

India's Plundered Heritage

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India's Constitution enjoins upon its nationals to preserve and protect the country's heritage. The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972 was enacted to regulate the illegal export of ancient art from the country. This presentation briefly considers just a few sculptures that were illegally exported from India; two of these are from a site that has now been declared a World Heritage monument.

THE RANKI VAV, PATAN, GUJARAT

Temples and other religious monuments, palaces, forts, etc., exist all over the world. However, stepped wells as commemorative monuments with religious connotations are unique to India. Water always had prime importance in this country's religious life, and therefore the creation of all forms of reservoirs, wells and stepped wells, lakes and drinking fountains was considered meritorious. Hundreds of such watering places were built throughout the centuries, especially in the western states of Gujarat and Rajasthan, where rainfall is scarce and the soil sandy.

Stepped wells are subterranean reservoirs – deep circular wells where one quadrant is opened up; a long stepped corridor, often with multiple landing stages, leads down to the edge of water, whose level is very low in the hot summer months. Sometimes they accommodated a small pool between the well and the end of the corridor to collect the well's surplus water.

Queen Udayamati, widow of the Solanki emperor Bhimadeva of Gujarat, excavated her stepped well as a memorial for her departed husband in the second half of the eleventh century. Being the enterprise of the dowager queen of a great dynasty, it had imposing dimensions (220 ft in length, 60 ft in width), and with a long stepped corridor attached to a well that was 100-ft deep. The queen decorated it with hundreds of sculptures. The queen's step well, which is by far the largest and most ornate of all, still possesses some 300 sculptures, although less than half of the original monument is preserved.¹



FIGURE 8.1: RANKI VAV STEP WELL, PATAN, GUJARAT, GENERAL VIEW FROM EAST



FIGURE 8.2: RANKI VAV STEP WELL, INTERIOR OF THE WELL



FIGURE 8.3: GAṆEŚĀ STOLEN FROM RANKI VAV OR THE QUEEN'S STEP WELL, PATAN, GUJARAT



FIGURE 8.4: BRAHMĀ WITH HIS CONSORT FROM THE RANKI VAV OR THE QUEEN'S STEP WELL, PATAN, GUJARAT

THEFTS FROM RANKI VAV: JEREMY KNOWLES

In 2001, about the time that India was submitting its first proposal about the Ranki Vav (incorrectly named 'Rani ki Vav' in official records) to UNESCO for a Heritage status, vandals stole a large Gaṇeśa from the stepped well, which was on display in the walled but open-air site museum on the premises. The sculpture was 1 m high and its weight must have been 250-300 kg. Those who are familiar with the layout of this extensive site at Patan that comprises in addition to the stepped well, the Sahasraliṅga or 'Thousand Liṅga' reservoir and stretches right up to the banks of the Sarasvati River, can imagine how hard it must have been to take it out from the site. Beyond the dry river on the west, there is just vast expanse of sand, no road and no town. Outside the premises on the east is the now disused railway line. One would have to transport the sculpture over 2 km, then exit the town and reach its final destination, probably Delhi a 1,000 km away.

Gaṇeśa was a known piece, having been published before, and it was unique, with its trunk in a double bend, identifiable at a glance.



FIGURE 8.5: BRAHMĀ WITH HIS CONSORT, ILLEGALLY EXPORTED AND ADVERTISED BY JEREMY KNOWLES, A LONDON ANTIQUE DEALER

What was more shocking was that Gaṇeśa was not the only sculpture vandalized from Ranki Vav. During the *same night*, a marble Brahmā, the Hindu god of the Veda and sacred knowledge, with his consort, was also stolen from the *same* location. Both sculptures were carried away together; 500 kg of heritage material disappearing in the dead of the night.

Gaṇeśa and Brahmā-Brahmāṇī would have once adorned 2 out of the 365-odd niches of the stepped well.

When this writer learnt about the thefts in 2012, he alerted museums, scholars and international security agencies by e-mail, and circulated their photographs, as has been his practice, and posted the information with the sculptures' descriptions and other details on www.plunderedpast.in where they can be seen by anyone.

The reason for following this practice is that if information about thefts remains buried in first information reports lodged at some remote police stations, chances of recovery are dim; but if it is disseminated widely, someone may take notice eventually. The same thing happened in this case. Vijay Kumar Sundaresan, host of www.poetryinstone.in, who has himself been chasing illegally exported art to help its restoration, saw an illustrated advertisement by the antique dealer Jeremy Knowles of London, and noted that it matched the sculpture reported on www.plunderedpast.in.

A query was sent to Jeremy Knowles to explain the striking similarity between the two sculptures and to reveal how he obtained this sculpture from a protected Indian monument in violation of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972. No acknowledgement was ever received.

In September 2014, the L.D. Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad organized a public lecture to mark the inclusion of the Ranki Vav among the World Heritage monuments. Gaṇeśa and Brahmā-Brahmāṇī both were shown in the lecture, as also the published Jeremy Knowles advertisement. Ahmedabad newspapers reported all this, including the fact that the Brahmā-Brahmāṇī had surfaced in London five years after the theft. With such a specific lead provided to the official agency protecting the Ranki Vav, by then already a World Heritage monument, the right course would have been to compel the antique dealer to reveal his source and to alert international security agencies. According to the available information, this was not done. (This writer did personally inform the US Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in August 2014.)

Do we care enough about the protection of our monuments; even those that are part of the whole World's Heritage, and not just India's? To what extent will the 'World Heritage' tag help the queen's memorial?

Archaeological Survey of India sent an official team to London in November 2015 to examine a marble Brahmā-Brahmāṇī sculpture in the possession of the Art Loss Register. The team reported that the Art Loss Register Sculpture is not the one stolen from Patan and that it is not 'original', implying in fact

that it is a fake. The writer has contested the official team's report giving several grounds.

THE NAGAPATTINAM BUDDHA: SUBHASH KAPOOR

Major South Indian dynasties such as the Pallavas, the Coḷas and the Pāṇḍyas, their subordinates and other minor kings erected temples and other monuments in their territories. These were dedicated to the gods of the Brahmanical pantheon Śiva and Viṣṇu or to the Jinas. But there are a few Buddhist remains in the port town of Nagapattinam. This town on the coast of Tamil Nadu was during the Coḷa period an important port for maritime trade with the countries across the Bay of Bengal. Buddhist sculptures and bronzes from the eleventh century are well known. The site is under the protection of the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Archaeology.

In the course of correspondence during the second half of 2012, Special



FIGURE 8.6: SEATED BUDDHA, NAGAPATTINAM. PHOTOGRAPH: US HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS

Agents of the US Homeland Security sent to this writer a photograph of a large seated Buddha in the Nagapattinam style dateable to the eleventh century.

Homeland Security had recovered the Buddha from the prominent antique dealer of Indian origin Subhash Kapoor in New York whom they had been investigating for some time. The date of the sculpture's theft and its export to the US were not known. The Special Agents also forwarded an article from the *Hindu* of 11 November 2012. The article illustrated a Nagapattinam stone Buddha, which, according to it, that same dealer and his accomplices had marked out but which they could not actually steal and export. The dealer from New York and his accomplices from Tamil Nadu, all known persons allegedly in the business of illegal export of antiquities, were actually named in the article. Homeland Security had before them the sculpture seized by them and the newspaper photograph; this writer only had the two photographs, which resembled each other closely. The Buddha of the *Hindu* matched the HSI Buddha in all respects. It was a curious case, the newspaper claiming that the figure was still in Tamil Nadu, though it was intended for theft, and HSI declaring that it was already in its own possession in New York.

It does not need great reflection that Homeland Security's Special Agents would contact a non-official individual such as this writer only after trying all official agencies first. The New York dealer was already in the custody of the Tamil Nadu police in Chennai itself, having been extradited to India in July 2012 for his allegedly illegal activities, hence his role in exporting the Nagapattinam Buddha could have been entrusted to the Idol Wing of that state's police, but it was apparently not done. This writer sent an e-mail and then a letter to the local archaeological authorities in Tamil Nadu, but no acknowledgement was ever received from the Commissioner of Archaeology. The Buddha still rests in the HSI warehouse with no claim pressed by this country so far, with no first information report of its theft on official records to back up any claim, as per the information available to this writer. And the dealer remains in the Chennai prison facing litigation – facing litigation about *other* antiques that he is accused of smuggling, but *not* the Nagapattinam Buddha. Without the Government of Tamil Nadu and the central government making out a case, there is little hope that the Nagapattinam Buddha will ever be repatriated. (It can be assumed that the Buddha must have been exported before the Antiquities Act came into force.)

There are sinister implications in this case as a whole and about this particular antique dealer's activities, as follows:

1. The case of the Naṭarāja in the Australian National Gallery (ANG) is now well known. After close research by www.poetryinstone.in of the similarities between the sculptures acquired from Subhash Kapoor and documented sculptures when they were still in India, ANG was persuaded to return the Naṭarāja and another sculpture to India in 2014 as illegally exported

- antiquities. The Australian prime minister personally brought them when he visited India. But these are just two out of the many sculptures that Subhash Kapoor has sold (and gifted) to museums and collections all over the world. Many of them were published in books and are in the archives of the Institut français d'indologie at Pondicherry. The question to ask is, would India follow-up those cases, establish their ownership/provenance and compel those who have illegally acquired them to repatriate them; or would the authorities rest content congratulating themselves on the recovery of just a couple of sculptures, without following-up on other cases?
2. Second, so far the authorities have focussed only on Subhash Kapoor's illicit activities in Tamil Nadu. That state, with its treasures of Coła sculptures and bronzes housed in small village shrines, is fertile ground for art thieves and smugglers. However, an ambitious dealer would not be satisfied with operating in one state alone. The authorities have not investigated his possible operations in other parts of the country, although the Tamil Nadu police has a dedicated Idol Wing. The following shows that Kapoor had spread his tentacles beyond Tamil Nadu and into Madhya Pradesh, which has been subject to heritage theft just as Tamil Nadu, even though such things being part of the 'black economy' cannot be quantified.

BHARHUT: SUBHASH KAPOOR

Alexander Cunningham, the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, discovered as far back as 1873, or over 140 years ago the ruins of the great Buddhist Stupa of Bharhut of the second century BCE, about 20 km to the south of Satna. While some remains of the Stupa still survived at the deserted site, away from any road, many others had been carried away during past times to surrounding villages – Batanmara, Uchehra, Pataora and Bharhut itself. Cunningham removed all the remaining pieces, the massive gateways, the railing that had encircled the Stupa, the figure sculptures most of which were inscribed, to the Indian Museum at Calcutta, where they are displayed in a special gallery. Cunningham published a detailed account of his work in 1879 under the title *The Stupa of Bharhut* (Cunningham, 1879).

Cunningham's book illustrated all the remains that he found, and the inscriptions, which numbered two hundred and sixteen. It was a massive operation, as the gateways of the Stupa were 20 ft tall, many sculptures larger than life, and the railings huge. In order to transport all this to Calcutta, the Great Indian Peninsula Railway/East India Railway built a station at the village of Lagargawan 6 km from Bharhut. The station still exists, though few trains halt.

Cunningham's account of Bharhut is so exhaustive that little was published after his book on what is India's earliest indigenous art in the durable material of stone.

Long after Cunningham, some 54 pieces of Bharhut went to the Allahabad Museum, a few to the Ramban Museum near Satna, and two to the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (in the 1930s). Two of Bharhut's sculptures ended up in the Norton Simon Museum at Pasadena in the early 1970s under circumstances that are not clear (as is the case with this man's Indian acquisitions generally).

Cunningham photographed the human and divine figures, Yakṣas, Yakṣīs, Devatās from the Stupa, but he could not photograph one major sculpture; it has remained unpublished from 1873 to the present day. A local family in their private shrine was worshipping this 6.5-ft-tall, inscribed female. Cunningham therefore copied the inscription, which recorded that it was a goddess named Mahākokā, donated by a Buddhist monastic functionary. Kokā means the bird Sārasa (Anas Casarca), 'Mahākokā' therefore means Great Bird Goddess, or we may say the Great Bird-Voiced Goddess, in human form. Cunningham had earlier found another inscribed sculpture, Culakokā, the 'Little Bird-Voiced Goddess', Mahākokā's sister so to say, at the Stupa and



FIGURE 8.7: BHARHUT, DEVATĀ MAHĀKOKĀ.
PHOTOGRAPH: US HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS

sent it to the Indian Museum. Since 1873 down to the present, Mahākokā remained a mere name known only from the conscientious archaeologist's eye copy of the donor's record. Every writer, from Cunningham himself to H. Lüders, E. Waldschmidt and M.A. Mehendale, etc., reproduced Cunningham's reading.²

Mahākokā always covered from head to foot in her shrine, was only photographed when the Antiquities Act came into force in the 1970s, and the wise devotee got it registered.

Then, during one rainy night in July 2004, Mahākokā was stolen from the unoccupied mansion on the village outskirts, and was illegally exported to the US. The owner lodged a report at the local police station, also informing the Archaeological Survey of India, as a responsible citizen. No progress was made during the following eight years, and the matter rested there. The owner of the precious sculpture reconciled himself to his loss.

In July 2012, the US HSI, already knowing about this writer's interest in the recovery of illegally exported art, sent him several photographs of a six-foot six-inch tall female figure standing under a tree. They had seized it from a well-known New York antique shop 'Art of the Past' owned by Subhash Kapoor, and they requested help in identifying it and in any other manner possible with the view to restoring it to its rightful owner. The declared provenance of the figure, heavily laden with primitive ethnic jewellery and tattoos, was Khartoum in the Sudan, and the date of the import into the US was claimed to be 1954, long before the Antiquities Act. The photographs showed an inscription on the trunk of the tree. Close-ups of the inscription were obtained and read. The record clearly says that the supervisor of a monastic kitchen donated this figure of the goddess Mahākokā. It turned out that what HSI had recovered was the same figure discovered by Cunningham as early as 1873 whose inscription he had copied. Although the sculpture, alone among all of Bharhut, had never been published, Cunningham's meticulous documentation a century and a half ago and the owner's wise choice of registering his figure one century after Cunningham, and lodging a police report after its theft, resulted in establishing ownership.

In order to fulfil the US security agency's request, all documentation – Cunningham's report of 1873/9, registration certificate of 1977, FIR of 2004 – were furnished to HSI, who have acknowledged ownership of the sculpture. Commercial value of the sculpture, as conveyed by HSI, is US \$15 to 18 million, that is Indian ₹90 crore or more; its heritage value of course is incalculable. All this has been supplied to the Archaeological Survey of India as well.

Kapoor is on trial in India, a process which may take a long time. If convicted, he may have to undergo a jail sentence, after which he will face court action in the US for his illegal exports to that country. All this also may take time. Homeland Security was therefore requested to isolate the Mahākokā

theft from all others, since its theft and export have been established, and restore the sculpture to India. Hopefully, in due time, Bharhut's Mahākokā Devatā shall return to India and to her shrine, provided our government makes serious efforts.

The Stupa of Bharhut, the earliest indigenous art in durable material, had already suffered greatly when Cunningham discovered it. We can judge from its surviving pieces that had it come down to us intact, Bharhut too would have been worthy of being among World Heritage monuments, like Sanchi.

THEFTS AT BILHARI AND KARI TALAI

From the above it is clear that Kapoor has been active in Madhya Pradesh. It is necessary to explore if he had any connection with other thefts in that state. Within two years of Mahākokā's theft in 2004, more vandalism was committed at Bilhari and Kari Talai in the adjoining Katni district; at Kari Talai, the



FIGURE 8.8: GAṆEŚA SIMILAR TO THE KARI TALAI GAṆEŚA IN THE INTERNATIONAL ART MARKET

daring vandals plundered as many as nine sculptures from the locked and secure sculpture sheds in the course of just one night in August 2006. A Viṣṇu-Vaikuṅṭha from among the illegally exported images has been recovered by INTERPOL and is in the possession of the US HSI. Other pieces from Kari Talai have turned up in dealers' catalogues, and Homeland Security has recovered one more. Normally, all these pieces would be returned to India after following due process; but this country must first initiate that process. (Letters were written to the Bhopal Circle, and an application has been made under the Right to Information Act, but it is not known to this writer if the ASI took any action.)

www.plunderedpast.in illustrates a Gaṇeśa stolen from Kari Talai in 2006 under the caption 'Kari Talai 1 Alert'; another Gaṇeśa was brought to this writer's attention by the host of www.poetryinstone.in placed in the international art market after the theft; the resemblance between the two photographs is striking.

ATRU: JOHN ESKENAZI

One monument in Rajasthan of great heritage value is the ruined temple on a mound known as Gadgach, 'Disorderly Heap', at Atru in Baran district, where the borders of that state meet Madhya Pradesh. D.R. Bhandarkar briefly reported on Atru over one hundred years ago, but thereafter no research was done. Atru may have remained unknown to scholars, but vandals have been exploiting it with impunity over the years. State boundaries are particularly susceptible to movement of contraband, as it makes it convenient to smuggle antiques from one state to another. Since 1984 alone, when the Jaipur Circle of the ASI was formed after bifurcating the Vadodara Circle, thieves have stolen at least eight sculptures from this site protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Around 1984, just before this writer visited there for the first time, thieves stole two sculptures within the space of one week. Other pieces that can be attributed to Atru on grounds of the distinctive purple stone and the style of carving are in some prime museums in the West, but are without proper attribution, labelled simply as 'coming from eastern Rajasthan'. Illegal antique dealers and exporters obviously avoid declaring the true provenance of their merchandise even if they know it.

Atru is located in the Malwa region that formed part now of one kingdom and now of another. The ruined structure that was visible on the top of the mound belonged to the last quarter of the tenth century when the Paramāras of Malwa had been ruling here; but scattered on the mound were architectural remains of an earlier date.

In 2007, this writer was associated with the ASI in the clearance of the Gadgach mound, located on the outskirts of the town, to reveal what lay beneath the late tenth century structure. A large plinth of a structure dateable

to the early tenth century, when the Pratīhāras of Kannauj were ruling in north India, came to light, exposing four amorous couples, about 4-ft 6-inches tall with their crowning pediments. They were perfectly preserved, since they had remained buried for many centuries. The exposed plinth confirmed the context of the other loose pieces that were lying scattered all around the mound.

In April 2009, one of the four amorous couples was stolen from the plinth. Local officials lodged a police report. In September 2009, another couple was stolen. Within six months, the sculpture that had been stolen in September was advertised in the journal *Arts of Asia* of Hong Kong in March 2010, as being in London/New York. This fact was brought to the notice of the Indian High Commission in London through the ASI in New Delhi. By way of opening a second front for tracing and recovering the sculpture, personal e-mail alerts with photographs of *both* figures were circulated by this writer, worldwide. Scotland Yard, INTERPOL, then US HSI were involved, and HSI seized both, which had made their way into the US. After following up with the international security agencies since 2010 onwards, both pieces were handed over to the Indian Consul General in New York on 14 January 2014. As per available information, they will soon be brought back from the US.³

At present when an Indian antique appears in the art market, there is hardly any means for potential buyers to find out its source, whether it is a stolen and illegally exported piece or a legally owned one which left India's shores before 15 August 1947. There is the Art Loss Register in the USA where a buyer can search if the antiquity he is intending to acquire was illegally placed on the market, and for someone who suffered loss of his antiquity to report it to the Register to warn potential buyers. The Art Loss Register, however, is not perfect: John Eskenazi wrote to this author that he had queried with the Register for any listing of the Atru amorous couple, but had found no record of its theft. (The reason for this may be because there may be no coordination between the ASI and the Art Loss Register.) Dealers create false provenance papers to mislead buyers and the authorities. This happened, for example, with Bharhut's Mahākoka. The declared provenance of this second-century BCE over-life-size sculpture was Khartoum in the African Sudan and the date of acquisition by its 'owner' was 1954, well before the Antiquities Act came into force.

ASI is not an investigative agency, and it cannot stop thefts from all of its 3,500 monuments; but it can start a page on its own website www.asi.nic.in or open a special website where it can post photographs and FIRs of stolen antiques. When a theft occurs, the fact could moreover be publicized through the media with photographs, for wider dissemination of the news. And when a stolen piece is recovered, that fact should also be recorded on the website, as is being done on www.plunderedpast.in.

Many of the thefts recorded on www.plunderedpast.in have happened from



FIGURE 8-9: JOHN ESKERAZI'S ADVERTISEMENT OF THE ATRU AMOROUS SCULPTURE STOLEN IN SEPTEMBER 2009



FIGURE 8-10: ATRU AMOROUS COUPLE, STOLEN IN APRIL 2009

sculpture sheds of the ASI. At present, photography in the sheds is difficult for scholars, and their contents remain unknown and unpublished. The concerned ASI Circle has photographic documentation, but this is rather limited, with just one photograph of the sculpture. In this situation, when some stolen antiquity is recovered by security agencies, its match may be hard to establish in the absence of high-resolution photographs taken from different angles, with a graphic scale, etc. One solution may be to allow photography in the sculpture sheds at the sites, as also for the ASI to put up such photographs on its website for everyone interested.

Photographs not only of sculptures in the sheds should be on the ASI website, but a general documentation of sculptures on the monuments, especially removable sculptures in niches, and female figures crowning the columns in temple *mandapas*, usually numbering eight, should be a priority. This author suspects that the hundreds of beautiful celestial females that we admire in the collections in India and especially abroad have suspect sources. Consider the fact that a temple *mandapa* has as many as eight columns, each crowned by a heavenly female figure. As an example, the Bahu Temple at Nagda near Udaipur in Rajasthan had eight such females, of which seven remained until 1994. Between 1994 and 2004 all seven were stolen. This writer obtained old photographs from the Jaipur Circle of the ASI and the American Institute of Indian Studies in Gurgaon and circulated them and then also posted them on www.plunderedpast.in. According to information, which is on record with the ASI, two Western dealers volunteered to return them to this country since their ownership had been demonstrated beyond doubt. As another example, attempts were made to loot all eight figures from the Solar-Śaiva shrine at Toos near Udaipur, Rajasthan, during the last few years; their present location is not known (www.plunderedpast.in). Yet another example of such female figures being stolen, one of them that crowned the *mandapa* of a temple at Baroli in Rajasthan ended up in the collections of the Denver Museum of Art in the US. For information about this piece, see www.plunderedpast.in.

However, for placing photographs of sculptures on their websites, first the central and state agencies charged with protecting the monuments will need to build up good documentation of sculptures from several angles, and make them accessible on their websites. The National Mission of Monuments and Antiquities set up in 2007 has been collecting documentation; but it is yet not accessible to interested persons.

Many smaller nations are pursuing their illegally exported heritage for restoration. In India, on the other hand, where the stringent Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972 is in force, attempts are being made to dilute the Act! An article, 'To Catch an Idol Thief', in the *Times of India* on 16 August 2015, discusses this question. The passage 'Whose Patrimony Is It?' speaks of the 'debate whether nations are right to be so possessive about their heritage'.

Some in the Western museum world are said to reject the ‘nationalistic-retentionist’ arguments of nations. It is the world’s collective heritage we are talking about – we of the cosmopolitan museums are better equipped to preserve and display it – therefore you (poor nations!) give it up and we shall look after it. Imagine that those who come into ‘possession’ of Indian sculptures by breaking India’s laws are turning around to ask Indians not to be possessive! Many of the dancing Śivas, Gaṇeśas, celestial women, Mahākokās, amorous couples, and thousands of others are ending up in these cosmopolitan museums, and private collections, after they are clandestinely removed and exported from this country.

The chain of scout-picker-handler-exporter-auction house works under the surface. The curator or private collector who acquires the Naṭarāja can hardly be ignorant about the ways of the antiquities market, of what happens before the sculpture comes to his collection. It was very likely violently wrenched from its niche, brutality was committed on the monuments and on men. The priest of the Devī shrine at Khekshu on the Sutlej in Kullu was reportedly killed when the sculpture was stolen some years ago; the caretaker of the temple at Bhachunch in Shimla district was killed two years ago. And the ASI attendants at Kari Talai barely saved their lives when robbers took away nine sculptures in 2006.

India’s past is indeed the whole world’s heritage. Then let it remain intact where it is, without violating its sovereign laws. Shun the sophistry. Shun the Christie’s and Sotheby’s and men like Jeremy Knowles and Subhash Kapoor – and all who enjoy bonhomie with them; and let all who value the past and its art come to admire it in its home.

Note: Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Jeremy Knowles are named as auction houses who never responded to queries. Visit www.plunderedpast.in for a look at some of these people’s handiwork.

NOTES

1. For a fuller consideration of all aspects of the stepped well, Mankodi, 1991, *passim*.
2. For more details on this absorbing question of Mahākokā, see Mankodi, ‘The Case for Goddess Mahākokā’ (in press).
3. This author had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 10 September 2014, ‘Would you consider personally carrying our own [Atru] heritage back when you visit the US this month and earn our appreciation?’ It gives him great satisfaction that the Prime Minister has instructed ASI to follow up. ASI has recently sent an expert team to authenticate and bring back the sculptures.

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