

Galerie Hioco

Pala Stele depicting Sūrya (P580)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- The softness of the modelling and the serenity that characterizes the sculpture.
- The sobriety typical of the stelae of the early Gupta period.
- The iconographic richness of the work despite the missing parts.



I. Detailed description

Sūrya (P580)

Sandstone

Northern India, Bihār or Bengal

10th-11th century, Pāla dynasty (8th-12th century)

Height: 26,7 inches (68 cm)

A Sūrya full of great nobleness

The characteristics of the god are numerous, and here rendered with care. Sūrya, with such a distinctive smile, particularly nice here, is standing full-front and in absolute symmetry. Depicted with a halo, wearing a royal tiara and heavy jewels, he is holding a lotus flower in each hand. His tall boots – a characteristic of the god's iconography - are attributable to his Iranian origin. Sūrya stands majestically on his chariot driven by Aruṇa handling the seven dynamic horses, all depicted in the lower part.

The fascinating symbolism of the divine entourage

On either side of the god are two assistants and their consorts. On the left, a slightly chubby Piṅgala is holding the stylus and inkwell he needs to note down the good and bad acts of men during the daytime. His wife is Darkness.

On the right one recognizes Daṇḍa traditionally armed with a sword, guardian of the residence of the Sun, along with his consort Light.

Sūrya's two wives, Dawn and Dusk, of smaller size, are shooting arrows shaped like the rays of the sun.

An artwork from the early Pāla dynasty

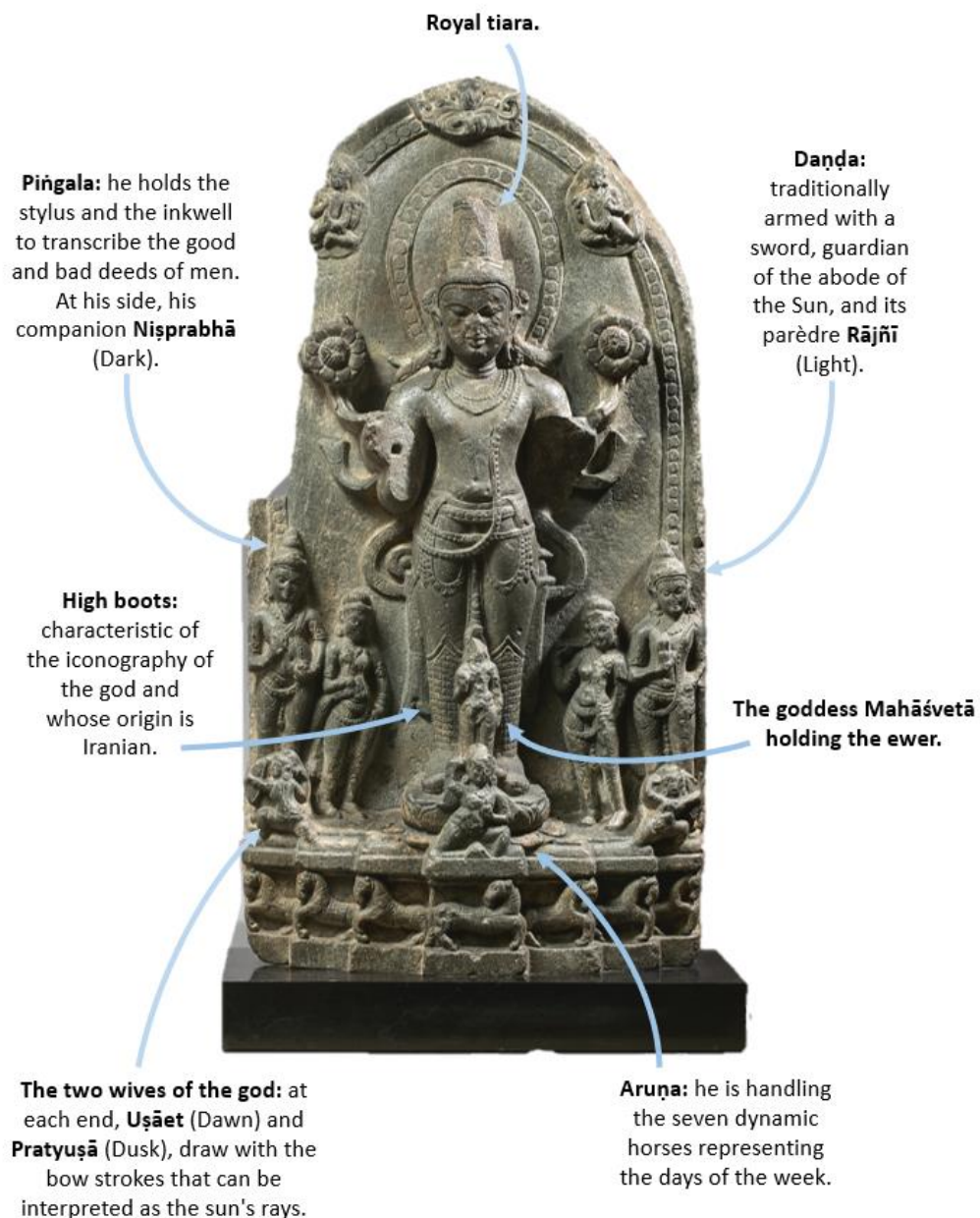
The beauty of this stele lies in the balance between iconographic richness and stylistic sobriety. The undeniable clarity of the sculpted details, the elegance of the characters, the full and non-open background or the still quite rounded top are all elements that make it possible to advance an early date, circa 10th century. All this makes the piece even more remarkable.



II. Visual description

SŪRYA

Many temples are dedicated to the god Sūrya in northern India in medieval times. The god of the Sun stands majestically on his chariot in absolute frontality and symmetry, holding two lotus flowers in each hand. The iconography is rich and the composition dynamic. The whole is of a great stylistic sobriety. The sculpted details, the elegance of the characters, the full background and the rounded top allow us to date the statue to the 10th century.



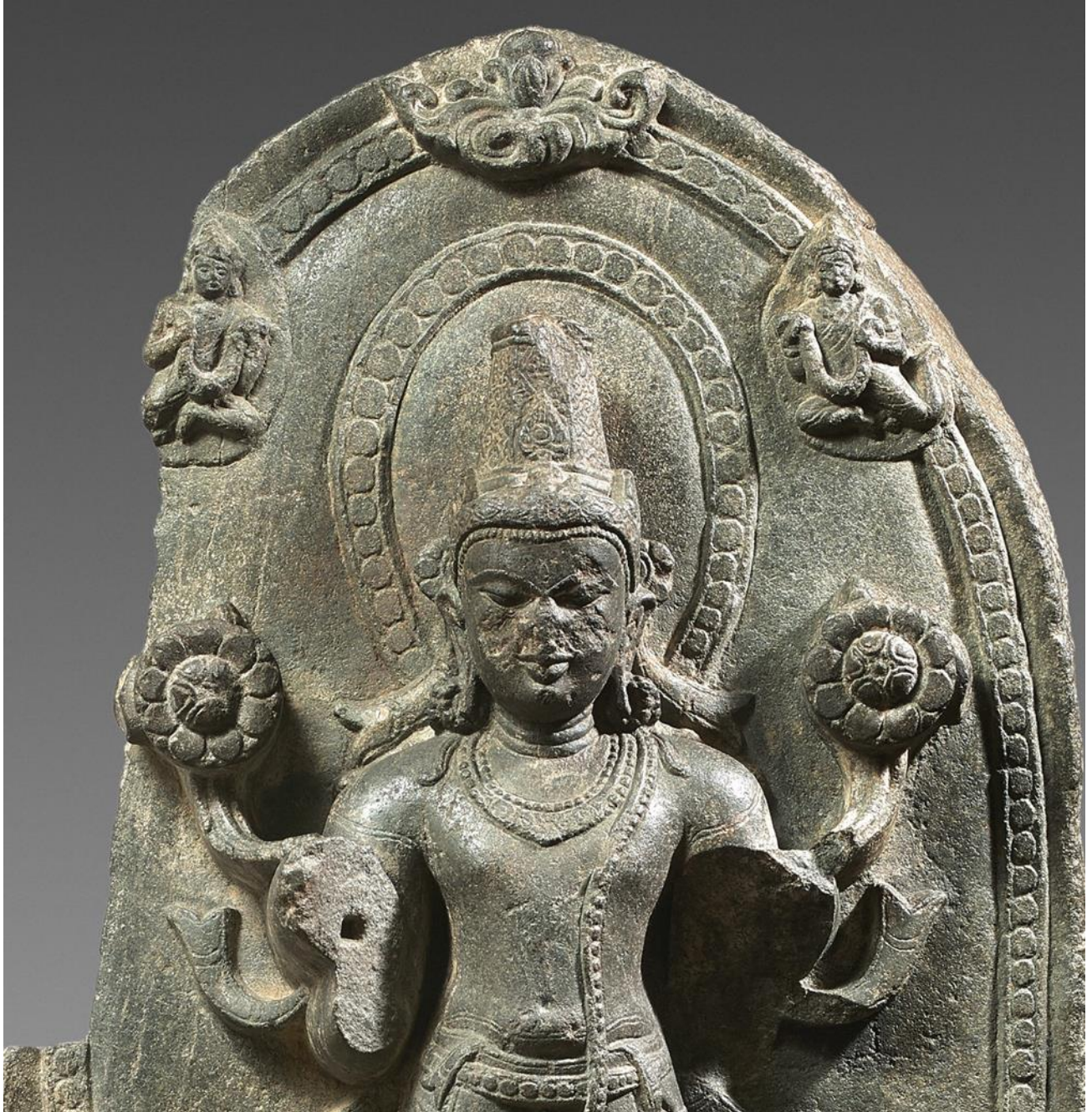
III. Image of the piece – front view



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



V. Image of the piece – left profile view



VI. Image of the piece – back view



VII. Image of the piece – right profile view



VIII. Image of the piece – right three-quarter view



IX. Provenance: in all transparency!

. This piece comes from a former French private collection.

. 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.

X. Condition report: our scientific approach

This stele representing Sūrya the Sun god, dated from the Pāla period (10th-11th century) is made of phyllite and measures 68 cm in height (or 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ in); is in an excellent condition. Some losses are obvious but quite logical given the age of the piece and the known fragility of the most protruding parts: the left arm of Sūrya is missing, as well as his right hand, showing a central hole. This hole indicates that a “joint” may have existed to consolidate this more protruding part to the rest of the sculpture. The head of the god's coachman is lost, as is a part of the face of Obscurity, the female deity to the right of the god. Sūrya's face - including his nose - has been damaged, as has the tip of his tiara. A large fragment of the left edge of the stele is lost, the break following a very regular linear cut. At the rear, the lower corners have been reduced in thickness, with material cleaved in a diagonal cut. The surface of the stone is weathered, and small scuffs are to be noted on the overall sculpted surface, such as the most protruding parts, the edges of the stele or the protrusions on the lower part. All these breaks appear to be old, as evidenced by the weathered and homogeneous surface.

Sand concretions survive, especially in the most recessed parts of the sculpture. Some red-orange deposits also bear witness to an ancient cult activity with the use of offering materials. However, the surface of the stone has most probably been cleaned - especially on the background - in the past. No restoration was detected.

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.



XII. Comparable museum artwork – The Walters Art Museum

A 12th century Pala stele depicting the god Sūrya, in the collections of the V&A (London):



Surya
Sculpture
12th Century (made)
PLACE OF ORIGIN : Bangladesh (made)

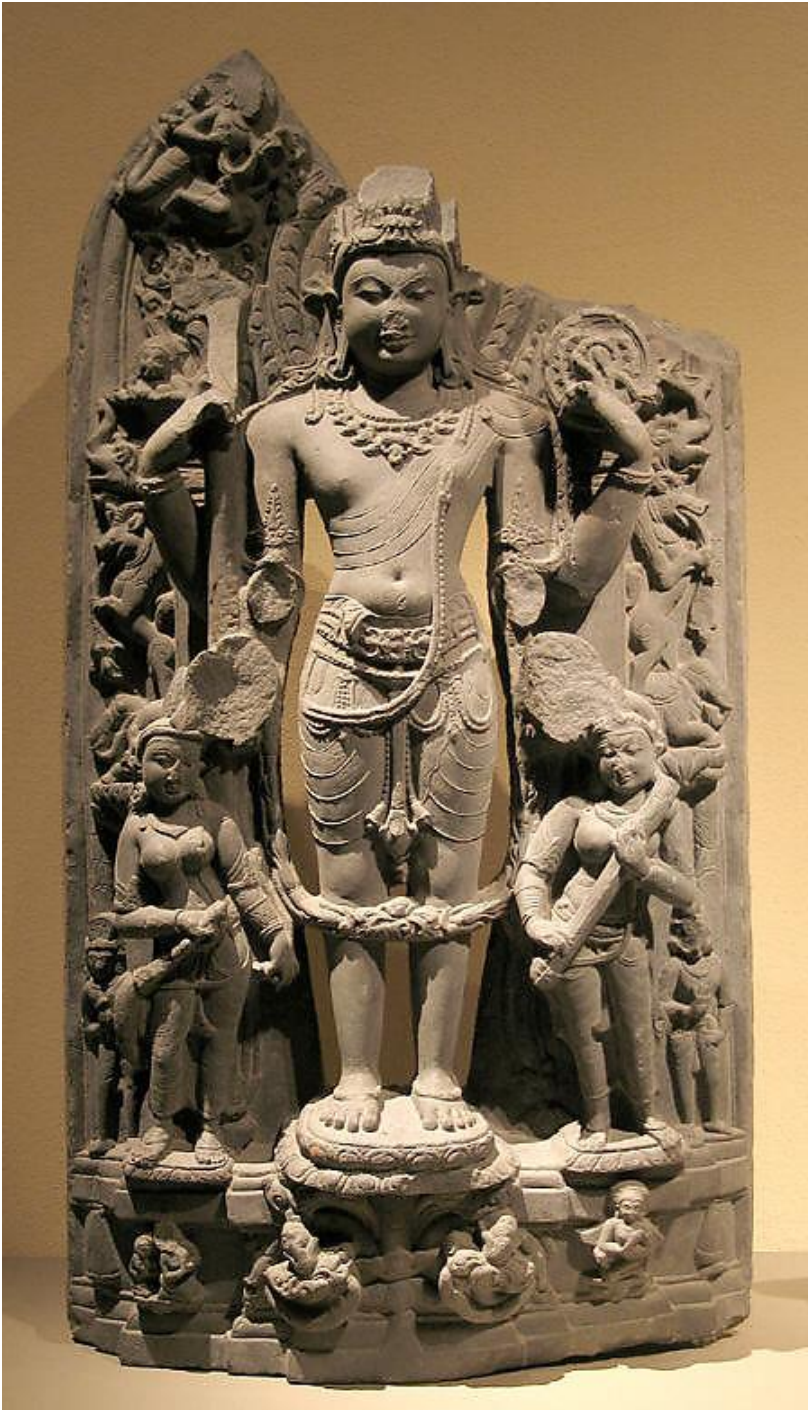
Standing figure of Surya with raised hands holding lotus blossoms and riding the seven-horsed chariot with flanking attendants.

Grey shale
DIMENSIONS : (Without tang) height: 24in
Width: 10.5in
Depth: 3.25in
STYLE : Pala
OBJECT HISTORY
Purchased for £15 from F.H.Edwards, Exec.
of the late J.C.French.
SUBJECT DEPICTED : Hinduism
COLLECTION : South & South East Asia
Collection
ACCESSION NUMBER
IS.22-1955



XIII. Comparable museum artwork – Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET)

A Pala stele from the 11th century in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York:



Standing Vishnu with His Consorts, Lakshmi and Sarasvati. second half of the 11th century
India (Bihar)

Title: Standing Vishnu with His Consorts, Lakshmi and Sarasvati

Period: Pala period

Date: ca. second half of the 11th century

Culture: India (Bihar)

Medium: Black stone

Dimensions: H. 36 1/2 in. (92.7 cm)

Classification: Sculpture

Credit Line: Gift of Michael V. Stolen, 1987

Accession Number: 1987.178

XIV. 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.

