

SECTION 1
THE VRĀTYA PROBLEM

1

Sanskrit Kaparda (Braided Hair) Yet Another Harappan Symbol of Royalty Surviving in Vedic “Vrātya Rituals”

Asko Parpola

Jan Heesterman (1962) has convincingly argued that the rites connected with the *vrātyas* and *vrātīnas* represent an earlier stage of development from which the “classical” Vedic sacrifice has evolved. While Heesterman and Harry Falk (1986) have assumed that the changeover from “preclassical” ritual has taken place within one Vedic tradition due to social reasons, my explanation (cf. Parpola 1983, 2002, 2012, in press) has been acculturation between two waves of Aryan immigrants with fairly different religions, an earlier (*vrātya* or “Atharvavedic”) wave and a later (“Ṛgvedic”) wave, separated by a time gap of about 500 years. As the earlier wave started arriving in the Indus Valley already in the twentieth century BCE, in Late Harappan times, it is very likely that the *vrātya* rituals contained important Harappan elements beside the Indo-European heritage of sodalities of young men to which Bollée (1981) and Falk (1986) have drawn attention.

In previous publications I have identified in Vedic tradition several royal symbols of Harappan origin, which on the one hand suggest that the Harappans had kings and on the other hand attest to a cultural continuity transmitting these symbols to later times. One particularly striking item of this kind is the “sky garment” of the “priest-king” statue from Moheñjo-daro (see Parpola 1985

for a detailed study and documentation; cf. also Parpola 1994a: 211-18). The Indus people adopted this dress from Mesopotamia, where kings and gods were wearing garments with golden appliqué decorations that depicted stars, rosettes, etc. The Harappan “priest-king’s” robe and a fragmentary bull statuette are both decorated with “trefoils” that once contained red paste. In the ancient Near East the “trefoil” was an astral symbol and was used to decorate figurines of the “Bull of Heaven”. The Harappan robe has a counterpart in the *tārp̄ya* garment which the Vedic king donned in his royal consecration (Rājasūya); it is said to represent the garment of the divine king, god Varuṇa, who is associated among other things with the night sky. According to the *Hiraṇyakeśi-Śrautasūtra* (17.6.31) and the *Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra* (22.16.3), images of *dhiṣṇyas* were sewn onto the *tārp̄ya* garment. The word *dhiṣṇya* signifies on the one hand priestly fireplaces of the Vedic Soma sacrifice and on the other hand stars, which are conceived to be heavenly fireplaces of pious ancient sacrificers (cf. *Mahābhārata* 3.43).¹ This paper identifies yet another such royal symbol of Mesopotamian and Harappan origin in the Veda.

The first identifiable Harappan exports to Mesopotamia, consisting of a large number of carnelian beads (“etched” and “long barrel-cylinder” type), come from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, dated to the Early Dynastic III period (c. 2500–2350 BCE) (cf. Reade 1979; Possehl 2002: 222f). The first references in cuneiform sources to the far-off foreign country of Meluḥḥa now fairly unanimously identified with the Indus Civilization date from the Akkadian period (2350–2100 BCE), when “ships certainly came from Meluhha to Mesopotamia” (Maekawa and Mori 2011: 248). Three or four Indus seals from Mesopotamia have been excavated from Akkadian contexts (cf. Parpola 1994b: 314f).

In the Early Dynastic III and early Akkadian periods

¹ For some other Harappan royal symbols surviving in the Veda, cf. Parpola 2004 and 2013.

Mesopotamian kings wore a distinctive royal hair-style, consisting of a chignon or knotted bun of hair at the back of the head, held in place by a braid or ribbon encircling the head and dividing the bun into two parts. This hairdress was in this period so important a symbol of kingship – Strommenger (1972-75: 346) considers it as the only known mark of royal rank – that it was depicted even over the king's helmet. Thus Eannatum, the Sumerian king of Kish, represented in the “Stele of vultures” as proceeding to battle in front of his soldiers, wears the hair-bun with its headband over his helmet, while the helmets of the soldiers are without this distinctive mark (*fig. 1.1*). In the golden helmet of the Sumerian king Meskalamdug discovered in Private Grave 755 of the Royal Cemetery of Ur, the hair-bun and the crest holding it in place are illustrated as parts of the metal helmet itself. Other Mesopotamian rulers of



fig. 1.1. In the “Stele of vultures”, the Sumerian king Eannatum wears a helmet with a hair-bun held at the nape of neck with a crest.
(Photo Asko Parpola, courtesy Musée du Louvre).

this time depicted as wearing this very kind of headdress include Ishqi-Mari from Syria, and Sargon the Great of Akkad as depicted in his victory stela found at Susa. After Sargon, the royal hairstyle changed from braided bun-shaped chignon into something else, but there are some statues with the Early Dynastic III hairstyle also from the Neo-Sumerian Ur III period (cf. Börker-Klähn 1972-75: 3-5 with figs. 9-10; During Caspers 1979: 134f; Hansen 2003: 34f, 190-94 with figs. 52, 54, 57; Parpola 2011: 309-11).

My brother Simo Parpola is an Assyriologist, and I have consulted him on the Sumerian and Akkadian terms used of this royal hairstyle and its possible symbolism. This and the following paragraph are his contribution. The principal Sumerian term is *gú.bar*, which has come to Akkadian in the form *gubāru* or *gupāru*. This expression is translated as “nape” and “locks of the nape (on a statue)”; an Akkadian gloss of it is *qimmatu* “hair, bun of hair” (cf. CAD, vol. G: 117). Here the word *gú* (*gu*₂) denotes “nape of the neck”. The Sumerian word *bar* has a large number of meanings (see Sjöberg 1984, vol. B s.v.); after hearing the gist of this paper, Simo thought that in *gú.bar* it might have the meaning “to divide into two, to separate from each other, to limit”, and that if it was the braid of this headdress that was referred to, *gú.bar* might mean “divider of (the hair bun of) the nape of the neck”. He also pointed out that *gú* originally started with a labiovelar, and that **g^wa.bar* might have been the shape in which the Harappans heard the expression. If they did not borrow the name of the hairstyle with it, as the Akkadians did, it might have influenced their choice of a native term.²

As to the symbolic function of this hairdress, it might have signalled the wisdom of the king, for one Sumerian lexical gloss of *gú.bar* is *suḫur* (hair bun), which is homophonous with *suḫur* (carp fish), and the carp is a primary symbol of Enki, the god of waters

² Other Akkadian terms for this royal headdress are *pursāsu* (wig) (cf. CAD vol. P: 523) and *upurtu* (headdress) (from the verb *apāru* (to cover head with headdress), (cf. CAD vol. U/V: 193).

and wisdom; the Seven Sages, Enki's servants and embodiments of wisdom, have the shape of carp-men. Another possibility, suggested by the connection of the braided hair with the helmet, is that it refers to Inanna (the goddess of love and war) who is supposed to be the king's divine mother, and is said to have taken hold of her baby son from his locks of hair: The hairdress could remind the soldiers of this myth and give them assurance that their leader is under Inanna's protection. The Sumerian kings and priests were usually shaven bald for the sake of ritual purity, but when performing certain functions they wore wigs, and in war helmets (cf. Börker-Klähn 1972-75: 1, 4).

The Harappans visiting Mesopotamia must have been deeply impressed by this royal symbol, because they have adopted it into their art and iconography. This was first noted by Elisabeth C.L. During Caspers (1979: 133-35), who referred to a number of human portrayals on Indus seals and sculptures:

In each case, the hair is dressed in a bun, which is then secured horizontally, by means of a ribbon or hair-slide of some sort, resulting in the division of hair into two protuberances one above the other.

One addition to During Caspers' references is a cylinder seal from Kālībaṅgan that supplies a military context corresponding to the Sumerian helmets: Two warriors, both wearing the divided chignon at the back of the head, fight against each other with spears, while the tiger-riding goddess of war holds them by hand (*fig. 1.2*) (cf. Parpola 1984). Another addition is the human head placed on an offering table in front of the deity within the fig tree on a famous seal from Mohenjo-daro; it probably is a warrior's head, having the two-part chignon at the back of the head (for this interpretation and the evidence on which it is based, cf. Parpola 1994a: 260 with *fig. 14.35*). Besides the evidence of Indus seals and tablets (cf. also for further examples, Parpola 2011: 306-09, 320), there are three sculptures of human heads from Mohenjo-daro (cf. During Caspers

1979: 134). In the male head illustrated here (*fig. 1.3*), the hair is gathered at the nape of the neck into a bun, which is divided into two (now broken) parts by a horizontal pin connected at both ends with the ribbon encircling the head.



fig. 1.2. Two warriors wearing their hair in a two-parted bun at the back of the head. Modern impression of a Harappan cylinder seal from Kalibangan.

After CISI I: 311, K-65a.

(Photo by Erja Lahdenperä, courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India).



fig. 1.3. A sandstone sculpture of a male human head from Mohenjo-daro, with the hair arranged into a bun at the nape of the neck, bisected and held in place by a horizontal pin fixed to a crest encircling the head.

(After *The Indus Civilization Exhibition 2000*: 83 no. 320, courtesy: NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation & NHK Promotions).

If the Mesopotamian–Harappan “sky-garment” as a symbol of royalty survived in the royal/*vrātya* rituals of the Veda, then this Mesopotamian–Harappan royal headdress might likewise have survived to Vedic times. One of the principal divinities worshipped by the *vrātyas* was Rudra (cf. *Atharvaveda Śaunakaśākhā* 15.5; Charpentier 1911; Hauer 1927: 189ff.; Caland 1931: 454–55 on *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 17.1.1; Falk 1986: 57–65). Rudra was feared as the divine leader of military bands (*vrātya*) robbing and killing people; this is very clear from his epithets in the long Śatarudrīya litany that accompanies the 425 oblations to Rudra at the completion of the brick-piled fire altar (cf. Gonda 1979); the first two stanzas will give an idea:

*Homage to thy wrath, O Rudra,
To thine arrow homage also;
Homage to thy bow,
And homage to thine arms.
With thy most kindly arrow,
And kindly bow,
With thy kindly missile,
Be gentle to us, O Rudra.*

— TS 4.5.11, tr. Keith 1914: II, 353



Rudra is the Vedic predecessor of the Hindu god Skanda, the divine army commander; both Rudra and Skanda are also called Kumāra “youth”, thus corresponding to the Tamil god of war, wisdom and love, Muruku or **Munukan** (Murugan) “youth”, whose names seem to occur often in the Indus texts (cf. Parpola 1994a: 225–39). If any Vedic divinity is expected to wear the Harappan warrior’s hair-style, it is above all Rudra.



Hair (*keśa-*) is in fact one of Rudra’s distinctions (cf. Falk 1986: 102 “Rudra gilt als der Keśin schlechthin unter den Göttern”), and he wears it in a particular way: Rudra is *kapardīn-* “having (hairstyle called) *kapardā-*”. This epithet Rudra has both in the first book of the *Ṛgveda* (RV I.114.1a: *imā rudrāya tavāse kapardīne*; 5a: *divo varāhām*

aruṣām kapardīnam), and several times in the Śatarudriya **litany** (TS 4.5.5.1; VSM 16.29 = VSK 17.4.3: *nāmaḥ kapardīne ca vyūptakeśāya ca*; **according** to the sixteenth-century commentator Mahīdhara, *kaparda-* denotes braided and coiled hair, and Rudra wears his hair in this fashion when appearing as Paśupati and other shapes, while he is bald as an ascetic and other **shapes**):

kapardo jaṭājūṭo 'syāstīti kapardī tasmai namaḥ |
pāśupatādiveṣeṇa || [. . .] | vyūptāḥ muṇḍitāḥ keśā yasya sa
vyūptakeśas tasmai namaḥ | yatyādirūpeṇa muṇḍitatvam ||

— VSM 16.10

vījyam dhānuḥ kapardīno [. . .] — VSM 16.43c

kapardīne ca pulastāye ca nāmaḥ — VSM 16.48a = ṚV I.114.1a

In the *Mahābhārata*, the epithet *kapardīn-* continues to characterize Rudra's successor in Hinduism, the great god Śiva (cf. Sörensen 1925: 206). According to the Śatarudriya, the Rudras, overlords of the spirits of the dead, wear their hair either shaven or in *kapardas* —

VSM 16.59ab: *yé bhūtānām ādhipatayo viśikhāsaḥ kapardīnaḥ |*

Mahīdhara —

[. . .] kecid viśikhāsaḥ vigatā śikhā yeṣāṃ te | śikhāśabdaḥ
keśopalakṣakaḥ | muṇḍitamunḍā ity arthaḥ | anye kapardīnaḥ
jaṭājūṭayutāḥ |

In the *Ṛgveda*, also the god Pūṣan, knower of paths, is *kapardīn-* (ṚV VI.55.2: *rathītamaṃ kapardīnam īśānaṃ rādhaso mahāḥ | rāyāḥ sākḥāyam īmahe*; ṚV IX.67.11: *ayām sōmaḥ kapardīne [. . .]*), and members of the priestly clan of Vasiṣṭha wear their hair in a *kaparda* on the right side of the head (ṚV VII.33.1: *śvityāñco [. . .] dakṣiṇatāskapardāḥ [. . .] vasiṣṭhāḥ*; cf. ṚV VII.83.8c: *śvityāñco [. . .] kapardīnaḥ*). According to the *Ṛgveda*, a maiden wearing beautiful ornaments (*su-peśas-*) may have her hair in four *kapardas* (ṚV X.114.3a: *cātuṣkapardā yuvatīḥ supésāḥ*).

A particularly important reference is the *mantra Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* 2.7.5ab = *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā* 16.5ab = TS 4.1.5.3ab = VSM 11.56ab; it details the headdress of Goddess Sinīvālī. Besides “a fair *kaparda*”, she wears “a fair *kurīra*” and “a fair *aupaśā*”: *sinīvālī sukapardā sukurīrā svaupaśā*. According to Mahīdhara’s commentary, *kaparda* here denotes a specific hair band or fillet used by women (*kapardo ’tra strīṅām ucitah keśabandhaviśeṣaḥ | śobhanaḥ kapardo yasyāḥ sā sukapardā*), *kurīra* a golden ornament worn on the head by women for the sake of finery, or a diadem, *mukuṭa* (*sukurīrā strībhiḥ śṛṅgārārthaṁ śīrasi dhāryamāṇaṁ kanakābharaṇaṁ kurīraḥ śobhanaḥ yasyāḥ sā sukurīrā sumukuṭā*). Mahīdhara’s attempt to explain *svaupaśā*- by deriving it from the root *śī-* may be skipped here.³

In the marriage hymn ṚV X.85.8, the solar maid Sūryā as the bride wears a *kurīra* and an *opaśā*. While explaining the work of smiths in the royal horse sacrifice, *Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra* 11.8.22 prescribes an *aupaśaya* of gold with a spike (or spikes) of silver, or of silver with a spike (or spikes) of gold, and one *kurīra* to be made of gold with a knot (or knots) of silver, or of silver with a knot (or knots) of gold

*etat karmārāṅām [. . .] aupāśayaḥ suvarṇo rajataśamyō rajato
vā suvarṇaśamyah, kurīraṁ suvarṇaṁ rajatagranthi rajataṁ
vā suvarṇagranthi |*

These two parts of the headdress, *aupaśaya*- and *kurīra*-, which Wilhelm Rau (1974: 60) suggests to be “hair-net” and “diadem” respectively, are clearly meant for the chief queen of the sacrificing king. The parallel passage of *Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra* 15.15 prescribes the goldsmith to make so many *upaśayas*, either golden with a knot (or knots) of silver or vice versa as there are wives (of the sacrificing king), likewise so many *kumbakurīras* either of gold with a silvery spike (or spikes) or vice versa as there are wives (of

³ *svaupaśā samyak upāśete śayanaṁ kurute yair avayavaviśeṣais te sarve
'py upāśāḥ teṣāṁ samūha aupāśaḥ śobhanaḥ śayanaavidagdho vilāsacatura
aupāśo 'vayavasamūha yasyāḥ sā.*

the sacrificing king).⁴ A cheaper version of this headdress of royal women is used in the initiation rite of an ordinary Soma sacrifice, where the wife of the sacrificer puts on her head the *kumbakurīra*, explained in the *Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra* to be a net (*jāla*) made with black (threads) of wool from living sheep (10.9.5: *atra patnī śirasi kumbakurīram adhyūhate*; 6: *kṛṣṇam jīvorṇānām iti vājasaneyakam*; 7: *jālam kumbakurīram ity ācakṣate*). In the parallel passage of *Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra* 6.1.4, *kumba* and *kurīra* are mentioned separately, and *Baudhāyana-Karmāntasūtra* 26.4 explaining this passage says that *kumba* is *vidala* “split (bamboo)” and *kurīra* is “net” (*kumbaṁ ca kurīraṁ ceti vidalam u ha kumbaṁ bhavati jālam u kurīram*). The commentator Bhavasvāmin says that *kumba* is (a crest of) split bamboo forming the rim of the (hair-)net⁵ (cf. Caland 1903: 59). As Caland (1924: 142) points out, the terms *kumba* and *kurīra* were obsolete early on and no more clearly understood. They are still etymologically unclear (cf. Mayrhofer 1992: I, 369-71); the structure of the word *kurīra*- suggests that it may come from the unknown language of the Oxus Civilization alias BMAC, and the same applies to the word *kirīṭa*- “diadem” occurring in post-Vedic Indo-Aryan (cf. Lubotsky 2001; Parpola 2002: 92-94). The Harappan term for “diadem” may survive in post-Vedic Sanskrit *mukuṭa*-/ *makuṭa*- “diadem” and its Indo-Aryan cognates, for this word has a Dravidian etymology recognized also by Mayrhofer (2001: III, 406-07), cf. Tamil *mukaṭu*, etc. (Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 437 no. 4888). While Rau (1974: 58-59 n. 2) thinks that *opaśa*/*aupaśa*/*aupaśaya*/*upaśaya* may be a synonym of *kumba*, from the fact that *Baudhāyana* mentions *upaśaya* besides *kumbakurīra*, and *Vādhūla* *aupaśaya* besides *kurīra*, it seems to me that originally *kurīra* was a diadem of precious metal having an ornamental knot, one that could additionally be furnished

⁴ *athaitān suvarṇakṛtaḥ saṁśāsti [. . .] tāvataḥ sauvarṇān upaśayān kuruta rajatagranthīn rājatān vā suvarṇagranthīn yāvatyah patnayas tāvanti sauvarṇāni kumbakurīrāṇi kurvata rajataśaṅkūni rājatāni vā suvarṇaśaṅkūni yāvatyah patnayas.*

⁵ *kumbaṁ vaṁśavidalāṁ jālasya nemibhūtam, kurīraṁ jālam.*

with a woollen net forming a skull-cap (*kumba*), while *opaśa* could denote a hair-net for the chignon of the Harappan type, and its *śaṅku* “spike, nail, peg” could denote the horizontal pin keeping it in place at the nape of the neck (cf. fig. 1.3). Interestingly, *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 13.4.3 has the compound *dvy-opaśa* “having two *opaśas*”, applying it to cattle with two horns. I should also like to point out that just as *kaparda-* was worn by both men and women, or male gods and goddesses, so *opaśa-* (etymologically unclear, cf. Mayrhofer 1992: I, 280) was worn by both sexes, for the war-god Indra wears the sky as an *opaśa* (ṚV I.173.6cd *bhárti svadhāvām opaśám iva dyām*; cf. also ṚV VIII.14.5c).

A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith (1912: I, 135) translate *kaparda-* simply “braid” and observe (following Zimmer 1879: 265) that its opposite is *pulastí-* “wearing the hair plain” (cf. *VSM* 16.43 quoted above); Mayrhofer (1996: II, 151) finds *pulastí-* “wearing the hair of the head smooth” yet another problematic word to explain etymologically. One may add that besides *kapardín-*, the Śatarudrīya litany characterizes Rudra or the Rudras also as bald, having hair shorn or shaven (*vyupta-keśa-*, *vi-śikha-*, see the passages quoted above).

In Sanskrit there is another word *kaparda-* m. denoting the “cowry shell, *Cypraea moneta*”. Rudolph Roth in 1846 observed that since *kaparda-* is the name of the cowry shell, the *kaparda-* hairdo must be thought of as wound in a similar shape:

Kaparda ist der Name der Kaurimuschel, deren Bezeichnung
übrigens wohl die abgeleitete ist. Das Haar muss also auf ähnliche
Weise gewunden gedacht werden.

— Roth 1846: 120f, fn.

Ten years later Böhtlingk and Roth (BR: II, 61) translated the word *kaparda-* used of hair as “*das in Form einer Muschel aufgewundene Haar* (unter Anderm auch Çiva’s *Haartracht*)”; they were followed by Monier-Williams (MW 1899: 250a), whose rendering is “braided and knotted hair (esp. that of Śiva, knotted so as to resemble the

cowrie shell)”. This explanation has been fairly universally accepted ever since, although some modifications have been proposed. Thus Albert Grünwedel found it difficult to understand how such a small shell as cowry could serve as the model of braided hair and suggested that *kapardin-* might mean “decorated with cowry shells” as headdresses and even animals often are in present-day India:

Unter den Eigenschaften, welche im Rigveda dem Gotte Rudra und dem Gotte Pūshan — auch den Vasishṭha’s gegeben werden, erscheint das Wort *kapardin*, welches Wort in der Regel übersetzt wird: »dessen Haar in Form einer Muschel aufgewunden ist«. Vgl. Grassmann, Rigveda-Wörterbuch und das Petersburger Wörterbuch s. v. s. v. Nach dem letzteren wird *kaparda* durch »Cypraea moneta« genauer bestimmt. Es handelt sich also um die Cowrie-Muschel, deren Name *kauri* aus dem Marāthi stammt und eine regelmässige Ableitung aus dem Sanskritworte zulässt. Es ist nun sehr schwer sich vorzustellen, wie eine Haartracht aussehen soll, die die Form einer so kleinen Muschel wiedergeben könnte. Ganz gewöhnlich aber ist es im heutigen Indien, Haarflechten, Strähne von Schnüren, die auf dem Kopfe getragen werden, mit *kauri*’s zu besetzen; vergl. die entsprechenden Schmuckstücke einer Banjāra-Frau im Museum. Es liegt also der Gedanke nahe, *kapardin* zu erklären als »mit *kauri*’s geschmückt« und *kaparda* als »*kauri*« und »Haar-zopf, der mit *kauri*’s besetzt ist«. Dass zum tierischen Schmuck in Indien neben Hörneraufsätzen etc. Schnüre mit Muschel- und Perlschmuck gehören, zeigt jede Sammlung; so würde sich auch zwanglos erklären, warum im Rigveda der Stier ebenfalls *kapardin* »*kauri*-besetzte Strähne tragend« heisst. *cātushkaparda* bedeutet dann: »vier *kauri*-besetzte Strähne (Zöpfe) tragend«, *dakshinataskaparda*: »solche Zöpfe nach der rechten Seite tragend«.

— Grünwedel 1895: 10-11

In iconographic studies *kaparda*-hair is likewise usually understood to be cowry-like; thus Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann (1963: 326b) simply translates it “coquillage”. Banerjea offers one of the most detailed and authoritative analyses of the historical period

iconography (for illustrations cf. also Krishna Murthy 1965, 1982):

The various types of head-gear have been grouped by the author of the *Mānasāra* under the general term *mauli*, which, according to him, are subdivided into *jaṭā-makuṭa*, *kirīṭa-makuṭa*, *karaṇḍa-makuṭa*, *śirastraka*, *kuntala*, *keśabandha*, *dhammilla* and *alaka-cūḍala*. It may be seen that in the above list the 2nd, 3rd and 4th denote different types of crowns, while the rest so many different modes of dressing the hair. The *jaṭāmakuṭa*, specially enjoined to be depicted on the heads of Brahmā, Rudra and Manonmanī, consists of matted locks of hair done up into the form of a tall crown on the centre of the head; it is sometimes adorned with jewels, a crescent and a skull, the two latter being used in the case of those worn by Rudra-Śiva. One of the names of Rudra-Śiva is *Kaparddī* which means ‘one whose matted locks wave spirally upward like the top of a shell’ (some Buddha figures of the Śaka-Kushan period at Mathura have the *kapardda* type of *jaṭā-makuṭa* on their heads; cf. the *Katra Buddha*, sketched in Fig. 5, Pl. III).

— Banerjea 1956: 286

Manfred Mayrhofer (1956: I, 154-55), too, originally agreed with the derivation of *kaparda*- “braided hair” from cowry shell: “wegen der muschelähnlichen Form dieser Haarflechte so benannt”, but in the final analysis noted that the main question really is whether the *kaparda*- hairstyle was named so after the cowry shell, and that the non-Indo-European origin of the word remains likely:

Es fragt sich, ob die *kaparda*-Haartracht nach ihrer Schneckensform benannt und mit dem Wort der späten Sprache *kaparda(ka)*- ‘Kauri-Schnecke’ (kl., Lex.) zu verbinden ist, das in mehreren Fortsetzern (mit Einschluss von hi[ndi] *kaurī* u.a., s. angloind. *cowry*, *cowrie* ‘Kauri’) fortlebt (Tu[rner 1966: no.] 2740ff., 7472, Tu[rner] Add[enda 1985: no.] 2740)); dessen nicht-idg. Ursprung bleibt wahrscheinlich.

— Mayrhofer 1992: I, 299

In Mayrhofer’s opinion Martti Nyman (1982) is right in rejecting the often proposed etymological connection of Sanskrit *kaparda*- with Latin *capillus* “hair of the head”, while F.B.J. Kuiper’s (1954)

suggestion of an Austro-Asiatic (Munda) origin is improbable (cf. Mayrhofer 1992: I, 299-300). I agree in both respects.

In my opinion it is impossible that the *kaparda*- hairstyle was originally called so after the cowry shell, for the simple reason that the cowry shell was totally unknown in the Indus Valley and more widely in South Asia until some 1,500 years later.

Money cowries [*Cypraea moneta*] are not found at sites of the Indus Age. They come from Lakshdweep and Maldive Islands, East Africa and seas farther east. — Possehl 1999: 230

According to Silvio Durante (1979: Table I), several species of *Cypraea* different from *Cypraea moneta* are found at Bronze Age sites in Egypt and Western Asia as far east as Tepe Yahya in Iran, but not in South Asia. Herbert Härtel's careful report (1993) of the extensive excavations at Sonkh does not mention a single cowry shell, so cowries were not found in the Mathurā area in the Kuṣāṇa period either. Nor are cowry shells mentioned in the Greek text *Circumnavigation of the Red Sea* that gives a fairly exhaustive description of the trade goods along the coasts of the Indian Ocean in first century CE (cf. Schoff 1912; Casson 1989). I have examined in detail the dates of all literary references to cowry in Sanskrit and Tamil sources known to me and found that they start around the ninth century CE. I am publishing the results of this examination in a separate article on the South Asian appellations of the cowry shell (including Skt. *kaparda*- and *kapardikā*-) and the etymology and dating of these **terms** [See the Addendum at the end of this article.].

But what, then, is the etymology of *kaparda*- in the sense of “braided hair” if it is not derived from an appellation for the cowry shell? In my opinion it comes from the Proto-Dravidian root **kapp-/*kavv-/*kav-* enlarged with the derivative suffix *-ar-* as in Tamil *kavar*, meaning “to bifurcate (as roads or rivers), to be(come) forked (as trees or branches), divided (into two), cloven (as a hoof), to branch off” (cf. Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 123 no. 1325). This verb perfectly describes the Harappan hair style of a “bifurcated”

bun divided into two by a diadem or crest (fig. 1.3); the element *-da* in *kaparda-* may come from the Dravidian past relative participle **kavar-nta* (bifurcated) or **kavar-tta* (divided into two, cloven).

A Dravidian etymon denoting a hairdo has a shape that can be perfectly derived from the above-mentioned Proto-Dravidian root **kavar-*. I have slightly supplemented the material collected in Burrow and Emeneau (1984: 124 no. 1327) from these dictionaries: TL, ML, Gundert, Kittel and Bhat, Upadhyaya, and added the Toda word which Burrow and Emeneau have placed with its homonym *kafy* “forked stick” under the verb *kavar*, no. 1325:

- Tamil *kavari* “bushy tail of the Tibetan yak (used as false hair or set in decorated handle and used as a fly-flap or fan before an idol or a great personage)”, *kavari-pantam* “bunch of hair”
- Malayalam *kabaram*, *kavaram* “a braid, fillet of hair, hairplait, plaited hair”, *kabari*, *kavari* “braided hair, braid of hair; false hair; woman with fine hair; the bushy tail of the yak employed as chowry, one of the insignia of royalty; yak”⁶
- Toda *kafy* “hair of a god or of priest of *tī-dairy*”
- Kannada *kabari*, *kavari* “a braid or fillet of hair; a knot of braided hair; the point of a braided hair”
- Tulu *kabari* “tufted hair of females”.

In addition come the following Dravidian loanwords in classical Sanskrit (partly as early as the fourth century BCE and that in the northern Indus Valley), which have no cognates in later Indo-Aryan

⁶ The meaning “chowry, yak’s tail” in Tamil and Malayalam is likely to be due, as suggested in TL, to interference of the Sanskrit words *camara-* m., *camarī-* f. “yak, Bos grunniens”, *camara-* n., *camarī-* f. “yak’s tail, chowry” and their cognates in later Indo-Aryan including forms like *cam̐varī* (in Lahnda, Panjabi), *cam̐var* (Panjabi, Hindi, Bhojpurī, Marathi) (cf. Turner 1966: 253 no. 4677). These words, first attested in *Gr̥hyasūtras* and epics, do not have a good etymology (cf. Mayrhofer 1996: III, 180).

(cf. Turner 1966, 1985) and which Mayrhofer (1992: I, 300) considers worth noting (“zu beachten”) in etymologizing *kaparda*- “braided hair”:

- *kabara*- m., *kabarī*- f. “plaited hair” “*Pāṇini* 4.1.42: [. . .] *kabarāt* [. . .] *keśaveśeṣu*)
- *kavara*- m., *kavarī*- f. “plaited hair” in various dictionaries including *Amarakośa*; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.2.6: *kavarabhāra*-; 8.12.21: *kavarīm ca vicyutām*; *Gītagovinda* 12.26: *añca srajā kavariḥharam*; *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 59.19: *kavarimokṣasamīyamau*; *Amaruśataka* 59; *Śiśupālavadhā* 9.28 (cf. BR: II, 181).



We cannot check what Vedic *kaparda*- “braided hair” looked like, because no iconographic material survives from that period. The hairdo going under the traditional name may have changed shape in the course of many centuries. But what matters is the shape which that hairdo had in Harappan times, when the Proto-Dravidian name for it was coined. And words for hairdo fitting the Harappan evidence have survived to historical times, making it likely that Vedic Rudra as a divine model for a *vṛātya* chief had inherited his hairstyle from the Harappans, who in turn had borrowed it as a royal symbol from Mesopotamia around 2500–2300 BCE.

References

PRIMARY SOURCES

Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra, ed. R. Garbe, 1882-1902, *The Śrautasūtra of Āpastamba Belonging to the Taittirīya Saṁhitā with the Commentary of Rudradatta*, I-III (Bibliotheca Indica, Work 92), Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

Atharvaveda Śaunakaśākhā, ed. Vishva Bandhu, 1960-64, *Atharvaveda (Śaunaka) with the Pada-pāṭha and Sāyaṇācārya’s Commentary*, I-V (Vishveshvaranand Indological Series, 13-17), Hoshiarpur: VVRI.

Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra, -Karmāntasūtra, ed. W. Caland, 1904-23. *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra Belonging to the Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, I-III (Bibliotheca Indica, Work 163), Calcutta: The Asiatic Society.

Hiranyakeśi-Śrautasūtra = Satyāśāḍha-Śrautasūtra, ed. K.Ś. Āgāṣe and

- Ś.Ś. Mārūlakar, 1907-32, *Satyāṣāḍhviracitaṃ Śrautasūtram*, I-X (Ānandāśrama-saṁskṛta-granthāvaliḥ, 53), Poona: Ānandāśrama Press.
- Kāṭhakasamhitā*, ed. L. von Schroeder, 1900-10, *Kāṭhakam: Die Samhitā der Kaṭha-ṣākhā*, I-III. Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.
- Mahābhārata*, ed. V.S. Sukthankar, S.K. Belvalkar and P.L. Vaidya, 1933-71, *The Mahābhārata*, 19 vols., Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, ed. L. von Schroeder, 1881-86, *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā, herausgegeben*, I-IV. Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.
- Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa = Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa*, ed. A. Ch. Śāstri, and P. Śāstrī, 1935-36, *The Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa Belonging to the Sāma Veda with the Commentary of Sāyāṇācārya, with notes, Introduction, etc.*, I-II (The Kashi Sanskrit Series, 105). Benares: Jai Krishnadas-Haridas Gupta.
- TS — *Taittirīya Samhitā*, ed. A. Weber, 1871-72, *Die Taittirīya-Samhitā*, I-II (Indische Studien 11-12), Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus.
- Vādhūla-Śrautasūtra*, ed. B.B. Chaubey, 1993, *Vādhūla-Śrautasūtram, with Introduction and Indices*. Hoshiarpur: Katyayan Vaidik Sahitya Prakashan.
- VSK — *Vājasaneyi-Samhitā Kāṇva* recension, see VSM.
- VSM — *Vājasaneyi-Samhitā Mādhyandina* Recension, ed A. Weber, 1852, *The Vājasaneyi-Samhitā in the Mādhyandina and the Kāṇva-ṣākhā with the Commentary of Mahīdhara*. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler; London: Williams & Norgate.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Banerjea, J.N. 1956. *The Development of Hindu Iconography*. 2nd rev. and enlarged edn. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
- Bollée, W.B. 1981. "The Indo-European Sodalities in Ancient India". *ZDMG*, **131**: 172-91.
- BR — Böhtlingk, O. and R. Roth, 1852-75. *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, I-VII. St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Börker-Klähn, J. 1972-75. "Haartrachten". In *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, IV. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 1-12.
- Burrow, Th. and M.B. Emeneau. 1984. *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*.

- 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- CAD — *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vols. 1(A)–21(Z). Chicago: The Oriental Institute 1964-2010.
- Caland, W. 1903. *Über das rituelle Sūtra des Baudhāyana*. (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 12: 1). Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.
- . 1924. *Das Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba: Achtes bis fünfzehntes Buch aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt*. (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 24:2). Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam.
- . 1931. *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa: The Brāhmaṇa of Twenty Five Chapters, translated* (Bibliotheca Indica, 255). Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Casson, L. 1989. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Charpentier, J. 1911. “Bemerkungen über die vrātyas”. *WZKM*, 25: 355-88.
- CISI 1 — Joshi, J.P. and Asko Parpola, eds. 1987. *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions, 1: Collections in India*. (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, B 239.) Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Durante, S. 1979. “Marine Shells from Balakot, Shahr-i Sokhta and Tepe Yahya: Their Significance for Cowry Trade and Technology in Ancient Indo-Iran”. In *South Asian Archaeology 1977, I-II*. Ed. M. Taddei (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, Series minor, 6). Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, pp. 331-41.
- During Caspers, E.C.L. 1979. “Sumer, Coastal Arabia and the Indus Valley in Protoliterate and Early Dynastic Eras: Supporting Evidence for a Cultural Linkage”. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22(2): 121-35.
- Falk, H. 1986. *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des vedischen Opfers*. Freiburg: Hedvig Falk.
- Gonda, J. 1979. “The Śatarudriya”. In *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honor of Daniel H.H. Ingalls*. Ed. M. Nagatomi, B.K. Matilal and J.M. Masson (Studies of Classical India, 2). Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, pp. 75-91.

- Grünwedel, A. 1895. "Notizen über Indisches". *Ethnologisches Notizblatt*, 2: 6-11.
- Gundert, H. 1872. *A Malayalam and English Dictionary*. Mangalore: C. Stolz.
- Hansen, D.P. 2003. "Art of the Early City-states. Art of the Akkadian Dynasty". In *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*. Ed. J. Aruz. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art & New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 21-42; 189-233.
- Härtel, H. 1993. *Excavations at Sonkh: 2500 Years of a Town in Mathura District* (Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, 9). Berlin: Dieter Reimer Verlag.
- Hauer, J.W. 1927. *Der Vrātya: Untersuchungen über die nichtbrahmanische Religion Altindiens*, I. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
- Heesterman, J.C. 1962. "Vrātya and Sacrifice". *IJJ*, 6(1): 1-37.
- The Indus Civilization Exhibition*. Tokyo: NHK & NHK Promotions. 2000.
- Keith, A.B. 1914. *The Veda of the Black Yajus School Entitled Taittiriya Sanhitā, Translated from the Original Sanskrit Prose and Verse*, I-II (Harvard Oriental Series, 18-19). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kittel, F. and M. Mariappa Bhat. 1968-71. *Kittel's Kannaḍa-English Dictionary*, revised and enlarged by M. Mariappa Bhat, I-IV. Madras: The University of Madras.
- Krishna Murthy, K. 1965. "Coiffure Delineation in the Sculptures of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Andhra Pradesh". *Arts Asiatiques*, 12(1): 121-24.
- . 1982. *Hair Styles in Ancient Indian Art*. New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan.
- Kuiper, F.B.J. 1954. "Two Rigvedic Loanwords". In *Sprachgeschichte und Wortbedeutung: Festschrift Albert Debrunner gewidmet von Schülern, Freunden und Kollegen*. Bern: Francke Verlag, pp. 241-50.
- Lubotsky, A. 2001. "The Indo-Iranian Substratum". In *Early Contacts between Uralic and Indo-European: Linguistic and Archaeological Considerations*. Ed. C. Carpelan, A. Parpola and P. Koskikallio (Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne, 242). Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura, pp. 301-17.
- Macdonell, A.A. and A.B. Keith. 1912. *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, I-II. London: John Murray.
- Maekawa, K. and W. Mori. 2011. "Dilmun, Magan, and Meluhha in early

- Mesopotamian history: 2500–1600 BCE”. In *Cultural Relations between the Indus and the Iranian Plateau during the Third Millennium BCE*. Ed. T. Osada and M. Witzel (Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora, 7). Cambridge, MA: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, pp. 245-69.
- Mallmann, M.-Th. de. 1963. *Les enseignements iconographiques de l'Agni-Purana* (Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque d'Études, 67). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Mayrhofer, M. 1956-80. *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, I-IV (Indogermanische Bibliothek, Zweite Reihe: Wörterbücher). Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- . 1992-2001. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, I-III (Indogermanische Bibliothek, Reihe 2: Wörterbücher). Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Carl Winter.
- ML — *Malayalam Lexicon (Malayāla Mahānighaṇṭu)*, I-VIII. Trivandrum: University of Kerala, 1965-2010.
- MW — Monier-Williams, M. 1899. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nyman, M. 1982. “Positing a Lautgesetz: Latin *Capillus*, *Pullus* and Kindred Issues”. *Folia Linguistica Historica*, 3(1): 87-108.
- Parpola, A. 1983. “The Pre-Vedic Indian Background of the Śrauta Rituals”. In *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, II. Ed. F. Staal. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, pp. 41-75.
- . 1984. “New Correspondences between Harappan and Near Eastern Glyptic Art”. In *South Asian Archaeology 1981*. Ed. B. Allchin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 176-95.
- . 1985. *The Sky-Garment: A Study of the Harappan Religion and Its Relation to the Mesopotamian and later Indian Religions* (SO, 57). Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society.
- . 1994a. *Deciphering the Indus Script*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1994b. “Harappan Inscriptions: An Analytical Catalogue of the Indus Inscriptions from the Ancient Near East”. In *Qala'at al-Bahrain, I: The Northern City Wall and the Islamic Fortress*. Ed. F. Højlund and H.H. Andersen (Jutland Archaeological Society Publications 30: 1). Aarhus:

- Jutland Archaeological Society, pp. 304-15 and 483-92 (bibliography).
- . 2002. “From the Dialects of Old Indo-Aryan to Proto-Indo-Aryan and Proto-Iranian”. In *Indo-Iranian Languages and Peoples*. Ed. N. Sims-Williams (Proceedings of the British Academy, 116). London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, pp. 43-102.
- . 2004. “From Archaeology to a Stratigraphy of Vedic Syncretism: The Banyan Tree and the Water Buffalo as Harappan-Dravidian Symbols of Royalty, inherited in Succession by Yama, Varuṇa and Indra, Divine Kings of the First Three Layers of Aryan Speakers in South Asia”. In *The Vedas: Texts, Language and Ritual*. Ed. A. Griffiths and J. Houben (Groningen Oriental Studies, 20). Groningen: Egbert Forsten, pp. 479-515.
- . 2011. “Motifs of Early Iranian, Mesopotamian and Harappan Art (and Script), Reflecting Contacts and Ideology”. In *Cultural Relations between the Indus and the Iranian Plateau during the Third Millennium BCE*. Ed. T. Osada and M. Witzel. (Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora, 7). Cambridge, MA: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, pp. 271-357.
- . 2012. “The Dāsas of the *Ṛgveda* as Proto-Sakas of the Yaz I-related Cultures. With a Revised Model for the Protohistory of Indo-Iranian Speakers”. In *Archaeology and Language: Indo-European Studies Presented to James P. Mallory*. Ed. M.E. Huld, K. Jones-Bley and D. Miller (JIES Monograph, 60). Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of Man, pp. 221-64.
- . 2013. “Beginnings of Indian Astronomy, with Reference to a Parallel Development in China”. *History of Science in South Asia*. 1: 21-78. <http://hssa.sayahna.org/>
- Possehl, G.L. 1999. *Indus Age: The Beginnings*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Company.
- . 2002. *The Indians Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Rau, W. 1974. *Metalle und Metallgeräte im vedischen Indien* (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jg. 1973: 8). Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur.



- Reade, J. 1979. *Early Etched Beads and the Indus-Mesopotamia Trade* (British Museum, Occasional Papers, 2). London: British Museum.
- Roth, R. 1846. *Zur Literatur und Geschichte des Weda: Drei Abhandlungen*. Stuttgart: A. Liesching & Comp.
- Schoff, W.H. 1912. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century, Translated from the Greek and Annotated*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co.
- Sjöberg, Å.W., ed. 1984-98. *The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania*, I-II. Philadelphia: The University Museum.
- Sörensen, S. 1925. *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata with Short Explanations and a Concordance to the Bombay and Calcutta Editions and P.C. Roy's Translation*. London: Ernest Benn.
- Strommenger, E., 1972-75. "Herrscher, B: In der Bildkunst". In *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, IV. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 345-51.
- TL — *Tamil Lexicon*, published under the authority of the University of Madras, I-VI and Supplement. Madras: University of Madras, 1924-39.
- Turner, R.L. 1966. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*. London: Oxford University Press.
- . 1985. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages: Addenda and Corrigenda*, ed. J.C. Wright. London: SOAS, University of London.
- Upadhyaya, U.P. ed. 1988-97. *Tulu Lexicon: Tulu-Kannada-English Dictionary*, I-VI. Udupi, Karnataka: Rashtrakavi Govinda Pai Research Centre, M.G.M. College.
- Zimmer, H. 1879. *Altindisches Leben: Die Cultur der vedischen Arier nach den Samhitā dargestellt*. Berlin: Weidmann.

Addendum

On page 23 above, I asserted that the *kaparda* hairstyle cannot have been called so after the cowry shell, because the cowry shell was not known in the Indus Valley in Harappan and Vedic times. In June-July 2014, I took part in the 22nd International Conference of South Asian Archaeology and Art History in Stockholm, and learned that the

absence of the cowry shell from the Indus Valley in the third, second and first millennia BCE is true only in the case of money cowry, *Cypraea moneta*. Other types of cowry shell have been found at Harappan sites. All cowries have a single shell which is convex on one side and has a narrow slit in the middle of the other side (fig. 1.4). This other side is thus cloven into two parts, which suggests that Sanskrit *kaparda* as the name of such a shell is derived from the Proto-Dravidian root *kavar*, “to be divided or cloven into two parts, to bifurcate”. It does resemble the Sumerian *gú.bar* chignon divided by a braid or ribbon, and the similar Harappan hair-bun “divided into two protuberances one above the other”. This is an additional argument in favour of the thesis that this Sumerian–Harappan hairstyle survives in Vedic *kaparda*.



fig. 1.4: The non-convex side of a money cowry shell divided into two parts in the middle by a narrow slit (Photo: Asko Parpola)