

Khmer and Cham inscriptional records and Indic literature to grasp the doctrine and ritual practices of Pāśupata Śaivism that spread across India as well as outside India. Indic literary and textual material is essential, as the Khmer inscriptions that identify Sanskrit texts as the basis for their ceremonies and ritual practices in the pre Angkorian and Angkorian period have survived only on the subcontinent. Manuscripts of pre-Theravādin times have perished in Cambodia and Vietnam. We then look at key practices of Pāśupata ascetics such as bathing with ashes, performing temple dance and music rituals and bearing the mark of a *līṅga* to become '*līṅgadhārī*', in order create the perception of a visual Pāśupata identity in the community.<sup>2</sup> This is achieved by applying ash to the body, wearing flowers from the deity, wearing a single cloth, marking or merging the body with the *līṅga* or Śiva.

The Mý Són E1 temple pedestal is the most written about Cham piece of art as can be seen from the scholarly references and even the entries in this catalogue. It was probably constructed by king Vikrāntavarman, whose inscription was found in the sanctuary. It once provided a base for a Śivalīṅga at temple E1, in the valley of Mý Són.<sup>3</sup> On top of the pedestal there are Sanskrit syllables beginning with *kā*, *ki*, and ending in *kha*, *khā*... engraved on each stone block, which show how they were lined up, while also attesting to the use of Indian alphabet in Champa.<sup>4</sup> Mý Són, situated at the middle of the Thu Bon river valley, is one of the oldest temple complexes in Vietnam comprising several Śaiva temples. The site's importance can be gauged from the fact that in a period when there were only a few scattered inscriptions, we find 20 Sanskrit inscriptions in or near Mý Són.

### The Śaiva sect: Pāśupata

One of the earliest organized, successful, and widely distributed ascetic orders of the medieval period (6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries),<sup>5</sup> was the Pāśupata school of Śaivism, who worshipped Śiva under the name Pāśupati, 'Lord (*patī*) of the beasts (*paśu*= souls)'. The life of a Pāśupata ascetic is divided into five successive stages in which he first inhabits the temple performing requisite rituals; in the second stage he moves into higher stages of spiritual meditation; in the third he goes into the world (discarding his external marks) and courts ridicule and abuse as a way of shedding bad *karma*; then finally dwelling in an empty cave or cemetery to attain the ultimate presence of Rudra

(Śiva).<sup>6</sup> The first stage is of particular interest here as the ascetic lives on the temple precinct and performs sacred acts.

Two most important sectarian source texts on the Pāśupatas are the *Pāśupatasūtra* (*PS*), traditionally attributed to its founder, Lakuliśa, and composed in c. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE<sup>7</sup>, with its commentary, *Pañcārthābhāṣya* (*PABh*), composed by Kauṇḍinya<sup>8</sup>; and Haradaṭṭa's *Gaṇakārikā* (*GK*) along with a lucid commentary called *Ratnaṭīka* (*RT*) by *Bhāsarvajña*.<sup>9</sup> Recently, few articles referring to the parts of forthcoming editions of *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, an old-surviving Śaiva tantra of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition containing information about the early history of the Śaiva religion have been published by Harunaga Isaacson, Dominic Goodall, Diwakara Acharya, Andrea Acri and others.<sup>10</sup>

Another important work is the *Skandapurāna*, composed between the end of 6<sup>th</sup> and the early 7<sup>th</sup> century in the Pāśupata milieu of Vāraṇāsī, north India, which elaborates on the sect's history and stresses the prominence of goddess worship, female deities in the world of Śaiva mythology and yogic practices.<sup>11</sup> Thus we have two textual groups, *PS* and *PABh* on one hand and *GK* and *RT* on the other. Both, *PS* and *GK* mention the process or *vidhī* for the attainment of liberation through five main sacred acts in the first stage of the ascetics' career, when he lives in the temple. From the *PABh* verses 1 – 1.9 we learn that the observances of the ascetic in the first stage are: purifying himself by *bhasmanā snānam* or besmearing with ash three times a day, sleeping in ash, supplementary bath with ash, wearing a single garment and wearing flowers taken down from the deity (*nirmālya*). He resides in the temple, which is a holy place of Maheśvara (Āyatana),<sup>12</sup> and performs these duties:

*'Hasita-gīta-nṛtta-duṇḍukāra-namaskāra-japyopahāreṇo-patiṣṭhet'*<sup>13</sup>

(One should worship Maheśvara with the offering of laughter, song, dance, a sound made in the throat, homage, pious incantations of Japa and offering of himself)

The *RT* elaborates on the procedure – the aspirant walks to the temple after the ash bath, chanting the *Sadyojāta* mantra; there he bows to Śiva and proceeds to the interior, where he kneels to the right of the image (*Dakṣiṇamūrti*), laughing loudly, meditating, singing and dancing while producing the auspicious sound *huḍukkāra*. In this way he goes around the deity three times singing