

Head of a god

India / South Asia Collection

Accession Nr.:	6351 
Type:	sculpture
Date of production:	9th-12th c. Pala-Sena period
Place of production:	India
Materials:	slate
Techniques:	carved
Dimensions:	height: 22.8 cm width: 15 cm depth: 13.5 cm
Acquisition:	donation of Imre Schwaiger

Deity head made of black slate. A work of high artistic quality from the Pala period. It is difficult to determine which god it represents, but there are several indications that the statue represents the Bodhisattva. He wears the characteristic towered hair ornament (mukuta) of the Bodhisattva statues in Magadha. His half-closed eyelids and transcendent smile are characteristic elements of Buddhist iconography. The vertical sign on its forehead depicts the Buddha's third eye. Although the headdress is richly embellished, unusual of the Buddha representations, it was indeed a characteristic of the Pala period to depict the Buddha in a royal ornament. According to some researchers, the sculpture depicts Vishnu: His right earlobe shows that he probably wore large round earrings - an earring that is a characteristic accessory of Vishnu sculptures. In front of the mukuta, a demon's or lion's head is shown in the middle, and two Indian swans (hamsas) on either side of the hair. Although the Indian swan is a symbol of spirituality, we do not know of a parallel where the bird would appear on the hair ornament. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the sculpture is one of the most beautiful, artistically outstanding pieces in our collection.

