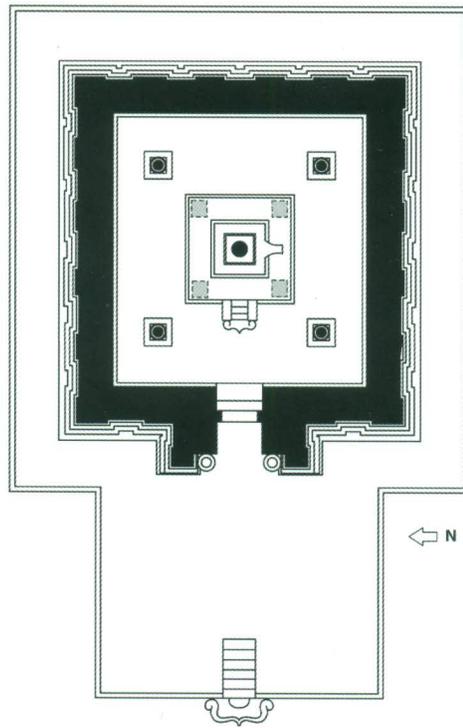
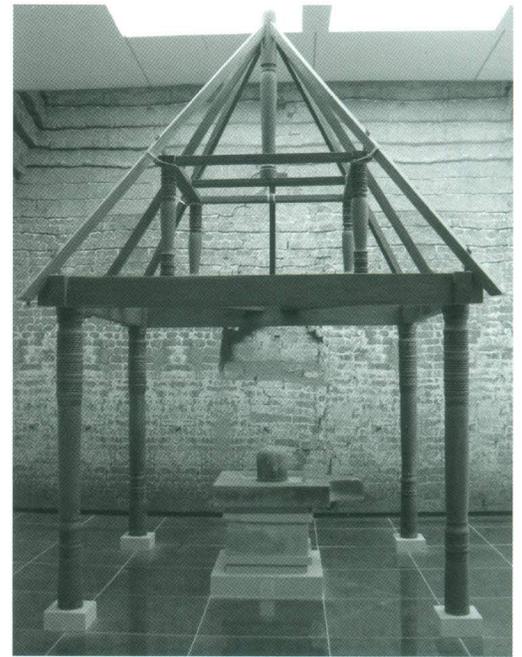


**Fig. 4** Plan, M̄y S̄on E1. Adapted from Parmentier (1909, pl. LXXXVIII).



**Fig. 5** Proposed model of a januk structure sheltering the M̄y S̄on E1 līṅga as displayed at the M̄y S̄on site museum. (Photo: Parul Pandya Dhar)



that seem to be inspired by the preoccupations of the ascetics residing at M̄y S̄on.<sup>18</sup> Ascetics in natural settings with abundant trees for comfort, in the company of forest birds and animals, with musical instruments and ritual paraphernalia such as a book stand and a *kamaṇḍalu* (ritual jar) are all delightfully rendered. One of the ascetic figures plays the lute, others pluck at the strings of a musical instrument, sage-like figures recline in leisurely attitudes, two ascetics squat on the floor and engage in a discussion with a manuscript or (astronomical?) chart between them, another sage engages in the *līṅga-pūjā* ritual, and an

ascetic appears to be reciting something from a manuscript to a parrot (Fig. 6)!

The act of recitation in the company of a parrot perhaps is an allusion to the tradition of learning the scriptures by rote or parroting them, so well-known in Indian Brahmanical traditions. Interestingly, each stone slab of the *mahāvedī* is inscribed with a Sanskrit syllable, with the letters arranged sequentially from one block to the next, beginning with *ka, k̄a, ki, k̄i...* and ending at *kaḥ, kha, kh̄a*.<sup>19</sup> While these syllables may have been inscribed by the artisans to mark the sequence in which the blocks were to be organized to assemble the *mahāvedī*, their presence also reveals that Sanskrit syllabary – and, by extension, its recitation and memorisation – was well-established at M̄y S̄on. Champa is well-known for the attention to detail lavished on altar-pedestals as they marked the most significant place or site of worship. Yet, no other pedestal or platform matches the M̄y S̄on E1 pedestal in its wealth of narrative and ornamental detail and the quality of workmanship.

The F1 temple near the E-group at M̄y S̄on has been stylistically attributed to the eighth century but the development of its ground plan and the surviving details of its elevation suggest an early-ninth century date, pointing to more than one cycle of building.<sup>20</sup> A stone tympanum, which had once crowned the F1 temple's doorway, is of a slightly earlier date (c. late eighth century)<sup>21</sup>

**Fig. 6** Detail of an ascetic carved on the banister of the M̄y S̄on E1 mahāvedī; Đà Nẵng Museum of Cham Sculpture, Vietnam, c. early eighth century CE. (River Books)

