

Finch & C^o



TIBETAN CARVED RHINOCEROS BONE 'BEAK'

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DEPICTING TWO INCARNATIONS OF BODHISATTVA.AVALOKITESHVARA 'THE LORD OF COMPASSION', PERHAPS A TEMPLE
ICON

18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 15CM HIGH, 11.5CM WIDE, 9CM DEEP – 6 INS HIGH, 4½ INS WIDE, 3½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE INDIAN RHINOCEROS 'RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS' HAS A SINGLE FRONTAL HORN AND IN COMMON WITH ALL OTHER RHINOCEROS SPECIES, THE HORN, MADE OF KERATIN, A TOUGH PROTEIN, PERCHES ON A ROUGHENED AREA OF THE SKULL, RATHER THAN BEING 'ROOTED' LIKE A TUSK IN THE SKULL.

THE CARVING DEPICTS TWO INCARNATIONS OF AVALOKITESHVARA, TO THE RIGHT HE HOLDS IN ONE HAND A LOTUS BLOSSOM, AN AUSPICIOUS EMBLEM DENOTING PURITY, AND HIS OTHER HAND IS OPEN SYMBOLISING COMPASSIONATE GIVING. TO THE LEFT HE IS SHOWN HOLDING A TRIANGULAR HALO AND ANOTHER LOTUS FLOWER. HE EMBODIES THE UNIVERSAL MANTRA 'OMMANI PADME HŪḤĀ' WHICH IS CHANTED CONTINUALLY BY ALL TIBETANS AS THIS HELPS TO CONSOLIDATE ITS BENEFICIAL EFFECT. HE IS A MANIFESTATION OF THE CELESTIAL BUDDHA, SYMBOLISING COMPASSION AND ITS ATTRIBUTES. HE IS SAID TO ACT IN MANY AND STRANGE WAYS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHER BEINGS TRAPPED IN CYCLES OF SUFFERING. HE TEACHES THAT COMPASSION IS A SPIRITUAL QUALITY THAT EVERYONE POSSESSES IN A LATENT FORM, AND WHICH IS PRESENT IN EVERY EXPERIENCE, EVEN THE HARSHTEST ORDEAL CAN BE A TEACHER OF COMPASSION.