



## GARUDA SCULPTURE

Cambodia • Bronze, ca. 1131

Khmer Empire, reign of King Suryavarman II (reigned 1113–ca. 1150) • 43.419

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Garuda, a bird-man creature, is a **Hindu** deity. In this sculpture the strong legs, talons, wings, and beak of an eagle are combined with the human torso and crowned head of a king. The figure wears a belt, necklace, two armbands, and elaborate earrings. Taking a forceful stride forward, Garuda looks ready to fight, protect, or fly off. In the Hindu religion, gods travel the universe on creatures that symbolize their powers. Garuda carries the god Vishnu, roaming the world devouring evil. One of the three most important deities in Hinduism, Vishnu the Preserver keeps the world intact. If he withdrew for an instant, faithful Hindus believe the entire world would be destroyed. At the time this sculpture was made, the Khmer king of Cambodia, Suryavarman II (reigned 1113–ca. 1150), was considered a god-king and the earthly manifestation of Vishnu. Suryavarman constructed an enormous temple complex, Angkor Wat, to validate his divine claim to govern.

This Garuda figure is very similar to one found on a sandstone relief at Angkor Wat. Perhaps this Garuda was associated with the part of the temple where the relief was found or was connected with Suryavarman's activities at the time. As a victor in the battle to preserve the universe, Garuda was considered a bird-king and was symbolic of Khmer royal power and strength. Refined, detailed, and elegant in style, this bronze Garuda was created using the lost-wax method of casting. It probably adorned an altar, and may once have had a sculpture of Vishnu mounted on its back.