

DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI

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For the editor of the monumental *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions* (CISI) these must have been daily questions: what is the underlying concept behind a well-attested iconographic form? Can a religious idea known from texts of a different type and period nevertheless be held to inform the iconography of a particular class of objects, or is the specificity of the latter a mere shadow preceding or following the abstractness of the former? I became entangled in questions such as these when, reading Kaunḍinya's commentary on the Pāśupatasūtras, I tried to connect its concept of the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* with the class of sculptures that commonly goes by that name. I had long been an admirer of the work of Asko Parpola, an admirer of his vast learning that does not stay within the safe precincts of one or other strictly defined specialism. Transhumance leads to new departures. If one wishes to epitomize Asko Parpola's scholarship, this term may serve: "new departures". Sometimes these prove to be productive, sometimes less. But his work always leaves its reader with a wealth of material and new ideas, and therefore never fails to enrich the field of South Asian studies. As I will argue in the following pages, the 'figure in the southern direction' refers to an east-facing god who bestows his grace on the south. We turn respectfully to the north and honour the master whose eye is directed to the Orient.

THE PROBLEM

In the *Pratima-Kosha* (S. K. R. Rao 1990, s.v. "Dakṣiṇā-mūrti"), the enigmatic nature of this concept is succinctly stated.

It is one of the well-known and popular iconographic forms of Śiva, and it is usually seen in all Śiva temples of South India with any claim to architectural and sculptural distinction. Curiously, however, there is no legend or myth explaining the assumption of this form by Śiva. It appears to be no more than a translation in pictorial and plastic

language of the idea that Śiva is a great yogi, the very personification of liberating wisdom (jñāna) and an expounder of sciences to ascetics and sages.

The exact significance of the expression “Dakṣiṇā-mūrti” is obscure.

In order to trace the history of this concept we may turn to the first text in which a *dakṣiṇāmūrti* plays a significant role, the Pāśupatasūtra and its commentary.

KAUṆḌINYA AD PĀŚUPATASŪTRA 1.9

Translation

Question: “Whose consecrated garland (*nirmālya*) should one wear, or in whose sacred compound should one stay? And where should one stand in adoration?” The answer to this is:

TO MAHĀDEVA’S FIGURE IN THE SOUTHERN DIRECTION (1.9)

The word *mahā* in the Sūtra means superiority, superior to all souls. Superior means that He is exalted and different, (as) He is “seer and brahmin”, an “overlord” (PS 5.26, 44). Why He is superior and Sadaśiva we shall explain later. The word “deva” in the Sūtra derives from the root *div-* in the sense of ‘playing’,¹ because playing is His quality, like heat (is a quality of) fire. Playfully the Lord produces, favours, and causes to disappear the creation that is threefold, namely knowledge, cosmic elements (*kalā*) and souls. For it has been said:

He is not impelled by those who are impelled; being almighty He does what He wishes to do. The Lord plays with the world like a child with his toys.²

“Of °deva” is a genitive. The relation is one of owner and owned. It refers to possession. ‘In the southern direction’ in the Sūtra has the meaning of a division of space: the sun divides the quarters and the quarters divide the figure. “Figure” is either the form of God (*deva*) that is perceived/visualized in His proximity by one who is situated at His right side (*dakṣiṇe pārśve*) and who is facing north, a form that is characterized by the bull-banner, lance in hand, Nandin, Mahākāla, erect phallus, etc., or it is that which the laymen approach as “the sacred compound of Mahādeva”; there one should stand in adoration.

Because the figure in the southern direction is mentioned, the eastern, northern and western figures are precluded. And because the injunction concerns a figure/image, the special duty is lifted, if there is no figure/image; and also because it is said “owing to the uselessness of alms (obtained) from untouchables”.³

¹ Cf. Dhātupāṭha 4.1 (Böhtlingk 1887: 72*)

² Cf. MBh 3.31.36.

³ This seems to mean that the images of other deities will not do.

Prescriptions, namely, apply to matters that are taught; because bathing in ashes is taught, bathing in water etc. is precluded. Because the laying in ashes is taught, the laying in other things (?) is precluded. Because it is taught that one should stay within a sacred compound, staying elsewhere is precluded. Because laughter etc. is taught, other offerings are precluded. Because a consecrated garland is taught, garlands of freshly picked flowers are precluded. Because ashes and consecrated garlands are taught as the signs, other signs are precluded. Because Mahādeva is mentioned, devotion towards other deities is precluded. Because the figure in the southern direction is mentioned, the eastern and western figures are precluded. In this way the special duties of this brahmin that have earlier been recognized are precluded by (other) special duties, like a spike (is replaced by) a counter spike and stale water by fresh.⁴

Alternative translations

Before giving my interpretation of this text, here are the three other translations of the crucial passage in which Kauṇḍinya explains the word 'image' (*mūrti*).

Hara 1967: 185

'By IMAGE here is meant whatever a man sees to the southern side of God when he stands nearby facing north. The term includes the image of Śiva of the Bull Banner (*vṛṣadhvaja*), the statue [of Śiva] bearing a trident, the statue of the bull

⁴ R. A. Sastri edition (1940), pp. 14–15: *āha – kasya nirmālyam dhāryam | kasya vā āyatane vastavyam | kva copastheyam iti | tad ucyate – MAHĀDEVASYA DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTEḤ || 1.9 || atra mahān ity abhyadhikatve | sarvakṣetrajanānām abhyadhika utkṛṣṭo vyatiriktaś ca bhavātīty abhyadhikah | ṛṣir vipraḥ adhipatiḥ | sadāśivatvam abhyadhikatvaṃ ca pravakṣyāmaḥ | atra deva iti divu krīḍyāṃ krīḍādharmitvād agnyuṣṇatvavat | krīḍāvān eva bhagavān vidyākalāpaśuṣaṃjñākaṃ trividham api kāryam utpādayati anugṛhṇāti tirobhāvayati ca | uktaṃ hi – apracodyaḥ pracodyais tu kāmākārakaraḥ prabhuh | krīḍate bhagavān lokair bālah krīḍānakair iva || devasya iti ṣaṣṭī | svasvāmibhāvaḥ sambandhaḥ | pariḡrahārtham evādhikurute | atra dakṣiṇeti dikprativibhāge bhavati | ādityo diśo vibhajati | diśaś ca mūrtim vibhajanti | mūrtir mama yad etad devasya dakṣiṇe pārśve sthithenodanmukhenopānte yad rūpam upalabhyate vṛṣadhvajaśūlapāṇinandinandimahākālordhvaliṅgādilaḥṣaṇam yad vā laukikāḥ pratipadyante mahādevasyāyatanaṃ iti tatropastheyam | dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt pūrvotarapaścimānām mūrtinām pratiśedhaḥ | mūrtinīyogāc ca mūrtiyabhāve niyamalopaḥ | bhaiḥṣyānupayogān nirghātānām uktatvāc cety arthaḥ | vidhir ity upadiṣṭānām arthānām bhasmanānopadeśād apsu snānādinām pratiśedhaḥ | bhasmaśayanopadeśād viṣaya*śayanādinām pratiśedhaḥ | āyatane vasatyarthopadeśāc cheṣavasatyarthapraṭiśedhaḥ | hasitādyupadeśāc cheṣopahārapraṭiśedhaḥ | nirmālyopadeśāt pratyagrāṇām mālyānām pratiśedhaḥ | bhasmanirmālyaliṅgopadeśāc cheṣaliṅgapraṭiśedhaḥ | mahādevagrahaṇād anyadevatābhaktipraṭiśedhaḥ | dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt pūrvapaścimānām mūrtinām pratiśedhaḥ | evaṃ asya brāhmaṇasya pūrvaprasiddhā niyamā niyamaiḥ pratiśedhyante | kīlakapratikīlakavat pūrāṇodakanavodakavac ceti ||*

* viṣaya°: read kuśa°?

Nandin, the statue [of Śiva] in the form of Fate (*mahākāla*), the statue [of Śiva] with erect phallus, etc. Or, as the term is popularly understood, one should offer one's worship simply at a temple.'

Chakraborti 1970: 62

'The image here means that form which the Sādhaka, seated near on the right side of the Lord with his face turned north realises and which is characterised as Vṛṣadhvaja (the bull-symboled), as Śūlapāṇi (with trident in his hand), [as Nandin,] as Mahākāla and as Ūrdhva-līṅga (with penis raised up), etc. Or the people go to the temple of Mahādeva and so there the Sādhaka should worship.'

Oberhammer 1984, viii

'Götterbild (*mūrtiḥ*) ist jene Form (*rūpam*) des Gottes, die [vom Verehrer], der nach [Osten] schaut, auf der rechten (= südlichen) Seite [oder] in der Nähe [davon] wahrgenommen wird [und ikonographisch] beispielsweise durch das Emblem des Stieres (*vṛṣadhvaja*^o), den Spieß in der Hand (*śūlapāṇi*^o), den Nandi, den Mahākāla (*nandimahākāla*^o) und das aufgerichtete Glied gekennzeichnet ist (*ūrdhvalīṅgādīlakṣaṇam*).'

Commentary

Hara's translation of *devasya dakṣiṇe pārśve* as 'to the southern side of God' seems impossible, although, of course, the southern side is the right side, if we assume that God is facing east. The locative is depending on *sthitena* rather than on *upalabhyate*.

Chakraborti's translation seems to me basically correct. I agree with Chakraborti that Kauṇḍinya's first alternative is no description of a common, say "material" image. His translation, however, obscures the intrinsic identity of both types of *mūrtis*.

The two major flaws in Oberhammer's translation are that *udaṅmukhena* is rendered as 'nach [Osten] schaut', which is clearly impossible, and that *upānte* is separated from *dakṣiṇe pārśve* by the conjunction "[oder]". Oberhammer omits the second sub-clause.

Though Kauṇḍinya is silent on this point, I am inclined to take *dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* as a Karmadhāraya compound.⁵ The case of *mahādevasya* is a possessive genitive:

⁵ An interpretation that takes it as a Bahuvrīhi compound is defensible, though. The rendering by Hara ('Of the great God [conceived] in His southern image') and by Chakraborti ('On the right side of the image of Mahādeva') may both be right as far as the intention of the Sūtra is concerned, but they are interpretations rather than translations.

it expresses that the °mūrti is of Mahādeva; He is the Master who displays a part of Him, viz. His Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

In his explanation of the word figure/image (mūrti) Kauṇḍinya distinguishes between two positions: one is the proximity of God (*devasya ... upānte*) and the other one is the sacred compound (*āyatana*). Two questions arise: what is meant by “His proximity” and why “at His right side”?

To turn one’s right side upon someone is an auspicious act; in the case of God it is an act of grace. It happens to the blessed ones in His proximity, that is in heaven on the Himavat, and, as Kauṇḍinya suggests, to the Pāśupata in his *yoga* with God.

There is an enigmatic verse in the Mahābhārata that possibly expresses the same idea. It describes the setting of the circumambulation that the nymph Tilottamā makes of Śiva (and the other gods) in Brahmā’s palace; Śiva is said to face east (*prānmukha*), though his posture also seems to be qualified by the adverb *dakṣiṇena*.⁶ Since he is facing east, *dakṣiṇena* must mean that he is tending to the right side, where the gods who turn to the north, i.e. to Him, are seated.⁷ It has to be admitted, though, that the verse remains problematic.⁸

Irrespective of whether or not the same idea underlies Mahābhārata 1.203.21, the Pāśupata ‘figure in the southern direction’ is to be conceived as the quarter that God displays, that is the form to which He gracefully grants access, i.e. *yoga*. In spite of the use of the word *mukha*, used here in a figurative sense, I think the Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.21 expresses this very idea:

“Unborn is He,” so saying, Let a man in fear approach Him: O Rudra [show] thy right [auspicious] cheek, Protect me with it ever!⁹

The picture described in Kauṇḍinya’s first situation (and possibly in MBh 1.203.21, see above) is of a god who is facing towards the east, but who confers his blessings – his auspicious, i.e. “right/southern”, side – on his inferiors, be they gods, siddhas, or worshippers in Bhāratavarṣa.

⁶ To judge by the critical apparatus the text of MBh 1.203.21 is certain:

prānmukho bhagavān āste dakṣiṇena maheśvaraḥ |
devāś caivottareṇāsan sarvatas tv ṛṣayo ’bhavan ||

A tentative translation runs: ‘Lord Maheśvara sits facing east,[tending] to the right / towards the south; the gods sit [turned] towards the north; the seers are all around.’

⁷ The adverbial *dakṣiṇena* is equivalent to *dakṣiṇā*, which is the OIA instrumental in *ā* preserved in some adverbs (Wackernagel 1930, III, § 41b). The instrumental means a direction rather than a location, ‘towards the South’ rather than ‘in the South’.

⁸ I am grateful to Phyllis Granoff whose observations have helped me to qualify my position.

⁹ Svet. Up. 4.21 (transl. by R. C. Zaehner [in Goodall 1996: 197]): *ajāta ity evaṃ kaścid bhīruḥ prapadyate | rudra yat te dakṣiṇaṃ mukhaṃ tena māṃ pāhi nityam.*

Similarly, His sacred compound (*āyatana*) is His benevolent epiphany, metaphorically speaking, His ‘figure in the southern direction’. In this way the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* continues the Ṛgvedic idea that the supreme deity manifests only one fourth of himself.¹⁰ The celestial or visualized scene envisages Mahādeva with his acolytes Nandin and Mahākāla, the bull-banner etc., in short, a “tableau de la troupe”. The image in the sacred compound is not defined. If our interpretation is correct, it may be any image, iconic or aniconic, in the Pāśupata context conceived metaphorically as Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Thus it is said in the Ratnaṭikā at Gaṇakārikā 7 (p. 18) that the Pāśupata should consecrate the ashes with mantras in the temple ‘at the southern image of Śiva’ (*śivadakṣiṇāmūrtau*);¹¹ or, as is said in the Skandapurāṇa, one should offer rice pudding with ghee to the southern image during one year in order to become like Nandin.¹² In many cases what is referred to as *dakṣiṇāmūrti* may have been a *liṅga*.¹³

The idea lying behind this figure/image is different from and probably older than the iconographic concept that defines the southern face of Śiva as terrifying (*raudra*, *ugra*).¹⁴ The ‘figure in the southern direction’ originally had nothing to do with a face of God taken literally; His face is turned towards the east (*prāṇimukha*). When Tilottamā makes her *pradakṣiṇa* around Maheśvara thus seated, three other faces appear, among them a southern one that is only characterized by its long lashes (*añcitapakṣmānta*, MBh 1.203.23). Soon, however, for instance in MBh 13.128.3–8, where we find a reprise of the Tilottamā myth, the original idea was lost; Maheśvara is no longer described as turning his right side, but instead the southern face provoked by Tilottamā’s beauty is said to be *raudra* (MBh 13.128.6). After Kauṇḍinya, and not really helped by his esoteric explanation of the ‘figure in the southern direction’, Śaiva authors tried to synthesize both concepts.

¹⁰ RV 10.90.3–4:

etāvān asya mahimāto jyāyāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ |
pādo 'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divī ||
tripād ūrdhvā úd ait pūruṣaḥ pādo 'syehābhavat pūnaḥ |
tāto viśvān vyakrāmat sāsanānaśané abhī ||.

¹¹ Cf. Kauṇḍinya ad PS 1.1, quoted below in note 20.

¹² SP 27.31 (= SP_{Bh} 27.31):

dakṣiṇāyāṃ tu yo mūrtau pāyasaṃ saghṛtaṃ śubhe |
nivedayed varṣam ekaṃ sa ca nandīśamo bhavet ||

¹³ See, for instance, Saurapurāṇa 5.11–13: *yayau viśveśvaraṃ draṣṭum jyotirlingam anāmayam |*
saṃpūjya sarvabhāvena daṇḍavat praṇipatya ca || devasya dakṣiṇāmūrtau upaviśya mahā-
muniḥ | paśyan viśveśvaraṃ liṅgaṃ japan vai śatarudriyam || kṣaṇād liṅgāt paraṃ jyotir-
āvirbhūtaṃ nirañjanam | sūkṣmāt sūkṣmaṃ ca paramam ānandaṃ tamasah param. Cf.
Śivapurāṇa, Vāyāvīyasamhitā 33.15–17ab.

¹⁴ Cf. Svet. Up. 4.21 quoted above in note 9.

THE DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI AND INITIATION

The original meaning of the idea of ‘the figure in the southern direction’ seems at first to be endorsed by Kṣemarāja, when commenting on the Svacchandatantra 3.129.¹⁵ He glosses *dakṣiṇām mūrtim*, the figure towards which the neophyte is led in the ceremony of the *samayadīkṣā*, as: “‘southern’, i.e. favourable, purely of the nature of Śiva, but not consisting of a body that conforms to a bounded soul’.¹⁶ The neophyte, the Svacchanda continues, is seated with ‘his face turned north’ (*udaṇmukham*),¹⁷ which – and then both concepts become intertwined – according to Kṣemarāja implies that he is directed towards Aghora.¹⁸ The guru, representing Śiva, is said to face east.¹⁹

The Svacchanda, its commentary, and the Śaiva Siddhānta texts presented above show that the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* is primarily that form of God to which the

¹⁵ SvT 3.129: *kṛtakṛtyaḥ prahrṣṭātmā prahrṣṭanayanam śiśum | utthāpya hastāt saṃgrhya dakṣiṇām mūrtim ānayet*. Cf. MṛĀ Kṛ. 7.61.

¹⁶ Kṣemarāja ad SvT 3.129d (I, p. 212): *dakṣiṇām anukūlam śivātmikām eva, na tu pāśavīm dehamayim*. Cf. SvT 4.496 (*sādhakābhīṣeka*) and SvT 4.468–469 dealing with the *ācāryābhīṣeka*: *kramād dhyātvā kalaṣeṣu ācāryaḥ susamāhitaḥ | abhiṣikto 'nyāvasas tu paridhāpyācamet tataḥ || praviśya dakṣiṇām mūrtim yogapīṭham prakalpayet | saṃsthāpya sakalikṛtya adhikāram prakalpayet*. Cf. MṛĀ Kṛ. 8.198–202ab; Somaśambhupaddhati (SŚP) III.6.16. Brunner’s translation of MṛĀ Kṛ. 200b (*dakṣiṇasyām tanau*) with ‘face à la forme du Dieu qui regarde vers le Sud’ (italics mine) seems to be mistaken, because Śiva, just as the *ācārya* who represents Him, looks east (*prāṇmukhaḥ*). This is also clearly implied in SŚP III.6.16, where Brunner correctly interprets that ‘il (i.e. the guru) ... le (i.e. the disciple) fait asseoir à droite de Śiva’ (*niveśya śivadakṣiṇe*). Note also that Nārāyaṇakantha glosses (*devasya dakṣiṇasyām*) *tanau* simply by *mūrtau*, ‘at the image’. Taking Kṣemarāja’s conformity for an identity (see below note 18), Brunner equates the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* with Aghora and accordingly interprets *anukūlam* as ‘not-terrifying’: “le guru amène le disciple ‘devant’ la Forme du Sud, Aghora. Il le ‘présente’ à Dieu, s’assurant ainsi qu’Aghora étendra sa protection sur lui, qu’il sera vraiment pour lui *a-ghora*, favorable.” (SŚP III, p. 482.)

¹⁷ SvT 3.130: *tatra maṇḍalakaṃ kṛtvā puṣpeṇa praṇavāsanam | tasyopari śiśum nyasya ūrdhvakāyam udaṇmukham*. Cf. MṛĀ Kṛ. 7.62, where the pupil is said to be *saumya-vadanaṃ*, which is glossed by Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇakanṭha as *udaṇmukhaṃ*; or MṛĀ Kṛ. 8.200d.

¹⁸ Kṣemarāja ad SvT 3.130 (I, p. 212): *śrīmadaghorabhaṭṭārakasamṃmukham*. Similarly in his commentary on Svacchanda 2.29ab, where it is said that the worshipper ‘sits on a throne made of the syllable *om*, at the southern figure’ (*dakṣiṇāyām tato mūrtau praṇavāsanasaṃsthitāḥ*), Kṣemarāja comments (I, p. 17): “‘southern’, because this conforms to the direction of the face of Aghora, who burns the [prior] division (i.e. duality) in its entirety, in the performance of the ritual practice of the southern stream’ (*dakṣiṇāyām iti dakṣiṇa-sroto’ nuṣṭhānapravṛttau samastabhedaploṣakāghoravaktrasaṃmukhatvasyānurūpyāt*).

¹⁹ SvT 3.131ab: *guruḥ pūrvānanaḥ sthītvā prokṣanādīni kārayet*. Cf. MṛĀ Kṛ. 7.62, 8.200d. The guru impersonates Śiva; our interpretation explains why the guru is facing eastwards (and therefore does not “face” the north-facing neophyte), a fact that is repeated with remarkable consistency. If Śiva in His *dakṣiṇāmūrti* would face south and thus “face” the neophyte, why should the terrestrial guru not do so?

disciple is conducted by the *ācārya* in rites of passage, initiation or *dīkṣā*. This form (*rūpa*) is the subject of Kauṇḍinya's first sub-clause explaining the word *mūrti*; to that form the laymen (*laukikas*) have no access. That the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* for Kauṇḍinya is also connected with a rite of passage clearly follows from his explanation of the future tense used in the first Sūtra (*vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*, 'we shall expound'), which runs as follows:

'Shall' (*syā*) refers to the time required, namely the time that is required [before the exposition can begin] by the *ācārya* to consecrate a brahmin, who has started the fasting observance, in front of the southern figure/image with ashes that are consecrated with the [five] mantras "Sadyojāta" etc., and [then] to initiate him in the mantra, after he has made him discard the signs of his origin – a brahmin whose [antecedents] have earlier been screened, as follows from the word 'therefore' (*ataḥ*) in the Sūtra, and who comes [to him] from amongst the householders etc.²⁰

The Ratnaṭīkā, commenting on Gaṇakārikā 5, in which the elements of the initiation are summed up the (right) materials, the (right) time, the ritual (of consecration), the image (*mūrti*), and the preceptor (*guru*)²¹ – confirms this role of the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* in the consecration (*saṃskāra*) ritual. It reads:

The word image (*mūrti*) in the Kārikā refers to the spot a little to the right/south of that which [by Kauṇḍinya] in [his commentary of] the "Sūtra on offering" (i.e. PS 1.8–9) is described as the focus of worship of Mahādeva being characterized by the erect phallus etc. – a spot (not?) screened from view by a hut or the like.²²

The *mūrti* is here defined as the spot of consecration, where the pupil will be granted access to the focus of worship (*ījyāsthāna*), i.e. Mahādeva. Celestial and terrestrial epiphany coincide: on the one hand the neophyte, by means of the mantra and instruction he is given, will have a vision of God in his *dakṣiṇāmūrti* as described by Kauṇḍinya, with erect phallus etc. – the celestial (Himālayan) scene – while God, on the other hand, is present in the physical object of worship within the

²⁰ Kauṇḍinya ad PS 1.1 (p. 8): *syā ity eṣye kāle | yāvad ayam ācāryo gr̥hasthādibhyo 'bhyā-gataṃ pūrvam ataḥśabdāt parīkṣitaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vratopavāsādyam* mahādevasya dakṣiṇasyāṃ mūrtau sadyojātādīsaṃskṛtena bhasmanā saṃskaroti utpattiliṅgavyāvṛttiṃ kṛtvā mantrasrāvaṇaṃ ca karoti tāvad eṣyaḥ kālaḥ kriyate. * °ādyaṃ: read °ādhyam?*

²¹ Gaṇakārikā 5cd: *dravyaṃ kālaḥ kriyā mūrtir guruś caiveha pañcamaḥ.*

²² Bhāsarvajña (?) ad Gaṇakārikā 5c (p. 9): *mūrtīśabdena yad upahārasūtre mahādevejyāsthānam ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇaṃ vyākhyātaṃ tatsamīpadakṣiṇabhūpradeśaḥ kuṭīkavyavahito 'trābhīpretaḥ.* It is not clear to me what exactly is meant by *kuṭī/kuṭī* in this context. I cannot subscribe to Oberhammer's translation which makes °*sthānaṃ* the subject of *abhipretaḥ* (Oberhammer 1984: viii: 'Mit dem Wort *mūrtiḥ*, das im Verehrungssūtram [vorkommt], wird der große Gott als [sichtbares] Object der Verehrung (*mahādevejyāsthānam*) genannt, das [ikonographisch] durch das aufgerichtete Glied gekennzeichnet ist (*ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇam*'). The commentator's cautious wording seems to me on the other hand a sign that he carefully tried to avoid saying that the *mūrti* meant here is a sculpture that has the actual iconographic characteristics of *ūrdhvaliṅgādi*.

sacred compound (*āyatana*), to the right/south of which the neophyte is placed by the guru.

This interpretation is corroborated by the *Ṭīkā*'s description of the daily worship of the initiated Pāśupata, who, after his bath in ashes,

enters slowly the sanctum. Then he falls to his knees on a spot to the south/right side of the image, makes an *añjali* before his heart, and looks at Śiva in the image as if He were there in His very person,

and this means that,

he, fully concentrated and with his head turned towards the north, practises *japa* with the aim of that (*viśeṣa*) detachment from the sensual world, after which *japa* he sinks into meditation on Śiva; only then (according to the commentator himself) should he burst into repeated boisterous laughter.²³

The terrestrial situation is made to reflect the celestial model, that is, the Pāśupata *sādhaka*, after having been initiated and instructed, visualizes the archetypal Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the material cult object, regardless of the appearance of this object, and presents his offerings, laughter etc., to this archetype.

From this and Kauṇḍinya's description of Kuśika's initiation by Lakulīśa in his Introduction to PS 1.1 and his explanation of the future tense in this first Sūtra we may reconstruct the following procedure for the initiation in the Pāśupata order.

1) The pupil approaches the preceptor and, after he has identified himself, asks for help to end his suffering. 2) The preceptor investigates the antecedents of the pupil (*parikṣā*). 3) When he has satisfied himself that the pupil is qualified (*adhikṛta*), the preceptor promises to expound to him the Pāśupata doctrine (*pratijñā*, PS 1.1). 4) The pupil begins his fasting observance (*upavāsa*). 5) The guru leads the neophyte to a spot on the right (southern) side of the image (cult object) and places him so that he looks to the north; the guru's seat is right next to him. 6) The preceptor, who faces east, anoints the neophyte with ashes, hereby replacing the signs (*liṅga*) belonging to the earlier status by that of the Pāśupata (*saṃskāra*). 7) The preceptor instructs the neophyte in the mantra (*śrāvāṇa*). 8) The preceptor starts his exposition (while facing east) (*vyākhyāna*, PS 1.2ff.).

The future tense in the first Sūtra spans the time between items 3) and 8). In this ceremony the *ācārya* represents Mahādeva, who, in the figure of Lakulīśa, was the first to expound the Pāśupatasūtras; in other words, the preceptor impersonates

²³ Bhāsarvajña (?) ad Gaṇakārikā 7 (p. 18): ... *śanair garbhagrhaṃ praviśet | tad anu mūrtidakṣiṇe bhūpradeśe jānūnī pātayitvā hṛdi cāñjaliṃ baddhvā mūrtisthaṃ sākṣād iva śiva(ṃ) paśyan ... saṃyatātmanottarābhimukhena pratyāhāraviśeṣārthaṃ japtavyaṃ japtvā tu śivadhyanāsakta evāṭṭahāsaṃ punaḥ punaḥ kuryāt*. The commentator rejects the view of some (*ity eke*) who say that he may burst into boisterous laughter as soon as he arrives at the temple, before he has realized the detachment (*yady anivṛttapratyāhāras tadā gatamātra eva hasitaṃ kuryād ity eke*).

the *dakṣiṇāmūrti*. From the above it follows that the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* is directly associated with Śiva in His role of teacher. In this theology it is through instruction into His real nature that Śiva gracefully grants access to Himself, i.e. grants *yoga*. The iconography of the so-called *dakṣiṇāmūrti* images evolves from this ancient idea.

THE ICONOGRAPHIC DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI

Among the earliest texts that describe the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* in iconographic terms may be the two Upajāti verses that are quoted by Gopinatha Rao, which he ascribed to the Visnudharmottarapurāṇa, but which are not found in the printed text of that name.

His right [lower] hand shows the [*jñāna*] *mudrā* and in his [right] upper [hand] he [holds] a white rosary; in his left [lower hand] he is holding a book comprising all the Āgamas and more, and with his upper [left hand] he holds the cup with nectar; he is seated on a white lotus, his colour is white, powerful, with white cloth and ointment, and crowned by the crescent, teaching knowledge to the sages: that is what they call his *dakṣiṇā-mūrti*.²⁴

On this and other predominantly late South Indian texts Rao based his description, which was repeated without any significant change by almost all later Indologist writing on this subject. To substantiate his view Rao wrote,

One account gives an explanation regarding the etymology of this name; it states that because Śiva was seated **facing** south when he taught the *ṛishis yōga* and *jñāna* he came to be known as Dakṣiṇā-mūrti. This aspect of Śiva is always invoked by students of science and arts. (G. T. A. Rao 1914, II.1: 273; bold face mine.)

Unfortunately, however, we are not informed about this “account”,²⁵ but Rao, without any doubt, was following an Indian iconographic convention, which prescribes

that in all Hindu temples, both Śaiva and Vaishṇava, the niche on the south wall of the central shrine should have the figure of Dakṣiṇā-mūrti enshrined in it (G. T. A. Rao 1914, II.1: 273).

Bruce Long, who devoted an article to the subject, relied heavily on Rao, but he put his finger on the problem, when he professed that he was puzzled,

²⁴ G. T. A. Rao 1914, II.2, Appendix B, p. 140: *dakṣeṇa mudrāṃ pratipādayantaṃ sitākṣa-sūtraṃ ca tathordhvabhāge | vāme ca pustāṃ akhilāgamādyāṃ bibhrāṇam ūrdhvena sudhā-dharaṃ ca || sitāmbujasthaṃ sitavarṇam īśaṃ sitāmbarālepanam indumaulim | jñānaṃ munibhyaḥ pratipādayantaṃ taṃ dakṣiṇāmūrtim udāharanti*. Cf. Mayamata 36.98–101.

²⁵ I could not find this “account” in the texts at issue presented in Rao’s Appendix B (II.2, pp. 137–146).

as to why the southern direction, which is believed almost everywhere in India to be sinister and inauspicious, should in this instance be evaluated as auspicious and benign (Long 1971: 69).

It is not beyond reason that we explain this curiously positive evaluation of the southern direction on the basis of the same religious principle by which the Furies in Greece came to be called the 'Eumenides,' and Rudra, the ferocious Howler, came to be addressed as Śiva, the Auspicious. Perhaps the worshippers of Śiva hoped that by having the Divine Preceptor face the southern direction, that area would, thereby, lose its sinister qualities and become benign. (Long 1971: 69, n. 1.)

Though I shall not deny that considerations such as the above may have played some role, at least in coming to terms with the apparent incongruity once established, it is important to recognize that, if they played a role, they did so in retrospect. The cause of the alleged incongruity, I would like to argue, is a break in the tradition, which prompted the misunderstanding. A cult concept was transposed to iconography. Part of the original meaning was retained, however – Śiva as the initiator of knowledge – but part of it was misunderstood, namely the direction God faces when expounding his wisdom: his "right side" became his "south face". The southern temple walls were consequently thought most suitable for showing images of Śiva in his role of teacher. Thus the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* entered the textbooks of Indian Architecture, for instance the *Mayamata*, which distributed over two quarters the original 'figure in the southern direction', which, apart from the ithyphallic Śiva himself, comprised Nandin and Mahākāla.

A chacun des piliers des temples il faut disposer aux points cardinaux des (images des) dieux. Au rez-de-chaussée on place à l'Est les deux gardiens de la porte, Nandi et Kāla; au Sud c'est la Dakṣiṇāmūrti, à l'Ouest Acyuta ou Liṅgasambhūta et au Nord Pitāmaha.²⁶

The iconographic interpretation of the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* seems to be almost exclusively a South Indian tradition,²⁷ though the confusion between the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* and Śiva's southern Aghora face was, as we noted above, also found in the Kashmirian Śaiva tradition. The question is whether the translation of the cult concept into an iconographic category actually took place in the South or whether this iconographic convention was established earlier and continued in the South. Put differently, the question is whether it is justified to dub North Indian images of the first millennium that show Śiva in frontal sitting position as "Dakṣiṇāmūrti". Gerd Kreisel was well aware of the questionable nature of this designation when he observed:

²⁶ *Mayamata* 19.39–40 (transl. by Bruno Dagens): *tale tale vimānānām dikṣu devān nyaset kramāt | pūrvāyām dvārapālau tu nandikālau ca vinyaset || dakṣiṇe dakṣiṇāmūrtiṃ paścime 'cyutam eva hi | athavā liṅgasambhūtam uttare tu pitāmaham.*

²⁷ Kreisel (1986: 134, n. 371) speaks of a "speziell der späteren südindischen Ikonographie Śivas zugehörigen Kategorie".

Parallel zu der gesondert zu behandelnden kanonischen Lakulīśafigur entwickelt sich in der Nachfolge der Sitzfigur von Nand in der Guptazeit die einköpfige Einzeldarstellung Śivas in Sitzhaltung. Die drei erhaltenen Werke der Mathura-Kunst unterscheiden sich in ihrem jeweiligen Charakter – weniger in den Details –, so daß es schwerfällt, sie unter einem kategorialen Begriff – etwa Dakṣiṇāmūrti – zu subsumieren. (Kreisel 1986: 134.)

To solve this question would go beyond the scope of the present essay, which only aims at showing the origin and development of the idea. The historical assessment of the iconographic category of the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* and its implementation in Indian art remains a task for future research.²⁸

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²⁸ The author is grateful to Prof Dr Phyllis Granoff and Dr Harunaga Isaacson for their comments on a draft of this article.

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