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METAPHORS OF KINGSHIP IN ANCIENT JAIN LITERATURE AND ART

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The worship of gods in a fully or partially human shape is considered a characteristic feature of South Asian religions. Yet, descriptions and representation of gods or divine beings in human form seems to be a rather late development gaining momentum only around the turn of the era. In these descriptions, royal features are frequently employed to describe gods and the palaces of worldly rulers are used to circumscribe transcendent worlds. In consequence, a semantic field frequently applied to express the deification of human religious founders like the Jina on a literary level, is that of kingship, royal rule and military conquest. The article will focus on the question how metaphors of kingship are employed in both Jain literature and visual arts to express and promote the changes in perception and gradual deification of the Jinas. It will further address the question how metaphors were used to construct divine corporeality of a human form and how literary metaphors relate to the shaping of the anthropomorphic visualization of a deified human being like the Jina.

The main question of this article is in which way metaphors of kingship occur in the deification of the Jina, or, in other words: How was the Jina transformed from a human, who searched for a path to salvation and founded an ascetic order, to a deified supernatural being, whose image became a cult object worshiped by his lay followers? In this process, metaphors played an important role, especially metaphors of kingship. It took a long time to transform the Jina into a divine being that bears, among others, the epithet '*devādideva*' and is clearly superior to both pre-Jain *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s, *nāga*s, etc. and cosmological deities like Śakra whose limited powers merely allow them to rectify things, for example by transferring the embryo of the Jina, if something in the cosmic course of events goes wrong. The transformation, however, can be traced in the literature as well as in the pictorial tradition.[1]

[1] The considerations presented in this article are based on research conducted as part of an ongoing project funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG, German Research Foundation) – SFB 1475 – Project ID 441126958. The subproject "The Human Body as Metaphor of the Divine: Anthropomorphism in South Asian Religious Traditions" is part of the CRC 1475 "Metaphors of Religion. Religious Meaning-Making in Language Use" and gives attention to metaphors as constitutive of the emergence and development of two divergent dynamics in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism from the turn of the Common Era to about 500 CE: the

In accordance with the fundamental concepts formulated in the course of the project mentioned above, I presuppose that religious meaning-making avails itself of metaphors. In metaphors, meaning is transferred from one semantic domain to another. Religion, which cannot directly address its ultimate subject - the transcendent - depends on this procedure. The research presented in this article addresses the fundamental question of how motifs from the field of the transcendent or the "divine" can be described or depicted. The level of transcendence is naturally beyond human experience and thus beyond the expressive possibilities of both language and image. Special means are therefore required to describe or depict the indescribable divine.

Gods and divine beings are generally inconceivable and therefore can neither be described nor depicted. Neither art nor literature have a separate vocabulary by means of which the level of transcendence and the inhabitants presumed there could be represented. This has always been a problem for religions, since religion cannot directly address and discuss its actual object, namely the transcendent or ‘divine’. Religious communication takes place primarily through the distinction between immanence and transcendence, i.e., the attempt to express the transcendent by immanent means.[2]

One way to overcome this difficulty and to make the transcendent world tangible – at least indirectly – on a textual and pictorial level is the use of metaphors.[3] Metaphors transfer meaning from one semantic domain to another. The difference between the tangible form and the underlying meaning makes it possible to locate the image in a source and a target domain.[4] This means that a known form from objective reality (source domain) is used as a substitute to represent a meaning that lies beyond known forms and therefore cannot be represented

manifestation in human form of the Hindu god Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, and the deification of the Jina and the Buddha.

[2] Luhmann 2002: 77. For a critical discussion, see Kleine 2016.

[3] Elwert, Karis, Krech 2023.

[4] Lakoff 1986: 294. Lakoff & Johnson 2003: 266:

> “In a metaphor; there are two domains: the target domain, which is constituted by the immediate subject matter, and the source domain, in which important metaphorical reasoning takes place and that provides the source concepts used in that reasoning. Metaphorical language has literal meaning in the source domain. In addition, a metaphoric mapping is multiple, that is, two or more elements are mapped to two or more other elements. Image-schema structure is preserved in the mapping - interiors of containers map to interiors, exteriors map to exteriors; sources of motion to sources, goals to goals, and so on.”

Following the definition of Lakoff and Johnson, the naming of a thing or a process from this world (source domain) serves to describe the otherwise indescribable transcendental world (target domain). Although Lakoff and Johnson do not explicitly include visual metaphors, it seems fruitful to apply their considerations to images, too. The levels of the source and target domain distinguish the visual metaphor from the symbol, where instead a sign refers to the content (signified) by means of its form (signifier).

immediately (target domain). If necessary, the resulting motif can be identified as a metaphorical representation by a reference to transcendence, which is then usually done using iconographic pictorial elements.

From the perspective of the history of religion, the legend about the life of Jina Mahāvīra – that in its complete form emerged rather late and does only incorporate some of the scattered episodes of the Jina's life from earlier texts – is therefore not only to be read literally, but to be analysed for its possible metaphorical content.

The gradual transformation of the Jina from a humanly conceived or remembered teacher into a divine being took place over a long time and involved – in mutual dependence – both the literary and the pictorial tradition. The cause of this development cannot be clearly determined from the surviving sources, but it is likely that the establishment of a Jain laity and the respectively increasing need for rituals of worship was a major impetus.

The Śvetāmbara canon[5] describes Mahāvīra as an ascetic, who proclaimed his doctrine of salvation, while in the Jina legend, that is, in the Ācārāṅgasūtra and Kalpasūtra, he had already undergone a complete transformation[6] and was presented as the saviour and first god among the gods (*devādideva*).[7] When exactly this transition from belief in the mythical founder to the idea of a divine Jina happened remains uncertain.

In the versions that have come down to us, the Jina legend is not a coherent work, but the result of an enrichment and overlapping of various narratives. This is obvious from the numerous variations within the narratives of the Digambara and Śvetāmbara literature. It is also evident in the composition of motifs, which dispenses with episodes from older traditions and replaces them with an extended plot praising pageantry and wealth, set in the environment of the Jina. In the oldest surviving versions transmitted in the Ācārāṅga- and Kalpasūtra, the Jina legend describes the life of Mahāvīra, who grew up as a prince and as an adult renounced the world to seek salvation as a mendicant monk. After a long search, he finally attained omniscience and presented the knowledge he gained in his sermons. This plot of the Jina legend corresponds in its structure with the rite of passage described in any hero's journey, consisting of *separation, initiation* and *return*.[8] The hero grows up, leaves home to face trials and returns

[5] Regarding the canon problem, see Bruhn 1987.

[6] Ohira 1994: 198.

[7] *Viyāhapaṇṇatti* XII.9. See Deleu 1970: 190.

[8] Campbell 2004: 28.

with knowledge or an insight that he shares with his family. In the Jina legend, *separation* takes place through the prince's renunciation of the world. *The initiation* occurs when he attains omniscience as the result of his long wandering and asceticism. The *return*, in the Jina legend, initiates the formation of a group of ascetics that receives the knowledge of the Jina when listening to his sermon. In the Ācārāṅgasūtra, Mahāvīra first preaches to the gods, who descend from heaven for this purpose, and then proclaims his teaching to the people.[9] The Kalpasūtra, on the contrary, does not mention this first sermon; instead, it highlights the large number of followers Mahāvīra left behind.[10]

The moment when the ascetic seeking salvation attains omniscience is the turning point of the Jina legend. Omniscience stands metaphorically for his divine qualities. According to Jain concepts the world was not created but exists eternally and all processes in the world repeat like a clockwork in every age. Divine omnipotence can therefore only exist in the form of absolute knowledge of the course of all action and being according to the cosmic order in the successive ages; it cannot mean omnipotence, since a creative power that brings about change is not part of Jain cosmology. The increase of the power attributed to the Jina could therefore only be expressed by means of a further metaphor, by designating the Jina as god among the gods (*devādideva*) and thus as the ruler and guardian of the universe, as mentioned before. This designation refers in a metaphorical way to the great king (*rājādirāja*) in the human world, who is supposed to steer the fate of his kingdom in a similar way without changing or questioning the world order.

As mentioned before, one essential tool for the process of deification is the use of metaphors. In this article the focus is on images, that is, visual metaphors, but the discussion includes related passages from Jain literature. The question, therefore, is how the deification of a humanly conceived founder of a religious tradition - the Jina Mahāvīra - or the divine qualities attributed to him can be expressed visually. It is crucial to note that the beginning of the deification cannot be traced. The oldest surviving versions of the Jina legend in the Ācārāṅgasūtra and the Kalpasūtra, already ascribed supernatural qualities like the ability to incarnate in the womb of his mother or to gain omniscience to the Jina.

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[9] Ācārāṅgasūtra II.15 §28.

[10] Kalpasūtra, Jinacaritra §§ 134-145.

A connection to kingship can be seen in the titles Jina ('conqueror' or 'victor') and Mahāvīra ('great hero') as well as in relation to the ruler of the world.[11] Finally, the cyclical appearance of the Jinas is some sort of deification in itself. It puts the Jinas on par with heroes and universal rulers *(cakravartin).* 'Metaphors of kingship' in this context involve the specific use of royal symbols beyond the context of the king or his reign. In connection with kingship royal insignia are mere symbols, but if these symbols are transferred to an ascetic figure like the Jina, a metaphorical content may be assumed. In the case under discussion, symbols of kingship are not depicted in a royal image, but in the representation of a figure known to be an ascetic. The metaphorical equation changes the meaning of the depicted ascetic and turns him – in a way – into a king. Symbols and metaphors are therefore often intertwined. They cannot always be fully interpreted without their respective context.

The following explanations are based on the approach of Klaus Sachs-Hombach, who analyses the meanings of at the levels of semantics, syntax and pragmatics.[12] According to his theory, after identifying the semantics of the individual pictorial element, the relationship between the individual elements (syntax) has to be identified, before the 'sense'– that is the meaning of the entirety of elements (pragmatics) – can be determined. The following analysis is further based on the assumption that a visual metaphor can manifest itself both in the entirety of the image content and in individual image elements or image formulas.[13] Form and meaning are united in the image content (*Bildinhalt*), i.e. what the viewer sees; the metaphor refers externally to the form, but is located on the level of meaning in terms of its sense. A visual metaphor therefore exists when the obvious form of an image and the meaning recognizable to the viewer, i.e. the meaning behind the form, do not directly correspond.[14] There is therefore an ambiguity in the image ('double imagery'), which can often only be deciphered through appropriate contextual knowledge. Without this knowledge it remains ambiguous ('openness of meaning').

The oldest known images of a Jina are found on stone votive tablets *(āyāgapaṭa)*. These tablets were found in the region of Mathurā in northern India around the beginning of the Common Era. About a century later, these earliest visual representations were followed by the

[11] See Krüger, forthcoming.

[12] Sachs-Hombach 2013: 73.

[13] An image formula (*Bildformel*) is an established, frequently repeated syntactic combination of individual visual elements. See Krüger 2020: 75.

[14] Krüger 2022: 52.

first sculptures depicting the Jina in a standing meditation posture or sitting during a sermon. In addition to larger sculptural temple images made of stone, portable bronze figures were also created – starting in ca. the 2nd century AD - depicting the Jina in an almost identical manner. Unlike in Buddhist art, where the image of the Buddha is preceded by an aniconic phase without any anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha, a purely symbolic representation preceding the image of the Jina is not known in ancient Jain art.

One basic question of how an *āyāgapaṭa* can be 'read' will be discussed taking the *sihanaṃdikā āyāgapaṭa* (Fig. 1) as an example. The first point worth noting is that an *āyāgapaṭa* was placed on a pedestal and the image must therefore be read as being in a horizontal position. This is illustrated by the fragment of a doorway arch discovered in Kāṅkālī Tila, Mathurā. It depicts a veneration scene where similar tablets are placed next to a stūpa on square pedestals (Fig. 2).

Fig. 1. *Sihanaṃdikā Āyāgapaṭa*, Kāṅkālī Ṭīlā, c. 1st century (National Museum New Delhi). Photo: Monika Zin.

Fig. 2. Detail of a doorway arch, Kāṅkālī Tila, 1st century CE (National Museum New Delhi). Photo: Monika Zin.

In the centre of the *sihanaṃdikā āyāgapaṭa* is a medallion with a naked ascetic sitting on a pedestal under a parasol. Four images of the so-called omega motif are depicted around the medallion. Two separate side registers show pillars with vessel-shaped bases; one is topped by an elephant, the other one by a cakra. It remains uncertain whether the ascetic can be interpreted as a Jina. Whether "the arhats" mentioned in the inscription of this *āyāgapaṭa*[15] are to be regarded as the Jinas at this early stage still needs further discussion. For the time being, the interpretation will be accepted that this image is one of the earliest known representations of the Jina.

The pedestal on which the Buddha stands during his first bath in an aniconic representation from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Fig. 3), is of particular interest in this context because it assumes the shape of an 'omega'-symbol. It cannot be ascertained whether this feature is an abstraction and reinterpretation of Roman tripod tables which probably were a source of inspiration for a number of representations of the Buddha's first bath.[16] The scene shows the persons involved in the bathing ceremony. The Buddha is represented by a water vessel placed

[15] Quintanilla 2007: 278.

[16] Stoye 2004: 146, 152, 164-166.

Fig. 3. Depiction of Buddha's first bath, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, c. 3rd century CE (National Museum New Delhi). Photo: Monika Zin.

on an 'omega'-shaped pedestal. This example demonstrates, that the omega symbol can be understood as a platform or pedestal.[17]

Against this background, it seems reasonable to assume that the four 'omega'-symbols surrounding the seated ascetic in the centre of the *sihanaṃdikā āyāgapaṭa* are also related to the concept of 'support' - even more so since the 'omega'-shaped object that is part of the nandyavarta in the *aṣṭamaṅgala* sequence also serves as a support for a small lotus flower (Fig. 1, first symbol in the lower register). In the centre, it may have also been employed to indicate that the teaching of the Jina addresses the four regions of the world.

The two panels above and below this central representation depict altogether eight auspicious symbols.[18] The two pillars on each side are of particular interest. It seems obvious that the pillars - crowned by two symbols related to royal authority, the wheel and the elephant - indicate kingship of some sort. However, it is unclear whether these symbols are related to the

[17] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Krüger 2022a: 213, 218.

[18] These are, from left to right: In the upper register, matsya (fish), bhadrāsana (thron seat) śrīvatsa (chest sign of a Jina), vardhamānaka (powder box): Lower register: nandyavarta (symbolic diagram), padma (lotus flower), darpaṇa (mirror), kalaśa (vase). See Krüger 2022a: 211, fn 5.

Jina or have a different function. Strictly speaking, if they allude to the presence of royalty, this is not a figurative metaphor, but a figurative metonymy - the presence of royalty is represented by an object that is directly associated with kingship.

The development of images in ancient India results from an interaction of text and art. Images are not necessarily mere illustrations of one or several texts, although mutual references are visible. In this case the depictions on the *āyāgapaṭa* may relate to a passage in the Aupapātikasūtra that mentioned the king of Campa as one of the attendees of the sermon of Jina Mahāvīra. The moment Mahāvīra left the city, many auspicious symbols appeared, including the eight symbols depicted on the tablet.[19] It is also mentioned that the Jina sat on a stone slab while he preached.[20] This may imply a connection with the *śilāpaṭas*, which are mentioned in early Jain literature and are also known in Buddhism.[21] So, it would be reasonable to read this votive tablet as a reference to the story told in the Aupapātikasūtra.[22] But this interpretation cannot be fully ascertained. Furthermore, a connection between the pillars and the Jina seems more on the other known *āyāgapaṭa*s. So, it seems more likely that the royal pillars are a means to exalt the preaching Jina. The association with symbols of kingship that is represented by the pillars would elevate him metaphorically from a simple ascetic to a high-ranking person - someone who not only propagates a spiritual teaching, but deserves to be revered like a king. From this point of view, the image could be read as a visual metaphor, since there is a transfer of meaning from the source domain of kingship to the target domain of asceticism. The two symbols placed on the top of the pillars, the elephant and the wheel, are royal symbols that cannot be directly attributed to Jina. However, it should be mentioned that a pillar with a wheel is depicted as an object of worship in the throne pedestals of early Jina sculptures.

In the next stage of the development – the early three-dimensional Jina images – the venerability expressed by metaphors of kingship manifests itself more clearly. The earliest stone sculptures of sitting and standing Jinas were created about a hundred years after the *āyāgapaṭas*. While the figure on the *āyāgapaṭa* cannot always be clearly identified as an ascetic or Jina, the stone figures in question definitely show the Jina. The Jina image usually consists of the body of the Jina and a throne pedestal (Fig. 4). An art-historical analysis would start at a more general

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[19] Aupapātikasūtra §49 I.

[20] Aupapātikasūtra §10.

[21] Shah 1987: 10ff.

[22] Dated to ca. the first centuries CE in Dundas 2002: 24 and, slightly more precise, to the 3rd-4th century by U.P. Shah 1987: 95.

level and state that it is a naked man on a pedestal supported by lions. The man can easily be interpreted as the Jina. The throne is a lion-throne *(siṃhāsana)*, which is usually assigned exclusively to a king. It therefore constitutes another metaphor, as an ascetic does not sit on a royal throne in the real world of ancient India. Here, the throne has two functions. The first is to elevate the figure of the Jina in a very direct way. At the same time, the Jina is also elevated metaphorically, because the throne demands reverence for the one who sits on it. By being placed on the lion-throne, the Jina is subjected to a transfer of meaning: beyond being an ascetic and spiritual teacher he becomes a being worthy of veneration on a par with kings and gods.

Fig. 4. Fragment of a Jina on the lion throne, Mathurā, c. 1st-2nd century CE (Government Museum Mathura). Photo: Monika Zin.

The question now is, can the Jina also be regarded as a divine being due to his position on the throne? This cannot be ruled out, because the lion throne is both: in the secular sense it

is the specific seat of rulership, but in the religious sense it is also a throne of the gods and represents the heavenly spheres. The oldest depictions of the lion throne in India were created around the turn of the Common Era in the Mathurā region and show a simple pedestal supported by two lions. The space between the lions was either left empty or contains, for example, depictions of ascetics surrounding a pillar topped by a cakra. By the Gupta period, the scenes disappeared from the pedestals of the seated Jinas. The visual program of the pedestal was now increasingly homogeneous and received - by the tenth or eleventh century at the latest - the form that adorns the throne pedestals of Jain cult images up to the present day.

From an archaeological perspective, the lion throne is an import from the Achaemenid Empire, but its roots go back much deeper to ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian imagery. In ancient India, the lion throne was introduced rather late and maybe as part of the regalia of the Kuṣāṇas. Probably the earliest depiction in Indian sculpture shows the ruler Vima Kadphises sitting on it (Fig. 5). It is important to note that we are concerned with the object, not the name. At object level, we are talking about a seat supported by two lions.

The terminology used to speak about this seat at that time is unknown. However, it is interesting that the inscription on the sculpture of Vima Kadphises refers to the king as *"rājātirāja"* - the first king among kings.[23] This formula is also used on coins from this period. The analogously formed term *"devādideva"* - first god among the gods - is later also applied to Mahāvīra and is mentioned in the Bhagavatī.[24] This is another case of the entanglement of kingship with the construction of divine spheres.

The word *siṃhāsana* first appears in the Mahābhārata as a term for the king's throne. It is uncertain whether the term actually refers to a seat carried by lions or simply to the king's throne. In epic literature in particular, the Sanskrit term *siṃha* means "king" without reference to the lion. It is conceivable that this was already a metaphor which, as a "dead metaphor", was no longer recognizable as such in linguistic usage. In any case, even though the *siṃhāsana* is presented as the seat of the king in the Mahābhārata, in Jainism and Buddhism as well as in Brahmanical contexts it is primarily becomes the throne of the gods. This is obvious since in early Jain literature, the term appears in the Jina legends in the Ācārāṅgasūtra and Kalpasūtra. Here, the *siṃhāsana* is in fact the seat of the god Śakra in his heavenly palace. The throne is

[23] Banerjee 1920: 92.

[24] Deleu 1970: 190.

Fig. 5. Statue of Vima Kadphises on the lion throne, c. 1st-2nd century CE (Government Museum Mathura). Photo: Monika Zin.

described in much detail and it is stated that when the birth of a special person, particularly a Jina, is about to happen, the throne trembles.

In the Kalpasūtra it is reported that Mahāvīra's father also sits on a throne called *siṃhāsana*. There is no detailed description here, yet it seems safe to assume that the term most probably was transferred from the throne of Śakra. Thus, the father of Jina Mahāvīra is put close to divinity by stating that his throne is equal to the one used by the divine king of the gods, Śakra. In other words, the metaphor of the throne of the gods was transferred to a human king in order to elevate him - and the parentage of his son.

This raises another question - how can gods be depicted? This is one of the central questions of my investigation. The answer seems relatively clear: in India gods have been imagined in human form since around 500 BCE and have also been depicted since the beginning of the Common Era. What we are interested in is the process of how this happens. And this is also a matter of metaphors. I will demonstrate this using an example from painting. In the Jain miniature paintings of the early modern period, the gods of the Jain cosmos are depicted for the first time. As in earlier occasions, the human body was used to depict these beings which elude being portrayed. The gods represented in the miniatures not only resemble humans, they are barely different. In some manuscripts, only their multiple arms indicate that they are gods. The world of the gods is a reflection of the world of humans.[25] This can also be seen in miniature painting, where the same motif is used to represent the royal court and the court of the gods.[26] In this motif, which was copied almost unchanged in numerous manuscripts, the enlarged ruler is placed on one side of the picture. On the other side, his entourage is depicted in a smaller scale.

This is one of many examples of how the transcendent, here the …, which cannot be depicted, is made visible in art through metaphors. The direction of the mapping is often clear, for example when the king of the gods is shown as the earthly king. However, the use of metaphors is often complex. To give an example: the human king is used to portray or describe the divine king. At the same time, there are descriptions where the riches of a human king are compared with the incredible wealth of the divine kings. In both cases the ruler, in one example the ruler of the earthly village Kuṇḍagrāma (Fig. 6), in the other the ruler over the Saudharma heaven (Fig. 7), occupies the left half of the image while the members of his court are shown in several registers in the opposite half. The rulers and their respective courtiers wear similar garments and ornaments. The only means to distinguish Śakra from the worldly king are the number of his arms and the attributes he carries. Yet, the members of Śakra's entourage have only two arms and on their own cannot be recognized as representations of deities. The king of the gods carries a sceptre (*vajra*) and elephant hook (*aṅkuśa)* while the human ruler holds a sword as the sign of his rulership and, unlike his divine counterpart - is shown bearded.

[25] Schubring 1962: 243.

[26] In early modern Kalpasūtra manuscripts, the gods are depicted in three-quarter profile just like the humans and can hardly be distinguished from them. A clear distinction is made between them and the Jina, who after attaining omniscience is only shown frontally and in this depiction is modeled after the Jain cult image. This is discussed in detail in Krüger 2022b.

Fig. 6. King Siddhārtha and his entourage, Kalpasūtra Manuscript, Gujarat, c. 1450-1475 (Berlin State Library). Photo: Patrick Felix Krüger.

Fig. 7. God Śakra and his entourage, Kalpasūtra Manuscript, Gujarat, c. 1450-1475 (Berlin State Library). Photo: Patrick Felix Krüger.

The medieval miniature painters thus created a visual connection between the kind in the human world and the king of gods. This concept has no immediate source in the Kalpasūtra. It reflects, however, a perception of the world of the gods that is particular to Jainism. In it, the world of the gods is a reflection of the human world, and this also includes the life at court. This is supported by the brief titles often given next to a miniature in a manuscript, probably as an instruction or aide-memoire for the painter. In these short keywords, the illustration of the king with his court is noted as *"rājasabhā"* ('court of the king') while that of the god Śakra in a similar manuscript is called *"iṃdrasabhā"* ('court of Indra'; another name for the god

Śakra).[27] Here, the use of a visual metaphor is obvious. The well-established and thus easily represented scene of earthly kingship (source domain) is transferred to the transcendent world of the gods (target domain). The multiplicity of arms and the attributes of Śakra have to be interpreted as indicators of his transcendent quality and enable the viewer to identify the miniature as a metaphorical representation though other elements, for example the human bodies of the deities, refer to the human realm. At the same time, the metaphorical content of the representation is supported on a theological level. By putting the royal court on a par with that of the king of gods, it refers to the ancient Indian idea of the king as *deva* who as such represents the gods in the human world. This kind of divine kingship is based on the concept of the ruler as a super-human being that originally was created from divine particles. Literary sources documenting this concept can be found in ancient Indian legal literature as well as in the epics.[28] The throne of the ruler originated in a fixed relationship to the royal throne hall, which to a certain extent symbolized the cosmos with the king in the centre. That ancient oriental tradition saw the throne as a kind of divine vehicle could be interpreted as a possible model for the Indian idea of the flying palace of the gods *(vimāna)*.

Based on these examples from Jain miniature painting how the human ruler was seen as a metaphorical depiction of the gods. The next step in the process is to demonstrate how divine attributes have contributed to the deification of the Jina, originally conceived as a human, and how the Jina was elevated into the ranks of a god in his cult images.

At the moment of its first appearance, the Jina image is fully developed. Apart from minor stylistic changes, the image does not undergo any significant further development. Thus, in the image itself, the Jina is represented as a human individual, and not as a divine being. For many centuries the cult image shows the Jina sitting on a throne with a parasol. Although Jain literature mentions physical features that symbolize the supernatural qualities of Jina, the Jina image does not display any of these features.

Starting in the fifth century, iconographic elements from Buddhist imagery such as the *uṣṇīṣa,* the *ūrṇā* or the wheel flanked by two gazelles are sporadically included in Jina images. At about the same time, symbols representing divinity begin to be placed around the Jina. The set of motifs expanded over the centuries and was completed by the twelfth century.[29] The Jina

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[27] Krüger 2020: 169.

[28] Gonda 1969: 24f.

[29] Krüger 2011: 43.

in these fully developed cult images is accompanied by a largely fixed ensemble consisting of fly whisk and garland bearers as well as musicians and elephants (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Jain bronze altar piece, Gujarat 1603/4 CE (Private Collection)

In combination with the lion throne, the parasol, and the nimbus of the Tīrthaṃkara, these figures symbolize the "eight great miracles" *(aṣṭamahāprātihārya)* that occur at the moment of a Jina's enlightenment. The miracles referred to by this array of figures and objects are an Aśoka tree, a heavenly drumming *(devadundubhi*), a shower of flowers *(puṣpavarṣa)*, a

triple parasol of honor *(trichattra* or *chattratraya)*, two fly whisks *(cāmara)*, the lion throne *(siṃhāsana)*, celestial music *(divya-dhvani)*, and the nimbus *(bhāmaṇḍala)*. These symbols, which were added to the Jain iconography successively, were later summarized in the literature as the Eight Miracles.

Three of the miracles are represented by immediate symbols of the king. These are the triple parasol, the fly-whisk and the lion-throne. Together with the lion throne, parasol and fly whisk are among the attributes of ancient Indian kingship and symbolize the status of Jina as a spiritual ruler, while at the same time indicating his relationship to the ruler of the world *(cakravartin)*. In ancient India, the king carried a white parasol as a sign of royal dignity and a symbol of the shape of the universe. In this sense, the triple parasol of Jina refers to his (spiritual) rule over the three worlds of Jain cosmology. The parasol stick is occasionally interpreted as the *axis mundi*, which is why the king depicted under a parasol can be interpreted as the mediator between heaven and earth.[30]

Even the earliest images of a Jina on the *āyāgapaṭa*s are provided with a simple parasol. In the Gupta period, the parasol was initially replaced by the nimbus, which was later supplemented by a triple parasol. In the context of kingship, however, the parasol has a deeper meaning that goes beyond its symbolic function as a sign of the cosmos. For example, the ruler should never be exposed to direct sunlight, as the splendour *(tejas)* attributed to the king would be neutralized by the power of the sun. As a result, he would thus lose this splendour and his royal status.[31]

Just like the parasol, the pair of fly whisks is a symbol of power in ancient India. In the images of the Śvetāmbaras in northern India, the fly whisks are usually carried by male or female worshippers. The pictorial tradition of the South Indian Digambaras shows the Jina flanked only by the fly whisks. The fly whisk as a royal symbol, just like the lion throne, is much older than its first depictions in ancient Indian art and dates back to ancient Egypt. At this stage, however, it was not an object carried by a servant in attendance of the ruler but an attribute of the ruler himself, who is able to brush aside the sins of the world with it.

The other motifs also represent kingship but are not as closely connected with the body of the ruler. Elephants, musicians, drummers and the scattering of flowers are all part of the royal procession in ancient India. An exception is the 'water pot' *(kalaśa)* at the top of the

[30] Owen 2012: 61.

[31] Gonda 1969: 37.

bronzes and the leaves of the Aśoka tree. From an art-historical perspective, the Aśoka leaves on the early bronzes were originally part of a *kalaśa* and only later interpreted as leaves.
The eight miracles are often referred to as symbols, but it seems more adequate to treat them as metaphors. As symbols would refer to the Jina or depict its characteristics. But again, the metaphors are taken from the realm of kingship. They therefore do not merely qualify the image of Jina, but change it. They are symbols of kingship, but in combination with the Jina image they gain their metaphorical dimension.

Conclusion

In their entirety, the eight miracles represent the omniscience of the Jina. Several of these pictorial motifs are taken from the symbolism of the source domain of ancient Indian kingship; however, they do not define the ascetic on the throne within their original symbolic sphere, as a king, but apply the signs on a metaphorical level to characterize him as a religious redeemer (target domain). In other words, royal or, in a broader sense, political symbolism is used to depict a religious theme.

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