

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Carved Durga Idol

Mysore, India, 19th century

Sandalwood

28 cm high, 18.5 cm wide, 6 cm deep

Stock no.: A6123

Provenance: Belgian private collection.

An intricately-carved sandalwood pooja idol, depicting the Hindu goddess Durga in the guise of Mahishamardini ('slayer of Mahisha'), set within an architectural frame. According to the Puranas, after the Gods were defeated by the bovine demon Mahisha, they created a Goddess by combining all their powers and attributes. Therefore, Durga is depicted with four or eight hands, holding the weapons of male gods.¹ In this case, her eight arms hold a sword (*kharga*), discus (*Chakra*), javelin of Karttikeya, conch (*shankha*) of Vishnu, bow (*Dhanu*) of Shiva, a punch dagger (*katar*), and the head of a demon. She has one foot on the back of the slayed demon, whose tongue lolls from its decapitated head.

Though this example dates to the 19th century, little has changed in the depiction of Durga. A stone carving of Durga slaying Mahisha from Karnataka in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (no. [M.70.1.1](#)) which depicts Durga very similarly, dates to the 13th century. This shrine is carved in sandalwood in the traditional style of the Kingdom of Mysore. A sandalwood figure of the goddess Saraswati in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession no. [M.111-1911](#)), is carved in a similar fashion. She wears a *Karanda mukuta*, a basket-shaped coronet worn by Hindu goddesses, which resembles that worn by Durga.

[1] Borah, Anupam. 'Iconographic Analysis of Goddess Durga (With Special Reference to Temple Sculpture of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam)', *Res Militaris* 13.3 (2023), pp. 2667–2673: p. 2668–2669.