

II.

NOTICE OF TWO BRONZE MASKS DUG UP AT KANAJOR, IN THE PROVINCE OF MYSORE, INDIA, AND NOW PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM BY MR R. C. SANDERSON, THROUGH DR JAMES SANDERSON, F.S.A. Scot. BY SIR WALTER ELLIOT OF WOLFELEK, K.C.S.I., F.R.S., F.S.A. Scot.

The two bronze masks presented to the Museum by Dr Sanderson in the name of his son, Mr R. C. Sanderson, were discovered by him about 15 inches under the surface of the ground in his coffee plantation, at Kanajor,¹ and were sent to me for any information I might be able to give touching their origin or use. Not having met with any articles of the same kind before, I was at a loss to recognise their purpose, but, remembering to have seen miniature figures in the form of male and female puppets, and brass statuettes, representing ancestors, and worshipped as household gods by the mountaineers of the western range of hills, I thought these might have some connection with the same practice. I was, therefore, led to make some inquiry in the same direction, and found that the subject embraced a much larger field than I had anticipated.

The belief that after death the disembodied spirit continues to take a deep interest in mundane affairs, and particularly in those of its late relatives, both for good and evil, is very generally held, not only on the west coast, where I first met with it, but prevails over all India, and even far beyond it, especially among the hill tribes of Turanian origin. Figures like those of the masks, or images of chiefs or benefactors, are preserved as *manes*, as are also those of relatives or beloved members of the family. The masks are fitted to the idol or statue of the former, where such exist, or are worn by some person dressed up for the occasion, to represent the individual in question on anniversaries or days of cere-

¹ Kanajor is situated 17 or 18 miles north of Saklespur, in the taluk of Mudigiri, recently separated from that of Manjarábád. The plantation is on the south bank of the Hemávati river, a few miles west of Kasbah Manjarábád, and 120 miles west of Bangalore.

mony. The spirits of men who have exercised an evil influence, or have experienced injurious treatment from others during their lives, are believed to be still actuated by malevolent impulses and revengeful motives, which must be propitiated by sacrifice or offerings to avert disease, misfortune, or other evil influence supposed to emanate from the demon. The effigies of the former are of a gentle and pleasing character, while those of the latter are distorted and frightful, with glaring eyes, protruding teeth, and garnished with attributes of terrible import. The prevalence of this latter belief, and the performance of rites to neutralise its supposed exercise, have been largely described by our missionaries, under the name of devil-worship, or—as the late Bishop of Calcutta (the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson) more appropriately expressed it, in an article contributed to the *Calcutta Review* about 1855, after his visitation to Tinnevely—demonolatry :—

The religion of many of the lower classes [he observes] before Christian preachers came among them was devil-worship. This is a proof of their pre-Brahmanical origin, for their superstitions are identical with the Shamanism of the ancient Mongol and Tatar tribes, and may be seen not only in India, but among the Ostiaks and other heathens of Siberia. It prevails also in Ceylon, where it is mixed up in strange and impure conjunction with the nobler creed of Buddha Demonolatry is purely a religion of fear; bloody sacrifices are offered to avert the wrath of certain malignant spirits, who take delight in blasting the crops, withholding rain, spreading murrain among cattle, and visiting men with sunstroke and epilepsy. They have no temples, but are honoured by the erection of white-washed pyramids, generally of mud, or of thatched sheds open in front, and decorated with hideous figures of bull-headed monsters, or hags devouring children. Such a structure was called a *péy kovil*, or devil's house, and round one of them the demonolaters may be seen from time gathering for a devil-dance, the most important feature, says Dr Caldwell, of their worship These demonolaters, it should be observed, are supposed to be the spirits of dead persons who, in life, were conspicuous either for their crimes or their misfortunes. It is well known that in one place the spirit of an English officer, who had been the terror of the district, was supposed to be the presiding fiend, and was propitiated at a *péy kovil* with offerings of cigars and ardent spirits.¹

But this explanation of the term demon refers only to a portion of the

¹ *Calcutta Review*, No. lxxviii. vol. xxxix. pp. 242-43.

cult, which embraces the great and good among the ancestors of the tribe, and also the former beloved members of the family, whose memory is still cherished, to include whom a more comprehensive term, viz., daimonolatriy, might with propriety be employed, inasmuch as devil worship and demonolatriy, under the present received meaning of the word demon, apply more directly to the worship of evil spirits. It is to the latter class—viz., the beneficent—that the bronzes now under consideration appear to belong, for they have none of the fearful characteristics of the malignant demons, but the very reverse. They are in excellent preservation, and represent two faces or masks of bronze—one a male, the other a female. The features are pleasing and well-formed; those of the man (fig. 1) sharper than those of the woman, which are softer and fuller; in neither of them any trace of the Mongolian or Tatar physiognomy. Above the forehead of the male is a circle of snakes, confined by a twisted band or fillet; above the nose is a perpendicular sectarial mark, broad above, and becoming narrower towards the nose; four necklaces hang round the throat. Round the head of the female (fig. 2) is a chaplet, confined by a twisted band; in both, the hair appears to be dressed upwards. A lozenge-shaped sectarial mark occupies the space between the eyebrows, the left nostril is pierced for a nose-ring, and her neck is adorned with three necklaces. The eyes are not represented, their places being left smooth as in modern sculpture. The cartilage of the ears has been perforated above and below for ear-rings; but the most remarkable feature is that of a curved and pointed object protruding from each angle of the mouth, larger in the male, the meaning of which I was at first unable to understand, but which I now believe, from a comparison with other similar objects, represent tusks. This conclusion is confirmed by the opinion of the learned author of *Native Life in Travancore*, who identifies them with the similar adjuncts common in malicious demons, called *vira pal*. This explanation of the masks agrees with a subsequent letter from Mr R. C. Sanderson, who states “that it was the custom in that part of the country for heads of villages and persons of distinction to keep these masks as household gods, and once a year to carry them in procession to a festival, in



Fig. 1. Bronze Mask dug up at Kanajor, Maisur, India (11 inches in length).

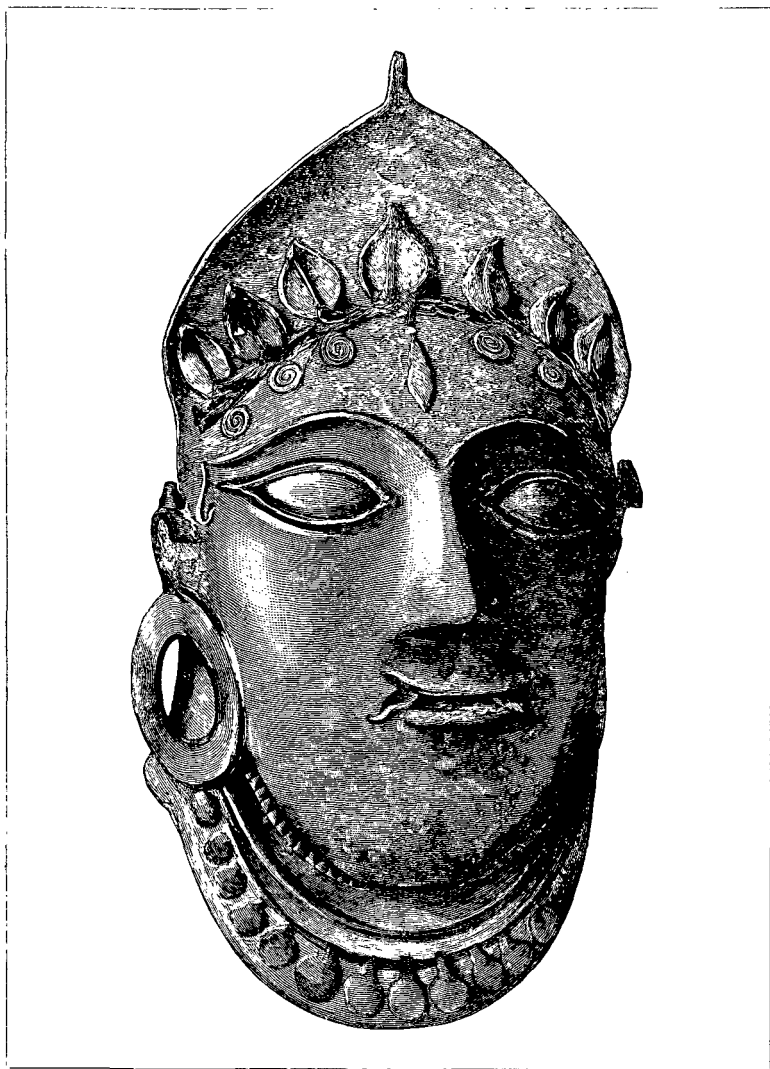


Fig. 2. Bronze Mask dug up at Kanajor, Maisur, India (10 inches in length).

honour of the principal god of the tribe; and even now it is customary for every one in the district to visit the god yearly with offerings of coconuts," &c. It is not easy to assign to them a probable date. Sectarial marks did not come into use before the ninth or tenth century, when the rival Saiva and Vaishnava sects arose—the former adopting the horizontal, the latter the perpendicular, signs on the forehead. This would lead us to look upon the owners of the masks as connected with the Vaishnava sectarians, notwithstanding the snake-like head-dress; but if they belong, as is most probable, to one of the hill tribes, they would be free from the influence of Hindu habits and prepossessions, and the marks must then be regarded as simply ornamental additions. Moreover, in the whole of Malabar, attributes of Siva and Vishnu, as I was lately informed by Dr Gundert, are not very carefully kept distinct. The correct design and elegant execution of the faces, as well as the metal employed, points to a somewhat earlier period, when Jaina art was in the ascendant, and when bronze was more frequently used than at present.¹

The forms in which such domestic memorials are perpetuated vary considerably. One of frequent occurrence is connected with the marriage of a second or third wife, when it is considered desirable to secure the favour or disarm the jealousy of her predecessor. This is sometimes done by means of a metallic face or mask, an example of which came into the possession of a friend in Bombay, to whom it was sold by the widower after the death of his second helpmate, because, he said, he had no further use for it. Another form is that of a small gold or silver plate, from 1 to 2 inches long, called a *tāk*, on which a female figure, generally with the hands joined, has been embossed in repoussé work. This is placed on the seat of honour during the marriage ceremony, and afterwards attached to the necklace of the bride by her husband. The

¹ The masks have been submitted to Mr W. Ivison Macadam, F.C.S., Lecturer on Chemistry and Analytical Chemist, Surgeons' Hall, who has reported to Dr Anderson that they are both of bronze, their composition being as follows:—

No. 1. Copper, . . .	86·262 per cent.	No. 2. Copper, . . .	85·467
Tin, . . .	13·632 „	Tin, . . .	14·411
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	99·894		99·878

occurrence of sickness or misfortune to herself or her husband is attributed to the displeasure of the spirit, and the *túk* is taken off and placed among the household gods, or an exorcist is consulted. Similar *túks* are suspended to the necks of children to preserve them from the evil eye or the malign influence of the late wife. Four smaller gold plates of like design, which have lately come under my notice from Travancore, have no means of attachment, and are probably therefore examples of the domestic *lares* kept secluded for family worship. Others are in the form of small brass figures, 3 or 4 inches high, two specimens of which, lent from the Church Missionary Society's Museum, had the following labels attached to them:—"Ancestral (female) image, worshipped by some Pulayans,¹ who embraced Christianity in 1881, and were baptized (24 of them) in 1883, near Cottayam." The other "Talanani—a sorcerer, who was devil priest among the Hill Arryans² during his life, and propitiated as a demon

¹ The Pulayans are a low and servile caste in Malabar, in which the husband lives with his wife though she may belong to a different master, and the children inherit any rights the mother may possess.—Wils. *Gloss.*, p. 426.

² The Hill Arryans are one of the most remarkable aboriginal races of the Travancore hills, of whom an account has been published by the Rev. Henry Baker, jun. (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, & Hunt, 1862). It is so interesting as to justify a longer extract. "Demon and hero-worship," he observes, "peculiar rites connected with births, funerals, and husbandry, are practised among them. Remains of cromlechs, funeral mounds, circular enclosures and other monuments precisely resembling each other, are found among them" (as well as among the hill tribes generally) "along most of the mountain ranges in India and Burmah northward. . . . They differ from the Hindus, inasmuch as they do not *idolise evil*, but worship the spirits of their ancestors or certain local demons supposed to reside in rocks or peaks, and having influence only over particular villages or families. The religious services rendered to these are intended to deprecate anger rather than to seek benefits. . . . It is very observable that these people are generally more truthful and moral in their habits than the people of the plains. They are free and intelligent in their manners, and great hunters of wild beasts. . . . Though they are regarded as inferiors by their Hindu neighbours, they are looked upon as beings in alliance with some powerful demonolatry, and presents are abundantly bestowed to prevent their curses producing evil effects. . . . They bury their dead, consequently there are many ancient tumuli in these hills, evidently graves of chiefs, showing just the same fragments of pottery, metal figures, weapons, &c., as are found in other similar places. These tumuli are often surrounded with long splintered pieces of granite, 8 to 12 or 15 feet long, set up on end with sacrificial

after his death. His last heathen successor and heir handed the image to me, and applied for baptism in 1881."—(*Signed*) W. J. RICHARDS. Among the lower castes similar practices prevail, varying somewhat, but all tending to the same belief. According to Mr Mateer, "the Puiliyars (a low outcast tribe, *Wils. Gloss.*, p. 427) offer worship to the spirits of deceased relatives. They are afraid to give any offence to such spirits, which are supposed to haunt the house and neighbourhood, to be pleased with offerings of food, &c., and to inflict disease or death if displeased. No images are made of these *chavukal*, as they are called. The Vedars, a similar low caste, believe that on the third day after decease the soul becomes a *chávou*. Their priest pretends to be able to see it. If it has appeared they are in fear of attack by it. To please these spirits, dancing is practised and fowls are sacrificed. The Pariahs call the souls of ancestors *maruthá* (from *mar*, to die), and these are worshipped by dancing and sacrifice of cocks."

The above remarks relate principally to inquiries made in Malabar, but similar observances have been found among the aboriginal population in other parts of India. Thus among the Santáls and the inhabitants of the Rajmahal Hills, Dr Hunter observes:—"The worship of the Santáls is based upon the family. Each household has its own deity (*orabonga*), which it adores with unknown rites, and scrupulously conceals from strangers. . . . In addition to the family god, each household worships the spirits of its ancestors. . . . The Santál religion, in fact, seems to consist of a mythology constructed upon the family altars and other remains, evidently centuries old. Numerous vaults (or rather *kistvaens*) too are seen in all their hills, like Kit's Coty house in Kent, and the Thevegony stones in Cornwall. They stand north and south, the circular opening being to the south; a red stone is fitted to this aperture, with another acting as a long lever to prevent its falling out; the sides, as also the stones of the top and bottom, are single slabs. To this day the Arryans make similar little cells of pieces of stone, the whole forming a box a few inches square, and on the death of a member of any family, as the body is being buried, the spirit is supposed to pass into a brass or silver image which is shut into this vault. If the parties are very poor, an oblong smooth stone suffices. A few offerings of milk, ghee, &c., are made, a torch lighted and extinguished, the covering stone placed on, and all leave. On the anniversary, similar offerings being made, the stone is lifted off and again hastily closed. The spirit is thus supposed to be enclosed; no one ventures to touch the cell at any other times."

basis.”¹ Mr Storrs, a missionary who has laboured for many years among them, referring to their “ancestral worship,” writes :—“Indeed I think this is always what they most cling to, and for which they most earnestly plead. The *mánjhi thún*,² so conspicuous in every village street, marking out the house of the head-man, the little thatched roof on its slight wooden pillars, with its round topped stone, with two little wooden doll-like heads projecting out of the ground, this is the place dedicated especially to the worship of the forefathers of the village *mánjhi*, though the two little heads are said to represent more especially the first man and woman In addition to this they have their *lares* and *penates*, the names of which are kept secret from generation to generation, the father never telling the son till he is well advanced in age.”

Colonel Dalton, in his *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 188, in the account of the religion of the Hos and Mundas of Singbhum and Chota Nagpur, after stating the principal objects of adoration, viz., the sun, moon, woods, springs, &c., continues :—“The remaining spirits are the ancestral shades, who are supposed to hover about, doing good or evil to their descendants. They are often denounced as the cause of calamitous visitation, and propitiatory offerings are made to them. Besides this, a small portion of the food prepared in every house is daily set apart for them. The ancestors are the *penates*, and are called ‘*Ham ho*.’ The ancestors of the wife have also to be considered; they are called ‘*Horatan ho*,’ because sacrifices to them are always offered on the path, ‘*Hora*,’ by which the old woman came as a bride to the house.”

From what has been said, it will be seen that this tendency to continue an intercourse with the departed is founded on the difficulty of accepting the conditions consequent on a sudden separation of continued association, which leads the survivors to deprecate the displeasure of those whom they may have offended or disliked during life, or to express the continuance of that love and affection which had formerly bound them together.

¹ *Annals of Rural Bengal*, pp. 182-4.

² *Mánjhi* or *míji*, among the Rájmahal mountaineers, a title borne by their head men, also termed *mánhá*.—Wils. *Gloss.*, p. 329.

A curious instance of the latter is afforded by an incident related of the first governor of Bengal and the founder of the city of Calcutta. Mr Job Charnock, of whose eccentricities many stories remain on record, having saved a Hindu widow from burning herself with her deceased husband, subsequently married her. She died before him, and ever afterwards he celebrated the anniversary of her death by sacrificing a cock to the goddess Durgá over her tomb.¹ This may have arisen out of Mr Charnock's familiarity with the ideas and habits of the natives, and his desire to conciliate them by conforming to their ways.

The above remarks refer to a small portion only of daimonolatry, without touching on the much larger subject of hero-worship, and founders of tribes, and men conspicuous for great and noble qualities. The religion of the Santáls, according to Mr Storrs, is partly of this description, "the objects of which are five or six brothers and two supposed sisters, evidently some men of old, men of renown, who once took the lead among them, and were afterwards deified." In recent times the Marathas pay divine honours to Sivaji, the founder of their later empire, whose image at Malwan is adorned with a silver mask, which is exchanged for one of gold on anniversaries and festivals. Such an expedient for the occasional worship of the common deities among the lower orders appears to have led to the employment of mask representations, to supply the absence of more elaborate idols, an example of which was given at the meeting, where it was stated that such was the practice very generally observed in the worship of Káli, or as she is called by the Tamils, Pidarí, among the lower orders of Hindus. Káli, the wife of Siva the destroyer, is especially an object of fear from her malignant disposition. She is worshipped under various names, as Durgá, Bhairaví, Chandi Chandiká, &c., with a host of local appellations connected with special traditions. From her are supposed to proceed the most terrible calamities and epidemics, as small-pox, cholera, &c. She is therefore propitiated by bloody sacrifices, holocausts of sheep, buffaloes, and other animals being immolated at her shrines. On such occasions she is represented either by her image or in default by facial representations in brass or terra cotta.

¹ Talboys Wheeler's *Short Hist. of India*, p. 199.

[Mr James Burgess, LL.D., &c., Archæological Surveyor for Western and Southern India, and editor of the *Indian Antiquary*, who was present at the meeting, has since communicated the following remarks to that journal, with the view of eliciting information respecting the use of such masks and surviving traces of ancestor-worship :—

The backs of the masks are open, so as to allow them to be attached to wooden, metal, or stone figures, representing the bodies of the personages intended. Both faces are characterised by the tusks usually assigned to images of Bhairava and Kâli, protruding from the wicks of the mouths, and both have on the foreheads the third eye,¹ placed vertically, which gives to Siva the name of Trilôchana, and which is generally borne by all the forms of that Dêva, and by his *gana* or demon troop of followers. The seven Nâga or cobra hoods on the garland over the brow of each, their intertwined bodies forming the band which unites them into a sort of fillet, and their tails coiled up in little flat curls are also characteristic marks of the Saiva class of images. In the smaller face these cobra hoods have a resemblance to leaves, but this is not unfrequently the case, even in separate images of snakes. The smaller mask has also a hole in the left cartilage of the nose as if for a ring. The other has been supposed to represent a male head, but the distinction is not marked.

Such masks for images of gods, made of bronze, silver, or gold, are quite common in the south of India, and are also in use in the Marâthâ country and in the north; but these are usually lighter and less imposing than the present pair.

They have probably been buried for a century, and may be considerably older; the large ear-rings and the forms of the necklets, however, are such as are still to be met with among certain castes in Southern India to the present time. It has been suggested by Sir Walter Elliot that they may be connected with or allied to images employed in the ancestor-worship, which he believes has not quite disappeared from among the Dravidan races. The worship of the *durdêvatâs*, Kâli, and Bhairava is closely connected with that of *bhûts*, or the ghosts of dead persons of notoriety.

¹ [This feature in the woodcut is somewhat indistinct, but in the mask itself I cannot see the least resemblance to an eye.—W. E.]

In the present case the masks appear to represent Kâli or Pidârî, as she is called in Tamil, who, being a *durdévatâ*, or evil goddess, is represented with tusks. The large rings in the ears and the necklaces mark the figures as those of females, and Mr S. M. Nâtêsâ Sâstrî informs me that masks of this goddess are made of clay, and burnt red, to sell to people of the lower castes who worship her at certain seasons; but these are, of course, of a much coarser type than the bronze ones.]