

EARLY TERRACOTTAS FROM CHANDRAKETUGARH

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The archaeological site of Chandraketugarh lies about twenty-three miles to the northeast from Calcutta. The place covers a very large area including several villages (viz., Berachampa or Devalaya, Jhikra, Hadipur etc.) and long stretches of cultivated fields. Very recently, the site was explored by the present writer for about one and a half years (1956-1957) which resulted in the discovery of numerous early terracottas of high importance and value. The collection has been further enriched by many other rare figurines collected from the same site by Satyen Ray and Prabhas Shome.

The terracotta figurines from Chandraketugarh are noted for their beautiful execution and style, which undoubtedly add to the richness of the already known finds of the Maurya, Śuṅga, Kushāṇa and Gupta periods. The male and female figurines of the early period are marked with a singular charm attained through an uncommon lyricism of style. These not only remind us of the similar miniature terracotta sculptures from other North Indian sites, viz., Tamluk, Bangarh, Patna, Kosam, Bhita, Mathura, Hastinapur, etc., but also in some instances afford evidences of foreign contact. Perhaps the earliest terracotta figures from Chandraketugarh, so far discovered, are two *yakshiṇī* heads wearing elaborate coiffures. One of these is the bust of a small moulded female figure (size: 3" × 2.3") wearing a bicornate headdress (Pl. XIII, Fig. 1, left and Fig. b, p. 51) which makes it comparable with similar figures from other North Indian sites. The other one (2.3" × 2") is also wearing an elaborate headdress adorned with circular medallions and precious ornaments (Pl. XIII, Fig. 1, right and Fig. a, p. 51).¹ The treatment and style of these two *yakshiṇī* figurines along with their coiffures seem to be associated with similar figures from Tamluk, Patna and Hastinapur, which are generally attributed to the Maurya period.² The conscious attempt to create the forms, the archaic decorations and the partly subdued feminine traits make them easily distinguishable from the Śuṅga and Kushāṇa terracotta figurines.

The main bulk of the terracotta figures from Chandraketugarh consists of numerous examples of Śuṅga and Kushāṇa periods, apparent from their treatment and style. The Śuṅga terracottas

¹ This was collected by D. P. Ghosh, Curator of the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University, Calcutta.

² Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, London 1954.

Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta 1933, p. 11, Pl. 7, Fig. 13.

Indian Archaeology—A Review, 1954-55, Pl. XXXIX.

Ashton (ed.), *The Art of India and Pakistan*, Pl. 4, 39.

Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1926-27; p. 135, Pl. XXXI.

B. B. Lal, "Excavation at Hastinapur and Other Explorations in the Upper Ganga and Sutlej Basins, 1950-52," *Ancient India*, Nos. 10 & 11, Pl. XXXVI, 1. The Hastinapur terracotta belongs to Period III of the excavated site which also yielded numerous sherds of the Northern Black Pottery as well as a number of punch-marked coins.



Fig. 17. Head of a terracotta *yakshini*.
Chandraketugarh. c. 2nd century B.C.
Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.

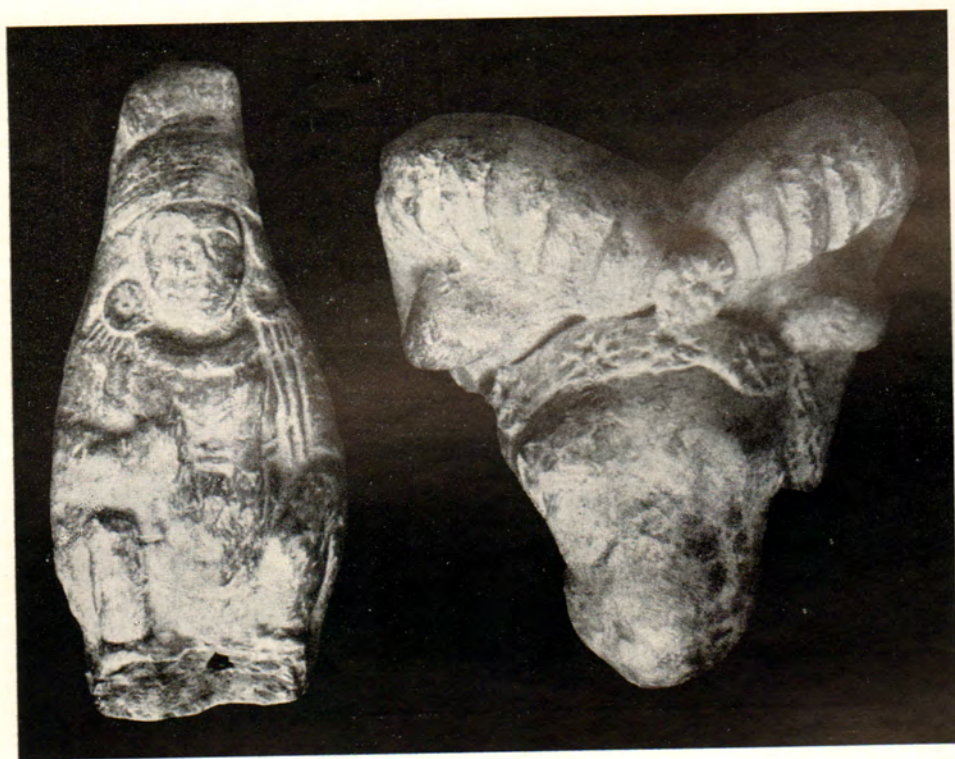


Fig. 18. (Left) Terracotta rattle with a seated figure (Kubera). Chandraketugarh.
4.8" x 2.4". Kushāṇa. Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.
(Right) Terracotta decorated ram's head. Chandraketugarh. Kushāṇa.
Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 19. Terracotta plaque with rhinoceros motif.
Chandraketugarh. Kushāṇa.
Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.



Fig. 20. Terracotta head of *yaksha* or *gaṇa*. Chandraketugarh.
Late Kushāṇa. Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.

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