

renaud montméat  
a r t d ' a s i e

36, rue étienne marcel  
75002 paris  
montmeat-asianart.com



Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian Art

renaud montméat  
a r t d ' a s i e

36, rue étienne marcel  
75002 paris  
+33 6 17 61 21 60  
montmeatartdasie@gmail.com  
montmeat-asianart.com

TEFAF  
MAASTRICHT  
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## MAITREYA

Grey schist

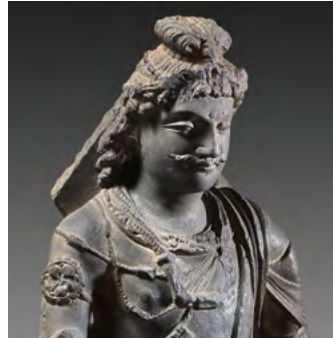
Height: 60 cm

3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

Pakistan, Ancient region of Gandhara

Provenance: French diplomat collection, 1950-60's

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00120100



Unlike the Buddha represented dressed with the monastic robes, the Gandharan Bodhisattvas wear the sumptuous classical clothes of north Indian princes of the Kusana period. Here,

Maitreya is adorned with a wide torque, elaborate necklaces, a string of amulets and floral armlets. His long hair is fastened into two loops on top of his head. The lower arms are missing but typically Maitreya holds a *kundika* or water flask in the left hand and his right hand is in abhaya mudra.

Bodhisattva is the second most popular image in Gandharan Buddhist art after Buddha himself, revealing a shift in Buddhist practice that emphasized the veneration of bodhisattvas. In Mahayana Buddhism, this saintly being is capable of achieving enlightenment and thus saving himself from the cycle of rebirth, voluntarily renounces Nirvana in order to help others find the right path to salvation.

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For a very similar Maitreya see:

Kurt A. Behrendt, *The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York. p. 54, Cat. 42.





## MANJUSHRI

Bronze

Height: 20,5 cm

9<sup>th</sup> century

Central Java

Provenance: Private collection, USA

Marcel Nies Oriental Art, Antwerpen, Belgium, 2013

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00070163

Registered in the documentation Centre for Ancient Indonesian Art, Amsterdam.

Seated in royal ease on a double lotus throne, Manjushri is lavishly adorned with a necklace, beads bracelets, and a three elements tiara. He wears a *dhoti* secured by a decorated belt.

The large radiant mandorla with wavy and beaded motifs surrounds the god.

Performing the gift gesture with his right hand, his left is pressed downward onto the seat, holding the stem of a lotus flower supporting the Book of Transcendent Wisdom, the *Prajñāparamita Sutra*. This attribute, along with the presence of Akshobhya resting on his head, identifies him as the bodhisattva of Wisdom. The style of this Central Javanese bronze is highly influenced by Northeastern Indian Pala art<sup>1</sup>

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1. Lerner and Kossak, *The Lotus Transcendent, Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg collection*  
See also: A.J. Bernet Kempers, *The bronzes of Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese Art*, 1933, fig. 30 and 31.







## HEAD OF BUDDHA

Dark grey schist

Height: 21 cm

3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

Ancient region of Gandhara, Pakistan

Provenance: US Private collection, 1984

Art Loss Register Certificate: S0010696

This beautiful Buddha head conveys the perfect harmony between physical beauty and spiritual inspiration. The soft outline of the oval face, the gently curving eyebrows which frame almond-shaped half-open eyes, straight nose and sensuous lips, all capture a state of serene meditation. The *ushnisha*, top knot of hair, the *urna*, the mark on the center of the forehead also called the Eye of Wisdom, and the elongated earlobes are all features of the Enlightened One.

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### Reference:

*The Buddhist heritage of Pakistan, Art of Gandhara, Asia Society, 2011. p. 147, Cat. 55.*



TWO ŚĀLABHAÑJIKĀ STRUTS

Wood  
Height: 114 cm  
C-14 date late 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century  
Nepal  
Provenance: private collection Paris, 1988-2015  
Art Loss Register certificate: S00100147  
S00100738

Amy Heller

The genius of Nepalese woodcarvers may be observed in architectural elements - windows, struts to support the overhanging eaves of roofs, rafters, beams and door portals - all become alive with deities - human, animal and imaginary creatures - who fly and dance to inspire the faithful. Such carvings have their antecedents in stone in ancient India, as protective nature spirits. On the pillars of the stupa of Sanchi, 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, hefty male yaksha uphold mountains and voluptuous female yakshi cling, even with both hands, to trees (Fig. 1 Yakshi, Los Angeles County Museum of Art). The yakshi of Sanchi wear much jewellery - crown, earrings, bracelets, torsade necklaces which emphasize the heavy breasts and at the hips, an elaborate girdle or belt with two or more tiers of beading keeps in place the few folds of the dhoti, her only garment. Abundant foliage and boughs replete with ripe fruits surround the deities to reveal the intimate association of the profusion of nature with fertility and well-being, thus these yakshi are auspicious tree nymphs called Śālabhañjikā. Śālabhañjikā literally denotes the act of bending down the branch of a tree, the Sala or Ashoka tree. As part of the development of the anthropomorphic Buddha image, by the art of Gandhara of 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, the standing yakshi clinging to trees has mutated into the representation of the birth of the Buddha, where Maya, future Mother of the Buddha, will give birth in a grove of trees. Maya herself is depicted as a Śālabhañjikā, standing under a tree (Sala, *Shorea robusta*) and clasping a branch with her upraised arm, as the infant Buddha emerges from her side (Fig. 2 Nativity of the Buddha, Freer Gallery, Washington D.C.). The tree renders its protection, life-substance and fertility power in support of the successful deliverance of the child, the future Buddha.<sup>1</sup> The representation of the yakshi persisted while the yaksha, in addition to bearing mountains, came to be also represented as dancers and musicians carved in stone at base of the entrance to the Ajanta cave

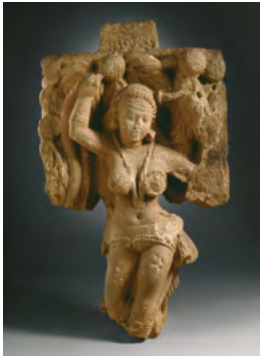


Figure 1.  
Yakshi (front view of Two Addorsed Tree Dryads)  
India, Madhya Pradesh, Sanchi, Stupa I, 50 B.C.E. - 25 C.E.  
Sandstone  
62.23 x 41.91 x 19.05 cm  
From the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection, purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch (M.85.2.1)  
Photograph courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Figure 2.  
Nativity of the Buddha  
Pakistan or Afghanistan (ancient Gandhara) late second - early third century CE  
Stone  
67.0 x 289.8 x 9.8 cm  
F 1949.9a-d, purchase  
Photograph courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.





26 (450 - 525 CE); yaksha were also integrated in the Buddhist pantheon as guardians of the underworld and its mineral treasures. This explains why yaksha are frequently represented on the lower levels of pillars or steps, as protectors of the point of junction where the underworld meets the surface of the earth. The yaksha are analogous to the atlantes of classical Greek and Roman architecture, male figures who function as a column supporting an entablature, which over time in India were assimilated as hefty dwarf or impish gnome-like figures rather than tall, athletic figures.

These visual concepts traveled from India to Nepal where they influenced the prototypes of the Nepalese Śālabhañjikā imagery during the Licchavi period as demonstrated by recent research by Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Woodcarving* (2010). Notably she studied Licchavi wooden examples ( C-14 calibrated date 660 - 850 CE, 95 % probability) where the distinctive Nepalese compositional scheme of the Śālabhañjikā is clearly formulated: on stylized cubistic rocks, a squatting dwarf carries a graceful nymph who stands beneath a tree laden with flowers, fruit and leaves.<sup>2</sup> This basic Śālabhañjikā composition has been retained in traditional Nepalese wooden architecture in subsequent periods with variations as we will discuss below. It is pertinent to compare a contemporary example in stone, attributed to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, a Nativity of the Buddha (h. 84 cm) now conserved in the National Museum, Kathmandu (Fig. 3).<sup>3</sup> In the Śālabhañjikā mode, here Maya stands in a graceful tribhanga with the left leg crossed over,



**Figure 3.**  
*Nativity of the Buddha*  
Nepal, ninth century  
Stone  
84 cm.  
Photograph courtesy of National Museum, Kathmandu  
(after Slusser 2010, Figure 93).

raising both arms to clasp the branches of a tree, as the infant Buddha, standing on a lotus pedestal to her right, receives ablutions from the gods Indra and Brahma in the lower leaves of the tree. The leaves of the tree and boughs are carved in low relief, while the bodies of Maya, the Hindu gods and the infant Buddha are carved in high relief. The tree's clusters of long leaves with the bell-shaped flowers have been identified as Ashoka tree.<sup>4</sup> Maya's physiognomy and garments recall those of the Sanchi yakshi, but she is more youthful, her body proportions are more elongated with small breasts, narrow waist and longer limbs. Her distinctive crossed-leg pose (*padasvastika*) is characteristic for the nativity of the Buddha and also present in many of Śālabhañjikā carvings.<sup>5</sup> The Buddha stands on a lotus pedestal, while Maya stands on the ground beside the tree, without stylized rocks or a yaksha to support her. In addition to the Licchavi period wood struts in Kathmandu studied by Slusser, recently two miniature struts of 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century have been identified (Fig. 4 Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive). Their height of ca. 40 cm precludes their use as roof struts, which tend to measure close to 100 - 115 cm, thus suggesting instead that they may have been perhaps been railings or posts in a balcony or window railing. The two sculptures have been dated by style (corroborated by C-14 testing) to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>6</sup> Although partially damaged, these masterfully carved sculptures

portray female nature spirits, or yakshis, beneath the boughs of trees, their lithe and slender bodies carved in high relief in sensuous poses. It is important to remark that these smaller size struts are at variance with the more typical model of a dwarf or yaksha supporting the yakshi goddess, for here the stylized rocks are directly beneath the feet of the yakshi. According to Gautam Vajracharya, the stylized rocks recall Mount Kailash as abode of the gods, for similar rocks are ubiquitous in the sculptures of Shiva and Parvati, and Mount Kailash is also the abode of Kubera, the god of wealth and king of the yaksha and yakshis.<sup>7</sup> The postures of the two yakshi are distinctive. Rather than bend the branches of the tree, one is holding the edge of her dhoti, either robing or disrobing (Fig. 4, left), while the other is drawing a thorn from her foot (Fig. 4, right). Vajracharya identified a strut of a Yakshi disrobing in the Uku Baha temple in Kathmandu, which he attributed to late 9<sup>th</sup> to early 10th century. He traced the motif of the yakshi disrobing to the Indian epic of the Mahabharata, which describes the yakshi as “sky-clad”, i.e. nude; the Mahabharata further recounts that Yaksha and Yakshi both enjoyed freedom in their sexuality and sensuality, unrestricted by any social conventions.<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, according to Vajracharya, the motif of the yakshi who extracts a thorn from her sole has amorous connotations, for the young girl takes advantage of extracting the thorn to look back and make eye contact with the young man who is watching her.<sup>9</sup> It is occasionally found in ancient India, but in Nepal, in addition to the present 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century Yakshi posing on the rocks, it is only known in one other temple strut attributed to ca. 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century, where the Yakshi removing the thorn from her sole is supported by a yaksha kneeling on the stylized rocks (Fig. 5, Metropolitan Museum of Art, height 98.7 cm, 1988.148.2). Her crown and coiffure adhere to the conventions of the earlier Yakshi - she wears single-leaf crested tiara in front of a high chignon, asymmetrically held in place by pearl ornaments, and coils of curls at her shoulders. As jewellery, she wears hoop earrings, a double strand pearl necklace, armbands, bracelet and anklets, as well as the beaded girdle at her hips holding the light fabric of her dhoti. Over her shoulders, there is a narrow fabric draped as a light scarf. In this temple bracket, the proportions of the four component elements are somewhat different than earlier models - the leaves and fruit are particularly abundant, occupying a full third of the entire length of the strut; the Yakshi's body is smaller and more hefty, the Yaksha is slender and seemingly taller than the goddess above him, while the stylized rocks maintain, relatively, their proportion with three interlocking tiers.

The examination of the previous examples of stone sculpture of Queen Maya represented as a Śālabhañjikā for the nativity of the Buddha and the temple brackets of the Yakshi represented in their diverse seductive postures, help to appreciate the development of the imagery of the Yakshi



**Figure 4.**  
Nepal, 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century  
Wood  
Height 41 cm  
Purchase made possible through funds provided by an  
anonymous donor  
(2013 18 1 a/b).  
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific  
Film Archive  
Private photograph



represented Śālabhañjikā as evolved from the Licchavi prototypes. For the Transitional period (ca. 879 - 1200) Slusser has identified the presence of keyuras, bracelet type adornments worn on the upper-arm as typical after about the tenth or eleventh century in certain struts at Uku Baha,<sup>10</sup> although there are several which appear to be later copies of earlier struts. In addition, for the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century, she has identified features such as the presence of a child, a long string of beads reaching to the navel, and a broad sash draped across the thighs such as found on struts in situ in Kathmandu valley.<sup>11</sup> There are, however, exceptions to these typologies, such as in the temple of Itum Baha where there was an earlier strut of a Śālabhañjikā with child at her side, which Slusser has attributed to ca. 770-970 CE on the basis of radio-carbon analysis. Mindful of these examples and their precious elucidations thanks to the research of Slusser and Vajracharya, we may now examine more carefully the Śālabhañjikā struts of the present exhibition. The provenance in terms of chronology is clearly to be attributed to 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century due to the radio-carbon analysis of the present pair of struts and one more example now in a private collection (see report by Zurich University Polytechnic school laboratory of Professor Georges Bonani). In terms of geographic provenance, as assessed by Slusser, “there must have been hundreds - if not thousands - of figural struts carved in the Kathmandu Valley before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, of which as few as forty are known to be

extant.”<sup>12</sup> Precise provenance is elusive insofar as numerous renovations have occurred throughout the centuries. The two Śālabhañjikā studied here may be attributed to the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century on aesthetic criteria as well as the radio-carbon analysis. The languid, peaceful demeanour and elongated bodies, the exquisite beauty of the carving of the fine jewellery - notably with the long strand of beads gracefully suspended between the breasts, the beads and ornaments of the two tiers of the girdle at their hips and the keyuras armbands - all confirm this chronological framework. Both Yakshi raise one hand to touch the tree. The right hand of one Yakshi is missing but the angle of the forearm does not tend to indicate the pose of robing or disrobing, it is not possible to determine her former gesture. The other Yakshi holds a small rectangular object clasped in her hand, with the elbow bent to position the wrist at shoulder level. Here too it is difficult to determine her former gesture. A distinctive characteristic of these Yakshi is that they are part of a series with a third Yakshi, now in a private collection; the third Yakshi holds a veena, the string-instrument somewhat similar to a violin, which may be plucked or played with a bow. Bearing this in mind, the very narrow form of the rectangular element still held in the Yakshi’s hand might possibly suggest a portion of a bow, which was partially broken over time. The three young goddesses are all depicted standing up with their backs to a tree, their sinuous bodies bending a branch with one arm. Perched on a yaksha



**Figure 5.**  
Yakshi temple strut  
Nepal (Kathmandu  
Valley), 13<sup>th</sup> century  
or later  
Wood  
Height 98.7 cm  
Purchase, Friends of  
Asian Art Gifts, 1988  
1988.148.2  
Photograph courtesy  
of Metropolitan  
Museum of Art

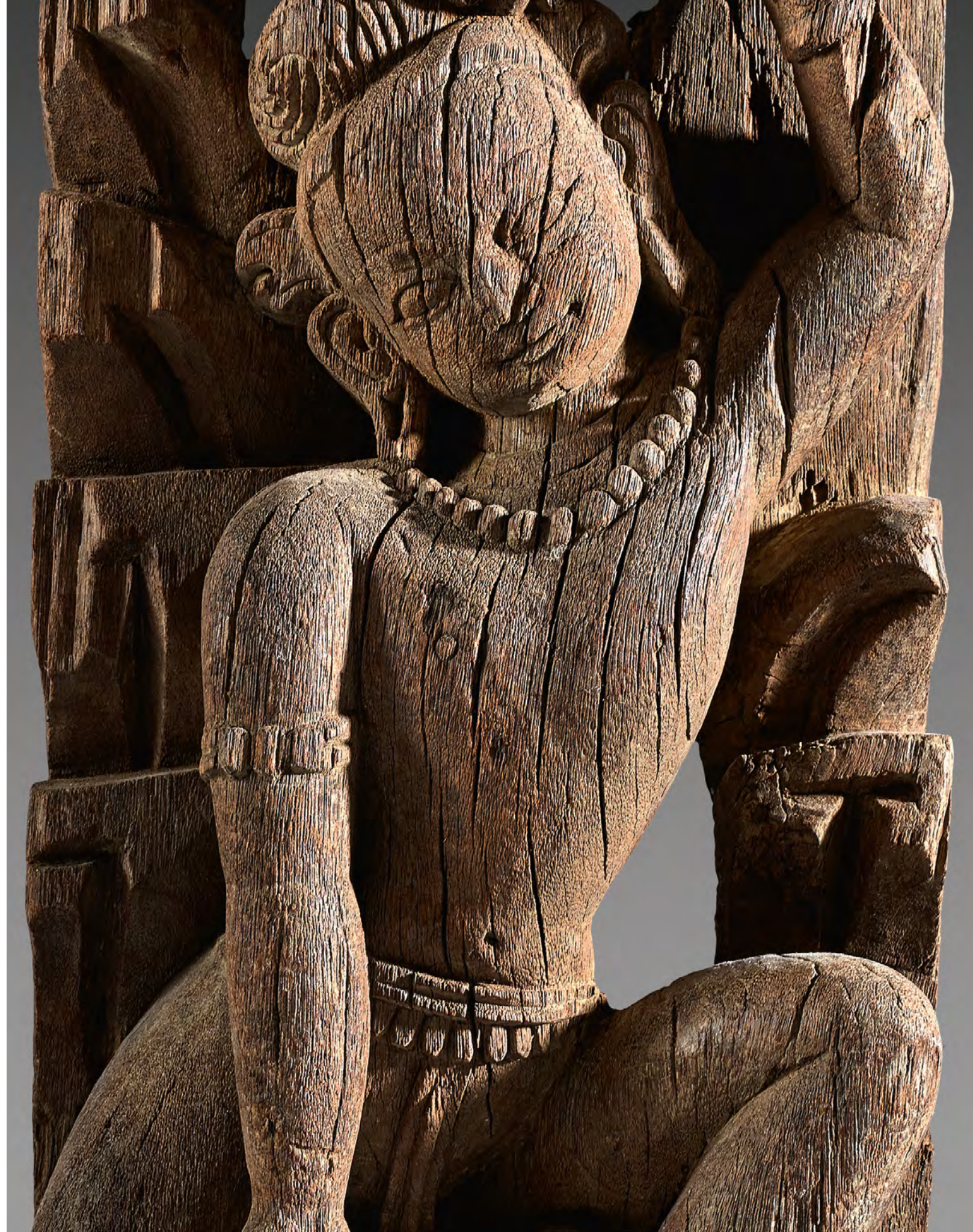






dwarf, they are richly adorned with jewels: a one leaf tiara crowning a double tied bun of hair, hoop earrings and double string necklaces. A belt fastens a diaphanous skirt which perfectly follows the lines and shapes of their long legs. These two Śālabhañjikā reflect the ideal of the feminine body with its generous shapes and sinuous lines. Clearly, the two come from the same site, as struts or supports for the eaves of the roof of a religious building in the Valley of Kathmandu. The vicissitudes of war, earthquakes, and the fragility of wood, subject to destruction by fire, all have brought important destructions. This makes these works even more significant and rare if we only consider the scarcity of the fragmentary elements of Nepalese architecture which came to us. Our two Nepalese Śālabhañjikā are marvelous illustrations of medieval “Indo Nepalese” art, depicting at its best the idealistic archetype of the female body in Indian art.

**Dr Amy Heller** is a tibetologist and art historian affiliated with the East Asian Civilisations Research Centre-CRCAO, Paris.



- 1 Gustav Roth, “The Woman and the Tree motif. Salabhanjika -damalika in Prakrit and Sanskrit texts with special reference to Silpasastras including Notes on Dohada. *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters and Science*, vol. 23/1: 91-116, 1957 cited by Claudine Bautze-Picron, “*The Lady under the Tree*”, p. 195, in *The Birth of the Buddha*, C. Cueppers, M.Deeg and H. Durt, eds. Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010.
- 2 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, University of Washington Press and Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., 2010, p. 17.
- 3 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 107, discusses the range of chronological attributions of this sculpture since Stella Kramrish first attributed to the 9<sup>th</sup> century in 1964. This chronology is still to be considered valid today. Slusser concurs with Vajracharya’s refutation of the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century date attributed by John Huntington and Dina Bangdel, as “unsustainable”.
- 4 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 138.
- 5 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 16.
- 6 Pair of Yakshis, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 2013.18. 1 a-b, Purchase made possible through funds provided by an anonymous donor. I thank Julia M. White, senior curator for Asian art, for correspondence about these sculptures exhibited July 27 - November 27 2016, “Buddhist Art from the Roof of the World”, at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.
- 7 Gautam Vajracharya, *Nepalese Seasons Rain and Ritual*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, 2016, p. 166.
- 8 Gautam Vajracharya, *Nepalese Seasons Rain and Ritual*, p. 168.
- 9 Gautam Vajracharya, *Nepalese Seasons Rain and Ritual*, p. 165.
- 10 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 49 and Figure 42.
- 11 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 59 and Figure 50.
- 12 Mary Slusser, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving*, p. 18.





## HEAD OF BUDDHA

Bronze

Height: 40 cm

15-16<sup>th</sup> century

Thailand

Provenance: Italian collection circa 1973-2016

This head of Buddha is depicted with finely arched eyebrows and half-closed eyes expressing a state of contemplation, a delicate half-smiling mouth and a protruding chin. A thin band separates his brow from the fine curls that cover his head. The cranial protuberance - symbol of his spiritual attainment - is traditionally topped by a flame, here missing. All these features, along with the elongated earlobes inherited from his royal youth when he wore heavy jewellery, are characteristics belonging to the traditional marks of an enlightened being.



## VISHNU

Black stone

Height: 68 cm

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

North-Western India

Provenance: Acquired from Galerie Jacques Barrère, Paris, 1980's

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00111447

Standing upright in frontal position and wearing a lavishly decorated octagonal crown is the four armed god Vishnu. Adorned with two necklaces accented with the *kaustubha* jewel on his chest, the sacred thread *yajñopavita*, armbands, a heavy girdle and ornaments on his feet he wears a *dhoti* with pleats etched on his lower body, with a knotted sash holds the girdle in place. The four attributes of Vishnu are the lotus flower, the mace, the chakra or wheel and the conch which are now missing. Originally, Vishnu would have been surrounded by his ten avatars in the sculpture, of which the fish, *Matsya* can be seen on the left. There are six standing figures at the feet of Vishnu, three on each side. The figures that can be identified on the left are Gadanari holding the club, Chakrapurusha holding the chakra, and Shankapurusha holding the conch shell, Padmapurusha holding the lotus and a Nagadevata on the right. Under the lotus base, two donors sit praying either side of Vishnu. The polish of the black stone highlights the incredible detail of the sculpture.

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### References:

Two pieces likely from the same site, today in Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, Paris: Brahma MA 4941 and Vishnu MA 4942. Sotheby's, *Indian and Southeast Asian Works of Art*. March 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, lot 268.







## CHANDRA MANDALA

Mineral pigments on cotton cloth

42 x 32 cm

Dated by inscription 1460

Nepal

Provenance: French collection, 1980's

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00120102

### *Étienne Bock*

This paubhā painting represents the maṇḍala of the moon god Chandra.

The image is divided into three main parts separated by golden lines: the central and most important section is the deity's maṇḍala with a dark blue background, the upper row comprises the cosmic Buddhas and two bodhisattvas and the lower part, divided into three, portrays the donor with the priest performing offerings, heavenly characters and some devotees.

### Central part

The maṇḍala is composed of a white moon-disc in the center of an eight petals multicolored lotus surrounded by a circle of wisdom fire of the five colors. In its center, seated on a richly adorned chariot drawn by seven geese (Skt. haṁsa), is the moon god Chandra, dressed in dark blue gown fringed with gold and wearing the complete set of royal ornaments. His two hands placed before his chest hold the stems of lotus flowers blooming by his shoulders. In front of him seats his charioteer Ambara, of similar appearance but with his hands holding the reins. Chandra is flanked by two deities of green complexion shooting arrows. They are identical, exception made of their gender, the left one being a male and the right one a female. This detail makes their identification uncertain since this place is generally occupied by his two consorts – Kanti and Śobha – as can be seen on other similar paintings<sup>1</sup>. In his description of a very resembling image, Krejiger chooses this identification despite of the obvious presence of a male archer<sup>2</sup>. On the lotus petals are displayed eight deities belonging – along with Chandra – to the Nine celestial deities (Skt. navagraha). Based on their appearance, attributes and mounts, they can be identified as follow<sup>3</sup>:

Below Chandra, to the east is Sūrya, the Sun god, of red complexion, sitting on a horse. Having the same appearance and position as the moon-god he holds two lotus flowers.

On the south-eastern petal, of red color and sitting on a goat, is Aṅgāraka (Mars), holding a severed human head and a knife.

To the south seated on a lotus and holding an arrow and a bow is the gold skinned Budha (Mercury).

In the south-west direction, seated on an elephant, of yellow complexion holding the stem of lotus and a stick<sup>4</sup> is Bṛhaspati (Jupiter).



On the western petal, sitting on a padma lotus, is the white Śukra (Venus) lifting a vase with his right hand and holding a text (?) in his left. Next to him to the north-west is the dark Śanaiścara, seated on a tortoise, brandishing a trident with his right hand and holding a noose in his left. To the north is Rāhu (the ascending node). Of wrathful appearance, with blue skin and red hair standing, he sits amidst flames holding the sun and moon. Finally, on the north-western petal is Ketu (the descending node). Of gray color, with nine faces and the lower part of the body of a snake, he brandishes a sword and holds a noose. On the periphery of the maṇḍala's circle of flames are four representations of the wisdom bodhisattva Mañjuśrī under is white manifestation, holding a text volume in his left hand and wielding a sword with his right. Each bodhisattva is flanked by two of the Eight auspicious signs (Skt. aṣṭamaṅgala) namely the knot, the lotus flower, the banner, the vase, the pair of fish, the parasol, the white conch-shell and a pair of fly-whisks. This last detail is typical from Nepal, fly-whisks replacing the usual Dharma-wheel encountered in Tibetan representations.

**The upper part**

Sitting above the maṇḍala in a separate section with green scrolling vines background are the Buddhas of the five families under their nirmāṇakāya appearance, wearing the triple monastic robe and without ornaments. At the center is the white Vairocana, to his right are the blue Akṣobhya and the yellow Ratnasambhava, and to his left the red Amitābha and the green Amoghasiddhi. Two bodhisattvas in royal attire are placed at each end of the row. Respectively of yellow and orange color, they sit in vajraparyaṅka and perform the salutation gesture holding the stems of two lotus flowers. The absence of specific attributes unfortunately prevents any precise identification.

**Lower part**

Under the maṇḍala, the lower rim is divided into three separate spaces. On the left are the donor and the vajrācarya performing the fire offering ritual. At the center, the dark blue wrathful deity Acala brandishes a sword and holds a noose. This specific kneeling manifestation of the deity is connected to the White Mañjuśrī Tantra<sup>5</sup>, a possible echo of the four representations surrounding the maṇḍala. Acala is surrounded by two characters seated in royal ease on thrones, turned towards him. To his right is an orange man performing the abhayamudrā and protected by a parasol, a white elephant carrying a wheel placed by his side. To his left is a white woman next to a horse supporting the triple gems (even if placed in the next section). Both are adorned with royal attire. Although the identity of this royal couple remains uncertain, all these elements associated are connected to the symbolic of the cakravartin, the universal monarch, among whose treasures are the precious queen, wheel, jewel, elephant, and horse<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the last section has four kneeling characters paying homage, probably members of the donor family.





From a stylistic perspective this painting possesses many similarities with other well-known examples from famous collections, especially considering its general composition.

The Chandra maṇḍala of the Zimmerman collection at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the 1425 painting from LACMA collection and that of the Metropolitan Museum, even if sometimes more elaborated, all share the same overall disposition<sup>7</sup> with the eight other navagraha on lotus petals, the five jīnas with two bodhisattvas and the triple section at the bottom of the painting. Yet the most striking resemblance remains the painting of the former Jucker collection<sup>8</sup>. Exception made of our inscription, the disposition of all deities and ornaments, the choice of colors and stylistic ornamentation appears almost identical.

The inscription indicates the date 1460, corresponding to the early period of production and worship of the planetary gods in Kathmandu valley.

**Etienne Bock** *is a French tibetologist and translator specialized in Himalayan art and Tibetan Buddhist literature.*

### English Translation

[Symbol of Siddhi]. In the full moon day of bright fortnight (of the month) of Kartik of Nepal Era 561 (1460 October/November), the (Kartik Purnima) Dharma was performed by these three main persons, (namely), Jyotiram (inscr. Jotaram) from Sohanache, Jitaram (and) Yikuli after the moon has risen. (Let it be) well.

### Roman Transliteration

1. ? savata 561 kātika śukṣa punamāsi dharama uda candra jusyana jotarāma sohajanache jitarāma yi
2. kuli tho śvahma pramukhana dhama doyakā juro subhaḥ ||

### Devanagari Transliteration

१ ? सवत ५६१ कातिक शुक्ष पुनमासि धरम उद चन्द्र जुस्यन जोतराम सोहजनछे जितराम यि  
२ कुलि थो श्वह्म प्रमुखन धम दोयका जुरो सुभः ॥

Translation by Kashinath Tamot

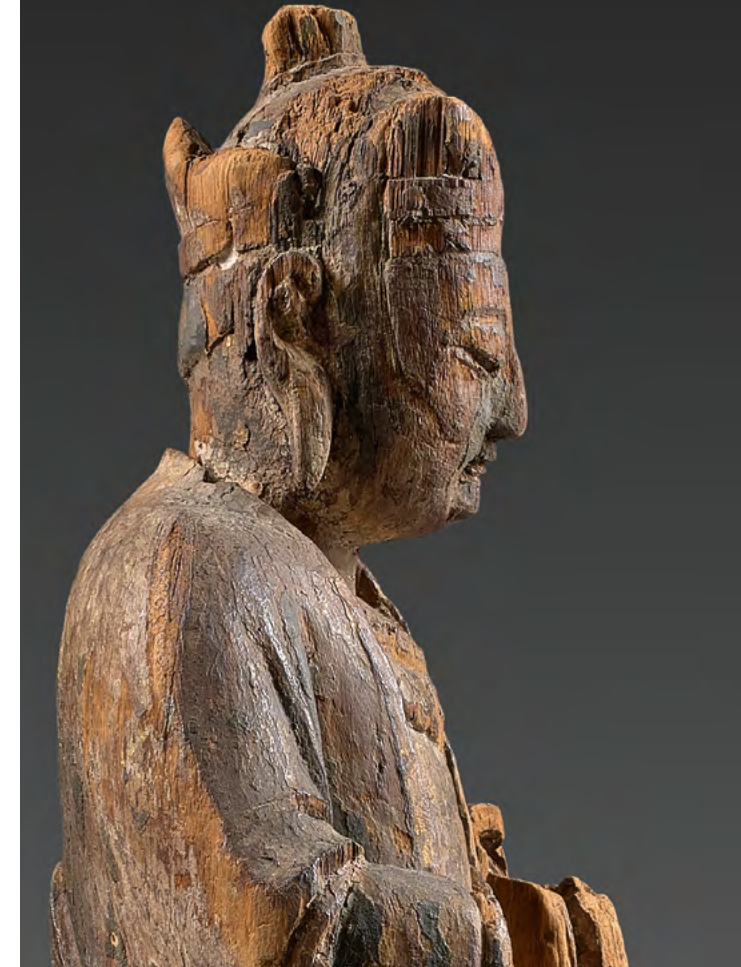
- 1 The Zimmerman Family Chandra Mandala in *Circle of Bliss*, p. 78, n°7 ; Shelley & Donald Rubin collection, # P1995.41.1 & # P1995.41.1, LACMA, n° M.83.113.
- 2 Kreijger, 1999, n°7 p. 40
- 3 Mallmann, M.-T., 1986, pp. 276-79
- 4 Coleman, Charles., p. 133
- 5 Himalayan Art Resources: <http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=199>
- 6 Huntington, 1993, p. 85-86
- 7 VMFA, n° 91.468; LACMA, n° M.83.113; Metropolitan Museum n° 1981.465
- 8 Kreijger, 1999, n°7 p. 40

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## BUDDHA

Polychrome wood

Height: 50 cm

Northern Song dynasty (960-1127)

China

Radiocarbon dated

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00120386

Provenance: French Collection 2000's

This wood-carved Buddha is standing on a lotus stand, wearing monastic garments, his long and heavy sleeves falling from the arms. A large flat necklace and remains of a tiara on the forehead allow us to think that he is a Dhyani Buddha. The hands were probably in abhaya and varadamudra. The Radiocarbon dating gives early dates between 776 and 1015 which places the Buddha in the mid Northern Song period.



## STATUE OF TĀRĀ WITH ATTENDANTS

Brass alloy with traces of gilt

Height: 6 cm

Circa 19<sup>th</sup> century

Tibet or China

Provenance: Astamangala Gallery, Amsterdam early 1990's

This statue represents the female bodhisattva Tārā. Seated upon a small lotus, her legs crossed in sattva posture, she performs the “gift gesture” (Skt. varadamudrā) with her right hand while her left seizes the stem of a lotus blossoming by her ear.

Her hair is tied in a very distinctive way, brought together into a large bun to the left of her head. Wearing few ornaments – double bracelets, large round earrings and a simple bead necklace – she is dressed with a clinging striated dhoti covering her legs and a long scarf with fine and regular concentric pleats. The scarf partly covers her breast and ends at her back with the folds echoing harmoniously with the pleats of the dhoti and the hair.

Her head is crowned by strings of pearls with a three petals lotus-shaped ornament topped by a crown jewel and double-range garlands of pearls hanging on each side of her face.

The basis of the statue represents a two storeys rocky landscape upon which rests the single row lotus seat. Six smaller characters are placed around the bodhisattva, paying her homage.

The front row of the lower level is occupied by a heap of offerings gathering elephant tusks, circular and rectangular earrings and flaming triple gems. They all belong to the seven insignia of the cakravartin<sup>1</sup>.

In front of the offerings are two nagā recognizable to their distinctive snake hoods. Their hands are jointed in the salutation mudrā. Next to them are two kneeling female drum players wearing pleated garments and elaborated hair dress.

On the upper level are two other female attendants. Seated with one knee on the ground they hold horn-like attributes. Their hair is tied in the same manner as that of Tārā.

From a stylistic perspective, the rocky formation, the crowd of attendants, the pleat of the garment and the hairstyle are all elements inherited from the Kashmir art tradition adapted to a more recent Tibetan production.

Most important, this statue with all its features and the overall composition is a variation of a famous silver Sarasvatī statue from the Potala collection<sup>2</sup> and a latter copper-alloy copy of it now preserved in Rumtek<sup>3</sup>. This is confirmed by Ian Alsop in his extensive analysis of Chöying Dorje's artistic production where he mentions the existence of copies described as follow<sup>4</sup>: “Extraordinarily detailed, these miniature sculptures are often also made of several pieces.”

Whether dating of the Yarlung period as presented by von Schroeder or production of the 10<sup>th</sup> Karmapa according to Alsop, it is certain that this extraordinary representation of Sarasvatī – in its original silver form or copper alloy copy – served as a model for our statue.

Among the differences between our statue and its models, the absence of peacocks (Sarasvatī's traditional mount) in front of the deity's lotus seat plays a significative role, changing her identity from Sarasvatī to







Tārā. The number of smaller figures and the appearance and attributes of the two main attendants are also different.

Despite these variations, with all its details and separately casted pieces, this small Tārā remains a highly refined homage to one of the 10<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's outstanding work of art.

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1 Beer, 1999, p. 165, pl. 79

2 Von Schroeder, 2001, pp. 762-763, pl. 179

3 Douglas & White, 1976, p. 133, (no. 48) ; von Schroeder, 2001, p. 799, fig. XII-19

4 Alsop, 2012, *The Sculpture of Chöying Dorjé, Tenth Karmapa*, [online]

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## ATLANTE

Grey schist

Height: 21,5 cm

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

Pakistan, Ancient region of Gandhara

Provenance: French collection circa 2005

Art Loss Register Certificate: S00120635

Finely carved in a dark grey schist, Atlante, loosely based on the Greek titan Atlas, is a muscular male figure kneeling on his right knee with strong facial features, and thick, wavy hair flowing onto his shoulders. The traces of wings are visible on his back which are often a feature of Gandhara Atlantes, and distinguish this figure from the classical Atlas.

Gandharan Atlantes act as structural supports in temple sculptures, and they are often associated with the Indian Yakshas because of their similar architectural purpose.

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Alfred Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhara*, 1905-1951, p. 206-209.

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W. Zwalf, *A catalogue of the Gandhara sculpture in the British museum*, 1996 p. 208-209.



## BHUDEVI

Bronze

Height: 28.7 cm

13-14<sup>th</sup> century

Tamil Nadu, Southern India

Provenance: Jullien's collection, 1959

Art Loss Register: S00111458

Bhudevi is a Hindu earth goddess representing fertility. She is the consort of Varaha, an avatar of Vishnu, and she is regarded as the mother of the goddess Sita. According to the Ramayana, when Sita leaves her husband Rama, she returns to her mother Bhudevi.

The goddess stands in a sensual and graceful *tribhanga* or thrice-bent pose. A missing attribute is a lotus bud held in her left hand, while her right hand is elegantly in *lolahasta mudra* (tail of a cow). Attired in a finely pleated *dhoti* held in place by an ornamental hip clasp, she is heavily adorned with jewellery including earrings, necklaces, bracelet and anklets, sign of her divine status.

This Bhudevi is a classic example of the Tamil Nadu style of the late Chola or early Vijayanagar, whose sculptures are among the highlights of Indian civilization.





PORTRAIT OF A TANTRIC MASTER

Gilded bronze  
 Height: 11,3 cm  
 18<sup>th</sup> century  
 Tibet  
 Provenance: French collection

*Étienne Bock*

Seated upon a triple cushion covered by an antelope skin with his legs wrapped in his cloak, this master is cladded in heavy Tibetan robes. His long braided hair is partly attached in an elaborated three-levels topknot above is head and partly loose on his back, almost reaching his waist. The length of his hair, the wrinkles on his forehead and the presence of a full beard are signs of him being portrayed at an advanced age. This particular hair dress along with his beard and earrings designates him as a lay tantric practitioner (Tib. sngags pa). Performing the argumentation gesture with his right hand, he holds a text in his left, symbol of his erudition and quality as a teacher. The absence of inscription prevents us from any certain identification. Yet, based on his appearance, we can compare him to other identified portraits. The antelope skin, the long braided hair, the beard and the earrings are traditional iconographical elements belonging to yogis<sup>1</sup>. A parallel can be made with Thangtong Gyalpo, who is always represented with a top-knot, although often less organized then that of our statue<sup>2</sup>, and whose attributes are not clearly established<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, since our master is not depicted as an ascetic with bare torso – like the famous bridge builder is always represented – the identification remains improbable. The garment he wears designates him as an established lama, possibly a householder like treasure-discoverers (Tib. gter ston) such as Nyangral Nyima Öser or Jigme Lingpa. An 18<sup>th</sup> century portrait of the latter belonging to the Rubin Museum<sup>4</sup> indeed presents similar features. Once more, the absence of *phurba* dagger at the waist, of treasure box in the left hand or of *ga'u* reliquary in the topknot – all distinctive iconographical elements of tertön<sup>5</sup> – are obstacles to this association. Due to his general aspect this master probably belong to the Nyingma, Kagyü or Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism which, compared to the Gelug, emphasize the tantric practice among non-monastic population.

1 Beer, 1999, p. 83  
 2 Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen 2006, pp. 303-5; Weldon & Casey Singer, 1999, pp. 184-5 pl. 46  
 3 Jeff Watt 2011, <http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=311&page=1>  
 rtstiftung Ruhr Essen 2006, pp. 303-5; Weldon & Casey Singer, 1999, pp. 184-5 pl. 46  
 4 Rubin Museum, Jigme Lingpa, acc. #C2002.29.2, <http://www.himalayanart.org/items/65159>  
 5 Dinwiddie, 2003, pp. 114-5

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## VAJRASATTVA

Bronze

Height: 17,5 cm

12<sup>th</sup> century, Angkor Vat period

Cambodia

Provenance: Wolfgang Felten, Germany

Exhibited: Musuem für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne, April-July 1989

Published: W. Felten and M. Lerner, *Entdeckungen, Skulpturen der Khmer und Thai*, Köln, 1989, pp. 100-101.

Seated in the “heroic posture” (*virasana*), with the legs folded over each other, this adorned bodhisattva holds a vajra in front of his chest and presses a ghanta bell against his hip. These typical attributes and posture identify him as the esoteric Buddha Vajrasattva from the tantric tradition. Fully equipped with the royal ornaments, he wears the tiara, earrings, necklace, armbands, bracelets and anklets of the sambhogakaya manifestations. Behind him is a large mandorla fringed with stylized flames. Two leaves patterns, extended and folded, support a moon crescent and a stupa-like top. This bronze is a good example of the early Angkor Vat production, possibly dating from the reign of the great king Suryavarman II (1113-1150).





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