

Galerie Hioco

Monumental head of a Jina (P652)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- A very rare colossal head belonging to one of the three most revered Jina (or Tirthankara) of the Jain tradition.
- Idealized facial features and harmonious curves reminiscent of the great classical aesthetics of the Gupta Empire.
- A finesse of sandstone with warm colors reflected in a variety of red and brown tones.

I. Detailed description

Monumental head of a Jina (P652)

Sandstone

India

Circa 9th-10th century

H. 35 cm or 13 ¾ in

Jainism, an Indian religion predating Buddhism

Jain sanctuaries have countless depictions of the Tirthaṅkara, also called Jina, omniscient beings who have broken free from the cycle of reincarnation. These extraordinary characters, twenty-four in number, of which there are twenty-four, existed down through the ages and are responsible for transmitting the foundations of Jain doctrine through the centuries. This doctrine predates Buddhism and one of its fundamental principles is non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), which applies to all creatures.

This superb head could represent Mahāvīra (the "great hero") because its halo is a blooming lotus flower that was originally part of the throne upon which the deity seated. The figure shows a skillful blend of expressive vigor and delicacy.

The Jina's moral virtue

The "Conqueror" or "Victor" (jina) was surely figured naked, as tradition dictates, sitting in the lotus position, hands in the lap, with a halo and protected by two parasols on top of each other. At the age of thirty, the prince Vardhamāna became a *sāḍhanā* (ascetic), gave up after a few months all clothing judging that detachment from the world required the nudity, practiced by the community Digambarā and some Sāḍhu, he devoted himself for twelve and a half years to meditation and long periods of fasting. He then reached enlightenment (*mokṣa*), which marks the end of the infernal cycle of reincarnations synonymous with pain. Through this face with a fixed expression, the sculptors depict the humility, righteousness and all the moral virtue of the holy man.

The influence of Gupta style

The artwork is characteristic of the medieval period in Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh, northern India, and its subtle decorative refinement is quite remarkable. Following the canon of Gupta art, Jain statuary oscillates between profusion of decoration and austere idealization of portraits. The roundness of the facial features still echoes the great classical aesthetics of the Gupta empire. It was at this same period, moreover, and by borrowing from Buddhist iconography the distinctive marks of holiness such as the cranial protuberance symbolizing the intelligence of the holy man, that the Jain canon was established.

II. Image of the piece – front view



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



IV. Image of the piece – right profile view



Galerie **Hioco**

V. Image of the piece – back view



VI. Image of the piece – left profile view



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



VIII. Provenance: in all transparency!

. This piece comes from a French private collection, acquired from the famous Parisian gallerist Moreau-Gobard in the early 1970s (by repute), who had purchased the artwork from an important 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.

IX. Condition report: our scientific approach

This monumental head of Jina is made of sandstone, dated to the 9th-10th centuries and measures 35 cm high (or 13 ¾ in). The head is full but the back has been partially hollowed out, perhaps to reduce its weight. The whole of the sculpted surface has an eroded aspect consistent with its dating, including the losses and breaks, which proves that they are old. These losses are obvious: the nose has completely disappeared as well as part of the relief of the mouth, of the right eye of the Jina and of the tip of the chin. Slight losses and small asperities are also to be noted on the ears, cheeks and brow bones, on the frontal line of the hair curls, on the uṣṇīṣa and the tenon that connects it to the halo. The hair above the ears -covering the back of the head- is not carved, since it was not intended to be seen by the devotees. Remains of orange pigments or devotional materials mixed with sand concretions are still visible in the most recessed parts of the sculpture, such as the curls of hair or the interstices of the halo's streak pattern. No restoration has been 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.

XI. Comparable museum artwork – The Brooklyn Museum

A Jina head, 10th-11th century, about 22 cm high (or 8 ¾ in), belonging to the Brooklyn Museum:



Brooklyn Museum

Head of a Jina

ASIAN ART

MEDIUM Sandstone

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

- Place made: [Central Region, India](#)
- Place made: [Central region, India](#)

DATES 10th-11th century

DIMENSIONS 8 3/4 x 5 3/4 in. (22.2 x 14.6 cm) ([show scale](#))

COLLECTIONS [Asian Art](#)

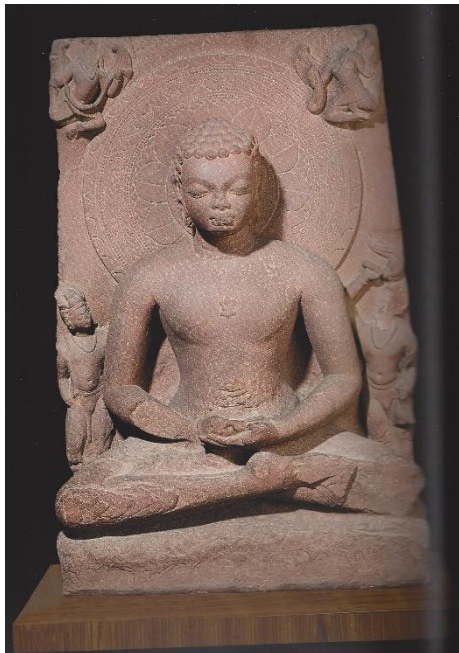
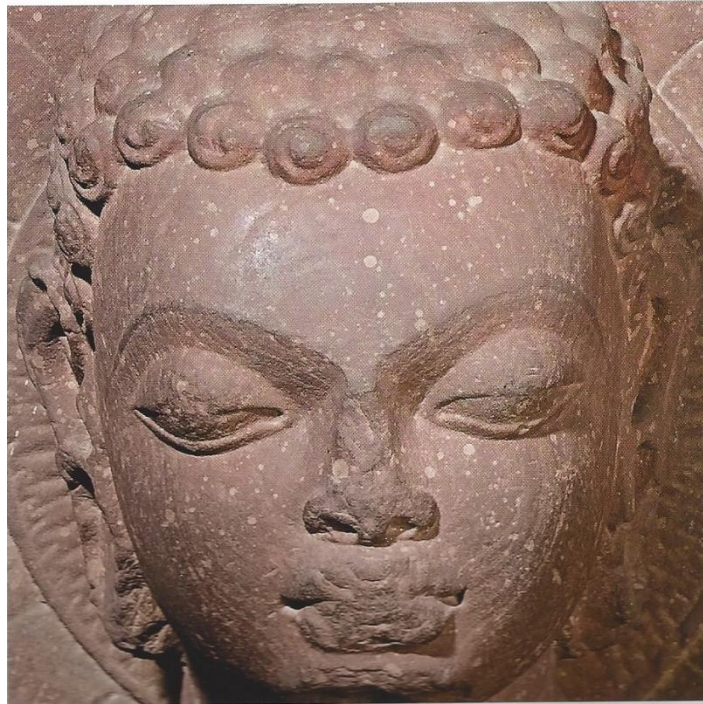
MUSEUM LOCATION This item is not on view

ACCESSION NUMBER 77.259.5

CREDIT LINE Gift of Emily Manheim Goldman

XII. Comparable museum artwork – State Museum, Lucknow

A Tirthankara Jain sculpture, 5th century, Gupta period, kept in the State Museum, Lucknow:



Tîrthankara jaïn

ve siècle

Grès rouge, 145 x 93 x 24 cm

Acc. no.: O. 181

Provenance: Sîtâpur, Uttar Pradesh
State Museum, Lucknow

Published in *L'Âge d'or de l'Inde classique : l'Empire des Gupta*, RMN, 2007, pp. 150-151, cat. 10.

XIII. 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.