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BRONZES OF KASHMIR: THEIR SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

The Sir George Birdwood Memorial Lecture by

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delivered to the Commonwealth Section of the Society

on Tuesday 17th April 1973,

with F. R. Allchin, MA, PhD, FSA, Reader in Indian Studies

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THE CHAIRMAN: It is a great pleasure to introduce Dr. Pal, who is a former student, a friend, and a scholar with a rapidly growing reputation. He came from the school at Calcutta University which grew up around the late Professor Jitendranath Banerjea, a distinguished art historian of his day. Under his guidance Dr. Pal decided that he wanted to do research on the art and architecture of Nepal. In intrepid fashion he set off into the field, in the late '50s, at a time when Nepal had only just opened its frontiers to the outside world. He had a three-rupee box camera, a notebook and almost no other aids, but he made a number of remarkable discoveries which, in part, he used in preparing his PhD thesis on the architecture of Nepal. As a result of this Professor Banerjea suggested that he should continue his research in this country. He won a Commonwealth Scholarship and came to Cambridge for three years, to write a second thesis on the Painting and Sculpture of Nepal. These days we often hear that too much time is spent in acquiring PhD theses, but I think that Dr. Pal's example is one where the double period of research has been amply rewarding. I understand that his Cambridge thesis, in greatly improved and magnified form, has now gone to the printer.

After Cambridge he returned to India for a short time and then, alas, he joined the brain drain across the Atlantic, first to the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, the museum whose Indian collections are peculiarly associated with the name of the greatest of Indian art historians, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and thereafter to the

County Museum at Los Angeles, where there is now one of the most important collections of Indian art in the world.

Dr. Pal has been a voluminous writer thus far in his career. The earliest record I have is of his editing a volume of articles for his teacher (*J. N. Banerjea Volume*, Calcutta, 1960). In the past seven or eight years works have flowed from his pen one after the other: a catalogue of *The Art of Tibet* from an exhibition held in New York (The Asia Society, 1969), a catalogue of an exhibition of the Heeramanek Collection from Boston (*The Arts of India and Nepal*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1967), a book on *Vaisnava Iconology in Nepal* (The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1970), several other works and many papers.

The subject of the Birdwood lecture to-day recommends itself to me because I know so little about it. Ever since I first approached Indian art the great mass of bronzes which proliferated in region after region, in century after century, have presented a baffling array — a vast body of material for the art historian if only he would get down to looking at them, analysing them and presenting them to the rest of the world. On the South Indian bronzes quite a lot of work has been done, but for Kashmir, with its own distinctive bronzes, there is scarcely a single synthetic account. I am looking forward to hearing Dr. Pal's lecture, and especially to seeing his splendid slides, in the confident hope that these will provide us for the first time with a coherent picture of the development of the school of bronzes in the Kashmir Valley.

The following lecture, which was illustrated, was then delivered.

I

FOR Sir George Birdwood and his generation, Kashmir was noted mostly for its carpets, ornamental bric-à-brac made with *papier mâché*, and, of course, the much admired shawls. Although Pandit R. C. Kak¹ had published his handbook for the Srinagar Museum in 1923, in his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, published in 1927, Coomaraswamy included only the well-known Buddha from Fatehpur, Kangra, and mentioned *en passant* the Avalokiteśvara dedicated in the reign of Queen Diddā (983-1003).² Twenty-five years later in his Penguin history of Indian art Benjamin Rowland³ devoted a small chapter to Kashmir but did not even allude to the tradition of Kashmiri bronzes. The story of Kashmiri bronzes is, therefore, the most recent and perhaps the most exciting development in the history of Indian art.⁴

In 1948 the then Maharaja of Kashmir abdicated his throne and retired to Bombay. Soon thereafter a group of bronzes appeared in the Bombay market and a number of them were subsequently published by Douglas Barrett in an article that still remains the most authoritative in the field.⁵ Most of these bronzes were dismissed by local scholars and collectors as being Tibetan because they were overpainted in cold gold.

In the early 1950s further political upheavals, this time not in Kashmir but in Tibet, resulted in a continuous exodus of Kashmiri bronzes from that unfortunate country. Most of these have now found their way, quite predictably, into private collections and museums in the United States. Indeed, the corpus of Kashmiri bronzes is now impressive and the majority of the works illustrating this lecture are from American collections.

The study of Kashmiri bronzes is important not only because of their intrinsic aesthetic merit, but also because of the contribution they made to the artistic traditions of many neighbouring areas. Along with Gandhāra – and it should be kept in mind that during the age of the Mauryas and well into that of the Kushānas Kashmir was not necessarily separated from Gandhāra – Kashmir enjoyed a unique position in the dissemination of Indian culture. Virtually the gateway into India from the north, Kashmir's geographical situation has ac-

counted both for her splendour and her grief.

The only other scholar, apart from Douglas Barrett, who has contributed significantly to the study of Kashmiri bronzes, is Herman Goetz.⁶ Both scholars have somehow associated the history of Kashmiri style bronzes with the political fortunes of the Karkota dynasty. It is generally agreed that the Karkotas assumed power sometime in the seventh century and the greatest of them was Lalitāditya, who ruled in the first half of the eighth century. Certainly some of the finest monuments of Kashmir were built during the reign of Lalitāditya, which does suggest that it must also have been a great period for Kashmiri sculpture. However, it is equally pertinent that even if the reign of Lalitāditya did signal the high-water mark of the Kashmir bronze tradition, the sculptors could not have worked in a vacuum. As we will presently see, the bronzes attributed to Lalitāditya's period are finished products revealing a technical sophistication and stylistic maturity that cannot be accounted for without the assumption of a long and anterior tradition of bronze casting. Moreover, it will also be apparent that the typical eighth-century bronzes of Kashmir display a variety of iconographic and stylistic features that simply cannot be explained in terms of indigenous development but strongly point to external sources of inspiration. Before the Karkotas came to the throne, Kashmir may have been occupied by a long succession of foreign rulers or tribes. Certainly both the Kushānas and the Huns were present in the area for centuries. Indeed, the history of Kashmir begins to take shape only with the foundation of the Karkota dynasty around AD 625. The immediate predecessors of the Karkotas appear to have been Huns, who, according to a number of modern scholars, were responsible for the massive destruction of the monuments. This, however, seems to be an unwarranted assumption. The destruction of monuments was not the prerogative of the Huns alone; the Kushānas before them were equally destructive and yet during their rule much of the finest Indian sculpture was created at Mathura, while Gandhāra flourished as a prolific centre of Buddhist art.

By far the largest number of Kashmiri bronzes discovered so far are Buddhist. It must be stressed, however, that the sectarian affiliation of a particular bronze had



FIGURE 1. *Mukhalingam, Kashmir, eighth century (Private Collection, New York), height 13½ in.*

little to do with its stylistic traits. All bronzes that are recognizably Kashmiri reflect certain demonstrably peculiar characteristics which distinguish them from other contemporary Indian bronzes. We will begin our rapid survey of Kashmiri bronzes by first delineating characteristics that are typical of the style, then go on to determine some of the major influences perceptible in these bronzes, and finally evaluate the relationship between Kashmiri bronzes and sculptures of neigh-

bouring areas, particularly Chamba, Western Tibet, Central Asia and China.

II

The style of sculpture that may be considered typical of Kashmir and that is reflected in the many bronzes that have come out of Tibet in recent years seems already to have been crystallized in the sculptures that embellish the Martand temple built by Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa in the first half of the



FIGURE 2. *Vāsudeva Kamalajā*, Kashmir, eleventh century
(Private Collection, New York), H. 7½ in.

eighth century. One may define the typical characteristics of Kashmiri bronzes as follows:

(1) A distinct predilection for rather heavy and sturdy bodies and an almost pretentious attempt at naturalistic modelling of them. This is particularly evident in the male body, where both the chest and the pectoral muscles are delineated in a contrived but perceptibly muscular manner. To my knowledge such an ob-

vious attempt to show the muscles of the torso is peculiar only to bronzes of this area.

(2) The faces of Kashmiri bronzes have distinct shapes, round and chubby, with rather thick and fleshy features. The cheeks are usually puffed up and the nose prominent. The lips, however, are poorly defined, definitely not full and sensuous like the lips one meets in other Indian sculptures. The eyes are some-

times large and have a vacant expression made particularly noticeable because of the silver inlay. In other instances the eyes seem to be slanted and have the narrowness of Mongoloid eyes.

- (3) A third distinguishing trait of Kashmiri bronzes is evident in the treatment of the petals of the lotus base. Generally no attempt is made to represent the stamenoid, and often the petals are more reminiscent of those of an artichoke than a lotus. Once again the peculiarity of the lotus design seems to occur only in the bronzes of Kashmir.
- (4) Finally, most Kashmiri bronzes are brassy in comparison to the darker and more coppery bronzes created elsewhere in India. Moreover, Kashmiri sculptors seem to have been more fond of using both copper and silver inlays – in the eyes very frequently, but also often in the garments – than, for example, were their counterparts in eastern or southern India.

There are many other details that distinguish a Kashmiri bronze from other contemporary works, but these need not detain us here. The general characteristics enumerated above are easily perceived in all Kashmiri style bronzes, whether Hindu or Buddhist.

III

Śaiva bronzes are relatively rare, and I know of only one Mukhalingam, which is now in a private collection in New York (Figure 1). There seems little doubt that stylistically it is almost a duplicate of another bronze Mukhalingam still being worshipped in the Śakti Devi Temple at Chatrarhi in Chamba.⁷ A second bronze, now in the Berlin Museum,⁸ is identified as Śiva-Lokeśvara, but it is doubtful if the figure is Śaiva at all. The base of the bronze carries an inscription and the paleography indicates a date in the seventh rather than the eighth century. The Śaivas in Kashmir were mostly Pāśupatas, who consider the *lingam* or the phallic symbol of Śiva as the ideal image for worship, a fact which accounts for the scarcity of Śaiva bronzes. There is nevertheless a Śaiva bronze of considerable significance, and this will be discussed presently.

With regard to Vaishṇava bronzes, two principal types predominate. One of these shows Vishṇu with or without his consort Śrī-Lakshmi, riding on his mount, the Garuḍa. A particularly handsome example is now in the Prince of Wales Museum in

Bombay.⁹ Stylistically it is even more elaborate than the Queen Diddā bronze of the late tenth century, especially in terms of its ornateness. A more intriguing bronze, probably of the same period, shows the two divinities, again riding the Garuḍa, but this time portrayed androgynously (Figure 2). Such conjoint forms are described as Vāsudeva-Kamalajā in tenth-eleventh century iconographic texts, and doubtless they were influenced by Arddhanārīśvara images of Śiva and Pārvati as well as by the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy. Rather more uncommon is the charming bronze of the Dwarf Incarnation of Vishṇu now preserved in the Berlin Museum.¹⁰ Indeed, representations of the Vāmana avatāra are so rare in the entire spectrum of Indian bronzes that I can hardly think of another example for purposes of comparison.

The most familiar Vaishṇava image from Kashmir is that of Vaikuṅṭha Caturānana in which the god is represented with four heads (Figure 3). The Vaikuṅṭha form of Vishṇu is considered to be the symbol *par excellence* of the Pāñcarātrins. That he was also the patron deity of Kashmir by the eighth century is evident not only from Kalhana's *Rājatarāṅgīnī* but also from the *Nilamata-Purāna* and the *Vishṇudharmottara-Purāna*. And so closely did the type become identified with Kashmir that when an image of Vaikuṅṭha was consecrated in the Lakshmaṇa temple at Khajuraho in the tenth century it was regarded as the 'Kashmiri type of Vishṇu image'.

IV

Of the Buddhist bronzes by far the majority portray the Buddha. At least three distinct types of Buddha images may be discerned among Kashmiri bronzes. The simplest type shows the Buddha seated in the classic posture of a *yogī* on a simple lotus, his right hand extended in the gesture of munificence, while the left upholds the end of the upper garment (*saṅghātī*).¹¹ Usually in such images both shoulders are covered by the garment whose volume is indicated by folds rendered symmetrically in the mode deriving from Mathura rather than directly from Gandhāra. In a more impressive variation of the same image type the Buddha is seated not on a lotus but upon an elaborate throne supported by rampant lions and a *yakṣa* (Figure 4). As pointed out by Barrett,¹² this type of image was probably created in the first half of the eighth century, which may be regarded as the classical period of Kashmiri sculpture.



FIGURE 3. *Vaikuntha Vishnu*, Kashmir, eighth century (Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), H. 18½ in.

The Fatehpur and the Los Angeles County Museum examples are among the most impressive as well as the finest examples of the type.

Perhaps the most elaborate of the seated Buddha type – and certainly a *tour de force* among Kashmiri bronzes – is a sculpture recently acquired by the Norton Simon Foundation (Figure 5). The principal image, interesting as it is, is almost an identical copy of the now familiar ivory Buddha generally

dated to the eighth century in the Boston Museum.¹³ A date in the second half of the eighth century for the Simon bronze can be deduced from a great deal of internal evidence which I will discuss elsewhere. But what is interesting is trying to identify some of the figures along the sumptuous base. Apart from the two Bodhisattvas, the most important are the four figures kneeling along the second step of the base. Obviously the base represents a mountain in a manner that



FIGURE 4. *Buddha Enthroned, Kashmir, eighth century (formerly the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), H. 16 in.*

seems to have been typical of Kashmir. The two figures on the inside are no doubt the more important of the four. The male wearing a diadem of pearls holds what appears to be a musical instrument; the female carries the auspicious vase (*purṇakumbha*).

If the male represents a king, rather than simply a musician, then he may be identified with Jayāpiḍa, who was accomplished in all the performing arts according to Kalhana. "There on the slab at the door of the temple he, who was versed in the histrionic arts of



FIGURE 5. *Buddha Enthroned, Kashmir, eighth century*
(the Norton Simon Foundation), H. 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.



FIGURE 6. *Buddha Enthroned, Kashmir, tenth century*
(Private Collection, New York), H. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

the dance, song, and the like in accordance with Bharata, sat himself down for a while.¹⁴ The bearded figure behind him carrying a garland may then represent a minister. He may well have been a joint donor of this spectacular bronze and appropriately kneels behind his king. The monk behind the female, who may represent the queen, is very likely the royal preceptor, someone as important as Sarvajñamitra, who lived in the holy Kayya *vihāra* and 'was comparable to Jina'.¹⁵ The Kayya *vihāra* was founded by Cankuna, the Tocharian prime minister of Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa, who was Jayāpīḍa's grandfather.

Both Lalitāditya and Cankuna as well as Jayāpīḍa are credited by Kalhana with having dedicated a large number of gold and silver images to the Buddhist monasteries, and this may well have been one such example. In Kalhana's words: 'The Tuhkara Cankuna, the founder of the Cankuna Vihara, founded a Stupa, lofty like the king's mind as well as gold images of the Jinas.'¹⁶ Jayāpīḍa spent most of his thirty-six years as a ruler fighting outside Kashmir but Kalhana also records his donations to Buddhist monasteries. He was especially a patron of the arts and letters and it seems not unreasonable to assume that Sarvajñamitra, the famous author of the *Sragdhārastotra* eulogizing the Goddess Tārā, would have added lustre to his court. However, what I still cannot really explain is the couple seated in a remarkably naturalistic and relaxed manner within the cave. The man has his hands raised as if he held a flute, and the woman is obviously enchanted by his music. Their inclusion in such a bronze could not be merely whimsical and arbitrary, and it is to be hoped that someone will shed light upon the scene soon.

Whether my suggested identifications of the kneeling figures are accepted or not, few scholars will dispute an eighth-century date for this spectacular bronze. From the point of view of style what is significant for us is the presence of a number of features that indicate close association with the arts of Central Asia. Even apart from the distinctive pearl and flower roundels decorating the seat of the Buddha, there is a quality of luxury and sumptuousness in this bronze that cannot but bring to mind the rich technique and texture, especially with inlay, of Sassanian metalwork. In addition the lions in their caves are not unlike the lions seen frequently in Chinese steles. The lions below the

thrones in Indian Buddhist reliefs are generally more hieratic and sedentary, while these lions have an animated quality about them. One of them is pawing his nose, while the other is busy licking his genitalia. Such whimsy is occasionally perceptible in Chinese reliefs, where lions are known to be scratching their noses,¹⁷ but I admit that I have not yet come across a Chinese lion licking his genitalia.

In my opinion the two small bronzes of the simpler kind, discussed earlier, may well be the immediate predecessors of these larger and more majestic versions. After all, we do know from Kalhana that enormously large metal images of the Buddha, 'which filled the heavens' and rivalled in splendour the Bamiyan figures, adorned some of the temples built by Lalitāditya, and particularly by his Tocharian minister Cankuna. Such monumental bronzes could not have been created in a vacuum and must indicate an anterior tradition.

In the second principal type of Buddha image created in Kashmir the Master is shown seated in the so called 'European' fashion (Figure 6). Undoubtedly this imperious type of image represents the Buddha as both a spiritual and temporal conqueror, and ultimately this composition - which became quite popular in Gupta India - must derive from such imperial Kushāna portraits as that of Wema Kadphises, which has the emperor enthroned in a like manner upon a similar lion-throne. Sometimes in such bronzes the Buddha is crowned and in others not. The example illustrated here shows rather an interesting delineation of the robes. The portion that covers the legs is left plain but the upper parts have been rendered to display the schematic folds.

More intriguing from the standpoint of stylistic analysis is the addition of a collar like piece of cloth or cape around the neck of some Buddha figures (Figure 7). This seems to be a feature peculiar to a number of Kashmiri Buddha images and is generally considered to be an element borrowed from Sassanian art. Iranian, or at any rate Central Asian, influences are even more evident in two superb bronzes, one of which is in the Rockefeller¹⁸ and the other in a private collection in New York (Figure 8).

The frilled collar is quite distinct in the Rockefeller Buddha, and in both the donor figures leave no doubt about their foreign character, at least as far as their costumes go. Although their dress is blatantly Scythian -



FIGURE 7. *Buddha Enthroned, Kashmir, eighth century*
 (Private Collection, New York), H. 7½ in.

Central Asian is perhaps a better term – their names, as given in the inscription, are Sanskrit. The donor of the Rockefeller bronze was very likely a feudal lord who also had the title of *gajapati* or Lord of the Elephant Brigade. The donor of the second bronze,

however, claims the conventional imperial titles of *mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara*,¹⁹ and although his name is given, he does not appear to have belonged to the ruling family of Kashmir.

A number of other Buddhist bronzes have



FIGURE 8. *Buddha blessing King Nandi Vikramāditya, Kashmir, eighth century* (Private Collection, New York), H. 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.

also come to light, but the Buddhist pantheon in Kashmir seems to have been relatively more limited than those of Bengal, Bihar, or Orissa. Both Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara are familiar, the latter in several of his Tāntric forms. Indeed, Kashmir is consi-

dered to have been one of the most important sources of Tāntric cults but only a handful of sculptures are known to portray Tāntric themes. Among these a beautiful bronze representing Vajrasattva (Figure 9), one of the principal deities of the Vajrayāna pan-



FIGURE 9. *Vajrasattva*, Kashmir, ninth century
(Private Collection, New York), H. 7 in.

theon, and a powerful sculpture portraying Samvara now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art²⁰ deserve our attention. The latter, or other similar bronzes, must have served as prototypes for the numerous portrayals of the god in later Tibetan art – a point that will be emphasized further on.

V

The chronological sequence of Kashmiri bronzes has yet to be firmly determined. At

any rate, it is a task that cannot be accomplished in the course of this lecture. Most of the bronzes we have already seen belong generally to a period between the eighth and eleventh centuries. This would also agree in principle with the chronological scheme suggested by Douglas Barrett some years ago. However, I should now like to discuss a few bronzes which I feel must be dated considerably earlier than the eighth century, and are perhaps to be regarded as precursors



FIGURE 10. *Maitreya, Kashmir, sixth century (formerly the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase, Los Angeles County Museum of Art), H. 10½ in.*

of the Lalitāditya period bronzes.

One of these (Figure 10), now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, represents the Bodhisattva Maitreya.²¹ Very likely it served as an attendant figure to a central Buddha in a triad such as is often seen in

Gandhāra, Central Asia and China. Both in terms of modelling and facial features, it barely anticipates the typically Kashmiri bronzes of the eighth century. Indeed, the absence of contrived naturalism in the modelling as well as the relatively slimmer



FIGURE 11. Śiva as Paśupati (?), Kashmir, sixth-seventh century
(Private Collection, New York), H. 8½ in.

proportions indicate a greater awareness of the Gupta style. However, the treatment of the hair, particularly the fan-shaped *jaṭā*, and the peculiar manner of raising the right hand with the palm turned towards the body seem to stem directly from Gandhāra.

Stylistically, therefore, this bronze seems to belong to the sixth rather than to the eighth century.

The second bronze, now in the Berlin Museum, portrays the Vaikuṅṭha form of Viṣṇu.²⁹ Few scholars have disputed a



FIGURE 12. Reverse of Figure 11 showing Śiva as Lakuliṣa (?)

seventh-century date for it, although this too may belong to the sixth. I need hardly stress that the figure type of Viṣṇu seems extremely close to Gandhāran Bodhisattvas, generally dated no later than the fifth century, while the base is similar to that seen in the Thanesar Khera Buddha now in the Kansas

City Museum.²³ The personification of the emblem is certainly a Gupta feature, while the wing-like horns, no doubt symbolizing the horn of plenty and emerging from the shoulders of the Earth goddess between Viṣṇu's feet, are not seen in any typical Vaiṣṇava image of Viṣṇu after the eighth



FIGURE 13. *Flying Angel, Kashmir, fifth century (Nelson Fund, William Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City), H. 3½ in.*

century but may be traced in the earlier art of Gandhāra. Perhaps the most convincing reason why this bronze should be dated earlier is the peculiar manner in which the additional heads of Vishṇu are grafted to the neck. In all standard Vaikuṇṭha images the heads are joined in a more harmonious fashion and appear to relate to the body in an organic manner. But in the Berlin Vishṇu they occur as unnatural outgrowths and are very similar to those seen in a Vaikuṇṭha image of the fifth century from Mathura.²⁴ These considerations lead me to attribute a late sixth century date to the Berlin Vaikuṇṭha.²⁵

The third pre-eighth century Kashmiri bronze represents a unique Śaiva icon (Figures 11, 12). It shows two adorsed figures sharing four heads. Three of the faces are benign and the fourth has an angry expression. On one side the two hands hold a trident and a deer or a goat by the head. On

the reverse the hands hold a staff across the thighs. The side that holds the staff seems to wear an animal skin above the *dhōti* immediately below the sacred thread. Although the forehead of each face is rubbed, which makes it difficult to trace the third eye, because of the trident and the animal I have little hesitation in identifying the figure as Śiva. Very likely the side with the trident and animal represents the 'Paśupati', or Lord of the animals, aspect of the divinity, while the reverse may portray Lakuliśa, whose principal emblem is the staff or *daṇḍa*.

Those of you who are familiar with Kushāna numismatics will at once recognize at least two iconographical elements in the Paśupati side of the image that occur frequently in Kushāna coins. In a large number of Kushāna coins, Śiva, either with one or multiple heads, is shown standing before his bull holding a trident.²⁶ Elsewhere, particu-

larly in some coins of Kanishka, we see a four-armed Śiva whose lower left hand holds a stag or a goat exactly as the figure does in the bronze.²⁷ Similarly the staff or sceptre held by Lakuliśa also appears to echo the shape of those held by many of the Kushāna kings.

I have no intention of suggesting that this remarkable bronze be attributed a date in the Kushāna period. But the fact remains that it is closer to Śaiva images of the Kushāna period, at least so far as numismatic evidence goes, than to any Śaiva icon of Karkota Kashmir or for that matter contemporary India. Stylistically as well it seems to conform more to the Berlin Vaikuṅṭha Viṣṇu or the Los Angeles Maitreya than to bronzes attributed to the period of Lalitāditya. I am therefore of the opinion that this bronze, now in a private collection in New York, is probably a work of the early seventh century and well imitates an earlier image of Śiva of the Kushāna period.

The last bronze for which I claim an early date is in the Kansas City Museum (Figure 13). The bronze shows a flying figure with wings on his back. It is possibly a celestial being or an angel of some sort, although one cannot rule out the possibility of it being a Garuḍa. The Kansas City Museum regards it as a Gandhāra bronze of about the second century. But almost certainly it is a Kashmiri bronze though the hair style and the modelling are strongly Gupta. The face, however, seems already to anticipate typically Kashmiri features, while the body is treated in a manner similar to that of the Los Angeles Maitreya. What is certainly non-Indian is the addition of the wings, which may have been derived from Gandhāra or Central Asia. At any rate it can hardly be given a date later than the sixth century.

It seems abundantly clear therefore that the typical Kashmiri idiom as formulated in the first half of the eighth century was an amalgam of various stylistic traditions. The principal artistic source was of course Gandhāra, and the discoveries at Akhnur and Ushkur prove this beyond doubt. It may further be demonstrated that Mathura must also have been an important source, not only for specific Vaiṣṇava images, but also for general Gupta stylistic traits. In the first five centuries of the Christian era Mathura was the single most important religious centre in north India, particularly for iconography, whether Hindu, Buddha, or Jaina. And,

lastly, Central Asia with its diverse styles appears to have been a third contributory source, especially for both Sassanian and Chinese elements.

In the seventh century a new wave of Iranian influence may have reached Kashmir more directly. The onslaught of Arabs had already destroyed the Sassanian empire, and just as groups of Zoroastrians migrated later to the Bombay region and formed the Parsee community, so also craftsmen from east Iran may have travelled to Kashmir, attracted by the growing splendour of the house of Karkotas. Even more than the Buddha images examined earlier, the Cleveland Sūrya²⁸ reflects strong Sassanian influences. The rich use of inlaying with silver and copper, a characteristic of Kashmiri bronzes of the eighth century, may also stem from the sumptuous metalwork of Sassanian Iran. Just as the ethnic composition of Kashmir was eclectic with the presence of a number of Central Asian tribes, as is evident from the costumes of the donor figures, so also the art that developed under their patronage had to assume a cosmopolitan style to suit the many different tastes.

VI

Quite naturally the influence of Kashmiri bronzes was felt very strongly in the areas immediately contiguous to Kashmir. Douglas Barrett has very convincingly shown how bronzes of the Swat valley are often almost indistinguishable from those of Kashmir. Another area that was certainly an artistic satellite of Kashmir from the eighth through the eleventh century is the small Himalayan kingdom of Chamba. Nestled in the Panjab Himalayas, Chamba has preserved even more impressive examples of Kashmiri bronzes than Kashmir itself. The now famous image of Vaikuṅṭha Viṣṇu that caused an international scandal only a little more than a year ago may well have been cast in Kashmir itself or was perhaps created locally by a Kashmiri master.²⁹ More distinctive, however, are the magnificent Gaṇeśa and Narasimha images at Brahmor and the two goddesses at Chatrarhi and Brahmor.³⁰ Both the Gaṇeśa and Narasimha are stylistically closer to Kashmiri works, but the goddesses reveal far more abstract and fluid qualities in the modelling. The superb images of Śiva-Pārvati along with the splendid bull in the Gauri-Shankar temple at Chamba town must also be regarded as masterpieces of Chamba sculpture. While



FIGURE 14. *Tārā*, Chamba (?), tenth century
(Private Collection, New York), H. 10½ in.

there is an overall similarity in the conceptualization of the figures, obviously the Chamba artists used somewhat different canons of proportions. There is a dynamic vigour and formal simplicity in these bronzes not always apparent in Kashmiri bronzes. In appreciating the art of Kashmir one is constantly aware of the synthetic character of the style, but these creations of the unknown Chamba sculptors seem the

products of a more spontaneous and indigenous vision. A number of smaller bronzes have emerged from the Himalayan area including a powerful Tāntric image now in the National Museum, New Delhi,³¹ and a delicately rendered *Tārā* in a private collection in New York (Figure 14). The majority of these bronzes from Chamba and the neighbouring areas are characterized by slim and elegant proportions, and their



FIGURE 15. *Yama, Kashmir, ninth century*
(Private Collection, New York), H. 4½ in.

modelling is not quite as naturalistic as in those from Kashmir.

Perhaps no other country has been more indebted to Kashmir for its culture than has Tibet. It was from Kashmir that the Tibetans borrowed both their religion and their script in the middle of the seventh century. Naturally, Kashmiri bronzes must also have provided the Tibetan artists with their first models. The fact that the majority of the Kashmiri bronzes appearing in the market to-day are coming out of Tibet attests to the popularity of Kashmiri art in that country. Several bronzes that have recently come to light are ostensibly Kashmiri but bear Tibetan inscriptions on their bases. One such is the monumental sculpture of the Buddha now in Cleveland.³² When he first published

it, Sherman Lee considered it to be a bronze of the eighth century. Herman Goetz,³³ in a postscript to one of his reprinted papers, redated the bronze to the eleventh century without giving any evidence. The inscription on the base states that the bronze was the personal image of Lhatsun Nāgarāja. The word *lhatsun* means Tāntric teacher. According to the *Blue Annals*,³⁴ which contains historical information about Tibet, in the tenth century there was a king named Khor-re in the small principality of sPuhrañs in western Tibet between the kingdoms of Guge and Manyul. Both he and his two sons, who curiously were given the Indian names of Nāgarāja and Devarāja, abdicated the throne and were ordained as monks. Very likely this is the Nāgarāja

whose name is inscribed on the Cleveland bronze. It seems likely that only a teacher with the resources of a prince could have commissioned so magnificent an image, and the tenth century seems a more likely date for the bronze than the suggested eighth.

Whether the Cleveland bronze was cast in Kashmir and transported to western Tibet or was produced locally by a Kashmiri sculptor is an issue that cannot be settled definitely. We do know that a large number of Kashmiri artists, along with many from Khotan, were physically present in both Ladakh and western Tibet. The kings of Guge, it may be recalled, were amongst the most zealous patrons of Buddhism Asia had ever known.

Kashmiri influence on bronzes from Ladakh or western Tibet are obvious and need no comment. That many of the Tibetan ferocious deities were modelled from Kashmiri originals is also evident from the unusually interesting bronzes that have recently come to light (Figure 15). Indeed, along with the Los Angeles Samvara and a significant Vajrapāṇi in Cleveland that will be discussed presently, such bronzes provide important sources for the study of Tāntric imagery which is so predominant in the art of Tibet.

VII

More than any other state, Kashmir maintained close contacts with China, both politically and culturally. Because of her geographical position, Kashmir was frequently drawn into the vortex of Central Asian politics, particularly during the period of the T'ang dynasty. The Karkotas, especially Candrāpiḍa and Lalitāditya in the seventh and eighth centuries, had a close diplomatic relationship with the T'ang Emperors. The balance of power in Central Asia was seriously jeopardized at this time by continual invasions of the Arabs and Tibetans. It was only natural that Kashmir and China should become political allies in order to counteract the threats. Equally important for Kashmiri culture was the appointment by Lalitāditya of Cankuna as his prime minister. This gifted Tocharian, hailing from Chinese Turkestan, was a devout Buddhist and was responsible for the erection and restoration of a large number of monuments in the valley.

Perhaps even more significant than the diplomatic overtures was the continuous exchange of monks, scholars and pilgrims between the two areas. One can draw up an

enormous list of names of Buddhist luminaries from Kashmir who visited China and vice versa. And, it must be remembered that more often than not these visitors carried back with them considerable quantities of bronzes. Discoveries of manuscripts in Gilgit, Tun-huang, and other Central Asian and Chinese sites leave no room for doubt that Kashmir was one of the principal forces behind the propagation of the Buddhist faith in inner and east Asia.

Whereas the flow of artistic influences into Tibet was a one-way affair – mostly from Kashmir – with regard to China it may have been a case of two-way traffic. In the early 1950s Herman Goetz suggested that this may have been the case, but the problem is not a simple one. While I will not attempt to reach any definite conclusions in this lecture, I would like to focus attention upon certain cogent facts that I hope will stimulate further research.

One of the most intriguing phenomena in the Buddhist sculpture of T'ang China is the emergence of a new concept of form, especially as applied to the human body. Let us consider the later sculptures of the caves at T'ien-g-lung-shan, regarded as the very finest among T'ang stone sculpture. Typical of Chinese scholars is the following opinion summarized by Sherman Lee:³⁵

Where before we were conscious of religious fervour, of a more abstract and mystical handling of the figure, of linear pattern and of elongation, here we are more aware of a unified and worldly approach. The modelling of the figures is fleshy and voluptuous, perhaps in part under the influence of the Gupta style of India.

Still more pertinent for our purposes is the comment by Vanderstappen and Rhie:³⁶

A quest for self-sustaining order governing the demarcation of the human body form in its principal component parts is a basic precept of this style. The strength of the taut planes and rhythmic lines is enhanced by variations which pay constant heed to structural articulation of the body.

By now it should have become quite apparent that the above statements may be applied with equal emphasis to the form as conceived by eighth-century Kashmiri sculptors. There seems little doubt that a distinct stylistic relationship exists between the later sculptures of T'ien-g-lung-shan and the eighth-century Kashmiri style.

Apart from the startling resemblance in the formal characteristics of sculptures from T'ien-g-lung-shan and those of Lalitāditya's

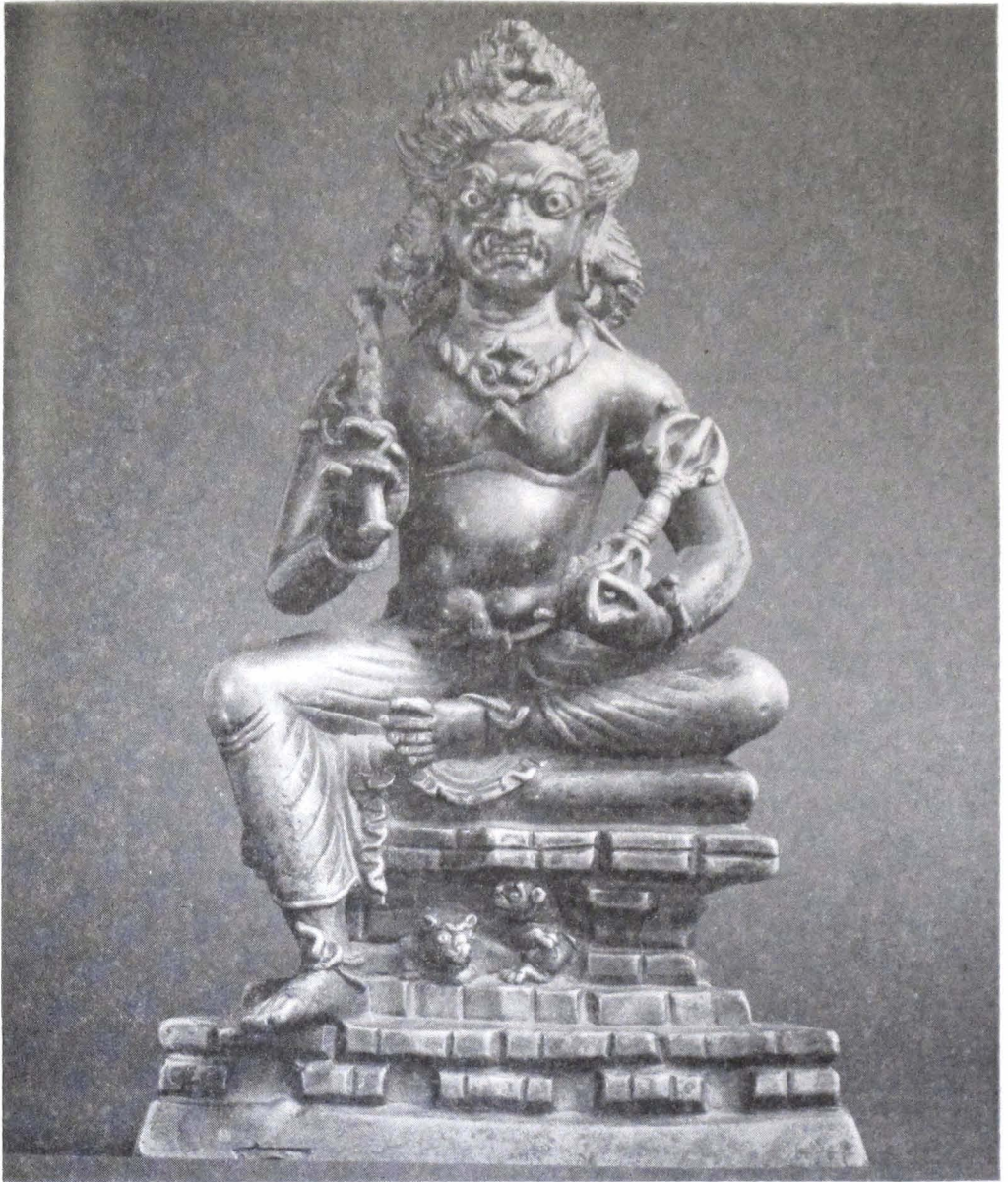


FIGURE 16. *Vajrapāṇi*, Kashmir, eighth-ninth century (Andrew R. and Martha Jennings Fund, the Cleveland Museum of Art), H. 8½ in.

Kashmir, it is manifestly clear that the typical Kashmiri face has a fullness and fleshy blown-up shape that is also found in T'ang sculptures. Among other details, medallions similar to those on the crowns of Kashmiri bronzes may already be found in cave 18 in Yun-kang,³⁷ dated to the second half of the fifth century. The lions which seem to be scratching themselves – on the base of the Norton Simon Foundation bronze – are perhaps based on Chinese models. But more significantly, the shape

and design of the aureoles that are found invariably in Kashmiri bronzes after the Lalitāditya period seem to derive from the pointed aureoles of steles and bronzes of Wei Dynasty China.

Finally, I would like to conclude this discussion by calling to your attention a significant Kashmiri bronze acquired recently by the Cleveland Museum (Figure 16). The sculpture shows a ferocious Vajrapāṇi seated on what is ostensibly a stylized mountain. There can be little doubt

about the iconographical relationship between such a bronze and the sculptures of Myo-o in Japan, especially that of the ninth-century Godai Myo-o on the altar of the Toji kodo in Kyoto.³⁸ The obvious link is provided by a sculpture of Acala Vidyārāja, recently excavated in the north-eastern outskirts of Hsi-an in Shensi province.³⁹ The Kashmiri bronze Vajrapāṇi may only be a contemporary sculpture, which makes it difficult to assert exactly where such types originated, but the relationship remains intriguing.

To sum up. The style of art that can be labelled as 'Kashmiri' seems to have been crystallized during the eighth century when some of the greatest bronzes were created. The development of this style, however, was not an isolated phenomenon and certainly presupposed an earlier tradition of bronze-casting. The dominant strain in the Kashmiri style of the eighth century, as reflected in the bronzes, remained Indian. The art of Gandhāra played an important rôle and so did that of Mathura or other centres of Gupta art of Madhyadeśa. However, situated at the crossroads of Central Asia, Kashmir imbibed the cultural traits of many different peoples, and the arts of Central Asia also played a significant rôle in moulding the Kashmiri style. At the same time Kashmir was one of the most important centres of Buddhism in the seventh-eighth centuries, which made it a primary source for Buddhist art. And, carried by monks, merchants and pilgrims, the bronzes of Kashmir must have influenced the arts of many neighbouring areas, particularly the Panjab Himalayas, Afghanistan, Central Asia, perhaps China, and most certainly Tibet.

This brief review of Kashmiri bronzes makes it manifestly clear that not only is art born of art, but traditional political frontiers rarely restrained the free movement of artistic styles. Paraphrasing Kalhana only slightly, one may well say:

Worthy of homage is the indescribable insight of a gifted *artist* which excels the stream of ambrosia since through it is achieved a permanent embodiment of glory by the *artist* and others as well. Who else is capable of making vivid before one's eyes pictures of a bygone age barring the *artist* and the Creator who create naturally delightful productions?⁴⁰

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Pal, for an exciting and remarkably lucid exposition of the subject. My expectations have certainly been well satisfied. I think we may now say that we

begin to see what were the scope and character of the Kashmir bronzes. Dr. Pal spoke with admirable clarity, and he has presented to us a dramatic picture of the way in which this eclectic art was formed, with influences from India, China, Central Asia and Iran, of the way it flourished and developed, and in its turn sent back its own influences to China, Japan and Tibet. I believe that Sir George Birdwood, had he been here, would have been well pleased by this lecture commemorating his name, and it remains for me to ask you to express your thanks to our speaker in the usual way.

The meeting concluded with the usual demonstrations of appreciation for the Lecturer and Chairman.

NOTES

1. R. C. Kak, *Handbook of Archaeological and Numismatic Sections of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar*, Calcutta, 1923.
2. J. Ph. Vogel, 'Inscribed Brass Statuette from Fatehpur (Kangra)', *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report*, 1904-5.
3. B. Rowland, Jr., *The Art and Architecture of India*, Harmondsworth, 1st ed., 1953.
4. It may be noted that when we speak of Kashmiri bronzes we really mean bronzes produced in basically the 'Kashmiri' style, irrespective of their exact provenance.
5. D. Barrett, 'Bronzes of Northwest India and Western Pakistan', *Lalit-Kalā*, no. 11, (1962), pp. 35 ff.
6. For Professor Goetz's articles see H. Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*, Wiesbaden, 1969.
7. *Ibid.*, pl. XXII.
8. *Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin*, Katalog 1971, Cat. no. 101 and pl. 23.
9. Barrett, *op. cit.*, Fig. 32.
10. *Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin*, Cat. 20, 142, pl. 24.
11. *The Art of India and Nepal: The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection*, Boston, 1966, p. 65, Fig. 52; P. Pal, *Indo-Asian Art from the John Gilmore Ford Collection*, Baltimore, 1971, p. 22, pl. 5.
12. Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7.
13. M. C. Beach, 'Two Indian Ivories Newly Acquired', in *Boston Museum Bulletin*, LXII, 329 (1964), pp. 95 ff.
14. R. S. Pandit, *Rajatarāngini, The Saga of the Kings of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 156.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
17. T. Akiyama and S. Matsubara, *Arts of China, Buddhist Cave Temples, New Researches*, Tokyo and Palo Alto, 1969, Fig. 182.
18. S. E. Lee, *Asian Art Selections from the Collections of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, 3rd*, New York, 1970, pp. 21 & 31.
19. The name of the King is Nandi Vrikramāditya. Mr. Prangopal Paul has very kindly allowed me to use his reading of the inscription. As both the bronze and the inscription are rather important I propose to discuss them in a separate paper.
20. *Heeramaneck Catalogue*, p. 62, no. 50.
21. The bronze was recently published by John Huntington ('Avalokitesvara and the Namaskāramudrā in Gandhāra', in *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture*, Vol. I, edited by P. Ratnam, pp. 91 ff.). While I agree with his suggested date of fifth-sixth century, his identification of the figure as Avalokitesvara or the gesture of the right hand as *namaskāramudrā* are unconvincing. I would like to acknowledge here that one of my students, Mr. Robert Fisher, is writing a substantial paper on this and other related early bronzes.
22. *Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin*, Cat. no. 100, pl. 23.
23. *Master Bronzes of India*, Chicago, 1965, Fig. 3.
24. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Parts I-II, Boston, 1923, Pl. XIX.
25. A sixth-century date must also be attributed to the Cakrapurusha now in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (*Master Bronzes of India*, Fig. 13).
26. J. M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, Pl. X, 206, 207, 227 etc.

27. *Ibid.*, pl. VIII, 158, 195.
28. S. E. Lee, 'Clothed in the Sun: A Buddha and a Sūrya from Kashmir', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, February 1967, p. 48, Figs. 5 and 6.
29. *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, No. 11, 1971, Fig. 36.
30. H. Goetz, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, Leiden, 1955, Pl. IV-VII.
31. B. N. Sharma, 'Consort of Sadāsiva', in *Oriental Art*, n.s. XVII, 4, pp. 355-6, Figs. 3 & 4.
32. Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 ff. and Figs. 1, 3 and back cover.
33. Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir . . .*, p. 76.
34. G. N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, Part I, Calcutta, 1949, p. 37.
35. S. E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art*, Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., and New York, n.d., p. 155.
36. H. Vanderstappen and M. Rhie, 'The Sculpture of T'ien Lung Shan: Reconstruction and Dating', in *Arribus Asiae*, XXVII, 3, p. 216.
37. P. C. Swann, *Chinese Monumental Art*, London, 1963, Pls. 32 and 38.
38. For representations of Godai Myo-o seated on a similarly stylized rock see J. Meech, 'A Painting of Daiitoku from the Bigelow Collection', *Boston Museum Bulletin*, LXVII, 1969, no. 347, pp. 18 ff. and Figs. 2, 5, 6.
39. *Arts of China*, p. 165, Fig. 156. That this sculpture was modelled upon a bronze is evident particularly from the treatment of the drapery.
40. Pandit, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Italics represent my emendations of the word 'poet' in Kalhana's text.

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