

Set of Buddhist manuscript covers, possibly from a Pancharaksha manuscript

Date

1686

Primary Maker

Unidentified artist

Medium

Gilt copper over wood

Description

The front cover consists of repousse in high relief depicting a pantheon of gods and goddesses, placed in two beaded registers with a lotus petal border. The main deities of the upper register include five Buddhas surrounded by attendants and bodhisattvas; the lower register presents five multi-armed and multi-headed goddesses known as the Five Protectresses, or "Pancharaksha," suggesting that these covers might have been made for a "Pancharaksha Manuscript," one of the most commonly copied and illustrated Buddhist manuscripts. The Pancharaksha is a ritual text that consists of five charms or spells, typically contains hieratic illustrations of Buddhist deities. The back cover has elegant low-relief repousse designs that contrast the sculptural qualities of the front cover by their linearity. Within an overall pattern of elegant floral scrolls, a plethora of animals and birds, including a peacock, elephant and horse, are shown along with devotees and "dakinis;" even Ganesha, the elephant headed god worshipped as remover of obstacles, is included.

Dimensions

Each: 4 × 14 1/2 inches (10.2 × 36.8 cm)