

6a. Gaṇeśa

Mỹ Sơn, Quảng Nam

7th century

Sandstone: H. 96 cm;

W. 48.5 cm; D. 33 cm

BTC 5-5.1



Associated with intelligence, knowing and knowledge – could he not have been, as the Indian tradition affirms, the scribe of the *Mahābhārata* taking the dictation from Vyāsa, the mythical author of the epic? Gaṇeśa is one of the most original gods of the Hindu pantheon, and one of the most loved. His mythology and the numerous legends concerning him produce a great richness; despite the multiple contradictions that emerge about his characteristics, his origin, his attributes and even his functions, a whole complexity arises, no doubt from a pre-Vedic religious base into which the cult of the god with an elephant's

head plunged in part its roots. Among the traditions linked to this very special head, is that of *Suprabhedāgama*, according to which Gaṇeśa was conceived by Śiva and Pārvatī when, admiring the tenderness and vigour of the amorous lovemaking of an elephant couple, they chose to assume elephantine form and enter their own amorous game and thus conceived this strange offshoot. Certain *Purāṇa* make Gaṇeśa the son only of Pārvatī, who modelled him from the dross of her body after taking a bath and appointed him guardian of her private apartments. This superb young man one day had the impudence to bar Śiva's access to the