

The american museum of natural history

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My specific choice of swords is the Phurba. Some say that they were in use during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, over 2500 years ago, particularly in the indigenous communities of Tibet. Others speculate even earlier origins. Padmasambhava is credited with the invention of the phurba. During the struggle against the demons that were fighting the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, he is said to have pulled out a peg from the tent of a non-believer and, using the peg to nail down evil spirits, consecrated the ground on which the Samye Monastery was established in the eighth century. This simple peg became the Phurba, an important tool of religious practice that is used to this day.

The Khadga is known as the fire sword which is paired with phurba. The Bodhisattva Manjursi, who is the embodiment of wisdom, is shown wielding the symbol of enlightenment. The fire is used to destroy the darkness of ignorance by the fiery rays which burst from the end of the sword. Wisdom is the sword that slices away illusion and wisdom is the final symbol of awareness. The first cut of the sword of wisdom is the decisive one, which is the dawn of enlightenment. The sword then continues to cut through the darkness.

The Phurba is a special triple sided Tibetan ritual dagger or stake, patterned after an ancient Vedic tool that originated as a stake that tethered sacrificial animals. It is used ritually to create stability and areas of protected space, often staked into the ground in circles prior to rituals. Only one initiated into its use may possess a phurba, all others are forbidden. It is an implement directly related to the Dorje Phurba who is a wrathful deity of Tibetan Buddhism. This practice is extremely powerful and deals with the subjugation of obstacles manifesting as plague, wars, invasions, drought, <https://assignbuster.com/the-american-museum-of-natural-history/>

famine, and demons. Dorje Phurba pierces and subdues the ignorance that is the root of anger, hatred, aggression, fear, and pride. The dagger of non-dual awareness penetrates to the root of obstacles, negative emotions, and intellectual afflictions to transform them. It cancels negativity by liberating it. It is the wrathful emanation of the water element. With his powerful Dagger in his hands, the Tibetan monk bands all magical hindrances of demons and evil spirits to protect practitioners on their way to enlightenment.

All in all, all of the Asian exhibits in the American Museum of Natural History were equally compelling. I find that the detail of the phurba raises my curiosity about these monks who created such a majestic instrument and I wonder how this instrument was crafted the first time it was created. It was clear to me that the phurba was the device that brought the magnificent collection together for this exhibition. Most impressive to me are ancient artifacts that maintain the same reverence as was intended from their inception centuries ago.