



JOHN SIUDMAK
ASIAN ART

**INDIAN AND
HIMALAYAN SCULPTURE**

INCLUDING PROPERTY FROM
THE COLLECTION OF THE LATE SIMON DIGBY
AND PRIVATE COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

INTRODUCTION

I am taking a rest this year from exhibiting and publishing a printed catalogue to celebrate Asia Week New York, 2017.

However, I would like to offer my international clients a small online catalogue of stone and bronze sculptures from historical India, which should appeal to a variety of tastes and pockets.

JOHN SIUDMAK
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VIEWING BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

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REDDISH-BROWN RINGSTONE

MAURYAN PERIOD
CA. THIRD/SECOND CENTURY BC
PROBABLY TAXILA
DIAMETER: 6.7 CM, 2 5/8 IN

The face is carved with eight honeysuckle palmettes (*nagapushpa*) alternating with smaller fan-shaped motifs, and pierced through the middle with a narrow band of lotus petals lining the aperture.

Cf. Lerner and Kossak 1991, pls 5, 6 and 7 for three disc stones with a variety of palmette designs, but lacking any figural design. In most recorded ringstones, the palmette alternates with a nude mother goddess, while most disc stones have a variety of anthropomorphic, and animal and bird design. See Gupta 1980 for the corpus of complete and fragmentary ringstones and discstones recorded up to the time of his publication, *the Roots of Indian Art*. The exact function of these exquisite objects still remains to be discovered, but it is generally thought to be connected with a fertility cult.



**RED SIKRI SANDSTONE
ADDORSED HEADS**

KUSHAN PERIOD
CA. SECOND/THIRD CENTURY AD, MATHURA
HEIGHT: 17 CM, 6 5/8 IN

The conjoined heads are of identical design. Both skillfully carved, they appear to have been finished, yet one of them is heavily abraded in the area between the bottom of the turban to the nostrils. The abrasion is certainly ancient since the area is thickly covered in lime-scale. The other head is undamaged and crisply carved. The face has long ribbed eyebrows, straight nose, smiling mouth with pouting lips and bulging eyes.

The back and sides of the head are covered with a net-like fabric held by cross-bands above which is a tall and elaborate cockade. This is the standard arrangement for the turban of a Hindu deity and that of a Bodhisattva in the Kushan period. The cockade, which is of ogival form, has a flame patterned edge. The heads are not flush, but are set at an angle which means that the missing bodies would have diverged from one another. The identity of the heads is a matter of conjecture. The iconography has not been recorded.

Provenance:

Purchased from Spink about twenty years ago by a Japanese collector, in whose collection it has remained till now.



**A RED SIKRI SANDSTONE FRAGMENT
OF YAKSHI WITH RAISED SWORD**

CA. THIRD CENTURY
MATHURA – WOOD STAND
HEIGHT 18.5 CM, 7 ¼ IN

The *yakshi* stands below an Ashoka tree caressed by its branches of long narrow leaves. She has boldly carved facial features with an alluring smile. Her hair is of unusual design, divided centrally and combed to the sides in narrow striations, above which it is gathered in a large bun by thick cording with five fanned-out looped bunches. Her missing right arm originally held up the sword that frames her face, the index finger clearly visible at the top of the hilt.

Provenance:

London Trade. Timeline Auctions. London sale of antiquities and coins, June 2014, lot 774. Acquired from the successful bidder.

Cf. Codrington, pl.57 for a similar coiffure on a *yakshi* on a railing pillar from Mathura, and *ibid*, pl.54 for a *salabhanjika* holding up a similar sword. The same two pieces are illustrated in Asthana, S. 1999, plates 103 and 105.



RED SIKRI SANDSTONE
FRAGMENTARY BUST OF A YAKSHI

KUSHAN PERIOD
CA. SECOND/THIRD CENTURY, MATHURA
HEIGHT: 22.3 CM, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ IN

The full, firm bust of the *yakshi* is sumptuously ornamented with beaded *channavira* intersecting with a large lotus medallion, two other smaller medallions at the neck each suspended from a triple corded strap. The large medallion is similar to that worn by Parvati on a Kushan sculpture in the India Museum, Kolkata, illustrated Chakrabarti 2006, pl.13, though it lacks a *channavira* and the medallion falls to the stomach.

Published:
Siudmak, 2013, no.20.



**MOTTLED RED *SIKRI*
SANDSTONE FRAGMENT OF
THE GODDESS SASHTHI**

KUSHAN PERIOD
CA. SECOND/THIRD CENTURY AD. MATHURA
HEIGHT: 22.3 CM, 8 ³/₄ IN

Broken off at the neck, the principal head is contained within a horse-shoe shaped canopy while the five diminutive busts emanate from the outer side of the arch.

They are well-preserved except for the central bust, which has lost its head and breasts. The five busts are arranged in a circle following the shape of the canopy. Starting from the left, the first emanation holds a lotus flower in her lowered hand, her right hand pointing to her cheek. The second emanation holds a bunch of mangoes, the third emanation preserves the right hand, which is in *abhayamudra*. The fourth emanation holds up a covered bowl in the left hand, and the right holds a *lota* jar. The final bust lacks its left arm, but the right index finger points to her cheek. The central head has drop ear-ornaments. Her hair is treated in a typical Kushan manner, the flattened hair tightly ribbed with a shallow bun and a flower-head ornament.

Provenance:

American private collection 1985 -2000.
Thereafter in storage until recent sale to EU national.
Imported to EU

Sashthi, the sixth protectress, is the principal Matrika associated with children. In sculpture she is depicted with six heads, either alone or in the company of Skanda and Vishakha. Joshi, 1986, p.11, noted that eleven figures of this iconography were recorded as being found in Mathura, including two kept in the Museum fur indische Kunst, Berlin, one of which depicts the goddess alone, the other as part of a group. The most impressive example to survive, although fragmentary, is the sculpture in the Mathura Museum that Vogel (1930 pl. 40) incorrectly identified as Queen of the Nagas. It must have been at least 3m.+ high, and would have been a very prestigious sculpture in ancient times. The present example would have been at least 1.5m.



**GREY CHLORITE FRAGMENT
OF A PORTABLE SHRINE IN THE
FORM OF AN ELEPHANT**

ANCIENT GANDHARA
CA. THIRD/FOURTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 7.3 x 6.3 CM, 2 7/8 x 2 1/2 IN

This fragment is from a diptych which when closed took the form of an elephant, the interior and exterior densely decorated with Buddhist scenes. Behind the front left leg is a scene of the Great Departure, the feet of the horse being carried by genie, of which only one remains, while at the front stands a palace guard holding a shield and sword. A rectangular panel in the interior has the Buddha standing in an elegant pose and surrounded by worshippers, above in a broken panel the Buddha is seated in *dhyanasana* with attendants. Finally to the left is a scene with a headless Hariti and other indistinguishable figures.

Published:

Siudmak, j. 2013, pls.23a and 23b.

Literature:

Koizumi, 2000, pl.18 for a piece probably from the same atelier.



**MARBLE PLAQUE CARVED WITH
THE GODDESS LAJJA GAURI**

CA. SEVENTH CENTURY
PROBABLY DECCAN, EASTERN CALUKYA

DIMENSIONS:
35 x 30 x 13 CM
13 ¾ x 11 ¾ x 5 ½ IN

The nude figure is sculpted in deep relief from a block of burgundy-coloured marble with white veins, the edges incised with single groove, the sides with band of bead and reel design. She lies on her back with raised legs spread wide in the 'birthing position', her arms bent holding the stem of a constricted blossoming lotus in each hand pointing upwards, her head taking the form of a similar larger lotus, the pericarp with a grid of seed pods. She has large globular breasts and pudendum rendered as a narrow slit, necklace, bracelets, a girdle and beaded band binding the thighs.

Provenance:

private collection Singapore

The sculpture bears close resemblance to a complete example in the Bijapur Museum, which is illustrated by Bolon 1992, pls 48 & 49 in her study of the development of the Lajja Gauri cult. The two examples differ in scale since the Bijapur example is about three times the height of the other, and in the type of stone, a red sandstone as opposed to the veined marble. It has been suggested that the marble stone is what is known as Udaipur red. Finally, the ornamentation of the marble piece is slightly more lavish. The Bolon example was originally in the Naganatha temple, Bijapur district, but is now kept in the Badami Museum, no. B36. Now in a private collection, the red marble piece was allegedly found in the vicinity of Kashmir Smast. This is now known to be the Bhimasthana, the abode of the goddess Bhimadevi, visited by Xuan Zang in the seventh century, in ancient times one of the most important Hindu pilgrimage sites in India. Many seals of Lajja Gauri have been found there, some with the head in the form a rectangular block instead of a lotus. See Nasim Khan, no.7. The marble piece was probably produced in an atelier in the Deccan and presented to the shrine sometime in the seventh century. Its close resemblance to the Bijapur sculpture should not compromise its authenticity, since no fake Hindu sculpture has been reported from the Deccan, and none of the abundant corpus of fake Hindu sculpture inspired by Turk Shahi or Hindu Shahi being produced in Pakistan today is convincing. The usual giveaway is the use of incorrect iconography more often than not giving the wrong attributes to the wrong deity or the creation of a pastiche incorporating conjoined heads and personified attributes.



**SEATED BRONZE
PRAJNAPARAMITA**

SWAT VALLEY
CA. SEVENTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 9.1 CM, 3 ½ IN

The female figure, goddess of wisdom, can be identified by the book she holds in her raised left hand. Seated in *vajraparyankasana*, her right hand lowered in *varadamudra* she wears a tightly pleated lower garment and simple jewellery comprising a double necklace fastened between her breasts that falls to her waist, multiple bangles, a pair of discal ear-rings, the larger set at right angles, and a single leaf diadem tied with a bow at either side. Wavy hair outlines the brow with a globular top-knot with hair falling to the shoulders behind. The *urna* is inlaid in silver. She sits on the pericarp of a lotus with large petals. A lug for an aureole on the shoulders behind is broken off.

This is typical work from the Swat valley in northern Pakistan, which is notable for its fine detail. The artichoke-like petals of the constricted lotus are a standard feature of pedestal design of Swat sculpture in bronze and stone, particularly in the seventh century. A standing version of the deity is known from Gilgit, which was produced early in the reign of the Patola Shahis, also carrying a book in the left hand, the right hand raised in *vitarkamudra* (Pal 2007, pl. 98).

Provenance:
Private collection



BRONZE SEATED PADMAPANI

SWAT VALLEY, CA. NINTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 16 CM, 6 ¼ IN

Seated with the left leg pendant, the left hand holds the stem of a lotus blossoming at his right shoulder, while the right is raised with the finger pointing down towards the chin suggestive of the so-called 'pensive mode'. He wears a ribbed *dhoti* and simple ornaments and three-leaf trangular diadem with seated Tathagata, tied with bows at either side and long ribbons falling down the shoulders. His eyes and *urna* are inlaid with silver. He is seated on a cushioned lion throne with pair of sejant lions and a tasseled textile cover, set on a plain rectangular plinth.

Provenance:
Private collection



WHITE MARBLE VISHNUPADA

CA. SECOND HALF NINTH CENTURY
HINDU SHAHI PERIOD, PROBABLY SWABI
NORTHERN PAKISTAN
HEIGHT: 21 x 25 CM, 8 ¼ x 9 ¾ IN

The square plaque is carved in high relief with an eight-petalled lotus, the raised feet of the deity placed in the centre and the four attributes in the corners, comprising the mace, the cakra, the conch and the lotus. There is a drainage spout on the proper left. It can be compared to another Vishnupad carved from lapis lazuli, which follows the same order in the placement of the attributes, though it does not have the classical moulding of this example. See Cummins 2011, pl. 150.

Provenance:
Private collection



**BRONZE STANDING
PADMAPANI**

KASHMIR, CA. LATE TENTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 28.7 CM, 11 ¼ IN

The deity stands in a slightly flexed pose, his left hand lowered holding the stem of a lotus blossoming at his shoulder, the right hand held up in *vitarkamudra* holding an *akshamala*. He wears a dhoti tied in the Kashmir manner, looped on the left thigh with concentric folds overlaid by a triangular flap, and falling down to below the knee of the right leg. The tripartite diadem has seated Amitabha in the front lobed leaf, the triangular side leaves with voluted and plain fronds. The eyes and *urna* are inlaid in silver, the face and neck with traces of cold gilding, indicating that the piece was in worship in Tibet. A band of hair shows beneath the diadem while rows of corkscrew curls cascade to the shoulders behind. There is thick sacred thread falling below the belt line and a plain scarf that crosses the chest from the left shoulder. He has beaded necklace and ear ornaments and high armbands. There is a pierced lug at the back of the shoulders for the attachment of the missing aureole.

The rectangular base has Classical mouldings and supports a lotus, on which the deity stands. There are two rows of lotus petals, one overlapping the other, an arrangement which dates back to the seventh century, where it is associated with the earliest standing and seated images of the Buddha in the fully developed style. Thereafter, the combination of moulded pedestal and lotus disc is usually confined to a single row of petals. However, the earlier treatment was still part of the Kashmirian repertoire as can be seen from this example. It was also the treatment favoured by Rinchen bZang-po when he commissioned the artist Bhidhaka to create a sculpture of Avalokiteshvara in honour of his deceased father in 998, which is still enshrined at Khatse, where it was dedicated. See HBSK p. 232.



There is a continuous dedicatory inscription in proto-Sarada script on the four sides of the pedestal, anti-clockwise from the first line in the frontal view, which has been read by Oskar von Hinuber. This is given below.

- 1 (front): deyadharmo yaṃ mutusūḷaṇaka pṛya
- 2 (right side): ḷaṇakānāṃ tathā sā
- 3 (back side): rtha pātrapitṛbhyaṃ tathā sārdaṃ ā
- 4 (left side): vantikāyā (mu)ddhareṇa

“This is the pious gift of Mutusūlonaka and Priyalonaka and together with (their) mother and father and together with Avantikā (and) Muddhara.”



Provenance:
purchased from a routine provincial auction in the north of England where it was catalogued as Thai. As it appeared on the market in isolation at a very low estimate without any information as to its recent history, its value and importance was evidently not realised by its former owners and it is intriguing to know how it first came into their hands. There is always the possibility that it came to the UK following the Younghusband military expedition to Tibet of 1903-04, a great source of Himalayan sculpture and thankas that were taken away as booty from monasteries in and around Gyantse, and many things still surface in the market. Only a few months ago a seated Buddha from Swat that was collected during the campaign was sold at auction in Hong Kong.

Art loss register certificate: Soo104177



BRONZE SEATED GANESHA

NORTH INDIA
PROBABLY UTTAR PRADESH OR BIHAR
CA. ELEVENTH/TWELFTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 8 CM, 3 1/8 IN

The deity sits with the soles of his feet almost touching on the pericarp of a lotus with single row of petals and large long-tailed rat wearing a collar. His upper hands hold ankusa and noose, while his lower left holds his severed tusk, and the right sweetmeats to which his trunk curls. He has a plain sash and a serpentine sacred thread. The features are heavily abraded through ritual bathing.

The style is difficult to determine, but it appears to show late Pala influence.

Provenance:
from the collection of the late Simon Digby



**BRONZE REPOUSSE
MASK OF SHIVA**

PROBABLY NORTHERN PAKISTAN
CA. FIFTEENTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 30 CM, 11 ³/₄ IN

The mask continues a long tradition of masks from the North-West. It was probably the cladding of a wood or terracotta image, which must have been life-size. See Siudmak 2005, Aachen for antecedents. It is thick repousse rather than cast, but the crown is made separately and is of much lighter fabric than the face. The facial features are very striking with prominent bulging eyes, broad nose and twirled moustache, and incised lines delineating a shallow beard. There is a third eye, which suggests that it is Saivite, probably Bhairava, however, the treatment of the mask is very decorative with a pearl necklace and ear ornaments in the form of a mango. The tapering crown is decorated with tiers of lappets. There is a wide plain flange at the bottom. It has a rich green patina.



**SOUTH INDIAN BRONZE
GANESHA IN RAJALILASANA**

TAMIL NADU
CA. THIRTEENTH/FOURTEENTH CENTURY
HEIGHT: 6.3 CM, 2 ½ IN

The deity is seated in *rajalilasana* on a lotus pedestal, his trunk falling straight down to his ample belly. He holds attributes in his four hands, of which only the laddoo in his lower left can be accurately identified owing to abrasion. He has a tall conical head-dress. Part of a halo which encircled the sculpture survives at the back.

Provenance:
from the collection of the late Simon Digby.



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