

Basic Detail Report



Seal with Vajra

Date

19th to 20th Century

Medium

Silver, carnelian, brass and cotton

Description

A silver seal like this one would have been used by almost every political and religious official from Tibet to sign

letters and documents. It would have been hung from a belt by its cord for ease of access. To leave a signature, an impression would be made in either cow skin, wax, or lac. This is a practice which was imported from China, but the decoration of the seals remains indisputably Tibetan. The fine carvings indicate that it would have been owned by someone very important. This seal also has a vajra attached to it. The vajra is a symbol found across Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Though its Sanskrit name translates to thunderbolt, its Tibetan name translates to diamond and speaks to its indestructible nature. The vajra appears to have been based on a club form and, having evolved out of its utilitarian purpose, adopted symbolic meanings that appear in the tantric path in Buddhism, itself called Vajrayana after the vajra.

Dimensions

Seal: $2 \frac{3}{8} \times \frac{7}{8} \times \frac{7}{8}$ in. ($6 \times 2.2 \times 2.2$ cm) Vajra: $2 \frac{3}{8} \times \frac{5}{8} \times \frac{5}{8}$ in. ($6 \times 1.6 \times 1.6$ cm)