

The Hindu Gods of Angkor Wat

by James Elliot

Shiva



the Destroyer

Will bring the end to the universal cycle with a destructive dance, seen as a positive force to cleanse the world. Shiva has 10 arms and 5 faces (but not all are always visible).



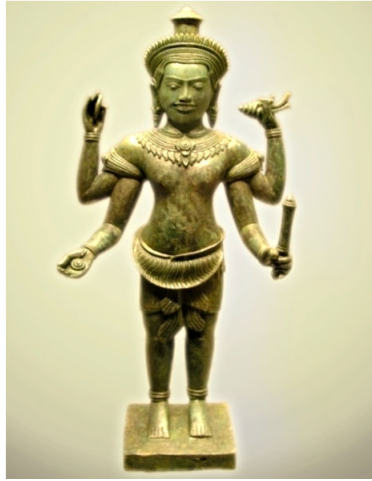
A **linga** is a phallic symbol used to represent Shiva. A **linga** is usually at the centre of the Angkor temples. The Khmers believed that Shiva's home was near Champasak in Laos where there is a large mountain with a natural 10 foot phallus on the top.

They built Wat Phu at the base of the mountain.



Nandi, a bull, is the mount of Shiva.

Vishnu



the Protector

Vishnu holds four items in his four arms (he only has 1 face);

- 1) A conch shell representing his power to maintain and create.
- 2) A spinning disk representing his superior vision
- 3) A mace representing his divine power, the source of all spiritual, mental and physical strength.
- 4) A lotus flower representing divine perfection.

Garuda is a mythical eagle who is king of the birds, enemy of the Naga and the mount of Vishnu.



Brahma



the Creator

Wasn't commonly worshiped but often depicted growing out of a lotus leaf. The lotus flower grows out of Vishnu's navel when he wakes up and decides to create the world. Brahma has four faces (not all are always visible) and eight arms.



The Trinity, from left to right Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. All three gods are the outward forms of one god who is invisible and incomprehensible.

Who is the most important god? Brahma and Vishnu were arguing over their supremacy when a blazing pillar appeared (in the shape of a linga). Terrified the two gods decided to seek the beginning and the end of the pillar. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew upward to find the top, Vishnu took the form of a boar and tunnelled downwards to find the bottom. Finding no top or bottom they returned exhausted to where they started at which time the pillar split open and Shiva revealed himself, both Brahma and Vishnu bowed down to him.

Shiva's Family



Uma is the second wife of Shiva. They have two sons together.



Ganesha is the son of Uma and Shiva. He is depicted with an elephant's head which Uma gave to him after Shiva cut off his original head. His mount is a rat.



Skanda, the god of war, is also the son of Uma and Shiva. His mount is a peacock.

Vishnu's Family



Lakshmi is the consort of Vishnu.

Incarnations of Vishnu

Krishna is shown fighting various demons and nagas around the temples. He also protects the cowherds against the various acts of Indra who is trying to regain his crown.

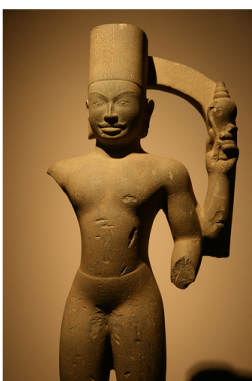
Rama fights against Ravana, the demon king. Rama can be seen fighting various demons and in his triumphant return to his capital.

Other Gods

Indra, the ex-lord-of-the-gods, is the guardian of the East and rides a white elephant with three heads (sometimes shown with just one). He protects the entrances to many temples.



Naga take the form of king cobras with many heads and are the guardians of treasure. They are also strongly associated with water.



Harihara is the depiction of Shiva and Vishnu in one image. Half Shiva and half Vishnu.



Makaras are made up from elephants, crocodiles and snakes. They are found on the lintels above doorways.

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