



is also the only pedestal in Cham sculpture that records daily spiritual activities of the ascetic sages (*rṣi*) performing rituals, practicing meditation, preaching, conversing, performing sacred dance, playing musical instruments, treating diseases, and so on. This pictures the life of the ascetic sages of the Pāsupata school of Śaivism (see Chemburkar and Kapoor, in this volume pp. 45-56). Such scenes provide rare insights into the ceremonial life of the circle of Mỹ Sơn sanctuaries located at the head of a narrow, forested valley below the holy mountain Mahāpārvata (also called 'Hòn Đền' [Temple Mountain] or 'Răng Mèo' [Cat's Tooth Mountain] in Vietnamese).

The Mỹ Sơn E1 temple evolved in two stages. Originally, it was only the base for a small structure (*januk* in Cham language), consisting of four wooden columns that supported a tiled roof without walls in open-sanctum format. Later it was renovated and enlarged, and the base of the tower became the pedestal of the icon within a temple with 2.5m high walls, with four square pillars at the corners supporting a tiled roof (Trần Kỳ Phương, in this volume (pp. 37-44); Dhar 2016: 34).

In 2012, an *ekamukhalinga* (*liṅga* with Śiva's face) was discovered at the northeast corner of the Mỹ Sơn E1 temple. The size of this *liṅga* is similar to that of a set of *yoni-liṅga* on the pedestal

drawn by Parmentier (Parmentier 1909: pl. CXX; Trần Kỳ Phương *et al.* 2016: 786-90). Because the temple faces west, its ablution spout (*snānadronī*) faces north and the scenes carved on the pedestal should be interpreted counterclockwise or west-south-east-north (Trần Kỳ Phương 1988: 24-8).¹ The interpretation in this way is consistent with the uninterrupted disposition of each scene.

The front layout of the pedestal is well-balanced with two pillared arcatures containing seated ascetics on each side of a central flight of two steps with ritual dancers exquisitely carved into the stair risers. Its architectural features reveal links with contemporary Śaiva temples. (Dhar 2016: 30-5). Some decorative motifs are typical of the region at that time, including a frieze of four-petal flowers alternating with lozenge shapes that runs around the pedestal, which is a feature of the Dvāravatī *dharmacakra* (wheels of the law) and also a feature that appears in the pre-Angkorian Khmer art of Sambor Prei Kuk. The designs in a rectangular frame around the pedestal have similar motifs to the tower of Gedong Songo temple in Central Java, Indonesia.

¹ This interpretation on the direction counterclockwise reading of the scenes runs counter to that of Guillon (2001: 73-8).