

BURMESE LOKAPALAS : A PROBLEM OF IDENTIFICATION

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In Burma the proper identification of Lokapalas is exceedingly difficult. Basically the problem stems from the fact that Burmese art has been greatly influenced by Indian traditions, yet successive migrations of Tibeto-Burman tribes have introduced Chinese elements. Consequently iconographic inconsistencies occur with such regularity that a positive identification of Lokapalas is nearly impossible. A case in point is a carving of four Burmese images recently brought to the attention of the author. (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4) Carved in the round, these four standing images wear the conventionalized dress associated with Burmese deva figures as well as nats and royal personages of the eighteenth century. The outer skirt has a multi-tiered frontal panel which covers an inner garment, most likely ballooned trousers. The upper vest with extended shoulders ties at the waist with a simple band. Petal-shaped decorations with jewelled inserts drape the front of the costume, and a tight fitting, sleeved garment extends to the wrists. The jewel studded, multi-tiered crown rises to a finial which recalls the splendidly truncated roofs of the Burmese shrines with a *hti* on top. With downcast eyes and upturned lips, the delicately carved oval face is framed by flowered ear ornaments.

Presumably the number four is crucial to the identification of these images and Lokapalas in general. In Burmese Buddhism two of the most frequently represented sets of four are the Lokapalas and a group of Burmese saints. In 1922-1923 Duroiselle reports the existence of shrines dedicated to the saints with four images inside wearing monk's robes. He refers to the saints as Shin Upagok, Shin Thiwali, Shin Angulimala and Shin Peindola.¹ Elsewhere Duroiselle mentions a set of Lokapalas above and below the sun and the moon on the jambs of the Lion's Throne carved for King Bodawapaya in 1816.²

.... this was a way of emphasizing that the Throne, with the spire over it was Centre of the Universe and the King therefore the centre of the world, since he sat between the four Lokapalas.³

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1. Melford E. Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967), p. 44.
2. Yi Yi, "The Thrones of the Burmese Kings," *Journal of the Burmese Research Society*, XLIII (Rangoon, December, 1960), p. 106.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

From a sketch drawing of the Lion's Throne, these Lokapalas are virtually indistinguishable from any other Burmese deva figures (Figure 5).⁴ Dressed as royal personages, they have identical costumes and attributes. Sir Richard Temple also identified four Burmese images as Lokapalas.⁵ He refers to them as Daddarata Nat Min (Dhatarattha), King of the East; Virulaka Nat Min (Virulhka), King of the South; Virupekka Nat Min (Virupakkha), King of the West; and Kuvera or Wethawun Nat Min (Kuvera of Vessavana), King of the North.⁶ Like Duroiselle, Temple fails to describe the Lokapalas according to their attributes rather they wear regal dress and carry identical swords.

Perhaps a key to identifying the carving of four Burmese images is both the regal dress and the number four. If Duroiselle's saints wore monk's robes and the Lokapalas donned regal attire, then possibly the carving also depicts Lokapalas. Other evidence which suggests that these images are Lokapalas is the fact that each figure carries a unique attribute, a characteristic of Lokapalas in both India and China. Examining the images in a clockwise direction, King 1 carries a stupa shaped container in his left hand, and a curvilinear handle which supports a banner or umbrella in his right (Figure 1). Next King 2 writes with pen in an opened book which he supports with his left hand (Figure 2). King 3 holds an object which perhaps represents a drum (Figure 3), while King 4 displays a longitudinal cross section of a conch shell in his right hand and perhaps raises a sword along with a lotus blossom in his left (Figure 4).

Now if one accepts the possibility that these four images are Lokapalas, then the problem becomes one of correlating the attributes each figure bears with a particular Lokapala. A most reasonable starting point is to analyze the attributes associated with the eastern quarter of the world. According to the ancient Hindu texts, the East is always reckoned first because Indra, the "first of the firmament deities",⁷ presides over this compass point. The special importance of the East is again repeated in the *Atanatiya Suttanta* where King Vessavana or Kuvera recites that the eastern quarter is the "First to come".⁸ Another important reason for beginning with this quarter is that both the Chinese and Indian traditions agree that the King of the East carries the same iconographic attribute; namely, a stringed instrument similar to a harp. Presumably if the attribute is the same in these two cultures, then quite possibly the iconographic tradition was transferred to Burma. Two jewel encrusted images which recently arrived in Bangkok support this hypothesis (Figure 6). The pair

4. *The Mandalay Palace* (Rangoon, 1963), Plate 17.

5. Sir Richard Temple, *The Thirty-Seven Nats*, (London, 1902), p. 33.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

7. Edward Moor, F.R.S., *The Hindu Pantheon*, (London, 1810), p. 261.

8. T.W. Rhys David, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV (London, 1921), p. 190.

wear costumes normally associated with royal personages i.e. Lokapalas; yet one carries a Burmese harp and the other a sword. A regal figure with harp is not unusual in Burmese art. Such a figure is especially common to Burmese nat worship. Minyé Aungdin Nat, Minthá Maung Shin Nat, and U Shin Gyi all play beautiful harp music yet not in pairs or in combination with three others. Conceivably Figure 6 might represent two Burmese Lokapalas which suggests that the Chinese and Indian attributes for the King of the East existed in Burma. By itself this does not mean that a *particularly* Burmese attribute did not develop for the King of the East also. Perhaps this explains why none of the Lokapalas in the circular piece in question carries a harp. King 3 holds an object which might be described as a drum, but a harp and a drum are only remotely related. Conceivably a Burmese craftsman might have confused the proper musical attribute carried by Dhatarattha. On the other hand perhaps the drum-like form actually represents a particularly Burmese attribute. Certainly the existence of another image carrying a similar rounded form with an elongated base suggests that this attribute represents more than a misidentification of musical instruments but rather a particularly Burmese symbol for Dhatarattha (Figure 7).

A possible explanation for the association of a drum-like form with the Burmese King of the East may be found in the Hindu texts. According to the Vedic traditions, Indra, not Dhatarattha governs the eastern quarter of the world. As King of the Immortals, he presides over the middle region of Mount Meru, and is primarily recognized as the thunder god, who conquers the demons of drought and darkness, and brings forth the waters and the light. The thunderbolt is the exclusive property of Indra, yet as he assumes other godly roles and names, his attributes become confused. As the Adviser of Evil, Indra adopts the name Sakka which is the term later incorporated into Buddhism to represent the King of Tavatimsa in which the Lokapalas reside. Like Indra, presumably Sakka bears the thunderbolt as his exclusive attribute, but Gandhara sculpture reveals this was not always the case. "In fact, many thunderbolt bearers appear, but varied to a remarkable extent."⁹ On reliefs depicting the life of Buddha, the Gandhara sculpture almost invariably shows a strange figure close to the Buddha. There are numerous representations of this personage on earlier and later reliefs, but one attribute remains common to all "a peculiar club-like object which the figure sometimes grasps by the middle with his right hand, and sometimes holds upright in his palm. In the case of the more modern reliefs, one gets the impression that the sculptor has not known exactly what the object was intended to represent"¹⁰ (Figure 8). Speculation also surrounds the identification of the figure itself. Grunwedel believes the club bearers represent the old thunder god Sakka who

9. Albert Grunwedel, *Buddhist Art in India* (London, 1901), p. 87.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

performs a protective and sympathetic role in the Buddhist legends for whenever anything important is about to happen on earth, his throne in heaven grows warm, and he hastens down to earth to intervene in the interests of right and truth.¹¹ Just as this cudgel-like form was possibly misinterpreted by the Gandhara sculptors, so too the drum-like object of the Burmese Lokapalas may indicate the sculptor had no idea what the intended object was supposed to be. Perhaps he was copying another cudgel-like form. Another possibility is the artist identified Indra or Sakka or the King of the East in his ancient role as the Regent of the Waters, who provides showers during the four rainy months from a water container suitably posed. The manner in which Figure 7 glances upward at the heavens while seemingly holding a drum suggests such a meaning. The connection between drum and rain is direct in Burma. In fact the Karen tribe uses bronze drums to bring rain, the sound of the drum symbolic of thunder.

The possible interpretations associated with each attribute multiplies as one moves from the eastern quarter to the other regions of the universe. To the West resides the King of the Nagas, lord of the fabled snakes who supposedly lives in the waters of the world, immediately under the Trikuta rocks supporting Mount Meru. Usually the Naga assumes a human form with a multiple cobra hood springing from the neck and rising above the head. Water is their special domain with every spring, pool, and lake claiming its own special Naga. In fact every water source in India bears the name of some Naga i.e. Anant Naga, Vir Naga. As king of these watery beings, Virupakkha is Regent of the Ocean and large masses of water. Also he is referred to as the Governor of Darkness most assuredly because light fails to penetrate water and the sun sets in the West. Again in the *Atantiya Suttanta*, King Vessavana describes the western quarter of the world :

And where the sun goes down, Aditi's child, orb'd and vast e'en as he goeth down ceaseth the day and when he goeth down the shrouder cometh, men are wont to say. There too and thus they know the sounding deep, the sea, the bourne of travelling waters so they call it 'sea'. And hence we say this quarter is the 'West', the last to come.¹²

Confusion over the identity of Virupakkha begins very early in Buddhist art. The inner face of the pillar from the Southern Bharhut Gate carries the image of Chakavako Naga Raja (Figure 9). According to Buddhist cosmology, the King of the Nagas is also the Guardian of the West. He resides on Mount Meru with the Nagas occupying a world called Nagaloka immediately beneath the three-peaked hill of Trikuta which

11. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

12. David, *op. cit.*, p. 191-192.

supports Mount Meru. Although the Buddhists place Virupakkha in the West, the Hindu traditions locate the Trikuta mountain on the southern *not* the western side of Mount Meru. "And accordingly (Cunningham) find (s) the figure of Chakavako Naga Raja placed as one of the guardians of the South Gate of the Bharhut Railing."¹³ A possibility is that Cunningham misunderstood the placement of the pillar. At Bharhut the great stone railing which surrounds the stupa has four openings towards the four cardinal points. Most likely the pillar which bears the name Virudhako-Yakho would face the geographic South (Figure 10). Now if one face of the pillar points to the South, this does not mean the other three sides must be associated with the southern quarter. In fact they face other geographic directions even though they form a portion of the Southern Gate. Assuming Virulhaka faces South, then Chakavako Naga Raja poses on the proper western face. Furthermore the figure abutting the other side of Virulhaka would then face East (Figure 11). This image is often described as Gan Gita although the royal personage posed on top of the elephant flanked by a tree could be the King of the East in the form of Indra.

Just as the geographic location of the King of the West changed with the introduction of Buddhism, so too did the attributes he carried. Most often Virupakkha posed with a pasha or noose in his right hand. As the Lord of Punishment and Governor of Darkness, he bound the guilty in fatal cords, while as Genius of the Waters, the pasha symbolized the sea encircling the earth (Figure 12). In the *Dharmahatuvagisvara Mandala* the description of Varuna or Virupakkha is slightly altered with the Lokapala holding in his two hands the noose of a snake and a conch. Virupakkha's association with the sea as well as the Nagas remains the same, but the dual nature of this role has been carefully delineated since Virupakkha carries two distinctive attributes, the noose and the conch. In later Buddhist art, the strong relationship between Virupakkha and the Naga form continues, and the King of the West is often depicted with a serpent and a jewel in hand for the Nagas supposedly live in great luxury with abundant gems and wealth. According to early Buddhist legends, the Nagas were initially hostile to the teachings of Buddha, but later became avid devotees. To symbolize this devotion to the faith, Virupakkha as Ruler of the Nagas sometimes carries a chorten or small shrine proclaiming the conversion of the Nagas to Buddhism.

In Chinese art the more disciplinary aspect of Virupakkha is emphasized with the Guardian of the West wielding a sword. As an informer of the good and evil going on in this world, "he holds a rod even over kings."¹⁴ The intimate relationship between

13. Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut*, (Varanasi, 1962), p. 26.

14. Moor, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

Virupakkha and the Nagas remains paramount, but sometimes the Naga itself takes a peculiarly Chinese form. Instead of the more usual cobra image characteristic of Indian art, the Chinese Naga assumes a dragon-like aspect. As chief of the scaly reptiles, the dragon can disappear or appear at will; it can increase or decrease as well as lengthen or shrink. Basically the dragon is considered beneficent. In the spring it mounts to the sky and brings rain and guards the heavens while in the winter it enters the earth and hibernates in the deep.

In both Chinese and Indian art, an inextricable relationship exists between the Naga form and Virupakkha as Regent of the Seas. Presumably the same tradition travelled to Burma and became at least part of the iconographic description of Virupakka. With respect to Burmese art and in particular the aforementioned Lokapalas standing in the round, only two figures in the set carry attributes which could possibly relate to the Chinese or Indian description of Virupakkha. King 3, previously described as holding a drum-like object, might in fact be carrying a water container. King 4 provides an even more plausible relationship. He displays a longitudinal cross section of a conch shell, and also wields a sword, attributes which recall the dual nature of Virupakkha, as Lord of the Seas and Punishment. As witnessed before with Chinese and Indian Lokapalas, a confusion of attributes often occurs, and such seems to be the case with the Burmese Virupakkha. A set of wooden Burmese doors found in Bangkok depict Lokapala figures as appropriate entrance guardian figures (Figures 13, 14). The left hand door shows a spritely posed personage supporting a vase in his right hand from which sprout vegetal forms (Figure 13). In this left hand he carries a lotus flower and nimbly balances on a tooth-grinning dragon whose scaled body wriggles back into space. The dance-like posture of the figure recalls a Ceylonese apsaras who also carries a blossoming vase, yet the supporting dragon on the door refers to a Chinese heritage (Figure 15). If the door carver was aware of Buddhist cosmological iconography, then this figure represents Virupakkha; the dragon symbolizes the Chinese Naga form and the water vase designates the close association between Virupakkha and the waters of the world.

If all these assumptions are correct, then which king in the carving in the round represents Virupakkha? The drum-like form carried by King 3 could designate a water container like the one held by the royal personage on the carved door. However, King 4 displays attributes more consistent with the Chinese and Indian description of Virupakkha. Furthermore, he carries a blooming lotus flower as does the figure on the carved door.

The guardian of the northern quarter is alternately described as Vaisravan or Kuvera (the Pali name is Waisrawana and in Sanskrit Vaisravana is a patronymic of Kuvera) the king who resides in Visana with its numerous cities, parks, lakes, assembly halls, and crowds of inhabitants. Brahma appointed Kuvera as God of Riches, and he rules over the Yakshas who guard the hidden treasures of the world and bestow its riches and prosperity. The Yakshas also guard earthly residences. Often they pose on either side of doors or even appear on carved posts. At Bharhut they protect the gateways (Figure 16), and at Nasik they watch over the cave entrances.

The benevolent image of the Yakshas as both guardians of worldly treasures and earthly residences contrasts greatly with the description of the Yakshas as decadent divinities who savor human flesh. This widespread fear of cannibalistic Yakshas is reflected in the legend of Yakshini Hariti who daily kidnapped one child from the town of Rajagriba to help feed her 500 children. Grunwedel suggests that the Yakshas as consumers of human flesh reflects the influence of "aboriginal local divinities; and if so are a survival of demonolatry."¹⁵ Cunningham seems less concerned with the cannibalistic nature of the Yakshas. Rather he believes the demonic interpretation stems from the derivation of the word Yaksha which means to eat.¹⁶ He cites the Yaksha figures on the Bharhut sculpture as a case in point. They pose as benevolent mortals or crouching, docile servants. In fact, the crouching form who supports "Kupiro Yakko" submits humbly and with a smile to the weight of the guardian king. This innocent portrayal of the Yaksha is not always the case though. Eight centuries later, the same crouching Yaksha form emerges in the earliest Buddhist temple of Japan at Horyuji (Figure 17). He supports Komoku-ten and assumes a stance similar to the Bharhut stone although the facial expression has transformed. The benign and humble vahana has been replaced with an awesome, red-eyed ogre, who snarls with his fang-like incisors, and stares wide-eyed and menacing, a creature easily capable of eating men's vitals.

Besides guarding worldly treasures and consuming human flesh, the Yakshas performed other tasks for Kuvera. They drew his water, danced and sang for his pleasure and often worked so hard that many died in his service. Among the Yakshas are numerous messengers; in particular, Tatola, Tatotala, Tattala, Tatojasi, Suri, Raja, Arittha, Nemit and Ojasi. Apparently they carry his proclamations and make them known in Uttarakuru. "And these are they who take his embassies and make them known".¹⁷

15. Grunwedel, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

16. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p., 20.

17. David, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

The attributes associated with Kuvera emphasize his role as God of the Riches and Lord of the Yakshas. In India he always appears corpulent and covered with jewels. He carries a mongoose in his left hand, perhaps spitting jewels and a banner in his right. Presumably the banner signifies the victory of Buddhism over other beliefs as well as the acceptance of Buddhism by the Yakshas. The mongoose has various interpretations. According to Getty, the Tibetan lamas claim the mongoose symbolizes Kuvera's victory over the Nagas as Guardian of the Treasures.¹⁸ On the other hand, Getty suggests that the mongoose is really just a bag made of mongoose skin, replacing an earlier Indian attribute of a long, narrow gold bag to hold the treasures of the world.¹⁹ This interpretation would explain why the mongoose spits jewels. In China Kuvera changes his rich royal robes and dons a warrior's uniform to guard the entering halls of the Buddhist temples. As in India he carries a banner or lance in his right hand and balances a stupa in his left. According to Getty the small chorten represents the Iron Tower where Najarjuna found the Buddhist scriptures.²⁰ As keeper of the world's greatest treasures, Kuvera eyes the shrine as befitting one of the guardians of Buddhism.

The traditional attributes associated with Kuvera are more difficult to ascertain in Burmese art. Of the four Lokapalas in the round, King 2 carries both a stupa form and a banner in the correct hands. This by itself would suggest King 2 is definitely Kuvera, Regent of the North. Another image taken from the book, *Mandalay* by V. C. Scott O' Connor also depicts a Lokapala figure possibly carrying a banner (Figure 18). The fact that two distinct images carry similar attributes proves that traditional Chinese and Indian attributes were adopted and correctly repeated by the Burmese artists. However, doubt emerges again with the appearance of another carved door which depicts a royal personage gaily balancing on a fanged ogre, and nimbly writing with pen in book (Figure 14). The awesome demon recalls the red-eyed Yaksha cannibals described in later Buddhist literary sources. As mentioned previously, Kuvera and the Yakshas are inextricably linked, but what could the book signify, if in fact this is a proper assumption? In Burmese art, a book writing image is common. The quartet in question contains one of these figures and there are numerous examples in private Bangkok collections (Figures 19, 20, 21). A writing figure is also included in John Lowry's book entitled *Burmese Art* from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Lowry speculates that the writing image relates to the activities of the four great Kings, but fails to associate the writing figure with a specific Lokapala. Rather

18. Getty, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

20. *Ibid.* p. 167.

he believes the image portrays Matali, Sakka's charioteer, as he compiles the report on human activities for Sakka. In light of the present material, the Matali interpretation for the writing figure becomes quite remote. If the personage was indeed Matali, there would be no need to associate him with three other images as is the case with the sculpture in the round. Lowry also associates the image with another figure whom he identifies as Sakka. As King of Tavatimsa, he displays an object which Lowry cannot identify. Based upon numerous observations of other Burmese images who also hold their hands in a similar position, it becomes apparent that Sakka carries a conch shell just as King 4 does (Figures 22, 23, 24). Thus the writing figure as well as the conch carrying image are interrelated as Lowry suggests. However, the relationship does not end with the two deities as he contends. There are in fact two more figures necessary to complete the grouping of four Lokapalas.

The question as to which image represents Kuvera still remains. Could the association between Kuvera and his numerous messengers be expressed by a writing figure? Rhys Davids in his editing of the *Mahagovinda Sutra* suggest that the Lokapalas served as recorders of events at the great assembly halls²¹ and since Vessavana acts as spokesman for the Lokapalas as is the case in the *Atantiya Suttanta*, perhaps he is best portrayed as a scribe or message bearer.

The quandary moves on as the last of the four great Kings is analyzed. The King of the South or Virulhaka rules the Kumbhandas or the giant demons. According to Chinese sources, the Kumbhandas are shaped like a gourd or a pot, or with a scrotum like one. In the Hindu pantheon, Yama is the Regent of the South or lower world in which the infernal fires blaze. As Judge of Departed Souls, Yama abides in the city of Yamapu where the deceased appear and receive a just sentence from the Judge of the Dead. Depending upon their previous existence, the departed may ascend to Swerga, the first heaven; descend to Naraka, the snaky hell, or assume an animal form on earth unless the offense deserves condemnation to the life of a vegetable, mineral, prison etc. In the *Dharmadhatuvagisvara Mandala*, the Lord of the South is the second deity in a series of eight gods of direction. Even in the eleventh century, the association between the Judge of Death and the Regent of the South continues for Yama appears in the mandala with both his staff of death and Sula or skull cap. The grim notion associated with the southern quarter follows through the Buddhist scriptures. In the *Atanatiya Suttanta*, "the quarter of south"²² is "where they whom men call Peta-folk reside, Folk rough of speech, back biters, murderers, Brigands and crafty

21. T.W. Rhys David, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. III, (London, 1910), p. 263.

22. David, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 191.

minded, looking hence."²³ Though the unsavory aspect of the southern hemisphere predominates in Indian literature, early Buddhist sculpture fails to associate the South with the infernal worlds. At Bharhut Virulhaka rather than Yama guards the southern region. He stands erect in regal dress with his two hands posed in prayer. Above his splendid turban, a stupa replaces the usual vegetal motif found in the other lunettes. Usually in India Virulhaka wields a long sword and dons the skin of an elephant's head for a helmet. Perhaps the stupa merely symbolizes the conversion of Virulhaka and the Kumbhandas to the new faith. Kuvera claims, "They too behol(d) Buddha, kin o' th' sun, Mighty, serene, acclaim him from afar... In wisdom's lore and conduct thoroughly versed; the Buddha do we worship, Gotama!"²⁴

In China the grim aspect of Yama as Guardian of the South characterizes Virulhaka. He holds an umbrella at whose raising a violent thunder and rain storm ensues or according to others brings universal darkness. The Taoist also have their Lokapalas with Mo Li-hung corresponding to Virulhaka. He also holds a magical umbrella, adorned with gems and precious stones as well as mother of pearl. On this umbrella are inscribed the following words: "Shut and open heaven and earth, Chwang-tsai-k'ien-kw'un."²⁵ When Mo Li-hung raises the umbrella, darkness falls upon the universe and the sun and moon become obscured. If he moves ever so slightly, the earth quakes down to its very center. Just as those who die wait for Yama's judgment so too the living fear the movements of Virulhaka.

Equipped with the iconographic attributes associated with both the Chinese and Indian Virulhaka forms, one turns now to the Burmese sculpture in the round to elicit any continuity between Burma and the respective cultures. The awesomeness of Yama with his staff of death and skull cap appears nowhere. King 4 carries a sword in conjunction with a conch shell and lotus blossom, but in no respect does the shell relate to Virulhaka. However, a Lokapala with only a sword is not an unusual attribute in Burmese art. Several images come to mind; in particular, a Lokapala who stylistically matches Dhatarattha playing the Burmese harp (Figure 6). Another figure appears on a carved monastery door holding a sword in his two hands (Figure 25). The monkey-like form below who supports the lotus flower on which the Lokapala stands perhaps represents a demon Kumbhanda. King 1 might also represent Virulhaka. He displays a stupa and a object formerly described as a banner. Conceivably, the banner could represent an umbrella instead. Though the ribbed portion of the umbrella does not extend down the handle as far as one would expect,

23. *Ibid*, p. 191.

24. *Ibid*, p. 191.

25. Henry Doré, S.J., *Researches into Chinese Superstitions* (Shanghai, 1922), p. 402.

confusion over the correct attribute or the inability to carve the umbrella properly in miniature might explain the variation. If the 'banner' is in fact an umbrella, there is a direct correspondence with the Chinese Virulhaka who raises and lowers his umbrella at will. Accordingly the stupa might refer to the remote Indian attribute depicted on the Bharhut Virudhaka-Yako who guards the Southern Gate. Another Lokapala who might possibly portray Virudhaka is King 2 who writes with pen in his book. According to Hindu mythology, Yama has numerous dog messengers who wander among men to summon them to their master. In the *Puranas*, Yama is described as the Judge of Men, and supposedly rules over many hells in which the wicked suffer. The *Padma Purana* says "Yama fulfills the office of Judge of the Dead, as well as sovereign of the damned; all that die appearing before him and being confronted with Chitrugupta the recorder, by whom their actions have been registered."²⁶ Thus Yama as the Judge of the Dead as well as his assistant Chitrugupta record the deeds of man perhaps even in a book not unlike the one carried by King 2. Furthermore, perhaps the ghoulis figure on the carved door who balances the lithesome Lokapala who also writes in an opened book represents a Kumbhanda rather than a Yaksha as suggested before.

As the analysis of the last Lokapala ends, a final question arises; namely, can the Burmese Lokapalas ever be identified individually according to their attributes. The sculpture in the round represents a unique work which includes four Lokapalas, yet under close examination it becomes apparent that each Lokapala could represent more than one cardinal point. King 1 carrying a stupa and banner or umbrella could represent Virulhaka or Kuvera; King 2 with his pen and open book could also be Virulhaka or Kuvera; King 3 who holds an unidentified container could pose as either Dhatarattha or Virupakkha, and King 4 with a conch and sword suggests both Virupakkha and Virulhaka. To confound the issue even more, the sculpture in the round depicts two Lokapala figures which carry multiple attributes. Normally this is not the case with Burmese Lokapalas. In fact, all the other Lokapalas included in this analysis carry single attributes with the harp, the shell and the book and pen as the most common forms. Thus, if one considers both multiple combinations of attributes as well as individual ones, a sum total of eight Burmese attributes can be enumerated; the four already examined in the sculpture in the round and the sword, the shell, the harp, and the umbrella or banner as illustrated in V.C. Scott O' Connor's *Mandalay*.

The four individual attributes most common to Burmese Lokapalas are easily identifiable. This is quite fortunate for the analysis because the book and pen

26. Wilkins, *op cit.*, p. 70.

27. Moor, *op cit.*, p. 263.

attribute which is listed among the most common attributes also appears in the sculpture in the round. Unquestionably the harp belongs in the eastern quarter with Dhatarattha, as King of the mythological Musicians who worship and serve Buddha. No other explanation satisfies the attribute. Likewise, the conch shell is easy to designate. Immediately the term conch brings to mind lapping ocean waves, and endless blue-green waters. Of the remaining three Lokapalas, only Virupakkha or Varuna, the Lord of the West, fulfills such attributes. "Varuna green, whom foamy waves obey,"²⁷ serves as Regent of the Seas. The last two Lokapalas present greater problems, but in all likelihood the sword signifies Virulhaka, the Lord of the South. As the ruler of unsavory and murderous demons, he wields his sword and ruthlessly judges both man and demons alike. Of course, the book and pen could feasibly represent Virulhaka as recorder of deeds performed by the deceased, yet given that there are only two remaining Lokapalas, it is more reasonable to associate a sword with a Yama-like personage rather than a god of riches. This conclusion leaves the book and pen in the northern quarter with Kuvera, Lord of the Yakshas and Protector of the Worldly Riches. "Sought by all, enjoyed by few,"²⁸ Kuvera has numerous Yaksha subjects who serve as messengers and proclaim his word. Certainly the carved wooden Burmese door with a writing Lokapala supported by a Yaksha suggests that this conclusion is correct. Thus, the four most common Lokapalas can be identified as follows: the book and pen -- Kuvera; the harp -- Dhatarattha; the sword -- Virulhaka; and the shell -- Virupakkha (Table I).

With the four most common Burmese Lokapala attributes enumerated, the identification problem associated with the sculpture in the round begins to unravel. There are four possible Lokapala combinations which describe the sculpture in the round (Table II). Diagram a presents one possibility; namely, the shell and sword combination in the West. According to the established attributes, a single shell describes Virupakkha. None of the other recognized attributes relate to diagram a. Diagram b is the most promising combination because the book and pen appear in the north which directly corresponds with the individual Burmese attributes. Furthermore, the sword identifies the South although not in combination with the conch which is a totally separate attribute for most Burmese Lokapala forms. The stupa and the banner in the West, and the container in the East both fail to conform to the recognized attributes for these cardinal points. The same holds true for all the attributes in diagrams c and d. Thus when one examines the sculpture in the round with respect to the established individual attributes, diagram b contains the only acceptable combination of attributes for 2 basic reasons: 1 – it has the greatest number of attributes

28. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

which corresponds to their respective cardinal points. 2- it is the only diagram in which the book and pen resides in the northern quarter. As previously mentioned, the book and pen is the only attribute common to the sculpture in the round and the individual Lokapala.

Though diagram b emerges as the most likely arrangement for the sculpture in the round, there are too many attributes left unidentified that fail to conform to recognizable Burmese attributes. To explain this lack of correlation, the Chinese and Indian attributes must now be re-introduced to cross check the validity of the Burmese attributes as: Kuvera-pearl and snake, or banner and stupa; Virulhaka-umbrella; Dhatarattha-stringed instrument; Virupakkha-chorten and serpent, or sword (Table I). In diagram a the stupa and banner stand properly in the north, while the shell and sword in the western quarter partially conform to recognizable Chinese attributes (Table II). Unfortunately, the other attributes show no correlation. Diagram b contains one or perhaps two possibilities. The stupa in the West is correct, but not in relation with a banner or umbrella; the container in the East might refer to the heavenly musicians if the object is in fact a drum. As for diagram c there is only one tentative attribute. In the South the Lokapala raises a "banner" which might really be an umbrella; but again the umbrella is never depicted with a stupa. Diagram d has no recognizable attribute. Thus, with respect to Chinese attributes, diagram a contains the only definitive attribute; namely, the stupa and the banner in the North, while diagram b has 2 hypothetical ones.

From the Chinese Lokapalas, one now moves to the Indian tradition with the four Lokapalas associated with the following attributes: Kuvera-mongoose and banner; Virulhaka-long sword; Virupakkha-conch or chorten or snake noose; Dhatarattha-stringed instrument (Table I). In diagram a the stupa and banner partially conforms to the accepted Indian attribute (Table II). Again the banner appears with a mongoose not a stupa. In the West Virupakkha displays a shell along with a sword. The sword is not specifically designated in Indian iconography, but represents a feasible choice if one considers Virupakkha as Lord of Punishment. Both the book and the container in their respective quarters have no relevancy. In diagram b there are at least 2 or perhaps 3 possibilities. Virupakkha, Lord of the West, sometimes carries a chorten yet not with a banner. The sword in the South is also possible but the shell is wrong. The container in the East is only feasible if it represents a musical instrument. As for diagram c and d, nothing conforms to recognizable Indian attributes. So it appears that diagram a and b represent the only possible combination of attributes. Diagram a is more acceptable because it contains one positive attribute, the shell and the sword, while diagram b had mostly suppositions.

Having completely analyzed the 4 diagrams with respect to the Burmese, Indian and Chinese attributes, one can safely eliminate diagrams c and d as possible combinations (Table II). That leaves diagrams a and b with diagram a relevant to both the Chinese and Indian attributes, and diagram b significant for the Burmese. Based upon this information, one is forced to conclude that the creator of the sculpture in the round was familiar with Buddhist cosmology and the Lokapala mythology, but unaware of the proper attributes associated with each king. He perfectly reproduced the banner and stupa attribute associated with the Chinese Kuvera; the sword and the shell correctly interprets Virupakkha's role as Lord of Punishment and Regent of the Seas as described in the Indian scriptures; and the book and the pen defines the Burmese Kuvera as depicted on the carved wooden door previously mentioned. The container which has yet to be positively identified remains unexplained although perhaps in the future other Lokapalas will come to light and bear more information on this attribute. Thus, the sculpture in the round contains 2 Kuveras, 1 carrying a Chinese attribute and the other Burmese, 1 Virupakkha displaying Indian attributes and lastly the unidentifiable king who is most likely associated with the East.

Table I

	King of the East (Gandhabbas)	King of the West (Naga)	King of the North (Yakshas)	King of the South (Kumbhandas)
India	stringed instrument	pasha, noose of a snake, conch, serpent, jewels, chorten	mongoose in left hand spitting jewels, banner in right	long sword, elephant head, helmet
China	stringed instrument	sword, dragon	banner or lance in right hand, stupa in left	umbrella
Burma	stringed instrument, drum	shell	book and pen	sword

Table II

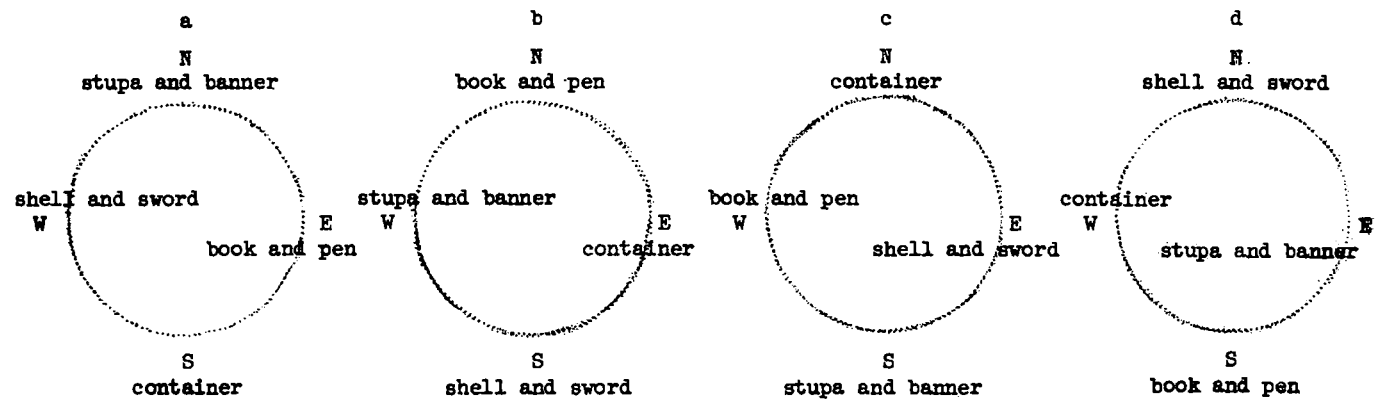




Figure 1: Burmese Lokapalas, View of King 1 and King 2, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?). Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 2: Burmese Lokapalas, View of King 2, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?).
Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 3 : Burmese Lokapalas, View of King 3, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?).
Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 4: Burmese Lokapalas, View of King 4, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?).
Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.

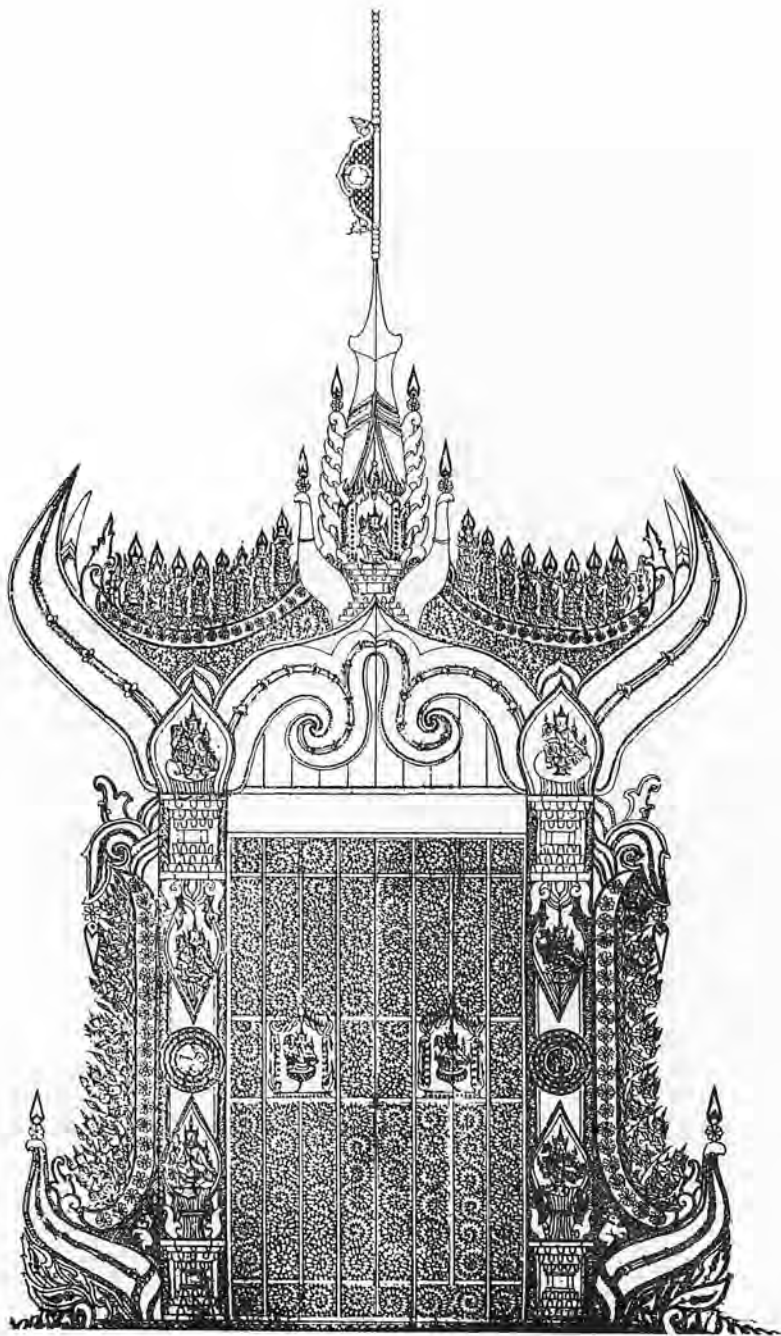


Figure 5 : Sketch of Upper Portion of Lion's Throne, Burmese, 1916. (Ministry of Union Culture, *Mandalay Palace*, Rangoon, 1963, Plate 17).



Figure 6 : Burmese Lokapalas, Wood, Figure on Left Carries Burmese Harp; Figure on Right Carries Sword, Nineteenth Century (?). Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 7 : Burmese Lokapala Carrying Unidentified Container, Wood, Nineteenth Century. Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.

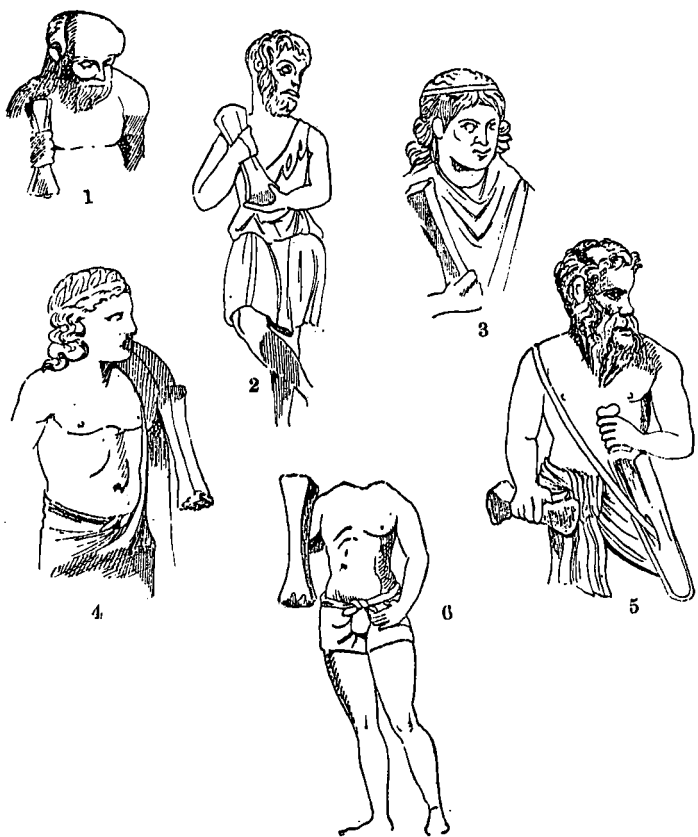


Figure 8: Various Club Bearing Images (Grunwedel, *Buddhist Art in India*, London, 1901, p. 88).



Figure 9 : Chakavako Naja, Raja Stone, Bharhut Pillar, Early First Century, B.C., (Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut*, Varanasi, 1962).

Figure 10 : Virudhako-Yakho, Stone, Bharhut Pillar, Early First Century, B.C., (Henrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, New York, 1955).





Figure 11: Royal Personnage, Stone, Bharhut Pillar, Early First Century, B.C., (Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut*, Varanasi, 1962).

Figure 12: Varuna, Stone, Northeast India, Eighth Century, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Asia Society, Inc., *The Art of India*, Tokyo, 1963, Plate 33).





Figure 13 : Burmese Door with Lokapala, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?), Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 14 : Burmese Door with Lokapala, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?). Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 15: Apsara Carrying Vase, Degaldaruwa, Ceylon, Mid-Eighteenth Century (Philip S. Rawson, *Indian Painting*, New York, 1961, p. 96).

Figure 16: Kupiro-Yakho, Stone, Bharhut Pillar, Early First Century, B.C., (Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut*, Varanasi, 1962).





Figure 17: Komoku-ten or Virupaksa, Horyuji, Japan. Seventh Century. (Henrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, New York, 1955).



Figure 18: Burmese Lokapala Carrying Banner or Umbrella, Wood, Nineteenth Century. (V.C. Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay*, London, 1907).



Figure 19: Burmese Lokapala Writing in Book, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?) Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 20: Burmese Lokapala Writing in Book, Wood, Early Twentieth Century (?). Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 21 : Burmese Lokapala Writing in Book. Bronze, Eighteenth Century (?) Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.

Figure 22 : Burmese Lokapala Holding Conch Shell, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?). (V.S. Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay*, London, 1907).





Figure 23 : Burmese Lokapalas, Figure on left perhaps held a sword; Figure on right displays a conch, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?), Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 24: Burmese Lokapala probably carrying shell, Wood, Late Eighteenth Century (?). Private Collection, Bangkok, Thailand.



Figure 25: Burmese Lokapala with Sword or Bludgeon, Wood, Nineteenth Century (?). (V.C. Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay*, London, 1907).

