

30. EKAMUKHALINGA

Oc Eo, An Giang Province, 6th century

Stone, H: 65 cm

Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, BTL5 5532

The Hindu god Shiva is frequently worshipped in his *linga* (phallus) form. Five mantras are invoked for Shiva, and these are sometimes represented on the *linga*, by either four faces (the fifth, which would be on the top, remains invisible), or one. *Ekamukhalinga* literally means "one-faced *linga*," and in Indian versions the single head often fills one side of the phallus. In Southeast Asian versions, Shiva's face is commonly quite small, although later *linga* in Champa have an attached *kosa*, a metal cover in the form of a face. The *linga* is generally installed in the *garbhagrha* (womb chamber) of the temple, and is the primary object of worship for devotees of Shiva.

The *linga* is divided into three sections, the two lower portions of which are often not visible, as they would have been inserted in the altar, or the *yonis*, which represents the female genitalia. The square alludes to Brahma the Creator; the

octagonal section to Vishnu the Preserver; and the cylindrical upper portion to Shiva the Destroyer. This trinity of gods plays an important role in Hinduism, though Brahma was early eclipsed by the other two deities. Clearly, in the instance of the *linga*, the god Shiva is given supremacy over the other two.

LITERATURE

Louis Malleret, *L'Archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, vol. 1, 1959.