

The Case for Devata Mahakoka from Bharhut

K. L. Mankodi





IT is assumed that everything worth knowing about the ancient Buddhist Stupa of Bharhut has already been published and is easily available. For, did not Alexander Cunningham, pioneer of Archaeological Survey of India, who discovered the great site nearly one hundred and forty years ago, himself give an exhaustive description of it together with illustrations of hundreds of remains as early as 1879? And did not Cunningham himself, and thereafter Heinrich Lüders, followed by Ernst Waldschmidt and M. A. Mehendale, re-edit and revise the hundreds of inscriptions that Bharhut had yielded?

Bharhut: discovery and documentation

Cunningham, in his explorations in central India during 1873 came across the remains of the ancient stupa at the village of Bharhut, twenty kilometres to the south of the present district headquarters of Satna in Madhya Pradesh (1, 2). Considering the enormity of the task, Cunningham promised to write a full account later, which appeared as *The Stupa of Bharhut* in 1879.

Even in 1873, when Cunningham chanced upon the site, the entire monument unlike the Great Stupa of Sanchi, had not been preserved. He was able to recover only parts of the circular memorial, its railings with their medallions, some gateways (*toranas*), and several *jataka* scenes or stories of the Buddha's previous births, quasi-historical narratives about the Buddha's life, and over-life-size sculptures of divine/semi-divine figures. These ancient remains were sent to Calcutta by train on the new Great Indian Peninsula Railway. To facilitate the loading of this material, a dedicated station was specially built at the village of Lagargawan close to Bharhut, between Uchehra and Satna.

Bharhut's stupa was reassembled in the Indian Museum in a special gallery (3). Reproductions of mythological characters sculpted in stone like Ajakalako Yakho, Kupiro Yakho, Sudasana Yakhi, Chanda Yakhi, Sirima Devata, Chulakoka Devata and others are seen in books on Indian art. Of Amazonian proportions, these tattooed figures, loaded with primitive jewellery, constitute the earliest examples of India's indigenous art. Unlike the art of the preceding period – that of the Imperial Mauryas of the third century BCE – which represents the earliest surviving examples of the Indian sculptural tradition, the Bharhut sculptures reveal no traces of foreign influence.

More than two hundred short inscriptions found on the stupa fragments give the names of the personages represented, as also those of their donors. Cunningham's volume *The Stupa of Bharhut* has published these inscriptions, as also their translations. Much later, in 1909-

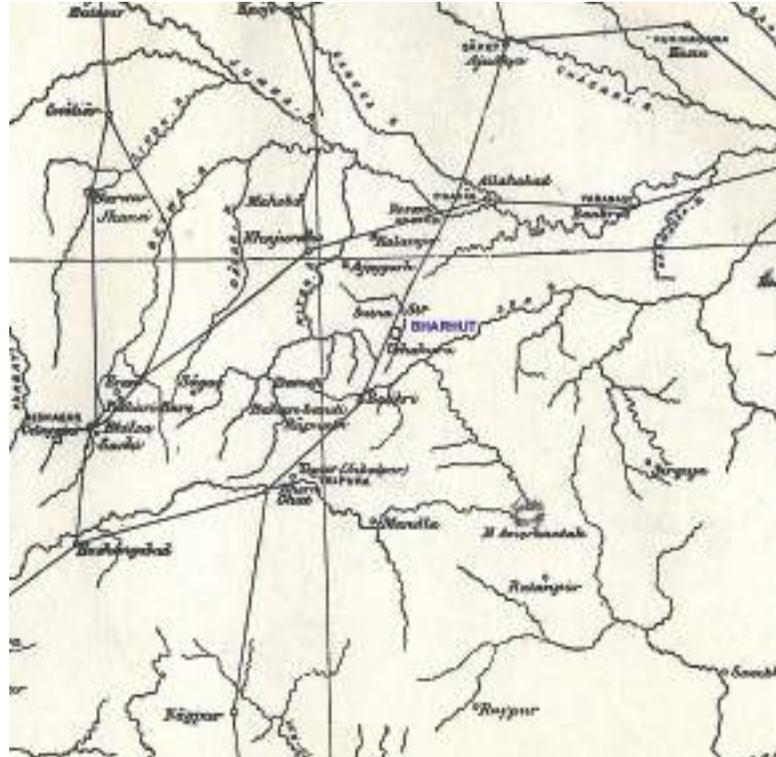
10, H. Lüders listed all the Bharhut inscriptions then known in *Epigraphia Indica X*.¹ In the 1940s, during British rule, the Archaeological Survey of India had proposed a publication by Lüders which would present a revised version of Cunningham's original readings of the inscriptions from Bharhut. Unfortunately, this project did not materialise. Later, in 1963, the Archaeological Survey of India published *Bharhut Inscriptions* edited by Lüders and revised by E. Waldschmidt and M. A. Mehendale.² In between, other books and articles by B. M. Barua-Gangananda Sinha, and by S. C. Kala have appeared on the subject. For this paper, references to Cunningham and Lüders-Waldschmidt-Mehendale will suffice.

Devata Chulakoka

One sculpture recovered from the ruins and now in the Indian Museum bears the inscription Chulakoka Devata, the Sanskrit form of which would be Kshudrakoka Devata. According to linguistic experts, the name means the Little Goddess Koka.³ Koka has been shown to be the name of the bird Chakravaka (*Anas Casarca*). Chulakoka Devata is therefore the "Little Chakravaka Goddess". It is not known if this nomenclature had any totemic significance. During the second century BCE, Indian iconography had not yet developed the concept of associating attributes with divinities. Thus, Chulakoka like other Devatas and Yakshis of Bharhut, stands under a tree, in this instance an Ashoka tree, holding its bough overhead and supporting her feet on an elephant (4).

In Buddhist tradition, the Little Chakravaka goddess has a companion, an elder sister or a senior, called Devata Mahakoka or the Great Chakravaka Goddess. Mahakoka Devata also was represented at Bharhut, but the figure remained unknown and this major sculpture was never illustrated anywhere. Mahakoka Devata has become known recently, under circumstances that are exceptional, and is being published here for the first time.

The reason Mahakoka was never reproduced by Cunningham or anyone else is that when Cunningham first explored Bharhut and the surrounding villages, he found that some sculptures, pillars – some split into two – *jataka* scenes and other legends that once adorned the stupa had been dispersed in nearby villages before his time, that is, even before 1873. One of them was a female figure preserved in the neighbouring village of Batanmara.⁴ Other pieces of various kinds were in the adjacent village of Uchehra, and still others in Pataora (1). These included, among split pillars, the inscribed sculpture of Mahakoka, which Cunningham merely described as being "inside the temple" without further particulars.⁵ This must refer to the shrine in the mansion or *kothi* of a local land owner.



1. Map of the area, Bharhut
 Photograph after Cunningham, A. *The Stupa of Bharhut*, London, 1879

Cunningham, however, did make an eye copy of the two short inscriptions engraved on the trunk of the tree under which Mahakoka like Chulakoka stands. Unlike Chulakoka, who has continued to receive attention ever since she was moved to Calcutta, Mahakoka has been all but forgotten, a mere name and the donor's record reproduced in Cunningham's eye copy and its first reading corrected by Lüders and Waldschmidt-Mehendale.

Sculptures "Dispersed" from the Stupa

Hundreds of architectural pieces including *torana* uprights, lintels, railing pillars, cross bars, coping stones, medallions, figures of Yakshas, Yakshis, Devatas, and human characters recovered from the stupa were transported to Calcutta. However, the monument had been greatly disturbed over the centuries. It had served as a quarry for building materials for neighbouring villages. Some dispersed pieces



2. Stupa site, Bharhut, July 2012

were found in the three villages of Batanmara, Uchehra and Pataora. Cunningham had diligently listed all these.

Except for these “dispersed” pieces, the operation of the removal of Bharhut’s remains, carried out at a time when scientific archaeology had not begun, was like a controlled excavation, accounting for every single find. The institutions that received the major part of Bharhut’s antiquities, after following due processes, were the Indian

Museum, the Allahabad Museum, the Museum at Ramban near Satna and the National Museum of India in New Delhi. The Freer Gallery of Art in Washington acquired four sculptures in 1932 before India’s independence, which were published by Ananda Coomaraswamy in *La sculpture de Bharhut*.⁶ Thus, if any collection other than those that officially received Bharhut’s antiquities possesses anything from the site, the source needs to be explained.



3. A section of the Bharhut railing, Indian Museum, Calcutta
Photograph: American Institute of Indian Studies, Digital South Asia Library, Gurgaon, (AIIS), No.35301

Mahakoka Surfaces in the USA in 2012

The all but forgotten sculpture of Mahakoka Devata surfaced unexpectedly in the USA. The circumstances were as follows:

Since 2011, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Department of Homeland Security (ICE/DHS) has been investigating the activities of an Indian antique dealer, Subhash Kapoor, based in New York. According to their own records, antiquities worth US \$ 100 million allegedly illegally exported, in plain language, smuggled, from India and other South Asian countries were recovered in raids on Kapoor's shop ART OF THE PAST. Kapoor has been running his family business for many decades, and his client base is spread over four continents – the US, Europe, Australia and Asia. The World's Press has been reporting these investigations spreading alarm among several museums and collectors that the art they received from Kapoor was illegally exported from their original countries.



4. Chulakoka Devata, Bharhut, Indian Museum, Calcutta
Photograph: AIIS 68520

Kapoor was wanted in India for antique thefts in Tamil Nadu and was extradited in July 2012; his trial has commenced in Chennai. He is also wanted in the USA by ICE/DHS for breaking US laws, and may be wanted in Australia as well for the sale of stolen antiques, including a South Indian Nataraja (worth approximately US \$ 5 million) to the Australian National Gallery.

As an archaeologist concerned about the illegal export of antiquities, this writer has been trying to trace and repatriate such antiquities by circulating worldwide all available information of thefts from Indian sites, as also through a website www.plunderedpast.in.

Although India has been the principal sufferer of antique smuggling, there is little evidence that the Indian authorities are greatly concerned. This article about the extremely valuable sculpture of Mahakoka from Bharhut shows that Kapoor was not active in Tamil Nadu alone but had spread his tentacles to other Indian States as well.

Theft and Smuggling of the Goddess

The Great Chakravaka Goddess Mahakoka was never photographed because it was not at the site of the stupa when it was discovered. However, in 1973, when the Registration of Antiquities Rules came into force, the family who had inherited this sculpture wisely registered it with the archaeological authorities, together with its photograph. The goddess always had remained enshrined in the landlord's house, covered from head to toe – only the face was visible. She was worshipped as their family deity, and her blessings were sought on special occasions like marriages. She was never exposed.

The Great Bird Goddess remained enshrined until the night of 18/19 July 2004, when the theft happened. The theft was reported to the police, the ASI was also informed. The owners even declared a reward of Rs. 50,000 for the recovery of what was the cherished image of their family deity.

With the lodging of the FIR, the matter seems to have rested in the files, as far as the police and the ASI are concerned. If any investigation was carried out, it did not turn up anything – no clue, no suspect, no recovery. The owner reconciled himself to never seeing his ancestral goddess again.

The Recovery of Mahakoka

In June-July 2012, several photographs of a large sculpture about 6' 6" tall that ICE/DHS Special Agents had seized during their raids on Kapoor's gallery became available. Kapoor had presented fabricated papers to show its provenance to be Khartoum in Sudan and for it to have been imported before the Indian antiquity laws came into operation. Under questioning, he admitted to smuggling it from Bharhut. It was essential for the US authorities to find the owner in order to restore it to him.

Though no photograph of Mahakoka had ever been published, the inscription giving her name and that of the donor had been copied by Cunningham more than one

hundred and twenty-five years ago. The goddess seized by the Special Agents bore the name “Mahakoka Devata” and the name of the donor which matched the published record of Cunningham. Kapoor had admitted to ICE/DHS Special Agents that he had picked up the sculpture from Pataora and that the people who had supplied it had no idea of its value. For Kapoor, of course, the sculpture’s value was its market worth, which he astutely estimated at US \$ 15 million or Rs. 90 crores in India. Considering its antiquity of second century BCE, its large size, its mint condition and the uniqueness of the goddess, the piece might well have commanded a heavy price. Kapoor had reportedly sold an eleventh century South Indian Nataraja bronze to the Australian National Gallery for more than US \$ 5 million; this one was more than a thousand years older, and there are few Bharhut sculptures in collections abroad.

Bharhut’s neighbourhood, such as Pataora, Uchehra, Khoh, still possess old sculptures - not all of which are properly studied. Personal exploration by this writer in this area, only a few kilometres from Bharhut, helped locate the family whose deity she was. The owner kindly furnished the supporting documents. The photographs submitted by the owner at the time of registration matched the sculpture seized by DHS in 2012. There was no doubt that the sculpture was the same as that reported by Cunningham in 1873/1879.

Description of Mahakoka

Mahakoka published here (5) closely resembles Chulakoka (4) in the Indian Museum in many respects. There are slight but significant differences, though, the most important being the mounts under their feet, a hunchback for Mahakoka and an elephant for Chulakoka.

Two thousand years ago when this figure was carved, figural “vocabulary” was limited and the distinction between Yakshis and Devatas is not observed in Bharhut carvings. Their features are similar, and it is only the inscribed records on them that serve as means of identifying them as either the one or the other. For example, both the “Devatas” Mahakoka and Chulakoka are shaded by a tree, but then so is Chanda, who is labelled on the sculpture as a “Yakshi”. On the other hand, Sudarshana Yakshi and the unidentified female figure at Batanmara near Bharhut-Satna stand alone without a tree,⁷ as does Sirima Devata.

Similar is the case with the Yakshas labelled Gangita, Suciloma, Kubera as well as other figures, which stand with folded hands on the railing posts. There is little to differentiate one from the other.

Mahakoka, like the other figures from Bharhut, is clad in a diaphanous lower garment reaching below the knees, which is discernible only from the ridge of the hem and the thick folds gathered up in front (5). The bosom is apparently bare, but four incised curved lines under the right breast suggest that there is a fine upper garment as well (5, 6) exactly as is the case with Yakshi Chanda as observed by Cunningham.⁸



5. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut

Like all other Bharhut sculptures, Mahakoka's adornments include rich and varied ornaments as also an ornate head cover which are in sharp contrast to her scanty garments. What appears to be a gold-embroidered headwear is thrown crosswise over the head (7) as in Yakshi Chanda.⁹ At the parting of the hair is a large circular forehead mark.

Mahakoka's ear ornaments, like those of several other male and female figures from the stupa, are strikingly original, and of unusual interest (7). They comprise two parts, a box and a double coil, the box being close to the cheek. Though large, they must have been hollow and therefore light in weight. The box is decorated with symbolic shapes on the surface, and the coils or spirals with gold pellets. Such ear ornaments are unique to Bharhut and a very limited number of ancient sites. Thereafter, they disappear from the scene, making way for more elegant shapes.¹⁰

Great attention was lavished on Mahakoka's jewellery, (5, 6) as is the case with practically all of Bharhut's figures, especially female. She wears a long flat garland of strings with spacers around her neck; over this are six more necklaces, made of pearls and beads of various sizes. One of these necklaces is strung with two elephant goads (*ankusha*) and a crescent shape, surely charms or amulets, flanking a central (gold?) leaf pendant. Yakshi Chandra in the Indian Museum wears a similar necklace.¹¹ In addition to these necklaces, there is a bodice-like adornment with a central round jewelled clasp, sometimes known as *chhannavira*.

A special ornament worn by Mahakoka, and only a few other Bharhut sculptures, such as the Batanmara sculpture, is worth noting (6, 11). It is a "collar"

(Cunningham's term) of pearls or beads worn over the left shoulder and then around the upper body in the manner of the Brahmanical sacred thread (*yajnopavita*). After every one or two pearls a variety of amulets or charms are strung on the garland. They include an *ankusha* or elephant goad, crescent, *svastika*, disc, barrel-shaped talisman, *srivatsa*, a human figurine (as far as can be made out from the photographs supplied, since the original sculpture is not available for personal observation as yet) Batanmara has a simpler form, having only alternating crescent and elephant goad after every three beads/pearls (11).¹² Cunningham called it a collar, to differentiate it from necklaces/garlands that are worn around the neck.

A variety of rich girdles, employing pearls or beads of various sizes and shapes, flat discs, and other elements adorn Bharhut's sculptures. A girdle of seven strings of large square beads with chased flowers and round beads is around Mahakoka's waist, with a long flat belt of precious fabric holding it in place in front (5).¹³

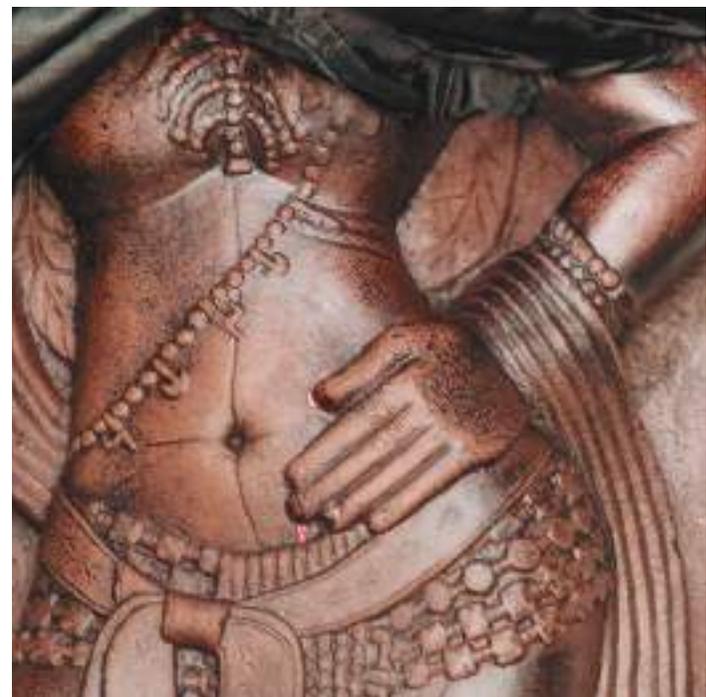
Mahakoka wears large armlets with floral bosses from the centre of which issue pearl strings (7). This shape does not occur in other Bharhut figures. Her bracelets also have the *ankusha* amulet (9). Her anklets of many rings have metal bells attached to their ends (5).

Tattoos of various shapes decorate many Bharhut figures, among them the Sun-and-Moon or lunar crescent on the cheeks. Mahakoka has a crescent on the right cheek (7). It is possible that she has only one tattoo, since Cunningham notes Sirima having only "a single star or flower", on the left cheek bone in her case. Chandra also has lunar-solar cheek tattoos.¹⁴

A dwarf with long plaited hair, a necklace and a leaf as his loin cloth, is stout and handsome in his own



6. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: ornaments and folds of upper garment



Detail of 11

way. He is shown in a weight-lifter's crouch balancing the goddess on the palms of his hands (8). Batanmara (11) and Kupiro Yakho¹⁵ also have dwarfs, all drawn from a common fountain of fantasy. In folklore and mythology, dwarfs and misshapen, abnormal men are believed to have magical powers – but this paper is hardly the occasion for such an exploration.

Like other sculptures at Bharhut, whether they are large Yakshis, Devatas or small figures on pillars, a tree is integral to the composition. Often a tree and a woman are depicted in tight embrace, limbs interlocked three, or sometimes even four times (5). Students of Indian art would recognize here at once the ancient *shalabhanjika*, at the core of which were ideas of fecundity and life's sudden bursting forth. Legends developed, the most important being *Dohada* or the longing of a pregnant woman, from *dvi-hridaya* the condition of pregnancy in which two hearts are beating in a woman's body, her own and that of the baby in her womb. To illustrate this notion a passage from the *Kathasaritsagara* may be cited: "Spring comes, and the Kuruvaka tree blooms, embraced by young maids; the Ashoka bursts into bloom, struck by young women; the Bakula blooms, sprayed with wine from the mouths of maidens; and the Champaka bursts, as it is sprinkled with perfumed water".¹⁶

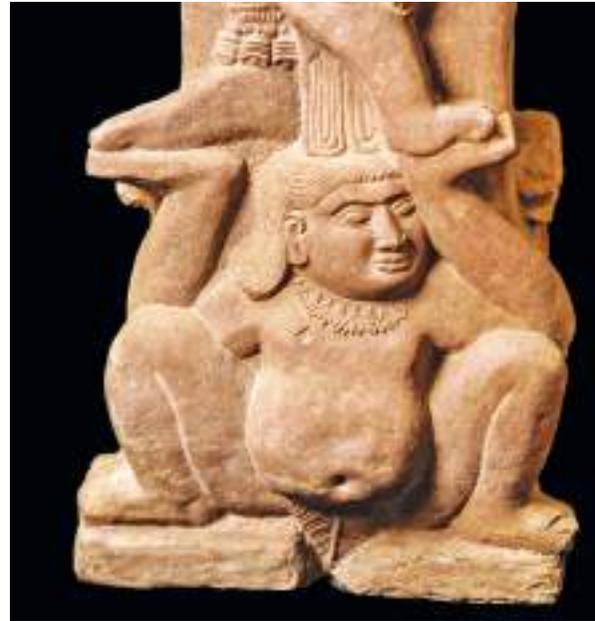
The tree under which Mahakoka stands (9, 10), or around which she entwines herself, has been provisionally identified as *Neolamarckia cadamba*, or the Kadamba.¹⁷

Mahakoka's Inscription

Like most Bharhut inscriptions, the one on Mahakoka is brief, just twenty-four letters recording the gift of the goddess in the Brahmi script of the second century BCE



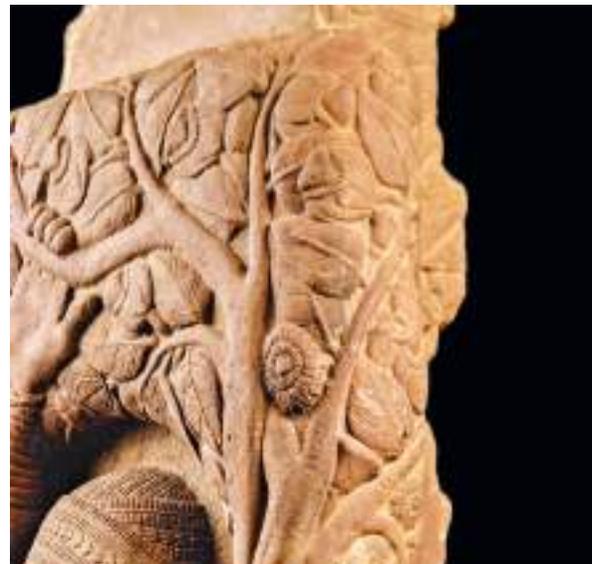
7. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: embellished headgear, ear ornaments, facial tattoos, amulet-strung necklace and armllets



8. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: dwarfish figure support of Mahakoka



9. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: tree provisionally identified as *Neolamarckia cadamba* or the Kadamba tree



10. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: tree shading her, shown in profile

in a Prakrit dialect. Until now, the few published readings have all been based on Cunningham's eye copy published in 1879 book (12). A direct reading of the engraved record is as follows:

Chuladhakasa purikaya bhatudesakasa danam Mahakoka Devata

The letters, deeply cut by a practiced hand, are clear and well-shaped: the engravers of records must have been in steady demand. Only, the letter *pu* in *purika* is rather shallow, but still decipherable. It has been translated as "Gift of Chuladhaka (?) from Purika, the superintendent of meals. Mahakoka Devata".¹⁸

When Will Devata Mahakoka Return to Her Shrine?

Since its recovery in 2012, Mahakoka has been in Department of Homeland Security's custody. The owner had fulfilled his legal requirements way back in 1977, and had lodged a police report when it was stolen in July 2004. The ASI and the Ministry of Culture have been made aware of all this by this writer. The owner's title has been proved to the satisfaction of the US authorities. Now it is for the government of India to act, to get confirmation of ownership so that the Bird-voiced goddess can return to her shrine.

Smaller countries are also successfully repatriating their smuggled heritage.¹⁹

A responsive administration is expected to take up the repatriation of this unique and extremely valuable figure as its own responsibility after following due process, and hand it over to the owner. Since the time the owner of the sculpture came to know about its recovery, he has made many visits to the Ministry, ASI's offices in New Delhi and Bhopal, and even the (then) Prime Minister.

The ASI is not an investigative agency, as its officials say; but who is preventing ASI from adding a page on their official website *www.asi.nic.in* where antiques stolen from their own sites can be posted? As to thefts from ASI's own sites, does its responsibility end once a report has been lodged at some remote police station such as Nagod, Atru, Kuthla, Rawatbhata? An unsuspecting art collector may end up buying stolen art smuggled out with fabricated papers, as has allegedly been done in this case.

From this writer's perception, international security agencies who intercept smuggled art are keen to restore it to India after observing due legal processes, more than our agencies are on retrieving that art. Two amorous couples stolen from the protected site of Atru in eastern



11. Female figure in a local shrine, Batanmara, Satna district
Partial view of the collar strung with charms and amulets
similar to Mahakoka Devata



12. Mahakoka Devata, Bharhut
Detail of 5: Inscription

Rajasthan in April and September 2009 and handed over to India on 14/15 January 2014 are a case in point.

In the 1870s, a conscientious British archaeologist documented the sculptures of Bharhut, transferred them to Calcutta, also copying the inscription on a piece that could not be transported. Full one hundred years later, the Indian family that had been worshipping the sculpture as a goddess got it registered in due observance of the law, and reported to the police when the sculpture was stolen and smuggled out of the country. One hundred and forty years after the first discovery of this invaluable image, our own government needs to do everything possible to ensure that the family and the goddess that they worshipped are re-united.

END NOTES

¹ *Epigraphia Indica* X (1909-10), (Reprinted 1959), Government of India, New Delhi. Appendix "A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to About A.D. 400, with the Exception of Those of Asoka", (ed) Lüders, H., Nos.687-903 list all of Bharhut inscriptions then known. This is commonly known as "Lüder's List", pp.65-91.2

² *Bharhut Inscriptions*, (ed) by Lüders and revised by Waldschmidt, E., and Mehendale, M.A., "Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum" series, 1963, Government of India, New Delhi, Vol. II, Part II.

³ *Ibid.*, p.20, fn.3: "Chula has been derived from *kshudra* in the translation of our inscription by Lüders in his *List*."

⁴ Cunningham, Alexander, *The Stupa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures Illustrative of Buddhist Legend and History in the Third Century B C*, 1879, London. Reprinted 1962, Indological Book House, Varanasi, pl. XXI. Reprinted, 1998, New Delhi.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.22, fn 4.

⁶ Lüders, Waldschmidt and Mehendale, p. viii a, refers to two Bharhut sculptures preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. See, Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., *La sculpture de Bharhut*, 1956, D'Art et Dehistoire, Paris, pl. XXV.

The few known to this writer are in the Norton Simon Museum at Pasadena, USA. They are a split architectural piece (No. f.1972-55S) and a *yakshi* under a tree (No. 1972.11.1.S). The numbers are on the museum's website.

⁷ This sculpture is published by Cunningham, Alexander, pl.XXI. The brief label inscription read by Cunningham and others including this writer at the site simply says *Sakaya thabho danam* (the pillar is a gift of Saka); whether *Yakshi* or Devata, or any other character of mythology is not mentioned.

Reference is given here to the accession numbers of the American Institute of Indian Studies' digital photographic archives (dsal.uchicago.edu): Chulakoka 68520; Sudarshana 68526. Sirima Devata is 34306, 68637; Chandra *yakshi* 68579. The Batanmara figure is in the shrine facing the lake in the village of the same name.

⁸ Cunningham, 1879, p.33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.34, pl.XXII/3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, About this peculiar ear ornament Cunningham remarks: "...the middle portion was formed of a spiral tube, and that the whole ornament, though very large, was most probably not very heavy. The flanged end was always worn outwards, and the square flowered end inwards touching the cheek. They were no doubt placed in position by pushing outwards the flanged end through the long slit in the lobe of the ear, and then two complete turns of the spiral would place the ornament in position ... with the square end touching the cheek", p.35. For a discussion of this unique ear ornament at

Bharhut and a few other sites elsewhere, see Postel, M. *Ear Ornaments of Ancient India*, 1989, Franco-Indian Pharmaceuticals Limited, Bombay, pp.34-35 and figures, A,B,C.

For a discussion of *shalabhanjika* through the earliest period in general: Desai, Devangana, "Salabhanjika and Surasundari—Auspicious Figures in Art", in *Art and Icon: Essays on Early Indian Art*, 2013, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, p. 161.

¹¹ Cunningham, 1879, pl. XXII/3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.36 and pl.XXI central figure, and Pl. L, Fig.8 for a diagram.

¹³ *Ibid.*, cf. pl. LI, Fig.3, for the girdle of Sirima Devata, which is slightly more ornate.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pl.LII/2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pl.XXII.

¹⁶ Adapted from *The Ocean of Story*, (ed) by Penzer, N.M., 1968, Indian Edition, New Delhi, Vol.I, p. 222.

¹⁷ Acknowledgements are due to J. M. Garg, Dr. Vijayasankar and Ms. Radha Veach for suggesting these. Mr. Garg posted this writer's query on [www.indiantreepix@googlegroups.com/Efloraofindia](mailto:indiantreepix@googlegroups.com/Efloraofindia). Kadamba was a favourite subject in Indian art. (<http://www.flowersofindia.net/botanical.html>).

¹⁸ Lüders, Waldschmidt and Mehendale, p.20.

Ibid., The authors cite Pali Buddhist texts for the expression *bhatta-uddesaka*, "a *thera* or elder [monk] who supervises the distribution of food", p.20, fn.3 *Chuladhaka* : As Lüders, Waldschmidt and Mehendale write on p.20, fn 3, Chula occurs as the first part of the goddess Chulakoka, "Little Koka". Chula is derived from *kshudra*.

Purika : Purika, literally, "the town", occurs in many Bharhut records as the place of residence of donors. (It is something like when people in the neighbourhood of a large town such as Ahmednagar refer to that town they often say simply "Nagar"; that they mean Ahmednagar is understood. Purika, therefore, must have been a place of some importance.

Lüders, Waldschmidt and Mehendale, on the authority of Hultzsch proposed, "a town between two ranges of the Vindhya mountains", p.8.

¹⁹ Peru, for example, has retrieved 8,000 pieces according to the Museum Security Network report (MSN No. 16433) of 21 March 2014, and Cambodia had successfully negotiated recovery of sculptures from the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, USA, (MSN 1731) of 4 June 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photograph: Mahakoka, Department of Homeland Security of the USA.

Photograph: Chulakoka, American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS). Photographic Archives, Gurgaon, India.

Photograph: Bharhut gallery in the Indian Museum, (AIIS).

Dr. Chaitanya Swaroop Saxena, Deputy Director of Archaeology in Madhya Pradesh, accompanied the author to Bharhut, Batanmara and Uchehra.

The site of Bharhut and the Batanmara sculpture were photographed in July 2012.

Courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India and all the above is acknowledged, as also of the custodians of Batanmara's shrine, and of the family who is the devotee of Mahakoka Devata.

