



Ritual Dagger (Phurbu)

Date

19th to 20th Century

Medium

Brass

Description

This is a ritual dagger or phurbu used in Tibetan Buddhist tradition to perform specific rituals pertaining to exorcising demons. Small examples such as this would have been held by hand, but larger daggers would have instead been displayed on pedestals. The triangular blade seen in this object is very characteristic of these daggers, as are the figurative representations on the pommel of the blade. The daggers served as representations of Buddhist deities such as Mahākāla and Vajrakīla who are called upon to remove evil spirits. The heads at the top of this phurbu are Vajrapani, Hayagriva, and Yamantaka. Interestingly, while other Buddhist ritual objects such as

the dorje are not unique to Tibet, the phurbu did not appear in other Buddhist countries until it was adopted by Chinese Buddhists from Tibet.

Dimensions

5 3/8 × 1 × 3/4 in. (13.7 × 2.5 × 1.9 cm)