

Fig. 10 Male deity, possibly a yakṣa, enthroned on a five-headed nāga, 6th century. Recovered in the vicinity of My Son temple G1, c.1903, now untraced. Sandstone. (Photograph courtesy of EFEO)



depicting Viṣṇu seated in royal ease, flanked by rising nāgas, represents a continuation of this convention as do later tympanum panels depicting a variety of nāga-protected Brahmanical deities, including Lakṣmi and Garuḍa. These iconographic innovations are unique to Cham religious art.

The first direct reference to the presence of Śiva's faces on kośa occurs at the end of the 8th century. The Yang Tikuh inscription (C.25), dated 799-800 CE (Śaka 709) was installed by king Indravraman I to celebrate his reconstruction of a temple in the plains of Phan Rang dedicated to Śiva, named as Indrabhadreśvara, we are told after its pillage by a fleet from 'Java'.²⁸ Kamaleswar Bhattacharya's corrected reading of Verse IX is as follows: 'two treasures for the God, the one movable and the other immovable. The movable kośa was provided with (one or several) face (s)'.²⁹ Bhattacharya then elaborates on the subtlety of the dualistic concepts being elaborated by the composer of the inscription, the liṅga and the sheath mirroring the Śaiva philosophical distinction between the 'subtle body' (of the divine) symbolised by the liṅga, and the 'gross body' of materiality represented by the kośa.

The Po Nāgar temple inscriptions at Nha Trang confirm similar dedications of mukhakośa, in honour of Śiva and, uniquely to this shrine, also the goddess. An inscription of 781 CE records that upon assuming sovereignty in the Kauthara kingdom in 774 CE, king Satyavarman installed a liṅga with a face of Īśa

(Śiva), which was subsequently looted by sea raiders and replaced by the same pious king in 781 CE. The replacement golden kośa displayed the face (mukha) of Śiva – 'as bright as gold and dispelling darkness from the world' – and was accompanied by an image of the beautiful goddess (Umā, Bhagavati) and Gaṇeśa.³⁰

Many of the Champa Sanskrit inscriptions describe the value of the precious metals employed. A typical inscription is that of Sūryavarmadeva prince Vidyānandana, dated 1194, which stated that among the gifts presented to the deity of M̃y S̃n, Śrisanabhareśvara, "to obtain merit in this life and the next", was a six-faced (sadmukha) gold kośa weighing 510 thei.³¹ The dedication of Jayendravarman at M̃y S̃n in 1163 CE (Śaka 1085) records the consecration of a precious metal kośa with five faces (panchamukhalinga), presented by the king. The inscription states that "This god, in spite of his benevolence, was unable to give his benedictions to the ten regions; [but] now he has become the guardian with five royal faces and five mouths".³² This seems explicit in its meaning, namely that royal intervention in the form of an expensive kośa enhanced the liṅga's ability to protect the territorial interests of the state: divine light and radiance extending through the realm, like lamps shining in the cardinal directions.

The association of precious metals with divinity, sovereignty and wealth is well understood in the Indian epic literature. The Purāṇas contain references to the cladding of Śiva in gold that then illuminates the universe.³³ Golden liṅga are understood to grant wealth to the devotee, and in the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa worshipped a golden liṅga in his quest for sovereignty.³⁴ These sets of ideas would seem to support the predilection of Cham rulers to favour the offering of gold and silver kośa to the state liṅga to enhance the efficacy of their devotion. No doubt also the martial and political dimensions of Brahmanical epic literature – both the Mahābārata and the Rāmāyaṇa were known in Champa – appealed to these rulers, who had seemingly taken on the trappings of Brahmanical culture so fully. A 7th century inscription (C 173), found at the citadel of Trà Kiệu, praises ṛṣi Vālmiki, 'the best of all poets', the author of the classic Rāmāyaṇa, and its narratives decorate the monumental temple pedestal there, suggesting a sophisticated awareness of Indian epic literature at the Cham court (Cat. 29 BTC 95-22.2).³⁵