Viṣṇu's victory over Madhu and Kaiṭabha (Figs. 45f.).

[5] Hindu temples, however, do not have the tradition of libraries, in contrast to Buddhism. Most of these buildings flanking the main axis of the temple complex do not fulfil the requirements of libraries. Therefore the function of the store rooms for ritual equipment seems to be the much better explanation for these buildings.

The core of the Angkor Wat temple has, on its western side, a cross-shaped gallery with four paved basins (Rooney 2002, p. 128, No. 12). A lintel of the south-north axis portrays on the southern side, looking to the north, the Anantaśayana event. The body of the serpent is stretched out on a socle, the wavy incisions of which indicate water. The five canopies of the cobra correspond to the upraised tail on the other side. Viṣṇu himself holds *cakra* (lower right), and *gadā* (upper left), while the upper right hand supports his head and the lower left is extended towards Lakṣmī who takes care of his feet with her left arm. The upwards directed lotus stalk is preserved. The figure of Brahmā, however, is destroyed. Two pairs of bearded ascetics, sitting beneath trees, worship Viṣṇu from both sides (Fig. 45).

A corresponding lintel can be seen on the same axis, on the south-facing northern side. Viṣṇu attacks the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha who are determined to threaten the work of creation from the very beginning. The god appears to be running, in the centre, his legs are in a straight line, while the two multi-armed demons try to escape to both sides. Viṣṇu holds the usual four emblems in his upraised hands, flanked by two medallions with sun and moon (?). The remnants of other figures cannot be identified (Fig. 46).

The best documented sacred complex of Angkor is the Preah Khan, "le temple funéraire du roi Dharaṇīndravarman II, père de Jayavarman VII" (Cœdès 1942, p. 261). Although basically a Buddhist structure, the temple contained no fewer than 430 statues of deities of different affiliation, among them those of Śiva, mainly concentrated in the north, and of Viṣṇu, mainly assembled in the west of the complex (ibid., p. 289).[6]

An Anantaśayana sculpture fills a fronton (*udgama*) of a gallery in the northern, mainly Śaiva section of the complex (Fig. 47). Viṣṇu's vehicle, atop a frieze with water animals, looks more like a dragon than a serpent, as in the case of Banteay Samre (Fig. 43). One unique feature is the lotus stalk with three buds that here replaces the creator Brahmā, the lotus-born one. Eight Ṛṣis, four on both lower sides, clasp their hands and hold them out towards Viṣṇu in *añjalimudrā*.

[6] Whether the Buddhist-Hindu-mélange of deities reflects a "sycrétisme religieux" (Cœdès 1942, p. 265) or rather an inclusivism in the sense of Paul Hacker (Oberhammer 1983, passim.) and comparable to the role of Hindu gods in outer circles of Buddhist *maṇḍalas* (Gail 2000b) would need further discussion.

An exuberantly carved lintel in the Guimet (2008, Cat. 120) represents the post-Bayon period. In the central loop of an undulating garland lies the four-armed Viṣṇu, crowned by five *nāga* hoods, the body of the serpent being omitted. The god is, in contrast to his traditional set of four emblems (*mahī, cakra, śaṅkha, gadā*), equipped with *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in his upper arms, and with a lotus bud in his lower right pointing towards Lakṣmī who holds his feet on her lap. The second left arm is just raised upwards, touching one *nāga* hood. An angular shaft is capped by a lotus that serves as Brahmā's seat. The god holds one hand in a meditating manner on his lap, one right hand carries a rosary (*akṣamālā*) in front of his breast, while the upper right seems to hold a sacrificial spoon (*sruc)*.[7] Among many tiny human figures a group of three can be detected in the upper left area of the lintel. Zéphir (Guimet 2008, p. 386) recognizes four-armed Viṣṇu embracing the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.

Viṣṇu's cosmic form is a favourite subject of the temple décor in Khmer art. It seems that the Khmer wanted to remain aware of the ever repeated cycle of creation and annihilation of the universe.

[7] See Zéphir's elaborate description in Guimet 2008, p. 284–287.

3. The *nāga* fan

Railings with handrails (Skt. *vedikā*) in the form of serpents (*nāga*) that end in upwards directed multi-headed cobras looking like fans (from now onwards: *nāga* fan) are an outstanding feature of Khmer art, beginning most probably in the 12th century AD and culminating in Angkor Thom (13th century AD).

The development of the motif supports the prevalent notion about the historical sequence – i.e. that Angkor Wat is up to 100 years older than the Bayon, Cœdès 1929 – in contrast to older assumptions such as that of Philippe Stern[1] and those more recently put forward by Golzio (Golzio / Heitman 2007, p. 228).

The oldest specimens may be those leading to the Bakong temple at Hariharālaya (Roluos) and those at Beng Mealea and Prasat Preah Vihear. The Angkor Wat temple represents a transition from simple to double-sided *nāga* fans that I call *viśvanāga* fans,[2] while in general Angkor Thom inserts Garuḍa into the centre of the group of *nāga* heads, a type that can also be doubled, i.e. Garuḍa on the front side and on the back side of the same fan.

The railing with *nāga* fan that leads to the pre-Angkorian Bakong (881 AD) can hardly have originated in that period since even Angkor temples with the same mountain-like structure, like the Pre Rup (961 AD) and the Eastern Mebon (952 AD), do not show any traces of railings with *nāga* fans. More plausible seems to be the assumption that the renovation of this temple in the 12th century AD, including a new central tower, involved the

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1 Stern's early dating of the Bayon (in Stern 1927, p. 81) – 9th century AD – was convincingly refuted by Cœdès (1929). Yet later Stern (1965, pp. 66 and 229) revoked his dating of Bayon before Angkor Wat.

2 In a similar manner to the use of *viśvapadma* and *viśvavajra* for double-sided lotus flowers and *vajras*.

addition of the railing (Figs. 48f.) that bestowed a more prestigious character upon the access route to the temple.

Let us examine the details of our motif.

The Bakong specimen rests on a low wall. The seven *nāga* heads of the fan are put together in such a way that the line of the upper periphery follows the individual heads on both sides. Five of the seven hoods spring from a central, geometrically decorated medallion. The structure of the serpent body is articulated by way of a wavy rhombic texture. The faces of the *nāga*s have nothing to do with naturalistic cobra faces but resemble dog-like visages with protruding, half-opened snouts. This feature marks a trend that distinguishes all *nāga* faces from now onwards, sometimes even looking aggressive because of their bulging eyes and threatening teeth.

The *nāga* fans at the northern end of the impressive Prasat Preah Vihear complex (Figs. 50f.), also positioned on low walls instead of railings, are more refined than those of the Bakong, although their general character is similar. Yet only three out of seven *nāga* hoods rise from the medallion on the front side, while the snake body is expressed by low, parallel arches.

The Banteay Samre temple, an attractive monument of the Angkor Wat period, is distinguished by an interior moat that is accessible via terrace and staircase from all four directions. A serpent balustrade, which connects these central terraces – on the east side the terrace is slightly shifted from the centre to the south (Rooney 2002, p. 248, No. 11) –, is interrupted on each side in order to give access to the staircases: the railing deviates towards the moat and ends (four times) with a pair of one-sided *nāga* fans (Fig. 52, west and south side of the moat with stringer, west staircase, south, and two pairs of *nāga* fans). A causeway, leading to the temple from east, is also bordered by serpent balustrades (ibid., pp. 248–251).

Boisselier (1947/51, p. 69, pl. XXVIII a,b) mentions *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fans in Angkor Vat "aux abouts des balustrades des chaussées intérieures du deuxième étage", mostly destroyed.[3] This gives us the opportunity to

[3] Stern (1965, p. 70), however, knows only one such specimen at Angkor Wat: "Les 'Garuda et Nāga' présentent quelquefois, à Tà Prohm, un second 'Garuda' au revers (Fig. 65, comme dans le seul exemple de ce motif dans le style d'Ankor Vat) et non la queue dressée, constant ensuite".

recapitulate the different forms of *nāga* fans in Angkor Wat that seem to reflect, to some extent, the history of the erection of that grandiose monument.

Coming from the main western side we meet the same type observed earlier, i.e. a *saptanāga* fan the back side of which exhibits the back of the animal (as in Figs. 56f.). This variety appears as a group of eight fans at the very beginning of the western access; immediately before the first *gopura* with its extended galleries, ten more fans of this type can be seen, and between these two spots, flanking the broad path, four one-sided *nāga* fans interrupt the railing. However, if we pass through the *gopura* and the gallery all the other *nāga* fans are double-sided, showing *nāga* faces to both sides (*viśvanāga*). A good example is the great cruciform terrace before the main building (Roveda 2002, pp. 268f.) demarcated by eight railings that end in eight *viśvanāga* fans (Figs. 53f.). An exemption are only Boisselier's fans from the upper gallery (see above) that would represent the third variety of fans in Angkor Wat and, at the same time, the last phase of its erection.

Evaluating the two simpler *nāga* fan variants from a historical perspective, one might argue that the change of fan type makes it probable that the construction of the temple began on the west side, and that the *viśvanāga* type was invented immediately after the completion of the *gopura* with gallery.

An example of the development of the one-sided *nāga* fan can be found in Beng Mealea (Figs. 56f.), resting on a railing as in Angkor Wat, and on a work from the Musée Guimet (Guimet 2008, Cat. 75) the exact place of origin of which is uncertain. Beng Melea, on the southern access to the temple, offers one of the best preserved and most beautiful specimens of the one-sided *nāga* fan. Yet each cobra head has its own *ogive aureola*, and these are bound together by an encompassing, elegant *ogive*. The geometrical design of these aureolas is continued on the back side although it is divided by arched patterns (Fig. 57). The work from the Musée Guimet replaces the area above the *nāga* heads with continuous scrollwork forming a pointed nimbus.[4]

[4] Guimet 2008, Cat 75. I cannot share the opinion of Auboyer (1974, 49) who sees "stylized flames or clouds" above the *nāga* heads. – The later *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fans often fill the apex with the tail feathers of Garuḍa (Stern 1965, Figs. 61–63, 67).

The next fundamental change in our *nāga* fan is the appearance of Garuḍa amidst the serpents. Of the many examples I am inclined to begin with a railing from the Preah Khan monastery, since this complex exhibits, in close proximity to one another, both the older one-sided fan variety without Garuḍa (Fig. 58) and the new one dominated by the king of birds (Fig. 59). He seems to ride on three *nāga*s while his forearms protrude between flanking serpents. The position of his hands bestows absence of fear (*abhayamudrā*) or, according to a particular Buddhist understanding, bestows peace (*śāntimudrā*).

The tradition of a relatively early date of the Preah Khan (1191 AD) among the creations of Jayavarman VII seems to be corroborated by the fact that the monastery does not yet possess the face towers that characterise the Bayon and the gates of Angkor Thom.[5]

The *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fan is omnipresent around the Bayon temple (Figs. 60f.) and embellishes the access to the royal bath (Srah Srang, Figs. 62 and 63). However, the reverse side of these fans on both sites is problematic. Evidently we have to do with a flat and reduced form of Garuḍa exhibiting erect wings and legs without claws (Figs. 61 and 63). A well preserved reverse side with Garuḍa more in the round belongs to the collection of the Guimet (2008, Cat. 103, p. 340 shows the reverse side). In some cases one has the impression that only one head, comparable to the front version, is sculpted (Fig. 63), while in other cases three tiny heads seem to have been portrayed (Fig. 61; cf. Stern 1965, Fig. 63).

In the late Bayon style,[6] 13th century, Garuḍa no longer embraces the flanking *nāga* heads, but he has raised his arms towards the fan apex. He

[5] It must, however, also be assumed that the face towers of the enclosure wall of Ta Prohm (1186 AD) are a later addition to the monastery, since there are no face towers on the Preah Khan, consecrated 1191 AD. The two monasteries are linked with each other: Ta Prohm was dedicated to the mother of Jayavarman VII, Preah Khan to his father. The first eighteen stanzas of their inscribed stelas are identical (Cœdès 1942, p. 255). According to Stern the Banteay Kdei is close to that of Ta Prohm. Their rectangular enclosure walls with *gopuras* crowned by face towers are additions of the second period of the Bayon style around 1191 (Stern 1965, pp. 32, 54, 58, 142, Figs. 54f., 100).

[6] Stern 1965, Figs. 67–69; *Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas,* 2006, Kat. 78; Guimet 2008, Cat. 113.

appears more detached than in the Bayon style (compare Guimet 2008, Cat. 113; *Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* 2006, Kat. 78).

Summing up, one can say that the *nāga* fans represent a trademark of Khmer art in the 12th and 13th century AD. Together with the respective balustrades they not only effectively frame roads and terraces, they convey to these railings an elegant swing.

The railings that lead to the Angkor Thom gates and to the Preah Khan have preserved the older type, i.e. the *nāga* fan without Garuḍa. This might have to do with the *amṛtamanthana* association of those specimens (see Chapter 4 and below Figs. 77f.; further cf. Guimet 2008, Cat. 98). They look rather aggressive with their half-open snouts showing a multitude of rapacious teeth.

4. The churning of the milk ocean

The Prasat Preah Vihear, an object of rivalry and even battles between Cambodia and Thailand, is a huge complex with various *gopura*s leading from north to south. The south side of *gopura* IV exhibits a lintel with *Anantaśayana* and, above, a fronton with the churning of the milk ocean (Figs. 64–66).[1]

The *Anantaśayana* shows Viṣṇu on a three-headed Śeṣa who is more similar to the *nāga* fans of the Angkor Wat period than to the relevant *amṛtamanthana* images of that period (see Chapter 3). Viṣṇu carries his usual four emblems (*mahī, cakra, śaṅkha, gadā)*, his crossed legs rest on Lakṣmī's lap and a lotus connects his navel with Brahmā (Fig. 66).

On the central bottom the *amṛtamanthana* scene depicts Viṣṇu as a tortoise (*kūrmāvatāra*), who carries a pot that supports the Mandara Mountain as the churning stick (Fig. 65). On the side of the three heads of the serpent Vāsuki three churning demons can be seen, on the other side three churning gods. Four-armed Viṣṇu seems to be climbing the pillar-shaped mountain. Lakṣmī and the horse Uccaiḥśravas flank the pot, Garuḍa stands on the end of Vāsuki's tail, while the elephant Airāvata is behind Vāsuki's three heads. Ṛṣis sit in the lower and in an upper register of the panel. In addition two medallions with sun and moon flank the central group. Since this sculpture in situ is closely related to a fragment from the Musée Guimet (2008, Cat. 64; see below Fig. 67),[2] we are able clearly to identify the figure who exhibits a strange sitting position on top of the Mandara Mountain. The Guimet panel reveals that it is Brahmā who holds a rosary in one of his right hands and who seems to be pressing two other hands against his seat,

[1] See also Boisselier 1966, Pl. XXIII.3.

[2] The close similarity would almost allow one to complete the Guimet sculpture, i.e. to add its lost side wings.

represented by a double lotus (*viśvapadma*). This observation brings us to particular affinities of the *amṛtamanthana* scene to the *Anantaśayana* topic.

The *amṛtamanthana* topic is, according to Kamaleswar Bhattacharya (1957, pp. 211–216), related to the *Anantaśayana* report. Quoting a passage from Coomaraswamy's *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (1935, p. 17) he links both myths with the *Tree of Life*:

"In Vedic formulation, the Tree of Life rises into space from the navel centre of the deity recumbent on the back of the Waters, its trunk representing the axis of the Universe, its branches all extension and differentiation on whatever plane of being."

It should, however, be kept in mind that Coomaraswamy's idea is not really *expressis verbis* formulated in the Indian texts. *Tree of Life* is not an Indian term.

Viennot's statement appears more conclusive since it is based on careful textual references and the reading of Kirfel's *Kosmographie der Inder* (Bonn und Leipzig 1920):

"L'arbre, dans cette cosmologie, est principalement envisagé sous sa forme de pilier, *skambha,* sur lequel tout l'univers prend appui" (Viennot 1954, p. 35).

According to this line of thinking the *tree* seems to be some sort of *tertium comparationis* between both myths. The Mandara Mountain (representing the *skambha*) is the churning rod of the *amṛtamanthana* myth and, at the same time, it represents the primeval tree and the lotus stalk with lotus flower of the *Anantaśayana* myth. The vegetal nature of the axis/pillar seems to have been preserved in the collective memory and could be responsible for the – *prima facie* – astonishing fact that the Mandara, in Khmer art, can appear as a tree with trunk and branches (Bhattacharya 1957, Fig. 3, Banteay Samre, east *gopura*) and that Brahmā, the four-headed god – out of which normally three are depicted – can be replaced by three lotus buds (Fig. 47). Finally, coming back to our comparison of the Prasat Preah Vihear specimen with that of the Musée Guimet (Figs. 65 and 67) we could argue that Indra who is, according to the Mahābhārata, entitled to press down and stabilize the Mandara with a tool (*yantreṇa;* see Rüping 1970, p. 9), is here replaced by Brahmā, whose traditional place is on the peak of the Meru.

Both myths, more concretely, are connected through the idea of creation. The *Anantaśayana* myth discusses cosmic creation. The myth of the churning of the milk ocean (*amṛtamanthana* or *samudramanthana*) reports the creation of valuable subjects and objects by the cooperation of gods and demons.

The churning myth was of the utmost importance in India, documented by numerous accounts in both epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, by the Harivaṃśa and by the Mahāpurāṇas. Studied through the method of textual history, it can easily be shown that the churning tradition becomes more and more elaborate, culminating in the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa that unfolds the narrative in no less than seven chapters, namely 6–12 in book VIII (Rüping 1970).

The main topics of the story in its elaborate form are Śiva's swallowing of the Kālakūta/Hālāhala poison, Viṣṇu's metamorphosis into a beautiful woman (*Mohinī*) in order to seduce the demons and to distract them from the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*), and the growing number of treasures 'churned into being' by the two parties, gods and demons.

The rare circumstance that gods and demons, as the Bhāgavata puts it, have to make friends for their great task (*devāsurāḥ kṛtasauhṛdāḥ,* Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,6,32), is important. Viṣṇu participates in the event by means of his incarnation as a tortoise (*kūrmāvatāra*) that supports the churning stick. He enters gods, demons and the *nāga* Vāsuki, the churning rope, with additional vigour and, sitting on top of the Mandara mountain, the churning rod, presses it down, thousand-armed, like another mountain (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,7,11–12). The demons churn on the side of the serpent's heads, and the gods, avoiding the animal's poison, do their job at Vāsuki's tail.

An enumeration of the churning products in the Bhāgavata is sufficient to demonstrate the enormous importance of the churning procedure. Even Lakṣmī, embodiment of good fortune and affluence, is created in the course of the violent efforts made by gods and demons.

The products are: the Hālāhala poison, swallowed by Śiva, the wish-granting cow Kāmadhenu, the sun's horse Uccaiḥśravas, Indra's elephant Airāvata, Viṣṇu's breast jewel Kaustubha, the wish-granting tree Pārijāta,[3]

[3] In the Kṛṣṇa legend the tree, belonging to Indra's paradise, was stolen by Kṛṣṇa for his wife Satyabhāmā (Viṣṇu-Purāṇa V,30).

the Apsarases, courtesans of the gods, Ramā (= Śrī), who is bathed by the elephants of the four cardinal directions[4] and endowed with a pair of earrings by the *nāgas*.[5] Finally Vāruṇī, the goddess of wine, emerges and Dhanvantari, a partial incarnation of Viṣṇu and the seer of the Āyurveda, appears with a pot filled with the nectar of immortality.[6]

Corresponding to this account Kūrma, Dhanvantari and Mohinī are enumerated as numbers 11, 12 and 13 among the 22 incarnations of Viṣṇu in the list of Bhāgavata-Purāṇa I,3.

The importance of the churning myth in the Khmer empire cannot be over-emphasized. It is present in many temples in and outside Angkor including the huge temple of Angkor Wat – here represented by an imposing bas-relief in the Great Gallery – and by an imitation of that relief in the inner gallery of the Buddhist (!) Bayon.

In order to elaborate upon the indigenous hand of the Khmer artists, it is useful to continue with at least one *amṛtamanthana* sculpture from India. The panel from Gwalior (ca. 6th/7th century AD; Fig. 68)[7] might have functioned as a niche decor. It reduces the main scene to a minimum. Only Viṣṇu is shown churning on the side of the gods and a demon on the other side. Beneath Kūrma the elephant Airāvata and Dhanvantari with the nectar pot can be seen. On top of the scaly, pillar-like Mandara, encircled by Vāsuki, sits Indra on Airāvata, flanked by a frieze of gods who are headed by the sun and the moon on the left wing.

The monumental *amṛtamanthana* scene in the Great Gallery of Angkor Wat has often been discussed (see e.g. Poncar/Maxwell 2006, pp. 16–31, with plates) and does not require an additional *ekphrasis*. In contrast to all *Indian* specimens, however, Viṣṇu in front of the Mandara acts *between* gods and demons; additionally we find Hanumān as an assistant of the gods at the tail

[4] *abhiṣiṣicur devīṃ Śriyaṃ padma-karāṃ satīṃ dig-ibhāḥ pūrṇa-kalaśaiḥ* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,8,14).

[5] *nāgāś ca kuṇḍale* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,8,16); most probably *sarpa-kuṇḍalas* (serpent earrings).

[6] *amṛtāpūrṇa-kalaśaṃ bibhrad …Viṣṇor aṃśāṃśa-sambhavaḥ* // 34 // *dhanvantarir iti khyāta āyurveda-dṛś …* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,8,34f).

[7] The appearance of Airāvata twice seems to presuppose the mythic version of the Padma-Purāṇa (Rüping 1970, p. 31). Earlier churning images derive from Pawaya (Williams 1982, Pl. 51, and from Bādāmī III, dated 578 (Banerji 1928, Pl. XI d).

of Vāsuki. No other persons on both sides can confidently be identified. On the side of the gods, in the centre, the four-headed deity cannot be Brahmā since Khmer reliefs depict him always with three heads in one row. Here, however, a fourth head sits on the three lower ones. On the opposing side no multi-headed and multi-armed demon can be identified. Rāvaṇa can be ruled out since he is, in Angkor as in India, ten-headed and twenty-armed.

As to the textual basis of the relief, I disagree with Maxwell that the Mahābhārata functioned as the most important reference (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 20). The Mahābhārata neither mentions Viṣṇu's somehow neutral position between the two churning parties nor does it mention Hanumān, a protagonist of the Rāmāyaṇa. So it remains rather doubtful whether the flying figure near the peak of the Mandara Mountain represents Indra (ibid., p. 27), who, according to the Mahābhārata, should press down and thus stabilize the mountain (see above).[8] Hence the assumption seems allowable that in the Khmer realm a regional version of the *amṛtamanthana* story – possibly linked with the Reamker – inspired the relevant pictorial scenes.

The depiction of *amṛtamanthana* in the inner gallery of the Bayon (Figs. 69–71) follows the tradition of the Prasat Preah Vihear and Guimet specimens: Viṣṇu, accompanied by sun and moon, embraces the mountain shaft with one arm and one leg (Fig. 69). On the other hand the Bayon follows the Angkor Wat version (cf. Poncar / Maxwell 2006, pp. 20–27, and Figs. 72f.). Hanumān supports the gods at Vāsuki's tail (Figs. 70 and 73), while a flying figure approaches the peak of the Mandara Mountain (Figs. 69 and 72). In distinction from the Angkor Wat relief, the scene takes place on a much smaller scale, and the churning parties are reversed. Again we meet Viṣṇu not only as a tortoise (*kūrmāvatara)* but also in anthropomorphic shape, now embracing the Mandara shaft with his left leg and one of his four arms (Figs. 69 and 72).[9]

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[8] The figure neither shows features of Indra nor of thousand-armed Viṣṇu who, according to the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, stood like another mountain above in the sky, after having seized the king of mountains with one hand like another mountain (*upary agendraṃ girirāḍ ivānya ākramya hastena sahasrabāhuḥ / tasthau divi …* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,7,12).

[9] In Chapter 9 I want to show that the *amṛtamanthana* cooperation of the *devas* and *asuras* was continued by the depiction of the *amṛtamanthana* war between *devas* and *asuras* on the western wing of the northern wall of the Great Gallery.

The heavily eroded lintel from Beng Mealea seems to keep the tradition of the Prasat Preah Vihear and the Guimet images (Fig. 74). The gods churn on the left side, Viṣṇu can be assumed to be at the shaft of the mountain, and Brahmā on a lotus seat crowns the mountain that is flanked by two seated gods, both surrounded by an oval mandorla, most probably the sun and the moon.

The popularity of the churning story is maintained in the International Airport of Bangkok where a large three-dimensional version embellishes the main hall. Viṣṇu, four-armed and wearing a tall pointed crown, dances on the peak of the Mandara Mountain (Fig. 75).

Finally we have to refer to the streets leading to the entrances of Angkor Thom and to the Preah Khan from the east where an allusion to the *amṛtamanthana* seems to be visualized. The railings, framing the access that crosses a broad moat, are shaped after serpent bodies that end in multi-headed fans (Figs. 76f.; Guimet 2008, Cat. 98). These fans represent the older type of the cobra canopy without Garuḍa. They are held by gods on the one side, by demons on the other side. If we develop further the association that is suggested by this enactment we seem to be entitled to interpret the moat as the milk ocean and the city of Angkor Thom as the central Mandara Mountain encircled by Vāsuki, in other words: as the axis or navel of the world.

According to the interpretation of Paul Mus (1937), based on inscriptional evidence, the *nāga*s here represent the rainbow that connects the human world with that of the gods.[10]

The National Museum in Phnom Penh exhibits a stone tortoise with a broad opening in its back side. The tortoise seems to represent the remnant of a three-dimensional rendering of the churning scene (Fig. 78).

[10] Mus assumes that the towers with four faces represent Avalokiteśvara gazing in all directions. He compares Avalokiteśvara with Brahmā who "is not a four-headed deity" (1937, p. 73). He continues: "The four faces of Brahmā are four instantaneous flashes of his manifestation, fixed simultaneously facing the four cardinal points" (ibid.). – According to Indian symbolic thinking Brahmā is a four-faced god since he exhaled with four mouths the four Vedas. Regarding Avalokiteśvara four faces are by no means a significant feature.

5. Akroteria and Antefixes

The *nāga* motif plays a paramount role in the architectural décor of the Khmer, particularly during the Angkor period. Technical terms traditionally used in western architecture often cannot be adapted one-by-one to oriental architecture, since the relevant architectural elements are different.

In the following chapter I use the term *akroterion* for all those elements that crown the different storeys of the superstructures of temples and *gopuras*. These elements might be square (*kūṭa* in Indian terms) or triangular etc. It is important that they are rather loosely placed on the different horizontal levels and are apt to fall down. In many cases they are now altogether missing and considerably change the contour and aesthetic impression of a tower.[1]

If we compare the towers of the Banteay Srei temple (Fig. 79) with those of Angkor Wat (Fig. 80) we notice an important change from a more square to a more roundish appearance. This variation has been achieved mainly by means of two measures: one is the multitude of offsets (risalits) that transform the square almost into a round circumference, and the other is the placing of triangular *akroteria* on every risalit corner, so that the different storeys, earlier clearly accentuated, almost conflate to form a linear rounded contour. The Angkor Wat tower storeys are divided by offsets into no less than nine planes (*navaratha*), each corner of which is topped by an *akroterion*, making up altogether thirty-two elements (Fig. 81).

The visual change is radical, and allows the question to be asked as to whether it is caused just by alterations that are rooted in the original features of Khmer sacred architecture, or whether the success of the north

[1] My *akroteria* include not only the *acrotères* (Guimet 2008, Cat. 213f.), but also the *amortissements d' angle* (Boisselier 1966, 183f.; Guimet 2008, Cat. 50) and the antéfixes along the edges of the tower storeys (Guimet 2008, Cat. 51) – in Indian terms they include all elements that constitute a *hāra* on the *vimāna* stories (Srinivasan 1964, p. 186).

Indian temple tower – the so-called *latina nāgara śikhara* – might have favoured this change, yet through using traditional methods.

The term *antefix* is applied by me to all those architectural elements – mostly *nāga* fans – that protrude from the corners of walls (Fig. 82), as well as from the vaults of galleries and from the *maṇḍapa*s (Figs. 83, 90). In contrast to the *akroteria* those antefixes are firmly embedded in the masonry and cannot just fall down. A loose specimen, firmly connected with masonry, is exhibited in the Museum of Battambang (Fig. 84).

There are still numerous unanswered questions about the history of the Khmer temple tower. Since *akroteria* are often lost[2] or – in the case of brick structures – have crumbled to pieces and vanished – we cannot definitely say when square miniature shrines that were located on the corners of the stories of superstructures – in Indian terms *karṇakūta*s – arose and when precisely they disappeared. The same question arises for the placement of triangular *akroteria* on the corners and offsets. The best witnesses to the two types are, no doubt, the Banteay Srei for the square shrine (Fig. 79; see also Jacques / Held 1997, pp. 54 and 58), and Angkor Wat for the shield-like type on a triangular basis (Fig. 81). They give a reason for the assumption that the more or less square structure, like all three *vimānas* of the Banteay Srei, preferred the *karṇakūṭa* type (see *Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* 2006, Kat. Nr. 47; Guimet 2008, Cat. 50), while the type with multi-faceted upper storeys – *sapta-* or *navaratha*, achieved by three or four offsets – favoured the triangular version. In that case temples like the Phnom Bakeng (around 900 AD; Jacques / Held 1997, p. 38) and both the Pre Rup (961 AD; Jacques / Held 1997, p. 43) and the Eastern Mebon (952 AD), almost contemporaneous with the Banteay Srei (967 AD), would have had triangular *akroteria*, if any. During the 10th century AD, it seems, the square variety was finally given up in favour of a type that Boisselier aptly defined as "un retrait plus faible des étages plux nombreux et la multiplication des antéfixes – [called *akroteria* by us] – donnent à la toiture une silhouette en ogive caractéristique" (1966, p. 69).

[2] The *akroteria* of the Banteay Srei have mostly been relocated by Henri Marchal (Guimet 2008, p. 180); see Parmentier 1926, Pls. 43, 47, 68f.

Even if often eroded, the small replicas of temples make it possible to identify the architectural features that distinguish the structures which they embellish: including plinth, doors, pilasters, lintels, *toraṇa*s, and *karṇakūṭa*s.[3] The triangular *akroteria* depict a large variety of images, only a selection of which can be identified since the details are often eroded or damaged. Boisselier (1966, p. 184) enumerates "gardiens, *ṛṣi*, *deva* sur *vāhana*, *devatā*".[4] In the vicinity of the twelve towers called Prasat Suor Prat (end of 12th century AD), in the heart of Angkor Thom (Figs. 85f.), several triangular *akroteria* that have fallen down lie on the bare ground (Figs. 87–89). Among other objects we find a specimen that depicts a warrior with sword and staff (Fig. 87), Yama on a three-headed buffalo (Fig. 88), and a *nāga* fan consisting of a canopy of seven hoods (*sapta-phaṇa-nāga,* Fig. 89).

The overwhelming importance of the latter variety can be deduced from a view of the Banteay Srei *maṇḍapa* (Fig. 90) and also by a glance at the upper gallery of Angkor Wat (Fig. 91). This brings us back to the *antefixes* that we left after providing a short definition (see above). Structurally similar to the corner antefixes of the Banteay Srei etc. (Figs. 82, 90) – although much more elaborate – are the *nāga*-cum-*Garuḍa* antefixes that can be found, among other things, beneath the faces of the face towers of the Bayon. Garuḍa himself, with raised arms, forms the central impressive part of the ensemble. He is crowned with two sets of five-hooded *nāga*s that frame for their part five tiny lion protomes. Between the legs of Garuḍa another five-hooded *nāga* can be seen (Figs. 92f.; see also Stern 1965, Fig. 178). The core of the motif, *nāga*-cum-*Garuḍa*, can be compared with a development that we studied in Chapter 3, i.e. the addition of a central Garuḍa to the *nāga* fan in the Angkor Thom period.

In connection with *toraṇas* (frontons) the use of the term *antefix*[5] does not seem to be appropriate. Banteay Srei shows at least two types of gable.

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[3] It should be kept in mind that the Indian *karṇakūṭas* represent only a reduced version of the *ekatala-vimāna*: *adhiṣṭhāna, pāda, [prastara, grīvā], śikhara, stūpī.* i.e. *caturaṅga instead of ṣaḍaṅga.*

[4] *Devī, not devatā*, is the female equivalent of *deva. "Appuyés sur une massue"* (loc. cit.) are not *ṛṣi*s, but guardsmen and warriors.

[5] Called – a bit ponderously – *terminaisons* by Boisselier 1966, p. 168. Guimet 2008, Cat. 38 says *extrémité de fronton.*

The first one still reminds of wooden architecture (Fig. 94). The slanting planks run into volutes that form an integral part of the gables (*udgama*). The second one is a variety of the well-known *makara-toraṇa* with *nāga*s (Fig. 95) *or yakṣa*s (Fig. 96). In both cases the protruding elements are genuine parts of the *toraṇa* frame itself.

I will close this chapter with a view of the *wild* complex of Ta Prohm. The towers of the temple are practically identical with those of Angkor Wat (Fig. 97), but they create a more stepped impression owing to the lost *akroteria* several of which can still be found on the ground (Fig. 98).

Considering as a whole the *nāga* fans of railings, *nāga*s decorating *akroteria* or *antefixes* – including the *nāga*-cum-*Garuḍa* beneath the face towers – the serpent turns out to be by far the most frequent, and also the most attractive – the Apsarasas may forgive me – embellishment of Khmer architecture.

6. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and other *avatāra*s

Besides episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa's life also seems to have fascinated the Khmer people. On the other hand it is surprising that Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, is much less present in the Angkor period although he is an embodiment of Śeṣa who, together with other *nāga*s, plays such a prominent role in the Khmer imagery.[1]

The Balarāma pictorial tradition in India and Nepal since the Kuṣāṇa period – a human figure supported by a whole multi-headed cobra or embellished by multiple cobra heads – could have inspired different images of an anthropomorphic *nāga* type, but surprisingly it did not.

The moment when Balarāma gives up his human existence is impressively described in the Viṣṇu-Purāna. A great serpent [Śeṣa] comes out of his mouth and enters the ocean, worshipped by the highest snakes.[2]

Kṛṣṇa, however, is omnipresent, even in a Buddhist ambiente. The narrative that became a favourite and was turned into many bas-reliefs is the episode of uplifting the Govardhana Mountain (*govardhana-dharaṇa*).[3] This is a subject with a background of hostility towards the worship of Indra. It is

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[1] In the earlier period, Phnom Da (Dupont 1955, Pls. V B, VI A, VII A), Balarāma is portrayed together with Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. There is good reason to assume that the so called Paraśurāma (Dupont 1955, Pl. I B) is in reality an image of Balarāma (Gail 2000b).

[2] Viṣṇupurāṇa V,37,49–51. – Danielle Feller directed my attention to a passage of the Mahābhārata, where Balarāma's departure from his human form is recounted in a similar way: Rāma's body is left by a white *nāga* that becomes 1000–headed and huge as a mountain. The ocean welcomes it together with the great *nāga*s (Karkoṭaka, Vāsuki, Takṣaka etc.) and *king* Varuṇa himself (Mahābhārata XVI,5,12–15). – The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, often taking up motifs from the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, does not mention this detail, but expresses his death in a Vedāntic manner: Balarāma joins his *ātman* with the universal soul: *tatyāja lokaṃ mānuṣyaṃ saṃyojyātmānam ātmani* (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa XI,30,26b).

[3] The oldest specimen seems to be the majestic sculpture from Ta Keo, 6th(?)–7th cent. AD (*Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer,* 1997, Cat. 13), preserved in the National Museum Phnom Penh.

also important as an icon of protection and could thus function as a symbol of royal duties. As Kṛṣṇa sheltered the villagers of Brindaban from Indra's torrents, so also the king is asked to shelter his subjects from any dangers.

With reference to Jacques / Freeman (2003 p. 212 and 214) Zsuzsanna Renner pointed my attention to the correct identification of a beautiful relief on the eastern pediment of the northern store house (see Chapter 2, fn. 5) of Banteay Srei (Figs. 100–101). Depicted is an event of the Mahābhārata (MBh), *in extenso* narrated in the Ādiparvan (I) 214–219: Agni, the god of fire, wants to swallow the Kāṇḍhava forest including all animals. He is barred in doing so by Indra who pours masses of water, assisted by Takṣaka and other multi-headed[4] *nāga*s as well as by elephants.

The image is structured rather symmetrically and, I think, synoptically. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna[5] are shown in the centre as well as in the corners of the relief, this time on horse-drawn chariots. From Agni and Varuṇa they have received weapons, from Arjuna bow and arrows, from Kṛṣṇa disc and club (MBh I, 216). They are going to fight in favour of Agni (and, one could add, in turn against Indra who is also Kṛṣṇa's opponent in the Govardhana-dharaṇa event). Among the animals are four elephants, deer, monkeys and birds which, above seven treetops, try to escape the conflagration (that is, however, not indicated by any flames).

The two most significant markers proving that the image depicts the Khāṇḍava conflagration are:

1. Arjuna (left) and Kṛṣṇa (right) stand on their chariots on both sides of the forest,[6]
2. the rain of arrows by which Arjuna prevented Indra's shower.[7]

Indra himself, in the apex of the pediment, kneels, wielding his vajra, on three elephant heads (Airāvata). The *nāga* Takṣaka is prominently exhibited with three heads in front of the double 'fence' of arrows.

[4] *Bahuśīrṣāḥ* (Ādiparvan, App. I, No. 118, lines 113–118). This attribute conforms to the general appearance of the *nāgas* in South Asian and Southeast Asian art.

[5] Jacques erroneously mentions Balarāma instead of Arjuna (Jacques / Freeman 1999, p. 212).

[6] *tau rathābhyāṃ nara-vyāghrau dāvasyobhayataḥ sthitau*, MBh I,217,1a.

[7] *tasyābhivarṣato vāri Pāṇḍavaḥ pratyavārayat / śaravarṣeṇa* … MBh I,218,1.

A lintel from Kompong Thom province, preserved in the National Museum of Phnom Penh (Groslier 1931, Pl. XXXVI.3) and dated in the 11th century AD, depicts a boy who seems to dance on two serpents. With his hands he pushes aside three *nāga* heads on his left and on his right side, while the bodies of the serpents are swallowed by monsters. The only narrative that comes to my mind in connection with a boy dancing on a serpent is Kṛṣṇa Kāliyadamana (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa X,16). The six *nāga* heads could probably be interpreted as belonging to one animal, the *nāga* Kāliya, whose heads are divided for the sake of symmetry.

If this interpretation is valid, a similar relief from a pilaster in Banteay Samre (Fig. 102) could also refer to the Kāliyadamana story, illustrating a boy who dances and fights serpents,[8] though this is not in accordance with the text.

One more exploit of Kṛṣṇa depicted on a pilaster of Banteay Samre is the defeat of the horse demon Keśin (Fig. 103; Bhāgavata-Purāṇa X,37).

As mentioned above, the potential that was apparent in Balarāma, embodiment of the great *nāga* Śeṣa, remained unexploited in Khmer art. An early figure of Balarāma from Phnom Da (6th century AD; Dupont 1955, Pls. V B, VI A, VII A) shows him, it is true, with his traditional plough but without a *nāga* hood, a conventional phenomenon in Indian art beginning from Kuṣāṇa art at Mathurā (Vogel 1930, p. 48, Pl. XLI a,b,c).[9] The Balarāma iconography of the Khmer is at first glance surprising. The only explanation that comes to my mind is that the identification of Balarāma with Ananta /Śeṣa either did not reach the Khmer realm or, rather, was deliberately not accepted by them.

Rāmacandra was a very popular figure in the whole of South Asia, including Cambodia. The Angkor Wat temple lavishly depicts the battle of Laṅkā on the northern wing of the western side of the Great Gallery (Roveda 2002, pp. 77–87). On a pediment of the southwest pavilion of the second enclosure (ibid., p. 268), the author seems to have discovered an event that proved to be very dangerous for Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa during this

[8] According to the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa Kāliya was surrounded by other very poisonous snakes: *vṛto mahāviṣaiś cānyair uragair…* (Viṣṇu-Purāṇa V,7,14b).

[9] Vogel misunderstands the two Balarāmas (Pl. XLI a,b,c) as *nāgas;* Pl. XLI d, however, is in fact a *nāga.*

battle. Indrajit had fettered the two heroes using arrows that were actually *nāga*s in disguise. When, however, Garuḍa, their archenemy, appeared on the battlefield, the arrow *nāga*s immediately flew away (Roveda 2002, p. 206; Fig. 205).[10]

In contrast to Indian tradition the boar *avatāra* (Varāha) was not really accepted by the Khmer. His rare sculptures are free from any embellishing paraphernalia, which can be seen in India, particularly a *nāga* or a *nāga* couple (Giteau 1956). In the boar myth the *nāga*s represent the primeval waters, from the bottom of which Viṣṇu's *avatāra* saves the earth (Gail 1977).

One significant *nāga* story in India, the rescue of the lord of elephants (*gajendramokṣaṇa*), has never, it seems, been depicted in the Khmer realm.[11] The beautiful image from Deogarh, Madhyapradesh, shows that Viṣṇu, who had hurled his *cakra* against the breast of the *nāga*, is propitiated by the serpent (and his wife), and is willing to release the elephant from the fetters of his coils (Fig. 135).[12]

Considering the ten classical *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu, we note that Matsya, Paraśurāma and Buddha do not appear in Khmer art at all. Varāha and Narasinha are apparent more in epigraphy than in imagery (Bhattacharya 1961, pp. 115f.). Trivikrama (never Vāmana) plays a rather modest role (a panel from the Baphuon is presented by K. Bhattachara 1961, Pl. XX). Only Kūrma (figuring in the *amṛtamanthana* event; see Chapter 4), Rāmacandra, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were more or less popular. A frieze of all ten *avatāras*, comparable to the Khmer *navagraha* lintels – or following Indian *avatāra* lintels – is hitherto unknown in Khmer art.

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[10] Rāmāyaṇa VI,40,37: …. *nāgās te vipradudruvuḥ / yais tau sat-puruṣau baddhau śarabhūtair mahābalau* //.

[11] Banerjea (1974, pp. 426f.) calls this an *incarnatory form* of Viṣṇu. If Viṣṇu Garuḍāsana with the *cakra* in his upper right hand can be interpreted as an elliptical version of the Gajendramokṣaṇa image (Hofmann 1999, pp. 10–12), the Garuḍavāhana in the Prasat Kravan temple, Angkor, could allude to the Gajendramokṣaṇa story (Bhattachara 1961, Pl. XVII).

[12] According to the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa it is a crocodile (*grāha*) that catches the elephant by his feet (*grāho balīyāṃś caraṇe ruśā 'grahīt,* Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII, 2, 27). A Nepalese painting that corresponds to this version of the story is published by Slusser (1982, Pl. 408).

7. The Buddha and the *nāga* Mucilinda

"Now at that time a great cloud appeared out of season, and for seven days it was cloudy weather attended with rain and a cold wind. Then Muchilinda [fn. 4: Pāli Muchalinda], the serpent king, issued from his abode, and enveloping the body of the Blessed One seven times with his coils, kept his large hood spread over the master's head, thinking to himself: 'May no cold touch the Blessed One, may no heat touch the Blessed One, may no gnats, flies or creeping things, no wind or heat come near the Blessed One.'" (Vogel 1926, p. 102)

With slight variations, particularly regarding the interval between the enlightenment and this event, the pertinent Buddhist texts report the story with Mucilinda.

True to the textual tradition, only two Gandhara specimens depict the Buddha enveloped by the coils of the serpent (Fig. 104). In Amaravati the Buddha was placed on the coils of the *nāga*, while his body was sheltered by the hoods of the animal (Dupont 1959, p. 252f.) This pictorial version travelled to Laṅkā. And it is more than probable that the story as well as the image bring together the Buddha with a pre-existing *nāga* cult (ibid., p. 251). One could add: with an inclusivistic intention. The supposed evidence for a particular serpent cult, however, was not confined to the South Asian world. On the contrary, in Southeast Asia the Buddha seated on Mucilinda gained in popularity. From Laṅkā the image travelled via Dvāravatī (Dupont 1959; Fig. 105) to Cambodia (Fig. 106) not later than 10th century AD, where it left traces of unsurpassed significance.[1]

The overall importance of that icon was finally established by a Japanese excavation in the Banteay Kdei complex. No less than 274 specimens of the Mucilinda Buddha from various periods were found, some 75 of

[1] For Mucilinda Buddhas in Nepal see Slusser 1982, Pls. 455–457.

which are now on display in the Sihanouk Museum in Angkor (Ishizawa / Marui 2002; Figs.109–111). In the National Museum of Bangkok an impressive array of Mucilinda Buddhas is exhibited that bears witness to the importance of the icon in areas of Thailand which during the Angkor period belonged to the Khmer empire (Fig. 107). The mere number of examples of this type of Buddha signals that it was the standard image of the Buddha and seems to largely exclude an esoteric interpretation that we will discuss below.

The Mucilinda Buddha reveals no small number of variations, beginning with his headdress, the details of his face, garments and ornaments, and last but not least the *nāga* seat. A general tendency can be observed to equip his head with a diadem and crown in combination with ornaments embellishing his neck and arms (Guimet 2008, Cat. 71; Fig. 106). These paraphernalia turn the Buddha into a universal king, in Indian terms into a *cakravartin*.[2]

The earlier Mucilinda Buddha in the Musée Guimet (Baphuon style, 11th century AD; Guimet 2008, Cat. 57; Fig. 108) is a superb work of art that exhibits all the sculptural merits that evoked and evoke admiration all over the world.[3] A cap of curls combined with a conical *uṣṇīṣa* crown a juvenile and serene face, the details of which are enhanced by fine incisions. The upper body appears almost naked but the section between breast and left arm leaves no doubt that a fine robe is intended. The hem of the lower garment (*antaravāsaka*) makes an elegant loop below the navel. The hands are put together in *dhyānamudrā* and rest on his *vīrāsana* legs. Three layers of scaly coils form the seat of the Buddha. Only fragments of the (seven) cobra hoods are left that formed a fan-like structure, each hood composed of a *torus* framed by a flat band.[4]

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[2] The crowned Buddha has been exhaustively studied by Bautze-Picron (2010). The earliest specimens appear "between the fifth and sixth centuries in eastern Afghanistan and north Pakistan before finding its way towards Kashmir in the early part of the eights century" (ibid., p. 1).

[3] Enlightening remarks regarding the historical place of that outstanding sculpture and its individual characteristics are presented by Dupont (1950, pp. 54–57, Fig. 11) and by Baptiste (Guimet 2008, Cat. 57).

[4] The similarity of these hoods to *nāga* fans at the end of railings is documented by a fan that now leans against the southern wall of the Banteay Kdei complex (photo in the possession of the author).

A close relative of this image can be found among the excavated Buddhas of the Banteay Kdei compound, now exhibited in the Sihanouk Museum, Siem Reap (Figs. 109f.; see Ihizawa / Marui 2002). Yet the sheltering hoods of the serpent and the arms of the Buddha are completely lost. Nevertheless, the image keeps its spiritual dignity.

In the Angkor period we meet more often the embellished type of Mucilinda Buddha. Guimet 2008, Cat. 71, is closely related to our Fig. 106 from Bangkok. In both cases any reference to the robe (*saṃghātī*) seems to have been omitted in favour of ornaments (*hāra, keyūra, valaya*). The squarish face is framed by a conical crown, tiara (*mukuṭa*) and heavy eardrops (*kuṇḍala*), the legs are adorned with anklets (*nūpura*). Now it is more majestic grandeur than spiritual dignity that radiates from the image of the Buddha.[5]

A final glance should be given to a bulky statue that also derives from the hoard of figures found in the Banteay Kdei area (Fig. 111). According to the conventions of the later Bayon style, the crown is abandoned. More important, however, seems to be the strip of the upper garment that falls over the left breast. It strongly reminds us of a comparable mode of wearing the robe in the Polonnaruwa period (12th century AD) in Laṅkā (Fig. 112).[6]

The meaning of the Mucilinda Buddha most probably surpasses the mere representation of an historical event in the life of the Buddha. We know that such an image was placed in the cellar of the Bayon temple (*Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* 2006, p. 170, Abb. 2). At the beginning of the great stela inscription of the Preah Khan temple the Buddha is, according to Mahāyāna ideas, invoked as *dharma-kāya-sambhoga-kāya-nirmiti-vapur*[7] *bhagavān vibhaktaḥ* (Cœdès 1942, pp. 271, 283).

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[5] Dupont (1950, pp. 48f.) thinks that the 11th century is marked by a coexistence of the type without crown (Fig. 108) and that *avec diadème et mukuṭa*. The Buddha is *paré* with an embellished body, however, this clearly represents a later phase of the Mucilinda Buddha (Fig. 106 and Guimet 2008, Cat. 71).

[6] This same strip of the robe can be seen on a Mucilinda Buddha in the late Angkor Wat style, a richly decorated bronze (*Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* 2006, Kat. Nr. 63).

[7] Normally called *nirmāṇa-kāya.*

In contrast to Wibke Lobo I do not think that the Buddha on the snake throne was invented as the embodiment of the primordially existing Buddha principle.[8]

Instead I believe that the Mucilinda Buddha reached Cambodia prior to the Mahāyānistic understanding of his nature, and that the latter interpretation does concern all three aspects of his "divided" (*vibhakta*) body. Moreover, the introductory verses of the relevant inscription end with *Buddhāya bhūta-śaraṇāya namo stu tasmai* – "reverence shall be to the Buddha who is the shelter of all beings" –, thus *verbatim* referring to the formula that from old Buddhist times approved the access of an applicant to the Buddhist community: *Buddhaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dharmaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi, saṅghaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

This same *triad of confession* is symbolized in the Cambodian pictorial triad with the Buddha in the centre, Prajñāpāramitā to his left, and Avalokiteśvara to his right side (Fig. 113), Prajñāpāramitā representing the *dharma*, and Avalokiteśvara most probably epitomizing the Buddhist community.

Jayavarman VII identified Prajñāpāramitā with his mother, whose apotheosis was illustrated in the Ta Prohm temple. He further identified his father Dharaṇīndravarman II with Avalokiteśvara, worshipped in the Preah Khan temple.[9]

The Buddhism professed by Jayavarman VII included respect towards the Hindu tradition of his people, impressively documented by the image galleries in the Bayon as well as by the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava wings of the Preah Khan complex. So it will be no surprise at all that the Mucilinda Buddha not only represents the evolved understanding of the nature of the Buddha but also pays homage to the older Theravāda heritage among the Khmer.

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[8] Cf. *Angkor – Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas* (2006, p. 170): "…die Verkörperung des von allem Anfang an existierenden Buddhaprinzips…". "Für ihn wurde ein Bildnis gefunden, das von einer bemerkenswerten schöpferischen Kraft zeugt: der Buddha auf dem Schlangenthron."

[9] The Preah Khan stela clearly says that the main image of that temple was a portrait of him (*pitṛmūrti;* Cœdès 1942, p. 275). This inscription supports the thesis that the magnificent faces of Angkor Thom ambiguously (*śleṣavat*) refer to both Avalokiteśvara (with third eye) and to Dharaṇīndravarman II (with a royal, manufactured crown; see Gail 2012).

8. Neak Pean, Terraces, Royal Bath

Neak Pean

The Neak Pean has been exhaustively described. So we can confine ourselves to basic features and our context. This sanctuary is unique among all Khmer structures. One important fact to note is its former location on an island (350 × 350 m) in an artificial lake (*baray*) that was affiliated to the Preah Khan (Stern 1965, pp. 79–82, Figs. 123–133; Glaize 1993, Pl. XXX).

The function of the sacred site is clearly determined in the valuable Preah Khan stela inscription. By way of purification, the site should help people to get rid of the burden of sins and to traverse the ocean of existence (Cœdès 1942, pp. 257f.; Glaize 1993, p. 212). More than any other temple it is a water monument (Fig. 114). Water ran out of the central basin (70×70 m) via four gargoyles on the four cardinal sides.[1] They were protected (and still are) by small chapels, where the pilgrims could carry out their religious duties such as sipping water, ablutions etc. The general outlay of this ensemble was convincingly interpreted as a replica of the mythical Anavatapta / Anotattā Lake on the Himālaya, the source of the main four rivers on earth.[2] The chapels covering the spouts are full of Avalokiteśvara images, the west chapel exhibits no less than 51 specimens. The southern face of that chapel also shows the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha together with worshippers (Stern 1965, Fig. 131). This interpretation seems to be valid even if the master is not resting on the lion's side, i.e. the right side of his

[1] Each spout is different: a human head in the east, a lion in the south, a horse in the west, an elephant head in the north. The reasons for this choice and distribution are uncertain.

[2] Glaize 1993, pp. 212f. – See also Kirfel 1920, p. 184.

body (Fig. 115). The eastern chapel is distinguished by a square tower, again embellished with Avalokiteśvara images (Fig. 116).

The central temple (Fig. 117) stands on a seven-stepped base crowned by a lotus platform. The sanctuary is open towards the east. The blind doors on the other three sides are embellished with figures of Avalokiteśvara in a protecting attitude (Fig. 118).[3] The pediments above the four doors depict four major events in the Buddha's life: the great departure in the west (Stern 1965, Fig. 123), the cutting of the hair in the north, and the meditating Buddha in the east. The fourth and southern image is completely obliterated.

One conspicuous feature is two *nāga*s that encircle the base of the temple (Fig. 117). Their tails are entwined in the west, and they raise their seven-hooded heads from both sides near the central east. Their canopies are by all means comparable to those fans that decorate the ends of *nāga* railings (Chapter 3), or to those *nāga*s that protect the Buddha after enlightenment (Chapter 7). Although not self-evident, it is indeed possible that the two *nāgas* represent Nanda and Upananda, witnesses of the Buddha's biography (Glaize 1993, p. 213). The horse that was initially swimming in the waters between the *nāga* hoods has been interpreted as Balāha, a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, which appeared in order to rescue people (Stern 1965, Figs. 132f.; Glaize 1993, pp. 213–215).

There seems to be little doubt that the site of Neak Pean was dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. The chapels covering the spouts are full of Avalokiteśvara images, the west chapel exhibits, as remarked, no less than 51 specimens. Indications are the horse just mentioned, the three blind doors with his image, and the evident relation – in terms of sacred geography – with the Preah Khan temple, where the central cult-image was Avalokiteśvara shaped as Dharaṇīndravarman II, the father of Jayavarman VII (*pitṛmūrti;* Gail 2012).

We could well compare the attitude of the *nāga*s encircling the temple with the protection of the Buddha by Mucilinda. In the Kathmandu Valley it is quite common that not only ponds and baths but also temples and caityas are encompassed / protected by *nāga*s (Gail 1991, Taf. XLVIII.2).

[3] Unfortunately, the photo is blurred. – Undamaged specimens of this type of Avalokiteśvara exhibit clockwise *padma, akṣamālā, pustaka, kamaṇḍalu* (Stern 1965, Fig. 50; here only the *kamaṇḍalu* is flaked; yet it can be safely conjectured from Fig. 113 below).

The Terraces

The Terrace of the Elephants and the Terrace of the Leper King, built under Jayavarman VII (Stern 1965, pp. 165f., Figs. 179–181; Glaize 1993, pp. 133–137), demarcate the impressive eastern border of the royal area (Fig. 119). One can easily imagine that the king and his court used to observe festive events such as, for instance, ritual processions and military parades from this elevated position.

The larger, 300 m long terrace in the south, is named after the frieze of elephants, marching in profile, that decorates the southern wing of the facade. For our purposes, however, another motif that structures the long facade seems to be of greater importance. It is some sort of interaction between lions and *garuḍa*s. They alternate in the role of atlantes, standing upright with raised arms (Figs. 120f.). They also share a similar body structure and wings behind their raised arms. All these features assimilate the two different species very closely. The characteristic difference is that Garuḍa keeps a multi-headed *nāga* between his legs and two additional *nāga*s outside his legs, whose tail-ends he holds in his upraised hands.

The iconographic assimilation of lions and *garuḍa*s clearly indicates that the king of the birds disposes of the same royal dignity as the king of the beasts.

Archaeological investigation revealed, behind the facade of the Terrace of the Leper King, traces of an earlier facade that for some reason was blocked up and replaced by a new outer wall. The old one has now been turned into a corridor that preserves some extraordinary pieces of sculpture, including *nāga*s. A fourteen-headed *nāga* (Fig. 122), five heads in an upper layer, nine in a lower one, represents, to my best knowledge, the maximum number of *nāga* heads that the Khmer realised.

A more vivid impression is conveyed by the corner *nāga*s, here twelve-headed with five heads in the upper row and seven in the lower one. In the lower register *nāgīs* in human form seem to flank the main figure (Fig. 123).

Royal Bath

The royal bath is a part of the royal area in the northeast (plan: Glaize 1993, Pl. X; cf. below Fig. 124).

Here, no doubt, the *nāga*s in their role as water spirits are at home. The best preserved part seems to be the southwest corner of the larger basin. The tank is framed by three elevated steps, the lower one decorated with aquatic animals, the upper one with humans of various types. The middle step is the world of the *nāga*s where the Khmer artist offers variations of this beautiful motif. In a repetitive way we see a mighty central zoomorphic *nāga* flanked by the human variety represented as *nāgī*s and *nāga*s (Figs. 125f.). One new feature seems to be the intertwined single *nāga* heads in the upper section of the panels.

The zoomorphic type of the *nāga*, particularly the seven-headed variety, is quite similar to those that we know from the railings (Chapter 3) and from the Mucilinda Buddha (Chapter 7). On the whole it seems to have been the most successful variety of *nāga*s.

9. The regents of the directions of space including zenith and nadir

The iconography of two series of deities, the *dikpāla*s and the *navagraha*s, has formed part of a controversial discussion to this day – at least where their presence in Khmer art is concerned. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya's theory, that the Khmer invented a mélange of both sets of deities, his *Neuf Deva,* where the first and the last pair of gods represent *navagraha*s (Sūrya – Candra; Rāhu – Ketu), and the five gods between them *dikpāla*s, can be neglected (Bhattacharya 1961, pp. 138–143). This idea, convincingly refuted already by Debala Mitra (1965, pp. 27–29), has been roaming through catalogues and books on Khmer art for decades.

While the set of *navagraha*s, mostly depicted on lintels as in India, no longer causes problems, there are still unsolved problems with the iconography of the regents of the directions of space (*dikpāla)*, who in India preferably appear on ceilings, on lintels as well as in particular wall niches of temples looking, more or less, in those directions that they represent as their guardians (Wessels-Mevissen 2001).

A prominent example of still existing uncertainties is a set of deities in the northwest pavilion of the Great Gallery in the Viṣṇu temple of Angkor Wat (1st half of 12th century), recently again analysed by Vittorio Roveda (2002, pp. 67–76). In close connection with this set the panel of the *war of the devas against the asuras*, depicted in the western wing of the northern gallery, should also be taken into consideration. The relief is 93.6 meters long and exhibits, most probably, the war between *deva*s and *asura*s after the churning of the milk ocean (Chapter 4).

When I had the opportunity of studying the matter on the site I found out that the best way to focus the problem is to look at those temples where the identity of the *dikpāla*s is a priori fixed by their directional position.

One good and well-preserved paradigm is the East Mebon, founded in the year 952 AD.

In Chapter 1 we have already had the opportunity to discover what is probably the earliest set of four *dikpāla*s with their characteristic iconographic features (Figs. 34–37). For our further studies it is necessary to keep in mind that the western lintel presents Varuṇa holding a noose and riding a goose (*haṃsa;* Fig. 36). In India this bird was replaced by a genuine water animal, the *makara*, between the 6th and 8th centuries AD. Kubera on the northern lintel is supported by two lions (Fig. 37).

Varuṇa's and Kubera's vehicles are *haṃsa* and *siṃha*. So this set of four *dikpāla*s[1] provides most useful information for our further investigations.

Let us refer now to the group of gods, aligned beneath a badly damaged Viṣṇu Śeṣaśayana in the north-western corner pavilion of Angkor Wat (Roveda 2002, p. 270 and Fig. 118).[2]

The eight *dikpāla*s from left to right are:

1. Nairṛta on a man (*nara*) with sword (*khaḍga*) in his right hand and a lotus bud in the left.[3]
2. Varuṇa, with a noose (*pāśa*) in his right hand, rides a goose (*haṃsa*).
3. Skanda sits on a peacock and wields a trident (*triśūla*) in his right hand.
4. Vāyu keeps a banner (*dhvaja*) in his right hand and rides a horse (Fig. 128).
5. Indra, holding a *vajra* in his right hand, sits on his elephant Airāvata.
6. Yama, holding his traditional staff (*daṇḍa*) in his right hand, a small noose (*pāśa*) in his left hand, rides a buffalo (Fig. 129).
7. Agni, who seems to have no emblems in his hands, sits on a rhinoceros (*khaḍga*).
8. Kubera, carrying a mace (*gadā*) in his right hand, a conch (*śaṅkha-nidhi*) in his left hand,[4] rides a lion (Fig. 130).

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1 In spite of the Rāmakerti that lets Varuṇa mount on a *nāga* (Bhattacharya 1961, p. 141), there is no evidence in Khmer art that Varuṇa ever possessed any other *vāhana* than the goose (*haṃsa*). Martini (1955) correctly identifies Kubera on the lion, but he is misled regarding the figure on *haṃsa*: it is not Brahmā, but Varuṇa holding a noose (*pāśa*). The Rāmakerti cannot function as a guide for the iconography of the *dikpālas* in the NW pavilion of Angkor Wat. According to the Rāmakerti Vaiśravaṇa (=Kubera) sits in a chariot (*vimāna*).

2 Devious is Manikka's identification of the *dikpāla*s with certain planets (1996, p. 189, Fig. 6.13). Her Ketu is Kubera (ibid.), her Varuṇa is Śeṣa (ibid., p. 174, Fig. 6.3).

3 Bhattacharya (1961, p. 139) sees a lotus, Roveda (2002, p. 136), a lotus bud.

4 Bhattacharya (1961, p. 139) sees *un lotus et un glaive*. The lotus can be excluded since the curved tip differs from a lotus bud. The identification of 'glaive' (*khaḍga*) is not very

Roveda's list (2002, p. 137) lets Kubera ride the horse, but we have seen that Kubera, according to the East Mebon, was supported by two lions. The rhinoceros (*khaḍga*) for Agni instead of the Indian ram (*meṣa*) is a Khmer speciality. Skanda (Kārttikeya) here almost undoubtedly replaces the Indian Īśāna, an aspect of Śiva. The reason for this replacement seems to be the high esteem rendered to Śiva by the Khmer, a reputation that would be damaged by his function as a *dikpāla*.[5]

Separately, on the left side of this relief, Sūrya and Candra are depicted (Fig. 131).[6] An analysis of the reliefs of the Great Gallery is not easy, since the crowded mass of persons, animals, chariots, weapons, standards etc., often overlapping, disguises the structure of the compositions. This observation holds particularly true of the war between the *deva*s and the *asura*s depicted on the western wing of the northern gallery that is 93.6 m long.

Attentive observation reveals the following principles of composition:

1. the gods fight from left to right, most of them shooting arrows, the *asuras* fight from right to left,
2. there is no frontline between gods and demons. *Deva*s, often standing on chariots (*vimāna*), penetrate deep into the army of the *asura*s, and *vice versa*,
3. major gods and demons are distinguished by a large number of umbrellas, standards, fans,
4. the major gods are Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the ten (!) *dikpāla*s; the gods wear the typical conical Khmer crowns, except for Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Yama. The *asura*s exhibit the demoniacal hairdress known from India, that is to say hair standing on end (*ūrdhvakeśa*).

Our analysis below should also be based on the hypothesis that the set of *dikpāla*s in the neighbouring corner pavilion corresponds iconographically with that of the Great Gallery.

probable if we compare the object with Nairṛta's sword (Fig. 128), and it is also contradicted by the majority of Indian testimonies (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, p. 104).

[5] In Bādāmī 3 Kārttikeya replaces Yama, in Ellora 16 (Kailāsa, *gopura*) he seems to replace Īśāna (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, pp. 24, 61).

[6] The lower figure is equipped with five umbrellas, the upper one with only three; furthermore, in contrast to the upper figure the lower one is worshipped by nine devotees. Therefore we should, in accordance with Roveda (2002, Fig. 119) – who, however, does not give any reasons for his identifications – take the lower figure as Sūrya and the upper one as Candra.

Following these principles we may discover, starting from the left side, Kubera in the first deity who is shooting arrows from a chariot drawn by a lion (Fig. 132).[7] The next conspicuous deity, honoured by seven umbrellas and moved by two horses, should be Vāyu, the wind god (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 66, left). Nairṛta, who triumphs on the shoulders of an athletic male, is impressive (*naravāhana*, ibid., p. 67 centre). No doubt prevails concerning Agni's identity, whose triangular chariot is drawn by a rhinoceros (*khaḍga;* ibid., p. 68 centre). Six-headed and twelve-armed Kārttikeya stands in some sort of howdah fastened on the back of his peacock. In accordance with the *dikpāla*s of the northwest corner pavilion he should be regarded as the *dikpāla* of the northeast direction, replacing in this function his father Śiva (ibid., p. 69). Indra, the king of gods, dances on his mighty elephant Airāvata, who wears a crown similar to his master and who exhibits four impressive tusks (ibid., p. 70 left). At a considerable distance, filled by minor combatants, Viṣṇu (with *cakra, śaṅkha, bāṇa, dhanus* and cylindrical crown) appears on the shoulders of his mount Garuḍa who fights two horses (ibid., p. 73).[8]

At some distance, again, his opponent Kālanemi, the general of the *asuras*, ten-faced and multi-armed (32) rushes from right to left on his horse-drawn chariot (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 74 right and 75 left). The dreadful character of Yama, god of death, is expressed by his hair standing on end (*ūrdhvakeśa*) comparable to the hairstyle of the *asuras*. He defends the gods with sword and shield, fighting from a chariot drawn by two buffalos (*mahiṣa*, ibid., p. 75). From a chariot drawn by two bulls (*vṛṣavāhana*) Śiva can be seen shooting arrows. His unique headdress looks like the three prongs of a *triśūla* (ibid., p. 76). As mentioned above in respect of the *dikpāla*s in the corner pavilion, Śiva's divine superiority seems to have motivated the Khmer to exempt him from the function of a guardian of space and to replace him by Skanda. Varuṇa is distinguished only

[7] This deity is missing in Poncar / Maxwell 2006. Maxwell (ibid., p. 64) mistakes Varuṇa for Brahmā, and Nairṛta for Kubera. In consequence he fails to detect Kubera *siṃhāsana* in the beginning of the panel.

[8] The appearance of Viṣṇu is quite similar to Rāma on the shoulders of Hanumān in the Rāmāyaṇa relief in the northern wing of the western gallery (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 99).

by his personal vehicle, the goose, while shooting arrows like most of his divine colleagues instead of exhibiting his usual emblem, the noose (*pāśa,* ibid., p. 78).[9]

The next prominent god is Sūrya, the sun god, underpinned by a large (sun) disk, who fights from a *biga* (Fig. 133). Does Sūrya play a special role in the vicinity of the eight *dikpāla*s? Within the set of ten *dikpāla*s developed in India, i.e. including zenith and nadir, Brahmā represents the zenith and Śeṣa / Ananta the nadir (see e.g. Agni-Purāṇa 56,29–30; Mallmann 1963, pp. 124f., 199). Yet there are traces in the Vedic literature of the idea that Sūrya was the guardian of the zenith (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, p. 6), a plausible idea since, visible to everybody, the sun stands at noon in the zenith of the sky. Regarding the set of *dikpāla*s, accompanied by Sūrya and Candra in the corner pavilion (Fig. 131), Bhattacharya nominates Sūrya "comme le gardien du zénith" (Bhattacharya 1961, p. 140).[10] The sun, I think, could be exchanged for Brahmā as the representative of the zenith since the sun on its daily course reaches Brahmā, whose court is located on mount Meru, the centre of the world, with its rays at noon.[11] Yet I would like to support this idea with an additional argument. While Brahmā has lost his importance in India (Gail 2008, pp. 92f.), he seems to have kept more respect in Cambodia, as is attested by several beautiful four-faced statues and by his important role in the process of creation, a subject that was celebrated by the Khmer in the Anantaśayana image of Viṣṇu including Brahmā (see Chapter 2). So it might be possible that the Khmer deliberately exempted Brahmā from the modest role of a guardian of space and replaced him in this function by Sūrya in the same way that they replaced Īśāna-Śiva by Skanda.

Our consideration might gain more weight when looking at one more god standing on a five-hooded *nāga* (*pañca-phaṇa-nāga;* Fig. 134). In

[9] Regarding the majority of *dikpāla*s I have to draw the attention of the reader towards Poncar / Maxwell 2006 since my own photos are not good enough to be worth to be included here.

[10] Poncar / Maxwell (2006, p. 64) wrongly make Sūrya "ruler of the south-west".

[11] *ṛte 'mara-girer meror upari brahmaṇaḥ sabhām / ye ye marīcayo 'rkasya prayānti brahmaṇaḥ sabhām* // Viṣṇu-Purāṇa II,8,19ab).

connection with Sūrya as the guardian of the zenith the identity of the god seems to be obvious: he is Śeṣa / Ananta representing the nadir.[12]

There is, moreover, a remarkable difference between the *dikpāla* Śeṣa and other *nāga*-drawn *asuras*. Śeṣa fights from left to right as do the other gods, standing on a *howdah* that is fastened on the back of a five-hooded *nāga*[13] (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 82). The *asuras* fight, from right to left, on *chariots* drawn by five-hooded *nāgas* (ibid., pp. 69 and 72).

Except for a few other anonymous deities the composition and identity of the gods seems to be clear.

The Khmer *dikpālas* are, on the one hand, conceived as a continuation of the Indian tradition, while on the other hand there are distinct differences. The Khmer have – more than the Indians – a tendency of stability in their iconography: elsewhere I have shown that Viṣṇu's important emblem, the earth, was replaced by the lotus in India (Gail 2009). The Khmer did not share this development and kept the earth in Viṣṇu's hand throughout their Hindu tradition.

In the same way they kept the goose (*haṃsa*) as Varuṇa's vehicle while Indian iconography replaced it by the crocodile *makara*. Agni's vehicle rhinoceros (*khaḍga*) is not known from India. The Indian *dikpāla*s Īśāna and Brahmā were replaced by Skanda and Sūrya, motivated, most probably, by reasons that have to do with hierarchy.

The above-mentioned iconographies of Viṣṇu and of Varuṇa offer the opportunity to think about the period of the immigration of pictorial features from India to the realm of the Khmer. As I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, the appropriation of the iconography of Viṣṇu must have happened between the 5th and the 7th century AD (Gail 2009). Since Varuṇa's *haṃsa* disappeared in favour of the *makara* at the latest

[12] In the courtyard of the Tripureśvara temple, Kathmandu, consecrated in the year 1820 AD, a figure can be found resembling Viṣṇu with *nāga* hood, called Nāgādhipati (= Śeṣa) in an inscription nearby (Gail 1988, pp. 15–18, Table XV. 4). Another impressive depiction of *nāga* Śeṣa alias Balarāma/Saṃkarṣaṇa can be found at the bottom (i.e. the nadir position!) of the Viśvarūpa image at Cāṅgu-Nārāyaṇa: a full anthropomorphic body is supported by a seven-hooded cobra (Fig. 136; cf. also Pal 1974, Fig. 113).

[13] Cf. Poncar / Maxwell (2006, p. 82). Further compare Skanda (PM 2006, p. 69), Indra (ibid., p. 70), and Varuṇa (ibid., p. 78).

in the 8th century AD, the 8th century AD is the latest period for the appearance of these iconographical features in Cambodia.

A further indication of the probability that major iconographical transfers from India to the Khmer territory took place in the 6th or at the latest in the 8th century AD, is the vehicle of Kubera (Figs. 132 and 137), the lion. There are only two instances known to me in India where we find Kubera riding a lion. Both of them can be seen on the ceiling of the Bādāmī cave temple III, where the *dikpāla*s with Kubera encircle once Brahmā and once Viṣṇu (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, p. 25, Figs. 10, 13). Bādāmī III is exactly dated in the 500th year of the Śaka era, i.e. 578 AD. All later Kuberas in India are equipped with other vehicles (ibid., pp. 103–105).

If my analysis is correct, the northwest gallery of Angkor Wat seems to be the only place throughout Khmer tradition where not only the eight regents of the directions of space are represented, as in the northwest pavilion. Two more regents are depicted, viz Sūrya (Fig. 133) for the zenith and Śeṣa (Fig. 134) for the nadir.

Relying on Cœdès (1911, pp. 181f.) Roveda (2002, pp. 67–76) and Poncar / Maxwell (2006, pp. 62–65) as well as other authors consider the Tārakāmaya war between *deva*s and *asura*s to be the narrative background of the panel. Admittedly Cœdès does not use the term Tārakāmaya, although he thinks of the "bataille qui se termine par la duel du dieu [Viṣṇu] avec l'Asura Kālanemi" (1911, p. 182). Yet the two textual references presented by him relate to two different events (unnoticed by the author).[14]

The Harivaṃśa (Hv, Cœdès 1911, p. 182, fn. 3: "Harivaṃśa, XLIV et suiv." = ed. crit. 32–38) refers to the so called Tārakāmaya war, while the Bhāgavata (VIII,10–11) refers to the war after the churning of the milk ocean that I will call the *amṛtamanthana* war. Comparing those two wars reveals a significant difference. The Hv enumerates four *lokapāla*s as warriors (Hv 34,19a), viz Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera (Hv 34,8–19), and adds, not under the heading of *lokapāla*s, Sūrya, Soma and Vāyu (Hv 34,20–30). The group of *four lokapāla*s and an even later list of eight *lokapāla*s[15] is

[14] Cœdès does not identify Agni on the Rhino (Pl. V.2). He misinterprets Nairṛta as Kubera (Pl. V.1) and Śeṣa as Varuṇa. The god riding on *haṃsa* is Varuṇa, not Brahmā.

[15] Called 'Manu-lokapālas' by Wessels-Mevissen 2001, p. 16 and passim: Soma, Agni, Arka (Sūrya), Anila (Vāyu), Indra, Vitta (Kubera), Appati (Varuṇa) and Yama (Manu 5.96).

definitely older than the list of the 'Purāṇic' eight, or rather ten *dikpāla*s: Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairṛta, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera, Īśāna, Brahmā and Śeṣa.

If we now compare the text of the Hv with our panel we have to note that the text lists only four *lokapāla*s while the panel, as we have seen, depicts ten. Sūrya, by way of contrast to what is said in the text, is not equipped with seven horses,[16] but with a *biga* (Fig. 133). Soma (Hv 34,23–26; 36,11–12) and Brahmā (Hv 35,58–67; 38,55–80) are missing in the panel. Śiva, fighting in the panel (Poncar / Maxwell 2006, p. 76) is not mentioned in the Hv.

Such discrepancies, however, do not appear between the panel and the *amṛtamanthana* war as told by the Bhāgavata. Kālanemi is here, too, the opponent of Viṣṇu who fights from the shoulders of Garuḍa (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa VIII,10,56).[17]

An additional argument in favour of the *amṛtamanthana* war is the *position* of the panel. At Angkor Wat the reliefs of the eastern gallery, northern wing, and the northern gallery, eastern wing, were carved only in the 16th century, i.e. some four hundred years later than the other six large panels (Roveda 2002, pp. 56–59). This means that the *deva-asura* war in question would originally have followed, anticlockwise, the *amṛtamanthana* event.[18]

Comparing the *dikpāla* frieze in the northwest pavilion and the divine army in the *amṛtamanthana* war an important difference should be pointed out. The *frieze* represents a peaceful line-up of the *dikpāla*s on the occasion of Viṣṇu's awakening after his cosmic sleep. Here all *dikpāla*s carry their individual emblems (Figs. 128–130). On the occasion of the *amṛtamanthana* war all *dikpāla*s, – except Yama, who fights with sword and shield – are warriors with bows and arrows, thus transformed into a homogeneous (military) formation.

[16] Hv 34,20a: *sūryaḥ saptāśva-yuktena rathena*.

[17] The regents of space are twice summarily mentioned as Vāyv-Agni-Varuṇādayaḥ (VIII,10,26b; 11,42a).

[18] On the clockwise or anticlockwise circumambulation in Angkor Wat see Brown (2004).

Epilogue

Three prominent religious figures who are distinguished by *nāga* canopies in India / Nepal do not exhibit their distinctive iconographic features in Angkor:

1. Viṣṇu's *avatāra* Balarāma is not portrayed with the *nāga* hood in Khmer art (see above Chapter 6).[1]
2. Amoghasiddhi, distinguished by *nāga* hoods and Garuḍa as his vehicle (*vāhana*) in Newar Buddhism (Gail 1991, Taf. II.1; Gutschow 1997, p. 224), is practically absent in Angkor (see Guimet 2008, Cat. 92).
3. The 23rd Jina Pārśvanātha has been wearing a *nāga* hood since the time of Kuṣāṇa art in India (2nd/3rd century AD). He cannot be expected in Angkor since Jainism seems to have never reached Cambodia.

The *nāgas*, patrons of water-supply (see Introduction), seem to have finally withdrawn their support from Angkor. Due to overpopulation – an estimated 750,000 as compared to ca. 30,000 inhabitants of European "large" cities in the Middle Ages – and probably also due to a change of climate, the subtle system of canals and tanks (*baray*) was no longer capable of supplying the masses.[2] These are relatively modern insights based on contemporaneous infrared photos of NASA that have brought to light many hitherto unknown temples and about 250 canals over an area measuring 25 by 45 km, i.e. more than 1,000 sq km. In the context of the decline of Angkor, deforestation – maybe comparable to that of Sicily – is also mentioned.

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[1] The most beautiful example of Balarāma-cum-*nāga* is the Viśvarūpa image from the Cāṅgunārāyaṇa Hill in the Kathmandu Valley (Fig. 136).

[2] A perfect water-management scheme was originally able to drain the fields during the monsoon and to considerably increase rice cultivation.

Other reasons for the wholesale abandonment of Angkor were possibly Thai invasions, the most serious perhaps in 1431 AD, and other reasons listed by Chandler 2008, Ch. 5: Cambodia after Angkor.

First the élite might have left the area for Phnom Penh, followed by the majority of the population. The water argument is enhanced by the comfortable situation of Phnom Penh at the confluence of the rivers Mekong and Tonle Sap. From the 15th century AD onwards Angkor became little by little prey to the jungle.

Why were the Khmer (artists) so incredibly fascinated by the motif of the multi-hooded *nāga*? Two answers are obvious. The decorative beauty of the multitude of cobra hoods, and the responsibility that the *nāgas* bore for the enormous demand for water (huge population, rice cultivation thrice a year).

A third answer could well be the *nāga* as *totem*, as a consciously produced image of a tribe (Khmer) or nation that functions as an object of collective representation (Durkheim 1915).

Here, however, begins the realm of sociologists.

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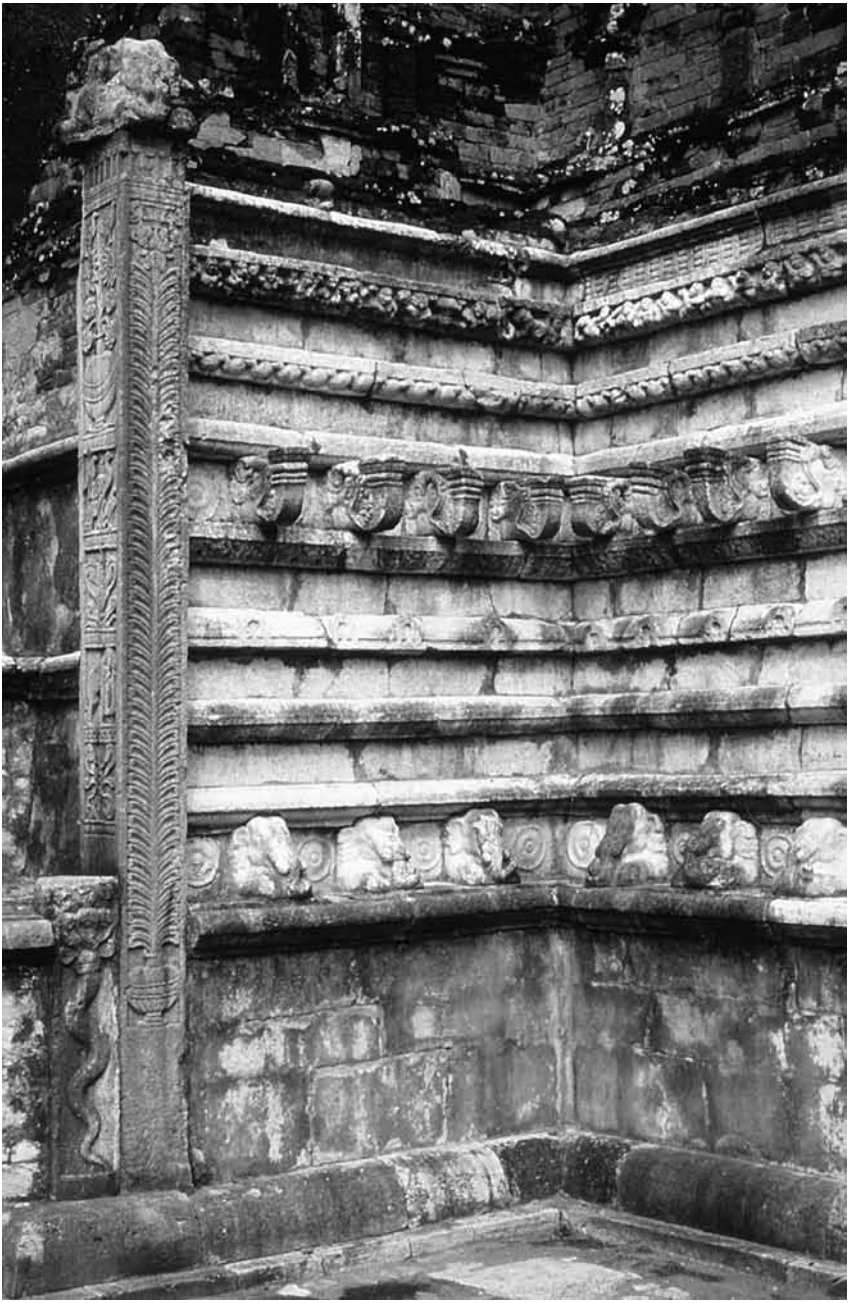
1. Stūpa slab from Amarāvatī with *nāgas*.

2. Kanakacetiya, Mihintale.



3. *Nāga* stela, Kanakacetiya.

4. Nāgarājā, Vaṭadage.

5. Detail, *yakṣī*, Vaṭadage.

6. Nāgarājā, Jetavana.

7. Detail, nine-hooded cobra, Jetavana.

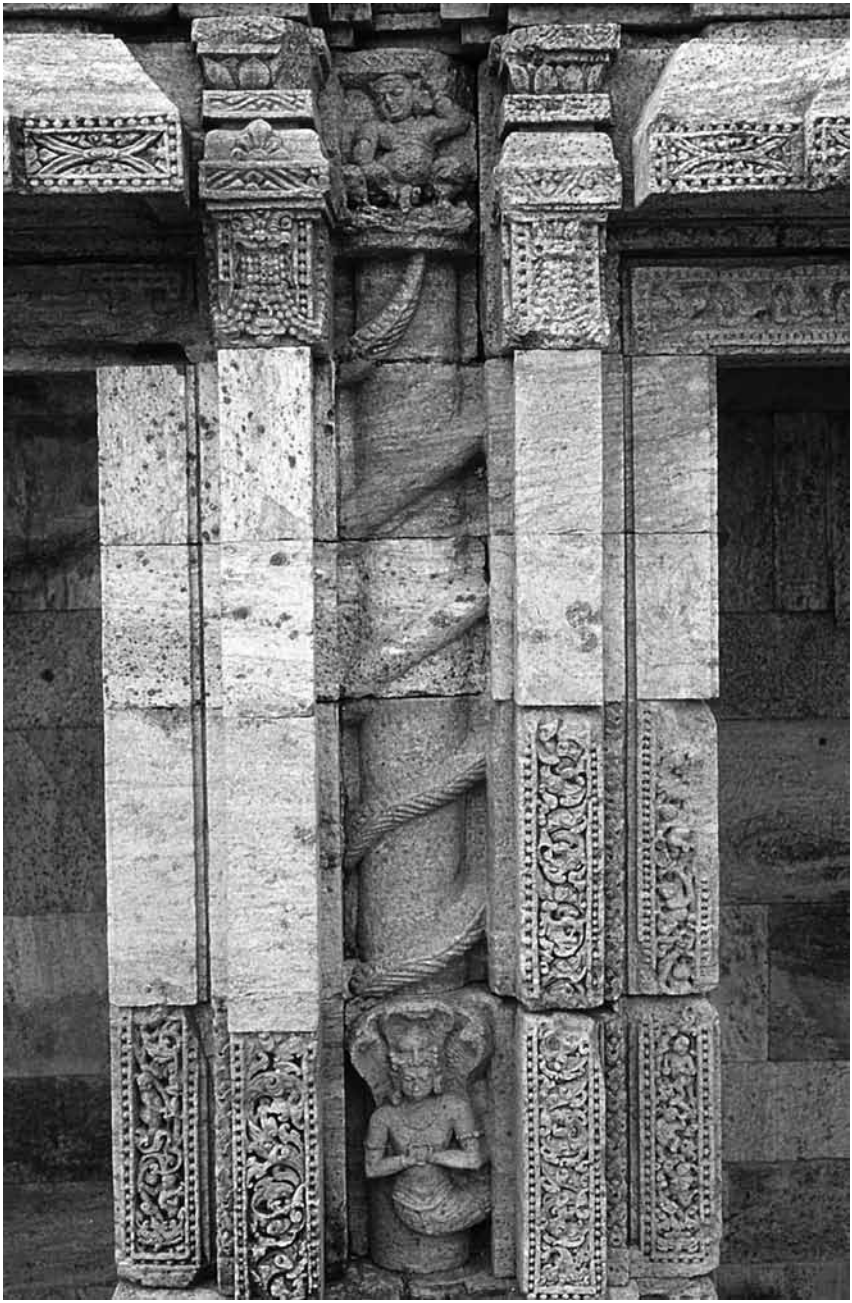
8. Jalaśayana, Pāṭan.

9. Royal Bath, Bhaktapur.

10. *Nāga* decor, Jagatnārāyaṇa temple, Patan.

11. Detail, Yama and *nāgī*, Jagatnārāyaṇa temple, Patan.

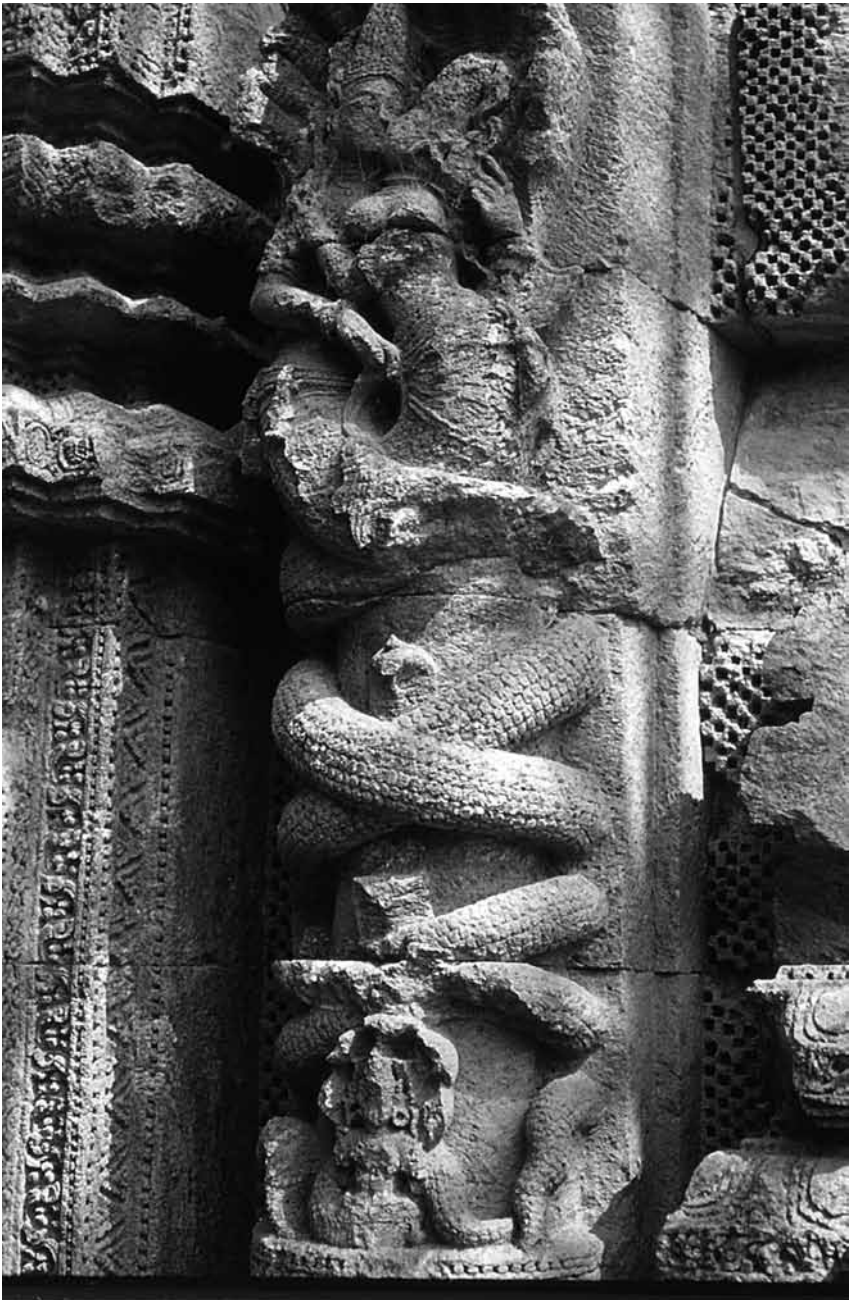
12. Nāgarājā, Vaitāl deul.



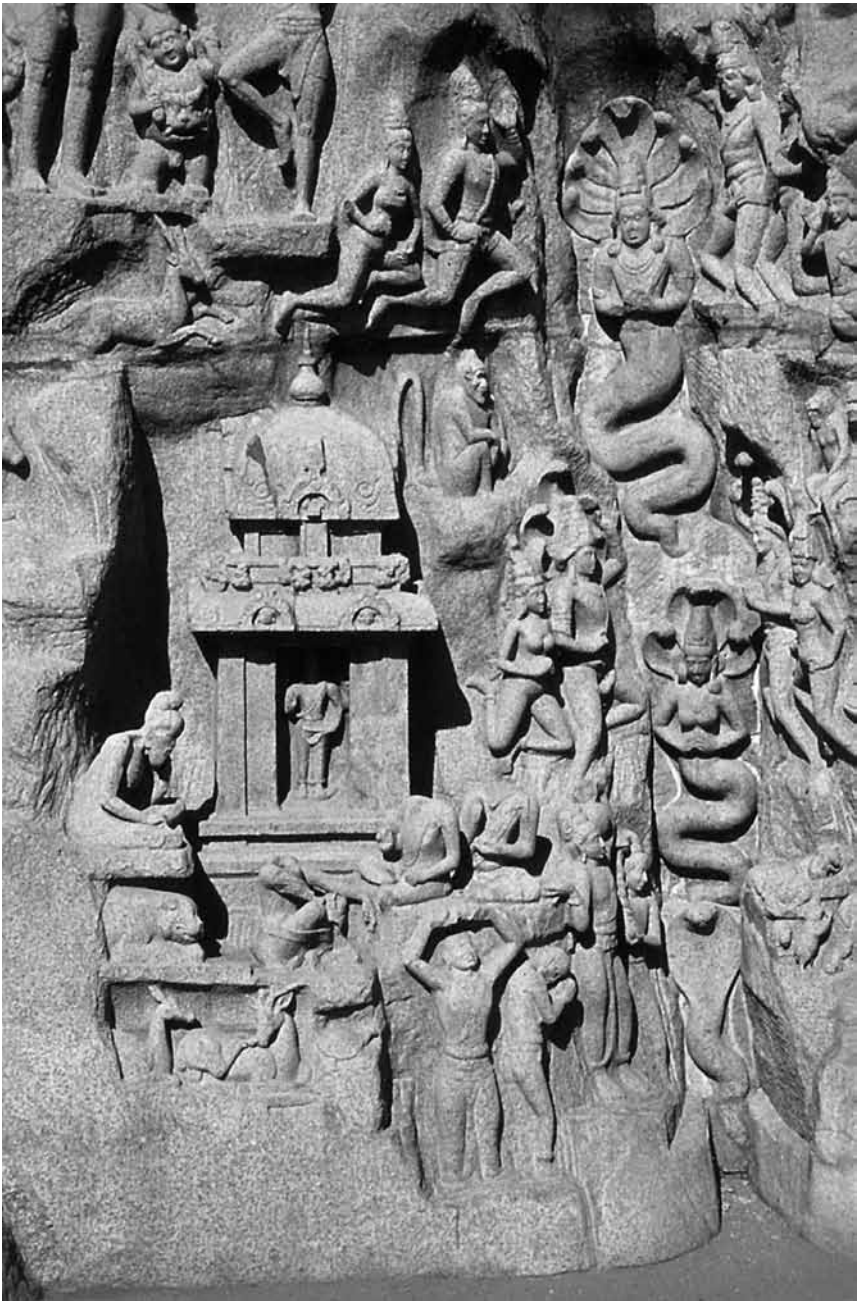
13. *Nāga* encircling pilaster, Ratnagiri.

14. *Nāga* couple encircling two columns, Caurāsī.

15. *Nāga* couple, Konarak.



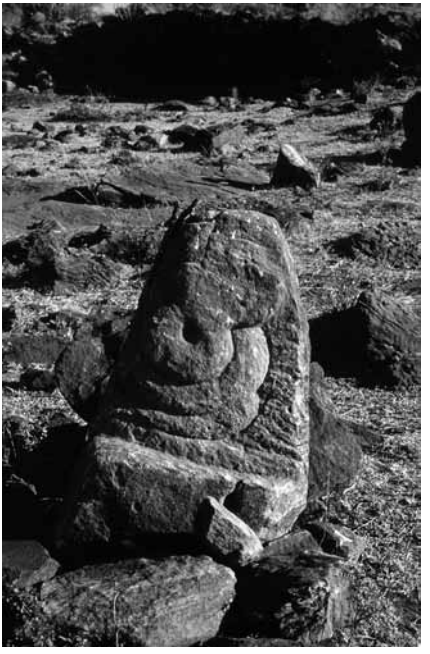
16. Five *nāga*s on one pilaster, Konarak.



17. Three types of *nāga*s, Mamallapuram.

18. Manasā, Bangladesh.

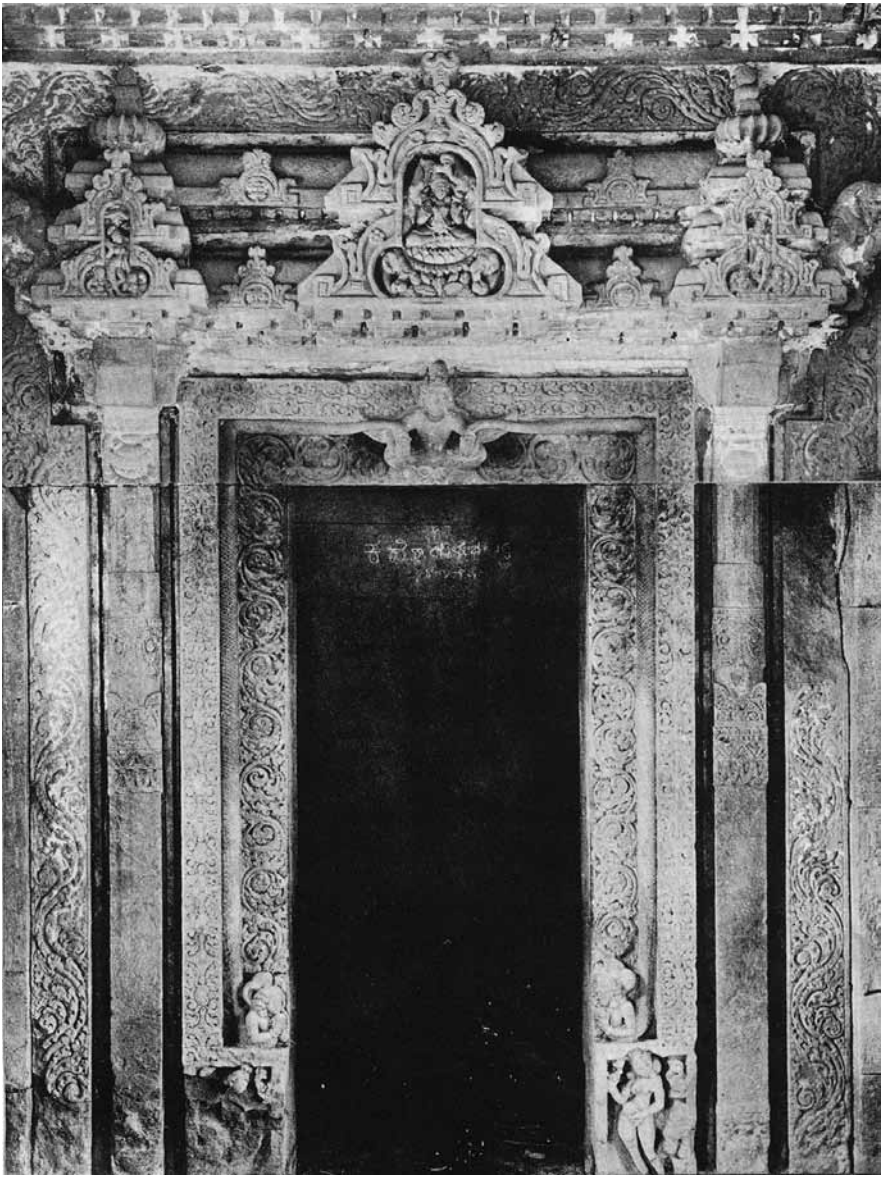
19. Nāgakals, Tamil Nadu.



20. Nāgakal, Aihole.

21. Lintel from Lolei.

22. Garuḍa and *nāga*s, Aihole.



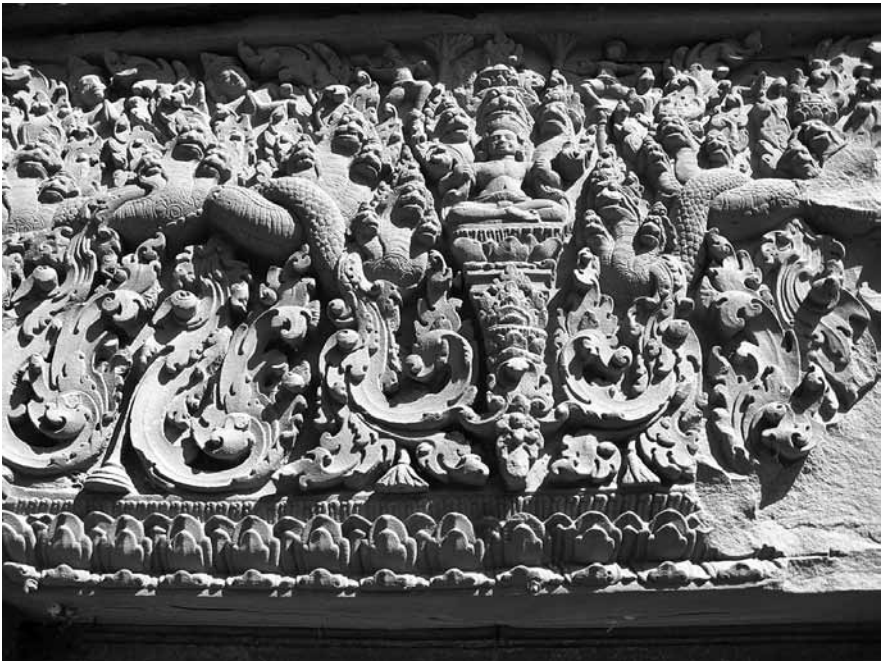
23. Lintel with Garuḍa, Aihole.

24. Lintel with Garuḍa, Lolei.

25. False door and lintel with Garuḍa, Preah Ko.

26. Detail, lintel with Garuḍa, Preah Ko.

27. Lintel with 27 *nāga* heads, Bakong.



28. Detail, center of lintel, Bakong.

29. Lintel with *kinnara*, East Mebon.

30. Ibid., lintel with *kinnarī*.

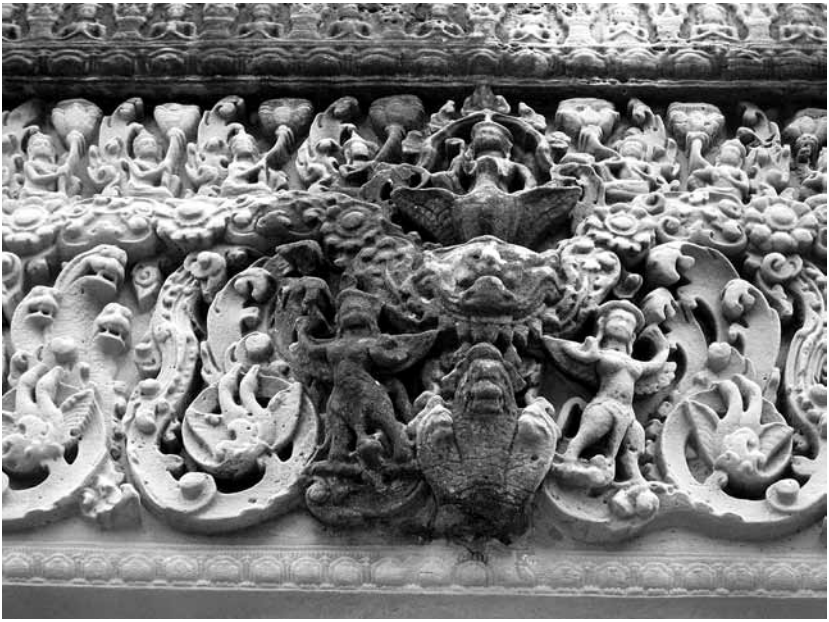
31. Lintel with *kinnara* and hybrid garland, East Mebon.

32. Detail, center of lintel with *kinnara*, East Mebon.

33. Detail, left end of hybrid garland, East Mebon.

34. Lintel with Indra, East Mebon.

35. Lintel with Yama, East Mebon.



36. Lintel with Varuṇa, East Mebon.

37. Lintel with Kubera, East Mebon.

38. Anantaśayana, Udayagiri, M.P.

39. Anantaśayana, Deogarh.

40. Anantaśayana from ceiling of Huccapayya temple, Aihole.

41. Jalaśayana, Budhanilkanth.

42. Anantaśayana, Prei Kmeng style, Museum Battambang.

43. Pilaster with Anantaśayana, Banteay Samre.

44. Fronton with Anantaśayana, Banteay Samre.

45. Lintel with Anantaśayana, Angkor Wat.

46. Lintel with Madhu-Kaiṭabha-vadha, Angkor Wat.

47. Fronton with Anantaśayana, Preah Khan.

48. *Nāga* fan, frontside, Bakong.

49. *Nāga* fan, backside, Bakong.

50. Railing with *nāga* fan, Preah Vihear.

51. Detail, *nāga* fan, Preah Vihear.

52. *Nāga* railings, Banteay Samre.

53. *Nāga* fan, frontview, Angkor Wat.

54. *Nāga* fan, backview, Angkor Wat.

55. *Nāga* railing, Beng Mealea.

56. *Nāga* fan, Beng Mealea.

57. *Nāga* fan, backview, Beng Mealea.

58. *Nāga* fan without Garuḍa, Preah Khan.

59. Two *nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fans, Preah Khan.

60. Lions and *nāga* railings, Bayon.

61. *Nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fan, backview, Bayon.

62. *Nāga* railings, Srah Srang.

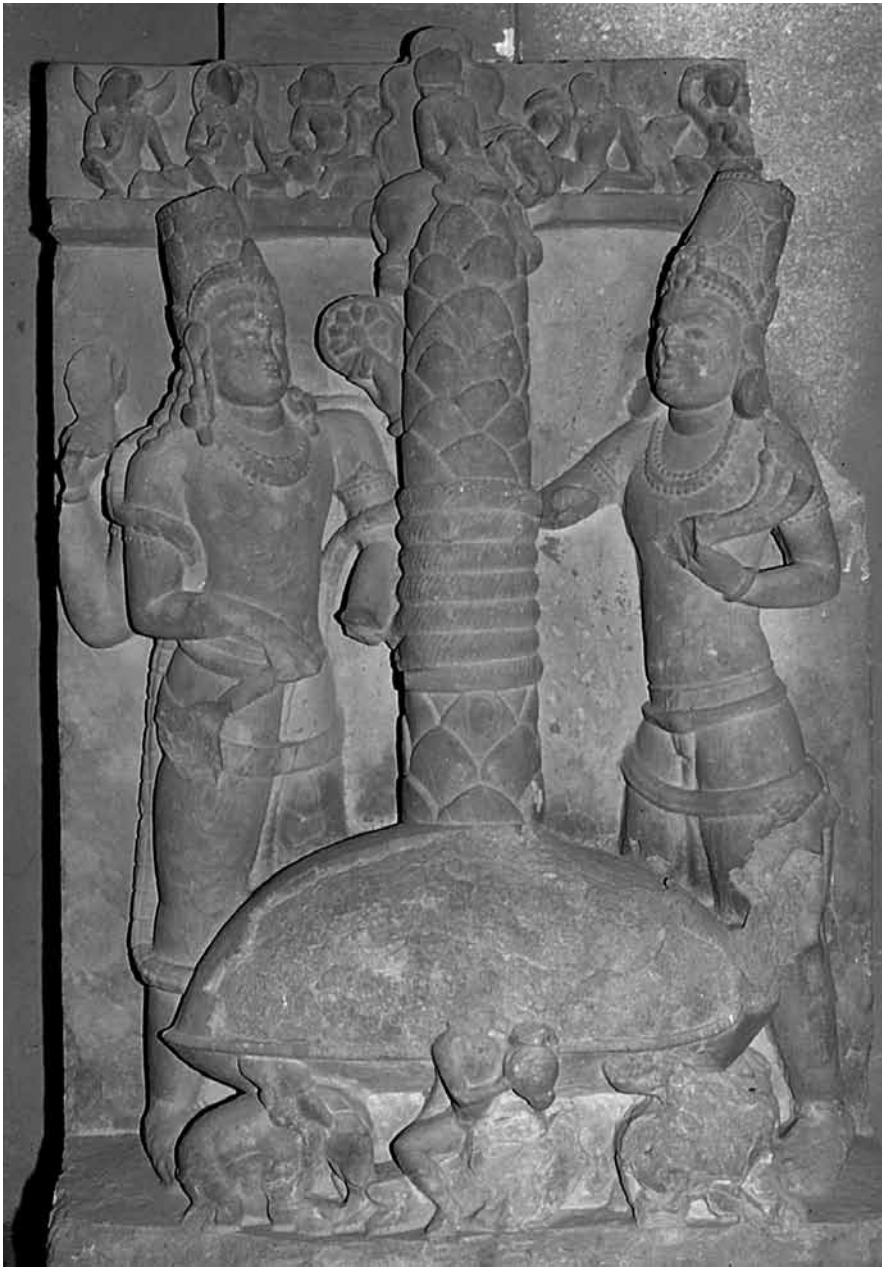
63. *Nāga*-cum-Garuḍa fan, backview, Srah Srang.

64. Amṛtamanthana and Anantaśayana, Prasat Preah Vihear.

65. Detail of fronton and lintel, Prasat Preah Vihear.

66. Lintel with Anantaśayana, Prasat Preah Vihear.

67. Amṛtamanthana panel, Musée Guimet.

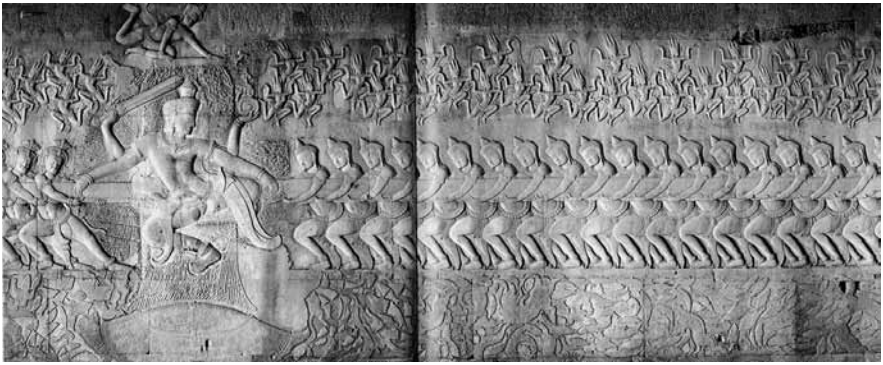


68. Amṛtamanthana panel, Gwalior.

69. Amṛtamanthana, center of image, Bayon.

70. Amṛtamanthana, tail of Vāsuki, Bayon.

71. Amṛtamanthana, head of Vāsuki, Bayon.



72. Amṛtamanthana, center of image, Angkor Wat.

73. Amṛtamanthana, tail of Vāsuki, Angkor Wat.

74. Amṛtamanthana, Beng Mealea.

75. Amṛtamanthana, Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok.

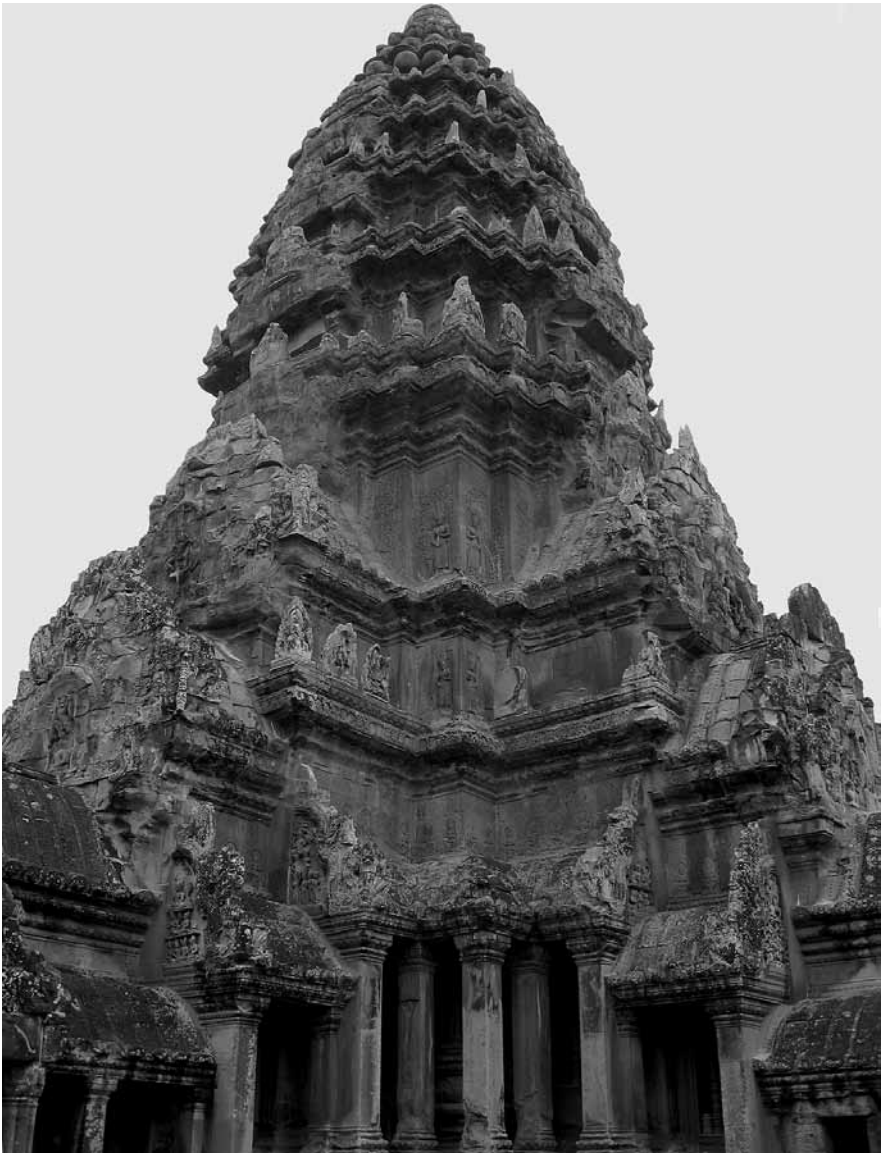
76. *Nāga* railings with *deva*s and *asura*s, Angkor Thom, south gate.

77. *Nāga* fan with a *deva*, Angkor Thom, south gate.

78. Kūrmāvatāra, National Museum Phnom Penh.

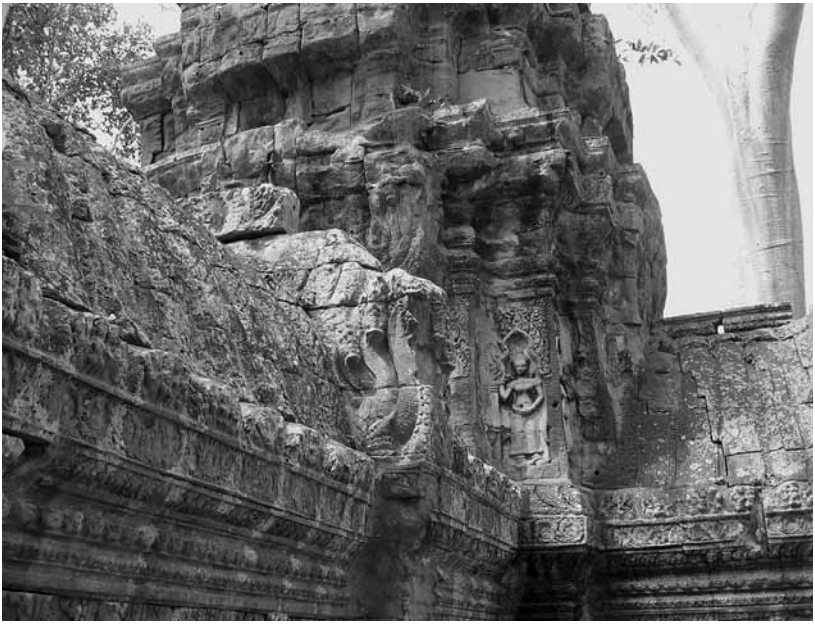
79. Banteay Srei, three *vimāna*s from southwest.

80. Angkor Wat, from northwest.



81. Angkor Wat, central tower, from northwest.

82. Antefixes, Banteay Srei.



83. *Nāga*-antefix, Ta Prohm.

84. *Nāga*-antefix, Museum Battambang.

85. Prasat Suor Prat, southern towers.

86. *Akroteria* in situ, Prasat Suor Prat.

87. *Akroterion* with warrior, Prasat Suor Prat.

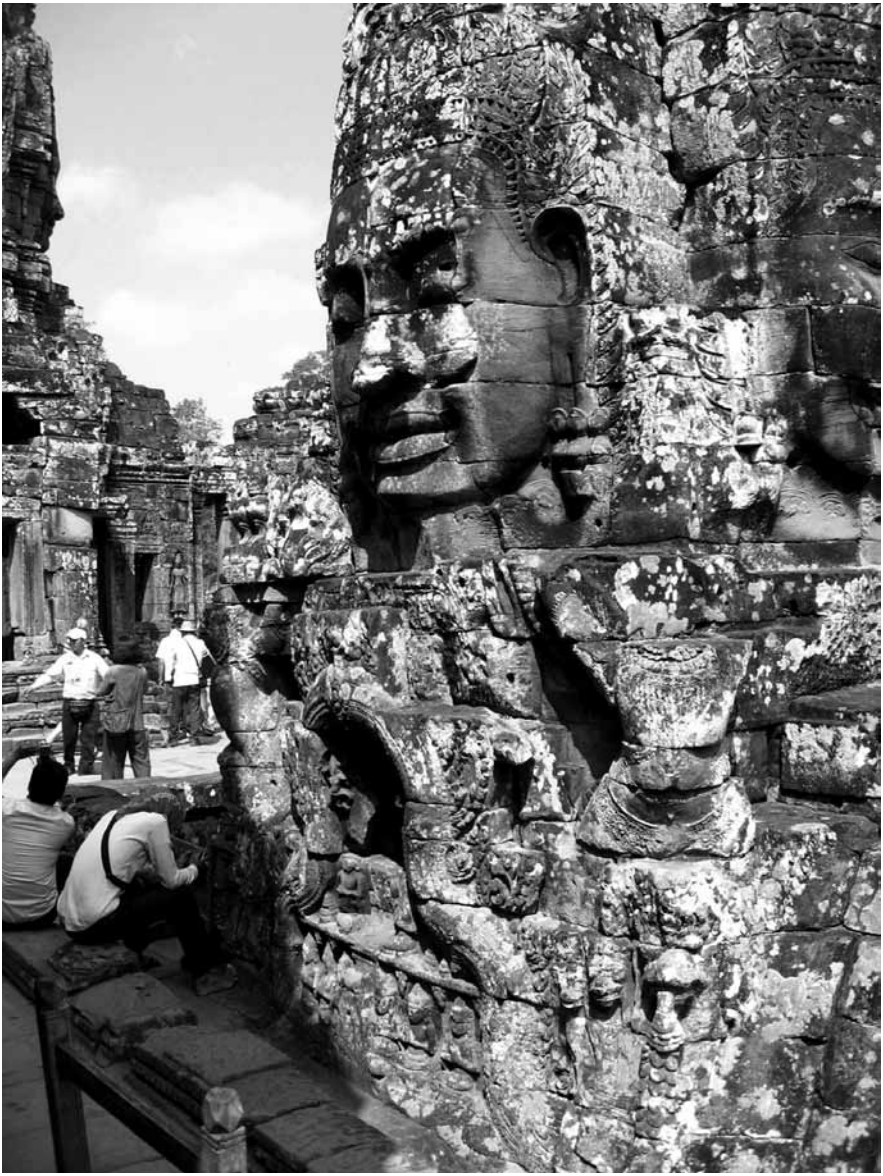
88. *Akroterion* with Yama on three buffalos, Prasat Suor Prat.

89. *Akroterion* with *nāga*, Prasat Suor Prat.

90. Corner antefixes, Banteay Srei.

91. *Nāga*-antefixes, Angkor Wat.

92. *Nāga*-cum-Garuḍa antefixes, Bayon.



93. *Nāga*-cum-Garuḍa antefix, Bayon.

94. *Gopura* with volutes, Banteay Srei.

95. *Makara-toraṇa* with *nāga*s, Banteay Srei.

96. *Makara-toraṇa* with Yakṣas, Banteay Srei.

97. Towers and gallery, Ta Prohm.

98. *Nāga-akroterion*, Ta Prohm.

99. Northern “library”, Banteay Srei.

100. Khāṇḍava conflagration, Banteay Srei.

101. Detail, Indra and *nāga* Takṣaka, Banteay Srei.

102. Kāliyadamana, Banteay Srei.

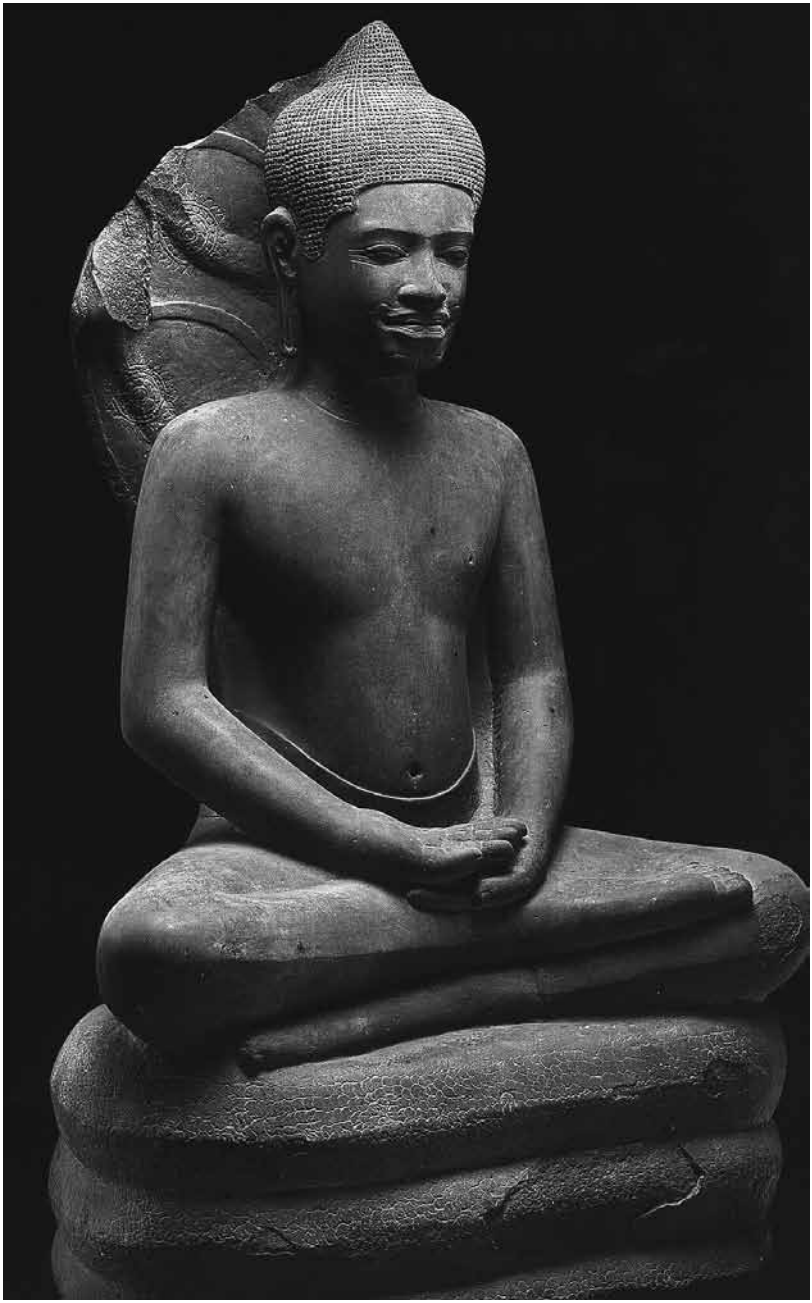
103. Keśivadha, Banteay Samre.

104. Mucilinda-Buddha, Gandhara.

105. Mucilinda-Buddha, Dvāravatī.

106. Mucilinda-Buddha, National Museum Bangkok.

107. Mucilinda-Buddhas, National Museum Bangkok.



108. Mucilinda-Buddha, Musée Guimet.

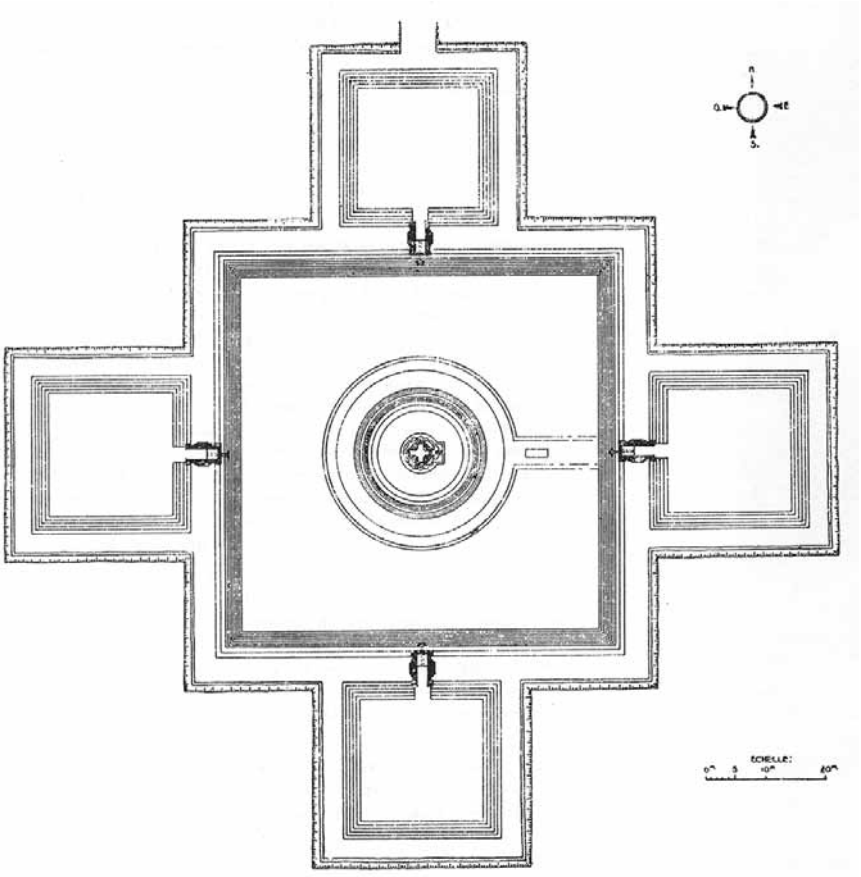
109. Mucilinda-Buddha, Sihanouk Museum.

110. Detail, head of Buddha, Sihanouk Museum.

111. Mucilinda-Buddha, Sihanouk Museum.

112. Meditating Buddha, Polonnaruwa.

113. Buddhist triad, Roluos, Bayon style.



114. Neak Pean, groundplan.

115. Neak Pean, west chapel.

116. Neak Pean, east chapel.

117. Neak Pean, eastside of central temple and two *nāga*s.

118. Neak Pean, southside of central temple.

119. North wing of Terrace of the Elephants and Terrace of Leper King.

120. Lions and garuḍas as atlantes, Terrace of the Elephants.

121. Lions and garuḍas, Terrace of the Elephants.

122. Fourteen-hooded *nāga*, Terrace of Leper King, corridor.

123. Twelve-hooded *nāga*, corner within the corridor.

124. Royal bath, two basins.

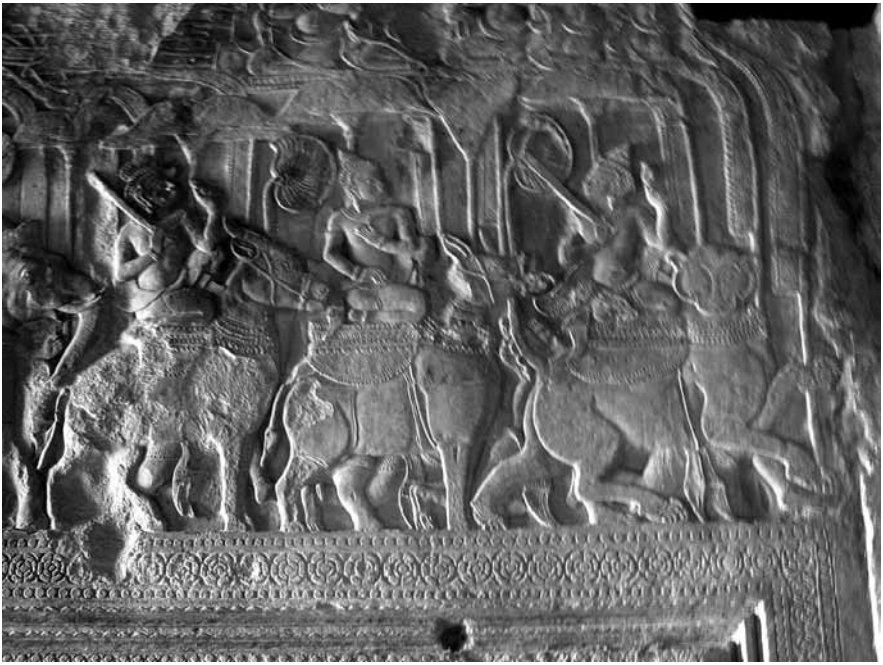
125. Royal bath, three sculpted steps.

126. Royal bath, *nāga* decor.

127. East Mebon, eastside.

128. *Dikpāla*s in corner pavilion, Angkor Wat.

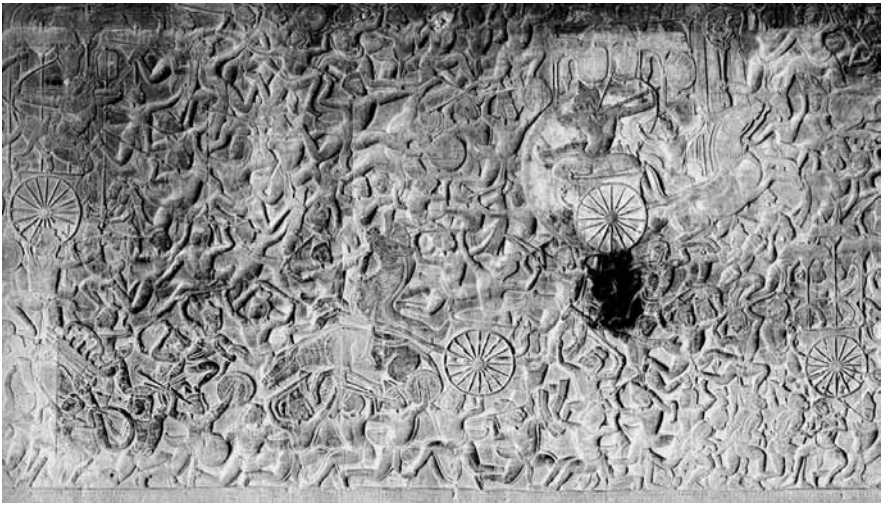
129. *Dikpāla*s in corner pavilion, Angkor Wat.



130. *Dikpāla*s in corner pavilion, Angkor Wat.

131. Sūrya (below) and Candra (above), corner pavilion, Angkor Wat.

132. Kubera, western wing of northern gallery, Angkor Wat.



133. Sūrya, western wing of northern gallery, Angkor Wat.

134. Śeṣa, western wing of northern gallery, Angkor Wat.

135. Gajendramokṣaṇa, Viṣṇu temple, Deogarh.

136. Viśvarūpa, Cāṅgunārāyaṇa, Kathmandu Valley.