

SOME ART OBJECTS FROM TIBET

IN the last number of the JOURNAL mention was made of the purchase of a number of rare objects from monasteries in Tibet.

These were included in the special exhibition arranged during the winter and have therefore been on view for some months. There are thirteen objects, all of which sustain a high artistic standard representative of the best workmanship of Tibet and Nepal. Among them are examples of the fine work formerly executed by the lamas in Tibetan monasteries.

The rarest and best article is the statue of St. Padma Sambhava, which measures 9 inches in height. This statue is of bronze, finely wrought and heavily gilt. The saint was the founder of Lamaism in Tibet. He lived during the eighth or ninth century A. D. and was the first to preach the doctrine of "the enlightened one." He is represented as seated on a lotus thalamus with crossed bare feet and the ancient ecclesiastical robes. On his head is the pointed cap of a deified lama. On either shoulder appears lotus blooms surmounted by the *vajra* emblem or thunderbolt.

Another notable piece is the large Buddhistic figure in gilt bronze, 15 inches high, representing Dorji Tomba, a divinity of the Mahâyâna school. He is seated in the traditional pose on a lotus base which is raised upon an oblong openwork pedestal. The figure, which is clad in rich attire, bears the *urna* mark on the forehead. In each hand the divinity holds the Buddhist emblem of the *vajra* or thunderbolt.

Another divinity of the Mahâyâna school, Goro Peema, is represented by a smaller image, 9 inches high. This, like the last piece described, has the usual *funagoku* or highly embellished nimbus rising at the back. In his right hand the divinity holds the thunderbolt and in the left, which rests on the knee, he holds the skull cup. These images and other bronze figures in the collection were first cast and afterwards worked by hand.

Of a different character, but of similar artistic interest, is a creed book with heavy wooden covers, one of which is elaborately carved and gilded. The book is made of sheets of heavy blue hand-made paper, covered on each side by closely written lines of text. The contents of this text is the Jadumba or fundamental dogma of the Buddhist creed. It is beautifully engrossed by hand in the old Tibetan characters.

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FIG. 4.—Rare Tibetan image of gilt bronze representing St. Padma, the founder of Lamaism in Tibet.

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FIG. 5.—Tibetan gilt bronze image representing Goro Peema.



FIG. 6.—Tibetan gilt image representing Dorji Tompa.

THE MUSEUM JOURNAL

On the carved cover of this book, which is finished in polychrome, are three sunken niches each holding a figure of Buddha enthroned, carved in bold relief. These three figures are collectively known as "the three precious ones" and comprise the Amitaba trinity. The accessories surrounding these figures include dragons and a frieze with a bird-headed scroll. The whole is carved in teakwood and gilded. Another similar cover in the collection presents the same three figures. In this case the accessories include birds, animals and winged guardians with a background of scrolls.

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