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CONTENTS

A.S. Bonfanti, R. Dan, <i>From Phrygia to Urartu. The Phrygian Belts Discovered in Toprakkale/Rusaḫinili Qilbani=kai and the Relations between Urartu and Phrygia</i>	7
N. Eskandari, K.A. Niknami, M. Vidale, <i>The Bronze Age Center of Shahdad, South-East Iran: “Hollow” vs. Nucleated Early Urban Processes</i>	31
G.L. Bonora, G.R. Osmida (†), A.Cengia, <i>A General Overview of the Oxus Civilization Graveyard of Adji Kui in Margiana (South Turkmenistan)</i>	47
M. Minardi, <i>Notes on the Elaboration and Transmission of Iconographic Elements in Central Asia and India before the Kushans: Zoroastrian “Bird-Priests,” kinnaras and Sirens</i>	81
L.M. Olivieri, F. Sinisi, <i>The Stele and the Other Statues. A Stone Puzzle from Surkh Kotal</i>	115
M.P. Joshi, V. Bahuguna, P.S. Rawat, H. Chauhan, M.M. Joshi, V.P. Rawat, <i>Lord of Kedara: A Unique Sculpture from Uttarakhand Himalaya</i>	163
F. Scialpi, <i>Mahatma Gandhi, an Inspiration for a New Humanitarian Society</i>	185
M.A. Polichetti, <i>Notes on The Last Judgement, an Annamite Painting of Christian Inspiration (18th Century) Conserved in the Vatican Museums</i>	193
L. Declich, <i>Emilio Dubbiosi and the Fondo Dubbiosi</i>	199
O. Nalesini, <i>Concetto Guttuso: a Brief Remembrance</i>	207
<i>List of Contributors</i>	211

Lord of Kedara: A Unique Sculpture from Uttarakhand Himalaya

by MAHESHWAR P. JOSHI, VIJAY BAHUGUNA, PRAHLAD SINGH RAWAT,
HARI CHAUHAN, MADAN M. JOSHI, VIJAY PAL RAWAT

Il presente articolo analizza quattro interessanti sculture brahmàniche recentemente scoperte in una remota area del Garhwal Himalaya nord-occidentale (Uttarakhand, India). Tra queste un'immagine terio-antropomorfa a testa di bufalo itifallica, un reperto unico nel suo genere. La stele non si conforma a nessuno stile iconografico noto e tradisce la presenza di un'arte locale che combina diverse tradizioni antiche. La raffigurazione di Śiva come bufalo è conosciuta come “Kedāra / Kedāranātha” nei testi purāṇici e nelle tradizioni himalayane dell'Uttarakhand e del Nepal. Pertanto, gli attributi śaiviti della scultura a testa di bufalo sono facili da spiegare, anche se provengono da diverse tradizioni non sempre facili da individuare.

INTRODUCTION

Uttarakhand Himalaya (India) consists of two traditional divisions, Kedārakhaṇḍa and Mānasakhaṇḍa, named after two *sthala-purāṇa*-s bearing these names, i.e. the *Kedārakhaṇḍam* (Bhaṭṭācārya 1906; Nautiyāl 1994) and the *Mānasakhaṇḍam* (Pāṇḍeya 1989). Interestingly, both names are associated with water. Thus, *kedāra* means “a field or meadow, especially one under water” (Monier-Williams 1899: 309), and *mānasa* refers to the famous lake Mānasarovara in Tibet. It may be noted that Kedārakhaṇḍa corresponds roughly to the erstwhile pre-British Garhwal chiefdom and Mānasakhaṇḍa includes the former principalities of Kumaon (Uttarakhand, India) and adjoining Doti (Far West Nepal).

This article discusses the discovery of a unique sculpture found in a natural cave dedicated to Mahādeva, where a few other Brahmanical sculptures were also noticed. A dilapidated platform in the cave partly rests on a ruined wooden frame supported by a heap of rubble and the remnants of dressed stone masonry originally set in a series of wooden frames on the side of a steep hill in the village of Dewal in Northwestern Garhwal (Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand, India) (Fig. 1).¹ This style of masonry work is widespread in this area prone to earthquakes (Fig. 2). The cave is situated some 400 m from the village and is totally abandoned, along with the sculptures referred to. The villagers offer their routine prayers at a temple of Śiva called Chādresvara Mahādeva situated in the village itself; the object of worship is a *mohrā* (metal facade/mask).² However, the area just to

¹ It is hazardous to explore deeper into the cave without adequate safety measures; for now it can be accessed only by means of an unfastened wooden log which needs to be held upright manually. Without help from local persons the cave is almost inaccessible to outsiders.

² Access to the temple is restricted and photography is prohibited. Information about the *moharā* installed there is based on the oral account of a villager.



Fig. 1 - The position of the village of Dewal in Northwestern Garhwal. © GoogleEarth.



Fig. 2 - Cave with stone masonry. Photo authors.

the right of the cave is still used by villagers to cook ritual food on two occasions: 1. the *Goṭhī* festival on the 20th day of the month of Sāvana (end of July/early August); *Goṭhī* is the goddess of cattle and on this occasion she is offered cooked food placed on a rectangular platform situated in the vicinity of the cave; 2. the Rainmaking ritual. It is said that in the month of Jeṭha (summer, corresponding to mid-May to mid-June) whenever there is a severe scarcity of water, villagers propitiate the *Mātrī*-s. They cook food, offer it to the deities and then distribute the offered food among themselves and eat it there and then. Having eaten the cooked items they deliberately throw some of the leftover food from their plates onto the ground. It is believed that this leftover food called *jūṭhan* (anything pol-

luted with one's saliva/spit) ritually polylutes the holy place in question and in order to clean it the *Mātṛ*-s bring rain (for a detailed account, see Joshi 2013).

It is also worth noting that though Northwestern Garhwal has yielded archaeological remains revealing the marked presence of Brahmanical tradition—in particular Early Medieval Brahmanical sculptures and a colossal metal trident recording the construction of a temple to Śiva in about the 7th century CE, late Gupta Brahmi characters (Mill 1836; Sāṃkr̥tyāyana 1953: 347-349) and an *Aśvamedha* brick altar dated to the 1st century BCE (*IAR* 1988-89: 88-89)—the area is also known for its unorthodox practices; it belongs to the *Pāsī vīla* faction of the “Mahāsū” cult.

SCULPTURES

Due to the hazardous nature of the cave (fn. 1) we were only able to access its outer platform, where we noticed four Brahmanical sculptures, several votive *liṅga*-s, a *yoni-pīṭha*, a broken *āmalaka*, and a broken stone ceiling representing a conventionalized full-bloom lotus motif in bas-relief (Fig. 3).³ Interestingly, all the sculptures are damaged, which might account for their presence in a deserted cave not used for worship. These sculptures are carved in bold relief on local sedimentary stone and seem to have been fashioned locally.

Buffalo-Headed Sculpture

Though the cave was well known in the area, its sculptures were noticed for the first time by one of us (VPR) about a year ago and their digital photographs were given to the first author for appropriate identification and explanation.⁴

³ These remains have been brought from an unknown site. It seems that there was a small shrine somewhere in the neighbourhood of the cave, but we were unable to locate it.

⁴ Coincidentally, the buffalo-headed sculpture was discovered at a time when the first author (MPJ) was studying the subject-matter relating to its identification (Jošī forthcoming: ch. 4). The very first sight of the enigmatic figure made him exclaim *eureka!* Explaining its uniqueness, Joshi therefore expressed his concern about its safety, and it was decided that the discovery should not be publicized until its publication in an academic journal.

It should also to be noted that when the interior of the cave was observed for the first time its floor, including the archaeological remains, was covered with a thick layer of dust. Two of us (VB and PSR) cleaned it thoroughly and then arranged the sculptures for photography. The height of the cave is too low to allow a person to stand erect, thus restricting the movements of photographers.



Fig. 3 - Sculptures and monumental remains in the cave. Timber work and carved wooden doorframe.
Photo authors.



Fig. 4 - Buffalo-headed deity. Photo authors.

The sculpture discussed here measures 73.66 cm high and 40.64 cm wide between the furthest points. It depicts a four-armed standing buffalo-headed ithyphallic human figure within a niche-shaped frame (Fig. 4). He holds a *triśūla* (trident) and a rosary of beads in his front right and left hands respectively, while his back hands hold an elephant, the right hand holding the animal by the scruff of the neck and the corresponding left hand by its tail, in a restful pose. The elephant figure, with the prongs of a trident thrust into its lower jaw and neck, is shown behind the bust of the therianthropomorphic figure (Fig. 5). The buffalo-headed figure bears certain interesting and curious attributes noted below.

He is adorned with serpents as neck, arm, and ankle ornaments, including the *yajñopavīta* (a sacred thread worn across the breast), the only exception being beaded wristlets (Figs. 4-6). He wears a lion-skin as a loincloth, with the lion's mane and face distinctly executed, covering his right thigh (Fig. 6). His buffalo-head is shown with a prominent beard and some portions of his body are hairy. His fleshy, hairy body and prominent beard together with his *ūrdhvaliṅga* (*penis erectus*) exhibit strong masculinity (Figs. 5-6).

It may be noted that his head is slightly bent towards his left, as evidenced by his right horn shown in front of the frame, while the left one is almost within it. Moreover, both horns bear striation marks and are curved upwards to exhibit a certain degree of naturalism and the narrative character of the sculpture (Fig. 5). This draws our attention to Hildebeitel's (2011: 404-405) observation on the shape of the wild variety of buffalo depicted in the Indus seals: "The upward curve of the horns which characterizes the buffalo on all these seals portrays the animal at his most aggressive potential." Hildebeitel cites U. Duerst:

The horns of the wild bull form a half moon and continue the slope of the forehead so that when the position of the head is normal they stand up above the withers. When the head is, however, lowered to the position which precedes defence bracing the vertebral column in order to increase the power-transmission of the hind legs, the position of the horns will be at least vertical usually, even slightly inclined towards the front so as to enable the animal to lift his adversary on them and to toss him up. (*Ibid.*: 405).

The above account makes it clear that the attributes of the sculpture are incredibly unique. The buffalo-headed figure does not conform to any particular iconographic norm



Figs. 5-6 - Details of Fig. 4. Photo authors.

and betrays the presence of a local (folk?) art idiom. Combining diverse traditions of remote antiquity the sculptor has conceived a divine image and meticulously translated it into stone in the present sculpture. The attributes wrought in the sculpture are undoubtedly Śaivite in character and reveal the presence of certain long forgotten traditions in Uttarakhand Himalaya as will be clear from what follows.

Literary and numismatic evidence clearly shows that Uttarakhand was organised into a tribal polity under the Kuṇinda-s, and their silver and copper coins dated to between the 2nd century BCE and 3rd century CE show that their tutelary deity was Śiva, who is represented symbolically as a *Chatra* (umbrella). In the latest series of the Kuṇinda coins (c. 3rd century CE) Śiva appears as a two-armed standing figure holding a trident-cum-axe in his right hand. His left arm, with a pelt hanging from the hand, is akimbo. The legend of these coins reads *Bhāgavata C[h]atreśvara Mahātmanah* (= [coin of] the holy worshipful great-souled Lord of Chatra/Umbrella). Significantly, the issuers of the Almora series of the Kuṇinda coins (c. 2nd century BCE-3rd century CE) bear names such as Śivadatta, Haradatta, Śivapālita, Śivarakṣita, thus indicating their deep devotion to Śiva (see for details, Joshi 1989a: ch. 4).

Śaivism evidently received royal patronage in Uttarakhand from the very beginning of the recorded history of this region. This explains Śiva's wide popularity and the presence of an overwhelming majority of temples associated with Śiva in Uttarakhand (see for details, Atkinson 1884: 809-813; Joshi 1986; the *Kedārakhaṇḍa*). The *Kedārakhaṇḍa* (*Kkh*), a Śaivite Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇa*, is considered to be the *magnum opus* of the sacred geography of Garhwal Himalaya.⁵ There are 206 chapters in the *Kkh* and the colophon of each chapter reads “*Iti śrī Skānde...*,” thus suggesting that the chapter in question forms part of the *Skandapurāṇa*. Interestingly, it is totally different from its homonym forming part of the original *Skandapurāṇa* (*SP* I.i; Doniger 1993: ch. 3, 59-81). The *Kkh* contains 12 chapters (*Kkh* 41-42, 47-56) that laud the auspiciousness of the region of *Kedāra deśa* (Country of Kedāra), a vast stretch of land extending from modern Kankhal-Haridwar-Rishikesh to the snowy summits of the Himalaya bordering Tibet. That the name Kedāra as a *Śaivāyatana* in the Himalaya was widely known follows from the fact that it occurs in the Khmer (Cambodia) and South Indian inscriptions and early *Śaiva* texts dating to

⁵ According to Joshi (forthcoming a), the last redaction of the *Kkh* seems to have taken place sometime in the late 17th century CE.

the 6th century CE (Sanderson 2003-2004: 403-408; Bisschop 2004: Appendix, 76-77; 2006: Introduction; Bakker 2004b). It is also mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and other Sanskrit texts (see Monier-Williams 1899: 309; Sircar 1960: 11, 13).

The *Kailāsamāhātmya* of the *Kkh* (*Kkh* 52) narrates an interesting account of the journey of the Pāṇḍava brothers to *Kedāra deśa* to seek Śiva's blessings to absolve themselves from the sin they committed in killing their kinsmen.⁶ Since Śiva did not want to oblige them, he escaped to the farthest area of the *Kedāra deśa*, but the Pāṇḍava-s chased him. Seeing them approaching nearer, Śiva dived into the ground. However, the Pāṇḍava-s managed to touch his hind part which remained at what is "named Kedāra," and his face emerged at Mahālaya (*Kkh* 52.3-8).

It is interesting to note that the *Kkh*, though claiming to be a part of the *Skandapurāṇa*, does not mention that Śiva assumed the form of a buffalo while diving into the ground. Significantly, the *Skandapurāṇa* not only explicitly describes the buffalo form of Śiva as "Kedāra," it also glosses the term *kedāra* in the *Kedārotpatti* chapter of the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* (*SN*, 119.11, 35, 50, 52; *SP*, 10-11, 32, 35, 47-48, 50). Thus it says that, pleased with the prayers of Indra (king of the deities) at Haridvāra, Śiva emerged from the earth in the form of a buffalo and asked Indra *ke dārayāmi* (whom should I tear off?). In response, Indra said that since Śiva himself uttered *ke dārayāmi*, he would therefore be addressed as "Kedāra." It is further stated that Indra requested Śiva—whose abode Mount "Meru" remained inaccessible in winter because it was covered with snow—to leave the Himalaya during the four months of winter and stay anywhere in *svarga* (heaven/abode of the gods), *pātāla* (lower region underground), or *mṛityu* (the world of death) in the same form (i.e. as a buffalo) to enable Indra to worship him without interruption. It is to be noted here that in recent years the *Skandapurāṇa* has been subjected to exhaustive critical study by a team of eminent scholars. Its earliest manuscripts have been found in Nepal and variously dated to between the 6th and 9th centuries CE (Sanderson 2003-2004: 406, and fn. 206; Bisschop 2006: 14, and fn. 31; Bakker 2011: 22; 2014: 3-4). Significantly, Bakker (2014: 177-183) has shown that the Nepali version of the *Skandapurāṇa* was known to the author(s) of the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* and that the modern Kankhal-Haridwar-Rishikesh area was one of the early important Pāśupata centres. Thus, Śiva's buffalo form as Kedāra was already well known by the 6th century CE (for details, see Jośī forthcoming: ch. 4).

Another version of Śiva's buffalo form is narrated in the *Śivapurāṇa*, *Koṭirudrasamhitā* (*SK* 19.6-16).⁷ Here it is mentioned that Śiva was residing at Kedāra as Kedāreśa/Kedāreśvara on the request of Nara and Nārāyaṇa and that when he saw the Pāṇḍava brothers approaching him he took the form of a buffalo and fled with his face turned downwards. However, he was caught there by the tail, while his head went to Nayapāla (Nepal) and remained fixed there.

These myths have been handed down in several versions. The earliest recorded versions are found in Skinner (1833), followed by those in Führer (1891) and in Crooke (1896), respectively as follows:

Kedar Nath is fancied by the natives to have some resemblance to a buffalo, and to that circumstance I believe owes a great portion of its character for sanctity. It was once an animated being, and unfortunately had a quarrel with a powerful giant of the name of Bheem Singh. To revenge itself upon him it assumed the shape of a buffalo, of no or-

⁶ It alludes to the Great Battle (*Mahābhārata*) of Kurukshetra.

⁷ The *Śivapurāṇa* is dated to the 9th-11th centuries CE (Klostermaier 2007: 503).

dinary dimensions, and rushed at its enemy with its utmost violence. The wary Bheem Sing, however, bestrode the narrow hills like a Colossus, and seemed to give the beast an opportunity of running between his legs; but when midway, closed them upon it, and divided it in two: the head and shoulder became Kedar Nath, while its hind quarters somewhere in the kingdom of Nepaul, and figure at this moment as one of the loftiest mountains in it. So much for mountain legends. (Skinner 1833: II.62-63).

It is dedicated to Sadāśiū, a form of Śiva, who flying from the Pāṇḍavas took refuge here in the form of a buffalo, and finding himself hard pressed dived into the ground, leaving, however, his hinder parts on the surface, still an object of adoration here. The remaining portions of the god are worshipped at four other places along the Himalayan chain: the arms (*bāhu*) at Jangnāth, the face (*mukha*) at R.udranāth, the belly (*nābhi*) at Mēdha-Mahēśvar, and hair (*jeta*) and head at Kalpēśvar. These together form the “Pañchakēdār,” the pilgrimage to which places in succession forms a great object to the Hindū devotee. (Führer 1891: 45).

Sadasiva, one of the forms of Mahādeva, took the form of a buffalo to escape the Pāṇḍavas, and sank into the ground at Kedār-nāth. The upper portion of his body is said to have come to the surface at Mukhār Bind in Nepāl, where he is worshipped as Pasupatinātha. When the Pāṇḍavas were freed from their guilt, they in their gratitude built five temples in honour of the hinder parts of the deity, which are now known as Pāñch Kedār-Kedarnāth, Madhya Maheswar, Rudranāth, Tungunāth, and Kalpeswar. (Crooke 1896: 237).

Whitmore (2018: 43) has recorded yet another version:

So [...] he [probably Yudhishtira] said to Bhima, “Make those buffaloes come out [Hindi: *nikalo*] from the herd one by one; among them is the true form of God.” So as they were sorting the buffalo herd one by one, each of the buffalo went to the *linga* [which as Tiwari-Ji previously mentioned was already present in the place] and were getting absorbed in it [Hindi: *us hi ling mem ja rahe hain samavesh ho ja rahe hain*]. The Pandavas . . . are driving the buffaloes the way they drive cows [Hindi: *hamkna*], one by one. [...] So the buffalo that was God, it came here and right at that moment it got absorbed into the Shiva *linga*. (Whitmore 2018: 43; citation as in original).

Joshi (forthcoming: ch. 4) informs that in the Nepali version of this myth the buffalo face of Śiva appears at Paśupatinātha (Kathmandu), the middle part (navel) at Nābhīsthāna (Doti, Far West Nepal), and the hind part at Kedāra (Kedarnath, Garhwal). He argues that though Shulman (1976) and Hildebrandt (2011) have discussed the issue in a pan-Indian context and suggested that the buffalo, Śiva, demon Mahishāsurā, Pottu Rāja (Tamil) or Pota Rāju (Telugu), and Mhsobā/Mhskobā (Māraṭhī) are interrelated, the buffalo-headed sculpture (under discussion) and *ke dārayāmi* of the *Skandapurāṇa* bear testimony to the fact that there existed a tradition representing Śiva in his buffalo form independently of the Kedarnath temple site in the Himalaya/Mahishāsurā/Pottu Rāja tradition.

Joshi (*ibid.*) further adds that Whitmore’s account of Kedār-nātha (Śiva, the Lord of Kedāra) representing Śiva in his buffalo form mixing with the herd of buffaloes and eventually each buffalo “getting absorbed in” the *linga* is suggestive of yet another independent tradition associating buffalo with *linga*.

Joshi (*ibid.*) suggests that the buffalo-headed sculpture combines diverse independent narratives. Thus, the elephant held in its back hands by the buffalo-headed figure answers to the description of South Indian *Gajāsura-samhāramūrti* (Śiva as vanquisher of the elephant demon) (Rao 1916: II.I, 149-156; Pal 1969), and the same figure wearing a lion skin as loincloth and adorned with serpent ornaments echoes the *Koyil Puraṇam*’s nar-

rative of Śiva's encounter with "heretical rishis, following of the Mīmāṃsa" in the forest of Tāragam. It is said that the *rishis* created a tiger "in sacrificial fires, and rushed upon" Śiva who "seized it and, with the nail of His little finger, stripped off its skin, and wrapped it about Himself," then they "produced a monstrous serpent, which however, Śiva seized and wreathed about His neck like a garland" (Coomaraswamy 1918: 57-58).⁸ The most remarkable features in the present sculpture are representations of the buffalo-head and *ūrdhva-liṅga* (penis erectus). They at once draw our attention to E. Mackay's discovery of "seal 420" depicting a seated human figure in the course of Mohenjo-daro excavations which Marshall (1931: I.52-56, fig. 17) identified as "Prototype of the historic Śiva." Marshall's view continues to prevail in that this deity is addressed as "Lord of Beasts" (for details and further references, see Shukla 2007).

Marshall's identification has been contested by several scholars.⁹ However, here we are concerned with only two features of our sculpture, namely, the buffalo-head and penis erectus. Marshall (1931: I.52) suggests that the figure is three-faced and hesitantly hints at its ithyphallic character. Interestingly Sastri (1957: ch. 2), describing it as the "Buffalo-headed composite god of the Indus Valley," adds that its legs are represented by "two looped cobras whose juxtaposed heads rest at the god's waist and tails terminate in the upturned toes" (*ibid.*: 8-9). Sullivan (1964) identifies it as a female figure representing "Mistress of the Beasts." Srinivasan (1975/1976), citing examples of similar types occurring in Indus Valley art, identifies the deity's face with that of a bull. As regards the penis erectus, she observes that other similar figures depicted in the Mohenjo-daro seals show "something like a waist band with an endpiece hanging down. Indeed there seems to be no explicit example from Mohenjo-daro, or from any other Indus site, of a god depicted with the erect phallus" (*ibid.*: 49). In a later study Srinivasan (1984) endorses Hildebeitel's account of the buffalo face of the deity. Hildebeitel has discussed the figure in great detail. We have already mentioned above that Hildebeitel (2011: 404) points out that some of the buffalo figures with upward curved horns depicted in the Indus Valley seals represent "wild buffalo." As regards the penis erectus, Hildebeitel's observation is interesting. He suggests that if "the double curvature away from the bottom of the vertical stripe" does not represent "tassles," they could be "testicles—a possibility I have never seen mentioned" (*ibid.*: 401).

In sum, Sastri (1957: ch. 2), Srinivasan (1975/1976; 1984), and Hildebeitel strongly contest Marshall's identification of the seated male figure on "seal 420" as "Prototype of historic Śiva" and suggest that it represents a male deity associated with buffalo-dominated ideology. Their contention rests mainly on the buffalo-head. However, as we have noted above, both the Paurāṇic texts and Central Himalayan traditions explicitly refer to Śiva's buffalo form. Our sculpture clearly offers compelling evidence of the "Proto Śaivite" cultic significance of the male figure depicted in seal 420. We will return to this in section "Ergo" below.

Ubiquitous Sculpture Types

There are three ubiquitous types of sculpture in the cave, namely a two-armed figure of seated Gaṇeśa and two broken steles depicting seated figures of *Mātṛkā*-s with attendant

⁸ It is worth adding here that traditionally the ministration of the Kedāranātha shrine is assigned to the South Indian priests of the Vīraśaiva sect of Śaivism who claim "that they have held this position for millennia" (Whitmore 2018: 70). However, Pilgrim seems to have mistaken them for the Brahmins of Kerala (Pilgrim 1844: 62-64).

⁹ For discussion and further references, see Srinivasan 1975/1976; 1984; Hildebeitel 2011: ch. 15.

deities. Each stele bears five figures: the first one shows, from left to right, four-armed Śiva as Vīrabhadra seated on couchant bull. He holds a *danḍa* (staff) ornamented with looped ribbons (?) or else a combined representation of *danḍa-pāśa* (noose-on-staff) and a serpent in his back right and left hands respectively, while his corresponding front hands hold a rosary of beads and a bowl. To his left are four *Mātṛkā*-figures, all two-armed and carrying a bowl in their left hands. The one to his immediate left is Brāhmī seated on a stylized lotus-seat supported by a goose (?).¹⁰ She holds an *akṣhamālā* (rosary of beads) in her upraised right hand, followed by (in sequence) Śaivī holding a *triśūla* (trident) in her upraised right hand and seated on a bull, Kaumārī seated on peacock, holding a *śakti* (spear) in her upraised right hand, and Vaiṣṇavī seated on the out-stretched wings of a *garuḍa* (eagle) holds a *cakra* (disc) in her upraised right hand (Fig. 7).

Stylistically, the sitting postures and the left-hand attributes of all the deities depicted on the second stele match the first stele. Thus, all of them are shown seated in the *arddhaparyāṅkāsana* posture and holding a bowl in the left hand resting on the thigh. From left to right, these figures represent first a two-armed lioness-faced Nārasimhī on a *pretāsana* (corpse seat) holding a conch in her upraised right hand. Next to her is two-armed Indrāṇī seated on a couchant elephant. She holds a *vajra* (thunderbolt) in her upraised right hand. To her left is four-armed Chāmuṇḍā seated on a corpse seat. She holds a *khaṭvāṅga* (skull-headed mace) and a *ghaṇṭa* (bell) respectively in her upper right and left hands, her lower right hand holds a *pāśa* (noose) and the left one a bowl. Interestingly, her image does not show a fierce expression. Next to her is two-armed Gaṇeśa. The elephant-headed god holds *svadanta* (his own tusk) in his upraised right hand while his left hand holds a *modakapātra* (bowl filled with sweetmeat balls). His left-turned trunk is shown in the act of eating sweetmeat balls from the bowl. The figure on the extreme right is damaged. However, the extant portion shows a female figure holding an *akṣamālā* in her upraised right hand, and in left hand she hold a stylized flower with two prominent stalks (? *sanāla kamala*?) (Fig. 8).

These two panels of *Mātṛkā*-figures draw our attention to Meister's study of "Regional Variations in *Mātṛkā* Conventions" (Meister 1986: 233-262). According to this, the *Mātṛkā*-figures were earlier associated with Skanda, and later with Śiva, and although Vaiṣṇava *Mātṛkā*-figures were introduced in the *Sapta-Mātṛkā* (heptad) or *Aṣṭa-Mātṛkā* (octad) groups, Viṣṇu does not appear to dominate *Mātṛkā* groups. Interestingly, if our *Mātṛkā*-panels are not interrelated they seem to exhibit two different cultic influences. Thus, the first group showing Śiva as Vīrabhadra is Śaivite and their order of arrangement agrees with that of Meister's "Chart A" showing "Gupta and Early Post-Gupta Period *Mātṛkā* Sets," i.e. Brāhmī, Śaivī, Kaumārī, and Vaiṣṇavī (Fig. 7). The second group begins with Nārasimhī followed in sequence by Indrāṇī, Chāmuṇḍā, Gaṇeśa, and a damaged female deity. If it is independent of the first one, following Meister, we may add that it represents the Vaiṣṇavite *Mātṛkā*-group. Meister notes:

As Vaiṣṇavism adopted Śakti forms to its own purposes, Nārasimhī, the Śakti to Viṣṇu's fiercest incarnation, was chosen to lead the Vaiṣṇavite *Matṛkas*. (*Ibid.*: 234).

If the second group is aligned with the first *Mātṛkā* group with Nārasimhī leading it, Vīrabhadra is in the centre. In that case it suggests influence of the Vaiṣṇavite cult;

¹⁰ Though soiled, the bottom of the lotus-seat shows a stylized frontal depiction of a digitigrade animal with face between its two feet, of which the left one clearly looks like the webbed foot of a bird such as a goose or swan, etc.



Fig. 7 - Mātṛkā group headed by Vīrabhadra. Photo authors.



Fig. 8 - Mātṛkā group headed by Nārasimhī. Photo authors.

vice versa it is suggestive of Śaivite influence. In any case, the second group beginning with Nārasimhī and ending in a Mātṛkā figure with Gaṇeśa shown before her and Chāmuṇḍā devoid of a fierce expression make this Mātṛkā group interesting (for a detailed study of the origin and development of the Mātṛkā cult, see Mishra 1989: chs. 1-2).

The next image in this collection of sculptures is that of a two-armed Gaṇeśa seated in the *arddhaparyāṅkāśana* posture. His right arm resting on his right thigh holds an indistinct round object (*svadanta*?) in his fist. He is shown in the act of eating sweetmeat from the *modakapātra* which he holds on his half-raised left hand. Close by, to the lower right of the Gaṇeśa image is a votive *liṅga* (*phallus*) of *miśṛaka* (compound) type, as it is part *mānusha* (man-made) and part *svayambhū* (natural). It is fashioned out of a rolled stone; one part is used as a *Rudra-bhāga* (upper portion of a *liṅga*) with neatly executed *Brahmasūtra* motif, while the other part, lacking the *Brahma-bhāga* (lowest part) and *Vishṇu-bhāga* (middle part), is natural (Fig. 9).

Wooden Doorframe

It seems that at some point in time a portion of the sedimentary rock above the cave broke off and a rubble platform sealed by dressed stone masonry set in intermittent wooden frames was created. It was equipped with a wooden doorframe, and is now in ruins. The doorframe is embellished with low, flat relief carvings in the typical folk style once widespread in this region. The lintel beam is carved with two registers, the upper one showing outlines of six pyramidal shrines and the lower one six stylized lotus flowers; a stylized image of two-armed seated Gaṇeśa is present between these rows. The elongated trunk of the elephant-headed deity is turned towards his left in the act of eating sweetmeat. The left pillar supporting the lintel beam bears two male figures, one above the other, both riding ungulates. The upper figure riding towards the right is shown in the act of shooting an arrow. The

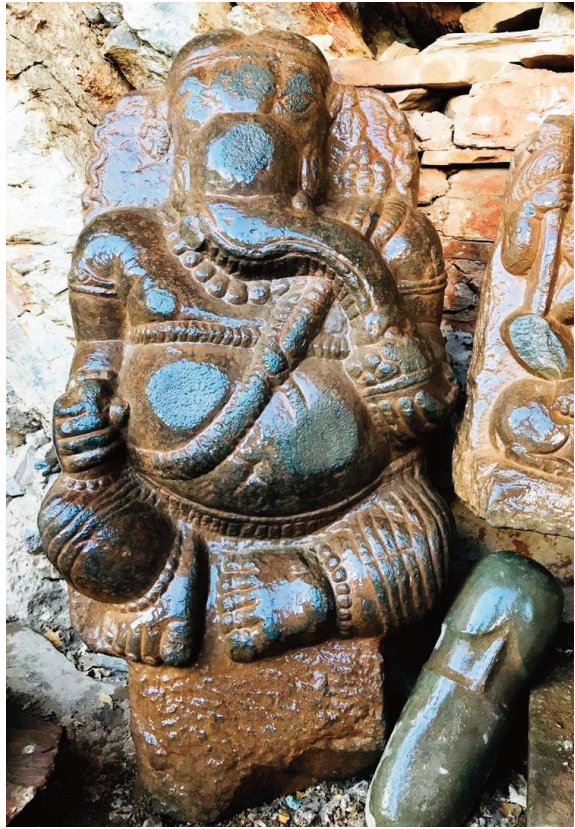


Fig. 9 - Gaṇeśa. Photo authors.

The lower figure shown towards left holds a sword in his left hand and the reins of the ungulate with the right one. It is interesting to note that whereas anatomically the tail and hooves of both the ungulates resemble those of an equid, the thin snouted face with drooping horns bearing striation marks resembles that of a male goat. They seem to be related to some myth about which we have no information. The right pillar shows Śiva and Pārvaṭī seated on a standing bull to the left. Śiva holds a flower (?) in his right hand and his outstretched left hand holds Pārvaṭī by her waist. Pārvaṭī is shown seated on Śiva's left leg. Her right hand rests on Śiva's thigh and the left one is shown in *varada* pose. The lower part of the pillar depicts four-armed Viṣṇu standing on the outstretched wings of Garuḍa (eagle) who holds a double-coiled snake in his claws. Viṣṇu holds a *gadā* (mace) in his upper right hand and in the corresponding left a lotus by its stalk. Interestingly, his front hands hold two unusual *āyudha*-s (attributes), namely a dagger in the right and a sword in the left. Due to its extreme stylization it is difficult to date this wooden frame; however, on the basis of circumstantial evidence it may be dated to about the 18th century CE.

Dating of Sculptures

Stylistically our sculptures represent two distinct phases of sculptural art under the Katyūri dynasty that ruled Uttarakhand and Far West Nepal for a long time. Inscriptions

refer to Katyūri rule in the Central Himalaya from around the 4th century CE (for details, see Joshi 2014). These represent the early phase and the stylized phase. The characteristic features of early Katyūri art may be summed up as follows:

[...] restraint in ornamentation, tasteful but simple treatment of hair style, of ornamentation and of drapery. The plasticity in this phase may be seen in the flowing contours of body with rounded form tending to fuse in the background of the relief. The figures are youthful and serene and often give a feeling of lightness, softness, and subtleness... and a touch of naturalism. Representation of diminutive figures accompanying the principal deity/deities is rarest [...] Furthermore, sculptures with narrative or iconographic orientation are pregnant with expression and distinctly harmonious. The artist has taken great care to create an aura of spiritual illumination and sublimity. (Joshi 1989b).

As may be noticed, despite the stone's fragility, the buffalo-headed sculpture and two *Māṭrkā* panels described above exhibit characteristic features of early Katyūri art. On these grounds the buffalo-headed sculpture may be dated stylistically to *c.* the 8th century CE and the *Māṭrkā* panels to *c.* the 10th century CE. However, we do not rule out the possibility of much earlier dates for these sculptures.

There is only one example of the stylized phase, namely the two-armed representation of Gaṇeśa. It appears to imitate the sculptural art of the early phase in its treatment of dress and plasticity of composition, although due to stylization the contours of the elephant-headed human figure are neither proportionate nor natural. It is depicted without bends, which further adds to the stiffness and heaviness of the stylized form. In the art of Uttarakhand such features occur from 13th century CE onwards (*ibid.*).

ERGO

The proto-history of South Asia rests on shaky grounds due to the fact that the Harappan script has not been deciphered and our knowledge of Vedic history and culture is based on a tiny amount of Vedic literature. Max Müller comments:

We have no right to suppose that we have even a hundredth part of the religious and popular poetry that existed during the Vedic age. We must therefore carefully guard against such conclusions as that, because we possess in our *Rig-veda-samhitā* but one hymn addressed to a certain deity, therefore that god was considered as less important or was less widely worshipped than other gods... What has come down to us of Vedic hymns, by an almost incredible, yet well attested process, is to us a fragment only, and we must be on our guard not to go beyond the limits assigned to us by the facts of the case. Nor can the hymns which have come down to us have been composed by one man or by members of one family or one community only; they reach us in the form of ten collections (*Mandalas*) composed, we are told, by different men, and very likely at different periods. (Müller 1899: 41-42; *Italic letters as in original*).

Keeping in mind these limitations it would not be an exaggeration to extend our search for the roots of South Asian culture to include the Himalayan region. This suggestion is based on the fact that during the last few decades linguistic and archaeological investigations in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have made significant contributions to South Asia's prehistory and proto-history.

Thus, in a recent reappraisal of the time-honoured hypotheses of Outer and Inner Languages of Old-Indo-Aryan, Zoller has persuasively shown that the Outer Language groups of Pahari dialects/languages have preserved several linguistic features of Proto-

Indo-Iranian which are older than Old Indo-Aryan. Zoller subscribes to the view that the Old Indo-Aryan speakers came to South Asia in several successive waves, and posits that those who arrived earlier than the Vedic Indo-Aryan speakers kept alive linguistic traits that were present in Indo-Iranian or Proto-Indo-Iranian, but not in Vedic Indo-Aryan. Interestingly, such features have been noticed especially in the Pahari language groups of Indo-Aryan (Zoller 2016; 2017). One such example is Bangani, discovered by Zoller himself (1988; 1989; 2007; 2008) in Bangan (Uttarkashi District, Garhwal), and another was discovered by Sharma (1983) in the Pattan Valley (Lahul-Spiti, Himachal Pradesh).

Coupled with archaeological discoveries, these linguistic studies make the Himalaya in central place for language and ethnic dispersal. They clearly indicate the existence of a network of exchanges of material culture and ideas between different Neolithic-Chalcolithic communities in North-West South Asia and Central Asia including Tibet. In these exchanges the Himalaya functioned as a corridor. This draws our attention to Fairservis' construct of a large Central Asian Neolithic culture complex that also included Nepal, Tibet, Hunza, Baltistan, and Ladakh (Fairservis 1975: 312-318). On the basis of subsequent archaeological discoveries, as well as his own research in Northwestern Pakistan, Stacul has also sustained the existence of the "Inner Asia Complex" in the Northwestern fringes of South Asia (Stacul 1993).¹¹

In his recent study, Joshi (forthcoming c) adds:

The Inner Asia Complex sites were situated in diverse geographical locations of the Himalayan corridor comprising both cis- and trans-Himalayan tracts for millennia dating back to 7000 BC. The Inner Asia Complex sites include what is termed as the Northern Neolithic (NN) of South Asia. Archaeological evidence from Burzahom (District Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir) bears testimony to the fact that NN peoples interacted with the Harappans, as evidenced by the discovery of a wheel-made painted red-ware pot from an early Neolithic level (Period II: c. 3rd millennium BC) showing a horned-motif. (Kaw 1989: 88).

It is significant to note that Dowad and Norbu (2017) have reported some interesting petroglyphs from the Lower Spiti Valley featuring human figures wearing a head-dress that is seemingly a variant of the above-mentioned horned deity (see for example, *ibid.*: pl. 12, petroglyph from Kyu Rud, and pl. 18, petroglyph from Palari). More recently, Dowad and Norbu have discovered several artefacts exhibiting a family likeness with those of the Burzahom Neolithic. In addition, in the course of our latest explorations in

¹¹ Although it is outside the scope of the present paper to discuss this issue, it would suffice to add here that the recent discoveries of Palaeolithic and the Neolithic artefacts in the Lahaul-Spiti region (see papers in Chauhan 2017; 2020) and Uttarakhand (Joshi 2008; Joshi et al. 2017; Joshi, Rawat forthcoming) indicate that those who made them interacted with their contemporaries inhabiting both cis- and trans-Himalayan regions. These discoveries also strengthen the possibility that Indo-Aryan speakers used the Himalayan corridor to enter South Asia and interact with its earlier settlers (Joshi 2017a; 2017b). The Palaeolithic roots of such interactive activities are evidenced in a recent study of Gissar Range, Pamir, Hindu Kush and Kashmir by Dambricourt-Malassé and Gaillard (2010) which shows close interaction of peoples in this area dating back to the "Late Pleistocene."

It draws our attention to Burushaski, spoken in the central Hunza Valley of Northern Pakistan. It is a language isolate, considered to be one of the branches of Basque (Cavalli-Sforza 2001: 142, 149). Interestingly, Basque is "related to the language spoken by Cro-Magnons, the first modern humans in Europe" (Cavalli-Sforza 2001: 112, 121, 141-142, 149, 158; see also Piazza, Cavalli-Sforza 2006). If it is so in Eurasia, what about the forebears of Burushaski-speaking folk in the Himalaya? This archaeological and linguistic evidence does suggest that the Himalaya has preserved certain strands that may be linked to the Palaeolithic (see for details and further references, Joshi 2019).

the Lower Spiti Valley, we found a broken stem of a bowl-on-stand similar to the ones reported from the Kashmir Neolithic along with cord-impressed potsherds, the latter scattered all over the lower terrace of the Spiti at Lari, where the majority of the above-mentioned Neolithic artefacts were found (see pertinent papers in Chauhan 2020). Polished stone artefacts and pounders have also been discovered recently in Western Uttarakhand adjoining Himachal Pradesh. It thus seems clear that the Inner Asia Complex sites were also distributed in the Eastern areas of Burzahom as well (Joshi, Rawat forthcoming).

Interestingly, while discussing certain motifs occurring in the petroglyphs of the Spiti valley, Nauriyal (2017) cites several studies reporting representations of “horned figures” in the material culture belonging to the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures of North-West South Asia and the adjoining area in Central Asia, including Tibet. Nauriyal notes that one of these motifs depicts a “horned-anthropomorph” which “is reminiscent of the seated horned figure of a *yogi* (horned deity?) depicted on a seal from Mohenjo-daro and interpreted by some as representing *pashupati* (the lord of beasts), an appellation of Lord Śiva” (*ibid.*: 158).

In this connection it is worth noting that with regard to Harappan commercial activities, Ratnagar (1982) draws our attention to the fact that the Harappans procured timber from the Himalayan region which included “elm wood” from Uttarakhand. It is obvious then that the inhabitants of Uttarakhand interacted with the Harappans directly or indirectly.

As noted earlier, in pan-Indian traditions the buffalo’s position is ambivalent. He is a demon and at the same time also a divinity. Thus the buffalo-demon is represented as an ardent devotee of Śiva or else Śiva himself appears in buffalo form (Shulman 1976: 29; Hildebeitel 2011: 27). This dual character has inspired different regional versions of the Mahiṣa myth (see Shulman 1976). The Kedāra myth is one such version, and it seems to have been used to incorporate the principal Śaiva traditions of Central Himalaya into the Pāśupata system. In sum, as Joshi comments, we should not be surprised if the buffalo-headed ithyphallic deity is reminiscent of a long-forgotten tradition associated with “Proto-Śiva” of the Indus Valley civilization (Marshall 1931: 52-56, fig. 17), for Western Garhwal (where recently Neolithic artefacts have been found) is noted for “Baṅgānī,” a pre-Vedic Indo-Aryan language still spoken by local folk. The buffalo-headed myth was reformulated, centred on “Pāśupata-Lakulīṣa-buffalo-headed Kedāra-Śiva” which was later on absorbed into the Nātha sect (Joshi forthcoming: ch. 4).

This possibility is not mere invention, but rests on firm archaeological evidence supported by surviving literary and oral traditions, as we already have discussed in the context of the Kedāra myth. Our contention draws further support from a recent study of an “Eight-Armed Devī from Guligram, Swat” (Srinivasan, Olivieri, Salemi 2018). This shows that the Devī image, dated to about the 8th century CE, bears some features of the Mahiṣāsūramardini sculptures of Gupta art, although apparently the Devī represents a local divinity named Disni, the “chief female divinity for the Nuristanis.” Two features in this study are central to the present study. First, in local traditions Disni’s position is ambivalent, she appears as a deity in the form of an ibex and at the same time she herself offers an ibex for sacrifice (Tucci 1963: 153). Second, replacing ibex for buffalo, the Guligram Devī conforms to nearly all the traits of the Mahiṣāsūramardini aspect of the goddess found in Brahmanical iconographic texts and sculptures (for details and further references, see Srinivasan, Olivieri, Salemi 2018). Srinivasan adds: “All together, we now seem to know of five, perhaps six females (in addition to the Guligram “Devī”) that are associated with a goat’s or ram’s head, plus one male. Further investigations into local myths involving a female and a caprid’s head from Swat and Kafiristan are warranted” (*ibid.*: 117).

It is interesting to note that while discussing the sculpture in question, Tucci notes that despite the prevalence of Buddhism, local beliefs continued to exist in this region. Interestingly, he adds:

The wild goat is represented also on the rock-carvings of Gogdara where it is preeminent among other animals; in that place only preliminary researches have been undertaken and we are therefore not in a condition to date them with certainty, so much so because they have no relation with the rock carvings so far known in the Subcontinent. But there is no doubt that they go back to proto-historic periods, as confirmed by the scanty material discovered in the trial trenches excavated so far. The excavations in that place will be undertaken on a large scale this very year.

In conclusion, I quite agree with Jettmar that we must consider with closer attention the culture of the shepherds and hunters spread along the mountains from Caucasus and the Hindukush, the Pamir and even beyond.

This culture preserved peculiar features which point to far-reaching old links between West and East along the mountain-chains ranging from the Caucasus to the Himalayas. (Tucci 1963: 155-156).

We suggest that the Devi sculpture is reminiscent of a pristine religious belief system and needs to be studied in the same vein as our buffalo-headed sculpture. Thus, Dollfus (1988, cited in Bruneau, Bellezza 2013, and Vernier 2016) draws our attention to the widespread cultic significance of ibex in the folk traditions of Ladakh, the Pamirs, Hindukush, Iranian plateau and Caucasus, though surprisingly not in Tibetan culture. She has also discussed its association with the fertility cult of Ladakh. In a recent study of rock carvings of Taru Thang (Ladakh), Aas (2008) observes that the mountain goats (ibex and blue sheep) represent “about 80% of the total number of carvings.” He credits “the Dardic speaking people” of the trans-Himalaya with having preserved the mountain goat “as a symbol, stretching its origins back to prehistory and all the way up to present time” (*ibid.*: 46). He observes:

The Dards believe that the pure zones of the mountains are inhabited by supernatural beings, ambiguous creatures capable of bringing fortune and prosperity, but also sickness and misfortune. The society of the supernatural beings is believed to be a mirror image of the Dard society, and the spirits keep mountain goats as domestic animals like humans keep goats. Therefore, the mountain goat is regarded the most pure amongst animals, being in touch with the pure sphere of the mountains and the supernatural beings...

[The mountain goat] being the link between Taru Thang, the supernatural world of the Dards and their social structure. (*Ibid.*: 26).

This draws our attention to one of the “most interesting” seal-amulets from Mohenjodaro which depicts a deity standing between two branches of a *pipal* tree, a kneeling worshipper to the deity’s right and “a goat with a human face [that] looks on with evident interest.” Below these there is a row of seven human figures. Mackay calls them deities or spirits associated with the *pipal* tree which is considered to be sacred in Indian tradition (Mackay 1935: 73-75, pl. M, 8). Dhavalikar (1963: 22-27), citing examples from Vedic literature, suggests that this seal depicts the scene of preparation of *Soma* under the ministrations of the kneeling worshipper, who is Agni with his ram mount behind him.

We believe that an alternative explanation of the depiction of a ram can be given in the light of discussion of the Guligram Devī by Tucci (1963) and Srinivasan, Olivieri and Salemi (2018). Accordingly, the ram depicted on the Mohenjodaro seal-amulet under examination may have been a sacrificial goat which the kneeling figure is offering to the

principal deity. Hildebeitel (2011) has cited several examples of a “goat” represented in the religious context of Indus Valley art. It is worth noting that the recent discovery of a large number of petroglyphs depicting ibex in the Spiti Valley (Himachal Pradesh) suggests preeminence of ungulates in the socio-cultural milieu of that region (see Chauhan, Joshi 2017; Dowad, Norbu 2017; Handa 2017; Joshi 2017a; Nauriyal 2017). We have mentioned above that the natives of a large part of Western Garhwal and Eastern Himachal Pradesh are followers of the unorthodox cult of the four Mahāsu brothers, who along with their principal attendant deities receive two kinds of he-goats as offerings, namely *khāḍū* and *ghāṇḍuā*. Whereas the former is sacrificed and its meat is eaten, the latter is dedicated alive to the deity in fulfilment of a pledge and its killing is forbidden. It enjoys the status of sacred animal, and as such it can graze everywhere in the settlement including cultivated fields. However, when it dies a natural death its meat is eaten by the Brahmins and in some areas also shared by *dhiyāñī*-s (village daughters). Thus, here we see a male goat that can be sacrificed and eaten as well as a sacred animal whose killing is forbidden. Its position is somewhat similar to that of Disni, albeit in Dardic folklore Disni is “a she-ibex” and she herself offers “the sacrifice—a she-ibex” (see Tucci 1963: 153). Commenting on the draft of the present paper, Claus Peter Zoller informed us:¹²

The etymology of Disni is controversial. Turner in his Comparative Dictionary makes some suggestions which I do not find convincing. The most convincing suggestion was made by my colleague Prof. Almuth Degener who argues that the Nuristani word is a reflex of Proto-Indo-European *dīks “goat,” not found in Sanskrit but for instance in Greek *dīza* “she-goat.” That such a word is found in Nuristani but not in Sanskrit can be an argument for the theory of Outer and Inner Languages.

It may be noted that Nuristani, Indo-Aryan, and Dardic have common roots (Masica 1991: Ch. 3). In Vedic literature the ibex is associated with procreation (van Buitenen 1979: 30, fn. 12), and is a symbol of *kāma* (lust) (Samanta 1994). As a sacrificial animal, the ibex occupies a significant place in Brahmanical mythology and rituals (Smith, Doniger 1989; 2014: 207 ff.). In this connection, Tucci (1963: 154) draws our attention to a ceremony recorded by Jettmar in the Haramosh valley:

One man only was allowed to join in the ceremony, the priest of the Murkum, the « zhabán ». It was his duty to kill the ibex and to divide up the meat on the altar. This was eaten by the women sitting on the benches below. Then the priest danced before the goddess (without clothes, as some audacious people maintained) taking liberties with the surrounding women. The women, however, would beat him and torment him to their hearts' content. No man was allowed to oppose the behavior of the zhabán. It seems that he even had full sexual rights on all women of the valley. He was called “buck of the women-flock.”

Could the zhabán's amorous dance before women and the latter beating and tormenting him be taken as a motif representing *kāma* (lust) and its suppression? Contextually, we have two different myths of subjugation of lust in Brahmanical mythology. First, Śiva in his Caṇḍeśvara aspect is the annihilator of Kāmadeva (God of lust), as may be read in an inscription from Kathmandu dated to 624-632 CE:

Chatracaṇḍeśvara, who burnt the body of Kāma, who possesses true knowledge and the other [virtues]. (Acharya 2005: 211).

¹² Personal communication.

Second, there are different versions of the Mahiṣa (Buffalo) myth; in one account he appears as a devout worshipper of Śiva and in another as Śiva himself. As Mahiṣāsura (Buffalo demon) he lusts for Devī and gets killed by her, although the goddess repents for having killed the devotee of Śiva (for details, see Shulman 1976). Arguably, ibex-related myths and rituals are rooted in ancient history. The ibex was part of a widely distributed, complex religious belief system converging on Śiva, and traceable back to the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures of Northwestern South Asia and adjoining Inner Asia. Thus, as pointed out by Tucci (1963: 177-180) and Srinivasan, Olivieri and Salemi (2018: 122), “the *śaivite* factor” looms large in explaining the attributes of the Guligram Devi. In this connection, Claus Peter Zoller (personal communication) draws our attention to the following observation of Asko Parpola (2015: 205-206):

Yama’s vehicle in Hinduism is the water buffalo, but there is no record of this in the Vedas. In the single context of a buffalo sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra texts, the water buffalo is sacred to Varuṇa. The water buffalo is an animal native to South Asia, not originally connected with Aryan deities. On the other hand, it is connected with Harappan “ProtoŚiva,” who wears the horns of a water buffalo. So the buffalo’s connection with Yama, the god of death, suggests something about Proto-Śiva, too: Proto-Śiva may have been a god of death, but most probably he was also a divine king, like Varuṇa, who guarded the cosmic order (*ṛta*-), as well as Yama, known as the king of righteousness, *dharma-rāja*.

The above discussion leads us to suggest that Śiva as a cult deity combines diverse religious beliefs and practices, some of which seem to have existed before the advent of the Vedic Indo-Aryan culture complex. We also believe that the “Proto-Śiva” ideology was current among Indo-Iranian/Proto-Indo-Iranian speakers, and later on bifurcated into Avestan “Oešo” and Indo-Aryan “Śiva” ideologies. What was the name of that deity before the bifurcation? We must wait until the Harappan script is deciphered, although the Central Himalayan evidence suggests that it should relate to *kedāra* or *ke dāra* (water or/and earth-moving) (Jośī forthcoming: ch. 4). Srinivasan’s (2016) recent appraisal of literary and numismatic sources dealing with “Oešo and Śiva” lends remarkable support to this suggestion.

We strongly believe that like our buffalo-headed sculpture, the Guligram Devi combines various aspects of religious beliefs and practices of great antiquity. In sum, the buffalo-headed deity and the Guligram Devi point to the potential of the Himalaya in tracing the legacy of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures of South Asia and the Inner Asia complex, including Tibet.

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