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Bes figurines from Roman Egypt as agents of transculturation in the Indian Ocean

Serena Autiero

Keywords: terracotta, figurines, Indo-Roman commerce, India, Egypt, globalization, transculturation.
Parole chiave: terracotta, figurine, commercio indo-romano, India, Egitto, globalizzazione, transculturazione.

Abstract:
This paper has the aim to widen the perspective on the study of global interaction through a specific category of objects: terracotta figurines. A new type of terracotta figurines arose in the Indian Deccan area in the period of greater development of transoceanic trade with Roman Egypt. The adoption of foreign elements in this Indian terracotta production can be read, indeed, as an indicator of increasing external contacts, and as the output of a stronger presence into the trade and cultural networks of ancient Globalization. Indo-Roman trade is the best-known part of a wider phenomenon of ancient globalization. The active parties in this trade route were Satavahana India and Roman Egypt. With a multidisciplinary approach it is possible to detect the long lasting outputs of trade contacts in local cultures. Most of all, it is possible to identify the fundamental contribution of apparently unimportant objects like terracotta figurines for personal devotion. From Egypt they reached India and were widespread into the local context; their iconography then merged with pre-existing local cults, imagery and rituals. The case study I will focus on is a peculiar type of Yaksha (nature spirit) figurine dated to the Satavahana period. A link can be indeed traced to the Egyptian representation of Bes. Examples will be used to introduce a new theoretical approach to ancient globalization studies.

Questo articolo ambisce ad approfondire lo studio delle interazioni culturali su scala globale attraverso l'analisi di una specifica categoria di manufatti: le figurine di terracotta. Un nuovo tipo di figurine fittili emerse nella regione indiana del Deccan nel periodo di maggiore sviluppo dei commerci transoceanici con l'Egitto Romano. L'adozione di elementi stranieri in questa produzione fittile indiana suggerisce, infatti, un incremento dei contatti esterni, e una maggiore presenza di queste entità statali nelle reti commerciali e culturali della globalizzazione antica. Il commercio indo-romano è la parte meglio conosciuta dell'ampio fenomeno della globalizzazione antica. Attori principali in questa rotta commerciale erano l'India Satavahana e l'Egitto romano. Grazie ad un approccio multidisciplinare è possibile individuare il contributo fondamentale di oggetti apparentemente poco importanti come le figurine fittili utilizzate per la devozione personale. Dall'Egitto esse raggiunsero finanche l'India e si diffusero nel contesto locale; la loro iconografia si fuse poi con culti locali preesistenti, immagini e rituali. In particolare sarà trattato il caso di un tipo peculiare di figurine di Yaksha (spiriti silvestri) datate al periodo Satavahana. Si può, infatti, tracciare un legame tra queste figurine e le rappresentazioni del Bes egizio. Gli esempi saranno usati per introdurre un nuovo approccio teoretico agli studi sulla globalizzazione nell'antichità.

This paper is part of a wider research on the iconographical exchange in the Indian Ocean Network. The final objective is a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods of Egypt. At the other end of these trade routes – that is the Indian Subcontinent – scholars refer to the same period as Early Historic.

Geographical focus of this paper is the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), where important trade networks developed since the 3rd millennium B.C. Along these routes culture travelled with goods. From the 1st century B.C., a direct link between Egyptian Red Sea ports and India was possible, inaugurating what is known as Indo-Roman trade, thanks to the exploitation of the monsoon wind by merchants[1] (fig. 1).

[1] Casson 1989, p. 11.

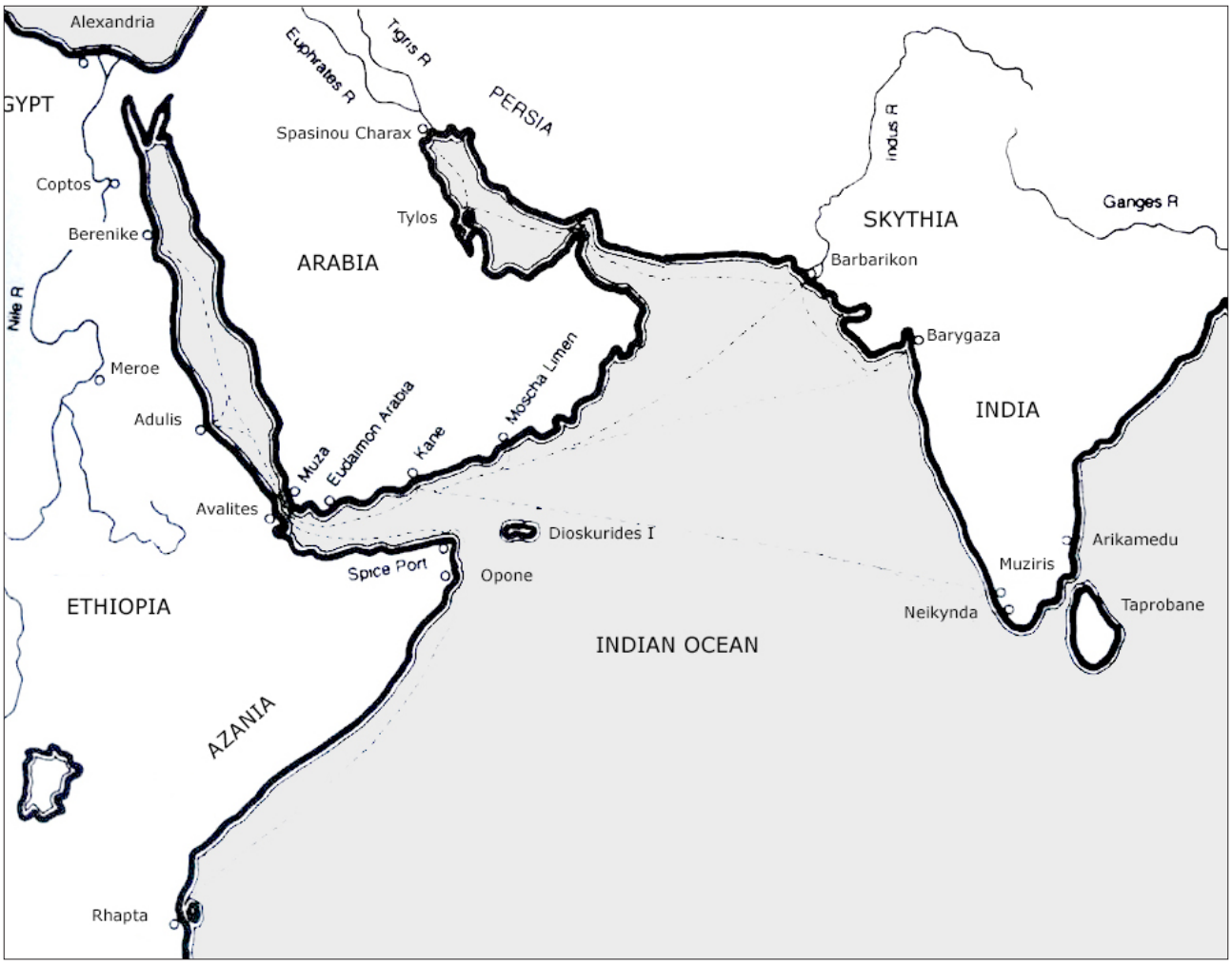

Fig. 1. Indian Ocean routes as described in the PME (elaboration from Young 2001, p. 29, map 2.1).

From a methodological point of view this research needs an approach based on multidisciplinarity, since interesting data come from the study of several kinds of sources. We have to handle historical, literary, epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and art-historical data[2].

Regarding the issue of globalization, the borders between disciplines fade out. To properly understand cultural globalization we need to deal with economy and social science. Suffice to point out that, as we all know, a global perspective is needed to properly understand human history and the role of every part of the world in a broader geo-historical frame.

In order to have a role in the global system, an important factor is the participation to a trade network; the other forms of interaction then spread out from it[3].

The methodological pattern spreading from these considerations points out that, in order to face this topic, five main issues need to be considered:

1. conditions and results of trade contacts
2. the peculiar role of political institutions
3. the reciprocal interactions in visual culture
4. distribution and extent of material culture
5. the interconnection between religion and trade

One of the key issues in this field of study is definitely the vocabulary. One of the most problematic definitions is that of Indo-Roman trade that actually cuts out several actors from the scenario. In 1928 Warmington was the first scholar to refer to these links between India and the Egyptian Red Sea as Indo-Roman Trade, a term that is still used

[2] This kind of approach has been proposed in my PhD dissertation (Autiero 2012).

[3] Autiero 2016, p. 152.

in current scholarship[4]. Until the re-excavation of Arikamedu in the late 1980s[5], the interpretation of Indo-Roman trade followed an existing orthodoxy – fostered by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, who first excavated this site from 1945 – as controlled by Rome. This initial approach to Indo-Roman trade strongly affected the comprehension of the exchange phenomenon, moreover, most of the relevant written sources are from the classic world, both in Latin and Greek, thereby reinforcing this unbalanced view[6].

The main source is the well known Periplus Maris Erytraei, a short sailors' handbook written in the late 1st century A.D. by a Greek-Egyptian trader[7]. The Periplus is a prominent source on so-called Indo-Roman trade, and even if all the information in the Periplus refers to a precise period, it allows us to draw comparisons to other periods and places.

The anonymous author of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* focuses on Roman-Egyptian exports to overseas harbours. The *Periplus*' silence about Egyptian imports and the exchanges between non-Egyptian harbours is based on the author's personal interest and his knowledge only of the trade of Roman Egypt[8]. The information in *Periplus* is wider than expected thanks to the author's documentary inclinations and personal interests.

Archaeological data confirmed the movement of people and goods across the Indian Ocean with tangible proofs[9]. An ocean is a continent in its own right, with fluid borders and open frontiers. In a challenging field of study like Indian Ocean trade we need hints from different specializations in order to draw a complete picture of the historical phenomena that took place in this area. Focusing on the Western Indian Ocean area, a study of the visual culture highlights the existence of travelling iconographic patterns resulting from the close link between Asia and the Western World.

The period between the 3rd century B.C. and the 5th century A.D. is lately better known thanks to a good amount of archaeological data unearthed. At the same time a number of artworks concur in displaying a new picture of interaction. A better comprehension of that period provides us with a clearer understanding of the continuity of relations and of mutual exchanges in this relevant part of the world. Having a complete picture of the exchange network during that time could show that phenomena that are apparently isolated and disconnected turn out to be intimately interlinked, within a broader entanglement of networks and interactions. By tracing back interconnections and interactions, scholars might broader their understanding of local contexts in a more global perspective.

In the Western Indian Ocean personal objects have travelled together with men and goods, and then these objects took root at the opposite extremes of the routes. The mobility of objects is a point of fundamental importance. Little artefacts – that either travel together with men or are imported – are a key element in the development of a shared figurative culture**.** We can see a real phenomenon of absorption and integration that leads to the production of objects with characteristics of foreign and distant origin; these artefacts are active agents in the circulation of iconographic models. Little objects and migrant workers can be the source from which iconographic elements have been absorbed and revisited, shaping a new visual culture at the ends of the trade routes[10].

This phenomenon can be followed looking at a special class of artefacts that is terracotta figurines. Plenty of cultural and social aspects find their own expression in the manufacturing of terracotta. Numerous examples have been found during archaeological excavations, but are still waiting for a comprehensive study to be placed in the wider context. In this paper I consider as a case study a peculiar type of terracotta figurines from Satavahana India. This class of works reveals a variety of both autochthonous and foreign elements so peculiar than it is almost impossible to give a general interpretation.

Terracottas are very important in order to clarify cultural aspects and interactions, but scholars dealing with international trade seem to have underestimated the importance of terracotta figurines as a proof of transcultural interactions.

Archaeological discoveries, ethnographic documentation as well as literary sources indicate a wide diffusion of terracotta figurines throughout the Indian subcontinent with a variety of uses that ranges from worship to decoration to children's games to magic[11]. In spite of this variety, religion is their main use[12]. In particular the analysis of the

[4] Autiero 2012, p. 247.
[5] Begley et al. 1996, 2004.
[6] Karttunen 1989 and 1997; Autiero 2012, p. 85.
[7] Casson 1989, p. 7.
[8] Autiero 2012, p. 105 ff.
[9] Suffice it to mention the excavations in Berenike (Egypt) carried out by a team co-directed by Steven E. Sidebotham (University of Delaware) and Iwona Zych (PCMA UW), co-directed by S.E. Sidebotham and Wilhelmina Z. Wendrich (Sidebotham 2011; Sidebotham, Zych 2011); in Oman, excavation have been conducted in Khor-Rori by an Italian Archaeological Mission lead by Alessandra Avanzini (Avanzini 2002; Avanzini 2008), and in Qani by a French-Russian team (Salles, Sedov 2010). In India, the Archaeological Survey of India conducted several excavation along the Indian Ocean coast (e.g. Gupta 1998; Cherian 2009).
[10] For an overview of Roman objects found in India refer to Suresh 2004.
[11] Banerji 1984, p. 21.
[12] Gaur 1983, p. 201.

Fig. 2. Figurines of Yoninilaya from Ter, Maharashtra, 1st to 2nd century A.D. (Sankalia 1960, p. 120, figs. 18-19).

decorations and styles is emblematic of the taste of a particular period and social context. In India the most common method of construction is hand modelling; however also the use of moulds is attested especially in conjunction with urbanization[13].

For this research a very significant datum comes from the analysis of terracotta production techniques. Indeed, in the Indian production, both in the North and in the South, in the early centuries of the Common Era (1st to 3rd century) something new emerges in the mould technique: single moulds show an increasing depth, and appears in the records the production of three-dimensional figures from two moulds. This same technique was already established in the Hellenistic and Roman East. Referring to the rich corpus of terracotta figurines from Alexandria, it is possible to find precise comparisons with Satavahana material, from a technical, structural and typological point of view[14]. This class of terracotta figurines – produced in central India during the heyday of trade with Roman Egypt – shows how visual forms originated in Egypt reached Satavahana India. Recently several studies are investigating the reception of Egyptian gods in the Mediterranean and the Near East, where they are mostly adopted and adapted, even if keeping their identity. In the Indian Peninsula, in a completely different context, that same religious imagery has been received but completely re-shaped on the local religious imagery, adopting foreign visual solutions, to represent ancestral divinities[15].

Another technical feature in South Indian terracotta production from this period that indicates contacts with the West is the widespread use of whitish depurated clay, usually addressed as kaolin, although this identification is not scientifically proven[16]. In any case, the choice of this material is stylistic in nature and portrays the knowledge of pale western terracottas. In Indian tradition, the use of such a pale material does not have precedents; so it could have reached the Deccan following trade contacts with Egypt. The same phenomenon can be detected also in the terracottas from Seleucia on the Tigris from the Seleucid and Parthian periods[17].

The most striking and obvious example of this phenomenon is the case of the Satavahana Yoninilaya figurines[18] (fig. 2), clearly affected by transcultural contacts between India and Egypt[19]. This type of figurine shows an iconography originated in Egypt, but fully adopted and adapted to the Indian context at the other end of the WIO trade route.

Yoninilayas are peculiar crouching female figurines showing their genitalia. This is an iconographic model that has been found at both ends of the Indo-Roman trade routes. At the western end this figure is identified as Baubo (fig. 3). During the 1st century A.D. Baubo iconography travelled to peninsular India in the heyday of Indo-Roman trade. In India the representation of female deities with fertility features has been widespread since ancient times, but some typologies from the 1st century A.D. onward are linked to the Western impact on the Indian substratum as suggested by stylistic feature and by the archaeological context[20]. Dealing with Roman settlements in India – both temporary and

[13] Autiero 2012, p. 211.
[14] Brancaccio 2005, p. 56.
[15] Fynes 1993, p. 377-378.
[16] Brancaccio 2005, p. 66, footnote 19.
[17] Van Ingen 1939, p. 9; for a new updated catalogue of the terracotta figurines from Seleucia refer to Menegazzi 2014.
[18] Shankalia 1960, p. 113; Desai 1975, p. 12.
[19] Autiero 2015, p. 95; the name Yoninilaya indicates the personification of the *yoni*, Sanskrit for vagina, meaning "She who houses the power that generates everything". This deity – in the context of a fertility cult – is still worshipped under the name of Lajja Gauri and keeps her shameless position in current iconography.
[20] Autiero 2015, p. 95.

Fig. 3. Figurines of Baubo from Alexandria, Egypt (Török 1995, tav. C, nos. 186, 187, 188).

Fig. 4. Figurine representing Bes from Egypt (Török 1995, tav. III).

Fig. 5. An Indian terracotta figurine representing a Yaksha (Bautze 1995, tav. XLc).

long-lasting – local populations could have noticed a devotional form characterized by the use of terracotta figurines, which could have been acknowledged as a common religious language.

The contribution of Egyptian terracottas of the Hellenistic and Roman period to Indian iconography is witnessed not only in Baubo/Yoninilaya figurines but also in other images. It is possible to detect in some Indian contexts images of Yakshas related to the Egyptian Bes (*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 1, 107). Bes was represented as a chubby dwarf with a wide face and pronounced features. He's often depicted in a crouched position with a stocky body and short limbs (fig. 4). Bes has an apotropaic power. It is likely that lucky amulets in the shape of Bes followed the Egyptian traders[21]. In the Indian culture the identification of the grotesque figure of Bes with *ganas* or *yakshas* has been immediate, and the new Western contribution enriched a strongly local image (fig. 5). *Yakshas* (plural for *yaksha*, also spelled *yakṣa*) in Indian mythology are ambivalent nature spirits, whose principal role is as custodians

[21] Brancaccio 2005a, p. 60.

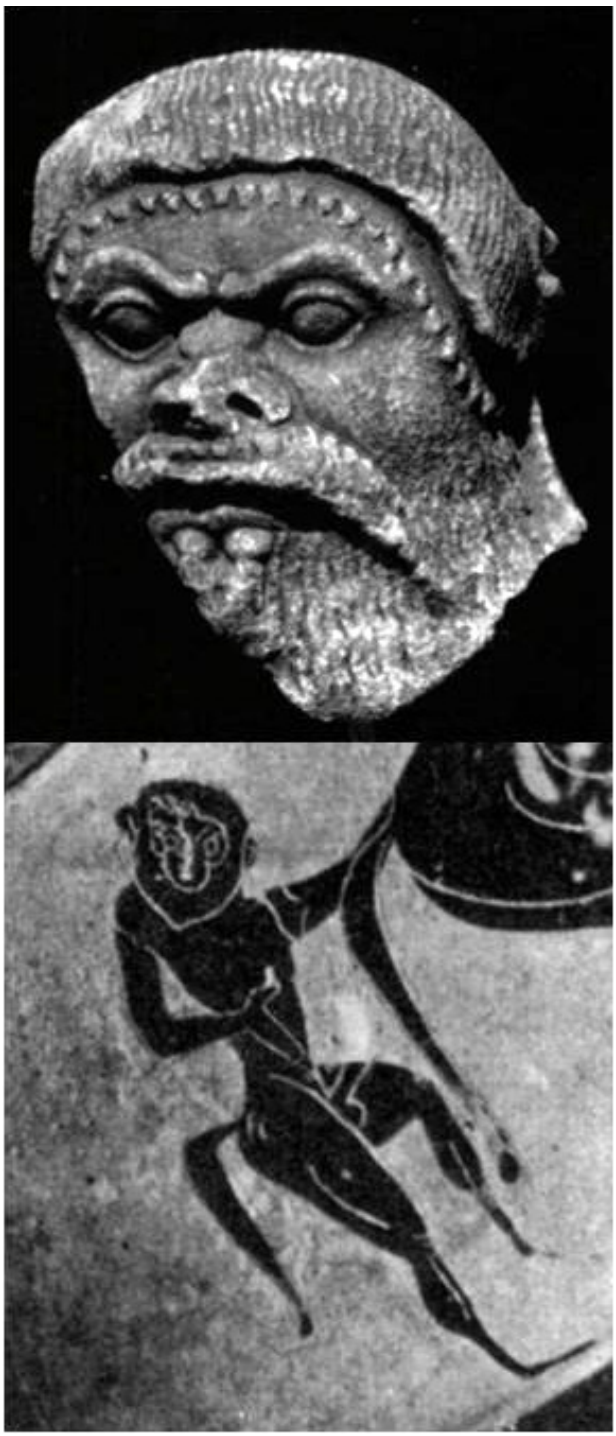

Fig. 6. A head of Silenus from Thasos and a Satyr on a Vase (Jesi 1962, p. 274).

of hidden treasures buried in the earth and in the roots of trees. *Yakshas* can be good or evil, mythology depicts them as powerful magicians and shape-shifters. They are capricious, sexually rapacious, or even murderous. The origin of y*aksha* worship is impossible to ascertain, but it may be placed in early indigenous pre-Vedic beliefs[22].

Bes has a long history, but in the Hellenistic and Roman period experienced a great success as a member of the Isiac Family, the Hellenistic interpretation of the Egyptian pantheon[23]. The name Bes in particular becomes in this period a generic designation utilized to indicate characters with common traits[24]. This phenomenon paves the way to the widespread diffusion of this Egyptian dwarf, and to his assimilation in different contexts. In general in the west an often similar grotesque type was used to portray Bes, comic actors, chubby children, satyrs, but most frequently sileni.

Indeed a good example in this respect is the process of assimilation that involved the iconographies of Bes and Silenus[25] (fig. 6).

The image of Bes became indeed widely spread in the Mediterranean world, where he preserves only in part his original Egyptian iconography. In its journey outside Egypt, Bes iconography was made into local images, and has been enriched with local contributions. In particular the relationship between Bes and Silenus seems to reflect an assimilation process, similar to what happened with *yaksha* iconography in India. Indeed Greek iconography already had an image, the Silenus, formally similar to Bes. Generally speaking the relationship between the image of Bes and Silenus is not only based on an iconographic analogy, but on similarities in the iconographic genesis and in functions[26]. The functions of Bes are the key point in the assimilation and re-elaboration of its iconography outside Egypt.

Another important area of distribution of Bes iconography is Western Asia. With the rise of Achaemenid empire the number of Bes images in this relevant part of the world underwent a veritable explosion[27]. Apart from actual Bes representations, there are significant Iranicized Bes images. Bes has been adopted as a counterpart for local iconographies also in the Achaemenid empire, it has been reported, as an example, the existence of a Bes-griffin/Bes-lion image, a hybrid of the Achaemenid lion or griffin with a Bes head[28] (fig. 7). This widespread diffusion of Bes and Bes-hybrid images strongly support the later diffusion and adoption of Bes iconography also in the Indian subcontinent.

Another interesting case is that of Mesopotamia. A very famous demon from Mesopotamia is Pazuzu, mostly famous because cited in the famous 1973 movie, *The Exorcist*. But focusing on iconography, in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* we read that Pazuzu appearance, especially his face, is related to Bes[29]. As for his origin, a possible local

[22] For a general introduction see Enciclopaedia Britannica s.v. *yaksha* online at https://www.britannica.com/topic/yaksha
[23] Volokhine 2010, p. 233.
[24] Volokhine 2010, p. 234.
[25] Jesi 1962, 263
[26] Bes covers a variety of roles such as musician or participant in initiation rites (Jesi 1962, 266 and 272 respectively).
[27] Abdi 1999, p. 115.
[28] Abdi 1999, p. 119; Abdi 2002, p. 146.
[29] Wiggerman 2010, p. 373.

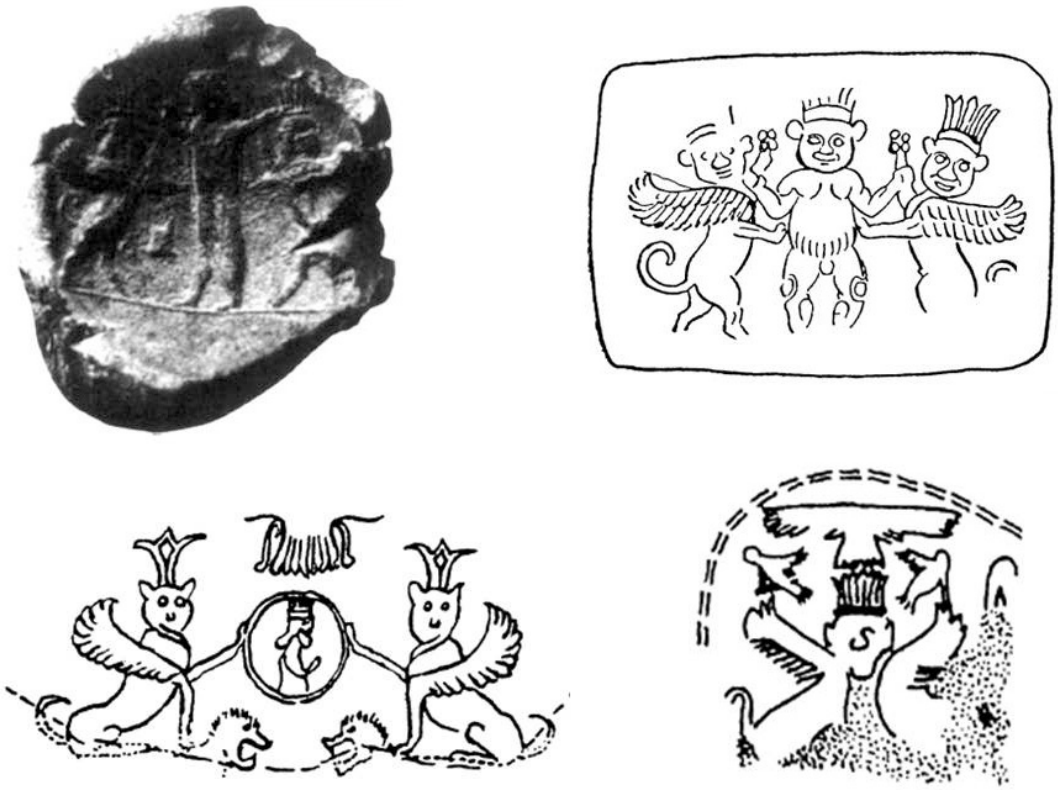

Fig. 7. Achaemenid Bes and Bes hybrids (Abdi 1999, pp. 127, 130).

Mesopotamian origin cannot be excluded, since he most probably derives from the Bronze Age west wind demon, re-elaborated in Assyrian/Babylonian mythology, also with the contribution of the travelling Egyptian Bes. The earliest datable Pazuzus are from the end of the 8th century B.C., most of the heads, amulets, and statuettes can be attributed to the 7th and 6th century, and the latest were found in Seleucid contexts[30]. In later periods Pazuzu is assimilated in the complex frame of Hellenistic and Later Eastern Mediterranean Magic.

An important feature of Pazuzu in this discussion is his ambiguity being dangerous but also helpful in fighting evil. Also in this case his fierceness and scary appearance have the power to ward off evil. In Seleucid and Parthian Mesopotamia actual representations of Bes are attested, together with related types of dwarves and grotesque. These persistent types remain unchanged for hundreds years creating confusion in identification and interpretation. In Seleucia on the Tigris figurines which portray potbellied dwarf-like figures were a popular theme, and they have been associated with Bes. They have an apotropaic significance: bowlegged dwarves, some dressed as soldiers to make them more effective in warding off evil, were thought to have the power to fight evil influences. This power is extended to "ugly" or "abnormal" figurines in general.

The long journey of Bes in the ancient world is crucial to the understanding of the effects of cultural globalization on visual and material culture. Terracotta figurines prove an excellent case study, conjugating visual and material culture in one kind of artefact.

This brief discussion on Bes and Bes related images allows the identification of some key characteristics, not always all present at once. Important point is that they allow the definition of a *type* with the following iconographic elements:

- Dwarvish figure
- Grotesque appearance
- Comic gesture/grimace
- Animalesque elements/Animal hybridization
- Ambiguity (In many of its expressions this iconography can be both good and evil)
- Ithyphallism
- Weapons, armour

[30] Wiggerman 2010, p. 372 ff.

Beside the visual *type*, Bes, Bes related, Bes assimilated, and Bes hybrid images share common *functions* such as the following:

- Apotropaic function
- Protection
- Defence
- Scare out the evil with grotesque, deformed, and fierce appearance

Keeping these *types* and *functions* in mind, a reassessment of the iconography of Satavahana terracotta figurines depicting *yakshas* makes it clear how immediate was the assimilation of some foreign iconographic elements to represent these local deities.

In order to understand why in Satavahana India a foreign iconography such as the Western Bes has been adopted (and adapted) to represent *yakshas* another important point is in the perception of foreigners from the West[31]. Westerners are known in Indian sources as Yavanas, this umbrella term in the Satavahana period possibly indicates any foreigner from the West. At first the term *yavana* appears in Acheamenian inscriptions as *yauna* to indicate Ionian Greeks conquered by Cyrus the Great in 545 B.C. The word probably reached northwestern India, and it is attested in Pānini's grammar (c. 5th century B.C.) in the variation *yavanānī*, which is taken by commentators to mean Greek script. From the Hellenistic period on, *yavana* was applied to the Bactrian and then Indo-Greek kingdoms, but from the beginning of the Christian era the word was often used loosely to refer to any foreigner[32]. In the inscriptions from Buddhist cave complexes in western Deccan, some foreign donors identify themselves as *yavanas* indicating some kind of western affiliation. Pia Brancaccio highlights how even if there is not enough evidence to know what the effective role of Yavanas was within the Satavahana society, it is possible that beside being traders, some of them also worked as guards as the Sangam literature of south India indicates[33]. Also the artistic evidence shows that in the Indian Subcontinent foreigners, mostly Roman soldiers, are represented – in various media, also sculptural representations on famous monuments are known[34] – assuming an apotropaic function. Their exoticism (curly hairdo, prominent nose, tall stature), and their unusual aspect with scary elements (armour, weapons), made them as mysterious and powerful as *yakshas*.

In this connection between *yakshas* and Yavanas, dwarvish, grotesque terracottas used by western traders as amulets, found an easy way into Indian imagery.

The *yakshas* are liminal figures from the wild, namely from outside established society, and so are the Yavanas, being from another outer world. This typological overlap further explains the iconographical overlap: giving a foreign look to Yakshas, also in terracotta, makes them more effective and powerful marking their status of outsiders.

Bes' journey outside Egypt and the peculiar iconography of Satavahana terracotta *yakshas* show the role of terracotta figurines in the context of cultural globalization. This paper demonstrates how the point is not simply a direct iconographic connection between Bes and Yaksha, but WIO trade allowed the circulation of a visual *type* with peculiar *functions* that is widespread in the Ancient World, and finds expression in different areas and with different iconographies. In a period of close interconnections with ancient globalisation going on, the movement of people allows also visual culture to travel, so that similar archetypical characters find common figurative expression. Undoubtedly the Egyptian Bes in his Hellenistic/Roman form had a huge success, a global success, reflected as far as India.

Mixing different iconographies in the Hellenistic and Roman world seems a quite common phenomenon that extended to the areas involved in the wide exchange networks. Usually when different iconographies meet and match scholars use the term "influence". This word is actually often misused. In such exchange contexts as a trade network, this concept is inappropriate because it hides a judgement about the value of the civilizations involved. In this frame the culture influenced is considered weaker than the influencing culture. Conversely the adoption of foreign iconographic elements cannot be ascribed to a cultural inferiority. The presence of foreign iconographic elements in terracottas does not mean that there is either a politico-economic or a cultural weakness. The adoption of foreign artistic elements, conversely, can be read as an indicator of increasing external contacts, and as the output of a stronger presence in international communication and exchange dynamics. In this perspective a visual culture enriched by foreign iconographies suggests an international environment, due to the integration of distant states into the trade and cultural networks of ancient Globalization.

[31] Brancaccio 2007, p. 390; also cfr. Brancaccio 2005b.

[32] It is interesting to note how the term *yavana* at a much later date also indicates Muslim invaders of India; see https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yavana

[33] Brancaccio 2007, pp. 388-389; Ray 1987, pp. 311-325; Kartunnen 1993, pp. 331-332.

[34] In particular, it is very interesting the presence of a warrior in western attire complete with boots in the Buddhist site of Bharut in Madhya Pradesh, India. This monument is dated to the early 1st century B.C. (Huntington 1985, p. 67).

Terracottas witness an intercultural dialogue that cannot be separated from a religious context, since the main use of these figurines is related to religion, personal devotion, and superstition. And the movement of terracottas in the Indian Ocean trade network has important effects.

A specific way in which religion can influence international trade is through its network effect[35]. Sharing religious ideas among people living in distant countries creates networks of trust that aid economic transactions[36].

Long distance trade in the WIO depended on the regular pattern of the monsoon. Whilst waiting for the wind to change, the ships were forced to stay for months at a time at one end of the route, until the monsoon changed direction, allowing the traders to come back to their homeland. During these prolonged stays abroad, traders interacted with local people and became involved in the cultural and religious life of the community. It is possible that in antiquity traders became involved in local cults that shared similar characteristics with those of their homeland and therefore an actual assimilation of different cults took place. This phenomenon has also consequences in iconography with the fusion and exchange of peculiar images, thanks to the use of portable icons – like terracotta figurines – that traders carried from their land of origin during the crossing of the Ocean.

It is clear that a new and complete study of terracotta figurines in the area involved in Indian Ocean trade is largely due. These first steps in this vast "ocean" of iconographies are very promising, and I hope it will be possible to extend these preliminary observations to a wider corpus of terracotta iconographies, and to a wider geographic area.

In conclusion, culture and religious artefacts, moved along trade routes as goods were exchanged. Indo-Roman trade is the best known part of the wider phenomenon of ancient globalization; main actors in this trade route were Satavahana India and Roman Egypt. Thanks to a multi-disciplinary approach, it is possible to detect the long lasting outputs of trade contacts in local cultures. Above all it is possible to point out the fundamental contribution of apparently unimportant objects like terracotta figurines for personal devotion in this complex frame. From Egypt they reached India and there they found a welcoming environment; their iconography merging with pre-existing local cults, iconography and rituals. In the Indian Ocean trade network local traditions welcomed and gave way to syncretism and exoticism, entering a period of cultural, artistic and religious turmoil.

[35] Eakin 2003.

[36] Lewer and Van den Berg 2007, p. 765.

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