THE YAK-TAIL'S FLYWHISK (CHAMARA)

On entering the Patna Museum, one is greeted by the stunning image of a majestic lady carved life-size from buff, highly polished sandstone. She is known as the Didarganj 'yakshi' or 'chaurie-bearer' (fig. 1).¹ Proudly she faces us, a faint smile on her lips. The near-symmetry of her body stance is emphasized by carefully carved ornaments, full breasts, clothing details and a many-stranded girdle. She holds a flywhisk with a short handle over her right shoulder; her left hand, now broken off, must once have rested on her left hip. Ever since its recovery, this sculpture has defied final attribution to a specific period of India's early sculptural art – informed estimates vary from the Maurya period (3rd century BC) up to even as late as the post-Gupta period (circa 700 AD).² The date of her manufacture, however, is not my present concern. It is the flywhisk that interests me.

Attendants with flywhisks

A flywhisk is a common enough attribute for attending figures, mentioned occasionally in tales and depicted in sculpture and painting. A special kind, the white flywhisk (*chamara*, with a long first a) is made from the bushy tail of a yak.³ In ancient days its use was a prerogative of royalty and the divine, and the royal *chamara* was regarded as almost as important as the white umbrella of state.⁴ Exquisite specimens of such *chamaras* of the mightiest of mighty, made of gold and sometimes enamelled and set with precious stones, survive from Mughal period courts and may be traced among the heirlooms of former princely families.⁵ A king, mortal or mythic, would arrange for courtiers to stand by in attendance and wave a white flywhisk to signal his superior status and express reverence.⁶ Thus a *nagaraja* (a Serpent King), depicted in a medallion from the railing at the Bharhut stupa (2nd century BC), is flanked by two *naginis* (female serpents), each raising a flywhisk towards their king (fig. 2).

The triad configuration of a figure of authority flanked by attending figures with a *chamara*, a lotus or a garland was one of the most favoured compositions in the visual vocabulary of the Indian sculptor. A superbly successful use of the theme on the roof of the Shiva Temple at Bhumara (Madhya Pradesh), datable to the 5th century AD, shows Yama, King of the Underworld, seated on his throne. He brandishes a *rajadanda*, the rod of punishment symbolizing the rule of force. Yama is flanked by two lovely ladies, each with a *chamara* draped over her shoulder (fig. 3).

Even though the *chamara* is among the first attributes to be applied in the iconographic sign language of the early Historic period (circa 300 BC – 300 AD), it seems to have attracted limited art historical study,⁷ perhaps because a flywhisk almost automatically leads one to think in terms of subservience.

As an attendant's attribute it seems self-explanatory, why explain the

Figure 1 (left)
Yakshini holding a
chamara, Didarganj,
now Patna Museum,
polished sandstone,
h. 162,5 cm. excluding
base, possibly
c. 1st cent. AD.
Photograph courtesy
American Committee of
Southern Asian Art,
slide no. 9121

Figure 2
Nagaraja with female
snake attendants
waving flywhisks,
Bharhut stupa, now
Indian Museum,
Kolkata, sandstone,
2nd cent. BC.
Photograph courtesy
Friends of the Kern
Institute, no. 36.376

obvious? However, it is not as straightforward and simple as that, as I shall demonstrate through the Didarganj *chauri*-bearer and a few related images.

‘Yakshinis’ and ‘yakshas’

When E.H.C. Walsh and D.B. Spooner came to inspect the reported find at Didarganj, they found that local villagers had already raised a bamboo canopy over the image and had started worshipping her.⁸ Because of the flywhisk, Spooner assumed the lady to have been an attendant of a divine or royal figure and he argued to the locals that the image did not represent a ‘member of the Hindu pantheon’. Walsh and Spooner thus ‘dislodged the *yakshi* from her incipient temple (to) relocate her in their own recently founded ... Patna Museum.’⁹

In his first description of the new find, Spooner made a passing reference to ‘two colossi from Patna’, kept in the Indian Museum in Calcutta, as offering the closest comparison in terms of proportions.¹⁰ What Spooner failed to point out is that the headless male of the Patna pair in the Indian Museum likewise holds a *chamara* in his right hand (fig. 4).¹¹ More importantly, the Patna image carries a label inscription across the scarf on his left shoulder, identifying him as a *yaksha* (Prakrit *yakho*), probably by the name of Sa(r?)vata namdi.

Yakshas and *yakshinis* (= *yakshis*) are among the most intriguing actors in the South Asian mythic arena. The term ‘*yaksha*’ is encountered as early as in the *Vedas*, around the turn of the 1st millennium BC. It indicates ‘something wonderful or terrible’. In the course of history *yakshas* acquire specific names and forms, and become the subject of tales right across religious boundaries.

Figure 3 (left)
King Yama with female attendants carrying *chamaras*, in a *chandrashala* (decorative dormer window) of the Shiva Temple, Bhumara (MP), sandstone, w. c. 76 cm., h. c. 67 cm. (outside measurements), end of the 5th cent. AD. Photograph courtesy Friends of the Kern Institute, no. 40.336

Figure 4
Yaksha with *chamara*, Patna, now Indian Museum, Kolkata, acc. no. P1, polished sandstone, h. 162 cm., c. 1st cent. AD. Photograph after Chanda 1927, pl. 4a-b

They are feared and loved, regarded as wonderful and supernatural, but at the same time potentially dangerous. The power that induces such awe is the *yaksha's* control over the fecundity of nature, specifically that of water and vegetation. Perhaps secondarily, they are also seen as guardians of the riches of the earth.

Around these pivotal concepts developed a mythology and an iconography that accommodate *yakshas* looking and acting like powerful gods, either benign or fearful. Others look like unbelievably strong dwarfs able to lift enormous weights above their heads.¹²

In Indian art *yakshas* come in many guises, in which sheer physical power and the fertility of nature are reflected in varying ways and degrees. An imposing frontality, life-size or even over life-size proportions, bulkiness in the men and prominent breasts and hips in the females are part of the early code. A standing posture with the right hand raised and the left arm akimbo are other such features. 'Sometimes the right hand holds a flower, or cauri, or weapon; sometimes the left grasps the robe, or holds a flask, but the position of the arms is constant', writes Coomaraswamy.¹³

Yakshas make ideal guardians for any sacred precinct, and the iconography of guardians at gates and temple entrances (*dvarapalas*) in fact goes straight back to that of *yakshas* in similar roles. We should not think in terms of 'subservience' when visualizing *yakshas* and *yakshis* guarding the entrances to cities, temples, *stupa* and monasteries. It is exactly because of their power, and the awe and respect that they inspire, that we find them there. And it is mostly for the same reason that we find them depicted as 'guarding' the Buddha or the Jina – not necessarily in token of subservience, but more likely as creators and guardians of a sacred and protected space around the seated figure.¹⁴

As for the now headless colossus from Patna, some scholars have read the name of an ancient king in the legend across the scarf on the left shoulder,¹⁵ but they felt uneasy about the flywhisk attribute. On the basis of the label, most scholars accept that the Patna male represents a *yaksha*. A few still assume that he is only an attendant, thus apparently ignoring the label.¹⁶ In view of the similarities in iconography and proportions between the Patna *yakshas* and the Didarganj lady, most scholars have since accepted that she indeed represents a *yakshini*. Some are still not convinced, again because of the flywhisk. Thus Susan Huntington argues that the *chamara* 'symbolizes her subservient role in the presence of a highly respected individual who might have been a religious or secular leader... She has none of the usual accoutrements of a *yaksi* and clearly is an attendant.'¹⁷ What 'usual' accoutrements did Huntington expect and not find, we may wonder? With her impressive frontal stance, her aura of contained energy, her full breasts and wide hips — instantly evoking associations with nature's fertility as exemplified by womanhood — her body draped in beautiful ornaments, the right arm raised, the left arm probably akimbo: what more accoutrements (in addition to a *chamara*) did the Didarganj *yakshini* require? It goes to show how pre-conceptions about the function of the *chamara* may cloud our vision.

Why the 'chamara'?

Why does the Didarganj *yakshini*, and many other *yakshas* for that matter, carry a *chamara*? Oddly enough, A.K. Coomaraswamy, whose most famous work deals with *yakshas*, does not even try to explain the *chamara*'s presence in their iconography. He merely notes it, almost in passing.¹⁸ In her influential study on Indian sculpture, Stella Kramrisch stresses that the flywhisk 'marks [*yakshas*] as attendants...' in 'whatever form of cult.'¹⁹ S.P. Gupta does pose the million dollar question: 'Why do they carry *chowrie*? ... If these were the subsidiary figures, which were the primary ones?' Unfortunately Gupta thought mostly in terms of subservience. He tried to explain the presence or absence of the *chamara* in the iconography of *yakshas* as reflecting changes in the importance of Buddhism vis-à-vis *yaksha* worship. *Yakshas* with flywhisks would then reflect a time in which Buddhism 'overruled' *yaksha* worship.²⁰

We have no archaeological evidence that the monumental *yakshas* and *yakshinis* from Didarganj, Patna and other places were installed as 'secondary' guardian figures or attendants, although this cannot be ruled out entirely. Through their sheer size and stance they themselves seem the ultimate embodiment of power, energy and nature's fertility. Their *chamara* must have fitted in with that total picture. When *yakshas* accompany the seated Buddha in later, well-known steles from Mathura (note 13), do they hold a *chamara* because they are attending, or because they are *yakshas*? I would suggest the latter. An aura of auspiciousness apparently clung to the *chamara* and earned it a place in lists of lucky symbols.²¹ Perhaps a few other fairly early portraits of goddesses with *chamara* might shed some more light.

Figure 5 (left)
Parvati doing penance
between fires, Palikhera
well, Mathura, now
GMM, acc. no. 15.879,
sandstone, h. c. 13 cm.,
Kushana period.
Photograph J.E. van
Lohuizen-de Leeuw,
neg. no. 257-7, Kern
Institute collection no.
2887. Courtesy Ancient
India and Iran Trust,
Cambridge

Figure 6
Vasudhara holding an
object with a long
handle and two fish,
found in the Yamuna
river, Mathura, now
GMM, acc. no. 27-
28.1695, mottled
sandstone, h. c. 21.6
cm., Kushana period.
Photograph J.E. van
Lohuizen-de Leeuw,
neg. no. 255-1, Kern
Institute collection no.
2865. Courtesy Ancient
India and Iran Trust,
Cambridge

Parvati in penance

A fragmentary relief from Kushana period Mathura (Government Museum Mathura 15.879), quite waterworn and broken off from the hip downwards, represents the earliest instance in art known so far of the goddess Parvati, loving spouse of Shiva (fig. 5). She is doing severe penance (*tapas*) between fires, as related in several *Puranas*.²² In the relief the goddess stands beneath what is usually described as a canopy – an ill-understood feature of goddess imagery of the age, possibly a hood-like head ornament. She has been described as raising her right hand in *abhayamudra*, her left arm akimbo, like numerous other gods and goddesses in the art of this period. However, I believe this description may need correction. The hand is no longer visible, and even were we to surmise its former presence, this still would not explain the bulky shape on Parvati's right shoulder. In spite of its weathered state, I suggest she holds a *chamara*.²³ True, early images of Shiva and Parvati together do not show her with a flywhisk, and the *chamara* does not reappear in the much later imagery of Parvati practising *tapas*.²⁴ If she indeed holds one, could this have been inspired by *yakshini* imagery? What would, furthermore, have been the connotation?

The Buddhist goddess Vasudhara

Iconographic analysis can get even more complicated when attributes start to resemble each other. This may have been the case with depictions of the *chamara* in the case of Vasudhara, the Buddhist goddess of plenty.²⁵ She is Lady Bountiful, as bountiful as the earth when she pours forth her treasures, be it agricultural fertility, wealth or wisdom. She was a popular deity in later Indian Buddhism, but her images appear in art as early as the Kushana

period. Vasudhara is a close equivalent of Shri as bestower of wealth, but most particularly of abundance directly related to nature itself.²⁶

Most Vasudhara images date to the early Medieval period or later, and come from areas where Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism got a strong foothold, in Northeast India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Tibet. There Vasudhara may be shown with her right hand in *varadamudra*, a fruit in the palm of her hand. In her left hand she may hold a sheaf of grain linking her visually with agricultural largesse.²⁷ In Bengali images, however, the sheaf of grain is 'stylized as a single long stem'²⁸ and in Bihar it even looks like a stick.

Why would an artist in Bihar or Bengal make a sheaf of grain look straight and sticklike?

The germ of this visual puzzle may lie in Vasudhara's early iconography as exemplified by the art of Mathura. The Government Museum in Mathura keeps some ten or so of her images which share many basic features with *yakshinis* and mother goddesses, but show some tantalizing iconographic niceties as well.

Against a flat slab of white-mottled sandstone, only 23 cm. high, Vasudhara proudly stands, facing us frontally (fig. 6).²⁹ Around her head is the 'canopy-like' hood. On her right side stand two open jars, one on top the other, assumedly filled with riches. On her left the vague outlines of a crouching figure can be discerned. In Mathura art Vasudhara's capacity to control the increase of nature's yield is often expressed by showing her carrying a pair of fish (*matsyayugma*).³⁰ A pair of fat fish, perhaps tied together in some way, has been slung over her left wrist. With her right hand she holds an object with a flat, sideward protruding lower end. The top has broken off, but a few fragmentary grooves remain of what has been interpreted as the lotus of a lotus parasol, with a fish hanging down from it. In the Kushana period the iconographic language is still fluid (if it ever became stabilized), and not every Vasudhara image in Mathura was given jars or fish. However, in most of them Agrawala came across a 'lotus parasol'.³¹ In the *Raghuvamsa* poem (4.5) the poet Kalidasa indeed refers to Shri using her lotus attribute as a parasol to shade King Raghu, so the visual imagery of a goddess using a lotus as a parasol was not unknown to the Indian artistic and religious imagination. Still, here we see Vasudhara handling a man-made handle, not the stem of a lotus...

Another Vasudhara image rests against a flat slab framed by a thin groove. As usual she faces the front, raising her right hand in *abhayamudra*. She holds two fish in her hand (fig. 7).³² A hood-like head ornament, long and heavy ear ornaments, a V-shaped necklace, a girdle and multi-faceted anklets adorn her body. On either side of Vasudhara's legs we notice a jar covered with a lid.³³ In her left hand she also clutches the fluted handle of what Agrawala describes as a lotus parasol, but what here tends to take on the shape of a *chamara*. The rounded top part, decorated with curvy lines, does not particularly look like a lotus.³⁴ The lower (hairy?) part near Vasudhara's shoulder has been cut back obliquely, thus suggesting that it disappears behind her back.³⁵ The handle is much longer than those in most earlier images, but such a long-handled flywhisk did exist (see below).³⁶ In a third Vasudhara image from the Mathura workshops, now kept in the National Museum in New Delhi,³⁷ she stands upright – leaning only slightly on her left leg – while her right hand is raised in *abhayamudra*. A diadem with leaf-like lobes adorns her hair done up in a flat, wide bun, while a thick scarf passes in front of the legs. Jars stand on either side, one overflowing, perhaps with

Figure 7
 Vasudhara, her right
 hand raised in
abhayamudra, in her
 left hand a *chamara*
 with a long handle and
 two fish, Bajna, now
 GMM, acc. no. 18.1411,
 sandstone, h. c. 24
 cm., Kushana period.
 Photograph J.E. van
 Lohuizen-de Leeuw,
 neg. no. 736-10, Kern
 Institute collection no.
 11698. Courtesy Ancient
 India and Iran Trust,
 Cambridge

vegetation? The fishes are absent. In her left hand Vasudhara carries an object with a fluted handle and a round bulging top.³⁸ A *chamara* may have been intended, or perhaps a horn of plenty, such as held by Hariti and Ardoksho, other contemporary goddesses of wealth and fortune. Although Vasudhara is reputed to be absent from Indian art after the Kushana period, only to emerge again at a later period, the similarity in form between this *chamara* and the stick-like 'sheaf of grain' in Pala-period images from Bihar can hardly be a coincidence.³⁹ I expect that intermediate iconographic links can be traced, necessitating us to reconsider the nature of Vasudhara's stick-like attribute in Pala period imagery from Bihar. As with the Didarganj *yakshini* and the Patna *yakshas*, in Vasudhara we again encounter a deity associated with nature's fecundity who, at least in some of her images, appears to carry a *chamara*. I do not think this is coincidental. The white flywhisk, at least in the art of the early Historical period, may still stand for the essential powers with which the *yakshas* and *yakshinis* had been associated – the generative powers of nature over which the *yakshas* have control, and over which Vasudhara has control as well. Its white colour is essential, just as it is for the royal parasol.

Figure 8
Dattadevi or Shri-Lakshmi on a lotus, holding a *chamara* and a piece of cloth, gold coin of Ashvamedha type, Samudragupta (reign c. 335-375 AD), weight 7.5 g., d. 2.21 cm., Lingen collection. Photograph courtesy Jan Lingen.

Shri or the Queen?

One of the factors that complicate our interpretation of these attributes is the circumstance that the artists in early Mathura mostly produced relief work in which frontality is the norm for the divine. The photographic process then adds another layer of near two-dimensionality before we try to mentally fill up what we cannot actually see. The final image of a lady with a *chamara* to be discussed here offers a three-quarter view (fig. 8). She stands to left (her right) on a lotus, with her right hand balancing a flywhisk with a long, thin handle on her shoulder. In her left hand she holds a piece of cloth. Notice how a sash, passing obliquely upwards along her legs, replicates a similar sash in the Mathura Vasudhara images illustrated above. The lady in three-quarter view graces the reverse of gold coins of Ashvamedha Type struck for Samudragupta of the Gupta dynasty in the 4th century AD. The obverse carries an image of the sacrificial steed tied to a post on the occasion of the grand royal sacrifice celebrating the king's universal kingship.⁴⁰ Just as with the Didarganj lady, there is no unanimity as to the intended identity of the lady with the flywhisk on these coins. Is she Samudragupta's queen, Dattadevi, who must have assisted in the horse sacrifice? Is she Shri-Lakshmi, the divine spouse at the side of the righteous king? There is room for both interpretations, and the debate continues, with the queen leading the polls. Why? Partly because the *chamara* is considered an uncommon or even unworthy attribute for Shri-Lakshmi. Still, when considered in the iconographic context offered by the Didarganj *yakshini*, Parvati in penance and Vasudhara, the *chamara* surely fits both Sri-Lakshmi and the queen equally well.

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Notes

1. Tapati Guha-Thakurtha (2002) reviewed the discovery of the Didarganj image. Her endnotes provide useful further reading on dating, style, related sculptures and their embedding in the changing discourse on early Indian sculptural art since the early 20th century. Huntington relates what seems to be an alternative version of the Didarganj lady's discovery (Huntington 1985, p. 52).
2. See Asher and Spink 1989 for details.
3. Sanskrit *chamara*, with a short first a; Latin *Bos grunniens*. Wild yaks are black or brown, but domesticated ones can also be white. The yak is indigenous to Tibet and southern Himalayan regions. They are used as beast of burden on trade routes with high passes, such as on the Silk Road route. Tibetans used yak hair to make tents, and their dung was used as fuel (Whitfield 1999, *passim*). Nowadays yak tails are imported to India via the China-India trade routes at Nathua La in Sikkim, and perhaps also through other channels. Specific casts specialized in making *chauris* and I expect this may still be the case. Wood carvers also made sandalwood *chauris* that resembled those made of yak's tail. Ivory carvers in Murshidabad, Travancore and Bharatpur also manufactured *chauris* (Mukharji 1974, pp. 242-243, 275).
4. The goddess of Fortune resides only in the *white* parasol. The whiteness of both the parasol and the *chamara* may have symbolized purity or excellence. Other emblems are a turban or crown, shoes or slippers, a throne, and a sword of state. Jan Gonda discusses the paraphernalia or emblems of royalty for ancient Indian kings based on texts (Gonda 1966, pp. 37-47).
5. Zebrowski 1997, p. 75, figs 56, 58.
6. At Sonkh (near Mathura) a temple complex from the early Kushana period was excavated. It was dedicated to the worship of Nagas (serpent deities). The relief on an architrave of its gate shows a Naga king and queen receiving visitors standing by respectfully. Of the *naginis* standing on the left side of the king, the taller of the two stands to front, her hip thrust out to her right. She rests a prominent *chamara* with a short handle on her right shoulder, the yak tail's hairs touching the backrest of the throne. To her left stands a shorter *nagini*, in a similarly outward thrust posture, her hands clasped around the fluted pole of the white *chattra* of state of the Nagaraja's court. See illustrations in Härtel 1993, pp. 413-427, 438 and Mode 1986, fig. 4.
7. Gösta Liebert provides a basic description and identifies the *chamara* as one of the insignia of royalty. He mentions a number of deities and Buddhist figures that may be seen with a flywhisk. As to its possible meaning as an attribute, he only suggests a connotation in Buddhism (Liebert 1976, p. 53). Margaret Stutley's *Illustrated dictionary of Hindu iconography* (Stutley 2003, p. 28) has a similar entry, without reference to the Buddhist connection.
8. E.H.C. Walsh was President of the Patna Museum Committee and D.B. Spooner was Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey for the Eastern Circle.
9. Davis 1997, p. 6.
10. Spooner 1919, p. 113. S.K. Saraswati compares these early sculptures in terms of style in his chapter on post-Mauryan sculpture (Saraswati 1957).
11. Clearly visible in Chanda's photographs of front and reverse side of the image (Chanda 1927, pl. 4a-b).

12. The load-bearing *yakshas* or *bharavahakas*. The seminal work on *yaksha* mythology and iconography is by A.K. Coomaraswamy (1927, reprinted in 1965). Ram Nath Mishra (1981) provides references to work done after Coomaraswamy's book came out. He refers to later texts that offer iconographic descriptions. Apparently iconographic texts offer limited information on what *yakshas* should look like when portrayed, and the extant texts are much later than the period in which their imagery first developed (Mishra 1981, pp. 105-106).
13. Coomaraswamy 1980, Part 1, p. 29.
14. This is not to deny that there are many tales relating how the Buddha subdued fearsome *yakshas* and turned them into the most faithful of devotees and personal bodyguards. The famous and often illustrated 'Bodhisattva' from the Katra mound at Mathura is accompanied by what may well be two *yakshas*. See Kramrisch 1933, fig. 41, reproduced in colour in Mode 1986, fig. 10; Huntington 1985, fig. 8.31. Huntington takes them to be Bodhisattvas (Huntington 1985, p. 153), which is at odds with her 'low' opinion of the *chamara*. Others simply style the attending figures 'acolytes'.
15. In Brahmi script that palaeographically fits a circa 1st century AD date. Cunningham provided an elaborate description in his 15th archaeological report (1882, pp. 1-3). K.P. Jayaswal suggested that the two images depicted early kings of Magadha. A heated debate over the contents of the inscriptions ensued. See e.g. Chanda 1927, p. 42; Ray 1945, p. 49; Misra 1981, pp. 108-109. Jayaswal (1919) offers clear images of the inscriptions in plates opposite pp. 94 and 96. Ramaprasad Chanda (1921, p. 72) found the inscriptions on the two Patna statues 'very carelessly engraved', but I would not agree regarding the headless male. The engraver made a serious effort to align the label with the grooves of the scarf, but it meant that horizontal strokes merged with the grooves, making the reading more difficult.
16. Susan Huntington (1985, p. 54, fig. 4.13) insists that the *chauri* means the Patna male 'must ... have been an attendant figure [only ER]'.
17. Huntington 1985, p. 53. Vidya Dehejia seems reluctant as well to accept the *chamara* as an attribute of *yakshas* and *yakshinis*, though without further discussion (Dehejia 1997, pp. 46-47, 92).
18. He briefly mentions 'the Didarganj *cauri*-bearer', maybe because he doubted whether indeed she does represent a *yakshini*. Coomaraswamy 1965, p. 17; Coomaraswamy 1980, p. 38, explanation to Plate 1.
19. Kramrisch 1933, p. 9.
20. Gupta 1980, p. 98.
21. Judging from secondary studies on early Indian symbols, the *chamara* does not appear in early lists or depictions of sets of auspicious symbols such as the *ashtamangala*. However, gradually the *chamara* found its way into such sets, particularly in South India (e.g. Liebert 1976, pp. 26-27; Wicks 1999, table 2). Shah (1955, p. 110) concludes that in the Kushana period the set of *ashtamangala* had not yet been finally settled. The *chamara* is listed among the eight auspicious symbols of the Digambaras (1955, p. 111). Be that as it may, the variety within symbol groups in art and texts will probably be much greater than anticipated. Probably there never was a 'standard' group of auspicious symbols, but rather a diffuse group revolving around a core group consisting of such major signifiers as the overflowing watervessel and the white parasol.
22. Joshi 1996.
23. Perhaps a study from aside of the actual image might confirm this. The image published by Joshi (Joshi 1996, fig. 1) reveals more of the attribute than the photograph, taken by Prof. J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, published here.
24. The iconographic form of Paravati between fires cannot be traced in iconographic

- texts (Trivedi 1981, p. 34), but it was quite often used in iconographic programmes for niches of temple walls in central India in the early Medieval period (cf. Trivedi 1981 and Joshi 1996).
25. Secondary source material on Vasudhara, in particular regarding her early cult and iconography, is scarce. Although formally part of the Buddhist mythic world, she is ignored in works that deal with the Buddhist art of Mathura, e.g. those by R.C. Sharma (1984; 1995). V.S. Agrawala devotes a chapter to her, collected in his *Studies in Indian art* (Agrawala 1965). Miranda Shaw discusses the later phenomenon of her worship and imagery in mostly Northeast Indian and Tibetan art (Shaw 2006). The Huntington Archive provides a number of images.
 26. Agrawala 1965; Shaw 2006, p. 247. In 1951 V.S. Agrawala listed seven Vasudhara images in the collections of the Government Museum Mathura (Agrawala 1951, p. 64). Upinder Singh refers to ten in total in 2004 (Singh 2004, p. 388). I could trace three published images of these Mathura figures.
 27. In other images the sheaf of grain is replaced by a vessel raining grains and gems, as instructed by iconographic texts. Shaw illustrates and describes several more, multi-armed images of Vasudhara. Lokesh Chandra compiled a multitude of references to published images from the Buddhist world in which her iconography retains symbols such as treasures, the sheaf of grain and the overflowing water pot (Chandra 2005, pp. 4278-4289). The *chamara* is not part of that iconography.
 28. Shaw 2006, pp. 252, 488.
 29. GMM acc. no. 27-28.1695; Agrawala 1951, pp. 64-65.
 30. The fish are visual pointers to abundance and rapid increase. For *matsyayugma*, the 'pair of fish', one of the eight auspicious emblems in early Indian Buddhist and Jaina art, see Stutley 2003, p. 91. Umakant P. Shah discusses the double fish symbol among the *ashtamangala* in the Jaina context (Shah 1955). The fish signify 'increase', since fish increase very rapidly (Liebert 1976, p. 176).
 31. In Agrawala's catalogue: nos. 748, 1411, 1583, 1695, 2523, so five out of seven. In his 1910 catalogue, J.Ph. Vogel's nos. F13 and F15 may also belong to the group.
 32. GMM acc. no. 18.1411. Stone, 10 inches = 25 cm. high. Cf. Joshi 1966, p. 33, fig. 34.
 33. Agrawala 1951, p. 64; Asthana 1999, p. 37; Joshi 1966, pp. 33, 82, fig. 34.
 34. N.P. Joshi calls it an umbrella Joshi 1966, p. 82.
 35. Unfortunately I have not seen the other images in the Mathura Museum collection which might have shed more light on the proper identification of the attribute.
 36. As e.g. held by a *naga* attending on the Jina Parshvanatha, GMM acc. no. 1505, probably post Gupta period or slightly later (photographed by Prof. J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, neg. no. 144-2).
 37. Acc. no. 67.38; Asthana 1999, fig. 37.
 38. Shashi Prabha Asthana identified it as a 'stalked lotus bud' (Asthana 1999, p. 40), but lotuses as such are not part of Vasudhara's iconographic make-up and it does not look like a plant.
 39. These developments in formal and iconographic traits require follow-up research.
 40. Raven 1994, fig. 3.