

Champa territories. Jean Boisselier provided the most comprehensive account of the presence of the *kośa* in Champa, drawing on the work of Louis Finot, Henri Parmentier and others, and most recently Anne-Valérie Schweyer has surveyed *kośa* references in the Cham record, identifying thirteen inscriptions, predominantly in Sanskrit, that refer to *kośa*, spanning the 7th to 13th centuries.²⁵ The recently discovered stele at Hoà Lai temple complex adds another. All are associated with royal patronage, and list *kośa* as first among the principal gifts offered to the presiding deity.

Two of the earliest inscriptions at M̃y Sơn are among the very first Sanskrit inscriptions found in Southeast Asia, and can be assigned on epigraphic style to the 5th century. Inscription C.72 provides the first record of the Cham king Bhadravarman I, likely the founder of the Bhadréśvara temple at M̃y Sơn, which continued to serve as a focus for royal worship in succeeding centuries. The Chiêm-sơn inscription, rock cut into a boulder overlooking the Thu Bồn river, also belongs to the reign of Bhadravarman I or his immediate successors, and further establishes the Bhadréśvara temple's importance, describing the territorial extent of the lands assigned for its upkeep.²⁶ The territorial parameters of Champa in this early period are difficult to define, but seem to be centred on the area stretching from M̃y Sơn in the hills to

Trà Kiệu in the Thu Bồn river basin, to the estuary at Hội An, in modern Quảng Nam and Đà Nẵng provinces.

Further, the Bhadravarman I inscriptions establish, at the beginning of the written record, a defining feature of Cham royal dedications, the identification of the ruler with the deity through the use of a shared name, in which the ruler's name serves as a prefix to that of the deity, here Śiva identified by his epithet *Iśvara*. This is witnessed first here at M̃y Sơn, in the worship of Bhadréśvara. For these rulers, who referred to themselves in their inscriptions as the kings of Champa, an interest in these esoteric concepts must have surely been linked to a desire to consolidate their authority in a fragmented and unstable political landscape. The Bhadravarman I inscription also praises the 'divine serpent of the king', likely referencing an pre-Indic indigenous *nāga* cult being invoked in the service of the new religion, and alluding to the sacred snakes that protect tanks and water places. A sculptural stele excavated at M̃y Sơn temple group G by Parmentier in 1903, and now untraced, signals the persistence of such cults into the early era of Cham state formation. It depicts a male deity, best identified as a *yakṣa*, regally seated on the coils of a five-hooded serpent (Fig. 10). It is perhaps the oldest sculptural icon to be recovered at M̃y Sơn, dating to around the 6th century.²⁷ A tympanum panel from Phong Lê



Fig. 9 Open platform *līṅa* shrine attended by *yakṣas*. 1st-2nd century CE, Mathura. Sandstone. State Museum, Lucknow, India.