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Indian and Southeast Asian Works of Art

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LOTE 67

OTHER PROPERTIES

TASHI TSERING MA AND HER LONG-LIFE SISTERS

POLYCHROME RHINOCEROS HORN

BHUTAN

Carved as a clouded mountain landscape depicting Tashi Tsering Ma below, Milarepa above and Amitayus at the summit, with Tashi Tsering Ma's sisters, Drozang Ma, Drinzang Ma, Miyo Lobsang Ma and Thinggi Shelzang Ma around the base of the mountain, all

astride their respective mounts, the deer, dragon, tiger and mule.

Height: 7 7/8 in (20 cm)

18th century

ESTIMACIÓN 80,000-100,000 USD

Lote vendido: 96,000 USD

DOCUMENTACIÓN

Jan Chapman, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, Christie's Books Ltd., 1999, no. 398, p. 276.

NOTA DEL CATÁLOGO

The carving may depict the sacred mountain Chomolhari that borders Bhutan and Tibet and is the spiritual home of Tashi Tsering Ma, the most prominently portrayed of the five sisters and the focus of this rare sculpture. The Five Long-life Sisters, tsering che nga, are said to be ancient Tibetan mountain deities that were persuaded into the service of Buddhism by Padmasambhava in the seventh century. Unlike Tibet, Bhutan has an indigenous population of rhinoceros, and it is likely that this fine and exceptionally rare Himalayan Buddhist carving has a Bhutanese rather than Tibetan provenance. The Drukpa Kagyu is the dominant Buddhist school and the state religion in Bhutan, and it may be that Milarepa is included on the carving in his role as an important spiritual progenitor of the Kagyu order, in addition to having Tashi Tsering Ma as his personal protector. One other Bhutanese rhinoceros horn carving of a mountain landscape is recorded - possibly also representing Chomolhari - and is now in the James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, Chicago, see Pal, 1997, no. 315, p. 344, pl. 315, p. 228. The Alsdorf carving depicts the seventeenth century founder of the kingdom of Bhutan, the Drukpa Kagyu hierarch Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, seated in meditation within a cave towards the mountain's summit.

Rhinoceros horn is considered auspicious in Tibetan Buddhism and a pair of horns is included in the rinchen dun, seven precious jewels. Himalayan rhinoceros horn carvings of Buddhist subjects are extremely rare. Amongst the surviving examples are a series of five rhinoceros horn statues depicting Kagyu lineage progenitors, said to have been carved by the tenth Karmapa, Chos Ying Dorje (1604-1674), and now preserved in the Rumtek monastery, Sikkim, see Douglas and White, 1976, pp. 2, 4, 10, 14, 18. A Bhutanese or Tibetan carving of Tara from the Gerard Levy Collection, Paris, is published by Chapman, 1999, no. 397, p. 275; a carving said to be from Bhutan is now in the Rietberg Museum, Zurich, see *ibid*, no. 399, p. 277; and a fine Bhutanese carving of Mahakala is now in the Robert Buravoy Collection, see Bazin, 2003, no. 65, p. 122.