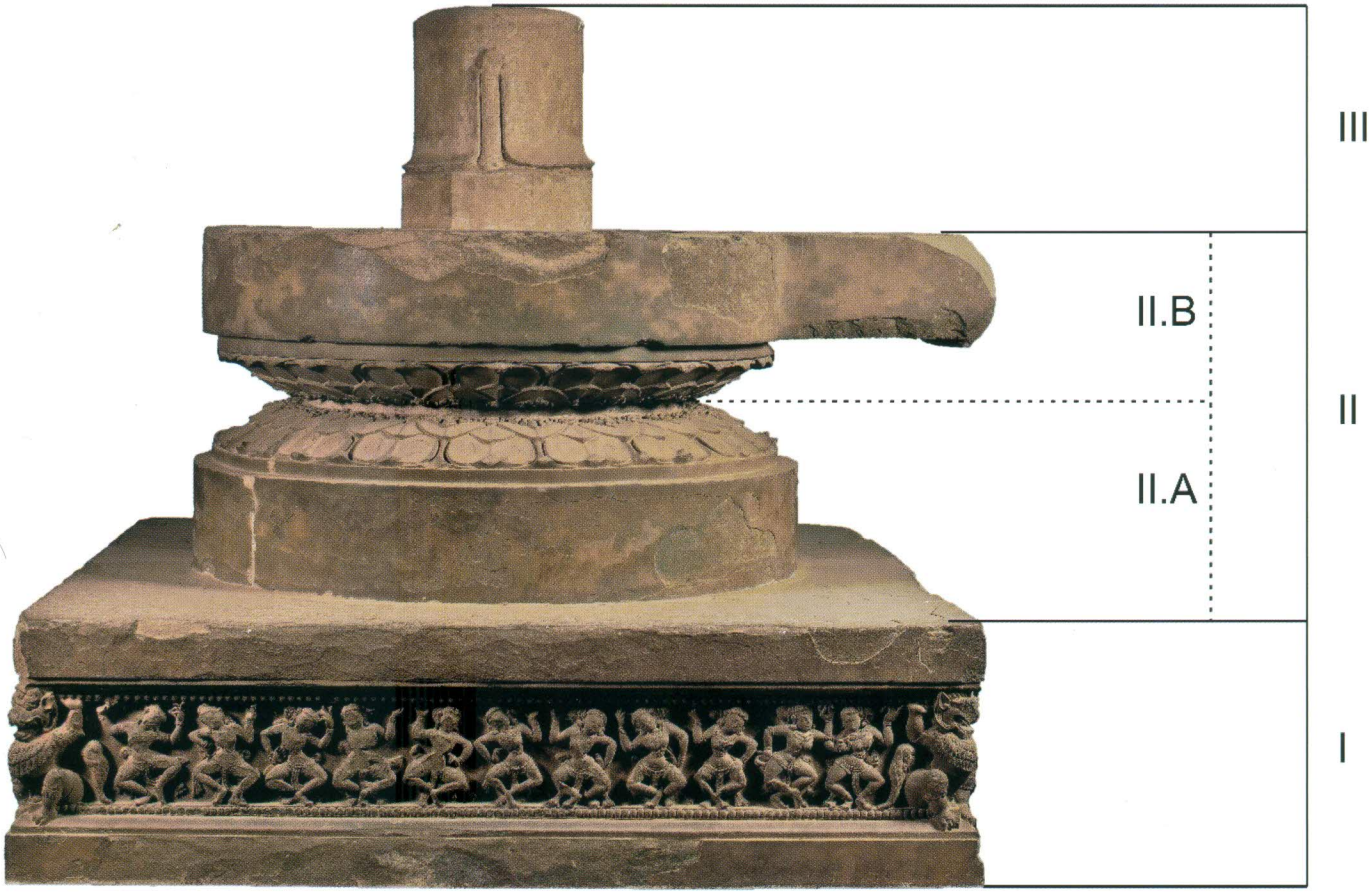
29. Pedestal

Trà Kiệu , Quảng Nam
10th (?) century CE
Sandstone: H. 128 cm;
W. 190 cm; D.190 cm
BTC 95-22.2



One of the museum's celebrated objects is a massive, finely-carved sandstone *liṅga-yoni* pedestal which may have been the centerpiece of a 7th (?) dynastic Śaiva temple at the major city of Siṃhapura (Trà Kiệu). It was inscribed in 2012 on the list of national treasures. The dating of the pedestal is still being debated with most scholars favouring a 10th century date but others arguing for a 7th century date. As there are only three major Cham pedestals the decision depends on iconographic analysis of clothing and hairstyles on the one side and some limited contextual data on the other. Trần Kỳ Phương (in this volume p. 38) interprets the narrative base as representing the marriage of Rāma and Sītā and speculates that this could provide a link with an inscription by king Prakāśadharma (r. 657-87 CE), who erected a temple dedicated to Vālmīki, author of the Rāmāyaṇa. Earlier scholars read Kṛṣṇa stories in the narrative band and find links in the hairdos, earrings, beaded jewelry and the long forward folds of the sarongs with other sacred art of the later Đồng Dương period in the early 10th century. More research is needed on this major national treasure.

The pedestal displayed at the museum before 2017 includes three parts. Part I: the square base measures 190 cm x 190 cm x 52 cm has elaborate carvings on four faces and a hollow in the centre for the *liṅga*. Part II: two round slabs, the lower slab (138 cm diameter and 38 cm high) is adorned on the upper face with