

Nāga Finial (Naga)

BANTEAY

Cambodia, Bayon style, ca. 1200
Sandstone

10th CENT

Purchase, 2004
(12,949.1)

The *nāga* is a many-headed serpent with complex symbolism in Cambodian beliefs; in addition to its role as the protector of the Buddha, Cambodians believe that their race and culture descended from the marriage of a *nāga* princess to an Indian Brahman. *Nāgas* were frequently used as the finial motif on long balustrades both surrounding and within Cambodian temples where they represented a bridge between the worlds of men and gods, leading the devotee from the secular to the divine realm.

