

# GOAT-HEADED DEITIES IN ANCIENT INDIAN SCULPTURE

## I. INTRODUCTION

Starting with the oldest preserved monuments, depictions of animals used in a religious context are quite common in Indian art. For the record, two such main groups can be distinguished: 1. whole animal figures (copied in accordance with nature);<sup>1)</sup> 2. hybrid representations in which part of the image is human and part animal. Most often, in the latter case, the animal element is the head or face. An example is Varaha – one of the incarnations of Vishnu, undoubtedly the most widespread hybrid image in India (Fig. 1). In this analysis,<sup>2)</sup> however, I would like to focus on less popular fig-

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<sup>1)</sup> The most important in relation to this tradition are studies of the ancient cult pillars, also the so-called Ashokan ones that confirm the antiquity and even the priority of cults using animal images. As Irwin points out, the origins of figural stone sculpture with which these monuments are connected should be treated as if “many links this pillar-art seemed to have with native Indian tradition – in particular with the animal standards or emblems described in epic literature as *dhvaja-stambhas* (. ..) leaving open the possibility that at least the unscripted pillars might have been erected by Aśoka’s predecessor, Bimduśāra.”; and “There is also abundant evidence that animal-pillars were associated with sacred-tree shrines as well as tumuli.” (Irwin 1973: 714, 716) It may be concluded that Ashoka took over already existing places of worship (with their images) to propagate the Buddhist dharma. Moreover, the researcher points out to the excellent technique of the creators of these animal representations: “a most sensitively modelled young animal in the naturalistic Indian tradition of animal carving.”; or “an animal depicted naturalistically, with the intuitive sympathy characteristic of Indian animal art through ages.” (Irwin 1973: 713).

<sup>2)</sup> The article is part of, and at the same time, a preview of my monograph on deities

ures, whose importance in the Indian tradition must have been considerable at the time – judging both by the number of surviving figures and by their presence and importance in various traditional religious stories. Moreover, among the entire group of images that in ancient Indian sculpture we can associate with fertility, practices of offspring granting and child protection, these spirit-deities stand out due to the way they are represented (among others, they are the only ones that can be identified one hundred percent on the basis of just a single element – the animal’s head). The heads are most often referred to in the literature on the subject as a goat,<sup>3)</sup> and sometimes also a ram,<sup>4)</sup> the latter attribution being denied by some researchers. In my paper I refer mainly to works from the art centre in Mathura in northern India, due to the richness of its representations and the unquestionable ability to set trends in the religious iconography of ancient India. Interestingly, Naigamesha<sup>5)</sup> – because, among others, such a name was passed down in the literary

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associated with protective, medical and religious practices, as well as with fecundity and childcare: *Abundance and Fertility. Representations Associated with Child Protection in the Visual Culture of Ancient India*, which will be released in the future.

<sup>3)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 68), Agrawala (1950: 66). In *Mahabharata* it is described by the term *chagavaktra* (e.g. 3.217.10–12, 3.215.23). Smith also states that Naigamesha may have the head of a ram, antelope or goat. This is also mentioned by Bühler (1894: 316): “the Brahmans substituting later a ram’s head on account of the seeming connection of the name with *mesha*, ‘a ram,’ and the Jainas a deer’s head on account of the compound *Harinegamesi*, seemingly connected with *hariṇa*, ‘a gazelle.’” However, Nagar (1999: 364–365) and Bhattacharyya have a different opinion. The latter points out: “It is wrong to connect the deity with an antelope or a ram for neither the descriptions nor the forms in art warrants such a conclusion.” The Hari-part in the name connects with Krishna (aka Hari) and the story of Naigamesha’s worshipping in the story of Krishna to ask for offspring for Satyabhama (Bhattacharyya 2010: 149–150).

<sup>4)</sup> In the stories told, among others in *Mahabharata* and the medical treatises Naigamesha is a form of Karttikeya (Skanda), the son of Agni, who is depicted with the goat’s head, or riding a goat or a chariot pulled by goats. The association of the ram’s head with Naigamesha is derived from his association with Agni. *Mesha*, *medha* often makes references to Agni – his *vahana* is a ram. See also the translation by Monier Williams, footnote below.

<sup>5)</sup> Sanskrit: Naigamesha, which in Monier-Williams’ dictionary (2005: 570) is explained as “name of a demon with the head of ram (supposed to seize or injure children)” after *Atharvaveda*. The etymology of the word is uncertain, but Monier Williams, in his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, says that it consisted of two elements: *neja* from the root *nij* to wash and *mesa*, a ram. In fact, the word denoted a ram on which the child was seated and bathed, thus purified of the evil eye of the *graha* (planet). The dictionary

tradition – appears there both in individual representations and in the genre scene showing him during worship in the sanctuary with the assistance of other spirit-deities and women (which should be treated as a rarity – the only deity of the above-mentioned protective spirits to be illustrated in a place of worship). It is a relief found at Kankali Tila (a place commonly referred to as a Jain mound), now at the State Museum Lucknow (No. J.626/528, dated from 75–100 CE, 25x55 cm, Fig. 2), forming a fragment of an architrave, probably from the gate of a stupa or a sanctuary, executed on both sides. Individual forms always show Naigamesha in a standing, frontal and static pose, in the company of children. Although there are some variants of the number and arrangement of the accompanying babies on the stelae, the sculptures in general look as if they were created in accordance with a previously established pattern. Naigamesha carries children on his shoulders or in his arms as if he had grabbed them and lifted them somewhere or led them by the hand<sup>6)</sup> (Figs. 3–5). It is therefore a unique and unusual approach. In the case of other deities that have a child as an attribute, this holding is not repeated. Only in single depictions of the goddess Hariti from the Gandhara center (Fig. 6) do children also appear on the arms of the figure. Among the hybrid animal representations of deities, however, one more aspect attracts attention.

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gives other names for this character: 1. Naigameya – explained as “a form of Skanda, considered also as his son and play-fellow, after *Mahabharata* and *Sushrutasamhita*; 2. Neamesha – “name of a demon inimical to children” after *Grihyasutras*, but does not provide any etymology. Other variants of the name are also encountered: Harinegameshi, Harinaigamesha, Harinaigameshin, Naigameshin, Nemeso, Nemesa, Nemeso. The name Harinegameshi Bühler (1894: 315, 316) translates, citing *Kalpasutra*, as meaning “Negamesi of Hari” or “Negamesi, the servant of Indra”, but he does not undertake to point to the etymology of Naigameya or Naigamesha. Winternitz (1895: 149) believes that Naigameya is simply a misreading of Naigamesha (letter y instead of sh – in the *devanagari* script, in the manuscripts). This can be seen, for example, in some editions of *Sushruta Samhita*. While Agrawala (1970: 80) believes that the name Naigameya indicates connections with the merchant community: “increasing popularity amongst the merchant community, as shown by the name Naigameya, Lord of the Naigamas or members of the trader guilds.”

<sup>6)</sup> In this regard, Gill (2000: 80) makes an noteworthy comment: “the close contact of children with Naigamesha seems to be an important element of the iconography.” It is also worth adding that a very interesting symbol is placed in the Gombrich-Gupta’s (2002: 101) analysis among the designs that are associated with female *vratas* today. This one is called “goddess of children carrying children”, a very formulaic human figure with small figures attached to the head, arms, and legs in the same schematic way.

This is the figure of a woman whose head also looks like a goat (Fig. 7). Not only this allows her to connect with Naigamesha, or the child-protecting deities, as she also holds the baby on her lap in an oval cradle – as if she was presenting him to somebody. However, it is problematic to define her unequivocally, because literary sources do not provide sufficient grounds to consider this representation as Naigameshi. Nevertheless, many researchers described her in their studies as the female counter-part of Naigamesha. At this point, attention should certainly be drawn to the custom of depicting female figures with animal heads in the Mathura art discussed here. There are many known panels showing groups of seated figures in a row (from 2 to 13 persons, Fig. 8), which are usually identified as Matrikas<sup>7)</sup> and were associated with the belief that they might endanger children, especially in the womb and immediately after birth. Accidents like congenital malformations, diseases and death – were a real threat. They have bird, feline (tiger/lion), bovine and goat heads.<sup>8)</sup> This goat-headed female deity must therefore also be considered in their context.

<sup>7)</sup> The term can be translated as “little mothers”. Agrawala (1970: 79) associates their origin with local beliefs: “The Mātrikā-gaṇa or hosts of Mothers included innumerable female deities of a local character and probably unimportant in nature whose tutelary position entitled them to receive only local allegiance.” An interesting classification, however, is proposed by White (2003: 35): “the female Seizers (*grahīs*) – also referred to as Mothers”, which may be key in understanding the Grahas form given and described in the medical literature. The main source of information about Matrikas, however, according to many scholars, is the *Mahabharata*, in particular the third book (3.217, 3.219, 3.230). The Matrikas are centred around Skanda – the character known there and in medical texts – as the chief Graha or their leader. According to the message, they wanted to ensure a constant worship and asked Skanda for this, so assured them that due to their destructive powers, people would have to worship them. Shah (1952–53: 40–41) believes that “malefic female Bāla-grahas, seven in number, worshipped also as Mātā or Mothers, must have been widely worshipped as is suggested from the finds at Mathurā and Ahicchatrā.”

<sup>8)</sup> In the so-called Matrika panels, women are usually accompanied by the figure of Graha-Skanda, flanking them on the left, and sometimes the worshippers are shown making the gesture of paying tribute. Most often, the Matrikas raise their right hand in a gesture of repelling fear (*abhaya*), and with the left they hold a cradle with a baby or a child alone. Researchers describe their heads in various ways: 1. Bautze (1987: 27) as resembling “goats, boars, buffalos and other such mammals” or resembling a lion, bovine, with short horns and protruding ears, a triangular face, large eyes, no ears, the pointed end of the head suggests a beak, avian, bear-like; 2. Joshi (1987: 159) describes them as an eagle, parrot, lion, tiger, bull, etc.

## II. NAIGAMESHA AS DESCRIBED IN TEXTUAL SOURCES

Since the literary sources have been already mentioned, it must be emphasised that they strongly connect Naigamesha with Jainism. Deity plays an evidently tutelary role in the story of the foetal transfer of one of the most important teachers, guides and the great reformer of the tradition – Mahavira – from the womb of the Brahmin woman to the womb of the Kshatriya woman.<sup>9)</sup> Maxwell thus concludes that “he was adapted for the Tirthankara-initiation myth from a masculine night-spirit of the same name, who in Vedic superstition was believed to abduct children.”<sup>10)</sup> Thus, his presence in the cult related to the protection of offspring could theoretically focus only on the good nature of the deity and the protective powers, supporting children mainly before birth, and as such providing mothers with reassurance at this particular time of concern for the proper development of the foetus or the provision of a male offspring. In the analysis below I will refer to this topic in detail. However, it is worth noting at the outset that this is not the only function of Naigamesha. A completely different character, and thus the type of worship that may be associated with a figure, are presented by other literary traditions, e.g. medical texts. It cannot be ruled out that Naigamesha not only supported pregnant women but could also take a malicious form. Then, as a harmful being, he might as well need to be honoured for propitiation as *Matrikas* or *Grahas*<sup>11)</sup>.

<sup>9)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 19–20). It is also worth noting that this is not the only person responsible for the transfer of embryos here. Balcerowicz (2003: 25–27) states that Indra was in charge of it. He recognises that the procedure echoed the story of the transfer of Krishna from Rohini’s womb to Devaki’s womb and was intended to illustrate the superiority of the warrior class over the priesthood. He also cites a passage from *Kalpasutra* clearly indicating that a Brahmana family is not suitable for the birth of such great figures as: *cakravartins*, *baladevas*, or *vasudevas*. Shah (1952–53: 20) and Maxwell (1997: 199–200) state the same. As explained by Bühler (1894: 314), however, Indra only appointed Harinegamesi to transfer the foetus. The researcher names him exactly: “the divine commander of infantry”.

<sup>10)</sup> Maxwell (1997: 199–200).

<sup>11)</sup> The verb root *grah* is translated as “seize, possess”, so the word *graha* (possibly also the female form: *grahi*), as the name suggests, serves to combine into a single class all beings that are dangerous, seize and possess with disease. Yano (2005: 46–48), analysing the connections between Indian astrology and Ayurveda, indicates the characters and the concept of *Grahas* as an element connecting both these systems. So in astrology, the *graha* is the planet and in Ayurveda the possessor, the demon that takes possession of and

Nagar and Bhattacharyya relate Naigamesha to Dakṣa Prajapati: “Naigameṣa is a peculiar sort of a Jaina demigod with an animal head. It is interesting, however, to notice an ideological similarity between this Jaina deity and Dakṣa Prajāpati (...).”<sup>12</sup> “According to Paurāṇic mythology, Dakṣa Prajāpati as the highest deity presiding over the principle of the Creation has also the goat’s head.” In my opinion, however, it should rather be treated as a coincidence that both characters have a goat’s head.

Let me therefore refer to more solid information. Based on the preserved fragments, it can be concluded that Naigamesha was a popular figure. Probably thanks to the inclusion in the Jain stories of Mahavira,<sup>13</sup> his popularity in Mathura’s visual realm grew even more. Perhaps, then, he was one of the most important child-guarding deities, who could have their own sanctuaries or appear at the entrance to Jain stupas.<sup>14</sup> However, I have noticed that it can be just one of his two possible appearances preserved in the tradition, as the other presents Naigamesha as a deity belonging to the group of spirits of

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causes disease (both of the body and mind). The researcher distinguished five phases of changes in the meaning of this word: 1. the demon of the solar and lunar eclipse (another term for him, *svarbhanu*); 2. changing the name of the demon to Rahu; 3. five planets perceived as possessors; 4. Sun and Moon added to 5 *grahas*; 5. establishing the order of the week and the seven *grahas*, then building the final list nine of them.

<sup>12</sup> Nagar (1999: 365–366), Bhattacharyya (2010: 149, 151).

<sup>13</sup> Jainism also refers to the story of Devaki whose children are transferred to Sulasa’s womb to be saved, and also Naigamesha accomplished that: “Jain stories of Krishna also preserve the myth of six children of Devaki in the Jain *Harivamsapurana* of Pun-nata Jinasena. However, the six children of Devaki were transferred as embryos from Devaki to Sulasa and born as three sets of twins. (...) The Jain story of the six brothers differs slightly from the Hindu versions, in that they were not killed by Kamsa, but were transferred as embryos to Sulasa, living an enjoyable and happy life on Earth.” See: Vemsani (2016: 80).

<sup>14</sup> An exceptionally important representation has been preserved in a relief on a *shilapata* (Government Museum Mathura, No. Q.2, dated 75–100 CE), where in the lower left section we see a figure of a god with a child standing in an arcaded niche. Unfortunately, the head is defaced, but the remaining elements and traces of horns and ears can be the basis for identification. Above all, however, here it is necessary to pay attention to the surroundings of the figure – it is shown in a niche symbolising a shrine, and in the right section of this panel, an analogous representation of *yakshi* in a sanctuary is depicted (Quintanilla 2007: 136, Pl. 168, 172). This is evidence of the possible localisation of individual images of this spirit-deity at the stupa’s entrance.

ambivalent nature – both favourable and harmful at the same time.<sup>15)</sup> Naigamesha appears as one of the characters to be propitiated so that he does not threaten children and mothers, but also can be asked for offspring. As I have already explained in the footnotes, in several places in the textual tradition one can find information that Naigamesha is a form of Skanda. Probably through assimilation, as Mann highlights, as a result of the development of the Skanda cult, the greater deity absorbs the minor one. In this context, an interesting example of a preserved image may be the Skanda statue in the form of Naigamesha, described by Deglurkar<sup>16)</sup> or the illustration of Skanda's *abhisheka* (Government Museum Mathura, No. 466, dated to the Gupta period, Fig. 9), where in the right side section we can see a bust of a figure with an animal's (goat?) head in the function of an assistant.<sup>17)</sup>

Both Winternitz and Shah point out that in the Vedic texts and *Grihyasutras* this is (still) a friendly deity to whom requests for offspring are made. The character therefore stands close to this later Jain version. It does not resemble the dangerous demon that harms children, as depicted in medical texts. This observation, however, is difficult to consider unequivocally accurate, because, first of all, each of the deities of the class analysed here (i.e. Grahas or Matrikas) can be both benevolent and malevolent in nature.<sup>18)</sup>

<sup>15)</sup> Winternitz (1895: 154–155) notices: “This is interesting as showing how closely connected the two ideas of a deity dangerous to children, and a deity helpful in the procreation of children.”

<sup>16)</sup> This is about a statue found in Mandhal near Nagpur, dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> CE, approx. 1 m high (lower part from mid-thighs not preserved). The author of the analysis describes its head as a ram's, but I cannot confirm this from the reproduction. The author argues that “The identity with Kārtikeya was a natural one, for in his original conception, the god seems to have shared a common trait with Naigameṣa, namely inimity towards foetuses and children.” An important attribute that binds Naigamesha to Skanda-Kārtikeya is the spear. Moreover, the researcher claims that since he is found in a group of such images as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, he is elevated to the rank of the principal deities of Brahminism (Deglurkar 1988–89: 57–60).

<sup>17)</sup> More about the image is offered by Agrawala (1948: 39–40), although he believes that this character is Dakṣha Prajapati or the ram-headed *vahana* of Agni, but this identification does not seem correct to me. From later representations, one can also refer to the relief in the 21<sup>st</sup> grotto in Elura, where Skanda-Kārtikeya is flanked by goat-headed figures, see also: Deglurkar (1988–89: 58).

<sup>18)</sup> This is no exception to the Indian pantheon. There are many deities of an ambivalent nature. Perhaps one of the oldest and most popular is Rudra (lit. “roaring”),

This does not prevent us from continuing to ask for offspring (that is, not just worship for the sake of appeasement). Second, such short passages do not tell us much about the actual character of a deity. It is difficult to say categorically that it was mild at first, and became sinister only later. Certainly, however, it can be concluded that of the characters described here, Naigamesha is the one that functions most at the interface of medicine and religious practice, and at the same time can be proud of the longest presence in the literary tradition, as he is already mentioned by *Khilani* of *Rigveda*:<sup>19)</sup> “O Neamesa! Fly away, and fly hither again, bringing a beautiful son; to my wife here who is longing for a son, grant them an embryo and that a male one.” These verses then function as mantras chanted in the *simantonnayana* ceremony, as e.g. given in *Shankhayana Grihyasutra* 1.22.7:<sup>20)</sup> “1. In the seventh month, at her first pregnancy, the *Sîmantonnayana* (or parting of the hair). 2. He causes her, after she has bathed and put on a (new) garment which has not yet been washed, to sit down behind the fire. 3. He sacrifices, while she takes hold of him, with the *Mahāvyaḥritis*. 4. He cooks a mess of food, 5. According to some (teachers) boiled rice with *Mudga* beans. 6. The implements used and the *Nakshatra* should be of male gender. 7. (He then sacrifices with the following texts,) ‘May *Dhâtar* give to his worshipper further life and safety; may we obtain the favour of the god whose laws are truthful. ‘*Dhâtar* disposes of offspring and wealth; *Dhâtar* has created this whole world; *Dhâtar* will give a son to the sacrificer: to him you shall sacrifice, an offering rich in ghee.’ (Besides) with the three verses, ‘**Negamesha, fly away**’ (*Rig-veda* *Khailika sūkta*, after X, 184, vol. vi, p. 31), and in the sixth place the verse, ‘*Pragâpati*’ (*Rig-veda* X, 121, 10). 8 (The husband then) parts her hair, upwards, beginning from the middle, with a porcupine’s quill that has three white spots, or with a *Darbha* needle together with unripe *Udumbara* fruits, with the words, ‘*Bhûr bhuvah svah*.’ 9. He lays down (the thing he has used) in her lap (...)”. Successively, the

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endowed in Vedas with the epithet *Shiva* (lit. “auspicious, kind, benevolent, gracious”), after: *Srivastava* (1998: 334, 360).

<sup>19)</sup> According to *Winternitz* (1895: 151) verse 30.1, in the *GRETIL* repository (<http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil.html>) verse 4.13.1: *Nejameṣa parā pata suputraḥ punar ā pata/asyai me putrakāmāyai garbham ā dhehi yaḥ pumān//*. *Agrawala* (1967: 51) thinks that the character and invocation to it is therefore apocryphal because it was certainly taken from folklore and did not appear in the original version of the hymn.

<sup>20)</sup> Translated by *Oldenberg* (1886: 47–48). My emphasis added.

lines of *Khilani* of *Rigveda* are mentioned in *Ashvalayana Grihyasutra* (1.14.3)<sup>21)</sup> and *Manava Grihyasutra* (2.8) as accompanying the same ritual. One more detail is also worth paying attention to – the male descendant is particularly desirable by the sacrificers summoning the god here. The *Khilani* excerpt, however, is too short to state whether the Naigamesha deity had the special power to bestow sons or whether these wishes are simply influenced by general Indian tradition. The preference for a male child has been relevant from ancient times until today. In this context, the passage from *Neminathacharita* (7.11–14) analysed by Bühler, concerning the request that Krishna makes to Naigamesha to assist Satyabhama, who wants a son equal to Pradyumna, is significant: “(11) Knowing her tenacity of purpose, Kṛishṇa undertook a fast in honour of the god Naigameshin, partaking only of every eight meal. (12) Naigameshin appeared and spoke to him: ‘What can I do for thee?’ Kṛishṇa answered: ‘Give to Bhâmâ a son who resembles Pradyumna.’ (13) Naigameshin replied: ‘Make her, whom thou desirest to have a son, put on this necklace, and then have intercourse with her; thereby she will obtain the desired son.’ (14) Handing over the necklace, which he wore, Naigameshin disappeared. (...)”<sup>22)</sup> Therefore, this is another proof that Naigamesha was especially the addressee of the petitions for a son.

Then Winternitz states that the fragment of *Khilani* he is analysing, according to *Apastambha Grihyasutra* (8.13), should be recited by the husband during intercourse (*ritu-samaveshane*). Then in *Manava Grihyasutra* (2.18) it is recommended that a person who wants a son perform a sacrifice called *shadahuta*. Should these treatments be unsuccessful, then the person should

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<sup>21)</sup> Translated by Oldenberg (1886: 181): “In the fourth month of pregnancy the Simantonnayana (or parting of the hair, is performed). (1) In the fortnight of the increasing moon, when the moon stands in conjunction with a Nakshatra (that has a name) of masculine gender (2) Then he gives its place to the fire, and having spread to the west of it a bull’s hide with the neck to the east, with the hair outside, (he makes oblations,) while (his wife) is sitting on that (hide) and takes hold of him, with the two (verses), ‘May Dhâtri give to his worshipper,’ with the two verses, ‘I invoke Râkâ’ (Rig-veda II, 32, 4 seq.), and with (the texts), ‘**Negamesha**,’ and, ‘Pragâpati, no other one than thou’ (Rig-Veda X, 121, 10). (3).” My emphasis added.

<sup>22)</sup> Bühler (1894: 315). Shah (1952–53: 21) also informs that in the Jain text *Vasudevahindi* Krishna is depicted as worshipping Naigamesha in order to gain a son. See also: Shah (1987: 2).

make a *sthalipaka*<sup>23)</sup> cake for Naigamesha, perform the *shadahuta* ritual, and recite *Khilani*.<sup>24)</sup>

Still, some interesting information about Naigamesha is provided primarily by medical literature. Due to the incorrectly read (and later reproduced in the literature on the subject) inscription on the panel at the State Museum Lucknow described above, first of all, the source in which Naigamesha is described as a character with a goat's head should be mentioned. This is an important clue relating to his visualisation in art. Agrawala cites a passage from *Sushruta Samhita*,<sup>25)</sup> where Naigamesha is defined as a goat-headed god protecting infants.<sup>26)</sup> An entire chapter of the text is devoted to warding off the threat of a deity (*pratishedha*) using medical treatments, as well as offerings to Naigamesha.<sup>27)</sup> The researcher reports that the relationship of the goat with birth ceremonies could be an element of customs or beliefs. He cites an illustration from the *Kadambari* poem: “association of a goat with the ceremonies of child-birth became a permanent feature of a popular religion.

<sup>23)</sup> According to Monier-Williams (2005: 1262) “a dish of barley or rice boiled in milk (used as an oblation)”. See also: Gonda (1977: 556). In this context, it is also worth mentioning the importance of certain sacrificial foods for supporting fertility, conception, and the male offspring. For example, Doniger (1980: 17–61) presents an analysis of the symbolic connection between milk, soma, and semen in Vedic and post-Vedic texts, then Jamison (1996: 51ff) gives examples of the use of mixtures of rice, water, milk and ghee, or with other substances as illustrated in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6.4.14–18), which is most often cited work as the evidence of such practices. This ritual feeding of women in order to promote fertility is here related to the provision of specific offspring – for more details see e.g., Madhavananda (1950: 938–941). Shloka 6.4.19 also mentions a sacrifice with the usage of a *sthalipaka*.

<sup>24)</sup> Winternitz (1895: 152).

<sup>25)</sup> *Sushruta Samhita*, *Uttaratantra* 36.9: **ajānanaścalākṣibhruḥ kāmārūpī mahāyaśāḥ/ bāla pālayitā devo naigameṣo bhirakṣatu//**. My emphasis added. Translated by Winternitz (1895: 153–154): “The protecting god Naigameṣa, the goat-faced with quivering eyes and brows, he who changes his form at will and highly famed, may protect the child!”.

<sup>26)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 70), Winternitz (1895: 153–154).

<sup>27)</sup> *Sushruta Samhita*, *Uttaratantra* 36.7–8: **tilataṃḍulakaṃ mālyam bhakṣyāṃśca vividhānapi/kumārapitrmeṣāya vrkṣamūle nivedayet//7// adyastādvaṭavrkṣasya snapanam copadiśyate/ baliṃ nyagrodhavrṣu tithau śaṣṭhyām nivedayet//8//**. In Bhishagraṭna's (1916: 159) translation: “Offerings of huskless sesamum, garlands of flowers and various dishes should be made to the deity Naigamesha (the preserver of the child) at the foot of a *Vata* tree on the sixth day of the fortnight and the child should be bathed there at the foot of the tree.”

We find it mentioned in the Kādambari as part of the birth ceremonies of Prince Chandrāpīḍa when a grown-up goat was brought and tied at the door of the *sūtikāgriha* at the time of the Shashthīpūjā.<sup>28)</sup> Perhaps this relationship stems directly from belief in the animal's fertility. Van Geer, discussing the functioning and importance of animals in Indian culture, points out that the goat has been certainly present in the human household<sup>29)</sup> in the subcontinent since the development of the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, such as Harappa. The evidence is found in burials – the remains of goat bones. She recognises it was a “burial gift”, but it's hard to inquire why. Subsequently, she considers the animal a favourite for sacrifice in Hinduism, perhaps because of its fertility. Certainly, she sees this proverbial prolificacy as the main reason for Naigamesha's connection to the goat, which she tends to compare to the situation with the Greek Pan.<sup>30)</sup> Anyway, Bühler explains this comparison very simply and I agree with him: “The goat's head excellently suits a deity, who has to do with the procreation of children, as the strong sexual instincts of the goat did not escape the notice of the ancient Hindus.”<sup>31)</sup> Therefore, it is worth remembering that the characteristic feature of the ancient representations that I refer to relies on a visual dictionary based on the observation of reality. In my opinion, the images very often contained obvious associations.

Yet another passage from *Sushruta Samhita*<sup>32)</sup> is extremely important in the context of warding off the threat. Agrawala, while quoting it, reports on

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<sup>28)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 73). The Shashthīpuja ritual honours another protective deity – Shashthī, who is worshipped by women on the sixth day after childbirth and also on the sixth day of each lunar month.

<sup>29)</sup> Generally, as Van Geer (2008: 169) points out: “Goats were, along with sheep and possibly dogs, the first domesticated animals, and form until today an important part of the livestock of humans worldwide. Goats were and are primarily used for their meat and milk.”

<sup>30)</sup> Van Geer (2008: 170–171).

<sup>31)</sup> Bühler (1894: 316).

<sup>32)</sup> *Sushruta Samhita, Sharirasthana* 10.62: *taṃ kadācidyaṭṭacchayopaśāntaṃ naigameṣāhr̥tamīti bhāṣante, tameva kadācit pralāiyamānaṃ nāgodaramityāhuṃ tatrāpi līnavat pratīkārah//*. Bhishagraṭna (1911: 236) actually translates it as an anomaly after intercourse, lack of success in a conception (possibly phantom pregnancy?): “And this is ascribed by the ignorant to the malignant influence of Naigamesha (spirits). Such an impregnated matter, sometimes lying concealed in the uterus, is called Nāgodara, which should be treated with the remedies laid down under the head of Lina-Garbha

an extremely dangerous disease in pregnant women: “a female disease in pregnant women was called *naigameshāpahṛta*<sup>33)</sup> in which the foetus ceased throbbing in the womb and it appeared as if life had ceased to exist in the foetus, making the abdomen inflated or compressed (Śārīrasthāna, Ch.10, Verse 68).”<sup>34)</sup>

Unfortunately, the references to the deity’s physiognomy do not end with the above-mentioned passages. In the same medical text, we have both the goat’s head and the description of the ram-headed demon (*meṣānana: Uttarantra* 37.4), which was created by Parvati. He is Guha’s companion and takes the children: “Naigameṣa, who is a ram-faced Graha, who holds a child, was created by Parvati as a beloved friend of the god Guha. That one who is called Skandapasmara, he [was created] by Agni, and he is equal in radiance to Agni. He is also called Visakha and is a friend of Skanda” (*Uttarantra* 37.6–7).<sup>35)</sup> So, I suppose originally Naigamesha was also the epitome of the real danger facing pregnant women in the sense that certain foetal anomalies or failed attempts at conception could be viewed as the actions of a malicious spirit named Naigamesha. Procedures assigned to specific symptoms (medical procedures and rituals) were to counteract these activities of Graha. Incidentally, it is worth noting that placing Naigamesha in relations with other deities, such as Parvati, Skanda, Agni, is evidence of the assimilation of these kinds of figures into the religious mainstream and an attempt to organise the spirit-deities with various backgrounds in one coherent divine genealogy.

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(weak foetus).” So, the text itself presents the ailment in a different way than Agrawala understands and explains it.

<sup>33)</sup> The word *āpahṛta* means “taken away, carried off, stolen”, as it comes from the root *apa hr* – “to snatch away, carry off, plunder; to remove, throw away”. Thus “*naigameshāpahṛta*” can be translated as “taken by Naigamesha. This spirit-deity is indicated by the text as directly endangering the unborn child and this is probably consistent with the nature of a character belonging to the Graha class. It should be corrected, however, that in the *Sushruta Samhita* version, I use, the term *naigameṣāhṛtam* (a verb without a prefix) occurs. *Sushruta Samhita* also mentions Naigamesha in many other places (including *Uttarantra* 27.4–5) in the Grahas group, who are harmful and cause specific children’s diseases.

<sup>34)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 70).

<sup>35)</sup> Mann (2003: 43). In the same way Shah (1952–53: 30) explains it: “The text further says that these *grahas* was appointed by Kṛttikā, Umā, Agni and others for the protection of Guha lying in the *Sara-vana* (reed-forest); Naigameṣa, the *meṣānana* (of ram’s face) was created by Pārvatī, and became a bosom friend of Guha.”

On the other hand, his presence in the *simantonnayana* ceremony described by *Grihyasutras* (crucial for the proper development of the foetus), and his role in the story of the transfer of Mahavira's embryo, confirm that Naigamesha could be associated primarily with this particular time before childbirth. However, he was not worshiped or invoked only to bring offspring to the believers, but also to keep the foetus healthy and to ensure its proper development in the womb. This could be understood, for example, that his function was to protect the child from the embrace of illness or even death. The depiction of Naigamesha in a medical context proves that the line remained fairly fluid between ceremonies, rituals, medical and magical treatments. Visualising a threat in the form of a deity, personifying a disease, are here an example of coping with danger and all fears that a situation (pregnancy, childbirth, illness of a newborn baby, etc.) may cause in a human being. Faith supports healing and treatments, and the use of images of a deity could be treated as an additional protective form, especially if we interpret the small terracotta figurines, to which I will refer in the second part, as amulets or props for perinatal ceremonies.<sup>36)</sup>

Participants in the ceremonies recommended here could refer to both the good and bad nature of the deity. Naturally, if they imagined that Naigamesha had the power to change foetuses or, for example, to deform them, to kill them, then his cult automatically became one of the most important in the female sphere. Including this character in Graha's group means that in the case of Naigamesha's cult, the basic rule applies – here is another spirit-deity that should be worshiped preventively, so that it does not harm. After all, the same principle applies to Matrikas. Thanks to the prayers (mantras, invocations) and the sacrificing, it is possible to ensure his favour and care, and, above all, to protect against his harmful effects in the most medical sense. Having already outlined the context of how this character operated, one can therefore move to the visual sphere, expecting that Naigamesha will be depicted in representations of various categories – on a larger scale,

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<sup>36)</sup> Jayaswal (1991: 44) cites information (after Barnett) that *Antagada-Dasao* describes the worship of Naigamesha, where Sulasa was supposed to make an image of Harinaigameshi and purify herself ritually every morning. Jayaswal believes that "Installation of an image by the individual worshiper, and household ritualistic nature of the worship is indicated by this description." Shah (1987: 61) and (1952–53: 21) also refers to the same story, noting that Sulasa in a childhood got this prophecy about the birth of stillborn children. By praying to Naigamesha she gave birth at the same time as Devaki and Naigamesha were turning babies into the wombs of women before their birth.

intended for a sanctuary, or in a smaller scale – for private/home use, since his role was so significant.

### III. NAIGAMESHA AS DEPICTED IN ANCIENT IMAGES

I shall start with the crucial representation here, i.e. the relief already mentioned above, with a figure identified in the literature on the basis of the inscription (that was supposed to state *Bhagavā Nemeso*<sup>37)</sup>). Unfortunately, it can no longer serve as a basis for attribution, since the inscription does not actually contain the name Nemeso as it was originally deciphered. In this regard, reference should be made to other sources which can confirm that the male goat-headed hybrid figure may be the image of Naigamesha. The most important of them are presented in the previous part of my paper.

On the other hand, if you look at the images themselves,<sup>38)</sup> you can generally say that, including terracotta figurines, there are many of them. Some stone statues are about 0.5 m high or more. He is actually the only male figure accompanied by children, which can be considered a distinguishing feature. In the case of the remaining male spirit-deities found in this group, the children do not appear in close proximity, i.e. held in their hands, arms or on their knees. Despite the damage to the objects, it is visible that some small figures are sitting on Naigamesha's shoulders, one or two on each. These children are either holding his horns or ears, or making a *namaskara* gesture. They also appear in the lower part of the representation, at his side, sometimes you can see that the deity is holding/leading them by the hand/hands. There are also images in which children of much smaller proportions are shown in a fist of Naigamesha hanging as if he was moving them somewhere – perhaps he captured embryos or newborns as Graha. The most interesting and, at the same time, the least common in this group of deities of the above ways of involving children in the performance, is to place them on the shoulders, not

<sup>37)</sup> See: Bühler (1894: 314, Pl. II), Smith (1901: 25, Pl. XVIII), Agrawala (1947: 68), Shah (1987: 2, 323, Pl. X, Fig. 19). Bühler deciphered this inscription as *bhagavā Nemeso*, after consulting with Jacobi changed to *Nemeso*. However, at a workshop in Bochum (Mathurā: The Archaeology of Inter-religious Encounters in Ancient India, 25–27 July 2019) the researchers present when consulting the material decided that the name Nemeso did not appear in this inscription. I am very grateful for this comment.

<sup>38)</sup> For example, Nagar (2000: 100–102) out of stone images refers to (not giving measurements, numbers or repositories) seven sculptures of Naigamesha.

only to hold them in hands, arms or on the lap.<sup>39)</sup> Agrawala also mentions some Naigamesha images that do not contain children, explaining that since the pattern was already established and widely adopted, it was not necessary to add the children's figures. This does not seem to be the correct explanation, and perhaps it was more a question of creating a simpler, more handy version for figurines that were used in home practice or as amulets. This explanation could therefore apply to all figurines of this type, not only, as the researcher postulates, from Ahichchhatra centre, from the Gupta period.<sup>40)</sup>

Apart from the head topped with a turban, other, repeated elements of Naigamesha's representation are the *abhaya* gesture, the moneybag (?), and Agrawala also mentions elongated ears (*lamba karna*) as a characteristic feature. In my opinion, however, this is nothing specific, because these ears simply belong to the head of an animal; I would not treat them as a feature of the image of a deity. Therefore, when it comes to the main features of individual representations, Agrawala provides illustrations with descriptions of the above-mentioned sculpture E.1 from Kankali Tila (not preserved from the knees down). The figure is shown frontally, with a decorative turban on his head, with a cloth rosette in the front and a thick necklace (both elements characteristic of Kushana sculpture), and a shawl hanging on his left hand. In it he holds two children depicted on a much smaller scale. In fact, he grabs their hands, so that they hang down close to the thigh. In addition, the children's legs are still visible on each arm, while the rest of their bodies is not preserved. The representations can be considered the most developed, i.e. containing the most characteristic elements and depicting a god with all the ornaments belonging to characters with his status (the turban symbolises a high rank).

Among the preserved images, we find only one narrative relief, as I indicated above, so I will focus on it. There is no certainty regarding which of the Naigamesha story is illustrated here. There are many important and interesting details on this panel. A goat-headed deity (with a visible beard)

<sup>39)</sup> Agrawala (1950: 66–67) mentions one of the most frequently described objects No. E.1 at the Government Museum Mathura, height 39 cm. Analysed also by Vogel (1971: 107): "Nemeśa or Naigamesa who presides over child-birth", the same repeated by Agrawala (1950: 66); Shah (1952–53: 24, Fig. 3); Shah (1987: 322, Pl. IV, Fig. 7).

<sup>40)</sup> I will refer to the figurines in detail below. It should also be noted that, of course, the simplification does not apply to all objects without exception. For example, Jayaswal (1991) describes terracotta panels from Vaisali which show the Naigamesha couple and the couple with a child and a figurine from Ahichchhatra with children on both arms.

sits on a platform in the *lalitasana* pose. Above his head, shown in profile, there is an arch (architectural piece?), while the rest of the body is shown frontally. The head is turned to his right side, unfortunately the panel breaks off here, the rest is not preserved. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether he is simply making an *abhaya* gesture; presumably he is holding something or pointing at something/someone. The other hand he placed on his thigh. He wears a loincloth, wide necklace and bracelets. There are two baskets in front of the seat, probably with gifts – food for the deity. From the left, two women are approaching Naigamesha with their right hands raised, the first is holding a fly-whisk (*chauri*), the second is making a greeting (?) gesture, and the third – at the right end, facing the viewer, making the same gesture with her right hand, in the left one supports the baby lying on an oval tray. Unfortunately, the lower part of this fragment has not survived. In addition, a little boy is standing by Naigamesha's leg, touching the figure's calf with his right hand. The reverse shows an equally interesting scene – we see here a gathering of women who dance and play instruments. Eight figures and a trace of one more have been preserved. Three of them are seated, two of whom are visible from the back, and one in profile playing a stringed instrument. Two of the women are clearly shown dancing while two are standing with their right hands raised (as in the *abhaya* gesture); on the right you can also see a fragment of the third figure, without a head, holding a box in front with both hands. Undoubtedly, despite the damage, this presentation is of key importance to the problem discussed here. It is a pity that it has not been preserved in its entirety. First Bühler and then Smith proposed reading the panel as a relief showing the transfer of Mahavira's foetus: "The missing personage addressed by the goat-headed god must have been Indra. The scene of the composition should, therefore, be regarded as laid in Indra's heaven after the execution of the mission. The infant seems to hold in his left hand a cloth, and to be thus conventionally indicated as an ascetic. He must be identified with Mahāvīra."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to agree with this interpretation,<sup>42</sup> as the depiction of the deity sitting on a platform suggests that he is the central and main figure in the sanctuary. It appears from Jain story that Indra is the supreme deity over Naigamesha.<sup>43</sup> It is therefore hard

<sup>41</sup> Smith (1901: 25), Bühler (1894: 316–317).

<sup>42</sup> Quintanilla (2007: 229) is of the same opinion.

<sup>43</sup> Shah (1952–53: 22) describes the much later illustrations in the *Kalpasutra* that relate to this episode: "In painting Hariṇegameśi is represented with a goat's face but

to imagine that Naigamesha could remain seated in front of Indra. Of course, this fragment is not preserved, so I realise there may have been something upon it. Were I to speculate, I would rather say that on the other side – for the symmetry of the composition, as we often see in panels of this kind – there could have been the other part of the retinue of women or men. Furthermore, the boy standing by the deity's leg is much older than the newborn, let alone the embryo. In Mathuran representations we have other children and newborns to compare the scale, and even on the same panel, a woman holds an infant on a tray. It seems that none of the researchers who first described this relief, apart from Bühler, noticed this crucial element, nor looked for similar depictions. It is hard to imagine that in the illustration of this story, women (pregnant) would come to the sanctuary to have their foetuses changed.<sup>44)</sup> Rather, I imagine such a situation with a deity represented in a dynamic setting and appearing at the house of the brahmin Devananda for this purpose. In the relief scene, however, he definitely enthrones – as a main deity usually depicted in the sanctuary. Additionally, one child is a newborn whereas the other is already several years old. Why? Some scholars suggest that it might be considered *tirthankara*. Since the Mathuran sculpture clearly differentiates between newborns, young and older children, something is wrong here – the story refers to the embryo of Mahavira, yet there is no embryo depicted. However, it should be noted here that Kankali Tila is in fact the site where the remains of a Jain stupa have been unearthed. In my opinion, this scene most likely depicts the offering of gifts to the god after the birth of a child on the panel; I agree with Vogel<sup>45)</sup> and disagree with Quintanilla,<sup>46)</sup> who views Naigamesha as a *yaksha* and Jain *shasanadevata*.

One more carving, but with a different function and method of depicting the deity, is found on the architectural fragment at the State Museum Lucknow (No. B.207, dated 150–200 CE) and may provide a context for the above considerations. Naigamesha, though represented in a group, even here

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sometimes he has the face of a horse. (...) When standing before Śakra, he is represented with both the arms folded in adoration.”

<sup>44)</sup> Even Agrawala (1947: 69) citing the story of the transfer says that both women during this “operation” were plunged into a deep, magical sleep. In Mathuran reliefs illustrating stories that refer to the different activities of their heroes, we see active/dynamic characters, hence I conclude that these activities shall be actually illustrated.

<sup>45)</sup> Vogel (1930: 52).

<sup>46)</sup> Quintanilla (2007: 231).

is not only a companion, but is shown in the deities' triad, with the goddess in the middle, himself on the left, and on the right a Kubera-like character. Thus, if panel No. J.626/528 had a continuation, it could be supplemented with equivalent gods, i.e. also functioning primarily in the sphere of fecundity and prosperity. Heading for the sanctuary of Naigamesha and the deities of this group, one should seek blessing and protection, both in general, and especially<sup>47)</sup> during pregnancy, and ask for the successful development of the foetus and delivery just before childbirth, and offer gratitude for everything after the delivery. Naigamesha was also the addressee of requests for offspring, which is particularly well-illustrated by the above-mentioned *Rigveda Khilani*, and then the Krishna stories. Returning, however, to the figure of the little boy, it may be an element illustrating this principle – prayers and religious practices for the birth of a child, addressed to Naigamesha, are to bring (provide) a male heir.<sup>48)</sup>

The female *devatas* that can be discerned in the retinue – wings appearing behind one of their backs (hence the presumption that they may be supernatural beings) while another presents the child on a tray – may simply form a group of auxiliary Matrikas or Grahas. However, there is no certainty that a woman with a child can be clearly identified as a *devata*.<sup>49)</sup> The scene on the back looks like a celebration and perfectly complements the shot from the sanctuary. For this reason, it is a unique panel, and I am not a supporter of the hypothesis that there was a central figure in the style of Jaina *arhat*, *tirt-hankara* or Indra there, to whom Naigamesha also pays honour. It is extremely important that the scene shows a small child (a newborn) held by one of the women in front of her. Therefore, we have the opportunity to look how this element/motif is depicted. Babies may also be seen in other sculptures, lying on something like an oval basket, cradle, cushions, or a tray, supported by

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<sup>47)</sup> Also Gill (2000: 80) concludes that this is the scene, where women are “praying to the god for the wealth of their children.”

<sup>48)</sup> There may have been more representations of this kind, the relief described by Agrawala (1950: 132), No. I.14 at the Government Museum Mathura, height 30 cm, dated from the Kushana era: “a relief containing a group of worshippers turned to the proper left in the attitude of adoration (...). Between these two figures a third male (?) person is partly visible. In front are three figures of children; the one in front headless and the other two defaced. They are likewise turned to the left, with folded hands. The child in front is a girl, wearing a girdle round her lions.”

<sup>49)</sup> *Chauri*-bearer though undoubtedly treated as an assistant, mortal, or minor character.

the left hand (e.g. represented in object No. E.2 in the Government Museum Mathura, 35.5 cm high; or at many Matrikas' panels – both with human and animal heads). They are not part of the scene, but are shown as objects of worship in a sanctuary, votive figurines,<sup>50)</sup> some with the head of an animal, so for us the most important are those whose head resembles a goat. Shah and Agrawala refer to them as “goat-headed goddess”, “goat-faced female figure”, but they cannot be considered to be definitively identified. Researchers suggest that this is a female version of Naigamesha, so it is most often described as a “female counter-part of the Jaina god Naigameśa”.<sup>51)</sup> From later relics, Nagar describes panels from temples in Osian, Kumbharia, where a female figure with a goat's head appears with a child in a scene referring

<sup>50)</sup> The literature on the subject shows that more such examples have survived, but unfortunately descriptions are not always accompanied by illustrations. Nagar (2000: 100–101) mentions four sculptures of women with the head of a goat, with no other details indicated (place of storage, Nos., etc.). two of which are interesting: “goat-headed female figure holding lotuses in right hand and goblet in left.” (this is for sure Government Museum Mathura, No. 799); “image carved in the round showing a goat-headed goddess holding a child in left arm seated on her left knee. Her right hand is in *abhayamudrā* and there is a big halo round the head.” Four of them mentioned by Vogel (1971: 107), Agrawala (1950: 67) and Shah (1952–53: 25–26): E.2, E.3 – goat-headed goddesses; E.4 female holding an infant on a pillow; E.5 – seated female holding a cradle with an infant, she is flanked by two crouching figures, all deposited in the Government Museum Mathura. Shah and Agrawala, also describes the sculpture No. 1210, (Government Museum Mathura, 25 cm high), a woman with an animal head supports a child sitting on her left knee, raises her right hand in the *abhaya* gesture, a large halo, a prominent necklace. Agrawala (1950: 67–68) describes No. 799 (Government Museum Mathura h. 21 cm) “a goat-faced female figure holding lotuses in right hand and a goblet in left. Probably the female counter-part of the Jaina god Naigameśa. Kushāna period.” Object E.4 Joshi (1987: 163–164) identifies as Revati. There is no basis for this, as it is meant to be dreadful, and here she has a human head, Joshi himself admits there is no such reference in medical texts that Revati has a human head. I believe that the term terrifying = with the head of an animal. Bawa (2013: 190–192) reproduces all three (E.2, E.3, E.4), also mentions the object in the Government Museum Mathura (No. 1210) showing a round depiction of a goddess with a goat's head, holding a child sitting on her knee in her left hand, making an *abhaya* gesture with her right hand, a nimbus around her head. More: Bawa (2013: 112, 180, 186–187)

<sup>51)</sup> Agrawala (1950: 66). See also: Shah (1952–53). Agrawala (1967: 51) though describes also one more interesting object of this kind (No. 1092, Government Museum Mathura) “four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a mountain with a child on her left lap who is holding a cup near his mouth. Her attributes are a trident, cup, noose and below her right leg is carved a miniature animal, a bull or a buffalo as her vehicle.”

to Mahavira's birth/embryo relocation.<sup>52)</sup> In search of the key to identifying this type of characters in the literature, in fact, the studies refer to an analysis by Jayaswal and Sharma, who comment on the female forms with the head of a goat in terracotta as follows: "In the context of female forms, reference of Agni-Naigameya may give an important clue. Agni appears as goat but when he hunts for Indra, he for obvious reason, 'put on the garb of a female.' Moreover, in *Taittiriya Samhita* (V.1.6.2), she goat is female and is said to be Agni's dear form and Prajapati's bodily form of heat (*tapas*)."<sup>53)</sup>

The above-mentioned bust (No. E.2, Government Museum Mathura) is a beautiful example of a stone sculpture, showing a figure with an animal head, with a prominent, naked breast. The lady is supporting a basket or tray with a male baby in her left hand, her right hand partially damaged, but from the outline it can be assumed that she was making the *abhaya* gesture.<sup>54)</sup> Her squatting position connects her more with the Matrikas group. They too, as I described above, can take hybrid forms, and a lot of their depictions were created in the Mathura centre. So, the example discussed here (No. E.2) is presumably one of the Matrikas.<sup>55)</sup> The figure is partially damaged and so it cannot be clearly stated whether it was shown in the entire group, on an elongated panel (probably yes), or if it was to be an individual image from the very beginning. For comparison – Altekar and Mishra mention 28 examples

<sup>52)</sup> Nagar (1999: 83, 119, 132).

<sup>53)</sup> Jayaswal and Sharma (2012: 345).

<sup>54)</sup> Agrawala (1952–53: 25, Fig. 3); Agrawala (1967: 100); Vogel (1971: 107), however, does not identify it using any name and states that E.3 (height 30 cm) is also an evident replica of E.2 (it is worth mentioning that the elongated goat ears hanging down on both sides are much better preserved here). Joshi (1972: 55, 62, Fig. 55) actually shares the identification of the researchers already cited: "Her origin seems to be shrouded in the Jain mythology as the female counter-part of the goat-headed god Negameṣa." Moreover, by the way, it is worth recalling the mysterious figure of the goddess with the head of an animal from the British Museum (No. OA 1939.1–19.19), who also tries to be associated with Naigamesha. However, as Zwalf (1996: 123) rightly points out – they have nothing in common.

<sup>55)</sup> We can compare her head with, for example, the head of Matrika from a panel at the Government Museum Mathura, No. 48.44 (one of the third figures in a row) or No. 799 (an individual representation). Shah (1952–53: 37) believes that both the stone and clay figurines could be one of the Bala-grahas described in the medical literature, e.g. Shakuni (also called Shakuni-Karna) or Revati. Gill (2000: 82) believes that this is the Matrika female counterpart of Naigamesha. Bawa (2013: 158, 160) has a similar opinion, and distinguishes three types of Matrikas: Shashthi, Naigameshi and Jataharini.

of terracotta figures with animal heads. They are identified as “Naigameśa, male and female types.”<sup>56)</sup> The illustrations show that they were formed according to the same pattern; unfortunately, none of them is complete. The female type has long ears hanging on both sides of the head, rather broad shoulders, hips and massive thighs, conical breasts and a protruding part on the head (fan-shaped headgear?), in which a hole is visible in some examples. The silhouette is highly simplified and schematic<sup>57)</sup>. Their height ranges from 5 to 12 cm. Both the material, size and the hole for the string in the top of the head prove that they were worn as amulets and certainly used in the home space. Altekar and Mishra (1959: 110) note that the figurines dated for period III (i.e. 100 CE to 300 CE) have horns (2 copies), and for period IV (300–450 CE) do not (other examples). They also note that: “Sanskrit authorities refer to Naigameśa as a male person.” Admittedly Mann (2007: 465) mentions that *Cikitsitasthana* enumerates the female Grahas, and Naigameshi (1.21) is on the list of names, but this is the only reference of which I am aware. It should also be noted that the text is dated to 7th CE at the earliest.

In conclusion, therefore, there are not enough strong arguments in the literature to confirm the existence of a female deity – Naigamesha’s counterpart – nor is there any mention of Naigamesha appearing in a female form, at least originally. Figurines, as described above, are reported in the literature on the subject from numerous other sites (e.g. Altekar and Mishra, as well as Jayaswal, also mention many examples from Ahichchhatra, dated to the Gupta era; Jayaswal also refers to finds in Ramnagar, Khairadih, Ahichchhatra, Kumrahara, Rajghat and Vaisali<sup>58)</sup>). Researchers argue that it was (still) a popular cult after the Kushana period, not necessarily in the public arena. It is very possible that the female version was a worshippers’ initiative, or

<sup>56)</sup> Altekar and Mishra (1959: 109–111).

<sup>57)</sup> Jayaswal (1991: 40) notices in the case of other figurines from the other site (Khairadih) “the absence of drapery, ornaments, finer anatomical details such as eyes, brows, nose etc. It may be mentioned that the stylistic depiction of this group in the entire Ganga Plains has a striking uniformity.”

<sup>58)</sup> Jayaswal (1991: 36ff). Jayaswal actually gives the same type of character. Figures are about 4–7 cm high and 3,5–8 cm wide. For important remarks, keep this in mind: “(...) Naigameshi figures which were obtained from the early Kushana level at Khairadih are crude hand-models of atypical female forms, while the typical examples both of the males and the females are well represented only in the late levels at this site.” More also in: Jayaswal and Sharma (2012: 343–348).

that the characters represented in the figurines may not necessarily to be explained with the help of the texts. Bawa cites Agrawala's opinion explaining this phenomenon as Jain's followers' desire to create a more natural,<sup>59)</sup> i.e. female, image for a figure that protects newborns or mothers. She then goes on to refer to Pannikar's opinion, who similarly believes that Naigamesha's sex change was due to her relationship with the children. Bawa, however, sums it up this way: "both the male and female figures are to be found in the same period and within the same geographical area. It would thus be safe to assume that the different sexual identities of the deities did in fact signify different functions (...)." The researcher therefore recognises that Naigamesha expresses a more ambivalent character in his character, and Naigameshi rather shows a motherly character – presenting a child on a pillow. Perhaps the images were made for such occasions as pregnancy or birth ceremonies.

Bühler, referring to the findings of Cunningham, mentions female representations with a child on a tray, including those with a human head, as belonging to one group. They are invariably linked, as is the narrative panel, as well as all individual portraits of Naigamesha, together with the story of Mahavira's foetus transfer. Thus, he considers those female deities with an animal head to be a female form of Naigamesha, and those with a human head as the two heroines of the story: Devananda and Trishala.<sup>60)</sup> When treating the extant representations with due care, I find it more appropriate to take them more generally, and not merely as an illustration of Mahavira's story.<sup>61)</sup> Although the narrative panel was found in a Jain context, and the spirit-deity called Naigamesha or Nemeso is popular in this religious tradition, it is also primarily a deity responsible for bringing or carrying children (influencing foetuses) – any classes and beings, not necessarily those classified between *chakravartins*, *vasudevas* or *baladevas*. His position was exalted and he was considered an influential deity, especially by women. Bühler, of course, is right to interpret the placement of children on the deity's shoulders as an illustration of his power to carry or bring children (but perhaps also to take them away). For me, however, Naigamesha's inclusion in legends

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<sup>59)</sup> Bawa (2013: 187–188).

<sup>60)</sup> Bühler (1894: 318).

<sup>61)</sup> Shah (1952–53; 24) thinks the same: "(...) the frieze preserved for us does not directly refer to the Transfer of Embryo legend."

such as Mahavira's and Krishna's foetal replacement is BECAUSE he was connected with foetuses and babies' diseases, not the other way around – he was responsible for foetuses, child protection, etc., because he appeared in Mahavira's story. If, however, one might feel the need to combine a preserved sculpture with this event, then Ghose's opinion should be quoted (quoting Srivastava),<sup>62)</sup> analysing the relief architectural fragment (No. B.207), which I have already mentioned once previously. It is the coping of a gate, window or niche with a sequence of characters in a 3-strip composition. In the lowest row: "at least the three [figures] in the centre must be of superior status. The person on the right of the central female figure has a goat-head. Thus, he is Naigameśa of the Jaina pantheon. The presence of this god near the female divinity suggests that the scene depicts the birth of Mahāvīra and that the woman is his mother." Quintanilla does not share this opinion: "The goddess on the center (...) is being worshipped by two flanking divinities, one of whom is identifiable as the goat-headed Naigameṣin, as well as by six laywomen and five laymen. Her placement in the center of the tympanum, on the bottom register, in line with a seated Jina image and a stūpa in the upper registers, reveals the importance of particular goddesses, probably śāsanadevatās (female divinities who serve as messengers between devotees and Jinas), in the sphere of Jaina devotion at Mathura. The evidence provided by this intact tympanum, although it is of a later date, implies the existence of a preexisting tradition of the worship of Jaina goddesses in the pre-Kuṣāṇa period (...)."<sup>63)</sup>

Therefore, in the relief of Naigamesha in the sanctuary, the female characters can also be interpreted as messengers, where Grahas and Matrikas manifest together. However, there is no basis for specifying the child characters in Naigamesha's panel as a specific child (Mahavira or any other character). Information about the relationship of a ram or a goat with Agni and assigning such an animal to him as a *vahana* should be completely left aside. Instead, it should be seen as the next stage in the evolution of beliefs and the disappearance of the individual Naigamesha's cult later. I do not think that the Kushana era was a time when Naigamesha already appeared in a subordinate, supporting role as a vehicle. The material points to something completely different.

<sup>62)</sup> Ghose (2002: 192).

<sup>63)</sup> Quintanilla (2007: 183).

Among the individual images, usually free-standing, three dimensional or in deep relief (thus, it can be presumed to be intended for a sanctuary), Agrawala enumerates a large number of those collected by the Government Museum Mathura<sup>64)</sup> (No. 909, 1001<sup>65)</sup>, 1046, 1115, 2482, 2547). Agrawala also describes the first four objects, giving their height too (11 to 21 cm).<sup>66)</sup> Shah in addition to these discusses No. 2482,<sup>67)</sup> which is also reproduced by Bawa.<sup>68)</sup> It is interesting because an object resembling a purse appears in the deity's left hand. Deva and Trivedi mention a photograph of an object from the Allahabad Museum catalogue (No. AM462, origin – Mathura, 16.5 x 11.5 cm),<sup>69)</sup> which they describe as a goat-headed yaksha, a local deity incorporated into the Jain pantheon. A beautiful beard and turban as well as long ears are visible, with which children are playing, sitting on his shoulders (one on each). Two accompanying figures are depicted in a gesture of prostration at the feet of the deity. All the sculptures mentioned are dated to the Kushana period. Previously, I referred to their characteristics in general; however, I will start with the oldest representation chronologically (No. Q.2<sup>70)</sup>). Although in relief, forming part of a *shilapata*, it allows us to imagine where, in what context, the images of Naigamesha were placed. Therefore, it is as important an object as the panel at the State Museum Lucknow (No. J.626/528). The relief No. Q.2 shows the stupa with its entrance, where, on the left side of the stairs leading to the *torana*, there is a kind of chapel with a niche coped with an arcade. There is a male deity with a child in it, the traces of goat horns and ears are the basis for identifying his head. The right hand is raised to remove fear, and the left hand is placed on the child's head. First of all, however, attention should be paid to the figure's surroundings – it is shown in a niche portraying a shrine, which is separated from the rest of the space by *vedika*.<sup>71)</sup> On the other side there is a sanctuary with a Yakshi statue. Probably both mini-sanctuaries at the entrance to the Mahavira's stupa have the

<sup>64)</sup> Agrawala (1967: 51).

<sup>65)</sup> After the catalogue update it is No. 15.1001. See. Bawa (2013: 186).

<sup>66)</sup> Agrawala (1950: 68).

<sup>67)</sup> Shah (1952–53: 25).

<sup>68)</sup> Bawa (2013: 185).

<sup>69)</sup> Deva and Trivedi (1996: 51, Fig. 158).

<sup>70)</sup> In the footnote 12 this object has already been mentioned.

<sup>71)</sup> As Agrawala (1970: 115) explains: “An essential feature of a religious cult was to erect an enclosure [sic!] or railing known as *vedikā*. In very ancient times when there

same function – offerings can be placed there for the intention of fertility, prosperity and good fortune.<sup>72)</sup> Of further relevance is Naigamesha's placement in the Jain foundation, which naturally brings to mind his role in the story of foetus replacement. Quintanilla believes that the baby looks more like a newborn or foetus, cannot stand up and is hanging; thus, it is being carried. The researcher interprets this particular way of “dangling” children, which is also characteristic in case of the individual representation (E.1), as a symbol of the moment of foetal transfer. However, children in Naigamesha's environment can be divided into three groups – 1. in the upper section, on his shoulders; 2. dangling in the hands, held by their hands; 3. standing, kneeling, crouching at his feet. Looking at the children's gestures, it can be seen that they express different kinds of relationships between the deity and the little characters. First, those on the shoulders often touching his horns or ears look as if they are teasing him by pulling his ears, which is far from the image of a deity to be worshipped. Secondly, other characters sitting on their shoulders make a *namaskara* gesture. Similarly, such a gesture appears in the figures depicted at the legs. So, these may be considered as respectful poses. On the other hand, those standing, touching his legs, held by the hand, look as if they are asking him for protection, building a relationship with him as with a guardian. On panel 1115 (Fig. 4), a child's hand looks almost as if it is reaching out to hide in his father's hand.

Another interesting sculpture is No. 2547 (GMM, 38.5 cm), where we see the right hand in *abhaya*, and four children on the shoulders. Gill while discussing this depiction points out that children are not individualised but are simply a symbol of all children who pray to Naigamesha for protection.<sup>73)</sup> As Shah reasonably comments when describing this sculpture, “Naigamesa, represented here, is not necessarily Naigameṣa in his Jaina garb, transferring the Embryo of Mahāvīra and might have been a popular deity worshipped by masses of diverse sectarian leanings in the Kuṣāna period.”<sup>74)</sup>

Gill also includes a sketch of the image, which has only been preserved in a fragment.<sup>75)</sup> Naigamesha is standing assisted by a woman, a newborn

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was no temple of brick or stone built for a deity, his platform-shrine was surrounded by such a railing.”

<sup>72)</sup> Quintanilla (2007: 136, Pl. 168, 172).

<sup>73)</sup> Gill (2000: 79).

<sup>74)</sup> Shah (1952–53: 25).

<sup>75)</sup> Gill (2000: 79, Fig. 120).

(embryo) hanging from his left hand, with one more baby sitting cross-legged at his right leg making a greeting gesture. The most interesting element is the newborn – the depiction suggests that Naigamesha is carrying it. Apart from a few objects that stand out, however, it can basically be said that the pattern once invented for Naigamesha caught on and was replicated. So, the images are similar to each other in terms of approach, with obligatory elements like pose, ornaments, attributes and gestures, children on the shoulders of the deity and at his legs, and clasped in his hands.

Other representations of Naigamesha, apart from the stone sculpture, which are worth recalling for the sake of completeness and comparison, are certainly the terracotta figurines mentioned above. They were found at several sites in northern India. One of the most interesting and richest in this type of representation is the Jetavana Monastery. The archaeological works carried out there yielded the excavation of ninety figures. There is no doubt that there must have been a place in the monastery where medical, ritual (or both) care was offered to women during their pregnancy or just before delivery. Perhaps in the event of children and newborns being afflicted by disease, women could come here for help.<sup>76)</sup> Jayaswal and Sharma believe that Naigamesha was not venerated in regular annual ceremonies, but when necessary, judging by the places where the Naigamesha figurines were found at the Khairadif site.<sup>77)</sup> After use, the figurines were probably discarded; they did not serve long, which would explain their number and disposal.

Another extremely valuable and interesting example outside of the stone carving is the gold coin of Huvishka (ca. 140 CE) showing a standing male figure with a goat's head. He holds a spear mounted by a bird (probably a cock) in his left hand, while his right hand rests on the side to which the belt is strapped.<sup>78)</sup> Attributes like this evoke an immediate association with the deity Skanda and how he is visualised both in sculpture and on coins. In fact, in other objects, mainly from later ages, one can find arguments in favour of Naigamesha's assimilation with Skanda.

As the researchers cited above believe, especially regarding the terracotta objects, it is not possible to determine the exact époque of Naigamesha's popularity for the post-Kushan period, although in fact the most stone sculp-

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<sup>76)</sup> Rees and Yoneda (2013: 252–271).

<sup>77)</sup> Jayaswal and Sharma (2012: 347).

<sup>78)</sup> <http://www.heritageonline.in/some-rare-depictions-of-naigamesha/>

ture representations are from the first centuries of our era. However, later clay figurines could be taken as an argument in favour of Naigamesha's presence in beliefs centred around the protection of offspring. It is very likely that they were used as personal items to provide extra care for women during this special time of pregnancy and delivery. On a larger scale, on the other hand, in religious foundations, one might expect a shift of attention to other deities of reformed Brahmanism. Naigamesha could have slowly disappeared from the decorations of stupas, sanctuaries, and chapels, giving way to the aforementioned deities. This does not mean, however, that he has been completely forgotten. Even if his presence in the pantheon should be associated with the figure of Skanda and regarded simply as his emanation, then the figure of the deity with the head of a goat crops up from time to time in decorations. One example is an interesting object – the architrave stored at the State Museum Lucknow (No. H.83, dated 10th–13th CE, Katra, Mathura site) showing seven figures of the Matrika type, and Naigamesha.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It can be inferred that one of the deities analysed in this paper was definitely “delegated” to take responsibility for the correct state and development of the child in the womb. Besides, of course, Naigamesha can handle both granting and taking children away (as Graha), as well as causing disease. This is probably why he is represented in numerous objects, and in such a particular way, when he offers children a place on his arms or when he carries them in his hands. Referring to this type of image, Bühler interprets children hanging in the hands as follows: “The motionless infants, represented in connection with the males, are the two embryos, which Naigamesha had to exchange. If the artist represented the larger Naigamesha with two children on his shoulders and two in his hands, and the smaller one with two on his shoulders and one in his hand, he probably meant to indicate two different steps in the transaction, viz., that the deity first took the children out of their mother's bodies and ‘cleansed them of all impurity,’ as the *Kalpāsūtra* says, and later conveyed them to their new destination on his shoulders.”<sup>79)</sup> Certainly, among the preserved images, the narrative panel offers an almost complete visual context

<sup>79)</sup> Bühler (1894: 318).

of the manner of worshipping this spirit-deity and should be considered a key reference throughout the material. If we emphasise Naigamesha's influence in ensuring proper foetal life here, it can be assumed that performing appropriate rites and/or honouring a deity was considered a basic activity to provide mothers with peace of mind before delivery. So, first, as illustrated by the *Grihyasutras*, he could be invoked in recited mantras,<sup>80)</sup> but secondly – and this is crucial for interpreting the preserved Mathura images – he could be a spirit-deity worshiped in specially dedicated sanctuaries. The arguments for this would be both the size of some individual sculptures, and the way the deity is shown on the panel from Kankali Tila. Thanks to these objects, it is possible to reconstruct the use of the carved representations I mentioned in the previous section. In the event of discomfort, as described by *Sushruta Samhita*, looking for the cause of illness in possession by Graha Naigamesha was one of the possible procedures, and hence the proper worship of the deity, offerings, and mantra recitations. The popularity and importance of the deity are therefore unquestioned. It is also a fact that he has the oldest confirmed history in the sources. To sum up I refer to Chatterjee's conclusion: "in the later Vedic period Nejaṃeṣa was the principal son-granting god and, therefore, immensely popular. In the early Jaina works like the *Neminātha Carita* (7th Canto) and the *Kalpasūtra* the god Naigameṣa or Hariṇagameṣi appears both as a son-granting and an embryo-transferring deity".<sup>81)</sup> It is also worth mentioning that in the story of Mahavira's life, Naigamesha should not be treated as a Jain deity, as Agrawala also notes,<sup>82)</sup> describing him as belonging to no tradition.<sup>83)</sup> Shah also recalls that the Digambara sect does not recognise the story of the foetus transfer, and that *Kalpasutra* itself is, in

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<sup>80)</sup> For example, Chatterjee (1970: 104) offers information that *Rigvidhana* – a text devoted to Vedic rituals and dealing, inter alia, with explaining the use of *Rigveda* verses or hymns – recommends that women wishing for offspring use the mentioned verse from *Khilani*, as well as hymn 184 from 10<sup>th</sup> *Rigveda mandala*. Winternitz (1895: 151), on the other hand, explains that this hymn and *Khilani*, as recommended by *Rigvidhana* (4.23), should be used by a woman who has reached maturity and is unable to conceive a child. Knapp (2005: 26) points out that the "precise chanting of particular verses produces specific magical or quick results, such as overcoming one's enemies, getting rid of disease, protecting oneself from ghosts, and many other things. The *Rigvidhana* indicates which verses, and the procedure if necessary, to be used to accomplish their various effects."

<sup>81)</sup> Chatterjee's (1970: 104).

<sup>82)</sup> Agrawala (1947: 71–72).

<sup>83)</sup> Although Naigamesha, as stated earlier, appears in fact in the Hindu context, if

his opinion, unfavourable to the Brahmanical tradition.<sup>84)</sup> It is not surprising then that Mahavira, having descended into the womb of the Brahmana named Devananda, had to be transferred to the womb of a Kshatriya woman named Trishala. These and other premises, according to the researcher, lead to the conclusion that this story is a later addition, and *Kalpasutra* may be dated not earlier than the 5th century CE. Shah reports that after the end of the Kushana dynasty individual images of Naigamesha tended not to appear in shrines.<sup>85)</sup> If that were the case, this could be an argument in favour of my hypothesis that the Mathura group of sculptures analysed here is the last example of a complete visual record of the role of these protective deities and their forms of worship before they changed character, were assimilated, or even forgotten. When it comes to assimilation, both the quoted source excerpts and the described sculptures testify to the fact that the Naigamesha character evolved. Probably before the 5th–6th centuries he was merged with Skanda. Thus, in the religious mainstream, he could have lost his position as an independent deity.<sup>86)</sup> If there were no founders who wished to commemorate him by commissioning the erection of sanctuaries and statues dedicated separately to him, then he must have been forced into the background and his images were probably created for the domestic sphere, where the most popular material, due to the costs and workload, were terracotta and clay figurines.<sup>87)</sup> Apart from the aforementioned post-Kushana object reported by Deglukar, Nagar also presents a sculpture of Naigamesha, which was found near the Deorani temple in Tala (Bilaspur district), dated to the 6th century CE. The identification was made on the basis of a goat's head.<sup>88)</sup> Rangarajan

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consider *Grihyasutras* purely Hindu, it would be more appropriate, as with the other characters, to classify him as a non-sectarian, shared spirit-deity.

<sup>84)</sup> De Clercq (2009: 54) explains it as follows: “in Jain tradition, a ‘monarch,’ spiritual or material, must be born in the warrior caste, not in a family that ‘subsists on alms,’ clearly referring to Brahmins.”

<sup>85)</sup> Shah (1952–53: 20–22).

<sup>86)</sup> Gill (2000: 78) claims that “After the Gupta period, he does not appear as an independent deity, but always in association with Skanda.” In *Vishnudharmottarapurana* (3.71.3) in the description of Kumara deity Naigamesha is already not included: “I am telling you about the forms of Kumāra who has the four manifestations like Kumāra, Skanda, Viśākha and Guha.” After: Bhattacharyya (1991: 143).

<sup>87)</sup> Deva & Mishra (1961: 53, Fig. XII C, 7).

<sup>88)</sup> To be specific – Nagar (2000: 161–162) depicts the object: “The goat-headed deity is standing holding a raft in right hand and a *Kartri* in the left. He is pot bellied, which

reproduces a sculpture at the State Museum Lucknow, dated to the 7th century CE, where one can see a fragment of a child sitting on the deity's left shoulder.<sup>89)</sup>

Jayaswal and Sharma report that "goat-headed form of human figurines in clay can be seen spread throughout the Ganga Plains between circa first-second century A.D. and twelfth century A.D., perhaps even later."<sup>90)</sup> Moreover, they claim: "idol worship in the very ancient cult of Naigamesh/Naigameshi, was initiation during the Kushan times. As the popularity of this cult increased, subsequently – during the post Kushan times, there were elaboration and additions in the compositions of this deity."<sup>91)</sup> Kala considers Naigamesha as a widely circulated deity (Kumrahar – as early as 1st until the middle of the 5th century CE, Taxila, Charsada, Mathura, Hastinapur, Atranjikhera, Ahichchakra – levels assigned to 450–500 CE, Kanauj, Bhita, Rajghat, Patna, Vaisali, Chandrakhetur, Bangarh). Kala also mentions female representations with a goat's head and claims that they were feared and worshipped to avoid evil, functioning as presiding deities of child-birth. This evidence proves that Naigamesha could not have just disappeared or faded into the beliefs and stories about Skanda. Both spirit-deities belong to the Graha class. The same applies to the female figure with the head of a goat in the Matrika type. As a class, the Matrikas were in fact also ambivalent in nature. They could – when not properly propitiated – attack children instead of providing protection. Despite Bawa's explanation of the distinction between the male and female Naigamesha – "The male grants wishes for offspring, protection and care, while the female embodies nurture and care"<sup>92)</sup> – it shall be remembered that this case is not that simple. Many Matrikas' images, including those with animal heads, have this meaningful element – an infant presented on a tray/pillow. Therefore, it is difficult to clearly assign a character such as the one shown in object No. E.2 to the benevolent Matrikas group. It is true that her look seems mild in general, but the attribute is not exclusively hers or belonging to auspicious deities. The

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is hanging downwards. The legs are quite smaller in size as compared to the torso of the figure. The head is adorned with possibly a human figure, which could be a Jina. A best is worn at the waist and a necklace appears around the neck."

<sup>89)</sup> Rangarajan (2010: Fig. 2).

<sup>90)</sup> Jayaswal and Sharma (2012: 41).

<sup>91)</sup> Jayaswal and Sharma (2012: 348).

<sup>92)</sup> Bawa's (2013: 191).

female goat-headed deity is certainly related to the protection of offspring, accompanying women during pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium. She probably offers/presents the child to-be-born or is to be the addressee of prayers for a (male) offspring. It must not be forgotten that in the case of the Matrikas, the inclusion of animal heads is also intended to introduce an element of horror and arouse due respect in the worshippers. No. E.2 is definitely not the pure mother that can be seen in the sculpture at the Government Museum Mathura (No. F.16, approx. 30 cm, dated 3rd CE, Fig. 10). Bawa herself points out that in case of the goat-headed deities there is no eye contact between them and the children in the image.<sup>93)</sup> It was assumed that the eye contact was to be with the devotee, who should be aware of the dangers awaiting his child and do everything in his power to stop forces of evil personified as Grahas or Matrikas.

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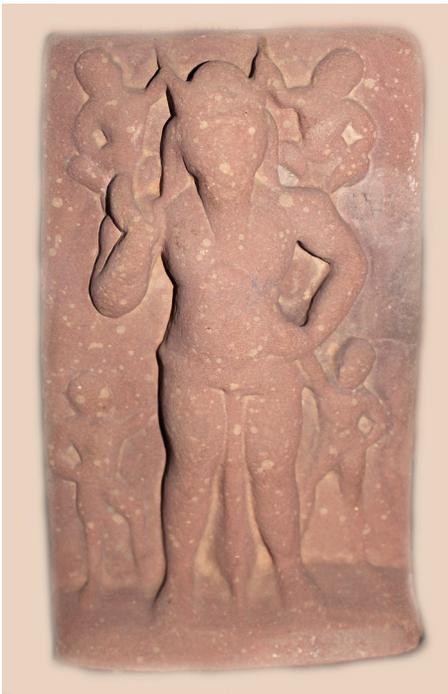
1. Varaha Cave, Udayagiri, 401 CE (in situ), photo: © A. Staszczyk.



2. Worshipping Naigamesha, 2nd–3rd CE, Mathura, State Museum Lucknow, No. J.626 / 528, photo: © A. Staszczyk.



3. Naigamesha with Children, 2nd–3rd CE, Mathura, Government Museum Mathura, No. E.1, photo: © A. Staszczyk.



4. Naigamesha, 2nd–3rd CE, Mathura, Government Museum Mathura, No. 1115, photo: © A. Staszczyk.



5. Naigamesha, 2nd-3rd CE, Mathura,  
Government Museum Mathura, No. 2547  
/ 34.2547, photo: © A. Staszczyk.



6. Hariti, 2nd CE, Skarah Dheri,  
Government Museum and Art Gallery,  
Chandigarh, No. 1625, photo: © A.  
Staszczyk.



7. Female Goat-headed Deity, 2nd-3rd CE, Mathura, Government Museum Mathura, No. E.2, photo: © A. Staszczuk.



8. Matrika Panel, 2nd-3rd CE, Mathura, Government Museum Mathura, No. 799, photo: © A. Staszczuk.



9. Skanda's Abhisheka, 4th-5th CE, Government Museum Mathura, No. 466, photo: © A. Staszczyk.



10. Motherhood or Abundance Deity, 2nd-3rd CE, Mathura, Government Museum Mathura, No. F.16, photo: © A. Staszczyk.