



Fig. 7 *Liṅga altar, 9th century. Mý Sơn temple A10, Quảng Nam province, Việt Nam. Photographed during excavation in 1928. (Photograph courtesy EFEO)*



Fig. 8 *Relief depicting a Brahman performing liṅgapūjā. Mý Sơn temple E.1 altar pedestal, late 7th century, Quảng Nam province. Sandstone. (Photograph John Guy, 1996)*

It is in the Cham regions of central Việt Nam that *liṅgakośa* assume particular prominence, as witnessed by both the epigraphic record and surviving examples, in gold, silver and bronze.¹⁹ This is in marked contrast to Khmer epigraphy, which as noted makes only rare reference to the gifting of *kośa*. Cham epigraphy is almost exclusively royal, and much concerned with recording royal religious donations. Royal inscriptions remain the prime source for understanding the religious orientations and associated ritual practices of the early rulers of Southeast Asia. However, the epigraphic record alone provides a limited vision of the reality of institutionalized state religion and the role of ritual. In the early kingdoms of Champa, evidence of institutionalised Śaiva worship is abundant in the form of stone *liṅgas*, including the monumental *liṅga*-pedestals that remain in-situ at Mý Sơn (Fig. 7). The scale of these *liṅga* indicates the size of the *kośas* deployed in worship in these sanctuaries.

The first secure reference to the installation of precious *kośa* in association with the worship of these *liṅgas* occurs in the Sanskrit inscription (C.87, Cat. 7) installed by king Vikrāntavarman at Mý Sơn on the 19 May, Śaka 609 (687 CE), found nearby to temple B6 in 1903.²⁰ It records the dedication by the royal devotee, referred to in the inscription both by his honorific title of Śrī Prakāsadharman, and by his reign name, Vikrāntavarman, of a *liṅga* to Īśāneśvara (Śiva), and the installation of both a silver *kośa* for Īśāneśvara and a gold diadem (*mukuta*) for Bhadreśvara, both names being epithets of Śiva. These ritual gifts are associated with

divine radiance, the *kośa* 'as the bright Moon', and the *mukuta* 'as the Sun'.²¹ As a number of *liṅgas* survive from the temple B group, we may gauge from them the impressive scale of the now lost *kośa*. Inscription C.87 however gives no indication if this was a *mukhakośa*, with one or more of the projecting heads of Śiva.

A century later, a newly identified foundation inscription of king Satyavarman, dated 778 CE, at the Hoà Lai temple, Ninh Thuận Province, specifically refers to the gifting of precious *kośa*.²² Here Śrī Satyavarman records his foundation of a *liṅga* dedicated to Śiva Vṛddheśvara, who is evoked as the protector of the territories of the Cham kingdom of Pāṇḍuraṅga and of Satyavarman's royal authority, and is named as the recipient of a '*kośa*, made of silver with a golden face'.²³ Further mention is made of an endowment to support a community of Brahmans, to reside there and provide ritual service. The Mý Sơn temple E1 *liṅga* pedestal depicts an array of such priests in relief panels around its base (Cat. 9, BTC 6-22. 4). Of particular importance in this discussion is one scene which, in my reading, depicts a Brahman ascetic performing lustration worship on an *ekhamukhaliṅga* the only such visual evidence known from Southeast Asia (Fig. 8).²⁴ The most compelling evidence to support this interpretation is found in a *Kuṣāṇa* – era panel of an open *liṅga*-shrine with an attached 'mask' of Śiva (Fig. 9).

The discovery in the past two decades of a significant number of precious metal *liṅgakośa* adds a further dimension to our understanding of the nature of Śaiva worship practised in