Yamuna and two attendents

Metal, sculpture Copper with fire gilding
7.75 inches
Nepal
Ca. 18th century
Patan school
Museum #: 92.045

By Natalie R. Marsh
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This Nepalese fire gilt copper sculpture represents the goddess Yamuna, the personification of the Yamuna, or Jumna, River in India. She is identified by the tortoise below her lower right hand. Frequently Yamuna is shown standing directly on the tortoise which serves as her vahana, or vehicle.1 In South Asia many rivers are personified as goddesses and worshipped as symbols of fertility and abundance. They are considered incredibly auspicious and powerful sites where numerous rituals take place. When paired with the goddess Ganga, the personification of the Ganges River, Yamuna assists in marking the entrances to both Buddhist and Hindu sacred spaces and monuments such as temples and shrines. Here Yamuna is depicted holding the mirror in her upper right hand and the kumkum jar, a container that holds vermillion powder, in her upper left hand. The kumkum jar and mirror are highly auspicious attributes, shown here to indicate the beneficence of this goddess' power. Yamuna's primary left hand is held in abhaya mudra, the gesture granting fearlessness, and her primary right hand is posed in varada mudra, which symbolizes the granting of boons. Due to the sculpture's current decontextualized state, the goddess'multiple roles, and the inconclusive evidence provided by the iconography, the actual purpose of this piece remains unclear.