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THE CHEJARLA TEMPLE MYTH REVISITED:  
SELF-DECAPITATION IN MEDIEVAL ANDHRA

In 2013 I published an article devoted to the myth connected with the Kapoteśvara temple in Chejarla, a small village in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. My attention was mainly focused on the comparison of the foundation myth of the Kapoteśvara temple with different versions of the Śibi story. I stated that the legend could be treated as showing the change and continuity of the idea of the sacredness of this particular place, which may have been in continuous use during the megalithic period, through the Buddhist phase, right up to its incorporation into Hindu worship (Sudyka 2013). It seems that Chejarla narrative contains motifs which spread with the advent of Buddhism in Andhra. These motifs, however, have been “localized”, i.e. settled in the local culture, landscape, and practices of human actors. The present paper studies self-decapitation as a motif found in the temple myth and represented by the *liṅga* venerated at this particular shrine.

Chejerla, Chejarla or Chezerla are the three ways of spelling the name of a village situated near Narasaraopet in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. The place is famous for its temple complex. All the temples, be they large or small, are within the double *prākāra*, and the main apsidal temple is dedicated to Śiva known as Kapoteśvara. The temple complex is situated at the foot of a small hill called Meghala Mallayya Konda, to the west of the village. The *liṅga* venerated at the shrine is considered to be the mutilated body of King Śibi. Varied versions of the Śibi story exist in different sources from different ages. In my article devoted to the myth connected with the Kapoteśvara temple (Sudyka 2013), I analysed a number of

different aspects, except for one detail, I believe. But first, let me retell the story, which was registered in 1889 by Alexander Rea, the first Superintendent of the Southern Circle of the Archaeological Department in Madras and cited by its next Superintendent, namely A. H. Longhurst, in his Annual Report for the year 1917-1918 containing the description of Chejarla (Longhurst 1918: 34–35):

(...) King Śibi, a ruler of Kashmir, had two brothers: Meghaḍambara and Jīmūtavāhana. One day Meghaḍambara decided to go on a pilgrimage to all the sacred places of South India. Śibi supported such a pious idea, appointing 1,500 persons to accompany him on this long journey. At last, Meghaḍambara and his retinue came to the place called Cherum Chorla, where in the hill-caves many yogis were meditating. He joined them and practised severe austerities. After a few years of 421 intense meditation he passed away and his body was transformed into a *liṅga*. His companions returned to Kashmir and related the happening to King Śibi. Thereupon, a younger brother, Jīmūtavāhana, with an escort of equal size, proceeded to the south in order to verify the story. He too came to the same place and seeing the *liṅga-śarīra* of his brother, dismissed his retinue and started the penance which brought exactly the same result. Then King Śibi set out with one million and one people, hoping to reunite with his brothers somehow. He reached the place and decided to perform a hundred *yajñas* on this sacred spot, which could bring him access to the realm of Brahmā. At the moment of performing his hundredth sacrifice, the gods decided to test whether he was really entitled to attain heaven. Śiva assumed the form of a hunter, Brahmā became an arrow and Viṣṇu took the shape of a dove. “This three therefore – Brahma, Rudra, and Vishnu – descended to Buloka, at a spot now named Rupanaguntla (*rupu*, sight). The place was thus named through the *Trimurti* here making themselves visible to the sight of mortals. They then stepped over to Kandlagunta from whence they looked

for Sivi (*kandlu*, looking). After leaving this place they halted at Vipparlanagari, and they transformed themselves, (...) The hunter with his arrow then run and jumped about, effecting a desire to shoot the bird, at a place now named Kunkulagunta (*kunkal*, jumping about).<sup>1</sup> The hunter chased after the bird, which approached Śibi looking for shelter. So the hunter asked King Śibi to give him the bird as he was starving. Śibi was unable either to give away the bird or allow the hunter to die of hunger. (Sudyka 2013: 93–94)

We know what solution the King found, although there are some differences as compared to other versions. Since he was willing to provide the amount of meat equal to the bird's weight, he tore off portions of his own body with his hands and placed them on a scale, but still the dove was heavier. Finally, according to the version provided by Longhurst in his *Annual Report*, King Śibi used large shears to cut his body in two pieces and put one half of it on the scales. The gods were extremely pleased with his sacrifice and granted him boons. According to Śibi's wish, both his and his retinue's bodies assumed the forms of *liṅgas* and, later on, a temple was constructed over Śibi's *liṅga-śarīra*, and Śiva known as Kapoteśvara is worshipped there.

Let us proceed to the detail I did not pay attention to in my earlier article: "...king Sivi procured a *Gandakattari* (long shears) and cut his body in two pieces, and had one-half placed on the scales" (Longhurst 1918: 35).<sup>2</sup> First of all, the Telugu dictionary notes the word *gaṇḍa-kattera*, not *kattari*, as large shears. The word *kaṭāri* also exists and has the meaning of dagger. So might *gaṇḍa-kaṭāri* actually mean a large dagger, good enough to cut one's own throat? In any case, it would certainly be a less shocking way of self-immolation. The word *kaṭṭāri* is attested in Tamil works at least from the 15th c. onwards and the Tamil Lexicon indicates that it is current in

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<sup>1</sup> A. Rea's report, quoted by A. H. Longhurst (Longhurst 1918: 34).

<sup>2</sup> In fact, I stated that Śibi cut off his head and the information provided by Longhurst was given in footnote 12 (Sudyka 2013: 94).

Telugu. The Sanskrit word *kaṭṭāra* may be a borrowing from Dravidian.<sup>3</sup> The Monier-Williams dictionary does not specify any text using this word. Only *kaṭṭāraka* m. (f. *-ikā*), with the meaning of “weapon, dagger”, is mentioned as appearing in Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (“The River of Kings”; Kashmir, 12th century CE). The *Ādāb al-ḥarb* (“The correct usages of war and bravery”), a treatise on statecraft, kingship and the art of war, most probably written in Muslim India, dates from almost the same period (Bosworth 1982: I.4. 445). The text lists a dagger *kaṭārā* among the weapons, which suggests that it had also been adopted by the Muslims at that time (Elgood 2004: 250). Judging by the form of the lexeme, it seems that the history of this weapon could be associated with South India itself, although it appears quite late in South Indian relief carvings. Images of South Indian push daggers have been popular since the 16th century.<sup>4</sup> *Kaṭāra* was described by Luijendijk (Luijendijk 2007: 97) in the context of Kerala martial art *kalaripayatu*, and this dagger was also mentioned in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s (1413–1482) travel-account. His Indian adventures began at the moment when he landed in Calicut, in the early 1440s. He offers the following description:

(...) naked blacks with loin-cloth tied from their navels to their knees, in one hand an Indian dagger (*katāra*) like a drop of water, and in the other a leather shield as large as a cloud. (Alam-Subrahmanyam 2006: 490).

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<sup>3</sup> I should like to express my gratitude to Prof. Jaroslav Vacek whose expertise as a linguist as well as a Tamil and Sanskrit scholar, helped me to settle the etymological problems. In his opinion the Dravidian origin of the word is highly possible, although the case should be studied in detail and the textual references could make it clearer. The suggestion of Dravidian origin was already made by Kittel, but in his *Kurtzgefastes Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* Mayrhofer differs in opinion. What can be stated is that the word appears rather late in Sanskrit.

The variants used in different Indian languages are, for example: Hindī – *kaṭāra* or *kaṭāri*, Marāṭhī – *kaṭyāra*, Malayāḷam – *katāra*.

<sup>4</sup> See: reliefs from Śeṣagirirāyar Maṇḍapa, Raṅganātha Temple, Śrīraṅgam and examples of Vijayanagara weapons from the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Elgood 2004: 148, 149). Nordlunde describes the 10th-century weapon of this kind from Orissa (Nordlunde 2013: 71-80).

The *kaṭāri* dagger is also associated with the Charans caste (Rajasthan, Gujarat) and their practises of ‘protest’ suicide (see Weinberger-Thomas 2000: 58-63). The weapon must have had a special meaning for the Bundi rulers because it was used on some of their coins as an emblem (Nordlunde 2010: 31).

Most authors dealing with Indian daggers explain that *kaṭāri* has a double-edged pointed blade and a peculiar hilt, which is perpendicular to the blade. This allows the user to put his whole body strength into the thrust. It became a symbol of its owner’s status and bravery in different parts of the Indian subcontinent,<sup>5</sup> and ceremonial *kaṭāris* were also used in worship.

Let us now consider what Śibi actually did. He cut himself into two pieces, but in what way? The *liṅga* is said to be the corpse, i.e. Śibi’s *kalebara*.<sup>6</sup> As I watched the evening *pūjā* at the Chejarla Kapoteśvara Temple on 1st March 2015, I was repeatedly told by the temple *pūjāri* and the devotees that we were not seeing a *liṅga* made of stone, but real bones (Fig. 1). Longhurst claims that it is a white marble *liṅga*, whereas Sarma informs us that it is made of limestone (Sarma 1982: 138). On its sides there are small cavities, according to beliefs, made by Śibi when he, with his own hands and nails, tore off the portions of his body. On top of the *liṅga* there are two large vertical holes. One of these can hold a pot of water, while the other, which represents Śibi’s throat, can hold any quantity of water.<sup>7</sup> It is now clear that Śibi cut his body into two pieces, but not into two halves, and that this was obviously a kind of self-decapitation.

Judging by the number of representations of self-decapitation scenes on the reliefs found in Andhra, this was an important issue in historical Andhra. Self-decapitating heroes are

<sup>5</sup> The well-known portrait of Ānandaraṅga Pillai (30 March 1709–16 January 1761), a *dubash* in the service of the French East India Company, shows the way in which the *kaṭāri* was worn as a token of high social status. The portrait and Ānandaraṅga’s mansion can be seen on the French Institute of Pondicherry’s website [http://www.ifpindia.org/digitaldb/site/pondicherry/data/part\\_1\\_8.html](http://www.ifpindia.org/digitaldb/site/pondicherry/data/part_1_8.html)

<sup>6</sup> This is the form used in Telugu for Sanskrit *kalevara*.

<sup>7</sup> The mystery of the disappearance of water, i.e. the presence of the sophisticated drainage arrangement, serves Longhurst as one of the proofs that the building was originally a Buddhist *caitya*.

represented on the temple walls and also on memorial stones. Mary Storm, in her book *Head and Heart. Valour and Self-sacrifice in the Art of India*, states that the earliest group of such stone sculptures originates in 7th-century temples in Tamil Nadu. In Mahābalipuram in Varāha-maṇḍapa one can see a worshipper cutting off his head in order to offer it to the Tamil goddess Korravai<sup>8</sup> treated as a form of Durgā (Fig. 2). The goddess also receives a head as a sacrifice in Draupadī Ratha. The devotees hold their hair in their left hands and swords in their right, and such scenes could be interpreted as offering hair to the goddess. Storm also mentions some earlier representations of self-beheading from the Mathura region (5th c. CE), as well as an example on one of the Mohenjo-daro seals, which she considers doubtful (Storm 2013: 8).

Self-decapitation scenes can be spotted on the hero stones from historical Andhra. Over a dozen hero stones dating from the 10th century CE to the 15th century CE are to be found in the Archaeological Museum in Panagal. They come from the area around Nalgonda, which is in Telangana, but obviously shares the larger region's culture. Several of these stones depict self-beheading by men and women (Fig. 3, 4). They are quite large pieces of fine-grained black or dark grey stone and all share the same simple but elegant style. According to Storm's description:

The male offerants stand in exaggerated *dvibhāṅga* (hip-shot) pose. The right hand holds a broad-bladed knife or short sword to the front of throat. [...] Hair is dressed in an elaborate *dhammilla*, or top-knot style, tied with an abbreviated turban. The devotees are ornamented with a variety of jewellery: chains around the neck, across the shoulder, looped about the waist, as well as armlets, bracelets and plug earrings; some also wear anklets. The men are dressed in short *lunghis* elaborately embellished with jewelled belts, decorated sword scabbards and floating scarves. (Storm 2013: 236)

The female figures have a similar appearance: rich jewellery, knee-length *lunghis*, bare breasts, and elaborate coiffures

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<sup>8</sup> More in: Harle 1963 and Vogel 1931.

embellished with a diadem (Fig. 5).

It is beyond any doubt that the Nalgonda group depicts the *bhaktas* offering their lives to the deity.

One of the *bhaktas* raises his hand in the *abhaya mudrā* (Fig. 6). The rest of them seem to be holding, according to Storm, a ball- or leaf-shaped object, which she believes, is a citron fruit or a leaf. *Citrus medica* is usually ovate or oblong and bigger than a lemon.<sup>9</sup> It appears in Śiva iconography and is associated with self-immolation. It is possible, Storm concludes, that these men and women were Vīraśaivas or Kālamukhas, because men and women held equal ritual status there (Storm 2013: 237). In fact, it is not clear what kind of object the offerants are holding, but the man in Fig. 7 definitely does not have a citron in his left hand. The other figures are also holding an object that resembles a chopper knife or a chisel, known in Śiva iconography as *taṅka*, more than a citron fruit or leaf.<sup>10</sup>

Numerous relief carvings showing decapitations, including self-beheadings, are also found in Śrīśailam. According to the inscription dated 1377, the *vīraśiro maṇḍapa* in Śrīśailam, constructed by King Anavemā Redḍi, was the place where the heroes cut off their tongues, hands or heads (Longhurst 1918: 23; Anuradha 2002: 65, 84, 119, 264). Thus, the reliefs could commemorate such acts as well as inspiring further brave deeds.

This now allows us to understand that in the Andhra context, at a certain point of time, Śibi's gift of his body could be equated with self-beheading.

Till now we have described the representations of heroes cutting off their heads with a broad-bladed knife or short sword. To the best of my knowledge, the Śrīśailam *prākāra* walls are the only ones that offer a representation of Śibi cutting off his

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<sup>9</sup> Weinberger-Thomas writes about the symbolic value of the lemon (Weinberger-Thomas 2000:74, 76–78) but more precisely it is a citron (Skr. *mātulaṅga/mātuliṅga*, *jambīra*) or a lime fruit which has a ritualistic application. *Citrus medica* is one of the ancestral species of citrus varieties and could be native to India.

<sup>10</sup> I owe this remark to Dr. Anna Ślaczka. I am also grateful to her and Prof. Cinzia Pieruccini for allowing me to use their photos.

head.<sup>11</sup> The date of the *prākāra* construction around the Mallikārjuna temple complex is not certain.<sup>12</sup> The King is seated in front of the scales with a dove on one pan and his own flesh on the other one. Śibi places a curved sword to his throat and holds his hair with his other hand. However, in the case of the Chejarla Śibi story (alas, there are no pictures or reliefs illustrating the story), he is supposed to have used a pair of large shears. It is possible that even a push dagger, albeit a large one, would not have been adequate for this task.

This brings a question to mind: is it at all possible to cut off one's own head? We do, in fact, have descriptions of certain contrivances designed exactly for this purpose. For example, Nicolo Conti, the 15th-century Italian traveller to Vijayanagara, relates:

Many present themselves who have determined upon self-immolation, having on their neck a broad circular piece of iron, the fore part of which is round and the hinder part extremely sharp. A chain attached to the fore part hangs suspended upon the breast, into which the victims, sitting down with their legs drawn up and their neck bent, insert their feet. Then on the speaker pronouncing certain words, they suddenly stretch out their legs and at the same time drawing up their neck, cut off their own head, yielding up their lives to their idols. (Major 1842: 27–28)

One of the hero stones from Vijayanagara depicts the lever-pulley decapitating device. A photograph can be found in Anila Verghese's book *Religious Traditions at Vijayanagara: As Revealed through its Monuments*, also reproduced in Mary Storm's *Head and Heart. Valour and Self-sacrifice in the Art of India*. On the Śrīśailam exterior wall there is a self-decapitating

<sup>11</sup> Anuradha, describing the scenes on the Śrīśailam *prākāra*, notices an unexpected detail and comments: "This event in the story is altered or wrongly sculptured as Sibi beheading himself." (Anuradha 2002: 131). Obviously the author did not know the Chejarla variant of the story.

<sup>12</sup> Anuradha mentions a damaged inscription, which can be assigned to the 12th century, naming King Ballālarāya as a founder of the walls. Then the constructions or reconstructions financed by Vijayanagara kings are mentioned. In 1512 CE, according to another inscription, the east and south *gopuras* of the *prākāra* were embellished (Anuradha 2002: 203, 204).



*bhakta* using a blade with two hilts placed behind his neck and held with his two hands. So it therefore was possible to cut off one's own head without any help from another person. One could also imagine large shears held with both hands as being good for the purpose. It is worth pointing out that the push dagger developed into a form with a forked blade, which most probably evolved into a scissors dagger with two blades that folded together and opened when the handle was squeezed. This type of dagger, recorded in the *Ain i Akbari* of Abū al-Faḍl ibn Mubārak (Blochmann 1873: 110), was called *jamadhar* or *jamdhar*.<sup>13</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa (1304-1369), relating his travels in South India, gives an extremely interesting description of this Indian dagger:

The villagers gathered round him, and one of them stabbed him with a *kattāra*. This is the name given to an iron weapon resembling a plough-share; the hand is inserted into it so that the forearm is shielded (...). (Yule-Burnell 2013: 305)

Could this be a first mention of a sort of scissors dagger originating as a combination of *kattāra* with an old Indian weapon known as *hala*, Skr. 'plough'?

Chandrasekhara Reddy, in his book *Heroes, Cults and Memorials: Andhra Pradesh 300 A.D.-1600*, refers to a Telugu poem *Bhojarājīyamu*, dedicated to Ahobilam Narasiṃha Svāmī. The poem was composed by Anantāmātya, an eminent writer living in the first half of the 15th century, and mentions *gaṇḍa-kattera* (V. verse 249). As Reddy explains: "*gaṇḍa-gattera*

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<sup>13</sup> Gayatri Nath Pan is the author who denies any connection between *kattārī* and *jamadhar* (Pant 1980: 174). As an argument, the author uses the example of the Kafari dagger *katara* (the word occurs in this form in the Ashkun and Waigali languages) described by Klimburg as follows: "It is a dagger some 30 cm in length, featuring a curving double-edged blade inserted in a flat hilt, and a grip which ends in a pommel in the shape of a flat crescent with symmetrical palmettes in relief." (Klimburg 1999: 216). However, there is no information as to whether such a pommel allows the weapon also to be used as a push dagger. The word *jamadhar* or *yamadhara* is not recorded in the dictionaries of the Dravidian languages, although the idea of a push dagger was known there. Some publications on Indian armours provide the explanation that the word comes from Sanskrit and means 'the tooth of god of death, Yama'. However, if one accepts a Sanskrit provenance of the word, it could only be explained as 'bringing forth death' – *yama* + *dhāra*. The MW gives the word *yamadhāra*, but again no example is provided except for the remark that it has not yet been encountered in the texts.

which is like scissors. This instrument was used to cut the throats of the devotees.” (Reddy 1994: 11). Later on, while explaining the religious causes of self-immolation acts and referring to the same work, he adds: “There are instances where devotees cut off their heads with big scissors called *gaṇḍa-gatteras* in such cases.” (Reddy 1994: 14). It seems that, at least in 14th- and 15th-century Andhra, such an instrument *did* exist to help the devotees in the difficult task of offering their own heads to the gods. Kittel in his Kannada-English dictionary also mentions: “Large scissors, such as devotees (or mendicants) threaten to decapitate themselves with, in order to extort a gift from a deity (or alms) (...)” (Kittel 2006: 523). So it seems that such a deadly pair of scissors was really invented. It is also possible that the push dagger in the form of scissors, an instrument bringing death, could inspire another outrageous device which served to cut one’s own head off.<sup>14</sup>

Getting back to Śibi, we have to reflect on the question as to why he decided to take his own life at all and why in such an extraordinary manner. His reasons include conflicting *dharmas*, the limitless generosity suitable for the vision of kingship, as well as an all-encompassing love for every creature who comes for refuge or protection (*śaraṇāgata*), so important in Buddhist and Jaina contexts, and I do believe that the Chejarla temple has a Buddhist past (Sudyka 2013: 97–100). Chandrasekhara Reddi tells us that:<sup>15</sup>

The act of self-sacrifice is noticeable in epigraphical records from the period of the Ikshvākus, (3rd century A.D.) in Āndhradēśa. Some stones having the images of male and female figures, with or without inscription, found in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa valley seem to carry such an idea of heroism. Among them there are some

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<sup>14</sup> The “decapitated” Goddess Chinnamastā, according to Weinberger-Thomas, is imagined with a sword, scimitar or shears in her right hand (Weinberger-Thomas 2000: 73).

<sup>15</sup> Some inscriptions from *chāyāstambhas* (i.e. memorial pillars presenting an image—*chāyā*—of a person in whose memory it was raised) can be found in Raghunath 2001. More about Ikshvākus in Rama Rao 1967.

memorial pillars. These memorial pillars testify to the existence of self-sacrifice. (Reddi 1994:12)

They were erected in memory of some important persons, such as generals who died for the sake of the country, or for persons who sacrificed their lives for some noble cause. (Reddi 1994:94)

It is worth remembering that there were Buddhists among the Ikṣvākus, and that the ladies of the royal court donated to the Buddhist edifices and also patronized the building of Buddhist monuments, such as the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa *stūpa*, which has representations of Śibi offering his flesh out of compassion in order to save a dove. However, the reasons why medieval *bhaktas* in Andhra offered their lives were different. They may have offered their heads to fulfil their religious vows, to ensure prosperity and victory for their kings<sup>16</sup> or the well-being of their families, to name but a few.

Chejarla Śibi offers his head to a hunter, i.e. to Śiva, which is in agreement with the practice observed in Andhra—the *bhaktas* offer their heads to Śiva or to the Goddess treated as Śiva's *śakti*. However, his mutilated body is **transformed into a *liṅga***. Unlike other ardent devotees of Śiva, he is not absorbed into the *liṅga*, but actually becomes a *liṅga* himself, and as a form of Śiva<sup>17</sup> called Kapoteśvara, he is venerated in the temple with the flowers which are proper to be offered to Śiva, such as *nagaliṅga* flowers, marigolds, jasmine, and hibiscus flowers.

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<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the most important thing in all the self-immolation acts is the presence of blood, which becomes the metaphor for the fertilizing fluid of life. The offering of one's own head to the god, this irreversible and extreme act of self-sacrifice, provides a new life and fertility for the kingdom. Chandrasekhara Reddi mentions an inscription at Mācherla in Pālnāḍu (the northern part of the Guntur District ruled by the Ikṣvākus, then by the Viṣṇukoṇḍis) dated 1066 CE in which it is stated that "Achkuṅḍu entered the army of Birudagāmaya, son of Uriya Bētarāja and Mahādēvi Menḍamma and offered his head to Paḍlasāni (goddess) for the sake of his master" (Reddi 1994: 14). Harle refers to the Nellore District inscription of a late Pallava king recording the gift of land to a certain man, most probably the son of a hero, who "cut off flesh from nine parts of his body and finally his head as an offering to Bhaṭāri, i.e. Durgā." (Harle 1963: 243).

<sup>17</sup> If we think about *Mahābhārata* versions of the story, Agni and Indra are testing King Śibi-Uśinara. Paradoxically, in the case of the Chejarla temple myth, one can say that Śiva the Hunter is testing himself.

But in fact, this is not Śiva, or not just Śiva, who is worshipped during each and every *pūjā*. The hero is clearly worshipped in the Chejarla temple: the story of Śibi Cakravartin's deeds is recited during the *pūjā* and, indeed, the mutilated *liṅga* has the value of a hero stone. This stresses the importance of self-immolation in Andhra and makes the temple even more interesting. It could even be called one of the Andhra hero temples. Chandrasekhara Reddi states that the origin of the hero temples in Andhra can be traced to the cult of the heroes who died in the 12th century in the famous Kārempūḍi battle,<sup>18</sup> and who are represented in the *liṅga* form and worshipped (Reddi 1994: 38, 39). Indeed, a heroic deed of a legendary monarch and a *bodhisattva* is commemorated in a very similar way in the Chejarla temple.

The Śibi story entered the Andhra region most probably with the spread of Buddhism, but remained in the country even after Buddhism had finally disappeared. The waning of the Buddhist culture was gradual in Andhra, and, in the case of Chejarla, the shift could have happened around the 6th century CE. (Sudyka 2013: 101). On the one hand, the veneration of Śibi's *kalebara* strongly recalls the Buddhist cult of relics, while, on the other it is a part of medieval Andhra culture in which the hero cult and self-immolation were so important.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The civil war between Nalagama and his stepbrothers lasted from 1178 to 1185 and came to an end on the Kārempūḍi battlefield (Yashoda Devi 1995: 156).

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this is the reason why the image of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī from the Amarāvātī stūpa which is kept in the Archaeological Museum in Amarāvātī is described in the showcase as “self-immolation”. Mañjuśrī is often depicted with a sword of wisdom in his right hand. A weapon cuts down ignorance and duality. The Amarāvātī figure holds a scripture in his left hand, namely the *Prajñāpāramitā*. This is a form of *Arapacana* and can be found in Pāla art (Banerji and Sahai 1981: 91). The Amarāvātī artefact could be assigned to the 8th–9th century CE. I am grateful to Prof. Akira Shimada for his help in the identification of the relief. One cannot exclude that such representations of a male figure wielding a sword in the Andhra Hinduistic context were interpreted as self-beheading scenes, not long after they were first made.

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Fig. 1. Śibi Liṅga in Kapoteśvara Temple, Chejarla. Photo: Anna Ślaczka

Fig. 2. Mahābalipuram in Varāha-maṇḍapa. Photo: Cinzia Pieruccini

Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Self-immolation scenes on hero stones, 10–12 CE, Nalgonda Archaeological Museum. Photo: Lidia Sudyka



*Fig. 1.*



*Fig. 2.*



Fig. 3.





*Fig. 4.*



*Fig. 5.*



*Fig. 6.*



*Fig. 7.*

## References

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