

piece and so the ivory probably represents a type of Indian chariot unknown so far. For, apart from the type usually represented in early Indian art, there seem to have been many other types of chariot. Some had banisters sloping on either side, others had no banister on the front and only on both sides and again others had no banister at all (Marshall, 1951: vol. II, 452, nos. 58-60; 602-3, nos. 390-1; vol. III, pls. 134 and 185).

With regard to the date of the ivory from Māntai, it is obvious that it is a very early piece. Chariots are known to have been used in India from the Aryan invasion down to the second or third century AD, after which the evidence suggests that their use declined steadily (Allchin, 1958: 154). Quadrigas drawn by four horses are mentioned in the Rāmāyana (VI, 110-9) and are depicted in early Indian art from the second century BC onwards



Fig. 31.3. Chessman, south India, late eleventh century, ivory, h. 12.6 cm. Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (copyright: Wichmann, 1960; Pl. 27).

(Coomaraswamy, *loc. cit.*). Stylistically, the sturdy horses of the Māntai ivory with their bulging chests and their flat hindquarters are reminiscent of the horses at such early sites as Bodhi Gaya (Coomaraswamy, 1935: pl. III, 2), Jagdayyapeta (Coomaraswamy, 1929: pl. 2), Mahura (Vogel, 1930: pl. VIII b; XX b) and Nāgārjunakonda (Longhurst, 1938: pl. IX a, c; XXVIII c; XXV b (toy)). Their nearest parallel is, however, the famous little terracotta horse excavated at Kondapur, Hyderabad (Fig. 31.8), which so far has been wrongly believed to be a toy. This site is located in what was once the ancient Satavahana realm. The close religious, cultural and political relations between this part of India and Sri Lanka are well known and our ivory chessman may consequently have been imported from Andhra Pradesh. The date of the little horse from Kondapur is generally accepted to be the second or third century (Ashton, 1950: 33, no. 79). Later on horses become more elegant, with slim bodies and long legs. For various reasons, especially

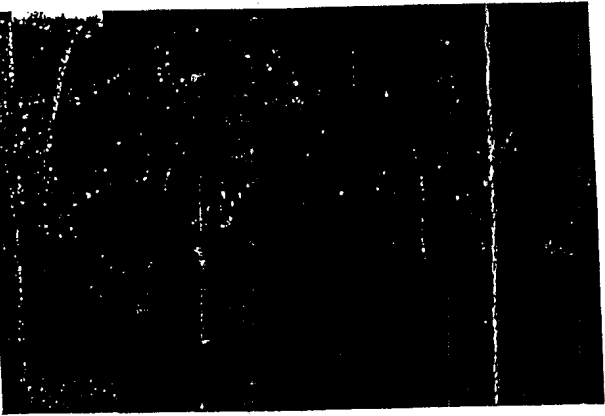


Fig. 31.4. Chessman, north-west India, late seventh to ninth century, ivory, h. 15.6 cm. Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (copyright: Wichmann, 1960; Pl. 37).

Zeppelant lang

248 EARLY HISTORIC AND BUDDHIST

the close parallel between the terracotta from Kondapur and the ivory from Māntai, we would therefore be inclined to attribute the latter to the second or third century AD. In view of this early date we should from now on be more alert with regard to the possible occurrence of game pieces among the small elephants and horses which have come to light at various early Indian sites and which have hitherto been interpreted as toys. As the Māntai chessman is roughly five centuries earlier than the other ivories discussed in this article, the charming little chariot from Sri Lanka would seem to be – at least for the time being – the oldest known chess piece in the world.

NOTES

1. For instance the ivory discovered at Pompeii (see Wheeler, 1934: Pl. XIX, or Dunning Caspers, 1981: 342).
2. Barrett, 1955: 51. However, comparison of the so-called Charlemagne chessman with the ivory diptych from Kanu, which Barrett correctly dated in the late seventh or eighth century (Barrett, 1967: 14, Pl. II, Fig. 13), and which is clearly related in style, confirms the date suggested by us.
3. It should be pointed out that the front of the banister is not always semicircular but occasionally tends to be straight (Sivaramamurti, 1942: Pl. X, 13) as in early China and the ancient Near East.
4. Sastri, 1957: 705. See, however, my forthcoming article,



Fig. 31.5. Chessman, Arabia, twelfth century, ivory, h. 6.9 cm. Musée Naz. Florentin (copyright: Wichmann, Pl. 37).

What was the purpose of the terracotta animal figurines discovered at Kondapur? to appear in the volume in honour of Dr C. Sivaramamurti.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allchin, B. 1958. Mohana Pahar, a rediscovery, *Man* 57, no. 207, 153-5.
- Ashton, L. (ed.) 1950. *The Art of India and Pakistan - A Commemorative Catalogue of the Exhibition held at the Royal Academy of Arts London, 1947-8*. London.
- Barrett, D. 1955. Note on the elephant ivory in the Cabinet des Médailles, *Oriental Art* (n.s.) 1, no. 2, 51.
1967. An ivory diptych, *Lalit Kala* 13, 11-15.
- Boisselier, J. 1979. Ceylon - Sri Lanka, *Archaeologia Mundi*. Munich/Paris.
- Buryakov, Y.F. 1980. On the dating and attribution of some chess sets (in the light of finds of 1977 at Afrasiab), *Sovetskaja Arheologija* 3, Akademia Nauk SSSR, 162-72.
- Coomaraswamy, A.K. 1927. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. New York.
1929. A royal gesture and some other motifs, *Festschrift Kominklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 150 Jaring Batavia, 17-78-1928, 1, 57-61.
1935. *La Sculpture de Bodhi Gaya*. Paris.
1956. *La Sculpture de Bharhath*. Paris.
- Dunning Caspers, E.C.L. 1981. The Indian ivory figurine from Pompeii - a reconsideration of its functional use, in H. Harrel (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1979*, 341-53. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Hackin, J. 1954. *Nouvelles Recherches archéologiques à Begram (ancienne Kaprith) (1939-1940)*. Paris.
- Lohuizen de Leeuw, J.E. van. 1959. Indian ivories with special reference to a medieval throne leg from Orissá, *Artis Asiaticus* 6, 195-216.
1981. Sri Lanka - Ancient Arts. London.
- Longhurst, A.H. 1938. The Buddhist antiquities of Nāgārjunakonda, Madras Presidency, *Mem. Arch. Survay* 54. Delhi.
- Marshall, J. 1951. *Taxila*, 3 vols. Cambridge University Press.
- Murray H.J.R. 1962. *A History of Chess* 2nd edition, Oxford.
- Ray, H.C. (ed.) 1959-60. *History of Ceylon*, 1, pts. I-II. Colombo.
- Sastri, K.A. Nilakanta (ed.) 1957. *A Comprehensive History of India*, 2. *The Mauryas and Satavahanas* - 323 BC-AD 300. Bombay.
- Sivaramamurti, C. 1942. *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum*. Madras.
- Vogel, J.P. 1930. *La Sculpture de Mahura*. Paris-Brussels.
- Wheeler, M. 1954. *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*. London.
- Wichmann, H. and S. 1960. *Schach - Ursprung und Wandlung der Spielfigur in zwölf Jahrhunderten*. Munich.

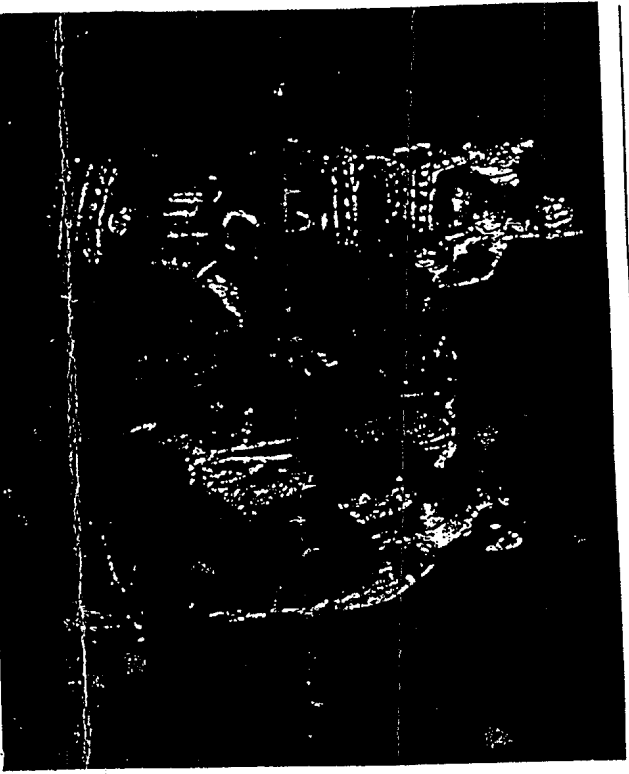


Fig. 31.6. Chessman, north-west India, late seventh to ninth century, ivory, h. 3 cm. Mus. für Indische Kunst, Berlin.



Fig. 31.7. Chesspiece, north-west India, late seventh to ninth century, ivory, h. 3 cm (copyright Spink and Son Ltd., London).

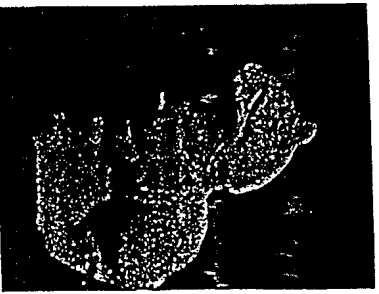


Fig. 31.8. Horse, Kondipur, second to third century AD, vertebrae, h. 6.7 cm, Govt. Mus. Hyderabad (copyright Ashton, 1950: pl. 23, fig. 79).

appeared in Asianic
(see page 846)