

<https://www.zacke.at/auction/lot/lot-237---a-pair-of-sir-elijah-impey-astrological-illustrations-depicting-ketu-and-radhu-bengal-c-1780/?lot=98859&so=0&st=&sto=0&au=168&ef=&et=&ic=False&sd=0&pp=48&pn=5&g=1>

16th Apr, 2026 11:00

TWO-DAY AUCTION: Fine Asian Art, Buddhism and Hinduism

Lot 237

A PAIR OF 'SIR ELIJAH IMPEY' ASTROLOGICAL ILLUSTRATIONS DEPICTING KETU AND RADHU, BENGAL, C. 1780

Lot details

Northern India. Gouache and gold on paper, mounted on European paper. The first with Ketu, the descending node, depicted as a headless torso drawn in a chariot by a pair of rhinoceroses. The second with Radhu, the bringer of eclipses, son of Viprachitti and Sinhika, depicted as a severed head riding in a chariot drawn by two rhinoceroses. Each within red borders framed by ink rules.

Condition: Excellent condition with minimal wear, very little creasing, and few minuscule stains.

Provenance:

- Collection of Sir Elijah Impey, Bengal, India.
- Phillip's London, May 21, 1810, lot 346 (part-lot)
- A private collection in London, United Kingdom, acquired from the above and thence by descent.
- Sotheby's New York, 20-21 September 1985, lot 389 (one sheet of the present lot)
- A private collection in the United States, acquired from the above.
- Sotheby's New York, 23 March 1995, lot 312 (part-lot)
- A private collection on the East Coast of the United States, acquired from the above and thence by descent.

Sir Elijah Impey (1732-1809) was Chief Justice of Bengal from 1774 to 1782. Along with his wife, Lady Impey, he was a well-known patron of Indian artists. They are known for the studies of flora and fauna they commissioned, but Sir Elijah was also an avid collector of Indian miniature paintings. The present lot is an example of this interest, and its subject may well reflect Impey's desire to form an almost documentary group of portrayals of aspects of Hindu religion in the same manner as the natural history paintings.

Dimensions: Sheet size c. 19.5 x 23 cm, Size incl. frame c. 34.5 x 32.5 cm

Each mounted and framed behind glass. (4)

Literature comparison:

Compare a closely related Pahari painting of a charioteer in a similar style, attributed to Manaku (about 1700-1760) and dated about 1740, 21.8 x 32.6 cm, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession number 63.143.

