

GLOSSARY AND IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

Angkor—Capital city of the Khmer Empire, although some scholars use Angkor Empire and Khmer Empire interchangeably.

Angkor Thom—This is the planned city and temple complex built by King Jayavarman VII around 1200. It consists of a royal palace, the Bayon Temple, neighborhoods for residents, causeways, roads, and bridges, etc. It is encircled by a perfectly square moat of water. The moat represents the founding myth of Cambodia when only a tiny island of land existed and the rest of the world was water. The Bayon Temple, while not as large as Angkor Wat, contains impressive bas-reliefs which are the only clues to the daily life of everyday individuals recorded in Angkor.

Angkor Wat—The word “wat” in Cambodian means Temple. Angkor Wat is the specific temple complex built by Emperor Suryavarman II, who ruled the region from 1113 to 1150. Angkor Wat is created in the form of the sacred Mount Meru whose five peaks are represented in the five towers of the temple.



Antefix—Temple roof ornament placed at the corner of each temple eave, the place where the roof meets the building.

Apsara—Female spirits of the water and clouds in both the Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. They were known for their graceful dancing and beauty. Their representation is an oft repeated motif in the bas-reliefs decorating Angkor Wat. In fact, there are roughly 600 meters of narrative bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat and these feature approximately 2000 female dancing figures.



Asura—A demon.

Brahma—Part of the Trimurti, the triple deity of Hinduism, along with Vishnu and Shiva. He is the omnipotent Hindu god of creation. He is depicted with four faces to show his ability to see in all directions and know all.

Deva—God-like or celestial beings from the Buddhist pantheon. They were not venerated as Buddha was, but were seen to be protectors of the temple. Also known as devata.

Devata—See above.

Durga—She is a Hindu goddess, also known as Devi and Shakti. She is a mother goddess associated with wars, destruction, protection, and strength.

Finial—an ornament at the peak of a roof or building, or on the top, end or corner of an object.

Ganesha—One of the most popular and easy to identify members of the Hindu pantheon. He is remover of obstacles and a bringer of luck. He has the head of an elephant because after Shiva cut his head off he sent Brahma to find a replacement from the first creature he found facing north. Brahma returned with an elephant's head and Shiva placed it on Ganesha's head and brought him back to life.

Gajashima—A mythical animal from Hindu mythology. It has the body of a lion and the head or trunk of an elephant.



Garuda—He is a Hindu demigod and the mount of Vishnu. He is bird-man figure often modeled after the kite bird. This representation is shown in the small sculpture Vishnu on Garuda. His anthropomorphic form is a man with bird wings and some bird-like features. This representation is shown in the small sculpture “Vishnu on Garuda”. Garuda’s zoomorphic form, more bird than man, is depicted as a giant bird with open, or partially open wings. This form can be observed in the large sculpture “Garuda on the Naga”.

Hamsa—This is a bird based on either a swan or goose. It is a Hindu symbol of the release from the cycle of birth and reincarnation. A hamsa is also the vahana, or mount, of Brahma and his spouse Saraswati.

Hanuman—A Hindu god and a divine varana. Varanasare either monkeys or a forest dwelling people. They are often depicted as humanoid apes. He is a companion to Rama (an avatar of Vishnu) and central character in the epic Ramayana, one of the two most important Hindu legends.

Hevajra—He is a Buddhist protective deity, or enlightened being. He is often pictured with sixteen arms, four legs, and eight heads. Often in one set of arms he holds symbols of deity and in the other set he holds their mounts. Variations exist across South East Asia. He is generally pictured with his consort, but in Cambodia in particular he is pictured alone.

Jayarajadevi—A passionate devotee of Buddhism, Queen Jayarajadevi supported her husband, King Jayavarman VII in his efforts to spread its teachings. She became a teacher whose efforts focused on educating girls. She died fairly early in her reign. Her sister Indradevi, who initially taught Jayarajadevi about Buddhism, became queen and continued the educational community for girls.



Jayavarman VII—Known as the builder king, he ruled the Angkor Empire from 1181-1220. He was the first Angkor leader to fully embrace Buddhism and disseminate it through the empire by making it the official state religion. He built the monumental city of Angkor Thom and also expanded infrastructure creating hospitals, highways, and rest houses throughout the empire. Additionally, the empire reached its greatest expansion of territory under his rule.

Khmer—This term is used as a synonym for the Cambodian people. It is also used to name the language and the empire which ruled over present day Cambodia during the middle ages.

Khmer Rouge—This is the name for the Communist Party group which ruled Cambodia from 1975-1979. The name means Red Khmer. The Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, fought against the Khmer Republic in a civil war. They captured the capital in 1975 and began a campaign to remake the country. Intellectuals, artists, musicians, and dancers were murdered. Cities were emptied as a campaign to return the country to a land of pastoral farmers began. Children were removed from their families. Thousands of individuals perceived as enemies of the government were murdered in the “Killing Fields”. Thousands more died from starvation. In the end, an estimated 1.5 to 2 million people, approximately 25% of Cambodia’s population, died under their leadership. Their reign ended in 1979 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Several iterations of government followed, including the restoration of the monarchy in 1993 and the formalized change in name to the Kingdom of Cambodia. A general amnesty for former members of the Khmer Rouge led to the surrender of thousands of individuals in the following year.

Activity Guide

GLOSSARY

ANGKOR

EMPIRE OF CAMBODIA



Lakshmi—The Hindu goddess of wealth and good fortune. She is married to Vishnu.

LiDAR—Light Detection and Ranging. A detection system that uses rapid laser pulses to measure variable distances from the laser to earth. This data can then be used to create 3-D imaging and maps.

Linga—An abstract, not literal, representational symbol of Shiva. In three-dimensional form it is a smooth cylinder resting in a circular disk. However, in our exhibit the linga has a square base highlighting regional variations in items. It is a votary object in the worship of Shiva. Two dimensional carvings of lingas were carved into the stones of rivers allowing the water to flow over them thereby blessing the water.

Lokeshvara—The bodhisattva of compassion and mercy. A bodhisattva is a “buddha-to-be,” meaning a being who could attain enlightenment, but chooses to delay doing so that they may help others to achieve enlightenment, and thus end their suffering.

Mount Meru—According to Hindu cosmology, Mount Meru was the home of the gods. It had five peaks, which are mirrored in the five towers of Angkor Wat. Thus, the temple was a literal representation of the home of the gods. Additionally, Mount Meru was surrounded by ocean. This is reflected in the massive moat that surrounds the temple.

Naga—Snake. Also, the mythological snake beings whose kingdom was under their ocean. Khmer origin mythology recounts that a naga princess married the only man on the tiny plot of land that existed, which was Cambodia and inhabited by a prince. Her father “chased away” the water and thus the land of Cambodia was born and later its population by the naga princess. Even today Cambodians still may say they are “born from the naga”.



Narasimha—This is an avatar of Vishnu. He incarnates, or appears on earth as part man, part lion. In this form he killed the demon Hiranyakashipu. This is the form in which he will come to earth to dispel wickedness and save humanity from danger.

Pandava-Sahadeva—The Pandavas were five brothers, the foster sons of Pandu King of Kuru. He was unable to have children, but his wife Kunti was granted a boon that she could bear the children of deities. Sahadeva and his twin brother Nakula were the children of the Ashvins, twin Hindu gods of medicine and health. These five brothers are the protagonists of the Hindu epic Mahābhārata. This tale recounts the war between cousins called the Kurukshetra War.

Prajnaparamita—A Buddhist deity of wisdom. The word prajnaparamita in Sanskrit means “the perfection of wisdom” and refers to the wisdom needed for enlightenment. Thus the female deity is referred to as the “Mother of all Buddhas.”

Preah Noreay—This is the name of Vishnu, a Hindu deity, incorporated into Buddhist worship at Angkor Wat. Preah means “god,” “king,” or “sacred” in the Khmer language.

Repatriation—The return of items, artifacts, art, or human remains to the country of origin.



Sadashiva—This is the highest manifestation of Shiva in Hinduism. He is depicted with five heads which represent the five creators or the five realities, and 10 arms which represent the 10 directions.

Sema—A Buddhist boundary marker, particularly associated with the Theravadin form of Buddhism practiced in Cambodia. They delineate the sacred space inside Buddhist temples where monks perform rituals.

Shiva—Part of the Trimurti, the triple deity of Hinduism, along with Vishnu and Brahma. Shiva is known as “The Destroyer.” He is a complicated figure—benevolent and frightening. These contradictions are shown in his aspects as he is both married to Parvati, also known as Uma, and father to Ganesha, but is also a hermit who leads an ascetic lifestyle.



Stela—an upright stone slab or column carved with a commemorative inscription or relief.

Uma—She is also known as Parvati. The goddess of power, love, beauty, motherhood, fertility and devotion. She is mother to Ganesha and married to Shiva. Uma originally created Ganesha out of turmeric to guard her while she was bathing. Ganesha was beheaded by Shiva for forbidding him entry. Upon discovering the death of her child Uma declares she will destroy all creation unless Ganesha is brought back to life and worshipped before all other gods. Shiva repented his folly when he learned who Ganesha was and brought him back to life using the replacement elephant head Brahma located. Shiva then declared Ganesha his son as well.

Vaishnava—A Branch of Hinduism devoted to the worship of Vishnu as the supreme being.

Varuna—He is the god of waters, ocean, and rain, yet in earlier iterations of Hinduism he was also associated with the sky. His mount is the crocodile Makara, but here he is pictured riding a hamsa, a heavenly swan. He is associated with the western direction.

Vishnu—Part of the Trimurti, the triple deity of Hinduism, along with Brahma and Shiva. He is known as “The Preserver”. Whenever the world is threatened by chaos, evil, or destructive forces he descends to protect it. He is married to Lakshmi.

Yama—The Hindu god of death and the underworld. He is associated with the south direction.