



FIG. 00. Poseidon depicted on silver drachm, reverse of a coin of Demetrios Poliorcetes, 177–88 BCE. American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.13789)

sculptor, Lysippos, who later famously created a large cult statue of Poseidon for Alexander's sanctuary at Isthmia about 340 BCE.⁵ During the Hellenistic period (ca. 321–31 BCE), the now lost Poseidon at Isthmia, as well as many other important works of art were routinely copied upon request from both private collectors and public entities, a practice that continued through Roman times.⁶

Early images of Lysippos's Poseidon were issued on a series of coins beginning about 290 BCE (fig. 00).⁷ These coins were minted to celebrate a naval victory of Demetrios Poliorcetes, a successor to Alexander, and undoubtedly contributed to the wide circulation of the image. Images of Poseidon also appeared on coins in Gandhāra.⁸ Other Roman bronzes, including a Herakles-Serapis, were excavated at Begram, Afghanistan (fig. 00).⁹ In southern India, such images in the round were rendered in low relief in stone—not for their iconography but for their admirable sculptural qualities.¹⁰

The Poseidon statuette found at Brahmapuri is one of a series of copies of the now Lysippos's lost original (cat. 88).¹¹ The figure is tall and slender with a relatively small head. Its bent right leg is raised and supported by a rock. The figure's right forearm rests on his thigh, while the left hand is raised to hold a trident, now missing. His abundant, elaborately curled long hair and meticulously modeled, luxuriant beard are meticulously modeled, features that Charles Picard has suggested associate this bronze with Alexandria.¹² Pliny wrote about the sculpture of Lysippos: "men were represented as they really were, but by him, they are represented as they appeared."¹³

Along with the Poseidon was found a

Roman emblema in sheet copper worked in low relief from the back (repoussé) (cat. 89). The subject, Perseus and Andromeda, was identified¹⁴ by the presence, in the lower right corner of the disc, of the head of Medusa and the distinctive sickle-like sword (*harpe*) that Perseus used to sever Medusa's head. The two main figures are seated apart but are joined by their intertwining arms, each holding the upper arm of the other, a well-known amorous pose in the paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum.¹⁵

Images of interacting couples, whether from small, imported objects from Pompeii or painted representations of them,¹⁶ were most likely a contributory source for the depictions of amorous couples (*mithuna*) that appeared at Bodhgaya during the first century CE and culminated in the third-century art of Nagarjunakonda.¹⁷ At Nagarjunakonda the motif of *mithuna* figures with crossed arms, as seen in Western sources, produced a new intimacy. The loving couples in this pose are an important feature of Indian art during the period of India's most active trade with the West (see essay by Norman Underwood in this volume).

The function of this emblema is not clear, but it most likely decorated the center of a bowl,¹⁸ although similar discs could have decorated a mirror back or mirror case. It is also possible that the disc arrived in India alone, perhaps intended as an object of exotica or to serve as an artist's model.

The jug handle (*situla*) (cat. 90) is one of a pair discovered at Brahmapuri. On the stem are six separate elements or symbols unconnected by artistic devices: a trilobed plant, a set of panpipes, a satyr or Pan mask, two floral bosses, a basket of flowers, and a small, undulating snake.¹⁹ On the medallion (*escutcheon*) is an amor sits sidesaddle on a feline in a posture of drunken abandonment while holding a cup in the fold of his left arm. The pointed base of the medallion ends in an engraved palmette flanked on each side by a volute. This handle and its nearly identical counterpart originally could have been part of a large amphora, a vessel type that was highly developed at Pompeii and Herculaneum.²⁰

Bacchanalian themes such as the one seen on the handle's decoration took hold in the Kuṣāṇa regions of northern India in this period (see cat. 97); the Cupid-like child was replaced by a *yakṣa* known²¹ Among Roman examples of the pudgy cherub that have been found



FIG. 00. Herakles-Serapis. Roman, probably Alexandrian or eastern empire, 1st century CE. Bronze, H. 9½ in. (24.1 cm). Excavated at Begram, "Royal City" room 13, June 1939. National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul (inv. 04.1.90)

in India, the most significant is on a beautiful bronze handle excavated at Akota.²² A small stone sculpture found in Junnar, Maharashtra, represents a chubby infant lying in an egg-shaped bowl which has been interpreted as the birth of Eros issuing from an egg, a well-known Western theme known in Attic culture as early as the sixth century.²³ But the most informative comparison is a pair of bronze statues found in Yemen of striding lions ridden by Eros or the child Dionysus and bearing a South Arabian inscription. It has been determined that these objects were based on Roman prototypes, perhaps from Alexandria, and they provide evidence that Bacchanalian images were widely dispersed through²⁴ Interestingly, such images do not occur on southern Indian sculpture; and the chubby infant appears in only one known work at Nagarjunakonda.²⁵ There the child is supported on the hip of a woman who twists around to face the man beside her. But this too has a classical source.

Indian Bronzes from the Brahmapuri Hoard PIA BRANCACCIO



91



93



92



94

91. Model bullock cart

Sātavāhana, ca. 2nd century CE
Copper alloy, 4⁵/₁₆ × 5⁷/₁₆ × 8¹/₁₆ in.
(11 × 15 × 22 cm)

Excavated at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Satara district, Maharashtra, 1944–45
Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur, Maharashtra

PUBLISHED: Bhandarkar 1878; Khandalavala 1960, p. 67, no. 8, pl. 20, fig. 33; Barrett 1967; Prince of Wales Museum of Western India 1975, no. 72.

92. Elephant with four riders

Sātavāhana, ca. 2nd century CE
Copper alloy, 1¹⁵/₁₆ × 1¹/₁₆ × 3¹/₁₆ in.
(5 × 4 × 8 cm)

Excavated at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Satara district, Maharashtra, 1944–45
Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur, Maharashtra

PUBLISHED: Barrett 1958, pp. 138–40; Khandalavala 1960, pp. 63–64, no. 3, pl. 17, figs. 1–22; Prince of Wales Museum of Western India 1975, inside front cover; Sadashiv Gorakshkar in Prince of Wales Museum of Western India 1975, pp. 29–30, no. 71; Harle 1994, p. 41, fig. 26.

93. Ritual water vessel

Sātavāhana, ca. 2nd century CE
Copper alloy, Diam. 3³/₁₆ in. (9.8 cm)
Excavated at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Satara district, Maharashtra, 1944–45
Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur, Maharashtra

PUBLISHED: Khandalavala 1960, pp. 70–71, no. 17, pl. 23, fig. 44; Sankalia and Dikshit 1952, p. 141.

94. Six auspicious emblems (*maṅgalas*)

Sātavāhana, ca. 2nd century CE
Copper alloy, 1¹⁵/₁₆ × 1¹/₁₆ in. (5 × 4 cm)
Excavated at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Satara district, Maharashtra, 1944–45
Kolhapur Town Hall Museum, Maharashtra

PUBLISHED: Bhandarkar 1878; Khandalavala 1960, p. 68, no. 9, pl. 20, fig. 35; Barrett 1967.

A hoard consisting of thirty-seven bronze and copper objects of diverse provenance was brought to light in 1945 during archaeological explorations conducted at the Brahmapuri mound in Kolhapur, situated in the hills inland from the western coast of India, in Maharashtra. The objects were

uncovered in the remains of a Sātavāhana-period house dating to the first three centuries CE.¹ The hoard included unique metal luxury objects likely belonging to the late Sātavāhana period of the first and second centuries CE, along with remarkable bronzes imported from the Roman world. Most notable among the latter was a Poseidon statuette probably cast in Alexandria (cat. 88) that has become emblematic of ancient Indo-Roman trade. Outstanding among the indigenous metal objects, which included lamps, bells, mirrors, metalware, and coins issued by the local Kura kings, are the four objects examined here: an exquisite elephant with riders, a beautifully crafted miniature cart, a fine spouted vessel, and six openwork plaques with auspicious emblems.²

The richness of the Brahmapuri mound prompted archaeologists to continue archaeological excavations in 1945–46.³ Even though significant interpretive problems remain for the site, the cultural sequence revealed by the excavators and the artifacts documented shed significant light on the cultural context and possible dates of the Indian bronzes from the Brahmapuri hoard.

The Indian items reflect the taste and practices of urban elites at a time when the Sātavāhana kings controlled much of western Deccan. The exquisite bronze miniature cart with a canopy that simulates a fine, bordered textile represents a vehicle used by the wealthy urbanites of the time (cat. 91). It is comparable to the carts pictured in the narrative carvings of the *Vessantara Jātaka* from the Buddhist stupas at Goli and Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh.⁴ In these images, when Vessantara renounces all possessions and journeys to the forest, he does so in a covered bullock cart very much like the one from Brahmapuri, a vehicle befitting his princely position and evocative of the prosperous city life he left behind.

Covered carts were status symbols for wealthy urbanites during the Sātavāhana period. As such, they were depicted on a body of sculpture generally overlooked, the so-called memorial stones from Sannati, Karnataka, now housed in the Government Museum, Gulbarga. These inscribed sculptures dating to the Sātavāhana period were erected to memorialize deceased members of the elite, the same people who were presumably active patrons of the Buddhist *stūpa* and *saṅgha* at the nearby site of Kanaganahalli. The covered carts depicted in the

memorial stones may be seen as visual emblems alluding to the transition of the deceased to another life.⁵

Miniature terracotta carts have been found in archaeological contexts dating back to the Indus civilization. However, the early historic miniature cart from Brahmapuri is unique in that it is made of an expensive alloy and displays great artistic refinement. **Although it is hard to ascertain the function of such an exquisite miniature,** it is clear from the fifth-century Sanskrit drama *The Little Clay Cart*, set at an earlier time, that it was common for children in ancient India to play with toy carts. The materials used in the fabrication of these toys mirrored the social status of the owners; the drama explicitly tells that ordinary children played with terra-cotta carts, while fancy gold carts were appropriate for child princes.⁶

The beautifully crafted elephant with riders from Brahmapuri further demonstrates how in the western Deccan in the early years CE there existed a hierarchy of materials for different social strata (cat. 92). A fine-clay terracotta specimen identical to the bronze elephant from Brahmapuri was recorded at Ter, in Maharashtra, an important urban center of the Sātavāhana period mentioned in the anonymous Greek text *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*.⁷ Such affordable clay specimens may have been produced for an urban upper-middle class (fig. 00).⁸ The princely ensemble on the elephant, was an established artistic formula in the Sātavāhana world and was rendered also in monumental form on pillar capitals of the rock-cut Buddhist *caitya* halls in the western Deccan, most majestically at Bedsa and Karla.⁹

The elegant, cast-bronze spouted vessel from the Brahmapuri hoard (cat. 93) is matched by an exact ceramic counterpart excavated at the same site in 1945–46. The ceramic vessel was



crafted in Red Polished Ware, a type of fine pottery commonly found in Maharashtra and Gujarat at excavation levels associated with the Sātavāhana and Kṣatrapa periods.¹⁰ It has been suggested that the form of such spouted vessels may be identical with that of the water bottles (*kuṇḍika*) carried by Buddhist monks.¹¹ However, the bronze example from Brahmapuri stands out because of its diminutive size, fine workmanship, and distinctive spout, which seems to emerge from cloth-like flaps. Like the spouted vessels depicted as markers of auspicious occasions in several early Buddhist reliefs, the container was probably employed for ceremonial use.¹² The urban diffusion of this vessel type in archaeological contexts demonstrates that it was not exclusively associated with Buddhism.

Emblems of royalty were frequently shared across Buddhist and non-Buddhist worlds. This was the case of the eight auspicious emblems associated with royal fortune (*aṣṭamaṅgala*), five of which are carved in the small bronze plaques from the Brahmapuri hoard (cat. 94). The symbols reproduced in the plaques are the so-called bull's hoof (*nandipada*), solar emblem (*svastika*), triple jewel (*triratna*), fish couple (*matsyayugma*), and auspicious knot (*śrīvatsa*). There is also a multitiered emblem that seems to be a standard, or *dhvaja*. One of these auspicious emblems appears in Buddhist art as allusions to the Buddha's role as king of the dharma (*dharmacakravartin*). They are also depicted on early coinage because of their intrinsic connections with royal fortune. The *śrīvatsa*, *nandipada*, and *svastika* are found on coins excavated at Brahmapuri that were issued by the Sātavāhana kings and by the local Kura and Maharathis royalty.¹³ It is difficult to determine the original use and placement of the small bronze plaques from the Brahmapuri hoard. Possibly, they were used as auspicious ornaments. Small holes barely visible at the corners of some of these plaques indicate that they likely functioned as appliques sewn on textiles or were strung in beaded jewelry.

FIG. 00. Elephant with three riders. Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh, 1st century BCE. Double-molded terracotta, H. 4½ in. (11.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.378)

95. Metal ring with rearing griffin, bull, lion and human headed creature

Excavated at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Satara District, Maharashtra, 1944–45. Sātavāhana, Deccan, ca. 2nd century CE. Copper alloy, H. 2¼, Diam. 2½ in. (H. 6.7, Diam. 6.5 cm). Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur (inv. 950)

PUBLISHED: Khandalavala 1960, p. 66, no. 6, pl. 19, fig. 27; Prince of Wales Museum of Western India 1975, pp. 29–30, no. 74.

A remarkable hoard of imported Roman and Sātavāhana Indian bronze objects was discovered in 1944–1945 at Kolhapur, situated on the Panchaganga River, in the Western Ghats of Maharashtra. This find was, and remains, the single most spectacular trove of Roman bronzes ever recovered in India and contains some singularly important examples of Sātavāhana metal casting (see discussion under cats. 89–95). One object, because of its enigmatic nature, warrants further comment (cat. 95). It is the small, bulbous ring shown here, with four mythical creatures—griffin, horned lion, bull, and human-headed hoofed beast—projecting from acanthus foliage. A second ring, with four rearing lions between acanthus leaves, indicates that these two objects may have been part of a set that surmounted a standard or decorated a chariot or palanquin.

While there is no evidence of a monastic establishment at Brahmapuri, a Buddhist chapter in the history of the site was revealed in 1877 with the unearthing of a copper vessel. The receptacle contained large numbers of lead and copper coins belonging to the local Kura rulers and their Sātavāhana successors.¹ It also contained a group of miniature Buddhist artifacts in bronze: a *stūpa*, a *torāṇa*, a *harmikā*, a *chattrā*, and a *dharmacakra* (fig. 00).² All of these objects are now untraceable.

Ancient Brahmapuri appears to have been a mercantile center with a prosperous community actively engaged in long-distance subcontinental and international trade that extended to the Roman Mediterranean. Judging by the 1944–45 hoard, Kolhapur may have served as an important transit center for Roman goods entering the Deccan. Numerous Sātavāhana-period donor inscriptions from locations that stretch across the Deccan signal that merchants allied to Buddhism regularly extended patronage to monastic communities situated far from where they resided.



The miniature Buddhist paraphernalia discovered in 1877 are therefore probably best explained as either ritual objects from the household shrine of a Buddhist merchant family or as stock of a merchant who traded in such goods.

Given their archaeological context, the enigmatic rings may have served a specifically Buddhist function, as first suggested by Karl Khandalavala in his pioneering paper on the January 1945 excavation.³ Ring sections adorned with heads of humans and mythical beasts are featured at Amaravati, for example, in depictions of pillars (*stambha*) supporting the Dharma-wheel, emblematic of the Buddha's teachings.⁴ At Kanaganahalli *stūpa*, new finds include a drum

panel depicting a *dharmacakrastambha* (wheel-of-the-law pillar) that displays precisely these devices: a series of ring sections, one with human faces and another with elephants. Several full-scale architectural capitals with mythical beasts and acanthus leaf projections in direct imitation of Roman stone capitals survive at Kanaganahalli, suggesting that freestanding *dharmacakrastambhas* of this configuration existed at that site.⁵ The two rings from Brahmapuri, which were excavated together with miniature *cakras* cast in bronze, might well have served as elements on the post of a miniature *dharmacakrastambha*, like the one preserved from third-century Bihar in a Jain setting (see cat. 102).

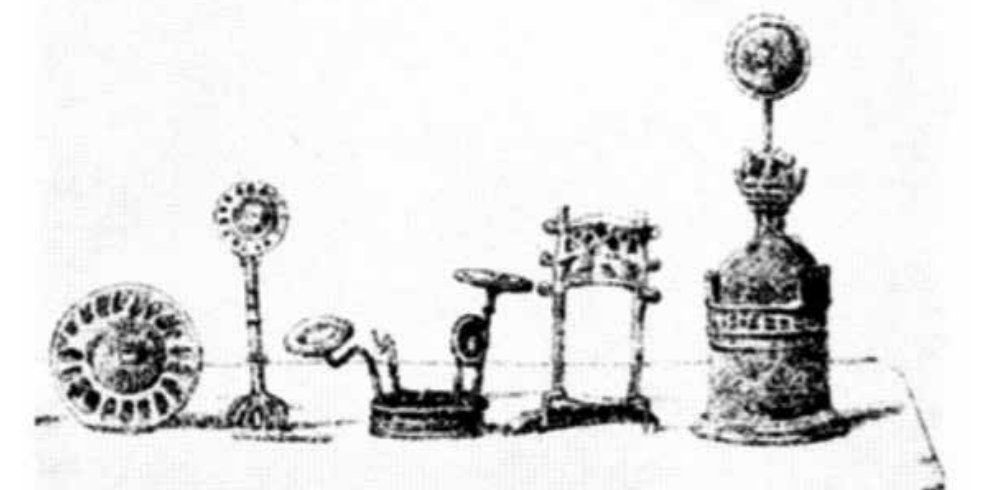


FIG. 00. Miniature bronze Buddhist ritual objects recovered at Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, in October 1877. From *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XIV in 1878. Location unknown