

Two Medieval Marble Parikaras of Sūrya Images from Nadol, Rajasthan

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In 1986, after documenting the main medieval buildings in Nadol (Nāḍol), our team¹ visited an insignificant looking temple of Hanumāna, situated about two kilometers east of the town. Inside its hall, we noticed two *parikaras* under reference, the one which is complete and in good condition is applied like a *dvāra-toraṇa* at the doorway of the sanctum : while two fragments of a second, incomplete and showing vestiges of lime coating are placed along the wall of the hall's interior.

The first *parikara*-frame (Pl. 5.1) is in form *triśākhā* or having three jambs which support a semicircular pedimental part above. The main or central jamb is a sort of *stambhaśākhā*, which, in this instance, also may be termed *daṇḍaśākhā* (Pl. 5.2). It consists of a round *stambhikā* of the *daṇḍikā* form along with an attached recessed jamb (*rūpaśākhā*) at its right and concave *khalvaśākhā*-jamb at its left. The fore-noted central round *stambhikā* has an octagonal *kumbhikā*-base showing *ardharatna* or half diamond decoration on its faces *kumbha*-member. Then starts, the round *daṇḍikā* part divided into two sections by a centrally carved round and projected *āmalasārikā*: the faces of each of the two sections thus formed bears a female figure, apparently the two solar divinities (Pls. 5.3, 5.4). Each figure stands on a lotus, holds a *mṛṇāla-daṇḍa* (lotus stalk) in the right hanging arm and the full blown lotus in the upraised left arm. The *dhamilla*-crown graces the head covered above by a *mṛṇāla-chatra* - lotus improvised as a parasol. The two figures in question plausibly represent Rājñīdevī and Niṣprabhā, the consorts of Sūrya. The section above the *daṇḍikā* shows an *āmalasārikā* topped by a plain *masūraka*-like two half-rounded *paṭṭīs* - the lower large than the upper one - supporting a bunch of schematized foliage. This is followed by a plain *bharaṇa*-abacus carrying above it a tri-paneled *rathikā* bearing the figure of Aśvinikumāra in the central panel with an attendant each on either side, the latter two figures set within narrow panels.

The *rūpaśākhā*-jamb (Pls. 5.2, 3,4) adjoining the right side of the central *stambhaśākhā*

bears in order three panels carrying female figures, the uppermost stands with crossed legs and bearing a child in left arm.² Above this section comes the well-known as also well-sculpted trio-*gaja*, *vyāla*³ and *makara*⁴ (the *makara* abtus the Aśvinikumāra panel of the *stambhaśākhā*). The corresponding *triśākhā* on the left side (Pls. 5.5, 5.6) is almost identical with the one on the right side.

The curvilinear portion of the *parikara* (Pl. 5.7) starts from above the Aśvinikumāra panels of the *parikara*'s right and left arms. In form, it is composed of a rounded *paṭṭikā* showing at its central point a tripartite panel which enshrines in the middle panel the image of Sūrya and the two lateral narrow panels somehow manage to accommodate what palpably could be the deity's two consorts. The *paṭṭikā*, moreover, shows the ten *Dikpāla* figures⁵ five on either side of the Sūrya panel. The attributes of these two-armed Regents of the directions, in most cases, can be identified.⁶

The *khalvaśākhā* carries at its upper end a *makara* from whose mouth emerges a stylized, beautifully incised *mālā* below which occurs a *gagārapaṭṭī*⁷. This part, in point of fact, forms the lower tier of the curvilinear pediment of the *parikara*.

The richly embellished *parikara* is elegant in look and perfect in form. It doubtless is a rare⁸ and significant instance of its class. On stylistic grounds, it seems to stand on the border line of the 10th and the 11th century C.E.⁹ Its size indicates that it was meant for an over life-size image of Ādityadeva.

The two fragments of the second *parikara* (Pls. 5.8, 5.9) represent the lower portions of the two arms of the second, almost similar, *parikara* whose details, too, almost duplicate those of the parallel portions of the first *parikara* seemingly is of the same period.

The last picture (Pl. 5.10) a fragment of a *jañghā* of a wall of some small *devakulikā*-chapel in Mahā-Gurjara style of c. mid 10th century C.E. shows a *gajavyāla* figure in the *salilālāntara* recess and the projecting *karṇa* or angle-face shows traces of a completely defaced *Dikpāla* figure. This fragment represents a rare instance of a guild working here in Mahā-Gurjara school in this area.¹⁰

Footnotes

1. The team was sent by the American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi in 1986. It consisted of this article's author, two draftsmen and a photographer.
2. I could not identify it. (A sort of *mātrkā* figure?).
3. A rider manages the *vyāla*.
4. From the gaping mouth of the *makara* emerges a *bālavidyādhara* (young-angle) while an *udadhikumāra* (water deity) sits over the head of the *makara*.



Pl. 5.1: Sūrya 'parikara', Hanumāna temple, Nadol, Rajasthan, c. 1000 CE or late years of the 10th century



Pl. 5.2: 'Parikara', right 'trisākhā' arm



Pl. 5.3: Detail of the lower part of the 'parikara', right arm



Pl. 5.4: Detail of the upper part, right arm



Pl. 5.5: 'Parikara', left arm



Pl. 5.6: Detail of the lower part, left arm



Pl. 5.7: 'Parikara's', curvilinear pediment



Pl. 5.8: Second 'Parikara': the surviving lower portion of its right arm, c. 1000 CE or late years of the 10th century



Pl. 5.9: Second 'Parikara', left arm, lower portion



Pl. 5.10: Fragment of a 'jaṅghā' of the wall of a 'devakulikā'-chapel, Mahā-Gurjara style, c. mid 10th century

5. The nine *grahas* - planetary divinities - would be more consistent here. In order to maintain the order of symmetry, however, the carver ingeniously has selected the ten *Dikpālas*, which include Brahmā of the zenith quarters and Ananta of the nadir quarters.
6. For example Yama carrying *khaṭvāṅga* (skull-staff) and bird (suggestive of *jīva*, soul), Vāyu holding *patākā*, Kubera carrying the *nakulaka* (mongoose-skin purse) etc.
7. The row of *gagārakas* i.e. the scout-badge like motifs.
8. I had met only one other instance from Vanthali (Saurāṣṭra) (14th cent. C.E.), now in the Government Museum, Junagadh. The iconographers can point out a few more instances.
9. The well-chiseled *gaja-vyāla-makara*, the *mālā*'s form and detailing, the form of the *gagārakas* and above all the style of the figures apparently suggest this date.
10. A rebuilt piece of a *kumhba* in Mahā-Maru style in one of the *vāpīs* (step wells) suggestive of the prevalence of that style when Cāhmāna prince Lakṣmaṇadeva founded (or chose) this town of Naddula (Nāḍol) as his capital and had built the temple of Lakṣmaṇasvāmī. The existing temples reflect a style which shows transition to Maru-Gurjara style.