

## The Case of the Contraband Cargo, or, Atru's Amorous Couples

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On 14 January 2014, the US Homeland Security Investigations returned to the Consul General of India in New York two sculptures from Atru, a little-known site in Rajasthan, bringing closure to two cases of illegal exports of antiquities. The sculptures represent two amorous couples, or *mithunas*, a popular motif in Indian art. Their repatriation was the culmination of efforts set in motion in India in early April 2010, and it was brought to conclusion in the US, where the sculptures had landed after violating the laws of both countries. The sculptures were over 1000 years old, in perfect condition, and very few persons had ever seen them. The ceremony of handing over the sculptures to the Indian government representative was widely covered by international media.

ATRU, THE TOWN FROM WHERE THE SCULPTURES WERE PILFERED

Atru (24°52'N; 76°40'E), a non-descript town in eastern Rajasthan a little over 100 km to the south-east of Kota, can be reached via the district



headquarters of Baran 76 km distant over the newly laid Express Highway No. 76, and then 28 km over the rough State Highway No. 90 from Baran to Chhipa Barod.

In this place, in the ninth and tenth centuries CE, eight Brahmanical and Jaina temples and a stepped well were built, nearly all of which are now dilapidated. The most interesting is a ruined Viṣṇu temple originally built in the first decade of the tenth century, which seems to have been silted up soon after.<sup>1</sup> Over the remains of that temple was raised another, dedicated to the same god, after a gap of three generations, or c. 965-70 CE. This high mound, now just a pile of rubble, is known as Gadgach (Gaḍgach), “Disorderly Heap”, in the dialect of Malwa where Atru is located, although the town itself is administratively in Rajasthan State.<sup>2</sup>

A short first report was published over 100 years ago by D.R. Bhandarkar (n.d., 48-49) in the Archaeological Survey of India’s *Western Circle Progress Report for the Year Ending 30th June 1905*. Bhandarkar briefly described all the nine monuments in the town, observing that Gadgach must once have been a lofty monument. The ruins are protected by the Archaeological Survey of

India (ASI) as being of national importance, yet no publication has appeared since Bhandarkar’s report. Atru, like some other sites in this region (such as Kakuni and Krishna Vilas), has not entered the main stream of Indian art studies.

#### THE MOUND

The Gadgach mound is at the western end of the town, about 100 m away on the left side of the Baran-Chhipa Barod road. Its extent was approximately 50 m east to west and 15 m north to south (Fig. 28.1). The height from the ground level to the standing column on top of the ruin (of the second or later phase of the monument; see below) was about 10 metres or 30 feet. Part of the porch railing, three columns of the *maṇḍapa* (hall) and the left side of the shrine doorway, all of the later structure, can be seen *in situ*. Some miniature superstructure models, carved ceilings, and other architectural members can also be seen at the site. The Gadgach temple had been deliberately pulled down a long time ago by some hostile agency.

The lay of the mound and its surroundings is as follows. From the road to Chhipa Barod, just after leaving Atru town, Gadgach comes into view 100 m



Fig. 28.1. Atru, Gadgach mound, general view from the south-west. Only the later phase of the structure of c. 965 CE is preserved on this side. Photo: Kirit L. Mankodi.

on the left, with an agricultural field in between. The first impression as the monument comes into view is of a towering mound rising from the surrounding plain.

There is at present no sign of old habitation. The present town is 200 m to the east; beyond the mound to the west is only barren land. Two hundred metres to the north-west is a lake, covering about five acres, mostly silted up but filled up during the rainy period. Before the mound to the east, there is a rivulet known as Budhsagar, which Gadgach faces. For most parts of the year, the rivulet is dry, but it can become turbulent during the rains. On the south side of the mound (Fig. 28.1) is a shallow depression, which is filled with water in the rains. The Gadgach temple, which was for Viṣṇu sleeping on the mythical serpent Śeṣa, was in a 'symbiotic' relationship to Budhsagar, as is often the case for Viṣṇu's temples.

Atru is not a famous sacred centre; hence, the reason for building so many temples here is not apparent. The only known record is a short land grant dated 1127-28 CE, carved on a column in the *maṇḍapa*, but it has no relationship to the temple (Ray 1973, 965). No reference to any old form of the name 'Atru' is known in ancient literature either.

#### TWO PHASES OF THE STRUCTURE

The mound on which the Gadgach ruin is situated actually has the remains of a monument that was built in two phases. Of the earlier structure, exposed only recently, in 2006-07, only the plinth remains intact, and is datable to the very early years of the tenth century. Over this, another temple was built after a gap of about fifty years, or c. 965 CE.

Gadgach stands on an elevated mound, yet no one seems to have suspected any structure buried underneath. In 2006, the Archaeological Survey of India's Jaipur Circle under its then Superintending Archaeologist (Shri C.B. Mishra) decided to clear the scattered debris beneath the visible parts of Gadgach, and requested this writer to collaborate.

The clearance exposed the remains underlying the dilapidated late 10th-century phase, including the high base of dressed blocks of stone in the north-east corner, and the west face and the mouldings on the north face of the plinth of the earlier structure. The entire south side of the earlier phase had vanished since long, the water-filled depression so close to it on that side surely playing a part in its total disappearance.

#### SCULPTURE ON THE EXPOSED PLINTH

This early plinth (*jagatī*) was adorned with large sculptures of two types: regents of the directions of space (*dikpālas*), and amorous couples (*mithunas*). We shall say no more than that most of the *dikpālas* had already been disturbed from their positions; however, four amorous couples were still in place on the surviving north face (Fig. 28.2). The other two sides on the south and west, which have vanished, must have had an identical arrangement; the front face may or may not have had any figures. The size, scale and decoration of these amorous couples bespeak their importance in the monument's embellishment: they, with the *dikpālas*, are its principal decoration, cutting across the mouldings from base to top, 1 m broad and 1.5 m high overall. They are framed by columns, which support an awning above, and then a crowning pediment; *vyālas* (mythical, hybrid leonine creatures), elephants, and female attendant figures are on the outer sides, all being carved out of a single block. The crowning pediment above was a separate block. Having been buried for centuries, perhaps a short time after they had been carved and set up, all four *mithunas* of Gadgach are intact (Figs. 28.2 to 28.4, Col. pl. 6).

#### ATRU ESPECIALLY SUBJECT TO VANDALISM

A large number of thefts have occurred at Atru, which is on the borders between the two States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Records are available since 1985, when the Jaipur Circle was



**Fig. 28.2.** Atru, Gadgach mound, view of the plinth of the earlier structure of c. 910 CE; north side. The *mithuna* stolen in April 2009 ('Mithuna 1') is at extreme right among the four *in situ*; the one stolen in September 2009 ('Mithuna 2') is at extreme left. The hollow niche at extreme right of the photograph was the location of Dikpāla Soma mentioned in note 13; it is exhibited in the local Art gallery under No. 104/03. Photo: Kirit L. Mankodi.

formed after dividing the Baroda/Vadodara Circle.<sup>3</sup> It may be said overall that State borders are sensitive areas, for they make it easy for vandals to commit a theft in one State, then slip into a neighbouring State. The scouts who surveyed Atru's surroundings for prey had unerring instincts indeed.

Though Atru has been subject to thefts in the past, even before 1985, its sculptures have not been recorded in any museum under their correct provenance; some are known to exist, though, in museums or collections abroad, their provenance recorded at least tentatively as Atru. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art has two doorway pieces, a doorjamb base and a lintel, accessioned as being from "Kota region, Atru (?)" ; they are nos. M.74.5.5 and M.74.5.6 in the Museum's website.<sup>4</sup> Vishakha N. Desai and Darielle Mason come tantalizingly close to locating some sculptures illustrated in their book to Atru.<sup>5</sup>

In the present case, being in a deserted location, the freshly exposed four *mithunas* drew

the attention of the scouts of smugglers, who stole one of them during the night of 22/23 April 2009 and illegally exported it. In Fig. 28.2, which is a photograph taken before the thefts, the sculpture can be seen as being *in situ* at the extreme right in the row of four sculptures; it was closest to the gate in the barbed wire fence protecting the site. When the theft became known, the ASI 'followed procedure', lodging a first information report (FIR) with the police, but without a photograph. Apparently, that was all that was ever done: no press publicity, no public alarm, no INTERPOL alerts, and no information to the Art Loss Register.

We may take it that such thefts of major art, whose prices run into millions of dollars, cannot be casual one-off affairs; they must have been carefully planned by some international cartel especially since we know that Atru has been subjected to vandalism through the years. It must therefore have come as a pleasant surprise to the cartel that the theft of the five foot tall sculpture from a centrally

protected monument, in immaculate condition because they had remained buried for centuries, weighing several hundred kilograms, had caused no ripples in official circles in India. Emboldened by this fact, they struck again barely four months after the first theft, on 18/19 September, taking away a second *mithuna*, this time daringly picking the one farthest from the fence (extreme left in Fig. 28.2). Again, a simple FIR was lodged without any photograph to help the security agencies to identify it.

Salvaged from the earth in 2007, left virtually unguarded, two of the four panels were thus swallowed up by smugglers within a couple of years of their exposure. The vandals would have picked up the two remaining figures as well, one by one, had fate not intervened.

#### THE MITHUNAS RECOVERED!

The two sculptures seemed to have vanished without a trace; in the normal course, they would have entered some private collection or a museum, without ever any hope of recovery in the absence of photographic documentation when they were *in situ* to prove any claim by the ASI.

Quite unexpectedly, the sculpture that was stolen in September 2009 ('Mithuna 2', stolen later, as we shall call it, to distinguish it from the one stolen in April 2009, which we shall call 'Mithuna 1') surfaced. It was illustrated in a full page advertisement of John Eskenazi, London, in the Hong Kong-based journal *Arts of Asia* (40.2, March-April 2010, p. 61). It had travelled thousands of miles in a roundabout route to end up in London in the span of under six months (see below). The advertisement identified it as "Mithuna, Loving Couple" and attributed it simply to "Northern India, 10th/11th century".

Mr. M. Postel, a French national with a deep interest in Indian art, who has encouraged research on Atru and other aspects of Indian art, on seeing the advertisement, met the Indian ambassador to

France (Mr. Rajan Mathai) and requested him to follow up with his counterpart in the UK. In India, this writer met the ASI's Director General in New Delhi (at that time Dr. Gautam Sengupta) on 4/5 April 2010, showed him photographs of Atru that he had taken, requested him to alert the Indian High Commission in London, and independently sent e-mails to scholars, museums and institutions worldwide, enclosing photographs of both the sculptures (April and September 2009). Then the international security agencies took over.

In the meantime, the advertised sculpture had been moved to New York from London. INTERPOL issued an alert.<sup>6</sup> The sculpture stolen first, in April 2009 ('Mithuna 1'), whose photograph was circulated by this writer, was also located in New York and was seized as well by Homeland Security in New York. This writer was requested by the Indian embassy through the ASI to authenticate its photograph. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Trial Attorney, US Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, confirmed as early as 9 July 2012 "both statues are seized here in New York – and I look forward to both being repatriated soon".<sup>7</sup>

The US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement news outlined the clandestine movement of the two *mithunas* from their niches in faraway Atru to the HSI warehouse in New York, across three continents, in the following words:

The investigation that led to this repatriation began April 13, 2010, when HSI New York special agents received information that the Indian sandstone sculptures recently looted from India were being offered for sale in the United States. HSI special agents discovered that the "Vishnu and Lakshmi" ['Mithuna 2': our Fig. 28.4] was transported from India to Hong Kong. From there, it was sold to a dealer in Thailand, and then resold to a buyer in London. The London buyer shipped the sculpture to New York City for an exhibition in March 2010. On April 15, 2010, HSI special agents recovered the piece while it was being shipped back to London.

On July 12, 2010, as a direct result of the "Vishnu and Lakshmi" seizure, a sister piece, the "Vishnu and

Parvatī" ('Mithuna 1'; our Fig. 28.3) was seized. It had been transported to Hong Kong, sold to a buyer in New York, and then sold and shipped to a buyer in Basel, Switzerland.<sup>8</sup>

Gadgach and all other remains at Atru are under the protection of the ASI, declared as monuments of national importance. To prove ASI's ownership, especially after photographs of the mound with the sculptures *in situ* had been furnished by this writer, should have been a routine matter, yet it has taken four years to reclaim our own heritage. (One of the two beautiful triangular crowning pediments remains to be traced.)

#### CONFUSED NOMENCLATURE

The *Arts of Asia* advertisement identified the sculpture as "*Mithuna* or Loving Couple". The name 'loving couple' is now an acceptable translation of *mithuna*, the glamorous phrase probably becoming current first among dealers and collectors, and now among serious scholars as well. However, the documents that India's diplomatic Mission in New York sent to this writer for authenticating the *mithuna* that was stolen in April 2009 and had been recovered from a New York dealer ('Mithuna 1') described it as "Krishna and Kubja".<sup>9</sup>

One could shrug off such identifications as Viṣṇu/Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu/Pārvatī and Kṛṣṇa/Kubjā if they were no more than superficial journalism.<sup>10</sup> However, when a qualified antiquarian considers one of them to be a scene from the life of Kṛṣṇa, it is a serious matter.

Donald M. Stadtner has reproduced one of the two sculptures (the *mithuna* stolen in April 2009 called here 'Mithuna 1', Fig. 28.3) in a recent article, "The Dhobi, the Hunchback and Medieval Narrative Sculpture" (Stadtner 2012). He sees in this the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* episode when a hunchback woman of Mathurā offers to the brothers Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma the perfumes and cosmetics meant for King Kaṃsa and Kṛṣṇa cures her of her deformity. The youth in the Atru panel is supposed to be Kṛṣṇa on his way to the

royal court, the young woman as the ugly woman after she was restored to youth and beauty.

The above interpretation is the result of an ignorance of the total setting of the Gadgach ruin's recently exposed lower plinth. Several objections can be raised:

Kṛṣṇa's adventures are narrated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and elsewhere; they were often carved on temples, and they are part of the Hindu consciousness. The worshipper would recall these marvels as he walked around the shrine. Kṛṣṇa's deeds follow the timeline from his birth in prison and the exchange of the babies all the way to the fated killing of Kaṃsa. Some episodes may be left out, others included; but the standard series always terminates with the hero assassinating his uncle seated on his throne by surprising him. Without going too far for illustrations, Harihara temples 1, 2 and 3 of the eighth century at Osian in Rajasthan (like Atru) have *Kṛṣṇalīlā* episodes.<sup>11</sup> As the final dénouement is nearing, episodes both of grace and death happen in Mathurā and in the King's presence. The King's washer-man insults the brothers only to be killed by them – the hunchbacked flower-woman presents to them the King's perfumes and adornments and finds herself cured – the rowdy royal elephant is killed – Kaṃsa's wrestlers Muṣṭika ("Fisticuffs!") and Cāṇūra are destroyed. Finally, Kṛṣṇa leaps upon Kaṃsa seated on his throne and assassinates him.<sup>12</sup>

On all three Osian temples, and everywhere else that *Kṛṣṇalīlā* is represented, the Mathurā episodes leading up to Kaṃsa's death occur towards the end. Stadtner's interpretation leaves no room on Atru's plinth for what naturally followed the hunchback episode: the washer-man, duels with the royal wrestlers and Kaṃsa's assassination.

When these episodes of the washer-man and the flower-woman happened, Balarāma was present as Kṛṣṇa's companion, but in the Atru panel, he is nowhere to be seen; and what is the justification for



Fig. 28.3. Atru, *mithuna* stolen in April 2009 ('Mithuna 1'), the so-called Viṣṇu and Pārvatī / Kṛṣṇa and Kubjā.  
Photo: Kirit L. Mankodi.

the dead elephant's uprooted 'tusk' in Kṛṣṇa's hand in a scene illustrating the blessing of a hunchback?

Apart from the three Osian shrines, *Kṛṣṇalīlā* is 'narrated' in rows of relatively small scenes, just as other epic scenes used to be illustrated for edification (the Virūpākṣa temple's columns at Pattadakal in Karnataka, for example). Atru's panels are, in stark contrast, independent, framed sculptures as large as one and a half metres or five feet high.

We were obliged to resort to some polemics here; actually, anyone who visits the Gadgach temple will reject the suggestion about *Kṛṣṇalīlā* in Atru's panels. Besides, authentic *Kṛṣṇalīlā* did indeed occur, on the upper or later phase of Gadgach, where they were set up in the entablature or *varaṇḍikā* between the wall and the superstructure. Though the superstructure itself has

collapsed, the few surviving panels lie scattered on the mound, and they are smaller panels, the same as at Osian (the baby's exchange, Pūtanā, Kāliya, dancing with the cowherds, the mad elephant, the wrestlers of Mathurā, Kaṃsa's death). They are yet unpublished, even unrecognized. (These and the others will form part of the monograph under production.)

"Kṛṣṇa and Kubjā" (our Fig. 28.3) has the hands of the youth and his lover daintily touching each other. He is a young man, not the boy that Kṛṣṇa had been until then, and his lover steps up to be close to him; he stands, lightly resting his elbow on a mace, a curved object in his left hand. Stadtner takes this to be the mad elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa's tusk that the hero had uprooted, and explains the mace as "evoking his link with Visnu" (Stadtner 2012, 69). The young woman's hair is tied in an elaborate coiffure,

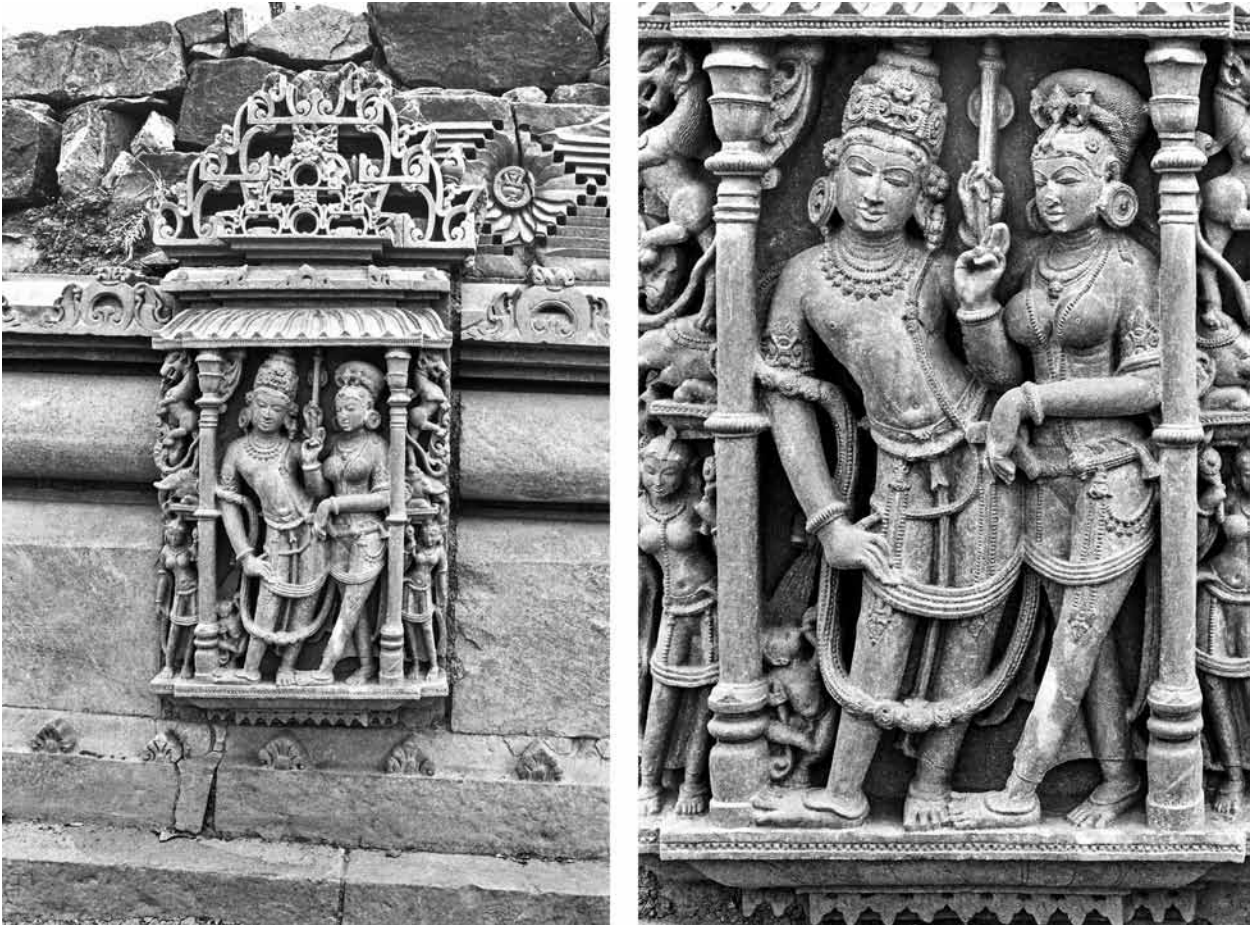


Fig. 28.4. Atru, *mithuna* stolen in September 2009 ('Mithuna 2') and advertised in the journal *Arts of Asia*, the so-called Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī of newspaper reports. Photos: Kirit L. Mankodi. [Col. pl. 6].

a garland is held up in the hand about to be strung; the right hand delicately holds a flattish dish (?). Her partner's rich hair is combed back. To this writer, however, everything about the pair suggests that they are a nattily turned out young couple on a dalliance, on an outing to the fair so to say. As in all of Atru's figures, jewellery and headdresses are extremely elegant, 'arty'.<sup>13</sup>

The object in the hand of the youth, curved, wide at the mouth, tapering, pointed at one end, is not often encountered in art, and its identity is uncertain. The closest comparison that can be suggested is with a sheath or case to hold a javelin (*bhindipāla*) (Agrawala 1969, 180, fig. 71). All the couples of Atru, *mithunas* as well as *dikpālas*, are modish, urbane, the women with musical

instruments or a 'vanity case' ('Mithuna 2', our Fig. 28.4), mirrors, a lotus leaf fan; the object in her companion's hand must be what a debonair youth would have.

A stout, dwarfish man looks up at the hero, excitedly lifting up his arm. This almost naked person beneath the couple is sometimes seen in early sculpture; he may be a jester accompanying the pair. Stadtner does not explain his presence.<sup>14</sup>

Such courtly couples diverting themselves in various ways occur also at the Harṣatmātā temple at Abhaneri some 300 km to the north of Atru and built 100 years earlier. The reason may be that these temples are of the Pāñcarātra sect of Vaiṣṇavism. (This entire question will be dealt with in the monograph being produced.)



## WHY MITHUNAS? OR, GADGACH AS A PĀÑCARĀTRA TEMPLE

The ASI signboard at the site is clearly incorrect; it was not a Śiva temple at all but was one for Viṣṇu, and quite possibly one of the Pāñcarātra sect, like the Harṣatmātā. A large mutilated sculpture of Viṣṇu sleeping on the bed of the cosmic serpent that must once have been enshrined in the temple of the second or later phase has become known during clearance in 2007; and we remember that the temple faced the Budhsagar stream. The *vedibandha* (base mouldings) of this later temple too has paired divinities, as on the earlier structure's plinth. In the monograph under preparation, a case will be made out that amorous figures were preferred statuary on Pāñcarātra temples. The fact that Pradyumna, one of the members of the Pāñcarātra pantheon, was identified with Kāma or the god of Love might have had something to do with the representation of the 'loving couples' on Gadgach and other Vaiṣṇava temples; however, this paper is not the place to take up such a larger question.

With its perfect camouflage – an ordinary town's anonymity, absence of other famous antiquarian landmarks in the entire region, convenience of a quick escape from one State to another – Atru has been game for vandals for years.<sup>15</sup>

The amorous couples will eventually be brought back home. However, the perpetrators of the crime are still at large. The auction houses suffered financially as Atru turned out to be bad investment; they must have also suffered loss of face in their trade. They will recover all of this in course of time. A few individuals who had physically stolen the pieces were arrested, and apparently, even they are out on bail.

Private collectors, scholars, university professors enjoying bonhomie with dealers, lending them legitimacy, may reflect, when they step into an auction house, that the sculpture they are invited to admire may have been wrenched from its niche, that brutality may have been practised, that

someone's heritage may have been violated. The scholar and the dealer have conflicting interests. A scholar wants his art in one piece; a dealer will not think twice before hacking off a head.<sup>16</sup> The scholar's interest is in pinpointing the true source of his sculpture; the dealer suffers no qualms in hiding its tracks. The scholar seeks Knowledge above all else; the dealer works for Profit.

The dealer who acquired 'Mithuna 2' stolen in September 2009 reportedly had queried the Art Loss Register for any reported theft, which had returned a negative report. Had the Archaeological Survey of India created a page on its official website ([www.asi.nic.in](http://www.asi.nic.in)) where photographs and details of stolen art would be posted, and had the loss of the theft of April 2009 been reported there, at least the second sculpture might have been spared its sad fate. Introducing such a page on [www.asi.nic.in](http://www.asi.nic.in) even now will discourage thefts to some extent; it will at least alert conscientious collectors, and it will put smugglers on notice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When it was reported to the international security agencies in early April 2010 that the Atru sculptures had been illegally exported, US Homeland Security Investigations took over the case, resulting in their repatriation, as was mentioned above. Now that the case of Atru's Contraband Cargo has been concluded, the officials who handled it can be acknowledged. Therefore, it is with great warmth that thanks are offered to Homeland Security Investigations, its Senior Special Agent Brenton M. Easter, Special Agent John Paul Labbat, and trial attorney Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos of the New York county court. (Especially mention should be made of Brent, who seems to observe a 24 hours x 7 days work schedule.)

The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Establishment under its Homeland Security Investigations is following other illegally exported Indian antiquities, including

an over-life-size Bharhut sculpture valued at US \$ 15 to 18 millions.<sup>17</sup> This writer's website ([www.plunderedpast.in](http://www.plunderedpast.in)) may be consulted for some other cases of art thefts and their illegal export.

If prompt action is taken, sometimes success

results, as has happened with Atru's amorous couples. On the very day that Atru's *mithunas* were handed over, this writer received a mail from Homeland Security that he had been publicly thanked at the ceremony.

#### NOTES

1. The Archaeological Survey of India's signboard at the site wrongly records it as a Śiva temple.
2. There are other ruined monuments in central India, described as "disorderly heaps" by local people in their dialects, who have forgotten their original names. Archaeologists have not noted the connection between the name and the ruined state of a monument: for example, the ruined Mahādeva temple known as Gargaj at Gurgi in the Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh (Banerji 1931, 41).
3. The list of thefts since the establishment of the Jaipur Circle as an exclusive Circle for Rajasthan in 1985 is as follows:
  1. Animal-shaped Varāha: 31 July 1989;
  - 2-3. Two Śiva-Pārvatī sculptures: 14 June 1995;
  - 4-5. Two female figures: 21 September 1999;
  6. One female figure: 13/14 February 2002;
  7. *Mithuna*: 22/23 April 2009 (subject of the present paper);
  8. *Mithuna*: 18/19 September 2009 (subject of the present paper).

Out of these, Nos. 1-3 have been recovered, while Nos. 4, 5 and 6 have not been recovered.
4. See also Pal (1988, 120-23, nos. 48 [M.74.5.5, "A River Goddess Relief"] and 49 [M.74.5.6, "Lintel from a Temple"]), where both have been attributed to "Rajasthan, c. 900" and where previous publications of 1966, 1972 and 1979 are referred to for both of them. Formerly, the two items belonged to the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection.
5. See Desai and Mason (1993, 153-54, no. 8; 236-37, no. 58; 238-39, no. 59), the latter two being the two LACMA pieces, while the first belongs to the Brooklyn Museum (no. 86.183.3, identified as "Vāyu"). In addition, two *dikpāla* couples (Vāyu and Varuṇa with their consorts) were collected from Gadgach many years ago by the Rajasthan State's Directorate of Archaeology and Museums and are in the State Government's Museum at Kota. They are in the stores, not on display; Vāyu is numbered 33/29 and Varuṇa is 60/50.
6. <http://www.interpol.int/Public/ICP/PressReleases/PR2010/News10100422b.asp> (the link has since become invalid).
7. Personal e-mail received from Homeland Security Investigations Trial Attorney, US Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, on 9 July 2012. (There is a slight discrepancy in the ICE dateline, being 12 July in the report quoted below as against the date of the e-mail.)
8. <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1401/140114newyork.htm> (last accessed 11 March 2015).
9. Letter from the Consulate General of India of June 18 2010 to Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, forwarded to this writer by the latter: "US enforcement officials are conducting an investigation to identify and authenticate a sandstone sculpture titled **Krishna and Kubja**, circa late 9th to early 10th century AD, photographs of the same enclosed. They believe that the said sculpture was stolen from the Temple Atru in Rajasthan, India." (Emphasis is in the original.) The sculpture in question is the one stolen on 22/23 April 2009.
10. Where these crazy identifications of the *mithunas* originated is not clear; the ASI's police FIRs or the fax despatched to the Indian High Commissioner in London by the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India on 5 April 2010 in this writer's presence did not make such an identification.
11. Some examples of *Kṛṣṇalīlā* are listed by Michael W. Meister (1973). See also Stadtner (2012, 74) for his own articles. A pillar *in situ* in the ninth-century Baodi or stepped well in the Bija Mandal precincts at Vidisha has some *Kṛṣṇalīlā* episodes; see Brij Mohan Pande and K.L. Mankodi's paper (under production). For Kṛṣṇa's deeds narrated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, see Vettam Mani (1975 [2010], 420 ff.), under "Kṛṣṇa".
12. *Kṛṣṇalīlā* on these three temples are on the *varaṇḍikā* or entablature below the superstructure.

The following photographs in the AIIIS archives ([dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aais](http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aais)) follow the order of Kṛṣṇa's exploits as they happened. Some carvings have the rhythm of a rite or a dance even if the scene is one of violence:

Harihara 1: 57654 Kṛṣṇa balancing Mount Govardhana; 57652-57653 subduing Śakaṭabhaṅga; 57655 Keśivadha; 57649 Yamalārjuna trees; 57643 mad elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa; 57645 Kaṁsa's court. Harihara 2: 57168 Kaṁsa's court; 57167 Kuvalayāpīḍa; 57164 Kāliya; 57162 Dhenuka demon; 57161 Mount Govardhana; 57160 Keśivadha; 57159 riding piggyback on Pralamba; 57158 Śakaṭabhaṅga; 57157 Pūtanā; 57156 birth, stealing butter. Harihara 3: 57698 Kāliya; 57699 Mount Govardhana; 57700 Śakaṭabhaṅga; 57701 Pralamba.

13. This applies to the *dikpāla* couples that adorned this early plinth as well; see Mankodi (in press-1).
14. For a few examples from Mandasor, see the photographic archives of the American Institute of Indian Studies ([dsal.uchicago.edu/images/](http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/)

aais), nos. 21637 and 21638 from a c. 600 CE pillar, where the person also holds a crooked staff; and from Khilchipura near Mandasor, nos. 16195 and 16197, details of the well-known column. See this writer's paper (Mankodi 1980). The Khilchipura column is discussed by Joanna Williams (1972-73). She describes the person as a "small old man with a stick" (*ibid.*, 57).

15. Note 3 above enumerates thefts from 1985 right down to September 2009 when the second *mīthuna* was stolen, but thefts happened earlier as well. On this writer's first visit to the site around 1983-84, two thefts had taken place on two successive Fridays, as informed by the local ASI staff.
16. The 'Home' band of [www.plunderedpast.in](http://www.plunderedpast.in) has some images. See also the alert about Brahmā from Devangan in Rajasthan, which passed through the auction houses of Christie's and Sotheby's, one of whom sawed off the smaller side attendants of Brahmā.
17. Mankodi (in press-2) will consider that case.

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