

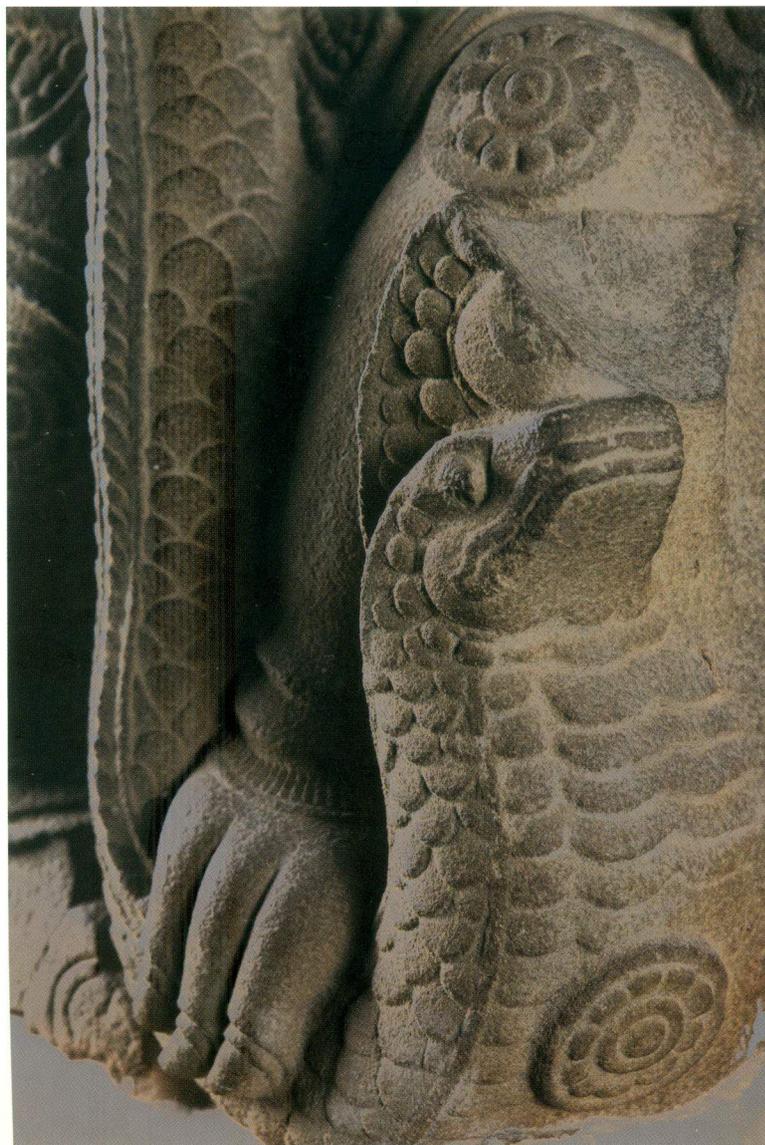
This original and dynamic piece presents another version of the struggle of Garuḍa and the *nāga*: here the fabled bird is not content to master the reptiles, he seems to devour them. Garuḍa sinks his teeth into the body of a three-headed cobra -- of which only two heads are visible as the animal is in profile -- which he grips with his right hand while flattening it to the ground with his powerful claws.

With his left hand, he immobilizes another serpent with a single head, whose body enwraps his arm with realistic suppleness. The bird's wings are spread out like a backslab and the sculptor has given them volume and body with two types of feathers: the large ones in the interior are in rows while a series of downy feathers, on the exterior, resemble scales.

Except for a rich diadem, whose edges envelope the ears, Garuḍa is soberly bejeweled.

His hair is a kind of chignon with vertical locks held by horizontal ties. His costume is short and held at the waist with a belt of pendants. Compared with the previous piece (cat. 84) the birdlike form is lessened: the bird component remains only in the bird of prey head and long, hooked beak and his taloned paws. The style is evidently in the Tháp Mãm mould. As in the two other known sculptures of the same kind,¹ there is a simplification in the treatment of the jewelry and decorative motifs chiseled into the body. This lightening, which is not here a lack of finish, is perhaps due to the nature of the sculpture and its function in the monument. It seems in fact that we are here facing a piece whose place was high in the building, perhaps on the cornice of a sanctuary tower where it served probably as an antefix.

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¹ See Boisselier 1963 (1), fig. 194 and 195.