



A RARE COPPER ALLOY FIGURE OF MANJUSHRI IN HIS HERO ASPECT.

Tibet, around 1800, height 21 cm.

Brown patina with decorative gold, silver and turquoise inlays. The lotus flower at his left shoulder is lost. The statue bears an inscription in Tibetan incised around the lotus basis identifying the figure and also mentioning its donor: "...This sacred support was commissioned by rTa tshag pa." It refers to an incarnation lineage of Gelug masters. The most famous were the 8th and 10th rTa tshag who acted as regents over Tibet between 1789–90, 1791–1811 and 1875–86. The lineage goes back to Baso Chokyi Gyaltsen (1402-73) but the first to bear the title of rTa tshag was the 6th incarnation Ngagwang Konchog Nyima (1653-1707). The previous incarnations were named rTa tshag retroactively as it is common among

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Tibetan masters. From the 8th incarnation Yeshe Lobsang Tenpai Gonpo (1760-1810) on, the lineage settled in Kundeling monastery near Lhasa. The inscription unfortunately does not provide further information regarding the exact identity of the master nor any specific period. Nevertheless, the use of "rTa tshag pa" as a name for the commissioner without any other precision could indicate an "obviousness" due to the celebrity of the character. Since the lineage became famous and settled in Lhasa with the 8th incarnation, it is possible this statue was commissioned during or after his life in the surroundings of the Kundeling monastery.

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