

epigraphy of Mý Són. At least 3 Stele inscriptions of Prakāśdharmā-Vikrāntavarman I describe the eight forms of Śiva.<sup>69</sup>

Some images in Cham art depict the ascetics with a smooth, high-domed shaped object placed on their heads. This is distinctly different from piled up hair or buns, as the strands of hair are not seen. In fact a strand of beads is placed between the hair and this dome shaped object to differentiate the two. Even though, the image is been labelled as Śiva, the usual iconographic traits: crescent moon and third eye are missing. We feel, the dome shaped object resembles a *liṅga*, in front of which a flower is placed. It reminds us of the concept of the 'liṅgadhārī' (one who wears a *liṅga*) ascetic. The earliest evidence on Pāśupata goes back to the Mathura Pillar inscription (380 CE) that traces the lineage of teachers, the tenth being Uditāchārya. It relates the establishment of two *liṅgas* by a disciple in memory of his two ācārya.<sup>70</sup> D.C. Sircar describes this establishment as representations of the teachers bearing *liṅga* on their heads.<sup>71</sup> These Pāśupata Brahmins played an important role in Khmer as well as Cham courts as ritual officiants and successfully associated themselves with powerful patrons.

Inscription No. 62 recording the donations of king Harivarmā mentions artists, men versed in different branches of learning, skilful in dancing, wise men and musicians.<sup>72</sup> From pre-Angkorian and Angkorian Khmer epigraphic records, it emerges that the Brahmins not only carried magico-religious functions but also had a role in dance and music based temple worship. Khmer epigraphic records sometimes acknowledge these Brahmin priests as authorities on art and music donating musicians and dancers to pre-Angkorian and Angkorian temples.<sup>73</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> century K. 181 mentions an elite man *upādhyāya Thmorī*, or a professor of percussion music.<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that these early period inscriptions mentioning the donations of musicians and dancers is also the period when Pāśupata references occur in plenty. The tradition of offering dancers and musicians continued as Yaśovarman (889-910), according to the inscription, offered a great number of beautiful dancers, singers, reciters, musicians, and a great number of handsome, mature men skilful in dance and other arts.<sup>75</sup> He himself was an accomplished dancer.<sup>76</sup> It is still impossible to know whether these dancers, musicians and singers were members of the working population with special skills



**Fig. 12** Brahmins with similar buns at Banteay Chhmar. (Swati Chemburkar)



**Fig. 13** Ascetic with *liṅga* in hair c.11<sup>th</sup> century. (Courtesy NMCP Ga5288)

or belonged to the same class who produced ruling officials or a particular sect. But they must have been an important part of the royal and sacred sphere as when the temple of Śrisanbhadreśvara was plundered in Champa, dancers and musicians were taken as booty.<sup>77</sup>