

Galerie Hioco

The Navagrahā (P684)



What do we like about this sculpture?

- The oblong, slightly unstructured shape, which brings a touch of modernity
- The finely worked details, in an excellent state of preservation
- The undulating surface, underlined by the dancing elegance of the figures

I. Detailed description

The Navagrahā (P684)

Black stone
Northeast India (Bihār, Bengal)
11th-12th century, Pāla period
H. 26 cm; W. 65 cm or H. 10 inch W. 26 inch

An elegantly modelled bas-relief

The Navagrahā (or the nine seizers) represent the deified planets, playing a role in the destiny of beings. The remarkable state of preservation of the work, coupled with the sculptor's fine workmanship, makes it easy to distinguish the different deities. The varied positions and sinuous modelling give the bas-relief an elegant appearance, underlined by the refinement of the black stone. The faces of the divinities are modelled with surprising delicacy, with a sense of detail that testifies to the virtuosity of the sculptor. The asymmetry of the cut-out gives the whole a seductive dynamism.

The nine seizers

The iconography of the nine planets is a classic scheme of the Gupta period. The last two 'seizers' are actually astronomical phenomena: Rāhu is the deity of the eclipse and Ketu, with a serpent tail, is the comet. According to the legend of Rāhu's origin, the gods churned the sea of milk to bring out the elixir of immortality. The demon Rahu, noticing this, tried to seize the elixir. Surya and Chandra, the sun and the moon respectively, denounced him to the god Vishnu, who punished him by beheading him with his cakra, a disc with a sharp edge. However, a drop of the elixir fell on Rahu's tongue, and his head remained immortal. Driven by a desire for vengeance, the latter eternally pursues the sun and the moon, seeking to devour them. Since the demon has no body, the sun and moon keep escaping through its severed neck, causing the phenomenon of eclipses.

Benevolence and good fortune

This bas-relief was originally on the lintel of a sanctuary door. It is a symbolic place signifying good fortune. The nine deities are present, each characterised by a particular iconography (Surya, the sun god, holds blooming lotus flowers in his hands). Rahu is also present, symbolised by a headless body. Each deity is linked to a planet, a testament to the consistent astrological knowledge under the Pāla empire. This is the first time Hioco Gallery has offered for sale a work representing The Navagrahā.

II. Image of the piece : frontview



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



IV. Image of the piece – Back view



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



VI. Provenance : in all transparency !

. This piece comes from the collection of a Japanese diplomat who acquired it in Bangladesh in the 1970s.

. 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.

VII. Condition report : our scientific view

This bas-relief is made of black stone, dated to the 11th-12th century, Pāla period. It is 65 cm long and 26 cm high. The whole lintel is well preserved. The details of each deity are in good condition. The upper right part of the lintel is missing. The right foot of the second figure from the left is also slightly missing. Slight whitening can be seen in places, especially on the lower left part of the relief. No traces of restoration have been observed.

Please note that we are neither conservators nor restorers, and therefore any condition report we submit is a subjective analysis that we issue with reservation, even though we take it very seriously and professionally. Potential buyers are invited to examine the piece themselves to ensure its condition.

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IX. Comparable artwork – Bangladesh national museum



Navagrahā, 11th-12th century, Akhylya, Nachole (Rājshāhi), Bangladesh National Museum.

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.