

Jayavarman VII offered two gold dancing Śivas to the *liṅga* of Preah Khan.⁸³ In fact Swati Chemburkar has argued that the dancing Hevajra playing a similar role to Śiva Naṭarāja, in Jayavarman's Buddhist kingdom/court hinting the continuation of Śaiva practices.⁸⁴ The entire inner gallery of the Bayon temple depicts several Śaiva ascetics, sometimes in the forest settings and sometimes as a part of an orchestra holding a harp-like instrument and sometimes holding a book or a manuscript like object as seen on the M̄y S̄on pedestal (Fig. 16) and on the Khmer temple reliefs. (Figs 17, 18)

If we follow the emblems listed by Lorenzen, it is easy to identify Kāpālikas or Kālāmukhas with *khatvāṅga* or skull-sticks depicted in their hands as seen at Someśvara temple, Mukhalingam, Andhra Pradesh, India. But how does one recognise a Pāśupata? Many Pāśupata ācāryas are known to have propagated the religion as several Pāśupata inscriptions have been found in north, central, western and southern India as well as Nepal, Bengal and further south in Southeast Asia.⁸⁵ In the spread of any cult, transmission of teachings and knowledge is important. When the reputation of *Skandapurāṇa* spread to Nepal, a copy was asked from India which was brought and was well treasured.⁸⁶ We assume, similar scenario happening during the spread of Pāśupata, where the *sūtra* must have played a key role as an emblem of the cult. Is the figure holding a book that we see on the M̄y S̄on pedestal a Pāśupata ascetic holding his *sūtra*? Similar figures are depicted at Phnom Rung, Angkor Wat, and the Bayon.

The Pāśupata cult and its integration into the Khmer court must have remained important as even though the temple epigraphy drops

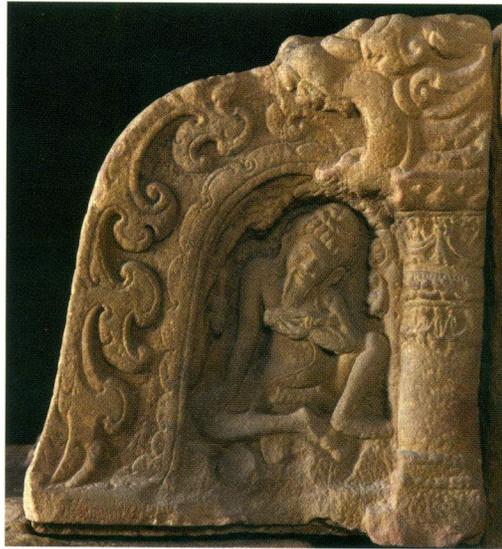
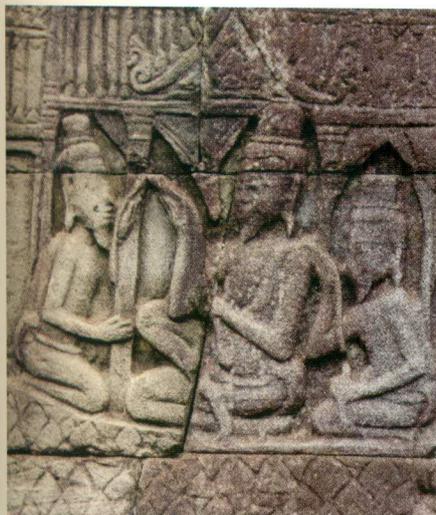


Fig. 16 M̄y S̄on E1 pedestal. Pāśupata Brahmin, wearing his sacred thread and holding a text. (River Books)

any mention of them post 10th century or Yaśovarman reign, the Chinese traveller Zhou Daguan mentions them in his eye witness account of Angkor. He spent a year (1296-7 CE) in Angkor as an envoy of Temur Khan of the Yuan dynasty, mentions ascetics called 'Basiwei' or 'Pa-sseu-wei' [Pāśupata?] wearing tall headdress [*jaṭā*], making offerings to stones and not icons [*liṅgas*], and wearing red or white cloth on their head.⁸⁷

Conclusions

The paper argues for the involvement of Pāśupata ascetics not only in the purely religious sphere but also in the royal. Their prominence in the politico-religious landscape is attested by the presence of ascetic imagery on the Khmer and Cham temples. Following the textual, literary and inscriptional evidence in India, Cambodia and Champa, the paper claims the depictions of ascetics may be taken as evidence of the presence of the Pāśupata sect.



Figs. 17, 18 Ascetics possibly holding a *sūtra*/scroll at the Bayon and Angkor wat. (Swati Chemburkar)