SVETOVID AND ŚIVA

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This paper will examine possible connections between the Sanskritic and the Slavic worlds. The connections will be sketched based on new evidence from Sogdia regarding representations of Maheshvara and the Goddess for this region served as the mediator between the two worlds. It will also consider the representation of Svetovid, the pan-Slavic god with four faces, that has interesting parallels with Maheshvara and Brahma with correspondence in the four colors of white, red, black, and green/gold.

Key words: Sanskritic world; Slavic world; Maheshvara; Svetovid; colors; iconography.

СВЕТОВИД И ШИВА

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Настоящая работа исследует возможные связи между санскритским и славянским мирами. Наличие возможной связей предполагается на основе новых свидетельств из Согда относительно представлений ох Махешваре. Богиня этой страны служила здесь посредником между двумя указанными мирами. Также рассмотрено представление о Световиде, общеславянском боге с четырьмя лицами, у которого есть интересные параллели с Махешварой и Брахмой, в том числе в рамках структуры, образованной четырьмя цветами: белым, красным, черным, и зеленым/золотым.

Ключевые слова: санскритский мир; славянский мир; Махешвара; Световид; цвета; иконография.

INTRODUCTION

The parallels in art and mythology in Indo-European societies for widely separated regions that do not belong to the same sub-family are normally seen through the lens of linguistics and the supposed ancient shared past for the entire family [1]. In the case of the Slavic world and India, the Balto-Slavic and Indo-Iranian language families are geographically next to each other and therefore for cultural factors not shared with Germanic, Italic or Celtic families, one should look for evidence of cultural transmission. We have considerable evidence of interaction via the Śaka (Scythian) (Greek: Σάκαι, Sákai) intermediaries who inhabited the Eurasian Steppe called Uttarakuru both by Indians and the Greeks. Indian texts remember Uttarakuru

as a borderland of their cultural world [2] and Megasthenes and Strabo both mention the Uttarakuru as a land associated with the Indians.

The Śaka were multi-ethnic. Herodotus (1.201, 1.204.1) says that one tribe of the Śaka consisted of the Getae and Massagetae (cognate with Skt.: Jaṭa and Mahājaṭa) and it was settled somewhere in the great plains to the east of the Caspian Sea. Ptolemy's Geography 6.10.2 sees them much further south near Kashmir. Many scholars believe that the Getae mentioned amongst the Śaka are the Jaṭs who are found in very large concentration in India's northwestern states. There is no linguistic evidence suggesting they are an intrusive group in India.

The Śaka could have carried different cultural innovations in either direction. A most striking example of this are the figures on the Gundestrup Cauldron found in a bog in Denmark and dated to about 150 BCE that are clearly of an Indic origin: the Goddess being adored by two elephants (which is out of place in Europe), and the meditating figure in a pose that is nearly identical to the famed Paśupati seal of the Harappan culture [3]. It is generally believed that Thracian silversmiths most likely connected to the Śaka (and therefore plausibly in knowledge of the Indian art tradition) were responsible for its creation.

Multifaced images and multiple hands of divinities are a unique characteristic of Indian art [4; 5]. This multiplicity serves the function of communicating abstract qualities and also marks them apart from humans. The qualities in the Vedic tradition often come as triads (the Vedas call themselves trayī-vidyā, triple knowledge) and pentads (to generalize to elements and senses). Multiple faces denote transcendent divinity as in Brahmā's four heads, or Krishna's innumerable heads in the universal form that is revealed in the Bhagavad Gītā. There are also images of the fusing of Śiva and Viṣṇu (Harihara) and Śiva and the Goddess (Ardhanāriśvara). In Atharvaveda 10.7, the cosmic pillar Skambha, without beginning or end, reaches into the heavens. The liṅga of Śiva is the iconic form of this Skambha. A Shaivite legend speaks of both Viṣṇu and Brahmā going in search of the ends of this column of fire. As Consciousness in which we perceive reality, Śiva is the Axis Mundi of the Universe. His symbolic abode is in Kailās, a mountain peak in the Himalayas (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Path to Kailas, painting by Nicholas Roerich, 1931

Śiva's symbol is Triśūla, trident, that represents trinities such as creation, maintenance, and destruction; past, present, and future; body, mind and atman. In an expansion beyond the three, Śiva is associated with five heads and they are 1) Sadyojāta, 2) Vāmadeva, 3) Aghora, 4) Tatpuruṣa and 5) Īśāna that refer to specific powers of Śiva (Pañcabrahmas) corresponding the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ākāśa) and other pentads (tab. 1). It should be noted that pentads are also expressed in other Indian traditions: in the Śākta tradition they are: 1) Brahmā, 2) Viṣṇu, 3) Rudra, 4) Īśvara, and 5) Sadāśiva, and the Great Goddess Lalitā is called Pañcabrahma-svarūpiṇī; in the Vaishnava Āgamas (Pāñcarātra), they are named: 1) Vāsudeva, 2) Saṅkarṣaṇa, 3) Pradyumna, 4) Aniruddha and 5) Nārāyaṇa.
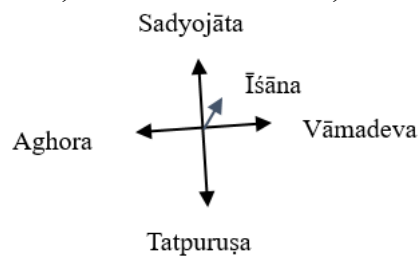
Tab. 1. Five faces of Śiva (Īśāna, points upwards)

A common representation of these five heads is as separate faces in the cardinal directions with the fifth above them pointing upwards. The mukhaliṅga representation has four faces on the liṅga with the fifth assumed to be the shaft itself.

Turning to the Slavs, we note that there is no first-hand account of their religion or mythology. The earliest reference is by the 6th century Byzantine historian Procopius, according to whom the Slavs worshipped a deity of lightning and thunder that may be deduced to be Perun (Skt. Parjanya). Later

accounts include the Slavic Primary Chronicle compiled at the beginning of the 12th century when the Western Slavs were forcibly converted to Christianity. The Chronica Slavorum, written in the late 12th century by Helmold, a Saxon priest and historian, mentions Zerneboh (Chernobog), goddess Živa, god Porenut, and other unnamed gods whose images had multiple heads. The three-headed Triglav [6] and, the four-headed Svetovid [7] were the most important of the Slavic deities. Like Śiva, both Triglav and Svetovid were seen as conceptualization of the axis mundi, and Helmold described Svetovid as *deus deorum* (god of gods).

In this article, we present evidence that the four-faced mukhaliṅga image was the prototype of the four-faced Svetovid image. Several parallels are adduced that include the sequence of the divinities on the images, and the way Svetovid was worshiped in its sanctuary. It is also noted that the Slavic color for Svetovid's eastern face is green, whereas for Śiva the corresponding color is golden, as is appropriate for the dawning golden Sun. It is proposed that this switch occurred since Sanskrit uses a single word *hari* for green and golden (yellow).

ŚIVA-MAHEŚAMURTI

There is simplification of the five-headed Śiva in three-headed Maheśamūrti, where most often either Sadyojāta or Tatpuruṣa is assumed to be behind the image [8]. In this representation, the middle head most often is that of Tatpuruṣa as the form in which Śiva is concealed, flanked by Vāmadeva on the left, and Aghora (in a frightening form) on the right. Sadyojāta or Tatpuruṣa and the other two Vāmadeva, and Aghora are thus a form of the Puranic trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa (tab. 2).

Tab. 2. The five faces of Śiva

	Sadyojāta	Aghora	Vāmadeva	Tatpuruṣa	Īśāna
Direction	West	South	North	East	Upwards
Color	white	black	red	gold	crystal
Element	*pṛthvi*, earth	*tejas*, fire	*āpaḥ*, waters	*vāyu*, air	*ākāśa*
pañcakṛtyas, five-fold acts	creation	dissolution	maintenance	delusion, concealment	grace, unveiling
Śiva's form	Brahmā	Rudra	Viṣṇu	Maheśvara	Sadāśiva

The four faces may be listed in a cyclic manner which deviates from the listing of the first four mahābhūtas in that fire and waters are switched (tab. 3). This switching may be seen as caused by the working of the higher tattvas. In the Maheśamūrti, fire and water flank earth or air.

Tab. 3. The four faces in a cycle

Sadyojāta	Aghora	Vāmadeva	Tatpuruṣa

The spread of Śiva-Maheśamūrti of three heads from its Indian origin into Central Asia and China is well documented [e.g. 9; 10], and scholars link this to the popularity of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect. Perhaps the spread was also facilitated by the creativity of thought in the Shaivite tradition that led to the flowering of diverse arts and sciences [11]. Indeed, Shaivism, as a theory of consciousness, continues to exercise powerful influence in contemporary thought.

The Maheśamūrti images is seen in the Elephanta and Ellora caves and in sculpture all across India [12]. Beyond the borders of India, the image went to Khotan, and finally reached eastern China [10]. The first representations of it are found at Yungang (5th century CE), and Khotan (6th-8th century CE). Maheśvara was assimilated in Buddhism in Tarim Basin, China and in Sogdia presumably to deal with its popularity [13], and this was happening back in India as well. Thus in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, the sun and moon are said to be born from Avalokiteśvara's eyes, Śiva from the brow, Brahmā from the shoulders, Nārāyaṇa from the heart, and Sarasvatī from the teeth. Three- or four-faced Maheśvara images have been found in Chinese caves. It is believed that philosophers Asaṅga and Āryadeva tried to amalgamate Shaivism and Vaishnavism with Buddhism.

The Kuṣāṇa coins (2nd century CE) shown below provide early examples of the Maheśamūrti image. In the image on the left, Śiva's bull Nandi is included (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Kuṣāṇa coins with the Maheśamūrti image (2nd century)

Figure 3 presents a standing Maheśamūrti image (9th century) with feet missing from Kashmir made of green stone from the British Museum (fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Maheśamūrti image from Kashmir in which the Aghora and the Vāmadeva faces are clearly seen

Śiva-Maheśamūrti sculptures are found in India from the beginning of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty until the 10th century CE. They are analogous to the Trimūrti, the Puranic Triad comprised of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. They represent a fully manifested Supreme Śiva endowed with the powers of creation, protection and destruction; the five-headed Śiva image is Sadāśiva, while the three-headed one is Maheśamūrti (fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Śiva-Maheśamūrti in China

In the Maheśamūrti image, Sadyojāta, the generative aspect of Śiva, and Tatpuruṣa, the concealed form within beings, are always portrayed with a meditating expression, Vāmadeva has the role of sustenance and may be shown in a feminine appearance, while Aghora represents the concept of destruction and is usually depicted in the form of a ferocious Yakṣa (e.g. Figure 3). The disposition of the faces changes according to the sect, or varies depending on the ritual. It could be either Tatpuruṣa (center), Vāmadeva (left) and Aghora (right), or Sadyojāta (center), Aghora (left), and Vāmadeva (right). The arms of the figure may be holding objects such as a skull, a snake, a pomegranate, a rosary, a lotus and a mirror.

MUKHALINGA

The iconography and making of the mukhaliṅga is prescribed in the Āgamas and the Tantras. The shaft of the mukhaliṅga has three equal parts: the lowest part of the liṅga, which is a square platform, is called the Brahmā-bhaga, the middle section with a pedestal or pītha is called the Viṣṇu-bhaga, and the topmost part with a rounded tip is called the Rudra-bhaga. This is quite consistent with the inner and outer cosmoses of the Vedic conception with the three levels of the earth, atmosphere, and the heavens, which is mirrored in the Tantric conception of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra *granthis* (knots) that are to be seen in the body from bottom up (fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Four-faced mukhaliṅga from Nepal, Asian Arts Museum

If the garbhagṛha has only one door, then the liṅga should have only one face on the front (eka-mukhaliṅga), in case of two doors, it should have two faces - front and back - facing the doors in the east and the west; In case of three doors, the liṅga should have three faces, except in the west. When the shrine has four doors, the liṅga may have four or five faces.

The eka-mukhaliṅga has hair piled on the head like a bun, and longer hair flow over his shoulders, earrings and a necklace and the crescent moon on his head and the third eye on the forehead. The faces of Śiva are carved generally from the ear onwards, emerging from the liṅga (fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Caturmukha Mahādeva Temple, Madhya Pradesh. Caturmukha Liṅga. 8th century, ANU

SLAVIC DEITIES

According to historians, the supreme divinity amongst the Slavs was known as *Deivos* (cognate with Sanskrit *Dyaus*), and later it was represented as *Rod* (Sanskrit *Rudra* (?)). From this One, emerged *Belobog* (White God, Sanskrit *Bala-bhag*) and *Chernobog* (Black God, Sanskrit *Kṛṣṇa-bhag* (?)) from which arise the heavenly-masculine and the earthly-feminine deities.

The Slavs held on tenaciously to their beliefs until Christianity was violently imposed on them through the Northern Crusades. Christian chroniclers report that they regularly relapsed into their original religion (*relapsi sunt denuo ad paganismus*), and popular resistance was led by *volkhvs*, the priests of the old religion. This resistance gave rise to what has been called *whimsical syncretism* and *dvoeverie*, «double faith». Since the

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early 20th century, Slavic Old Religion has reorganized into the movement of Slavic Native Faith (Rodnovery).

The cosmology of Old Slavic religion is visualized as a three-tiered vertical structure, quite like the tripartite division of Vedic cosmology. The figures of Triglav and Svetovid are three-headed and four-headed representations of the same axis mundi, of the same supreme God. Triglav represents the vertical interconnection of the three worlds, reflected by the triads of the physical and the psychological universes.

Besides Triglav and Svetovid, other deities were represented with many heads, and Rugievit was shown with seven faces that converged at the top in a single crown. These images that were wooden or carved in stone, some covered in metal, were kept in temples that were regarded as the houses of the gods as is the case in the Hindu temple. They were wooden buildings with an inner cell with the god's image that parallels the garbhagṛha of the Hindu temple.

SVETOVID

Svetovid, the four-headed highest divinity, is known under various names: Światowid, Svantovit, Swiatowid, Световид [14] and translated variously as «Holy Light», «Sacred Knowledge», or «Dawning One». Various sites dedicated to him have been found in Pomerania and there was a famous shrine to him on the island of Rügen at Cape Arkona, before it was destroyed in the 12th century by the Danish King Valdemar I and his adviser Absalon, Bishop of Roskilde (fig. 7). The image was wooden statue that showed Svetovid with four faces and a horn filled with wine. The statue was in a square, column-supported temple. Some consider Svetovid a local Rugian variant of the Slavic god Perun.

Fig. 7. Bishop Absalon topples the god Svantevit at Arkona, as imagined by Laurits Tuxen (1853–1927)

The temple to Svetovid was highly decorated with carvings and paintings. The size of temple was 20×20m and in inner part of building was the image of the deity, 8m height, also made of wood. In his right hand he held horn made of different kinds of metals. This horn was filled with wine or nectar. In his arms he held a bow and a sword made of silver. The body of statue was with carvings divided in three parts. The upper part symbolized the spiritual world, middle was material and the lower part symbolized the netherworld.

It is natural to ask if the name has anything to do with Sanskrit *Śvetavid*, श्वेतविद्, Knower of Light. To make sense of the name, remember that Śiva is also called Prakāśa (Light). Svetovid's nickname is Beli (or Byali) – Vid (*beli* = white, bright, shining; Skt. *bala* is white in *balakṣa* बलक्ष = white-beamed = moon).

Svetovid's north head is Svarog (Skt. Svarga, heavens); the red west face is Perun (Skt. Parjanya, a name of Indra); the black south face is Lada (cognate with Skt. Laḍaha, meaning beautiful); and the green east face is Mokosh (Skt. *Mokṣa*, a form of *Aredvi Sura Anahita,* or *Śurā Sarasvatī*). The description by Saxo Grammaticus that states that entry into the inside of the temple was severely restricted is similar to the restriction on entry to the Garbhagṛha in Hindu temples (fig. 8).

Fig. 8. The Zbruch idol, a four-sided column made of limestone, appears to be the representation of Svetovid

The Zbruch idol, a representation of Svetovid, is a four-sided column made of limestone from the 9th or 10th century. It was found in 1848 in the river Sbruch near the village Lychkivtsi in what was then Eastern Galicia, now Ukraine, and is now in the Archaeological Museum in Krakow (fig. 9).
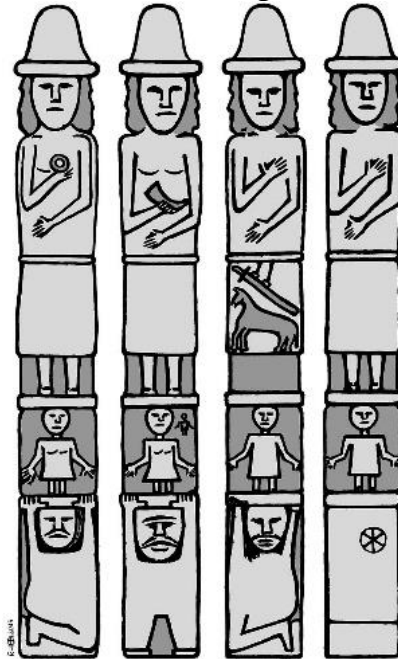

Fig. 9. The lower part of the Zbruch image

Going from left to right, the female with the ring is Lada (Earth), the female with the horn of plenty is Mokosh, the male deity with the horse and sword is Perun, and the last on the right is the Sun (tab. 4). The two middle ones that concern lived life are enclosed by the Earth and the Sun. This representation can be reconciled with the four-faced representation of Śiva in the following manner.

Tab. 4. The four faces in a cycle

Sadyojāta	Aghora	Vāmadeva	Tatpuruṣa
Lada	Mokosh	Perun	Sun

This correspondence is compelling. Lada, the Earth, represents birth which is naturally associated with Sadyojāta. Mokosh is plenty obtained out of freedom and this freedom is given by Aghora that is another name for Rudra. Perun sustains as does Vāmadeva, and Tatpuruṣa (the Self within) can be taken to represent the Inner Sun.

Rybakov [14] claimed that the phallic shape at the bottom of the second figure represented the deity Rod and that seems fine for it is in correspondence with Rudra, the Vedic name for Śiva.

DISCUSSION

We have listed broad parallels between the Vedic and the Old Slavic religions related to divinities with multiple heads. We cannot see these as emerging at a time when the Slavic and the Aryan (Indo-Iranian) societies were in close proximity because multiple faces for divinities are absent in the Iranian sub-branch. They could not have come from the Slavic lands to India at a late stage – such as the time of the Kuṣāṇas – because the history of such representation in India goes back to the Vedas itself (as in the image of the four-faced Brahmā) and the idea of the cosmic pillar from which everything emerges is in the Atharvaveda.

We have sourced the impetus for such representation to the great ferment in Kashmir related to Shaivism that began in early centuries CE, leading to extraordinary creativity in many fields [e.g. 11], and motivating scholars to travel beyond the borders of India to spread these ideas. We have evidence that the idea of 3- and 4-faced representations of Śiva traveled to Central Asia and China, and it is plausible that it went further beyond Sogdia to the Slavic world.

The conception of the goddess in the Śāradā Māhātmya speaks of Śāradā, Kashmir's version of Sarasvatī, as having three colors of Śveta (white), Rakta (red), and Śyāmā (black). One can propose that the image of Svetovid represents a fusion of the three colors of the Goddess with the fourth that is Light (Prakāśa, Śiva). The mystery of the green color associated with it comes from the fact that Sanskrit uses the same word *hari* for both green and golden, and this double use is from the fact that the plants in the field turn from green to golden when they ripen. That the names are all identical in Sanskrit and the color that got associated with Mokṣa in the popular imagination indicates that the synthesis original occurred in a Sanskritic land. The visualization with multiple faces with a count that agrees with the three colors for the Goddess and the golden color for Śiva, who represents freedom in the inner world and the sun in the outer, is consistent with the Indian concept [e.g. 15].

If indeed the above sketch view is correct, one should add that the basic idea was given its full form within the existing old Slavic cultural tradition, which explain the details of the iconography.

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