

Spring 2026 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
Asia Reimagined: Mapping Cultures Beyond Borders
Sponsored by the Society for Asian Art

The Lord of the Elements and the Eaglewood Goddess
Hinduism in South & Southeast Asia

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May 8, 2026

Key Terms and Places

Champa: A network of linked but semi-autonomous coastal polities that flourished along what is now central and south-central Vietnam, especially from the early first millennium CE onward.

Monsoon Asia: A broad maritime and climatic zone shaped by seasonal winds, rains, river systems, and sea routes. In Champa, monsoon patterns structured trade, agriculture, travel, and religious imagination.

Mỹ Sơn: A major Śaiva temple complex in a mountain-ringed valley of present-day Quảng Nam Province. It became one of the most important religious centers of early Champa.

Thu Bồn River: The river system linking Mỹ Sơn, Trà Kiệu, Hội An, and the sea. It served as a ritual, political, and commercial artery of early Cham life.

Trà Kiệu / Simhapura: A major early Cham political center in the Thu Bồn basin, connected inland to Mỹ Sơn and downstream to maritime routes.

Bhadreśvara: A form of Śiva worshipped at Mỹ Sơn; the name means “Prosperous Lord.” Early inscriptions present Bhadreśvara as the divine owner and protector of the landscape.

Śiva: One of the major Hindu deities, especially important in Champa as a god of mountains, ascetics, royal identity, and ecological presence.

Aṣṭamūrti: “Eight-formed”; a Śaiva concept in which Śiva manifests through earth, water, fire, wind, ether, sun, moon, and the ritual specialist or sacrificer.

Po Nagar / Yang Pu Nagara: A powerful Cham goddess associated with Nha Trang, eaglewood, fertility, kingship, and the sea. She was understood both as an Indigenous ancestral goddess and as a local form of the Hindu goddess Umā/Bhagavati.

Liṅga: The distinguishing “mark” or sign of Śiva; sometimes represented as a phallic emblem and also imagined as a pillar of fiery brilliance. In Champa, liṅgas could be ritually enlivened, adorned, and associated with royal authority.

Kośa: A “covering,” “sheath,” or “container.” In Cham Śaiva ritual, *kośas* were precious metal coverings placed over liṅgas, often made of gold, silver, or electrum and sometimes bearing one or more faces of Śiva.

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