

Christophe **Hioco**



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

www.galeriehioco.com



Galerie Christophe Hioco is located in the heart of Paris in the 17th arrondissement near the Parc Monceau, it's just a 3-minute walk from the Musée Cernuschi. It takes pride in its unfaltering focus on the originality, provenance and authenticity of the pieces it acquires.

This requires extreme specialization. And so Galerie Hioco has focused its expertise on Hindu and Buddhist and Jain Indian sculptures, especially that from the major artistic periods: Gupta (4th-6th c), Pâla (8th-12th c, Bihâr region) and Chola sculpture.

Vietnamese art also plays a major role in the collection, with two main fields: extremely rare bronzes from the Đông Sơn culture and ceramics from the 1st to 6th centuries as well as the Ly and Trần dynasties.

It is through participating in the world's most prestigious international art shows that Galerie Christophe Hioco has become a respected resource sought out by a vast number of collectors and experts:

- Biennale des Antiquaires de Paris;
- Asian Art in London, 31 October - 9 November, 2013;
- Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts fair - BRAFA, 25 January - 2 February, 2014;
- Asia Week New York, 14 - 22 March, 2014.



Above all else, Christophe Hioco has been a passionate collector. His unbridled enthusiasm for antiques stretches as far back as he can remember. He became interested in Asian art more than twenty years ago when his career with J.P. Morgan gave him the opportunity to live in Asia, first in Tokyo and later in Singapore. That is where he became knowledgeable about Eastern Asia and India, confirming his expertise in ancient art by numerous trips throughout the region.

Then nearly ten years ago, in London, he decided to give his life over to his passion and work in antiques while continuing as a collector as well. Which is why all the pieces presented by Galerie Christophe Hioco were initially acquired through the eyes of a collector, and applying the same stringent rules of selection used by the world's leading museums. Careful attention is paid to the originality, quality, provenance and authenticity of pieces acquired. 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. Buying pieces from Western collections, some built up several decades ago, is an extra guarantee of their excellent provenance.

The 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.

Buddhist Reliquary Stupa

Schist

Ancient region of Gandhara

2nd - 3rd 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 Shakyamuni. Each deity is seated in the lotus position in dhyanasana meditation. Both are the image of the Gandhara 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 harmika 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 stupas in various regions of India. Under the reign of Ashoka, the great protector of Buddhism who ruled during the 3rd century B.C., the cult of the stupas grew, with worshipers circling clockwise around them.

A stupa 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. Gandhara stupas 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.

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.



Head of a Man

Marble

Southern Central Asia, Hellenistic

1st - 2nd century

Height: 22 cm or 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

Alexander the Great's megalomaniac push to extend his empire to the East famously ended in the vast steppes and valleys of Southern Central Asia. A number of isolated Greek settlements have been founded in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE, a colorful blend of trade outposts and fortified cities, as Ai Khanoum in Northern Afghanistan and numerous settlements along the

Amu Darya river, the Oxus of ancient times, nowadays flowing through Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Transoxiana, as this easternmost province of the Greek empire was named, became a melting pot of cultures until, in the 2nd century, the Kushans took control and the Greek influence rapidly vanished – not without leaving its imprint on the art of Gandhara.



Marble was one of the preferred mediums for Greek artists and not unsurprisingly a number of provincial Greek and Hellenistic sculptures, either imported, but mostly carved from local marble have been found in the various sites of Transoxiana. The head of a Man described here purportedly came from this area. The masculine facial features, the cropped hair and naturalistic appearance suggest that we look at a Hellenistic portrait of a man which might have been produced as a part of a grave stone.

Provenance: Private Belgian collection.



Buddha and Bodhisattvas

Terracotta
Eastern India
Gupta period, 5th – 6th century
Height: 49 cm or 19 ¾ in

Numerous fragmentary Gupta period terracottas have been discovered in early sites in Bangladesh and Eastern India. However, complete sculptures as this masterfully modeled relief are exceedingly rare. Its shape suggests that it was once enshrined into a brick wall. The subject of a Seated Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas was probably meant to be installed inside of a temple, rather than outside.



The stylistic proximity of this sculpture to the iconic Sarnath Buddha is simply perplexing. Sarnath played a pivotal model role in fashioning the Gupta period temples in Eastern India and Bangladesh. Rarely, however, do we encounter in Eastern India such a sublime image which appear to be right out of Sarnath, one of the most sacred Buddhist sites during the Gupta empire.

Buddha Shakyamuni sits in the cross-legged meditation posture, both arms raised at slightly differing angles, which makes it difficult to guess the actual mudra the hands performed. In all its details the Buddha radiates the serenity and tranquility of the classical Sarnath image. The Buddha is flanked by two Bodhisattvas, both carrying fly-whisks. The figure on the left holds a rosary in his raised left hand, indicating that Lokeshvara is Bodhisattva of Compassion is depicted here. To the proper left of the Buddha, a Bodhisattva with different hairdo is holding an object in his left hand which we might interpret as a vajra; this might indicate that Vajrapani is the subject.

The sculpture is in a remarkably well-preserved and almost complete condition as a CT scan proves. The original fine top slip of the terracotta is well-preserved. The panel was broken across from the top right to the bottom left. Hands and nose of the Buddha were missing; the nose has been restored. Smaller areas of the hair curls of the central image have been restored and stabilized; eyes, lips and ears are all in original condition. The Bodhisattva to the Buddha's proper left is entirely in its original condition.

The refinement of this virtually complete sculpture offers us a rare glimpse into what the finest of Gupta terracotta art has looked like. Its superlative quality makes the panel a highly important contribution to the very small corpus of the finest known Gupta period sculptures in this medium.

Provenance: Private Collection, Hong Kong, acquired in 1990.
TL-Analysis (Oxford Authentication Ltd.), sample no. N110m56.
CT-Scan (Dr. Marc Ghysels, Brussels), Certificate 101109-1.

Vincent Lefèvre et Marie-Françoise Boussac, Chefs-d'œuvre du delta du Gange – Collections des musées du Bangladesh, Paris, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, 2007.

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.



Standing Ganesha

Buff sandstone
Northern Central India
10th century
Height: 41 cm or 16 ¼ in

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



This exquisitely carved Ganesha stands in a relaxed tribhanga posture between two round, decorated columns. His head is charmingly tilt sideways as if he is eyeing the bowl of delicious sweets in his lower left hand. In his upper left hand Ganesha gracefully raises his broken tusk. The upper right holds a radish (mulaka), while a battle-axe (paras'u) is dangling from his lower right hand's wrist. Next to his left leg, a rat, Ganesha's mount, curiously raises its head. The beautiful contrast between the animated central figure and the massive columns evokes the remarkable grace and liveliness for which the finest of Northern Central Indian medieval sculpture is renowned.

In India, Ganesha 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. This sculpture was very likely placed at the side of a temple's entrance gate.

Provenance: Private Belgian collection, acquired in the 1980s.

Paul Martin-Dubost, Ganesha, The Enchanter of the three Worlds. Project for Indian Cultural Studies, Publication VI, Mumbai 1997.

Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1988.



Bhairava

Sandstone
India, Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh
Circa 12th century
Height: 81 cm or 32 in

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



Shiva 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 (kapala) and a severed head. It is said to represent one of Brahma's head, which Shiva 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.

Shiva's mount is the bull and sometimes Bhairava's mount is the dog. In this sculpture, there is the bull (Nandi) flanked by apparently two dogs, one licking the blood dripping from Brahma'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, 1980.

Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du Musée Guimet, Trésors du musée Guimet, Paris, 2000, p. 189 – 191.

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



Pair of Jinas

Sandstone
India, Tamil Nadu
10th - 12th century
Height: 75 cm or 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

These two fragments clearly came from the same piece and represent two Tirthankaras. The iconography concerning these spiritual guides, defined around the 5th century during the Gupta period, depicts almost all of them with the same characteristics.



These are shown as naked men standing with their arms at their sides. Their powerful torso only bears one jewel. The lines of their body are fluid and the flesh appears firm and smooth. Here, each of the figures stands on a pedestal borne by two lions and with a triple dais overhead.

Surrounding them are different carved scenes representing ascetics, worshipers and even elephants mounted by their mahouts. The rich details and delicacy of this sculpture are typically Indian. Such artwork is found throughout Indian statues, whether they be Hindu, Buddhist or Jainist.

Only one symbol of lanchan at the foot of each Tirthankara, makes identification possible. The figure on the left is probably Bhagavan Naminath, the conch shell indicating a period of his life when he blew into an identical shell.

The other Tirthankara is more difficult to identify. It could be Bhagavan Padmaprabh, whose symbol is a flower or a bird, or else Bhagavan Anantnath, whose lanchan is a falcon, or perhaps even Bhagavan Shreyansnath, recognizable by his characteristic eagle.

Emphasizing the concepts of non-violence and karma, Jainism is a religious movement of India whose origins date back to early antiquity. The role of the spiritual leaders of Jainism, called Tirthankaras, is to guide souls toward liberation and a release from the cycle of life and death. There are twenty-four of them.

Provenance: Private collection, France.

Pratapaditya Pal, Indian Sculpture - a catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection, 1988.

Phyllis Granoff, Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, 2010.

Pratapaditya Pal, The Peaceful Liberators, Jain Art from India, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994.



Stele of Vishnu

Sandstone
Northern India
Circa 12th century
Height: 61 cm or 24 ½ in

This richly decorated stele depicts Vishnu, the second god of the Hindu trimurti, surrounded by servants and worshipers. The god is standing in the samapada position. He once had four arms, but only three remain. In his raised right hand, Vishnu holds a mace, remarkably carved and richly decorated. With his lowered right hand, he is making the gesture of giving, or varadamudra. Finally, his lowered left hand holds a conch shell, the symbol of creation and the ritual attribute of the god.



This representation follows the Indian code of beauty, with a strong but supple chest, wide shoulders and a narrow waist. His body is covered with heavy jewelry carved with delicacy, including the Brahma knot. His head is crowned with a royal hairdo, or kirita, also richly decorated and standing out against a lotus-shaped aura.

At the right of Vishnu, at the top of the stele, are Brahma and Sarasvati seated. Brahma is depicted with a round stomach below the primordial three heads of the god.

The rounded shape, the supple positions and angular hips, along with the refined, intricate sense of detail, are all characteristic of the period. The mastery of the craftsmanship makes this stele an exceptional piece that underlines the power of this god.

Provenance: Gordon Rollins Collection, United States, 1960's/1970's.



Stele of Surya

Sandstone

India, Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh

10th - 11th century

Height: 35 cm or 13 7/8 in

This stele depicts Surya, the sun god of the Vedic pantheon. The divinity wears a tall, finely carved crown called karandamukuta. He holds a solar symbol in each hand and is kneeling. The god is wearing sumptuous earrings and a wide necklace. He is depicted in a chariot drawn by seven horses driven across the sky by the charioteer Aruna. Surya is surrounded by his four wives: Dawn and Dusk, Light and Darkness. There are also two Apsara with flower garlands at the top of the stele.



Surya is a Vedic god. Vedaism refers to the aryan civilization, a people organized into castes who imposed their power throughout ancient India through on complex rites based on magic words and gestures. The Vedas are the texts that codify these rites. Their teachings are transmitted from Brahman to Brahman and are considered to be the knowledge revealed to the wise. They are of capital importance in the development of religious and philosophical movements in India.

The temple of Konarak in Orissa is dedicated to Surya. The Bhaja Caves are also one of the oldest representations of the sun god, dating from the 2nd century B.C.E.

Provenance: Private collection, Europe.



Seated Ganesha

Phyllite

Eastern India, Bengal

Pala period, 11th - 12th century

Height: 15 cm or 6 in

Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, son of Shiva and Parvati, is depicted here sitting with one leg tucked under him and the other bent, his foot resting on the ground. This representation is a haut-relief on a black stone stele. The peaked top and base with multiple protrusions are typical of Pala steles from the 11th and 12th centuries. It is not overly ornate, with a delicate, almost bare semi-circular molding to frame the god. It is broken at the top by a branch heavy with fruit.

Ganesha is seated on a throne of two-tiered lotus flowers above a tooth-like pedestal bearing the lizard (godhika) that indicates Parvati in Bengal art.



As usual, Ganesha is depicted with the head of an elephant on the slightly deformed body of a man with short legs and a highly protruding belly. Shown with four arms in this representation, he holds prayer beads and an axe in his right hands (bottom to top). His lower left hand holds a bowl of delicacies (laddus), which he samples with his trunk, and his other hand seems to be holding a horseradish.

Ganesha is crowned with a bun of braided hair (jatama-kuta). His Brahman sacred thread looks like a serpent whose mouth is biting its tail in the center of his belly. Around his head are two clouds with no decoration.

This little stele, in perfect condition, is highly characteristic of the Pala style of the 12th century. In addition, its iconography is particularly rich, which makes this piece even more rare.

A comparable piece, but much larger, can be found in the Varendra Research Museum in Rajshahi and is shown in a work published by the Guimet Museum, "Chefs-d'œuvre du Delta du Gange" ("Masterpieces of the Ganges Delta") by Vincent Lefèvre and Marie-Françoise Boussac.

Provenance: Private Collection France, acquired in the 1980s.

Vincent Lefèvre and Marie-Françoise Boussac, Chefs-d'œuvre du Delta du Gange – Collections des musées du Bangladesh. Paris, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, 2007.

Paul Martin-Dubost, Ganesa, The Enchanter of the three Worlds. Project for Indian Cultural Studies, Publication VI, Mumbai 1997.

Susan L. Huntington, The Pala-Sena Schools of Sculpture. E.J. Brill. 1984.



Stele of Vishnu

Grey schist

India

Pala period, circa 11th century

Height: 94 cm or 37 ½ in

A magnificent representation of Vishnu Vasudeva, supreme god, wearing the royal tiara (kirita). Vishnu can be identified by the symbols he holds in his four hands: the mace in the raised right hand, the chakra in the raised left hand, the lotus in the lowered right hand and the conch in the lowered left hand. The head of the god is surrounded by an oval halo decorated with lotus petals.

To the right of Vishnu is Lakshmi, his wife and the goddess of good fortune, holding a fly-whisk, the symbol of royalty and happiness. To his left is Sarasvati, goddess of knowledge, wisdom and the arts, who can be recognized by the vina.



Vishnu is standing on a pedestal decorated with lotus flowers. On either side of the god are two lions, standing on their hind legs and on the back of a crouching elephant. On the lower part of the stele are Garuda - the half-human, half-bird steed of the god Vishnu - and a female divinity, both worshipping the god. At the top of the stele is the kirtimukha, the mask whose role is to provide magical protection. On either side of this mask are two Apsara with flower garlands.

Vishnu is wearing a long dhoti which falls in parallel folds to his ankles. It is held at the waist by a decorated belt. We can also see the richness and finery of jewellery of unspeakable beauty on his chest, arms and ears. This magnificent stele, still in excellent condition, is admirable for its flowing and elegant composition.

From the 8th to the 12th century, the states of Bengal and Bihar produced sculpture in black and grey stone, essentially Buddhist under the Pala sovereigns (8th to 11th century), then Hindu under the reign of the Sena, of Brahman origin (11th and 12th centuries). It was specifically under the Pala and Sena reigns that the great university of Nalanda reached its peak of glory, attracting thousands of students from numerous countries to the largest religious and scientific teaching complex of its time.

Provenance: Private collection, Austria.

Vincent Lefèvre and Marie-Françoise Boussac, Chefs-d'œuvre du Delta du Gange — Collections des musées du Bangladesh. Paris, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, 2007.

Susan L. Huntington, The Pala-Sena Schools of Sculpture. E.J. Brill. 1984.



Gauri

Phyllite
Eastern India
Pala period, 10th - 11th century
Height: 81 cm or 32 in

The small crocodile on the base identifies this exquisitely carved deity as Gauri, one of the aspects of Shiva's consort Parvati. Often referred to as 'The Glowing One', she is venerated as the epitome of marital fidelity and devotion.



In her upper left hand, the four-armed goddess holds a lotus-flower with a charming little seated Ganesha, one of Par-vati's sons. The upper right hand probably held a lingam, now lost. The sculpture is carved with an extraordinary attention to detail, particularly in the elaborate jatakamukuta and hairdo and the sumptuous jewelry. Most exquisite is the lower pair of earrings with their jewel-spewing makara and the gem-studded tiara with its central medallion depicting the head of Kala, the mythological creature representing time.

Befitting a goddess, Gauri is standing in a regally upright position, her bare upper body that of a young woman in her prime, with full breasts, gently sloping shoulders, a narrow waist, taut belly and wide hips. The sensuousness of the sculpture is enhanced by its smoothly polished surface. Four female figures are graciously positioned around her legs; two elegantly moving ladies stand by her side holding flywhisks while two others are seated at her feet.

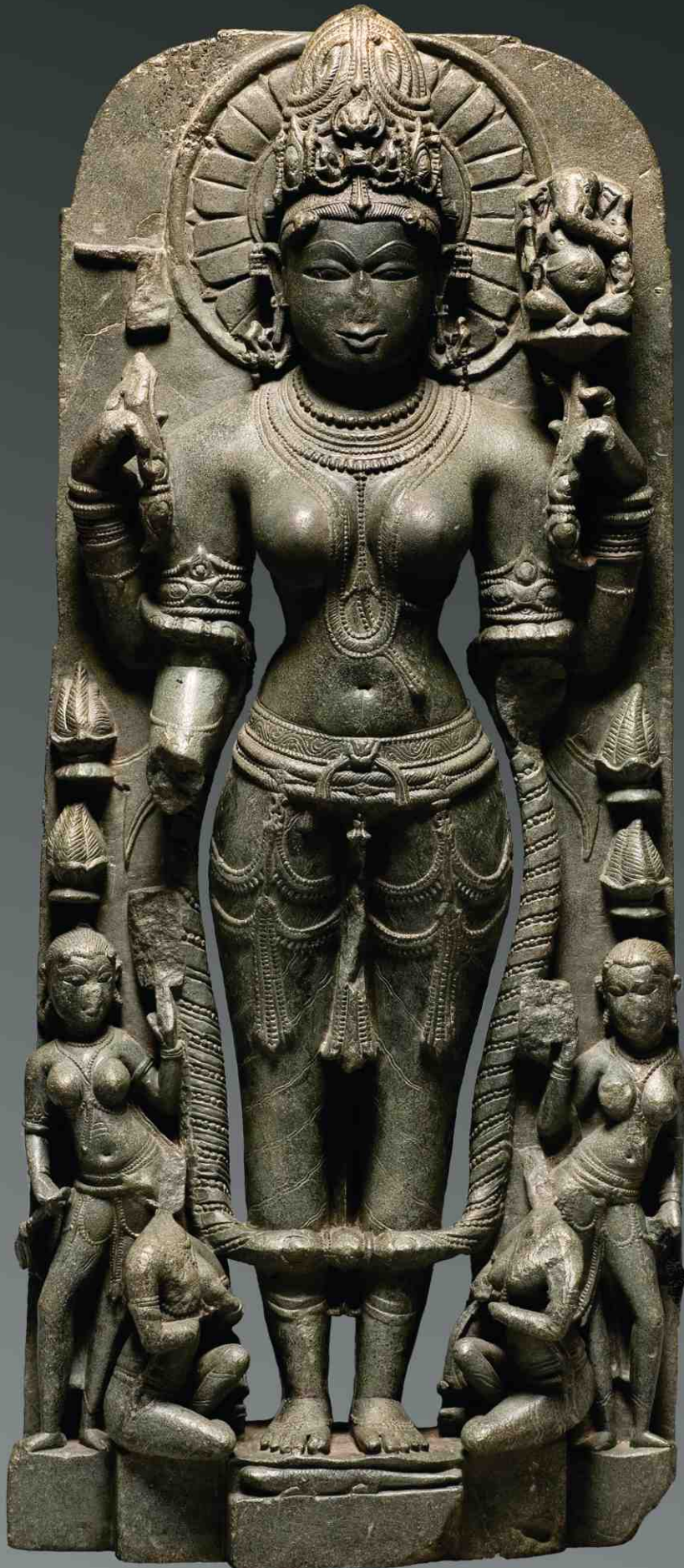
Carved from a very fine durit grey phyllite, the sculpture has developed a slightly greenish surface, a feature that we occasionally find in sculptures from Orissa. A stylistically similar, though less refined Gauri sculpture is in the Dacca Museum.

Provenance: Kunsthandel Lemp, Zurich (late 1960s); Private Collection Germany (until 2012).

Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1929, reprint 2001), plate LXVIII 9b). 110, fig. 1.110.

Vincent Lefèvre and Marie-Françoise Boussac, Chefs-d'œuvre du Delta du Gange — Collections des musées du Bangladesh. Paris, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, 2007.

Susan L. Huntington, The Pala-Sena Schools of Sculpture. E.J. Brill. 1984.



Shiva Dakshinamurti

Granite
South India, Tamil Nadu
Chola period, circa 13th century
Height: 90 cm or 35 ½ in

Shiva is the powerful god of destruction and creation. His wisdom is ultimate truth and awareness, beyond the world. Shiva Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti is venerated as the supreme master of knowledge, scripture, arts and science. In Hindu temples, Dakshinamurti faces south, as it is the direction of death, change and transcendence. This aspect of the god is appreciated by students of the arts and sciences and is still the object of a quite active cult today.



This sculpture displays an exceedingly rich iconography, further highlighted by its excellent condition. Shiva is portrayed seated under a banyan tree in the Himalayas. He is seated in the Virasana position, his left leg resting on his right thigh and his right foot crushing Apasmrapurusa, a sort of gnome who personifies human ignorance. On the base of the stele, Shiva is surrounded by two ascetics, called zri, to whom he is teaching the sastra. There is also considerable iconography concerning his four hands, and the quality of the sculpture makes the details stand out.

The three eyes of Shiva represent the sun, the moon and fire, the three sources of light that illuminate the earth, the sphere of space and the sky. Shiva's lower right hand makes the gesture known as jnanamudra. In his raised right hand is a mata with a snake image above it. In his lower left hand is a manuscript, while his raised left hand holds a flaming torch, both symbolizing knowledge.

Emphasizing his ascetic nature, the god is adorned with flowers over his ears, with necklaces, bracelets and ornaments, and the yajnopavita (sacred cord). Shiva wears a kirtimukha earring in his right ear and an open circular earring in his left earlobe. Thick, rounded sculptural forms were dictated by the nature of the very hard stone. Typical for stone sculptures of the Chola period is the use of granite, which lends the piece a feeling of immortality.

The Chola are a very ancient dynasty of southern India mentioned in the Mahābhārata, which gave its name to the Coromandel coast of Tamil Nadu. Little is known about the first Chola, whose traditions and literature have handed down to us a few approximate dates and names. The Chola developed a particular art style in the field of statues and lost-wax cast bronzes.

Provenance: Private collection, US.

Pratapaditya Pal, The Sensuous Immortals. A Selection of Sculptures from the Pan-Asian Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The MITT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England.

Pratapaditya Pal, The Image of Grace and Wisdom: Dakshinamurti of Shiva in Oriental Art, vol. XXVII, no. 3, London, 1982.

Amina Okada, Sculptures indiennes du musée Guimet, Trésors du musée Guimet, Paris, 2000.



Figure of Vishnu

Bronze
South India, Tamil Nadu
Chola period, circa 12th century
Height: 59 cm or 23 ¼ in

The second god of the Hindu Trimurti is standing in samapada on a circular lotus base supported by a waisted square plinth with prongs on either side. He is holding the chakra and conch in his upraised hands and with his lower right hand in abhaya mudra. He is wearing a beautiful long dhoti with rippling folds secured by a belt with lion-headed clasp, sashes, armlets and necklaces.



His face is featured with full lips and almond-eyes and surmounted by a conical headdress with escaping locks visible on verso. His jatas is adorned with lotus blossoms. Its back is particularly well represented with beautiful shape and details.

As mentioned, its provenance is exceptional as this Vishnu was a gift from Thomas Aroul to Governor Bonvin's wife, Yvonne Marcelle Bonvin, during Governor Bonvin's term in Pondicherry between 1938 and 1945.

After completing his studies, Louis Bonvin entered the French colonial administration and in 1938 he became Governor of the French Establishment in India. He lived in Pondicherry, known as the "French Riviera of the East" until 1945. During his time in India, Governor Bonvin was impacted by several events associated with WWII. In 1941, the Vichy Decree stripped him of his French nationality; in 1942, he was sentenced to death in absentia, his property was confiscated, and his wife was condemned to force labor. As a result, Governor Bonvin became an important French Resistant, was awarded the Order of the British Empire and General de Gaulle gave official recognition to his achievements. Governor Bonvin and General de Gaulle enjoyed a close friendship extending beyond their political relationship. In 1946, just before his death, he named de Gaulle the godfather of his last son.

Provenance: Louis Bonvin, Governor of French establishment in India, acquired between 1938 - 1945 and then by descent. Christie's, New York, 20 March 2009, lot 1293.

For a closely related example in the National Museum, New Delhi, see V. Dehejia, Chola, Sacred Bronzes of Southern India.

S. Rathnasabapathy, Bronze Sculptures, The Thanjavour Art Gallery, 1982.

C. Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, 1983.

Yvonne Robert Gaebelé, Histoire de Pondichery de l'an 1000 à nos jours, 1960.



Vaishnavite Saint

**Bronze,
Southern India
Vijayanagara period, 13th - 14th century
Height: 64 cm or 25 ¼ in**

This solid cast bronze dates from the Vijayanagara period, the dynasty which ruled Southern India after the demise of the Cholas in the early part of the 13th century, and which continued its dominance until the mid 17th century. The quality of the casting, the fine modeling and the heavy form of the base with its double lotus pedestal on which the saint stands are all indicative of an early date. The bare-footed figure stands upright but leaning slightly backwards, his left leg planted slightly forward and bent at the knee his weight resting on his right foot. He wears a short, thigh-length dhoti, clasped at the waist with an elaborate belt. He is bare-chested and wears basubands and a long necklace. His arms are bent at the elbow, his hands

raised, palms facing outwards with the tips of his middle fingers resting on the tips of his thumbs in shuni-mudra – bestowing patience and discernment. His hair is pulled back from his face and piled in a high chignon on the top of his head. On his forehead the saint displays a trident shaped mark - an urdhva pundram or upright pun-dram - worn by devotees of Vishnu



With its lack of identifying attributes it is difficult to give an exact name to this particular saint but it may represent Kaustubha who wears a gem necklace. He belongs to a class of poet saints known as the Alvars who were worshipped in Vaishnavite temples. The twelve Alvars lived between the 6th and 9th centuries, writing songs and poetry and immersing themselves in devotional practice. In many ways their break from orthodoxy and the caste system puts them in the tradition of Krishna devotees with their love of song and immersion in devotion to their god Lord Vishnu.

Provenance: Private European collection, acquired in 1972.

Dehejia, Chola, Sacred Bronzes of Southern India.

S. Rathnasabapathy, Bronze Sculptures, The Thanjavour Art Gallery, 1982.

C. Sivaramamurti, South Indian Bronzes, 1983.

Yvonne Robert Gaebelé, Histoire de Pondichery de l'an 1000 à nos jours, 1960.



Ritual Crown

Gilt copper
Nepal
15th - 16th century
Height: 30 cm or 11 ⅞ in

A very rare headdress worn by a Buddhist celebrant (vajracarya), traditionally decorated with jewels depicting the five transcendent Buddhas and by various Buddhist symbols. With the five Tathagata symbolizing the five directions, the fact that the celebrant would wear such a tiara indicates his merging with the very essence of Buddha, and therefore with the cosmos.



The structure of the object is divided into three degressive parts that correspond to an archaic form of yogic topknot that can be connected with Mount Meru, the axis of the universe. The top half of the vajra symbolizes the perfect execution by the celebrant of the meditations that activate the body's knots of energy (chakras), up to the top of the tiara. Together it can be seen as a type of mandala.

According to recent research, this type of crown is connected with Vajrasattva, and the celebrant wearing it would be linked to the god. Among the small number of ancient tiaras, this one falls within a rare chronological group that includes three examples from the 12th and 13th centuries conserved by the Musée Guimet, the Los Angeles County Museum and the Zimmerman collection; most of the others are relatively more recent, dating from the 17th to the 19th century.

The blank bands at the base of the object and on certain ornamental plates were probably embellished with semi-precious stones initially. As is frequent with this type of object, certain plates were replaced as time went by.

Provenance: Private French collection, acquired in the 1980's.

Dr. Pratapaditya Pal. Art of Nepal - A catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection. L.A. 1985, Fig. S.27, pp 106-107.

Huntington & Bengdel. The Circle of Bliss - Buddhist Meditational Art. Columbus 2003, No. 60, 61, 62, pp 224-229.

Gilles Béguin. A propos d'une tiare d'officiant bouddhique. Musée Guimet in "La revue du Louvre et des Musées de France, XXXIV, 1984, 3, PP 176-183, ill.



Figure of Lakshminarayana

Gilt copper
Nepal
Circa 14th century
Height: 16 cm or 6 ⅜ in

Rare androgynous representation depicting Vishnu, the second god of the Hindu Trimurti under its form of narayana, and Lakshmi, his beautiful and graceful consort. She is associated with abundance of water and fertility. The combination of the two gods symbolizes the non-duality of the divine principle. Here the deity is depicted standing in samabhanga and has eight arms.



The term "narayana" is defined as the abode of man or knowledge but can also take the meaning of "the one standing upon the waters."

Like other androgynous figures, the two deities are not represented in the same way: the single breast on the left side indicates the duality of the figure as well as the headdress that is divided down in the middle with unmatched earrings and different fabric of the garment.

The God Vishnu holds his four usual attributes: the conch, lotus, mace and disc. Among the identifiable attributes of Lakshmi, we can recognize the pustaka (manuscript), lotus, mirror and kalasha (pot).

The smooth and athletic body is characterized by a small waist highlighting the beautiful patterned hips. This figure is quite the style of the 14th century, which is defined by particularly larger face and shoulders, firm legs and at that time the wheel is held in the highest hand. Nancy Tingley, in "Celestial Realms, the Art of Nepal" described an extremely similar bronze coming from a Californian collection, see number 10 page 58 and 59.

Provenance: Private collection, Netherlands, acquired in the early 1980s.

Stella Kramrisch, The Art of Nepal, n° 73.

Nancy Tingley, Celestial Realms, The Art of Nepal from California collections, 2012, p. 58 - 59, n° 10.

Suzanne Held et Gilles Béguin, Népal, Vision d'un Art Sacré, Hermé, 2002.

Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, Himalayas, an Aesthetic Adventure, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2003.



Srivijaya Buddha

Bronze
Peninsular Thailand or Malaysia
7th - 8th century
Height: 13 cm or 5 ¼ in

The religious art of the mid first millennium CE in Southeast Asia was primarily based on Indian prototypes, both Buddhist and Hindu. Sculptures of the Buddha were depicted in standing and seated positions. A particular type of Buddha, apparently popular from the 6th to the 8th century, is seated in the so-called “European posture”. This rare and well-preserved, solid cast bronze sculpture belongs to this group, examples of which were found in various early Buddhist sites in Mainland Southeast Asia. Purportedly discovered on the Malay Peninsula, this piece might have been cast in the vast domain of the Kingdom of Srivijaya, which at times spanned the region from Sumatra to Peninsular Thailand.



Buddha Shakyamuni sits with legs pendant (in Sanskrit: bhadrāsana) on a now-lost pedestal, his right hand raised in the gesture of teaching (vitarkamudra), his left resting in his lap and holding the end of his long robe. A very fine and early stone sculpture in this posture, dated 6th - 7th century, was discovered in the Mekong delta of South Vietnam.

Scholars are discussing various theories about where this image might have originated. Buddhas in the bhadrāsana posture are rather uncommon in India. Therefore more recent studies suggest that this iconographic convention might have been brought to Southeast Asia from China during the early Tang period (618 – 907), possibly by travelling Chinese pilgrims on their way to or from India. This small and precious image is a suitable reminder that long-distance trade and religion often went hand in hand in the 1st millennium CE – and that a global perspective is not an invention of the 21st century.

Provenance: Private Belgian Collection, acquired in 1990.

Nancy Tingley, *Arts of Ancient Viet Nam – From River Plain to Open Sea* (New York and Houston: Asia Society and The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2009), p. 148-149, fig. 40.

Nicolas Revire, *New Perspectives on the Origin and Spread of Bhadrāsana Buddhas throughout Southeast Asia (7th – 8th Centuries)*, in: Tjoo-Bonatz, Mai Lin et al. (eds), *Connecting Empires and States. Selected Papers from the 13th Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Volume 2* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), p. 127-143.



Dvaravati Buddha

Limestone

Thailand

Mon-Dvaravati period, 7th - 8th century

Height: 39 cm or 15 ½ in

The Dvaravati kingdom flourished from the 6th to 12th centuries in what is now Thailand, but due to absence or lack of written records, little of its culture and style is known. It was not until 1959 when Pierre Dupont's book *L'archéologie mène du Dvaravati* was published, that there was an extensive chronological study of the Buddhist sculptures of Dvaravati.



This remarkable bluish-grey limestone head of Buddha is a monumental example of the finest art of this period. The elegant facial features with high cheekbones, broad nose and full lips beautifully reflect the ethnic traits of the Mon people, while emphasizing the perfect symmetry of the oval shape of the face. The unique curved line created by the joined eyebrows as well as the double curvilinear outline of the eyes and lips display Dvaravati's distinctive style while the snail-shaped curls of the hair with the ushnisha and the down-cast eyes show a strong Indian influence, particularly from the Gupta period.

The calmness of the Buddha's expression, with his serene smile, displays a moment of sublime peace. The artist beautifully captured Buddha's compassionate spirit while subtly displaying his quiet strength through the strong shape of the head with its structured cheekbones and refined jaw line.

Provenance: Private collection, Hong Kong, acquired in 1962/63.

CT-Scan (Dr. Marc Ghysels, Brussels), Certificate 070620-1.

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

Pierre Dupont, L'archéologie mène du Dvaravati, Pub. École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XLI, Paris, 1959.

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.

Denise Patry Leidy, Treasures of Asian Art: The Asia Society's Mr. & Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, New York, The Asia Society Galleries, 1994, p. 94, fig. 77.

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



Gold Crown

Gold repoussée
Vietnam
Circa 8th - 9th century
Height: 28 cm or 11 ½ in

Some of the most striking religious images of the Cham Kingdom in Vietnam are heads of Shiva made of precious metals such as gold, silver, or electrum (a naturally occurring gold-silver alloy). Referred to as kosha, they were produced as devotional objects to cover stone linga in Hindu temples and were mentioned in Cham texts. Only a few examples have survived over the centuries.



From chance finds we know that at least some of the kosha were adorned with additional jewelry, in particular an elaborate crown, ear ornaments and a pectoral-shaped necklace from high-carat gold is by far the largest known example. Its design replicates the floral and expressive patterns on bas reliefs of Cham temples, in particular of the contemporaneous site of Dong Duong in Central Vietnam.

Provenance: Private Belgian collection, acquired in the 1980s.

Richard A. Pegg (ed.) Passions for Form – Selections of Southeast Asian Art from the MacLean Collection (Chicago and Honolulu: MacLean Collection and Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2007), cat. 29, p. 76-77.

Heidi Tan (ed.), Vietnam – from Myth to Modernity (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2008), p. 84.



Head of Shiva

Sandstone
Vietnam
Champa, circa 10th century
Height: 40 cm or 15 ¾ in

The god is striking in his serene aspect, which does not exclude his fully assumed strength. His three-tiered headdress style and his earrings salute his divine aspect. The third eye underlines his identity. The facial traits, typical of the Tra Kieu style, enhance the tranquil force that his powerful head - particularly successfully rendered by the use of *ronde-bosse* - imposes. These Shiva images were usually carved in the tympanum, over the entrance door of the temple.



Champa is a state in the Indian sphere that existed in the eastern part of today's Vietnam, between, to the north, the Gate of Annam and, to the south, the latitude of Phan Thiet. In the Indian sphere because it was India with its merchants and adventurers, but also very probably its exiled nobles that brought to Champa its language (Sanskrit) and its religions (Hinduism and Buddhism), and therefore its way of thinking. Champa as a state, emerged in the 4th century. Ceaselessly in conflict in the north with the Chinese and then the Vietnamese (who regained independence from China as of 968) and in the west with the Khmers, Champa built itself up as small principalities, shaped by the particular geography of coastal plains.

Progressively, the country was absorbed by Vietnam during the "march to the south" (*nam tien*) and the Cham capital, Vijaya, was definitively conquered in 1471. Champa continued to be amputated little by little and, in 1832, its definite annexation by Vietnam was pronounced by Emperor Minh Mang. Of this tormented history, we are left today with highly original towers or "*kalan*", in ruins, and magnificent sculptures, bearing witness to a profoundly original style. Cham sculpture became illustrious, over time, in a variety of styles that are clearly identified today thanks largely to the pioneering work of erudite Frenchmen. Parmentier (1871-1949), Stern (1895-1979) and Boisselier (1912-1996) were able to lay the groundwork for increasingly precise dating, that the work of the contemporary Vietnamese school has completed.

A major exhibit at the Guimet Museum of Asian Art in Paris, under the auspices of its curator Pierre Baptiste: Treasures of the Art of Vietnam, Champa sculpture, 5th to 15th centuries, was held from 12 October 2005 to 9 February 2006 (see Baptiste Zéphir 2005).

Provenance: French collector who lived in Dalat and Saïgon, Vietnam, acquired between 1920 and 1940 and then by descent.

Pierre Baptiste et Thierry Zéphir, Trésors d'Art du Vietnam, La Sculpture du Champa, Musée Guimet, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2005.

Philippe Stern, L'Art du Champa (ancien Annam) et son évolution, Toulouse 1942.

Le Musée de Sculpture Cam de Đà Nẵng, AFAO – EFEO, 1997.

Nancy Tingley, Arts of Ancient Vietnam: From River Plain to Open Sea, Asia Society, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Drums

Bronze

Vietnam

Dong Son's culture, 5th - 1st century BC

Height: 20 cm or 8 in and 14 cm or 5 ¾ in

These rare small drums with its magnificent green patina are without a doubt the most emblematic object of the Đông Sơn culture.

The centre of its plateau bears an eight-point star, in relief, which corresponds to the area which the drummer struck and also symbolized the sun. Chevrons and dotted circles nestle between the branches of the star. On a wider concentric band four stylized birds are found, with very long beaks, that can be considered to be waders. The outer edge of the plateau is composed of two rows of vertical crosshatchings, geometrical motifs that are typical of Đông Sơn culture. The body of the drum presents three sections, including a flaring base, a median zone with straight sides and a convex upper section called a torus. Vertical and diagonal crosshatching decorates the body of the object except for the foot, that has no decoration. Four double handles are attached to the torus and the middle section of the drum. This description corresponds to the category of drums called Type I, according to the classification by Franz Heger in 1902 – and which still holds sway today. (See Crick, 2006, p. 39-45, for a description of different categories of drums).

Identified in 1924, the Đông Sơn culture was named after a site on the banks of the Red River where its first traces were discovered at least 600 years B.C. Highly sophisticated bronze casting skills were developed, mostly for the creation of drums, recipients, arms and ornaments. People of the Đông Sơn culture placed great importance in rites and ceremonies, and most burial objects had both a practical function and a ritualistic symbolism. Clear proof of cultural and economic exchanges, Đông Sơn art not only influenced the Chinese provinces on which it bordered, but also a wide geographic zone that included Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia up to the eastern Sunda Islands. This Đông Sơn culture progressively morphed into Vietnamese art with Chinese tendencies, called Giao-Chi (or Han-Viet) as of the 1st century A.D.

Provenance: Lan Huong Pham collection, Switzerland.

X-ray analysis by the CIRAM.

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

Monique Crick (Ed), Viêt Nam, Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi, Paris Musées et Editions Findakly, Paris, 2006.

Nancy Tingley, Arts of Ancient Vietnam, From River Plain to Open Sea, Asia Society, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Short Sword

**Bronze
Vietnam**

Dong Son Culture, circa 2nd century BC – 2nd century AD

Length: 40 cm or 15 ¾ in

This short sword with an anthropomorphic handle is exceptional in more than one way: in its rarity while we only know a few ones in the Dong Son sculpture and by the sculpture that ornaments its hilt. Archaeologists are used to call this short sword as "Nui Nua sword", because a very similar Dongsonian one was found in Nua mount of Thanh Hoa province. It is now exhibited in the Museum of Thanh Hóa, a city in the North Central Coast region of Vietnam.



The rarest feature of this sword is its representation of a woman, identifiable by her long sarong. Men, for their part, wore short loincloths. These anthropomorphic pieces effectively played a precious role in furthering knowledge of apparel in times past. The sarong is decorated with spirals and hatching, both very typical of Dong Son bronzes. One can also distinguish a belt with a band of cloth. Another interesting detail is the axe held in the right hand. If women are regularly represented in Dong Son iconography, if only because of the role they played throughout the centuries – let us mention the legend of Au Co, spouse of King Long Quan, considered being the founding and protecting mother of the country – it is very rare to find feminine figures carrying weapons.

Even if there is a heavy archaeological patina, the face is highly expressive. The details are finely worked and great emotion streams out, through the wide eyes that dominate a narrow face, which inscribes itself harmoniously in the lines of the sword. Jewellery was very important for Dong Son men as much as for women. This woman is wearing a heavy necklace and large earrings. Even more impressive is her high headdress in a cone shape that brings to light the great mastery of the Dong Son bronze smiths.

The force of the object and the richness of its decoration suggests a ritual (or sacrificial) use during important events or ceremonies, that seem to have been very frequent in Dong Son society, if we judge by the numerous representations of dancers and musicians on ritual objects such as drums, situlas and knives.

Provenance: Private French collection.

X-ray analysis by the CIRAM.

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

Monique Crick (Ed), Viêt Nam, Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi, Paris Musées et Editions Findakly, Paris, 2006.

Nancy Tingley, Arts of Ancient Vietnam, From River Plain to Open Sea, Asia Society, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Charles Higham, The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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



Breast Plate

Bronze

Vietnam

Dong Son's culture, 5th century BC - 1st century AD

Height: 19 cm or 7 ½ 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 20th 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: French collector who lived in Dalat and Saïgon, Vietnam, acquired between 1920 and 1940 and then by descent.

Jean-Paul Barbier-Mueller, Rêves de Collection, Sept millénaires de sculptures inédites – Europe, Asie, Afrique, Somogy Editions d'Art, Musée Barbier-Mueller, Paris, Genève, 2003, p. 72.

Nguyen Viet (et alii), "Situles en bronze de Đông Sơn" in Arts & Culture, Somogy, Editions d'Art, Publications des musées Barbier-Mueller, Paris, Genève, 2006, p. 234 - 271.

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

Monique Crick (Ed), Viêt Nam, Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi, Paris Musées et Editions Findakly, Paris, 2006.

NancyTingley, Arts of Ancient Vietnam : From River Plain to Open Sea, Asia Society, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Bronze ritual axe-head

Bronze

Vietnam

Dong Son's culture, 3rd century BC - 1st century AD

Height: 13 cm or 5 ¼ in

An outstanding bronze axe-head with an incised relief design of a bird or other animal on the side of the blade and parallel lines that extend around the back edge; the rear section with two round terminals resembling an open mouth, with a tubular handle for the insertion of a shaft.

For four similar axe-heads in Vietnamese museums, see cat. n° 42 - 44, p. 70 - 71 in Luu Tran Tieu et al (eds.), *Vietnamese Antiquities*, Hanoi: Department of Conservation and Museology - National Museum of Vietnamese History, 2003.

Bronze spear-head

Bronze

Vietnam

Dong Son's culture, 3rd century BC - 1st century AD

Height: 21 cm or 8 ⅜ in

A rare and important bronze spear-head with a deep green patina and relief designs of feather men and unidentified quadrupeds on both sides of the blade, with a tubular handle for the insertion of a shaft.

For a similar spear-head in the Hanoi Museum, see cat. n° 80, p. 84 in Luu Tran Tieu et al (eds.), *Vietnamese Antiquities*, Hanoi: Department of Conservation and Museology - National Museum of Vietnamese History, 2003.

Provenance: Private U.S. West Coast collection. Purchased in London from Alexander Goetz, 1995. On loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts from 1996 to 2010.

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

Monique Crick (Ed), Viêt Nam, Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi, Paris Musées et Editions Findakly, Paris, 2006.

Nancy Tingley, Arts of Ancient Vietnam, From River Plain to Open Sea, Asia Society, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Ewer

Bronze

Vietnam

Giao-Chi era, 1st century BC - 3rd century AD

Height: 28 cm or 11 ½ in

This pitcher with its spout shaped like a makara head from the Giao-Chi era (1st to 3rd 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.

X-ray analysis by the CIRAM.

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



Imperial Dragon Panel

Terracotta (unfired clay)
Northern Vietnam
Ly dynasty, 11th century
Height: 72 cm or 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

The Chinese occupation of Northern Vietnam, commenced during the Eastern Han period, finally ended with the establishment of the Ly dynasty in Northern Vietnam in the mid-11th century. The remains of the long searched-for Imperial Palace of the Ly dynasty were finally unearthed in the late 20th century in Central Hanoi during excavations for a new parliament building. Amongst the stunning assemblage of finds were numerous ornamental tiles, panels and other architectural elements, often worked from unfired clay. A number of these depict a pair of three-clawed, snake-like Ly dragons chasing a flaming pearl, strikingly similar to ornaments found in 11th century temples and pagodas in the northern Vietnamese provinces surrounding Hanoi.



Most of these elements are of smaller size, such as an example carved from sandstone discovered at Phat Tich pagoda in Ha Bac province in Northern Vietnam, which was founded in 1057 (see Heidi Tan: Vietnam – From Myth to Modernity, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore 2008, p. 76). The monumental example described here is one of the largest examples in existence. A few other large sculptures and architectural elements of this type are in the provincial museums of Ninh Binh and Thanh Hoa as well as in private collections.

Provenance: Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong (since 1970s); Private Collection Hong Kong (since early 1980s).

A very similar architectural element is published in Richard A. Pegg (ed.): Passion for Form – Selections of Southeast Asian Art from the MacLean Collection, MacLean Collection and Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2007, cat. 51.



Cover:

Figure of Vishnu

Bronze

South India, Tamil Nadu

Chola period, circa 12th century

Height: 59 cm or 23 ¼ in

Back cover:

Ritual Crown

Gilt copper

Nepal

15th – 16th century

Height: 30 cm or 11 ⅞ in

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