

10 ŚAIVA RITUAL: LĪNGAKOŚA AND MUKHAKOŚA IN CHAMPA

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The Sanskrit term *kośa* - sheath or covering - is applied in the context of Śaiva ritual to the metal sheath used to cover the upper (*rudrabhāga*) section of the *līṅga*. In Cham inscriptions, the terms *kośa*, *līṅgakośa* and *mukhakośa* are used to describe royal offerings made of gold or silver, employed in the worship of the Śiva *līṅga*. Some are simply recorded as covers (*kośa*), their association with *līṅga* worship implied or understood, some are explicitly *līṅgakośa* and some are *mukhakośa*, covers adorned with the face/s of Śiva (Fig. 1). Of the latter, up to four (*caturmukha*), five (*pañchmukha*), even six faces (*sadmukha*) are described, but to date only *ekhamukhaliṅga* with one projecting head of Śiva are known.¹ On occasions the cost of the gift is indicated by the weight of metals employed in their making, distinguishing the silver (shaft) and

gold (raised face/s) components. We are told that on occasions the *kośa* was embellished with precious gems, adding further to their value and efficacy. Some examples display recesses to accommodate inlay into the eyes, eyebrows and moustache, whilst others have ear ornaments with settings for precious stones (Figs. 2, 3). The head is typically repoussé work on sheet metal gold or an electrum alloy. The cylindrical sheath is of silver, as first described in king Vikrāntavarman's gift of 687 CE. Excavated *kośa* routinely have small remnants of this brittle silver sheet still attached to the neck flanges, gripped by the rivets and washers used to fix the head to the sheath.²

The concept of the *līṅgakośa* and *mukhakośa* is well known in Śaiva worship in India, and is witnessed by medieval examples which have survived, principally from Kashmir, Himachal

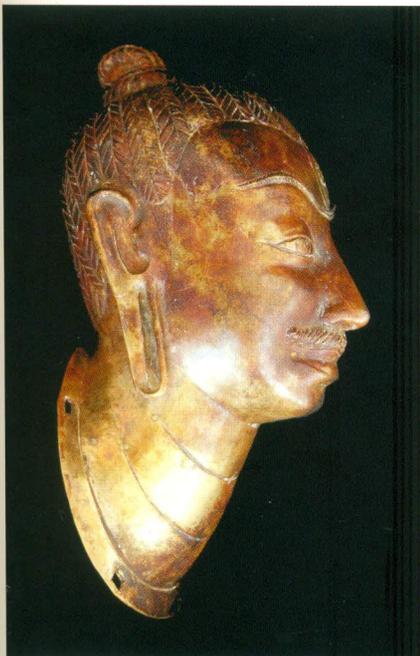


Fig. 1 Mukhakośa. Champa, c. 8th-10th century. Found in vicinity of Phú Long village, Quảng Nam province in 1997. Metal alloy. Height 24 cm. Quảng Nam Provincial Museum, Tam Kỳ. (Photo: Hồ Xuân Tịnh)



Fig. 2 Mukhakośa. Champa, c. 8th-10th century. Silver alloy or electrum, with fragments of silver sheet at the collar. Height 17.2 cm. Private collection.



Fig. 3 Mukhakośa. Champa, c. 8th-10th century. Electrum sheet, with fragments of silver sheet at the collar. Height 28 cm. Private collection.