



Parallels of Gundestrup cauldron interior art with Indic motifs

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Abstract

Scholars have debated the cultural context and image interpretations for the approximately 2000-year-old Gundestrup cauldron since its burial discovery over 125-years-ago in Denmark. Many, including the author contend that it is a ritual object and its five inner-plate scenes seem to depict stories and rites, perhaps seasonal/celestial. The evidence supporting the Thracian or the ‘Celtic’ origin is thought less likely by some due to recent technical studies and changing opinions, causing many to revisit the ideas of never knowing what the scenes depict. Building on an old hypothesis that three Indic motifs inspired three bowl interior motifs, we find two candidate Indus seal impression-plate motif pairs potentially showing parallels for all five inner-plates. Since art critics have not completed detailed evaluations for all five pairs, the author made a visual, descriptive, stylistic, and interpretive analysis using art criticism-theory. The inability to find enough bowl-Indic motif matches, made the past south Asian linking arguments doubtful, but when judged *in toto*, this paper makes a strong case that all five cauldron interior motifs can be shown to have definitive parallels with five Indic motifs. The study holds promise for a search for further potential parallels between Indic and cauldron art using pictorial narratives, combining art and literary criticism-theory.

Keywords Archaeology · Archaeoastronomy · Art history · Astronomy · *Brāhmaṇic* ritual · ‘Celtic’ studies · Decoding iconography-image analysis-decryption · Gundestrup cauldron · Iron Age studies · Material culture · Myth & literature · *Vedic* ritual studies

1 Introduction: Gundestrup cauldron cultural origin debate

Currently housed in the National Museum of Denmark after its reconstruction, the approximately 2000-year-old Gundestrup cauldron consists of 13 silver plates [one missing], dismantled and laid in a silver bowl. It was found buried in Jutland, Denmark peat bog in 1891 (Harding, 2007, p. 226) (Fig. 1). Previously, scholars predominantly argued the artefact is either a ‘Celtic’ or Thracian-styled ritual vessel (not Roman or Greek) dated to La Tene Iron Age 1st-century BCE–1st-century CE. It contains numerous ‘Celtic’ images and appears to display deities throughout with pictorial narratives of rites, possibly seasonal, on its interior plates (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 7–8; Kaul, 1995, p. 9; Klindt-Jensen, 1959, pp. 161–165; Marazov, 1995, p. 74; Olmsted, 1976, pp. 95–96; Schutz, 1983, pp. 292–296). A third origin hypothesis is that a few cauldron motifs on four

plates (three inner, one outer) seem to be inspired by Indic motifs. This argument had less support thus far since artistic analysis for three of the plates was brief and no further evidence of the cauldron’s connection to India had arisen (Dillon, 1974, p. 28, 1975, p. 138; Mode, 1961, pp. vi, 12; Taylor, 1992, pp. 87–89).

Recently new archaeological data and changing views have raised doubts about assigning a Thracian or ‘Celtic’ provenance for the cauldron. In 2005, Nielsen’s team assessed metalworking processes to reveal that four artisan groups used a silver-copper formula, *repousse*—a figure press-out method often seen in silver material objects at Thracian sites, and tooling finish with beeswax behind plate figures to protect them. The analysis of bowl-making materials showed that scientific accelerator dating for the most reliable beeswax sample (KIA19713) was 1st-century BCE–2nd-century CE. The glass inlay X-radiographic analyses were traced to 2nd-century BCE–1st-century CE (glass for god’s eyes could have been used later), and, based on synchronic data for Roman silver, gold content of silver cauldron placed cauldron to 1st-century CE or earlier, all conforming well with dates above (Jouttijarvi, 2009, p. 964;

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Fig. 1 Gundestrup cauldron, National Museum of Denmark. *Courtesy Harding (2007)*

Nielsen et al., 2005, pp. 42, 47–49). All material sources were found to come from northern or western Europe. The ‘Celtic’ Rhinelands and northern France silver isotopically matched with cauldron silver. Cornwall tin matched cauldron tin, and glass was like that found near Manching (Nielsen et al., 2005, pp. 34–42). Knowing that cauldron silver came from northern Europe, past argument that cauldron crafters used Persian *siglos* silver coins from Thrace is ruled out (Taylor, 1992, p. 87). If paleobotanists can extract pollen DNA from the beeswax, the area of the bowl’s production location might be narrowed.

In addition to a weakened Thracian case, many experts challenge the use of the descriptor, ‘Celtic,’ or identification of ‘Celts’ as a single cultural group. Joy (2001, p. 405) criticizes past scholars’ use of biased classical texts and early medieval literature incorrectly, as they combined this with archaeological finds as evidence of ‘Celtic’ religious practices. They erroneously viewed distribution of ‘Celtic’ settlements as matching the distribution of a unified ‘Celtic’ religion which was “often implied across large geographical areas and over long-time spans”. She argues against “the existence of a single Iron Age religion”. Deconstructing traditional ‘Celtic’ identity further, James says that a universal ‘Celtic cultural package’ is dangerously misleading. The groups appearing similar might not be in reality; local identities and their differences from others are more important. He provides several examples of ‘Celtic’ misfits including Celtiberians who did not use ‘Celtic’ La Tene art, sparse Druid cult evidence found only in British Isles or Gaul with priests possibly unknown to most Iron Age continental ‘Celts’, and ‘Celtic’-identified social groups possessing widely variable socio-political structures across time and landscapes (James, 2005, <http://www.le.ac.uk/archaeology/stj/whocelts.htm>). In all fairness to ‘Celtic’ culture-concept supporters, the sheer

number of language, clothing, weapons, trade, and spiritual links seen for various groups known as ‘Celts’ is hard to ignore entirely. Still, if one chose to identify the cauldron as ‘Celtic,’ it would be better to specify a tribe responsible for crafting it or to concede by agreeing to use the current, general term, Iron Age religious artefact.

With weaker arguments for both ‘Celtic’ and Thracian provenance, the exploration of the cauldron’s possible Indic link rose in importance. Since the inner plates display more images, suggesting narratives and/or rites, and Hindu culture has abundant art and literature, this research attempts to search for a link between the two. As an elite-produced artifact, it is thought best that bowl scenes be compared to elite-made Indic art and text. Employing art criticism theory to strengthen the analyses for three inner plates that previously matched with Indic motifs, we continued using it to assess other Indic pieces to see if any had motifs similar to bowl interior motifs. Unexpectedly, critical analysis found parallel between two more inner plate-Indic art motif pairs, with a result that all five interior plates appear to display Indic motifs.

Before reporting the visual assessments, let us briefly review artistic analysis theory/method used by archaeologists and art or religious historians. The art criticism evaluations provide descriptive, stylistic, and interpretative analyses, in that order, and conclude by specifying pictorial narratives, intuitively aligning art scenes with text. For this work, we assess whether Indic-cauldron art parallels exist using the first three steps, leaving the complex art-text-linking final step, which enjoins art criticism and theory with literary criticism and theory, for later. During the descriptive phase, art critics evaluate iconographic content of a piece providing head-to-toe details for all images (Indic art has anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, hybrid, aniconic god forms), noting all objects or symbols including those on or near figures, and place each in the scene (centre, right, left, above, below). The experts provide attributes like size, shape, poses, devices implying action/direction, material used, and emphasize certain aspects of the work determined most significant, while passing over others (Ross, 2005, p. 328; Banerjea, 1956, pp. 1–2, 246–248, 269–305). Next, the stylistic analysis places art synchronically (time period, location of origin) and diachronically (motifs, techniques, artistic styles developed over long timespans) (Ross, 2005, p. 328). With an archaeological record showing Indo-Gangetic plain cultural continuity from the 7th millennium BCE to present, (conceding no social isolation nor immunity to outside cultural influences) (Shaffer & Lichtenstein, 2005, p. 93), I argue that some Indic religious motifs apparently were transmitted from the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) (2500–1900BCE) to the *Vedic* culture continuing up to today in India. IVC elite and common folk worshipped human images and used aniconic cult-god symbols, practices

which continued as Indian history progressed. For elite however, image-worship had “no place” in early *Vedic* rituals (c. 16th–13th cen. BCE) nor was it seen in detailed sacrificial rites of the early *Brāhmaṇas* (c. 9th–6th cen. BCE), yet the use of god symbols continued. As early as 6th–5th cen. BCE according to Pāṇini, practices began changing as popular god images (*pratīkṛti*) were sold (*paṇya*) for livelihood (*jīvikārtha*) or were exhibited door-to-door for alms by low level Brahmins; others were not for sale (*apaṇya*). Patañjali reports later in the 3rd–2nd cen. BCE that the Mauryans produced god-images (*arccā*) to procure gold revealing that most elite eventually accepted image worship (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 39–40, 48–57, 62–69, 78–89, 102–108, 228–229, 394–395). As early as *Vedic* times, a few cult icons displayed images appearing to belittle the beliefs of other faiths; conversely, some art seemed intent on reconciling differences among sects. Starting in the pre-Christian era, religious texts like *smṛtiśāstras* broadly spread ideas that the principal god for each of the four main sects was just another aspect of the one absolute god, becoming expressed later as unifying art showing each sect’s god with the artist’s god possibly assigned preferential placement (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 5–6, 231–232, 540–542). During the stylistic analysis, assessors can consider multiple Indic motifs as potential plate matches including motifs adopted by one creed only, those used across multiple creeds, and amalgams/fused motifs of more than one god or creed, perhaps due to syncretistic or foreign influences. Banerjea reveals commonality of borrowing saying:

If a careful analysis is made of a good many of the images associated with the developed phases of Buddhism and Jainism, it can be shown how they are close adaptations of Brāhmaṇical Hindu cult icons (Banerjea, 1956, p. 557).

Finally, though some Indic motifs are known to have existed due to their mentions in iconographic texts, why have Indic art historians been unable to find some of them on material objects available today? First, most Indic sacred art has vanished since it was made of perishable material, usually wood, less often clay; second, countless durable art works were destroyed by enemies or by religious groups who judged them idolatrous; third, at times local people took religious art to use as building materials or for other uses; lastly, disaster such as fire or flood demolished art. Unfortunately, unless new discoveries are made, some previously existing art and texts written about them will be lost for ever (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 32–33, 203–204).

The interpretative evaluation follows as critics attempt to assign each work of art to a specific ideological context and to identify the art’s sponsors, creators, and intended audience. The cultural groups can express “multiple, nested, or conflicting ideologies, though one will usually dominate

others” (Ross, 2005, p. 328). The sacred art involves priest or devotee deifying interpretations of ominous natural forces, which can change over time, so forms gods take, emblems, weapons, or other powers-qualities seen with them and human ritual responses to them, guide expert decisions as to whether motifs-deities are depicted in sacred art. Iconography may show focused god images for worship, stories of the gods including rituals, human-god interactions with mortals seen lower on the earthly plain or deities often seen higher in astral realms (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 1–2, 284–304; Potts, 1997, pp. 185–187; Ross, 2005, p. 334). Thus, any interpretation of *Vedic* or *Brāhmaṇic* art, literary, and religious history is incomplete without the mention of astronomy symbolism embedded within them. Though mentioned in mid-2nd millennium BCE *Rg Veda* text, but likely originating at least 1000 years earlier, a *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic nakṣatra* system evolved to contain 27 lunar station stars (*nakṣatras*); each with a *nakṣatra* deity, presiding deity, and symbol-meaning relating to asterism shape, number of stars in it, or star colour (Bryant, 2001, pp. 252–253; Pingree & Morrissey, 1989, pp. 99–102),¹ totaling a minimum of 81 potential images-imagery searchable in art and scripture. Since priests looked mostly east-south-west to dutifully observe the motions of sun, moon, and planets with these bright bodies seen as gods in many cultures, the art assessors may interpret sacred scenes as celestial landscapes showing presence of gods in the heavens, figures with wings or dangling legs might depict flight (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 281–283, 310) or sky presence. Artists crafted images and added symbolic clues to help viewers identify characters and determine motions/behaviours, season/time of day, or land-sky directions. Art critics seek optimal alignment of the images with cultural ideas to interpret or evaluate messages and ideas intended by the designers.

2 Comparing Gundestrup cauldron plate images to Indic art scenes

With past argument linking ‘Celtic’ and Thracian cultures to the Gundestrup cauldron in question, we will apply initially, the visual-only steps of art criticism to compare Indic art with bowl plates and explain how critics cross-match motif images. The artistic assessment by experts has already associated four plate scenes found buried in Denmark to India. In this study, two inner plate-Indic art

¹ NOTE: Periodically, sacred texts list 28 *nakṣatras*, however, priests used the 28th only for calendar corrections to keep the moon aligned with the correct *nakṣatra*; Texts near start of Christian era list number of stars in each *nakṣatra*, but I contend priest-observers used these memorized lists to find *nakṣatras* for a few 100 years prior to recording.



pairings are added to the discussion, potentially, strengthening the hypothesis that cauldron and Indic iconography show numerous parallels. Since the past scholars focussed only on inner plates depicting rites, my end goal is to identify ritual pictorial narratives. I excluded one of the six plates, Taylor's outer plate-Indic art pairing of goddess Hārītī, which does not seem to show a rite. Success in finding motif parallels for five Indic art-inner plate pairings, all with ritual displays, will support the future search for pictorial narrative image ensembles on Indic and cauldron interior art. Three previously identified Indic-inner plate motif pairings are shown first, followed by the two new Indic-plate motif couplings found by the author. Only Indic seal impressions, showing what artists intended to be seen after stamping, are used here and at times will be called 'seals' for brevity. Cauldron plate numbers are identified with recent Nielsen et al., (2005) study designations (e.g., C6571). For the first Indic-cauldron pair, we will assess each piece alone using art criticism steps of descriptive, stylistic, and interpretative analyses. Then employing expertise and guided by intuition, like all art or religious historians, and archaeologists do, the author compares the two evaluations in a short summary to assess the strength of parallels and assigns more importance if key figures and attributes are seen in both pieces. I use the scale strong, very good, good, poor, non-existent and require a minimum of three image matches to conclude that works have good-quality parallels. Due to space limitations, for the four remaining Indic-cauldron pairs, a slightly longer summary analysis of parallels is provided, excluding separate evaluations. Lastly, recalling challenges of lost art mentioned above, I have endeavoured to find the best Indic image extant which is diachronically as close as possible to plate motifs and which displays as many of each

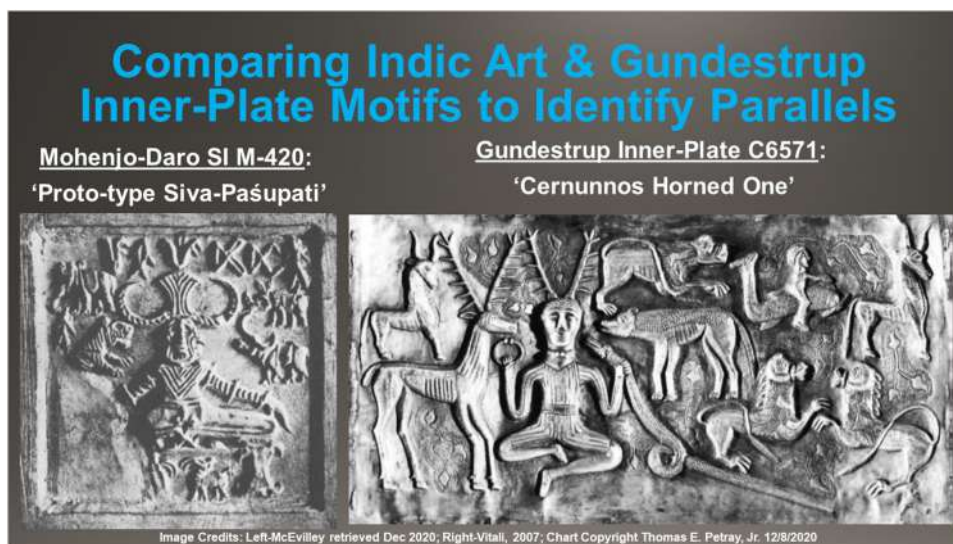
Indic motif's key elements as possible to enable quality comparisons.

First-identified and most-cited as showing Indic links, scholars (Dillon, 1974, p. 28; 1975, p. 138; Mode, 1961, pp. vi, 12; Taylor, 1992, pp. 87–89) chose inner-plate C6571 (Vitali, 2007, p. 186 photo) 'Cernunnos-Horned One' as resembling *Mohenjo-Daro* (M-D) Seal Impression (SI) M-420 (McEvelley, 1981, p. 45), proto-type of historic 'Śiva-Paśupati-Lord of Sacrificial Animals' (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 159–160 citing Marshall). The art comparison chart embedded in art criticism in coming sections allows readers to match images. Standard is that at least three distinctive image links are required to say that two art works have good-quality parallel motifs.

2.1 Art critical analysis: M-D seal impression (SI) M-420 proto (Śiva-Paśupati)

Description: Tall, fan-shaped headdress with curved horns worn by 3-faced, possibly ithyphallic giant male is seated erect-frontal on low Indian throne, in *kūrmāsana* yogic posture (heels touch under gluteals toes turned down). Five triangular necklaces-torcs are placed on neck or breast, bangled arms stretch out (or striped upper-torso), hands rest on knees, tassels hang from double-banded sash at waist. Four animals aside male are elephant and tiger to left, rhinoceros and buffalo to the right, as deer, tied to historic Śiva, looks at giant as it stands below throne with horns turned to centre (2nd deer's horns aside 1st?) (Fig. 2, left). Six Indus script symbols seen atop SI include a crude human figure (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 159–160 citing Marshall; Srinivasan, 1975/1976, p. 49). Features include: size: ~3 cm × 3 cm

Fig. 2 Left: M-D Seal Impression (SI) M-420 proto (Śiva-Paśupati) and right: Gundestrup Inner-Plate C6571 (Cernunnos 'Horned One')



(Sources for estimate: Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5, 235; Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113); shape: square; materials: terra cotta, lower-left damage.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, SI M-420 is similar to other Indus valley culture (IVC) finds dating to c.2400–2200 BCE. Mackay's IVC seals 222 and 235 clearly show same deity wearing headdresses akin to M-420 except for plant motifs in crowns and a one-faced god with a pigtail on 235. The '*Śiva-Paśupati*' motif, yogic-posed god wearing horns, necklaces-torcs, joined by deer, other animals, is 4000 years old yet still used for Lord *Śiva* today (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 159–160 citing Marshall, Mackay). Many IVC seals, mostly of 1-inch squares, have been found; front faces usually show text line atop, iconographic motif below; reverse faces reveal that most seals served as trade goods since "traces of packing materials such as woven cloth or reed matting" remains are found there, less-worn seals may have been worn as badges (Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113; Fairservis, 1992, p. 5). Diachronically, this motif evolved into *Śiva* with his emblems seen in Kushan (1st–6th cen. CE) and Gupta (4th–7th cen. CE) era coins (Smith, 1972, pp. 63–128). The necklaces/torcs placed on neck or breast of M-420 are like *yakṣa graiveyaka* of Śuṅga and post-Śuṅga period of c.184 BCE (Banerjea, 1956, p. 159) (Gupta & Hardaker, 2014, p. 17).

Interpretive assessment: Banerjea (1956, pp. 159–160) says that male seated on throne looks like an icon and his large size and horned crown all reveal his divinity. Thus, M-420 perhaps served the purpose of worship or self-property protection. As with other seals, a Mohenjo-Daro chieftain likely commissioned elite priests to design the motif for use as a trade tag showing shipper-receiver-cargo-customs paid, a tribal emblem, and/or a rite, story, or deity display (Parpola, 1994, 2000, pp. 113–115, 188; Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5–6, 200, 221). Fairservis (1992, pp. 39–40, 129, 200, 221) sees the buffalo-horned ½-animal, ½-man as a lord with sizable buffalo herds and four animals as clan totems using his Indus script decipherment "high ruler who is wealthy in buffalo gathers clans" all fitting *Śiva-Paśupati's* wealth in cattle title. Srinivasan (1975/1976, pp. 48, 51–55, 57) views central figure as a bull man tied to fertility; but use of a poor-quality M-420 reprint causes her to miss the tricephalic head seen. Abhyankar (1993, pp. 475–476) proposes that calendar information is shown, calling the horned figure *Prajāpati-Brahmā* (lord of the civil year) which starts at autumnal equinox. Based on approximate 3000 BCE solar positions, he links four animals near the god to four stars (*nakṣatras*) tied to solar-points: vernal equinox-summer solstice-autumnal equinox-winter solstice. However, I question using a 3000 BCE date for images aligned to stars (*nakṣatras*) 500 years before the oldest seal date. Rao (2005, pp. 503–505) says that the 'proto-*Śiva*' figure's horned headgear has 15 marks

on one horn, 14 on the other, a similar pattern to a 2600 BCE *Kot Diji* pot, except it shows 15 and 14 rare white paint marks on horns. Small marks at one horn tip grow larger to the forehead, then return to small at other tip on both, marks match lunar counts showing lunar phases, new moon to full moon at the face, then back to new moon, completing a cycle. Rao posits that the horn markings continued an imaging lunar months tradition saying, "If the figure on the seal represents later lord *Śiva*, it is interesting to note that the horns get replaced by the lunar crescent in the imagery of Lord *Śiva*, literally suggesting the connection." I agree that side views of water buffalo horns could look like a crescent moon, but it is suggested that seal shows a full moon rite occurring late summer or early fall during buffalo migration/rutting, a time to gather rich herds. All above archaeological, artistic, and astronomical interpretations reveal many embedded and sometimes conflicting ideologies in this seal.

2.2 Art critical analysis: Gundestrup inner-plate C6571 Cernunnos 'Horned One'

Description: The scene's focus is left of centre, giant male, eyes closed, mouth open, wears striped cap with deer antlers-leaf symbol. A ball-terminal neck torc, striped clothes (tight-fitting, long-sleeved coat, knee-breeches per Klindt-Jensen, 1959, p. 164), waist belt, seated in yogic-style posture (right heel touching under gluteal, toes touch lower calf of left leg, both sets of toes turned down), hands raised to shoulder height, right hand holds torc (both torcs originally gilded in gold, Kaul, 1995, p. 10), left holds serpent's neck, naked calves with laced shoes on feet. Left side of plate, two animals facing male on his right side include giant deer with three leaf symbols nearby and antlers akin to giant male; smaller, long-tailed goat with twin horns in upper left corner. Right side of plate to male's left, seven animals with seven leaf symbols twixt them include two strong-jawed canines in plate's upper centre. To immediate right, wearing suit, shoes akin to giant man, small male holds front fin of dolphin-tailed, alligator-scaled, three-finned creature with extensions from mouth, upper right corner goat matches other goat, lower right corner neath these four, twin lions wearing horse's heads interact facing each other while standing on hind paws with forepaws raised. The body of ram-horned serpent held by giant male extends to lower right neath other six animals (Klindt-Jensen, 1959, pp. 161–162; Schutz, 1983, pp. 299–300); Features include: size: ~41 cm × 20 cm (Nielsen et al., 2005, pp. 4, 11); shape: rectangular; materials: silver, gold leaf.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, plate C6571's antlered, cross-legged man 'lord of animals' motif, adding signifiers of torcs, ram-horned snake, his stag familiar, other animals



around him, fits to Iron Age god, Cernunnos ('Horned One') aka 'Lord of Animals' seen before Rome influenced art in western Europe. Like all bowl plate art, C6571 fits to other La Tene Iron Age material finds in north central Europe, is too idiosyncratic to fit Greco-Roman style, and has updated 1st-cen. BCE-1st-cen. CE date. Raevemose bog, Gundestrup, Jutland, Denmark, find-location is not likely the place of manufacture. Since Oppida are the only sites where cauldron construction evidence exists (Wells, 1995–1996, p. 220), I suggest assigning it a Rhine-Danube production site like Manching since horse skeletons found there are physically akin to horse figures seen on another plate (Schutz, 1983, p. 298). The bowl artisan repousse-styled faces look extremely similar to those seen on Jutland's bog-retrieved Dejbjerg wagon (La Tene 1st-cen. BCE) also thought to be built in the Danube region (Powell, 1971, p. 198; Schutz, 1983, pp. 291–292), and the river lies along easy transmission routes for Thracian repousse techniques and zig-zag shoelaces to appear while also being closer to its northern European material sources. Another Danish bog find at Rynkeby includes 1st-cen. BCE bronze cauldron fragments. The exterior has repousse woman's head, 'Hathor' wig, lobe-curling coif, and neck torc with two bull torsos at each side. The interior shows repousse boar and canine creatures (Schutz, 1983, pp. 291–292; Taylor, 1992, p. 88). Terminal-knobbed torcs, finest quality made of gold akin to plate's torcs, "were widely distributed over the Celtic area" in La Tene period finds, while the cross-legged giant's striped, long-sleeved topcoat and tight knee-breeches are like those seen on 1st-cen. CE northern Rhine 'Celtic' auxiliary soldiers' tombstones (Klindt-Jensen, 1959, p. 164). Art closest to the 'Lord of Animals' motif and cauldron time and place, although early Gallo-Roman fusions, are an Augustan period c. 12 BCE silver cup from Lyon showing Cernunnos laying on a couch with neck torc, torc in hand, plus his stag, a dog, tree, and snake nearby him. A merchant god Mercury sits/counts money at a table with his tortoise and other animals close. A Nuits St. George, Burgundy relief shows seated mother-goddess, hermaphrodite, and 3-faced, horned Cernunnos with his stag familiar along with many animals are around them (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 88, 90, 94). Diachronically, earlier pre-Roman images of Iron Age antlered god, Cernunnos existed in western Europe; e.g., a rock carving of antlered, standing figure with torc on each arm, is observed with horned serpent as early as 4th-cen. BCE in northern Italy's Camonica Valley. Cross-legged, giant male stone sculptures appear in 4th-3rd cen. BCE Gallic shrines in the Lower Rhône Valley (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 87–88, 109–110). Close parallels of antlered god Cernunnos motifs are also seen in early Christian era Romano—'Celtic' iconography. He was most popular with the Sequani, Aedui, Bituriges, Arverni, Santones, and Namnetes tribes of north central Gaul, but is also seen in western Gaul and southwest

Britain. Key motif elements signifying Cernunnos include antlers, cross-legged sitting pose, one or more torcs worn/held, ram-horned snake, wealth symbols, e.g., grain, coins, and, at times, three-faced or with a stag. The combined ½-human, ½-animal nature and cross-legged pose of this god are exclusive to him and totally non-Roman (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 89–91).

Interpretive assessment: Images on plate C6571 fit to six of seven key Iron Age Cernunnos motif elements including crossed legs, horned headdress, ram-horned snake, wealth signs of torc worn and one held, plus his deer and animal menagerie, with only his three-headed nature unseen. Bowl was elite funded and built to show elite's ability to obtain community needs from the god. Green (1989, 1992, pp. 92–94) considers ram horns and snakes as fertility symbols while stags symbolise virility and torcs invoke prosperity. She says that the god's pre-Roman link to goats appears at two Gallic sites, one at a thermal-spring sanctuary where he holds a small goat to his chest and at another site where he sits cross-legged on a goat. I propose that goats in the plate's upper right-left corners strengthen Cernunnos' fertility-wealth links. Green (1989, 1992, pp. 90, 94–96) adds a regenerative role for him due to his presence at healing-spring shrines and names him a fatherly figure as 'Lord of Animals'. She ties him to autumn or spring rites when seeing removable antlers, and links antlers to tree symbolism and mating season aggression. Stag-sun associations seen in Bronze Age northern Italy and Scandinavia plus Iron Age Hampshire, piqued Green's curiosity since Cernunnos is not the 'Celtic' sun god, so she saw the links as added fertility signs fitting the god's later Romano- 'Celtic' job to give good fortune (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 88–89). I view the plate's gold-gilded circular torcs as sun-wheel signs possibly linking Cernunnos to sun rituals or the sun-god.

2.3 Strong quality parallels between *Mohenjo-Daro* SI M-420 (proto-*Śiva-Paśupati*) and Gundestrup cauldron plate C6571 (Cernunnos Horned One)

Description: Parallels seen on both seal M-420 proto-*Śiva-Paśupati* motif and inner plate C6571 Cernunnos motif show the presence of giant-god in yogic pose, wearing horned-headdress, rich adornment-bangles-necklaces-torcs, encircled by animals and deer companion(s). The seal-plate paired image differences are headwear-water buffalo horns vs. deer-antlers, 3-faced vs. 1-faced gods, left leg positions, animal types in ensembles. The unpaired image variances are seal's script and plate's leaf-print background. The feature variances not affecting image comparisons include... sizes: seal ~ 2 cm × 2 cm (Sources for estimating: Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5, 235; Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113) vs. plate ~ 43 cm ×



20 cm (Nielsen et al., 2005, pp. 4, 11); shapes: seal-square vs. plate-rectangular; materials: seal-terracotta vs. plate-silver, gold leaf. Five out of six motif matches above provides a strong link, thus I judge that the motifs have strong parallels to each other.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, SI M-420 is similar to other Indus seal proto-*Śiva-Paśupati* motif finds (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 159–160) (yogic-posed, horned headdress wearing gods) cited above, dating to c.2400–2200 BCE; while plate C6571's antlered, cross-legged man motif, at times seen with torcs, ram-horned snake, his stag familiar, other animals around him, fits to other Iron Age god, Cernunnos art pieces (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 88, 90, 94) mentioned above, dated to 1st-cen. BCE–1st-cen. CE. Diachronically, minor detail changes such as adornment, styling, or techniques that evolved from pressed-clay to sheet-silver repousse all fit as normal progressions from IVC times to Iron Age. The minor variances listed above are explainable since horn and animal types are location dependent, 3-faced Cernunnos gods were made, and leg position does not affect the gods' meditative look. The visual analysis does not explain differences like seal's Indus script or the plate's leaf-print background. Though non-synchronic, the motifs' five shared elements like giant god-horned headwear-yogic pose-deer-animal menagerie, are so similar and distinctive that the experts noticed them quickly and caused them to declare the links.

Interpretive assessment: The priests likely created both the works, maybe commissioned by elites, intending them to show proper rites to obtain grain and cattle aplenty for all from the horned god. The five linked images in 'Lord of Animals' motifs above show strong parallels of prosperity-fertility symbolism, and the missing 3-headed trait

is a non-issue as both motifs have comparatives without them. The experts link M-420 to seasonal rites; e.g., tying animals to yearly solar solstice-equinox dates or headdress horns to lunar phases with full moon on the god's forehead, similarly, scholars suggest autumn or spring rites for C6571. It can be concluded that both plate and seal show a late-summer or early-fall rite hoping for fertility-wealth during yearly animal migration hunts or cattle-crop harvests.

3 Parallels between Kushan period seal (*Viṣṇu* wheel-god) and Gundestrup cauldron inner-plate C6572 (wheel-god priest)

Taylor (1992, pp. 87–89) sees another Indic connection when comparing *Brāhmaṇic* wheel-god *Viṣṇu* (Bibliography's *Greek-style seal*) to wheel-god on inner-plate-C6572 (Vitali, 2007, p. 183) (Fig. 3). The comparison chart and art criticism below show motif matches with more than three unique matches needed for parallel motifs.

Description: Iconographic parallels for both pieces include: male giant-god; wears elite headgear and neck ornament; raises two arms in "U"-shape as if praying; wheel, akin to cart-wheel, is partly hidden behind giant or broken; small male to giant's right devotedly faces him. Seal-plate pair differences are: full-body, unbearded giant dons necklace on Kushan seal vs. plate's male bust, beard, neck torc; cap, three spheres atop seal's giant vs. nose-guarded helmet on plate's giant; four-armed seal giant vs. plate giant's two; seal giant's lower left hand touches wheel vs. plate giant's right; seal giant's right hands hold mace (lower), globular item (upper), with ring-like object in upper left. The other

Fig. 3 Kushan Period Seal (*Viṣṇu* Wheel-God) and Gundestrup Cauldron Inner-Plate C6572 (Wheel-God Priest)



differences include: seal small male dons headdress, garment akin to Kushan royalty vs. plate male's horned helmet, striped clothes; seal small male does not hold broken-hidden wheel while the plate's small male does (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 124–125). Unpaired, seal has script, around plate's two males-wheel trio, twin spotted lions face right, paws dangling as if not on solid on ground, floating, leaf images between-below legs. In the lower scene, winged hybrid animal trio (bird head, lion body) face left, paws dangle as if to leap-fly, as tail-first, ram-horned snake, 2nd in line with bird-lions, looks up to wheel. Feature variances not affecting image comparisons are: sizes: seal ~2 cm × 2 cm (Sources for estimate: Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5, 235; Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113) vs. plate ~40 cm × 20 cm (Nielsen et al., 2005, p. 4); shapes: seal-oval vs. plate-rectangular; materials: seal-clay vs. plate-silver, gold leaf. With five out of five images linked, three of them strong (giants-gods-touch part wheels-attendant to giants' right), I find good quality matches to support these motifs as parallel.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, the selected seal (Greek-style Kushan seal, Banerjea, 1956, pp. 125, Pl. XI, Fig. 2) is the best-quality *Viṣṇu*-Wheel motif closest to plate's time dating to 50–200 CE when Kushans ruled to the Punjab and Indus valley. Banerjea (1956, 124–125, 152) says that Cunningham saw the four-armed male holding wheel (*cakra*) and club (*gadā*) as solar deity *Viṣṇu* since the symbols link to him; e.g., sun sign-wheel is his emblem par excellence. The seal, with Greek-influenced Tocharian script naming *Mihira* (Iranian Sun god), *Śiva*, as well as *Viṣṇu*, may be a Kushan cult amalgamation accepted by differing faiths. The evidence for use of *Viṣṇu* symbols in India before or early within the cauldron construction time range include *Viṣṇumitra*'s hard-to-see 1st cen. BCE Indian coin with a rare *Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu* image with left hand holding a wheel, possibly atop a pole (winter-summer solstice rite event?) (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 129–131) and coins showing *Brāhmaṇical* cult *Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu*'s icons and sun signs, wheel (*Sudarśanacakra*) and bird head-lion body (*Garuḍa*), used in 2nd-1st cen. BCE (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 102, 131, 531). This allows plenty of time for a small group of 8–10 priest/artisans to bring these ideas to a Rhine-Danube trade settlement. Plate C6572's synchronic data is the same as C6571's stylistic evaluation, except to add that northwest Europe's Iron Age people worshipped spoked wheel images tying them to the sun-god years before Roman conquest. It is evidenced by Gaul's many bronze and silver solar-wheel amulets produced and offered in rivers, tombs, and temples, by northern Italy's Camunians putting sun signs-chariot-wheels on armour or coins for protection, and by wheels used as sun symbols at Iron Age Oppida sites. Scant pre-Roman finds of human form sun-gods include sun-wheels in hair of human heads on Armorican coins. The plate C6572's

god with chariot-wheel, and like C6572's small male, bull-horned, helmeted individuals can be linked to solar talismans on the Arch at Orange (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 116, 164–165; Megaw, 1970, p. 131). These works have fewer comparison challenges since their production is less than three centuries apart, yet a several thousand-mile location difference must be addressed. The distance from Kushan Empire to the cauldron's north-central Europe origin site can explain tiny cultural feature variances such as in adornment or art style-technique listed above. Reversals in god-devotee hands touching wheels might reflect different parts of a rite or are just random. The seal's 4-armed giant, unpaired three items held, or Tocharian script, or plate's twin lions, triplet bird-lions, ram-horned snake, or leaf-print background remain unexplained. Diachronically, *Viṣṇu* mentioned earlier in *Vedic* text, is seen only with sign and not human icon. *Viṣṇu*'s solar deity traits fit to his sun images; e.g., griffin-bird-lion (*Garuḍa*) his mount in theriomorphic form and his sun-shaped-wheel used as a weapon along with his non-solar signs such as club (*gadā*). Late *Brāhmaṇic* times c. 3rd–1st cen. BCE, human images joined the symbols above. Knowing that other faiths also used sun-wheels to signify their sun-god, added signs helped viewers to decide if a god shown is *Viṣṇu* (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 152, 300–301, 305, 385, 531). *Viṣṇu* (Wheel-god) imagery use continued in India through 4th–12th cen. CE up to today (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 400–404). Diachronically for plate C6572, post-conquest, Romano—'Celtic' human form sky-sun gods with sun-wheels and at times Jupiter symbols, along with gravestones with wheels-circles-rosettes with/without Roman influence are seen from Gaul to the Danube on sculptures and figurines, disappearing a few centuries later as Christianity grew (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 116–119, 167). Despite differences discussed above, I still conclude that the two motifs' distinct images are similar sharing three elements (god-touches wheel-attendant to god's right) to meet a good-quality parallel minimum.

Interpretive assessment: Priests probably made both works to show that they could get community health and protection from the wheel god. Good-quality parallels exist for the two wheel god motifs as they share three similar images: giant male (suggests a god), dons a headpiece, elite neckwear; wheel (sun sign of regeneration) touches god, and; attendant-devotee to god's right. Both motifs provide seasonal ritual clues while only the plate depicts flight. In *Brāhmaṇic* winter or summer solstice rites, a priest turns a wheel atop a pole to help the sun (Keith, 1925, p. 339; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* V.1.5.2 & note). In Wheel turning at 'drink of strength' event, part of Soma pressing, a wheel, lower, leaning on the seal god may be a lower, weaker winter solstice sun, it's lifegiving force waning. Olmsted (1976, p. 99) calls the plate's wheel "broken" and the upside-down



ram-horned snake “injured,” thus a broken solar wheel and neath it a wounded regenerative serpent strongly suggest a weakened winter solstice sun needing leaf-sign life force and godly blessing. Green (1989, 1992, p. 142) says that snake regenerative-healing power beliefs derive from skin shedding and is seen as a rebirth. Plate winged griffins and lions with feet dangling as if not on solid ground may symbolize flight, but dotted lions create a vision of floating among night sky stars. Again, I propose that plate and seal show parallel motifs of winter solstice rites with helpers aside priest/gods touching/blessing lower-broken weak sun-wheel images to represent a less powerful, lower sun being regenerated at a colder time of year.

4 Parallels between Bharut ‘Gaja-Lakṣmī’ stele and Gundestrup cauldron plate C6573 (Goddess & Elephants)

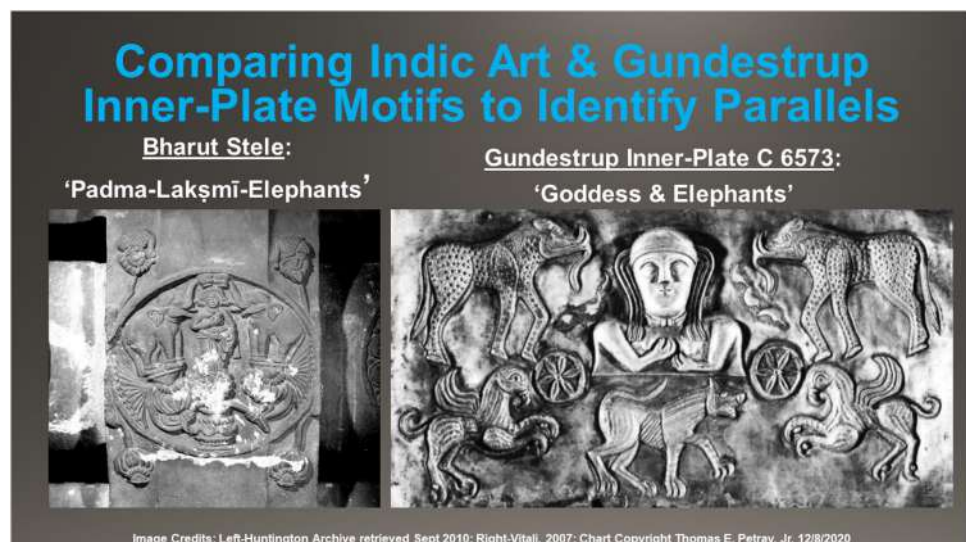
The Fig. 4 shows Taylor’s link of Indic goddess *Padma-Lakṣmī* (See bibliography’s *Padma-Lakṣmī*) to inner-plate-C6573 (Vitali, 2007, p. 186), each motif with elephants aside a woman bathing, not unusual to be seen in India, but seen nowhere else in Europe (Taylor, 1992, pp. 87–89).

Description: Iconographic parallels seen in the two art works are: central focus-giant female-goddess, naked top; wears necktorc; cups her breasts as if bathing; mirrored either side of female; twin small-eared elephants face female; water signs (2-one twixt each elephant and its female); flower signs (2-one below each elephant). Differently, on stele woman seen head-to-toe cups both breasts with right arm, stands on pedestal as if enshrined, elephant trunks pour water jugs over female’s head, lotus flowers are pedestals where elephants stand; whereas on plate, crowned,

braided-hair female seen waist-up, cups breasts with both arms as right-facing striped lioness is neath woman’s waist area, dotted elephants, their 8 foot-pads tilting forward as if floating or not on solid ground, point their trunks toward leaf symbols twixt them and female as if spraying leaves like water, six-petal flowers (2-encircled) one neath each leaf symbol, twin striped hybrid winged animals (bird-head, lion-body) fly under each elephant, diamond-shaped eyes-woman, lioness, elephants. Feature variances (no effect on image comparisons) are: sizes: stele ~70 cm × 40 cm vs. plate ~40 cm × 20 cm (Nielsen, et al, 2005, p. 4, 11); shapes: stele-short-base rectangle vs. plate-long-base rectangle; materials: stele-stone relief vs. plate-silver. With nine linked images, six being strong (goddess-cups breasts-twin elephants-2 flowers), three good (2 water signs-jars vs. leaves and a torc) I find very good quality matches to support that the two motifs are parallel.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, the *Gaja-Lakṣmī* stele fits other Bharut finds dated to c.100–80 BCE and is best-quality two-elephants-bathing-*Lakṣmī*-with-lotuses motif available. Although it falls within plate C6573’s 1st cen. BCE–1st cen. CE dates; I confidently compare stele to plate since stele shows similar *Gaja-Lakṣmī* motif figures as seen on Mauryan-post Mauryan carved reliefs and northwest Indian tribal coins dated to c. 3rd–2nd cen. BCE (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 110–111). It seems that long before the cauldron’s construction dates there was plenty of time for a small group or 8–10 priest-artisans to travel or come back to a Rhine-Danube trade settlement with these ideas. Plate C6573’s synchronic data is the same as C6571’s stylistic evaluation, except to share the plate goddess’s slight likeness to a 1st-cen. BCE Danish Rynkeby bog bronze bowl fragment. The exterior with repousse woman’s head, finely styled hair, and neck torc, differently two bull torsos are aside her. The

Fig. 4 Left: Bharut ‘Gaja-Lakṣmī’ Stele and Right: Gundestrup Cauldron Plate C6573 (Goddess & Elephants)



interior has repousse boar and canine creatures (Schutz, 1983, pp. 291–292). No other Iron Age European art shows the plate's basic motif, giant female cups her breasts as twin elephants face her with two leaf-water, two flower-rosette signs twixt her and elephants, to exclude twin griffins facing her and lioness beneath her. Poor Iron Age motif matches at best are goddesses, some with neck torcs or various birds, though other animals-snakes, dogs, and horses-might join them (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 24–25). Best matches for the bowl's Goddess-Elephants motif are Indian *Gaja-Lakṣmī* motifs. Few comparison challenges exist for these works since their production periods overlap, yet the several thousand-mile difference in location must be addressed. Distance from northwest Indian motif origin sites to C6573's north-central Europe location can explain cultural features such as minor variances in adornment, flower type, water symbols or artist's choice of style-technique listed above. The lioness and twin hybrid bird-lion figures are unexplained. Diachronically, the two elephants-near lotuses-bathing a standing *Lakṣmī* motif typified Indian ideas of prosperity from the late-*Brāhmaṇic* period. *Lakṣmī* was popular across the four practicing sects of this time (*Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva*, *Saura*, *Śākta*), and were even adopted on coins of alien rulers of northern India. Besides appearing as *Gaja-Lakṣmī* in goddess-water-elephants-lotus scenes up to the Gupta period and afterward, *Lakṣmī* is seen with *Viṣṇu* (her consort), trees, clouds, lion, pot, *Garuḍa*, male with money bags (Kubera?), or other accessory symbols in this role, as *Śakti* of *Vāsudeva Viṣṇu* or as *Śrī* (Banerjea, 1956, pp. 110–112, 135, 194–197, 265, 370–375). The two motifs' six common traits are so similar (goddess-cups her breasts-twin elephants-twin flowers), that it can be concluded that they have very good parallels. However, the parallel rating reduced only due to possible disagreement of matching water symbols.

Interpretive assessment: Priests likely created both works, perhaps enlisted by elites, intending them as demonstrations of their ability to acquire good harvests, offspring, and health for all from the goddess. Seasonal-ritual aspects, fertility-prosperity signs, and possible flight symbolism are seen on both seal and plate. The Goddess's naked breasts, water, and flower images are strong signs of spring rites and new life on both motifs. For those not seeing plate water signs, I offer what follows; since leaves hold water, plate leaf images can be water signs. Elephant trunks with multiple leaf-water clusters help viewers visualize water sprayed toward the goddess to bathe her. I rule out elephants eating leaves as their trunks hold no leaves. Stele artist placement of goddess and elephants on pedestals may intend ideas of flight or sky presence; and although uncertain, viewer knowledge of *Lakṣmī's Garuḍa*-bird-lions and clouds connections strengthens a sky-link. On the plate, eight elephant foot-pads tilting forward as if the elephants do not stand

on solid ground may suggest flight or bathing, but when shown with dotted elephant bodies, strongly suggests floating among night sky stars. Candidates for C6573's Iron Age goddess are Rosmerta, Nantosuelta, or Sirona, seen alone or with consort, who originate close to finds linked to cauldron images. Worshipped widely from Burgundy's Aedui to Rhine-Moselle region tribes, Rosmerta 'Great Provider' paired with 'Celtic' Mercury, but at times alone raising her importance, had wealth-fertility functions akin to *Lakṣmī* signified by purse, patera, cornucopiae signs and spring goddess job. Revered by Mediomatrician, Nemetan, and other Rhine-Moselle region tribes, Nantosuelta 'Meandering River' is seen mostly with prosperity images- *Lakṣmī*-like pot, house-sceptre, hive, and ravens-death signs as she partners with Sucellus-hammer god, like *Viṣṇu* who holds his club (*gadā*). In the Rhine-Moselle region, Sirona, an astral linking name, is a fertility-healing goddess symbolized by snake and eggs who pairs with 'Celtic' Apollo, a sun-god quite similar to *Lakṣmī's* solar deity partner *Viṣṇu* (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 42–43). Note, all three goddesses possess symbolism and functions akin to *Lakṣmī*. Perhaps *Lakṣmī* ideology was brought to Europe and fused with these Iron Age religious beliefs. With a lioness neath the goddess, twin bird-lions aside her evoking *Garuḍa*, vehicle to *Lakṣmī* and her consort *Viṣṇu*, added to twin elephants, leaf-water, and flower symbols around the goddess, plate C6573 seems a better exemplar of the *Gaja-Lakṣmī* motif and *Lakṣmī* ideology than the Bharut stele. Both evaluations find six strong matches (an iconic-posed, torc-wearing giant-female-goddess, cupping her breasts, as twin elephants each by a flower sign bathe her plus two good water symbols), overall, very good stele to plate parallels exist, and parallel rating is reduced only due to possible disagreement in matching water symbols.

5 Parallels between Mohenjo-Daro seal M-430 and Gundestrup plate-C6574

After a search, the author found two new Indic-cauldron art pairs potentially linking all bowl inner-plates (with seasonal-ritual-narrative scenes) to India. The motif parallel analyses compare M-D Seal M-430 (See bibliography's *Mohenjo-Daro seal M-430*) to Gundestrup plate-C6574 (Vitali, 2007, pp. 6–7) (Fig. 5) both showing 'Giant-priest-god faces bowl(s), live tree, and being nearest to giant-tree-bowl(s), as seven beings witness rite' motif. It is most likely a rite for ancestors and/or the dead. It may be noted that at least three distinctive image matches are needed to call motifs parallel.

Description: The iconographic parallels observed for both pieces include (i) focus-giant-god-priest faces bowl(s)-tree, (ii) human, closest to giant-tree-bowl(s), (iii) live



Fig. 5 Left: Mohenjo-Daro seal M-430 and Right: Gundestrup plate-C6574



tree-branches-leaves, (iv) bowl(s) twixt giant & tree, and (v) seven humans walk underneath the tree, bottom-centre. Differently, (i) seal giant (tall as tree if standing) centre to right of tree sits-faces small bowls & tree (ii) human figure twixt tree branches as if doing rite, plate giant-left stands-faces large bowl from which tree grows, holds human over bowl as if dunking-doing rite, (iii) seal tree has oval trunk base and two limbs form “U” shape, three branches on each limb totaling six, each with one leaf. On plate, roots grow from slatted wood bowl’s right side to form a horizontal trunk-limb over seven humans, fourteen branches evenly spread round trunk-limb-one leaf per branch, two over each human, (iv) seven human figures walk to right on seal, left on plate. Also, seal has Indus script atop; to giant’s right, horned human-face on giant bull body has eleven-torc neck-piece. Loin-clothed giant and naked human in tree wear armllets, horned headgear with trail. Seven human figures wear feathered headgear with trail, arm bangles, & tunic. Cross-inside-rectangle shape is left of tree. On plate over tree-limb, four horsemen don crested helmets (crests front-to-back are-bird, boar, bull horns, flame inside arc), striped coat, leggings, laced shoes and ride geared horses (reins, saddle, affixed phalerae) who saunter to right behind ram-horned snake. Plate right, three boar-head carynxes point to first horse’s front, as three horn players play them and walk behind seven staff-holding males, all but last carry shield. Neath tree-bowl-roots, dog sits on haunches with front paws up to face first of seven humans. Giant, small human, seven humans neath tree, three horn players all wear laced shoes, striped clothes (tight-fitting, long-sleeved coat, knee-breeches-Klindt-Jensen, 1959, p. 164) & striped caps except giant’s cap has tail and last of seven’s cap has boar atop. Feature variances not affecting image comparisons include: sizes: seal ~ 3 cm × 3 cm (Sources for estimate: Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5, 235; Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113)

vs. plate ~ 44 cm × 20 cm (Nielsen, et al, 2005, pp. 4, 11); shapes: seal-square vs. plate-rectangular; materials: seal-terracotta vs. plate-silver. Eleven images potentially link (giant-god-priest, human near giant-bowl(s)-tree, live tree, bowl(s), seven humans pass neath live tree) possibly supporting quality matches for parallel motifs.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically dated c.2400–2200 BCE, seal M-430 looks akin to Harappan seal H-177 showing from left a normal-sized, long-horned bull facing a central human sitting/kneeling figure faces a human figure standing inside a top-enclosed sacred fig tree, no bowls by sitting human nor any humans in line below (Parpola, 1994, 2000, pp. 109–110). No synchronic exemplar has been cited for Plate C6574. Its synchronic data is the same as C6571’s stylistic evaluation (Schutz, 1983, p. 298), except to add similarly styled material objects matched to plate images and closest to cauldron’s time-place. For example, rectangular shields-six round bosses like La Tene period III type are found across pre-Roman Europe. Helmets, horned like Orange Arch Gallic helmets, bird or boar crests seen widely on Gallic monuments, coins are cited in Roman text. The radiant arch over point-flame crest is unreported. Boar-headed carynxes (3-right-centre), like animal-headed wind instruments from Gaul or seen on Gallic coins, are played by males (3-lower-right) increasing in height. Spurs, spherical-terminal-curved-spike common in La Tene period are worn by horsemen. The horse-harness, ring-terminal-bits for reins and round mounts (dot-within-dotted-circle, 1-front, 1-rear) loosely joined straps from fore-to-saddle-to-hind-quarters for four horses are like gear shown on Orange Arch and Romano- ‘Celtic’ cavalry auxiliary tombstones. Garment-gathering rings curved to fit shoulder on seventh male neath tree are like rings found on late La Tene northern Gaul male graves and on later Gallo-Roman statues. Striped,



long-sleeved sixteen topcoats and twelve tight knee-breeches worn by males are like above-cited military dress seen on 1st-cen. CE northern Rhine ‘Celtic’ auxiliaries’ tombs (Klindt-Jensen, 1959, pp. 162–165). Diachronically, experts report no other M-430 motif exemplars across time within India (only synchronic H-177 above), nor have they noticed any C6574 motif exemplars across time within Europe, leaving only M-430 as best diachronic exemplar of C6574’s motif, if parallel determination indeed is made. Only isolated images with similarities to cross-time images are found near their production locations; e.g., horned headwear, can be found for the two pieces. Detail differences such as in adornment, equipment-weapons, styling, or techniques evolving from pressed-clay to sheet-silver repousse, all fit as normal progressions from IVC times to Iron Age. The numerous, differing scholarly explanations for these two pieces exposes the lack of consensus and thus welcomes new opinion. So, I offer mine here and in the interpretive section. Variations in tree-types or adornment listed above are explained by species or style fit to location or time, changes in giant-priest-god poses or reversals in seven human figures’ walking direction may reflect differing phases of a rite. Based on visual analysis, there is no explanation for differences like the seal’s Indus script, giant human-faced bull, cross-inside-rectangle shape, or the plate’s horn players or carnyxes, four horsemen, dog, and ram-horned snake. Though being more than 2000 years and several thousand miles apart, I propose that both motifs’ show similar key images as part of rites.

Interpretive assessment: Priests probably produced both pieces, perhaps sponsored by elites, intending to demonstrate their ability to obtain the gods’ favour for deceased community/family members or simply to worship the gods. Motif comparisons prior to this one had more consensus as to what each pair displays and good to strong parallels were observed clearly across paired pieces. Scholars somewhat agreed in their descriptions of Gundestrup plate C6574, however, they differed greatly when interpreting Mohenjodaro seal impression M-430. So, I will review separately before continuing to compare pieces. Influenced by Marshall, Banerjea (1956, p. 168), seal M-430 (reversal of seal impression atop) shows a tree goddess or spirit appearing in a *pipal-asvattha* tree, identified by its leaf, a devotee in centre, and a human-faced goat with remaining description akin to others. Parpola (1994, 2000, p. 272) says that the worshipped ‘fig deity’ in the tree is ‘Proto-*Durgā*’ goddess of victory and fertility. Fairservis (1992, pp. 199, 201, 206, 238) views seal as portraying a post-procession wedding ceremony, buffalo-wedding-crowns don groom in *pipal paṇḍala* and female facing him as she bows by offering table (bowls) with sacrificial milk goat gift behind her, while seven women from wife’s family wear peacock feathers (“many children” signs) and watch at bottom. Knowing that

astronomy is embedded in rites and art depicting them, Bag (2000, pp. 136–137) blends his views with Parpola’s to form celestial interpretations e.g., young war-god Skanda stands west in two *pipal* branches, faces priest kneeling at altar-like shape, as seven humans stand below deity-altar-priest to possibly help form east–west line required for Vedic altars, with Indian turbans on eight humans and a giant long-horned, human-faced ram-stag in scene. Bag adds to Parpola’s idea that the seal’s Indus script plus Vedic and Epic mythology tie Skanda to the Pleiades, to picture an autumnal equinox new year festival with full moon in *Kṛttikās* (seven humans are Pleiades seven stars). And since the stag is west of *Kṛttikās*, he must represent the next two *nakṣatras* *Bharaṇī* and *Aśvinī*. Skanda’s placement between two branches aligns him with his opposite *nakṣatra* *Viśākhā* meaning “between two branches”. Bag disagrees with Asfaque’s variances from Parpola; e.g., seal shows a vernal equinox new moon rite since the being in branches wears a crescent-shaped, horned headdress, a sign denoting the dark-phase moon god. Recalling mention of priests’ southerly sky watching of sun-moon-planets-god motions, the author find Bag’s directional analysis incorrect as to how IVC priests would depict god actions in art. If facing south, priestly art would put eastern sun-moon-planet rises on left side, western sun-moon-planet sets to right, opposite to land maps, with north-top, south-bottom. Bag’s seal use, not seal impression, adds error to his interpretation. A pressed out seal (how it is made to be seen) reverses M-430’s images to put Skanda east-left, not west as Bag says, but this ends up well since autumn full moons rising near Pleiades-Skanda’s *nakṣatra* would be east. Using seven as *Kṛttikās* (Pleiades’) star number, is a bigger problem since in Vedic and epic myths Skanda has only six mothers (*Kṛttikās*). Later *nakṣatra* lists still have six, not seven stars for *Kṛttikās* (Pingree & Morrissey, 1989, pp. 101–102), so seven humans as *Kṛttikās* on an IVC seal is likely incorrect. I contend tree being, same size as seven bottom figures, is human, central giant is seated, bigger and a god, and the seven would better fit the seven fathers-ancestors (*pitaraś* or *pitṛs*) who receive offerings in lower-southern fires in autumn and winter rites and at funerals (Keith, 1925, pp. 429–431; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.4.2.1–24 & notes—death rite example). Schutz (1983, pp. 298–299) interprets Gundestrup C6574 as a “circular parade” suggesting a “death-rebirth cycle” or “initiation-transfiguration ritual” in which at left a tall “royal priest” holds a man upside-down over a cauldron to “immerse” him, as beneath a horizontal tree a paws-up dog holds back an “armed” 6-man column nearing bowl for dipping. Over the tree, four horsemen seem to be “galloping away from the immersion” while Schutz is unsure whether the snake leads them or sits over the horns. Megaw (1970, pp. 131–133) calls giant dunking warriors a central or east European Mars-Teutates war-god type or insular Dagda ‘good god’ with his cauldron of immortality restoring life to

troops killed in battle. Powell (1971, pp. 202–203) calls the bowl “Well of Revivication” citing Kimmig as he emphasizes the “sacred tree” over warriors as important, while Green (1989, 1992, p. 185) sees it as a “Tree of Life” taken into battle for good luck or as an aid in getting to the Otherworld”. Numerous and differing scholarly explanations for the seal above exposes a lack of consensus welcoming new opinion. Though clothing and accessory-tool variances might raise comparison challenges for these diachronically more than 2000 years old several-thousand-miles-apart pieces, similar to evaluations above, I find them to have little or no impact in comparisons. Both motifs show eleven similar key images as part of rites (giant-god-priest, faces bowl(s) & living tree, human nearest to tree-bowl(s), seven humans pass-walk neath tree); however, since seal consensus is lacking, *Brāhmaṇic* text imagery potentially could show that both have good to strong parallels. Based on plate’s consensus, both works may fit death rites as priest presiding/honouring deceased nearest to tree-bowl(s) or winter rite related to death-rebirth. Then seal’s bottom seven images may be proto-type *pitaras* (*pitrs*) fathers-ancestors given southern fire gifts at death rites. Plate’s seven males neath Tree-of-Life, kept separate from horn players and horsemen, can also serve as seven ancestors.

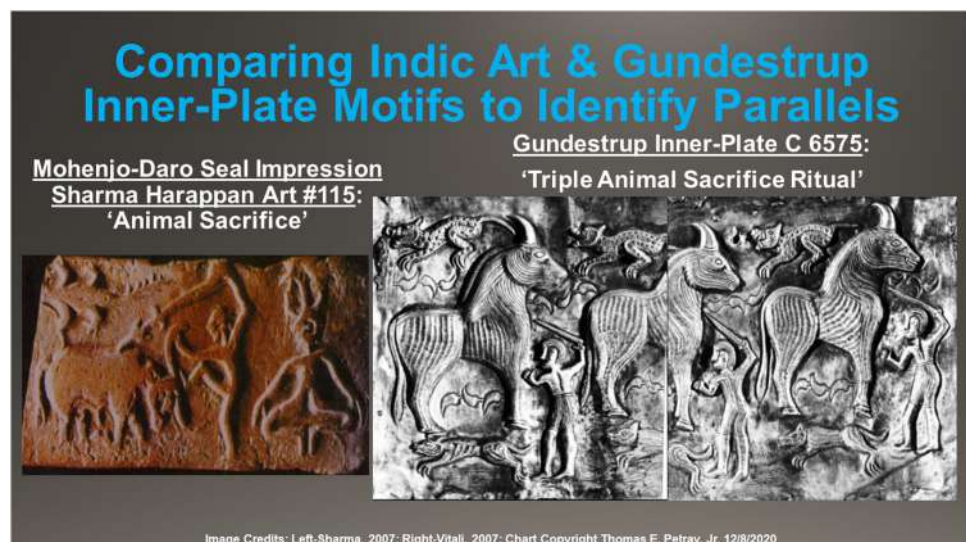
6 Parallels between Mohenjo-Daro seal Sharma #115 and Gundestrup cauldron inner-plate C6575

The last motif parallel analysis compares Sharma’s Mohenjo-Daro seal #115 (See bibliography’s *Plate 115*) to Gundestrup cauldron plate-C6575 (Vitali, 2007, pp. 188–189) both showing an ‘animal sacrifice’ motif (Fig. 6).

Description: Iconographic parallels seen in both pieces are across centre (i) animal(s) facing right, submitting to sacrifice, (ii) priest/warrior(s) facing left pierce(s) animal(s), and (iii) sacrificial tool(s). Differently, on impressed seal (i) longhorned, head-down water buffalo offering, (ii) priest-warrior places his foot on buffalo’s head to stab it’s spine using spear as sacrificial tool, while on plate, (i) giant, 1-horn, grain-tail, striped cattle (three) stand head-up, sword-to-throat, (ii) helmeted, short-trousered priest-warriors (3-centre priest has top, outer priests shirtless) pierce bovine throats (three), use (iii) swords (three) as sacrificial tools. Additionally, seal impress has yogic-posed male with horned headdress to right of warrior-priest, both seem nude; on plate, facing left, three spotted felines-lionesses hover, one over each bovine, three striped canines-hyenas-wild dogs run, one under each bovine, leaf triplets seem to flow from each bovine’s throat-pierced site, appear twixt their legs and over last bovine. Feature variances not affecting image comparisons include... sizes: seal ~ 2 cm × 3 cm (Sources estimate: Fairservis, 1992, pp. 5, 235; Parpola, 1994, 2000, p. 113) vs. plate ~ 40 cm × 20 cm (Nielsen, et al, 2005, pp. 4, 11); shapes: seal-rectangular vs. plate-rectangular; materials: seal-terra cotta vs. plate-silver, gold leaf. With all three images linked (right-facing animal-left-facing priest-tool), repeated twice on plate, we find good quality matches supporting parallel motifs.

Stylistic evaluation: Synchronically, pressed seal Sharma #115 is akin to other naked man, foot-to-head, spine-spear-ing, willing buffalo sacrifice exemplars from IVC seals-Mohenjo-Daro M-279, M-11b (sacred tree added behind buffalo), M-492 (cobra added behind sacrifice) and an Akkadian cylinder seal with no local parallels—Parpola citing Boemer, 1965: no. 223 all with dates close to c.2400–2200 BCE (Fairservis, 1992, pp. 198–199; Parpola, 1994, 2000,

Fig. 6 Left: Mohenjo-Daro seal Sharma #115 and Right: Gundestrup Cauldron Inner-Plate C6575



pp. 252, 254). Seal #115's yogic-posed figure is akin to yogic-posed males on M-420's proto-*Śiva-Paśupati* motif and other seals cited before (See Banerjea, 1956, pp. 159–160 citing Marshall, Mackay). Plate C6575's synchronic data is linked to C6571's stylistic evaluation, except to add similarly styled material objects linked to plate images and closest to bowl's time-place. For example 'Celtic' coins with bull images, some with astral symbols-moon between their horns, show substantial Iron Age evidence of cattle sacrifice and burials such as at Gournay. The priest-warriors wear striped helmets with nose-guards (artists possibly intended braided hair and large noses). The plate's round protruding hilted swords are akin to La Tene swords held by Gallic warriors on 1st–2nd cen. BCE reliefs, striped, short-sleeved top-coat (one-piece suit?) & tight knee three breeches worn by males here are like above-cited military dress shown on 1st cen. CE north Rhine 'Celtic' auxiliary tombs (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 149–150; Klindt-Jensen, 1959, pp. 162–164). Though Roman influenced, Klindt-Jensen (1959, p. 168) views the Arch of Augustus's bull sacrifice scene in Susa 1st-cen. BCE as evocative of C6575's style, while Green (1989, 1992, p. 183) sees its three bull sacrifice as typical of this period's 'Celtic' triplism as seen at Saintes in Aquitaine on a two-sided stele "supported on the heads of three bulls"-one side showing stag deity Cernunnos, a goddess, and a small club-carrying human, the other a deity pair. Though diachronically being more than 2000 years and several thousand miles apart raises comparison challenges, I have determined that the two motifs' have sufficient similar images, to investigate a possible link. However, since a human stabbing an animal motif exists in many cultures, we will discuss animal-human combat against animal sacrifice scenes-positions during interpretation. Variances in animals, sacrificial method and dress listed above are explained by species-rite-clothing changes over time or distance. Based on visual data, there is no explanation for differences such as seal's yogic-posed being or the plate's tripling of the sacrifice, spotted lioness above or canine under each of three bovines, nor the presence of leaves twixt bovine legs or above last one, except to say the artist's addition of leaves by each throat-piercing site invokes the idea of blood. Diachronically, animal sacrifice was common during *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* times as evidenced by text, yet I find no art displaying willing victims. Priests usually sacrificed domestic livestock-goats, horses, cattle and sheep. The cattle were gifts par excellence (Lincoln, 1981, p. 65). European pre-'Celtic' iconography of bull or oxen motifs possibly linked to weather cults appear in Bronze Age Mont Bego and Camonica, later Bronze Age Urnfield cultures, Hallstatt phase, and into the Iron Age. In later Romano-'Celtic' period, bulls continued as fertility-prosperity-health images as seen in Gaul at Reims, Tremblois, Foret d'Halatte, and Fontes Sequanae (Green, 1989, 1992, pp. 149–150).

Interpretive assessment: Elite creators of both art works used them to broadcast the idea that the priestly class could communicate with the gods who chose them as mediators between them and the people, and that sacrificial offerings were vital in convincing the gods to grant wealth, health, or protection in return. Parpola (1994, 2000, pp. 252–254) supports these views as he surmises seal M-492's cobra behind the dead buffalo as the god to whom a sacrifice was due. However, god-animal combat scenes like oldest Durgā battling buffalo art from early Kushan to beginning of Christian era or later seen in a Pallava period c. 650 CE Mamallapuram rock-cut, granite relief do not fit with the previous section's non-combative sacrifice seals. Seal #115 and plate C6575 show submissive victims, and myths of gods offering their lives to create living things were foundational for this required sacrifice ideology, well-known to common folk. For example, art critics wondering why, artists added a proto-*Śiva-Paśupati* motif aside a buffalo sacrifice in Sharma #115 may consult *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* text (Doniger, 1975, pp. 28–31; See pp. 25–33 for more origin stories). It is perhaps depicted on the seal, where *Rudra-Śiva* earns the title of *Paśupati* 'lord of cattle' for piercing *Prajāpati* 'lord of creatures' who became a deer to have relations with his daughter turned doe, a primeval incest story explaining how life is created. Since little or no pre-Roman writing exists for tribes producing C6575 or similar art, we have no Iron Age sacrifice origin tales. Due to their gigantic size relative to the warriors killing them with swords, Green (1989, 1992, p. 183) views C6575's three sacrificial bulls as deities, while Schutz (1983, p. 298) purports that the scene is a "purging sacrifice" with fierce dogs beneath and ready-to-pounce spotted felines over each bull whose tails look like ears of grain as leaves are interspersed near the bulls. The Indus culture killing approach on #115, is spear-stabs-spine-over-buffalo's-back; while in *Paśubaddha-Brāhmaṇic* animal sacrifices it is strangling or piercing a willing victim's-throat (Keith, 1925, pp. 324–325; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* III.7.3.4–6; III.7.4.1; III.8.1.5, 15–16). Though text specifies this sacrificial technique, no art from this period depicts it; perhaps it was never made or is lost as mentioned above. Notably, Gundestrup plate C6575 shows a similar *Brāhmaṇic* animal sacrifice method, throat-piercing. *Brāhmaṇic* text also refers to *Śoḍaśin* rites in which priests sacrifice three animals (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* IV.5.3.1 & note; IV.6.3.3; Keith, 1925, pp. 324–325). Both motifs' meet minimum standard of good quality parallels with three similar key images involved in animal sacrifice rites (right-facing animal-left-facing priest uses-tool to pierce throats), twice repeated on plate. The slight sacrificial differences do not negate good parallels as methods change over time. I contend this link since *Brāhmaṇic* prescription and plate events are alike. The rites are performed to obtain fertility-prosperity in late summer or fall.



7 Conclusions and future research

After pairing all five Gundestrup cauldron inner-plates to Indic art with similar motifs, the author used art criticism theory and method to assess the pairs individually. The images across pairs with minimum three for good quality motif parallels were found and reported. If functions stayed similar, minor variances in elite clothing/adornment, weapon/tool images are reasonable style changes over time or distance, thus making a link of two such images from diachronic art acceptable. Three or more definitive image matches were identified for four paired-motif, image sets making for good quality or better parallels and potential good quality parallels were seen for the fifth motif pair, enough to declare that substantial parallels exist for all cauldron interior motifs and Indic partners. Though diachronically distant, art critical comparison of Indus Valley Culture (IVC) seal impression M-420-*proto-type Śiva-Paśupati* with plate C6571-Horned One-Cernunnos motifs shows five shared elements: giant anthropomorph-god, wears horned headwear, assumes yogic pose, has deer companion, is encircled by animal menagerie, resulting in strong parallels for the paired motifs, a likely reason why M-420 was the first Indic art experts tied to the cauldron. The author proposes that plate and seal show a late-summer or early-fall rite seeking fertility/wealth during annual animal migration hunts or cattle-crop harvests. A Kushan Greek-style seal was chosen as best-quality *Viṣṇu* (Wheel) motif available for synchronic comparing to C6572's wheel god plate and the author found three linked images: giant anthropomorph-god, wheel touching god, attendant nearby. The plate's twin lions and twin bird-lions, both strong *Viṣṇu* sun symbols, strengthen C6572's link to *Vedic-Brāhmaṇic* ideology. The author proposes that both pieces show winter solstice rites as assistants help priest-gods who touch/bless lower-broken-weak sun-wheels meaning a lower, less powerful sun is being regenerated at a colder time of year. Comparing Bharut's *Gaja-Lakṣmī* stele to plate C6573, we find six strongly matched images viz. iconic-posed, torc-wearing, giant-female-goddess, cupping her breasts, as twin elephants paired with flower symbols bathe her; plus, two good water symbols (jars vs. leaves); overall, very good stele-to-plate parallels, however made weaker only because some art critics might not see leaves as water symbols. Lioness below plate's goddess is a determinant of goddess *Lakṣmī* in *Brāhmaṇic* India, especially when also seen with plate's bird-lions, like *Garuḍa* animal vehicle of *Lakṣmī*, thus making plate an even better exemplar of the actual *Gaja-Lakṣmī* motif and *Lakṣmī* ideology than the Bharut stele. Goddess's naked breasts, water, and flower images are strong spring/new life symbols on both motifs. Author's art critical assessments and comparison of Mohenjo-Daro seal impression M-430

and Gundestrup inner-plate C6574 show eleven matched key images as part of rites: giant-god-priest, faces bowl(s) & living tree, with human nearest to tree-bowl(s), as seven humans pass neath tree. The author acknowledges that some archaeologists or religious art historians may not agree with his links, especially for two of them. First, though giant-god-priest faces bowl(s)-tree and human images appear on both, plate's giant stands at left while seal's giant sits or kneels in centre; second, though both have seven humans at bottom, the plate's seven have three musicians walking to the left with them, while the seal's seven walk right. Excluding them, a minimum three linked images remain—bowl(s), living tree, and human near them. We may say that both motifs potentially have good parallels. Based on plate's death-rebirth consensus and a "Tree of Life" on both, we propose that the two works fit funeral rites as priest presides and honours deceased near tree-bowl(s) or winter rites when plants seem dead, yet rebirth is possible. Sharma IVC seal impression #115 and inner-plate C6575 have three linked images—right-facing animal, pierced by left-facing priest, using sacrificial tool, which repeats twice on plate, thus we find good quality matches to support parallel motifs. We may suggest that these rituals were performed to obtain fertility and prosperity in late summer or fall.

The second art criticism comparison above mentioned the importance of the wheel as a sun symbol and its use in *Brāhmaṇic* rituals. In the fifth comparison, the author shared Sharma IVC seal impression #115 having a warrior-priest stabbing a water buffalo's spine, a sacrificial method which differed from *the Brāhmaṇic* rite's throat-piercing, and throat-piercing is the exact killing approach Gundestrup C6575 displays. These *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* text to art links help explain what is pictured as occurring in Indic-cauldron pairs above. The future research would employ the highest level of art criticism where a search for texts that fit the pictorial narratives seen in art will be sought. This literary-art criticism hybrid approach will analyse text and compare it to the images in Indic and plate art to determine whether imagery sets match with image sets-motifs and perhaps explain even more about the rites that seem to be taking place in this art.

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