

Christophe  
**Hioco**

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# Christophe Hioco

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Christophe Hioco Gallery  
+33(0)1 53 30 09 65  
info@galeriehioco.com  
72 rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré - 75008 Paris

**Memberships: Syndicat National des Antiquaires, the Belgian Royal Chamber of Antiques and Art Dealers, the Asia Week New York Association, Inc.  
Director of the Asian Art Association in London.**

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Galerie Christophe Hioco is located in the heart of Paris in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, near the Parc Monceau. Our private gallery has almost 200 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibit space for our Asian art collections. Only by appointment.

The Gallery will participate to the following events:

- Asia Week New York, 10 - 19 March 2016;
- Le Parcours des Mondes - Paris, 6 - 11 September 2016;
- La Biennale des Antiquaires et de la Haute Joaillerie - Paris, 10 - 18 September 2016;
- Asian Art in London, 3 - 12 November 2016;
- Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts fair - BRAFA, 22 - 30 January 2017.



Above all else, Christophe Hioco has been a passionate collector since his youth. His unbridled enthusiasm for Asian art started more than twenty-five years ago when J.P. Morgan Bank gave him the opportunity to live in Asia, first in Tokyo and later in Singapore. There he became knowledgeable about Asia and India, confirming his expertise in ancient art by numerous trips throughout the region.

In 2003, after thirty years as Managing Director with J.P. Morgan, he decided to focus on his passion and work in antiques, first in London and then in Paris, while also continuing as a collector, always in search of works of extreme quality. Gildas Hioco, his son, joined the Galerie in 2013, after earning degrees from University College London and from HEC Paris.

The Galerie's criteria for selection are every bit as demanding as those of the world's leading museums, and pay particular attention to the originality, quality, provenance and authenticity of the works it acquires. Christophe Hioco never hesitates to seek the opinion of independent experts recognized in their field, or to systematically use the latest, most sophisticated scientific methods to confirm the authenticity and integrity of the pieces proposed.

This uncompromising approach and personal assurance, which stands behind every piece acquired, has enabled Galerie Christophe Hioco to build lasting relationships of unquestioned confidence with the leading collectors and museums around the globe, and to win the Galerie a place in the major Asian art events throughout the world.

All this demands a high degree of specialization, which is why the Galerie has honed its expertise in ancient statuary from India and the Indian-influenced regions.

The art of Vietnam also plays a major role in the collection, especially by extremely rare bronze pieces from the Đông Sơn culture and ancient ceramics.

# Buddhist Reliquary Stūpa

## Schist

Ancient region of Gandhāra

2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century

Height: 79 cm or 31 ¼ in

Three sides of the rectangular base are decorated with lotus flowers while the fourth has two niches, each with a depiction of Buddha Śākyamuni. Each deity is seated in the lotus position in dhyānasana meditation. Both are the image of the Gandhāra Buddha, characterized by profound serenity. Their clothing has obviously been influenced by classic Mediterranean sculpture. The same is true of their hair, represented by gracefully waving lines that end in a bun to symbolize Buddha's cranial bump. Above the pedestal circles a large checkerboard



section and above that several sections of floral or geometric designs. The domed top is finely sculpted with three rows of petals. The harmikā is crowned with several circular platters forming a parasol.

After the cremation of the historic Buddha, his relics and ashes were given to eight kings who came to pay their final respects. These kings then placed them inside stūpas in various regions of India. Under the reign of Aśoka, the great protector of Buddhism who ruled during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., the cult of the stūpas grew, with worshipers circling clockwise around them.

A stūpa evokes the architecture of the cosmos. With the exception of a small inaccessible cavity to hold relics or objects, there is no open space inside. It is undoubtedly the most popular monument in Asia. Its origin lies in the Indian subcontinent but followed the spread of Buddhism, reaching well into the Far East. Gandhāra stūpas were decorated with bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the lives of Buddha, with rich iconography and a style not typical of the region. This exceptional piece is large in size and finely sculpted with precision and naturalism. The perfect balance between the four geometric shapes contributes to the aesthetics of the piece. Its historic aspect is every bit as remarkable.

Provenance: *Private collection, France, acquired in the late 1970's.*

*Private collection, France, acquired from Christie's Paris, 8 June 2008, lot 420.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00090098.*

## Bibliography:

*For a closely related stupa now in the Indian Museum Calcutta, see Huntington, The Art of Ancient India, p. 133, fig. 8.8.*

*Lerner and Kossak, The Lotus Transcendant, p. 74, n° 637*

*Ikuro Hirayama, Gandharan Art from the Hirayama Collection, p. 206 - 210*

*David Jongeward, Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries, p. 76 - 79.*





# Gandharan relief

**Grey schist**

**Ancient region of Gandhāra**

**2<sup>nd</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> century**

**Height: 38 cm or 15 in**

A group surrounds and worships a bejeweled person with an aura and an elaborate bun, sitting on a throne between two lions. The water jug held in his right hand makes it possible to identify him as the bodhisattva Maitreya, reigning in the heaven of the gods (Tuṣita), awaiting the next cosmic period when he will become the historic Buddha (manuśi buddha in the Mahāyāna). His raised left hand was probably making the gesture of fearlessness (abhaya mudrā) like on the two reliefs in the British Museum (Zwalf, 1996. Inv. OA 1920.6-8.1 and OA 1904.10-7.1, vol. 2, p. 78, No. 125 and 126). Brahman gods surround him. Many are paying homage, their hands folded in añjali mudrā, other designating him for veneration. The one to the immediate left of the bodhisattva is making an approving sign to the god's discourse. In the upper register, other gods are grouped on balconies protected by canopies.

To varying degrees, Gandhāra art expanded over a vast area, covering the north of present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Islamic republics of Central Asia, Kashmir and up to the borders of Xinjiang and the Western Himalayas. It included numerous regional styles that are still not well known. In spite of great certainty as to its provenance, this relief is one of the most masterful. Different influences blend harmoniously. The balconies are characteristic of this fusion of motifs. Pillars with composite capitals of Western Greco-Roman tradition support roofs with Indian-style foliage, and openings half-way up to provide regular ventilation. This type of vernacular architecture is often found on Gandharian bas-reliefs. A few examples: in the Swāt Museum of Saidu Sharif (inv. GT-50. Cambon, 2010, p. 88, No. 18), in the Lahore Museum (inv ; G-104. Id., p. 116, No. 45, and also Bussagli, 1984, p. 241) and in the British Museum (inv. OA 1963.5-22.2. Zwalf, 1996, vol. 2, p. 69, No. 110).

Two of the three balustrades are found in the ancient art of India. The one with crosspieces is of Western pattern. As is the rest of the relief: turbans and rich jewels from the Subcontinent next to beautiful draped fabric, some with a graphic design similar to that of Parthian sculpture. The woven rattan seats of Indian origin, clearly visible at the ends of the central register, were quite popular all along the Silk Road and are found in Buddhist caves of the first millennium excavated in China.

Two young, naked servants carrying fly-swatters are perched atop the columns. They constitute the highly original note of this relief, and one which bears witness to the inventiveness of Gandharian artists. The idea of a hero and his heroic nudity, at the top of a column, is reminiscent of many examples from Antiquity. The same can be said of the position of their legs, accentuating the volume of their body and athletic muscles. The curly hair evokes the children, natives and dwarves found in the Nilotic scenes that arise so often in Roman art. They can be compared to other ignudi, sometimes wearing a prudish veil or a lightly draped cloth, some as attendants like those in the British Museum (Zwalf, op. cit., No. 126) and the Peshawar Museum (inv. P.M.-2714. Cambon, 2010, p. 118, No. 47), or in decorative panels that may be doors (British Museum, inv. OA 1937.7-15-1, Zwalf, op. cit., No. And t inv. OA 1962. 11-14.1, id., No. 216, also inv. OA 1902.10-2.20, id. No. 483) and even as mithuna, and therefore accompanied by a woman, such as one from a Hindu temple in Peshawar (British Museum, inv. OA 1959.3-23.1. Zwalf, op. cit., No. 354).





We should also mention a relief from the Taxila Museum (inv. W.T.G. 6. Cambon, 2010, p. 133, No. 61) which shows Maitreya presiding over a divine assembly, with some characters spread out on balconies. As in the piece discussed here, two columns, vertical to the lions placed at the feet of the throne, frame the bodhisattva. The tops of the columns are too eroded for us to see the motifs that crowned them.

The deepest parts of the relief have conserved the white engobe which provided the original preparation for a rich polychromy that has since disappeared. The multiple colors that probably existed must have changed the aspect of the work immensely.

Provenance: *Private collection, Japan, acquired in the 1990s.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00110272.*

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# Buddha head

## Schist

**Ancient region of Gandhāra**

**3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century**

**Height: 21 cm or 8 ⅜ in**



The Gandhāra Valley and its extensive surrounding territories are the cradle of an original art style largely inspired by Hellenic-Roman and Parthian art, adapted for Indian religions, almost exclusively Buddhism. In discussing its origins, we must go back to the adventures of Alexander the Great in Central Asia, up to the very gates of India (330-326 B.C.E.) and to the founding of Greek colonies such as Ai-Khanoum on the Oxus (Amu Darya), located on the modern border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The caravan trade helped spread Western influences, even if the genesis of the synthetic art of these regions retains some obscure aspects. It

developed over a vast area, from the Muslim republics of Central Asia up to the north of Pakistan. Many regional styles co-exist. Documentation from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. is rare and inconclusive. The apogee of this art, formerly called “Greco-Buddhist” art, an incorrect but image-evoking description, dates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century of our era. Beautiful works were created one after the other until Islam arrived at a point in time that varies depending on the region concerned.

This head shows two explicit signs of a Buddhist link: the small whorl of hair on the lower forehead (ūrṇā), most often represented by a small flat dot, and a cranial knob (uṣṇīṣa) at the top of the skull, hidden here by curly hair pulled back loosely like a chignon. This large, relatively flat uṣṇīṣa can be seen on a preaching Buddha in the Loo Gallery (Saunders, 1986, pl. XII).

The hair falls in curls rather than being held in a topknot, and can be compared to that of a head in the Kabul Museum (Darbois-Tissot, 2002, p. 91). The pierced ears, distended from wearing heavy earrings, indicate the former princehood of the Blessed One. The half-closed eyes reflect the intensity of his meditation.

The expression on his mouth, which could be misinterpreted as haughty, is also found on two heads in the British Museum (Inv. No. OA 1929. 11-4.2 and OA 1902. 5-20.3. Zwalf, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 32 and 33, fig. 39 and 40). The somewhat chubby aspect of the face may have been influenced by Gupta India (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c) and would tend to date this head from the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The work is particularly polished, which would indicate it is a purely Gandharian production. The black color of the stone and its perfect sheen are reminiscent of certain Roman statues of Late Antiquity. These characteristics can be found in a head from Sahri Bahlol, conserved at the Lahore Museum (inv. No. PM 2860. Cambon, 2010, p. 141, No. 68), in another recently presented on the British market (Ray, 2014, No. 1) and yet another in the Norton Simon Museum of Pasadena (Pal, 2003, p. 52, No. 20).

Provenance: *Private collection acquired from Hartman Rare Art, NY, 1984.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S0010696.*

## Bibliography:

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# Gupta Buddha Head

**Mottled red sandstone**

**India**

**Early Gupta, second half 4<sup>th</sup> century**

**Height: 15.8 cm or 6 ¾ in**

The Gupta period of central India (4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> centuries) is often considered the classical period of Indian art. Sculptors created images of an inward-looking Buddha, effectively combining an approachable human figure with the sublime. The effect was not lost on pilgrims who visited India, and soon the Gupta style influenced Buddhist art throughout the Asian world.



Early images of the Buddha portrayed the historical Buddha Śākyamuni with a set of uniform characteristics. His distended earlobes indicate his renunciation of the princely life. The uṣṇīṣā (cranial protuberance) and ūṇā (dot between eyebrows) are symbols of a mahāpuruṣa (great man). Poetic descriptions describe his eyes shaped like a lotus petal, while within a century of the first Buddha images, his hair, recently tonsured, is displayed in snail-shell curls.

The sweet humanity, so valued in Gupta sculpture, is readily apparent in this finely carved head, in the slightly petulant out-thrust lip, the full cheeks, and the distended lobes. But, the downcast eyes indicate a remove from the mundane, just as the slightly downturned corners of the lips imply concentration.

A seated Buddha from Bodhgaya, now in the Calcutta Museum, is dated by an inscription into the Year 64 of the reign of Trikāṃālā (which corresponds to 384 AD). This sculpture has a rather similar face to the head described here. Both images retain a certain degree of Kuṣāṇ influence, but the modeling of eyes, eyebrows, lips and hair curls point to an early Gupta date.

*Provenance: Dr Kurt Broechin, Aarburg, Switzerland, since late 1960s.*

*Private collection, Basel, Switzerland, since 1996.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00064428.*

**Bibliography:**

*Karl Khandalavala (ed.), The Golden Age, Gupta Art – Empire, Province and Influence (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1991), p. 18, fig. 4.*

*L'Age d'or de l'Inde Classique. L'Empire des Gupta, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 2007.*

*Amina Okada, Sculptures Indiennes du Musée Guimet, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000, p. 78 - 79.*







# Bust of Gandharva

## **Terra cotta**

**India, state of Uttar Pradesh**

**C. late 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century, Gupta period (around 320 - end of 6<sup>th</sup> century)**

**Height: 29 cm or 11 ½ in**

During the Gupta period, the lower walls of Hindu temples and Buddhist stūpas, whether made of stone or brick, were decorated with panels that told stories. Terra cotta panels are found in all the regions of the empire, but most particularly in Uttar Pradesh. In this state, two Hindu sanctuaries were studied in depth: one of the Vaiṣṇava sect - Bhitargaon (first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century) - the other ṣaiva - Ahichatra (late 5<sup>th</sup> - early 6<sup>th</sup> century). Their highly diverse iconography illustrates the major religious themes described in the Purāṇas and narrative episodes taken from the two great Indian epics: the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa.



Moldings depicting episodes from the life of Buddha Śākyamuni also decorated the lower walls of the stupas which are numerous throughout modern Bangladesh and the Pakistani Sindh. Sometimes, as in Ārāvastī (Uttar Pradesh), a number carved in one of the lower cornerstones helped determine their order when they were laid.

The panels - made by “clay sculptors” (puṣṭaka), a trade distinct from that of potters (khumbakara) and obviously from that of simple brick-makers (istakā vardhakin) - were inserted into the masonry wall. Here they are molded but they could also be sculpted. Most of these bas-reliefs were polychrome and therefore originally looked very different than they do today.

The winged god seen here is in too many pieces for us to be able to identify the religious affiliation of the temple to which it belongs. According to tradition, both the Hindu and the Buddhist heaven were populated by an infinite number of secondary deities (devatā). Some of them, the gandharvas, toss flowers and jewels at the main characters of particularly holy episodes, miracles or preaching scenes. The character here can be connected to this specific group. Its craftsmanship is characteristic of terra cotta works from the second half of the Gupta dynasty. The X-ray examination confirmed that the statue did not show any other restoration or breaks. The datation was also confirmed by the TL analysis.

*Provenance: Private collection, France.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00092541.*

*TL-Analysis (Oxford Authentication Ltd.) X-ray (Ciram).*

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*L'Age d'or de l'Inde Classique, L'Empire des Gupta, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 2007, p. 176 -179 and 226 - 227.*

*Amina Okada, Sculptures Indiennes du Musée Guimet, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000.*



# Head of Goddess

**Pink sandstone**  
**Northern India**  
**Circa 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 28 cm or 11 ⅛ in**

This imposing head is carved in pink sandstone, a very typical material of the state of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India. From one quarry to another the color can vary from a beige pink to a fairly strong red as is the case with this piece. The absence of any iconographic element precludes any dating, even approximate.



The head with its pouting smile displays heavy ear ornaments in the shape of opened flowers. This hairstyle is found on many female statues. The hair is pulled back into a bun which partially disappears into the background stele and is bordered by an openwork garland. The latter bears pendants which have been brought back to the top of the forehead ending with little attached floral elements.

It can be compared with a Sarasvatī previously in the Pan Asian collection (Pal, 1978, p.60-61, no 17) optimistically dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It can also be compared to a Yamunā in the national museum of Delhi (Inv. 68.53, In the Image of Man, 1982, p.114, no 72).

Provenance: *La Compagnie de la Chine et des Indes, Paris, France, since the 1970s.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097029.*

## **Bibliography:**

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*L'Age d'or de l'Inde Classique, L'Empire des Gupta, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 2007, p. 176 -179 and 226 - 227.*





# Ganeśa

**Bronze**

**Eastern India**

**Circa 10<sup>th</sup> century, Pāla dynasty (8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century)**

**Height: 8 cm or 3 ¼ in**

With his beloved elephant head and human body, Ganeśa, the son of Śiva and Umā Pārvatī is one of the most endearing Hindu deities. In a well-known legend, Pārvatī asks her son to guard the door from all intruders while she privately bathes. Faithfully obeying her request he refuses entry to Śiva himself. Angered, Śiva cuts off his head. As an act of repentance and to appease his wife, Śiva promises to replace the head with the first creature he sees. As fate has it, the first creature he encounters, is an elephant.



In India, Ganeśa is venerated as a popular guardian for doorways and gateways for he is known to be the great remover of all obstacles and the God of auspicious beginnings. He is also considered the god of wisdom and prudence. People praise his name when they begin a new journey and often writers would inscribe his name before putting their stories on paper.

As usual, Ganeśa is depicted with a slightly deformed body of a man with short legs and a highly protruding belly. Seated in lalitāsana with his pendant foot resting on a lezard, the god is holding a mālā, radish, and bowl of sweets in three of his hands with the fourth resting on the handle of an axe.

An adorant is sitting at his feet. The peaked top and base with multiple protrusions are typical of Pāla steles. It is not overly ornate, with a delicate, almost bare semi-circular molding to frame the god.

Provenance: *Private collection, Germany.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00092046.

Bibliography:

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# Śiva

**Sandstone**  
**India, Rājāsthān or Mādhyā Pradesh**  
**Circa 10<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 103.5 cm or 41 in**

The god is performing a dance step, a reference to one of the god's seven cosmic dances (tāṇḍava). Here he is depicted in his first dance (kālikā tāṇḍava), symbolizing creation. In this form, Śiva has eight arms, two legs and no third eye on his forehead. With his bottom right hand he is making the protective gesture (abhaya). The next two hands are holding the trident and the hourglass drum (ḍamaru). The top two brandish a serpent which, here, replaces the cord and the belt usually held in the right and left third hands. The bottom left hand falls in the gaja hasta pose, evoking an elephant's trunk. The second holds the scepter crowned with a skull (yamadanda). The third, almost not visible at the edge, might be holding the flaming cup.



The other dances represent respectively: the preservation of the beings who live in the shadows, the conservation of the beings who live in spiritual bliss, death, the purification of the incarnate beings, the release of the souls, and finally the last summarizes the god's five activities. For each of these forms the number of arms, the nature of the attributes and the movement of the legs vary. But in all, the god is holding the ḍamaru.

The sides of the niche give the illusion of a wooden construction. It is easy to spot the earthen jars with columns on the sides to protect them from humidity and wood-eating insects. Two attendants surround the god, one holding a lotus blossom and the other a fly-swatter.

The niche, undoubtedly removed from the outer wall of a temple, is crowned by a sort of tympanum made up of Indian arcs laid out in a fishnet pattern. This purely decorative motif was the final evolution in the monumental openings made in the facades of the great halls built in the Mahārāstra cliffs of northeast Deccan as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. and copied directly from actual wooden structures. After a lengthy evolution, this theme, having become a simple motif, was combined to decorate the facades of śikhara temples, crowned with curving towers characteristic of the Nagara style found widely in northern India as of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This type of ornamentation was very popular in Rājasthān and Mādhyā Pradesh, parts of the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire from the mid-7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Provenance: *Private Collection, Belgium, acquired 22 January 1969.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. 500106969.

Bibliography:

*Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du Musée Guimet, p. 189 – 191.*

*Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 288 - 289.*





# Śiva Bhikṣāṭana

**Red sandstone**  
**India, Rājasthan or Madhya Pradesh**  
**10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 38 cm or 15 in**

The present work depicts Śiva in the form of the beggar Bhikṣāṭana. Very finely carved holding a ḍamaru behind his head, adorned with various necklaces, the bearded face tilted upwards with cleft chin, bow-shaped mouth and almond-shaped eyes framed by gently arching brows, the hair in thick locks and arranged on his head in a bun.



The Kūrma Purāṇa, one of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇa, narrates that during a particular council of ṛṣi (sages), the god Brahmā arrogantly declared that he was the Supreme Creator of the Universe. Śiva appeared at the assembly as an infinite pillar of light and challenged Brahmā's statement. After deliberation, the council accepted Śiva as the true Creator, but Brahmā remained obstinate. Angered by Brahmā's vanity, Śiva, as the terrifying Bhairava, cut off one head of the five-headed Brahmā with a mere flick of his fingernail (Brahmāshirascheda-murti). As a consequence, Brahmā died, but the spiritual credit he had accumulated over a lifetime of devout asceticism pulled him immediately back from death. Upon his resurrection, Brahmā accepted Śiva's superiority.

To expiate the sin of killing Brahmā (Brāmahatya), Śiva had to perform the vow of a Kāpāli: wandering the world as a naked beggar with the skull of the slain as his begging bowl. The women of the houses who came to grant him food became enamored by his appearance and followed him, singing and dancing. Wandering, Bhikṣāṭana reached the Deodar Forest where he shocked the sages with his "lewdness and nudity" and tempted their wives. Śiva Bhikṣāṭana made them realize his greatness after their confrontation. The Kūrma Purāṇa goes on to state that after the encounter with the sages, Bhikṣāṭana continued to wander, visiting various countries of gods and demons before he finally reached the abode of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu's gatekeeper Viśvakṣena did not allow him to enter. Angered, Bhikṣāṭana slew Viśvakṣena and impaled the corpse on his trident. This form of Śiva with a corpse on his trident is called Kankala-murti. Bhikṣāṭana, entered Viṣṇu's abode and begged for food. Viṣṇu offered his own blood as food, then directed Bhikṣāṭana to visit the sacred city of Varanasi, where his sin would be expiated.

While the iconography of Bhikṣāṭana changes considerably with location and date, he is almost always depicted nude. In one sense, his lack of clothing evokes the humility of his mendicant status; conversely, it is also his most erotic form. Women who looked upon Bhikṣāṭana were said to have been irrevocably smitten with the Lord.

Provenance: *Collection of Alice Boney, New York and Tokyo. Distinguished Private Collection, acquired from Sotheby's New York, 2 June 1992.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00090111.*

**Bibliography:**

*Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du Musée Guimet, p. 189 – 191.*

*Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 288 - 289.*





# Viṣṇu

**Basalt**  
**Northern India, Rājasthan**  
**Circa 11<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 45 cm or 17 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in**

This architectural fragment from an edifice contains a depiction of the Hindu god Viṣṇu in high relief. The deity is seated in the relaxation position (*ardhaparyāṅka*), but reversed, with his right leg folded beneath him and his left leg hanging. The god, wearing a royal tiara (*kirīta*), has four arms. The first right hand is broken off but was probably making the gesture of pacification (*patakamudrā*). The second right hand, raised, brandishes the wheel (*cakra*) and the second left hand holds the mace (*gadā*), two of the god's main attributes. The first left hand, turned downward and partially broken off holds the conch. In spite of anomalies in the order of the attributes, we can see that this representation is a variant of Vāsudeva, one of the most important aspects of Viṣṇu.



The character is sitting in an elegant pavilion whose roof, with superposed levels (*prasada*), is held up by ringed columns. The lower part of this roof has a frieze of fine diamond shaped elements that could be interpreted as stylized flowers. Above is a tympanum made up of a succession of small "Indian arches", laid out like a fishnet, as was often done in medieval times. A large ribbed fruit (*āmalaka*) crowns the building, like many rounded towers (*śikhara*) of Hindu sanctuaries.

Two female attendants, half hidden behind the columns stand on either side of the god. They have no attributes and their purely decorative presence makes it impossible to identify them as the god's wives. They are mere *Devātas*, which are numerous on the outside walls of medieval temples. Of more interest, on the right, is the fragment of a protomé of the mythical makara, half-crocodile, half-elephant. The symbol of the sky, this chimera is the guarantee of abundant rain. It is traditionally found in the upper sections of numerous sculptures. This detail might mean that this fragment is part of a larger ensemble, perhaps the right side of the top of an abutment, with the volute on the left being part of the decorative motifs over the door of a sanctuary.

Provenance: *Collection Pons, Barcelona, Spain.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106976.*

#### Bibliography:

*Huntington, Susan L.- Huntington John C. : The Art of Ancient India, New York - Tokyo, Weatherhill, 1985, P. 499, fig. 20.62.*

*Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du Musée Guimet, p. 189 – 191.*

*Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 288 - 289.*





# Bhairava

**Sandstone**

**India, Rājasthan or Uttar Pradesh**

**Circa 12<sup>th</sup> century**

**Height: 81 cm or 32 in**

Bhairava is the wrathful form of Śiva and means terrible. Śiva is indeed the lord of death and dread. This Bhairava stands in an elegant tribhaṅga dear to Indian sculptures, wearing a long dhoti secured with a beaded festooned belt.



Śiva is naked, except for numerous ornaments: heavy circular earrings, necklace made of superposed strings of pearls, armband (keyura), armlets (hupuras), a bejewelled belt (makhala), also made of numerous strings of pearls, hanging down from which are other strings of pearls. The sacred cord falls across his chest.

Amongst the four arms of Bhairava, three ones are broken. Based on other representations of Bhairava, the remaining one is likely holding the skull cap (kapāla) and a severed head. It is said to represent one of Brahma's head, which Śiva cut off.

His bearded face shows almond-shaped eyes and his hair is pulled into a high chignon secured by a bejewelled tiara, backed by a flaming halo. His impassive features reinforce Bhairava's fierce nature.

Śiva's mount is the bull called Nandi and sometimes Bhairava's mount is the dog. In this sculpture, there is the bull flanked by apparently two dogs, one licking the blood dripping from Brahmā's head. On either side of Bhairava there are multiple deities, flanked by mythical beasts and with flying celestial beings above. On either side of the base are presented two devotees with hands folded in adoration, next to Nandi and the dogs.

*Provenance: Private collection, England, in the 1980s.*

*Private collection, France, acquired from Christie's New York, 21 September 2007, lot 82.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00090106.*

**Bibliography:**

*Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du Musée Guimet, p. 189 – 191.*

*Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, p. 288 - 289.*





# Viṣṇu

**Bronze**  
**Southern India**  
**16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century, Vijayanagar Era**  
**Height: 66 cm or 26 in**

Here Viṣṇu is seen in a form which is widespread throughout southern India. Standing perfectly straight, he has four arms. With the first right hand, he is making the gesture of pacification (patakamudrā); the second holds the wheel (cakra), a particularly formidable throwing weapon. On the left, the first hand is stretched out to the side and the second is holding the conch (śaṅkha) which is called Pāñcajanya. A royal tiara (kirīta) is on his head. Visible also is the Brahmanic cord and numerous jewels.



Southern India is famous for its bronze statuettes. These ex-votos, left in temples, were carried in processions during religious celebrations. The two large tenons on either side of the base were used to anchor it to a platform.

Such statuettes were part of triads, the god being accompanied by representations of his two main wives, Śrīdevī (Lakṣmī) on his right and Bhūmidevī on his left. These triads were particularly numerous at the end of the Chola Period (843-1173) and up to the Vijayanagara Era (1379-1565). We can mention a beautiful triad from the 11<sup>th</sup> century conserved in the Government Museum of Chennai (Régner, 1996, p. 95) and another from the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the LACMA of Los Angeles (Pal, 1988, p. 286, n°153. Inv. M. 70.5.1-3). We should also mention a 15<sup>th</sup> century bronze of Viṣṇu in the V&A (In the image of Man p. 198, n° 356). Inv. IM 127-1927).

Provenance: *Private collection, France.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. 500106973.

#### Bibliography:

*In the Image of Man. Londres : Art Council of Great Britain, 1982.*

*Pal, Pratapaditya, Indian Sculpture, Vol.2. Los Angeles : Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1988.*

*Régner, Rita, Des Dieux, le geste suspendu ... L'Art du bronze dans l'Inde dravidienne. Paris : Editions Findakly, 1996.*

*Lalit Kala Akademi, South Indian Bronzes, New Delhi, R. L. Bartholomew, 1981.*





# Tibetan paintings

Galerie Christophe Hioco is happy to present four of the best possible Tibetan thangka paintings. They belong to the sMan-bris style, an aesthetic widespread over the entire period when Tibetan Buddhism was expanding during the previous centuries, and whose formal modulations are imperfectly understood, and depended on the era, the sectarian orientation, the place of execution and the wishes of the sponsors.

The last few decades have witnessed the discovery, by art historians and collectors, of the most ancient styles of Tibetan painting. Many masterpieces have found a place in museums, and far fewer works of good quality are now available on the market, where they bring justifiably high prices. It is time to rehabilitate the more recent styles. Among them, sMan-bris plays a dominant role.

## **Ancient sMan-bris**

According to tradition, sMan-bris was created in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by sMan-bla don-grub rgya-mtsho, an artist from sMan-thang in the southern part of lHo-brag province, not far from the Bhutan border. Leaving his wife behind, he took to the roads, visiting southern Tibet (gTsang province), spending some time in Sa-skya, searching for a master capable of teaching him the art of painting. He took lessons from a certain rKo-pa bkra-shis rgyal-po, under whose guidance he became an accomplished artist. This wonderful biography relates that he visualized a great tapestry (kesi) that he executed in China in a previous life. Based on this memory, he introduced Chinese motifs into his painting. Those works bore the name lDan-lugs, even though it is presently impossible to link a given thangka to this style. However, this point indicates that the painter had several successive styles. The sMan-bris originated in the lDan-lugs. Sman-bla don-grub rgya-mtsho also wrote a specialized treatise, the bDe-bar gshgs-pa'i sku-gzugs-kyi tshad-kyi rab-tu byed-pa yid-bzhin nor-bu, Jewel that grants wishes, perfect exposé of the corporeal proportions of the tathāgata. He trained his son and several disciples who continued his style.

In spite of the artist's southern origin, it seems wise to look for the origin of sMan-bris in eastern Tibet, a region where this style is especially widespread. A few works, probably executed in eastern Tibet, arriving in the West and dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, seem to foretell the sMan-bris style. These thangkas have certain particularities found in the sMan-bris. The general tone is dark. The landscape juxtaposes blue and green according to a process that can be traced back to China in the Tang era (618-915 C.E.) and made popular again by artists in the Yuan era (1279-1368) looking to the past. Many elements, especially the rocks, are gilded. A decor of dense bush covers the entire composition, leaving no space for the sky.

Influenced by Chinese Buddhist art, Tibetan painting abandoned the constricting system of composition in registers. This mutation seems sudden but the extreme rareness of dated works makes dating it a guessing game. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is consummated. Ever more complex compositions leave little or no room for the sky. Toned-down colors dominate: brown, dark beige, dark blue and dark green. Many elements - such as clouds, architecture and plants - are reminiscent of Chinese prototypes. Numerous details are gilded. Landscape elements separate the scenes of a story apparently without any chronological order but often according to sites where several episodes of a same narrative take place.

As of this era, sMan-bris doesn't appear to be a unified style but rather follows several different trends.

### **The new sMan-bris style**

A painter from gTsang, Chos-dbyings rgyal-mtsho, active from 1640 to 1660 approximately, first used the sMan-bris style, then created a style of his own, the “new sMan-bris” (Sman-bris gsar-ma). Using this innovative fashion, he painted the walls of the mausoleum of the first Panchen Lama, Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan (1570-1662). The artist was protected by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

In general, the new sMan-bris style corresponds to the pictorial production of central and southern Tibet during the times of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. It should be noted that the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama had eclectic tastes, which led him to sponsor works in the major styles of his era, mainly sMan-bris and mkHyen-bris. As is logical, the dGe-lugs-pa iconographies prevail in paintings belonging to the new sMan-bris style. The decor of the buildings of Lhasa and its region, sponsored by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and by his entourage, don't provide art historians with as many stylistic markers as they would like. These wall paintings were totally renovated under the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama between the two wars or during the last few decades after the damage wreaked during the Cultural Revolution.

Thangka in the sMan-bris style, most often painted against a dark background (blue or green, and rarely brown), are drawn extremely meticulously. Their technique is reminiscent of the art of miniatures. Certain contours, the design of the buildings, the clouds, the light emanating from certain characters are gilded. Perfectly assimilated Chinese motifs (clouds, roofs, ornamental flowers) complete the composition. The shapes are often “shadowed” by subtle shadings of color, a process inherited directly from Chinese washes and the ancient Indian tradition of “concentric rings”. Their original mounting, when conserved, is made of sumptuous silks imported from China.

It is in this style that several major series of xylographic thangka were executed, most of them in sNar-thang in southern Tibet. They are part of the propaganda that was apologetic, but also political in favor of the dGe-lugs-pa during the three secular regimes that came one after the other in Lhasa as of 1705, before the restoration of lamaic theocracy in 1750.

After 1750, totally bastardized sMan-bris, mixed with various influences, morphed into a sort of pan-lamaic style that was widespread over a large area of Upper Asia.

The three paintings presented here illustrate the delicate passage from the old sMan-bris style to the new, even though great chronological care is advised. Two of them have no relationship to the monastic order of the dGe-lugs-pa, which would tend to date it prior to the uncontested victory of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama over rival armies in 1642. It is tempting to date as oldest the complex and rare representation of the Bearded mystic (Thang-stong rgyal-po) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the very beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. Śākyamuni and the medical buddha can reasonably be dated from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Sa ak ari form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is a direct allusion to the temporal power of the Dalai Lamas and fits perfectly into the policy of exaltation of the Great 5<sup>th</sup> and of the theocratic power exerted on a monumental scale by the regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho between 1679 and 1705.



# Buddha Śākyamuni and the medicine Buddha

**Tempera on canvas**

**Tibet**

**Late 16<sup>th</sup> - first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century**

**Dimension: 90 x 62 cm or 35 ½ x 24 ½ in**

In the center of the composition reigns Śākyamuni, the historic Buddha, his right hand making the earth witness gesture (bhūmisparśa mudrā). Below him is Bhaṣajyaguru and around him the other medicine Buddha.

The main Sanskrit text concerning Bhaṣajyaguru, the Bhaṣajyaguruvai ūryaprabhā sūtra, relates how this buddha was born from a wish by Śākyamuni, who wanted to care for the suffering of the creatures of the world. Bhaṣajyaguruvai reigns over a paradise to the east called Vaidūryanirbhāsa. Modeled after the Pure Land of Amitābha which tradition says is in the west, this paradise is its geographic opposite. Many parallels with the Amitābha cycle seem to indicate that this cult arose at a later date.

The most ancient translation in Chinese of a sutra concerning Bhaṣajyaguru dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It is not known when the cult was introduced in Tibet. The Bhaṣajyaguruvaivaidūryaprabhā sūtra, which allows worshippers to enter his paradise, is recited in the land of snow. Prayers to Bhaṣajyaguruvai ask for better health.

With his right hand, Bhaṣajyaguruvai makes the gift-giving gesture while holding the myrobolan fruit, which is considered to be a panacea. The god's complexion is blue, the color of the vaidūrya gem, identified as being either beryl or lapis lazuli. He is leading a group of several other therapist buddhas. These characters surround Śākyamuni. Their number varies depending on the tradition involved: either eight in all, as here, or eight not counting Bhaṣajyaguru. Their personalities also vary. The list found in the Ngor mandalas (first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), as related by Theresia Hofer (2014, p. 272), is different from that of the woodcuts of the Three Hundred Icons (sKu-brnyam sum-brgya) reproduced by Lokesh Chandra (1991, pp. 730-732, No. 136-144). Originally the Three Hundred Icons were made in Beijing for the dGe-lugs-pa church in China, Mongolia and Tibet, for scholastic purposes and as part of justificatory politics designed to pacify Mongolia. Decreed by the Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795), it was put into practice by the Great Lama of Beijing Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1778), who wrote the preface for the first edition. These representations were widespread and became the standard in most of the lamaic world, eclipsing other traditions.

Comparing the list supplied by T. Hofer, that by L. Chandra and the buddhas shown on this painting, it can be seen that the buddhas don't follow strictly the order of the cardinal points and the intermediary points of the Ngor mandalas; their colors are less subtle than those mentioned by T. Hofer. Our sources say nothing about the complexion of some or their traditional position in space. The hypotheses presented here are the most plausible ones, but remain open to comment or correction.





Starting from Bhaṣajyaguruvai and moving around Buddha Śākyamuni in the auspicious direction (pradaksinam), holding the object of veneration in the right hand, we find the following Buddhas. At the throne, Svaraghosarāja (sGro-dbyangs rgyal-po) making the gift-giving gesture. At the head stands Survanabhadravimalaratnaprabhāsa (gSer-bzong dri-med rin-chen-srang) with reddish-yellow skin, making the teaching gesture with both hands and located to the west. Higher up, we recognize the golden Suparikīrtita Nāmaśrī (mTshan-legs yongs-sgrags-dpal), making the renunciation gesture (hand out, palm turned upward), corresponding to the south. At the top of the composition reigns Abhijnārāja (mNgon-mkyen rgyal-po), red like coral, making the gift-giving gesture, corresponding to the northeast. Lower down, on the right of the composition, we find, in succession, Ratnaśikhiṇi (Rin-chen gtsug-tor-cam) - undoubtedly the Ratnacandrarāja mentioned by T. Hofer - with yellow skin, making the gift-giving gesture - here of renunciation - and which may correspond to the southwest. Below that, Aśokottamaśrī (Myang-ngan-med mchog-dpal), with a pale red complexion and related to the northwest, is meditating. Finally, below that, with pink skin according to texts, Dharmakīrti Sāgaraghosa (Chos-sgrags rgya-mtsho'i dbyangs) makes the teaching gesture with both hands and corresponding to the north. Variants are noticeable both compared to the list of Ngor mandalas and to the woodcuts of the Three hundred icons, and following another ritual and textual tradition.

There are several deities in the lower section of the painting. On either side of Bhaṣajyaguruvai, we recognize the two Tārā goddesses, white and green. In the lower left corner is bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, in the middle bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in his Sadakari manifestation, and finally in the lower right corner a god with an angry look and blue skin brandishing a sword and holding a skullcup (kapāla), which is probably meant to be Mahākāla.

The painting, with its artful subtlety, is characteristic of the sMan-bris style.

Provenance: *Private collection, Belgium, since 1987.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106959.*

#### Bibliography:

*Chandra, Lokesh, Buddhist Iconography, A compact Edition. New Delhi : International Academy of Indian Culture- Aditya Pradaksinam, 1991*

*Hofer, Theresia, (Ed.), Bodies in Balance. The Art of Tibetan Medecine. New York : Rubin Museum of Art, 2014.*







# Thang-stong rgyal-po

**Tempera on canvas**

**Central Tibet**

**Circa 17<sup>th</sup> century**

**Dimension: 83 x 64 cm or 32 ¾ x 25 ¼ in**

On this thang-ka, the main character, of heroic size as is the custom, is the focus of attention.

In Tibetan art up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, portraits of holy men are conventional images. Then things changed. The faithful depiction of pontiffs was part of their “bodily relics” whose veneration brought merit on disciples. Thus the traits of this person could indicate he is Thang-stong rgyal-po (1385-1464), with his characteristic beard ending in long tufts of hair. This great mystic was a member of the ‘Brug-pa order, a branch of the Bka’-brgyud-pa monastic school. A metallurgist, he was famous for building several iron-chain suspension bridges, a huge achievement at that time. He is also credited with building the Dhungtse Lhakhang stūpa near Paro in Bhutan. He also invented Tibetan opera.

This convenient identification remains subject to discussion however. In the most common iconography, Thang-stong rgyal-po is seated with his hands in his lap, holding a vase of abundance. In other depictions, he makes various gestures but is identifiable by the iron chain in his right hand. On a wall painting described by David Jackson (2015, p. 135), the two traditions are combined; his right hand, held out toward the ground, holds the chain and the left, in his lap, holds the vase. Both hands downward, like those of an ascetic at rest, is a rare gesture in Tibetan iconography but instances of it can be found. Within the Pantheon of Aṣṭasāhasrikā alone, we can find seven monks in this posture (Chandra, 1991, Nos. 1514, 1722, 1729, 1958, 1964, 1977, 2021, 2099 & 2110) but no ascetic.

In the top part of the painting is the sorcerer Padmasambhava (8<sup>th</sup> century), which implies that the other characters represented are spiritual descendants of that master, and concerns the study of a text or the practice of a ritual. One of the 25 disciples of Padmasambhava, Sangye Yeshe, wearing the black hat of the ferocious dancers, is located at the left of the main character (Chandra, 1991, N° 1660). Opposite him may be Marpa (1012-1096) and below is his disciple, the mystic poet Milarepa (1040-1123). Two major figures in Bka’-brgyud-pa tradition. It is difficult to identify the other monks whose hats belong to the Bk’a-gdams-pa, Sa-skyapa and Bka’-brgyud-pa orders.

The work is part of the “new sMan-bris style” (sMan-bris gsar-ma) created by the painter Chos-dbyings rgya-mtsho, active circa 1620 to 1660, a style especially appreciated by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (1617-1682). This painting bears all its characteristics: dark green and brown background, extremely meticulous drawing reminiscent of the art of miniatures. Moreover, certain details are gilded. Motifs such as the clouds and rocks are part of Chinese tradition. Rare in its highly unusual iconography, remarkable in its refined pictorial treatment, this painting, in spite of its sectarian divergences, falls within the realm of great Tibetan art as found in the grandiose projects of the Great 5<sup>th</sup> and perpetuated by Regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, who reigned from 1679 to 1705.

Provenance: *Collection J. Stewart, Europe.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106952.*

**Bibliography:**

*Candra, Lokesh, Buddhist iconography. Compact Edition. New Delhi : International Academy of Indian Culture – Aditya Prakashan, 1991.*

*Jackson, David P., Painting Traditions of the Drigung Kagyu School. New York : Rubin Museum of Art, 2015.*







# Avalokiteśvara in his Saḍakṣari manifestation

**Tempera on canvas**  
**Tibet, dBus Province**  
**Circa second half of 17<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Dimension: 60 x 40 cm or 23 ¾ x 15 ¾ in**

This Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva has four arms in his “Six-Syllable” Saḍakṣari manifestation, a depiction of the six syllables of his specific sacred formula (mantra): “Om mani padme hūṃ” (Glory to the gem in the lotus flower). The repeated recitation of this mystic phrase is a way for disciples to achieve salvation. The pietist cult centered on this mantra expanded more and more over time. In his Saakari manifestation, Avalokiteśvara is considered to be the protector of Tibet.

Seated in the diamond position, the bodhisattva has four arms. The two main hands are joined in front of the chest in the divine offering gesture (aṅjali mudrā). The rear hands hold the rosary and the lotus flower (padma), his main attribute.

The god reigns from his Potalaka palace on a mythical island off the south coast of India. Chinese Buddhists situate this divine residence on Putuoshan Island in the Shanghai region. Surrounded by walls, the residence also acts as a “pure land”, a paradise where the bodhisattva’s worshippers hope to be reborn for a final reincarnation before breaking free of the cycle of universal causality (saṃsara). This “paradise” of Avalokiteśvara is modeled on Sukhāvatī, the “pure land of Amitābha”, the Buddha of the West, who has been worshipped since the first centuries of the Christian era. A thangka in the Rubin Museum of New York (inv. F 1997-4.1 Cf Mullin, 2007, p. 69, fig. 29) shows a pond in front of the palace, filled with lotus flowers, the transposition of the “pool of seven jewels” of the pure land of Sukhāvatī.

In this painting, a gazebo at the top of the palace shelters Amitābha, the tathāgata of which Avalokiteśvara is the hypostasis in the phenomenal world.

Four secondary forms of the bodhisattva surround him, all holding the padma lotus. At the bottom of the composition, the green Tārā goddess (Śyāma Tārā) guards the entrance to the divine residence. In the upper spandrels, we recognize the supreme Buddha Vajrasattva on the left, and on the right the white Tārā goddess (Sitātārā).

The finely crafted work is part of the devotional artistic production promoted widely by the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (1617-1681) after he conquered all of Tibet in 1642, and then, after his death, by the regent until his fall in 1705. Here the theme exalts both the dalai lamas, incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, and the independence of a unified Tibet. The residence that the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama built west of the capital Lhasa, the Potala Palace, reinforces this symbolism of a pilgrimage to the holy city, which is again made as of this period.

The style is part of the new sMan-bris, an aesthetic in great favor with the Potala court at this time.

Provenance: *Collection Béatrice Kiener, France, since the 1970s.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106957.*

**Bibliography:**

*Mullin, Glenn H. : Buddha in Paradise. A Celebration in Himalayan Art. New York, Rubin Museum of Art, 2007.*







# Samvara in his Śrīcakra aspect

**Tempera on canvas**

**Tibet**

**Circa 19<sup>th</sup> century**

**Dimension: 46 x 30 cm or 18 ¼ x 11 ⅞ in**

Esoteric Indo-Tibetan buddhism (Vajrayāna) assigns considerable importance to particular deities with a complex iconography, the personification of speculative treatises and rituals (iṣṭa devatā, literally “cherished divinity”).

The double god, Hevajra - Samvara, holds a special place in all Tibetan monastic schools. Here, Samvara (in Tibetan, bDe-mchog) is shown in his most common aspect, that of Śrīcakra.

The deity, whose skin is blue in some texts, has four faces, twelve arms and stands with legs spread and slightly towards the left. According to the Niṣpannayogāvali, a Sanskrit treatise written by the monk Abhayākara Gupta around 1100 C.E., the attributes held in his right hands are the vajra, the trident, the cleaver, the axe, the two-headed drum (ḍamaru) and the elephant hide. In his left hands are the bell, the heads of the Hindu god Brahmā, the rope, the skull cup filled with blood, the “tantric scepter” (khaṭvaṅga) and the other end of the elephant hide.

With his main hands, the god embraces the goddess Vajravārāhī (rDo-rje phag-mo) brandishing the vajra and holding the bell in his hand on the neck of his partner. In the Śrīcakra form, his left leg is lifted and wound around the thigh of the deity; the left leg remains straight along that of his partner.

Below the divine couple is Mahākāla (mGon-po), one of the eight guardians of the religion, in his Nag-po chen-po aspect, with four heads and four arms. At his side, various offerings and symbols of the five senses are presented in front of a mountainous landscape.

In the upper section are three “great adepts” (mahāsiddha), heterodox monks who wrote the esoteric treatises of Indo-Tibetan tradition. Among them we can recognize, from left to right, Birvāpa (Virūpa), his hand lifted to stop the sun, the eccentric holy man who cannot repay a debt before the end of the day. In the center of the composition, Ḍamarūpa brandishes the two-headed drum with its “striking balls”. Finally, on the right, that could be Kṛṣṇapa, often associated with the two other mystics.

The work is one of the black paintings (nag-thang), the most original and creative genres of Tibetan painting of the last two centuries. A few rare works of this type date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century but their origin is probably even more ancient, transposing on portable scrolls the wall decorations of the dark chapels reserved for protective divinities. This procedure probably spread naturally, as it did here to other deities of fierce appearance. The painting belonged to a thang-ka group representing other protective gods. In the best compositions of this type, the gods seem to spring out of the void, as in a vision obtained through tantric meditation. This effect is particularly well rendered here.

*Provenance: Acquired in Kalimpong in the early 1970's; Ariane Macdonald collection.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00110486.*

**Bibliography:**

*Béguin, Gilles, Art ésotérique de l'Himālaya. La donation Lionel Fournier. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990, p. 129130, n° 72. Inv. musée Guimet M.A. 5249.*







# Bust of bodhisattva

**Gilt Bronze**  
**Tibet**  
**14<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 31 cm or 12 ¼ in**

Popularization of the 18<sup>th</sup> century everywhere, the repetitive wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in eastern Tibet, the bureaucratic vandalism of the Cultural Revolution throughout China and, almost as bad, the restorations of the past few decades... all are obstacles to the study of lamaism, especially during the imperial patronage period of the Mongol emperors (1279-1368).

None of the foundations built under the orders of Kublai Khan (1216-1294), his successors or the princes of their court has come down to us through the ages. However, the rare fragments

that endured, along with literary sources, make it possible to define some landmarks: the abundance of orders, the munificence of sanctuaries, technical perfection, the transposition on a vast scale of Nepalese creations from the Kathmandu Valley, the geometric aspect of faces... With the exception of Zhwa-lu in the Tsangpo Valley, no monumental decor from this period still exists in Tibet. Which is why any vestiges of the golden age that have been handed down to us are especially rare and precious.



The work commented upon here is part of a triad, the standard layout of the Buddhist world. A person sitting, undoubtedly a Buddha, surrounded by two of the eight great bodhisattvas, mirror images, undulating. Given the absence of any attribute, it's impossible to identify who they are.

In spite of being mutilated, this piece, with its subtle muscles that seem to come to life when touched, is a rare vestige of the great lamaic art of the Mongol era.

The pose of the work is evocative of a Nepalese statuette from the Metropolitan Museum of New York, formerly in the collection Pan-Asian, although it is more affected, with shapes less stylized and the face less geometric. The Jokhang Temple of Lhasa still has a statuette of a bodhisattva about 54 cm high dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It could give an idea of what the work would have been like originally, in spite of major stylistic differences.

Provenance: *Private collection of Jacques How-Choong, France, acquired before 2000.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00090000.*

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# Amitāyus

**Gilded bronze**  
**Tibet**  
**15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 18 cm or 7 ½ in**

Amitāyus, “Infinite Life”, is the source of a term designating Amitābha, “Infinite Light”, the Buddha of the West. Thus the first texts describing the Pure Land Sukhāvatī, such as the Amitāyurdhyāna sūtra, use one term or the other indifferently to designate the deity. In Lamaic Buddhism, the name Amitāyus designates the aspect of the jina Amitābha. Praying to him can grant a long life, thereby an accumulation of merit and the guarantee of a better reincarnation.



At the court of the Manchu emperors, images of Amitāyus were offered as birthday gifts. In 1751, 1761 and 1771, to celebrate the sixty, seventy and eighty years of Dowager Empress Xiaosheng (1693-1777), Emperor Qianlong (reigned 1736-1795) ordered the creation of several statuettes of Amitāyus, one of which he presented to his mother (Clark, 1965, p. XII).

Amitāyus, as Amitābha, is seated in meditation, his hands in his lap, holding a vessel containing the nectar of immortality.

This work has a double influence. The tiara and arrangement of its jewels are reminiscent of the ancient clichés of Nepalese jewelry. But the draped cloth and “chubbiness” of the face are inherent in Chinese art which became generalized in Tibetan production as of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The statuette is a happy synthesis of these two worlds. The delicately fretted shape of the lotus petals on the base is unusual. It can be found, however, on a statuette of Yama that once was in the Brahm Norwick Collection (Béguin, 1977, p. 194, N. 212). A scattering of fine gems lends a precious touch. The elegant treatment of the back and the delicate decoration engraved on the rear of the base are rare elements in the standard Tibetan context.

The face and jewelry are similar to those of an Amitāyus conserved at the British Museum (von Schroeder, 1981, p. 440, n° 118 B. Inv. 1958.7-19.1).

Provenance: *Private collection, France.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106951.

Bibliography:

*Béguin, Gilles (Dir. Et auteur), Dieux et démons de l'Himâlaya. Paris : R.M.N., 1977.*

*Von Schroeder, Indo-Tibetan Bronzes. Hong-Kong : Visual Dharma Publications, 1981.*





# Hayagrīva

**Gilded bronze**  
**Northern China**  
**Circa 17<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 22 cm or 8  $\frac{3}{4}$  in**

In Hinduism, Hayagrīva, “The Horse-headed One”, is a term designating two characters linked to the Vishnu tradition. Hayagrīva is the name of a demon slain by Vishnu during the mythical Tārakā battle. According to relatively recent speculation, he was reincarnated as Keśin, the youngest brother of Kāṁsa, thereby becoming a majestic part of the Kṛṣṇa legend.

Viṣṇu himself, in a form with a horse’s head, promulgates the Vedas. In this frightening form, sometimes considered as one of his avatāra, he exterminates certain demons such as Madhu and Kaiṭabha.



The exact link between the Hindu Hayagrīva and the divinity of the same name in Tantric Buddhism is not known. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the horse Balāha, the salvatory aspect of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, is the object of a pious legend. Developments specific to Buddhism arising from this particular animal emanation might explain the relationship between Hayagrīva and Avalokiteśvara. In Japan, Shingon tradition would seem to corroborate this hypothesis. Hayagrīva (Batokannon in Japan) is considered as one of the six main avatars of Avalokiteśvara (Kannon).

The Hayagrīva cycle was first preached in Tibet in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Atīśa (circa 982-1054).

Hayagrīva, a minor deity, became the focus of most of the horse-based cults that Buddhism encountered during its eastward expansion. In Tibet, this god was venerated by horse merchants, apparently due to his iconography alone and not because of the rare legends that were attached to him. His cult is especially widespread in Mongolia, the horse culture par excellence.

In Tibet, this paradoxical god is now studied only rarely. However, he is present in three specific contexts. His horse-headed aspect links him to the wind-horse Rlung-rta reproduced on many prayer flags. These wood-cuts printed on fabric are hung on masts, to float in the wind and thereby sanctify an area. This marvelous horse, bearing jewels, intercedes between the earthly world and the world of the gods. Hence he helps transmit the prayers of believers and makes magical incantations more effective. The links between Hayagrīva and Rlung-rta do seem to have arisen later on, the fruit of popular beliefs born out of pious confusion. Rlung-rta probably originated in the white horse of Indra, the king of the gods, named Uchaiśravas, one of the seven treasures of the Universal Sovereign.

In certain texts such as the Padma thang-yig, one of the classics of rNying-ma-pa literature telling the legendary story of the holy Padmasambhava (8<sup>th</sup> century), Hayagrīva wins out over the terrible Rudra, the demonic version of the Hindu Śiva. In other traditions, this role falls to the bodhisattva Vajrapani. That explains the evocation of Hayagrīva in certain exorcism rituals. His neighing is said to scare off demons. Thus many ritual daggers (Phur-bu) are adorned with one or more heads of Hayagrīva (Huntinton, 1975, p. 24-25, fig. 29-31).





Hayagrīva has many aspects. A horse head on the top of the skull makes it possible to identify him without question, regardless of the number of heads or arms.

In one of his works, the fourth Panchen Lama, bLo-bzang bstan-pa'i nyi-ma (1780-1852), names this avatar with three faces and six arms Khro-bo rgyal-po rta-mgrin, "Hayagrīva, the lord of the krodha". The statuette here presents a few variations on this canonic aspect. For instance, it has only one horse head above the skull's diadem instead of the three prescribed by the Panchen Lama. The first hand on the right holds a sword whose pommel is still perfectly visible and the third holds the "diamond-thunderbolt" (vajra). The lower hand on the left, perfectly visible, holds a cord made of human intestines and the third is making the gesture of vigilance (tarjanī mudrā). The attributes of the second hands, both right and left, respectively holding the trident and the arrow, are replaced here by a cord (paśa). With his eight feet, the god is trampling nests of serpents.

By their expressive and inventive nature, angry representations of deities constitute the most original aspect of Tibetan art. The menacing vision here contrasts with especially refined decoration, which is assumed to be characteristic of northern Chinese workshops under the reigns of the first two Qing emperors, especially Kangxi (reigned 1661-1722), a period of renewed and active patronage. This work fits into the same aesthetic context as a Savara in the Asian Museum of San Francisco (Rhie-Thurman, 1991, p. 278-279, n° 102) and to a lesser extent a Buddha in the Hermitage in Saint-Petersburg (Rhie-Thurman, op. cit., p. 84-85, n° 5).

*Provenance: Private collection, Bordeaux – France.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106956.*

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# rDo-rje legs-pa

**Gilded Bronze**  
**Tibet**  
**18<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 18 cm or 7 ½ in**

rDo-rje legs-pa belongs to the Dam-can group, authentic Tibetan deities, and thus absent from Sanskrit texts. Tradition considers these fierce beings to originate either in Central Asia or as being deus loci. Converted to Buddhism, they are among the countless angry-looking guardian deities that protect religious sites and espouse the doctrine of hostile powers. Necromancers and astrologers, some speak through the oracles of various monasteries.

Five of them are especially honored. At the head of this group is rDo-rje legs-pa, the protector of metalworkers, who is represented here.



In his right hand, he brandishes a hammer (now missing) and in the left a bellows to fuel the fire of the forge. Through his veneration, he indirectly bears witness to the specific social status of blacksmiths in many ancient societies. He wears a special hat called an 'O-bas-zhva, a round hat with a wide brim worn by travelers but also by mediums. As is the tradition, he is riding a goat with crossed horns.

It should be noted that among the 360 brothers and companions of rDo-rje legs-pa, mGar-ba'i mtshan-can, a secondary dam-can, has an iconography identical to that of rDo-rje legs-pa himself, with the exception of the color of his skin.

The absence of dated pieces makes it difficult to set specific dates for Tibetan sculptures of centuries past. Here, the expressiveness of the face, nothing like the traditional art of the Newars of Nepal, as well as the sense of movement and the subtleness with which the lotus petals on the base are rendered, all lead us to situate this work among the masterpieces of the very late 17<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Provenance: *Private collection, Paris, acquired in the 1970-80's.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00106953.*

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*Von Schroeder, Indo-Tibetan Bronzes. Hong-Kong : Visual Dharma Publications, 1981, p. 548-54, n° 156 F.*





# Ornamental Plaque

**Gilt copper**  
**Tibet**  
**15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 38 cm or 15 in**

In the world of India and regions under its influence, the sides of dieties' thrones, as well as the lower part of the ornamental back panel of their backrests, are decorated with superposed animals symbolizing the various strata of the world: the elephant for Earth, the rearing lion gryphon (vyalaka) for the middle world, and above an aquatic monster with an elephant head (makara) for the heavens.

Riveted onto a rigid frame, these metal plaques were either worked in repoussé or else cast, as is the case here.



Nepalese bronze artists, many of whom worked on sites in southern and central Tibet during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, used this motif as one of their favorite themes, although it fell outside strict iconographic dictates. Sometimes they innovated, as they did here, replacing the makara by a secondary deity (devatā) astride the mount. They took liberties with the vigorous graphics of more or less jagged floral motifs, resulting in works that are immensely decorative and attractive.

Among comparable pieces, we can cite the beautiful plaque from the Zimmerman collection and two that make a pair at the Los Angeles County Museum.

*Provenance: Private collection, Switzerland, acquired in 2003.*

*Previously with Carlo Cristi, Milan.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00091758.*

**Bibliography:**

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# Viṣṇu

**Copper with traces of gilt**  
**Kāthmāndu Valley**  
**14<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 17 cm or 6 ⅜ in**



In his four hands, the god holds his usual attributes: the śrīphala, fruit of the bilva tree, the wheel, the mace and the conchshell. Such a classic iconography is frequent in Nepal, where the god is venerated as Nārāyaṇa. The order of his attributes may vary however. This particularity bears witness to the importance of the vaiṣṇava sect of the Pañcarātra in that country. These religious people consider Viṣṇu as a major divinity. While the supreme form (para) of the divinity remains inaccessible, these hypostases (vyūha, literally meaning “expansion”) have a fervent cult following. Twenty of them are considered to be secondary, but four principal ones

(caturvyūha), for the four cardinal points, are venerated as principals. Most of the time, these four vyūha are represented with four arms, holding the usual attributes of the god (Suisser, 1982, Vol. 2, Fig. 385) in the place determined by canon, but their order may vary from one form to another (Suisser, 1982, Vol. 2, Fig. 386). From that perspective, the statuette discussed here could be identified as being Nārāyaṇa Hiti Caturvyūha. Especially numerous in Nepal, the Pañcarātra are distinguishable from the Bhāgavata, who emphasize the redeeming action of the god Viṣṇu’s avatāra.

There are many statuettes of Viṣṇu in Nepal. In his 1981 compendium, Ulrich von Schroeder reproduces two Viṣṇu stylistically very similar to the one here. One is at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Schroeder, 1981, p. 349, Fig. 90 E); the other, with eight arms, is in a private collection (id.,

Fig. 90 D). As with the piece discussed here, the divinities have strong pectoral muscles and a narrow waist that is in contrast with wide hips. A Brahmanic cord and belt drape down to his knees in a perfect semicircle. The folds of his clothing flow down to his legs symmetrically on both sides. Small, stylized floral ornaments vertical to the base stand out from the surface, making these elements appear more solid.

The central flower-shaped ornament of the diadem has a deep circular ornament but of a different design.

As with many pieces from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fine inlaid jewels bestow the statuettes with a particularly precious, refined appearance. On “our” Viṣṇu, very deep but empty cabochons were once probably beautified in a similar fashion.

Provenance: *Private European Collection, acquired in the 1970s/1980s. Sotheby's, New York, 21 March 2012, lot 301. Private Californian Collection.*

*Certificat Art Loss Register ref. S00106949.*

#### **Bibliography:**

*Slusser, Mary Shepherd, Nepal Mandala. A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley. Princetown : Princeton University Press, 1982 (2 vol.).*

*Shroeder, Ulrich von, Indo-Tibetan Bronzes. Hong Kong : Visual Dharma Publications, 1981.*





# Dancing Divinity

**Gilt-copper**  
**Nepal,**  
**Late 16<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Height: 26 cm or 10 ¼ in**

A parcel red-lacquered gilt-copper embossed plaque depicting the Hindu god Śiva in his dancing aspect Naṭarāja, "King of the Dance", also sometimes called Nāṭeṣa, "Lord of the Dance", dancing on a lotus-shaped base and surrounded by a halo of flames. Wearing a dhoti, it is adorned with jewellery and scarves. In a frenzied dance, the god creates and destroys worlds. Their existence to the God last only for a moment, but each world has a long term in his own time. Note the frontal eye, one of the characteristics of the god.



This plaque comes perhaps from a sanctuary pediment. The access of many places of worship in the Kāthmāndu Valley are surmounted by a metal wall pediment, sometimes hammered over its entire surface, sometimes as here, decorated with small plaques and riveted, representing the god honored in the sanctuary but also deities from his entourage.

Royal or private donations and zealous devotee from cultural associations (guthi) will cover the Kāthmāndu valley with countless religious foundations throughout the recent Malla period (1482-1768). This seductive element can be dated from the last phase of this period, made even more decorative yet by the whirling motion of the sides of the scarf.

Provenance: *Private collection, France, acquired in 1994.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00091678.*

Bibliography:

*Mary Slusser (1982, vol. II, fig. 129, 140, 199, 559).*





# Seated Buddha

**Hight-tin Bronze**

**Thailand**

**Dvaravati style, Prakon Chai, 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> century**

**Height: 11 cm or 4 ¾ in**

The Shakyamuni Buddha is depicted seated in the lotus position, his feet tightly locked with the soles turned upwards, his hands on his lap in the meditation mudra (dhyanamudra). The pierced and drooping earlobes have been distorted by the weight of heavy jewels indicating his princely rank. As a monk, he is dressed with an undergarment (antaravasaka) the lower part of which can be seen at the bottom of his calves, and with an overgarment which covers his shoulders and flares gently at the wrists. The pedestal is in the shape of a blooming lotus. A protruding metallic piece at his back, indicates that this figure stood out against a carved background.



This famous figure, published by S. Little, is characteristic of the identifiable aesthetics of the Mon-Dvaravati period. The structure of this State is not known, presumably, more than a centralised State, it was a confederation of urban centres linked to international trade and controlling surrounding countryside. This territory became a political power at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century controlling large sections of today's Thailand. In the south, it survived until the 11<sup>th</sup> century as a particularly prosperous region until it was reclaimed by the Khmers. In the North, the principality of Haripunjaya survived until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Theravada Buddhism prevailed in the local religious life. The Mahayana vehicle and Hinduism were little known. Two iconic sites offer a good understanding of the visual arts of this civilisation. The site of Prakon Chai, in the East of the country, revealed several bronze figures, certain of which, as for this subject piece, were disseminated by the auctioneer Spink & Son Ltd. in the seventies and early eighties. In this trove the Mon-Dvaravati pieces featured alongside pre-Ankorian figures of the Prei Khmeng style (8<sup>th</sup> century). As for the Sri-Deb site (Si Thep), in the center of the country, it produced an ensemble of exclusively Hindu sandstone figures of superior quality, of a very original style but with a questionable dating (7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> century).

This figure displays pronounced ethnic features: double arched joining eyebrows, a heavy nose and a small pouting mouth, all common and typical details of Dvaravati statuary. The semi-closed eyes are the sign of deep inner meditation. The facial features bring to mind a famous standing Buddha at the national Museum in Bangkok (Baptiste-Zephir, 2009, p.218, fig 2).

*Provenance: Spink & Son Ltd., London (1980s); Michael Phillips, Los Angeles (since 1980's).*

*Published: Stephen Little, Images of Buddha from the Michael Phillips Collection, Hong Kong: ARTS OF ASIA, Jan-Feb 2013, p. 113, fig. 33.*

**Bibliography:**

*Philip Rawson, The Art of Southeast Asia, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1967, p. 136.*

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*National Museum Bangkok, Dvaravati Art — The Early Buddhist Art of Thailand, Bangkok 2009, p. 148 -149, fig. 20.*

*Staatliches Museum fuer Voelkerkunde Muenchen, Weiter als der Horizont — Kunst der Welt, Muenchen, 2008, fig. 118.*

*Pierre Baptiste et Thierry Zéphir, Dvaravati aux sources du bouddhisme en Thaïlande, Musée Guimet, Paris, 2009, P. 21 and 240.*





# Ganeśa

**Bronze**

**Indonesia, Java**

**Circa 10<sup>th</sup> century, end of Central Java period (8<sup>th</sup> - end 10<sup>th</sup> century)**

**Height: 20.8 cm or 8 ⅜ in**



Sitting in the relaxed posture, the god has four arms, as is usually the case when he is depicted. In his left hand he holds a gourd filled with a sugary treat: either ladduka - barley or rice semolina or flour, mixed with sugar and spices and then deep fried as fritters - or modakam, a small ball-shaped candy or small cake (Mallmann, 1963, p. 269). With his trunk, the elephant-headed god sniffs these treats greedily. Above, the second left hand holds the battle-axe (paraśu). In spite of their poor state of conservation, it's possible to identify the attributes held in his right hands: at the bottom, the tusk with which the god is said to have written the great Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, dictated by the wise man Vyāsa. A few beads of the rosary held in his second right hand still subsist. In spite of an inversion of the tusk and the rosary, the iconography of the deity follows the dictates of the 348<sup>th</sup> verse of the Agni-purāṇa (Mallmann, 1963, p. 112). This anomaly can easily be explained by the major variations in the many depictions of the god. Other elements are associated with Ganeśa. The tiger skin vestment, for example, is easily recognizable. The serpentine sacred thread (upavīta) is given a "naturalistic" representation, with the ophidian's head pointed toward the spectator at the left shoulder. The headdress has two elements taken from śaiva tradition: the crescent moon and the skeleton head. Corroded patches on the base near his right foot probably mark where the rat, the god's traditional steed, would have been.

The god strikes an original pose amongst lotus buds. It is difficult to identify the four characters sitting or standing on opened flowers. These sketchy attendants could be the god's four wives: Bhāratī, Śrī, Vighneśvarī, Buddhi and Kubuddhi (Banerjea, 1956, p. 358).

Statuettes of Ganeśa are relatively rare in Indonesia. There is, however, a bronze in the National Museum of Jakarta (inv. No. 534a. Fontein, 1990, pp. 216-217, No. 61). Its molded base and rounded "headboard" are somewhat reminiscent of the piece described here. On our piece, the offshoot at the very top is undoubtedly a vestige of a shaft that held a parasol as with the Jakarta Ganeśa. However, although it was dated from the Central Java era by the famous Bostonian expert, the Jakarta statuette has a much more evolved style than the one that concerns us here: greater freedom of movement, rather oversimplified head, simplified lotus petal base. Unlike its hieratic character, all these particularities of the more extensive iconography, with its specific details and careful workmanship, mean the statuette cannot be clearly dated later than the bronze at the Indonesian museum. It could confirm a date in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, even though care must be taken with a chronology that is still fluctuating due to a lack of pieces with an engraved date.

Provenance: *Private collection, Singapore, since 1970's.*

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*Fontein, Jan, The Sculpture of Indonesia. Washington : National Gallery of Art, 1990.*

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# Vietnamese bronzes, originality and influences

The Đông Sơn culture was identified in 1924 thanks, notably, to the archaeological digs undertaken by Louis Pajot, on the eponymous site of Đông Sơn, a small village in the Thanh Hoa province, situated in northern Vietnam. Principally originating in the Red River valleys, along the Ma and Ca Rivers, the Đông Sơn culture produced, from at least 600 BCE, a very sophisticated bronze metallurgy, essentially in the form of drums, recipients of various shapes, weapons and ornaments.

The anchorage of the Đông Sơn culture in South-East Asia is worthy of mention, as well as, from the north, the penetration of Chinese influence as from the 2nd century BCE. Proof of undeniable cultural and economic exchange, Đông Sơn art not only influenced, for its part, neighbouring Chinese provinces, but also a large geographic zone including Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia and reaching the Sunda Islands where some drums (called mokko) — though more recent — are decorated in a similar fashion to Đông Sơn bronzes.

The Đông Sơn culture progressively became Sino-Vietnamese art called Giao-Chi. Vietnamese, because the metal itself and certain stylistic characteristics remained; Sino, because it is obvious that in this case the North imported its shapes and stylistic modes. The quality and interest of the historic Đông Sơn and Giao-Chi (or Han-Viet, according to a somewhat exacerbated terminology) bronzes are founded in the extraordinary confluence of two great civilisations that, far from being in opposition, united in the quest for beauty.

## How can we be sure of the authenticity and integrity of bronze objects?

Given the growing interest in artworks, and more specifically in Asian art, there is a risk of some being fakes or of objects having been considerably restored, making them unacceptable for collections. Dongson bronzes are no exception, especially in view of the growing number of Western as well as Vietnamese collectors.

### So how can these risks be eliminated?

It obviously starts with a vigilant selection of the people from whom we buy artwork. It is also necessary to make sure the provenance is reliable and satisfactory. This entails a visual inspection to be sure that its iconography is consistent with its presumed period, as well as to detect any restoration, problems of patina or anything that doesn't seem logical.

It is also essential to back up this initial examination with scientific analyses, the only way to ensure that the objects offered to the clientele are quality objects of confirmed integrity. The first scientific verification we carry out systematically for bronze objects involves an examination by x-ray. In the past, this has enabled us to detect masterful replications of bronze pieces as well as outrageous restorations.

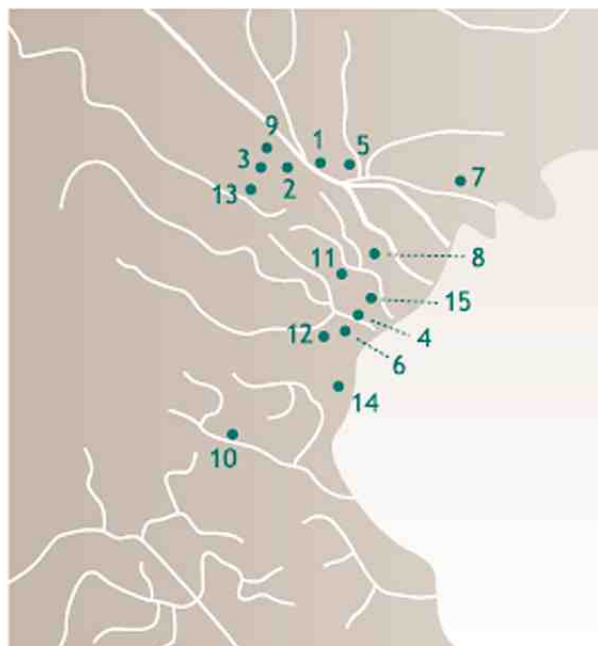
More in-depth examinations can also be carried out if necessary, either to confirm our initial conclusions or in view of the complexity or value of the piece.

- Analysis of the composition of the alloys, and comparison of the results with our data base, to see that their composition concurs with the presumed period of the object. Let's take the example of a Dongson ladle with a person represented on its handle. It was necessary to determine whether the person had been added on at a later date. A ladle decorated with a person would have much more value than one without. Analysis of the alloy of both parts of the piece - the ladle and the decoration - makes it possible to affirm or refute the piece's integrity and ensure the buyer of its quality.
- Another risk can come from restoration by touching up the patina. Infrared examination can be used to identify any difference between touched up areas and areas of natural corrosion.
- An additional inspection can be made using scanning electron microscopy.

Through a combination of applying rigorous acquisition criteria based on our expertise in this field and carrying out scientific analyses, we can offer our clientele optimum assurance of a piece's authenticity and integrity. This also explains why a large number of our pieces end up in the world's leading museums.



### The main Bronze Age Đông Sơn sites



- 1 - Đông Dâu
- 2 - Thanh Dên
- 3 - Gò Mun
- 4 - Quy Chu
- 5 - Co Loa
- 6 - Đông Sơn
- 7 - Việt Khê
- 8 - Châu Can, Xuân La
- 9 - Lang Ca
- 10 - Lang Vác
- 11 - Hoàng Hạ, Song Đà
- 12 - Quang Xương, Nong Cong
- 13 - Ban Thom
- 14 - Đông Hiếu
- 15 - Ngọc Lu



# Short Sword

**Bronze  
Vietnam**

**Dong Son Culture, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> century BC**

**Length: 40 cm or 15 ¾ in**

Daggers make up some of the most famous bronze objects of the Dongson culture. They were used either as a weapon or as an utensil and were worn at the waist of the nobles or tribal chiefs. Some of these daggers, such as this one, were longer than others, which is why they could be classified as short swords. There were two main types of dagger in Dongson culture:

- Type A, with a pointed blade, is shaped like a long bamboo leaf and has a buffalo horn shaped handle with a spiral motif at its end. These handles can be classified into three categories: the T-shaped handle, an onion-shaped handle, or a handle with a human or animal figure at its end.
- Type B has a pointed triangular blade and is decorated with geometric shapes.



Most Type A daggers are found in the downstream part of the Red River and in the southern Tonkin regions (Ma, Chu and Ca Rivers), whereas Type B daggers are usually found in the upstream part of the Red River regions. Based on this dichotomy, without a doubt this dagger would be classified as Type A, with an anthropomorphic handle.

Figures on the handle were usually depictions of heroic tribal chiefs or eminent nobles. They could be either men or women, and in rare cases children. This dagger depicts a woman, which is somewhat exceptional. Her head is crowned with a high pyramid-shaped hat and her face is an elongated oval with a pointed chin. Her ears are adorned with large loop earrings and she has rings around her neck. She is wearing a robe, probably with a floral decor, and a wide belt. She stands erect on both legs, her fists on her hips. At the nape of her neck is a ring used to suspend the knife. On the waist and the front part are the imprint of cords, as well as on the legs of the female figure. These are not decorations but rather traces of the cording wound around this dagger's base.

These daggers were first found in the Nua Mountain region. That is why archeologists have called them "Nai Nua sword" and called the women depicted on them Lady Nai Nua. The force of the object and the richness of its decoration suggests a ritual or sacrificial use during important ceremonies that seem to have been frequent in Dong Son society. Similar daggers can be seen in the Museum of National History in Hanoi and in the Thanh Hoa Museum in Vietnam, as well as in the Huet Collection at the Musée du Cinquantenaire in Brussels. Galerie Christophe Hioco also presented a dagger with two female figures in its 2008 publication.

Microscope study revealed traces of abundant decoration and the fabric remnants present a texture that would correspond to the fabric that protected the dagger. The alloy, mainly copper and tin, is consistent with the composition of the bronze from this period. Its corrosion is proof of a long period underground. X-ray and ultraviolet detected no restoration, breakage or cracking and no painting over with pigments. The decoration on the handle was made of metals that contrasted in color with the alloy: traces of silver were found on the pyramid-shaped hat.

Provenance: *Private collection, Belgium.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00091781.

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*Dr. Nguyen Viet, The imaged Trung Ladies on the handle of a Dongsonian dagger", in Fine Art of Vietnam, vol 01.*





# Daggers

**Bronze  
Vietnam**

**Dong Son Culture, circa 2<sup>nd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> century BC**

**Length: 22 cm or 8 ¾ in**

Bronze daggers with human-figure handles were relatively common in Dongson culture. They belong to type A3 as presented in this catalogue (see Short Sword with Lady Figure Handle in the same catalogue, page 50). The dagger has a blade shaped like a bamboo leaf and the guard between the blade and handle is shaped like a buffalo horn.



The handle represents a male figure standing on straight short legs with his two long arms akimbo. He is naked except for a loincloth, a short rectangular flap on the back and front, decorated with a symmetrical design. On his head is a flat hat with a little indentation on one side. The man wears earrings and perhaps also a headband. His hair is coiled into two braids on his back. It's notable that the braid are joined together and curve toward his spine. The figure has a round-to-oval face. The nose is flat and the eyes are open wide. His chest is flat and has two small circles with central points.

In archaeology, there are two examples similar to this dagger. They are in Lang Ngam (Bac Ninh) and in Nui Deo (Hai Phong), both in Vietnam. This same type of dagger can also be found in many private collections.

The dagger is in good condition with green patina. The x-ray study made by CIRAM confirmed the physical health of the object except for some small restored places on the right arm, on either ends of the guard and on the right earring.

Provenance: *Private collection, Belgium.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097032.*

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# Ceremonial Spear-head

**Bronze**

**Vietnam**

**Dong Son's culture, c. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC**

**Length: 21 cm or 8  $\frac{3}{8}$  in**

Native warriors from the Dongson region of Vietnam fought with axes. They were used as a weapon as well as a tool for chopping. Both axes and halberds were found together in Dongson tombs. Spearheads were also found dating from the oldest ages of these periods, along with axes and daggers, all of which were the classical weaponry of the Dongson warrior. According to archeologists, this spearhead is the type found in the Red River area of northern Vietnam. It has a central spine slightly thicker than the rest of the surface. In 1976, human remains were found in a Dongson cemetery, along with a similar spearhead. That spearhead was cast in a mold with two symmetric parts. Its central spine was also thicker, providing reinforcement.



One essential element that makes this piece rare is the richness of its decoration, which was carved into the clay mold used to cast the bronze. The artist first drew a border around the spearhead about 5 mm from the edge. The slightly rounded central spine split this border into two symmetric halves. Each half is richly decorated with human figures and crocodiles. The man is seated, naked, wearing a feather headdress similar to the feathered warriors seen in a canoes found on situla and drums (see the situla in the Galerie Christophe Hioco catalogue, "Bronzes from Vietnam: symbols of emotion", Object No. 16). The heads of these men face the throat of the spear while the crocodiles face the tip. Crocodiles are often represented on bronze objects (drums, situla and especially belt buckles) from the Dongson culture, being a sacred animal that could save people from other aquatic animals. This iconography is extremely rare and a similar spearhead is part of a California collection, with a feathered warrior sitting on a drum and surrounded by deer. Another is in the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Hanoi. An object so richly decorated could only be a ceremonial spear used by a tribal chief during shaman ceremonies or festivities. It probably dates from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

We examined this spearhead by x-ray and by studying a sample under a metallographic microscope and a scanning electron microscope. It was also studied under ultraviolet and infrared light to determine if there was any restoration. It confirmed the excellent condition of the piece with only minor restoration, intended to conserve the piece. This bronze has a layer of corrosion which developed over a long time, the alloy's composition being consistent with bronzes from this Dongson period. The corrosion, which is natural and helped create the olive green patina, is generally called noble patina in that there is no deformation or cavities, and forms a natural barrier to protect the metal. It's interesting to note that we found no traces of attachments nor holes, implying that this spearhead was simply held in place by friction.

*Provenance: Private U.S. West Coast collection. Purchased in London from Alexander Goetz, 1995.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097036.*

*Exhibited: On loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts from 1996 to 2010.*

**Bibliography:**

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# Ewer

**Bronze**

**Vietnam**

**Giao-Chi era, 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD**

**Height: 28 cm or 11 ¼ in**

This pitcher with its spout shaped like a makara head from the Giao-Chi era (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries C.E.) is an exceptional object. Its basic shape is reminiscent of the Hu vases of the Han era, with a flaring foot and a paunchy body. The spout, for its part, is not classical. It is ornamented at its base by the head of a makara, a monster from the Indian pantheon. From its maw, in which four pointed fangs surround a set of crocodile teeth, erupts the nearly straight spout. The makara's short trunk, which relates it to the sea cow, is folded back upon itself. Its very bright eyes bring to mind those of a monkey, whereas the ears, stylised and certainly



ornamented by earrings, seem to be listening for the slightest sound. A line separates the animal into two parts that join at the eyebrow ridge, forming a slight hump. The top of the head is bedecked with spiralling elements in relief. The highly realistic materialisation of this aquatic animal, through details of extreme precision, makes the piece very dynamic. The handle is decorated with lotus buds and palmettes, borrowed from the Indian decorative vocabulary. The lid, attached to the handle by a loop that itself ends in animal paws, has a knob also shaped like a lotus bud.

This type of pitcher is already known in ceramic (Cernuschi Museum and the Brussels Museum) as well as in bronze (Metropolitan Museum), all with elephant heads and trunks. The presence of the makara in place of the elephant makes this piece unique: linked to Indian tradition, it refers to the kingdom of Champa, heir in Vietnam to Hindu beliefs and known at the time as Linyi, a kingdom on territory south of Đông Sơn.

One can compare this piece with the pitcher mentioned in the Cernuschi Museum work *Vietnam, Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi* ('Vietnam, The Vietnamese Collection of the Cernuschi Museum'), 2006, p. 94, though its iconographical details are less refined than those of this pitcher, thus allowing a discovery of the influence of this type of creation on ceramics, produced on a larger scale, and an appreciation of numerous similarities in shape and detail.

Two other pitchers were exhibited as part of the Baur collections in Geneva in 2008 page 17 of the catalogue '*Art ancien du Viêt Nam, Bronzes et céramiques*'.

Provenance: *Lan Huong Pham collection, Switzerland.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00091653.*

Published: *Christophe Hioco, Vietnamese bronzes, The symbolism of emotion, Paris, 2008.*

Bibliography:

*Monique Crick, Art ancien du Viêt Nam, Bronzes et céramiques, 5 Continents (Ed), Collections Baur, Musée des Arts d'Extrême-Orient, Genève, 2008.*





# Metal Scale

**High Iron Bronze**  
**Cambodia**  
**Pre-Funan Culture, 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century**  
**Length: 24 cm or 9 ½ in**

The scales consist of three objects: a stick with two hanging rings, a weight, and a basket-like disc to be suspended with rope. In principle the stick must have had a rope at its midpoint to suspend it from while weighing. In the laboratory the researcher found traces of fabric on the stick, either from a piece of clothing or from part of the bag the scales were kept in.



The weight is shaped like a droplet or a penis. On top of the weight, two men sit back-to-back in the Buddha position, their arms on their knees. They are naked except for loincloths and some spiral markings can be seen on their shoulders. They are linked to the weight. There is a bronze ring between the heads of the two figures; it's used to suspend the weight from the end of the balance stick.

At the other end of the stick would hang the round disc. It is shaped like a round sun in the center with rays branching out from it. The disc has eight small rings on its bottom side where a rope could have been run to hang it from the stick. In practice, the disc is too small to counterbalance the weight, so the scales may perhaps have been only symbolic or ceremonial.

The scales may be made of bronze with a high iron content. The three parts were cast using a lost-wax mold. X-ray images very clearly show traces of the wax used to mold the disc.

Such scales can be seen in the collections of the Barbier-Mueller Museum in Geneva, and those of Martin Doustar in Paris and Karim Gussmayer in Geneva. No archaeological context has yet been found for this kind of scales. Laboratory researchs confirmed the good condition of the scales except for some small crack repairs on the disc and on the stick. We can date such scales from around 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup>, putting it in the Pre-Funan Period.

Provenance: *Private collection, Belgium.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097035.*

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*Monique Crick, Art ancien du Viêt Nam, Bronzes et céramiques, 5 Continents (Ed), Collections Baur, Musée des Arts d'Extrême-Orient, Genève, 2008.*

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# Musician

**Bronze**  
**Cambodia**  
**Pre-Funan Culture, 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century**  
**Height: 11.5 cm or 4 ¾ in**

This represents a man sitting in a sort of chair with feet made of or wrapped in rope and the seat between two posts. The ring over his head was meant for hanging the object, either for use as a weight for scales or simply as a pendant. His hair is in long braids wound like snail shells. It's interesting to note that, in spite of the natural corrosion that accumulated over the years, those braids are still clearly visible.



The man is naked except for a loincloth, and his body is decorated with spirals characteristic of Dongson culture - Bandiang or Battambang style for the city in Cambodia near the great Tonlé Sap Lake. His shoulders, chest and legs are decorated. He's holding a wind instrument called a *khen*. It is made up of sort of woven pouch from which run several bamboo pipes. The instrument is actually a type of mouth organ found throughout Southeast Asia in the Bronze Age, in the Dongson and Dian cultures. The very fine impression of the woven seat of the chair leads us to conclude that this bronze was cast using the lost-wax technique.

The musician is covered by a thin green patina. Slight crazing on the arms and legs indicates the presence of iron in the alloy. X-ray analysis confirmed its excellent conservation, as both texture and density are uniform with no trace of breakage or restoration.

The shape of the musician's head doesn't resemble that of Dongson human figures. Likewise, his hairdo and sturdy build are more similar to those of central or southern Indochina, regions with close relations to Dongson and Bandiang cultures. It could be of pre-Funan culture dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. Excavations in the Lang Vac cemetery in Vietnam and Ban Chiang in Thailand, as well as Charles Higham's recent digs along the Mun River in northern Thailand, have unearthed numerous objects decorated with spirals. This would suggest a broader context for that culture to which these human figures might belong.

There are comparable pieces in several private collections. The first object of this sort was found in Laos by Mrs. Madeleine Colani, an archeologist from the French School of the Far East in Hanoi. It was made of bronze and represented a young man standing. That piece may be in the reserves of the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Hanoi. A plaster copy was made by Swedish archeologist Johan Andersen during his stay in Hanoi in 1937. The copy is kept in the reserves of the Museum of Far Eastern Arts in Stockholm. It should also be mentioned that an extremely similar piece, minus the musical instrument, is in the collection of Dr. Kurt Saxelmair in Munich, and was on display until recently at the Museum of Asian Arts in Berlin. This piece was shown in Martin Doustar's publication "Art of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia" in 2013.

Provenance: *Private collection, Belgium.*

Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097034.

Published: *Martin Doustar, Art of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia, 2013.*

Bibliography:

*Monique Crick, Art ancien du Viêt Nam, Bronzes et céramiques, 5 Continents (Ed), Collections Baur, Musée des Arts d'Extrême-Orient, Genève, 2008.*

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# Bell with Elephant Figures

**Bronze**  
**Cambodia**  
**Pre-Funan Culture, 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century**  
**Height: 20 cm or 8 in**

The bell has a cylinder echo body and a special hanger. This hanger is very typical for almost Pre-Funan bells. Bronze bells with various types are famous character of the co called Pre-Funan Culture. Generally there are tree types of bronze bell hanger for Pre-Funan Culture : A- semicircle hanger, B- hopper opening hanger and C- cylinder tube hanger. The hanger of this bell belongs to the C-type with cutting profiles on two ends, which are decorated by cordage and sloping up to make the cylinder hanger looks like as roof of traditional house in Indonesia or of house of bronze age Dian culture in Yunnan (China).



The bell body is like a cylinder tupe, that isn't regular but upper section is round while underneath's one is ovale. The body top, which is jointing to the bell hanger, is scaled down. On this part occurred bands of fine cordage decoration. It is linked to the under part by a rougher cordage band and two spiral semicircle ears. Especially, there are two small atatuates of domestic elephants. In the upper part of the echo body of bell two triangle holes were opened to make the echo sound to be lauder by ringing.

In some cases man found also a metal bob hanging on quer bar inside upper of bell body, that makes the sound from inside. This bell has stil the bar stick only. The metal bob is lost. But not every bell of this kind has bob and bar stick. That means they were used by gonging from outside. The cylinder hanger, which is transverse on the bell body, suggests a cord through it to hang on the neck of a holy animal (buffalo, elephant...). Until today this kind of bronze bell isn't yet found in any archaeological context. However they existed in many private collections and antique shops and named as "Battambang bronze bells". They were decorated sometime with animal statuartes as buffalo, elephant. Here, two elephants stand on the front side of bell body uppart. It confirmed that this side is always on opposite.

The bell presented here is conservated in good condition. On the surface of body a textile imprint is traced. It was perhaps a piece of dead's costume or shroud. A CIRAM's X-Ray report confirmed the healthy of the object.

*Provenance: Private collection, Belgium.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00092081.*

*CIRAM Analisis Certificate no. 0114-40B-13, March 3rd, 2014.*

*Published: Martin Doustar, Art of the Bronze Age in Southeast Asia, 2013.*

**Bibliography:**

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# Breast Plate

**Bronze**

**Vietnam**

**Dong Son's culture, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD**

**Height: 12 cm or 4 ¾ in**

On this square plate – destined, according to some archaeologists, to protect soldiers' chests – figure highly remarkable symmetrical decorations, with relatively stylised motifs, representing the well-known boats typical of the Đông Sơn.



Each vessel carries feathered figures, seen in profile, that can easily be assimilated with soldiers. The centre of the plaque is ornamented by a geometrical double-hook motif surrounded by fish that are represented in a realistic fashion. Extremely similar double hooks decorate bronzes, basketwork and fabrics in tribal cultures of the Malay Archipelago. It is interesting to note that concentric designs were still used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in embroidery and are still worn today by the Miao tribe of Northern Vietnam.

Cast using the lost wax technique, rather than by repoussé (as was long believed), this plate was found with others in the tombs of the region of the Đông Sơn village in the province of Thanh Hoa. As the plates were discovered next to weapons, they can be assimilated with attributes of masculine warriors. The holes, visible at each corner of the plate, are likely to have been used to attach the breastplate to a war tunic, at one and the same time an element of prestige and apophylactic object.

*Provenance: Private collection, France.*

*Art Loss Register Certificate, ref. S00097033.*

## **Bibliography:**

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**Cover:**

Śiva Bhikṣāṭana

Red sandstone

India, Rājasthan or Madhya Pradesh

10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> century

Height: 38 cm or 15 in

**Back cover:**

Hayagrīva

Gilded bronze

Northern China

Circa 17<sup>th</sup> century

Height: 22 cm or 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in

## GALERIE CHRISTOPHE HIOCO

72 Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré  
75008 Paris - France  
By appointment only  
Tel. +33 (0) 1 53 30 09 65  
[info@galeriehioco.com](mailto:info@galeriehioco.com)



[www.galeriehioco.com](http://www.galeriehioco.com)