

name 'Champa' and is contemporary with the Cambodian inscription K. 53 of 667 CE that notes an envoy was sent to the 'ruler of Champa'.⁵¹ Given these royal connections between the Cham and Khmer polities during the 7th century and the several Pāsupata inscriptions of Sambor Prei Kuk, we can assume that similar practices took place in M̐y S̐n.

Pāsupati is mentioned in the M̐y S̐n stele inscription of Vikrāntavarman⁵², and Bang An stele inscription of Bhadravarman III.⁵³ The latter mentions Pāsupati wearing white ashes like the foam of the ocean. The practices of the sect are possibly mentioned in the 9th century Po-Nagar inscription of Vikrāntavarman II that discusses 'those who protect the famous Rudrakṣetra (field of Rudra) for the lord of ascetics would go to heaven [world of Rudra?];'⁵⁴ as well as in another inscription of the same period, stele of Glai Lomov of King Indravarman I. It describes the practices such as 'white ashes, yoga, muttering and *humkāra*' of this religious order and the ultimate goal to be one with Rūdra in concurrence with the *Pāsupata-sūtra*.⁵⁵

Art historical evidence of the Pāsupata sect

A 6th century stele from Mekong delta depicts Śaiva trident, axe, and vase of plenty. The trident has a generic resemblance to that depicted on an inscribed pilaster attached to a well shrine from Mathura and suggests that it possibly belonged to a long Pāsupata tradition.⁵⁶

Another early example of the depiction of Khmer kings and their Pāsupata (?) Brahmin priests is found on a 7th century lintel from Wat Eng Khna, where a group of men identified as 'Brahmins' (as they wear the sacred thread) is performing a consecration ritual for a king, who is seated directly below a *Śivaliṅga*. A group of musicians and male dancers accompany the Brahmins. (Fig. 6)

Yet another example of long-haired, bearded holy men appear on a sandstone lintel from Sambor Prei Kuk with a scene of Garuḍas slaying human adversaries. It displays six ascetics with piled up, braided hair and beards, wearing simple dhotis and sacred threads, playing instruments and dancing ecstatically in celebration. (Fig. 7)

Cœdès' analysis of commonalities and differences between Vaiṣṇava, (K. 701) Buddhist (K. 290) and Śaiva (K. 279) āśramas of Yaśovarman in Angkor, observes the quantity of ash needed for Śaiva ascetics to clean their

buns and its absence in Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist āśrama records.⁵⁷ This inscription of Prasat Prei,⁵⁸ describing the regimen at the Brahmāśrama, (āśrama founded by Yaśovarman I for 'Śaiva and Pāsupata'), specifically directs that each initiate should be given; one ādhaka of ash, one ādhaka of pungent ash in a vase to clean the bun, a burning perfume, a stove etc. All these objects will be given every four months individually to the Brahmins (*dvija*), the aged masters and ascetics (*tapasvin*).⁵⁹ The term 'ādhaka' is a measure by weight, of food grains etc., and in the Khmer context, according to Claude Jacques; it would be equal to 5 kilograms.⁶⁰ So each person in the āśrama required 10 kilos of ashes, every four months.⁶¹

As we have seen above, the injunctions for the Pāsupata rituals constantly reiterate the importance of the use of plentiful ash, and this inscription provides the evidence of the continued observance of this ritual in these lands. But, these practices were to be performed secretly, '*Gūḍhavrataḥ*' – away from the public gaze, according to the *Pāsupatasūtra*.⁶² So despite



Fig. 6 Lintel depicting Liṅgodbhavamūrti myth and a royal consecration ceremony found at Wat Eng Khna, Mid 7th century, Central Cambodia, National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh (Ka 1774). Photo Courtesy: Kunthea Chhom



Fig. 7 Lintel depicting Śaiva ascetic celebrants found at Sambor Prei Kuk S1, 7th century, National Museum of Cambodia Phnom Penh (Ka 1748). Photo Courtesy: Kunthea Chhom