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MOVING MOUNTAINS AND SWALLOWING SEAS

Śaiva Gurus as Ecological Agents in Early South and Southeast Asia

ABSTRACT

The worship of Śiva in early South and Southeast Asia offered devotees a fully realized "religious ecology," i.e., a system of mutually beneficial relationships between human communities, natural systems, and the nonhuman or more-than-human worlds in which they operated. Within this religious worldview, the Śaiva guru functioned as a critical terrestrial intermediary. In canonical early Śaiva texts, the guru was celebrated as an ecological agent capable of alleviating suffering and nurturing community. In material culture, the guru's iconographic attributes (e.g., waterpot, trident, and lotus) signaled his ability to offer devotees emotional, social, and environmental benefits.

Using the figure of the Brahmanical sage and Śaiva guru Agastya as an entrée, this study initiates a comparative analysis of the cultural connections between gurus, Śiva worship, and the power of the natural world as expressed through iconographic programs and architectural spaces from northern India, Vietnam, and Java. Since Agastya is both a personification of Brahmanical cultural authority and a transregional emblem of the Śaiva tradition, he provides a fertile ground from which to explore the role of the guru in early South and Southeast Asia. Agastya's mythic biography also features two significant environmental interventions: subduing the Vindhya Mountain when it threatened to block out the sun, and drinking the ocean's waters to reveal hidden demons threatening a divine order. His ecological agency, expressed in narratives as the power to neutralize potential threats in the natural world and manifest beneficence, is materialized in images that express the socially supportive values of prosperity and fertility.

Introduction

This study examines depictions of the sage Agastya and related Śaiva gurus using a selection of images from premodern Java, northern India, and Vietnam. My analysis uses these images to develop a larger argument that the worship of Śiva (i.e., Śaivism) in early South and Southeast Asia offered devotees a "religious ecology" articulated across three registers: emotional, social, and environmental. Ecology, as the term is employed here, is not limited to strictly environmental concerns or the workings of the natural world, although environmental concerns are critical. Rather, ecology in the context of this article describes the mutually imbricated networks of relationships that connect human societies, natural systems, and the nonhuman or

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more-than-human worlds in which they operated.[1] Within this religious worldview, the Śaiva guru functions as a critical intermediary and more-than-human agent.

As a class of religious specialists, gurus are akin to seers (*ṛṣi*), preceptors (*ācārya*), ascetics (*saṃnyāsin*), and yogis. These various types of specialists are characterized by their supernatural energies and capacities: a preternatural "vision," superhuman powers (*siddhis*) cultivated through austerities, and a social and symbolic "heaviness" (*gurutva*). Perhaps most significant, however, is the guru's bright, blazing energy (*tejas*), often homologized to a fire, that could be experienced in phenomenal and deeply affective ways.[2] To examine the ways that the guru's role was expressed in early South and Southeast Asia, the first section of this article will survey passages from three canonical Sanskrit sources that depict gurus as terrestrial vectors for the auspicious power of Śiva.

As a celebrated Brahmanical sage, Agastya embodies the powers of the guru as defined in these normative texts.[3] Yet, analysis of material evidence contributes facets of a Śaiva religious ecology through world-affirming and public-facing (*laukika*) values that are absent from socially restricted texts. The second section of the article uses an East Javanese stone sculpture of Agastya from the Singosari period (ca. thirteenth century CE), in the collections of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA), to explore the visual expression of these values (fig. 1).[4] The discussion of this image focuses particular attention on three iconographic attributes: water vessel, trident, and lotus. While these attributes are familiar features in Agastya's iconography, their functions have not yet been sufficiently explored. More than stock features of early Hindu imagery, these iconographic elements are potent objects indicative of Agastya's identity as a more-than-human agent capable of alleviating suffering, nurturing community, and bestowing prosperity.

While the iconography of Agastya is well treated in art historical scholarship on Java,[5] there has not yet been a study that considers the function of these Javanese sources vis-à-vis depictions of Śaiva gurus in mainland Southeast Asia and in South Asia.[6] The final section of the article positions the Javanese Agastya in a broader frame by considering it in dialogue with representations of Śaiva religious specialists from two temple complexes that were definitive of the early Śaiva landscape of South and Southeast Asia—Kālañjara in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and the Cham temple complex of Mỹ So'n in Vietnam. Since these places preserve evidence of Śaiva religiosity over an extended period of time, they provide significant contemporaneous and antecedent evidence with which to contextualize the role of guru in Java and beyond.

A Śaiva Ecology: Emotional, Social, and Environmental

A Śaiva religious ecology claimed to offer beneficial ways of being in the world that support human flourishing across three different registers: social, emotional, and environmental. The passages below highlight the guru's contribution as a source of auspiciousness in these contexts.

Expressions of the emotional register of a Śaiva religious ecology are found in the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*, Kauṇḍinya's commentary on the *Pāśupatasūtra* (ca. fourth–fifth century CE), an esoteric Sanskrit text that outlines the fundamental precepts and origins of the earliest tradition of Śaiva ascetics, called the Pāśupatas. In his commentary, Kauṇḍinya presents the Śaiva teacher as a more-than-human agent capable of alleviating the psychosocial suffering that defines the embodied human experience.[7] The following passage describes the initial encounter between the student Kuśika, the founder of the Pāśupata lineage, and his teacher:

> Thereupon Lord Kuśika arrived, impelled by Rudra (Śiva); he saw the signs of perfection, such as complete contentment, in the preceptor and the opposites thereof in himself; falling at his feet

FIGURE 1. Agastya, ca. 13th century, East Java, Singosari period. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 78.7 x 40.6 x 20.3 cm. National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Ann and Gilbert Kinney, S2023.9.6

> he informed him properly about his caste, gotra, Vedic affiliation, and his being free of debts; then at an appropriate moment, (this) pupil, who was like a patient, consulted the preceptor, who had bided his time, and who was the doctor as it were: "Lord, is there a remedy that is effective and final for all those pains which fate, the world and we ourselves afflict upon us, or not?"[8]

In the terse style characteristic of the sutra genre, the teacher's response," Well . . . (*atha* . . .)," is understood by the commentator to indicate a favorable reply—namely, yes, that an end to suffering *(duḥkhānta*) is possible for the worthy student initiated by the guru. Significantly, the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*'s resolution to suffering is theological. More precisely, it provides a soteriology that is dependent upon the Lord's grace. For it is the Lord who can offer people (in this case male able-bodied brahmins) the favor (*prasāda*) needed to attain to lordship themselves and, by doing so, escape the suffering that characterizes the life of an embodied soul. In this text, the mental state of anguish that gives rise to suffering is likened to the state of being a bound animal (*paśu*). The liberated being, by contrast, is a powerful master (*īśvara*) who exists in a state of mental and physical emancipation. Liberation is absolute sovereignty.

Kauṇḍinya's discussion addresses the emotional register of a Śaiva ecology through the perspective of the individual aspirant and renunciant. The *Śivadharmaśāstra* (ca. sixth–seventh century CE) expands upon this by discussing the social register and the role of Śiva devotees and gurus in creating community. The text specifies that, although Śiva requires nothing from his devotees, the benefits of honoring and welcoming Śaiva gurus and yogins bring rich rewards equal to the performance of expensive sacrifices. These pious acts may grant the devotee union with Śiva or admission into his divine entourage.[9] Further, the text specifies that these acts are ultimately performed for the Lord since his worshipers are his terrestrial proxies:

> That devotion towards devotees of Śiva which is performed by men devoted to him [Śiva], that devotion performed by [those] devotees always goes to Śiva [himself].[10]

Through acts of mutual care and reciprocity—the text praises offerings of hospitality, food, shelter, and kind speech—Śiva's devotees work to constitute a community that, while ultimately oriented toward the Lord, supports a utopic state of mutual flourishing.[11]

The second text in the *Śivadharma* corpus, the so-called *Śivadharmottara* (ca. sixth–seventh century CE), offers a more precise vision of the Śaiva community and the exalted position of the Śaiva guru and yogin as terrestrial embodiments of Śiva's auspicious power. These more-than-human agents are described as *śivapātra* or *satpātra*, the true "vessels" of Śiva and the worthiest recipients for the pious gifts of the community of devotees.[12] The donative action is reciprocal in that the devotee's gifts activate the potential of the "vessel" to be a source of auspiciousness. The passages cited below provide two explanations for the centrality of the yogin within the Śaiva community. The first employs an etymology to explain that the salvific power of the yogin makes them a worthy vessel (*pātra*) for donations. The second explains that offerings given to the yogin are, in reality, offerings to Śiva by virtue of the identity of these powerful beings with the Lord.

> It is traditionally taught that the one who saves ignorant people from the ocean of transmigration with the raft of knowledge, because of protecting (*pā*-), [i.e.,] saving (*trai*), is the supreme recipient.[13]

> Since the yogin eats food while he is constantly meditating upon Śiva, this food will be eaten by Śiva himself.[14]

Unlike the esoteric teachings of the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*, the *Śivadharma* authors style their text as teachings for the uninitiated lay devotees. While ostensibly geared toward a broader audience, the *Śivadharma* remains a normative, and thus highly rhetorical and ideological, construction. Given that only a tiny fraction of the population in premodern South Asia or Southeast Asia at this time would have been functionally literate, and even a smaller fraction would have had access to a text composed in the elite and socially restricted language of Sanskrit, the *Śivadharma*'s claims to present a nonspecialist Śaivism need to be read critically and interpreted contextually. As indicated by the passages quoted above, these teachings represent a highly regulated community presided over by an internal hierarchy of initiated brahmin males.

The early *Skandapurāṇa* (ca. sixth–seventh century CE), a Sanskrit narrative tradition, addresses the environmental register of the religious ecology in its vision of a Śaiva ecology. In the Purāṇic account, Śiva recognizes that the world is afflicted by suffering (*duḥkhārdita*) and descends to the terrestrial plane as the guru Lakulīśa out of an empathic desire to offer assistance (*anugraha*).[15] Critically—and in ways that echo the emphasis on the teacher and guru in Kauṇḍinya's account, the *Śivadharma*, and the *Śivadharmottara*—Lakulīśa and his disciples act as the Lord's agents on earth. They are produced from him, and while described as a *puruṣa* (male person) and *nara (*man), they are clearly not ordinary human men. Taking up residence in places across northern India, these agents-of-the-divine are vehicles for secret and salvific teachings and are imbued with the immense efficacious power (*tejas*) of Śiva, an energy often homologized to a blazing fire. After they have done the Lord's work on earth, these agents are instructed to return to him. This description of a process of emanation, descent, and subsequent return emphasizes that these teachers are more-than-human agents by virtue of their close association, approaching identity, with the deity:

> As the Kaliyuga was progressing, the Supreme Lord, aware of the world's affliction, created four men from each of his own four mouths out of his desire to furnish favoring assistance to [its] populations. [119] He told them: "All of you go upon the earth as brahmin ascetics. After you have conveyed brahmins to the highest place, you Lords of Yoga will return directly to me." [120]
>
> After they had heard these words from Lord Paśupati himself, those students, imbued with the fiery energy of Lord Bhava, all did as they were commanded. [132][16]

The *Skandapurāṇa* provides an environmental context by locating the narrative of the Lord's descents in a particular place called Kārohaṇa, from where they disperse to settle in four locales in northwestern India. The text designates this region as a sacred landscape (*kṣetra)* distinguished by a set of eight highly charged abodes of Śiva that serve as destinations for pilgrimage (*tīrtha*) within this sacred landscape.[17] And while the area serves as a retreat for yogins, the authors make explicit that mortals also gain significant rewards from visiting there. In this way, the account of the god's agents shows how their actions empower a particular landscape. That power is residual, in that it remains after the events of the narrative and the return of the yogins to Śiva. It is also renewable and transferrable since, as the authors relate, people who visit the place will continue to be empowered and blessed by it. While the divine

agents are no longer accessible, the promise of release from suffering is still available to those who make a pilgrimage to the *tīrtha*.

> Since Lord Bhava (Śiva) descended in this place, marked by a quarter of Dharma, it is thus considered a supremely sacred spot. [133] The exalted one has a place there called the "Eight-Abodes" (Aṣṭāyatana), a retreat of yogins where the destruction of bad deeds occurs. After seeing it, mortals attain the highest place. [134][18]

In the narrative, the *Skandapurāṇa*'s authors glorify a new *tīrtha*, but their concern with place and the potential for empowerment that certain natural places may offer is deeply rooted in the environmental imaginary of Indic religions. In early South Asia, worship of Śiva was inherently emplaced and intimately connected with the distinctive features of the physical landscape and the salvific places of pilgrimage, hermitages, and caves, considered to be the Lord's many abodes (*āyatanas*). These places were often sites where Śiva was manifest and worshiped in the form of the lingam (his "characteristic mark" often represented as a phallus).[19] Similarly, in Southeast Asia, Śiva was imagined in epigraphic and material sources as inseparable from remarkable landscape features, particularly mountains, that were considered self-actualized (*svayambhu*) or "natural" manifestations of his divine presence in the natural world.[20]

Agastya: Śaiva Guru and Ecological Agent

According to late Vedic lore, Agastya was born miraculously from a waterpot (hence his common epithets Kumbhayoni and Kumbhodbhava, i.e., "Pot-Born." The sage's Indic biography features two significant environmental interventions. First, he is credited with subduing the Vindhya Mountain of central India when its heights threatened to block out the sun.[21] The miraculous deed is recalled in the name Agastya (Mover of Mountains).[22] He is also famed for drinking up the ocean when the unruly waters concealed the demons Ilvala and Vātāpi, who were threatening divine order.[23] There is an additional environmental association reflected in Sanskrit sources that identify Agastya as the star Canopus, one of the brightest stars in the Southern Hemisphere's night sky.[24] In his commentary on the *Raghuvaṃśa*, Mallinatha explains that, as the bright autumnal star, Kumbhayoni made the waters clear and pure to drink. In these foundational myths, the Śaiva sage works to domesticate the landscape—that is, to make it productive and socially supportive—through acts of ecological thaumaturgy.[25]

In the Old Javanese tradition, Agastya retains the environmental connections that define his mythic biography in the Indic sources, and his associations with Śiva are emphasized.[26] In the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma tells Sītā the story of how Agastya, following the instructions of Śiva, subdued the Vindhya.[27] The *Hariwangśa* recalls the sage's drinking of the ocean's waters. Agastya also plays a central role in the shaping of Java's physical and religious geographies. The *Tantu Panggĕlaran* records a unique version of Agastya's birth and connection to Javanese topography.[28] According to the text, Śiva used yoga to burn his own thumb to ash, and after dousing the ashes with holy water (Śiwāmba), he used them to form a man.[29] The account of Agastya born of Śiva's thumb is an innovation of the Old Javanese tradition, yet the thumb-size man evokes another of Agastya's epithets from South Asia—*māna* (the measurer), which refers to the sage's diminutive stature as the measure of a span (approximately eight inches).[30] After this hand-birth, Śiva instructs Agastya to practice asceticism on Mt. Kawi, which becomes his abode.

As Śiva's agent in the archipelago, Agastya is closely linked to the cultivation of a Śaiva religious landscape on the island. Evidence of these associations are preserved in some of the earliest inscriptions of Java. The eighth-century-CE Canggal inscription commemorates the installation of a lingam on a hilltop shrine by the ruler Sañjaya. Verse 7 of the text praises the beauty and prosperity of Java, an island blessed by Śiva and rich in rice, gold, and places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*). More specifically, the inscription describes the setting as sanctified by descendants of a place called Kuñjarakuñja, a sacred mountain hermitage granted to Agastya by Śiva in the *Hariwangśa*.[31] In R. N. Poerbatjaraka's interpretation, this inscription records the echoes of a genealogy linking the Śaiva landscape of Java with Agastya and a lineage associated with the sage.[32]

A corpus of ninth-century-CE inscriptions composed in Sanskrit and Old Javanese records the installation of different named lingams by a person called Kumbhayoni, one of Agastya's most popular epithets. One of these objects, called the Peneng inscription, was found two kilometers south of the famous Śaiva temple complex of Prambanam. As expressed in the Peneng record, Kumbhayoni is the one who sanctifies the land and transforms it into a miraculous vision of prosperity (*bhadrāloka*) to serve as an abode for his descendants. The identity of the Kumbhayoni of the inscriptions has been debated by historians at length, and it remains unclear whether this is a proper name, the epithet of a historical person, or a venerated lineage progenitor who installed the many lingams for his spiritual followers or members of a kinship group.[33] Bracketing these longstanding debates, for the purposes of this study it is significant that these inscriptions feature Kumbhayoni not only as a mythical progenitor or historical person embodying and representing his mythic role, but also as an ecological agent who sanctified the landscape in order to ensure the prosperity of his descendants.

The narrative accounts of Agastya's ecological wonder working convey different facets of his identity as an ecological agent and source of Brahmanical auspiciousness. These tales can be interpreted as reflections of a broader Śaiva ecology, as exemplified in the textual passages discussed above, that depicts Śaiva ascetics and teachers as terrestrial vectors for the auspicious power of Śiva. This power offers emancipation from the psychosocial suffering that characterizes the human condition and can be accessed through the remarkable people and natural places that are manifestations of his efficacious energy (*tejas*). Material culture contributes other facets of a Śaiva religious ecology that are expressed in more world-affirming ways. More than just an absence of suffering, gurus could be sources of abundance and vectors for the dissemination of socially supportive values such as prosperity and fertility.

The Stone Sculpture of Agastya from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art

The sculpture of Agastya from East Java of the Singosari period currently held by the NMAA (see fig. 1) provides a fertile ground for exploring the visual expressions of a Śaiva religious ecology. By this period, Agastya had developed a fixed iconography in Javanese art and a stable position on the southern-side exterior niche of Śaiva temples. The iconography of the NMAA image conforms to the established pattern in its depiction of the bearded, matted-haired sage bearing a water vessel, prayer beads, and accompanied by the trident (*triśūla*) emblematic of Śiva. While removed from its original architectural context, the image could have been displayed as part of the exterior iconography of a temple or as the central icon within a shrine.

Agastya appears standing in a front-facing position. His matted locks, an iconographic feature common to Śaiva ascetics, are piled high on top of his head in the *jaṭāmukuṭa* and

FIGURE 2. Agastya, ca. 11th–13th century, Central Java. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 107 x 38 x 35 cm. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, the Netherlands, RV-1403-1583

FIGURE 3. Agastya, ca. 9th–10th century, Central Java. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 100 x 46.5 × 36.5 cm. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Netherlands, AK-MAK-238. Artwork in the public domain

encircled with a crown that rises in two tiers of richly ornamented jeweled inlay. Matching jeweled armbands adorn each arm. The lower portion of the sculpture is broken, but it appears that the image was originally adorned with anklets as well. His weighty earrings have stretched the earlobes down to brush the shoulders. Two matted locks that have fallen from the *jaṭā* flow across each of his shoulders to the top of the chest, where they align with the point of his heavy torque. The center of the necklace is partly obscured by the projection of his well-groomed beard. The pointed beard frames his face with a striking angularity that contrasts with his softly rounded body. The sage's almond-shaped eyes have lightly incised pupils that would have enhanced the power of his gaze upon the viewer. His mouth rests in a slight smile. He wears only a simple lower garment, which drapes in heavy folds across his thighs and becomes thin and transparent as it clings to the lower legs. The garment is fastened securely by a belt just below the waist, and the excess fabric flows luxuriously from a fanned knot at the right hip. The weight of Agastya's adornments and the heaviness of his physical body express his social prestige as a respected guru.[34] This depiction might reflect his presence within a royal

temple complex and accords with Agastya's invocation as a royal sage and model for kingship in South and Southeast Asian inscriptions.[35]

Agastya's sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), an indication of his status as a brahmin initiated in the Vedic tradition, extends from the upper left shoulder across his chest. Two additional iconographic accessories reveal important aspects of his religious identity. His right forearm, bent across the center of his chest, is wound with two loops of a long rosary (*rudrākṣamālā*) that he counts with his right hand. Like the mark of initiation noted above, the prayer beads, too, are indicative of his sacerdotal role. His left arm is extended close to the body, and in his hand is a water vessel held between the index and pinkie fingers. The water vessel is an object associated with ascetics and the power of holy water. His head is framed by a flaming aureole carved in low relief. The flaming arc designates the guru as a venerable figure, and in ways that recall the early *Skandapurāṇa* description of Śiva's agents as terrestrial vectors for his immense fiery energy (*tejas*), it suggests that Agastya, too, blazes with the Lord's energy.

As mentioned above, by the thirteenth century Agastya had developed a fixed iconography in Java and conventions in his representation were already well established in images from the classical period. A sculpture of Agastya from central Java (ca. twelfth–thirteenth century CE), now in the collections of the Museum Volkenkunde in the Netherlands, displays a static figure, regally adorned and framed by a trident and holding a rosary and a waterpot in the right and left hands, respectively (fig. 2). In this example, the prominent belly is emphasized. Another, slightly earlier image (ca. ninth–tenth century CE) from central Java, held by Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, displays a similar stance and similar adornments and attributes (fig. 3). The addition of a fly-whisk (*camara*), one of the insignias of royalty, draped over the left shoulder contributes to the regal stature of the image. Like the NMAA sculpture, both of the Central Javanese images are framed by an aureole that designates them as venerated figures. The lotus pedestal of the Volkenkunde sculpture further reinforces the figure's auspiciousness since the lotus is a transregional motif associated with divine agents.

Empowered Objects: Water Vessel, Trident, and Lotus

This section focuses close attention on three of Agastya's iconic accessories as represented in the NMAA sculpture: the water vessel, the trident, and the lotus. While the inclusion of one or more of these three items in Agastya images of the period were conventional and materialized facets of his socioreligious identity as a Śaiva guru, we may also view these objects in more expansive ways as indices of a Śaiva religious ecology and of Agastya's potential to offer devotees emotional, social, and environmental benefits.

In Indic art, the water vessel is emblematic of renunciation and asceticism since a waterpot is one of the few personal items the renouncer is permitted to keep.[36] As such, the objects are typically small, unadorned, and made of natural materials such as dried gourd. Śiva, as the divine personification of the ascetic, often holds one of these simple pots (fig. 4). In Agastya's case, the waterpot can be a visual gesture to his identity as an ascetic as well as to the remarkable story of his birth from the waterpot, since the round pot (*kumbha*) is homologized to the womb (*yoni)*—hence Agastya's common epithet, Kumbhayoni. In the Pāla Agastya at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the sage's waterpot is a tiny, round vessel held between the index and little finger of the left hand and shown with a small vegetal or floral projection at the top (fig. 5; for a similar pot, see fig. 14).[37]

In Javanese Hinduism, by contrast, Agastya's pot is not a renouncer's vessel. Waterpots are receptacles of sacred waters, prepared by priests and used in temple rituals and devotional

FIGURE 4. Śiva as the ascetic with waterpot, accompanied by Pārvatī, Kausambi, ca. 5th century. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by author

FIGURE 5. Agastya, ca. 12th century, India, Bihar. Chloritoid phyllite, H x W x D: 67.9 x 36.2 x 12.1 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.2005.30. Artwork in the public domain

practices. These vessels were often highly decorative items rich in symbolism that recalls the environmental origins of their life-giving waters. While Indic sources attribute the churning of the Milk Ocean as the source of the sacred elixir of immortality (*amṛta*), the Javanese tradition provides a different account. According to the Old Javanese *Tantu Panggĕlaran* (ca. fifteenth century CE),[38] a text that provides a mythic history of Java and the divine origins of the island's mountain landscape, the elixir is produced in the process of relocating the peak of the Indic Mt. Meru to Java.[39] As the gods Śiwa, Wiṣṇu, Brahmā, and Bāyu worked to drag Mt. Meru to the island, the friction of the massive mountain pressing against trees and other vegetation as it bumped along produced a potent plant exudation. The "water" was initially poisonous, but the power of Śiwa's gaze transformed it into the "water of life" (Śiwāmba). The water was then placed in the holy vessel (*kamaṇḍalu*) decorated with gold and jewels and used to bathe the gods. In a Javanese context, the waters in Agastya's vessel are Śiwāmba. As an agent of the Lord, Agastya can share these life-giving waters with his devotees. The lithic origins of the waters also contribute an important environmental affinity to the guru's identity. Agastya's vessel in the NMAA sculpture is further adorned with a decorative floral motif carved in relief along the rounded sides of the pot. The decorative elements recall the description of the divine *kamaṇḍalu* in the *Tantu Panggĕlaran*, which was adorned with precious gems and covered in gold.

FIGURE 6. Water vessel, ca. 13th–14th century, East Java. Bronze, H: 25.5 cm, bronze. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Netherlands, AK-RAK-1992-4. Artwork in the public domain

FIGURE 7. Detail of waterpot held by Agastya, ca. 13th century, East Java, Singosari period. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 78.7 x 40.6 x 20.3 cm. National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Ann and Gilbert Kinney, S2023.9.6

In studies of the bronze ritual vessels used to hold sacred waters, P. Lunsingh Scheurleer and M. J. Klokke drew attention to the tiered lids of East Javanese vessels (ca. thirteenth–fourteenth century CE) as representing the lofty Mt. Meru from which the waters originated.[40] Notably, one of the vessels in a separate study by Klokke shows the tiered mountain arising from a lotus-style pedestal with a serpent or *makara*-head spout projecting from the side (fig. 6).[41] This bronze vessel bears a striking resemblance to Agastya's water vessel in the NMAA sculpture (fig. 7). Like the bronze, the sculpted pot is crowned with a long, pointed projection that gestures to the water's mountain origins. The elongated shape of the lid recalls the Meru-style lids of the bronze vessels. Three tiered projections are visible on the top of the sculpted lid above the sage's fingers. The Rijksmuseum Agastya holds a water vessel with a similar Meru-style lid (see fig. 3), but this one lacks evidence of tiering. Like the bronze vessel, Agastya's vessel in the NMAA sculpture also displays a lotus-petal motif around the base of the lid and at the base of the round vessel above the foot. The elaborate *makara*-spout of the bronze is not present in the NMAA sculpture. The faint circular shape to the left side of the pot, parallel with the lotus-style base of the lid (see fig. 1 and detail in fig. 7), hints at a spout like those shown on the front faces of the water vessels in the Rijksmuseum and Volkenkunde sculptures (see figs. 2, 3). The similarities between the East Javanese bronze vessel and the NMAA sculpture

FIGURE 8. Brahmā, ca. 13th century, East Java, Singosari period. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 212 x 87 x 58 cm. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, the Netherlands, RV-1403-1582

suggest that Agastya's accessory is not simply a renouncer's pot, but a potent ritual object used to contain sacred and life-giving waters.

The water vessel of the NMAA Agastya is imbued with further nuance when viewed in light of two potent iconographic elements, a blossoming lotus stalk and the trident, both carved in low relief on the left and right sides, respectively, of the human figure. The lotus is a common visual idiom in art of the Singosari period[42] and is deployed in a variety of ways: as a pedestal upon which venerable figures are placed (see fig. 2), in the form of buds that deities hold in their hands, and, of significance for this particular Agastya image, as framing objects placed on one or both sides of the human figure. A ca.-thirteenth-century image of Brahmā from the Museum Volkenkunde provides some useful comparanda (fig. 8). Two lotus stalks emerge from behind the figure and his avian vehicle. A leaf and bloom are visible on the left side of the four-armed figure below the fly whisk he holds in his rear left hand. The proper-right side of the image is damaged, but it is likely that the vegetal motif was repeated on this side to create a symmetrical composition. On each side, at mid-thigh level, waterpots are placed directly beneath the lotus stalk. The position of the pots just below the blossom and leaf suggest that they, too, are products of the lotus stalk. In other sculptures of the period, we can see the lotus plants incorporated as a framing motif accompanying auspicious deities,[43] as, for example, in the Singosari-period sculpture of the Śaiva guardian figure Nandīśvara from the Volkenkunde (fig. 9). In both images, the lotus stalks seem to emerge as if organically from the "ground" of the stone sculpture.

The artists and makers responsible for the Agastya sculpture at the NMAA utilized an iconographic idiom in a nuanced way. Extending from the base of the left side of the sculpture, two lotus blossoms emerge supported by vine-like stalks. The larger of the two lotuses is equal in height to the human figure, and the other terminates at shoulder level. Their delicately curled floriate pattern echoes in form the flames of the trident and Agastya's fiery nimbus. The flowers are carved in a lower relief than the waterpot, and they extend from behind the foregrounded pot. This layering gives the impression, at first glance, that the vegetal elements emerge from the pot itself, thus creating an image that evokes the vase-of-plenty motif common in South and Southeast Asian temple sculpture. The overlapping of the water vessel and the lotus stalks could communicate a set of symbolic associations connected to the identity of Agastya. The lotus appears only on one side of the image, which might suggest that it was not intended merely as an auspicious "framing device," but used to express a more specific association. The layering of the familiar lotus motif with the waterpot encourages the viewer to assume a relationship between them. The juxtaposition of these two potent visual symbols in relation to the guru is a sign that he is an agent of auspiciousness capable of effecting fertility. For the worshipers who encountered his image on the temple, the fecund vessel may have also signaled that, like the yogins and gurus who presided over the utopic community in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, Agastya was a worthy and rewarding "vessel" for their pious gifts.

On the right side of the figure, opposite the lotus and water vessel, is the trident. As the weapon emblematic of Śiva, the prominent presence of the trident is a clear indication of the

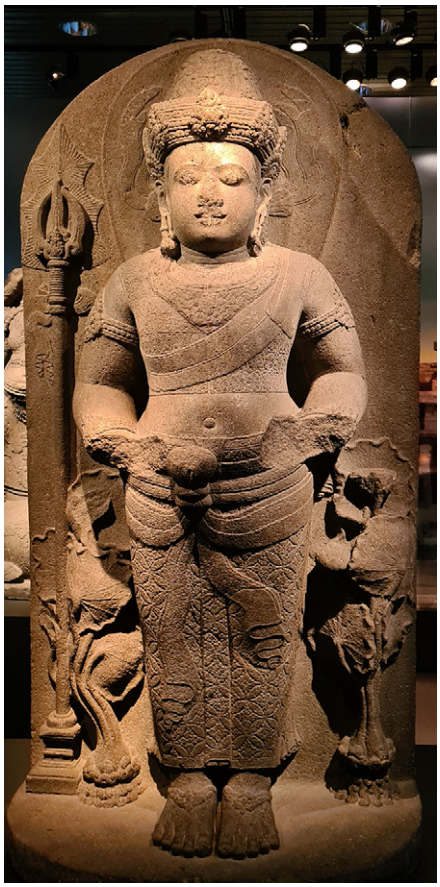

FIGURE 9. Nandīśvara, ca. 13th century, East Java, Singosari period. Volcanic stone, H x W x D: 174 x 93 x 50 cm. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, the Netherlands, RV-1403-1624. Photo courtesy of Marijke Klokke

association of Agastya to this deity. Although the framing of the aureole designates him as a venerable figure, the sage's two-armed, human form indicates his mortal status. The emblematic weapon creates a strong visual affinity or association between the sage and the deity that is indicative of their close relationship. The tips of the trident's three prongs culminate in flamed points that are identical to the flames emanating from the sage's aureole. This may be interpreted as another indication of his association with Śiva: the source of Agastya's fiery energy (*tejas*) is the Lord.

The comparable height and position of the trident, the guru's head, and the lotus suggest an affinity between them, as if they compose a triad. The sage in the middle may be understood as the element that connects the flanking objects to create a polyvalent tableau. Viewed in conjunction with the lotus arising behind it, the life-giving and purifying potential of the waters in Agastya's vessel are expressed in an image of rich fecundity. Considering this pairing of the water vessel and the lotus in conjunction with the trident on the right side of the sculpture prompts a further association of this environmentally inflected tableau with the deity Śiva.

This interpretation aligns with the well-attested role of the Śaiva guru as a source of abundance in early Javanese folklore and material culture—in particular, in the tales of Śaiva gurus using their tridents to release and control waters as analyzed by F. D. K. Bosch.[44] Significant evidence of the associations between Śaiva gurus, their tridents, and waters are found in the fifth-century-CE Tugu inscription. Sponsored by the ruler Pūrṇavarman, the inscription commemorates his ritual construction of a canal in the alluvial landscape north of today's Jakarta.[45] In his study, Bosch drew attention to the visual element that bisects the engraved text: a trident. Supported by a long, thin staff, the three prongs of the *triśūla* rise up to cover the top of the egg-shaped stone in a swirl of rivulet-like prongs (fig. 10). We may view the long staff as a visual analogue for Pūrṇavarman's canal, part of a hydrological infrastructure intended to fertilize the land and prevent flooding. The watery prongs of the trident, on the verge of spilling over the rounded top of the stone, are channeled productively through the canal/staff

FIGURE 10. Tugu Stone inscription of Pūrṇavarman, ca. 5th century, drawing after F. D. K. Bosch, "Guru, Trident and Spring," in *Selected Studies in Indonesian Archaeology* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1961), 166.

FIGURE 11. Inscribed trident (K. 520), ca. 7th century, Cambodia. Polished black sandstone, H x W x D: 102 x 41 x 18 cm. National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Ka 1741. Photo by author

FIGURE 12. Inscribed stone stele of Jayavarman I (K. 367), ca. 7th century. Photo courtesy of Bertrand Porte, National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh

and cut a clear course through the text field of the inscription. In this interpretation, Śiva's trident becomes a tool for ecological wonder working. When the trident is wielded by the king as proxy, the creation of the canal becomes a divinely inspired act evocative of Śiva's bringing forth the life-giving waters in the *Tantu Panggĕlaran*. Within the broader context of the Javanese tradition, Agastya's trident evokes both a recognizable transregional emblem of Śiva while incorporating regionally specific understandings of the Śaiva guru as an ecological agent with power over water.

Bosch's analysis is focused on the early Javanese conceptions of the ecological efficacy of the Śaiva guru. Yet similar associations can also be observed in earlier material culture from mainland Southeast Asia. Stylized representations of Śiva's emblematic trident occur on votive objects and altars from the Khmer Empire,[46] including in the unique votive object of black polished stone inscribed with a ca.-seventh-century inscription that identifies the trident as a receptacle for the lost tooth of an aged Śaiva preceptor (fig. 11). The trident, with a small axe blade projecting from the side, emerges from the top of the rounded vase in a way that recalls the vines and foliage emerging from the *pūrṇaghaṭa*. The association between Śiva, as signified by the emblematic weapon, and the fecundity of the natural world is similarly expressed in the decorative accolade of the K. 367 stele, a ca.-seventh-century-CE inscription of the Khmer ruler Jayavarman I from the mountainside temple at Vat Phu in southeastern Laos (fig. 12).[47]

The crowning point of the stone has been broken, but it would have culminated in an ogee arch or accolade—a characteristic of early Khmer inscriptions and boundary stones (*sima*)—that echoes the pointed peak of a mountain. In the upper panel of the inscribed stone object, the "mountain space" is filled with stylized swirls of lush foliage, at the center of which stands the trident—the weapon emblematic of Śiva—set upon a kind of pedestal. The curvilinear design of the trident's three prongs blends easily with the foliage and serves to naturalize its presence by suggesting that the emblem of Śiva is part of the flourishing natural landscape.

Śaiva Religious Ecologies in South and Southeast Asia

Agastya's narrative biography exemplifies the "civilizing mission" of a Sanskrit-infected religious culture. The obstacles in his way are powerful features of the natural landscape. In South Asian sources, these features are imbued with agency and subjectivity: the mountain who has grown too proud and threatens to block the sun, and the ocean who conceals a demonic and disruptive presence in its depths. As an agent of Śiva, Agastya "domesticates"—that is, he makes auspicious and socially supportive—anxiety-producing aspects of the natural world. In Java, Agastya catalyzes the inherent fecundity of the landscape through the creation of a Śaiva shrine, described in the Peneng inscription as *bhadrāloka*: a vision (*āloka*) of prosperity (*bhadra*). His ability to effect human and environmental flourishing is expressed visually in his icons through the juxtaposition of the water vessel, trident, and lotus.

While the discussion thus far has connected these acts of ecological agency to a particular Śaiva sage, we can use Agastya and his signature attributes to gain broader traction in analyzing images of Śaiva gurus and ascetics as figures who empower the natural landscape by making it receptive to human interventions. These images include representations of Agastya and other Śaiva teachers such as Lakulīśa, as well as representations of anonymous Śaiva gurus. The latter category includes images that employ visual idioms to signal a Śaiva affiliation (e.g., *jaṭāmukuṭa*, *rudrākṣamālā*, legs bound in the *yogapaṭṭa*) for those who are shown engaged in acts of teaching, meditation, and the veneration and lustration of Śiva's lingam.

Agastya's Hermitage at Kālañjara

Perched on a rocky hill at the edge of the Vindhya mountains, the fortress of Kālañjara is instructive for thinking about how images of Śaiva gurus were deployed within devotional and sanctified landscapes. Kālañjara is identified in the epic *Mahābhārata*'s list of pilgrimage destinations (*tīrthas*) as the location of Agastya's hermitage,[48] and its setting in the Vindhya recalls Agastya's famous encounter with the mountain. As an active site of Śaiva religiosity from the Gupta period through the late medieval period, when significant renovations to the monumental temple to Śiva as Nīlakaṇṭha were completed under Chandella patronage (ca. ninth–thirteenth century CE), Kālañjara has a complex and multilayered history.[49] For the purposes of this study, the site provides valuable comparanda in its expansive relief carvings depicting Śaiva ascetics and gurus in the act of teaching, seated in meditation, and lustrating the lingam.

The majority of these images are strikingly similar and seem to represent a certain class or type of Śaiva guru rather than individual teachers. There are two types of images, however, that stand apart since these Śaiva gurus are shown with distinguishing attributes. One is easily identifiable as the Pāśupata teacher Lakulīśa (Lord with a Club) bearing his namesake club (fig. 13). The other type consists of images of a seated, bearded ascetic, crowned with a massive twisted *jaṭā*, who holds the rosary and is accompanied by a waterpot at his left side or cradled in his bent arm. For example, a waterpot with a sprouted top is clearly visible

FIGURE 13. Relief carving showing Lakulīśa, at center, seated on a lotus surrounded by four pupils, ca. 11th–12th century CE, Nīlakaṇṭha temple courtyard, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo by author

FIGURE 14. Relief carving showing Agastya with the waterpot and scenes of lingam veneration, ca. 11th–12th century CE, Nīlakaṇṭha temple courtyard, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo by author

alongside the figure who appears as part of a relief depicting *ekamukhaliṅgas* under veneration (fig. 14).[50] Another fragmentary sculpture located in the Nīlakaṇṭha temple courtyard shows a seated, bearded male figure with a waterpot at his left side (fig. 15). We may hypothesize that these are images of Agastya. While Agastya imagery is rare in the context of northern India, the presence of the waterpot as a signature iconographic accessory in the reliefs at Kālañjara distinguishes these guru figures from the other generalized type of ascetics depicted without attributes.

The potential pairing of Agastya and Lakulīśa at Kālañjara is intriguing because it suggests an association between these two archetypical Śaiva gurus that can also be traced in Old Javanese sources. The Old Javanese tradition of the "five sages" (*pāñca ṛṣi*) includes in its list the names of four gurus that appear as the disciples of Lakulīśa in Indic sources, such as the early *Skandapurāṇa*.[51] In the Indian materials, this group would be led by Lakulīśa as the manifestation of Śiva on earth. In the Old Javanese sources, the fifth guru is known as Pātañjala (or with the variants Pṛtañjala/Pratañjala).[52] This name, as Alexis Sanderson suggests, reflects an ancient corruption of Pītañjala (He Who Drank the Waters).[53] Following Sanderson's hypothesis, Agastya, designated with an epithet that recalls his famous drinking of the ocean's waters, replaced Lakulīśa in Java as the leader of the five sages and Śiva's agent on earth. This substitution of

FIGURE 15. Sculpture showing Agastya with the waterpot, ca. 11–12th century CE, Nīlakaṇṭha temple courtyard, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo by author

Agastya for Lakulīśa seems plausible given the prominence of the sage in Java and the absence of references to Lakulīśa in Southeast Asia.[54]

The inclusion of Agastya is also fitting within the context of the Śaiva landscape of Kālañjara in which this guru's presence, alongside Lakulīśa and the many other images of anonymous ascetics, works to sanctify the space. Reliefs depicting ascetics, water carriers, and scenes of lingam veneration together with various deities from the Hindu pantheon can also be found grouped around the numerous tanks, springs, and caves throughout the hilltop.[55] Within the Nīlakaṇṭha temple complex, these carvings are clustered intensely around the mouth of the cave, which houses the inner sanctum and lingam shrine, and on the surrounding rock face that flows with water in the rainy months (fig. 16). Kālañjara and its Śaiva landscape have long been identified with

FIGURE 16. View of Nīlakaṇṭha temple *maṇḍapa* projecting from the rock face of the cave, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. The small tank and stairs behind the structure provide access to spring water. Photo by author

FIGURES 17a,b. Terracotta seals from Bhīṭā, ca. 5th century, Uttar Pradesh, India. Image after K. K. Thapylal, *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals: A Study of North Indian Seals and Sealings from circa Third century B.C. to Midseventh Century A.D.* (Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, 1972), 145, nos. 15, 16.

caves and natural springs. These landscape features appear in Gupta-period seals excavated from Bhīṭā, which juxtapose the central image of the lingam flanked by Śiva's emblematic trident and the mountain with its caves represented by heaps of hollow rounded projections (figs. 17a,b). In figure 17b, the legend of Kālañjarabhaṭṭārakasya (of the Lord of Kālañjara) appears below a series of connected emblems in three registers: on the bottom is an undulating stream of water; the middle is a mountain filled with caves; the lingam fills the upper register.

Through these symbols—mountain, cave, water, and lingam—the seals provide a pithy visual template that identifies the lithic and hydrological landscape with the presence of Śiva. These associations persist in the later medieval sculpture and epigraphy. Relief carvings of water carriers appear frequently alongside images of Śaiva gurus and near many of the natural and excavated caves found on the mountain. Numerous inscriptions on small labels record the names of religious specialists who likely used the caves for shelter and religious practice. A Sanskrit inscription (ca. eleventh–twelfth century) from Khambhor Śiva—a cave site with a large tank located on the northern slope of the hilltop and south of the Nīlakaṇṭha temple—is engraved on a rocky overhang above the water (figs. 18, 19). While fragmentary, the inscription mentions the repair of caves where lingams had been installed.[56] Just below the inscribed text is an image of a water carrier and, below that, a panel depicting the seven mother goddesses (*saptamātṛkās*) flanked by Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa beside a scene of lingam veneration. The inclusion of these images with the inscription suggests that the waters of the tank were connected with these lingam shrines, and with the worship of the powerful *mātṛkās* as deities affiliated with Śiva, and that the waters may have been used in rituals of lustration by the Śaiva religious specialists who tended them.

FIGURE 18. Khambor Śiva tank and caves, ca. 11th–12th century, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo by author

FIGURE 19. Stone inscription and relief carvings above the Khambor Śiva Tank, ca. 11th–12th century, Kālañjara, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photo by author

Empowering the Landscape at Mỹ So'n

The sage's hermitage is often imagined as a kind of ideal setting—a quiet, cool forest that provides respite from the world. Yet, this space set apart from society is by no means a wilderness. This carefully curated scene celebrates a domesticated natural landscape, its flora and fauna unthreatening—as seen, for example, in reliefs from Mahabalipuran and Deogarh in which lions and deer relax together under the gaze of the guru who is seated beneath the branches of a fruiting tree.[57] Rather than representations of the everyday lived spaces of ascetics, such images are more productively viewed as a visual rhetoric that communicates a particular social function of asceticism within the Śaiva imaginary. Thus, we may understand the role of the ascetic and Śaiva guru as actively constituting these idyllic landscape settings. Śaiva presence and practice catalyze the potential of the land since they both empower and are empowered by it.

The early Cham temple complex at Mỹ So'n in coastal Vietnam is an important setting for considering the role of the Śaiva guru in sanctifying spaces in Southeast Asia. Like Kālañjara, Mỹ So'n was embedded within the regional landscape and the mountain and water features that defined it. The earliest inscriptions from the site dedicate it to a particular form of Śiva as Bhadreśvara (Prosperous Lord). In addition to designating Śiva as a source of abundance and well-being, the title Bhadreśvara appears to designate a lineage or clan deity, presumably a lingam named after the Cham ruler Bhadravarman. A fifth-century-CE inscription from Mỹ So'n commemorates a donation of land given to Bhadreśvara by the ruler, who is described as "devoted to the feet of Bhadreśvarasvāmin."[58] The inscription goes on to identify the parameters of the area that Bhadreśvara controlled, an expansive valley defined by key landscape features: "the Sulaha Mountain to the east, the Great Mountain (*mahāparvata*) in the south, the Kucaka Mountain in the west, and the Great River (*mahānadī*) in the north." The reference to the Great Mountain likely refers to the landmark known locally as the Cat's Tooth Mountain. The distinctive hooked peak lies in a direct line of sight from multiple temples within the Mỹ So'n complex. The Great River is presumably the Thu Bhon River, the conduit of Cham trade and travel that frames the valley and flows into the sea.

One of the earliest shrines at Mỹ So'n is referred to as E1 (ca. seventh–eighth century CE). The structure of the temple was a simple brick enclosure that contained a lingam shrine. As reconstructed by Tran Ky Phoung, E1 was intended as a *januk*, an indigenous design consisting of a pedestal with four wooden pillars supporting a pyramidal roof.[59] Little remains of the brick exterior from this early phase of construction. What has survived is the remarkable stone platform that would have supported an enormous lingam (now lost) enshrined in E1. The platform consists of fourteen stone blocks and stairway pedestals. Each element is decorated with dynamic scenes of gurus engaged in a variety of activities—instructing students, studying manuscripts, seated in contemplation (figs. 20–23), and playing music and dancing in celebration of Śiva.

In figure 20, carved in the exterior of the stairway pedestal, a guru reads from his manuscript. The cascade of foliage extending in an arc down the right side of the image suggests that he is seated in a forest or bower. A squirrel scurries down the tree trunk. On his left side, a parrot peeks out from a hollow as if to read over his shoulder. Figure 21 shows two adjacent ritual scenes—a figure seated with knees bound in the *yogapaṭṭa* on the left and a bearded figure lustrating a lingam on a pedestal in the niche on the right.[60] The lingam veneration takes place at the base of tree while an attendant figure looks on with offerings including a basket brimming with fruit. In the third panel (fig. 22), a crouching ascetic figure, his hair piled high atop

FIGURE 20. Carved stone block from lingam platform from E1 temple, Mỹ So'n, ca. 7th–8th century CE. Currently on display in the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, Vietnam. Photo by author

FIGURE 21. Carved stone block from lingam platform from E1 temple, Mỹ So'n, ca. 7th–8th century CE. Currently on display in the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, Vietnam. Photo by author

his head, sits in a hollow space framed on his right side by the stylized rounded projections used to represent mountains or mountain caves (see also fig. 17). Figure 23 uses the forest as a setting for teaching as indicated by the guru's gestures of instruction which are received with a gesture of reverence by the student on his right. In each of these scenes, depictions of the natural environment frame the composition, providing an ideal context in which the activities take place. These idealizations are central to the overall imagining of a landscape being actively

FIGURE 22. Carved stone block from lingam platform from E1 temple, Mỹ So'n, ca. 7th–8th century CE. Currently on display in the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, Vietnam. Photo by author

FIGURE 23. Carved stone block from lingam platform from E1 temple, Mỹ So'n, ca. 7th–8th century CE. Currently on display in the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, Vietnam. Photo by author

empowered by the activities of Śiva's agents.[61] As the Śaiva agents and their activities encircle the pedestal, they work to energize the lingam, the ritual foci of the shrine and the manifestation of the Prosperous Lord (Bhadreśvara).[62]

Conclusions

In his celebrated acts of moving mountains and swallowing seas, Agastya appears as a Śaiva ecological agent whose deeds made the landscape productive and, thereby, receptive to ritual and political manipulation. Agastya's environmental interventions are specific to his hagiography;

yet the guru's status as a transregional emblem of the Śaiva tradition provides a ground to consider the significance of these associations within the larger context of Śiva-centered religion in early South and Southeast Asia and supports a comparative analysis of the cultural connections between gurus, Śiva worship, and the empowering potential of the natural world. This study has shown how these relationships could be materialized within iconographic programs and architectural spaces in ways that portray Śaiva gurus as accomplished beings empowered by the deity's *tejas* and capable of alleviating suffering, nurturing community, and bestowing prosperity for the Lord's devotees.

The central role played by the physical environment and the landscape in early Śaivism is critical for our understanding of the role and symbolic presence of guru figures within temples and sanctified spaces. As expressed in visual and material culture, Śaiva religious specialists are representatives of a particular religious ecology that communicates the emplaced nature and world-affirming values of early Śiva-centered religion. Although conceptions of worldly prosperity and well-being in the world might appear to contradict an ascetic ideal grounded in practices of renunciation, representations from across early South and Southeast Asia communicate close associations between Śaiva gurus and the salutary benefits of their teachings for the initiates and devotees who received them. In a Śaiva context, asceticism is an aspiration to self-mastery and the resulting status of empowerment that effects an identity or union with the Lord. The acquisition of this empowerment and the attainment of union was dependent upon the dedication of the aspirants, the skill of the guru, and, critically, the grace of Śiva.

In the East Javanese sculpture of Agastya held by the NMAA, the guru's Śaiva affiliation, indicated by the presence of the trident, is complemented by a stalk of blooming lotus flowers that signal his capacity to effect fecundity and abundance, and a vessel brimming with the life-giving elixir produced by the sacred Mt. Meru. Considering this unique sculpture within the broader Śaiva landscape of South and Southeast Asia shows how it participated in a religious ecology that viewed features of the natural landscape—for example, mountains, caves, and springs—as empowered by Śiva and activated by the ascetics and gurus who served as the Lord's representatives on earth.

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Notes

1 My understanding of ecology is informed by current work on Indigenous ecologies and ontologies that emphasize forms of interspecies kinship, nonhuman agency, and the vitality of more-than-human worlds. The following works have been particularly influential in my theorizing of an early Śaiva religious ecology: Kim TallBear, "An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21.2/3 (2015): 230–35; Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Radhika Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Marshall Sahlins, *The New Science of the Enchanted Universe: An Anthropology of Most of Humanity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

2 Jan Gonda's study of the supernatural powers of the guru is useful in linking these capabilities by drawing attention to the sensorial and affective regimes in which the power of the guru was experienced. Divine energy, materialized as a bright and fiery energy (*tejas*), animates certain individuals and makes its presence known in the world: "ce *tejas*, qui est une substance qu'on peut voir et qui peut entrer dans un corps, qui constitue donc une substance matérielle pourvue de dimensions, est de nature à faire baisser ou tomber des choses qui se trouvent près de lui." On this point he cites the *Lalitavistara*, in which the *tejas* of the Buddha (still in the womb) causes a tree branch to bend in support of his laboring mother. In addition to its effects in the phenomenal world, the social and symbolic weight of the guru can evoke feelings of anxiety, fear, or dread—emotions that, as Gonda notes, are often accompanied in Sanskrit with forms of *pīḍita* (to be oppressed). Gonda, "A propos d'un sens magico-religieux de skt. guru-," in *Selected Studies*, vol. 2, *Sanskrit Word Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 294–302.

3 Agastya is included within the canonical group of the seven Vedic sages (*saptarṣi*).

4 The sculpture is not currently on display (https://asia-archive.si.edu/object/LTS2015.4/)

5 K. R. Rajagopalan, "Identification of 'Śiva-Guru' or 'Bhaṭṭāra-Guru' Images of Java—A Discussion," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* 71 (1996): 132–42; R. N. Poerbatjaraka, *Agastya in den Archipel* (Leiden: Brill, 1926); Ordhendra C. Gangoly, "The Cult of Agastya and the Origin of Indian Colonial Art," *Rūpam: An Illustrated Quartly* [sic] *Journal of Oriental Art, Chiefly Indian* 1 (1926): 1–16.

6 Studies of Agastya's iconography in South Asia have tended to focus on southern Indian and Nepalese materials, an emphasis justified, in part, by the rich iconographic corpus from those regions. Notable exceptions include the study of a fragmentary sculpture from Khajuraho and a series of publications on the important Pāla-period Agastya in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) (see fig. 5). See Devangana Desai, "A Rare Sculpture of Sage Agastya at Khajuraho," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* 74 (1999): 66–70. For a study of the LACMA Agastya and its bibliography, see Stephen Markel, "Further Observations on Some Unusual Aspects of a Recently Acquired Pāla Period Masterpiece," in *Prajñādhara: Essays on Asian Art, History, Epigraphy and Culture, in Honour of Gouriswar Bhattacharya*, ed. Gerd J. R. Mevissen and Anundhati Banerji (New Delhi: Kaveri, 2009), 281–87 and pls. On Agastya in Nepal, see Carol Radcliffe Bolon, "Images of Agastya in Nepal," *Artibus Asiae* 51.1/2 (1991): 75–89.

7 This suffering is described as manifold and occasioned by three different sources: fate (*adhidaivika*), the external world (*adhibhautika*), and one's own self (*ādhyātmika*). Mental suffering is the outcome of negative emotional states such as anger, greed, etc. Other sources include ignorance of the nature of the self, which gives rise to the state of being "bound," as cattle are bound. See Minoru Hara, "Pāśupata Concept of Duḥkha," in *Pāśupata Studies*, ed. Jun Takashima (Vienna: Nobili Institut, 2002), 77–88.

8 The edited text is from Peter Bisschop, "*Pañcārthabhāṣya, Adhyāya* 1: A Critical Edition," 2022, https://leidenuniv.academia.edu/PeterBisschop/Drafts. The translation is from Hans Bakker, "The Gospel of Kauṇḍinya: The Descent of God in Gujarat and the Practice of Imitating God," in *Myths, Martyrs and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen, and Yme Kuiper (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 518.

9 For example, "What can men do for Śiva who is already complete? Whatever is done for Śiva's devotees is done for Śiva" [v. 50]. Peter C. Bisschop, Nirajan Kafle, and Timothy Lubin, *A Śaiva Utopia: The Śivadharma's Revision of Brahmanical Varṇāśramadharma* (Naples: UniorPress, 2021), 116–17.

10 Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin, 121, v. 81.

11 Hence Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin describe the community as a "Śaiva utopia" in the title of their book. It should be noted, however, that this utopia is gendered male. The inclusion of women and low-caste persons is occasionally mentioned in exceptional

terms but does not represent the normative vision expressed in the majority of the work.

12 This description of the *śivayogin* is found in the text of the *Satpātrādhyāya* published in Florinda De Simini, "Rules of Conduct for the Śaivas: The Intersection of Dharmaśāstra and Śaiva Devotion in the Śivadharmottara," in *'Verità e bellezza': Essays in Honour of Raffaele Torella*, ed. Francesco Sferra and Vincenzo Vergiani (Naples: UniorPress, 2022), 291–336.

13 *Śivadharmottara* 4.8, in De Simini, 296.

14 *Śivadharmottara* 4.15, in De Simini, 297.

15 The use of *anugraha* in this context can be read as synonymous with *prasāda* in Kauṇḍinya's commentary. For a full translation and discussion of this section of the *Skandapurāṇa*, see Elizabeth A. Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape: Narrative, Place, and the Śaiva Imaginary in Early Medieval North India* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 16–21.

16 *Skandapurāṇa* 167.120 and .132, in Cecil, 16–21.

17 *Tīrthas* (river fords or crossings) are the earliest examples of Indian pilgrimage sites and are held sacred because they permit pilgrims to "bridge the gap" by serving as a point of contact between the mundane world and the celestial world of the gods. Diana Eck, "India's Tīrthas: Crossings in Sacred Geography," *History of Religions* 20.4 (1981): 323–44.

18 *Skandapurāṇa* 167.133–34, in Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape*, 16–21.

19 On the lists of these *tīrthas* in premodern South and Southeast Asian literary and epigraphic sources, see Peter C. Bisschop, *Early Śaivism and the Skandapurāṇa: Sects and Centres* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2006). On the emplaced nature of early Śaivism, see Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape*.

20 See Elizabeth A. Cecil, "A Natural Wonder: From Liṅga Mountain to 'Prosperous Lord' at Vat Phu," in *Primary Sources and Asian Pasts*, ed. Peter C. Bisschop and Cecil (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 341–83.

21 On the subduing of the Vindhya, see *Mahābhārata* 3.102. This deed is also recorded in the early sixth- to seventh-century-CE *Skandapurāṇa* (60.6–14), a foundational text for the Pāśupata Śaiva tradition. For this account, see Yuko Yokochi, *Skandapurāṇa*, vol. 3, *Adhyāyas 34.1-61, 53-69: The Vindhyavāsinī Cycle; Critical Edition with an Introduction and Annotated English Synopsis* (Leiden: Brill; Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2013).

22 This description of Agastya is recorded in *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.10.77. For this passage, see Sheldon Pollock, *The Ramayana: Book 3, The Forest*, Clay Sanskrit Library 15 (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 262nn77–78.

23 *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.12. Vātāpi is associated with the ancient Calukya capital of Badami, and the tank located there is called Agastya *tīrtha*.

24 *Raghuvaṃśa* 4.21. Mallinātha's commentary on this verse describes the autumnal season as the time when the bright star of Kumbhayoni (i.e., Agastya) appears and makes the water clear and pure to drink. In *Raghuvaṃśa* 4.44, Raghu's campaign into the Tamil lands describes him as heading south in the direction associated with Agastya. This directional association precedes a verse about the Kaveri River. In the Tamil tradition, Agastya is also connected to this river whose waters, according to the narrative, flowed forth from his waterpot. On Agastya in the Tamil lands, see David Shulman, *Tamil: A Biography* (Harvard: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 25–42.

25 Agastya's environmental works are unique, yet his role as a brahmin socializing new spaces through the dissemination of religious doctrines and practices resonates with the mythic biographies of other sages. For example, the guru Lakulīśa and his disciples spread the Pāśupata doctrine and practice of yoga across northern India. Also comparable is the legend of Kauṇḍinya, the sage responsible for founding Kambujadeśa (Cambodia) through marriage with the Indigenous princess Somā, who was associated with the Mekong River. On Lakulīśa, see Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape.* On the Kauṇḍinya story, see Rüdiger Gaudes, "Kauṇḍinya, Preah Thaong, and the 'Nāgī Somā': Some Aspects of a Cambodian Legend," *Asian Folklore Studies* 52 (1993): 333–58.

26 For a survey of Agastya's appearances in Old Javanese literature, see Poerbatjaraka, *Agastya in den Archipel*, 32–42.

27 In the Old Javanese text, Agastya is instructed by Śiva to subdue the mountain, evidence of Agastya's close affinity to Śiva, an episode that is not present in the Sanskrit accounts of this event. See Poerbatjaraka, 33–34.

28 Stuart Robson and Hadi Sidomulyo, *Threads of the Unfolding Web: The Old Javanese Tantu Panggĕlaran* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2021), 37.

29 The origins of this water are discussed below.

30 The *Matsyapurāṇa* describes him more precisely as the measure of a thumb. See Bolon, "Images of Agastya," 75–89.

31 Himansu Bhusan Sarkar, *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Java (up to 928 A.D.)* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadyay, 1971), 15–24, no. III: stone inscription of Sañjaya (Canggal).

32 Poerbatjaraka's interpretation is based on his reading of the edition of the Canggal inscription pub-

lished by H. Kern, *Verspreide Geschriften, onder zijn toezicht verzameld* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1917), 7:115. See Poerbatjaraka, *Agastya in den Archipel*, 43–45. For an alternative reading and interpretation, see Sarkar, *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Java*, 20–22.

33 For an overview of these debates and the history of scholarship on this inscription and the others in the corpus, see Poerbatjaraka, *Agastya in den Archipel*, 45–51; Sarkar, *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Java*, 171–77; Arlo Griffiths, "Imagine Laṅkapura at Prambanan," in *From Laṅkā Eastwards: The Rāmāyaṇa in the Literature and Visual Arts of Indonesia*, ed. Andrea Acri, Helen Creese, and Arlo Griffiths (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 134–40.

34 In addition to the LACMA Agastya, we can compare the robust physical forms of the gurus depicted as receiving students and offering instruction in ca. eleventh-century-CE sculpted panels from Khajuraho. The Pāśupata teacher Lakulīśa also appears in a highly ornamented and regal form in the doorway panel of the ca. fifth- to sixth-century Jogeshvari Caves. See Tamara Sears, "In the Gaze of the Guru: Shikshadana Scenes at Khajuraho," in *Art, Icon, and Architecture in South Asia: Essays in Honour of Dr. Devangana Desai*, ed. Anila Verghese and Anna L. Dallapiccola (Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2015), 151–68. On the image from Jogeshvari, see Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape*, 194, pl. 77a.

35 Some ninth-century Khmer rulers claimed matrilineal descent from the guru Agastya. See K. 95 from Phnoṃ Prah Bat and K. 323 from Lolei. Abel Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites de Campā et du Cambodge* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1893), 369–70, 394–95. Chandella inscriptions from the Śaiva temple complex at Kālañjara refer to his exploits, which are homologized to the deeds of the king. As the sage subdued the mountains and consumed the ocean so, too, did the Chandella king force enemy kings to bow and consume rival rulers like the waters of the ocean. H. H. Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the Paramāras, Chandellas, Kachchhapaghātas and Two Minor Dynasties*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum 7 (New Delhi: Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1989), 3:501, 509.

36 On the significance of the water vessel in the life of the Śaiva ascetic, see Diwakar Acharya, "The Pātravidhi: A Lakulīśa Pāśupata Manual on the Purification and Use of the Initiate's Vessel," in *Samskṛta-sādhuta: Goodness of Sanskrit; Studies in Honour of Professor Ashok N. Aklujkar* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2012), 1–29.

37 On the role of the waterpot in the ritual worship of Agastya, see Bolon, "Images of Agastya"; and K. R. Rajagopalan, "Agastya Cult and Iconography," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* 67/68 (1992–93): 210–18.

38 T. G. T. Pigeaud, *De Tantu Panggĕlaran: Een oud-Javaansch Prozageschrift* ('s-Gravenhage: Boek- en steendrukkerij voorheen H. L. Smits, 1924), 134–39.

39 See Robson and Sidomulyo, *Threads of the Unfolding Web*, 14–18.

40 P. Lunsingh Scheurleer and M. J. Klokke, *Divine Bronze: Ancient Indonesian Bronzes from AD 600 to 1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 139–40, 143–44.

41 M. J. Klokke, "Drie Javaanse watervaten in hun religieuze context," *Aziatische Kunst* 26.1 (1996): 45–51.

42 The style of the lotuses is one of the criteria used to posit a date for the image since the representation of the plants arising from the ground or other natural base distinguishes them from Majapahit exemplars in which the lotuses are depicted in pots. On the lotus motif in Javanese material culture, see M. J. Klokke, "Stone Images of the Singhasari and Majapahit Periods," *Arts of Asia* 30.6 (2000): 60–68; Lesley S. Pullen, "Worn Textiles of Singhasāri," *Aziatische Kunst* 19.2 (2019): 19–27; and Johanna Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, "The Dikpālakas in Ancient Java," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 111.4 (1955): 356–84.

43 Perhaps not surprisingly, the lotus is not a motif in images of fierce deities or bellicose manifestations, such as the Śaiva guardian Mahakāla or Śiva as Bhairava. However, it should be noted that not all "auspicious" deities are consistently depicted with lotuses. Identifying the ubiquity or idiomatic nature of a visual element should not desensitize us to the nuanced and strategic way that such elements can be deployed artistically. On a related point in the context of South Asian lotus motifs, see Fatima Quarishi, "Luminescent Lotuses: Mimesis in Miḥrābs and Micro-architecture at Maklī," *Philological Encounters* 7 (2022): 55–94.

44 F. D. K. Bosch, "Guru, Trident and Spring," in *Selected Studies in Indonesian Archaeology*, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 5 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1961), 153–70.

45 J. Noorduyn and H. Verstappen, "Pūrṇavarman's River-Works near Tugu," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 128.2/3 (1972): 298–30.

46 John Guy, "Shiva's Land: Brahmanical Sculpture in the Religious Landscape of Early Southeast Asia," *Orientations* 45.3 (2014) 56–57.

47 For the text of the inscription, see Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions*

in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Other Indo-Aryan Languages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 280–83. For further discussion of the inscription and its context, see Cecil, "Natural Wonder," 341–83.

48 *Mahābhārata* 3.85.15. On these passages, see also Peter C. Bisschop, "Two Pre-Chandella Inscriptions from Kālañjara," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56 (2013): 280.

49 For a discussion of the importance of Kālañjara for the Pāśupata movement, see Hans T. Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa: Northern India in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). On some early inscriptions from the site, see Bisschop, "Two Pre-Chandella Inscriptions," 279–94.

50 The fragmentary base of a second image is preserved on the upper-right side of the seated guru (see fig. 12). The crossed legs are still discernible along with the outline of a rounded pot just above the left knee.

51 Alexis Sanderson, "Śaivism among the Khmers: Part I," *Bulletin de l' École française d'Extrême-Orient* 90/91 (2003): 349–462. On the Pāśupata tradition in northern India and the role of Lakulīśa and his students, see Cecil, *Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape*.

52 On the sources for these groupings, see C. Hooykaas, *Agama Tirtha: Five Studies in Hindu-Balinese Religion* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappji, 1964).

53 On this interpretation, see Sanderson, "Śaivism among the Khmers," 375n86.

54 On this point, see Andrea Acri, who suggests that the incorporation of Agastya in the Old Javanese tradition was a strategy to lend the teachings of the Pāśupata tradition a greater status through association with the venerated sage. Acri, *Dharma Pātañjala: A Śaiva Scripture from Ancient Java Studied in the Light of Related Old Javanese and Sanskrit Texts* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2011), 371–73. For the same arguments about the role of Agastya in the Balinese context, see Andrea Acri, "From Pañcakuśika to Kanda Mpat: From a Pāśupata Myth to Balinese Folklore," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 7 (2014): 146–78.

55 The water carriers are perhaps medieval representations of *kavad/kānvar* rituals, named after the device used to transport the water in two vessels suspended from a pole. In these practices, water from the Ganges or other sacred river is transported by devotees for ritual use in their local Śiva temple. In the context of Kālañjara, the images might refer to practices of transporting water from the mountain's many springs and tanks for use in the lustration of the lingams in the cave behind the Nīlakaṇṭha temple and in other cave shrines, as suggested by the inscription from the Balkandeśvara tank.

56 An edition of this inscription was published by Vijay Kumar and Alok Rajan in 2021, but the reading may still be improved. The first verse in Vasantatilakā meter (line 13) includes a list of Śaiva cave sites (these may be lingam shrines since some end with the suffix *-īśvara*). The second verse (lines 4–6) mentions that these stone abodes (i.e., the caves) that are Śaiva abodes for liberation (*śailamayā śaivagṛhāṇi muktyai*) have been made new again (*kṛtāni punarṇṇavāni*). Kumar and Rajan, "Inscriptions of the Kalinjar Fort, Kalinjar Distrinct Banda, Uttar Pradesh," *Indian Journal of Archeology* 6.2 (2021): 653–54.

57 On these scenes, see Tamara Sears, "Encountering Ascetics on and beyond the Indian Temple Wall," in *Material Culture in Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object*, ed. Benjamin Fleming and Richard Mann (London: Routledge, 2014), 172–94.

58 For this inscription, catalogued as C. 72, see L. Finot, "Notes d'épigraphie I: Deux nouvelles inscriptions de Bhadravarman Ier, roi de Champa," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 2 (1902): 187–91.

59 Tran Ky Phuong, "The Integral Relationship between Hindu Temple Sculpture and Architecture: A New Approach to the Arts of Champa," in *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*, ed. Tran Ky Phuong and Bruce M. Lockhart (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011), 277–99.

60 The lingam appears to have a face projecting from the side. Following John Guy's analysis, this image provides evidence of the practice of adorning lingams with decorative sheaths (*kośa*), some with the face (*mukha*) of the deity emerging from the front. John Guy, "Śaiva Ritual: *liṅgakośa* and *mukhakośa* in Champa," in *Vibrancy in Stone: Đá Nẵng Museum of Cham Sculpture*, ed. Trần Kỳ Phương, V. Văn Hắng, and Peter D. Sharrock (Bangkok: River Books, 2018), 89–96.

61 In her work on Cham temples, Parul Pandya Dhar inquires as to the role of these scenes and wonders if they may be vignettes from the imagined lives of sages dwelling on Kailāsa, the abode of Siva, with the dynamic figure of the load bearer on the staircase fronting the platform alluding to Rāvaṇa, who had vainly attempted to lift the Kailāsa. I find this idea highly plausible. Considering broader patterns in the transposition of Indic sacred geographies and mythic locales through visual and epigraphic material in early Southeast Asia, we can interpret the E1 pedestal as contributing to the establishment of a new Śaiva geography through the adaptation

of Indic models. Dhar, "Early Temples of Campā, Vietnam: Shaping an Architectural Language," in *Temple Architecture and Imagery of South and Southeast Asia*, *Prāsādanidhi: Papers Presented to Professor M. A. Dhaky*, ed. Dhar and Gerd J. R. Mevissen (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2016), 30–51.

62 Swati Chemburkar and Shivani Kapoor have argued that the Śaiva ascetics depicted on the E1 pedestal are representatives of the early Pāśupata tradition. This is certainly plausible since there is epigraphic evidence to suggest a Pāśupata presence in mainland Southeast Asia at this time. Yet, the images lack any defining features that support a specifically Pāśupata affiliation (e.g., bathing in ashes, wearing a garland discarded after lingam worship, and feigning madness to incur social censure), nor are there surviving contemporaneous epigraphic sources from the site that mention the presence of Pāśupatas. Given the lack of evidence to support a sectarian association, I think it is sufficient to use the more inclusive term *Śaiva* to describe the figures depicted on the E1 pedestal. Chemburkar and Kapoor, "The Pāśupata Sect in Ancient Cambodia and Champa," in Trần Kỳ Phương, V. Văn Hằng, and Sharrock, *Vibrancy in Stone*, 45–56.