

Some *Mukhalingas* in the Pakistani Collections

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Abstract

While collecting data for my PhD research from different government and private collections across the country, I had an access to the few stone sculptures depicting mukhalingas coming from divergent areas of Pakistan. They are delimited to sites located in the geographical confines of Northwest (i.e. the present NWFP and the northern Punjab). Chronologically, they range from third/fourth to ninth/tenth centuries CE marking different stages in the development of mukhalingas. The work in hand puts these Śivaite cult objects together for further artistic and iconographic investigations of scholars.

Introduction

The corpus of stone sculptures at our disposal that come from different government and private collections in Pakistan contains *ekamukha*- and *trimukha*-lingas. Our survey could locate four sculptures of the former variety one each from Bannu, Huṇḍ, Jhelum and Kashmir Smast; while one specimen represents the latter coming from an unknown provenance in the ancient Gandhāra valley. All of them have been published previously. The present paper aims at bringing them together for discussing briefly their artistic and iconographic peculiarities.

According to the *Āgamas*, the first stage in the trilateral sequential unfolding of the all-pervasive and transcendental supreme is the *Para-Śiva* from which starts the material manifestation of the unmanifested (called *Brahman*) who assumes some shape in the form of plain *liṅga*, to be followed, in the second stage, by *mukhalinga*. The body of god begins to reveal itself and the head projects first. This is called *Sadāśiva* who may be represented by one, three or four projected heads, which actually characterize the five-headed or five-fold nature of Śiva. The final or third phase of manifestation is completed in its fully anthropomorphic form. This is called the *Maheśa* (or *mūrti*) stage (Srinivasan 1997: 272ff; 1990: 108ff; 1987: 339ff; 1984: 40ff).

A. *Ekamukhalingas*

1. *From Wāṇḍa Shahāb Khel (Bannu)* (Figure 1)

This *ekamukhalinga*, now in the reserve of the National Museum Karachi, was found together with a stone sculpture of *Bhū Varāha* (or *Nṛi Varāha*) near Wāṇḍa Shahāb Khel, 64 km northeast of Bannu city in the district of Lakki Marwat, NWFP. First reported by Farooq (1988), Farid Khan (Khan 1993) subsequently subjected it to further discussion.

The sculpture shows an *ekamukha* of Śiva carved against the shaft of a cylindrical *liṅga* tapering upwards. Worked in fine-grained limestone, the monolithic and more naturalistic/realistic erect phallus rises from a projecting pedestal. The head of Śiva is carved on the ventral side of the *liṅga* where an ogee-shaped pointed crest can be seen prominently. The inner satisfaction and pleasure of the figure is aptly reflected in the facial expression showing a smiling face, elongated chin, full cheeks, wide-open

eyes and broad forehead. The third eye of the god is not in its normal verticality but slightly tilted to left. The elongated ears once must have been adorned with the now missing *kuṇḍalas*. The god is shown wearing two beautiful *hāras*. The upper one is *ekāvali* comprising fourteen beads with a central locket while the lower necklace is more intricate in execution and made of a central rectangular *ratna* flanked by the heads of two *makaras* from whose mouths issue two strands of the supporting cords (cf. Deo 1966; Cousens 1990). His hair is combed back and joined together with a topknot of rolled loops held in place by a band of alternating large plain and striated beading. Farid Khan (1993: 91), using the tool of stylistic comparison, rightly dates it in the second/third century CE.

2. From Kashmir Smast (Figure 2)

This white marble *liṅga*, measuring 50.7 cm high having a diameter of 70.7 cm, is now preserved in the Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, University of Peshawar. It appears to be the remaining shaft of a *liṅga* that once stood in the *Liṅga* shrine and whose head, carved with the *ekamukha* of Śiva, was sawn off by art dealers. This head was sold to an antique dealer in Peshawar (Nasim Khan 2001: 223) that subsequently found its way to a private collection in London.

Its cylindrical shaft shows chisel marks but no artistic dexterity like the other sculptural findings from the same site. We are unable to give any detail of the face of Śiva whose *ekāvali* (or single stranded *hāra*) merely survives on the shaft. It is this necklace that has led to its identification as an *ekamukhaliṅga* (Shah 2003; 2009).

3. From Jhelum (Figure 3)

Presently on display in the Lahore Museum (Acc. # 733), this gigantic¹ and beautifully carved *ekamukhaliṅga* is worked in red sandstone of the Salt range (Khan 1997:119-120). Coming from Jhelum area, Humera Alam (1989: 48, Pl. 6) dated it in the Gupta period. Dar (1990: 37-38, Pl. IV-b) places it in the post-Gupta period; but Farid Khan (1993: 90) justifiably favours its former dating.

Śiva's head boldly juts out of the *sulcus glandis* of the erect *liṅga*. The *liṅga* itself is composed of two parts: the lower octagonal *viṣṇubhāga* and the *pūjābhāga* (or *rudrabhāga*) above. The fine delineation and execution of the *liṅga* and Śiva's head suggest it to be the work of a skilled artist. The cucumber-shaped *corona glandis* is differentiated from the *sulcus glandis* below by the incised *pārśvasūtras* whose lateral view can easily be seen at the place where it is touched by the *jaṭā*.

The hair is carefully combed straight on all the three sides delimited to the extent a little above the middle of the ears. Frontally it shows sharp precision like newly dressed hair thus leaving a moderately broad forehead. The hair is partly gathered by means of a topknot now damaged using a hair band above the skull. The third part of the hair is arranged in three parallel locks on either side hanging down behind the ears. The ears are elongated and although badly damaged, once must have been bejewelled with precious *kuṇḍalas*. The third eye is set vertically in the middle of the forehead in juxtaposition of the nose coaxial. The almond-shaped eyes are wide open and their lower and upper eyelids meet at the outer-end near the temple. Some facial elements such as chin, mouth, nose and eyes have received the brunt of iconoclasts or the ravages of time and neglect that has marred aesthetic beauty of the figure. Yet it still retains its serenity, simplicity, precision and fleshy face, chin

and temples. The ridges of both eyes mark the eyebrows. The god wears an *ekāvali* with a central locket that looks like a crescent on his bosom.

In roundness of face, proportionality of body forms, hairstyle or *jaṭā* and locks dangling down behind ears and its massive size and shape, this *liṅga* can safely be compared with the *ekamukhaliṅga* in Cave 4 at Udayagiri (Vidiśā district, c. 400 CE) (Harle 1974: 34, Pl.9). The *ekamukhaliṅga* in the Municipal Museum, Allahabad (5th century CE) (Sivaramamurti 1974: 426, Pl.253), the *ekamukhaliṅga* from Khoh (6th century CE) in the Allahabad Museum (Smith 77, Pl. 65-a) and the *ekamukhaliṅga* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Gupta period) (Kreisel 1986: 197, Pl. 42 a, b) seem to be its true parallels. Still it can be compared with the Karamdāṇḍa *liṅga* (UP., dated 437 CE) (in the State Museum, Lucknow) (Mitterwallner 1984: 20, Pl.6). The *liṅga* under consideration marks the Mitterwallner's third stage in the evolution of *liṅga* with characteristics of the Gupta examples (ibid).

4. *From Huṇḍ* (Figure 4)

Taddei (1962) has published this *ekamukhaliṅga* carved in white marble now in a private collection in Peshawar. The lower octagonal part of this bipartite *liṅga* is chiselled roughly for its fixing in a *p'ṭha*. The *pūjābhāga* above is decorated with the beautifully carved head of Śiva (ht. 42 cm). The probable provenance of the *liṅga* might be Huṇḍ (ancient Udabhāṇḍapura) (ibid. 296, fn; Kuwayama 1976: 383).

The head of Śiva is carved in high relief with elongated, narrow and half-closed eyes. The vertical third eye serves as a bridge between the hair and the junction of the eye-ridges. The *sulcus glandis* is separated from the *corona glandis* by means of double incised lines serving as *pārśvasūtras*. The area between pointed apex of the *pārśvasūtras* and the tuft of *jaṭā* is marked by a similar double lined *brahmasūtras*, which are invisible below because of the presence of the head up to the border of octagonal *viṣṇubhāga*. The slightly wavy hair are combed, parted in the middle and folded back in the form of large parallel wavy bands rising from the hairline. It makes a *jaṭā* composed of two tufts twisted and spiral in shape (Taddei 1962: 288). Behind the ears are three serpentine locks in low relief. The pierced ears have elongated earlobes decorated with *kuṇḍalas*. The neck of the god is shown wearing an *ekāvali* as if touching the *kuṇḍalas* on either side. Both nose and chin are damaged. On the basis of its comparison with the sculptures of the Elephanta cave temple (Kramrisch 1946) and the great Bodhisattva of Vihāra I at Ajantā (Brown 1959: 56-57), this *ekamukhaliṅga* is approximately dated in the 8th century (Taddei 1962: 288-289). Kuwayama (1976: 405) suggests 10th century date for this piece of art 'when the Hindu Śāhis moved from Kābul to Udabhāṇḍa'. But the possibility of its being the work of the Turk Śāhi period can not be ruled out in view of the archaeological evidences from Gandhāra and the Punjāb.

Barrett (1960: 51, Pl. XXVI-b) has published a Kashmiri type *ekamukhaliṅga* found from a mound at Coleyana near Okara now in the collection of the British Museum (Figure 5), which he places in the late seventh or early eighth century CE. J. Siudmak (1992: 455, Fig. 54.8), while discussing some early Kashmiri *ekamukhaliṅgas*, revised its date to the late sixth century on account of it having been manufactured in Kashmir (cf. Barrett 1957).

Recently, an *ekamukhaliṅga* (carved in schist) was brought to our notice, which lay in a private collection in Zürich (Ghose 2003: 251, Pl. 240) (Figure 6). Greater height, realistic rendering, hair-do,

facial features and heavy torque help us to assign a date in the Kuṣāṇa period (ibid; cf. Ingholt 1957: Pls. 290, 301).

Nasim Khan has recently published in his monograph entitled *Treasures from Kashmir Smast: The Earliest Śaiva Monastic Establishment* (Peshawar 2006: 61, Pl. 55) an *ekamukhalinga* in baked clay. His claim traces its provenance in Chinji (district Chakwāl), which in no way corresponds to the antiquities of the entitled area the monograph deals with. The figure of Śiva, carved near the *corona glandis* of the *liṅga*, shares some of its features with the Gandhāran and the Gupta idioms (cf. Harle 1974: Pls. 84, 85; Biswas 1985: 28, Pls. I/1, XLVII/110). On stylistic grounds, it would be convincing to date this piece of art in the Gupta period as many Hindu sculptures and architectural elements of Hindu temples have been retrieved from Chakwāl, Mūrti, Rokhri, Jhelum and Lahore, mostly datable to the Gupta ascendancy in India. This could fit well in the religio-cultural pattern that developed in the region during the fourth/fifth centuries of the Common era.

B. Trimukhalinga

From an unknown provenance in ancient Gandhāra (Figure 7)

This is now on display in the Peshawar Museum (Acc. # 4941). Taddei (1962: 290, 297 note 24), while writing on an *ekamukhalinga* in a private collection in Peshawar, reports that M. A. Shakur, then the curator of the Peshawar Museum, purchased it from the local antiquarian market in 1961.

The *trimukhalinga* has two parts: prepared and plain pedestal below and the *trimukhalinga* resting on it above. The heads up to busts of Mahādeva in the centre, and *Umā* and Bhairava on the flanks are carved against the shaft of an erect phallus. The central figure is wrought on the ventral surface of the *liṅga* as is apparent from the *pārśvasūtras* marking the nut from the shaft.

Sculpturally, the Peshawar Museum *Sadāśive* represents *Tatpuruṣa/Mahādeva* in the centre facing the viewer, *Aghora/Bhairava* on his right and *Vāmadeva/Umā* on the left side of Mahādeva. Of the three heads, the central figure of Mahādeva is shown with a single pair of arms resting on the plain pedestal below. His face is normal and peaceful. The bust and head of Mahādeva is bedecked profusely. His hair are arranged beautifully and kept in order by a bejewelled crown of peculiar shape. The two tufts of hair above the crown are visible in the form of entwined bunches. The crown shows some stylistic affinity with that of Vishnu images from Kashmir, particularly the one in the Peshawar Museum (Paul 1990). Almond-shaped eyes of Mahādeva are wide open in which the iris droop down. The full face with fleshy cheeks and a normal chin make the facial features more handsome. *Mahādeva's* ears are hidden behind the pronounced *kuṇḍalas* below which is suspended his *ekāvali*.

The *śrivatsa* mark is visible in relief on the chest of the god, which is although characteristic of Viṣṇu but other gods such as Sūrya, Narasiṃha and Śiva also wear it (Srivastava 1979: 48). This heroic sign denotes a great man implying divine status and is also depicted on some Jaina and Buddhist images (Stutley 1977: 286). Each arm of the god is decorated with beautifully executed *keyūras*. *Sarpayajñopavīta* runs diagonally over the left shoulder and below the right arm joining at the back of the god. This sacred thread marks the initiation rite (i.e. primary rite or *upanayana*) whose

culmination is evidenced in *yajñopavīta* being the 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace' (Stutley 1977: 344). The extant visible bust of the god is nude where no signs whatsoever of drapery are discernible. The naked upper body is compatible with the circular grooved nipple marks, and *śrivatsa* on the chest. *Tatpuruṣa/Mahādeva* holds in his right hand with palm opening upwards *akṣmālā* being held in such a skilful way that the fingers entering the ring formed by rosary is visible at the back of the palm hanging downwards.²

The figure of *Mahādeva* reflects Indian, more precisely Gupta idiom, while the heads of *Bhairava* and *Vāmadeva* show classical Gandhāran features (Taddei 1962: 290). Above all, the material, the fleshy physical features of our *Sadāśiva* and the lateral heads, the general appearance of hair style and the way of rendering plasticity to the sculpture speak of its being a masterpiece of the sculptor from an atelier in ancient Gandhāra. The sculpture under consideration is now dated in the Śāhi period, more precisely the Turk Śāhis (Kreisel 1986: Pl. A. 20 a, b).

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Notes

¹ Rising to a height of 98 inches with a diameter of 18.5 inches and weighing about 70 tons. The author is thankful to Ms. Humera Alam, Deputy Director, Lahore Museum, for giving these details.

² Rosary symbolizes reintegration of this world (see Kramrisch 1946: 6-7). It is also symbolic of eternal time '*Kāla*' pointing to Śiva's mastery of life and death (Banerjea 1956: 572-573).

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Figure 1: From Wanda Shahabkhel (Bannu). Photograph, courtesy of the National Museum, Karachi.

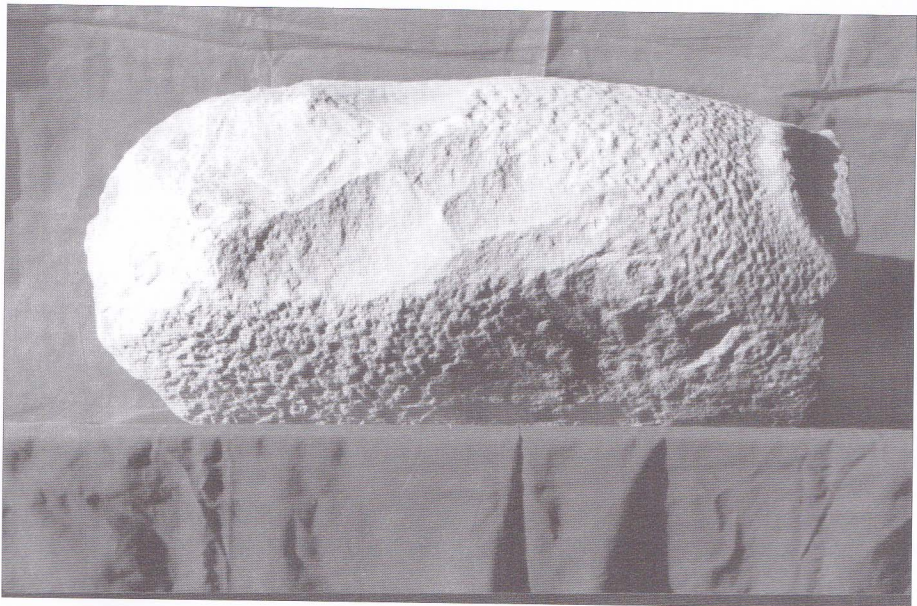


Figure 2: From Kashmir Smast (Mardan). Photograph, courtesy of the SSAQ Museum, University of Peshawar.

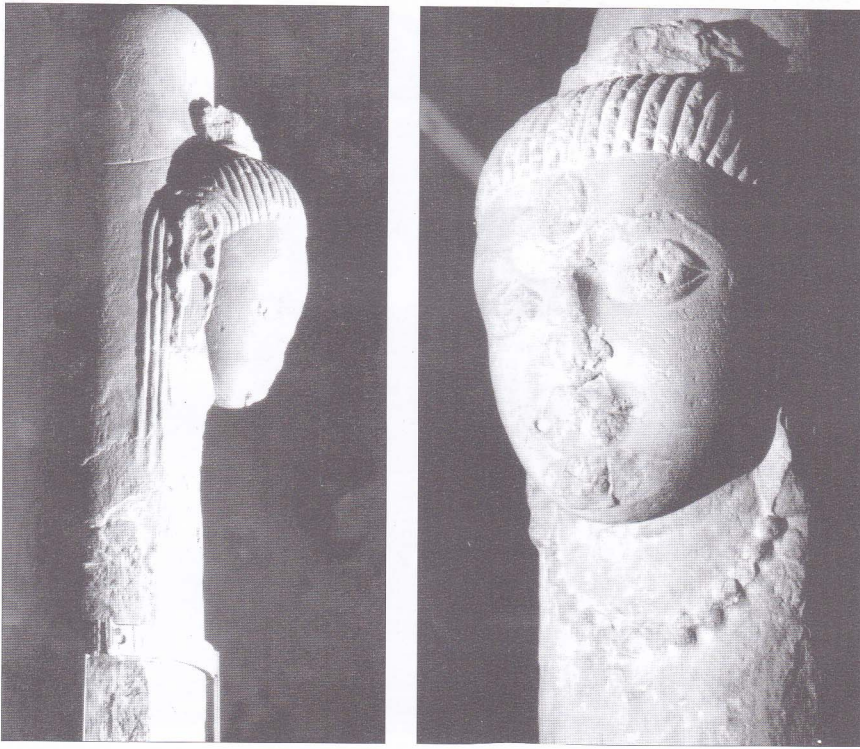


Figure 3: From Jhelum. Photograph, courtesy of the Lahore Museum, Lahore.



Figure 4: From Hund. Photograph, courtesy of the Peshawar Museum, Peshawar.



Figure 5: From Coleyana (now in the British Museum). Photograph, courtesy of the British Museum, London.



Figure 6:

From Gandhara (now in a private collection in Zürich). Photograph, after M. Ghose (2003: pl.240).



Figure 7:

Trimu-khalinga in the Peshawar Museum. Photograph, courtesy of the Peshawar Museum.