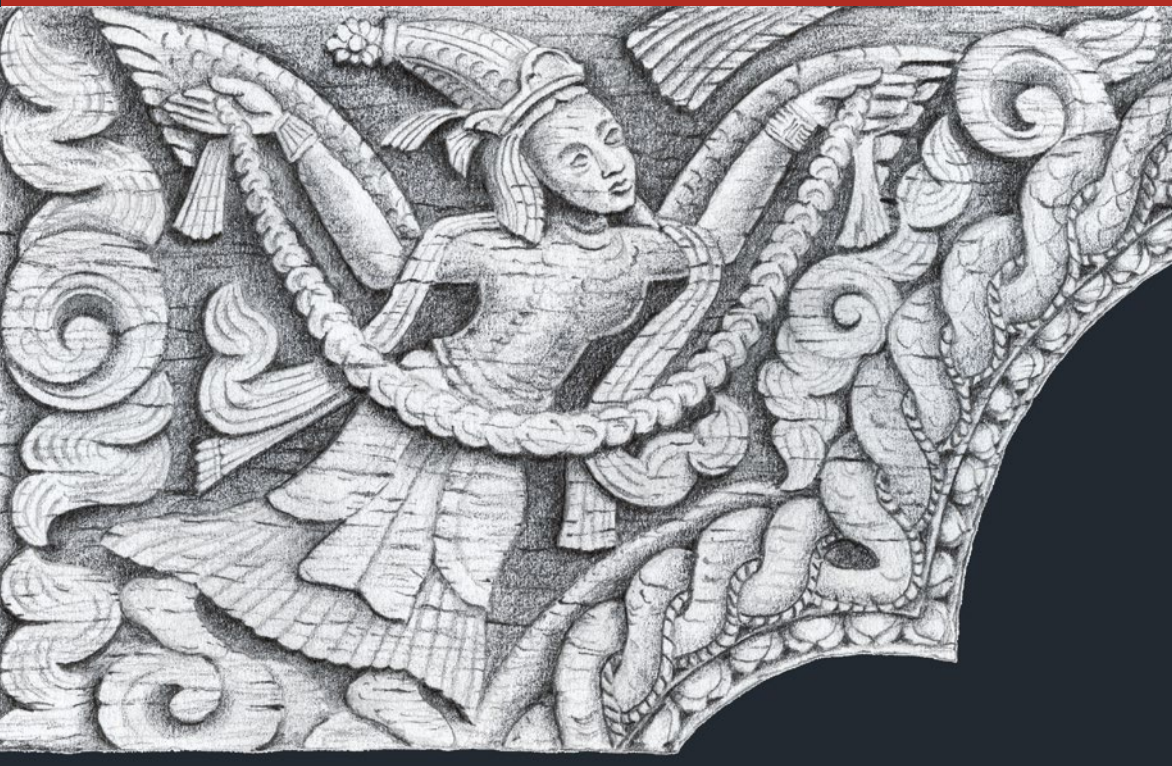
Spirits in Transcultural Skies

Auspicious and Protective Spirits in Artefacts and Architecture Between East and West

Niels Gutschow · Katharina Weiler *Editors*



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Cover illustration: The cover illustration is a detail from a drawing of the uppermost panel of a trefoil central window in the Hindu monastic institution Kuthumaṭh in Bhaktapur, Nepal, which was established in 1749. The detail shows one of two garland bearers that flank the window of the eastern wing. The figure is a representative example of winged wisdom-bearers that can be found on most spandrels of windows and doors in the Kathmandu Valley as of the early eighteenth century. The figure is surrounded by scrolled cloud motifs in the Chinese fashion and its clothing shows how new iconographic conventions entered the depictions of wisdom-bearers at the time. Drawing by Axel Weller (2009)

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Introduction

Transcultural Journeys

Art history has long been one of the disciplines most firmly rooted in hermetic and regionally limited analytical frameworks. Since the nineteenth century, art and its historiography have been intimately bound to a whole range of projects dedicated to identity formation. Only recently have scholars in the field of art history begun to look for new frameworks (Bruhn et al. 2012) that focus attention on the creation of a new historical mind map, and the growing tendency to transcend and query a hitherto Western-dominated historical perspective. In this regard, "transculturality" is a major keyword for defining such a new approach, as it addresses issues of processuality and the consistent networks of cultural relations that are understood to constitute a culture. "Cultures" are in turn not understood as hermetic and regionally limited by fixed boundaries. Instead, a transcultural approach aims at gaining insights into cultural dynamics and the entanglements that lie beyond those transmitted through discourses of cultural purity and originality and the forms of cultural essentialism they stand for and sustain. This approach inquires into reciprocal effects and aspects of interwovenness in art and architecture with a view to reconceptualizing given realms (Juneja 2012). A project of this nature may begin by reconstituting art-historical units of analysis, replacing fixed regions with mobile contact zones featuring shifting frontiers (spaces of transition), and considering nonlinear and palimpsestic aspects of time.

From time immemorial, objects of art, migrant artists, and traveling visual regimes have invariably created an open public sphere of shared meanings and forms of articulation. Because of this tendency, the present volume investigates the visualization of both ritual and decorative aspects of auspiciousness and protection in the form of celestial characters in art and architecture. Their iconography proves a useful tool for investigating and conceptualizing transculturality as a form of relationality. Presented here are the proceedings of the workshop "Spirits in Transcultural Skies," held at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global

Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows" at Heidelberg University from 30 June to 2 July, 2011. The workshop set out to approach the issue of "protection" from a primarily art-historical perspective and was devoted to spirits or goddesses and gods, that is to say essentially auspicious and protective figures "populating" architecture on their travels between the East and West.

A vivid account of buildings inhabited by spirits is to be found in Italo Calvino's *Le città invisibili* (1972) (translated into English as *Invisible Cities*, in 1974), a compilation of fragmentary, fictitious urban images. The author conjures up cities through imaginary conversations between the thirteenth-century Venetian traveler to Asia Marco Polo (ca. 1254–1324) and his host, the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire (r. 1260–1294) and Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty in China, Kublai Khan (1215–1294). "Gods of two species protect the city of Leandra," says Marco Polo of one of these legendary cities. "Both are too tiny to be seen and too numerous to be counted" (Calvino 1974). Invariably, however, these gods inhabit the houses. When families move house, the Penates (guardians of the provisions) follow them. The Lares (guardians of certain places or families) "belong to the house, and when the family that has lived there goes away, they remain with the new tenants; perhaps they were already there before the house existed, among the weeds of the vacant lot, concealed in a rusty can." These house gods like to intermingle in a house: "they visit one another, they stroll together on the stucco cornices, on the radiator pipes; they comment on family events; not infrequently they quarrel; but they can also get along peacefully for years." Marco Polo continues his description of the encounters and relationships between the two kinds of gods: "The Lares have seen Penates of the most varied origins and customs pass through their walls; the Penates have to make a place for themselves, rubbing elbows with Lares of illustrious, but decaying palaces, full of hauteur, or with Lares from tin shacks, susceptible and distrustful."—"If you listen carefully, especially at night, you can hear them in the houses of Leandra murmuring steadily, interrupting one another, huffing, bantering, amid ironic, stifled laughter."

What Calvino conjures up in his tale is the notion of Roman *genii*, the idea of gods connected to places, landscapes (rivers, mountains, and valleys), buildings, or even entire cities. Aside from those related to particular persons, such places were guarded by a *genius loci*. In his descriptions, Calvino hints at the contacts and encounters and at the dynamic and culturally productive practices that are associated with auspicious and protective deities as soon as they are personalized.

The nine articles in the present volume deliberate further on the relationships between ethereal creatures and the symbolism found in pictorial programs. The authors come from different fields of research, including art history, architecture, and classical archaeology. They detect the different ways and situations in which aspects of protection, power, and salvation find their expression, for example, when painted or carved in stone or wood in art and architecture, or on ritual implements, covering a wide geographical area between Tyrol and Japan. The examples presented do not claim to provide a comprehensive overview. The collection rather opens a window on a phenomenon in the history of art and architecture that has never been looked at from this vantage before. The time frame ranges from Greek

and Roman antiquity to the twentieth century. Though they are individual examples, the objects of investigation discussed here can be analyzed in terms of specific fields of tension that have evidently evolved from situational shifts in meaning. With the help of a range of different instances, the authors detect multiple identities in some of these figures, identities that have taken shape as a result of their multipolar genesis. The philosophies present in the art and architecture featured here are primarily religious (though some are also political) and communicate distinctive notions of protection. In descriptive terms, they find expression in the pictorial programs of temples, churches, palaces, triumphal arches, and houses where goddesses, gods, or heavenly spirits, e.g., *genii*, *victoriae*, angels, *paris*, *apsaras*, *vidyādharīs*, *shenren*, *yuren*, *hiten*, or *tennin*, as well as winged dragons may "dwell" in reliefs, murals, or carvings on façades, arches, spandrels, vaults, niches, cantilevers, composite capitals, tympana, door and window lintels, or roof struts. The scholars delineate the spirits' diverse trajectories and histories, inquire into the periods and situations in which they came about or were created, and ask what these beings—both winged and wingless—can tell us about the power of exchange.

In its attempts to conceptualize transculturality and transcultural flows, this volume contributes to charting the motif of the aerial spirit in architecture and art objects and examines the eagerness displayed in adopting certain concepts and artistic ideas. Moreover, varied as their approaches and analyses may be, the authors all apply methods that examine the diverse and often contradictory processes of relationality, keeping in mind the fact that transculturality may be described not only in terms of the empathy required to accept foreign forms and practices but also of the desire to domesticate them. Perusal of the "migration" of the motif of airborne or winged auspicious beings reveals clearly defined instances of experiences of cultural entanglement and multiple ways in which both homogeneity and difference are negotiated within contacts and encounters through the selective appropriation, translation, and rereading of signs. In this case, "translation," rooted in the Latin cognate *translatio*, stands for a form of border crossing, a space where different cultures engage with each other. The term can be used to define a series of relationships across boundaries of genre, language, and cultural formation. In this sense, translation provides a comprehensive and productive basis for reconsidering what, in cultural and artistic practice, is referred to as "influence." With respect to transculturality, "translation" can be read as a dynamic and culturally productive practice through which the circulation, mediation, reception, and transformation—in short, the representation—of specific cultural forms, codes, and practices are affected. In highly transformative processes, certain artistic prototypes are revived and consciously imitated, copied, and amalgamated.

As is characteristic of transcultural entanglements, the way beliefs "travel" and translate into symbolic motifs, fashioned in a two- or three-dimensional form, is never linear. The routes are complex and unexpected. The belief in auspicious goddesses and gods or in spirits related to people, places, or victories can be found in many regions and throughout different time periods, thus making such notions of protection universal. These deities materialized in local contexts and were altered in

the course of extended contacts and cultural, political, and religious relationships. In this respect, the motif of the auspicious, airborne spirit persistently guaranteed prosperity and victory, and could also pay homage to an emperor. Furthermore, notions of protection and auspiciousness are often linked to metaphysical concepts of eternity, immortality, or the life cycle.

Messengers and Protectors

In ancient Greek and Roman belief, goddesses and gods had the power to dispatch winged messengers, and a number of sculpted airborne figures of transcultural genesis from those periods are familiar today. The most important and influential of these was the goddess of victory (called *Nike* in the Greek and *Victoria* in the Roman world), who announced forthcoming victories. Kai Töpfer tells us that, in the sixth century BCE, Nike was a "relatively new goddess and was, in fact, more a personification of an abstract concept than a real goddess." She was a winged "messenger" between the realm of the gods and the world of human beings, her garments fluttering behind her as she moved through the skies. Töpfer shows that though both Nike and Victoria were depicted in a very similar way, there are clear conceptional differences between them. This fact reveals the figure's identity as located in a specific field of tension. Against the background of such shifts in meaning, Töpfer discusses the depictions of Victoria in Roman Syria. Due to the significant role of the Levantine region in forming cross-cultural contacts and developments throughout antiquity, the question of the beliefs and concepts represented by these figures is of special interest from a transcultural perspective.

For more than four centuries prior to the latter stages of late antiquity, two great world powers, the Roman Empire and the Sasanian Empire (the last pre-Islamic Persian Empire), ruled over the Near East and the Mediterranean. In this transitional period between antiquity and the middle ages, these empires were sometimes well-disposed partners, sometimes rivals. Shervin Farridnejad studies significant examples from the religious canon of Sasanian iconography by referring to angels that are investigated for their cross-cultural entanglement. The Sasanian canon contains some iconographical elements borrowed from previous or neighboring cultures, which the Sasanian artists translated and domesticated into a genuinely Zoroastrian mode. The transformation of Victoria in Roman Syria, acting as protector of specific individuals, turns up again in the context of Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Sasanian empire: *amәšа spәnta* ("beneficent immortals" or "immortal holy ones") relates to Ahura Mazdā and to all the divine beings he has brought into existence, including *frauuašis* (guardian angels) and *yazatas* ("adorable ones," angels). The "*frauuašis* are the only anthropomorphic winged deities to have been identified in Sasanian religious art to date" (Farridnejad).

The Roman *victoriae* are companions of the ruler; the Zoroastrian *frauuašis* appear in the context of the king's investiture; in North India, *vidyādharas* ("wisdom bearers") flank the halo of the Buddha (possibly acting as

dharmacakravartin—the protector of teaching) who with the gesture of reassurance and safety (Skt. *abhayamudrā*) assures divine protection and bliss to the devotee and dispels fear (Fig. 4 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"); and, in the Christian context, angels frame Christus Pantocrator (Figs. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 in the chapter "Angels as Agents of Transfer between Hebrew Origins, Byzantium, and Western Europe: Marienberg in South Tyrol as a Case Study").

Angelika Konrad-Schineller's article deals with angels performing special functions in Christian religion in both Byzantium and Western Europe. Their functions are rooted in Hebrew traditions expressed in the Old Testament. Such functions were adapted and developed in the New Testament in both Byzantium and Western Europe. Within a framework like this, angels "functioned in the liturgical ceremonies of the funerals as psychopomps for the deceased, thus connecting heaven and earth, even after their earthly existence ends in the hour of death" (Konrad-Schineller). Konrad-Schineller examines the angelic function and the application of angelic figures in a Christian sacral space, with reference to the example of the crypt of Marienberg in South Tyrol, where angels figure as guardians of threshold spaces. Investigating the transcultural potential of the angels in situ by focusing on their relation to liturgical practices of Byzantine origin and their application in Western European rites, Konrad-Schineller presents the Tyrol as a zone of transfer wherein Byzantine art was adapted through trade and pilgrim routes extending to and passing through Sicily, Venice, and Salzburg. She examines how iconographical models of Byzantine origin, e.g., bands enmeshing the wings and heads, borders on the dresses, and the fluttering ends of the clothes (Fig. 15 in the chapter "Angels as Agents of Transfer between Hebrew Origins, Byzantium, and Western Europe: Marienberg in South Tyrol as a Case Study"), were adapted and transformed. The *taenia* on the heads "probably derived from the winged Roman *victoriae* and the clothes are reminiscent of antique robes" (Konrad-Schineller).

Cloud-Borne Beings and Controllers of Rain

In Syria, the Roman Victoria underwent a decisive change as of the second century CE, when the goddess became associated with fortune, resulting in wealth "which is in some cases expressed by the addition of a cornucopia to the established iconography of Victoria" (Töpfer). Equipped with a diadem, necklace, lobed earrings, and fluttering ribbons, Anāhitā is one of the major Zoroastrian *yazata*s in anthropomorphic form, standing for "water, vegetation, agriculture, and fertility" (Farridnejad). Most revealing is the description of the powers celebrated in one of the hymns to her cited in Farridnejad's article: "Some waters she made stand still, the others she (made) flow onward."

Apparently, Anāhitā is the controller of water, thus sharing the power of the beneficent, wingless aerial spirits of the Indian sky, the dancing *apsaras* associated with the clouds, the wisdom-bearers (*vidyādhara*), or celestial musicians

(*gandharva*) who act as the guardians of rain, the celestial *soma* (the juice that was the essential libation in all early Vedic sacrifices). These spirits appear in early Buddhist sculptures from the second century BCE, eventually frame the halo above the Buddha, and populate the lintels and jambs of Gupta-period Buddhist temples, as well as Hindu temples of the fifth century.

In South and Southeast Asian art, protection from transience is often associated with the sky and its rain clouds, which stand for both celestial and terrestrial water, and, in some belief systems, even amniotic water. Water symbolizes life. Chari Pradel surveys the pantheon of deities that arrived in Japan with the advent of Buddhism in the mid-sixth century. Her research is dedicated to the flying or heavenly beings assembled around Buddhas and bodhisattvas and their origins. By analyzing a range of visual and textual materials, Pradel demonstrates that the type of heavenly being that came to Japan was a composite created in China which combined the Indian prototype of flying beings with the Chinese ideas of immortal beings soaring through the skies on clouds. Kushan-style spirits with gently backward-bending legs made their way into the caves of China in painted form in Dunhuang (Fig. 5 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"), or as polychrome stone carvings in Yungang (Fig. 6 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"), inevitably enveloped by fluttering scarves. As Pradel says, these "sinuous scarves seem to suspend them in the air" (Fig. 6 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"), to some extent replacing wings. The Indian-type heavenly beings of the caves in China are "praising the Buddha. . . to create a splendid Buddhist land," as Pradel writes, and thus seem to attain a specifically Chinese quality—that of the "winged immortals" already figuring as "feathered men" in the first century BCE (Fig. 2 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies") and "believed to live amid sacred mountains in a numinous realm" associated with "the search for longevity and immortality." With long skirts fusing with stylized clouds, these spirits landed in Korea and Japan from the fifth century CE and were always associated with the heavenly realm.

Celestial beings are often depicted using clouds as chariots. More than that, an aerial creature can be understood as a guardian of the rain. The cloud motif and wind aspect, often represented by a celestial figure's floating garment and scarf, became propelling agents for the mobility of these immortals and other ethereal beings. In this context, Niels Gutschow studies the celestial spirits figuring in the urban culture of the Newars in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. His investigation starts with the fifth century CE, when structural and decorative details, among them ethereal imagery, were borrowed from the plains of the Ganges and subsequently domesticated and transformed. For a period of some 1,000 years, wisdom bearers in particular appeared in flight, albeit without wings, as guardians of doors, windows, and thresholds. The representation of clouds involves not only water but also foliage motifs. Gutschow connects celestial water with the (cloud-) foliage motif and associates this combination with a rich repertoire of hybrid foliate creatures such as celestial spirits, birds, animals, and aquatic sea monsters, either with

foliated lotus-scroll tails or emerging from a foliage motif. One image of the wingless *vidhyādhara*—depicted with extremely flexed legs since the Gupta period (Fig. 2 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)")—survived in Indian art for centuries and arrived in Nepal in the sixth century (Fig. 3 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)"). This specific body posture remained unchanged for almost a millennium. To cover another full circle of transcultural journeys, one example of a very recent visualization of a wisdom bearer in Newar architecture, crafted in copper repoussé in the late nineteenth century, is winged, carries a traditional flower garland, and emerges from a puffy cloud (Fig. 14 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)"). This latter motif traveled from China to the court of the Il-Khans and from there to Tabriz, arriving at the court of the Mughals (the dynasty in power in India from 1526 to 1858) by the end of the sixteenth century, and was readily incorporated into the Newar context by the end of the seventeenth century. Last but not least, the deities were equipped with wings and clad in new attire to conform to representations of *paris*, angel-like spirits of Persian-Mughal provenance, in the mid-seventeenth century, thus successfully ousting the earlier spirits.

Preferably placed on door or window lintels or below small windows, the Nepalese spirits seem to be not necessarily associated with the heavenly realm of the immortals, but rather with the protection of thresholds. This aspect brings us to "the dragon in transcultural skies" presented by Sara Kuehn. The dragon's *ouroboros* aspect (i.e., the dragon eating its own tail, which it simultaneously swallows and disgorges, as shown in Fig. 1 in the chapter "The Dragon in Transcultural Skies: Its Celestial Aspect in the Medieval Islamic World") "marks the boundary between the ordered world and the chaos around it." It therefore appears around openings, serving as a "liminal marker and apotropaic device" (Figs. 7a, 8, 9, and 10b in the chapter "The Dragon in Transcultural Skies: Its Celestial Aspect in the Medieval Islamic World"). The pairing of serpent dragons on the arch of a building reinforces its power. In our context, the words of a thirteenth-century Spanish cabbalist (a disciple of the Jewish cabbala) quoted by Kuehn confirm an astonishing semantic continuity: "And without it [the Great Serpent] no creature in the sublunar world had life, and there would be no sowing and no growth and no motivation for the reproduction of all creatures." The dragon as another airborne and sometimes winged creature embodies both the preservation and destruction of life. It may represent protection or threat, and it also displays "chthonic, aquatic, and aerial aspects" (Kuehn), able to turn itself from a creature of the air into one of the sea or land. These aspects reflect the dichotomous nature of the dragon, with its capacity to move with equal ease in water, sky, and earth. Kuehn elaborates on the winged dragon and its astral-cosmological, alchemical, astrological, and metaphysical manifestations, glimpses of which are vouchsafed in Islamic, Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian writings. As shown by Kuehn, the intrinsic and extrinsic ambiguity of the great beast also, and indeed necessarily, entails an element of transcendence,

since its mystery can only be explained as flowing from the juxtaposition of two or more levels of reality. Its inherent duality makes the dragon an embodiment par excellence of change and transformation.

In early seventeenth-century Newar architecture, the dragon effectively replaced the conventional wisdom bearers on the lintels of doors and windows. As the ultimate symbol of liminal guardianship, the dragon even started to populate pillars, capitals, friezes, and cornices, while gradually adopting details of Chinese and Mughal provenance. A generation passed before the wisdom bearers emerged in a new form, now equipped with wings, to reclaim their traditional place in the architecture of the day (Fig. 6 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)").

Ethereal Escorts in Godly Realms

Coming to power in India in the early sixteenth century, the Mughals were highly successful in developing a syncretistic imperial rhetoric, which is described in this volume by Ebba Koch. Koch discusses the crucial function and hybrid identity of *paris* and angels in the art of the Mughals. Since they ruled as Muslim elite over a vast empire of peoples of different beliefs and cultures, they were concerned about addressing the widest possible audience. Koch emphasizes the Mughals' "unrivalled talent for visual articulation," their talent for universalizing various ideas and "successfully merging them with related features of other traditions." As Koch indicates, the ruler Jahangir associated himself with Solomon on his flying throne, a topic found in the paintings on the vault of the Kala Burj, a tower pavilion at Lahore fort, which forms part of the palace complex. Jahangir decided to place angels of Persian provenance on the outer fort wall (Fig. 7 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art") and others of European design in the interior (Figs. 3 and 4 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art"). Koch analyzes how Jahangir utilized the knowledge and skills of his local painters to produce European-inspired works in an unconventional setting, resulting in the adaptation of European prototypes to Mughal taste and symbolic functions. Christian iconography had been introduced into Mughal art through pictorial material such as engravings from the print shops of Antwerp, brought to the court by Jesuit missions around 1580. Koch explains how the "European adolescent angel" was "particularly suitable to fuse with or supplant the traditional Iranian–Mughal child angel" (which made its way to Nepal less than a generation later). In the early nineteenth century, the fact that protective angels were used to decorate the seat of an Islamic ruler—reminiscent in some respects of the tradition of Roman *victoriae* or Zoroastrian *yazata*s—even prompted the Qajar dynasty of Iran to look "to Mughal India for artistic inspiration" (Koch).

Later, ethereal deities such as wisdom bearers and celestial musicians joined angels for creative dialogues on the pilasters, corbels, lintels, cornices, and arches of neoclassical architecture, which had its heyday in India between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries and in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal between the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Drawing upon selected examples from Ahmadabad's early nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, Rabindra Vasavada discusses the presence of ethereal winged half-divinities as an important aspect of architectural and sculptural detail in Indian religious architecture. His remarks are confined to late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jain and Svāmināràyaṇa temples, where "images are seen as an inspiring extension of the human mind's ability to harbor thoughts about spiritual life as the highest level of human existence" (Vasavada). It is in the temple architecture that heavenly divine figures "are always shown with ethereal dispositions suggestive of their skyward movements and spiritual domains" (Figs. 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the chapter "Ethereal Imagery: Symbolic Attributes in the Art and Architecture of India"). In the second half of the nineteenth century, hybrid angelic figures carved in wood or molded in plaster after winged European prototypes emerged from the entanglement of local artistic tradition and imported Western art forms redolent of the taste and preferences of the colonial state. As Vasavada suggests, some female figures recall depictions of statues of the Virgin Mary, while others seem to depict Kṛṣṇa playing the flute (Fig. 3 in the chapter "Ethereal Imagery: Symbolic Attributes in the Art and Architecture of India"). The imagery is "stylized in a medley of both 'Western' and 'local' forms" (Vasavada).

It is here that Katharina Weiler's study of angelic figures in the stucco decoration of early twentieth-century houses in the Kathmandu Valley ties in. The twentieth-century spirits in neoclassical Newar architecture are a "transcultural, hybrid outcome engendered by artistic and architectural exchanges" (Weiler). Weiler's focus is on the interplay of local artistic forms and philosophies and a "neoclassical" formal idiom hitherto unknown in architectural forms. The study examines how certain paths of artistic appropriation and transformation are evident in the depictions of these winged celestial beings, i.e., their transformation from rather standardized versions dressed in Mughal costumes to canonical, yet individual images with elaborate hairstyles and Western-style attire. Weiler detects a canon of winged celestial figures that are frequently represented as holding garlands and appearing in pairs. She notes that such imagery is clearly rooted "in both the local mythological, artistic traditions and the neoclassical repertoire" (Weiler). In this respect, Weiler reflects on the conspicuously full-bosomed and scantily clad winged angels, which she refers to as "deities of the gaze" (Weiler). These figures present ornate cartouches (Fig. 5 in the chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal"), frame windows (Figs. 6 and 7 in the chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal"), or appear above window lintels, where they arrange themselves into triangular formations, often with outstretched arms as if to embrace the opening (Figs. 8 and 14 in the chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century

Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal"). They are also found squeezed in between acanthus leaves on composite capitals of neoclassical pilasters. As Weiler concludes, the builders of Nepalese palaces and residences obviously positioned themselves in a world of globally valid images taken from a neoclassical architectural idiom that was "'spoken' on a global scale, however in different 'vernaculars'" (Weiler). Last but not least, the figures lost "their defined role as 'either' intermediaries between the almighty power of a Christian or Islamic pantheon and humans 'or' celestial beings mainly associated with rain and fertility in Hinduism and Buddhism" in this transformational process (Weiler).

Entangled Angelology

From the winged Nike of Greece dating from the sixth century BCE (Fig. 1b in the chapter "The Goddess of Victory in Greek and Roman Art") and the "feathered man" of China's first century BCE Western Han Dynasty (Fig. 2 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"), to the angels that figure in Shahzia Sikander's 2003 paintings (Figs. 12 and 13 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art"), more than two and a half millennia are covered in this volume, documenting an almost global practice from a transcultural perspective. We apologize for not having been able to present a more comprehensive (polycircular) journey, which might have included more dragon-snakes from Western cultural realms, ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as recent *paris*/angels from contemporary temples in India, and finally all kinds of hybrid winged animals combining the features of lions, horses, snakes, dragons, and seahorses (*hippocampi*, which in Etruscan belief originated from a sea voyage to the other world). The epilogue, however, establishes ties with the entangled visualities of *genii*, angels, *vidyādharīs,* and the like in the contemporary iconography of everyday matters. Evidently, auspicious and protective spirits have maintained (and maybe even enlarged) their potential to act as representatives of certain zones of transfer.

Across time and space, throughout cultures and religions, the belief in celestial beings, their appearance, and specific function was modified from time to time in the course of conquest and trade relations, and changes in artistic style. Indeed, one can vividly imagine spirits of different origins and time periods encountering each other, comparing their different customs, quarrelling, or getting along peaceably, as described in Calvino's story. One thing we need to add to our propaedeutic notes on "spirits in transcultural skies" is that, on closer inspection, the universalization of ideas about protection culminated in creative dialogues, merging related artistic features from various traditions that proved to be capable of constant adaptation and change.

For example, the flying goddess on a Boeotian cup (sixth century BCE), (Fig. 1b in the chapter "The Goddess of Victory in Greek and Roman Art") depicted in a lunging position prefigures the bent leg posture we encounter in India from the fifth

century CE (albeit without wings) (Fig. 2 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)"; Figs. 3 and 10 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art") and in Nepal at least since the tenth century (Figs. 4b, 5 and 9 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)"). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, ancient images of Nike/Victoria standing or flying (Figs. 2, 3 and 6 in the chapter "The Goddess of Victory in Greek and Roman Art") are recalled in the palace architecture of the Rana rulers in Nepal (Fig. 3 in the chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal"). In her paired shape, Victoria (Fig. 4a, b in the chapter "The Goddess of Victory in Greek and Roman Art"), the Roman version of the Greek Nike, seems to have been remodeled in the art of the Sasanian Empire (early third to mid-seventh century CE, extending from the Roman Empire to the Indian subcontinent) as a Zoroastrian archangel (Figs. 7 and 8 in the chapter "The Iconography of Zoroastrian Angelology in Sasanian Art and Architecture"), while also serving as "the dominating iconographic model for later depictions of angels and other winged spirits" (Töpfer) in the Christian context (Fig. 11 in the chapter "Angels as Agents of Transfer between Hebrew Origins, Byzantium, and Western Europe. Marienberg in South Tyrol as a Case Study"). After various detours, this model reemerges in the mid-thirteenth century, in the form of the winged figures above the portal of Susuz Han in southwestern Turkey (Fig. 9 in the chapter "The Dragon in Transcultural Skies: Its Celestial Aspect in the Medieval Islamic World"), on Lahore Fort as a Solomonic angel in the early sixteenth century (Fig. 7 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art"), in seventeenth-century Nepalese art (Figs. 6, 7a, 8, 9, 10, and 11 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)," and in the early twentieth-century architecture of the Kathmandu Valley (Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal"). In this respect, the imagery of the winged figure has become a universal image traversing "transcultural skies," while the respective structural elements displayed by these celestial creatures took on the quality of contact zones negotiating different symbols, signs, and collective processes of consciousness.

Tracing the flow of the winged spirits motif from West to East, archaeologist Ingeborg Luschey-Schmeisser, who dedicated her research to seventeenth-century architecture in Iṣfahān (Iran), once suggested establishing a "line of ancestors" (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 47ff). This project recognizes the "movability of wings"—artistic concepts that traveled across time and space—generating the feeling that at least heaven comes without fixed boundaries, imaginary antipoles such as Asia and Europe, or notions of cultural isolation, and may even unhinge well-established frameworks such as European or East Asian art history, which

consolidate supposed cultural and political borders, and conceivably provide a basis for reconceptualizing art history. This understanding still needs to take into account that, though we are dealing with images associated with heaven and earth, with the skies, clouds, and water, those images were born in the minds of worldly artists, and that the latter (or at least some of the art objects they created) could have been itinerant or peripatetic.

Considered as a whole, the present volume focuses upon a transcultural iconography in art history, a methodologically innovative approach to redefine and develop the practice of identification and classification of motifs as a means to understanding meaning, and attempts to challenge academic disciplines. In this respect, the contributions examining the artistic flow in Nepal are new, because art history in Nepal has, to date, been the subject of little research. Close examination of the artwork discussed in this volume with recourse to well-established labels such as *Greek*, *Roman*, *Christian*, *Buddhist*, *Islamic*/*Mughal*, *Indian*, or *Chinese* calls for a constitution of innovative units of investigation more responsive to the logic of objects and artists on the move.

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The Goddess of Victory in Greek and Roman Art

Kai Michael Töpfer

Abstract In Greek and Roman art, a number of winged characters attest a transcultural genesis. The most important and influential of these, the goddess of victory, was called Nike in the Greek and Victoria in the Roman world. Both goddesses were usually depicted in a very similar way, but in fact there are clear conceptional differences between them. Against the background of such shifts in meaning, a special phenomenon will be discussed, namely the unusal amount of depictions of Victoria in Roman Syria. Because of the significant role the Levantine region played in contact between the East and West in ancient times, the question of which beliefs and concepts these figures represented is of special interest with respect to a cross-cultural perspective.

The Greek Goddess: Nike

In order to better understand the nature and concept of the Greek goddess Nike, a closer look at the sources is useful. In the earliest Greek literary testimonials, the epics of Homer, Nike is not mentioned at all. The first known literal evidence is given instead in Hesiod's *Theogonia*, written in the sixth century BCE. There, Nike is described as the daughter of the river goddess Styx and the Titan Pallas (Schrinding 2007, 34–35).[1] Her only known involvement in a myth is her attendance at the fight of the Olympian gods against the Titans, in which she was supporting the party of Zeus and the Olympians (Schrinding 2007, 34–35).[2]

[1] Hesiod, "Theogonia," 382–385. Alternative genealogies can be found in Homer, "Hymnos" 8, 4, see West (2003, 188–189) (daughter of Ares), and in Himerios, *Orationes* (19) 65, 3, see Penella (2007, 94). A compilation of relevant sources can be found in Goulaki-Voutira (1992, 851) and Thöne (1999, 15–16).

[2] Hesiod, "Theogonia," 397–403.

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Given the great importance of myths in Greek culture, the lack of any other mythological involvement of Nike indicates that she was a relatively new goddess and was, in fact, more a personification of an abstract concept than a real goddess (Shapiro 1993, 27–29). This argument is further corroborated by the fact that there is a lack of any reference to a cult for her, at least in Archaic and Classical times (before the third century BCE). Even in the later Hellenistic period, references to a cult of Nike are very few in number and, in addition, problematic in detail (Thöne 1999, 57–76).

The basic character of Nike was that of a messenger, sent by a god or goddess into the world of the human beings. Within this role, she specialized in solely conveying one type of message, namely forthcoming victories. Indeed, she is never the one who decides who will win, but her appearance on the side of one of the opponents is a clear sign of who will be the winning party. However, her function is not restricted to the military context. Nike can also be found in agonistic contexts, both artistic and athletic (Thöne 1999, 77–96).

In the Archaic period (700–480 BCE) her iconography was not defined in detail, so it is difficult to distinguish her from Eris, who is also known as a messenger of the gods.[3] Because of their similar function, namely to move between the sphere of the gods and the world of human beings, Nike and Eris were both imagined with wings. In order to emphasize their role as messengers, both were depicted with a special baton, the so-called Kerykeion, which was also the specific attribute or symbol of human messengers in ancient times.

Most Archaic images of Nike can be found in two-dimensional pictures, such as on painted vases. The first known three-dimensional depiction of Nike is the famous Nike of Archermos, erected as a dedication to Apollo on the island of Delos, just before the middle of the sixth century BCE (Fig. 1a).[4] The sculptor Archermos, who is mentioned in an inscription which is likely to belong to the statue, is known from other sources as being the first artist to make a three-dimensional figure of Nike with wings.[5] The sculpture shows the goddess running and flying simultaneously, a motif which was very common when depicting fast, forward-moving figures in Archaic times (Fig. 1b). Today, in the German language, it is commonly called *Knielaufschema*, because of the kneeling-like position such characters assume (Schmidt 1909, 251–397). This position was also used for other winged characters in this period, such as the Gorgon Medusa.

Nike was frequently depicted in classical times (480–330 BCE). Numerous statues of her were erected (Thöne 1999), primarily in the great sanctuaries, where Greek cities dedicated a large number of monuments to military victories, both against foreign invaders as well as against neighbouring, hostile Greek cities. A famous example of such a monument is the Nike of Paionios (Fig. 2), which was

[3] Cf. Isler-Kerényi (1969), Goulaki-Voutira (1992, 895–897), Thöne (1999, 17–27).

[4] Cf. Isler-Kerényi (1969, 77–117), Goulaki-Voutira (1992, 853, no. 16), Thöne (1999, 17–18), Ridgway (1986, 259–274).

[5] Scholion to Aristophanes, "Birds," 573–574, in Dübner (1852, 223).

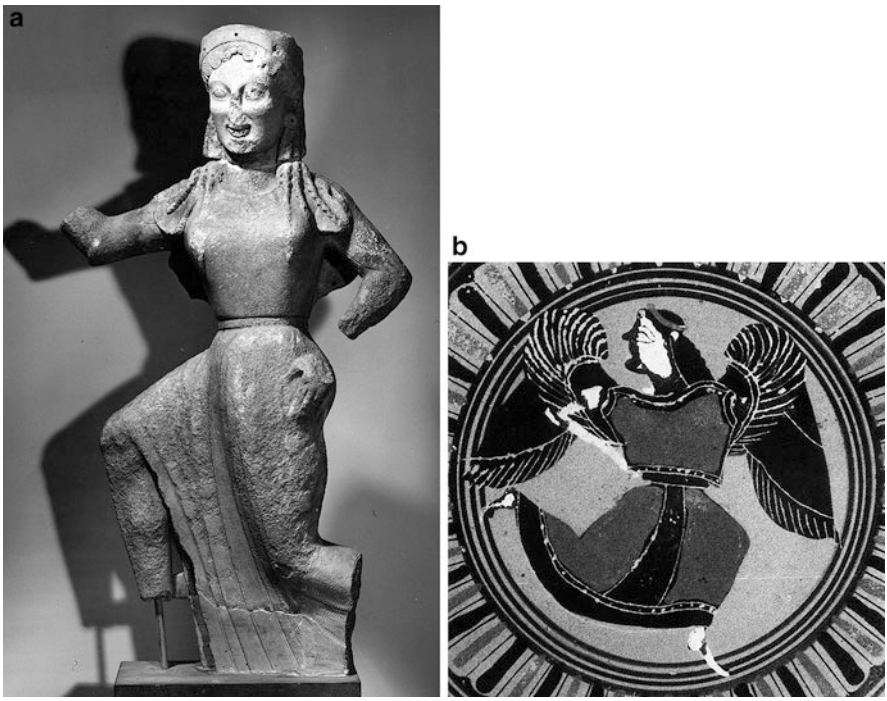

Fig. 1 (**a**) Nike of Archermos, found on the island of Delos. The figure shows Nike in the so-called *Knielaufschema*. The original crescent-shaped wings have been broken. 560–550 BCE. Athens, National Museum Inv. No. 21. Photo by Photo Hirmer Nr. 654.1861. (**b**) Boeotian cup. The image shows the goddess in a pose comparable to that of the Nike of Archermos. The wings on the statue were proportionately smaller. 575–550 BCE. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv. No.1963.21. Photo by LIMC/Mus Hamburg

erected in Olympia after a victory of the Messenians and Naupaktians against Sparta, in 425 BCE (Hölscher 1974, 70–111; Gulaki-Voutira 1981, 41–49; 1992, 862–863, No. 137; Thöne 1999, 117–118). For this occasion, an 8.5 m-high pillar crowned by one of the most impressive statues of Nike ever made, was erected just in front of the famous temple of Zeus. The statue evokes the impression of a flying figure, not only because of Nike's elevated position, but also due to the special treatment of the very thin garment she wears, which appears to be floating in the wind, and the depiction of an eagle beneath her feet.

From the fifth century onwards, the iconography of Nike was more or less standardized. However, some new visual contexts were created, such as scenes depicting the goddess making offerings at an altar (Thöne 1999, 36–56) or, more commonly, erecting or decorating a Tropaion, a very typical monument for a victory, which was usually erected directly after a battle, on the battlefield itself (Thöne 1999, 114–119; Rabe 2008). This motif, with its clear military background, was even used for monuments glorifying an agonistic victory, as early as the second half of the fifth century BCE.

Fig. 2 Nike of Paionios, ca. 421 BCE, found in Olympia. This figure of Nike in flight was originally set atop a high pillar. The wings, once outstretched, are broken. The statue was an important iconographic model for later figures. Museum of Olympia, Inv. No. 46-48. Photo by Photothek Heidelberg S 810

In the Hellenistic period (330–31 BCE), Nike was very frequently depicted in the official art of Alexander the Great and his political successors (Grote 1992, 881–895 and 902–904). Especially in the beginning—the late fourth and early third century BCE—these men ruled primarily on the basis of their military success and, in the tradition of Alexander himself, on the appearance of individual valour and strength. To represent these qualities, the goddess of victory was frequently depicted in close proximity to the king, as she often was on coins from that period. The frequent connection between a ruler and the goddess of victory made her, at least in visual language, more and more a long-term companion of the ruler. Consequently, the ruler himself became able to guarantee the presence of the goddess and, therefore, victory.[6]

[6] In regard to the close connection between a triumphant ruler and Victoria cf. Martínez (2002/03, 127–143).

Fig. 3 Nike, early second century BCE, found at Samothrace. The figure of Nike is standing on the bow of a warship. Originally, the ship—with her atop it—was placed in a basin full of water and rocks. The monument was erected to glorify a naval victory. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo by Photo Giraudon, Neg. Nr. 46.128

In addition, just as in the Classical period, large monuments commemorating military victories were erected by rulers as well as cities, as in the case of the famous Nike of Samothrace (Fig. 3) (Knell 1995; Hamiaux 2007). This monument, erected just above the ancient theatre in the sanctuary of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace, showed the goddess standing on the bow of a ship. The sculpture and ship were made of stone and placed in a basin containing water and rocks, thus simulating a natural setting. This impressive monument was presented by the Rhodians in the early second century BCE, probably after a victory against the Seleucid Empire.

In summary, by the Hellenistic period at the latest, the image of the winged goddess Nike was widespread and well-known throughout the Mediterranean world, and understood as a concise symbol of different kinds of victory.

The Roman Goddess: Victoria

The Roman counterpart to Nike was called Victoria.[7] The goddess and her iconography have their roots in Etruscan culture and its iconography, which was heavily adapted from Greek imagery (Känel 2009, 74–83). Therefore it is not surprising that the Roman goddess Victoria was depicted principally in the same way as the Greek Nike. With regard to her function and status, however, clear differences can be observed.

The most significant of these differences is the fact that Victoria was venerated, as proven by the existence of temples erected to her. The first temple was probably dedicated in the beginning of the third century BCE, by the consul L. Postumius Megellus, on the Palatine Hill.[8] Next to this stop, Porcius Cato built a second temple 100 years later, dedicated to Victoria Virgo.[9] In Rome and other Italian cities, and later throughout the whole Roman Empire, temples to Victoria can often be attested by their inscriptions. Moreover, the existence of priests for Victoria is well documented (Vollkommer 1977, 237–238; Yébenes 2007, 221–235). An important annual festival for Victoria was held on the first day of August. The existence of temples, priests, and a festival day clearly indicate a flourishing cult for Victoria in Roman times.

However, even in Roman thinking, as clearly stated by Cicero ("De natura deorum," 3, 61–88"), Victoria is only the messenger whose appearance indicates an upcoming victory, and not the one to determine the victor. Furthermore, Victoria is not the personification of the human power which enables someone to be victorious, Cicero continues. In fact, the goddess Victoria symbolizes an accomplished victory, the final result, but not the means of achieving it. This approach is

[7] Fundamental reading: Hölscher (1967).

[8] Titus Livius, "Ab urbe condita," 10, 33, 9, in Henderson (2006, 484–485).

[9] Titus Livius, "Ab urbe condita," 35, 9, 6 in Sage (1958, 24–25).

Fig. 4 (**a**) Spandrel relief from the Hercules Gate at Ephesus, first half of the fourth century CE. A flying Victoria holds a palm leaf in her right hand and a crown in her left. The opposite spandrel (not shown) contains a mirror image of the figure. Ephesus was an ancient Greek city and, later, a major Roman city, on the west coast of Asia Minor, near present-day Selçuk, Izmir Province, Turkey. Photo by Kai Töpfer. Courtesy of the Archaeological Museum at Selçuk. (**b**) Fragment of a door lintel, second century CE, found at Souweida, present-day Syria. Only one of the original two Victoria figures is preserved, holding a crown which was placed directly in the centre of the opening, above the doorway. The goddess flies while presenting the crown with her right hand and holding a palm leaf in her left. Damascus, Mus. Inv. No.5332. Photo by Kai Töpfer. Courtesy of Syrian National Museum at Damascus

clearly shown, for instance, in images of the Roman triumph, where Victoria is often depicted standing behind the imperator, holding a golden crown over his head (Hölscher 1967, 80–90).

The act of crowning a victor was also the underlying concept of images showing the goddess alone, in a flying position and holding a crown in her outstretched right or left hand (Fig. 4a, b). This motif became very popular on spandrels, especially on triumphal arches, where the act of crowning was related to the imperator himself

and his victorious army. Such imagery was also used to decorate the frames of special passages and doorways where the coronation, the act of being crowned by Victoria, related to the person who used that specific passage in a ceremonial context or, in some cases, even to a god or goddess who was thought to do so. Figures of a crowning Victoria can also be found on niches for statues or on sepulchral monuments.

Because of the great importance of military strength and success for the legitimation of the Roman emperors, images of Victoria were often found in the imagery of the Roman Empire. The prominent role of the goddess in the visual language is underlined by the fact that, even after the rise of Christianity, the goddess continued to be depicted (Vollkommer 1977, 269). The Christianised emperors after Constantine (r. 306–337 CE) and Theodosius I (r. 379–395 CE) used Victoria widely in their official imagery, just as in the tradition of earlier motifs. A Christianised version of a motif originally invented in Greek times, but primarily and frequently used since early Roman times, was very popular. In this version, the goddess is shown in the process of writing successful military campaigns on a shield. In the later Christianised version, Victoria is writing a Chi-Rho, a Christogram formed by superimposing the capital letters Chi and Rho (XP), of the Greek word *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ* ("Christ"), on the shield (Fig. 5a, b) (Hölscher 1967, 98–102). This seems to be a reference to the well-known episode in which Constantine, on the night before the battle at the Milvian bridge, is said to have had a vision of the Christian Cross in combination with the words "In this sign, you will conquer" (Dam 2011, 1–18).

Fig. 5 (**a**) Roman gold coin (Aureus), minted in Rome under the Emperor Lucius Verus. On the reverse Victoria is depicted inscribing a shield with VIC(toria) AVG(usti), 164 CE, RIC 522; BMCRE 294–5. Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XV, Auction 3 January 2012, Lot 1532. (**b**) Roman gold coin (Solidus), minted in Constantinople for the Empress Aelia Pulcheria Augusta. On the reverse, Victoria is shown holding a shield inscribed with a Christogram, 414–419 CE. RIC 205. Stack's Bowers and Ponterio, Sale 163 – N.Y.I.N.C. Auction 6 January 2012, Lot 406

Thus, Victoria remained popular in the official art of the Christian emperors, as well as in sepulchral art. Nevertheless, the goddess was only rarely adapted for ecclesiastical art. Here, the known motifs of triumph were transformed and, in place of Victoria, angels appeared, for example in depictions of Christus Pantokrator, or the triumph of Christ (Schneider 1989, 29–64; Charalampidis 1994, 17–54). Indeed, Victoria and the angels were divine messengers of triumph, but it seems that some kind of separation existed. Victoria continued to indicate military success of the Emperor in the profane world, while angels were created to serve the heavenly sphere.

The Goddess of Victory in Roman Syria

Cross-cultural Developments in the Levant

In ancient times, the Levantine region already played a very important role in maintaining contact between Asia and Europe. Apart from its local tradition, the material culture of this area showed, even before the conquest by the troops of Alexander the Great in the years just before 330 BCE, strong traits of Greek, Persian, and Egyptian art (Sartre 2008, 25–49). After the death of Alexander, Syria was an important part of the Seleucid Empire, even though the southern part was temporarily conquered by the Ptolemys, the rulers of Egypt. In the second and the beginning of the first century BCE, the Seleucid power declined and different kings and empires tried to gain control over this area. The Armenians first conquered the northern part, while the Nabataeans later took over the south. Around 69 BCE, the Romans under Sulla drove away the Armenians, but the southern part still remained Nabataean. After the interlude of the Herodian rule, the majority of this area was incorporated into the Roman Empire, with only small areas in the south and east remaining under the control of the Nabataen Empire, which was well-disposed towards Rome. However, in the early second century CE, this region was ultimately conquered by Trajan.[10]

Against this historical background, it is not surprising that, at least since Hellenistic times, the Greek pantheon and Greek iconography were widespread and well-known. In the following centuries, different forms and levels of adaption and assimilation took place in the Mediterranean, especially regarding the use of the names and iconography of the Greek gods and the adoption of Greek models (Teixidor 1989, 81–95). For instance, the local goddess Allat was identified with different Greek goddesses such as Artemis, Athena, and the muse Urania. Nevertheless, her depictions either recall the iconography of Atargatis or, more frequently, of Athena (Krone 1992; Friedland 2008, 315–350). It seems that the frequent adaptation of Greek and Roman iconography was supported by the fact

[10] To the history of the region cf. Sartre (1989, 31–44) and Rey-Coquais (1989, 45–61).

that many gods in this region were originally worshipped as idols or holy stones, so many of them lacked a strong iconographic tradition (Stewart 2008, 297–314).

Nike/Victoria in the Local Imagery

Based on the previously mentioned observations, it is, in principle, not very surprising to find images of Victoria/Nike, which more or less adopt the known Greek and Roman iconography in this region. However, the number of statues and depictions of Victoria/Nike found in the Levantine region in general is surprisingly high. The findspots include the Hauran area, the cities of the Decapolis and Palmyra, and even Petra. With respect to the examination of cross-cultural entanglements, it is reasonable to focus on a special and very representative group of these depictions, namely the three-dimensional statues of Nike/Victoria found in the Hauran area. All figures in this large and homogeneous group can be dated to the first three centuries CE. In addition, nearly all of them were made of basalt, a local volcanic rock, proving they were locally produced rather than imported (Bellefonds 1997, 879–882 and Dentzer and Weber 2009, 60–64).[11] Since very few Hellenistic era depictions of Nike were found in this area, a local tradition may not be the only explanation for this trend.

Most of these statues were found as fragments without a clear context. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that many of them were erected in sanctuaries, either as votive figures consisting of a single statue, or as parts of larger monuments. An example of a larger monument was found in the sanctuary of Sahr-al-Ledja (Fig. 6) (Dentzer and Weber 2009, 22–88). Six smaller and one larger horsemen stood on one side of the top of a large square base, flanked by two pillars with statues of the goddess of victory on the top. On the other side, figures of two chariots had been placed, presumably driven by gods and also flanked by pillars with figures of Victoria. The larger horseman can probably be identified as a local ruler (Dentzer and Weber 2009, 71–88). Thus, even though the position of the statues of Victoria is remarkable, the function of the goddess as companion of the ruler, as well as of the other gods, is understandable and familiar from Greek and Roman art.

More surprising is the significant number of individual statues of Victoria, erected in various sanctuaries of local significance. Only a few of them still bear inscriptions, but those preserved neither refer to specific military or private success, nor to Nike or Victoria herself. Most of these statues only mention the name of the dedicator; others praise the gods venerated in the respective sanctuaries. However, there are no clear hints of syncretism between Victoria and a local goddess. Indeed, a few sanctuaries were ascribed to the goddess of victory by modern scholars but, in fact, the only supporting evidence for these assignments consists of the depictions and statues of Victoria found in the context of these temples. Finally, there is no

[11] At present, in most cases, it is not feasible to give exact dates within the first three centuries CE.

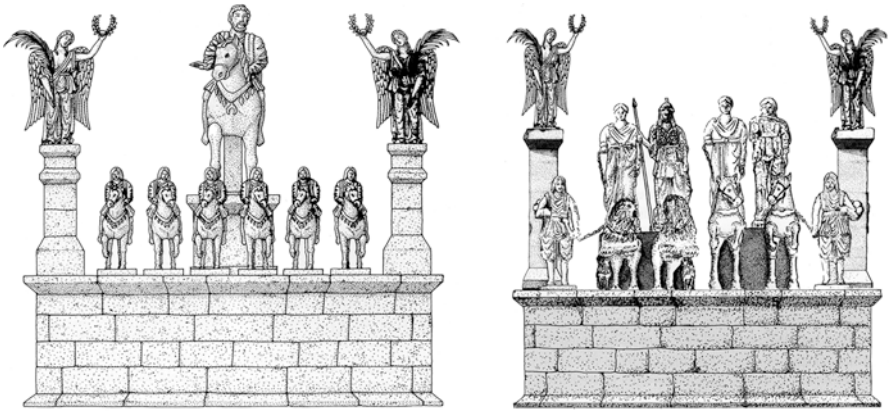

Fig. 6 Great monument in Sahr-al-Ledja. The figures of Victoria stood on high pillars. The goddess is shown crowning the prominent central rider on the *left* and gods in chariots on the *right*. Late first century CE. Sketches of reconstruction made by Fayez Ayash. Source: Jean-Maire Dentzer and Thomas Maria Weber 2009, 45, Fig. 66, and 72, Fig. 120

indication that all of these statues were erected as victory monuments reminiscent of Greek sanctuaries. In addition, literal and epigraphic sources do not mention the surprisingly high appeal of Victoria as a subject.

Accordingly, in order to understand these figures better, the focus must be on the iconography. The statues can be classified into two main iconographic schemes (Dentzer and Weber 2009, 60–64). One scheme depicts the goddess with a Greek-inspired garment, a Peplos, belted beneath her breast (Fig. 7a). The knot in her belt, a so-called Heracles knot, which is not very common in Greek and Roman images of the goddess,[12] is remarkable. The second scheme (Fig. 7b) is called the Amazon type, due to the goddess's exposed right breast, which is well-known from depictions of Amazons. Furthermore, it is a typical element in the iconography of the goddess Roma, the personification of Rome, and of Virtus, the Roman personification of military strength.[13] In contrast to an uncovered left breast, which represents fast movement and disarrayed clothing, seen for example in the Nike of Paionios in Olympia (Fig. 2), an uncovered right breast refers, in the case of a female figure, to a readiness to act and fight.

Most of the Syrian statues show Victoria standing on a half or full sphere or globe. This motif of Victoria on top of a globe was very popular in Roman art, since the first emperor Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) had brought a statue of this type from Tarentum to Rome and placed it in the Curia, the house of the Roman senate

[12] In Roman art, this knot appears frequently in the context of Hercules but also as the knot of the cingulum of high-ranked military officers. Therefore, Laxander (2003, 584) argues that this knot was adapted from Roman art and must be understood as a symbol of military triumph. However, this form of knotting a girdle has a long tradition in Persian art, too.

[13] Wenning (1986, 113–129) shows, that the usage of the Amazon-type for personifications of cities in the Roman Near East was clearly inspired by the iconography of Roma and Virtus.

Fig. 7 (**a**) Statue of Victoria, now in the garden of the Damascus Museum. The figure represents one of the two iconographic schemes used for statues of Victoria in Roman Syria. The goddess wears a Peplos and a belt with a Heracles knot. In her left hand she holds a cornucopia (partly broken). Photo by Kai Töpfer. (**b**) Victoria from Souweida. The goddess stands on a globe, her right breast is exposed. The inscription says that Asmathos, son of Solymos, has dedicated the statue. The figure represents the second iconographic scheme. The motif of the nearly invisible clothing around the belly is adapted from earlier models such as the Nike of Olympia in Fig. 2. Damascus, Mus. Inv. No. 10018/11687/C 4221/5215. Photo by Kai Töpfer

(Hölscher 1967, 6–47). The statue from Tarentum might have originally been made for the Hellenistic king Pyrrhus. However, it is unlikely that its globe was added until Augustus transferred the sculpture to Rome, because in Hellenistic art a globe under the feet of Nike is nearly unprecedented (Hölscher 1967, 12–17).[14] Therefore, as with the specific dress with an uncovered right breast, even the globes or spheres of the aforementioned Syrian statues must have been inspired by Roman models, and cannot be explained by Hellenistic influence. Hence, even the outstanding popularity of Victoria in Roman Syria must be seen in the context of the expansion of Roman rule or at least Roman art.

Image Adaptation in the Context of Local Religious Concepts: Victoria–Tyche–Gad

Against this background, attention should be given to an iconographic detail, the addition of which seems to be a local invention. Some figures are equipped with a cornucopia (Fig. 8a, b) as their attribute which, in Greek and Roman art, is only rarely arrtibuted to Nike or Victoria (Dentzer and Weber 2009, 4).

This attribute is usually connected with the goddesses of fortune, Tyche or Fortuna. Moreover, the cornucopia appears in images glorifying Roman power, namely as a symbol of wealth resulting from Roman rule. For visualizing this concept, figures of Tyche/Fortuna, as well as of individual cornucopias, were widespread in the Roman visual language. Hence, the addition of this element to some figures of Victoria in Syria could be explained as a concise representation of the aforementioned idea, namely that overall wealth was attributable to the security assured by the dominance and everlasting victory of Rome. Thus, Victoria could have been perceived as the goddess who guarantees Roman rule and, with it, the achieved wealth.

Even with this explanation, however, the high number of statues erected by individuals in more or less small local sanctuaries remains surprising. Nowhere else in the Roman Empire can one find such a high concentration of single statues of Victoria or similar images glorifying Roman rule. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that all these figures were erected primarily to thank and praise the gods for Roman rule.

The addition of the cornucopia also indicates an understanding of Victoria as a goddess connected with fortune and luck. These aspects were very popular in the Levantine region, as part of a religious concept, in particular in their conception of the god, or rather the divine power Gad respectively Gadde.[15] Gad was the

[14] The only earlier depiction known showing what is perhaps a globe under the feet of Victoria is a painting from the tomb of Dazihonas at Gnathia (Italy), dating to the early third century BCE. Cf. Hölscher (1967, 15–16). Whether the sphere under Victoria is really a globe or rather a knob for the shoulder flap, on which the goddess is depicted, remains uncertain.

[15] For Gad cf. Hörig (1979, 166–173) and Dirven (1999, 101).

Fig. 8 (**a**) Statue of Victoria from Khirbet Ramadan. The wings, now lost, were originally made separately and doweled into the holes in the back. The figure holds a cornucopia whose addition seems to reflect local beliefs. Late second or early third century CE. Damascus, Mus. Inv. No. 2504/5066. Photo by Weber. (**b**) Statue of Victoria with cornucopia, findspot unknown. The wings have been lost. Second or third century CE. Damascus, Mus. Photo by Kai Töpfer

pansemitic god of fortune but also a protective god of specific localities such as cities, mountains, or even houses, as well as of groups and individuals. Gad is usually depicted as a man—though there are also female depictions—and it seems as though no strict iconographic rules ever existed for him. Gad could even be represented with the iconography of other gods, but this does not mean that those gods took over the function of Gad—the iconography of those gods was simply seen as a fitting image for Gad.

In this context, a closer look at the famous so-called Tyche of Antiochia (Fig. 9), a statue that was created in the very early third century BCE in Antiochia on the Orontes in Syria (Meyer 2006, 5–120), could be fruitful. This statue was often copied, frequently adapted, and conceived as the personification of the city, showing on the one hand a female figure with a mural crown as the personified city and, on the other hand, the natural setting of the city in the form of a rock and personified river. It was only in later years, probably not before the second century BCE, that this figure was named and seen as Tyche (Meyer 2006, 335–378). According to Marion Meyer, this process has to be understood as a transfer, by which the idea of a

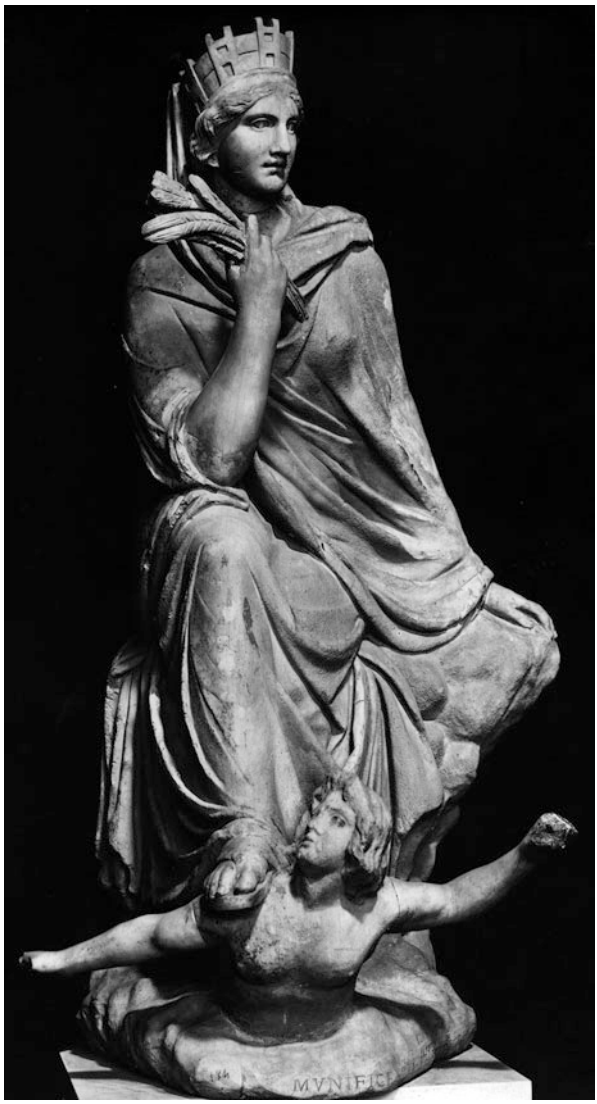

Fig. 9 Roman copy of the so-called Tyche of Antiochia. The female figure of the personified city is seated on a rock, her right foot on the personified river Orontes. The composition of the figure reflects the natural setting of the city. Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Inv. No. 2672. Photo by Photoarchiv Alinari 6497

personal Tyche was adapted into the concept of a Tyche of a specific group, namely of a city (Meyer 2006, 342–348). In her point of view, this process has to be seen as rooted in a Greek way of thinking (Meyer 2006, 350).

However, one has to keep in mind that the local semitic concept of Gad as a protective god of individuals, groups, and locations appears to be much older. Against this background, it was probably not by chance that the concept of Tyche as a protective god of a city was developed in the Levantine region alone, even though Greek influence cannot be denied, especially concerning the visual representation of this idea. Altogether, it seems likely that the figure of the personified

city Antiocheia was first interpreted by the local population as Gad of the city, before this concept was transferred, through the Greek way of thinking, to Tyche of the city.

The widespread and popular belief in Gad could even be responsible for the popularity of the goddess Victoria in Roman Syria.[16] Because of her iconography and her role in Roman imagery, in particular her depiction in connection with specific individuals, she might have appeared primarily as a protective goddess. She certainly remains a symbol of victory, but this concept could be easily applied to different aspects of social life and related to individual persons and groups. Thus, it seems possible that, in Roman Syria, Victoria was understood in a more general way as guarantor of a specific aspect of fortune, namely all political and private victories, the resulting wealth of which is in some cases expressed by the addition of a cornucopia to the established iconography of Victoria. From this point of view at least, the extraordinarily high number of statues of this goddess dedicated in different sanctuaries seems to be more understandable. In order to verify this idea, new findings of inscriptions could be particularly helpful.

Nike/Victoria: A Powerful Transcultural Image

As mentioned above, few of the sculptures of Victoria found in Roman Syria are equipped with inscriptions and those that do have inscriptions usually only give the names of the dedicators. Thus, at present, only the iconography of the figures can be investigated in order to gain a better understanding of which beliefs and concepts were visualized with these depictions. As shown above, this method led to the assumption that, in Roman Syria, the winged goddess Nike/Victoria was most likely understood in a specific way, inspired or at least affected by local beliefs. Victoria was probably no longer exclusively seen as the divine messenger in the context of a victory, but as a personal protector of specific individuals and groups, guaranteeing their success. Presumably it was this point of view which was responsible for the goddess's extraordinary appeal, and may have been what prompted the production and veneration of such a large number of figures of her in this region.

The religious concept behind the Syrian figures of Victoria, as well as the phenomenon of their special attractiveness, seems to be relevant to the overarching research question of this volume, namely the creation, development, and visualization of winged spirits in later times, and in other regions, especially further east. Without a doubt, the image of the winged goddess Nike/Victoria was the dominating iconographic model for later depictions of angels and other winged spirits.

[16] Cf. Bellefonds (1997, 879–882). Bellefonds already argued that the concept behind the Syrian figures of Nike must be something like a Nike-Tyche, and that the local belief in Gad could be relevant for a proper understanding.

In addition, the Roman Near East was the most important zone of contact between Asia and Europe in ancient times and therefore, without question, of great importance for conveying iconographic models between the East and the West.

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The Iconography of Zoroastrian Angelology in Sasanian Art and Architecture

Shervin Farridnejad

Abstract Historical depictions of angels are a suitable means of tracing transculturality in the ancient world. For more than four centuries, and as far as the end of late antiquity, two great world powers, the Sasanian Empire, the last pre-Islamic Persian empire, and its neighbor, the Roman Empire, ruled the Near East and the Mediterranean—sometimes as well-disposed partners and, sometimes as rivals. Choosing Zoroastrianism as the empire-wide religion, Sasanians developed and complemented their in-house religious iconographic canon. The Sasanian canon contains some iconographical elements borrowed from previous or neighboring cultures, which the Sasanian artists translated, alongside their own creations and "iranianized" in a proper Zoroastrian mode. The cultural legacy of the Sasanians in turn became a great source of inspiration for medieval art and architecture both in Europe and Asia. In this article, significant examples from the religious canon of Sasanian iconography are studied in reference to the cross-cultural entanglements of angels.

Zoroastrian Angels: Term and Function

Zoroastrianism, named after its prophet Zarathustra, is one of the world's oldest religions. It is the religion of the Iranian peoples and dates back to the second millennium BCE, in Central Asia.[1] When worshippers moved to the Iranian mainland, it became the religion of three great empires, the Achaemenids (550–330 BCE), the Parthians (247 BCE–224 CE), and the Sasanians (224–651 CE). Zoroastrianism is still a living religion in Iran, western India and Pakistan, as well as in the western diaspora.

[1] For a general and brief introduction and selection of texts, cf. Skjærvø (2011) and Boyce (2006).

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Zoroastrianism has a wide range of different spiritual beings besides its supreme god, Ahura Mazdā, who represents an angel-like concept. For the purposes of this article, angels will be defined from a theological view as "spiritual beings who mediate between the transcendental realm of the sacred and profane world of man" (Coudert 1987, 282). Although the use of the term "angel" in Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) may differ from Zoroastrianism in some aspects, some of the main concepts are the same. Today, many scholars believe that the concept of the angel in Judaism after the Babylonian exile (as well as later, in Christianity and Islam) was taken from Zoroastrianism (Boyce, Grenet 1991, 404–405, 411, 419–421). This likelihood allows us to compare concepts among these cultures and observe their similarities as a successful example of transcultural phenomena.[2] The function of angels—at least in religions based on revelation, Zoroastrianism among them—which emphasizes the gap between God and man, is to mediate between heaven and the earth (Coudert 1987, 282–3). This main function, inter alia, is my initial point regarding the identification of "Zoroastrian angelology" and its related iconography of religious "Sasanian art," which shall be investigated first.

Sasanians and the Term "Sasanian Art"

The term "Sasanian art"[3] implies a variety of categories including cultural, geographical, historical, ethnic or religious aspects, as well as places and objects which are all categorized as and characterized by artistic and creative works. Sasanian art refers more specifically to the art produced by an ethnic aggregation within Iranian nations, namely the Sāsān family in Persis (NP. *fārs*), as well as ultimately the art of a great dynasty and power of late antiquity that, for more than 400 years, stretched from the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire to the Indian subcontinent.[4] The Sasanian Empire (MP. *Ērānšahr*) was founded by Ardašīr I (224–239/40 CE) after he defeated the last Arsacid king of kings, Artabanus IV (213–224), and declined with the last Sasanian king of kings, Yazdgird III (632–642). In regard to its cross-cultural negotiations with the Roman civilization, the Sasanian Empire marks one of the most important and influential historical periods of late antiquity.[5]

[2] A short bibliography on this matter is found in Gray (1929, 1–2).

[3] For a general overview of Sasanian art cf. Erdmann 1937; Schippmann 1990, 107–139, Harper 1978; Shepherd 1983; Harper 1981; Harper 1983; Harper 1987, 585–94.

[4] For an overview on the history of Iran in the Sasanian Era cf. Christensen 1944; Daryaee 2008. For a sociological-historical overview cf. Daryaee 2009; and for a very brief but informative introduction in German cf. Schippmann 1990.

[5] For some aspects of cultural exchanges between Sasanians and Romans cf. Canepa (2009).

Far beyond their political borders, from Western Europe to North Africa, China, and India, the Sasanian cultural heritage has always played an important role in the formation and development of both European and Asiatic medieval art and architecture, and was influential throughout the Islamic ages.

The proper definition of the term "Sasanian art" refers to the art of the court of the Sasanian Empire produced from 224 to 650 CE. This body of work commonly includes both courtly art as well as propaganda art of the Sasanian kings, covering a range of geographical and historical realms. But Sasanian art communicates more than this. It is, for example, simultaneously Zoroastrian art, and possesses many impressive and remarkable spiritual dimensions. I will address this Zoroastrian aspect of Sasanian art first.

The Concept of Spiritual Beings or the So-Called "Angels" in Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism, as the most eminent Iranian religion and, specifically, as the official religion of the Sasanian Empire in the course of late antiquity in western Asia and the Mediterranean region, has left an important imprint on the genesis of the *weltanschaung* of Iranians and their neighbors over the past millennia. Sasanian art depicts and is marked by Zoroastrian beliefs and ideology and can be better understood within the frame of Zoroastrianism in both their official theological and folk religious forms. The angel-like figures—*yazata*s ("the adorable ones")—or deities are one of the main elements within Zoroastrian cosmogony and theology. As a result, *yazata*s are the key to understanding the concept of angels both in the Iranian realm and the world that adopted significant cultural aspects from it. This may also lead to another understanding of the iconography of Sasanian art, which was and is one of the most controversial topics in the field of Iranian studies and art history.

Zoroastrianism recognizes various classes of spiritual beings besides the supreme being Ahura Mazdā[6]: the divine heptad *amə̄ša spə̄ntas*[7] and the major and minor deities, the *yazata*s and *frauuaṣ̌i*s.[8] In practice, every fifteen year-old Zoroastrian has to choose a patron angel for her or his protection (Dhabhar 1909, 22) and through worship, meditation, and acts/efforts, endeavors to always carry the angel with him or her.

[6] On Ahura Mazdā cf. Boyce (1984, 684–7).

[7] On *amə̄ša spə̄nta* cf. Boyce (1989, 933–6), Narten (1982).

[8] On *frauuaṣ̌i* cf. (Boyce 2001; 2001a, b).

Zoroastrian Angelology

Av. *amәša spәṇta* (MP. *amešāspand, [a]mahraspand)*

The term *amәša spәṇta* applies to Ahura Mazdā himself, and to all the divine beings he has brought into existence (Boyce 1989, 933–6), including *frauuaṣi*s and *yazata*s and literally means "beneficent immortals" or "immortal holy ones." These are the highest spiritual beings created by Ahura Mazdā, and they work with him as "archangels" or "ministering angels" (Dhalla 1972, 26), helping to overcome all evil. As the *Yašts*, hymns to lesser divine beings, confine the list to a divine heptad, *amәša spәṇta* is used more often in a restricted sense, to refer to the greatest of them,[9] as follows (Narten 1982, 1): Each of the *amәša spәṇta* is also connected with one of Ahura Mazdā's good creations[10]: Av. *vohu- manah-*/MP *wahman* ("good mind" or "good purpose") presides over cattle and their associated products (e.g. Y.33.6, 28.1, 31.10); Av. *aša- vahišta-*/MP *ardwahisht* ("best righteousness"/"best order") presides over truth (*aša*) and fire (e.g., Y.34.4, 43.4, 9); Av. *xšaθra- vairiia-*/MP *šahrēwar* ("desirable dominion"/"well-deserved command") presides over metals[11]; Av. *spәṇta- ārmaiti-*/MP *spandārmad* ("holy devotion"/"life-giving humility") presides over the earth (e.g., Y.30.7, 47.3); Av. *hauruuatāt*/MP *hordād* ("wholeness") presides over water; Av. *amәrәtāt*/MP *amurdād* ("immortality") presides over the plants (e.g., Y.33.8, 34.11, 51.7).

Together with Ahura Mazdā at their head, who is linked to the "just man" (Y.33.6), these six form the divine heptad and can be interpreted in abstract terms as well as personified as concrete beings.

Av. *frauuaṣi-* (MP. *frawahr)*

*Frauuaṣi*s can be understood as man's immortal soul as well as each person's guardian angel (MacKenzie 1971, 33). In Zoroastrianism, each person is accompanied by a guardian angel (Y.26.4, 55.1) which acts as a guide throughout life. These angels originally patrolled the boundaries of the ramparts of heaven,[12] but volunteer to descend to earth to accompany individuals until the end of their days. Ahura Mazdā advises Zarathuštra to invoke them for help whenever he finds himself in danger (Yt.13.19–20). If it were not for their guardianship, animals and people could not have

[9] Also cf. Boyce (1989, 933–6).

[10] In *Šāyest nē-šāyest* (ŠnŠ XV.5) we can read: "(In) that material world of Mine, I who am Ōhrmazd, (preside over) the just man, and Wohuman over cattle, and Ardwahišt over fire, and Šahrewar over metals, and Spandarmad over earth and virtuous woman, and Hordad over waters, and Amurdad over plants." Cf. Kotwal (1969, 58–9).

[11] For the evidences regarding this link cf. Boyce (1989, 933–6).

[12] *Bundahišn* VIa. 2–3, cf. Pakzad (2005, 89–90).

continued to exist, because the wicked "lie" (Av. *drūj-*) (Kellens 1996, 562–3) would have destroyed them all (Yt.13.12–13).

These *frauuašī*s are the celestial prototypes of all created beings, the guardian angels of believers. They possess a dual character or nature: angels on the one hand and, on the other, beings with human qualities, attributes, and thoughts (Davidson 1971, 112). The *frauuašī*s also serve as an ideal towards which the soul must strive and, ultimately, after death, become one with the souls they protect (e.g. Y.16.7, 26.7, 26.11, 71.23, Yt.22.39) (Dhalla 1977, 232–234 and 375–378).

Av. *yazata* (MP. *yazad*)

The rest of the *aməša spəṇta*s excluded from the divine heptad, are classified as *yazata*s, which literally means "adorable ones" or "ones worthy of worship."[13] Using the term "angel" for Iranian *yazata*s is a controversial debate among Iranists. Mary Boyce and other scholars believe that the position and function of *yazata*s make them conceptually similar to the angels of Semitic monotheistic religions, but suggest the term *yazata* should remain untranslated (Boyce 1975, 196). On the other hand, some scholars and specifically Pārsi and Irāni scholar-priests do use the angel terminology (Dhalla 1972, 26ff., 87ff., 96ff.; 'Ušidari 1992/1371, 368). Regarding the main definition of angels and being aware of differences between some aspects of angels in Semitic religion terminology versus Zoroastrianism, the term "angels" will be used here to express the general concept of heavenly beings under Ahura Mazdā, i.e. the Zoroastrian *yazata*s. Generally, *yazata* is a collective term for all the Zoroastrian divine beings. These are deities worthy of being honored or praised and who, like the heptad *aməša spəṇta*s, can personify abstract ideas and virtues, or concrete objects in nature. *Yazata*s can be defined as direct or indirect emanations of Ahura Mazdā and can be considered as hypostatizing his qualities or attributes (Boyce 2001, 22). *Yazata*s also try to help people and protect them from evil (Dk.3, 66; cf. de Menasc 1973, 50–9, 71ff.). Although the title *aməša spəṇta* may be applied to any of these divinities, *yazata* is usually reserved for the lesser ones (Boyce 2001, 22).

[13] Pokorny considers *Yazata-*, *yaz-*, *yasna*, *yájati*, *yajñá*, ἅγιος to all be derivatives of a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root *i̯ag*ʲ- (*i̯ag′-*) "*religiös verehren*" ("religiously venerate"), cf. Pokorny (1959).

Angels in Sasanian Art: Notes on Their Iconography

The question of which of the Zoroastrian angels or deities are depicted in Sasanian art is controversial among scholars. In terms of depicting angelic groups of deities, not many anthropomorphic depictions of the archangels or *amәšа spәnta*s have been identified. A rare example of those depictions, as identified and discussed by Franz Grenet (1986 and 1993), can be found on Sogdian ossuaries of the eighth century. Apart from this example, the presence of *amәšа spәnta*s in Sasanian art is limited to other non-anthropomorphic images and attributes which must be discussed separately.

Most Indo-Iranian gods, deities, and angels, however, possess anthropomorphic features, and most of the known anthropomorphic, angelic representations of Zoroastrian deities belong to the common *yazata*s and *frauuašį*s. Furthermore, with respect to iconographic matters, the depiction of supernatural beings in Sasanian art and architecture can be divided into two groups: those with and those without wings. In general, when observing their depictions in Iranian art from the Persian Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550–330 BCE) to the Sasanian Empire, it is possible to say that in most cases the presence of wings is among the iconographic elements of the so-called mixed and/or mythical creatures and, to a lesser extent, to the gods or deities, especially in their anthropomorphic forms.

Ahura Mazdā, Mithra, and Anāhitā are the main *yazata*s whose anthropomorphic depictions can be found on Sasanian rock reliefs (Herrmann and Sarkhosh Curtis, 2002; Jacobs 2006; Bier 1989). The main scenes in which they appear are the so-called investiture scenes,[14] in which a king receives the ring of glory, *xᵛarənah*, from Ahura Mazdā or Anāhitā. The *yazata*s are shown mostly in a frontal position and in profile and, rarely from the front or in a three-quarter profile. In all of these cases, the figures appear static and are firmly rooted to the ground. This is not the case, however, with the angels on the toreutics where these figures can also be found dancing and floating. The figurative, decorated silver and gold vessels (Grabar 1967; Harper 1981) boast a rich display of angelic deities. From this group, I am going to investigate the so-called dancing girls, whose iconography has been the subject of debate.[15]

The *frauuašį*s, as we will see later, appear mostly in winged anthropomorphic forms. Among the most prominent examples of anthropomorphic winged figures in Sasanian art are those found on the arch of the greater *īwān*[16] of Tāq-e Bostān in Kermānšāh, in the western part of Iran. Other examples are naked male winged figures on Sasanian silver vessels, which can also be identified as personifications of

[14] On investiture and investiture scenes cf. Brosius et al. (2006, 180–8).

[15] For more details on different views—secular, religious, or erotic—regarding the "dancing girl" cf. Ettinghausen (1967), and also Sarre (1922); also Bier (1989).

[16] *Īwān* is a typically Iranian rectangular type of construction, which consists of a vaulted rectangular hall, walled on three sides and open on one end. Cf. Grabar (1989, 153–5).

frauuaṣ̌is.[17] Apart from the two geniuses of Tāq-ē Bostān, no other anthropomorphic winged figures have been found on Sasanian architecture. The anthropomorphic appearances of gods or angels are denoted with other attributes and distinguishing features. Besides the seals, the main sources for pictorial depictions of winged figures in Sasanian art include bullae, amulets, toreutics, textiles, and coins.

*Yazata*s Depicted in Sasanian Toreutics and Rock Reliefs

Dancing Girls

The dancing or floating female figures—in most cases naked or clad in diaphanous garments—on numerous Sasanian bowls and vessels are titled, in the earliest theory by Ernst Herzfeld, as "dancing girls."[18] This assumption seems to be generally correct, but Herzfeld neither identifies the figures, in particular the attributes and symbols carried by them, nor does he make any suggestions regarding their function and importance. These figures are accompanied by different attributes, such as birds, children, foxes, bears, floral patterns, bunches of grapes and vines, vessels, etc. and in some cases they appear within an architectural composition of arcades and columns (Bier 1989).

Based on a boat-shaped bowl from the seventh century[19] preserved in The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (Fig. 1),[20] its main scene depicting a king receiving homage by courtiers and/or a deity, with two nude female dancers with scarves (Fig. 2), Roman Ghirshman reasons that the dancing female figures in this "banquet scene,"[21] (Harper 1978, 216) are "court dancers" (Ghirshman 1953, 54).

I would like to abandon the theory of secular interpretation of the dancing figures shown on Sasanian bowls and vessels. Richard Ettinghausen mentions that, beside other non-representational elements of the scene, the fact that the female images are shown to be larger[22] than the king may indicate that it is a symbolic matter rather than a normal profane staging of courtly life. The most widely held theory on the iconography of the Sasanian vessels' female nudes has been presented by Hovsep

[17] However, not discussed in this paper, there is another group of nude, wingless, male figures which I identify as personifications of "*apąm napāt*."

[18] Cf. Ettinghausen (1967, 36).

[19] Although associated with silver vessels made in Iran during the Sasanian dynasty (224–651 CE), the vessel's shape and decoration suggest that this object dates from the early Islamic era.

[20] Cf. Harper (1981, Pl. 36).

[21] The dancing female figures are identified as being either totally or partially female nudes in erotic scenes, cf. Ghirshman (1953, 54).

[22] In the hierarchical imagery system of the art of ancient orientals, the proportions of the figures, as well as objects in some cases, are crucial in declaring the significance of power.

Fig. 1 Boat-shaped silver bowl (8 × 26.2 × 9.5 cm), hammered and carved, Iran, seventh century. Carved in relief with engraved and chased details. The main scene shows an enthroned king receiving homage, flanked on the right by a courtier and on the left by a noble or princely figure, or a deity holding a diadem. The bowl is adorned with dancing figures, whose scarves (*left* and *right*) wave backward toward the main scene. Source: The Walters Art Museum Baltimore. Photo published in Harper (1981), 237, Plate 36

Fig. 2 Dancing figures (details of the boat-shaped silver bowl in Fig. 1) carved/cast in relief with engraved and chased details. The dancers swing long scarves, their ends flying backward toward the main scene with the king. The dancers' hairstyles, as well as the ribbons on the diadems, strongly suggest divine aspects. Source: The Walters Art Museum Baltimore. Photo published in Harper (1981), 237, Plate 36

Abgari Orbeli, followed and extended by Dorothy Shepherd (1964, 1980). Two prominent examples of vessels showing dancing female figures are a silver bottle from Iran with a gilded background, probably from the fourth or early fifth century[23] (Fig. 3), and another one from the fifth or sixth century, which is now housed in the Musée du Louvre[24] in Paris (Fig. 4).

Both vessels show four dancing figures, each holding different attributes. Orbeli has identified the dancing figures as the Iranian *yazata* Anāhitā. Shepherd,

[23] Cf. Ettinghausen (1967, 28–29, plate 1–4).

[24] Cf. Martiniani-Reber and Bénazeth (1997, 105, plate 43).

Fig. 3 Dancing figures on a vase with gilded background, Iran, probably fourth or fifth century. Two of four dancing figures can be seen. The different objects carried by each figure are attributes connected to the four aspects for which the Iranian *yazata* Anāhitā is responsible, namely water, vegetation, agriculture and fertility. The diadems are attributes of divine beings. Source: Virginia Museum. Photo published in Ettinghausen 1967, 29, Figs. 3 and 4

expanding on this theory, interpreted the symbolization of the different objects carried by each figure, as well as their attributes, according to the four aspects for which Anāhitā is responsible, namely water, vegetation, agriculture, and fertility.[25] The topknot and diadem of this figure, as attributes of deities, are important features which support this theory's validity. The main obstacle to this theory might be the Avestan record of Anāhitā in her hymn, Yašt 5, in which she has been described as a beautiful young maiden with firm and large breasts, clad in a beaver mantel, and wearing a jeweled crown (Gray 1929, 55 ff.) as in Yt.5.78:

[25] Cf. Martiniani-Reber and Bénazeth (1997, 105, plate 43). The goddess is also reponsible for the warriors. No attribute of this aspect of her in this context is available.

Fig. 4 Dancing figures on a vase with gilded background, Iran (probably Reshy, Deylamān), fifth or sixth century. The *yazata* Anāhitā with bird and mythical plant attributes. These attributes, as well as the scene composition marked by a beaded line on the upper part, point to a divine figure. This form of vessels belongs to the typical fashion of the second half of the Sasanian Era. Source: Le Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités Orientales, Paris. Photo published in *Les Perses Sassanides: Fastes d'un empire oublié (224–642)* 2006, 105, Obj. 43

> Arədwī Sura Anāhitā flowed up to (him) in the form of a beautiful, very strong maiden, well built, high girdled, erect, noble in respect to (her) illustrious lineage, dressed in golden shoes, who was completely adorned, splendid. Some waters she made stand still, the others she (made) flow onward. She left a dry passage across good Wītahwaitī (Malandra 1983, 126).[26]

[26] The original reads as follows: *upa.tacaṯ. arəduuī. sūra. anāhita./kaininō. kəhrpa. srīraiiå./ašamaiiå. huraoδaiiå./uskāṯ. yāstaiiå. ərəzuuaiϑiiō./raēuuaṯ. ciϑrəm. āzātaiiå./zaraniia. aoϑra. paitišmuxta./yā. vīspō.pīsa. bāmiia./arəmaēštå. aniiå. āpō. kərənaoṯ./fraša. aniiå. fratacaṯ./hušk̨əm. pəṣ̌um. raēcaiiaṯ./tarō. vaŋuhīm. vītaŋuhaitīm.*

Also, Yt.5.123:

> Good Arədwī Sura Anāhitā stands, wearing a golden plastron (beaver pelt mantle), yearning for the prayer at the libation, thinking this in her mind (Malandra 1983, 129).[27]

Elsewhere in Yt.5.127 we read:

> Holding *barəsman*[28] in her hand in the correct way, showing off her four-lobed golden earrings, Arədwī Sura Anāhitā of good birth is wont to wear a necklace about her beautiful throat. She laces herself around the waist both so that (her) breasts (maybe) well-formed and so that they swell out (Malandra 1983, 129–30).[29]

On the other hand, we know of her representation on two Sasanian rock reliefs: one in an investiture scene of Xusrō II (590–628), in the tallest grotto at Tāq-e Bostān (Fig. 5), on a series of stone capitals from the same site,[30] and one at Naqš-e Rostam. Both the description of the goddess in her Avestan hymn and representations of her on plastic arts should be seen as allegorical and metaphorical accounts. The artists did not feel the need to depict her as she was described in literary or religious texts. Each of those iconographic types has been considered and planned in different contexts for different reasons and is understandable only within the context of the Zoroastrian religious structure of Sasanian society and state. The expectation of finding a detailed parallel representation of the deity as mentioned in Avestan text in Sasanian visual sources is an inexperienced expectation and likely cannot be met. The images and texts in ancient oriental conventions were always supposed to complete and accompany but not represent, reproduce or imitate each other.

The female figures on Sasanian vessels have, in most cases, been illustrated in a so-called hedonic scene. Even if their hedonic accounts are not directly present in the Avestan and Middle Persian Zoroastrian corpus, we are well aware of such hedonic cults in ancient Iran because they are mentioned in various sources, among them the Persian Book of the Kings, *Šāhnāme*. The so-called pre-Zoroastrian cult of nude goddesses has a long-known history in western Iran and Mesopotamia which makes a syncretistic composition of two or more figures possible. Many of the iconographical features of Anāhitā are comparable with those of old Egyptian-old Syriac Anat and the ancient Mesopotamian Innana/Ištar.[31]

According to another theory regarding such naked female figures, Alexander Strelkoff and Jean Duchesne-Guillemin count them as priestesses of Anāhitā, rendering homage to her by dancing a ritualistic dance (Duchesne-Guillemin 1971, 377–388 (Planche I–XI)). Subsequently, Kurt Erdmann and Lars-Ivar

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[27] The original reads as follows: *zaranaēnəm. paiti.dānəm./vaŋuhi. hištaite. dražimnō./arəduuī. sūra. anāhita./zaoθre. vācim. paitišmarəmna./auuaŋ. manaŋha. mainimna.*

[28] *Barəsman* or *barsom* is the sacred twig bundle which is an important part of the Zoroastrian liturgical apparatus, cf. Kanga (1988, 825–7).

[29] The original reads as follows: *bāδa. yaθa.mąm./barəsmō.zasta./frā.gaošāuuara. sīspəmna./caθru.karana. zaranaēni:/minum. baraŋ. huuāzāta./arəduuī. sūra. anāhita./upa. tąm. srīrąm./manaoθrim:/hā. hē. maiδim. niiāzata./yaθaca. hukərəpta. fštāna./yaθaca. aŋhən. niuuāzāna.*

[30] For a detailed description of the capitals cf. Compareti (2006).

[31] On the Babylonian-Akkadian goddess cf. Zgoll (2003), Wegner (1991), Meinhold (2009), Levit-Tawil (1992).

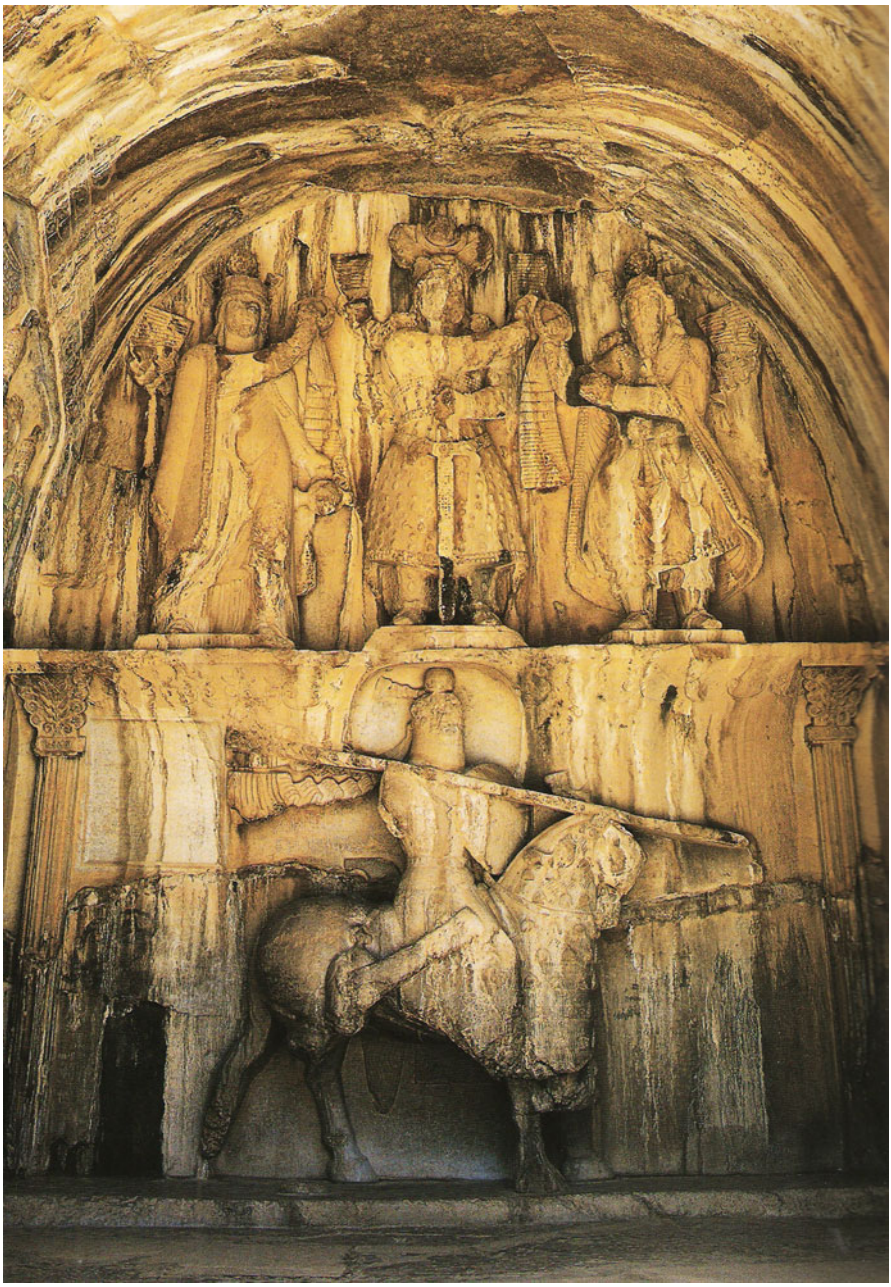

Fig. 5 The great *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān. Investiture scene of Xusrō II (590–628) in the tallest grotto, Kermānšāh, Iran. The upper part of the central scene depicts the investiture of Xusrō II (590–628). The king is standing in the middle, the *yazata* Anāhitā stands to the right of the king, and the Zoroastrian supreme god Ahura Mazdā to his left. In keeping with the most important attributes of a water goddess, Anāhitā pours water from a vessel she holds in one hand and a ribbon-decorated ring, symbolizing divine glory and power (*xᵛarənah*) in the other. The lower part of the scene features a mounted warrior, an allegory for the armed *frauuaṣ̌i*s, the Zoroastrian guardian angels. Photo by Shervin Farridnejad, IIS Archive

Ringbom see them as Anāhitā's attendants and/or hierodules (Ringbom 1957). Many of the hedonic scenes are interpreted as Dionysian or Bacchic imagery in Parthian and Sasanian Iran. The great popularity of these scenes is remarkable given that a real trace of such a Dionysian cult in Sasanian Iran has not been found. Furthermore, the imagery of Dionysus/Baccus himself is absent. On the other hand, this may contrast with the popularity of wine drinking ceremonies in Persian courts, which have been well-illustrated in Pahlavi literature, as well as the Persian Book of Kings. We can agree with Ettinghausen that, even if a kind of Baccus cult had existed within the boundaries of Iran, it was later assimilated into an Anāhitā/Anāhīt cult or some sort of fertility cult. In this way, it could be possible to interpret those attributes as implying a hedonic cult of Bacchus (Ettinghausen 1967).

Frauuašis Depicted in Sasanian Rock Reliefs and Toreutics

Winged figures of Tāq-e Bostān

As mentioned before, the *frauuašis* are the only anthropomorphic winged deities to have been identified in Sasanian religious art to date.[32] Both male and female figures are depicted in the iconography.

The site of Tāq-e Bostān,[33] situated in northwest Iran, seven kilometers from the modern city of Kermānšāh, includes a series of monumental rock reliefs and comprises a big (Figs. 5 and 6) and a small grotto. Tāq-e Bostān was the camp of the Sasanian kings on their royal hunts. The greater *īwān* (Fukai and Horiuchi 1969, 1972, 1983; Fukai et al. 1984) contains several scenes: the investiture of Xusrō II on the upper part of the back wall, a mounted warrior in the lower part and two royal hunt scenes on the right and left walls. The great *īwān* is surrounded by a triumphal arch which rests on two pilasters with finely-carved floral patterns (Fig. 6). Above the arch, two winged female figures levitate on opposing sides. These figures have often been compared to the Greco-Roman Νίκη/Victoria and Τύχη/Fortuna[34] (see Kai Töpfer's contribution to this volume) and are undoubtedly one of the most prominent examples of cross-cultural negotiation processes in Persian art and the Persianate world (see Ebba Koch's contribution in this volume, especially Fig. 7,

[32] With the exception of the armed mounted figure on the upper part of the greater grotto of Tāq-e Bostān.

[33] Cf. Vanden Berghe (1984), Kleiss and Boehmer (1996), as well as the very detailed and valuable four volumes by Fukai and Horiuchi (1969), (1972), (1983), and Fukai et al. (1984).

[34] For the links and connections between Tāq-e Bostān and Byzantin iconography cf. Mackintosh (1978); also cf. Fukai et al. (1984, 167–77) (Appendix II: Flying Victory—Its Prototypes and Diffusion). Tanabe asserts that "It is clear that the flying genii are obviously modelled after the goddesses Nike and Tyche, but her significance within the Sasanian dynastic iconography is unknown." Cf. Fukai et al. (1984, 43); this must be disscused in a separate article as despite Tanabe's opinion, the iconographical role and significance of these flying figures is rather clear.

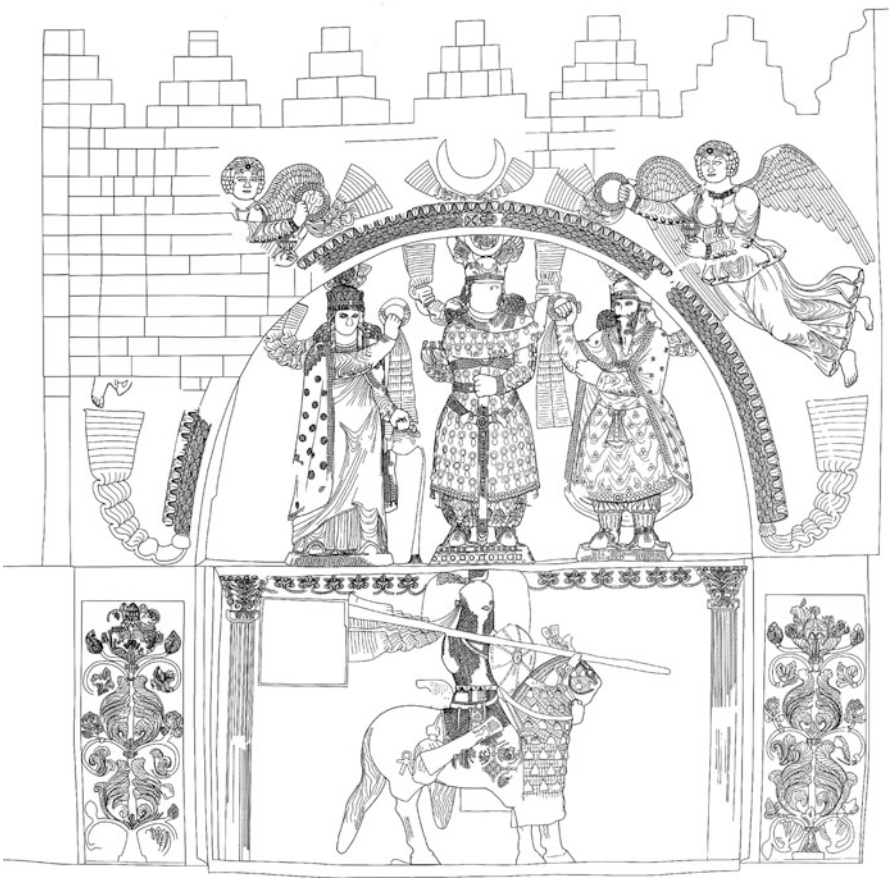

Fig. 6 Line art rendering of the great *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān. Source: Fukai and Horiuchi 1983

which clearly shows the continuation of its iconography in Islamic art and architecture).

All that remains of the left figure is her head and left arm. The figure to the right is completely preserved (Figs. 7 and 8). She has a pair of long, pinnate wings and wears (in the Greek) a *chiton* with an *apoptygma*.[35] She is carrying a diadem—a ribbon-decorated ring—in her right hand. In her left hand, she offers a bowl, presumably filled with pearls, which she holds on its pedestal. Valuable offerings of a similar kind were also presented by heavenly beings in early sixth century China (see Fig. 9 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies"). This being faces the viewer while her legs are shown in profile. Her short hair is gathered on top of her head, differing from the flowing

[35] For a more detailed description cf. Fukai et al. (1984, 42 ff).

Fig. 7 The winged figure of a *frauuaṣi* on the right corner of the great *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān. She wears a *chiton*-style garment with *apoptygma* and carries a diadem—a ribbon-decorated ring, an allegory for divine *x*^{v}*arənah*—in her right hand and a bowl full of pearls in her left. Her iconography shows clear parallels between the Greco-Roman Νίκη/Victoria and Τύχη/Fortuna. Photo by Shervin Farridnejad, IIS Archive

hairstyles of the females depicted on Sasanian vases. Other features recall well-known shapes of Sasanian female figures: her face is round and her almond-shaped eyes are open wide. Her short neck lends a powerful impression of exuded strength.

These two winged geniuses above the taller grotto at Tāq-e Bostān are perhaps the most frequently studied winged figures in Sasanian iconography. Herzfeld

Fig. 8 Line art rendering of the winged figure at the right corner of the great *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān. Source: Fukai and Horiuchi (1983)

identified these flying figures as *amərətāt* and *hauruuatāt*, both of which are Zoroastrian female archangels (Herzfeld 1920, 75). As in the majority of cases, these two archangels appear together, both of them in Avestan are female, and according to the concepts that they represent, namely immortality and wholeness, it is possible that they are presenting the king with the *xᵛarənah*,[36] as symbolized by a ribbon-decorated ring. This identification, however, has no direct textual support from Avestan or Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts. Another possible identification of the flying winged figures, which seems most plausible, is with the *frauuaṣ̌is*.[37] The Avestan term *frauuaṣ̌i* is grammatically female (Bartholomae 1904, col. 992). The *frauuaṣ̌i*s are believed to have wings,[38] even among Zoroastrians in Iran today. In *Frawardīn Yašt* (Boyce 2001a), the thirteenth Avestan hymn devoted to the *frauuaṣ̌i*s and the longest of all the Yašts, it is said that they will grant good fortune

[36] *xᵛarənah*, lit. "glory" is the magic force or power of luminous and fiery nature. On *xᵛarənah* cf. Gnoli (1999, 312–9).

[37] Tanabe mentioned this possibility only marginally and in a footnote, but does not discuss it. Cf. Fukai et al. (1984, 46, n. 21).

[38] Cf. Boyce (1977, 161, n. 47), and the author's observations and dialoges with Irani Zoroastrians.

to the man who worships them, as was done by the righteous Zarathustra. This could be a suitable explanation for the appearance of *frauuašį*s above the king's investiture arch, which could have been meant to bring him fortune, glory, victory, and prosperity.[39]

The *frauuašį*s are, according to *Frawardīn Yašt*, an army of armed warriors who help righteous men in their battles against demons and devil powers (Yt.13.45).[40] In fact, their brawny impression—in contrast to the rather delicate figures on the silver vessels described earlier—makes this identification plausible. Another fitting iconographic interpretation of *frauuašį*s as warriors is the armed mounted warrior of the lower part of the greater *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān (Fig. 5) (Gall 1971, 230–3; Kellens 1973).

Winged Figures in Toreutics

Moreover, in addition to the rare appearances of female *frauuašį*s evident in Sasanian art objects and architecture, other depictions of *frauuašį*s on Sasanian vessels show them as small male figures or child-like beings. Since Middle Persian lost the grammatical gendering of terms, *frauuašį*s were also considered male beings. Furthermore, some iconographic parallels between these and the Greco-Roman *putti* can also be found, which at the same time present another example of cultural and artistic entanglement in late antiquity. In some aspects, like those winged figures of Tāq-e Bostān, a Roman iconographical element has been borrowed to incorporate a completely different concept.

A silver-gilt plate from the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin (Harper 1981, 221) (Fig. 9) shows a royal hunting scene, in which a *frauuašį*—like those female figures at Tāq-e Bostān—offers the ribbon of victory (Av. *xᵛarənah*) to the king. This is the kind of iconography in Sasanian art which can be seen on many other movable objects, including a fourth-century Kušāno-Sasanian silver plate from the ancient Gandhara-region (present-day Pakistan) (Fig. 10), now in the British Museum. Again, a *frauuašį* brings the king a diadem symbolizing *xᵛarənah*. The scene arrangement evokes the investiture scene of the greater *īwān* of Tāq-e Bostān.

Conclusion

Angelic iconography is present in most religious beliefs. Both the theological concepts of heavenly figures and their visual representations in art and archeology testify to cultural regenerations and prove to be a fascinating field for observations

[39] For a descriptive account on *frauuašį*s cf. Dhalla (1972, 143–50), Boyce (2001).

[40] See also in Bundahišn VIa.3, cf. Soraki (2005, 90).

Fig. 9 Silver-gilt plate, Iran, seventh or eighth century (diameter: 19.9–19.3 cm; h. 4 cm). This plate is part of the Novo Bayazid treasure discovered in 1907 near Yerevan, Armenia. It shows a typical Sasanian royal hunting scene in which a *frauuašǐ* offers the diadem to the king as an allegory of royal and divine victory (Av. *xᵛarənah*). Source: Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo published in Harper (1981), 221, Plate 20

from a transcultural vantage point. As the last great pre-Islamic Persian Empire, Sasanians and their religious iconographical canon with its wide zone of cultural and political authority, were the most important bridge between the ancient Near East and medieval European and Islamic worlds.

It may seem difficult at first glance to establish reliable iconographic classifications for the angelic figures in Sasanian art. The differing points of view and scholarly approaches, which range from religious to profane interpretations, make it even more complicated to establish a multilateral concept regarding the depiction of angels in Sasanian art.

Futhermore, dividing the depiction of Zoroastrian deities/angels in the Sasanian art into two groups of winged and non-winged figures allows us to distinguish

Fig. 10 Kušāno-Sasanian silver plate from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, fourth century (diameter: 23.7 cm). The central scene of investiture in two registers is surrounded by a broad band featuring musicians, banquet figures holding vessels and plants, and an isolated plant. In the upper register of the main scene, a flying but wingless *frauuašī* brings the king a diadem symbolizing *xᵛarənah*. Source: The British Museum London. Photo published in Harper (1981), 109, Fig. 35

between the iconography of *yazata*s vs. *frauuašī*s. As constituent parts of Zoroastrian cosmogony, angels (*yazata*s and *frauuašī*s) mediate between heaven and earth and Zoroastrianism associates these beneficent immortals with all kinds of good creations. The way they are commonly depicted in the art of the Sasanian Empire (including architecture, but also on moveable objects such as bowls, plates, vessels, seals, sealings, bullae, amulets, toreutics, textiles, and coins) inevitably ties them to

their Roman and ancient Near Eastern kin, Victoria and Ištar/Inanna in particular, and their similar role as tutelary deities.

With respect to the depictions of such angelic figures, the religious Sasanian iconographic canon reveals a transcultural phenomenon; due to the usage of both Greco-Roman and Ancient Near Eastern sources for embodying genuine Zoroastrian concepts of angels, Sasanian art leaves an important legacy of inspiring sources to the medieval Byzantine and Islamic era.

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Angels as Agents of Transfer Between Hebrew Origins, Byzantium, and Western Europe: Marienberg in South Tyrol as a Case Study

Angelika Konrad-Schineller

Abstract Angels are major spirits in Byzantine and western Christian rites. Their sources are rooted in the Hebrew traditions of the Old Testament, which were adapted and enlarged in the New Testament both in Byzantium and Western Europe. This paper investigates the transcultural potential of angels by focusing on their relation to liturgical practices of Byzantine origin and their application in western rites. The text examines their angelic function and the application of angelic figures in a sacral space by choosing the example of the crypt of Marienberg, in South Tyrol, with its unique medieval murals, where angels play a key role in the outer and inner space of the ensemble. As shown, iconographical models of Byzantine origin were first adapted and then transformed in Marienberg, where angels serve as guardians and "fixed points" in spaces of threshold which relate them to spaces of Hebrew origin.

Introduction

In the middle ages, Byzantine art traveled through South Tyrol on its way from Sicily to Salzburg, via Venice. Because it came through South Tyrol and presumably was seen by local artists, elements of Byzantine art were adapted in local artistic expressions. Trade and pilgrim routes that were suitable for transcultural exchanges crossed the area (Stampfer and Steppan 2008, 30–31 and 34–35). The Benedictine monastery of Marienberg—which was still active in the Middle Ages—was situated next to the village of Burgeis, on the important Via Claudia Augusta, an ancient pass established in Roman times to link northern Italy with

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what is now southern Germany across the Alps. Local murals of the Romanesque period (1000–1250 CE), in particular, testify to the adoption of certain cross-cultural artistic elements in Marienberg. Angels populate the pictorial program of the crypt (Steppan 2007, 679).

The crypt of the church belonging to the Benedictine monastery of Marienberg is a narrow, rectangular space, with three apses in the east that are not visible from the outside. Between the main apse and the much smaller northern and southern apses are two doors that allow entrance to the crypt from the outside. On the western side of the room, steps lead to the aisles of the upper church. The crypt is lit by small oculi in the apses, which allow daylight to enter. The groin vault is divided into five bays (Fig. 1). The baroque tombs of the prelates that covered large parts of the west, north, and south walls were removed at the beginning of the 1980s, revealing the murals behind them (Stampfer and Walder 2002, 11–12). For the surviving crypt paintings, dating varies between the consecration of the crypt in 1160 and 1185 (Fig. 2) and, for the outer-space murals, between 1163 and the first decade of the thirteenth century.[1]

The most important source for the history of the monastery of Marienberg is the so-called *Registrum Goswini*, written by the monk Goswin in the fourteenth century.[2] Goswin writes that the patron of the monastery, Ulrich III of Tarasp (d. 1177), a local nobleman, ordered the building of the monastery near the village of Burgeis, in the Vinschgau area (Goswin 1996, 64). The chronicler further informs the reader that the crypt was the first sacral room to be built and that it was consecrated in 1160 by bishop Adelgott of Chur. The *Registrum* mentioned the function of the crypt clearly: firstly, it served the monastery community for the celebration of the mass. Secondly, it was where the Liturgy of the Hours was held during the period of time when the other buildings were not yet finished (Goswin 1996, 108). For about 40 years, the community held the Hours inside the crypt until, as Goswin describes later, the church of the monastery was consecrated around 1201 (Goswin 1996, 158).

Goswin mentions the patrons of Marienberg, Ulrich and his wife Uta, several times to express his gratitude for their rich donations and to ensure their memory. As part of this patronage, Ulrich III of Tarasp ordered relics from Western Europe and the Holy Land and donated them for the altars of the crypt and the upper church (Goswin 1996, 160). While he and his son became lay brothers of the monastery, his wife Uta became a nun. She died during a journey to the Holy Land in 1163, where she hoped to visit the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Ulrich himself went on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and brought his wife's remains back to Marienberg, where

[1] The discussion is summarized in the latest publication about Marienberg by Stampfer and Steppan (2008, 196–197).

[2] A German translation of the *Registrum Goswini* was published by Christine Roilo and Raimund Senoner, see Goswin (1996).

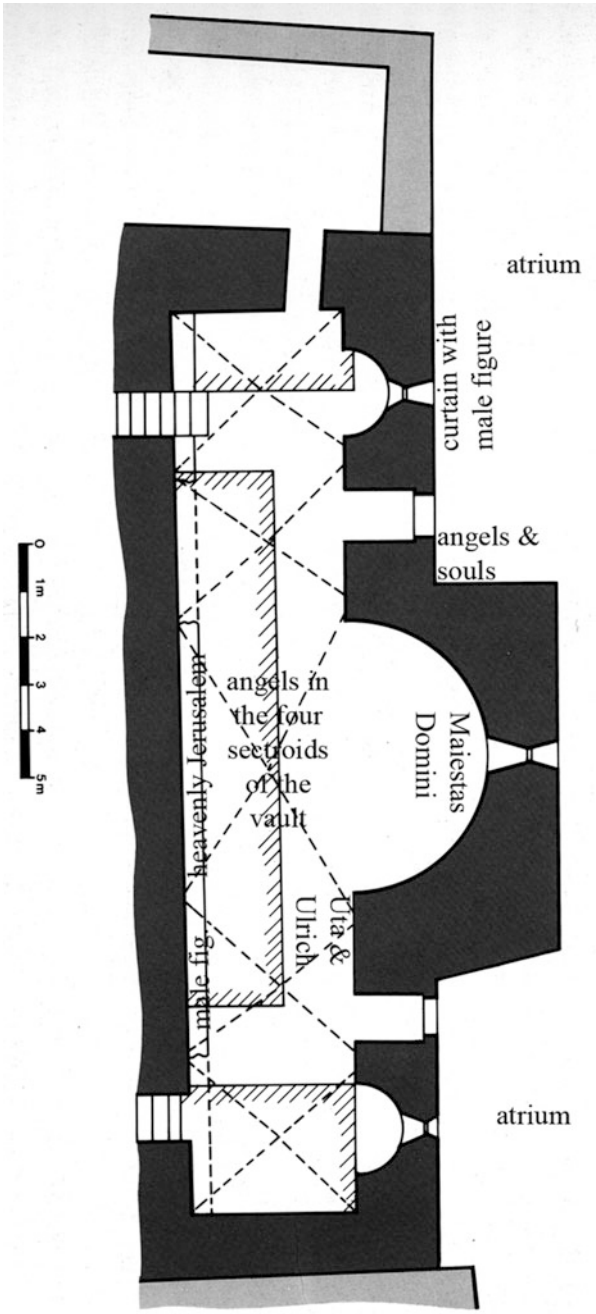

Fig. 1 Marienberg. Ground plan of the crypt with baroque tombs and mural locations. Source: Stampfer and Walder 2002, 11. © Hubert Walder. The author changed the plan in Photoshop by inserting the mural locations

Fig. 2 Marienberg. View to the northeast of the crypt, *terminus ante quem* 1160. Source: Stampfer and Walder 2002, 10. © Hubert Walder

he died in 1177.[3] Both patrons were pictured in the crypt, but only some fragments of Uta's portrait as a nun, to the south of the main apse, and some words mentioned in full length in the *Registrum*, have survived. The picture of Ulrich in pilgrim clothes that Goswin describes is no longer visible, but was surely the counterpart of Uta's representation and reminded the reader of the donations made by the patrons and their future reward in heaven (Goswin 1996, 108).[4]

This essay argues that the outer space, which connects with the crypt through two doors, was an atrium and served as a burial place for these patrons, the so-called *non valde mali*, "not very bad ones."[5] I investigate the involvement of angels who play an important role in the pictorial program of the crypt and its outer space.[6]

[3] There are several passages about the journey of both patrons to the Holy Land. See for example Goswin (1996, 88, 104, 116). About the illness and death of Ulrich see Goswin (1996, 102 and 104).

[4] Thomas A. Dale identified a male figure on the western wall as Ulrich, see Dale (2004, 152–153). Lukas Madersbacher recognized the figure as chancelor Hezilo of Sent, see Madersbacher (1996, 78–80).

[5] Helmut Stampfer convincingly interpreted this space as an atrium although he did not connect it to a burial place. A strong argument for his theory is provided by the slanted upper edges of the frescoes of the outside space which speak in favor of a lean-to roof of an atrium. See Stampfer and Walder (1982, 11, 2002, 14).

[6] I agree with Thomas E.A. Dale that the frescoes of the outer and inner space have to be interpreted together and cannot be separated although my interpretation differs from his. I am convinced that the starting point of a reading and understanding was originally tracing the viewer

Placing them in the framework of an investigation of cross-cultural entanglement, they are described and their iconographical Byzantine elements are examined, as is their comparison with the analysis of the topic of the Christ in Majesty (Lat. *Majestas Domini*), which, in turn, is closely connected to angels. The essay surveys the Marienberg angels and their iconography and addresses their relation to textual sources such as the Book of Revelation (the final book of the New Testament, composed in the first century CE) and one Byzantine text, *De caelestis hierarchia* by Pseudo-Dionysius (early sixth century), which, from the early Middle Ages, was widely distributed and appreciated in Western Christianity and included in the liturgy. Last but not least, the angels are contextualized in their relation to the (cryptic) space in Marienberg, which is closely connected to liminal states, as this space enforces another aspect of cultural translation[7]: the spatial position of the Tabernacle of the Israelites which becomes a Christian temple in the murals of Marienberg. The term "translation" is appropriate to outline the situation in Marienberg as the original model was not copied, but "translated" into a new cultural context.

Iconographical Translations: Byzantine Models for Christ in Majesty and Angels

On the outside of the main apse, only a few fragments of paintings remain (Figs. 3 and 4). On the outside of the smaller northern apse, the architecture is covered with a painted multicolor curtain that is decorated at its border with precious stones (Fig. 3). Under the oculus, the curtain is decorated with ornaments that are depicted in squares but still let the painted curtain shine through. A male figure with a green coat, red trousers, a red cap, and a rod in his hand, moves towards the northern entrance of the crypt on the right side of the oculus.

The curtain theme is not maintained on the northern outer wall of the main apse (Fig. 4). Instead, a two-color band encloses the scene on the upper end. Two figures with yellow and green clothes turn to the right with a gesture of prayer towards two angels that can only be identified by the preserved fragments of their two-color wings. The background of the scene is divided into two areas of color. The lower half, which extends to the neck of the figures, is red, the upper half green. On the left side of the figures are three white "drops" with green insertions. Scholars have interpreted these "drops" as lanterns or stylized trees with leaves.[8]

from the outside to the inside, something that Dale describes as "spiritual pilgrimage." For further information see his article, Dale (2004).

[7] Bianca Kühnel recently introduced this term for different visual manifestations of Jerusalem in her project *Spectrum-Visual translations of Jerusalem*. For a description of her project see: http://spectrum.huji.ac.il/PDF/Spectrum_description.pdf, accessed 13 September 2012.

[8] Andergassen (1996, 263) interprets them as trees. Müller (1980, 104) and Weingartner (1991, 994) consider them to be lanterns.

Fig. 3 Marienberg. A curtain and a pilgrim on the outside of the small, northern apse of the crypt, 1163–1210. Source: Stampfer and Walder 2002, 44. © Hubert Walder

In contrast to the fragmentary paintings of the outer space, the frescoes of the crypt's inner space are in better condition and are preserved particularly well in the main apse, the vault of the middle bay, and the western wall. In the main apse, directly positioned over the oculus, one can see Christ in Majesty being enthroned and surrounded by a halo and mandorla (Fig. 5), both of which are transcultural indicators of the divine in various religions (compare, for example, Figs. 4, 5, and 6 in the chapter "Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies," Fig. 4 in the chapter "The Dragon in Transcultural Skies: Its Celestial Aspect in the Medieval Islamic World," Figs. 7b and 15 in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century"). Christ is clothed in red and white and holds an open book in his left hand, while his right hand is elevated in a gesture of blessing. Christ in Majesty is flanked by human figures on both sides of the composition. The background is formed by bands of different colors and thickness that are horizontally arranged and follow the elevated form of the mandorla. Two symbols of evangelists—the steer of Luke and the lion of Mark—are positioned on the lower level. The steer on the right side is holding the gospel of Luke, which is decorated with precious stones (Fig. 6). The same attribute was probably added to

Fig. 4 Marienberg. The souls of the deceased and an angel awaiting them, on the outside of the main apse and part of the northern wall of the crypt, 1163–1210. Source: Stampfer and Walder 2002, 44. © Hubert Walder

the lion on the left side (Fig. 7). Although both the steer and the lion turn away from the *majestas*, they glance at Christ. Further to the right on the same level there are a few preserved remains of the symbol of Matthew the angel, with the gospel in his hand (Fig. 6). The eagle of John must have been on the opposite side, though only fragments of the head and the wings remain (Fig. 7). On the same level as the symbols are the apostles Peter on the left and Paul on the right (Figs. 6 and 7). Peter is holding his attribute, the key, and Paul, the book. The apostles do not look upon Christ in Majesty, but can be understood as intercessors for the believers. Two female figures, with their palm leaf attributes, are inserted as the apostles' counterparts in the window jambs. They look up at the apostles and communicate between the inner and outer space of the crypt and the atrium. These figures have been identified as the martyrs Climaria and Panafreta, whose relics were placed in the altar (Stamper and Steppan 2008, 196).

On the same level as the apostles, one can see a smaller monk depicted on the left side (Fig. 7). He is the only figure in the apse without an aureole and can be understood as a deputy of the believers, for whom the apostles intercede. The symbols of the Evangelists, the apostles, and the monk all occupy one level marked by a stripe with floral ornaments.

Fig. 5 Marienberg. The Christ in Majesty in the main apse of the crypt, 1160–1185. Only the angels are fully aware of the heavenly vision. They protect Christ with their wings from the gaze of the apostles and the monks. The angels stand on a higher level and are taller than the other figures. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

Fig. 6 Marienberg. Detail of the main apse of the crypt with the symbols of Luke (the steer, holding the gospel of Luke) and Matthew (the angel with the gospel in its hand), the apostle Paul holding his attribute, the book, a two-winged cherubim with a banderole, and a six-winged seraphim that elevates its hands in prayer (from left to right), 1160–1185. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

Fig. 7 Marienberg. Detail of the main apse of the crypt with the symbols of Mark (the lion, *right*) and fragments of John (the eagle, *left*), the apostle Peter, holding his attribute, the key, a monk, a two-winged cherubim with a banderole, and a six-winged Seraphim that elevates its hands in prayer (from *right* to *left*), 1160–118. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

One level above, on a white stripe, two winged angels (Figs. 5, 6 and 7) stand on their own little platforms, next to the Christ in Majesty. One wing of each angel follows the form of the mandorla and touches it. By doing so, the angels separate the mandorla from the heads of the apostles. The angels hold banderoles that lack any text passages, thus perhaps intending to merely communicate the character of a scroll (compare to Ebba Koch's study of the seventeenth century Kala Burj in this volume). The faces of the winged angels, probably two cherubim, are elevated toward the Christ in Majesty. Three levels above, two seraphim (Figs. 5, 6 and 7) can be identified by their six wings. The uppermost pairs of their wings follow the dome of the mandorla and the transverse arch. The seraphim, too, look toward Christ and elevate their hands in prayer. In the entire composition, only the angels are fully aware of the heavenly vision, which they protect with their wings against exterior viewing by the apostles and the monk. They even stand on a higher level and are taller than the other figures, indicating their importance and proximity to the Lord.

Seraphim with six wings are mentioned in the Old Testament vision of Isaiah (Is 6:1–7), where they surround God's throne (Geretti 2010, 11 and Madersbacher 1996, 84) and recite the Sanctus to praise God. The word "cherubim" can be found 58 times in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament, in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 9:5). It is striking indeed that in all text passages of the Bible that mention the cherubim, the number of wings (two) is mentioned only twice, in the

description of the wooden cherubim in the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 6:27) (Iacobini 2000, 136). In contrast, cherubim are described as having four wings in the vision of Ezekiel (Ez 10:21). Both traditions can be traced in iconography, although the depiction with two wings was rare.[9] Furthermore, the position of the two-winged cherubim in Marienberg fits the description by Ezekiel, as well as the description of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, both of which tell how God appeared above the cherubim during the vision (Ex 25:22, Ez 10:18, 11:22).

In most medieval depictions of the Christ in Majesty, the symbols of the four Evangelists are placed directly around the throne, i.e., in the highest hierarchical position. This positioning can be traced to one of the earliest Byzantine models preserved in the mosaics of the Hosios David Church in Salonicco, from the first half of the sixth century, where there are no angels (Fig. 8).[10] In the Byzantine Egyptian monastery of Bāwīt, where a vast variety of early depictions of the Christ in Majesty have been excavated, chapel XVII (Fig. 9), which dates only slightly later than the example from Salonicco, includes depictions of two angels worshipping Christ in Majesty directly in-between the symbols of the Evangelist, a variation derived probably from the Book of Daniel, where myriad worshipping angels are mentioned (Iacobini 2000, 169). The Byzantine motif of worshipping angels was adapted in the West, for example in the early ninth century Carolingian murals of Müstair (Fig. 10), close to Marienberg, where a multitude of angels is on the same level as the four symbols surrounding the throne of the Christ in Majesty. Furthermore, a scene depicting two angels worshipping around[11] the throne is found in twelfth century architecture in South Tyrol, for example in the chapel of the castle of Hocheppan (Steppan 2004, 109 and Fig. 3). Hocheppan is also one of the most prominent examples to demonstrate that, apart from the stylistic features of Byzantine art, multiple motifs of Byzantine origin were also adapted in South Tyrol. For example, the Mary in Majesty with the worshipping angels mentioned earlier adapts a type of depiction which emphasizes the close emotional relationship between mother and child typical in Byzantium from the middle of the twelfth century, and can be compared with the murals of Panhagia Arakiotissa in Cyprus, as Helmut Stampfer and Thomas Steppan have demonstrated.[12]

The motif of two angels flanking the throne was also varied in Egyptian and Greek Byzantine art from probably the fourth century onwards. In this image, two angels are placed closer to the mandorla and holding it as high as, for example, the

[9] A prominent example is the depiction of the Ark of the Covenant with the two-winged cherubim in the oratory of Theodulf in Germigny-des-Prés from the ninth century. For a depiction see Toman and Bednorz (1996, 384).

[10] For further information see Iacobini (2000, 173–182).

[11] For further information about the Carolingian and the Romanesque murals of Müstair see Goll (2007).

[12] Stampfer/Steppan (2008, 219), Fig. 76, 113–114. The strong, often expressive emotions of Byzantine origin can also be traced in other artworks of the late Romanesque period in South Tyrol; for example in the church of Maria Trost in Untermais/Meran (1201–1210) showing the death of Mary, see also Stampfer/Steppan (2008, 214–215) with Figs. 96–100.

Fig. 8 Hosios David, monastery of Latomou, Salonicco. Mosaic of Christ in Majesty in the apse. The symbols of the four evangelists are found around the throne, in the highest hierarchical place. No angels are shown. First half of the sixth century. © Thomas Kaffenberger

Fig. 9 Bāwīt. Christ in Majesty and two worshipping angels directly between the symbols of the Evangelists in the apse of Chapel XVII, second half of the sixth century. Source: Iacobini 2000, 45, Fig. 15

Fig. 10 Müstair. Christ in Majesty surrounded by a multitude of angels that are on the same level as the four symbols in the middle apse, first half of the ninth century. Source: © Stiftung Pro Kloster St. Johann in Müstair, Photo Suzanne Fibby-Aeppli

symbols in the grotto of the Pantokrator in Herakleia at Lamos (Fig. 11).[13] This holding of the mandorla, sometimes by four angels, can also be found in the West, as in the now lost Tympanon relief of the abbey church of Cluny (Fromaget 2003, 24).

Marienberg shows a shift in the hierarchy of the angels, the symbols, and their behavior. The symbols of the Evangelists are hierarchically subordinated. In contrast to the Byzantine and Carolingian models, the seraphim and the cherubim[14] are inserted here, instead, and are not holding the mandorla, but protecting it with their wings. Although reflecting the tradition of Byzantine models which introduced angels around the throne, the Marienberg angels differ from other depictions. Only

[13] Antonio Iacobini mentions for example the wooden architrave probably from Al-Moâllaqa, now in the Coptic Museum in Cairo which dates between the fourth and sixth century and the murals from the grotto of the Pantokrator at Herakleia al Latmos that date between the seventh and ninth century, see Iacobini 2000, 201–209 and for the architrave Fig. 79.

[14] There are also other depictions of the Christ in Majesty with cherubim such as the murals of St. Peter and Paul in Niederzell on the Reichenau in Germany dating from the early twelfth century. But the cherubim are here positioned next to the apostles Peter and Paul who are closest to Christ in Majesty. For a depiction see Untermann (2001, 55).

Fig. 11 Herakleia al Lamos. Watercolor painting of the Christ in Majesty in the grotto of the Pantokrator. Two angels with bent legs, flanking to the mandorla, present the majestas. Between the seventh and ninth centuries. Source: Iacobini 2000, 203, Fig. 80

Fig. 12 Marienberg. Thirteen angels are depicted in the vault of the crypt against a background of a blue sky with stars, 1160–1185. Photo by Angelika Konrad–Schineller, 26 March 2011

textual sources can explain their elevated position. As discussed in the next chapter, the definition of the seraphim and the cherubim as the two highest orders of angels was first postulated by the Byzantine author Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

The vault of the crypt is painted, too. The four sectroids display thirteen angels in long garments. Their background consists of different bands and triangles and a blue sky with stars (Fig. 12). The sectroids are separated from each other by stylized, meandering cloud patterns that culminate in a painted apex stone in the shape of a flower. The pictorial composition of the northern and southern sectroids

Fig. 13 Marienberg. Three angels from the western sectroid of the crypt's vault, 1160–1185. The angels hold lily scepters and hover in the sky. A fourth angel appears out of the stone apse, his wings touching those of the angel next to him. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

has the same background with triangles and similar angels. In the middle, there is a large angel with a lily scepter standing on a platform in front of a green triangle. It is flanked by two other angels of the same height on platforms, also with lily scepters. They turn their heads toward the divine vision in the main apse. Only one angel in the northern sectroid is "aware" of the depictions on the western wall, its gaze reinforcing the connection between the two walls and the vault. The angels of the eastern and western sectroid are much smaller, due to the rectangular form of the vault, which affects those sectroids that have an obtuse angle. In the eastern sectroid, there are three angels. The middle one is positioned as an extension of Christ in Majesty and holds an ecclesiastical banner and symbol of power, a labarum, in his hand. In contrast to the other angels of the vault, his head is not directed toward the stone apse, but to the throne. He is accompanied by two other angels with lily scepters in their hands, against a triangular green background. The western sectroid differs the most from the other sectroids (Fig. 13). It does not have a green triangular background, nor are there platforms for the angels, which seem to hover in the sky. There are four angels instead of three. Three angels, with lily scepters, are directed toward the stone apse, while the fourth seems to be entering the stone apse from a westerly direction, his wings touching the wings of the angel next to him.

The angels in the vault show iconographical elements and stylistic forms of Byzantine origin that were probably transferred via illuminations from Salzburg from the second half of the twelfth century, as Helmut Stampfer and Thomas

Fig. 14 Marienberg, detail of an angel in the northern sectroid of the vault. The hairstyle—the plaited hair and decorative bands—is a stylistic form of Byzantine origin. The wings that differ do so highly from those of the Angel of Kurbinovo, which are wrapped with thin bands. The long sticks decorated with the cross are, like lily scepters, adapted from Byzantium and can be seen as signs of power. To Pseudo-Dionysius, they were signs of kingdom, God-given power, and leadership. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

Steppan have convincingly suggested. These elements include the bands on the wings and head, the borders on the dresses, and the fluttering ends of the clothes (Fig. 14) (Stampfer and Steppan 2008, 196). The Byzantine angels of Kurbinovo (Fig. 15a, b), for example, show most of these features, except for the bands on the wings.[15] The bands or taenia on the head probably derived from the winged Roman *victoriae* and the clothes are reminiscent of antique robes (Hahn 2010, 84). The long sticks decorated with the cross as lily scepters on top or the labarum were adapted from Byzantium and can be seen as signs of power. Scepters were already mentioned in the Old Testament where an angel uses a stick in his hand to demonstrate the miraculous power of God (Jgs 6:21), and were also adapted by Pseudo-Dionysius. To him, they were signs of kingdom, God-given power, and leadership (Hahn 2010, 86).[16] Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, introduced the labarum made of purple cloth as a Christian symbol which was adorned with a Christogram.[17]

[15] Stampfer and Steppan (2008, 196) also refer to Kurbinovo but rather to point out the stylistic differences to Marienberg.

[16] For a depiction see for example the angels from Bema in Iznik in Barber (2002), Fig. 22 or the angels from Hacli Kilise in Kizil Çukur in Cutler and Spieser (1996), Fig. 80.

[17] LCI 3, 1–2.

Fig. 15 (**a**) Kurbinovo in Macedonia. Worshipping angel, 1191. Iconographical elements and stylistic forms of Byzantine origin such as the fluttering ends of the clothes were the models for the Marienberg angels. Source: Wikimedia, public domain. (**b**) Kurbinovo in Macedonia. Detail of the worshipping angel (**a**). The plaited hair is adorned by a diadem and thin bands. The garment has decorative borders. The taenia is probably derived from the winged Roman *victoriae*. The clothes are reminiscent of antique robes

Fig. 16 Marienberg. The heavenly Jerusalem on the western wall of the crypt, 1160–1185. Six angels on small platforms populate the city. They are placed in an apocalyptic framework. The angels hold banderoles lacking any inscription in groups of three. Photo by Angelika Konrad-Schineller, 26 March 2011

The western wall depicts the heavenly Jerusalem (Fig. 16). The fresco can be divided horizontally into two levels, which are separated from each other by a decorative meander. The lower level consists of a yellow curtain. An old man with a cap and monk's habit, probably the Apostle Peter, is shown in the center. He is holding two keys in his right hand. On the upper level, one can see the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The city here is shown as a town wall with battlements, but the wall has only two sides divided by towers.[18] Because the remaining walls that would usually complete the picture of the heavenly city are missing, the space is open to the viewer who is only separated from the city by its upper level and the curtain. Six angels on small platforms populate the city. They face forward, three in front of every mural section. The two groups of three are united by banderoles, again lacking inscriptions.[19] Their background consists of a small blue square with a green outline. Next

[18] For a different depiction of the heavenly city see the murals of Matrei (1270) in eastern Tyrol. Here the heavenly Jerusalem is depicted in the vault as a circular town wall. Instead of angels the 12 apostles populate the city and the symbols of the Evangelists lift their arms and uphold a circle in which a depiction of Christ as Pantocrator has been inserted. The placement of the latter in the middle of the vault is probably an adaption of the position of the Pantocrator in the cupola of Byzantine churches (Stampfer/Steppan 2008, 258 and Fig. 146–147), which in Matrei has been translated to the heavenly city.

[19] The lack of inscriptions here cannot be fully explained. Angels very often have banderoles with inscriptions, for example the archangel Gabriel during the annunciation scene. Robert Favreau has given an overview of the inscriptions on images of angels, see Favreau 1997.

to both sides of the city are the busts of two bishops, who can be identified as such by their clothes—a miter with hanging bands (Lat. *vitta*) and the chasuble. The bishops hold blank banderoles, too. Their background consists of triangular fields of different colors. The space between the western wall and the heavenly city is divided from the vault by depictions of gems. Precious stones frequently suggest the heavenly Jerusalem, as described in Revelation (Rv 21:19–20). In this regard, the angels in the Marienberg crypt are placed in an apocalyptic framework. Their meaning in relation to the Christ in Majesty and the heavenly Jerusalem, as described in Revelation, thus becomes a logical topic for further development.

Textual Sources Relating to Angels of Biblical and Byzantine Origin

Angels in the Book of Revelation

The New Testament Revelation of John, the last book in the Bible, is one of its most famous and controversial. Around 90 CE, the visionary John wrote down what he described as a vision he had during his exile on the Greek island of Patmos. The author of the text was probably a migrating Christian with a Jewish background, who was moving from the Jewish-Palestinian area to the churches of Asia Minor (Müller-Fieberg 2003, 40–41). In the text, the author describes the end of times as they were relayed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The first vision of apocalyptic events takes place after John is commissioned to write down the vision and the missive to the churches (Rv 1:9–3, 22). This vision of the throne (Rv 4:1–5, 14) starts the apocalyptic and destructive events that culminate in the Final Judgment. Together with the vision of the final heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 21:1–22, 5), which comes down from a new heaven to earth and will be serving God and his people as a new dwelling place, the vision of the throne forms a textual bracket, the beginning and the end, the promise and fulfillment of the apocalyptic events (Kretschmar 1985, 35). Revelation ends with a reiterated speech and warning to the churches (Rv 22:6–21) and is deeply rooted in texts of Hebrew origin, such as the visions of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah (Krauss 2000, 50), that can be analyzed in connection with angels.

Revelation tells of angels on earth and in heaven. The scholars Yves Cattin and Philippe Faure called the last book of the New Testament "The Book of Angels" (Cattin and Faure 2000, 56) and not without reason. Revelation, according to Johannes Hafer, unites 23 different groups of angels (Hafer 2010, 41).[20] With respect to their functions, they can be simplified into eight groups. A first group

[20] There is no common consensus about how many angel groups can be found in Revelation. For a different opinion see Cattin and Faure (2000, 55–56). For a general listing of the functions of angels in the whole Bible see Hahn (2010, 88–92).

includes a guiding angel or soul companion that leads John through the divine visions (Rv 1:1, 17:1–3, 21:9–10, 21:15–17, 22:1). These and other angels also have another function: they are interpreters of the divine message to the visionary (Rv 17:7–18, 19:9–10, 22:6–21). Thirdly, angels appear in the role of guardians of the believers, for example as spirits for the seven churches, or the angels in the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 1:4, 1:20, 21:12). Fourthly, they also take part in the vision of the throne. The seven spirits and the four creatures gather around the throne of God and the lamb and receive the beatific vision and knowledge of God as his entourage (Rv 4:5–6). A fifth function can also be attached: they not only partake in the divine vision, but also celebrate the never-ending praise of God with the singing of the Sanctus (Rv 4:8). This singing or heavenly liturgy is also performed by those angels who are not directly beneath the throne, such as the myriad of angels ($1{,}000 \times 1{,}000$ angels), and is reflected in the earthly liturgy, which will be explained in more depth later. The angels' praise will be repeated frequently until the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 5:11–12, 7:11–12, 12:12, 15:2–4, 19:1–7). In addition to this task, angels must fulfill a sixth duty by divine order during the apocalypse: They create apocalyptic catastrophes and bring God's justice from heaven upon the earth (Rv 8:2, 8:3–5, 8:6–13, 9:1–21, 11:15–19, 14:17, 14:19–20, 15:1, 15:6–8, 16:1–20, 18:21–24, 20:1–3). Their acts have an immediate effect upon human beings and against evil. The seventh group amongst the angels is that of the angelic warriors of God's army, led by the archangel Michael (Rv 12:7–9, 19:14). An eighth group can be identified as the messenger angels that announce the apocalyptic events or demand them with the intent of advancing further toward the end of times. In contrast to the creators of cosmological disasters, they do not actively partake in the events (Rv 5:2, 7:2–3, 10:1–11, 14:6–12, 14:15, 14:18, 18:1–3, 18:21–24, 19:17–18).[21]

Some of these functions are depicted in Marienberg, where angels can be found partaking of the vision of the throne, performing the heavenly liturgy, and guarding the heavenly city in the murals of the eastern and western walls of the crypt. The angels in the vault do not seem to have a specific biblical function, as they cannot be connected to narrative passages from Revelation. Perhaps they can be seen as cosmological forces and messengers between the two visions, as their position in the vault suggests.

Revelation is a biblical source for the function of angels in eastern and western Christianity. A Byzantine writer, Pseudo-Dionysius, tried to develop something that went beyond the biblical sources: a hierarchical definition of the angels of high importance to the Latin West.

[21] For the division between fighting angels and angels announcing different phases of the apocalypse see also Hafer (2010, 41).

Pseudo-Dionysius, the Byzantine Liturgy, and Their Adaption in Western Christianity

The eastern Christian author Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (early sixth century) wrote down an angelic hierarchy in *De caelestis hierarchia* to prove that angels were spiritual beings.[22] This text was also widely accepted and adapted in the West. Pseudo-Dionysius drew a picture of the different characteristics and hierarchies of angels, which he divided into nine ranks. Although he relied upon other texts, he was the first to develop a congruent image of the nine orders of the angels. They were separated into three by three triads that were mirrored in the ranks of the church (Krauss 2000, 58–59). These groups have different levels of access to God and divine knowledge. The highest sphere, or hierarchy—the one closest to God—contains the orders of the seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones. This sphere can see God directly, is more closely aware of his plans than any other, and praises him eternally. The second sphere contains the orders of the dominions, the virtues and the powers and has no access to the divine plan or wisdom, but relays it as a messenger to the lowest sphere. This lowest sphere, which has contact with the world of the human beings and the universe, is made of the principalities, the archangels, and the angels. They annunciate the will of God to human beings (Krauss 2000, 66–68).

This text was widely spread in the West and among almost every exegete there; Gregory the Great (about 540–604 CE) was influenced by it (Frings 2010, 299) but developed his own hierarchy in the *Moralia in Job,* and in the thirty-fourth *Homilia* of the *Homiliae in evangelia* in comparison with the parable of the tenth drachma, by choosing a different order. The highest hierarchy for him included seraphim and cherubim, followed by the thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and the virtues, and as the lowest, hierarchically, the archangels and angels. Every human being has an equivalent in one angelic rank, according to one's own merit. Gregory's concept was the second important angelic model in the Middle Ages (Bruderer-Eichberg 2000, 40).[23]

In Marienberg, this adaption of Pseudo-Dionysius by Gregory the Great is visible in the two highest ranks of the angels—the seraphim and cherubim of the apse. The other ranks, however, cannot be deduced from the depictions in Marienberg alone.

The texts described above also found their place in the liturgy (Bruderer-Eichberg 2000, 41). Celebrating the unification of angels and human beings in the mass was commonly accepted by the church, where the believers sang the *Àghios* in Greek or the *Sanctus* in Latin, both in the Eastern Liturgy of Byzantium, and in the Western Roman Church. The unification between the heavenly and earthly liturgies

[22] For an edition of the text see Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita (1986).

[23] Bruderer-Eichberg also has written a monograph about the nine hierarchies in medieval art which is based on her PhD, see Bruderer-Eichberg (1998).

is mentioned for the first time in Revelation, during John's vision of the throne, which takes place in heaven but is made visible to John, who is on the earth. Every being in heaven, on the earth, in the sea, and under the earth partakes in the singing (Bux 2000, 44 and Geretti 2010, 18–19). In the introduction of the Western *Sanctus* in the Roman liturgy, the unification between heaven and earth in the praising of God is maintained, although one can see the orders as fulfilling different duties (Cablé 1997, 6). Angels functioned in the liturgical ceremonies of the funerals as psychopomps for the deceased, thus connecting heaven and earth, even after their earthly existence ends in the hour of death. This tradition has been handed down by the famous Gallican Antiphon *In Jerusalem deducant te Angeli*, which was sung during funeral processions (Aris 2010, 63–64).

These liturgical aspects also found their expression in the spaces of Marienberg with their starting point in the atrium.

Spaces of Transition: Angels in Threshold Situations

Angels as Psychopomps for the Deceased

In medieval church-architecture, atriums were a space of transfer to the liturgical space. Atriums were also a burial place for the so-called *non valde mali* ("the not very bad ones"). After the times of church father Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), there was a system classifying the deceased into four groups. First, there were the *valde boni* ("the very good ones") who belonged in heaven and did not have to wait for Judgment Day. Secondly, there were the *non valde boni* ("the not very good ones") who stood before heaven in a kind of transitory space where they no longer had to suffer for their sins. Thirdly, there were the *non valde mali* who had to stay in purgatory until Judgment Day. Lastly, there were the *valde mali* ("the very bad ones") who belonged in hell. Only the martyrs were classified as *valde boni* and went directly to heaven because there was nothing bad in them (Angenendt 1994, 68–69). These *valde boni* had a prominent place in the altars of the crypt and the upper church of Marienberg and at least two of them were also visible in the window jamb of the main apse and, in this position, served as mediators between the outer space of the atrium and the inner space of the crypt.

Arnold Angenendt has argued in another context that those who considered themselves *non valde mali* often took the atrium as a burial place as an act of humility to the Lord. As an example, Angenendt mentions the atrium of St. Peter in Rome were many popes were buried. He argues that the *non valde mali* who still had to suffer for their sins were understood as standing in front of the door as the *non valde boni* stand in the gates of the heavenly city. The imagery of the *non valde boni* originates in Jewish beliefs and can later be found in the Christian tradition. In Psalm 122, the Jewish pilgrims sung "Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem." Or, in Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have

the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." But they were not going there alone. They had heavenly support from angels, a belief which is also reflected in a very famous Gallican oratory for the deceased. The oratory starts with the Latin words: "*In paradisum deducant te angeli*. . ., *perducant te in civitatem Jerusalem*" ("Into paradise angels are leading you. . . and will conduct you to the holy city of Jerusalem"). Only after the Final Judgment would such individuals be allowed to fully enter the heavenly city (Angenendt 1994, 69 and 74).[24]

The wait before the gates of paradise is pictured next to the northern entrance of the crypt in Marienberg. The souls are guided by an angel to the gates. One angel is awaiting them next to the gates, which in Marienberg are real gates leading to the crypt. This was a common way of depicting angels and the souls of the blessed, as a comparison with the mosaic on the ninth century triumphal arch of Santa Prassede, in Rome, shows. On both gates of the city, angels await the souls who are lead to the city by another angel and the apostles Peter and Paul.[25] The angels in Marienberg lead the faithful to the heavenly city and the sacral space of the crypt. The frescos remind spectators of the souls waiting in the atrium for their heavenly mansion, the patrons of Marienberg. In the atrium of Marienberg, there would have been a direct correspondence between the earthly and heavenly liturgies, the atrium understood as a waiting place in front of heaven, the gate being a threshold to the inner space, with that connection and meaning complemented by the murals. In my opinion, a transitory aspect is also observable in the encrusted curtains with the pilgrim, who is probably Ulrich on his earthly pilgrimage: his preparation for the heavenly city.

Angels, the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant

The two painted curtains in Marienberg emphasize a connection to Old Testament Jewish sources and thoughts. One curtain can be seen in the outer space, and the other on the western wall beneath the depiction of the heavenly Jerusalem, when one enters the crypt. The multiple curtains and the spatial arrangement in Marienberg probably derived from texts in Hebrew traditions. The Tabernacle, which served as God's mobile dwelling place, and which Moses ordered built after the renewal of the Covenant, is a familiar element in Jewish belief and can be found in Exodus (Ex 11, 25–31, and 36–40). The Tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant

[24] The oratory contains the following text: *In paradisum deducant te Angeli; in tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres, et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem. Chorus angelorum te suscipiat, et cum Lazaro quondam paupere aeternam habeas requiem*. Quoted from Geretti (2010, 25). English translation by the author: "Into paradise angels are leading you: when you arrive the martyrs are awaiting you and will conduct you to the holy city of Jerusalem. The choir of the angels will await you and then you will have eternal quiet with the poor Lazarus."

[25] The literature on Santa Prassede is extensive. For a first reading, one can consult the PhD dissertation of Rotraut Wisskirchen, see Wisskirchen (1990).

Fig. 17 Dura Europos. Aaron consecrating the Tabernacle in the synagogue, 245–256 CE. Next to the spectator in the *lower left* one can see the walls of the atrium and a *loosely-draped red* and *blue curtain* partly concealing the entrance. Aaron, the tallest figure, stands in the atrium. Celebrants play music and bring animals for sacrifice. Objects such as the golden lampstand are taken before the Holy Place to be consecrated by Aaron. The Holy Place is depicted by colonnaded temple architecture. The curtains in *green* and *red* are taken aside behind Aaron and the other male figures. The viewer is able see the Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant. Source: Postcard from the site, © unknown

could be entered via an atrium that was kept from the eyes of the believers by curtains on each side. In the inner space of the atrium, one curtain separated the so-called Holy Place from view (Ex 26:36–37, 36:37–38). Inside the Holy Place, was another curtain decorated with cherubim, that separated the Most Holy Place, which contained the Ark of the Covenant, from direct view (Ex 26:31–33, 36:35). The covenant was placed in the Ark by Moses himself (Ex 40:3, 40:21). The Ark was decorated with two golden cherubim on each end, as protectors, who were poised with open wings, facing both each other and the cover of the Ark (Ex 37:7–9). God told Moses that he would speak to him there between the cherubim and give him his commandments (Ex 25:19–22). The high priest Aaron and his sons fulfilled their duties in the Tabernacle. Depictions of the Tabernacle can be traced to Jewish art. One famous example that also shows the sequence of the spaces and the curtains is preserved in the synagogue of Dura Europos (as early as 245 CE), present-day Syria, where Aaron is shown consecrating the Tabernacle (Fig. 17).

The spatial arrangement is made very clear. Next to the spectator one can see the walls of the atrium and a loosely draped red and blue curtain at the entrance. The walls are not mentioned in Exodus but are an addition of the artist. One can see Aaron, identified by his clothes and an inscription, in the Atrium, where celebrants

play music and sacrifice animals on the altar. Objects such as the golden lampstand, which are normally put in the Holy Place, are taken before it to be consecrated by Aaron. Behind Aaron one sees inside the Holy Place, shown here as temple architecture with colonnades. The curtains in green and red that normally protect it from direct view are drawn aside behind Aaron and the other male figures. The spectator can glimpse something that is normally hidden by elevated red curtains: the Most Holy Place, with the Ark of the Covenant.

The wish to make Jerusalem God's dwelling place was expressed by Nathan and David (2 Sm 7:12–13) and later fulfilled by Solomon, who erected the Temple, with the Ark of the Covenant in it, in Jerusalem (Kühnel 1987, 21). After the final fall of the second temple in 70 CE, apocalyptic sources of Jewish origin generated a heavenly Jerusalem (Kühnel 1987, 42). The notion of a heavenly Jerusalem was adapted by the Christians in Revelation. As God once dwelt in the Tabernacle, he then dwelt with his new chosen people. The Latin word *tabernaculum* was used in the text of Revelation 21:3, as a synonym for the heavenly Jerusalem. The old covenant had been replaced with the new one by the Christians (Kühnel 1987, 56–57):

> *Ecce tabernaculum… Dei cum hominibus, et habitavit cum eis; et ipsi populos eius erunt, et ipse Deus cum eis erit eorum Deus.*[26]

This connection between the Tabernacle, with the Ark of the Covenant, and the heavenly Jerusalem must have been known to those responsible for building the monastery of Marienberg, given that both of its patrons made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Jerusalem. In Marienberg, the curtains create a similar spatial arrangement, as per the description of the Tabernacle. A division of three main spaces in the Tabernacle can be found in Exodus: the Atrium, the Holy, and the Most Holy Place which, in Marienberg, are comparable to the atrium, the crypt as the Christian temple, and the depiction of the heavenly Jerusalem. Angels also fit in this arrangement as they are present in both texts. Although their appearance has changed, their function as guardians of the covenant is maintained in the heavenly city.

The curtain theme was also adapted in Christian exegesis and related to other writings of the New Testament. For example, the tearing of the temple curtain in the hour of Christ's death (Mt 27:51) was linked by medieval exegetes to the curtains of the Ark of the Covenant. To Hieronymus (347–420 CE), the tearing of the curtain meant the revelation of the secrets of the mundane sphere and history, but it did not mean an entering into the heavenly city as much as waiting in its atrium (Spitz 1972, 37–38). Augustine altered this view by interpreting Psalm 64:4 as Christ, who, being both High Priest and Lamb at the same time created a door to the Most Holy Place. In Old Testament times, people were separated from the Most Holy Place by the curtain, and only through Christ's sacrifice—the hidden truth—could the curtain be opened (Spitz 1972, 38–39).

[26] Quoted from Kühnel (1987, 57). English translation by the author: "See the Tabernacle… God will be with the human beings and live with them. And his people will be with him, and God himself will be with them as their God."

Perhaps this also explains why the curtain in the lower register of the western wall in Marienberg does not hide the heavenly city from the faithful, but exposes it, instead. The believer is now permitted to see the heavenly vision with the angels and is invited to do so by its architecture, which is open to the viewer. This architectural arrangement is strengthened by scripture because the city is no longer hidden from the eyes of the faithful (Rv 22:3–4). Instead of a pilgrim, Peter as guardian holds the keys to the heavenly city. Peter is also reflected in the vision of the Christ in Majesty in Marienberg, where he acts as intercessor for a monk that might be Ulrich. This interpretation seems plausible because Goswin writes that, during his lifetime, Ulrich was already working toward his reward in heaven by converting, spurning his social rank, wealth, and his family, just like the apostles did. Goswin also explains that Ulrich asked Peter to intercede for his eternal blessing before God (Goswin 1996, 102).

The Angels as Role Models for the Vita Angelica

As one turns around within the crypt, one can see the two heavenly visions from Revelation facing each other: the Christ in Majesty in the apse, and the heavenly Jerusalem, the abode of the blessed, on the opposite side. The angels in the vault represent cosmological forces sent by God in a celestial zone designated by stars that connect the two visions, without taking up some of the narrative elements of the middle part of Revelation. Angels are omnipresent in the two heavenly visions. In the Christ in Majesty, the seraphim and the cherubim are directly experiencing the divine vision and knowledge of God in accordance with the medieval Byzantine tradition, while the Apostles Peter and Paul, the monk, and the martyrs are still awaiting the complete vision of God because of their lower rank in the hierarchy. In the heavenly Jerusalem, they no longer act as pure guardians of the gates and soul companions as seen in the atrium, but populate the heavenly city. The golden cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant have become Christian angels.

Why was such an explicitly angelological program implemented in Marienberg? After Augustine, Christians were already expected to experience a so-called *vita angelica* on earth, in preparation for the afterlife. Monks especially seemed to be able to experience the incorporeal life of the angels because they were expected to live without bodily sins, practice strict asceticism, and devote much of their time to prayer. They longed only to serve the Lord as the angels did in their different ways (Krauss 2000, 56–57). The crypt of Marienberg was the place where the community celebrated the mass and where the Liturgy of the Hours was held. The community assumed the duty and function of the angels by anticipating their everlasting heavenly liturgy when celebrating the mass. This is a reflection of the Byzantine Pseudo-Dionysian ideas, namely the constant praising of God in the celebration of mass in the earthly liturgy. This idea is a reflection of the heavenly and the beyond in the earthly existence of the monks, an idea that formed an integral part of medieval thinking. But references to angels and their connection to the monks do

not end here. Goswin is once again a fruitful source. At the very beginning of the *Registrum*, he speaks to the monks directly and reminds them of their main function, which he sees as their obligation to pray for the deceased. His derivation of the word monk is helpful for a further understanding of the murals:

> *Maxime autem religiosi ligati sunt per animabus orandis. Monachi dicti sunt a monos, quod est unum et ŷcos, quod est custos, quasi custos unius rei videlicet anime* (Goswin 1996, 2).[27]

The monks, like angels, can also be understood as protectors and guardians of souls. They fulfill these functions in the earthly world by praying, as a reflection of the angelic guardians in heaven that can be seen in the atrium. The eschatological fulfillment of their constant prayer is found in the crypt: the heavenly Jerusalem is revealed.

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[27] Translation by the author: "the monks especially have to pray for souls. They are called monks from "monos" which means "one," and "ycos" which means "guardian," as if a monk only protects one thing: the soul."

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The Dragon in Transcultural Skies: Its Celestial Aspect in the Medieval Islamic World

Sara Kuehn

Abstract The dichotomous nature of the dragon is reflected in its chthonic, aquatic, and aerial aspects, allowing it to cross boundaries within its natural environment, metamorphosing from air to land or sea creature and back again, its winged aspect implying an independence from local position and the ability to attain whatever plane of apperception it desires. This quality is revealed in its astral-cosmological, alchemical, astrological, and metaphysical manifestations, glimpses of which can be found in Islamic, Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian writings. The intrinsic as well as extrinsic ambiguity of the great beast necessarily entails an element of transcendence, since its mystery can only be explained as flowing from the juxtaposition of two or more levels of reality. Its inherent duality renders the dragon image an embodiment of change and transformation par excellence. Such associations expand its semantic territory as agent of metamorphosis and into the realm of spiritual conceptions.

A wide semantic range of dragon iconography and iconology evolved during its immemorial history in Western Asia.[1] Animated by an endless interplay of dichotomous forces, the creature revealed itself as deliverer or destroyer, regenerator or annihilator, protector or adversary. The dragon thus served to embody the eternal opposition of two distinct forces, one seeking to preserve life, the other to destroy it, a polarity giving rise to a kaleidoscopic diversity of function and symbolism. Owing to this inherent polyvalence and ambiguity, it has been called "one of the most complex symbolisms of the history of cultures" (Le Goff 1980, 162). Its iconography is a recurring and popular image in the architecture and art of the

[1] The iconography of the dragon is the topic of my Ph.D. thesis, published in revised form (Kuehn 2011). While it discusses different qualities of the great beast, its aerial or celestial aspect has proved to be the most elusive and was not considered in as much detail as it deserves—a lacuna which the present paper attempts to address.

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medieval Islamic world. Yet despite its wide diffusion, the symbolism that survives from medieval Western Asia is often elusive and even cryptic.

As composite mythical creatures, dragons are endowed with features or parts belonging to various animals generally recognizable across cultural-aesthetic boundaries—the reptilian, feline, and raptorial motif being prevalent in the overall composition—and often carry chthonic, aquatic and aerial aspects. Features such as these reveal that the dragon was able to cross boundaries within its natural environment, metamorphosing from air to land or sea creature and back again. The physical changes accompanying such shape-shifting form part of the dragon iconography in medieval Islamic art so that the creature is, for instance, portrayed variously without legs, with two forelegs, or with four legs. Thus a dragon may have a quadruped body, a serpentine body, or a quadruped protome extending into ophidian coils.[2] The avian aspect of the dragon is often expressed through its portrayal with wings, which are associated with the power of flight, a well-known vehicle for the transition from one realm to another.[3]

In its astral-cosmological manifestation, the dragon necessarily has a celestial quality which is all-powerful, as the sage astrologer Jāmāsp relates to Gushtāsp (Av. Wishtāspa, the Greek Hystaspes), the Kayanian king of Iranian traditional history and first Mazdaist on the throne:

> No one can safely pass that fateful wheel. Who has by wisdom or by manliness escaped the knife-sharp claws of that celestial dragon? What has to be will be. There is no doubt. The shrewdest man has not escaped his fate.[4]

The early medieval author Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Kisāʾī, writing not long before 1200, refers to the authority of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (probably in 17/638) when portraying the creation of the canopy and the throne of God, which encompasses both heaven and earth, and the great serpent that surrounds it:

> Then God created a great serpent to surround the Canopy. Its head is of white pearl and its body is of gold. Its eyes are two sapphires, and no one can comprehend the magnitude of the serpent except God. It has forty thousand wings made of different kinds of jewels, and on each feather there stands an angel holding a jewelled lance, praising God and blessing His name. When this serpent extols God, its exaltation overwhelms that of all angels [. . .].[5]

A related description of the girdling serpent-dragon is given by Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, the thirteenth-century expert in *ḥadīth*, or sacred tradition, in a commentary on *Sūra* 40 of the Qurʾān:

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[2] For an in-depth discussion of the reptilian characteristics of the (serpent-) dragon, see Kuehn (2011, 5–9).

[3] The composite mythical animal commonly identified as Sasanian-style *sēnmurv*–a distant cousin of the dragon–which has a (pea)cock-like tail (associating it with the motif of flight) is the subject of a detailed investigation in Kuehn, *Ancient Iconography in Western Asia: The Image of the Dragon from 2500 BC TO 650 AD*, forthcoming.

[4] Al-Firdawsī, *In the Dragon's Claws*, trans. and ed. Clinton 1999, 33.

[5] Al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, trans. and ed. Thackston 1978, 7.

> When God created the Throne, it said, "God has not created anything greater than myself," and exulted with joy out of pride. God therefore caused it to be surrounded by a serpent having 70,000 wings, each wing having 70,000 feathers in it, each feather having in it 70,000 faces each face having in it 70,000 mouths, and each mouth having in it 70,000 tongues, with its mouths ejaculating every day the praises of God [...], the number of drops of rain, the number of leaves of trees, the number of stones and earth, the number of days of this world, and the number of angels—all these a number of times. The serpent then twisted itself round the Throne which was taken up by only half the serpent while it remained twisted around it. The Throne thereupon became humble.[6]

In the Jewish tradition, a great silver serpent likewise encircles the machinery of the throne of King Solomon and, by operating the wheelwork, activates the mechanism.[7] It is of note that Solomon's mechanical throne, which can be likened to a miniature universe, can only be put into motion by the serpent (Jellinek 1967, vol. 2, 83–85).

According to Islamic traditions, the Kaʿba, the most famous sanctuary of Islam, is closely associated with the serpent-dragon. In his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* ("Tales on the Prophets"), Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī al-Nīsābūrī al-Shāfʿī (d. 427/1035), describes the Kaʿba in Mecca, the central sanctuary of the Islamic world, as a divine throne that is encircled by a dragon:

> Then Allāh surrounded it by a serpent. [...] this serpent wound itself around the throne and the latter reaches to half the height of the serpent which is winding itself around it.[8]

Al-Ṭabarī describes it as:

> [...] a stormy wind with two heads. One of them followed the other till it reached Mecca; there it wound itself like a serpent on the spot of the sacred house.[9]

The foundation of the Kaʿba is further described as:

> [...] a wind called the wind Al-Khadjūdj which had two wings and a head like a serpent's.[10]

A similar description is given by Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Diyārbakrī in his *Taʾrīkh al-khamīs*, in which the foundation is said to possess:

> [...] two serpents' heads, one behind the other.[11]

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[6] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, trans. and ed. Jayakar 1906, vol. 1, 638; see also al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, trans. Brinner 2002, vol. 24, 25.

[7] See Jellinek (1853–73, repr. 1967, vol. 5, 35). Cf. Ginzberg (1946) and, *idem* (1955, vol. 4, 57–59); Wensinck (1978, 63).

[8] Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ. Musammā biʾl-ʿarāʾis al-majālis*, 1290, 13, as cited in Wensinck (1978, 62 and n. 3); see also al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis*, 151. Wensinck (62 and n. 3) notes that there are also Greek images in which the serpent is wound around and ascends above the *omphalos*, which often has a sepulchral character (see also Elderkin 1924, 109–116); for a discussion of the *omphalos* in literature, see Roscher (1914, pl. IX, no. 6); and *idem* (1915, pl. I, no. 1, pl. II, nos. 3, 4, 14).

[9] Al-Ṭabarī, *Mukhtaṣar taʾrīkh al-rusul (al-umam) wa 'l mulūk wa 'l-khulafāʾ*, ed. de Goeje (1879–1901, vol. 1, 275, 8–10), cited after Wensinck (1978, 61 and n. 2).

[10] *Idem*, 276, 16–17, as cited in Wensinck (1978, 61).

[11] Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 98, as cited in Wensinck (1978, 61).

Such traditions endow the great serpent with a sacred as well as mythological character. Its supernatural qualities are manifest in its winged and double-headed appearance. Even more significantly, as Arent Jan Wensinck points out, the Meccan serpent is either the Sakīna or a being sent by God in most traditions, and is hence "not a demoniac but a divine being."[12]

The iconography of the encircling dragon, traditionally known by its Greek name *ouroboros*, was thus known in the Islamic tradition and its imagery vividly described in surviving textual sources. The symbolism is also evident in the visual heritage; it appears on portable artefacts, such as in manuscript illustrations, as well as in sculptural and architectural elements.

Among the large, pseudo-epigraphic alchemical books produced during the medieval period, an Arabic alchemical treatise titled *Muṣḥaf al-ḥakīm Usṭānis fī-l-ṣināʿat al-ilāhiyya* ("Book of the Wise Ostanes on Divine Art"), attributed to Ostanes (Uṣtānis), the renowned Median Achaemenid-period author of books on magic and gnosis (Sezgin 1971, 51–54; Ullmann 1972, 184f; Anawati, "Arabic Alchemy," *EHAS*, 1996, vol. 3, 862; Needham and Wang 1965, 333–335),[13] describes how, in a dream, a creature with a serpent's tail, eagle's wings, and elephant's head devouring its own tail (like a serpent) guides Ostanes up to the seven gates of wisdom, for which it gives him the keys (Reitzenstein 1916, 33–35; Ullmann 1972, 184ff. and ns. 1 and 2; Rashed 1996, 862). The symbol appears in other Arabic alchemical texts, such as the writings of Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Ṣādiq al-Tamīmī (ca. 287/900–287/960, known in the West as "Senior Zadith").[14] His most renowned work was the *Kitāb al-Mā' al-Waraqī wa 'l-Arḍ al-Najmīyah* ("Book of the Silvery Water and Starry Earth"), known in Latin as the *Tabula Chemica* (Stapleton and Ḥusain 1933, 117–213), in which a pair of winged creatures holding each other's tails in their mouths is depicted (Fig. 1).[15]

It is significant that, in medieval Islamic iconography, the *ouroboros* dragon was doubled[16] and often pictured as two entwined dragons eating one another (or, in other words, threatening and "devouring," as well as "delivering" and protecting one another). In an act simultaneously self-destructive and parturient, the cycle is recreated in the self-devouring.

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[12] *Idem*, 65.

[13] In Zoroastrian pseudo-epigrapha that include those of Ostanes, the magus is said to have accompanied Khshayārshā (Xerxes) during the great Persian invasion of Greece. Cf. Boyce and Grenet (1991, 494–496).

[14] Cf. Sezgin (1971, 283–288); Needham and Wang (1965, 378); Ronca (1998, 95–116, esp. 102–109).

[15] The highly stylised illustration is accompanied by an Arabic inscription in the Lucknow manuscript as "...two Birds [with an indication of the position of/the respective heads and the tails]; the Male and the/Female; Two in One". See Stapleton and Ḥusain (1933), pl. IA. A closely related, yet even more stylised, version of the motif is depicted in the Paris Ms. no. 2610, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, see *idem*, pl. 2B.

[16] Needham and Wang (1965, 378–379) consider this development to have been due to "Chinese influence" on the Hellenistic single tail-eating serpent motif. Cf. also Schütt (2002, 106f).

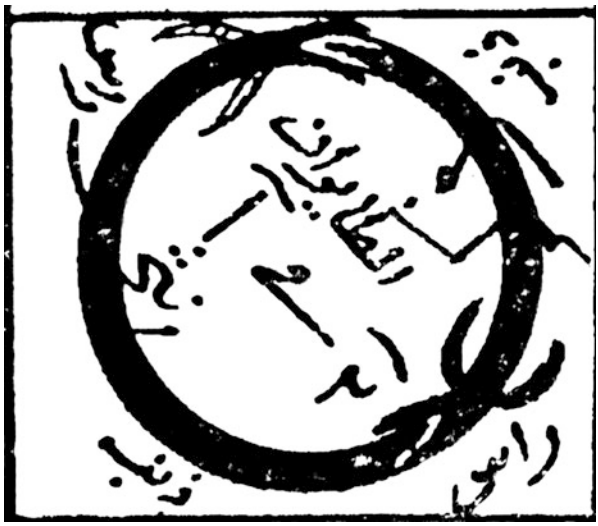

Fig. 1 A pair of fantastical creatures in a circular arrangement, biting each other's tails. Painting in a copy of Muḥammad ibn Umayl al-Ṣādiq al-Tamīmī's *Kitāb al-Mā'al-Waraqī wa 'l-Arḍ al-Najmīyah* (ca. 287/900–287/960). Opaque pigment and ink on paper. India, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, State Museum. Source: Stapleton and Ḥusain 1933, pl. I A

The motif appears on a carved wooden door, once possibly part of a mausoleum (Hauptmann von Gladiss 2006, 95) (Fig. 2). The door, dated to the first half of the thirteenth century is thought to come from the Tigris region, and is now held in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin (Meinecke 1989, 54, 58, detail). It is carved with a pair of large dragons surrounding a central medallion set within an arch-shaped frame. The latter contains an interlaced infinite star pattern, outlined by an interlaced pearled band which extends at its apex to a small medallion. The medallion is touched on either side by the sinuous tongues projecting from the gaping mouths of the dragons whose scaly, serpentine bodies with raised slender wings wind tightly around the medallion. Their bodies form a heart-shaped knot and two loops, the ends of their tails tapering to a point to form a tight curl at the base. Due to the surface wear of the door, only the frame of the small medallion is extant, so one can only speculate what it was that the dragons were protecting or threatening.

A similar concept dominates the depiction on a large bas-relief stone fragment carved with a pair of antithetically arranged dragons framing concentrically arranged, patterned circles that carry clear solar associations. Discovered near Alaeddin Tepe in Konya, now in the İnce Minare Muzesi in Konya (Fig. 3), the medallion was probably part of a thirteenth-century Saljuqid monument which no longer exists. Only the head of the dragon on the left is complete, portrayed with a long, curved snout and wide-open mouth, revealing sharp teeth and fangs and a prominent, sinuous tongue, the tip of which touches the edge of the star rosette. The head is punctuated with almond-shaped eyes framed by long, curved lashes and crowned by a small, rounded ear. At the back of the head, the dragon's neck is clasped by paired "collars," the upper part braided, the lower marked with vertical hatching. The dragons' long, scaly ophidian bodies form a loop and then a pretzel-like knot. The bottom section of the stone is broken off, so the tips of their tails are

Fig. 2 (**a**) A pair of confronted winged dragons with forelegs enclose a large medallion containing a star pattern. Relief carving of a wooden door (central vertical section replaced in the style of the

Fig. 3 A pair of dragons enclosing a large medallion containing a star pattern. Relief carving, Anatolia. First half of the thirteenth century. Konya, İnce Minare Müzesi, inv. no. 5817. Photo by Sara Kuehn

lost. Likewise, only part of the pretzel-like knot of the dragon on the right's body has survived.

The dragon's *ouroboros* aspect is further evident in the double frontispiece of the *Kitāb al-diryāq* ("Book of the Theriac," often referred to as "Book of Antidotes"), dated 595/1199, in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, on which the encircling dragons are juxtaposed with the personification of the Moon (Fig. 4).[17] Although of course realised in an entirely different medium, the representations in stone and on paper probably share a relatively close geographic provenance and period of production. The astral personification on the Pseudo-Galen double frontispiece, moreover, might provide a link between what appear to be composite stellar symbols on the Berlin door (Fig. 2) and the Konya architectural stone fragment (Fig. 3).

The dragon's manifestly dual nature confers it an intermediate status. The world encircling *ouroboros* marks the boundary between the ordered world and the chaos around it and thereby appears as an exponent of liminality situated upon the ambiguous dividing line between the divine and the demonic. Thus intrinsically linked with the idea of the threshold, dragon imagery appears around openings and entry points of secular and religious architectural monuments, where it serves as a

Fig. 2 (continued) original), Tigris region, the Jazīra. First half of the thirteenth century. Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, inv. no. I.1989.43. Photo courtesy of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin. (**b**) A pair of gaping dragons' mouths, confront each other and flank a small central medallion enclosing a human bust (?). Detail of the relief carving of a wooden door, Tigris region, the Jazīra. First half of the thirteenth century

[17] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 2964; current pagination 36–37; dated Rabīʿ al-awwal of the year 595/31 December 1198–29 January 1199.

Fig. 4 A personification of the Moon enclosed by interlaced dragons. Four winged figures, of presumably honorific and celestial significance, frame the medallion. Detail of the right half of the double-page frontispiece in the *Kitāb al-diryāq*, possibly Mosul (?), the Jazīra. Rabīʿ al-awwal of the year 595/31 December 1198–29 January 1199). Opaque pigment and ink on paper. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 2964; current pagination 36–37. Photo courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

liminal marker and apotropaic device in the role of a guardian imbued with protective and talismanic power, warding off the dangers and inimical forces inherent to such places.

In the discussion of the story of primordial heavenly Paradise in post-Qurʾānic canonical traditions, the serpent-dragon's inherent ambivalence is also expressed: Before the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Genesis serpent is described as a winged creature with legs. Such a giant winged quadruped serpent is portrayed, for

Fig. 5 The Genesis serpent. Wall paintings showing events related to the book of Genesis on the drum of the dome (far right) in the Armenian church of the Holy Cross at Aghtʿamar. Eastern Turkey, Lake Van. 915–921. Source: After Thierry (1987, 384, Fig. 266)

instance, in the wall paintings showing events related to the book of Genesis on the drum of the dome in the Armenian palatine church of the Holy Cross at Aghtʿamar on Lake Van (now in Eastern Turkey), built between 915 and 921 (Mathews 1982, 245–257; Thierry 1987, 384, Fig. 266) (Fig. 5).[18] In Islamic lore, the serpent is described as the most beautiful and strongest of animals:[19]

> The serpent was shaped like a camel and like the camel, could stand erect. She had a multi-coloured tail, red, yellow, green, white, black, a mane of pearl, hair of topaz, eyes like the planets Venus and Jupiter, and an aroma like musk blended with ambergris. Her dwelling was in the aqueous Paradise, and her pond was on the shore of the River Cawthar. Her food was saffron, and she drank from that river; and her speech was exaltation of God, the Lord of the Universe. God had created her two thousand years before he created Adam, and she had told Adam and Eve about every tree in Paradise.[20]

A narrative ascribed to Wahb ibn Munabbih (b. 34/654–5), a Yemenite descendant from a family of Persian origin, describes the Fall which led to the expulsion from the Garden:

[18] The fact that the Genesis serpent is winged is also mentioned in the Jewish *Apocalypse of Moses*, 26; Ginzberg (1909–38, repr. 1946) and *idem* (1955, vol. 5, 123f, n. 4). The Armenian dragon *vishap* is discussed in Kuehn (2011, esp. 6, 9, 29, 38, 41, 52, 54, 66, 67, 74, 89, 90, 121).

[19] Cf. Wheeler (2002, 25).

[20] Al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 38.

> When Iblīs wanted to cause [Adam and Eve] to slip, he entered into the stomach *(jawf)* of the serpent; the serpent [then] had four legs and was like a Bactrian [camel] *(bukhtīya)*, one of the most beautiful creatures God had created. When the serpent entered the garden, Iblīs came out of its stomach *(jawf)*; he took [a fruit] from the tree [the Tree of Immortality (Qur'ān 20:116–21)] that God had forbidden to Adam and Eve and brought it to Eve.[21]

As a consequence of the service rendered to Iblīs, the serpent is not only banished from the heavenly Paradise, but loses her legs, which reenter her body; she will dwell in dark places and only earth will be her food;[22] she is condemned to crawl on her belly, becoming "malformed and deprived of the power of speech, mute and forked-tongued."[23]

The serpent-dragon in Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran, also experienced a "fall from grace." A decisive change in its iconology was brought about by the rise of a rigid Zoroastrian cosmological dualism. A more robust symbolism was needed and the serpent-dragon accrued a range of negative aspects. The Zoroastrian evil principle of the universe, Angra Mainyu, known in later times as Ahriman, is likened to the serpent in the *Great Bundahishn* ("Book of Primal Creation")—Pahlawī translations based on lost Avestan scriptures of the third century CE and earlier, and their commentaries written after the Arab conquest (Watkins 1995, 58). It describes him as having sprung:

> [. . .] like a snake, *out of the sky* down to the earth. . . thereby *the sky* [emphasis added] was as shattered and frightened by him, as a sheep by a wolf.[24]

The inherently powerful and combative serpent-dragon aptly came to represent the Zoroastrian evil spirit who declares to God:

> I shall destroy you and your creatures forever and ever. And I shall persuade all your creatures to hate you and to love me.[25]

At the same time, it has to be pointed out that in spite of the negative associations brought about by Zoroastrian cosmological dualism, the Greek writer Philo of Byblos (ca. 64–141 CE) records a saying attributed to the magus Zoroaster, according to whom the serpent is not only immortal but:

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[21] Al-Ṭabari, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, 108; see also *idem*, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, I, 235, cited after Katz (2002, 179). Jewish Midrashic literature similarly records that the serpent of the Garden of Eden originally had feet; Gray (1906, 186).

[22] Al-Ṭabari, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, 525f; cf. al-Kisā'ī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 53.

[23] Al-Kisā'ī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 46. See also the second-century BCE Hebrew work, *Book of Jubilees* 3.28, as well as Philo of Alexandria, *De Opificio Mundi* 55.156.

[24] *Bundahishn* 6.10–11 (*Sacred Books of the East*, trans. West, vol. 5, Oxford, 1897). Cf. Zaehner (1955, repr. 1972, 262); Boyce (1984, 50).

[25] *Idem*, 46. This may be compared with the antagonism between Jahweh and the serpent in the Genesis narrative (2–4); see the interpretation by Rhodokanakis with addendum by Ehrenzweig (1921, 76–83).

> [...] the director of everything beautiful [...] the best of the good, the wisest of the wise [...] the father of order and justice, self-taught [...] and perfect and wise [...].[26]

The link between these statements and historical Iranian Zoroastrianism seems tenuous. Nevertheless, in addition to reflecting the Hellenistic reception of Zoroastrian ideas, these passages may suggest that the Iranian definition of the serpent-dragon as unequivocally maleficent was perhaps not always as cut and dried as it appears from surviving scriptures.[27]

Hence in its new guise—that is, after the rise of Zoroastrian cosmological dualist notions—the dragon assumed the mantle of eschatological opponent, the evil principle who would be destroyed, following a millennium of conflict, in a final battle that would usher in a new age and a new creation. Serpents and dragons thereby came to be classified as noxious beings (*khrafstra*s), creatures of Ahriman, the Zoroastrian evil principle of the universe and, as such, evil and deserving of death.[28]

Astrology also offered support for Zoroastrian apocalyptic ideas, according to which the planetary bodies were regarded as evil. The "good" luminaries, the Sun and the Moon, were removed from the category of the seven planets, whose intrusion brought injustice into the world (Khareghat 1914, 129; Brunner, "Astronomy and Astrology in the Sasanian Period, s.v. Astrology and Astronomy in Iran," *EIr*). Consequently, the Sun and the Moon were substituted by two "demonic" opponents, the head and tail of the dragon (Pahl. *Gōchihr* which stems from the Avestan *gao chithra*, "holding the seed of cattle," formerly the stock epithet of the Moon[29]).[30] According to the *Bundahishn*, Gōchihr is portrayed as "similar to a snake with the head in Gemini (*dū-pahikar*, the twins) and the tail in Centaurus (*nēmasp*), so that at all times there are six constellations between its head and tail."[31]

The idea that these phenomena were caused by a body whose head and tail intercepted the Sun and Moon's light was probably related to the emergence of definite ideas as to the nature of the orbits of the Sun and the Moon and their

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[26] Philo of Byblos' *The Phoenician History* (as quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10.52), trans. and ed. Attridge and Oden Jr. (1981, 67). Cf. *idem* (95, n. 161), for reference on Zoroaster in this text.

[27] This supposition is further corroborated by the ongoing Zoroastrian practice of ophiomancy (see n. 32) which is in striking contradiction to the classification of serpents as noxious beings (*khrafstra*s).

[28] Cf. Boyce (1975, repr. 1996, 90f). The special stick used by the Zoroastrians to kill noxious creatures of various kinds is called a *mār-gan* ("snake-killer"); Russell (1987, 461). The custom of killing *khrafstra*s is also mentioned by Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride 46*; *De Invidia et Odio* 3.537B; *Questiones Conviviales* 4.5.2.670D).

[29] See Zaehner (1955, repr. 1972, 164, n. E); MacKenzie (1964, 515, n. 26).

[30] *Bundahishn* ch. 5, A. 5, 52.12–53.1, cited after Brunner, *EIr*. Cf. Hartner, "Al-Djawzahar," *EI*^{2}, 501b.

[31] *Bundahishn* ch. 5 A. 5. P. O. Skjærvo, "Aždahā I," *EIr*. Cf. Zaehner (1955, repr. 1972, 164, n. E). Also MacKenzie (1964, 515, 525).

opposite points of intersection between the Moon's orbit and the ecliptic (Khareghat 1914, 129). The classical theory of the dragon myth seems to have been modified in accordance with developments in astrological doctrine from late Arsacid and Sasanian times onwards.[32] Sasanian astrologers received the notion of Rāhu, a celestial serpent whose head (*siras*) and tail (*ketu*) cause solar and lunar eclipses, from India.[33] In Pahlawī, Rāhu was referred to as Gōchihr. In contradistinction to the original meaning of *gao chithra*, the Moon's light and fecundity attributes, the dragon's head (*gōchihr sar*) and tail (*gōchihr dumb*), came to represent the demon of eclipses that intercepts the light of the luminaries, the personified dark principle and direct antagonist of the luminaries (Hartner 1938, 153).[34] This shift in meaning led to the concept of a polarity of good and evil throughout the cosmos, the eclipse demon being referred to as Dark Sun and Dark Moon, "dark" meaning "obscured" and "eclipsed."[35] Thus, according to the *Bundahishn*, the serpent-like (*mār homānāg*) Gōchihr and Mūsh Parīg (Av. Mushparīkā), with tail (*dumbōmand*) and wings (*parrwar*), are said to be the

[32] See Panaino (2004, 196–218), and *idem* (2005, 73–89, esp. 74f), who discusses the Zoroastrian practice of deducing omens through ophiomancy (that is to say, divination by serpents) which was linked to astral elements. It is noteworthy that this practice was known by the great eleventh-century polymath al-Bīrūnī in the *Kitāb al-Āthār al-Bāqiya*, trans. and ed. by Sachau, 1876–8, 218. In this connection it is interesting to consider the reference of the fifth-century Armenian theologian, Eznik of Koghb (*Elc alandocʿ* ("A Treatise on God") 1959, 641, ch. 291) to the pre-Christian belief which associated the heavenly bodies with deities when they worshipped venomous creatures, whereby he implicitly appears to associate astrolatry with ophiolatry. The practice probably goes ultimately back to the Mesopotamian world (Panaino 2004, 2005), since the heavenly bodies follow patterns that are comparable to Babylonian hemerologies. Cf. Zaehner (1972, 107–9).

[33] For an analysis of the origin of the concept of Rāhu, see De Mallmann (1962, 81); Markel (1995, 55–64); Pingree (1989, 1–13, esp. 3–7, 11–13), and *idem* (2006, 240). In the Rigveda (5.40.5–9) Rāhu is known as a demonic being, *Svar-bhānu-*, which is said to have pierced the Sun with darkness. In post-Vedic mythology, *Svar-bhānu-* is replaced by *Rāhu-*, his name sometimes being conferred upon the latter; *Svar-bhānu-* perhaps meaning "who has the effulgence of the sun" or "who is affected by the effulgence of the sun." Advanced knowledge of periodical eclipses of the sun and the moon led to the belief in two demonic beings, the red *Rāhu-* and the black *Ketu-*. See Scherer (1953, 100f).

[34] Cf. Duchesne-Guillemin (1990, 17–19). The great treatise on horoscopic astrology of the first-century Hellenistic astrologer Dorotheus of Sidon, which was first translated into Persian in the third century and into Arabic in the eighth century, contains a chapter (V, 43) entitled "on clarifying the phases of the moon and the head of the dragon and its tail . . ." It states that "the head is called the 'ascending' and its tail the 'descending' and the signs which those learned in the stars call 'obscured' are from Leo to Capricorn . . ." *Dorothei Sidonii Carmen Astrologicum*, trans. and ed. D. Pingree (1976, 322), cited by Beck (2004, 172). Jews writing in Hebrew utilised the terms *ro'sh* or rather *zanav hat-t*^{e}*li* or *hat-tannin* for *ra's* and *dhanab*, whereas it was known in the Byzantine tradition as *hē kephalē* or *hē ouratou drakontos*. See Schlüter (1982, 138).

[35] *Bundahishn* (ch. 5.4, 49.13–5) and the late ninth-century catechism *Shkand-gumānīg wizār* ("Doubt Dispelling Exposition") 4.46, cited after Brunner, "Astronomy and Astrology," *EIr*.

evil opponents of the stellar constellations and are therefore bound to the Sun's path, which restrains their capacity for harm.[36] The expulsion of evil from the sky, from heaven, is manifested by the plunging to earth of Gōchihr,[37] who sets the earth on fire and whose permanent body will only be destroyed by resurrection.[38]

In Manichaean astrology, two dragons make the firmament turn with the aid of two angels:

> He [i.e. the Living Spirit] fastened the Seven Planets; and he bound and fettered two Dragons, and bound them on high to that which is the lowest heaven; and, in order to make them turn the firmament at call, he placed over [them] two Angels, a male and a female.[39]

In Manichaeism the eclipse dragon also played a part as the ascending and descending nodes, anabibazon and catabibazon, which stand for the head and the tail of the dragon.[40]

In Islamic astronomy, the Persian *gōchihr,* called *al-jawzahar* or *al-tinnīn* (also *aždahā*, "the giant dragon"), was sometimes represented as a bipartite or double-headed dragon. It is the circumpolar constellation Draco, "represented as a very long serpent with many convolutions; it is coiled around the north pole of the ecliptic,"[41] which is sometimes metaphorically applied to the Milky Way.[42] In a verse by the late eleventh-century Iranian poet Labībī, the seven heads of the dragon represent the heavenly spheres and the universe.[43]

Individual depictions of *jawzahar*—Draco as eighth planet next to the seven traditional planets—often portray a cross-legged figure holding a dragon in each hand (Fig. 6). This image is featured on an inlaid copper-alloy inkwell of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, which depicts a cross-legged figure crowned by a pointed headdress and flanked by dragon-headed staves. The dragons have gaping mouths with particularly long tongues, oriented towards the figure's head. Importantly, the dragons' undulant bodies descend diagonally from the staves and thus

[36] "[The Sun's opponent, the "tailed Mūsh Parīg"] is tied to the sun's chariot but occasionally becomes loose and does great harm"; *Bundahishn* ch. 5.4.5 A. 6–7, 50.6–7, 53.1–5, and *Shkand-gumānīg wizār* 4.46, cited after Brunner, "Astronomy and Astrology," *EIr*. Cf. Jackson (1932, 30–32), Hartner (1938, 151), Zaehner (1955, repr. 1972, 164, n. E). MacKenzie (1964, 513, 516).

[37] *Bundahishn* 34.17, 225.1–3, cited after Brunner, "Astronomy and Astrology," *EIr*.

[38] *Bundahishn* 30.31, cited after Khareghat (1914, 128).

[39] Manichaen Cosmological Fragment M. 98–99 in Turfan Pahlavi; Jackson (1932, 30–31, 38–39, ns. 1–7). See also Boyce (1975, repr. 1996, 60 text y 1 with note); Skjærvo, "Aždahā I," *EIr*.

[40] For instance in the Coptic *Kephalaia* (ch. 69), cited after Beck (2004, 177f).

[41] Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-Awaīl Ṣināʿat al-Tanjīm*, 71.

[42] MacKenzie, "Zoroastrian Astrology," 521–2, n. 53, 525. *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi* 1982, 113, n. 42.

[43] M. Dabīrsīāqī, *Ganj-i bāz yāfta*, Tehran, 2535/1355 Sh., cited after Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, "Aždahā II," *EIr*.

Fig. 6 "A ruler on a dragon-throne," sign of the zodiac featuring the eclipsed pseudo-planet (*al-jawzahar*). Detail on the base of an inkwell. Western Central Asia. Late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Copper alloy, silver inlay. Location unknown. Source: Pugachenkova et al. (1960, Fig. 196)

directly associate the depiction with the entire body of the dragon; the latter representing an abbreviated reference to the astrological "head" (*ra'ṣ*) and the "tail" (*dhanab*) of the dragon.[44]

While the dragon is often associated with eclipses and, hence, the "devouring of light," its positive aspect as giver of light and, consequently, as protector of light is more difficult to gauge, although numerous references are found in poetry and in Iranian works in particular. Accordingly the polymath Asadī Ṭūsī writes of the sunlight in his epic *Garshāsp-nāma:*

[44] For a discussion of the astronomical and astrological aspects of the dragon, see also Caiozzo (2009, 419–439, esp. 424–430).

[...] the dragon that gives the sun also takes it back by its poison.[45]

The simile "the sun is delivered from the dragon" in the romantic epic, *Wīs u Rāmīn*,[46] almost certainly of Arsacid Parthian origin, expresses a related stance. Translated and versified by Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī around 440/1050 for the first Saljuq *sulṭān* Ṭoghrıl I, his minister Abū Naṣr ibn Manṣūr, and his governor Abu 'l-Fatḥ ibn Muḥammad of Iṣfahān, this notion is echoed by the great twelfth-century Persian poet Afḍal al-Dīn Khāqānī (520/595–1126/1199), who writes in his *dīwān*:

The dragon of the emerald (heavens) wreathes,
[And] spews out the sun from the tip of its tongue.[47]

These references reflect the circular nature of the dragon's heavenly motions, as well as his agency of transformation that both devours and restores.

A double-headed celestial dragon is evoked in the description of the Persian poet Kamāl al-Dīn Abu 'l-ʿAṭaʾ Maḥmūd ibn ʿAlī Khʷājū Kirmānī (689/1290–753/1352):

Two-branched head like two branches of a tree,
Wrapped around one another knot by knot [...].

The poet then goes on to elucidate this imagery by explaining that "the universe is lit with the eyes of this dragon."[48] This visual description is echoed in the *dīwān* of Rashīd al-Dīn Wāṭwāt (d. 573/1177–9 or 578/1182–3), who was born in either Balkh or Bukhara, but spent most of his life in Gurganj, the capital of Khwārazm, and who describes the dragon's eyes as astral bodies.[49]

The east-west aspect of the bipartite dragon and its light symbolism is further evoked in a passage of the fables and anecdotes of the early thirteenth-century *Marzubān-nāma*, with the allegorical allusion:

At dawn, when the black snake of night casts the sun's disc out of the mouth of the east [...].[50]

This passage once again implies a double-headed dragon delivering the luminary and creating the light.

The paired and dualistic aspects of the dragon, for instance his beneficent/destructive or light/dark aspects, which represent a fundamental polarity on which the cosmic rhythm is based, are affirmed by Ṭarsūsī's twelfth-century compilation of prose narratives, the *Dārāb-nāma*. He describes the following episode that happened to the hero:

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[45] *Garshāsp-nāma*, 475–6, cited after Daneshvari (1993, 21).

[46] Translation cited after *idem*.

[47] *Dīwān*, ed. ʿA. ʿAbdulrassūlī, Tehran, 1977/1356, 507; after Daneshvari (2011, 65).

[48] *Dīwān*, Sanāyiʿ al Kamāl wa Badāyiʿ al-Jamāl; Malek Library Ms. Sh 5980, Tehran; printed A. Suhaylī-Khʷānsārī, Tehran 1336/1957, 189–193; cited after *op.cit.* (61 and n. 21).

[49] *Dīwān*, ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran 1960/1339, 157; cited after *op.cit.* (80 and n. 69).

[50] Saʿīd al-Dīn Warāwīnī, *Marzubān-nāma*, 51. Cf. Warāwīnī, *Marzubān-nāma*, ed. M. Rūshan, 2 vols., Tehran 1978, 96f, cited by Daneshvari (1993, 20f).

> Ṭamrūsiyeh, while deep in thought, saw a snake as white as milk with two wings on its sides . . . and a human face . . . An hour passed and he saw another snake similar to the first one but black as the wings of a crow . . .. Ṭamrūsiyeh said: "The black snake should not be allowed to kill the white snake." So hurriedly he awoke the white snake and when the white snake saw the black one they began to battle . . .. Ṭamrūsiyeh rushed [into the fracas], took a large rock and hit the black snake on the head and killed it . . . the large snake . . . then disappeared. [Later] two snakes appeared and greeted Ṭamrūsiyeh and paid homage to him. They said, "The white snake was our offspring and God Almighty made you victorious. You aided our son and killed that demon."
>
> Ṭamrūsiyeh retorted, "What kind of creatures are you and which [tribe] do you come from?" The snakes answered, "We belong to the angels [*parīyān*] but the black snake was a demon [*dīv*] and they live behind the mountains and raise their heads above it . . .. These are not dragons but demons who make themselves look like dragons.[51]

This account seems to access a very deep substratum in that it confirms the existence of angelic and celestial dragons vis-à-vis demonic and ecliptic dragons. It also shows the inherent ambivalence of the great dragon beast, its white versus black attributes (or light against darkness), and its delivering versus devouring aspects. This conceptual pairing of opposites is also reflected in the symmetrically doubled dragons, in other words by their paired portrayal, on the architectural compositions discussed below.

The esoteric conceptualisation of the cosmic dragon is illuminated in the allegory of a hero's spiritual journey in *A Tale of Occidental Exile,* written by the mystic Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), known as the *shaykh* of the Philosophy of Illumination (*ishrāq*):

> If you desire to be delivered along with your brother [i.e., speculative reason, the guide (*ʿāṣim*)], do not put off traveling. Cling to your rope, which is the dragon's tail *(jawzahr)* of the holy sphere that dominates the regions of the lunar eclipse [the realms of the eclipse denoting the world of ascetic practice].[52]

The hero passes beyond the material world and reaches a light, the active intellect, which is the governor of this world. He places the light in the mouth of the dragon, the world of the elements, that "dwelt in the tower of the water-wheel [i.e., the sky which turns like a wheel], beneath which was the Sea of Clysma [i.e., the water below the sky] and above which are the stars the origin of whose rays was known only to the Creator and those ʿwho are well-grounded in knowledge'."[53]

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[51] Ed. Dh. Ṣafā, Tehran, 1965/1344, vol. 1, 188; cited after Daneshvari (2011, 61 and n. 22). It is interesting to consider the white/black aspect of the serpent-dragon in the light of a tradition according to which "God struck Adam's back and drew forth from his all his progeny. The men predestined for heaven came forth from the right side in the form of pearl-like white grain; those doomed to hell came forth from the left side, in the form of charcoal-like black grain." Al-Ṭabarī, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'*, vol. 1, 1879–1901, 125–127; cited after Chelhod (1979, 240). For related symbolism in the Vedic scriptures, see Coomaraswamy (1935, 402).

[52] *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi*, 102 and ns. r and s.

[53] *Idem*, 105 and ns. uu, vv, ww.

Reminiscences of ancient cosmogonical notions may be gauged from Armenian lore recorded by the Armenian historian Moses of Chorene (Movsēs Khorenatsi), in his *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* ("History of the Armenians"),[54] which relates the story of the Median king Astyages, the Armenian archenemy referred to as Aži Dahāka, the archetype of evil misrule, whose first wife, Anoysh, was called the "mother of the dragons" (Mahé 1995, 183). Her name, Anoysh, literally means "immortal, luminous, perfumed."[55] Moreover, her association with the monstrous dragon, to whom she gives numerous offspring, recalls certain cosmogonies in which one of the two primordial entities is "infinite light, serene and joyous" and the other "a frightening and dark obscurity, coiled up in twisting spirals akin to those of a serpent."[56]

It is also interesting to note that the original meaning of the Sanskrit word *ketu* is "light" or "clarity" (synonymous with the etymologically related adjective *citra* of the Pahl. *gōchihr*), which is in apparent contradistinction to the light-devouring function of Ketu as eclipse demon (Hartner 1934, 152f).

The celestial association of the dragon is alluded to in one of the monumental entrance gates to the citadel of Aleppo, which was legendary for its impregnability. A pair of monumental, intertwined double-headed dragons tops the entrance gate (Fig. 7a, b). A large, relief-carved frieze with interlaced dragons surmounts a pointed archivolt with a raised frame at the main portal known as "Serpent Gate" (Bāb al-Ḥayyāt, re-built probably around 606/1209–10)[57] at the eastern tower of the citadel, which was rebuilt under the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Ẓāhir ibn Salāḥ al-Dīn (568/1173–613/1216). Their two heads, one at the spring of the arch and two at the apex, are crowned by a pair of cusped ears and punctuated with small, round eyes; their pointed snouts reveal a row of prominent, pointed teeth with bifid tongues thrusting out. Scaly, ruff-like collars from which project what appear to be tiny, upswept, cusped wings accentuate the base of their necks and delineate their bodies. Their slender, serpentine bodies are thrice knotted on either side into evenly spaced, pretzel-like shapes. Their entwined necks at the apex result in an addorsed position of the dragon heads that, with their wide-open jaws, appear to grasp or attack their bodies; this configuration is mirrored in the lower necks and heads of the dragons at the tail tips, which are twisted around roundels enclosing eight-pointed star rosettes, which Willy Hartner has interpreted as solar symbols (Hartner 1934, 144).

A similar notion is conveyed on the small "Kiosk Mosque" situated in the arcaded rectangular courtyard of the double-section caravanserai Sultan Han, located north-east of Kayseri, on the main road that once linked Konya, Kayseri and Sivas to the east (Iraq and Iran). It is the second largest Saljuq caravanserai in Anatolia and was

[54] The text is ostensibly written in the fifth century but its present form probably dates to the mid-eighth century; see the "Introduction" of *Khorenatsi: History of the Armenians* 1978, repr. 1980.

[55] Acaryan, H., *Hayeren armatakan bararan* ("Dictionnaire etymologique armenien"), vol. 1, 206 b (in Armenian), cited by *idem*.

[56] *Poimandres, Traites 1–12*, 7 and 12, n. 9.

[57] See Herzfeld (1954–5, 85, no. 36), Tabbaa (1997, 75).

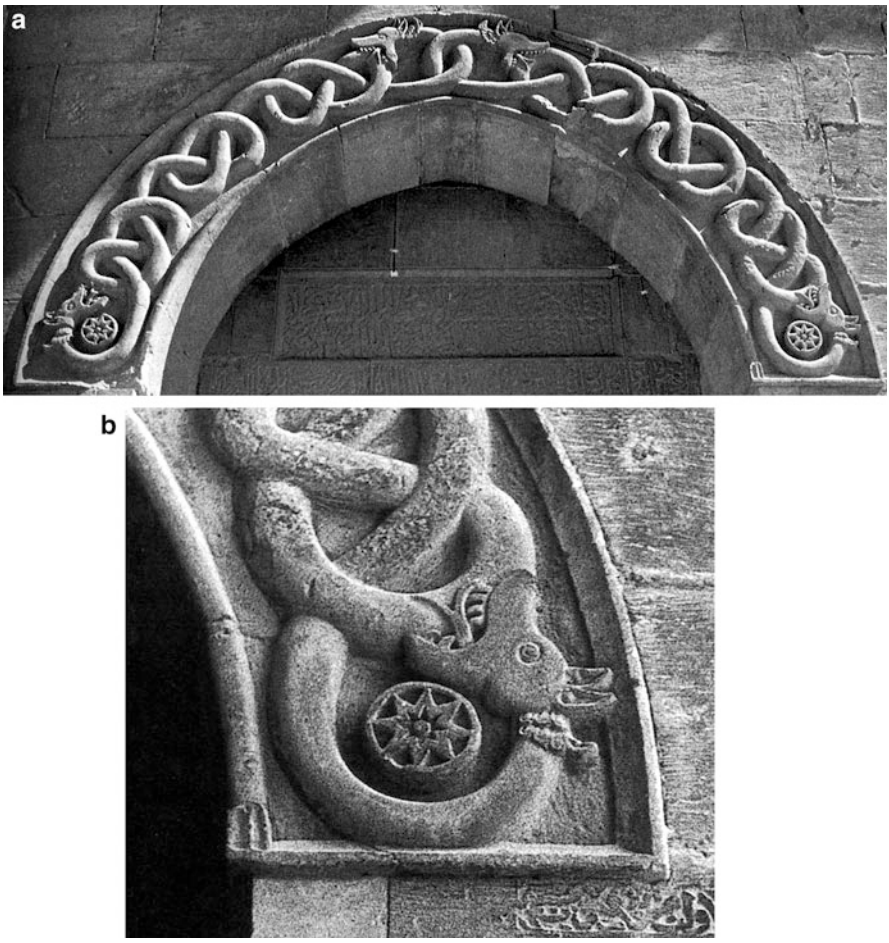

Fig. 7 (**a**) A pair of intertwining, winged double-headed dragons. Relief carving on the so-called "Gate of the Serpents" (Bāb al-Ḥayyāt), Citadel of Aleppo. Syria, Aleppo, ca. 606/1209–10. Source: After Ettinghausen and Grabar (1987, repr. 1994, Fig. 337). (**b**) Detail of the relief carving on the so-called "Gate of the Serpents" (Bāb al-Ḥayyāt), Citadel of Aleppo. Syria (ca. 606/1209–10)

built between 629/1232 and 633/1236, on the orders of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kay Qubādh I of Konya, as attested by an inscription on the portal. Resting on a four-bay substructure, both the south- and east-facing monumental ogival arches are symmetrically framed with a complex serpentine festoon. The latter is composed of reciprocally arranged pretzel-like shapes, culminating at the apex in confronted dragon protomes. Their heads, with large, almond-shaped eyes, topped by backward-projecting pointed ears, have wide-open jaws revealing tongues and sharp teeth (Fig. 8).

Both the south- and east-facing reliefs are closely related but, while the dragon protomes on the south side do not touch each other at the apex, the protomes on the east side are joined and enlivened by dots (Öney 1969, Figs. 6 and 7; Gierlichs

Fig. 8 Apex of a dragon festooned with a pair of dragons confronting one another. Relief carving on the south-facing arch, mosque of Sultan Han. Central Turkey, northeast of Kayseri, village of Tuzhisar. 629/1232–633/1236. Photo courtesy of Joachim Gierlichs

1996, pls. 6.1, 2). Moreover, on the south-facing arch, the dragon festoons end in small, inverted dragon heads with large eyes, necks bent inwards, and open jaws that appear to hold the tip of the outer edge of the festoon band.[58] It is thus interesting to observe that they seem to bite (in other words simultaneously "swallow" and "disgorge") their own tails. While this feature is not recognisable on the east-facing arch (possibly due to surface deterioration), it shows, interestingly, an additional small, upward-oriented dragon head, growing out of one of the bends of the dragon festoon to the left.[59] Also of note is the fact that both serpentine festoons are surmounted by a further band enclosing a tightly-woven knotted composition distinguished by a small eight-petalled star rosette in the interstitial area at the apex (although on the east side, this is no longer identifiable due to surface deterioration). Katharina Otto-Dorn has interpreted the rosette as a planetary symbol suggesting an astral-mythological reading of the iconography (1978–79, 130f, Fig. 24).

A closely related Saljuq dragon sculpture can be found on the now partly destroyed thirteenth-century caravanserai, Susuz Han (Susuz Khān), dated ca. 644/1246, located about one kilometre south of Bucak, just off the Burdur-Antalya road. Here the ogives of a pair of recessed *muqarnas* niches that flank the portal are each surmounted by a pair of antithetically presented dragons in profile (Fig. 9). The heads of the mythical creatures are crowned by curved horns. They have elongated snouts that end in curled-up tips and their mouths are wide-open. Their sinuous necks are covered with scales and from their protomes project curved wings and short forelegs. At the apex, the confronting dragon mouths flank a small, rounded human head with clearly demarcated eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The dragons' stylised festooned tails, which echo the contemporary festoon on the arches of the "Kiosk Mosque" at Sultan Han, frames the entire arch (without

[58] This detail is documented by Öney (1969, Fig. 7a). Cf. Gierlichs (1996, pl. 6.1), and features the entire festoon on which, however, it is difficult to discern this feature.

[59] See detail in *idem*, pl. 7.3.

Fig. 9 A pair of winged dragons with forelegs flanking a human head surmounted by winged figures. Relief carving above two niches that flank the main portal, Susuz Han. Southwestern Turkey, south of Bucak, ca. 644/1246. Photo by Sara Kuehn

however ending in a second head at the tail tip, as on the south-facing ogive arch at Sultan Han). The composition is further distinguished by a pair of winged figures that flank a central, now destroyed, motif. These figures seem to hover protectively over the composition and can be assumed to have celestial significance. Their presence seems to bestow an honorific dimension upon the enigmatic iconography of the mask-like human heads tightly enclosed by the dragons' gaping jaws.

A pair of monumental antithetical dragons are similarly depicted on a deeply-carved relief band at the back of the entrance *īwān* at Karatay Han, on the former trade road linking Kayseri with Malatya, built during the reign of *Sulṭān* Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw II in 638/1240–1. Their expansive serpentine bodies, entirely stylised by three parallel moulded bands, form a horizontal guilloche, which extends to frame the entire arch and interlaces at the apex to form a central circular motif, presumably alluding to stellar symbolism (Fig. 10a, b). Tongues with bifid tips touch the edges of the central motif, projecting from the toothed jaws of the substantial dragon heads which are finely carved in profile with slightly gaping mouths and long, wrinkled snouts, the tips terminating in a tight curl. Their heads have small, almond-shaped eyes and their cheeks are enlivened by fine spiralling motifs. A pair of cusped ears crowns their heads; their manes swept back and covering the uppermost section of their finely carved, scaly necks.[60]

[60] The iconography is entirely absent from surviving Western Central Asian monumental art until the fifteenth century, when it first appeared on the portal of Abu 'l-Qāsim Babur's mosque dating

Fig. 10 (**a**) A pair of dragons with entwined bodies flanking a stellar emblem. Relief carving at the back of the entrance to *īwān*, Karatay Han. Central Turkey, east of Kayseri, village of Karadayi, ca. 638/1240–41. Photo by Sara Kuehn. (**b**) Detail of relief carving at the back of the entrance to *īwān*, Karatay Han. Central Turkey, east of Kayseri, village of Karadayi, ca. 638/1240–41. Photo by Sara Kuehn

from 848/1444–5, situated in the shrine complex of Jamāl al-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Dīn at Anau near Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, which was destroyed when the area was struck by an earthquake in 1948. There, two symmetrical large yellow dragons set against a blue background in mosaic faience were depicted in the tympanum of the portal arch. Some of the dragon mosaic has been recovered and is now housed at the Fine Arts Museum of Ashgabat. The portal was photographed by the German art historian Ernst Cohn-Wiener in the 1920s, whose collection of photographs taken in west Turkestan is kept at the British Museum and published online in the digital library of archnet.org; ArchNet Image ID ICW0120 (accessed July 2013). For a discussion of the Anau dragon motif, see Pugachenkova (1956, 125–9). Dragons also appear in the spandrels of a fifteenth-century mosque at the shrine complex of Turbat-i Sheikh Jām halfway between Mashhad and Herat in Khurasan; see Daneshvari (1993, pl. I, Fig. 1), and *idem* (2011, 84, pl. 39).

The pairing of the dragons, aimed at buttressing and doubling the visual impact, was a noticeable feature that may have served to both augment and reinforce the symbol's potency. The cult of heaven (*täñri*) was central to the ancient Turko-Mongol system of belief, its beginnings going back to ancient times. The belief system played a fundamental role not only in the notions of legitimacy and sovereignty (Spuler 1939, repr. 1955, 168–9),[61] but comprised the veneration of the sun, in particular the rising sun, the moon, and the natural phenomena of the heavens in which the belief in a dragon also played an important role.[62] The inherently ambivalent aspect of the great beast is also mirrored in ancient Turkish cosmology, which saw the creature living underground in winter, then reappearing in the spring and soaring into the sky in the summer, where it reigned at the zenith as a divine creature (Boratav, "Drache." *WdM*, 207).[63] It may thus be suggested with a degree of certainty that the double dragon featured above or next to archways alludes to the heavenly spheres and the diurnal cycle of the light of day followed by the darkness of night.

At this juncture, it is important to emphasise that the intrinsic as well as extrinsic ambiguity of the serpent-dragon also entails an element of transcendence, necessarily so since the creature's mystery can only be explained as flowing from the juxtaposition of two or more levels of reality. In essence, then, the dragon defies understanding. The cosmic aspect of the dragon also involves a sacred dimension; it is interesting to note that the Latin term *sacer* means both sacred and wretched or cursed. Its inherent duality makes the dragon image an embodiment of change and transformation par excellence. Such associations extend the dragon's semantic territory as agent of metamorphosis into the realm of spiritual conception. Further, the great beast serves as metaphor for spiritual realities whose meanings are obscured or veiled.

In his short tractate entitled *Sod ha-Nachasch u-Mischpato* ("Mystery of the Serpent"), the thirteenth-century cabalist, Joseph Gikatilla ben Abraham, a disciple of the Spanish mystic Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (1240–ca. 1292), sheds some light on the mystery of the mythical creature, which serves not only as a liminal symbol, situated upon the ambiguous dividing line between the divine and the demonic but also as the serpent of heaven:

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[61] Cf., for instance, the Mongol formula, *möngke tngri-yin küčün-dür* ("In the Might of the Everlasting Heaven"), found at the beginning of some Mongol letters; Meyvaert (1980, 253, n. 39 and 258, n. 79).

[62] Spuler (1939, repr. 1955, 140), with reference to D. Banzarov, *Černaja věra ili* šamanstvo *u Mongolov i drugija stat'i* ("Der schwarze Glaube oder der Schamanismus bei den Mongolen und andere Aufsätze"), edited by G. N. Potanin, St. Peterburg, 1891, 15f. Cf. Liu (1958, 10), Roux (1978, 128, also 143).

[63] See also Esin (1970–71, 161–82), and a review by Rogers (1970, 161–82), in which he disputes the cosmological significance of the dragon in Turkish art. In her reply (1973–74, 151f), Esin quotes, *inter alia*, from Yusūf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib's *Qutadghubilig* ("Wisdom of Royal Glory") completed in 462/1069–70, couplet 126:

Yarattı, kor, evren, tuci evrilur Anıng birle tezginc yime texginur ("See, He created *evren* [the dragon] which revolves continually, Together with it revolves the Ecliptic").

For a further discussion, see Esin (1981, 834).

> Know that from the outset of its creation the serpent represented something important and necessary for harmony so long as it stood in its place. It was the Great Serpent who had been created to carry the yoke of both sovereignty and service. Its head surmounted the heights of the earth and its tail reached into the depths of hell.
>
> Yet in all worlds it had a befitting place and represented something extraordinarily significant for the harmony of all stages, each one in its place.
>
> And this is the secret of *the serpent of heaven* [emphasis added] that is known from the *Sefer Yezira*, and that sets in motion the spheres and their cycle from east to west and from north to south. And without it no creature in the sublunar world had life, and there would be no sowing and no growth and no motivation for the reproduction of all creatures.
>
> This serpent now stood originally outside the walls of the sacred precincts and was connected from the outside with the outer wall, since its tail was linked with the wall whereas its countenance was oriented inwards. It did not befit it to enter the inside, but its place and law was to affect the creation of growth and reproduction from the outside, and this is the secret of the tree and the knowledge of good and evil.[64]

Finally, it is important to recall the significance accorded to the great serpent in the legendary Islamicised prophetic tales, based on the authority of learned men from the early years of Islam but recorded only from the eleventh century onwards. Related by the *quṣṣāṣ al-ʿāmm* ("narrators for the common folk"), who enjoyed great success with popular audiences, the tales reveal the extraordinary aura that surrounded the fabulous beast. Not only was the great serpent said to encircle the divine canopy, but it was singled out to:

> . . . greet [the] Prophet Muḥammad on the night of his ascent into heaven and give him glad tidings concerning himself and the community.[65]

Abbreviations

EHAS	Rashed, Roshdi, ed. 1996. *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science*, 3 vols., London and New York: Routledge.
EI^2	*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005, *Extract from The Encyclopaedia of Islam CD-ROM v.-1.0*.
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*. Available: http://www.iranica.com/newsite/. Accessed February 2012.
WdM	Haussig, Hans Wilhelm, ed. 1965–86. *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, 7 vols., Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag.

[64] See Scholem (1957, repr. 1988, 437).

[65] Al-Kisāʾī (citing the authority of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār) in *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, 7.

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Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings Across the East Asian Skies

Chari Pradel

Abstract In the mid-sixth century, Buddhism and with it its pantheon of deities arrived in Japan. This paper focuses on the flying or heavenly beings represented around Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In spite of being quite conspicuous in early Buddhist temples and on icons, such beings are seldom the subject of study, perhaps because they are not the focus of devotion. Their role seems to be to enhance the radiance of the Buddhist world. The aim of this paper is to trace the origins of these heavenly beings and their arrival in Japan. Through the analysis of visual and textual material, this paper demonstrates that the type of heavenly being that came to Japan was a composite being created in China that combined the Indian prototype of flying beings with the Chinese idea of immortal beings soaring through the skies on clouds.

Introduction

Flying beings (Jap. *hiten*) or heavenly beings (Jap. *tennin*) accompany Buddhas and bodhisattvas in a variety of Buddhist monuments in Japan. These being are typically painted on the walls of temples, such as the late seventh or early eighth century murals in the Golden Hall of Hōryūji (Fig. 1), a temple located in Nara Prefecture.[1]

The beings can also be depicted in wooden reliefs attached to the walls of temples, such as in the twelfth century Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō-in, located in Kyoto.[2] Their apparent lightness and ability to soar on clouds in the skies, their

[1] For the mural paintings of flying beings at the Golden Hall (Kondō) of Hōryūji, see Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo (1989). In addition to a discussion of the murals' flying beings, this publication also includes a comprehensive survey of representations of flying beings in East Asia.

[2] For the Phoenix Hall, see Nishikawa Shinji (1987–1992), and Toshio Fukuyama (1976).

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Fig. 1 Pair of heavenly beings. Detail from mural painting from the Golden Hall at Hōryūji, Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, Japan (late seventh–early eighth century). In the Golden Hall of Hōryūji, on the walls above the columns surrounding the central rectangular platform, there are 20 panels, each containing a pair of heavenly beings. Although badly damaged by a fire in 1949, these aerodynamic heavenly beings can still be recognized. Their faces and broad shoulders are represented frontally, and their bodies are extended at a slight diagonal. Each holds a tray with lotus petals in the left hand and gracefully scatters them with the right hand. The figures appear light and airborne due to their billowing, looping scarves and the trail of elongated clouds below them. Each cloud has a pointed end and a puffy end, in the shape of a floral design similar to the popular peony motif of the Tang period in China. Photo courtesy of Nara National Museum

scarves billowing, gives the sense that they inhabit a celestial world. These heavenly beings began to appear in Japan around the seventh century, when Chinese culture was introduced through Korean kingdoms. As stated above, the main purpose of this paper is to trace the iconographical and stylistic origins of these beings by finding their prototypes in East Asia (China and Korea) and India.[3] I will argue that the type of Buddhist heavenly being that arrived in Japan between the sixth and early eighth centuries was a combination of Indian celestials and Chinese immortals.

This paper begins with a discussion of the representations of flying beings in China during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE): the "feathered men" (Ch. *yuren*) and the winged deities associated with the immortality cult. Next, I continue with a study of flying deities brought by Buddhism to Japan, addressing selected examples in Buddhist cave temples of the fifth and sixth centuries located in northern China that show the adoption of Indian-type heavenly beings. Around the same time, the evidence shows that a new type of heavenly being—called the Southern-type—was created in southern China. This paper ends with a brief

[3] One of the earliest studies on the topic of flying beings in Japan is by Toshio Nagahiro (1949). For flying beings in India and East Asia, see Hayashi On (1993).

discussion of the adaption of these beings for the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands, as these areas began to embrace Buddhism and Chinese culture.

Feathered Men and Winged Immortal Beings of the Han Dynasty

This section presents the feathered men and the winged immortals of the Han Dynasty in China, and also addresses textual material that refers to their ability to soar the skies. A number of small gilt bronze sculptures, known as "feathered men" have been found in tombs (Fig. 2).[4] Most kneel barefooted, and have long bodies with wing-like appendages on their backs. Their facial features emphasize their mythological nature: they have raised eyebrows, sunken eyes, pointed sharp noses, protruding lips, and very large ears extending above their heads. These sculptures appear to have a functional purpose, since some have containers attached to them and others have grooves suggesting that they served as supports.

The feathered men have been identified as immortal or transcendent beings that existed beyond space and time. They were believed to live amid sacred mountains in a numinous realm removed from the world of humankind (Little 2000, 149). Immortal beings are associated with the immortality cult, a series of beliefs and practices which included the search for longevity and immortality. This cult began as early as the Qin dynasty (221–210 BCE) and spread during the Han dynasty. Achieving immortality or "no death" (*busi* in Chinese) became one of the main goals of devout Daoists, and immortal beings became an important aspect of the religion (Penny 2000, 110).

What we call in English an "immortal, adept or transcendent being" is the translation of various Chinese terms. An early textual description in the *Zhuangzi* (Master Zhuang's Book) refers to them as "spirit beings" (Ch. *shenren*).[5] It states:

> In the mountains of far-off Ku-yi there lives a 'spirit being' whose skin and flesh are like ice and snow, who is gentle as a young girl. He does not eat the five grains but sucks the wind and drinks the dew; *he rides the vapor of clouds* [italics added], yokes flying dragons to his chariot, and roams beyond the four seas. When the spirit man concentrates he keeps creatures free from plagues and makes the grain ripen every year.

Scholars of Daoism contend that the spirit being mentioned in this text is the immortal (*xianren*) or transcendent being (*shenxian*) of later literature.[6] Wings are not included as part of the description of this spirit being, but the quote indicates

[4] Statuettes found in Han tombs are reproduced in Takahama Shū and Okumura Hidenori (1997, vol. 2). For a short reference in English, see Wu Hung (2006, 72–3).

[5] *Zhuangzi* is named after the fourth century BCE philosopher. For more about this text, see Mair (2000, 30–52).

[6] Both Little and Penny use the same quote to define immortal, adept or transcendent.

Fig. 2 "Feathered man" (Ch. *Yuren*). Bronze figurine from Chang'ancheng, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China. Western Han Dynasty, ca. first century BCE, h. 15.3 cm. This small, three-dimensional representation of a feathered man is important because it is a detailed representation of a Han period immortal or trascendent being. His face has unusual features, such as raised and arched eyebrows, sunken eyes, a sharp nose and protuding lips, and very large ears extending above the head. The wing-like appendages on his back have incised lines suggesting feathers. The same feather design surrounds the hem of his kilt. Source: Zou Wen (2000), Plate 164

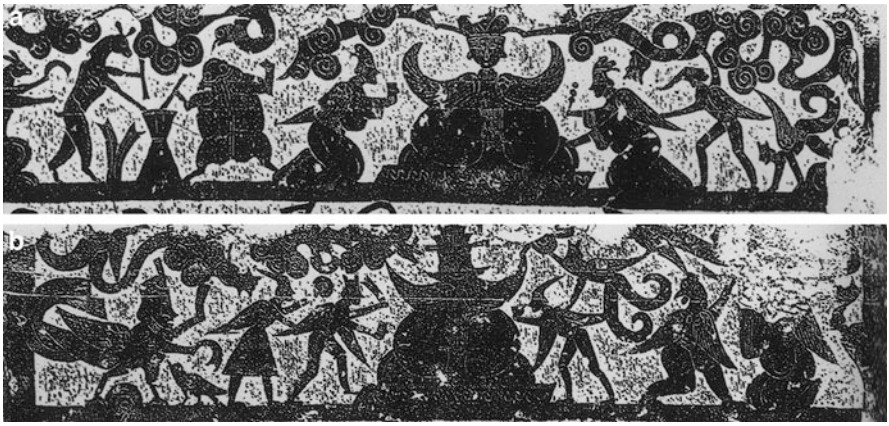

Fig. 3 (**a**) Queen Mother of the West. Ink rubbing from the top register of two pictorial slabs from Songshan, in Jiaxiang, Shandong Province, China. Eastern Han Dynasty, ca. second century CE. The composition represents the heavenly abode of the Queen Mother of the West. The heavenly setting is suggested by the curled designs representing energy clouds (Ch. *yunqi*). The Queen seats facing forward and has crescent-shaped wings on her shoulders. She is flanked by attendant winged immortals and other fantastic beings, such as the hare and the toad, which pound the drug of immortality on the left side of the Queen's register. The winged immortal beings are represented in profile view and can be recognized by their wings and, in some cases, their ears, which point above their heads. Some are portrayed with only one wing, others with two. The ones that soar through the skies to the right of the Queen have their legs curled, in addition to having wings. These figures have been identified as "cloud immortals" and might be a pictorial representation of the textual description which states that immortals "rode the vapor of clouds." Source: Wang Renbo (2001), Plate VI–11. (**b**) King Father of the East. Ink rubbing from the top register of two pictorial slabs from Songshan, in Jiaxiang, Shandong Province, China. Eastern Han Dynasty, ca. second century CE. The composition represents the heavenly abodes of the King Father of the East and forms the counterpart to the Queen Mother of the West. Source: Wang Renbo (2001), Plate VI–12

that he had the ability to soar the skies by "riding the vapor of clouds," making it clear that clouds were the propelling force that allowed him to be airborne.

An important deity in the Han dynasty's immortality cult was the Queen Mother of the West (Ch. *Xi Wang Mu*), the ruler of Kunlun or the Western Paradise, where immortal beings and fantastic creatures abound and hares prepare the drug of immortality.[7] The Queen Mother of the West, her male counterpart, the King Father of the East (Ch. *Dong Wang Gong*), and their immortal attendants are represented as winged beings on a series of reliefs found in Jiaxiang, Shandong Province. The most famous of these are the stone slabs from the Wu Liang Shrines from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE), where winged immortals are especially prominent on two opposing triangular gables and roof slabs (Fig. 3a, b) (Wu Hung 1989).[8]

[7] For a discussion of the Queen Mother of the West, see Wu Hung (1989, 108–141). See also Loewe (1979, 86–126).

[8] Rubbings are reproduced in Liu (2005).

In most cases, the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East are in the center of the composition, seated and forward-facing.[9] Both beings have crescent-shaped wings on their shoulders and are surrounded by a variety of fantastic beings, including winged anthropomorphic figures. Because the slabs are carved in very low relief and in a shadow-like style of representation, the details of some of the winged beings are not clearly visible. Some, however, have the characteristic big ears above their heads and others have pointed hair styles.[10] The figures of immortals are in profile view; some have only one wing on their backs, whereas others have two. An interesting feature of the winged immortals that demonstrates they are airborne is the depiction of bent legs. In some cases, such as on the roof slab of Stone Chamber 1, winged immortals are portrayed with multiple curls replacing their lower limbs and appear to float in the sky. These curls resemble abstract clouds, perhaps portraying the idea that immortals rode on the vapor of clouds.[11]

The representation of the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East as winged figures in the company of winged immortals continued in China through the Three Kingdoms period (220–265 CE), particularly on bronze mirrors with cosmological diagrams (Little 1988, 12).[12] Hence, we can safely conclude that winged and feathered figures with the ability to fly were an important component of the immortality cult during the Han period. In their visual representations, their wings or airborne poses create a convincing portrayal of the extraordinary immortal land inhabited by the Queen Mother and the King Father somewhere in the heavens. In addition, textual sources inform us that some rode on clouds. In later Daoism, a new pantheon of deities and new types of immortals replaced the feathered men and winged immortal beings.[13]

Heavenly Beings in China

Buddhism arrived in China around the first century CE, but the more monumental Buddhist projects only date to the early fifth century, when China was politically divided. Known as the Age of Disunion, or the Northern and Southern Dynasties, this period lasted roughly from the late fourth century through the unification by the

[9] Wu Hung suggests that the iconic frontal posture of the Queen Mother of the West was derived from Buddhism. In Han times, the Buddha himself was believed to be an immortal. See Wu Hung (1986, 263–352).

[10] For other representations of immortals in the Han dynasty, see Powers (1991, plates 53–58) and Tseng (2011, 3.46–3.52).

[11] For rubbings showing immortals with cloud-patterned legs, see Liu (2005, 141 and 146–7). Liu identifies the winged beings with curled appendages as "cloud immortals," but does not give an explanation for the naming.

[12] A number of bronze mirrors with representations of the immortal land have been found in tombs in Japan dated to the Kofun period (ca. 300–550 CE), see Kashihara Kōkogaku Kenkyūjo (2000, 42–94). See also Wu Hung (1986).

[13] For the Daoist pantheon and later Daoist immortals, see Little (2000, 227–254 and 313–336).

Sui dynasty in 589. North China was under the control of non-Chinese groups, who established dynasties such as the Northern Liang (419–440), Northern Wei (386–534) and Eastern Wei (534–550), among others. The descendants of the Han settled in the south, establishing a number of short-lived dynasties, such as the Southern Qi (479–502) and Southern Liang dynasties (502–557). Both the North and South embraced Buddhism, but the extant evidence is mostly from the northern dynasties.[14] In addition, it is known that some cultural interaction between these two areas took place and that, in spite of the scant physical evidence, the southern dynasties played a major role in artistic developments (Soper 1960).[15]

During this period of time, the interiors of cave temples sponsored by the Northern Dynasties were filled with Buddhas and bodhisattvas surrounded by wingless flying beings, which are clearly based on Indian prototypes. In India, as discussed in the chapters by Ebba Koch and Rabindra Vasavada, as well as in Nepal, as per the contribution by Niels Gutschow and Katharina Weiler, flying beings are attendants to *devas*, or gods inhabiting the heavens. The beings are classified according to their roles and gender: for instance, those flying above the halos of Buddhas are the bearers of wisdom (Skt. *vidyādhara*) (Fig. 4).[16]

In addition, heavenly maidens (Skt. *apsaras*, Jap. *tennyo*) and male heavenly musicians have also been depicted (Skt. *gandharva*, Jap. *kandaba*).[17]

Before discussing the visual representation of flying beings that arrived in China with Buddhism, a brief introduction of the nomenclature is necessary. In English publications of East Asian Buddhist art, flying beings in the Buddhist context are usually referred as *apsaras*, which according to the Sanskrit definition are female. In the Japanese language, these beings are called *tennin* or "heavenly beings" (*tianren* in Chinese) and sometimes *hiten* (*feitian* in Chinese, literally meaning "[beings] flying [in] heaven"). For the sake of simplicity, the term "flying being" will be used as the translation of *hiten*. The Japanese scholar Yoshimura Rei, who has devoted much of his academic career to the study of *tennin* in East Asia, argues that the term *hiten* is mostly used in modern scholarship, seldom appearing in Buddhist texts or historical sources. He explains that the term used in the Chinese translation of Buddhist sutras is *tianren*, or "heavenly being". Moreover, Yoshimura claims that *tianren* is also found in texts associated with the immortality cult and was used to refer to immortal beings. Therefore, he believes that the term "heavenly being" was first used in the context of the immortality cult, to refer to the immortal beings that were believed to soar through the skies, and was later adapted for Chinese Buddhism.[18] In this essay, following Yoshimura's study, the term heavenly being is used to refer to anthropomorphic flying beings.

[14] For a concise history of this period, see Lewis (2009).

[15] Recent discoveries corroborate Soper's theories.

[16] For a discussion of the Kushan period Buddha image, see Huntington (1993, 150–9).

[17] The correspondence of Sanskrit and Japanese terms is based on Nakamura Hajime (1991).

[18] Yoshimura Rei's articles on this topic have been published in Yoshimura Rei (1983, 1999). The article "Tennin no gogi to Chūgoku no sōki tennin zō," about the term *tennin*, is from Yoshimura (1999, 365–384) (first published in *Bukkyō geijutsu* 193 (1990): 73–93). See also Wu Hung (1986).

Fig. 4 Seated Buddha with attendants. Red sandstone carving from Katra, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India. Kushan period, ca. second century CE, h. 72 cm. Mathura Museum, Mathura. The flying beings flanking the halo of the Buddha are *vidyādharas* or bearers of wisdom, one of the many minor Buddhist deities. In this sculpture, the *vidyādharas* fly up and towards the center. The figure on the left carries a bowl of gems and the one on the right raises his hand in a sign of respect. Each of them wears a skirt, scarf, crown, and necklace, and is barefoot. Following the Indian tradition, they do not wear upper garments. Their diagonally placed bodies and bent legs suggest their upward movement toward the skies. Source: Kleiner (2010), Fig. 1–12

The discussion that follows is largely based on Yoshimura's comprehensive research. After almost five decades of studying representations of heavenly beings on Buddhist and funerary monuments in East Asia, Yoshimura classified them into two types: the Western-type Buddhist heavenly being and the Southern-type heavenly being. Accordingly, the Western-type is based on Indian models, its means of propulsion a heavenly scarf. (I prefer to use "Indian-type" as Yoshimura uses "Western," to indicate their transmission route, rather than their origin). The Indian-type heavenly being can be found in the early cave temple buildings in the city of Dunhuang (Gansu Province) and the Yungang grottoes (Shanxi Province).[19] The Southern-type being also wears a long Chinese-style robe with wide sleeves

[19] Yoshimura began his studies of *tennin* in Yungang. See "Unkō ni okeru renge keshō no hyōgen," in Yoshimura (1999, 23–37) (first published in *Bijutsushi* 37 (1960)); and "Unkō ni okeru renge sōshoku no igi," in Yoshimura (1999, 39–54) (first published in *Bijutsushi kenkyū* 3 (1964)). In these two articles, he explains that the Indian-type heavenly beings are the product of birth by transformation from lotus flowers.

and a lengthy looping scarf and, in addition, rides on clouds. This type of heavenly being was first represented in funerary monuments of the Southern Dynasties from the late fifth century. A slightly transformed version can be found in Buddhist monuments from the late Northern and Eastern Wei dynasties. Below is a detailed discussion of the three different types of heavenly beings.

Indian-Type Heavenly Beings

As mentioned above, the Indian-type heavenly being is represented in the cave temples of Dunhuang and Yungang. The earliest cave murals were painted during the Northern Liang Dynasty, in Dunhuang. In Cave 272, built between 421 and 433, Indian-type heavenly beings surround the mandorla of the main icon, the top of the walls, and the ceilings, according to areas associated with light—like the mandorla—and corresponding to the skies (Fig. 5). The heavenly beings are all quite dynamic: most are represented with their faces in three-quarter view, their naked torsos in frontal view, and their lower bodies covered by long skirts with their legs extended toward the back. The figures all have long, loose scarves with freely

Fig. 5 Indian-type heavenly beings. Detail of polychrome mural painting, top of the wall of Cave 272, Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China. Northern Liang Dynasty (419–440), ca. 421–433. Like their Indian counterparts, these figures are portrayed bare feet, bare chests, and wearing long *dhotis*. In this case, the scarves are represented in a fluid manner, with loose loops behind the halos and free loose ends, giving these beings an ethereal and heavenly quality. Source: Zheng Ruzhong (1999), Plate 13

flowing ends, which loop above or behind their haloed heads. Their varied and vibrant poses further accentuate their ability to soar through the skies.[20]

The Yungang site, begun around the 460s, was the first grand project sponsored by the Northern Wei rulers. Yungang is located near the first Northern Wei capital, the modern city of Datong, in Shanxi province.[21] The walls of the cave temples are filled with colorful low-reliefs. Caves 6 and 7, dated to around 470–490, both have a stupa–pillar in the center and numerous Indian-type heavenly beings framing the Buddha images and filling in empty spaces. They are also part of lintels on the doorway. Some kneel with their hands in prayer, and others play musical instruments while flying. The ceilings are covered with these flying figures (Fig. 6). For instance, the rectangular ceiling of Cave 7 is divided into quadrangles framed by bands with a lotus flower in the intersecting points and pairs of flying heavenly beings on either side. In addition, in the center of each quadrangle, is a lotus flower surrounded by six heavenly beings that appear to be flying in circles around the flower.

Like their Indian counterparts, these heavenly beings wear jewelry and a *dhoti*. The Buddhist sutras refer to heavenly beings flying in the skies while praising the Buddha, playing musical instruments, scattering lotus flowers and burning celestial incense to create a splendid Buddhist land.

Southern-Type Heavenly Beings

The Southern Dynasties also embraced Buddhism, but although the material evidence is scant, recent archaeological discoveries have given a better picture of the extent of patronage. Extant funerary monuments show not only the continuity of Han beliefs and practices, but also the creation of new types of deities, perhaps related to the fact that Daoism was taking shape at the time as a thriving, organized religion in the south.[22] Evidence of the continuity of Han immortality beliefs is found in pictorial decorations bricks in tomb chambers. Three tombs unearthed in Danyang County, in Jiangsu Province, are believed to have housed members of the Xiao family, which ruled as the Southern Qi dynasty (479–502). The tombs were built between 493 and 502 and the iconographical program on the bricks within the three tombs, although now damaged, is noticeably similar.[23] On the walls, large elongated figures of immortals with or without wings prance before a tiger on the

[20] For publications exclusively on heavenly beings in Dunhuang, see Chang Shuhong and Li Chengxian (1980). Also Dunhuang yan jiu yuan 1999, 11–3, for diagrams of the main locations of heavenly beings in the cave temples.

[21] For Yungang caves, see Unkō Sekkutsu Bunbutsu Hokanjo (1989).

[22] By the fifth and sixth century, the Shangqing ("Highest Clarity") and the Lingbao ("Numinous Treasure") schools of Daoism were thriving in the area. For an overview of Daoism in China, see Robinet (1997).

[23] The decorative program of these three tombs is thoroughly discussed by Spiro (1991, 95–117). For photographs and rubbings, see Yao Jian (1981).

Fig. 6 Indian-type heavenly beings. Detail of polychrome carvings from the back chamber ceiling of Cave 7, Yungang, Shanxi Province, China. Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534 CE), second half of the fifth century. In Cave 7, at Yungang, the heavenly beings are of the Indian-type, but have East Asian facial features. As with the heavenly beings from Dunhuang, the faces are in three-quarter view, with a halo behind them and their torsos facing forward. They are barefoot and their legs extended. Their sinuous scarves seem to suspend them in the air. Like the *vidyādharas* from the Mathura sculpture, they carry offerings for the Buddha portrayed on the walls and the central stupa–pillar. Source: *Yungang*, vol. 3 of *Zhongguo shi ku diao su quan ji* 2000–2001, Plate 69

west wall and a dragon on the east wall. These beasts are the White Tiger of the West and the Green Dragon of the East, two of the so-called Four Directional Animals, which are associated with the four cardinal directions and the symbols of *yin-yang*.[24] The concept of *yin-yang* is a key component of Daoism. In brief, they are lines of force that cross and mingle, playing against each other.[25]

In addition to the large elongated immortals leading the way, heavenly beings, which are identified as such by inscriptions, appear above the beasts. These heavenly beings are among clouds that are represented by parallel, horizontal, comma-shaped lines—some with quivering ends—and floral designs.[26] Audrey

[24] Spiro presents visual evidence for a similar subject dated to the Eastern Han, see Spiro (1991, 97).

[25] For a detailed discussion of *yin-yang*, see Robinet (1997, 8–16).

[26] Rubbing of inscriptions in Yoshimura (1999, 247).

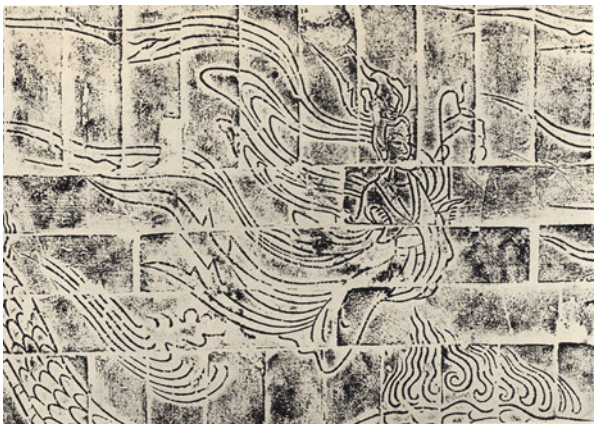

Fig. 7 Southern-type heavenly being. Detail from rubbing from pictorial bricks of the east wall the tomb of Xiu An of Xiao Daoshen, Danyang County, Jiangsu Province, China. Southern Qi Dynasty (479–502), 493–502 CE. This elegant figure is one of three heavenly beings hovering above the body of a blue dragon following a tall, winged immortal. The figure, whose delicate facial features suggest female gender, wears a Chinese style robe with wide sleeves. Her torso is upright and her bent legs are covered by the long robe. She also wears a long scarf and has ribbons tied around her head. These garments trail behind the figure; the robe hem mimics the lines of the ends of the scarf, which frame the two loops behind her back. As per the Indian-type, the portrayal of the garments gives the sense of flying, but in this case, this idea is emphasized by clouds, which are represented by a series of curved parallel lines with wavy sections, suggesting fluffiness. Source: Yao Jian (1981), Plate 197

Spiro points out that some of the beings have delicate facial features and appear to be female, whereas others have more masculine features. They all wear graceful, long-sleeved garments with long scarves which form two or more U-shaped loops with freely-flowing ends. The figures also have ribbons tied around their heads. Their torsos are upright, their legs bent, and they seem to be floating in the air as they ride on the clouds. In addition, their fluid garments and scarves give a sense of a burst of wind (Fig. 7).

A particularly interesting creature that also wears a feathered garment is perhaps a new version of the Han feathered man. Yoshimura has noted that most of the Southern-type heavenly beings are associated with clouds, as well as a sprouting bud motif and swirling flowers. He argues that these designs are associated with a process of birth by transformation into a heavenly being, which will not be discussed here.[27]

[27] Most of Yoshimura's research is about the process of the birth of heavenly beings. He contends that the sprouting bud motif is the birth seed for the Southern-type. He first discussed this process in his article "Ryūmon Hoku Gi kutsu ni okeru tennin tanjō no hyōgen," in Yoshimura (1999, 55–72) (first published in *Bijutsushi* 69 (1968): 1–12) and later, in "Nanchō tennin zuzō no Hokuchō oyobi shūhen shokoku e no denba," in Yoshimura (1999, 163–180) (first published in *Bukkyō geijutsu* 159 (1985): 11–29).

Fig. 8 Southern-type heavenly being. Molded brick with pigment from Dengxian, Henan Province, China. Southern Dynasties (420–589), ca. fifth century, 19 × 38 cm. This pictorial brick from Dengxian provides important evidence of the name used for these flying creatures. The inscription between the two figures on this tile confirms that these were called "heavenly beings." These two figures are similar to the ones in the Danyang tomb, but in this tile there are multiple clusters of lines representing clouds as well as six sprouting bud designs, which together might represent *yunqi*, or cloud energy. Source: Henan sheng wen hua ju wen wu gong zuo dui 1958, Plate 35

In addition to the heavenly beings identified by inscription at Danyang, a pictorial tile from a tomb at Dengxian in Henan province, dated to the early sixth century, confirms that the term "heavenly being" was indeed used to name these beings. The term is incised in the mold of the pictorial brick in between two heavenly beings, linear clouds, and sprouting bud motifs that surround the two heavenly beings.[28] The fluid linear treatment of the figures emphasizes their lightness (Fig. 8).

Due to the profusion of the Southern-type heavenly beings in later Northern Wei and Eastern Wei monuments, particularly in the cave temples at Dunhuang, art historians believed that this type of being originated in the North and then spread to the South. Nevertheless, the discovery of the tombs at Danyang and other monuments from the Southern Dynasties demonstrated that this type of heavenly being originated in south China and later spread to the Northern Wei controlled areas, as well as to the Korean peninsula and Japanese islands.[29] Furthermore, a variety of

[28] For the tomb at Dengxian, see Juliano (1980).

[29] Yoshimura Rei, "Nanchō tennin zuzō no Hokuchō oyobi shūhen shokoku e no denba," in Yoshimura (1999, 163–180) (first published in *Bukkyō geijutsu* 159 (1985): 11–29); for the spread to Korea and Japan, Yoshimura Rei (1990, 171–177).

theories about their origins have been proposed. For instance, Yoshimura contends that these heavenly beings are the product of the spread of Buddhism in the south, and that they are the Chinese version of Indian Buddhist heavenly beings. On the other hand, Audrey Spiro argues that the heavenly beings in the Southern Qi tombs are not related to their Indian counterparts. They are stylistically quite different, reflecting the taste of the Qi elite. Moreover, Spiro argues that the appearance of these beings might be based on indigenous beliefs. In fact, she suggests that this new type of heavenly being shows the transformation of the old immortals into aristocratic looking ones, perhaps influenced by the new descriptions of immortals (Spiro 1991, 102).

Spiro's theory is based on the writings of Ge Hong (283–343), in *Baopuzi* (Book of the Master that Embraces Simplicity, ca. 320), which reveal a new discourse about immortals in the Southern Dynasties period. His description states:

> they walk through the raging fire and are not burned, stepping lightly, they cross gloomy torrents; *they fly in the pure air, with the wind as harness and the clouds as chariots* [italics added]. Raising their eyes, they reach the Purple Pole, lowering them, they settle into Kunlun (Lai 1998).

As with the earlier description of the immortals, clouds are a key element, due to their association with mobility through the sky. In this case, however, wind seems to be another important propelling agent. With this in mind, I would like to refer to the work of Sakai Atsuko, who has demonstrated that the swirling floral and sprouting bud designs usually associated with Southern-type heavenly beings are a variation of the Han *yunqi* (Jap. *unki*) or cloud energy.[30] In Han art, the *yunqi* design of scrolling patterns was a visual trope of the heavenly vapors of the divine world, as seen for instance in the Wu Liang Shrine carvings discussed above. Accordingly, *yunqi* is the manifestation of the *qi*, the transformative and non-decaying energy of the universe.[31] Sakai argues that the cloud-shaped *qi* continued in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but that it was also combined with the newly-introduced palmette and floral designs.[32] Sakai considers that these new motifs, rather than representing the birth process of a heavenly being as proposed by Yoshimura, are included in the compositions to give a sense of flow, movement, and energy. I agree with Sakai and believe that the combination of clouds and floral designs suggest motion, which together with the graceful linear style of painting, successfully creates the sense that immortals are able to soar through the skies on clouds guided by wind.

[30] Sakai Atsuko (1999, 66–81).

[31] Katherine Tsiang also argues that designs of the Northern and Southern dynasties derive from the Han *yunqi*, see Tsiang (2002, 222–245).

[32] For a detailed discussion of the palmette and floral design, see Rawson (1990).

Winged Immortals and Southern-Type Heavenly Beings in Northern Monuments

The new types of heavenly beings and winged immortals created in the south and discussed above become quite conspicuous in the late Northern Wei monuments, due to the exchange between the southern and northern courts. The dynastic histories show that, from 481 on, the Southern Qi and the Northern Wei courts began to exchange envoys almost annually. Katherine Tsiang argues that these contacts were clearly one of the reasons for the transmission of Southern Chinese artistic forms to the Northern Wei court, and that the northerners were not just passive recipients. Their choice of artistic forms was based on the intention to refashion the Northern Wei as a Chinese dynasty as great as the Han by adopting Chinese culture in their court. One important contributor to this process was the decision to move the capital from modern Datong to Luoyang, in 493. Luoyang had been the capital of many great dynasties, the Zhou (770–256 BCE), the Han (25–220 CE), and the Jin (265–316 CE). It is likely that, in addition to their contacts with the south, the Northern Wei artists might have also had access to the Han period works in the city and its surrounding areas.[33] An example of the introduction of southern funerary iconography to the Northern Wei is the sarcophagus with reliefs of immortals teasing the White Tiger and the Green Dragon (currently in a private collection), a subject portrayed in the tombs at Danyang. In this case, an immortal precedes the animals while another one follows them. In addition, the tiger and the dragon have female and male riders, respectively. Important to note is that, in this work, garments with angular hems have replaced the tassel-like hems of the immortals' clothing. The diagonal, angular hems give the sense that the garments are being blown by the wind. Thick, comma-shaped clouds and active, winged thunder monsters complete this dynamic heavenly scene.[34]

Another example of a modified Southern-type heavenly being can be seen in the Buddhist cave temples of Longmen. The first twenty years after the capital was moved to Luoyang were devoted to the construction of the capital, so Buddhist projects were delayed. The earliest Buddhist project was the Central Binyang Cave in Longmen, sponsored by Emperor Xuanxu (r. 500–515) to commemorate his father, Emperor Gaozu (d. 499). The Buddha images in this cave show the mature Northern Wei style but, importantly, the domed ceiling is filled with the image of ten heavenly musicians (Fig. 9) represented in the Southern style. Each of the figures has bent legs, a long looping scarf, and is surrounded by a trail of fluffy clouds. Yet these beings are bare-chested and wear only a *dhoti* or skirt, rather than the elegant southern robe. Hence, it could be argued that this is a composite being dressed like the Indian Buddhist heavenly being, however, stylistically, it is closer to the Southern type of heavenly being and, importantly, rides on clouds.[35]

[33] For a detailed discussion of related historical events, see Tsiang (2002).

[34] Sarcophagus reproduced in Little (2000, 130). For another sarcophagus with a similar subject, see Karetzky (1983, 5–20).

[35] For a detailed discussion of the Binyang cave, see McNair (2007, 7–30).

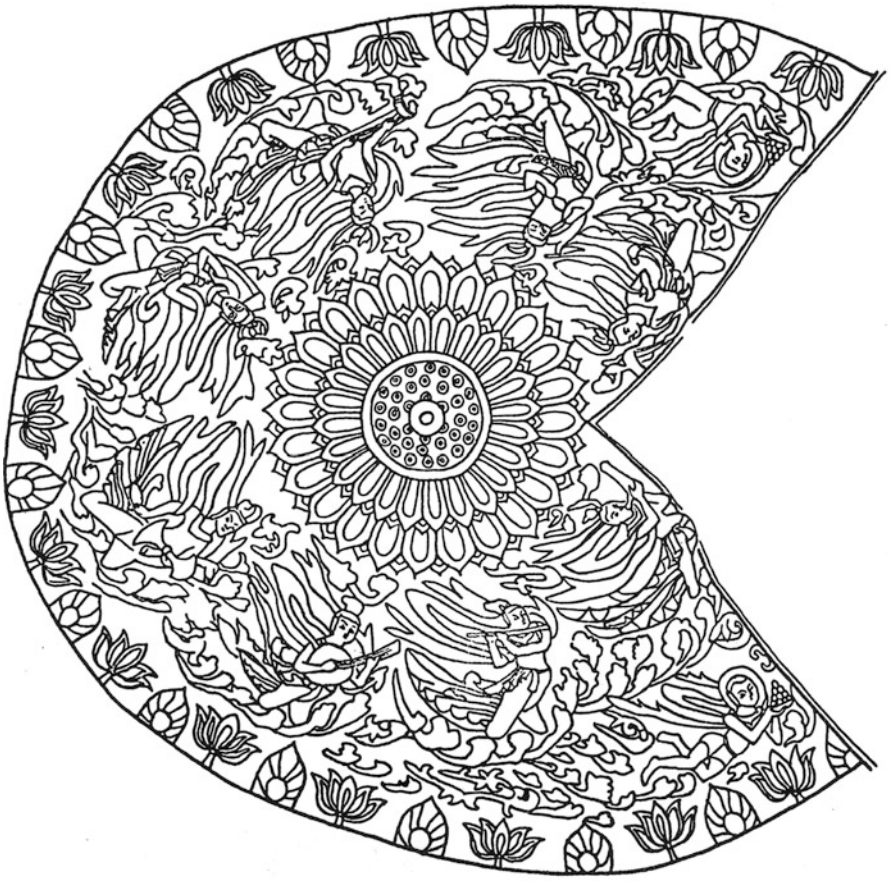

Fig. 9 Composite-type heavenly being. Line drawing from the ceiling of the Central Binyang cave in Longmen, Henan Province, China. Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534 CE), early sixth century. The Southern-type heavenly being travelled north, as evinced by these figures. Eight of the ten heavenly beings play a musical instrument while two hold offerings. All the beings appear to fly toward the pointed mandorla featuring the cave temple's main Buddha. The two figures with offerings look young, have flexed bare legs and are barefoot, have short hair, and have halos around their heads. Their elongated forms and the fluid, dynamic lines used to depict the heavenly musicians suggest that these figures are the Southern-type. They also ride on trails of puffy clouds and sprouting bud designs. A closer looks reveals that they wear the Indian-style attire: a long *dhoti* ending in a bird's tail shape that covers their feet. Their billowing scarves emphasize their airborne appearance. These figures are obviously a combination of the Indian and Southern types. Source: Line drawing published in Yoshimura Rei (1999, 67)

In addition to the composite heavenly being described above, murals in cave temples suggest that knowledge of other indigenous Chinese deities, such as the winged immortals, reached as far as Dunhuang in Jiangsu Province. The colorful ceilings of caves 249 and 285, dated to the Eastern Wei dynasty (534–550 CE), show such a combination. At first glance, the iconographical program suggests that

Chinese and Buddhist immortality beliefs were combined; however, Saitō Rieko argues that this dome shows the visual representation of the Chinese understanding of a Buddhist world (Saitō Rieko 1995).[36] Cave 249 has a square floor plan, its ceiling composed of four trapezoids capped by a square, thus creating a dome-like structure. The discussion of Cave 249 will be limited here to the eastern side of the ceiling, which is above the main niche containing the main Buddha icon. The subject on this side is Mount Sumeru, the Buddhist cosmic mountain, and a palace supported by a pair of dragons. The four-armed Vedic god Asura stands in front of the previously described setting. His upper arms are extended to hold the sun and the moon while his lower arms are in front of his chest. The Chinese wind god is depicted to the right of Asura. Below him, a winged monster figure and a Southern-type heavenly being are depicted among clouds. To the left of Asura are the Chinese thunder god, another winged monster figure, and a bird with a human head (Skt. *kalavinka*). In addition, there are two winged immortals, identifiable by their rabbit-like ears and wings. The other three sides of the ceiling depict similar combinations of Buddhist and indigenous Chinese deities. Saitō Rieko argues that the amalgamation of deities from two different belief systems shows the new Chinese conception of the Buddhist world. Because the deities of the immortality cult appear in this Buddhist context, they should, according to Saitō, be viewed as a part of the Chinese Buddhist world. Saitō thus stresses the importance of context in establishing the meaning of a design. But, as stated above, the term "heavenly being" makes for a versatile inhabitant of any heaven and, as such, on the Korean peninsula, where it is found in both funerary and Buddhist contexts.

Concluding Remarks About Chinese Winged Immortals and Heavenly Beings

The visual material discussed above suggests that, in the Han dynasty, flying beings were related to a belief in a land of immortals located in the heavens. For this reason, their inhabitants—the immortal or transcendent beings—had the ability to fly to those realms with their wings while others used clouds as vehicles. By the late fourth century, the Indian-style heavenly being was introduced in Chinese Buddhist monuments and artifacts associated with the Northern Dynasties. As represented in great numbers, mostly on the ceilings of cave temples and surrounding mandorlas, the force for remaining airborne seems to be the long, billowing scarf. Contemporary to the Northern Dynasties, a new type of flying being—identified by inscriptions as "heavenly being"—began to be introduced to the funerary iconography and monuments of the Southern Dynasties. As per the Indian-type, this Southern-type

[36] A similar subject appears on the ceiling of Cave 285 (completed around 538–9). A row of composite heavenly musicians, trailing sprouting buds, floral designs, and clouds, appears below the line of the ceiling.

heavenly being wore a looping scarf suggesting the power of the wind, as well as a long robe with wide sleeves and, probably based on earlier textual sources, rode on clouds.

Importantly, monuments dated to the sixth century show the creation of a composite heavenly being that, like the Indian-type, was bare-chested and wore a long skirt and scarf, but was carried by clouds. The inclusion of clouds might have been associated with the concept of *yunqi,* or cloud energy, a driving force. This composite heavenly being was subject to stylistic change, particularly in the Tang Dynasty (618–906). During this time, the creatures were characterized by the naturalistic representation of the body, with more aerodynamic and contorted poses. Importantly, the cloud design of parallel, curved lines was replaced by a more elongated cloud that integrated the peony-derived motif, which became one of the Tang period's predominant designs.[37]

Heavenly Beings in Korea and Japan

Although there are no monumental cave temples on the Korean peninsula or the Japanese islands, the few extant artifacts and mural paintings show that, from the fifth through the eighth centuries, the various flying beings originally created in China began to appear in these areas. In particular, the evidence shows the adoption of the composite heavenly being with its characteristic Chinese cloud. Because the surviving examples are iconographically and stylistically very similar to those of China, this discussion will not include a detailed analysis of those features, but will be limited to mentioning important works, both funerary and Buddhist.

In Korea, immortals and composite heavenly beings are depicted in the mural paintings found in the complex of funerary mounds of the Kingdom of Koguryo (37 BCE–668 CE), particularly on the ceilings representing the heavenly realm.[38] Immortals are found in the fifth century tombs of Tokhung-ri (Nanp'o city), the Tomb of the Dancers (Jilin Province, China), and in the seventh century Great Tomb at Kangso (Nanp'o city). The composite heavenly beings can be found in the fifth century tombs of Chanchuan No. 1 (Jilin Province, China) and Anak No. 2 (South Hwanghae Province). In the case of the Great Tomb at Kangso, the beliefs seem to be those associated with the Chinese immortality cult: the four cardinal animals are portrayed on their corresponding walls, while the lantern roof is filled with fantastic animals, heavenly beings, and immortals. On the first level, on the north side of the ceiling, are four composite heavenly beings (Fig. 10a).

[37] For heavenly beings in Dunhuang from the Tang Dynasty and later, see Chang Shuhong and Li Chengxian (1980).

[38] The McCune-Reischauer system of transliteration is used for Korean terms. Books with good illustrations of the Koguryo tomb include Chōsen Gahōsha (1985) and Yŏnhap Nyusŭ (2006).

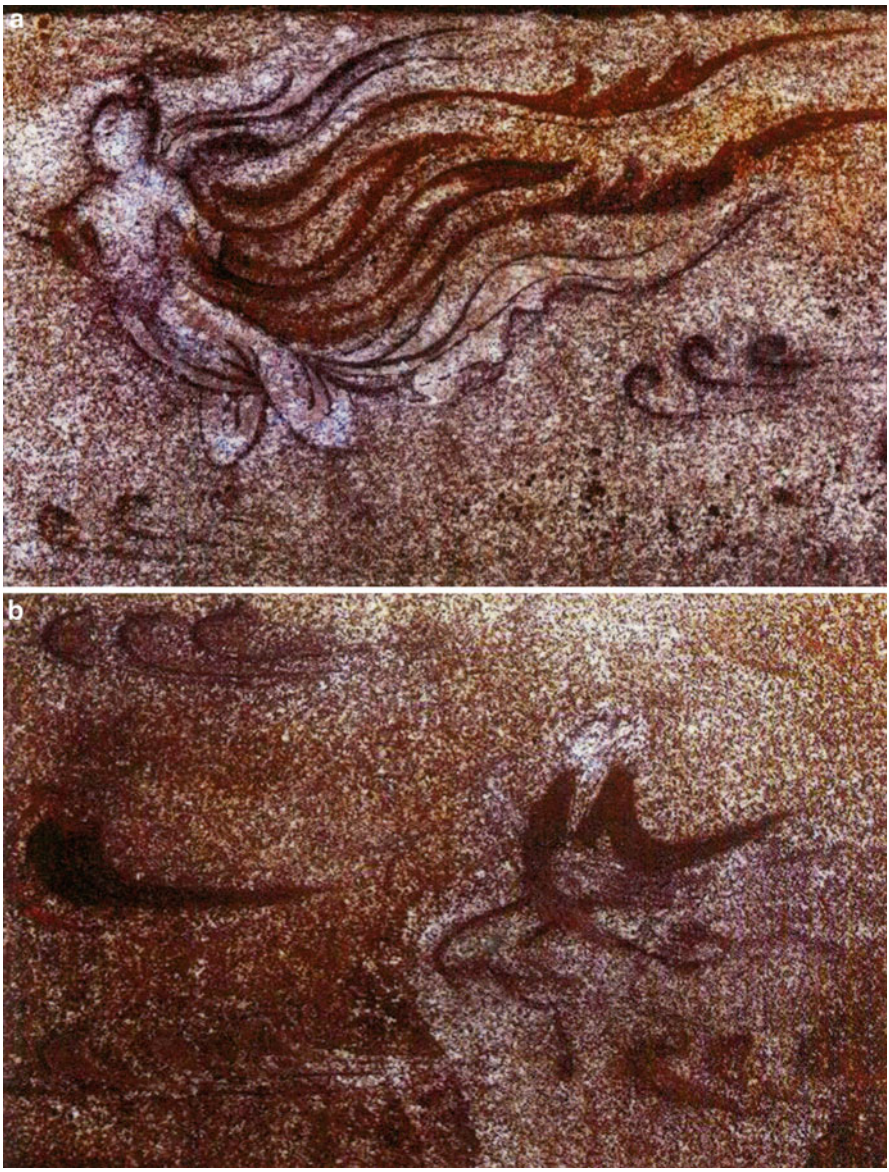

Fig. 10 (**a**) Heavenly being. Detail of mural painting from the Kangso Large Tomb, Nampo city, Korea. Koguryo Kingdom (37 BCE–668 CE), seventh century. In the Kangso Large Tomb, heavenly beings and immortals are portrayed, along with fantastic animals, as inhabitants of the celestial realm. These depictions demonstrate the Korean adoption of Chinese culture and funerary iconography. The heavenly beings are the composite type and the immortals resemble those from the Southern Dynasties tombs. Both creatures are surrounded by clusters of comma-shaped lines, which likely represent clouds, and the sprouting bud motif. Source: Yŏnhap Nyusŭ (2006, Plate 166). (**b**) Immortal being. Detail of mural painting from the Kangso Large Tomb, Nampo city, Korea. Koguryo Kingdom (37 BCE–668 CE), seventh century. Source: Yŏnhap Nyusŭ (2006, Plate 177)

On the south side, four flying immortals, with their characteristic upright ears and angular garments that resemble wings, are depicted (Fig. 10b).[39]

Besides in tombs, heavenly beings are also portrayed on Buddhist artifacts, such as on the bodies of bronze bells. The oldest extant bell, dated to 725 CE and located at the Sangwŏn-sa Temple on Mount Odae, depicts heavenly musicians. The most well-known of these bells is the Emille Bell, located in the Gyeongju National Museum, Korea (Fig. 11a). The Emille Bell was cast in 771, during the Unified Silla period (668–935), in honor of King Sŏngdŏk (r. 702–742). While commissioned by Sŏngdŏk's son Kyŏngdŏk (r. 742–765), the bell was not completed until Hyegong's rule (765–780). It was originally housed in the temple of Pongdŏk-sa.[40] On the body of this bell there are four heavenly beings that seem to be kneeling on lotus shaped cushions, each holding an offering in its hands. These graceful creatures seem to be descending from heaven, their scarves and strands of jewelry fluttering upwards (Fig. 11b). Like most works of the Unified Silla period, they are stylistically similar to those of the Tang, the clouds comprised of clusters of peony-derived designs.

Hōryūji—the oldest extant Buddhist temple in Japan—is the repository of a number of treasures dated to the seventh and early eighth centuries. Located in Ikaruga, in Nara Prefecture, the temple houses, in addition to the heavenly beings on the walls of the Golden Hall (Fig. 1), objects that give an idea of the variety of media and formats used for the portrayal of heavenly beings. Among the objects, the Tamamushi shrine, a small Buddhist shrine dated to the seventh century and the oldest extant example of painting in Japan, includes a number of anthropomorphic heavenly beings on its painted panels (Fig. 12a). The most conspicuous of these are on the front lower panel, which shows two monks worshiping reliquaries; above them, two symmetrically arranged heavenly beings hold a lotus-shaped reliquary (Fig. 12b).[41] In this case, as with their continental counterparts, the heavenly beings are portrayed as inhabitants of the Buddhist world.

Interestingly, sketches of heavenly beings were found during the preservation of some of the treasures at Hōryūji. For instance, a Southern-type heavenly being was found on the back side of a wooden panel from the pedestal of the Yakushi Buddha, in the Golden Hall. This discovery is important because, as mentioned above, while most of the heavenly beings in Japan and Korea are the composite type, this sketch demonstrates the arrival of the Southern-type.[42]

In addition to drawings and paintings, Hōryūji also contains preserved fragments of embroidered textiles, a popular medium for Buddhist pictorial representations.[43] Among them are the fragments of a Buddhist banner, each elongated remnant

[39] For details of the motifs on the Great Tomb at Kangso, see Yŏnhap Nyusŭ (2006, 182–215).

[40] Short references to these bells in McCune (1961, 99–100), Kim and Kim (1974, 73) and Lee (1984, 87–88).

[41] For a complete study of this shrine, see Uehara Kazu (1991).

[42] Sketch reproduced in Tokyo, Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan (1994, 101).

[43] For embroidered Buddhist textiles, Itō Shinji (2005).

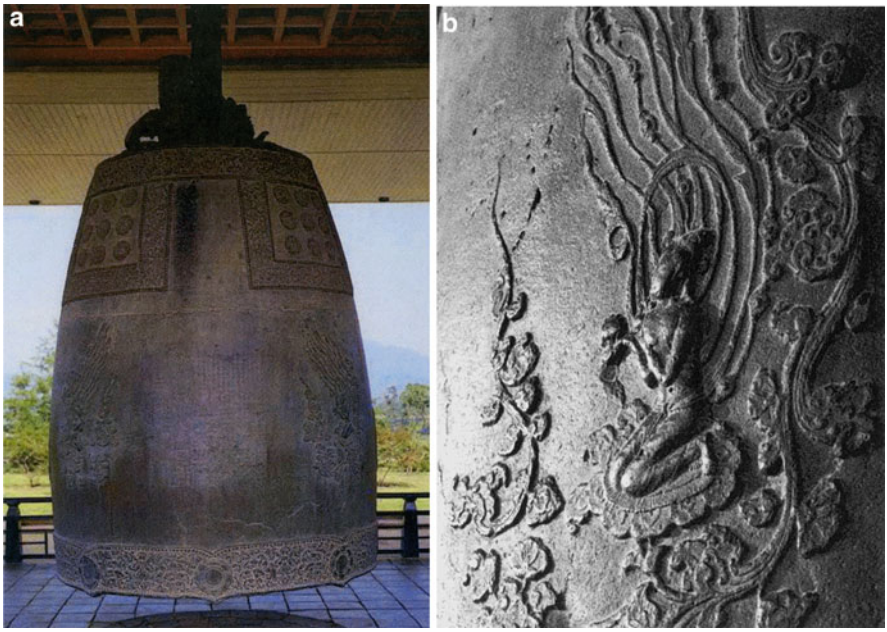

Fig. 11 (**a**) Emille Bell. Bronze bell from Pongdŏk-sa. Unified Silla Period (668–935), cast in 771 CE, h. 3.33 m. Photo courtesy of Gyeongju National Museum, Korea (approval number 201111–2041). (**b**) Emille Bell, detail. The Emille Bell and others from the Unified Silla Period show that the representation of heavenly beings was not always associated with Buddha images. In this case, the heavenly beings are the main subject, each magnificently framed by trails of clouds shaped like floral designs. The four heavenly beings kneel on lotus-shaped cushions, each holding an offering, their scarves and chains of jewelry fluttering upwards. Photo courtesy of Gyeongju National Museum, Korea (approval number 201111–2041)

containing the image of a heavenly being seated on a floating lotus, its scarf looping in the air.[44] Banners are important ornamental objects in Buddhist temples, and their manufacture was not limited to embroidered fabrics. The Hōryūji collection includes a bronze banner made with openwork plaque.[45] The entire banner consists of a square canopy housing a main banner comprised of six elongated rectangular plaques, arranged vertically. In addition, four shorter inner banners consisting of three plaques each hang from the canopy, which is surrounded by a string of decorative oval pendants. Two of the main banner's six plaques have representations of a seated Buddha flanked by attendant bodhisattvas and figures worshipping in shrines. Heavenly beings are portrayed in the rest of the plaques: some bring offerings and others play instruments. Like in the cave temples in China, or the Golden Hall of Hōryūji, Buddhas and bodhisattvas are praised by the heavenly

[44] For a detailed discussion of the embroidered banner fragments, see Sawada Mutsuyo (2001).

[45] For a detailed analysis, a diagram of the canopied banner, and photographs of each panel, see Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan (1991a, b).

Fig. 12 (**a**) Frontal view of the Tamamushi shrine, Hōryūji collection. Asuka-period, seventh century, h. 2.32 m. The painted panels of this small shrine built in the seventh century CE are the earliest extant examples of Buddhist painting in Japan. Photo by courtesy of Nara National Museum. (**b**) Tamamushi shrine, detail of heavenly beings, Hōryūji collection. The bottom frontal panel depicts a symmetrical arrangement of two monks worshipping relics and two heavenly beings. The heavenly beings fly toward the center and hold a lotus-shaped reliquary. Their airborne bodies seem to be suspended by a long, quivering line representing the clouds that contour their bodies. These two heavenly beings show the adoption of the early Tang style of heavenly beings

beings bringing offerings and creating the celestial sounds and splendors of the Buddhist world.

Conclusion

Artists in India and East Asia found convincing ways to represent airborne anthropomorphic beings. In India, a solution to this challenge was to portray the figures with upright torsos and bent legs, or with bodies extended as if they were floating. To further emphasize the illusion that the figures were flying, a long scarf (part of the Indian attire) billowed, as if catching the wind. This Indian-type heavenly being reached China when Buddhism was adopted by the Northern Wei and was abundantly portrayed in the cave temples sponsored by this dynasty. Before the arrival of Buddhism, however, the Han Chinese already had their own concept of flying anthropomorphic beings. Accordingly, winged and other types of immortal beings that rode on clouds to reach the heavenly lands were depicted on various funerary monuments and artifacts, because winged and flying immortal beings are associated with the afterlife beliefs of the Han period. The pictorial representations in tombs,

and particularly those of the Southern Dynasties, show that the Indian idea of billowing scarves was combined with the Chinese idea of clouds as vehicles to traverse the sky. The Japanese scholar Yoshimura Rei called this newly-created form the Southern-type of heavenly being, which is represented wearing a Chinese robe, a long scarf, and riding on a cloud. This creature was later adapted for the Northern and Eastern Wei Buddhist monuments, where a composite Buddhist heavenly being wearing an Indian *dhoti*, a scarf, and riding on a cloud became popular. This composite type reached the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands, where its surviving examples show an adaption of Chinese iconography and styles. As discussed in Niels Gutschow's and Katharina Weiler's papers, the use of the "Chinese cloud" as a propelling element seems to have been adapted for modern depictions of Nepalese flying beings.

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How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)

Niels Gutschow

Abstract From at least the fifth century CE, distinct architectural styles developed in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Buddhist monasteries (Nep. *bahī*/*bāhā*), votive structures (Skt. *stūpas*/Nep. *caityas*), tiered temples (Nep. *degaḥ*), towering stone temples (Skt. *śikhara*), arcaded platforms (Skt. *maṇḍapa*/Nep. *phalcā*), and palaces characterised the squares and courtyards of a dense urban fabric. Structural and decorative details were borrowed from the Gangetic plains and the Tibetan plateau, and subsequently domesticated and transformed. The urban culture of the valley shared a common set of celestial spirits which dwelt in the atmosphere. These spirits guarded the celestial rain or may have represented the rain cloud itself. Wisdom bearers (Skt. *vidyādhara*) in particular, appeared flying, albeit without wings, as guardians of doors, windows, and thresholds for 1,000 years. In the middle of the seventeenth century, to conform to established images of angel-like spirits (Pers. *pari*) of Mughal-Iranian provenance, they were equipped with wings and clad in outlandish dress, successfully replacing the earlier spirits.

The Urban Culture of the Kathmandu Valley

Very little is known about the early inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley (which has an area of approximately 1,000 km^2, and a minimum altitude of 1,250 to 1,360 m) and settlement patterns prior to the present inhabitants, the Newars, who developed a distinct urban culture (Gutschow 1982) from at least the fifth century CE (to which the earliest known architectural fragments are dated). By the end of the first millennium, three cities had emerged: Bhaktapur (Nev. Khvopa), Patan (Nev. Yala), and Kathmandu (Nev. Ye), as well as a couple of smaller towns and some eleven villages in a compact settlement style, with three-storeyed houses lining narrow lanes and courtyards, creating an essentially urban character (Fig. 1).

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Fig. 1 Bhaktapur, aerial view across the city from the Southwest. The historic core, which was developed primarily during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, is still well-defined, with nineteenth and early twentieth century extensions clustering around it. The highway bypassing the city to the South was built in 1971. The Jugāl and Rolwāliṅg Himāl can be seen in the background. Photo by Erwin Schneider, March 1972

The origin of the Newars remains obscure, so we know little about the background from which their specific urban lifestyle and clustered settlement pattern developed. The structure of their language points to Tibeto-Burman origin, but because they settled in the valley, the language was highly exposed to the Great Tradition of the Gangetic plains, with its dominant Brahmanic culture.

A specific townscape dotted with imposing temples dedicated to the personal gods and goddesses of the kings and many hypaethral shrines housing the aniconic Lords of Place—preferably identified as Gaṇeśa or Bhairava—produced an intense dialogue and often a discrepancy between narrow private courtyards and spacious public squares that served (and still serve) as a stage for enacting urban rituals.

Notes About Transcultural Flows

From at least the fifth century on, Newar architecture encountered, accepted, and appropriated a large variety of motifs and structural elements from the North and the South, based on a general willingness throughout history to accept innovations from other cultural spheres in a dynamic development process.

The urban culture of the Kathmandu Valley has not only been a recipient of cultural exchange: viewed from a transcultural perspective, it occupies a space of transition. It borrowed from, and transmitted to, what it both connects and separates—the Gangetic plains and the Tibetan plateau. Its geographical remoteness, which allowed Buddhism to flourish without interruption, never led to cultural isolation. The continuity of the geographically confined, and at times competing, kingdoms of the valley has always served as a multidirectional and multivalent treasure house of ideas, forms, specialised skills, and knowledge.

Almost every structural or decorative detail of Newar architecture is made up of elements that travelled a long way to be transformed into a particular shape, which, through a long process, became unmistakably identifiable as "Newar." Harking back to a common set of symbols of almost universally valid cosmological and cosmogonic associations, such details are based on ideas centring around the mountain as the vertical axis, water and rain, sun and moon.

The following presentation illustrates how celestial creatures—generally associated with water—inhabited and still inhabit a vast transcultural space, in which myths travelled in all directions. Common to all myths are hybrid creatures associated with water, and which combine various bodily features to create ambiguity. The hybrid creatures which inhabit the woodwork, brickwork, and stone of the architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, unveil the cultural entanglement of the Newars.

Influence, emergence, derivation, transformation, amalgamation, impregnation or assimilation—all these terms attempt to describe the process of transcultural activity, in this case with respect to architectural details and iconographical programs. This activity or "flow" often transcends encounters between neighboring regions, with their varying architectural traditions. With reference to the concept of transculturality, architecture is not seen as being produced in a static environment, but being embedded in a dynamic and never-ending process of change. The craftsman is never an isolated actor in a well-defined territory, but one embedded in a zone of contact with fluent, flexible borders.

To speak of an "influence" would "deprive both ends of a cultural production, the passing and the receiving entity, of their autonomy,"[1] as art historian Hans Belting maintains. Cultural production is indeed an ongoing process: under certain conditions—whether landscape, natural resources, or religion—the grammar of an architectural vernacular is constantly extended. The vocabulary of symbols and motifs that roved—and is still roving—throughout Central and Southern Asia

[1] Hans Belting in a talk at the Karl Jaspers Centre, Heidelberg, on 29 April 2009.

tended to be incorporated or assimilated via a complex process of newly emerging forms.

Aerial Spirits: Wisdom-Bearers, Celestial Musicians, and Angels

Genii *of Roman and Sasanian Provenance*

The pictorial formation of *genii* facing each other in a triumphal arch became a permanent feature in the Roman Empire. Originally, winged male *genii* symbolised fertility and bestowed power. In a Roman context, they carried trophies in their hands to celebrate victory. Beginning in the late fourth century, these *genii* became angels in a Christian context, but were still depicted facing one another. The Roman theme of two figures being depicted face to face reappears at the Tāq-e Bostān cave reliefs, created under the Sasanian king Xusrō II (590–628 CE). These figures are discussed in this volume by Shervin Farridnejad, in his investigation of the iconography of Zoroastrian angelology.[2] Depicted with wings and fluttering ribbons, they carry wreathes of sovereignty and bowls with pearls in their hands, as a sign of investiture and wealth. From here, similar types of winged *genii* can be traced along the Silk Road, leaving evidence at Bāmiyān, in Afghanistan, and in Turfan. "In such a way Roman and Byzantine trends, having assumed a Sasanid structural form, are still further conveyed into the East," in what Ingeborg Luschey-Schmeisser observed as a never-ending act of "giving and taking one from the other" (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 50). This is exactly what can be understood as a process of transcultural exchange, a notion that transcends the narrow concept of "influence."

The persistent reappearance of auspicious motifs that ensure prosperity and pay homage to an emperor testifies to a valid symbolic association with winged airborne spirits. Framing a spiritual leader such as the Buddha, these spirits also reached India and, finally, in the sixth century, Nepal.

The Background of Aerial Spirits: Gupta-Period Origins

Beneficent aerial spirits populated stone reliefs within the context of early Buddhist monuments of the ancient Gupta Empire, such as those from Bhārhut, Sāñcī and Amarāvatī. As "bearers of wisdom" (*vidyādhara*), they appeared either in human or hybrid form, with the upper half of the body in human form, the lower half bird-like. On the first century northern tympanum of the Great Stūpa of Sāñcī, such bird men

[2] See also Luschey-Schmeisser (1978, Fig. 67).

can be seen equipped with long wings, carrying garlands, and turning to the object of veneration, a *stūpa*. A century later, such spirits were depicted airborne, flanking the top of Buddha images, their outer leg almost straight and the knee of their inner leg reaching the height of the navel (Huntington 1985, 99 and 153). On similar and contemporary reliefs of the Sātavāhana dynasty at Nasik, flying garland bearers appear with both legs bent at the knees. On fifth-century Gupta period panels, the wisdom bearers carry auspicious offerings in cups, their lower leg bent in such a way that it appears parallel to the body. Fluttering shawls entwine their bodies. This position of the body remained unchanged for almost a millennium.

The terminology of the aerial spirits, who roam the rain-bearing clouds, appears somewhat confusing. Wisdom bearers are depicted airborne and carry, as Margaret and James Stutley explain, "flower-garlands symbolizing victory, and sometimes swords representing the wisdom (*vidyā*) that cuts through ignorance (*a-vidyā*)" (Stutley and Stutley 1986, 332). Bird men (*gandharva*) are the guardians of rain and may represent the rain clouds. As mentioned above, the upper halves of their bodies are depicted as human, the lower halves are bird-like. Along with the dancers of the gods (*apsaras*) and other spirits with human heads and the bodies of horses, or with human bodies and the heads of horses (*kinnaras*), they "form the celestial choir in Kubera's paradise" (Stutley and Stutley 1986, 332). Kubera, being the leader of mysterious *genii*, is associated with generative power. Bird men are also considered to be celestial musicians, depicted with string instruments or cymbals. Wings are not always seen attached to their bird bodies, and they rarely appear in mid-air. The identity of all these *genii* is often veiled, the wisdom bearers being depicted with musical instruments and the bird men holding garlands. The freedom inherent to woodcarving includes the possibility of producing ever more hybrid creatures which evade the clear-cut definitions historians of iconography tend to create.

The Arrival of Gupta-Period Wisdom-Bearers and Bird Men in Nepal

For a convincing prototype of the Gupta-period wisdom bearers that made their early entry into Nepal, we shall look at a fifth century fragment in terracotta, from Uttar Pradesh, India (Fig. 2), which depicts an aerial spirit holding a garland of braided flowers. In the sixth or early seventh century, similar flying spirits first appeared in Nepal on two panels in low relief, fixed to the drum of a large *caitya* at Tukābāhā in Kathmandu (Fig. 3). On these panels, the wisdom bearers fly almost horizontally, their legs bent to an extreme, and hold offerings in their raised hands.

Pairs of lions, geese, snake virgins, composite creatures such as winged and horned lions, and hybrid forms of bird men are seen guarding the niches of hundreds of *caityas* of the Licchavi period (sixth to eighth century Nepal).

However, flying human figures depicted without wings (*vidyādhara*) and mirroring Gupta-period prototypes are quite rare. These airborne, wingless,

Fig. 2 A Gupta-period, fifth century terracotta wisdom bearer (*vidyādhara*) from an unidentified place in Uttar Pradesh is set against an arched frame. Holding a garland of flowers with both hands, the benevolent aerial spirit is depicted with his legs bent at the knees. Source: Musée Guimet, Paris

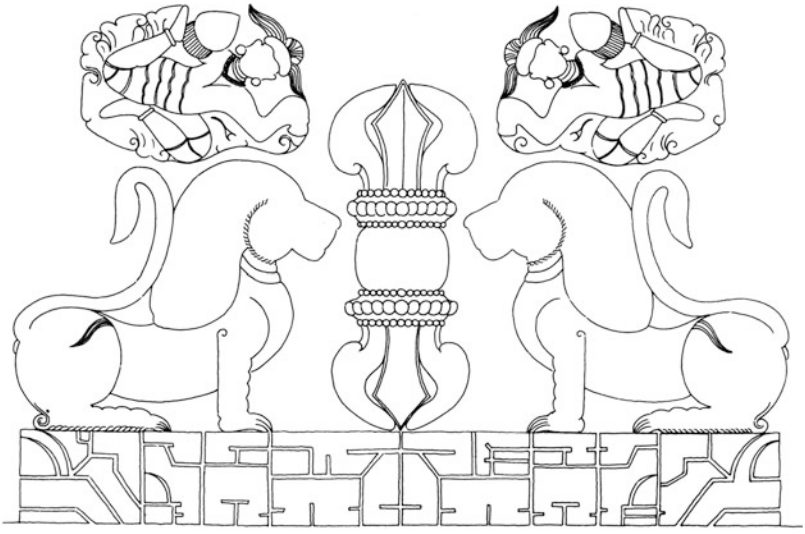

Fig. 3 A sixth century panel of the *stūpa* at Tukābāhā, h. 18 cm, from Kathmandu, displays a pair of wisdom bearers flying above lions, as a representation of the Buddha's Teachings. The beings frame a *vajra*, the sceptre that symbolises the indestructible, which stands for the true reality. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 1992

human-bodied *vidyādhara* survive solely on a few fragments in stone, on lintels, and on the supporting blocks below aedicules—with or without small openings, all of them dated from the ninth to thirteenth centuries. One of these, salvaged from an esoteric shrine at Sulima Square, in Patan, has been carbon dated to the late tenth century.[3] Similar bearers of wisdom, invariably with large earrings, a turban-like hairstyle, and a diadem above the forehead, quite literally bear the architectural frame of aedicules or miniature windows. An example can be seen in a Buddhist context at the Sasunani and Ukubāhā monasteries, both in Patan (dated ninth century), and in Itumbāhā and Yethkābāhā, two monastic courtyards in Kathmandu (both tenth century). In these cases, the original structure of the buildings has been replaced on more than one occasion. Earlier carved elements such as struts (Ukubāhā, Itumbāhā), aedicules (Sasunani, Ukubāhā), and doors (Sasunani) were regularly integrated into the new buildings, which were re-erected on the same foundations.

Bird men (*gandharva*)—hybrid, half human, half bird creatures—appeared contemporaneously with the wisdom bearers of Tukābāhā on five Licchavicaityas—*caityas* dating back to the reign of Licchavi kings—at Cabahī (Gutschow 1997, 161, 162, 166, 167, and 170). On these miniature votive structures, hybrid creatures frame the niches that were once sheltering images of the Tathāgatas, at the bottom ends of what may be called the jambs and, in one case, the panels on either side of the niche. In contrast to the wisdom bearers of Gupta provenance, the bird men on these *caityas* are never placed above the object of worship, but always below it.

Bird men were rarely depicted flying, and their wings were never outspread, but remained an almost inseparable part of their feathered bodies. Their tails would have triggered associations with water, because they were depicted like lotus foliage growing upwards, in coils, to support a leonine, mask-like head (Skt. *kīrtimukha*) crowning the niche frame. Other hybrid creatures, such as the water-borne *makara*, or the gander (Skt. *haṁsa*), often appeared in the place of bird men, framing niches on Licchavicaityas. While the *makara* is an aquatic animal inspired by the crocodile, the gander symbolises cosmic breath, its exhalation referred to as *ham* and its inhalation *sa*. The tails of both creatures develop into the cloud foliage characteristic of bird men.

[3] In January 2009, the Institut für Umweltphysik of the University of Heidelberg tested a larger sample that included the outer 10 tree rings of altogether 51 identified rings including heart wood to 906–1014 CE. As the outer rings were possibly near the sap wood, the tree was certainly cut before 1030 CE.

Wisdom Bearers and Bird Men on Portals and Lintels, Eleventh to Sixteenth Century

The earliest known pair of female and male wisdom bearers (*vidyādhara/vidyādharī*) in the Kathmandu Valley appear on the lintels of the Mañjuśrī Temple of Sasunani, and the principal doorway to the courtyard of Ukubāhā in Patan and, based on radiocarbon testing, are datable to the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, respectively. The pairs at Ukubāhā are partly hidden behind eighteenth-century colonnettes, which were later added to support a tympanum to beautify the existing building. These pairs of wisdom bearers demonstrate a supreme mastery of craftsmanship; the details seem to hark back to the Gajendramokṣa relief of the early sixth-century Viṣṇu Temple, in Deogarh (Huntington 1985, 211). At Ukubāhā, a much smaller female *vidyādarī* rests at ease on the thighs of her larger male partner; both have stretched legs. Depicted carrying garlands or bowls filled with jewels or fruit, wisdom bearers appear on lintels in both a Buddhist (Yetkhābāhā), and Hindu context (Viśveśvara Temple in Panauti; Ratneśvara Temple in Patan) and have been dated to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. At Ukubāhā and Yetkhābāhā, the male *vidyādhara* appears with his female counterpart, *vidyādharī*, in a loving pose.

Similar pairs of wisdom bearers which survive in their original structural configuration can be found on the lintels of the western portal of the Indreśvara Temple, in Panauti. The temple was first constructed before the middle of the thirteenth century (radiocarbon tested 1121–1229), though an often quoted document suggests its consecration in 1294 (Slusser 1982, 165). Wisdom bearers also support the eight aedicules which house representations of the guardians of the eight directions (Skt. *dikpālas*). Shown in two pairs, they also occupy the spandrel-like space between the secondary jambs and the lobed arches of the door openings on the sides of the western portal.

There is no surviving evidence of airborne spirits for the following two centuries. The next known instance appeared when the Ibābahī was re-established in 1427, in Patan, and the Yakṣeśvara Temple in Bhaktapur was built (radiocarbon tested 1311–1411). Here, pairs of wisdom bearers are seen in a Hindu context, framed by *makaras*, not only holding garlands and plates with offerings (on the lintels of the southern portal) but also playing musical instruments (on the lintels of the western portal, which was possibly constructed later) (Gutschow 2011, 411).

Among the early wisdom bearers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, those framing the principal doorway of the Buddhist monastery Ibābahī (Fig. 4a, b) are well preserved and exceptional for many reasons: The large male (with string instrument) and smaller female (with cymbals) wisdom bearers are followed by a third figure wielding unidentified (possibly musical) instruments. Engulfed in cloud foliage in deep relief, the wisdom bearers keep only their right leg bent while the left leg supports the following figure. Later versions of pairs of wisdom bearers found on lintels in monasteries date to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and largely follow the prototype at Ibābahī, but demonstrate a gradual process of

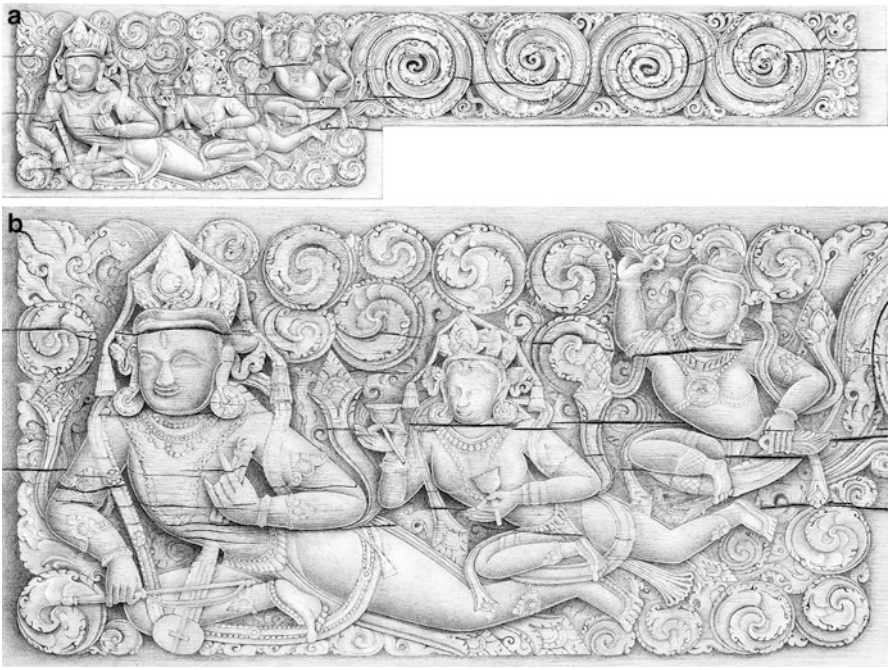

Fig. 4 (**a**) Patan, lintel end of the Ibābahī monastery, probably dating back to its re-establishment in 1418–1427. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2010. (**b**) Patan, detail of the lintel end of the Ibābahī monastery. The broad part, h. 25 cm, features a pair of wisdom bearers (*vidyādhara*/*vidyādharī*) depicted as celestial musicians *gandharva*/*gandharvī*), the male playing a stringed instrument, the smaller female playing cymbals. A third aerial spirit is following, wielding unidentified instruments. The three spirits move among cloud foliage which ends in four large coils

separation of the female *vidhyādharī* from the male *vidhyādhara*, as she becomes engulfed by her own cloud foliage.

Wingless Wisdom-Bearers and Bird Men

The moment music and dancing are added to a scene, associations with another class of aerial spirits, the *gandharvas*, are triggered. *Gandharvas* populate Indra's paradise and are mostly represented in hybrid form, half human and half bird, and were thus introduced earlier as bird men.

In such a form, following the prototypes on Licchavicaityas, *gandharvas* were first depicted on the eleventh-century, carved wooden panels flanking the doorway of the shrine at Bungabahī, in Bungamati; on the lintel of a five-part window at Itumbāhā; and on the fragmentary tympanum of the triple window at Jangammaṭh (twelfth century), in Bhaktapur. Large and exceptionally deep in relief, and adorned with flamboyant details, *ghandarvas* reappeared in 1586, on lintels and the lower

ends of wall brackets in the Kṛṣṇa Temple, in Bhaktapur, which stands out for its unrivalled artistic carvings (Gutschow 2011, 425 and 1001).

Vidyādharas without wings dominate the supporting blocks of aedicules and have been depicted with four hands filled with offerings, a sword, and a shield (Cār Nārāyaṇa in Patan, 1567) or facing forward (Cār Nārāyaṇa in Kathmandu, 1563). Sketchbooks which survive from that period present iconographical details in four consecutive folios, including a *gandharva* (inscribed *jalamanuṣa*: "the aquatic man") carrying a garland, an aquatic monster, the *makara*, spouts of jewels, the sun bird Garuḍa, and a dragon (Vajracharya 2003a, 42). Common to them all are coils of lotus foliage, which Gautam Vajracharya aptly termed "cloud foliage" (Vajracharya 2009, 12).

In one instance, at Itumbāhā in Kathmandu, wisdom-bearers (Fig. 5) appear on the base of a sixteenth-century *stūpa* with four standing Tathāgatas (Gutschow 1997, 47, 176 and 177, 2011, 680). This rare design replicates sixth-century prototypes and, in turn, represents a prototype for six similar *stūpas* of the late seventeenth century. While the guardians of the universe (*dikpāla*) support large lotus flowers, which in turn support the Tathāgatas, the wisdom bearers frame the guardians. The wisdom bearers obviously underwent a fundamental change of location. For almost 1,500 years, they framed the Buddha, the doors leading to a monastic courtyard, or the shrine of a monastery, heralding the victory of the teachings of the Buddha (Skt. *dharma*). This sixteenth century example places them at the very bottom of a composition, below the Buddha, not among cloud-like foliage, but—still in flight, yet wingless—supported by fully-opened lotus flowers.

Airborne wisdom bearers dominate ten of the twenty base stones filling the gaps between the pillars of the ambulatory of the Viśveśvara temple in Patan, established in 1627. They have either two or four hands, hold garlands of offerings, wield swords (representing the wisdom, *vidyā*, that cuts through ignorance) and shields, or play stringed instruments. In a few cases, the wisdom bearers are replaced by bird men, *gandharva*s, playing stringed instruments. In contrast to this rich representation of celestial spirits, neither *vidyādharas* nor scenes from the epics are presented on lintels, the location where they were often found until the end of the sixteenth century.

The Viśveśvara Temple departs from this convention and introduces, probably for the first time, the eight planetary deities (*Navagraha*). Like so many iconographical details, the depiction of the planetary deities reaches back to the Gupta period, as reflected in their widespread, apotropaic use on lintels. In the context of Newar temples, this scheme was changed in such a way that two planets guarded each of the four doors of a temple based on a square plan. In other spatial configurations that did not allow for the appearance of the eight deities, the scheme was subsequently reduced to the pair of sun (Skt. *Sūrya*) and moon (Skt. *Candra*) which, for the coming three centuries, dominated the lintels of doors.

Wisdom bearers of Gupta-period provenance rarely appeared on lintels after the end of the seventeenth century. One example can be seen in the early eighteenth-century principal courtyard (Mūcuka) of the Patan palace. There, the wisdom

Fig. 5 Kathmandu, detail of the base of a composite *stūpa* at Itumbāhā, featuring four standing Tathāgatas below a primary trio of finial, dome, and drum. The *stūpa* (named in the inscription *pañcajinālaya*) was consecrated in 1551 (Saïvat 672). A female wisdom bearer (*vidyādharī*) rests with bent legs on a lotus flower which emerges from the stem of a larger lotus flower that, in turn, supports Vairocana (with *dharmacakramudrā*), facing west. The right hand elegantly holds the end of a garland of lotus flowers, which ends in a lotus bud beyond the right hand. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2011

bearer's upper body is not presented in an upright position, but bent forwards, possibly to emphasise the act of flying. A few more representations are found on the lintels of the secondary doors facing the square, enclosed in circular lotus tendrils, or on door jambs.

Flying aerial spirits, with or without wings, have long been used in Nepal to either frame a door or triple portal, or to support an aedicule, with or without an opening. In the sixteenth century, they were replaced by the narrative depiction of mythic events, and in the early seventeenth century, by the planetary deities, preferably the pair of sun and moon, or even by dragons. Finally, in the second half of the seventeenth century, airborne spirits with winged bodies, floating garments and eccentric headgear suddenly began to appear on temples and palaces in Nepal. At about the same time, such angel-like hybrid beings began to populate paintings[4], as the contribution by Katharina Weiler to this volume demonstrates.

Dragons and wisdom bearers, now equipped with wings, seem to be the soaring winners in a contest to occupy strategic spaces in the iconographic program of a door or window. These two creatures supersede the original Gupta-period heritage in their participation in new transcultural moves. The incorporation of the Chinese Mughal dragon and the Persian Mughal angel into the architectural decoration of temples and palaces demonstrates the need to associate the late Malla kingdoms with the Mughals before angels of Christian provenance took over at the end of the nineteenth century, as also discussed by Katharina Weiler. The following overview of various sources should be seen as a short sketch.[5]

Winged Spirits: Diverse Roman, Sasanian, Islamic and Christian Sources

*Angels (*Pari*) or Genii of Persian Provenance*

The Persian type of Solomonic angel first appeared on the outer west wall of the Lahore Fort (Koch 2001, 31)[6] in the 1620s, probably a decade later than the wall paintings of Kala Burj. Myths and legends referring to the Qur'anic figure Solomon/Suleiman present him as the prophet king who has command over the demons (Pers. *jinns*), which he controls with the assistance of winged spirits (*pari*). These winged spirits are often depicted with long, floating garments, carrying fruit bowls,

[4] See the Viṣṇu-maṇḍala commemorating the completion of an *ananta vrata* by King Jitāmitramalla of Bhaktapur in 1681, in Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, Vol. II, Pl. 383.

[5] See also Weiler (2010).

[6] Koch's article "Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore" is a reprint from her earlier paper with the same title, published in Deppert (1983, 173–195). More angels carrying rosaries, cups, and flasks are presented in water-colored plates by Vogel (1911a, Fig. 31) and Vogel (1911b, Fig. 80).

or playing musical instruments.[7] In Persian paintings, the legs of these spirits are always concealed by long garments. At the wall of the Lahore Fort, however, we see for a pair of feet emerging from a long skirt for the first time (see the contribution by Ebba Koch).

The bent legs and fluttering scarves of the angels at the Lahore Fort reveal a pre-Islamic tradition and establish a link to both Gupta provenance, and the wingless wisdom bearers of Kuṣāṇa, as described by Chari Pradel in this volume. However, the crown-like cap, wings with three registers of feathers, and trousers which conceal the legs and often even the feet are representative of the later Persian-Islamic tradition which stands for "victory and power of the sovereign from the earlier tradition, blessing and happiness from the later tradition" (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 53). Also noteworthy is the appearance of two- and three-pronged clouds, which had already "travelled" with Chinese artists to the court of the Il Khans at Tabriz, in the thirteenth century (see also Fig. 5 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art").

It is exactly this type of flying spirit with a long garment and eccentric headgear that has populated capitals, tympana, and door frames of Newar architecture since the middle of the seventeenth century. Pronged cloud motifs effectively replaced the cloud foliage shaped like coils of lotus leaves, which had dominated wood and stone carvings for a millennium.

Christian Angels at Mughal Courts

European-style angels in Mughal wall paintings arrived in the first decade of the seventeenth century, as Ebba Koch documents in her contribution to this volume.[8] Iranian-style angels and boyish, (half) nude *putti* following European prototypes,[9] both equipped with feathered wings, can be seen at the Lahore Fort. Of these, some characteristics of the Iranian angel type found their way to Nepal in the course of the early seventeenth century. Such angel types gained popularity in the eighteenth century and populated wood carvings until the early twentieth century, before angels in stucco took over, moulded after British, or Anglo-Indian prototypes in Colonial India.

The Kala Burj, a pavilion integrated into the north wall of the fort in Lahore during the first decade of the seventeenth century, was "populated by winged beings

[7] See the painting of the Safawid period (early sixteenth century) with 25 angels and 5 demons among Chinese type of clouds, accompanying Solomon on his flying throne under a canopy, in Koch (2001, 30).

[8] See also Koch (2001, 12–37).

[9] The appearance of angels in sixteenth and seventeenth century Mughal paintings has been the focus of two articles by Monica Juneja, see Juneja (1999, 295–323) and Juneja-Huneke (2002, 142–157).

of the celestial regions." These paintings add, as Koch observes, to the notion of the architecture "as a heavenly vault of concentric spheres demarcated by stars" (Koch 2001, 20). The stars contain flying birds, the central medallion showing two fighting mythical birds (Pers. *simurgh*) taken from a Persian context. The angels of the wall painting are "characteristic products of the creative dialogue between Mughal and European art in the time of Jahangir" (Koch 2001, 21).

The legs of the painted angels are bent backwards at the knees, in a fashion that can be seen in late-sixteenth century European prototypes. At the same time, they recall the bent legs of the wisdom bearers (*vidyādhara*) which have appeared flanking the Buddha since the early Kushan period (first to second century).

In the Islamic context of a Mughal palace, winged beings and birds were traditional motifs that symbolised victory and power. In a specific Persian context, such motifs were clearly used "in search for the blessing of the angels and as winged beings which protect and serve the ruler."[10] Jahangir realised the heavenly palace in the architectural form of the Kala Burj.

Winged Spirits in Newar Architecture

Bird Men and Cloud Foliage

On early *caityas* of the early Nepalese Licchavi period (fifth to seventh centuries), the wings and tails of those spirits which already appeared 300 years earlier on the gates of the *stūpa* in Sāñcī, India, were transformed into a single tail of foliage. Such coiled foliage should be understood as framing the gates of the celestial dome. These gates were considered "the source of rainwater," as Gautam Vajracharya writes (2003b, 53). The entire tradition based on water symbolism was gradually abandoned and replaced with other formal sets of meaning. Since the early seventeenth century, lintels were either occupied by the Buddhist eight auspicious objects, by lotus flowers, or vines with a rather non-descript cloud foliage. Amidst such a fundamental change in iconographical modalities, winged spirits with long garments and new headgear replaced the wisdom bearers, and the bird men began to appear with outspread wings.

Through their transformation into hybrid beings with wings, the wisdom bearer in human form and the hybrid bird men seem to have merged. Both are believed to populate celestial realms and promise rain. Winged horses or composite leonine creatures with beaks, wings and horns, appear in variations on wall brackets and struts in Newar architecture, but never as *kinnaras* of the kind described by the Stutleys, that is half human and half horse (Stutley and Stutley 1986, 147). Whether termed *vidyādhara*, *gandharva*, *apsara* or *kinnara*, these are all, as introduced above, airborne spirits who basically guard the rain.

[10] Koch refers to Luschey-Schmeisser (1978, 47–55).

The Emergence of Winged Wisdom Bearers: Seventeenth Century

The emergence of winged spirits in Mughal garb in Nepal represents yet another stage of the assimilation of airborne spirits. To mark their Islamic origin, I suggest designating the emerging figures as "angelic spirits."

The first angel spirit of the new type appears on a tympanum at the Tusahiti (Fig. 6), in the stairwell of the Sundaricuka quadrangle at the southern end of Patan's palace complex. Attributed to King Siddhinarasiṁhamalla, the stairwell has been dated by many authors to 1647, although this dating is derived from much later sources (Bühnemann 2008, 92). A pair of flying spirits holding a yak-tail whisk in one hand and a flower offering in the other, frame a garland that forms a

Fig. 6 Patan, detail of Tusahiti, the stairwell of Sundaricuka, the southernmost courtyard of the palace complex, probably built in 1649 by King Siddhinarasiṁhamalla. The winged attendant fills the spandrel to the left of a threefold, leafed arch, above the golden spout of a fountain. The angel-like figure is presented in a foreign outfit and—for the first time in Newar architecture—equipped with wings. The pleated skirt, the brimmed bobble cap, and shoes betray Mughal-Persian traditions. The left hand is raised to support a flower offering while the right wields a yak-tail whisk. The wings appear from behind the body, independent from the arms. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2011

triangle above the tympanum. The garland hangs from the top of a pinnacle that crowns the tympanum behind the golden spout of the water conduit.

At first glance, the figures at the stairwell look like variations of those attendants who frame various deities or the Buddha while wielding similar whisks as an insignia of royalty. However, none of these early representations of spirits have wings. The newer, "foreign," and more "modern" of the figures at the stairwell is identifiable by the combination of its footwear and what appears to be a bobble cap. These figures seem to hang in mid-air, while not really flying. Only upon close inspection can the wings be distinguished. They are not fixed to the arms, but emerge from behind the body.

Throughout the seventeenth century, wings were obviously not considered mandatory for the presentation of garland bearers in their new form as angelic spirits of Mughal origin. Thus such a pair of airborne spirits without wings is integrated into the carvings on the lintel of the shrine of Nagubāhā (Fig. 7a, b), a small monastic courtyard located in the Southeast of Patan, which was consecrated in 1673. Not occupying the broad part of the extended lintel, but placed beside the planetary guardians, the sun and the moon, they seem to represent an additional layer on top of an already existing iconographical order. With their hands raised to hold a garland of flowers, their upper bodies follow the order of the ancient wisdom bearers, complete with diadems, large earrings, necklaces, and floating scarves. The lower halves of their bodies, however, follow a new convention based on Mughal and Iranian prototypes: they are bent backwards horizontally, and clad in long skirts from which their bare feet emerge. This posture suggests flying, although no traces of clouds, which by that time had become fashionable, can be seen.

Almost contemporary to the wingless airborne spirit of Nagubāhā are those winged, angel-like spirits on the Siddhilakṣmī Temple (Fig. 8), in Bhaktapur's Darbār Square. Dedicated to his lineage deity, King Jitāmitramalla established this temple in the 1680s. The iconography of the temple is dominated by the Mother Goddesses and Durgā, in her form as the slayer of the buffalo demon. Almost identical to the prototype of the Tusahiti, the angels with their long garments, long hair, and outlandish caps occupy the projecting part of the capitals of those pillars which frame a narrow, south-facing porch. Their raised hands hold a garland of flowers in an almost perfect semicircle, in much the same way as the earlier wisdom bearers.

A similar figure, yet without wings (Fig. 9), appears on the principal entrance to Sundaricuka, the southern courtyard of Patan's Palace, in which the abovementioned Tusahiti stairwell is located. The quadrangle, along with its doorway, was probably remodelled in the 1730s. Equipped with a bobble cap and shoes like its predecessor, the garland bearer wears a long-sleeved jacket and trousers in the Mughal fashion. The figure is depicted similarly to the wisdom bearers of the thirteenth to sixteenth century, with one leg bent and the other leg outstretched.

The first truly winged spirits (Fig. 12a) of the new fashion are presented through a pair of angel-like figures framing the King of Serpents (Skt. *nāgarāja*), who is depicted above the spout of a drinking water fountain (Nev. *jaḥdhu*) in Taumādhi

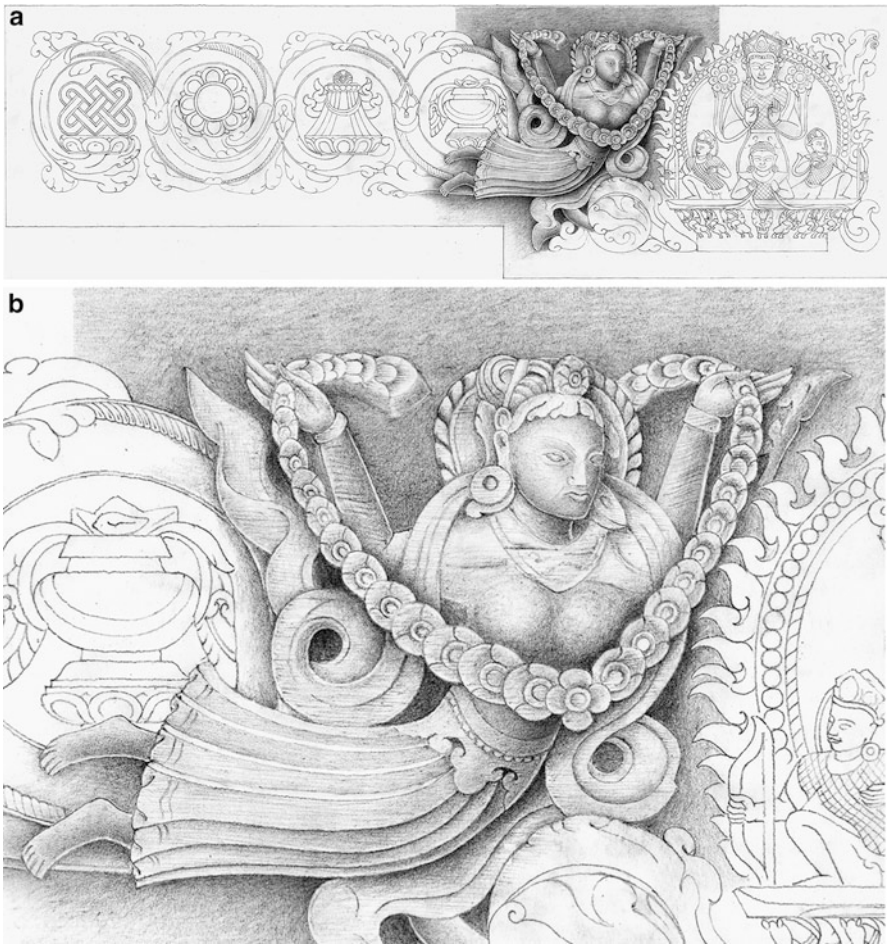

Fig. 7 (**a**) Patan, wooden lintel, h. 26 cm, from the door of the shrine (Nev. *kvāpāch*) of Nagubāhā, a lineage monastery established in 1662. The female wisdom bearer (*vidyādharī*) is placed between *Sūrya*, the Sun God, and four of the Eight Auspicious Objects (Skt. *aṣṭamaṅgala*): the vase, banner, lotus flower, and endless knot. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2010. (**b**) Patan, Nagubāhā: Detail of Fig. 7 (a). The wingless celestial spirit holds a garland of flowers in its raised hands, with the garland ends turning toward the body. The diadem, large earrings, and necklace follow earlier prototypes while the belt introduces foreign patterns. Most strikingly, the legs are not bent. Its bare feet and stretched legs emerge from a plaited skirt

Square, in Bhaktapur, presumably installed by King Bhūpatīndramalla in the early years of the eighteenth century. The earlier vest has now become a closed, short-sleeved jacket, covered in flower or cloud motifs. The inner leg is resolutely bent while the outer leg remains unseen behind clouds of hitherto unseen design. The three prongs of the cloud, the ribbed surface of which is reminiscent of water, form large triangles originating from a leaf-shaped curl at the centre, which can be

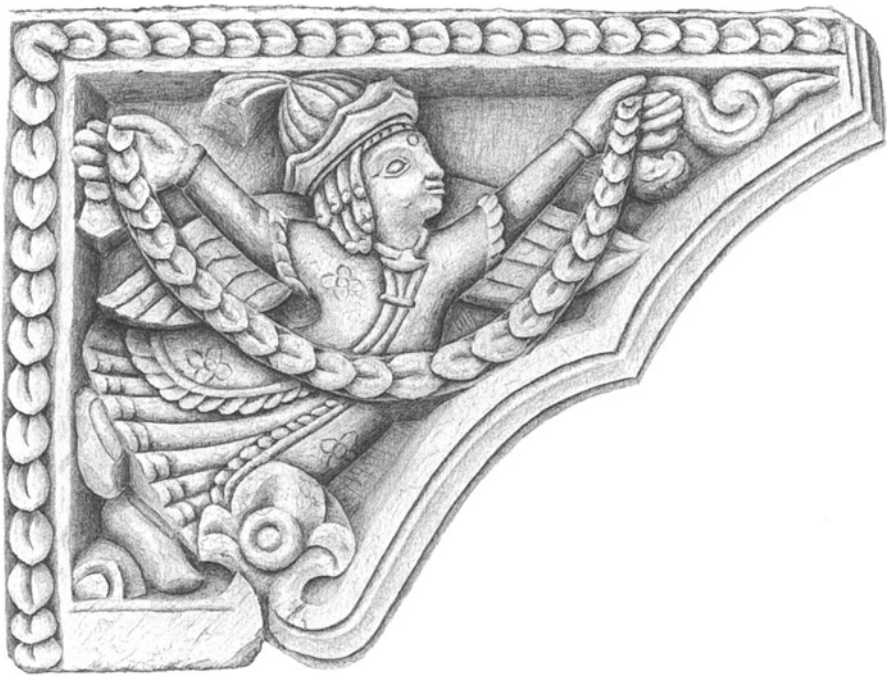

Fig. 8 Bhaktapur, detail of a capital, h. 15.6 cm, of the stone porch of the Siddhilakṣmī Śikhara Temple, established by King Jitāmitramalla in ca. the 1680s. The panel of the projecting end of the capital depicts a wisdom bearer (*vidyādhara*), who holds a garland of flowers whose ends falls behind the palms. The short-sleeved garb, shoes, bobble cap, and the innovative wings behind the body betray Mughal traditions. Drawing by Axel Weller, 2009

loosely associated with the coils of lotus foliage, which have also been identified as cloud foliage, to evoke associations with rain. In her contribution to this volume, Chari Pradel mentions a similar pattern that may symbolise cloud energy, found on a fifth-century moulded brick from Dengxian, Henan Province, in China. The three-pronged cloud motif is one of those prominent motifs that made its way from China to Persia, through the Mughal courts of Lahore and Agra, to the valley of Kathmandu (see also chapter "Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal). The outstretched arms of the garland bearer hold a yak-tail whisk and a vase of plenty (Skt. *kalaśa*), from which no foliage emerges, as a pervasive symbol of fertility and affluence. However, a cloud motif touches the vase as if emerging from it.

Fig. 9 Patan, detail, h. 15 cm, of the principal door of Sundaricuka of the palace complex, probably dating to the reconfiguration of that courtyard in the 1730s. The airborne spirit is presented in the fashion of wisdom bearers, with both hands raised, holding a garland of flowers. The being's bobble cap, trousers, and shoes present an outlandish fashion, and the legs are neither stretched nor bent backwards at the knees. The left leg is almost fully stretched and the right one bent. Drawing by Axel Weller, 2009

*The Dominance of Winged Spirits (*Vidyādharas, Gandharvas *and* Kīrtimukhas*) in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*

From the early eighteenth century, wisdom bearers (*vidyādhara*) with wings almost exclusively occupied the spandrels of the semi-circular or cusped arches of windows and doors. The pair of spirits presented on the first floor bay window of the courtyard of a Hindu monastic institution, the Kuthumaṭh (Fig. 10) in Bhaktapur, dates to 1749 and may serve as a representative example. Walking on clouds rather than flying, the spirits are clad in attire similar to that depicted a 100 years earlier. Their outstretched arms hold garlands and seem to be attached to feathered wings. The motifs of fluttering scarves worn around the neck and the gesture of holding flower garlands seem to have been borrowed from the ancient wisdom bearers. The cloud motif faithfully follows seventeenth century examples and can no longer be mistaken for lotus foliage.

Fig. 10 Bhaktapur, Kuthumaṭh, uppermost panel of the trefoil central window (24.2 × 91.6 cm) of the eastern wing of the courtyard, established in 1749. The relief carving is 3 cm deep, while the fivefold snake hood has been added to the panel and projects 3 cm outward. A pair of garland bearers graces the opening, their arms fully stretched outwards and equipped with wings, which originate from their shoulders. Their outlandish tapering headgear, crowned by flowers, demonstrates the introduction of new conventions, further supported by their open, long-sleeved shirts, and long, frilled gowns, which extend to their ankles. The fluttering scarves faintly recall the ancient outfits worn by wisdom bearers. Slight variations suggest that a couple is depicted: the figure on the left could be female, as evidenced by long hair, a necklace and a long garland of pearls. The figures are framed by scrolled cloud motifs of the Chinese fashion. The opening is framed by pairs of twisted snake bodies, with a fifth head marking the centre. Drawing by Axel Weller, 2009

Fig. 11 Bhaktapur, capital (15.5 × 99.4 cm) of the arcade (*phalcā*) in front of the Cvãga Gaṇeśa Dyaḥch, ca. mid-eighteenth century. A pair of musicians play a double-headed barrel drum (*ḍholak*) with V-lacing (left) and cymbals (*jyāli*), turned toward a central *śivaliṅga*, across which a garland of flowers is spread. Equipped with feathered wings, the male celestial musicians belie their original background as wingless wisdom bearers and attain the form of Mughal-style angels, dressed in long skirts but also wearing Newar-style necklaces. The legs are not bent but stretched upwards, to fit into the undulating outline of the capital, which bears fluttering cloud foliage at its very end. The most innovative feature can hardly be seen in the drawing: The headgear overlap the capital's structural width, thus accentuating the relief of the carving. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2011

Probably contemporary to the carvings at Kuthumaṭh, the pairs of winged celestial musicians on the capitals of the arcade of the god house of Cvãga Gaṇeśa in Bhaktapur (Fig. 11) present a playful variation of the theme. Two full-length capitals and six half capitals provide space for ten figures flying horizontally among clouds. Holding a garland of flowers, carrying offerings, or playing musical instruments, they face a *śivaliṅga* bedecked with garlands. The relief carving is unique in that the headgear and, in some cases, the feet transcend the inner frame of the capital. The wings emerge from behind the shoulders and turn upwards, while the arms are engaged in playing music or holding offerings.

The wings of bird men (*gandharva*), which populated the spandrels of door and window openings till the early seventeenth century, were depicted as almost

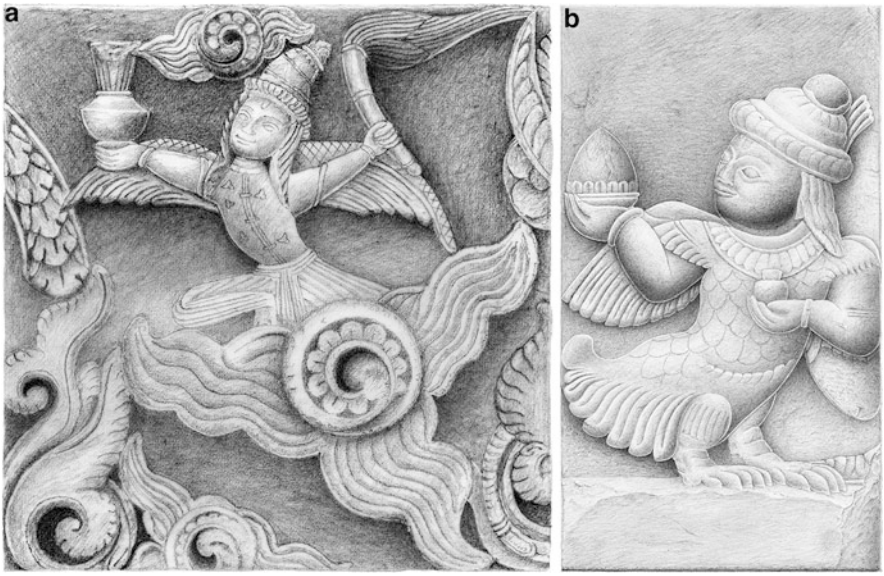

Fig. 12 (**a**) Bhaktapur, a detail of a drinking water fountain (Nev. *jaḥduhiti*), presumably installed by King Bhūpatīndramalla in ca. 1700, beside the Bhairava temple on Taumādhi Square. The wisdom bearer (*vidyādhara*) seems to ascend from behind a triple-pronged cloud of Chinese provenance, with a lotus-leafed spiral on top. Its right leg is raised and bent, its left leg hidden by the cloud. The conical bobble cap, the short-sleeved shirt with a cloud pattern, and the wings, now outspread behind the arms reveal Mughal fashion. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2010. (**b**) Bhaktapur, another detail of the drinking water fountain beside the Bhairava temple on Taumādhi Square. *Gandharva* with the head and arms of a human being, wings attached to the shoulders, and a bird-like lower half. As guardians of the rain, such *gandharvas*, like wisdom bearers, populate the atmosphere. The offerings—in the right hand what appears to be a jewel, in the left hand a vase of plenty—suggest an identification with Kuber, the god of riches and productivity, who is also seen as the chief of spirits with *vidyādharas*, *gandharvas* and *kinnaras* as retinue. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2010

inseparable from their feathery bodies, while their tails developed into cloud foliage. In the early eighteenth century, the impulse to add outspread wings to spirits and even demons reached semi-divine beings other than wisdom bearers, such as bird men and even the demon mask *kīrtimukha* (literally "the face of glory"). However, bird men and *kīrtimukha* with outspread wings remained a rare innovation in Newar architecture.

A good example of a bird man with outspread wings is found on the early eighteenth-century drinking water fountain in Taumādhi Square, in Bhaktapur, which also features a pair of winged wisdom bearers (Fig. 12a). The bird man (Fig. 12b) has a scaly upper body with a frilled collar and short, frilled sleeves. The wings emerge from behind the shoulders and have 12 registers of feathers. The talons look like those of a predatory bird. The feathery part of the bird half of the body starts below the waist and ends with eight long feathers. In sharp contrast to all its predecessors, the tail bears no resemblance whatsoever to cloud foliage.

Associations with water are exclusively indicated by its scales, which are particular to serpents and dragons. Moreover, the objects they hold invite an association with Kuber, originally an earth spirit, who represents affluence, and thus seem to complement the bird man's capacity to ensure rain. To comply with the contemporary fashion, the bird man wears a bobble hat with pearls on the rim.

A *kīrtimukha* is invariably depicted as a mask-like face with upright ears, often with horns, a moustache, and fangs. Originally portrayed as a lion's head (Skt. *siṁhamukha*) without horns, the mask crowned the niches of sixth to eighth century Licchavicaityas, and was later found on capitals, lintels, and jambs of thirteenth to sixteenth century portals. In many cases, the mask either disgorges or receives strands of water that simply frame the niches or emerge from cloud foliage. Whether a *kīrtimukha* disgorges or receives water remains contested. The head also represents *Kāla*, a term that is associated with time, the sun, and death. Time is the source of the primordial waters and, as such, *kīrtimukha* disgorges water. Associated with the sun, the head also represents the cosmic fire, which periodically annihilates the world; thus, *kīrtimukha* both produces and dispels water. In order to stress the act of dissolving water, the strand of cloud foliage assumed the scaled body of a snake sometime in the sixteenth century. With the emergence of the snake's body, *kīrtimukha* appeared to have two arms whose hands were grasping a pair of snakes. These arms emerge from a feathered background on both sides of the head or mask. These feathered arms suggest "aerial king" associations.

In a rare variation, the depiction of *kīrtimukha* crowning the tympana of the small Yantaju shrine in the main courtyard (Mūcuka) of the Patan palace has a pair of widespread wings (Fig. 13). Only on the tympanum facing north are there preserved fragments of a unique, three-dimensional demon head, which demonstrates the creativity of the early eighteenth century. For the first and probably the only time, *kīrtimukha* has outspread wings (measuring 48 cm) with two registers of seven feathers each, framing the mask. A pair of hands with only the indication of wrists emerges from below the wings, firmly grasping the scaly bodies. The snake bodies end in a knot, with only a short, 2 cm long tail visible upon close inspection. The knotted end, presented below a fiery arch, possibly demonstrates the snake's resistance to being devoured and thus being exposed to the inevitable cycle of death and rebirth. The head of *kīrtimukha* projects 8 cm from a background of lotus leaves, worked in shallow relief. The mask has a third eye and upright ears entangled in horns, with a flat lotus flower in between, as well as a jewel surrounded by five more jewels placed vertically behind a curly mane. The face itself is surrounded by smaller curls that seem to indicate the neck of the hybrid creature, while a moustache indicates its male identity. What cannot be seen on the elevation drawing is the mouth, complete with upper and lower jaw. From behind the chin, two jewels are suspended which emerge from the mouth in those cases where the face has only an upper jaw.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the spirits began to lose their elegance and assume a stiff, repetitive form. As such, they competed with depictions of dragons in occupying the spandrels of nineteenth century doors and windows. The routine of presenting accepted motifs was at times overcome in an effort to create variations of

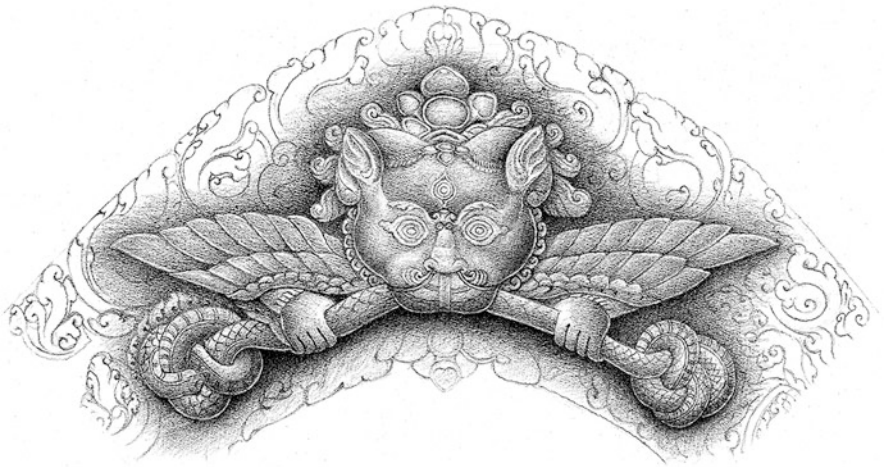

Fig. 13 Patan, detail (32 × 62 cm) of the tympanum of the early eighteenth century Yantaju shrine, in the centre of the main courtyard (Mūcuka) of the palace complex. Crowned by jewels, the face of *kīrtimukha* (literally the "face of glory") is equipped with three eyes, ears, horns, curled hair, and a moustache, and devours a pair of snakes, whose tails are knotted at the end. A pair of wings suggests the airborne nature of the demon, representing the cosmic fire which periodically annihilates the world. Hands emerge from below the wings to grasp the bodies of the snakes, which represent water. Drawing by Bijay Basukala, 2011

flying hybrid spirits. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Buddhist monastic courtyards witnessed beautification programs in the course of which new arches, gates, pairs of lions guarding the main shrine, flags, and gilt copper repoussé attached to doorways, tympana, and windows were created. In the context of such an effort, a free-standing golden gate (Nev. *suvarṇadvāra*) was donated, to honour the main shrine of Bubāhā, in Patan. A *kīrtimukha* occupies the apex of the cusped arch, and a pair of *makaras* the bottom ends, their heads turned away from the arch. To fill the gap between the *makaras* and the arch, a pair of winged spirits is presented in a rare frontal view (Fig. 14).

The fluttering scarves around their necks, their large earrings, necklaces, and garlands are reminiscent of early Malla-period wisdom bearers. The ribbed halo appears for the first time, simplifying an age-old motif that had been reserved for the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The widespread wings with four registers of feathers are given uncharacteristic prominence, while the body of the garland bearer seems to emerge from a cloud that moves towards the arch. Thus the original wisdom bearer turns into a winged cloud man. The wings and cloud have been borrowed from the winged, angel-like spirit walking on clouds. With the cloud becoming part of the spirit, the original water symbolism—the *gandharva* guarding the rain, or representing the rain cloud itself—becomes even more apparent.

Fig. 14 Patan, a garland holder in gilt copper repoussé, on the lower end of a cusped and stepped arch in front of Bubāhā monastery, established in 1882. The garland-bearing pose of the upper body in human form, the fluttering scarf, and the necklace recall the ancient wisdom bearer, while the wings betray a mid-seventeenth century transformation. For the first time, the body is fully cloud-borne, albeit not in the form of lotus foliage, but in a style that recalls the pronged clouds that were also introduced in the seventeenth century. Photo by Niels Gutschow, 11 November 2010

Celestial Musicians, Wisdom Bearers, Bird Men, Faces of Glory, and Angels in Perspective

Hybrid creatures such as leogryphs (Skt. *śārdūla*) have always been depicted with forelegs equipped with wings originating at their knees. These hybrids then turned into ithyphallic, and thus apotropaic, winged leonine creatures equipped with horns and appeared on corner struts (Nev. *kūsalā*, lit. "corner horse"), or were exposed two-dimensionally on wall brackets of windows (Nev. *bvasalā*, lit. "flying horse"). From the mid-seventeenth century, dragons (Nev. *malaḥ*) with wings on their forelegs replaced the earlier motifs on capitals, doors, and windows. Finally, in the nineteenth century, a plethora of leonine creatures with wings started guarding the stairs and entrances of Buddhist shrines and Hindu temples alike. The fact that even *kīrtimukha* was equipped with wings shows the fascination of the craftsmen and their patrons with the notion of flight.

It would be too digressive to search for traces of wings in Tuscan hippocampi (seahorses with the forelegs of a horse and the tail of a fish), Mesopotamian, Scythian snake dragons, or Roman *genii,* all of which contributed to the creation of hybrid beings that moved between the clouds in the sky and the ocean. Borrowed

from birds, wings were to herald the capacity of these creatures to remain in between, in mid-air.

The change from wingless spirits associated with clouds and their potential for showering rain, thus sustaining life, to winged spirits demonstrates but one example of decisive change in a transcultural process on the periphery of the Great Tradition of the Gangetic plains. For more than a 1,000 years, the bearing of the spirits indicated movement in mid-air. The legs bent backwards, below the raised upper body, convincingly demonstrated the airborne nature of the spirits.

To comply with new representations of airborne abilities that were either witnessed by Newar nobles at the Mughal palaces of Lahore or Agra, or brought by merchants in pictorial form, the former spirits were transformed into angelic spirits, winged and clad in outlandish dress. Shaped after Christian and Islamic prototypes, this fundamental change in the iconography of the spirits did not, however, affect their former function. In order to be contemporary, the guardians of niches, doors, and window openings, which once marked the transition between inside and outside, were now flying with the help of wings. The bodies of flying spirits lost their dynamic motion and attained a new posture reminiscent of floating, with horizontally-stretched legs. Later, these floating figures were equipped with wings, to comply with the fashion of the day.

The transition from wingless towards winged celestial spirits of the *vidyādhara* and *gandharva* variety in Newar seventeenth century iconography, presented here as a case study, could lead to a more general presentation of the beneficial and malicious creatures populating Nepal's transcultural sky.

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Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art

Ebba Koch

Abstract In this paper, I shall discuss how angels or winged spirits appear in the art of the Mughal Empire. The Mughals, the Muslim dynasty which was in power in India from 1526 to 1858, were paradigmatic in many of their formulations, and brilliantly expressed their ideas in the visual arts. Since they ruled as Muslim elite over a vast empire of peoples of different beliefs and cultures, they were concerned with addressing the widest possible audience and, in order to achieve this, developed a cosmopolitan imperial rhetoric which also informed their artistic programs. Thus following Mughal artistic interests, as is true of an investigation of winged spirits in general, will often be a cross-cultural journey.

The Angels of the Kala Burj, Lahore Fort

Transcultural Iconography

The concept of "auspicious" and "protective winged spirits" is common to many cultures and thus an ideal theme for transcultural investigations. In my discussion, I shall focus on the paintings of the vault of the so-called Kala Burj, at the Lahore fort, a tower pavilion which forms part of the Mughal palace complex. I discovered the paintings in December 1980 and published on them for the first time in 1983 (Koch 1983).[1] In the following sections, I shall outline the results of this

[1] The article on "Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore" was reprinted in Koch (2001, 12–37). For a more extensive discussion and detailed references consult this publication.

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investigation, adding new evidence and new literature, as well as new insights I have formed since then.

The Kala Burj is the second tower pavilion west of a series of towers that project from the north façade of the Lahore fort. It was not the only building in the fort to be decorated with wall paintings.[2] The outer wall and lower part of the towers also display a rich ornamental scheme of paintings, as well as its famous figural tile work, which I shall come back to later in my discussion.

The interior of the Kala Burj is dominated by the central vault (Fig. 1). Above the arches and squinches of the transition zone, the vault is faced with decorative plaster work showing a system of stars or partial stars arranged in concentric circles. The stars form the knots of a geometrical network which creates kite-shaped and, within them, fan-shaped compartments. At the apex of the vault sits a medallion on a circle formed of intersecting arched ribs. Originally, the whole vault was covered with paintings which now only survive in the central area. The paintings depict birds in the stars that form the knots of the network, angels in the fan-shaped compartments, and two fighting *simurgh-s* (mythical Persian birds) in the central medallion. The facets that frame these figural paintings are filled with arabesques, flowers, and flowery ornaments.

The shape of the vault came into fashion in the time of Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) who undertook major alterations to the Lahore fort in his early reign. The style of the paintings also points to the early seventeenth century. There is a description of a European traveller named William Finch who visited the Lahore fort in 1610. From other reports of Europeans on Mughal palaces it appears that such visits, also to the more secluded areas, were possible when the emperor and his court were absent from the city. Finch seems to clearly refer to the Kala Burj, when he speaks of a gallery situated near the river,

> where the King useth to sit [there] are drawne overhead many pictures of angels, with pictures of Banian dews. . ., or rather divels, intermixt in most ugly shape with long hornes, staring eyes, shagge haire, great fangs, ugly pawes, long tailes, with such horrible difformity and deformity that I wonder the poore women are not frighted therewith (Finch 1921, 163–64).

Part of the "many pictures of angels" which Finch would have seen "drawne overhead" survive in the central area of the vault, but no trace is left of what he described as "Banian dews." We shall come back to them later.

The program of the paintings, which depicts a heavenly vault of concentric spheres demarcated by stars and populated by winged beings, implies a celestial region. The fan-shaped compartments and the medallion of the apex are set off by blue color and by little clouds, as sections of heaven.

[2] There are also traces of wall paintings with Christian subjects in other buildings of the Lahore fort. Best preserved besides the Kala Burj are those in the *bangla*-shaped pavilion called Seh-Dara further east on the north front of the fort. See Beach (1992, 86–89); see also Cooper (1993). He argues not very convincingly, contradicting himself, against my interpretation of the program of the paintings of the Kala Burj. Khalid (2010) presents a detailed study of the Christian figures in the so called Seh-Dara pavilion.

Fig. 1 Vault of the Kala Burj, Lahore Fort, early seventeenth century. Photo 1980. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

What is left of the paintings impresses the viewer with its quality. The angels are among the most original creations Mughal art has brought forth in this genre. They do not follow the traditional Iranian-Mughal type of winged beings dressed in long floating garments, but are clearly derived from a European prototype, namely the boyish (half-)nude putto image, which had been revived in the Italian Renaissance Quattrocento, as a conscious imitation of classical Eros figures. Such winged infants became an indispensable element of European art iconography; they appeared as angels in religious works, and as putti in secular representations. The latter were mostly of an allegoric or symbolic nature.

The putto angel had been introduced into Mughal art through pictorial material brought to court by the Jesuit missions from about 1580 onwards. These depictions of putti were, to a large extent, engravings, often from the print shops of Antwerp, specially produced for Jesuit requirements, as part of their Counter Reformation and mission activities.

The winged child angel head, a form reduced from the concept of the cherub who has wings instead of arms, entered Mughal art for the first time through the same sources.

The European adolescent angel, which dates back to early medieval Christianity and Roman *victoriae*, was also taken from Christian engravings. Similar in concept, this type was particularly suitable to fuse with or supplant the traditional Iranian-Mughal angel figure.

The three European types of winged beings became predominant in the art of Jahangir. The European angels were either copied in their original context (Fig. 2),

Fig. 2 *Putti* and angels in long garments, detail of a Mughal copy of a Descent from the Cross after Marcantonio Raimondi, combined with Last Judgement scenes from Adrian Collaert, after Stradanus, 1598, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS 133-1964 f. 79b. Photo courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London, published in Stronge (2002)

or took the place of the Iranian-Mughal figure in traditional programs, like the spirits serving the Koranic prophet king Sulaiman (Solomon). Or else, putti were transplanted into a new pictorial setting, the Mughal allegory, which was created by Jahangir, his artistic advisers, and his artists. This representation is a characteristic Mughal hybrid visually expressing Jahangir's concept of rulership by means of compositional techniques derived from European allegories. To this end, European forms underwent a Mughalization, were used along with more traditional Mughal forms realized with European stylistic techniques.

The angel cycle of the Kala Burj is a vivid demonstration of this transformative process. It shows, simultaneously, the above-mentioned stages of angel depiction, from only slightly transformed Mughal copies of European models to Europeanized Mughal images, all of which are characteristic of the creative dialogue between Mughal and European art at the time of Jahangir.

Among the preserved angels, the most faithful copy of a European model is the angel in the innermost circle, holding a red scroll with *nasta*^{c}*liq* characters (Fig. 3). The type of putto with bent legs is close to the one flying in the top center of the Mughal copy of the Descent from the Cross, 1598, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Fig. 2) (Stronge 2002, 111, pl. 77; Koch 2001, Fig. 2.14). Robert Skelton suggested that this picture of the deposition may have been the one seen by the Jesuit father Jerome Xavier at Lahore, when it was painted under the supervision of Prince Salim, later Jahangir (Skelton 1969, 43–44). It demonstrates Jahangir's interest in the subject when he was still a prince. The Lahore connection is also noteworthy. The Kala Burj angel has retained the chubbiness of its European prototype. The carefully observed naturalistic details of the feathers of his wings, though only partly preserved, recall the best creations of this genre in Mughal

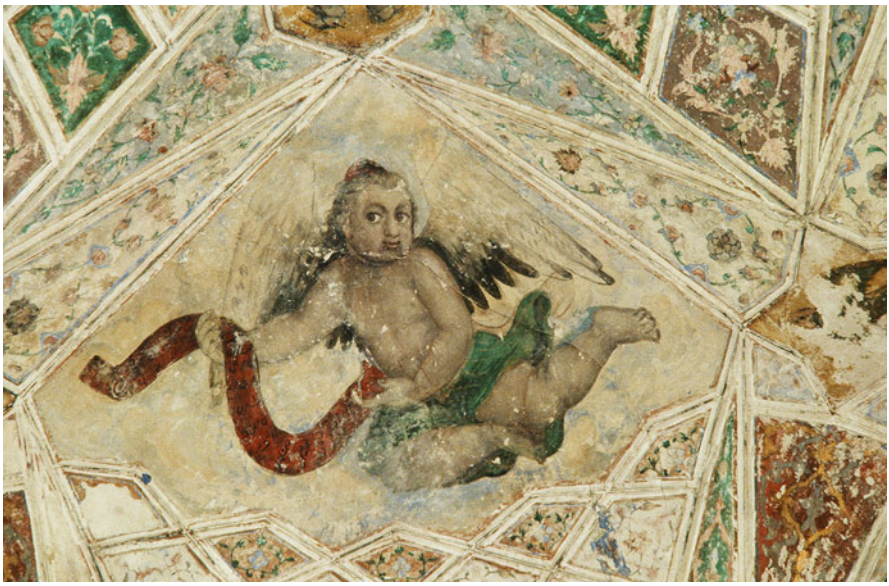

Fig. 3 Angel holding a scroll with *nasta*^{c}*liq* characters, vault of the Kala Burj, innermost circle. Photo 1980. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

painting, namely the bird studies of *ustad* Mansur and his circle. Even without knowing the exact European prototype, we realize that his large eyes and their intense look are also a Mughal contribution to the original concept, as are his cap and the *nasta*^{c}*liq* characters on the scroll. The scroll's text offers no coherent meaning and was intended only to indicate the character of the scroll as a carrier of writing, pseudo writing being a common practice of calligraphic decoration in Islamic art.

Closely patterned after a European original, but even more estranged by his accessories, is the angel with ruby and pearl earrings and a European hat (Fig. 4). This headgear, though European, is not used by his European counterparts at all. A potential source for this angel is found on an engraving known to have been in the possession of the Mughal emperors, namely the dedication page of the famous Antwerp Polyglot Bible, presented in 1580 to Akbar (r. 1556–1605) by the first Jesuit mission: the flying putto who holds a laurel wreath and a palm branch over the head of Pietas Regia, the personification of the piety of Philip II of Spain, the sponsor of this Bible edition (Koch 2001, Figs. 1.2 and 2.15). The Mughal version of this putto is again more athletic than his model and his large, pink wings bear minute distinctions in the texture and pattern of the different feathers. The angel's arms, which he holds in front of his body, as well as the position of his fingers, indicate that he was supposed to hold something like a string. The composition is very fine and is the most complete among those which have been preserved. The whole background, with the sky and the little clouds, is still visible.

Fig. 4 Angel with earrings and a European hat with a partly preserved hoopoe in the star to the left, vault of the Kala Burj, second circle. Photo 1980. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

These two types of angels served as the basic model for most of the other angels of the vault, who appear in different states of preservation. Generally, the model was only used for the pose of the body (the legs in particular), upon which angel images of different types were superimposed. The angels wear bizarre headgear, mostly caps of different shapes, and carry different objects like fruit bowls, green feathers, or twigs. One dark angel wears a floral wreath and holds a turban with cross bands, of the distinctive shape designed by emperor Humayun (Fig. 1, left).

Lastly, an angel in the second circle holds a long-necked bottle and a cup. Of all the angels preserved, he is the one with the least "outlandish" appearance (Fig. 1, further left). The youthful Mughal cupbearer, the *saqi*, is raised to the status of an angel and his nude, well-modelled torso lends him a new physical presence.

Two winged angel heads still preserved in the second circle again represent a purely European concept that had no precedent at all in the Islamic painting tradition (Fig. 1, right). Such cherubim became great favorites with Jahangir. They appear especially in paintings directly related to the emperor, such as the well-known political allegory of Jahangir embracing Shah Abbas, of about 1618–1620, now housed in the Freer Gallery, Washington DC. There, winged angels' heads not only support the great sun and moon halo of Jahangir, but also appear in minute form as a golden ornament on his green waistcoat.[3]

[3] For a color illustration see Ettinghausen (1961, pl. 12), but one needs a magnifying glass to make out the cherub heads.

The central medallion of the Kala Burj creates the illusionistic impression of an opening in the vault to the blue sky, where a pink and a green *simurgh*, both with long gold, green, and red tail feathers, are engaged in a fight. This dynamic concept comes close to Mughal marginal drawings—*hashiyah-s*—which are a traditional domain of the aggressive *simurgh*. Mughal marginal illustrations and architectural decorations often show similar motifs.[4]

The Angels of the Lahore Fort as Actors in a Solomonic Program

This elaborate program of angels and birds of the Kala Burj leads us to the question of why it is featured in the vault of a palace building of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. The obvious intention, one would think, was to characterize the reception hall, the *diwan khana* of Jahangir's private apartments, as a heavenly palace. This in any case would have been the most traditional way to denote the dwelling of a Muslim ruler. A problem arises in view of several features of the representation, such as the eccentric headgear of the angels and the specific activities in which they seem to be engaged, which cannot be explained by this general interpretation. If a more specific program was expressed in these paintings, then we may ask further whether the fact that it was realized with predominantly European forms has a special significance, given Jahangir's pronounced interest in European themes and styles.

The evidence in surviving monuments and representations of palace buildings in miniature painting shows that angels or winged beings, birds, and *simurgh-s* belong to the traditional stock of images used to decorate the setting of an Islamic ruler. These images appear either as individual motifs or feature in pictorial programs that may also include fights of real or mythical animals and birds, beasts, birds of prey descending on their respective victims, or predators and their potential victims in peaceful coexistence. The tradition of these motifs and themes as symbols of rulership and the paradisiacal setting of the ruler has been investigated in Iran and the world of greater Persianate culture by Ingeborg Luschey-Schmeisser, in her study of the 1670 tile cycle of the Hašt Behešt pavilion, in Iṣfahān (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 47–55). She interprets winged beings in connection with Muslim rulers as symbols of victory and power going back to the *victoriae* of classical times. She further views them as an expression of rulership in search of blessings from the angels, and as winged beings which protect and serve the ruler.

We have seen that Jahangir had a general inclination to be depicted in the company of (European) angels. His angels in the Kala Burj, however, were actors in a very specific setting, deeply embedded in the mythology of Islamic rulership.

[4] On this point, see Stronge (2002, 168–170), where she compares the marginal illustrations of the Wantage and the Kevorkian Album with the ornament on Akbar's cenotaph (ca. 1611–1613).

No other Islamic ruler beside Jahangir, however, had given this concept such a naturalistic and individual expression.

The key for our interpretation is provided, though unintentionally so, by William Finch who, as we remember, expressed his astonishment about the "Banian dews or rather divels" populating the vault with the angels. (As no trace of them remains, they must have been set in the lower compartments of the outer circle.) From Finch's reaction, we can deduce that they must have been represented as naturalistically as the angels, for he was amazed that the "poor women" of the *zananah* were not frightened by viewing such monstrous images. Not familiar with the symbolic images of the mythology of Islamic rulers, Finch did not realize that, far from being a cause of horror, these depictions were, on the contrary, a source of elation and reassurance to the female inmates of the palace. For Finch's "Banian dews" were, of course, no other than the *diws* or *jinn* of Sulaiman bin Dawud (Solomon, the son of David), the archetypal ruler of the Koran and prophet king who, by divine assistance, rules over the seen and unseen world. Countless myths and legends have developed around this Koranic figure. All sources elaborate on the fact that he was granted command over the demons, *jinn*, which he controlled with the divine seal on his ring and the assistance of the angels, who disciplined the unruly ones or put them in irons.

Among the animal subjects of Sulaiman, the birds are especially prominent, with the Koranic *huhud* (hoopoe) as his messenger to the Queen of Sheba. Based on these Koranic passages and legends, a special Solomonic iconography developed in Islamic painting. The most frequent representation is that of Sulaiman on his throne surrounded by angels who have acquired the position of his servants, the subjected *jinn*, the birds led by the *simurgh* ("the king of the birds," *shah-i murghan*), and his other animal subjects. In the Persianate world, angels are designated as *paris*—fairies, or positive winged spirits—and the demons as *diws*.

A variation of this theme, particularly relevant in our context, is Sulaiman on his flying throne. Carried with him through the air by angels or *paris* and *jinn* or *diws* between puffy clouds (compare Fig. 12a in the chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)") are the necessities of Sulaiman's princely household and those animals which cannot fly, such as deer or ibex, as well as those which cannot fly very well, e.g. the house duck (goose) and the peacock (Fig. 5). The birds, along with the *simurgh* and the *huhud*, complete Sulaiman's flying retinue. In the decoration of palaces and painted architecture, we often find individual winged beings which have apparently been taken out of this pictorial context.[5] These beings still

[5] See for example the tiny *paris* holding gazelles on the spandrels of the gate of the Agra fort under construction on a page from the *Akbarnama* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, painted by Miskina with Sarwan and Tulsi Kurd, 1590–95, see Koch (2006, 82). Individual *paris* holding Solomonic animals or objects begin to occur in Timurid and Turkman painting and seem to have been particularly popular in Ottoman drawings, see e.g. a beautiful *pari* holding a peacock, end of sixteenth century, in Taylor and Jail (2001, cat. no. 198). The authors are not aware of the Solomonic connotation of the figure.

Fig. 5 Sulaiman on his flying throne surrounded by angels or *paris* and *jinn* or *diws* which carry the necessities of his princely household and those animals which cannot fly, as well as the ones which cannot fly very well, such as peacocks. Puffy, pronged clouds, whirl between them.

Fig. 6 Solomonic angel holding a peacock, Bagh-i Nur Afshan, today called Ram Bagh, Agra, north pavilion, completed in 1621. Photo 2006. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

carry their respective fruit bowls, ibexes, peacocks, and the like that now acquire the quality of attributes, to denote those who carry them as Solomonic angels (Fig. 6).

Each Islamic ruler compared himself with Solomon/Sulaiman to the extent that an automatic association with Solomon developed for all themes, myths, and ideas which pertained to the life of a prince and his environment. The Mughal emperors, Jahangir among them, were no exception. The poets celebrate Jahangir as Solomon and Nur Jahan as Bilqis, the Queen of Sheeba.

These literary associations with Solomon were also expressed in visual images. No literary metaphor can be as particularized as a picture must be, hence the same theme can be illustrated in many different ways. This consideration is particularly relevant in our context because Jahangir, or the persons responsible for his artistic programs, used the same Solomonic theme, not only in the interior of the palace, but also on its exterior.

Fig. 5 (continued) The birds—*simurgh* and *huhud*—complete Sulaiman's flying retinue. Safavid period, early sixteenth century. *Black line* and *gold* on paper; tinted with *red*, *blue*, and *green*; image area 30.8 × 19.8 cm. Photo courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (acc. no. 50.1)

Fig. 7 Solomonic angel leading a subjugated *jinn*, tile mosaic on spandrels of arches in the outer west wall of the Lahore Fort. Photo 2001. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

The famous tile decoration of the outer walls of the Lahore Fort contains clear Solomonic allusions.[6] The tile panels which originally covered the whole northern façade, as well as the northern part of the western façade, survive only in fragments. The preserved panels depict scenes of Mughal court life of that particular historical period, along with ahistorical symbols of rulership, such as mythical animals, beasts of prey descending on their victims, and the like, as were already briefly discussed. In the spandrels of the arched openings or blind arches of the upper zone of the west wall, we find angels/*paris* with Solomonic attributes leading subjugated demons (Fig. 7). Nearby, two little *jinn* or *diws* dance to the sound of their tambourines, giving these representations the significance of the court of a *shah Sulaiman hasham* (a ruler with the retinue of Solomon).

The Solomonic angels, or *paris*, on the outer wall are realized in a more conservative medium (tile mosaic) and style. Most are derived from the traditional Iranian angel type, with a crown-like cap and long floating garments. They carry sunshades, branches with fruit, and lambs, and are surrounded by birds and Chinese-style clouds that appear "old-fashioned" when compared to the newer, European-style clouds found in the Kala Burj vault. In other words, these angels are

[6] Jean Philippe Vogel published his *Tile-mosaics of the Lahore Fort* in 1920.

characterized as carriers of the flying household of Sulaiman. Concessions to Jahangir's taste in this traditional setting can be found in certain Europeanisms, like the turned-up feet of some angels, which suggest a perspective from above, and the introduction of his favorite cherub heads. There is also a *saqi* angel who, despite being fully dressed, wears a cap similar to that of his counterpart in the interior. Eccentric head coverings, including leaf bunches, are a characteristic though not exclusive feature of Solomonic angels. The flower wreath worn by the dark angel and the European hat (*kulah-i firangi*) of the angel whom we named after his unusual headgear seem to be modern expressions of this established iconographic tradition. Though it is not clear in every instance which objects the angels of the Kala Burj are carrying, we recognize the traditional (fruit) plate. The green stalks in the hands of one of the angels might have been flowery twigs or the like. Knowing Jahangir's inclination to materialize his symbolic settings, it is tempting to conjecture that real (gold) chains were fixed to the hands of the angel with the *firangi* hat, to make him lead one of the *jinn*/*diws* (Fig. 4). Evidence in a comparable installation in the vault of Palladio's villa Maser in the Veneto (ca. 1560), where a painted putto holds a real lamp suggests this interpretation.

We may therefore conclude that the paintings in the vault of the Kala Burj represent the flying retinue of Jahangir as a second Solomon/Sulaiman. Conforming to the iconographic tradition of Solomonic angels, his winged servants wear eccentric headgear, some of them styled after the latest *firangi* taste of the Mughal court. They carry (fruit) plates and other objects of the Solomonic household and may even have led the now lost demons with real chains. The birds, including his messenger *hudhud*, complete Sulaiman's winged subjects (only partly preserved, in the left star of Fig. 4). Their leader, the *simurgh*, undertakes an excursion into another iconographic tradition in the central medallion, by doubling up and engaging himself with his dark alter ego in the symbolic fight which has become a symbol a ruler's victory and power.

That Jahangir associated himself with Sulaiman on his flying throne and even used it as a figure of speech is evident from the autobiographical history of his reign. When, in the spring 1618, he was keen to leave the city Ahmadabad in Gujarat, where he had fallen ill, he wrote:

> If the rainy season had not prevented me, I would not have delayed one day in this abode of trouble but, like Solomon [*Sulaiman-var*] would have seated myself on the throne of the wind [*takht-i bad*], and hastened out (Jahangir 1994, vol. 2, 13).[7]

There remains the question of why, in contrast to the traditional angels derived from the Persian type on the outer fort wall, angels after a European prototype were chosen for the interior of the palace. The outer representations were meant to appeal to a much wider and conservative public than those in the private reception hall of the emperor. Here, Jahangir's taste as a connoisseur of painting demanded to be

[7] Thackston (in Jahangir 1999, 264) translates the passage: "would get on my flying carpet like Solomon and fly away," but the Persian text (Jahangir 1980, 262) says "*takht-i bad*" which means "throne of the wind."

satisfied with the latest achievements of painters, the adaptation of European prototypes to Mughal taste, and symbolic function.

One appeal of the European prototypes was certainly their realism and illusionism. The use of the European form as the most naturalistic one available seems to have had the function of investing the symbol with the greatest possible degree of reality in order to, as Abu'l Fazl's said, "lead the ones who consider only the outside of the things to the place of inner meaning" ([c]Allami 1867–77, vol. 1, 111).[8] Jahangir's painters succeeded. They created such a vivid Solomonic atmosphere for the emperor that even the *firangi* Finch credited it with the power of being taken for real.

These naturalistic pictorial expressions of a ruler's asserted mythology are Jahangir's own contribution to Mughal painting. The vault of the Kala Burj is not an isolated phenomenon, but forms part of a wider iconographic program. We find the idea expressed in the painted vaults of the pavilions of the Rambagh at Agra. Known collectively as Nur Afshan garden, they belonged to the quarters of Jahangir's wife Nur Jahan (completed before 1621) (Koch 2001, Fig. 2.21, 2006, Fig. 37). Here, the vaults are populated by birds and winged beings holding various objects, like fruit plates and, in one case, a peacock (Fig. 6). Such painted programs apparently decorated most of Jahangir's palaces, and echoes of them also appear in the decorations of tombs, such as the cherub head and angel or *pari* at the entrance vault of the tomb of Khusrau, Jahangir's unfortunate eldest son, at Allahabad (1621–1622) (Koch 2001, Fig. 2.22).

Post-Jahangiri "Solomonic" Iconographies

Such figural wall paintings were abandoned in Shah Jahan's art, with the exception of the Solomonic decoration of birds and lions, and the panel of Orpheus (reinterpreted as a Solomonic symbol) on the wall behind the throne *jharoka* at Delhi, "painted in stone," that is inlayed with semi-precious stones or *pietra dura* (Koch 2001, 61–129). However, the miniature painters continued to draw from stocks of these images. The painted *jharoka-s* of Shah Jahan's court scenes and the walls from which they are projecting were still decorated with angels and birds (Beach et al. 1997, cat. no. 44 and Topsfield 2008, cat. no. 33).

Shah Jahan's governor of the Panjab, Wazir Khan (d. ca. 1640–41), had his *hammam*, or bathhouse (built in the 1630s) at Lahore decorated with wall paintings. These paintings took up Jahangir's angel/*pari* theme of the fort. The reference here

[8] The work was translated and published in 3 vols: vol. 1 by H. Blochmann (second edition revised and edited by D. C. Phillot (Calcutta 1927)); vols 2 and 3 by H. S. Jarrett (second edition corrected and further annotated by J. Sarkar (Calcutta 1948–49)). All three volumes were reprinted in New Delhi 1977–78. For a new translation of the passage see Koch (2010, 277).

Fig. 8 Angel in the hammam of Wazir Khan, Lahore, 1630s. Photo 1991. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

is made to the more conservative angel type dressed in a long garment of the outer fort wall (compare Fig. 8 with Fig. 7).[9]

Jahangir's Solomonic vaults clearly influenced the courts of Rajasthan, who followed the lead of the Mughal emperors. Winged beings appear on the painted vaults of the palace in Bairat, which dates from the first quarter of the seventeenth century. These representations also include images of winged *jinn* holding birds (Koch 2001, Fig. 2.23). We find adaptions and transformations of the theme in the palace Govind Mahal of Bir Singh Dev at Datia in Bundelkandh, ca. 1620–27,[10] and in the eighteenth/nineteenth century fort of Nagaur. At Nagaur, several ceiling paintings depict large roundels, in which angels or winged spirits wearing long garments form circular whirls. Putti also appear here, demonstrating that, even at this late date, the full Jahangiri repertoire was still remembered and taken into consideration (Fig. 9).

A very creative transcultural amalgam appeared in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, in the marble pavilions of the Rana of Udaipur Raj Singh, arranged on the stepped terraces of the dam of the Raj Samand, in Kankroli.

[9] Cooper (1993, 16), mentions the Wazir Khan angels briefly and shows a line drawing of one of them.

[10] See the chapter "Surpassing Invention: Painted Decoration under Bir Singh Dev," in Rothfarb (2012), especially pl. 6.1 showing riders on dragons catching gazelles below a solar motif among foliage and birds in the spandrels of the gate, and pl. 6. 10 showing a painted relief of the *rasalila*, the circular moonlight dance of Krishna and the cow herd girls on a ceiling of the palace.

Fig. 9 Winged spirits, painted ceiling, Nagaur fort, eighteenth to nineteenth century. Photo 2006. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

The pavilions are replicas of the Mughal pavilions built by Jahangir and Shah Jahan at Ajmer, before 1637, but the plain ceilings of the latter are replaced by ceilings in marble relief showing angels, birds, and a *simurgh*, amid a heaven of Hindu gods (Fig. 10) (Goetz 1978, 102, pl. xxxi, 8/16 and 8/17). A more distant though clear reference to the Solomonic programs of Jahangir is found in the wooden temples of Ahmadabad, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The highly original brackets of the Ajitnāth Derasar (1799 CE) at Waghan Pol, discussed by chapter "Ethereal Imagery: Symbolic Attributes in the Art and Architecture of India," have the form of winged spirits carrying musical instruments, and those of the Monk's residences (1871) of the complex of the Svāminārāyaṇa Temple at Kalupur, built in 1822, show *paris* intertwined with *diws*, birds, and other figures of Hindu mythology. The reception of Jahangir's winged spirits reaches as far as the wooden temple sculptures of Nepal (see chapter "How Celestial Spirits Became Winged in the Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Sixth to Nineteenth Century)").

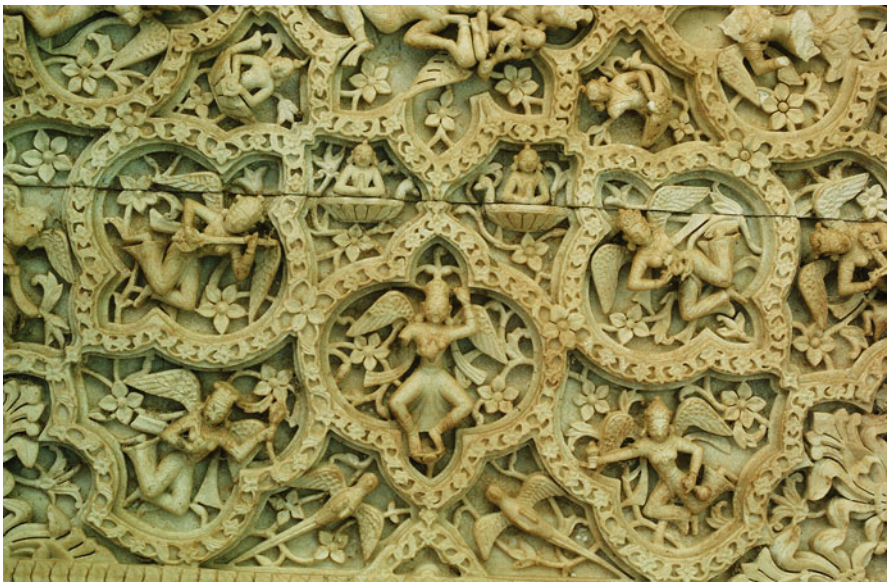

Fig. 10 Ceiling with winged spirits, birds, and gods carved in marble relief, pavilions of Raj Samand, Kankroli, Rajasthan, third quarter of the seventeenth century. Photo 1982. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

Wider Echoes of Jahangir's Solomonic Vaults

Ten years after its publication, Priscilla Soucek used my reading of the angels of the Kala Burj as a hermeneutic model to identify related themes in Umayyad and Qajar art. That model led her to "consider whether the complex at Khirabt al-Mafjar was intended to portray a member of the Umayyad dynasty, possible Walid b. Yazid, in the guise of Solomon and his retinue" (Soucek 1993, 122). Soucek felt that several of the features of the sculptural ensemble which decorates the palace indicate a Solomonic program, more specifically of a projection of a flying Solomonic retinue including birds, lions, other animals, and human figures, which have landed on the palace complex, with the ruler standing on a lion-protected throne in the center.

To turn to Mughal art to explain a phenomenon of Umayyad art stands to reason. I would even go so far as to claim that formulations of Mughal art are often indispensable to understanding earlier or later ideas in Islamic art. In its first phase, Mughal art was characterized by the amalgamation of the Mughals' Timurid heritage with local Hindustani traditions; soon after, the Mughals also began to look westward and to the distant past for inspiration for their artistic and imperial formulations. With their clear and rational approach, the Mughals more clearly defined and systematized ideas which had been more vaguely expressed in the traditions from which they drew their inspiration; they aestheticized these ideas

Fig. 11 Takht-i Marmar, the marble throne supported by *paris* and *diws*, Gulistan Palace, Teheran, created for Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797–1833). Photo 2005. Published with kind permission of © Ebba Koch, 2015

with their unrivalled talent for visual articulation and universalized them by successfully merging them with related features of other traditions.

At the same time, the reception of Jahangir's Solomonic angels in Qajar art, which forms part of a wider though largely neglected trend, is not surprising. Mughal India was on the receiving side of external cultural influence in the sixteenth century but, by the end of the seventeenth century, the tables turned and Iran looked to Mughal India for artistic inspiration. This reversal is especially apparent in the arts of the Qajar dynasty, which show evidence of strong historic as well as Indian interest. A throne in the Gulistan Palace in Teheran, the so-called Takht-i Marmar, or marble throne, was created during the reign of Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797–1833) (Fig. 11) (Soucek 1993, 120–121, Figs. 6 and 7).[11] This throne consists of a platform supported by columns and figures. Three of the figures are *diws*, two are young men, and four are young women holding pieces of fruits and flowering twigs. Lions also appear on the steps. The throne has an inscription which identifies it as a Solomonic throne and relates it to Fath Ali Shah, as the Solomon of the Age (*Sulaiman-i zaman*). The supporting figures are described as *paris* and

[11] I have also consulted Tushingham (1972, 121–132).

Fig. 12 Shahzia Sikander, Angels from east and west invade Shah Jahan's throne-jharoka. By courtesy of Shahzia Sikander, still image of SpiNN (2003). The angel imagery is taken from a Deccani manuscript and from the Mughal copy of a descent of the cross (Fig. 2)

diws. While they have no wings, they are clearly intended as the carriers of the flying throne of Sulaiman. The painted iconography is translated into three-dimensional marble sculptures with an implied performance aspect; when the ruler sat down on the throne, he became a new Solomon. The lions on the steps refer to another Solomonic throne which was also protected by lions and featured birds.[12]

The examples presented here provide insight into the role of winged beings in the mythology and symbolism of ruler representation. They demonstrate that such creatures, although recognizable, were not static but capable of adaptation, and of undertaking the most amazing and unlikely transcultural and transcontinental journeys.

There could be no better way to conclude this discussion than with the video of the contemporary Pakistani artist Shahzia Sikander entitled SpiNN (Sikander 2003). Sikander created the video using her characteristic, miniature painting technique, with which she comes amazingly close to the Mughal original but then transforms it, giving it her own interpretation.[13] To this end, she engages in an

[12] For a discussion of this throne see Koch (2001, 104–111).

[13] I thank the artist for providing me with two still images of the video reproduced as my Figs. 12 and 13.

Fig. 13 Shahzia Sikander, Female power from east and west takes hold of the Solomonic throne. By courtesy of Shazia Sikander, still image of SpiNN (2003)

unusual and creative dialogue with the hermeneutics of art history by taking obviously inspiration from my article about the Lahore angels,[14] and from another publication, the exhibition catalogue of the paintings of the so-called Windsor Castle *Padshahnama*, which illustrate the history of Shah Jahan (Beach et al. 1997). From the latter, Shahzia Sikander copied the *jharoka*, the viewing window of a court reception scene (Beach et al. 1997, cat. no. 9) but left out the figures of Emperor Jahangir embracing his son Prince Khurram (the later Shah Jahan) and the attending courtiers. Instead, she introduced the blue god Krishna on a composite horse and, after him, gopis, the cow-herd girl companions of Krishna, whose hair separates from their heads, transforms into bat-like shapes and gathers in a swarm. Angels taken from a Deccani manuscript, and the Mughal copy of a descent from the cross which I used as a comparative example for the angel types of the Lahore fort, follow (compare Fig. 12 with Fig. 2).[15]

The video continues with the scene moving into a primordial landscape, taken from the background of Shah Jahan's hunt as depicted in the Windsor manuscript

[14] See note 1 above.

[15] Shahzia Sikander does not copy the putto angel of the descent of the cross but an angel of the victory type with a long garment and blowing a trumpet, which is more closely related to the angels on the outer wall of the Lahore fort.

(Beach et al. 1997, cat. no. 33). Into it flies the Safavid throne of Solomon, held by his angel retinue (Fig. 5). But like the Mughal emperor, Solomon has been removed from his throne, and the female power of east and west takes over. The empty throne falls into the hands of a Mughal lady and a "European" Venus (compare Fig. 13 with Fig. 5). The two women and the throne are enclosed by an ephemeral rainbow bubble. Finally, demons, the *jinn* or *diws* of Sulaiman, enter the scene and, in frustration, brutalize one of their own.

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Ethereal Imagery: Symbolic Attributes in the Art and Architecture of India

Rabindra J. Vasavada

Abstract Since religious beliefs have long been the foundation of a community's way of life in India, these beliefs were adopted in all expressions of both temple and domestic architecture. The environment thus reflected the cultural traits of the people. With the help of selected examples from Ahmadabad's early nineteenth and twentieth century history, this text introduces the presence of ethereal, winged half divinities as an important aspect of architectural and sculptural details in Indian religious architecture. In the second half of the nineteenth century, such forms finally emerged as a result of the entanglement between local and imported Western art forms. European art and imagery thus became identified with the taste and preferences of the colonial state.

Belief in Ethereal Existence

Symbolic attributes in the art of all cultures emerge from a desire to represent their inherent philosophical thoughts and ideas. They may permeate human existence on a metaphysical plane, through spirituality, harbouring a belief in ethereal existence. Physical and metaphysical existence are both part of a people's cultural beliefs. They are vividly expressed in representational expressions to convey the story of mankind and our spiritual beliefs, which supposedly connect us to the ethereal sphere and its heavenly spirits. The desire to convey these meanings and beliefs in their totality produces varied forms of visual imagery and is conveyed through various symbolic themes and images. These images and themes become important attributes in sculpture and painting. The form represents an entity of unique completeness, conveying all aspects of the philosophical beliefs. This conveyance is the main object in representational arts.

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Ethereal imagery may thus be an important attribute in artistic compositions. It raises human aspirations and thoughts, lifting the mind to thoughts beyond the mundane world, while allowing it to concentrate on worship. For this reason, these images are seen as an inspiring extension of the human mind's ability to harbour thoughts about spiritual life as the highest level of human existence. In Indian art and architecture, the ethereal images may be depicted as figurative symbols that may be the subjects of all kinds of artistic expressions like music, poetry, painting, and sculpture, the supposed conveyers of states of higher thoughts: divine celestial musicians, *gandharvas*; divine preachers, *vidyādharas*—literally "wisdom-bearer"—small garland bearers who fly above the head of a god, while the garland symbolises the attainment of supreme (spiritual) wisdom; divine beings, *kinnaras*—celestial musicians possibly related to the *gandharvas* who have the heads of men and the bodies of birds or horses. *Kimpuruṣas* are also from the family of similar ethereal forms. The presence of divine figures in representational arts and architecture infuses in the minds of the worshippers a sense of sacred union while celestial imagery forms part of the belief in higher realms of consciousness. In any case, it must be realised—in connection with gross or subtle expressions of worship—that the end goal is only attainable when the worshipper's consciousness identifies with the form under which the deity is conceived. With respect to the Indian context, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy once expressed this idea as follows:

> Only when concentration *dhyanam* is thus realised in full *Samadhi* is worship achieved. . . . One should set up in temples the images of angels who are the object of his devotion, by mental vision of their attributes; it is for the full attainment of this yoga vision that the proper lineaments of images are prescribed; therefore the mortal imager should resort to transvision, for thus and no otherwise, and surely not by direct perception, is the end to be attained (Coomaraswamy 1956, 165–66).

In the following sections, the ongoing presence of ethereal, winged half divinities, as an important aspect of architectural and sculptural details in Indian religious architecture, is introduced with the help of selected examples from Ahmadabad's early nineteenth and twentieth century history, which emerged as a result of the entanglement between local and imported Western art forms.

Regional Concepts of Art and Architecture in Ahmadabad

Ahmadabad has long been a merchant communities' trading centre in western India. It was important to both the ruling dynasties in this region and Mughal rulers of India with seats of power in Delhi. Hindu merchant communities, along with other multireligious and multicultural communities, represented a large percentage of the city's population. Followers of the Jaina religion formed a significant part of the population, along with Vaishnava followers, another large group.

In regard to their art and architecture, followers of these religions drew their entire associative attributes from the mainstream idiom of Indian Buddhist and Jaina art, architecture, and the meanings they portrayed. Regional traditions were

complemented by the inclusion of interpretative forms of various religious faiths and their own expressions of belief. In Ahmadabad, some Hindu communities followed subsidiary religious faiths like Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradaya, which was introduced in the early nineteenth century when Sahajananda established the sect in Ahmadabad. Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradaya (literally, "following-faith") became an important religious sect in western India and established its own expression of temple architecture, which also followed mainstream temple architecture traditions.[1]

Ahmadabad's communities of traders and merchants, especially the Hindu and Jaina, treated the construction of houses as a religious act and always attended to this activity with due reverence. The house was seen as a house of the god in whom the residents believed and was sanctified in the same manner as a temple would have been. The sect also had a tradition of converting their homes into temples: the word *ghar-derasar*, for Jaina, and *haveli*, for Vaishnava, came to mean the same as both communities established temples within their homes and invited the communities to worship in them. This practice also inspired them to consider their houses equally as sacred as temples and to build them with the same dedication, reflecting the same sentiments and religiosity.

While temples were built in stone and were more expensive due to the sculptural work that went into making them, people found timber a more practical solution when building their houses, as it offered the same plasticity in carving but at a considerably reduced cost. The tradition of woodwork was predominant in house building until the nineteenth century, following which other non-timber materials and newer construction techniques were introduced. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the limits and plans of house forms remained confined to the traditional neighbourhood framework. However, façade design started changing with people's awareness of western popular art. The latter came to be an important feature of the so-called "modern" sensibilities of those people who were enamoured with the British presence and its imported practices in all spheres. The travelling merchant classes who had contact with the western world played an important role in advancing and adopting newer cultural imports. The craft communities very quickly grew accustomed to newer materials and techniques of decorative arts and wasted no time in adopting imported arts and crafts. Most of the time, copying architectural forms and decorative details was made easier through photographs and

[1] The vaishnavite Svāminārāyaṇa faith was established by Ghanshyam Pande, or Sahajananda, later known as Svāminārāyaṇa (2 April 1781–1 June 1830), who hailed from Chhapaiya in Uttar Pradesh, Central India. He settled in Gujarat around 1799. In 1800, he was initiated into the Uddhav Sampradaya by his guru Ramananda Svami, and was given the name Sahajananda Svami. In 1802, his guru handed over the leadership of the Uddhav Sampradaya to him before his death. Sahajananda Svami held a gathering and taught Svāminārāyaṇa mantras. From this point onwards, he was known as Svāminārāyaṇa, and regarded as an incarnate God by his followers. Within the faith, Svāminārāyaṇa is equated with the Supreme Being, *purusottama*. The Uddhav Sampradaya became known as the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradaya, which he spread in western India as he travelled through this region in the early nineteenth century, and found a great following in the vaishnavites, the followers of Viṣṇu [See Barrot (1987, 67–80)].

drawings brought from overseas. With these, craftsmen could easily produce almost identical imagery. It is through this process that one can review the progression of artistic transcultural entanglement characterised by rereading, recasting, and translating symbolic attributes. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, tastes leaned toward western models. All building trades were transformed with newer materials and construction techniques. The local craftsmen adopted these methods while older traditions, once such a major part of their lives, were abandoned. The traditions were replaced as craftsmen sought new patrons with transformed tastes and lifestyles.

Symbolic religious imagery, which was an attribute of art and architecture of temples, was mimicked on houses. Even though they retained the overall sense of symbolism and themes which were traditionally expressed in built forms, craftsmen possessed a certain freedom of expression by using the concurrent materials and craft practices. As the new elements were reworked in the field of building with features from other cultures, especially Western culture, and introduced as "progressive," the traditional themes were reread and remodelled in newer forms and imagery. This development was brought in by European, and especially British, society that established its presence in Ahmadabad on a more permanent basis, and was also possible due to increasing exchanges between merchants, traders, and communities across the seas. This way, the city and its architecture started reflecting imagery that reflected similarities to Western culture, which would establish them as an international society and further their interests in the wider world.

Heavenly imagery is found in architectural elements in the city's temples and houses, where winged figurines are always shown with ethereal dispositions suggestive of their skyward movements and spiritual domains. This symbolic imagery is present in art and architecture from ancient times and has continuously evolved in its form and likeness, depending on prevailing artistic practices, within the cultural continuum. This way, significant cross-cultural exchanges are reflected in Ahmadabad's nineteenth-century celestial figures. For the examination and description of the sculpted ethereal imagery that can be attached to each place, *genius loci* in the true sense of the term, three examples of temples situated in Waghan Pol, in the historic city of Ahmadabad, are selected. The Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple, visited by followers of Jainism, was built in 1798 CE and was successively renovated in 1904 CE. The Ajitnāth Temple, built in 1799 CE and renovated in 2007 CE, is also a place of worship for Jainas, whereas Svāminārāyaṇs visit the Māhavīr Svāmi Temple, erected in 1822 CE.

Ethereal Imagery in Jaina Temple Architecture

Ahmadabad's historic city has hundreds of Jaina temples, sacred places that mark the threshold across which one attains liberation (Skt. *tīrtha*). Some can be dated back to the city's founding in the early fifteenth century. Jaina temple architecture

subscribes to the mainstream Hindu temple architecture tenets and is dedicated to Tīrthankara images, as worshipped by the patrons. Jaina temples differ in the matter of their detailing and sculptural thematic schemes as far as their interiors are concerned. However, their overall form and composition are very similar to their sources in regional Hindu temple architecture. Jaina temples, though, are built with concurrent practices and testify to different preferences of stylistic expressions. Since the importance of daily worship plays an important part in Jaina family life, a temple's proximity to residential areas is also very significant with respect to its location within the city. For the patron who finances the building of a temple, which can also be referred to as a *jinālaya*, a *derasar*, a *ghar-derasar*, or a miniaturised *tīrtha*, it is important that the endowment raises the level of piety attained (Skt. *punya*). Since historic times, Ahmadabad's Jaina temples, spread all over the historic city within community settlements, have been in a constant state of maintenance (Skt. *jirnoddhara*), repair, and worship. The Jaina community, the rich merchants and their families, continuously finance these activities, which are accepted as their sacred duty towards the religion.

The Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple (Fig. 1) was built in 1798 CE, but restored in 1904 CE. Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth was the twenty-third Tīrthankara of the Jaina

Fig. 1 Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Derasar (1798, renovated in 1904), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. The temple's renovated façade is part of a long veranda space running along the street. The façade contains composite pillars with motifs that translate from Mughal architecture, and are suggestive of tapering trunks and crossed capitals supporting ornate, cusped arches which span the openings. The façade brackets support various angelic figures. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

Fig. 2 Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Derasar (1798, renovated in 1904), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Winged figure in a standing posture with bent legs, on the renovated façade. The statue, moulded in stucco, is imagined in accordance with the classical tradition, yet is transformed. Her right arm is broken and she holds a pigeon in her raised left arm. Her fully-draped *sari* differs from the local style: it is wrapped around each leg separately, its end kept free and passing over one shoulder. She wears earrings and a crown which resembles a head band (*kalgi*) with an embossed flower. Her facial features and body contours are apparently Western-inspired. The features of the angel suggest the complete transformation of the temple arts and attest to an entanglement with Western imagery. This way, the Jaina temple displays the departure from its traditional arts and architecture. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

Tīrthankara. The Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple was not maintained in the past, though it is believed to be 500 years old. The façade is comprised of composite pillars with motifs that translate from Mughal architecture and are suggestive of tapering trunks, with crossed capitals supporting ornate, cusped arches (Skt. *toraṇas*) which span the openings. The Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple was in a very derelict state in the early twentieth century and was therefore remodelled. Special attention was given to the exterior, with its rather recent treatment of form and statuary (Shah 1996). The winged, angelic spirits depicted—*vidyādharīs* and *gandharvīs*—are all female and made out of reinforced plaster molds, a new technique and an easier statuary method than the traditional stone or wood.

The statuary on the external façade—on which some figures are depicted with wings (Fig. 2), and others without—was completely renovated and is very curious because of its formal treatment of imagery stylised in a medley of both "Western" and "local" forms. While some female figures are reminiscent of statues of the Virgin Mary, others recall nature spirits (Skt. *yakṣiṇī*) holding fly whisks, or even Kṛṣṇa playing flutes (Fig. 3).

The figures' drapery, attributes, and facial likenesses have no parallel in Jaina sculptural arts of any preceding period. The seraphical female forms in the Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple are completely draped in dresses depicting the contemporary stylistic preference of *saris* wrapped around each leg separately with their ends passing over one shoulder, which differed from the local style. In Gujarat, *saris* are shorter and wrapped around both legs, then tied at the waist with ends brought before the upper body, covering the entire front. The facial features,

Fig. 3 Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Derasar (1798, renovated in 1904), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Wingless figurines appear in the same style as their winged counterparts. The right-hand musician playing a flute is reminiscent of images of Kṛṣṇa. Like the Virgin Mary, the other figure is holding an infant with both arms raised, a motif that is also known from images of the infant Kṛṣṇa with his foster mother Yashoda. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

Fig. 4 Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Derasar (1798, renovated in 1904), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Original sculptures depicting *devangana* on the corner of the old part of the structure. The form of the sculpture is in accordance with the classical norms followed in contemporary Jaina temple architecture. The sculptures are positioned on the projected capitals of the pillars. Support brackets under the roof projecting over their head are also indicated. The surfaces of the lower pillars are covered with plaster work. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

ornaments, and headgear of the figures also show evidence of an entanglement with external stylistic features. A crown seems to be worn on all the sculptural figures and replaces the cap (*paghri*) which was the traditional headgear in earlier times. Shifts in iconographic preferences affected the sculptural depictions of traditional themes that tried to maintain thematic content similar to what had been expressed through ethereal imagery in earlier periods.

In contrast to modern achievements, the western part of the Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple exhibits the fragments of earlier sculptures on pillars (Fig. 4).

Furthermore, classical traditions have been strictly followed in the figurative sculpture of an adjoining Māhavir Temple. The temple was erected between 1797 and 1800 CE and remodelled in later periods after major parts of this temple were

Fig. 5 Ajitnāth Derasar (1799), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Wooden temple dedicated to Ajitnāth, the second of the twenty-four Jaina Tīrthankaras. The interior structure is richly decorated with carvings and sculptural brackets attached to the pillars. These brackets depict female flying spirits of various types combining the attributes of *vidyādharī* and *gandharvī* in one form. There are sixteen such brackets with varying features on the central four pillars. The spirits seem to fly towards the heavens, abode of gods. The pillars and beams are also very richly carved and form a central *maṇḍapa*, which is naturally lit by windows and an open storey above. The interior has been profusely decorated with mirrors and glass lampshades (*handi*). Very unlike a Jaina temple, the interior is decorated with brightly-colored oil paint. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

destroyed in a fire in 1846 CE (Shah 1996). Here, the entire architectural treatment displays post-Mughal features.

The similarity and close proximity of the original parts of the two temples, Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth and Māhavir, could be attributed to the patrons who financed the construction and temple repairs. Their choices and preferences were followed by the builders of the temples. In fact, the Rajasthani craftsmen working on these temple buildings were the carriers and translators of architectural imagery. The patrons and the master builders had a free hand in detailing different building elements.

Although Cintāmaṇi Parśvanāth Temple is one year older than the Ajitnāth Temple (Fig. 5), the antiquity of the Ajitnāth Temple has been very strictly maintained (barring the unusual painting of woodwork). This temple is one of the few surviving examples of wooden temples in the historic city and is dedicated to Ajitnāth, the

Fig. 6 Ajitnāth Derasar (1799), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. One of the four interior central pillars with brackets supporting the floor beams above. The postures of the angels depict a position as if preparing to take flight. With legs bent and pressed against the pillar, earrings (*kuṇḍla*) that differ slightly and garland and skirt supported over the base fixed to the pillar, this posture is suggestive of their taking the entire temple with them. The symbolic wings shown on these angels are treated in a different manner, in upward or downward profiles. The wings are patterned with detailed bands depicting organic forms. The open wings suggest a flying motion. According to Indian mythology, the wings are imagined as being from a goose (Skt. *haṁsa*), the vehicle for goddesses. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

second of the 24 Jaina Tīrthankara. It is unique in its form as it is scaled and detailed almost like a house, or abode of god, in the dense residential area of the historic city. It is otherwise unique for a city temple as it is located within a court surrounded by a number of sub-shrines on three sides, lending it the importance of a sacred place (Skt. *tīrtha*).

The pillars and beams are richly carved and form a central hall (Skt. *maṇḍapa*) which is naturally lit by windows and an open storey above. The interior has been profusely decorated, presumably in a later period, with mirrors and glass lampshades known as *handi*, reminiscent of nineteenth century taste. Very unlike a Jaina temple, it is also oil painted in bright colors and lacquered. The interior structure is also richly decorated, for instance with carved pillars with sculptural brackets attached to them. These brackets depict female flying spirits of various types, combining the attributes of *vidyādharī* and *gandharvī* in one form (Figs. 6 and 7). Sixteen such figurative brackets with varying features on four central pillars

Fig. 7 Ajitnāth Derasar (1799), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Drawn detail of Fig. 6. Front bracket in the form of a female flying celestial spirit (*gandharvī*) holding a musical instrument (*vīna*) in her hands. She is dressed in a full skirt (*ghaghra*) and a blouse (*choli*), with a scarf. The skirt is detailed with a frill border and a long garland which is also around the neck. The skirt is full-length. A side slit allows her bent legs to fold up without the skirt limiting their movement. Her face is sombre and bears a mark (*bindi*) on the forehead which signifies a perfect attribute of blessed womanhood, a "*saubhāgyavatī*" (one who is bestowed with excellent luck), with a crown (*mukuta*) with two or three layers of petals over the headband, and bangles (*kangan* and *kada*) on her wrists. Drawing by Neetipal Brar, 2007

testify to a unique concept of detailing brackets in the traditional Jaina temple architecture, where full brackets symbolise flying spirits in female form.

The brackets in wooden architecture that transfer and distribute the load have always been a very symbolic element in the construction of pillar beam assemblies. Here, the figurative brackets of the timber construction create an aura of mystic

Fig. 8 Ajitnāth Derasar (1799), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Celestial, winged female musician (*gandharvī*) holding a small drum (*dholak*) in both hands. The sculpture is attached to a bracket. The figure wears a blouse (*choli*) and *dhoti*-type lower garment with a four-pleated cloth hanging between her legs, over the *dhoti*. The short sari (*odhni*) is wrapped around her and tucked in at the waist. A scarf (*khes*) is draped over her arms and hangs in front. Both feet are on tiptoes, suggesting that the spirit is ready to fly. Her face is broader than usual, and she wears a crown with three tiers, and a headband holding the crown. The earrings (*kuṇḍla*) are very large and elaborate. The two garlands, one smaller with beads and one larger and elaborately shaped, encircle the legs and feet and form a support over the projected base on the pillar. The wings are imaginatively devised with some kind of mango (*keri*) pattern. The wings show a gradually opening shape, as if they are preparing to assume a flying position. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

meaning and are symbolic of eternity. The flying spirits somehow express an upward-moving gesture (Figs. 8 and 9) that evokes the impression that the entire temple is being lifted heavenward, toward the abode of the gods. The symbolic wings on the angels are treated differently, depicting either an upward or downward profile, and provide an imaginary upward surge of spirits, in an effort to transport and imaginatively inspire worshippers.

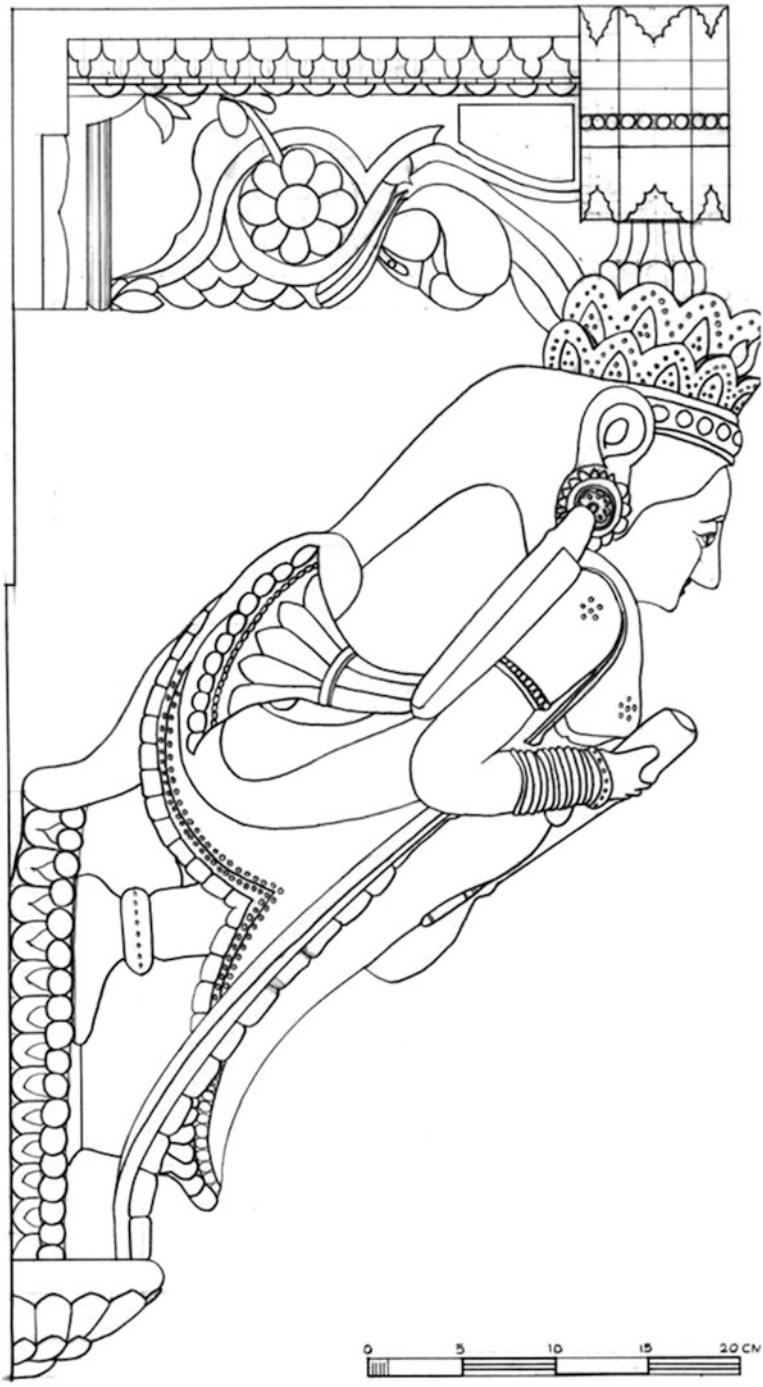

Fig. 9 Ajitnāth Derasar (1799), Waghan Pol, Ahmadabad. Drawn detail of Fig. 6. The forearms are full of bangles (*kangan* and *kada*). The feet are connected to the pillar and the huge garland provides the contact with the lower base connected to the pillar. Drawing by Anju Mamen, 2007

Winged Celestial Figures in Svāminārāyaṇa Temple Architecture

Through their temple complexes and institutions, the Vaishnavite Svāminārāyaṇa *Sampradaya* have patronised art and architecture with their own interpretations of symbolic expressions.[2] Svāminārāyaṇa philosophy believes in the epitomised "ideal" existence, known as *puruṣottama*, as the epitome of godly being—Svāminārāyaṇa beholding virtuous qualities of Kṛṣṇa-nārāyaṇa (which is an incarnation of Viṣṇu). They believe in chastity as the most important virtue and their *Vachanamrut*, considered to be their philosophical, social, and practical teachings, highlights moral conduct (Skt. *dharma*), understanding of the nature of self (Skt. *jñāna*), detachment from material pleasure (Skt. *vairāgya*), and pure selfless devotion to God (Skt. *bhakti*) as the four essentials that Hindu scriptures describe as necessary for a soul (Skt. *jiva*) to attain salvation (Skt. *moksa*) (Paniker 1997, 132). Svāminārāyaṇa have a strict attitude to male-female distinctions and the monks maintain a strict separation from women (temples for women are separate), the antithesis of mainstream Kṛṣṇa worship.

The Svāminārāyaṇa Temple (Fig. 10) was built in 1822 CE. It was established by Svāminārāyaṇa as the first seat "Nārā-Nārāyaṇa Dev Gadi" in Ahmadabad. A British agency gifted about 5,000 acres of land in what is known as the Kalupur area of the historic city of Ahmadabad. The second seat was established by Svāmi Sahajānanda at Vadtal, known as Lakṣminārāyaṇa Dev Gadi, on 21 November, 1825. Several such temples were later built in the western part of Gujarat and in Saurashtra, where the temple complexes had similar establishments in the form of *haveli*, where the monks stay, and the temple for Svāminārāyaṇa worship, at the centre of the complexes. In all these cases, a temple for women was constructed separately.

The Ahmadabad Svāminārāyaṇa Temple is an elaborate establishment built in the typical, locally-prevalent style of a *haveli*, which was very distinct in its richness of exquisite craftsmanship and ornate wooden façades. This idea of richly-carved and decorated wooden façades, and *haveli* architecture, forms an impressive aspect of the Kalupur temple complex. The façades of the north and west sides of the *haveli* complex create an impressive central courtyard—the main festival area in front of the temple. The imposing gateway on the west forms the main entrance to the complex, which has a temple for women flanking the entire entrance area outside the gate and marks an impressive front approach to the gate.

[2] This faith has a large group of believers and has established its own dominion through constructing temples and institutions throughout the world, wherever its followers have settled. When Svāminārāyaṇa died, he had a following of 1.8 million people. In 2001, Svāminārāyaṇa-centres existed on four continents, and the congregation was recorded to be five million, the majority in homeland Gujarat [see Williams (2001, 68)] and see Rinehart (2004). In 2007, the newspaper *Indian Express* estimated members of Svāminārāyaṇa faith to number over 20 million worldwide [see Rataul (2007)].

Fig. 10 Svāmināŕāyaṇa Temple (1822) Kalupur, Ahmadabad. Façade of the *haveli* for female devotees, constructed with ornate pillars and brackets with imagery of heavenly life and intricate carvings of the life of Kŕṣṇa (Kŕṣṇa-*līla*). Winged figures are found at different locations in the brackets. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

The roofs and the spaces within the large *haveli* somehow recreate a northern Indian aura very different from the local character. The interiors have very distinct monumental spaces reminiscent of northern Indian *haveli* architecture, with massive timber halls supporting roof structures complete with corner towers and large span trusses.

The public place of the central court has façades similar to those found on *haveli*, which are characterised by a tiered post and beam construction, with floors projecting outwards, and supported on pillars by ornately carved brackets. The carving details on these brackets vary greatly and are prominent parts of the building. The details actually provide the entire architectural expression of the façade with its thematic and symbolic content. It is here that the scheme of the imagery reflects the idea of the building and its associative symbolism for the culture and religion it represents. The theme on these façades is to express the idea of worship of the Sampradaya and its associative gods, which find prominent places in the carved brackets (Fig. 11).

Since the brackets display various aspects of the gods' realm, and the activities of the gods and their devotees (*līla*), the presence of ethereal spirits witnessing and celebrating these *līla* form an important aspect of the symbolic imagery of the carved forms. The sculptures (Fig. 12) are dressed in accordance with the norms as accepted by the tenets of the *Sampradaya*, where the full clothing of human bodies is imperative to righteous conduct in society. The forms of the ethereal images also vary stylistically, and express the craftsmen's freedom and delight in producing a gay abundance and a sense of "wonder" or emotive stimuli, *vismaya bhava*. The portrayal of these stimuli in characters and their postures creates a mental state in the craftsman (Skt. *rasa*) that depends on the activity and the gender of the depicted character. This results in the re-interpretation of the classical definitions of *vidyādhara* or *vidyādharī*, *gandharva* or *gandharvī*, *kinnara* or *kinnarī* and, Sampradaya norms in particular.

Fig. 11 Svāminārāyaṇa Temple (1822) Kalupur, Ahmadabad. Bracket with a winged male angelic figure wearing typical Svāminārāyaṇa clothing and headgear (*paghri*). His partly seated posture, with one leg folded and the other half-folded, suggests obeisance. The angel's head supports the top of the projected pillar capital. His face is adorned by a forehead mark (*tilak*), a distinct symbol characteristically applied by the followers of the Swami faith. The figure is located on the uppermost part of the bracket. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

Fig. 12 Svāminārāyaṇa Temple (1822) Kalupur, Ahmadabad. Bracket from the *haveli* for monks, situated on the north side of the temple complex. The brackets represent a cosmos. The carvings include imaginative natural life with flora and fauna. Figures of humans are integrated in the pictorial program, united in their worship of their deity Kṛṣṇa-nārāyaṇa, who is considered the protector of all living things. The brackets are fully populated with a number of flying beings, winged and wingless musicians, and dancers who all enjoy their act of worship. The entire depiction is symbolic of a celebration of their god and is reminiscent of a festival mood, when devotees would have assembled for mass celebrations (for instance, during *holi*, the festival of colors). The bracket's carved imagery is painted in bright colors. Color is an intrinsic part of Kṛṣṇa worship. The entire representation, with hundreds of such brackets within the façades, provides an impressive religious scenario. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

The Sacred and The Mundane

From the nineteenth until the early twentieth century, winged celestial beings populated not only Ahmadabad's temples but also numerous residential buildings. Carved figures can still be found decorating beam ends, wooden struts, and capitals.

The city's houses also started to be built with newer materials, though within the old framework of the settlements (*pol*). Façades began to appear in new forms, with more and more stucco imagery, and Western-style statuary (Fig. 13).[3]

Since the entanglement with Western building forms also affected the costumes that were depicted, newer statuary often displayed male and female figures in European garb, with hitherto foreign features, as well as the fair-skinned, scantily clad female body, which came to symbolise a "fairy." All statuary was thus transformed by Western art forms. This shift gave rise to the total subversion of traditional art forms, and a new type of popular art gained currency in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ahmadabad, transforming both domestic architecture, and art and architecture's symbolic attributes. The transformation was so complete that all practices related to building changed, and British building practices were completely integrated into mainstream art and architecture, not only in Ahmadabad, but throughout most of the country.

Religious Beliefs and Camouflaged Imagery

Artistic expression, as is evident in Ahmadabad's historic temples, was representative of human beliefs and in tune with the classical traditions followed by the patrons, artists, and craftsmen who produced them. With respect to architectural representation (*sadrasya*) and proportion, scale, and type (*pramana*), creators of art who had gained insight into religious canons and texts adhered to fundamental principles: They "found" and internalised the form through their imagination. The imagination was inspired by the themes with which they dealt. This act of "finding" an expression through one's own imagination was like worship (*bhakti*) dedicated to one's inner self. Aspects of Indian art were thus a result of a deep intellectual, mental and artistic endeavour which was undertaken to imagine and create symbolic attributes in representational art to create a sense of wonder. This process was self-initiated, where an artist was occupied by a religious duty towards the creative role assigned to him. These artistic traditions survived in India for a long time, and still do in craft communities that have the same approach to their work today: they apply their skills to the religious edifices which are built with the same devotion and employ the same imagery, adhering to beliefs that captivate the minds of the religious followers. Since religious beliefs have long been the foundation of the community's way of life, these traditions were adopted in all expressions of both

[3] It was no longer "sculpture" or wood carving, but "statuary."

Fig. 13 Ahmadabad. A female stucco figure dressed in flowing pants decorates the façade of an early twentieth-century house. The flower garland she holds is reminiscent of that of a wisdom bearer. Photo by Rabindra J. Vasavada, June 2011

temple and domestic architecture, and thus the environment reflected the cultural traits of the people. This was also a reason for adopting European art and imagery, which actually became identified with the taste and preferences of the colonial state and local people's readiness for subjugation. The translation of the West, evident, for example, in the camouflaged imagery, changed the entire architectural environment of Ahmadabad.

Popular art emerged as a result of the entanglement between local and imported post-Renaissance European art in late nineteenth and early twentieth century India. This artistic development resulted in hybrid imagery within both the temple and the

domestic environments. Now, the flying spirits that were once gloriously inspirational attributes of residential buildings seem to have "flown away" from a gradually advancing society and have taken a back seat. Where they remain on temples, they bring artistic and religious traditions to mind.

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Entangled Visualities: Celestial Beings in Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal

Katharina Weiler

Abstract This article investigates the adaptation of sculptural stucco design in the form of angels into the early twentieth century architectural program of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. The twentieth century spirits in neoclassical Newar architecture are a transcultural, hybrid outcome engendered by artistic and architectural exchanges. Nepalese celestial beings are symbolic of the Newar builders', plasterers', and residents' willingness to accept alien artistic and stylistic forms and appropriate them. The focus of this article shall thus be on the interplay of local artistic forms and philosophies and a neoclassical form vocabulary that was hitherto unknown. The text examines how certain examples of artistic appropriation and transformation are evident in depictions of these winged celestial beings.

The Newar Neoclassical

The winged spirit is a universal image that travelled on a long route until finally reaching Nepal. The following investigation focuses on winged spirits that were modelled in stucco. The adaptation of sculptural stucco design in the form of angels into the architectural program of the Kathmandu Valley is closely connected with the advent of neoclassical architectural forms that were eminently "conquering" the world outside Europe from the eighteenth until the beginning of the twentieth century. Transcultural negotiation processes in Nepal between ever-evolving local architecture (Gutschow 2011) and conventional architectural styles from the Mughals in India, and from Europe, were already evident in the first half of the nineteenth century when, for example, Mughal-style columns and arches, and neoclassical pilasters heralded a hybrid Nepalese temple and palace architecture. Consequently, the numerous

This article emanates from my research published in my doctoral thesis on "The Neoclassical Residences of the Newars in Nepal. Transcultural Flows in the Early Twentieth Century Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley," see Weiler (2010)

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whitewashed palaces of the Ranas who ruled Nepal from the middle of the nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century were characteristic of a Westernised architectural language which mimicked the neoclassical architecture of Europe and British India. It was supposed to demonstrate and legitimatise Nepalese political power to the British in India. Finally, the new architectural style was absorbed by the Newars, the people of the Kathmandu Valley. Their residences, for example in the larger cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, adapted and transformed neoclassical elements. Fully plastered or partly decorated with stucco, many houses built in the first half of the twentieth century—the majority of them after a devastating earthquake in 1934—superseded the red-toned brick façades and today still give the cities their *genius loci* (Weiler 2010, 2011).

The unique building style of both the palaces and Newar neoclassical houses came to be locally known as *Rana Style*. The Ranas and Newars were clearly attracted by universal themes that were first appropriated for the palaces and, later, the vernacular architecture. The appropriation of neoclassical patterns such as Corinthian columns, fancy keystones, cartouches, festoons, mascarons, lion masks, and angelic figurines (Weiler 2010, 165–205), for both the palace and vernacular architecture, may be regarded as paradigmatic of a trend that affected significant parts of Asia during the nineteenth century, whereas the translation of such forms was in accordance with the Newar locality.

Re-imagining the Divine

Early twentieth century façades are regarded here as transcultural contact zones that negotiate different symbols, offering the opportunity for the rereading of signs. One should be aware of the iconography evident in Nepalese art and architecture in order to understand the adoption and translation of the angel motif in the local sculptural design.[1] Instead of suggesting the artistic process of altering the existing form vocabulary as a result of the imitation of European ornamentation in a Nepalese context, the examination of ancient local themes points to Buddhist and Hindu mythology that also contains a repertoire of celestial beings such as *kinnaras* and *kinnarīs*, *gandharvas*, *apsaras* and *vidyādharas*, and *vidyādharīs*. All of these beings are renowned for their dance, song, and poetry. As Niels Gutschow demonstrates in his contribution to this volume, aerial spirits in the repertory of Nepalese Licchavi architecture (sixth to eighth centuries) reveal close parallels to the Indian architecture of the Gupta period.

In Buddhist and Hindu mythology, a *kinnara* is a celestial musician, half-human and half-bird, that was originally depicted with a human figure and a horse's head (Liebert 1976, 137). *Kinnarīs*, the female counterparts of *kinnaras*, were depicted as half-horse, half-woman creatures in Southeast Asian mythology and art (Ibid.). In Nepal, since Licchavi times (300–850 CE), their heads, torsos, and arms were most often depicted as those of a woman with wings, a tail, and the feet of a bird. Some

[1] See also Weiler (2010, 184–197).

Nepalese carvings, however, depict *kinnarīs* with the body of a bird and a horse's head, for example at the Indrēśvara Temple (1294) in Panauti (see Niels Gutschow's contribution). The word *kinnara* is literally translated as "what sort of man?" (Liebert 1976, 137). Gautama V. Vajracharya, a Sanskritist from Kathmandu with a keen interest in South Asian art, states that, in illustrated Newar texts, a *kinnara* is identified as *jalamānuṣa* ("aquatic man") (Vajracharya 2009, 12). Due to its association with water, the author assumes that the literal meaning of the word indicates the *kinnara*'s original designation. Regarding the water aspect, the depictions of *kinnarīs* and *apsaras* show close parallels. Together with *gandharvas*, semi-divine beings, and musicians of the gods (Liebert 1976, 89), *kinnarīs* form a celestial choir in Kubera's paradise (Stutley and Stutley 1977, 147).

As celestial nymphs who dwell in Indra's paradise (Skt. *svarga*), *apsaras* have at all times been part of Hindu and Buddhist drama, literary art, music and dance, painting, sculpture, and architecture. In the Rigveda, the oldest text of the Veda which was recorded about 1200 BCE, *apsaras* are mentioned as the fellows of *gandharvas*, the personification of sunlight. The first depictions of *apsaras* date back to the Rigveda. The Sanskrit word for *apsara* is *apsarasa*, being a constituent of the words *apah* ("water") and *sarasah* ("reservoir of water"). In the Rigveda, the term *apsara* was attached to clouds. In the epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, composed before 400 BCE, as well as in the Puranas, the *apsaras* are described as clouds. The Ramayana in particular identifies them as both clouds and water, and personifies them as dancing damsels of the heaven (Banerjee 1982, 12). Buddhism adopted the *apsara* nymphs and, in the Mahavastu that tells the legendary life of Buddha, depicts them holding garlands of flowers and jewels (Banerjee 1982, 11).

As "bearers of wisdom" (Liebert 1976, 336), *vidyādharīs* possess magical knowledge. In ancient and medieval Indian art, the motifs of the ethereal, garland-bearing *vidyādharas* and their female counterparts, *vidyādharīs*, were often depicted as couples next to the principal deity. As shown in Gutschow's survey, they were favoured in Nepal in Licchavi and Malla architecture, where they embellished carvings in timber and stone, for example ancient Buddhist votive structures (Skt. *stūpa*/Nep. *caitya*) and Buddhist monasteries (Nep. *bāhā*/*bahī*). These mythical beings' attributes include jewels (Skt. *ratna*) and forest garlands (Skt. *vanamālā*) made of flowers, which are worn on the body or carried in one hand, symbolising victory. Sometimes they also carry swords representing the wisdom (Skt. *vidyā*) which cuts through ignorance (Skt. *a-vidyā*).

In ancient architecture in India and Nepal, celestial spirits, birds, animals and aquatic monsters (Skt. *makara*) are often characterised by a foliated lotus-scroll tail or emerging from a so-called foliage motif that is described in a Sanskrit text as *meghapatra* ("cloud foliage") and known to the Newars as *lapva*, "amniotic water" (Vajracharya 2009, 12). Vajracharya provides an elaborate investigation of the foliage motif and its association with foliate creatures and celestial water (Vajracharya 2003, 44).

In other cases, wingless figures are presented against cloud patterns resembling foliage, and their bent leg postures and floating scarves suggest that they are airborne (Vajracharya 2003, 46). The crest of the cloud may be identified as foliage (Skt. *patra*), due to its resemblance to the turn and twist of the lotus foliage motif.

Ultimately, in South and Southeast Asian art, the foliage motif is not only employed in the representation of clouds, but also in the depiction of terrestrial water.

Niels Gutschow shows that, evidently, the iconography of ethereal spirits in Nepal has changed in the course of the last 1,500 years. Newar artists reworked motifs, for example by altering the beings' posture and attire, or by adding wings to the figures. In a way, such artistic processes of appropriation and transformation show parallels to the examples in Mughal architecture discussed by Ebba Koch in her investigation of angel depictions in the Mughal emperor Jahangir's wall paintings in the Lahore Fort (Koch 2001, 12–37).

The development from wingless to winged celestial beings in Newar paintings may be assumed to have started in the second half of the seventeenth century, when the then Malla kings of Nepal maintained connections with the Mughal court. At that time, winged figures were found in Nepalese paintings for the first time, for example on the covers of Nepalese manuscripts and on *paubhās*,—e.g. *maṇḍalas*[2]—painted on cloth to commemorate particular religious rites and celebrations, or to depict episodes and sacred scenes with local deities.

In his book *The Arts of Nepal* (1978), Pratapaditya Pal, who has done pioneering research on Himalayan art since the early 1960s, describes a scene on the cover of an unknown manuscript (1681–84) depicting King Śrīnivāsa Malla and Visvanatha Upadhyaya, as follows:

> Against a flat red background two persons are shown facing each other; one is a Brahman who kneels on a rug and holds a manuscript which he seems to offer to a god distinguished by an aureole; the second figure seated on a lion throne also offers a lotus flower to the deity. His left hand clasps a *katar*, a type of dagger popular in Mughal India. A winged apsara riding on a cloud upholds the parasol of sovereignty above his head, thereby further emphasizing his royal status.[3]

Since the deity is Rāto Machendranāth, the patron of the Newar city of Patan, Pal identifies the regal person as King Śrīnivāsa Malla of Patan who, despite being a Hindu, was a devout worshipper of the Buddhist deity.

With respect to *paubhā* paintings, which were generally stored in a temple, one example (containing mineral pigments on cotton cloth, 165.9 × 128.6 cm) depicts a shrine of Viṣṇu and is dated to 1681 [LA County Museum, Los Angeles, (Museum Acquisition Fund, M.73.2.2)].[4] The main deity inside the shrine is surrounded by several other divinities. The winged tutelary figures flying towards the temple, offering up garlands and dressed in "Mughal-Rajput attire" (Pal 1978, 127)—long robes with pleated skirts and *kurtī*-like jackets—are closely associated with architecture and its pictorial programs.

The Mughal Emperor Humayun (1508–1556) hired Iranian artists and craftsmen for his paintings and book illustrations. Mughal court painting in India was thus

[2] *Maṇḍala*: lit. "circle"; spiritual image, or ideal model of the universe.

[3] King Srinivasamalla and Visvanatha Upadhyaya, 1681–84, Private Collection, see also Pal (1978, 127–128), and Fig. 191.

[4] Shrine of Viṣṇu, 1681, LA County Museum of Art, see also Pal (1978, Fig. 116).

Fig. 1 Bhaktapur, Iccha. Apron of a late nineteenth-century window decorated with flying beings with garlands. The beings wear helmets or turbans with pinnate plumes and are dressed in long robes with pleated skirts and *kurtī*-like, tight-fitting jackets that open in the front. Their foreheads are adorned by tiny marks. A lotus design decorates the bottom corners. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2006

dominated by the accepted artistic standards of the Iranian court from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards. During the reign of the Mughal king and great builder Akbar (1542–1605), painters were not recruited from Iran alone; Indian artists trained in local styles were also present in the imperial workshops as exemplified by Milo Cleveland Beach in *Mughal and Rajput Painting* (1992). During the time of Akbar and his successors, the Mughal painters further enriched their corpus of signs and symbols as a result of their contact with Renaissance art. Symbols and motifs such as cupids, angels, orbs, and terrestrial globes were imitated in royal paintings.

Pratapaditya Pal finds reason to believe that the Nepali artists became aware of the "Mughal-Rajput paintings" (Pal 1978, 101) during the rule of King Pratāpa Malla (1641–1674), sometime around 1650, when they started "borrowing significantly from Rajput paintings" while creating "a distinctive style of their own" (Pal 1978, 144). Finally, the multiple identities of the winged female figures in seventeenth century Nepalese paintings and architecture emerged as a result of their multipolar genesis. Instead of drawing from the Indian repertoire of European-style, yet mughalised *putti*-like angel figures created under the Mughal rulers, the Newar craftsmen of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries based the depiction of their half-divinities closely on Persian winged spirits (*paris*) wearing Mughal-style fashion.

In the middle of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, winged, garland-holding figures were frequently found on reliefs in Nepalese architecture,

Fig. 2 Bhaktapur, Gāḥiti. An apron is adorned by a pair of flying figures with winged arms and bent legs. The figures wear crowns and shoes, and bear garlands. Foliage resembling lotus leaves furl in front of the figures, partly covering them, suggesting that they are airborne. Photo by Katharina Weiler, October 2007

mostly on the cantilevers of capitals, wooden spandrels, apron planks, or tympana (Skt. *toraṇa*), and appeared mainly in the context of religious architecture. They began to appear in residential buildings, however, during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century (Fig. 1).

While, depending on the context, their antecedents may have offered up garlands or carried offerings of fruit, fly whisks, instruments, or parasols of sovereignty, winged beings in late nineteenth-century carvings carried only a garland. It is also questionable whether the garlands are devotional articles since no deity is present. Yet these figures were depicted in the same style as the celestial beings of Newar paintings and temple architecture of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries—either with stretched legs, wearing long robes with pleated skirts and *kurtīs* that opened in the front, or with a bent leg posture (Fig. 2).

The fashion reveals close parallels to the "Iranian angel type" or "Solomonic angel" as Ebba Koch describes the *paris* found in seventeenth century Indian paintings and architecture (Koch 2001). These Mughal angels were clearly assimilated into the Nepalese pictorial program. Nepalese Mughal-style winged figures in turn prepared the ground for the European-style stucco angels found in the architecture of the Kathmandu Valley from the late nineteenth century onwards.

Winged Spirits at Rana Palaces

A range of depictions of celestial beings from late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture of the Kathmandu Valley can still be found today and testify to the interplay of local artistic forms and philosophies, and a "neoclassical" form vocabulary that was hitherto unknown to the architectural canon. The example of winged celestial beings raises the question of how certain ways of artistic appropriation and transformation are reflected in Nepalese building sculpture.

It was not before the late nineteenth century that winged nymph-like figures with garlands in a European style occasionally appeared at Rana palaces in Nepal and were thus exhibited outside of their traditional architectural context on Buddhist votive structures (*stūpas*/*caityas*), blind windows, spandrels, late nineteenth century apron planks, and tympana (*toraṇa*). They were moulded in stucco for the first time, instead of being carved in stone or wood.

On the gable of the grand palace Ananda Niketan in Patan (Fig. 3), erected by Bir Shamsher Rana for his wife and son, Ananda, in 1892, a pair of winged, female figures is depicted Nike-like, in a victorious pose. Even though their depiction is obviously based on European neoclassical décor and in the style of the Greek goddess Nike, the personification of victory, they are set in an unmistakably Nepalese context with the use of a stucco *śrī yantra*. A *śrī yantra* is a geometric figure composed of nine interlocking triangles that are interlaced in such a way as to form 43 smaller triangles in a web symbolic of the entire cosmos.

Fig. 3 Ananda Niketan, Patan (1892). On the gable of the grand palace erected by Bir Shamsher Rana for his wife and son, Ananda, a pair of winged, female figures is depicted, Nike-like, in a Greek style and victorious pose. Seemingly marching in Empire-style dress, they flaunt flambeaux in one hand and hold flower garlands in the other. They are unmistakably set in a Nepalese context by presenting a stucco *śrī yantra*. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2007

Another example of pairs of flying, garland-holding stucco angels is found inside the Darbar hall of the former palace Agni Bhawan (1894) (Fig. 4) of Juddha Shamsher's son, Agni Shamsher, in Kathmandu. The interior decoration is characterised by a joyful medley of Newar, Mughal, and European designs. Pairs of celestial figurines with bird-like wings dwell in the spandrels of the Darbār hall. Drapery encircles the spirits' otherwise nude bodies. In keeping with local style, they have black hair and wear necklaces, their arms and ankles are adorned with bangles, and a *ṭika* marks their foreheads. The ethereal beings seem to hover above stylised mountains and "Chinese" clouds.

Such stylised, puffy clouds may have evolved from the "pronged clouds," an ancient cloud that resembles "typical conventions of Chinese landscapes" (Slusser 2005, 394), as Niels Gutschow describes in this volume. Ingeborg Luschey-Schmeisser traces the evolution of Chinese–type cloud formations (compare also Chari Pradel's description of the moulded brick from Dengxian, Henban Province, China) to the thirteenth to fourteenth century—the time of the Il Khanate (1256–1336), a Mongol *khanate* established in Persia and considered a part of the Mongol Empire (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 126). The puffy, yet pronged, whirling cloud type was continuously painted in Persian art during the fourteenth century Timurid dynasty and is a decorative element in the art of the Safavids (compare Fig. 5 in the chapter "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art"), a Persian dynasty from 1501 to 1722 (Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, 53). Consequently, it was incorporated into the miniature paintings and architecture of the Mughals, with their strong ties to Persian art. Such stylised clouds are also found, for instance, in the tile decoration of the Kala Burj of the Lahore Fort (Koch 2001, 33). The cloud motif may have reached Nepal either via Mughal art from India, or the Tibetan art in which it was also a common feature but, most probably, Newar artists adopted the motif both in India and Tibet, and incorporated it into their pictorial repertoire. Regarding the extant sketchbooks and painted scrolls of Newar artists, there is reason to believe that the Chinese cloud type had been established in Nepalese paintings by the early fifteenth century, at the latest.[5]

[5] Chinese clouds are depicted on leaf 10 of a sketchbook presented by John C. Huntington in his account on *Nevar Artist Jīvarāma's Sketchbook* (2006). The sketchbook is of unique value since it contains a colophon that provides information about the date (1435 CE) and historical circumstances of its creation in Tibet and the name of the artist. *Nevar Artist Jīvarāma's Sketchbook*, 24 × 12.5 cm (each folio), ink and water-based pigment on paper, Thyasaphu format (with 39 leaves remaining from an unknown number): "In Nevari Samvat 555 (CE 1435) on the second day of the dark half of Vaiśākha [April–May], Jīvarāma personally wrote this, [and] after [he] heard [instructions] from Chon bhota made the whole book himself. After having come from *Prati cittam* [towards the West; perhaps a place name], where he heard [instructions] from Lālā Chunva [a Newar phonetic rendering of a Tibetan name ending in "the younger"]. Giving the book special importance, he brought it back to [his own] *vihāra*. After working in Nyar Dva [Tibetan place name?], he then brought it back. This was made personally by Jīvarāma." See Huntington (2006, 76).

Fig. 4 Agni Bhawan, Kathmandu (1894). Interior decoration of the former palace of Juddha Shamsher's son, Agni Shamsher. Pairs of flying, garland-holding stucco figures with bird-like wings decorate the spandrels inside the Darbār Hall. The figures seem to hover above stylised mountains and whirling clouds. Drapery waves around the spirits' otherwise nude bodies. According to the local style, they have black hair and wear necklaces, their arms and ankles adorned with bangles, and a *ṭika* marks their foreheads. Photo by Katharina Weiler, December 2007

Celestial Figures of the Newar Neoclassical Style

Despite these examples that show celestial beings in the context of late-nineteenth-century Nepalese palace architecture, the ethereal, angel-like motif was rarely incorporated into the exterior and interior decoration of Rana palaces. The sculptural design of winged spirits is particularly found in the residential architecture of Kathmandu and Patan, where it was borrowed from the neoclassical architectural repertoire and appropriated by Newar plasterers for the local requirements of their

Fig. 5 Patan, Saugah (ca. 1935). A pair of winged spirits with bent legs holds a garland above the central window on the first floor of a Shakya house. The figures present a cartouche labelled *Śrī trīratna saugala tola sā na tranabbe* (*93*), or "Blessed three jewels Saugaḥ locality number 93," hinting at the original house owner's affiliation to a Buddhist house priest, Vajrācārya. The cartouche thus provides information about the location of the house. Flower garlands are frequently found hanging from window lintels of Newar houses. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2006

modern house façades. Most of all, the winged stucco figurines enjoyed great popularity in the 1940s, in the course of the great rebuilding of Newar cities after the earthquake of 1934. These are prominent examples of the negotiation processes between the local iconography and Western décor, and are important features of the Newar neoclassical style.

Above all, the fact that celestial figures are presented as winged, often holding garlands, and in couples, clearly locates the motif in both the local mythological, artistic traditions and the neoclassical repertoire. Similar to the spirits depicted in the royal context, fairy-like beings present ornate cartouches above first-floor windows of Newar houses (Fig. 5). Winged figures are also arranged as garland-bearing couples framing windows (Figs. 6 and 7). Angel busts may appear above window lintels, where they form a triangle that replaces the pediment (Figs. 8 and 14), or be squeezed between acanthus leaves on the composite capitals of neoclassical pilasters (Fig. 10).

Fig. 6 Buddhanilkanta. An angel replaces a keystone. Black-haired winged figures with bent legs on the wall frame the window and hold drapery in a neoclassical manner. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2007

Fig. 7 Bhaktapur, Kvãchẽ (1940s). A pair of figures with foliated wings frames the windows on the first floor of a house. Dressed in *saris* and wearing crown-like caps, they hold flower garlands. Their feet are visible and are positioned one upon the other. Photo by Katharina Weiler, October 2007

Fig. 8 Patan, Mahāpal (after 1934). A female angel holding a flower garland is cleverly incorporated into the triangular pediment above the central window on the first floor of a residential building. Her wings resemble those of birds. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2006

The depiction of angels in early twentieth-century Newar architecture reflects the enhancement of motifs that had been familiar to Nepalese iconography. This way, angels were first adopted and then incorporated into a new cultural context. The representation of equivocal celestial beings that resulted in this transformation implies the artisans' awareness of the motivic similarities between the angels propagated by neoclassical décor and the celestial beings inherent in their own pantheon.

Deities of the Gaze: Scantily Clad Angels and Aspects of Eroticism

In the early twentieth century Kathmandu Valley, the motif of celestial beings was reworked in an urban context characterised by Buddhist and Hindu religious activities, though not without stamping them with a certain kind of "Newarness." The figures' hair is often painted black, reminiscent of the hair color typical of the local people. In some cases (Figs. 4 and 9), the figures are adorned with jewelry (for example bangles) and, in a few instances, a tiny mark (*ṭika*) which decorates the forehead. Full-bosomed and scantily clad, the early-twentieth-century Newar stucco spirits are characteristically moulded so as to accentuate their femininity.

A group of angel busts with uncovered breasts (Figs. 9, 10, 11 and 13) is presented with a clearly erotic air like the fabulous, benevolent maidens that represent nature spirits (Skt. *yakṣiṇī*) that frequent fields and forests, haunt sacred trees, and which are in fact found as figural carvings on ancient Nepalese roof struts. A *yakṣiṇī,* portrayed in a particular pose as a tree goddess (Skt. *vṛkṣadevatā*) "gathering fruit or flowers from the tree, or trees, under which she stands in a distinctive cross-legged pose (*pādavastika*) upon a dwarfed being, a *yakṣa*, her male counterpart" (Slusser 2010, 16), bears a special Sanskrit name, *śālabhañjikā*, meaning "one who breaks the branch of a *śāla* tree."[6] The most refined depictions of *śālabhañjikās* survive on struts in the north wing of the Buddhist monastery Ukubāhā in Patan (Fig. 12), five of which have recently been dated to the late seventh or ninth century CE (carved between 690 and 890)[7]—the time of the Licchavis, kings of Nepal—and identified as being among the oldest extant woodcarvings of Nepal. Mary Shepherd Slusser, who has concentrated her attention on these figures, describes them as follows:

[6] Mary Shepherd Slusser states: "In the *śālabhañjikā* tradition, literary and sculptural, the tree whose branches the maiden bends is not confined to the *śāla*, and she does not break the branch but bends it within reach of its fruits or flowers." See Slusser (2010, 16). For the tree as a symbol for fertility see ibid, 134.

[7] Although only one Ukubāhā strut was tested, Mary Shepherd Slusser, the initiator of the radiocarbon dating feels secure in dating the other four the same because they are so stylistically like the test object and were probably made by the same person, see Slusser (2009).

Fig. 9 Dhulikel (probably before 1934). Capital with the bust of a female, nude, winged spirit with black hair. The figurine holds a flower and a garland, its ends shaped in the form of stylised lotus leaves. She wears a fan-shaped necklace and her forehead is adorned by a *ṭika*. Stylised lotus leaves also decorate the capital's edges, where acanthus leaves would otherwise embellish composite capitals. In Nepalese iconography, the foliage motif is often associated with foliate creatures and celestial water. Photo by Katharina Weiler, October 2006

> It is clear that the Ukubāhāḥ master carpenter wished these bodies to be admired. That their alluring breasts and svelte limbs [shall] not be hidden, ornaments are few and clothing is the narrowest of shoulder scarves and the most gossamer of skirts. Gossamer, indeed, but worn seductively low on the hips, secured by a richly jewelled belt, and confected of the finest of fabrics patterned in the most attractive of ways (Slusser 2009).

The narrow shoulder scarf leaves the torso bare. As with the traditionally stylised female forms of the *yakṣiṇīs* who are, however, "not bona fide deities who must be represented in accordance with exact rules" (Slusser 2009), the creation of the

Fig. 10 Patan, Saugah (ca. 1935). Stucco angels with bare breasts, Victorian hairstyles, and bird-like wings are squeezed between decorative acanthus leaves on the capitals of pilasters that frame the façade of a Newar house. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2006

modern half-nude female angels was probably a conscious aim of the artists to amalgamate the physical form with the spiritual and cosmic world by depicting the female body as an object of the gaze. In the words of Slusser, who dedicated a book to *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving* (Slusser 2010) the "supple, willowy bodies of these voluptuous young women...invite comparison with physically desirable living counterparts and are the very embodiment of fertility" (2010, 88). Slusser notices the idealisation of the female body—that is also evident in neoclassical angelic figures (Fig. 13)—since all of these figures "flaunt appealingly youthful breasts that spring from high on the chest and range from large, heavy globes to hemispheres of modest size...."

The imagery of the lightly dressed feminine figure is a common canonical motif of Indian and Nepalese art. The depiction of the female body in diaphanous and revealing garments was an inalienable feature of the iconography of both Buddhist

Fig. 11 Patan, Nakabahī (ca. 1940). The centre of a symmetrical cartouche above the central window on the first floor of a house is adorned with a fairy-like angel with bird's wings, standing cross-legged. The posture is reminiscent of the classical bearing of *yakṣiṇīs* on wooden roof struts. The angelic figure wears a wrap garment that covers her left breast, leaving her right breast bare, in a way eliciting associations with depictions of the Greek goddess Nike. In her left hand, she holds a small cloth. Photo by Katharina Weiler, October 2006

and Hindu goddesses; they remained fully within the realm of the aesthetic (Guha-Thakurta 2004, 237). These familiar characteristics of Newar religious art were reworked in the early twentieth century angels of the Kathmandu Valley. This modelling and remodelling of ethereal or angelic semi-nudes in the early twentieth century architecture of the Kathmandu Valley amounts to the same aesthetic propagated by traditional Nepalese and Indian art forms.

Fig. 12 Ukubāhā, Patan. On Strut 1, a *yakṣiṇī* with alluring breasts is depicted as a goddess of the Buddhist sacred grove (Skt. *śālabhañjikā*) with crossed legs (Skt. *pādavastika*), grasping a tree branch with her extended arm, and standing on a dwarfed being, a *yakṣa*. The strut was analysed through radiocarbon testing to between 690 and 890 CE. Source: Slusser (2010, 40, Fig. 31). Photo by Stanislaw Klimek

Fig. 13 Patan, Tyāgaḥ (after 1934). A nude, Art-Nouveau style female angel with black, Victorian corkscrew curls, jewelry, and an acanthus corset embellishes the façade of a house in Patan's outskirts, between two windows of the first floor. This figure with bird's wings is located on the central, vertical axis. Photo by Katharina Weiler, November 2006

Negotiating the Local and the Global

The hybrid twentieth-century spirits in neoclassical Newar architecture are the result of artistic and architectural transcultural exchanges. These figures can be regarded as negotiators between different cultural modes, having lost their defined role as "either" intermediaries between the almighty power of a Christian or Islamic pantheon and humans "or" celestial beings mainly associated with rain and fertility in Hinduism and Buddhism. Newars, when asked about the term for the stucco fairies and winged beings on their early twentieth century houses, generally identify them today as being *apsaras* or *paris* and décor to the façade. It is difficult to find any definite answer to the question of whether their presence initially communicated any religious meaning. However, when depicted on a house's most prominent part, the façade, ethereal early-twentieth-century figures qualified as highly decorative elements, through which a house owner, whether a domestic priest (Nep. *purohit*), a Buddhist priest (Vajrācārya), or a butcher (Kasai), could present himself as modern. The figures are representatives of a neoclassical architectural language

Fig. 14 Khokana, Nepal. An aging Newar looks out the first-floor window of his early twentieth-century house. Above him, a female angel figure is depicted with outspread wings and the puff-sleeved blouse that became a popular feature of higher class women's wear in the early twentieth century. Photo by Niels Gutschow, 2007

that was "spoken" on a global scale, however in different "vernaculars"—in this case, the Nepalese neoclassical style of architecture. The figures of the Newar neoclassical canon could be dressed in contemporary "Western"-style fashion (Fig. 14) and have elaborate hairstyles, like the female Rana elite who dressed in modern attire. They are thus evidence of certain vogues that eminently conquered the world outside Europe from the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, and showed the transformation of the motif of celestial beings from rather standardised versions, dressed in Mughal costumes and found on architecture until the nineteenth century, to canonical yet individualised images.

Despite this "Westernization," the figures refer to their locality, the Kathmandu Valley, in a bewildering range of artistic expressions. Above all, Nepalese celestial beings are symbolic of the Newar builders', plasterers', and residents' empathy for and acceptance of alien artistic and stylistic forms, as well as their desire to make them their own.

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Epilogue

Katharina Weiler

Angels and auspicious and protective spirits have great potential to cross frontiers. The contributions to this volume testify to various transformative processes, the transcultural—and even transcontinental—trajectories of such beings, and the creative dialogue among the artists and architects who created them.

Maybe now more than ever, such spirits are made symbols of transformation, with a magical aura, reconceptualised for everyday matters (Fig. 1). Personified and visualised, celestial figures serve as a special means of communication in different kinds of media. They still qualify as a major vehicle for addressing issues of protection and salvation, but also identity and gender, class, and the advent of the information age.

Guardian angels, for instance, are recontextualised to conform to current issues, their fields of duty constantly broadened. In doing so, a guardian angel is deployed where he or she is needed the most, for example as a protector of the climate (Fig. 2) or peace ambassador.

In 2004, 2 years before the end of the civil war in Nepal, a picture of two girls (Fig. 3) was published in the daily Nepalese newspaper *Kathmandu Post*. According to the caption, the girls were "dressed as angels" leading a peace rally in Chitwan. The way they are depicted as a couple and bearing garlands, however, indicates that they represent hybrid aerial creatures, half wisdom bearer (*vidyādharī*) and half angel.

In his work "Archangel Michael: And no message could have been any clearer," the photographer David LaChapelle portrays Michael Jackson as Archangel Michael defeating Satan. The image shifts the discussion of the legend that

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Fig. 1 In December 2010, the German weekly *Stern* dedicated its cover story to "The Magic of Angels" (*Die Magie der Engel*) which asks why humans need ethereal messengers for their worldly bliss. The front page depicts "Tobias and the Angel," a small altar piece by Tizian or a follower, ca. 1512. Source: *Stern* 52, 22 December 2010, cover. Photo by CameraPhoto/AKG-Images

accompanied the singer's intricate biography and the mystery surrounding his death into a new, religious context in which the gossiped-about person becomes a divine idol who defeats the demonised monster. In this context, Jackson becomes a modern-day deity, who is built up and torn down by a community that he at the same time holds together. Finally, Taschen used the image for an advertisement (Fig. 4), stating that "TASCHEN books don't just break coffee tables, they also crash headlong through perceived barriers between high and low art."

Michael Jackson's transformation into his namesake archangel exemplifies the iconographic similarities and relationships across geographical boundaries, genres, and cultural formations.

The praying pose of Michael Jackson as the Archangel Michael somehow finds its modern counterpart in a different cultural context in the Śri Adhya Katyani Śakti Piṭh Maṇḍir, popularly known as Chattarpur Temple, in Delhi, India. The temple was established in 1974, by Baba Sant Nagpal Ji, who died in 1998. An almost life-sized winged, angelic statue (Fig. 5) is placed on a pedestal from where the female figure welcomes the devotees and other visitors at the entrance to the guru's mausoleum (*samadhi*) that lies in the premises of the Śiv-Gauri Nageśwar Maṇḍir, within the temple complex.

Another picture of the Archangel Michael (Fig. 6), who has guarded the Christuskirche in Mannheim, Germany since 1911, was published in June 2010,

Fig. 2 This picture, along with the slogan "The climate has a new guardian angel!" (*Das Klima hat einen neuen Schutzengel*!), advertises "climate-friendly" consumer goods recognisable through a special, official seal called "Blue Angel" (*Blauer Engel*). Through buying such products, the consumer becomes a "climate guardian angel" (*Klimaschutzengel*). Source: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16/17 January 2009

when the Vuvuzela, a wind instrument, came to be known around the globe during the Football World Cup. While the author identifies the Archangel's instrument as a Vuvuzela, the divine statue resembles a football fan that follows a global trend.

These examples show that the appearance or specific function of angels and their understanding is constantly being modified across time and space in a transcultural web of relationships. The same is true for contemporary representations of the Roman goddess of victory.

In an ambiguous way, model Erin Heatherton (Fig. 7) alluded to moral and gender categories during a fashion show for the lingerie and beauty label Victoria's Secret. By presenting models that are under "angel" contracts as winged, the designer plays with the brand's name and the iconography of the goddess of victory while showing how seemingly contrasting articles of clothing can be combined. A leopard-patterned push-up bra is paired with a woollen hat and gloves. Heatherton, who "propagates" the message "HOPE" with her violet panties, invites the viewer's gaze. The suggestive impact of this pictorial language appears so forcefully that, on

Fig. 3 This picture of two girls "dressed as angels" was taken in 2004, at a peace rally in Chitwan, Nepal. Depicted winged, as a couple and bearing garlands, indicates that they are half wisdom bearer—in the age old tradition—and half angel. Source: *Kathmandu Post*, 7 November 2004. Photo by Post Photo/Khuman Singh Tamang

interwoven levels of meaning and interpretation, the imagery makes further statements. Violet is a symbol for a range of things: in a clerical context, it is the liturgical color for Advent and Lent, the color of contemplation and penance. Violet also stands for the equal treatment of men and women within the women's movement. Has the Roman goddess of victory, in this respect, become a projection for present-day gender issues? Regardless, behind the appearance of the goddess lies a hidden commentary: lingerie is divine and has a message!

Images of the bronze sculpture of Victoria or "Golden Lizzy" (*Goldelse*), as Berliners call the statue (8.30 m) that crowns the Berlin Victory Column, are often found in German media. The column symbolises German war victories in the past. Victoria holds a laurel wreath and army flag with the Iron Cross, her helmet decorated with an eagle. Because of the eagle, the figure may also be identified as Borussia, the personification of Prussia. Nowadays, she is a symbol of Berlin (Fig. 8) (and Berlin, in turn, is symbolic of German politics), while she also illustrates the weather forecast.

Last but not least, Victoria sometimes "abandons all restraint." In the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*'s advertisement (Fig. 9) for a book series, the goddess puts down her army flag, sits comfortably cross-legged, and reads *Magic Hoffmann*, a book by German author Jakob Arjouni, who critiques German society

Fig. 4 Michael Jackson as Archangel Michael with white wings and dressed in a suit of armour, in an advertisement by Taschen publishing company: The publisher uses David LaChapelle's picture of Michael Jackson, "Archangel Michael: And no message could have been any clearer" and an excerpt from the *Sunday Times Magazine*, London saying "[TASCHEN] books don't just break coffee tables, they also crash headlong through perceived barriers between high and low art." Source: TASCHEN-Advertisement. Photo by David LaChapelle

Fig. 5 Chattarpur Temple complex in Delhi, India. An almost life-sized winged, angelic statue is placed on a lotus-shaped pedestal atop a polygon, from where she welcomes devotees at the entrance to Baba Sant Nagpal Ji's mausoleum. The lifelike expression of the ethereal figure contrasts with her elaborate wings. She is dressed in a *sari*, wears a crown, and has a mark on her forehead. A scarf with a floral pattern waves behind her shoulders, recalling the iconography of *paris* or *apsaras*. Photo by Katharina Weiler, March 2010

after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The eagle joins Victoria in her reading while the sun rises in the east.

The advertisement alludes not only to former eastern Germany, but to a wider East which is suggested by the rising sun, the army flag that points towards the east, and the goddess of victory's comfortable, cross-legged position. She thus metamorphoses into a hybrid deity that adopts new forms and cultural practices.

Depending on context, artist, and audience, dynamic and culturally-productive practices receive, translate, mediate, and transform images of winged, angelic figures. The angel motif has become a universal image whose iconography and role is constantly being reinvented worldwide: more than ever, it soars in transcultural skies.

Fig. 6 A picture of “Archangel Michael and his ‘Vuvuzela’,” by a German journalist at Christuskirche in Mannheim, Germany, during the Football World Cup 2010. Source: *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* 146, 29 June 2010, 9

Fig. 7 Model Erin Heatherton as an angel with colorful wings made of balloons, walking for the lingerie and beauty label Victoria’s Secret. The picture was used to illustrate an article in the German daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The article was about strong reactions to a case involving breast implants and disrobement in the United States that became a controversial issue. Source: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19 January 2010. Photo by AFP

Deutscher Alltag

von **Kurt Kister**

Dieser Tage in Berlin, wo man die Pflicht des Frühstücksdirektordaseins mit dem Angenehmen des Gelegenheitsflaneurtums verbindet. Man läuft also durch jene Straßen, die vor gut einem Jahrzehnt widerhallten von den energischen Schritten des Basta-Kanzlers und seiner journalistischen Nachlatscher, zu denen man selbst in Glanz und Elend zählte. (Es war deutlich mehr Elend als Glanz.) Man beginnt also den Spaziergang am alten DDR-Staatsratsgebäude, das für eine Übergangszeit Schröders Kanzleramt war. An diesem Bau prangt immer noch jener aus dem Stadtschloss expropriierte Balkon, von dem aus Karl Liebknecht 1918 die sozialistische Republik ausgerufen hatte. In manchen der besonderen **Berliner Nächte** soll Gesine Lötzsch auf diesem Balkon stehen, weil sie erspähen will, ob möglicherweise einer der Wege zum Kommunismus durch die nur noch als Geist vorhandene Ruine des einst nahe gelegenen Palasts der Republik führt. Als Linkspartei-Chefin muss man schließlich ein besonderes Verhältnis zu Geistern pflegen.

Dann passiert man das Auswärtige Amt, in dem man Joschka Fischers Verkugelung ebenso erlebt hatte wie Steinmeiers Versuche, Interviews zu geben, die aus einer Aneinanderreihung von dreieinhalbminütigen Denkpausen bestanden. Das ist jetzt alles anders. Der gefühlsmäßig immer noch neue Außenminister ist schlank und Denkpausen schätzt er nicht so sehr.

Man strebt weiter, an so manchem Neubau vorbei, der da steht, wo man früher, als man noch rauchte, auf einer Bank saß und bei drei Zigaretten darüber nachdachte, ob die Alternative zu Schröder wirklich Merkel heißen könnte, gar sollte. Während man quer über den Gendarmenmarkt geht, fällt einem auf, dass heute die Alternative zu Merkel eigentlich nur Merkel heißen kann, weil es niemanden gibt, der Gelegenheitsfreunde von Stoiber über Steinmeier und Koch bis hin zu Westerwelle so effizient und zuvorkommend verschleißen kann wie eben Merkel. Wenn man überleben möchte, sollte man Merkel vielleicht lieber zur Feindin haben als zur Partnerin.

Foto: Rainer Jensen/dpa

Mit diesen Gedanken nähert man sich dem Ziel des Spaziergangs, dem Antiquariat am Gendarmenmarkt. Das ist ein Laden aus der Vor-Internet-Zeit und hoffentlich bleibt er das noch lange. Man ersteht ein rares Verzeichnis der Werke Sven Hedins, einen Alfred-Polgar-Sammelband von 1947 (mit Lizenz der US-Militärregierung) und ein Büchlein aus der Sammlung Insel, 1965 von Joachim Kaiser zum großen Thema „Hamlet, heute" herausgegeben. Das macht einen nahezu froh und man ist plötzlich dankbar dafür, dass es Berlin gibt.

Fig. 8 A picture of the bronze sculpture of Victoria that crowns the Berlin Victory Column and symbolises German war victories in the past illustrates an article about German political affairs. Source: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15/16 January 2011. Photo by Rainer Jensen/dpa

Fig. 9 In the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*'s advertisement for a book series, the goddess puts down her army flag, sits comfortably cross-legged, and reads *Magic Hoffmann*, a book by German author Jakob Arjouni, who critiques German society after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The eagle joins Victoria in her reading while the sun rises in the east. Source: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 May 2010