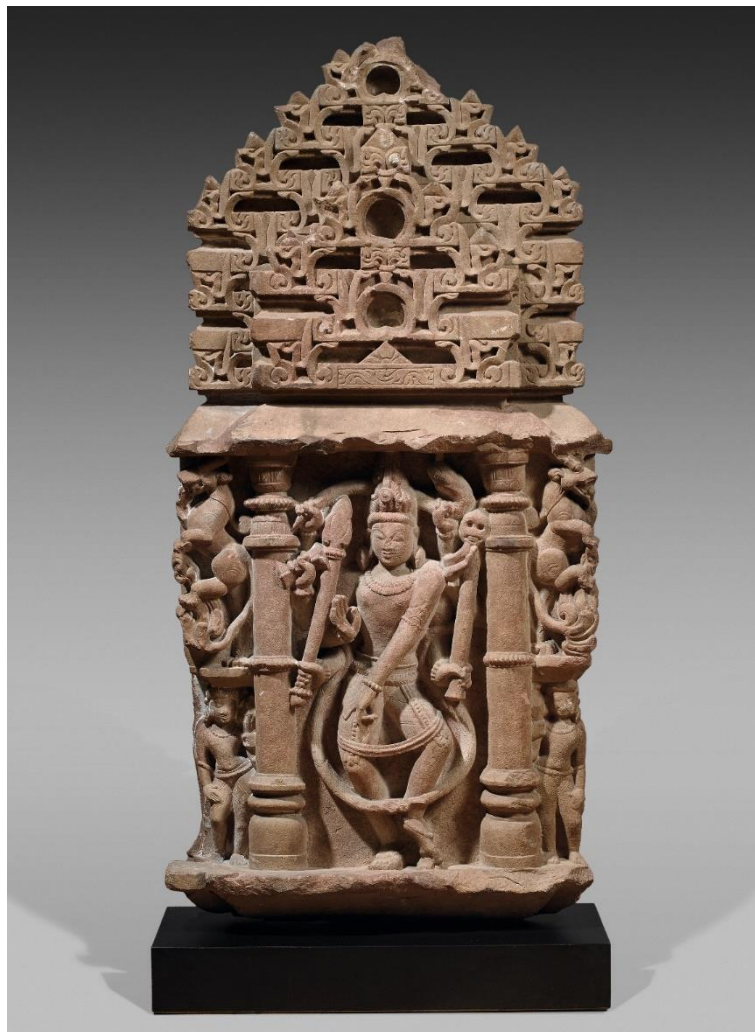


Galerie Hioco

The Hindu god Śiva (P387)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- Its evocative power of a fundamental episode of śaiva mythology
- The harmony between the subtle combination of the character's curves and the lines of the architectural frame
- Its state of preservation: it is rare to find the upper part in its original state



I. Detailed description

The Hindu god Śiva

Sandstone

Northern India, Rājasthān or Madhya Pradesh

Circa 10th century

H. 41 in

Iconographic approach

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

Śaiva mythology and cosmic dances

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

A witness to the evolution of decorative forms in India

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

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

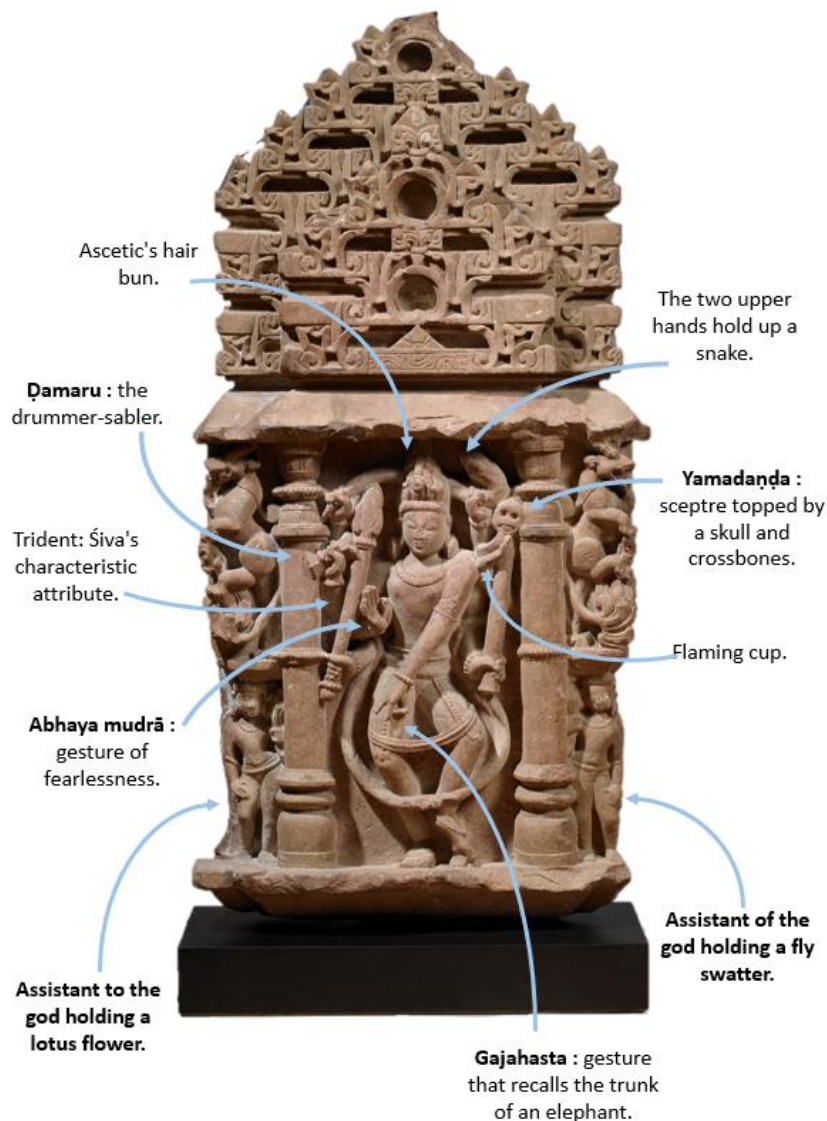
The style of the characters fits well into the vast production of this empire, yet its specific origin cannot be ascertained.



II. Visual explanation

ŚIVA

In this form, the creator, protector and destroyer god of the universe has eight arms. He sketches one of the seven cosmic dances (tāṇḍava), in this case the dance of creation (kālikā tāṇḍava). He stands in a niche surmounted by a tympanum of Indian arches. These testify to an evolution of the monumental bays that open the facades of the assembly halls cut into the cliffs of the Mahārāṣṭra, in the northeast of the Dekkan as early as the 2nd century B.C. These decorative motifs, including the colonnettes framing the divine figure, copy wooden architecture and enliven the facades of temples in northern India from the 8th century. This type of ornamentation is particularly popular in Rājasthān and Madhya Pradesh, in the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire from the mid-7th to the 11th century.



III. Image of the piece – front view



IV. Image of the piece – left three-quarter view



V. Image of the piece – upper part detail view



VI. Image of the piece – front detail view




VII. Provenance: in all transparency!

- . This sculpture comes from a private collection located in Belgium and acquired on 22nd January 1969.
- . We are always very cautious and diligent about the provenance of the artworks we offer. Ensuring the seriousness and reliability of the information given by the former owners is one of our priorities and we then guarantee this origin by engaging our responsibility.
- . In order to reinforce this guarantee, we systematically verify that these artworks have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to directly consult their database of stolen or reported items, we verify by ourselves and issue a certificate attesting to this.

INVOICE NO. 786
ORDER NO. Bangkok January 22, 1969
INVOICE of Merchandise
Shipped by H. H. Import & Export Ltd., Part.
per M.S. Phalsith To Belgium to order at risk
and for Account of Messrs

Terms

Article No.	DESCRIPTION	Quantity	@	US\$	Amount	US\$
	One stone sculpture of a dancing shiva from India, 105cm. high Medieval. From the collection of Mr. Manas Certificate of antiquity I, hereby, certify that the above sculpture is over one hundred years old. Received the amount in full this day January 22, 1969. Paid with thanks, Eng Hour 	1		US\$		

VIII. Condition report: our scientific approach



We always attach a great importance to provide reliable condition reports to make sure that the piece did not face restorations touching its integrity, such as a complete rebuilt face...

We asked John Twilley to make a detailed examination of this sculpture. We have been working for several years with this Art Conservation Scientist, who is probably the most reputed in the US. As an example, he has been examining most of the acquisitions of the LACMA Museum and the Norton Simon Museum in LA before acquisition.

He confirmed the excellent condition of this stele, with no modern repairs or restorations, except for the low right proper corner of the supporting surface that has been reattached. Please find below our condition report resulting from the scientific examination performed by John Twilley.

Condition report (P387)

This Northern Indian stele (104 cm in height), representing Shiva in an eight-armed manifestation and carved from sandstone, was examined visually and microscopically, with the aid of ultraviolet light. The deity dances beneath a canopy supported by flanking round columns with an attendant and rampant beast on either side. An elaborate, multi-tiered superstructure with empty niches surmounts the porch sheltering Shiva. There are chip losses to its pinnacle. The entire rear of the relief has been reduced in thickness by not original trimming that leaves only about 1.5cm of stone behind the thinnest parts of the background plane. The background plane formerly extended for some distance beyond the outline of the triangular superstructure and at least a short distance beyond the attendant figures. All of these margins have been trimmed in modern times to reduce the background to outline the figures and superstructure. There are chip losses to the canopy front, the left proper column and the front of the shelf on which Shiva stands. The right proper corner of this supporting surface has been broken off and reattached.

The relief is notable for abundant residues of a white layer of thick limewash that probably served as a base for polychrome decoration. There are multiple layers of this material accumulated in the protected "ceiling" areas of the niches, suggesting a history of redecoration. Elsewhere, this material appears to have been reworked by natural dissolution and recrystallization under the influence of intermittent dampness.

Laboratory testing of the sandstone showed that it is typical of North Indian works and yielded no evidence of chemical treatment of its surface. The wear-rounded condition of the sculpted sandstone surface and its color relative to that of the freshly trimmed areas are supportive of a 10th century date of carving. No evidence of recarving or reinforcement of sculpted details was found.

Please note that since we are not conservators or restorers, it must be understood that any condition report we made is a subjective qualified opinion, even if we do our best efforts. Prospective buyers should inspect the piece to satisfy themselves as to condition.



IX. Comparable museum artwork – The Cleveland Museum of Art

Dancing Siva:



Eight Armed Shiva Dancing Between Two Pillars
900s–1000s
India, Rajasthan, Chandela Dynasty, 10th - 11th century
Sandstone
Overall: 46.4 x 45.7 x 22.2 cm (18 1/4 x 18 x 8 3/4 in.)
James Parmelee Fund 1958.288

X. Our guarantees: for a serene acquisition!



- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will establish an invoice that you can pay by bank transfer.
- You will receive our certificate of authenticity with the photo of the artwork, its detailed description and the mention of the provenance.
- We will define together the shipping modalities and we will take care of all customs formalities if you live outside of France.
- If you do not like the piece, we give you the possibility to return it to us and we will assist you with the resulting terms and conditions.

