
PAGODA RED



TIBETAN GAU TRAVELING SHRINE WITH SILK CASE

\$1,280

c. 1900 • Tibet • Ceramic, Brass, Copper, Fabric • Collection #CFC588

W: 7.5" D: 3.0" H: 9.0"

Tibetan traveling shrines, known as Gau, were believed to offer protective powers and were used to hold and carry sacred objects during long journeys. Crafted over a century ago, Buddhist followers may have purchased this intricate gau while on religious pilgrimage to a temple or holy site. This large brass shrine is decorated in repoussé with decorative scrollwork and several Buddhist symbols in low relief. At the top of the shrine is the cintamani, or wish-fulfilling jewel, shown here as a cluster of flaming pearls. At the bottom is the kirtimukha, or 'face of glory,' a powerful demon believed to be a fearsome guardian of thresholds and sacred spaces. Continued...



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The remaining eight motifs are each of the ribbon-clad Buddhist auspicious symbols, including the parasol, the banner of victory, the conch shell, the treasure vase, the lotus, the wheel of life, the endless knot, and the pair of golden fishes. These symbols of good fortune represent the offerings that were made by the gods to Shakyamuni Buddha when he attained enlightenment.

These intricate symbols surround a central glass panel displaying a small polychromed clay figure depicting a seated Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom and knowledge. Seated upon a lotus plinth, he holds in his left hand a lotus blossom and in his right the flaming double-edged sword that cuts through all ignorance. The shrine has been paired with a quilted silk carrying case by which the shrine could have been slung across one's shoulders and carried long distances.

From the collection of Frances and Gary Comer.

