



Consonanze 11.2

ANANTARATNAPRABHAVA

STUDI IN ONORE DI GIULIANO BOCCALI

*a cura di Alice Crisanti, Cinzia Pieruccini,
Chiara Policardi, Paola M. Rossi*

II



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Studi in onore di Giuliano Boccali

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Devī uvāca, Maheśvara uvāca.
Some Katyuri Representations of Umāmaheśvara and the
Śaivism of Uttarakhand

Laura Giuliano

The Cult of Śiva and Śaiva Thought in Uttarakhand: The Archaeological and Art-Historical Evidence

The religious tradition of Śaivism in the territories of Uttarakhand, as in other northern areas of the Subcontinent, has very ancient roots. Indeed, as from the centuries immediately preceding the Common era, it played a decisive role in the integration of the various tribal oligarchic groups, presumably through a process of assimilation of various local divinities in the figure of Śiva.

On the basis of the archaeological evidence, worship of the divinity in the region should date back at least to the period of the Kuṇḍinas, who reigned between the second century BCE and the third century CE.

In fact, one of the earliest anthropomorphic representations of the god appeared on some coins of the dynasty dating back to the second century CE.¹ Śiva is depicted on the obverse with a *jaṭā* on top of his head, holding a trident associated with a battle-axe in his right hand, while his left hand rests on his hip; what might be an animal skin hangs from his left arm, although this detail cannot always be made out (Fig. 1). Moreover, in some cases the figure seems to be represented under an umbrella (*chattra*) – an iconographic detail recalling the epithet of Chatreśvara, the name with which the divinity is recorded in the coin legend in *brāhmī* characters alongside the figure: *bhagavataḥ chatreśvara mahātmanah*, ‘(coin) of the holy one, noble-souled Lord of the *chattra*’.² This inscription has been interpreted in various ways: in particular, it has been pointed out that this is an anonymous legend, which mentions not the name of the ruling sovereign but that of the divinity worshipped. In this connection it has been said that the tribal state of the Kuṇḍinas was at that time dedicated to Śiva and that «the coins were issued in his name in the capacity of its sovereign ruler».³ Whatever the sense of this legend may be,

1. Rapson 1897, pl. III, Fig. 10; Allan 1936, 70-77; Banerjea 1956, 118; Mitchiner 1975, vols. VI-VII, 633, t. 931, 933 etc.

2. Banerjea 1956, 118. See also Allan 1936, 167-168; Sircar 1968, 213.

3. Banerjea 1956, 116, 118, fn. 1.

the Chatreśvara epithet clearly evokes the regal nature of Śiva as Lord of the universe – an idea already seen in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and the *Pāśupata Sūtra* –⁴ and quite likely alludes to the connection the divinity has with the earthly sovereign, who receives legitimation from Śiva to hold power.

The particular link between the god and the sovereign and the close connection with kingship – aspects that were to take on an important role in Śaivism during the Medieval period – seem therefore to date back to the most ancient Śaiva tradition, and are furthermore attested in this period also in the contemporary Kuṣāṇa world.⁵

The effigy of Chatreśvara on Kuṇinda coins is to be considered in the context of the religious movement connected with the figure of Śiva, still attested by the literary⁶ and archaeological evidence, which involved all of Northern India around the Common era: the territories of the Himālayan range under the control of the Audumbaras, the Vemakas and the Yaudheyas – tribal kingdoms much like the kingdom of the Kuṇindas – and the areas of North Western India, governed by dynasties of foreign origin, first the Saka and the Indo-Parthians, and subsequently the Kuṣāṇas.⁷ The depiction of Chatreśvara shows many affinities precisely with some earlier images of Śiva on the coinage of Wima Kadphises, the Kuṣāṇa sovereign who defined himself *mahiśvara*, that is *māheśvara* i.e. ‘devotee of Śiva’, in the

4. Giuliano (forthcoming).

5. *Ibid.*

6. Of the textual evidences regarding Śaivism from the centuries immediately preceding the Common era, particular importance is to be attributed to some references in the works of Pāṇini (4th-3rd century BCE) and Patañjali (2nd-1st century BCE). The former, besides mentioning certain epithets of Rudra, according to Banerjea (1956, 449-450) and Chakraborti (1970, 5) makes reference to the devotees of Śiva in the *sūtra*: *śivādhibhyoṃ* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* IV. 1. 112), while Patañjali, commenting on the Pāṇini *sūtra*: *ayahśūladandājīnābhyaṃ śhakṭhaṇāu* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* V. 2. 76), recalls the Śiva Bhāgavatas who bear a spear or trident (*śūla*) of iron (*ayah*). Interpretation of the passage is tricky (see Giuliano 1989, 8-9 and Giuliano 2003, 61), but there can be no doubt that here the grammarian is referring to a sect of devotees of Śiva, possibly a pre-Pāśupata group, who used to pursue their ends with violent methods.

7. In the centuries preceding the Common era, aniconic representations of the divinity, such as the *triśūla* associated with the battle-axe, together with legends containing epithets referring to Śiva, appeared on coins issued by the Audumbaras and the Vemakas. Then, in the period from the first century BCE to the first century CE, we have images that might possibly be taken as the earliest attempts at anthropomorphic representation of the divinity. Some coins of the Saka sovereigns and the Indo-Parthian Gondophares exhibit figures which, while still showing the iconographic characters of classical divinities like Poseidon, Heracles and Zeus, went on to show the essential features of representations of Śiva in the subsequent period. It was, however, between the 1st and 3rd century CE that figurative evidence of the Śiva cult in northern India became particularly substantial. Representation on Kuṇinda coins is in fact coeval with or immediately subsequent to the celebrated images of Oēšo-Śiva on Kuṣāṇa coins and the sculptural representation of the divinity in the reliefs of Gandhāra and Mathurā, as well as other sites in northern India.

coin legend. As in the Kuṇinda effigy, the divinity is depicted here with the *jaṭā* on top of his head, the *triśūla* associated with a battle-axe in his right hand, his left hand resting on his hip with a *kamaṇḍalu*, and the animal skin hanging from his left arm.

After the Kuṇinda period, we have evidence in a series of Gupta and post-Gupta epigraphs that once again attest to the presence of Śaivism in Uttarakhand, bearing out the continuity of the Śaiva cult in the region. Diffusion of this religious thought appears to have made great headway above all in the period of the Katyuris, the dynasty that governed these regions between the 8th and 13th centuries, and which some consider to have originated from a branch of the Kuṇindas.⁸ The particular fervour characterising the Śaiva cult at this point in history may possibly be accounted for with the arrival of Śaṅkara (788-820 CE), who according to tradition reached Uttarakhand at the beginning of the 9th century, re-establishing there the Brahmanic faith – in particular Śaivism – and doing away with the Buddhist cult which may have hitherto coexisted with Brahmanism, converting places of Buddhist worship into Śaiva temples in some cases.⁹

Just how widespread Śaivism was in the Katyuri period is borne out by the titles attributed to the sovereigns of the dynasty in the *copper plate grants*, and first of all the epithet of *parama maheśvara parama brahmana* which Ishtagan Deva and his son Lalitasur were glorified in.¹⁰ Above all, however, diffusion of this religious thought is attested by the construction of many religious complexes dedicated to Śiva. Of these, our focus here will be on the two sites in the region of Kumaon: the complex of Baijnath – ancient Karttikeyapura – for some time capital of the Katyuris, and Jageshwar, in the valley of the river Jatagang. This may well be the most important temple complex in Uttarakhand, with about 125 sanctuaries of various sizes (Fig. 2), built mostly in the Katyuri period and dedicated to various forms of Śiva, strongly influenced by the temple architecture of eastern India, especially of Orissa,¹¹ with a tall curvilinear tower surmounted by a ring stone (*āmalaka*) similar

8. See for example Viyogi–Ansari 2010, 342-343; Sharan 1972, 273; see also Joshi 1989, 266.

9. Joshi 1989; Viyogi–Ansari 2010, 347. According to these last scholars, Śaṅkara probably came to the region during the reign of the sovereign Ishtagan Deva (*ibid.*, 369).

10. *Ibid.*

11. Handa–Jain (2009, 172) write about Jageshwar: «We may have, therefore, to look for external factors, which could have been responsible for creating these grand edifices. The predominating influence of the Orissan temple architecture on these temples may indicate that an alien king of the mainland might have been responsible either to provide wherewithal and expertise for the construction of these temples to the local king or accomplished that task himself. It is known that round about the reign of Kharpar Dev (c. 870-880), maybe even earlier, Dharm Pal, the Pal ruler of Magadha, mounted a religio-military expedition to the central Himalayan kingdom and subdued it [...]. That was the most momentous event for initiating the stone temple building activity in this region. The Pal dominance in Uttaranchal opened the Himalayan interiors to the introduction of eastern Indian

to an indented wheel, in turn topped by an element in the form of a vase (*kalaśa*). The *liṅga* is usually placed in the *sanctum* of these temples, surrounded by sculptures and steles of other divinities. Jageshwar was an ancient place of transit for pilgrims on their way to Mount Kailāsa. Tradition has it that Śaṅkara passed through here before founding the monastery of Jyotirmath.¹² The site was not only closely associated with Śiva and his cult – significantly, local tradition situates the famous myth of “Śiva’s visit to the Pine Forest” in the nearby wood of Deodar and considers Jageshwar one of the 12 places in India where the *liṅga* of fire (*jyotirliṅga*) appeared –, but in all probability, it was also the seat of the Pāśupata cult, the Śaiva sect that, to judge by the artistic and archaeological evidence, found particular favour under the Kātyuris. Just how widespread the Pāśupata cult was at Jageshwar and in other sites of Uttarakhand is confirmed by the images of Lakulīśa frequently encountered on the trefoil pediment above the doorways of the temples, situated immediately below a three-headed bust of Śiva. In these reliefs the founder of the Pāśupata sect is represented as an ascetic seated with legs crossed on a lotus flower, ithyphallic, his right hand in the gesture of reassurance (*abbayamudrā*) while in his left he bears a club. In the relief above the doorway of the Lakulīśa temple, Lakulīśa is surrounded by four disciples (Fig. 3),¹³ while on the trefoil pediment of the Mṛtyuñjaya temple he is accompanied by two royal personages, possibly the sovereign and his spouse.¹⁴ On the evidence of this latter representation, Joshi conjectures that the Pāśupata enjoyed the favour of the royal family.¹⁵ Actually, direct involvement of the dynasty is not improbable, and it is possible that in the context of the restoration work carried out by Śaṅkara, the Kātyuris showed a particular predilection for this Śaiva sect,¹⁶ sponsoring and supporting the cult and foundations of the Pāśupata at Jageshwar and in other sites of Uttarakhand including Kedarnath, Gopeswar, Kalimath and Baijnath. At Jageshwar and in other temples of Uttarakhand, depictions of the founder of the sect were often associated with the icon of the three-headed bust of Śiva (Fig. 3)¹⁷ and of the dancing Śiva (Naṭarāja) (Fig. 4).¹⁸ The latter was also placed to adorn the pediments of some sanctuaries, depicted in *lalita* pose, with braided *jaṭāmukuta*, wearing a loin cloth, the upper

architectural mannerism and construction techniques. Although, it may be too preposterous to ascribe these temples to Dharm Pal or his successors, yet the stylistic affinity of these temples with the Orissan temples may suggest such possibility».

12. On Jageshwar as a major place of pilgrimage in the times of Śaṅkara, see Joshi 1989, 269.

13. Giuliano 2014, 30, Fig. 8.

14. Joshi 1989, 270.

15. Joshi 1989, 270. For other images of Lakulīśa in the Kātyuri period, see for example Joshi 1986b, 160.

16. Joshi 1989.

17. Nautiyal 1965, 231, Fig. 1; Nautiyal 1969, pl. 27, Fig. 42; Giuliano 2014, 30, Fig. 8.

18. Nautiyal 1965, 231, Fig. 2; Nautiyal 1969, pl. 27, Fig. 41; Giuliano 2014, 31, Fig. 9.

right hand holding a cobra, the lower right in the *gajahasta* pose, the upper left in *abhayamudrā* and the lower left bearing the *triśūla*. The frequent association of these images, which recalls the iconographic programme of Elephanta and of some temples of Orissa, must have had precise significance connected with the Pāśupata cult,¹⁹ which would merit more searching investigation.

Similarities with the iconographic programmes of other areas in the Subcontinent, in particular Deccan and Eastern India, as well as the temple architecture inspired by the sanctuaries of Orissa, evoke an idea of Uttarakhand in the Katyuri period as a place that was not isolated but open to the religious ideas and the artistic and cultural developments in other regions, although always reworked following an original and recognisable style.²⁰ This tendency of Katyuri art to absorb artistic models, re-interpreting them from the formal point of view and, indeed, in content, creating something new and peculiar, also appears to be evidenced in the case of the icon of Umāmaheśvara, an iconographic theme frequently represented in Uttarakhand, revealing other aspects of the Śaivism practised in the area.

Representation of Umāmaheśvara in Uttarakhand

Over the centuries, and in the various territories of the Subcontinent, the figurative type of Umāmaheśvaramūrti, the image depicting Umā with the Great Lord, one of the classical themes of Indian art, took on different stylistic features and iconographic formulas. The regional variants are marked by the number of arms Śiva shows, the different postures assumed by the two divinities – in particular by Umā –, their attributes and the way they are arranged, the presence and placing of the various personages surrounding the figures of the two principal divinities.²¹

In Katyuri art representation of Umāmaheśvara takes on particular, recognisable nuances distinguishing this icon from icons from other regions. In this context we can distinguish a fairly uniform group of steles from the stylistic and figurative

19. Joshi 1989.

20. See Joshi 1986a, 211: «[...] the most remarkable feature of the Katyuri age is the culmination of an art idiom that found its expression in a considerably large number of temples and sculptures. In its initial stage it seems to have drawn inspiration from the Gupta art and in course of time it attained an independent personality in close parallel to the other contemporary art idioms, particularly that of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. It is also likely that the Katyuris who figures as the most prolific builders of the art objects invited master artists from different parts of India and patronized them in the initial stage and in course of time, these artists developed an idiom of their own that may be termed as the Katyuri art». As for the Gurjara Pratihāra component in the Katyuri school of art, see Singh 1996, 34 and Negi 1993, 77.

21. See also Donaldson 2007, vol. I, 376.

point of view,²² originally probably situated in the niches on the outer walls of the temple. Among these we may mention some Umāmaheśvaramūrti conserved in European and American museums, including the steles in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 5),²³ the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 9), the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'Giuseppe Tucci' (Fig. 10),²⁴ the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 12),²⁵ the British Museum (Fig. 13),²⁶ and other sculptures from Almora (Fig. 6), Jageshwar (Figs. 7,²⁷ 11²⁸), Baijnath (Figs. 8,²⁹ 15-16³⁰), Anasuyei (Fig. 14).³¹

Apart from a few differences which will be pointed out in the various cases, the general arrangement of the icon remains more or less the same. Śiva appears represented with four arms, seated in a regal posture (*lalitāsana*) – left leg folded and resting on the lotus seat, right leg hanging down – with Umā or Pārvatī sitting on his lap. He holds his lower right hand before his chest in *jñānamudrā* (Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 16), or in *vyākhyānamudrā* (Figs. 5-6, 11-15), in some cases clutching a *mālā*. In his upper right hand he may bear a snake (Fig. 8) or a lotus flower (Figs. 5-7, 9-14, 16). When he holds the lotus flower, the snake emerges from the god's headdress making for the corolla to smell its scent. His upper left hand brandishes a trident (*triśūla*). He rests his lower right hand on Umā's left shoulder (Figs. 10-12, 14-15), or caresses her hair with it (Figs. 5-9, 16). The god's head displays the classical headdress of the ascetic, embellished with an elaborate tripartite diadem. He wears a short *dhotī* and is adorned with a great many jewels. In some cases he wears a garland of flowers (*vanamālā*) (Figs. 9-16). A long Brahmanical sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) runs across his chest. His right knee is bound by a swathe of cloth (*yogapaṭṭa*), used by the *yogin* to maintain the posture with crossed legs during meditative practices.

Umā, seated on Śiva's left thigh, has her legs inclined towards the right, left knee raised above the other, while her bust is turned to the left as she gazes at her husband. With the palm of her right hand the goddess touches her husband's foot, showing intimate familiarity. Her left arm rests on her left leg, the hand hanging down (Figs. 10-15) or placed on her right thigh (Figs. 6-7); in other cases she raises

22. According to the Umāmaheśvaramūrti classification proposed by Donaldson (2007), who groups together seven categories of this figurative type on the basis of iconographic differences, the sculptures from Uttarakhand displaying this subject belong to what is termed as «Format (A)» (*ibid.*).

23. Inv. 1978. 541.

24. Inv. 8443/9167. Taddei 1973, 247; Mazzeo 2014, 17-21; Giuliano 2014, 25-33.

25. Inv. IS. 113. 1986. Guy 2007, 131, Fig. 146.

26. Inv. 1966, 10-12 2 Brooke Sewell Fund.

27. Donaldson 2007, vol. II, Fig. 520.

28. Joshi 1986a, 213-214; Giuliano 2014, 28, Fig. 5.

29. Donaldson 2007, vol. II, Fig. 324.

30. *Ibid.*, Figs. 325, 327.

31. *Ibid.*, Fig. 519.

her left hand to toy with her earring (Figs. 5), to clutch a fluttering scarf (Fig. 8) or a flower (Figs. 9, 16?). Superbly bejewelled, the goddess wears a long draped skirt.

Amid the multitude of personages shown in smaller proportions surrounding the two divinities, the lower foreground shows Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Nandin and the lion, in some cases accompanied by Bhṛṅgīn and other figures. In general, for this part of the composition we can distinguish two figurative schemes, one relatively simple, the other complicated by the addition of various personages.

In the steles of the first type (Figs. 5-8) Gaṇeśa is depicted on the far left of the row, seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāsana*, the figure often appearing badly damaged. Looking towards the right we find Nandin squatting beside Śiva's left foot, immediately below the divinity's seat; close to Nandin we see Kārttikeya holding a spear; to the far right of this series of figures is positioned the lion on which the goddess rests her foot.

The most complex sequence sees other actors finding a place in the scene: the position of Gaṇeśa and Nandin remains unchanged, but immediately at the centre of the row, below the seat of the two divinities, we find the small, skeletal, dancing image of the sage Bhṛṅgīn; by his side Kārttikeya appears on the peacock, while the lion makes a showing on the extreme right of the series (Figs. 9, 11-14). In a variant on this sequence we see the lion and Kārttikeya changing places: *śimha* is depicted in a central position, beside Bhṛṅgīn, and Kārttikeya on the extreme right of the stele, in a mirror image position to that of his brother Gaṇeśa (Fig. 10).

This sequence may be further complicated by the presence of numerous other personages identified according to the particular cases as male or female donors (Fig. 15), as the earth goddess in worship (Fig. 11), etc.

On these steles, which are more complex from the compositional point of view, other personages surround Śiva and Umā. In the middle ground, at the sides of the two divinities, there are generally two male figures standing as attendants/guardians (*pratihāra*), possibly armed with a *triśūla* or a *khaṭvāṅga* (Figs. 9-12, 14-16). In some cases they bear bowls containing liquids and are depicted with their eyes wide open, projecting out of their sockets (Figs. 9-12). Other male or female figures may find a place immediately in front of these guardian figures (Figs. 11-12, 14), or female personages – presumably donors – may appear kneeling on lotus corollas immediately above the guardians (Fig. 10). In the more elaborate examples, in particular, the uprights of the throne are decorated with *yālī* and *makara* figures (Figs. 11-13, 15). Above, *vidyādhara*s are often to be seen in flight with garlands (Figs. 9-14, 16), their images sometimes standing out on cloud-shaped motives (Figs. 10, 13-14). Finally, in the upper part the steles are delimited by a curved band decorated with lotus petals, in some cases contained within a further band decorated with exuberant scrolling foliage, presumably in a stylised representation of the nimbus surrounding the divine couple (Figs. 9-14).

In general, we may say that the iconographic differences between the various Katyuri steles of Umāmaheśvaramūrti lie mainly in the position of Śiva and Umā's hands, the sequence of personages in the foreground, and the presence or absence of certain secondary figures.

Analysis of these variable elements could offer a key for an understanding of the evolution the subject went through in the art of Uttarakhand between the 9th and 12th century.³²

We may conjecture that the earliest steles are the ones showing an extremely simplified composition, portraying only the main figures of the myth: Śiva and Umā, the *vāhana* of the two divinities, and the sons Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. Belonging to this first group, possibly dating to the 9th century, should be the steles in the Metropolitan Museum, perhaps the very earliest work of the series (Fig. 5), as well as the stele from Almora procured from the antique market (Fig. 6), the stele from Jageshwar (Fig. 7), and, finally, the sculpture conserved in a godown in Baijnath (Fig. 8). The latter stands out from the others in that it shows details revealing an attempt to depart from the principal model (see, for example, the halos of the two divinities, the serpent and the scarf in the hands of Śiva and Umā respectively, the position displayed by Kārttikeya with raised leg, and the treatment of the goddess's apparel).

While the iconographic and formal features that represent a "brand mark" of Katyuri art are retained intact, the figurative scheme elaborated with this first group of sculptures subsequently became more descriptive: portrayal of the divine couple was then achieved within a scene of increased complexity thanks to the addition of numerous personages, a multiplication of details and a heightened decorative taste. Belonging to this phase are the steles in the Cleveland Museum (Fig. 9), the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'Giuseppe Tucci' (Fig. 10), the Museum of Jageshwar (Fig. 11), the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 12), the British Museum (Fig. 13), and the ones from Anasuyei (Fig. 14), and Baijnath (Figs. 15-16). The variations on the principal theme to be observed in the second group of works can in part be attributed to the greater confidence the artists show with the previously developed iconographic Katyuri model, and in part to the various requirements of the clients. Leaving the figurative scheme of the principal images unchanged, the sculptors now unleashed their imagination in the representation and sequence of the surrounding figures. This is particularly notable in the representation of the male and female donors and attendants, showing striking differences in the various examples, possibly to meet the clients' preferences, possibly to adapt to the various doctrinal and ritual necessities.

32. See in this connection the datings of these works supplied by Donaldson (2007, vol. I, 376).

In this second series, too, we can moreover find attempts to depart from the model, as in the case of the highly refined stele from Baijnath (Fig. 16), characterised by a certain degree of figurative simplification, alluding to the “ancient scheme” of the first group of steles, and quite possibly the work of a “master”.

The great number of formal and iconographic similarities that can be observed in each group of works suggests that at least some of them were produced in one and the same workshop. Here, the artists shared figurative schemes which were re-elaborated to be presented anew on various occasions. Suffice it to recall, for example, in the case of the earlier series, the images from Jageshwar (Fig. 7) and Almora (Fig. 6) and, in the case of the subsequent series, the steles conserved in the Cleveland Museum (Fig. 9), the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale ‘Giuseppe Tucci’ (Fig. 10) and the Museum of Jageshwar (Fig. 11).

Finally, it is also to be noted that most of these sculptures shows signs of damage. A particularly striking case is the figure of Gaṇeśa, almost always defaced. Such damage is quite likely to have been made by the iconoclasts of the Rohillas, a dynasty that invaded Kumaon and Garhwal in the 18th century, who were responsible for the ruin of many monuments in the region.

The Katyuri Representation of Umāmaheśvara: An Interpretation

While the images of Lakulīśa on the pediments of the Jageshwar temples and other sanctuaries in Kumaon and Garhwal point to the presence of a Śaiva religion of Pāśupata matrix, the iconographic features of the Katyuri Umāmaheśvaramūrti reveal other aspects of the Śaivism practised in the region during this span of history. Moreover, certain elements characterising the image, in the manner of other aspects of the art of the period, seem to be the outcome of cultural contaminations and relations between Uttarakhand and other areas of the Subcontinent.³³

The profoundly affectionate relationship binding together the tenderly embracing figures of Śiva and Umā, each absorbed in the other’s gaze, is characteristic of many Indian sculptures portraying the divine couple. Moreover, it seems to echo some passages of Sanskrit literature that describe the embrace of the god, never satiated with gazing in wonder at the beauty of his spouse (*Śaradā Tilaka Purāṇa* 24. 102),³⁴ and the goddess sitting on his lap (*Śiva Purāṇa* 2. 3. 8. 53-55).³⁵ While the conjugal aspect is evoked, the ascetic nature of Śiva is not denied, but is in fact evidenced by his apparel (for example the *yogapaṭṭa* binding his knees)

33. See *supra*, fn. 11 and 20.

34. Quoted in Donaldson 2007, vol. I, 85, fn. 1.

35. *Ibid.*

and headdress. Essentially, the image conjures up in an ambivalent relationship the tension between the indulgence in the erotic and its renunciation, between indulging passion and rising above it, which characterises much Śaiva mythology.³⁶ This interpretation can be applied to many Umāmaheśvara representations in the Subcontinent.

In the case of the steles from Uttarakhand, however, there is a detail that offers another key for interpretation: here Śiva appears represented in *jñānamudrā*, the ‘gesture of knowledge’, performed with the thumb and index finger of the lower right hand joined to form a circle, palm turned towards the heart.³⁷ The gesture indicates the transmission of inner knowledge and evokes the aspect of the divinity as the Master revealing the secrets of *yoga* and liberating wisdom. In other cases Śiva is in *vyākhyānamudrā*, the ‘gesture of exposition’, performed with the thumb and index finger joined and the palm turned outwards, a gesture identifying him as the Master of rhetoric explaining the sacred scriptures (*śāstra*).

Both the *mudrās* are characteristic of the divinity in his aspect as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the universal teacher (*jagat guru*), an icon that found circulation in particular in the South of India.³⁸

However, the southern figurative tradition represented Śiva in his aspect as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, isolated (Kevalamūrti) or possibly surrounded by disciples, but only very rarely associated with the figure of the goddess.³⁹ In Uttarakhand the use of this image, even if in the context of portrayal of the divinity accompanied by his spouse, could have to do with the arrival of Śaṅkara,⁴⁰ who, as we have seen, set the Brahmanic faith on a stable footing in the region, favouring in particular the development of Śaivism. It may in fact have been his preaching which gave rise to

36. For fuller study of this aspect, see Doniger 1981.

37. Dallapiccola 2005, 125-126; Nardi 2006, 95-96.

38. See Rao 1916, vol II, Part I, 273-292.

39. A rare image in which Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti appears portrayed in the South of India with Pārvatī is that of Samba Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

40. Guy 2007, 130; Joshi (1986a, 214), on the other hand, conjectures that representation of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti beside the goddess is due to the influence of the Śaiva ascetics of the Somasiddhānta school, or the Kāpālikas (Lorenzen 1989, 235), a sect very close to that of the Pāśupata, whose cult, as already seen, spread particularly in Uttarakhand during the Katyuri period (see *infra*). The similarities between some Śaiva iconographies of southern India and those of the temples of Kumaon were also noted by Nautiyal (1965, 228), who observed: «A few aspects of Śiva which were popular in South India had emerged visibly on the temples of Kumaon and particularly in the Kedarnath shrine of District Garhwal. The profound similarity in art motifs of two far-off geographical regions is no doubt very interesting». He added «It is believed that Śaṅkara visited this part of Kedarnath in about the beginning of the 9th century, with a view to reviving the decaying Hinduism».

the circulation of certain iconographic forms typical of the South of India in these northern lands.⁴¹

All in all, the steles examined represent the synthesis of two distinct Śaiva iconographies: the representation of the universal teacher, characteristic of the southern territories of the Subcontinent, merges into the portrayal of the divine couple surrounded by their sons and other figures of attendants.⁴² The emergence of these images in one single representation is particularly distinctive of Katyuri art,⁴³ which, having drawn inspiration from other figurative traditions, rapidly developed a language of its own.⁴⁴ Here Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti is no longer represented passing on his teachings to his disciples, as in the portrayals of southern India, but to his spouse. Thus the image seems to evoke some Śaiva Tantras presented in the form of dialogue between the two,⁴⁵ the goddess asking questions and Śiva answering.⁴⁶

Of all such Tantras we may recall the opening verses of a text in the northern tradition, the *Vijñānabhairava Tantra*:

Bhairavī, the śakti of Bhairava says (uvāca):⁴⁷ O *deva* who in manifesting the universe and treating it as your play are my very self, I have heard in toto all the scriptures which have come forth from the union of Rudra and his pair śakti or which are the outcome of Rudrayāmala Tantra, including the Trika together with its divi-

41. The figurative variants of the Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti icon in southern India are represented by images of Jñānadakṣiṇāmūrti, Vyākhyānadakṣiṇāmūrti, Yogadakṣiṇāmūrti and Viṇādharakṣiṇāmūrti. In Uttarakhand, besides portrayals of Śiva in his aspect as Jñānadakṣiṇāmūrti and Vyākhyānadakṣiṇāmūrti shown accompanied by his spouse in the steles of Umāmaheśvara, some examples can also be seen of Yogadakṣiṇāmūrti with legs in *svastikāsana* (Singh 1976, 108), and Viṇādharakṣiṇāmūrti playing the *vīṇā* (*ibid.*, 108-109). This latter aspect is reproduced for example on a stele from Jageshwar (Singh 1976, 109, pl. II), where, from the iconographical and stylistic point of view, the figure of Śiva shows striking similarities with the representations of the god on the steles examined in this article, and can to all intents and purposes be considered a product of the same sculptural school. Singh (1976, 109) mentions another Śiva Viṇādharakṣiṇāmūrti beside the goddess also from Jageshwar which, unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to see for myself.

42. Joshi 1986a, 214.

43. However, there is no lack of examples of contamination between these two iconographies also in other areas of the Subcontinent, especially Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh: consider, for example Donaldson 2007, vol. II, Figs. 46, 107, 124, 260, 261, 265, 267, 291, 312, 324-327, 340, 348, 359, 364, 396, 403, 418, 462, 476, 520, 522, 544, 549, 566, 567, C 91, C 118, C 117, C 129.

44. See *ibid.*, fn. 20.

45. Joshi 1989, 215; Giuliano 2014, 29.

46. «These roles may also be inverted, as happens in the *tantras* assigning the highest position to the Goddess, accompanied in a subordinate position by the God, who may sometimes even be absent altogether» (Torella 1999, 129).

47. «The word in Sanskrit is *uvāca* which is past tense and means “said”, but as the question is perennial and the answer contains eternal truth, it is taken in the sense of present tense» (Singh 2006, 3). See Torella 1999.

sions. I have heard the Trika which is the quintessence of all the scriptures and also all its further essential ramifications.

But O supreme Lord, even now my doubt has not been removed.

Oh God, from the point of view of absolute reality, what exactly is the essential nature of Bhairava ? [...]

Bhairava said:

Good! Good! Dear one, you have put questions which pertain to the very quintessence of Tantra. Though, the matter is most esoteric, oh auspicious one, yet shall I explain it to you. Whatever has been declared to be the composite form (*Sakala*) of Bhairava, that oh goddess should be considered as insubstantial, as phantasmagoria, as magical illusion, as dream, as the mirage of a town of *Gandharvas* in the sky. The *sakala* aspect of Bhairava is taught, as a prop for meditation, to those who are of deluded intellect, who are interested in ostentatious performance of rituals, it has been declared for those people who are a prey to dichotomising thought-constructs. [...]

These concepts play the same role as the bonbon of the mother. They are meant to induce the aspirants to tread the path of righteousness and spiritual practices in order that they may ultimately realize the nature of *Bhairava* which is non-different from their essential Self. (*Vijñānabhairava Tantra*, 1-13).⁴⁸

If the use of images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti in his various forms may be accounted for with the visit made by Śaṅkara to the region, and thus with the contacts established with the exponents of the religious and cultural tradition of southern India, the contamination between this representation of the divinity and the Umāmaheśvara icon is undoubtedly due to the Katyuri artists. It appears to be particularly distinctive of this area, although examples of fusion between these two iconographies are also attested in other regions of India.⁴⁹

The reasons behind this figurative synthesis are hard to understand. But, as we have seen, one good possibility is that the image of the divine couple in which Śiva takes on the aspect of the universal teacher may represent sculptural transposition of the couple in dialogue evoked in many Tantric texts where the teachings are conveyed in the form of an exchange between the two divinities,⁵⁰ «a methodological device for revealing truths existing at the *parāvāk* level in *vaikharī* or human language».⁵¹

48. Transl. Singh 2006, 5, 11-13.

49. See *supra*, fn. 43.

50. In order that the «truths may be available to man, the *anugraha* (grace) aspect of the Supreme Divine assumes the role of Devī or Bhairavī who puts questions from the *paśyantī* level and receives answers at that level» (Singh 2006, 2).

51. *Ibid.*

Thus the image of Umāmaheśvara with Śiva in his Dakṣiṇāmūrti aspect could have evolved in a religious environment pervaded by Tantrism.

Moreover, the figures of attendants/guardians bearing staffs surmounted by a skull, with a bowl, eyes starting from their sockets as if they were drunk (Figs. 9-12, 15) appearing on some of these steles might attest to the presence of Lākula or Kāpālīka ascetics.⁵²

Conclusion

As the numismatic evidence suggests, the antiquity of the Śaiva cult in Uttarakhand should date back to the times of Kuṇindas. The continuity shown by this religious faith, revitalised with the arrival of Śaṅkara, is subsequently documented, particularly in the Katyuri period, on the basis of epigraphic and artistic evidence which reveals some aspects of the Śaivism practised in the area. The images adorning some Katyuri temples attest to the cult and indeed the cultural and religious relations that Uttarakhand had with other regions in the Subcontinent, documenting a religious ambience pervaded with Pāśupata elements.

The steles representing the divine couple examined here, which evidence the peculiar figurative idiom of Uttarakhand, also reveal other aspects of Śaiva thought in the region, delineating a rather more complex situation that possibly echoes Tantric doctrines and shows not only Pāśupata, but also Kāpālīka traits. These sculptures – fine examples of Katyuri art – represent a very particular synthesis between the southern and northern artistic traditions of the Subcontinent. Indeed, the emergence of the image of Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the universal teacher, in the iconography of the divine spouses constitutes a new iconographic model that should possibly date back to the visit made by Śaṅkara to the region. On the one hand paradigm and archetype of the family, these steles also evoke the relationship between master and disciple – one of the fundamental elements in Indian thought – exemplified in a masterly way in those texts in which Śiva is described as expounding knowledge and the secrets of *yoga* to his spouse, as if imparting them to the whole world. Ultimately, it alludes to the conception of a universe polarised at the extremes with a male-female couple in eternal dialogue, and to the integration of these two components in the human being through transmission of the knowledge brought forth through their timeless words.

52. *Dvārapāla* showing similar characteristics are also represented at the entrance to the temple of Jyotirliṅga at Jageshwar, but quite possibly of a later period.

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Fig. 2



Fig. 1



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

