

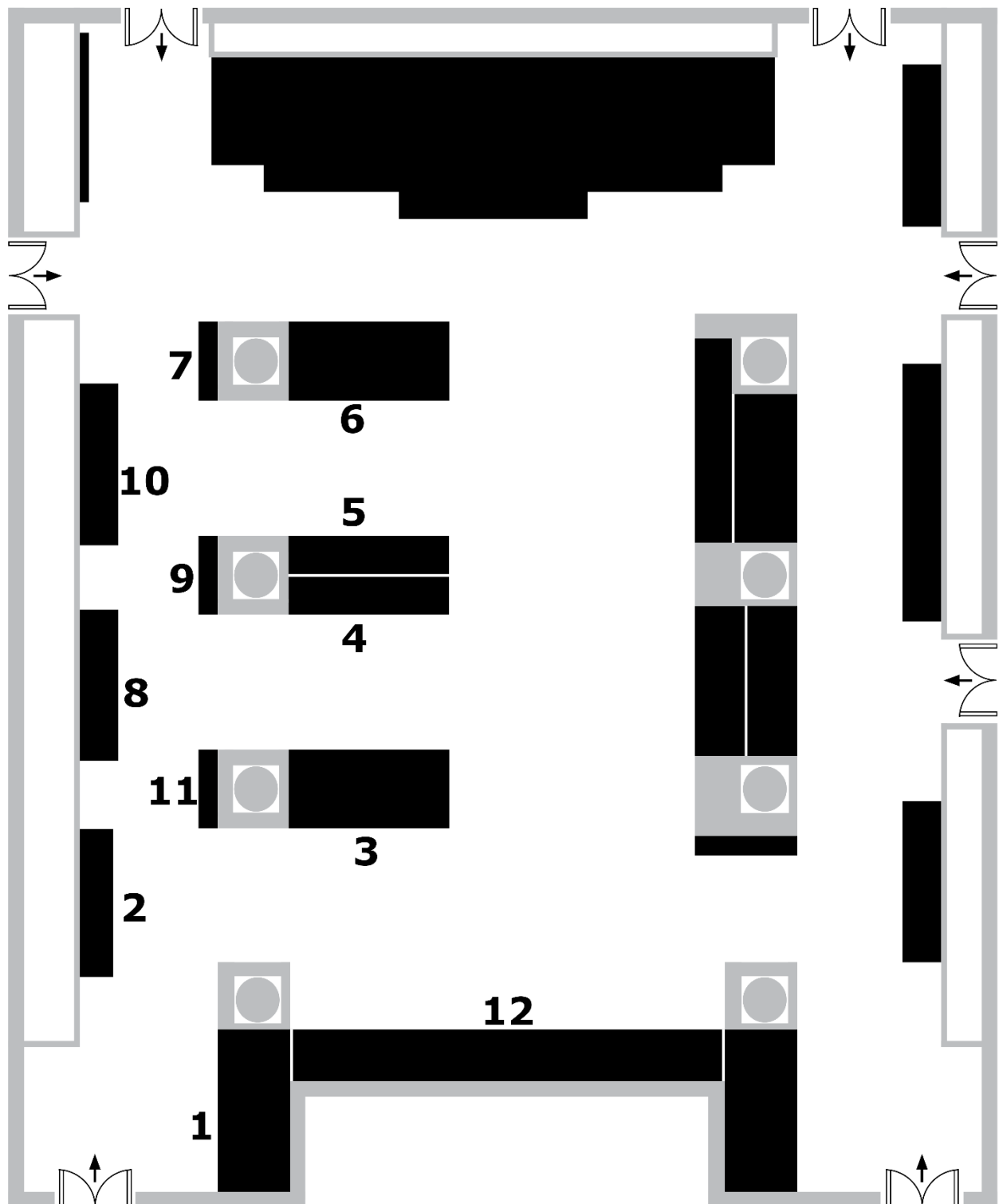
Large Print Guide
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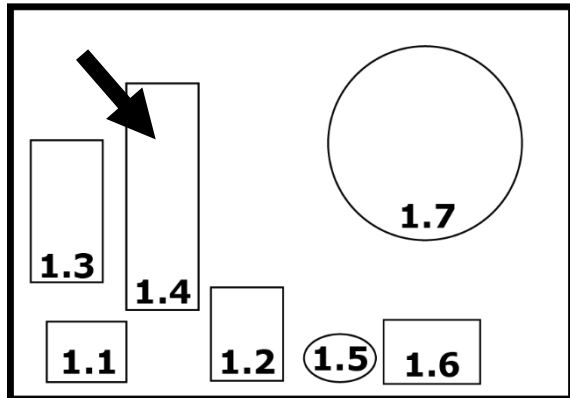
Ancestors & Rituals Book 1

Level 2
Permanent Galleries
Faith & Belief

Floorplan of Gallery and User Guide



How to read display case and floorplans



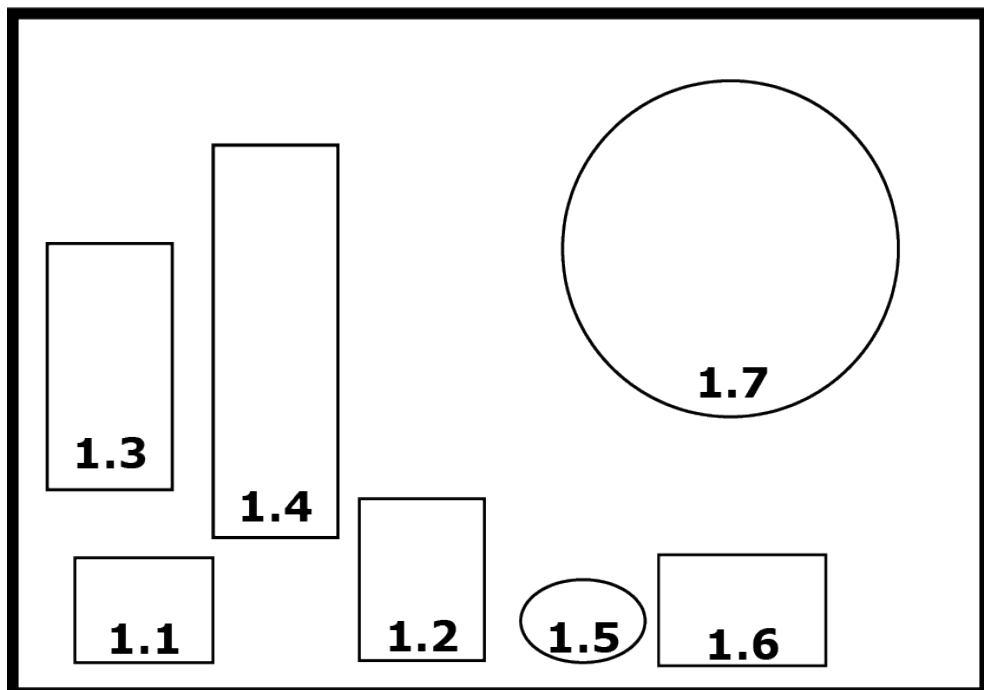
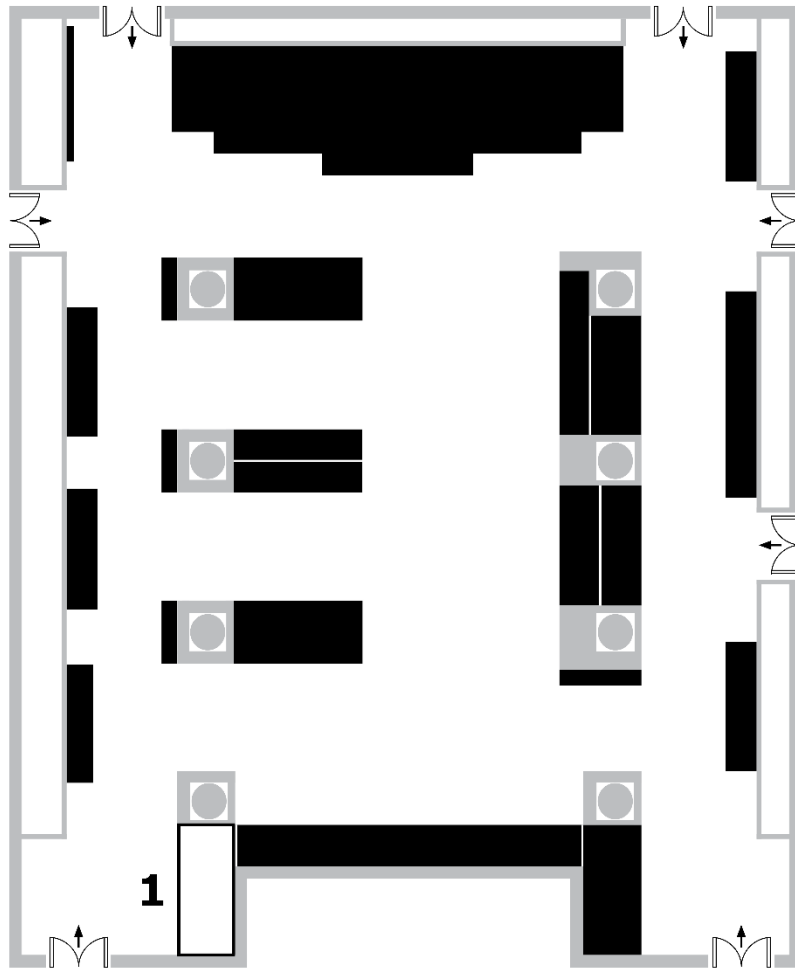
To find object label text, match 1.4 to 1.4,
then 1.5 to 1.5, and so on.

1.4

Rahwana on his mount

Eastern Java, early 20th century

W-0021



1

Hindu-Buddhist Southeast Asia

Sculptural traditions in Java and Bali

After the arrival of Islam, the hybrid Hindu-Buddhist beliefs of the Javanese kingdoms ceased to be part of state religion, but the old gods did not disappear completely. Carvings of deities made as decorations or for altars used in folk religion remained common in Java. In Bali, on the other hand, sculpture continued to receive lavish court patronage and carvings often more closely follow pre-Islamic styles.

The caricature-like carving of the Javanese figure contrasts quite dramatically with the highly stylised Balinese carvings. The figure of Vishnu riding Garuda lacks the formal attributes of classical Javanese carving, and is in a more life-like style with little elaboration.

This contrasts quite dramatically with the lion figures from Bali. Both are portrayed with highly exaggerated expressions and one is almost completely buried in floral and vegetal profusions.

1.1

Winged lion figure (singa ambara)

Bali, 19th century or earlier

2015-00377

1.2

Dewi (goddess)

Bali, 19th century or earlier

2015-00376

1.3

Guardian lion (singa)

Bali, late 19th or early 20th century

XXXX-11584

1.4

Rahwana on his mount

Eastern Java, early 20th century

W-0021

MASKS

In Bali traditional dance and dramatic performances were staged both for religious ceremonies at temples and as entertainment at major life cycle events such as weddings and funerals. Wayang originally meant “shadow”, as seen in puppetry, which referred to the spirit of the tribal ancestors. It later came to also refer to plays or drama with human dancers wearing masks.

Such performances began as stories of the lives of the ancestors, but merged into the Hindu epics, such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Local legends were also popular. Perhaps the most famous of these is the tale of Barong and

Rangda, a classic story of good versus evil in which a malevolent witch is ultimately defeated by a mythological beast, known as Barong.

1.5

Miniature wayang wong mask of Rahwana

Bali, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

XXXX-10918

Formerly Raffles Library and Museum, acquired in 1932

1.6

Barong bangkal

Bali, early 20th century

Wood, pigments, leather,
wild boar skin

XXXX-11437

Formerly Raffles Library and Museum, acquired in 1937

Mask Theatre (wayang topeng)

1.7

Masks

Java, early 20th century

Wood, pigments, leather

XXXX-11007, XXXX-10925, XXXX-10923, XXXX-11002, XXXX-10922, XXXX-10924, XXXX-10926, XXXX-11065, XXXX-11004, XXXX-11008, XXXX-10917 (reverse)

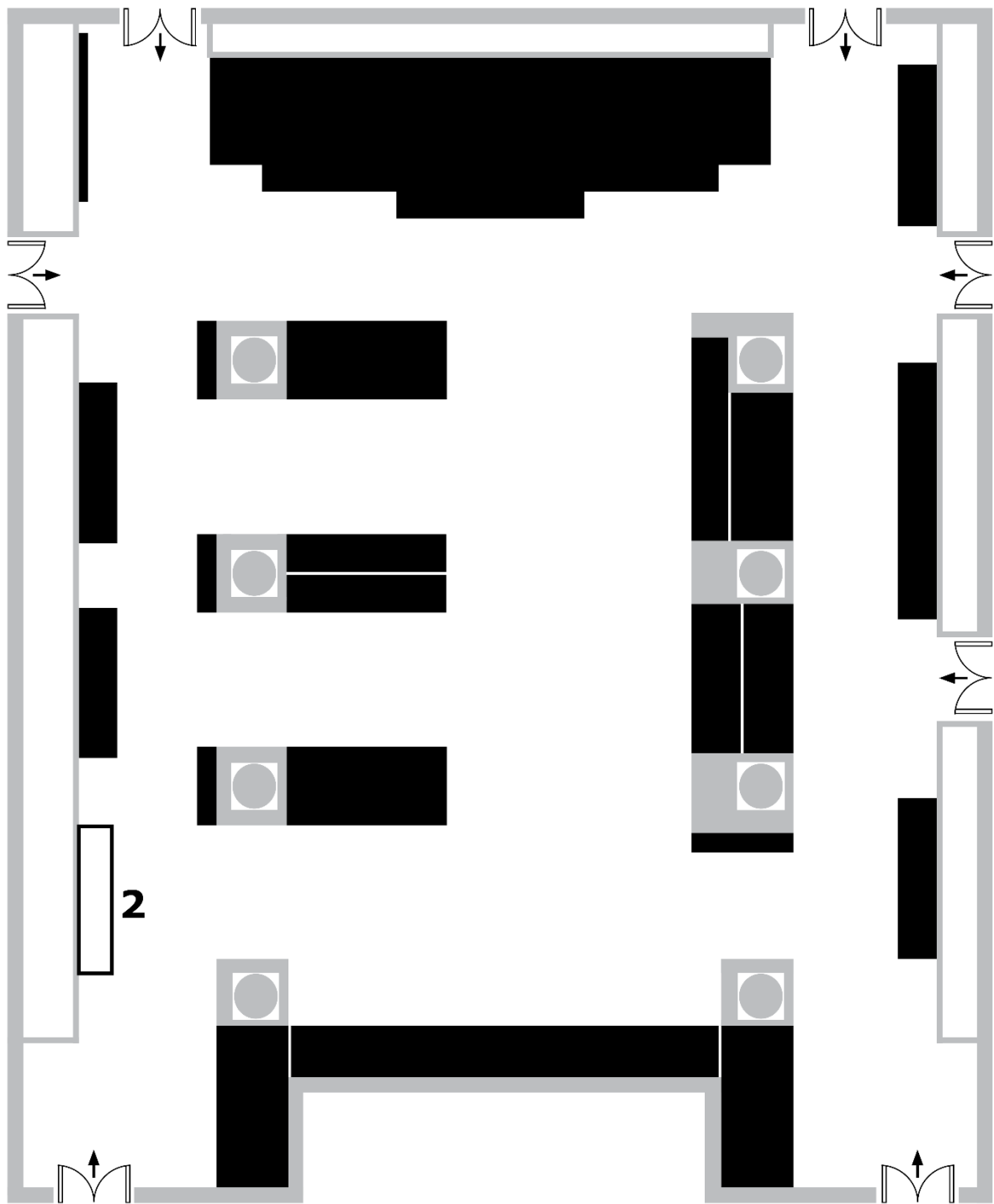
Wayang topeng is one of the oldest of the Indonesian performing arts, and is accompanied by gamelan music. Wayang topeng became refined as a Javanese court art accompanied by music and narration, similar to the court masked dance of Cambodia and Thailand.

Masks were used in dances for ritual purposes, funerals, initiation, and healing ceremonies, which are still undertaken today. It is believed

the masks enable the wearer to communicate with spirits and to personify Mask theatre (wayang topeng) ancestors and deities. The spirit of the character is said to enter the dancer through the leather strap held in the teeth (see mask with back displayed). One performer can play several characters by switching from mask to mask.

Many dances perform the Panji narratives – adventures of Prince Panji and his beloved, Candra Kirana. Panji is the counterpart of Arjuna, the princely hero figure in the Hindu epic the Mahabharata. The colour of the face, as well as the size and shape of the eyes, indicate the type of character. Sophisticated and refined characters have pale faces with delicate features and narrow eyes. Strong and coarse characters have brightly coloured or red faces with round, wide-open eyes.

These masks were collected in the early 20th century for the Raffles Library and Museum (now the National Museum of Singapore). Similar masks were collected by Stanford Raffles, some of which were depicted in his book The History of Java – seen here.



2

Entryway

Decorative entryway

North-central Java, dated 1822

2016-00955

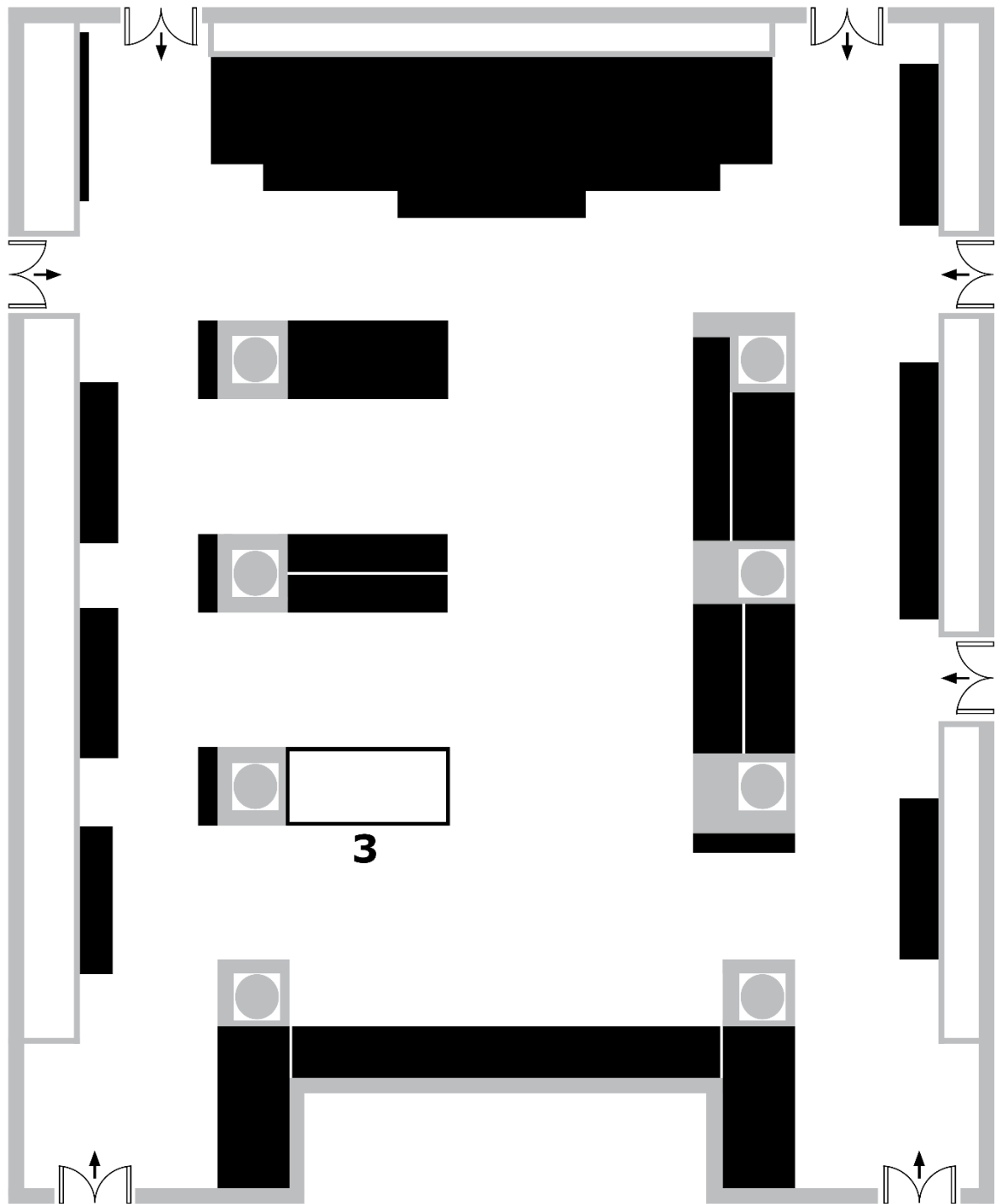
Gift of Michael and Shelly Dee

Entryways are key points that require spiritual as well as physical protection. This entrance reflects the diverse cultures that have influenced Java.

The central panel with a tiger and peacock is an unusual combination – possibly an emblem of the original owner. The peacock may show a Chinese influence as it resembles a phoenix. The two ogre-like guardian figures wielding clubs are a common feature throughout Southeast Asia, originating in Hindu and Buddhist temples.

Human guards in Dutch-Javanese colonial-style uniforms demonstrate the hybrid nature of Javanese court culture.

While the major courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta developed a refined and lavish style, smaller courts were typically less sophisticated. This entryway is believed to have come from the home of a minor noble or official, probably from around the Surabaya or Semarang area.



3

Makara

Makara palanquin ornament

Malay Peninsula, Pattani, 18th or 19th century

Jackfruit tree wood, zinc, brass and copper plates

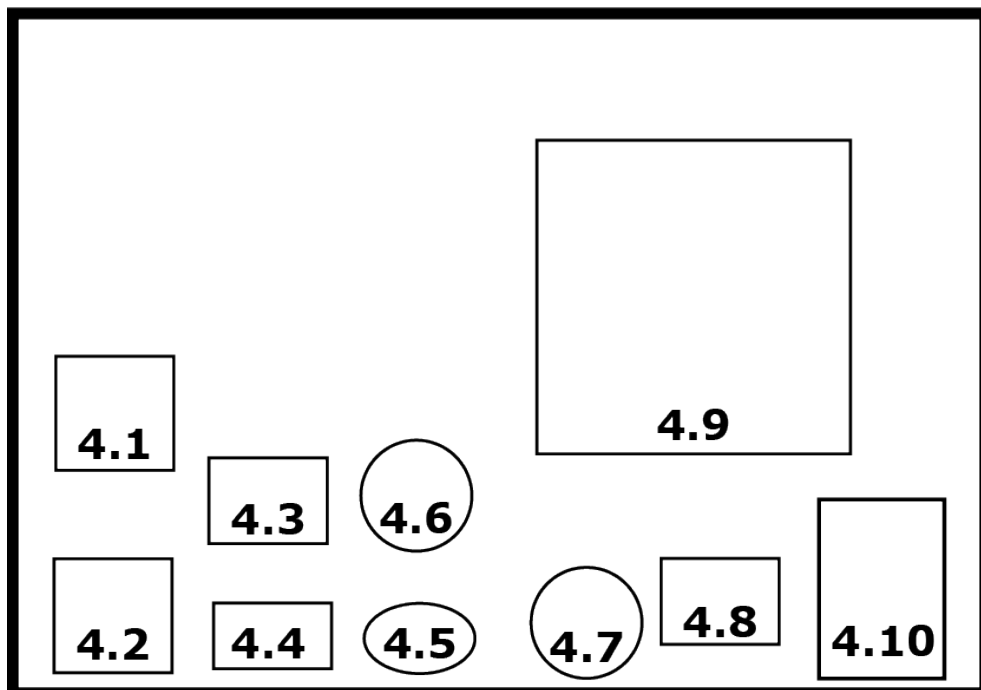
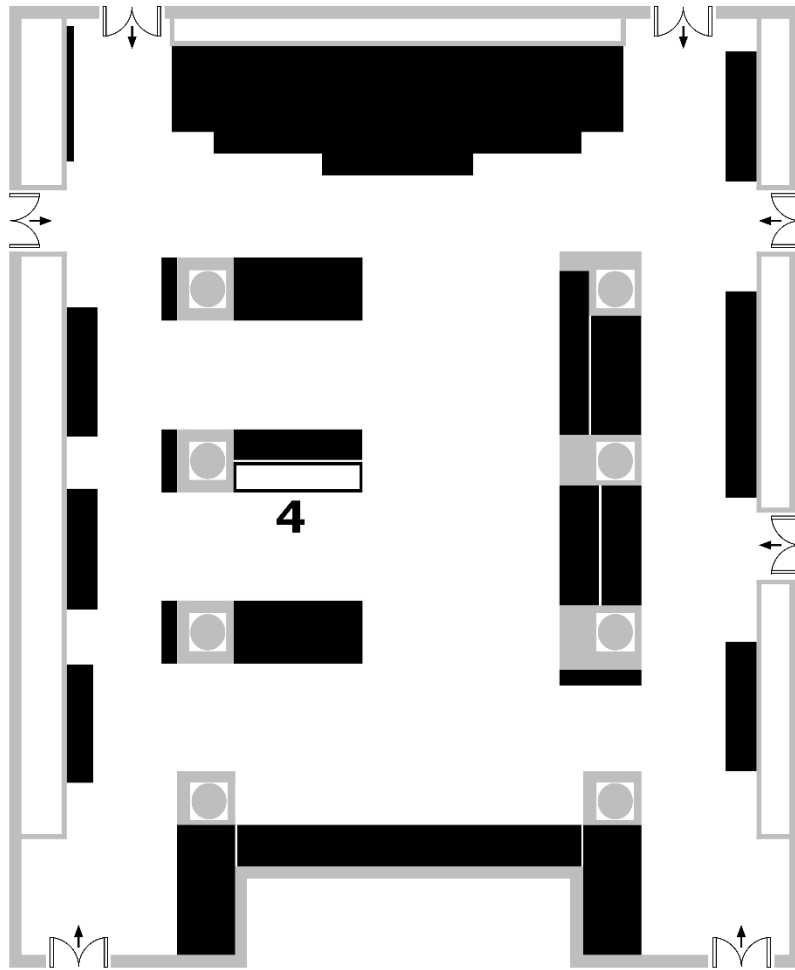
2004-00906

Acquired with the funds from Friends of ACM
through Gala Dinner 2003

The makara is the vehicle of the Hindu river goddess Ganga. It is a composite creature with features of a crocodile, fish, goat, and elephant. The form harks back to the Hindu-Buddhist pasts of the now-Muslim communities along the north-eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula. Despite its origins, it is still seen as a water spirit and symbolises fertility.

This one is a rare surviving example of an ornament for a palanquin used in village

ceremonies revolving around the circumcision of young boys. Prescribed by Islamic law but embellished with local customs, male circumcision is regarded as a rite of passage among Nusantara cultures. A common ritual element is the parade and presentation of circumcised boys to the community.



4

Malay World

4.1

Quail trap (jebak puyuh)

Malay Peninsula, early 20th century

Wood, rattan, palm fibres

XXXX-10572

A female quail in the cage lures wild quails, which are trapped by the outer netted door. As quail-trapping was an aristocratic pursuit, the intricately carved gunungan (peak) ornament – typically reserved for lavish gateways – crowning the top of the trap, transforms it into a luxury object.

4.2

Container with tiered lid

Malay Peninsula, Malacca, Tanjong Kling, around 1905

Pandanus leaves

XXXX-10266

The shape of this container is a representation of Mount Meru, reflecting influences from a Hindu-Buddhist past. It also resembles ancient sites of worship called candi found throughout the Malay World.

The unknown maker used the now almost extinct basketry technique called anyam gila (literally, “mad weave”). Typically done by females, the work is begun by weaving a star shape, called pusat Belanak (navel of the Belanak fish). Then the box is built from the centre outwards, by weaving strands of mengkuang leaves (similar to pandan) into rhomboid shapes that combine to

give the illusion of hexagons. On this basket, the weaver has added intricate, raised curl-work ornamentation.

4.3

Betel box

Riau-Lingga Archipelago, mid-19th century

Leather, lacquer, gold

XXXX-12029

The distinctive shape of this betel container (kotak sirih) is typical of the form. One is typically presented as part of the gifts in the proposal ceremony, or as part of gift exchange between bride and groom that kicks off wedding proceedings.

The technique of tooling thin slivers of gold onto leather mimics the traditional technique of gold embroidery on velvet. The box is decorated with panels of scrolling leaves and flowers, a pattern

known as the sulur bayung arrangement. The neatly ordered composition of leaves that curl in signifies ideals of humility and modesty.

4.4

Betel set

Sumatra, Aceh, around 1910

Fern fibres, rattan

XXXX-10765

The wonderfully woven Acehnese set was made by coiling fern fibres above and below a rattan framework. Various coloured fibres were used, and they form patterns inspired by the ikat motifs seen on shoulder cloths worn by Acehnese and Batak peoples of northern Sumatra. The exceptional quality indicates its possible use for formal occasions.

4.5

Ceremonial tableware

Riau-Lingga Archipelago, mid-19th century

Gold alloy

2007-00892 to -00894

The finely worked designs on the dish, finger bowl, and spoon were inspired by the flora of the region. The bowl (batil) serves as a receptacle to rinse fingers, when using the customary Malay manner of eating – using your hand like a scoop.

While the designs are typical of Riau tableware, the material is unusual. Silver is more typical than gold. This particular gold is mixed with copper to make an alloy known regionally as suasa, which is sometimes believed to ward off bad luck.

4.6.1

Dish

Riau Archipelago, around 1912

Silver

XXXX-06530

4.6.2

Tobacco box with lime box

Sumatra, around 1920

Silver and partly gilded silver

XXXX-06839

4.6.3

Tobacco box

Brunei, around 1915

Silver

XXXX-06726

These are called tobacco boxes because they are used to hold tobacco alongside pre-prepared betel quids. The tobacco is rolled into a little ball

and chewed to provide a change of flavour as well as to clean one's teeth. The chain and rings enable them to be hung on a belt or shoulder cloth, to ensure that one can always be hospitable while on the road.

These boxes have indigenous names that sound similar – celepa in Sumatra; calapa in Brunei. The Sumatran term is more specific to this type of container. In Brunei, calapa can refer to any container or set for betel chewing.

4.7

Betel set

Malay Peninsula, Kedah, mid-19th century

Silver, brass, iron

1999-00147

This set has lidded containers (cembul) to hold ingredients, a taller one (bekas sirih) for betel leaves, an areca nut cutter (kacip) designed like

the head of a bird, and a mortar and pestle (gobek or gucu) to mash the nut.

The royal crest of Kedah on the upper rim suggests that it might have been presented as a state gift.

4.8

Manuscript on the interpretation of dreams

Malay Peninsula, Perak, around 1900

Ink on paper

2000-06776

This Malay manuscript is written in Jawi – an adapted and modified form of the Arabic script. Jawi was the main script for Malay from around 1303 until the 1960s, when there was a mainstream switch to using the Roman alphabet.

This manuscript features pages of continuous, run-on lines. Red ink is used to divide sections

into chapters. Each chapter discusses a subject dreamt of – such as smells and scents, or eating particular foods – and guidance is given on interpreting elements as signs or symbols.

4.9

Baju kurung

Straits Settlement or Indonesia, 1930s or 1940s

Silk velvet, dyes, and gilded thread

Peranakan Museum, 2011-01194

Gift of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee

A woman's garment, the baju kurung falls below the knees and is worn over a sarong. The loose fit and floral pattern conform to Muslim ideals of modesty and non-figural representation. The deep red colour is known in Malay as merah pulasan (merah is "red", pulasan is a fruit similar to rambutan).

This style, with rounded neck, is called baju kurung Teluk Belanga (also baju kurung Johor), as coined in the 19th century by Sultan Abu Bakar, the first Sultan of the modern Johor Sultanate. Teluk Belanga, located at Telok Blangah, Singapore, is the ancestral palace (istana) of his grandfather Temenggung Abdul Rahman.

4.10

Kris (Keris tajong)

Malay Peninsula, Kelantan or Pattani, early 20th century

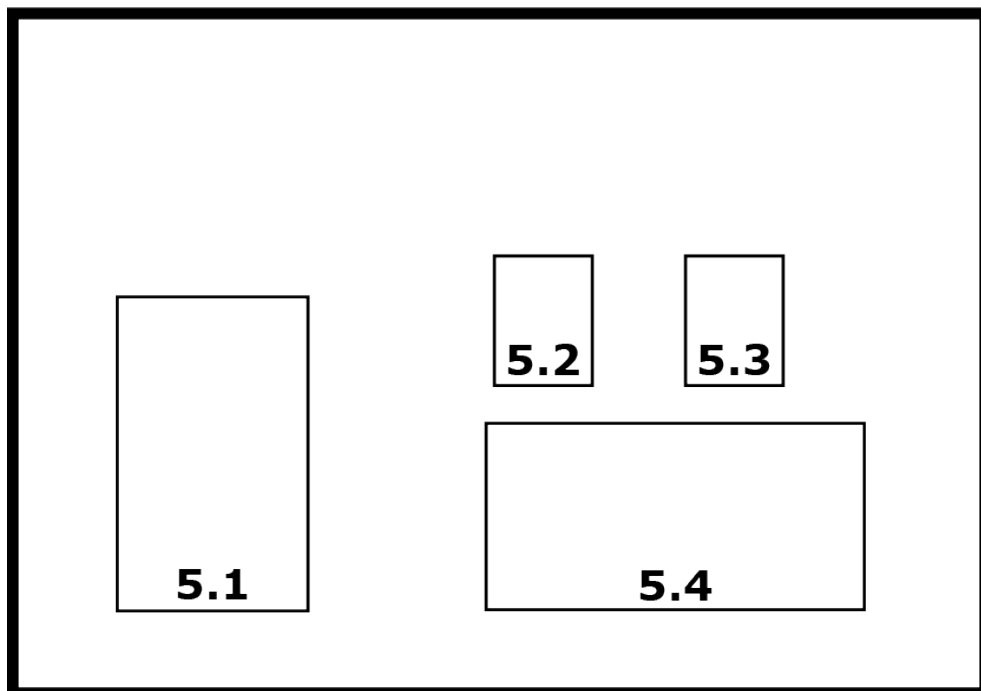
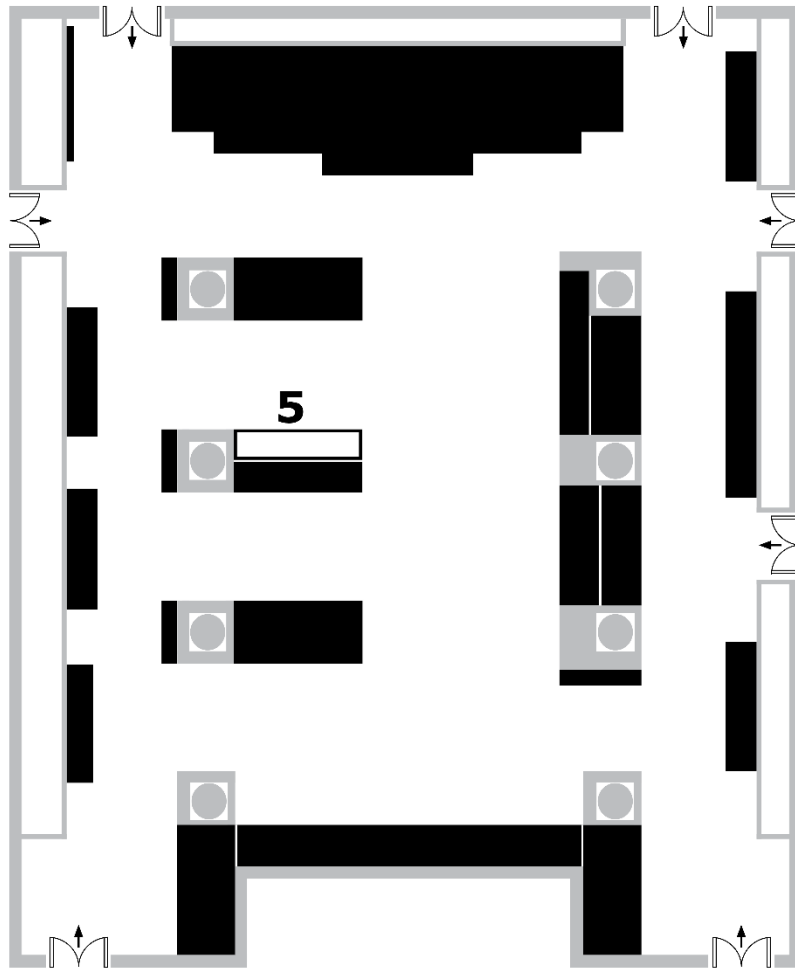
Wood, steel, gold, rose gold

2014-00944

It used to be said that leaving home without a kris is tantamount to going out naked. The weapon is believed to endow its wearer with bravery. This reveals the cultural belief that

specific items of dress – including motifs used – can give powers or be protective.

This keris tajong is a large and rare type. It features a straight blade instead of the iconic wavy form. Its hilt has evolved under Islamic influence from the early Garuda-shaped hilts found in pre-Islamic Java. Here the dramatically curved “beak” only hints at a bird-like form. The keris tajong is always matched to this form of sheath. Other krises and sheaths can be used interchangeably.



5

Dayak of Borneo

5.1

Hornbill

Iban tribe

Borneo, Sarawak, Sarebas River, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

W-0744

Depictions of the rhinoceros hornbill, called "kenyalang", are among the most spectacular carvings produced by the Iban. The hornbill represents the vital life force needed to sustain all living beings. The Iban believed it was the chief of the birds and had an important role as a messenger of the deities in the upper world.

They also believed that they could invoke the hornbill's help in warfare. A fig is held in its

beak; the shape resembles a trophy head, alluding to the traditional head-hunting ceremony. These hornbills were carved for the sacred ceremony of Gawai Kenyalang, which was originally associated with fighting, raiding, and headhunting, but today is a thanks-giving celebration.

5.2

Mask: wild boar

Kayan tribe

Borneo, Sarawak, early or mid-20th century

Wood, pigments

XXXX-10864

Almost all Dayak groups produce wooden masks that depict gods, ancestors, demons, or animals. They have also been used to lessen sorrow during solemn funeral ceremonies, to elicit laughter on festive occasions, and to attract rice spirits to bless the planting season. Dayak

mothers often wear these masks to scare their children into obeying them.

5.3

Mask: crow

Kenyah tribe

Eastern Borneo, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

XXXX-10859

This mask was used in the hudoq dance.

According to traditional beliefs, crop-destroying pests are called hudoqs. In an annual thanksgiving festival, dancers wear masks, and ask the ancestors to possess them. They want to attract them to guard over the rice harvest.

5.4

Pair of Aso figures

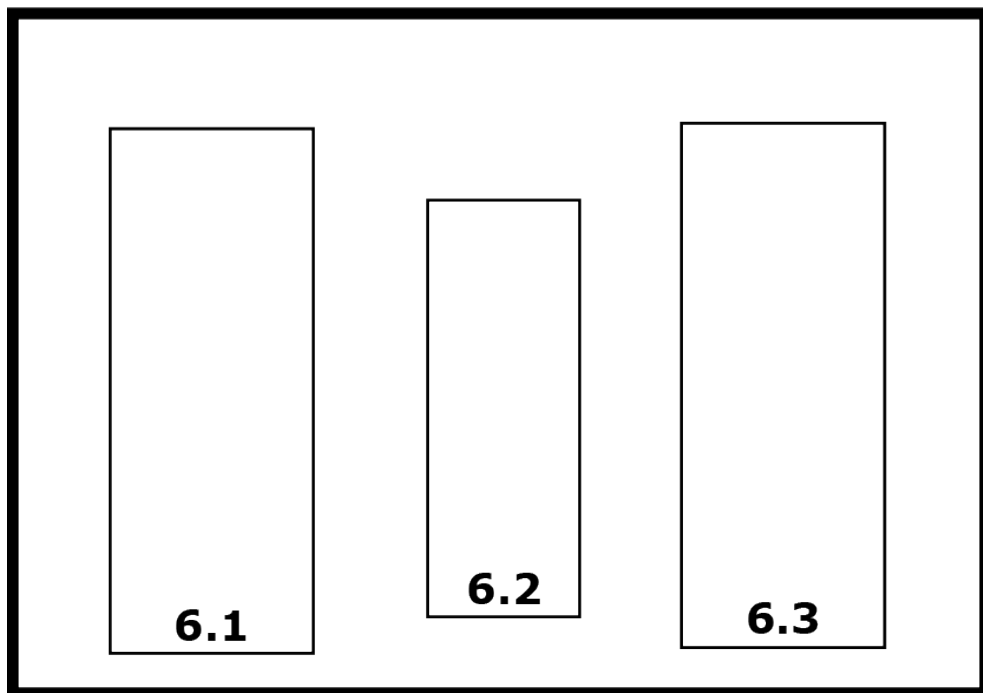
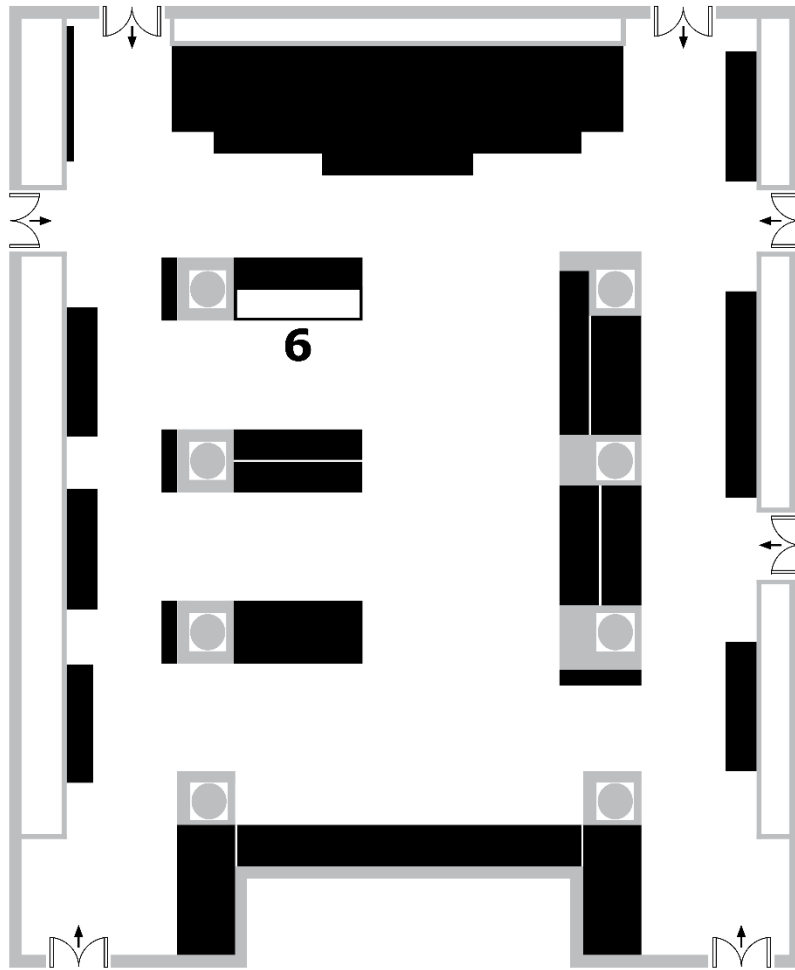
Borneo, Sarawak, 19th century

Wood

XXXX-11587, XXXX-11588

Aso is the Dayak dragon goddess. The Dayaks believe that Aso rules the underworld and is guardian of the dead. She oversees the journeys of the dead from one world to the next, and is also associated with human and agricultural fertility.

Aso appears in the designs of many other Dayak objects. These Aso carvings were used as table legs (the other two are in ACM storage).



6

Shields

6.1

Shield

Mentawai Islands, Siberut Island, around 1900

Wood, pigments, coconut, rattan, feathers

1991-00131

Traditional shields (koraibi) like this one were made for headhunting and warfare. Half a coconut shell surrounded by rattan covers holes made to make a handle, and protects the hand. This shield has the last owner's feather talisman still attached at the back.

The spiral patterns are typical of shields from Mentawai. These designs are thought to derive from the ancient Dong Son culture, objects from which are in this gallery.

6.2

Shield

Dayak

Borneo, 19th century

Wood, rattan, bamboo, pigments

XXXX-10064

This shield is thought to be from an extinct Dayak tribe who were defeated by the Iban. Interwoven rattan creates intricate patterns, and bamboo strengthens the edges. The applied wooden design also added strength. A similar one is on the back. A high level of craftsmanship and expertise was required to produce objects like this.

6.3

Shield

Dayak, Kayan tribe

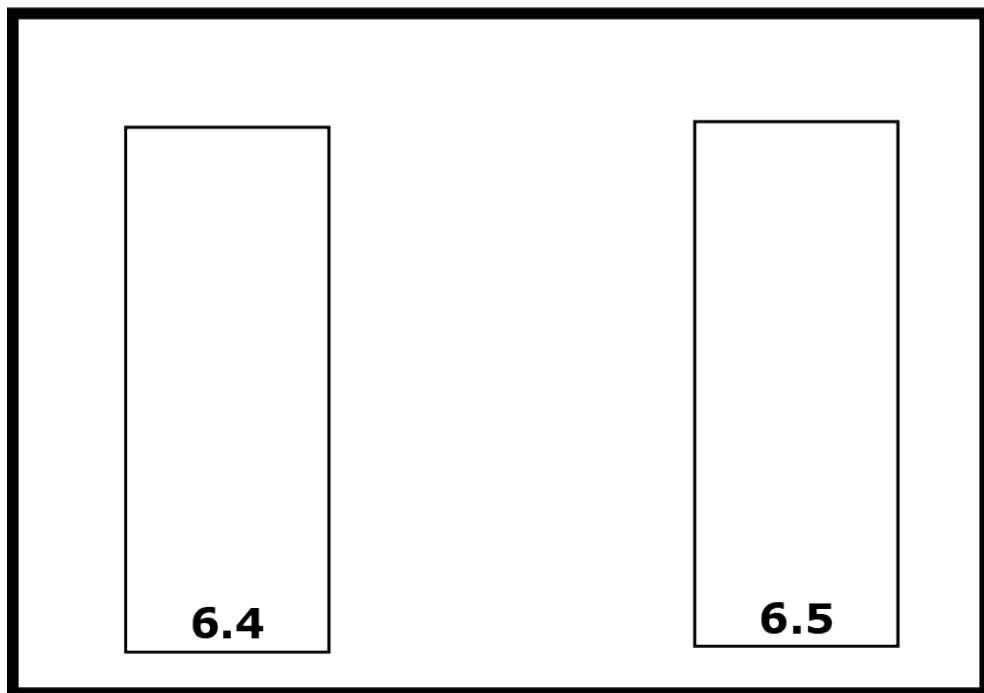
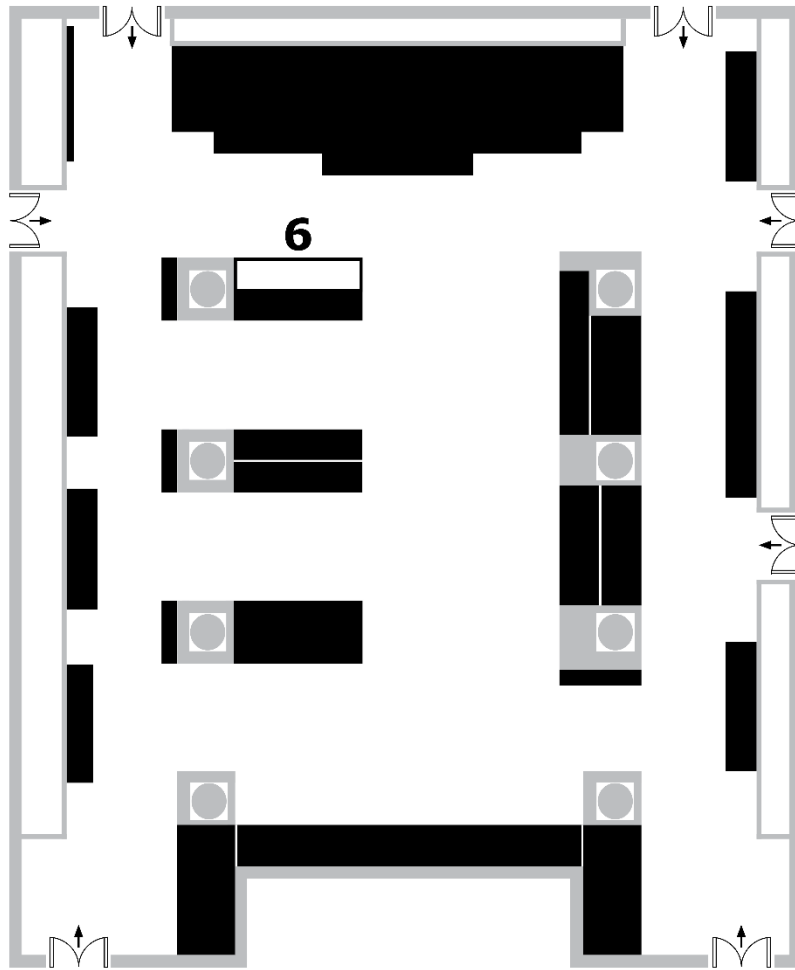
Borneo, 19th century

Wood, iron, rattan, pigments

XXXX-11526

This shield was probably used in headhunting rituals. The central motif is a face with bulging eyes and fanged teeth, to ward off evil. Above and below are facing, protective dragon-like creatures called Aso, in a scrolling design.

Dayak warriors often attached tufts of human hair to their shields to show off their prowess as headhunters. Perforations can be seen at intervals where the hair was attached. On the reverse are two multi-eyed supernatural protective beings.



6.4

Shield

Dayak, Iban tribe

Borneo, 19th century

Wood, pigments

1991-00134

The central panel on the front is decorated with a scrolling Tree of Life motif. At the top is the hornbill, symbol of the gods. At the bottom a snake symbolises the underworld. A human figure and crocodiles stand for the earthly realms. Other auspicious animals appear at the bottom of the shield.

The remarkable handle on the back is in the form of an ancestor warrior, a powerful protective symbol for the bearer.

6.5

Shield

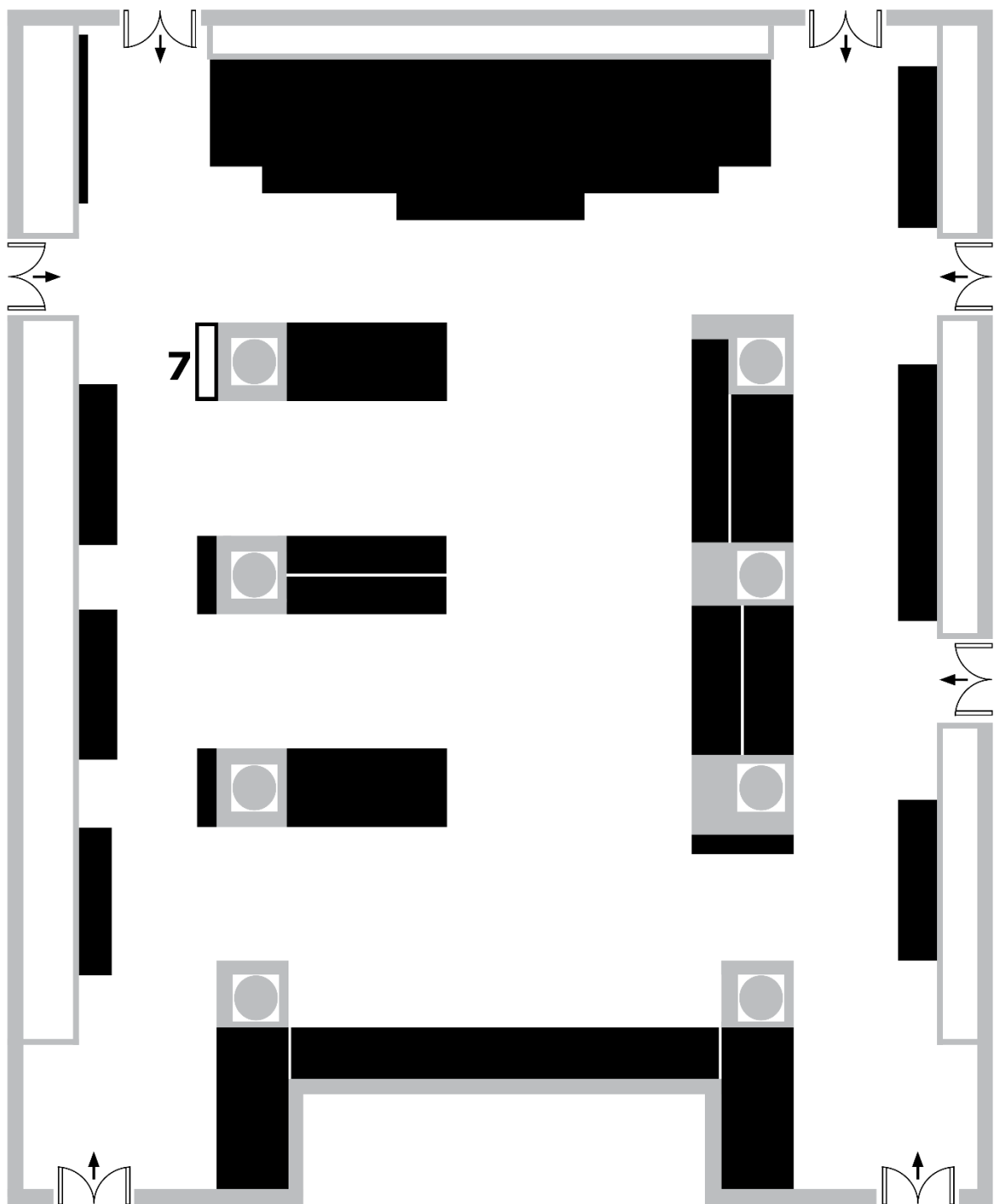
Dayak, Kayan tribe

Borneo, early 20th Century

Wood, pigments

XXXX-11532

The shield has an applied design showing the Tree of Life. Facing pairs of hornbills and crocodiles indicate the upper and middle spheres of the universe. The pairs of snakes top and bottom indicate the lower world. The handle on the reverse is surrounded by floral motifs.



7

Spice Islands

The Maluku Islands (also Moluccas), east of Sulawesi, have long been called the “Spice Islands”. They originally were the world’s only source for nutmeg, mace, and cloves.

TRADING SPICES

The spice trade can be traced back to at least the 2nd millennium BC. Spices moved among China, India and Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, Arabia, and Africa, by land and sea, in the ancient past. Asian spices were highly prized in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Arab traders moved spices across the Indian Ocean and through the Red Sea. Alexandria, in Egypt, then later Venice, were hubs in the network, creating vast wealth in those cities.

THE WEST SEEKS CONTROL – AND PROFITS

Controlling the spice trade was a major factor that inspired European nations to seek colonies in Asia. The Portuguese controlled much of the trade from Malacca in the early 1500s, followed soon after by the Spanish, Dutch, and English. It was one of the reasons Stamford Raffles was interested to set up a port in Singapore.

Shield

Halmahera Island, 17th to 19th century

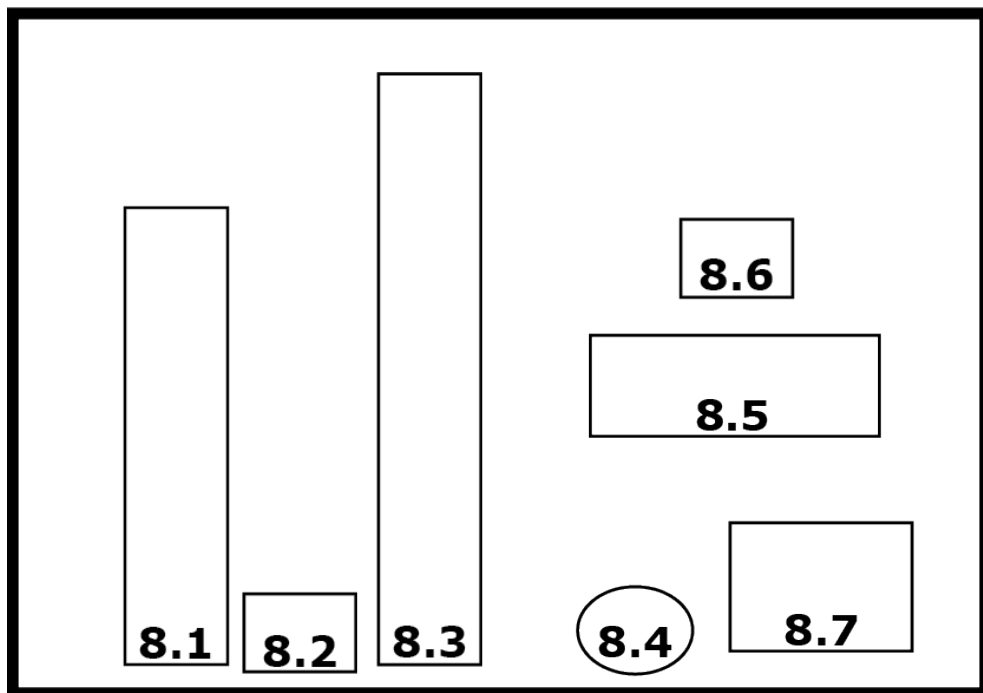
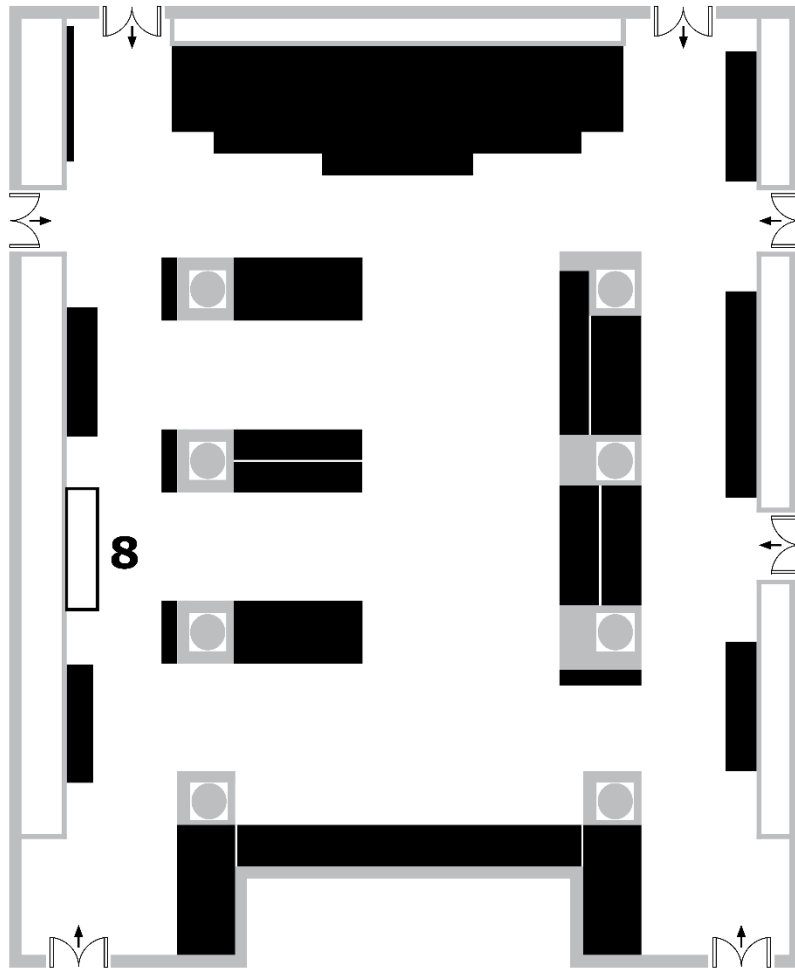
Wood, mother of pearl, porcelain, hair

2018-01156

Slender, hourglass-shaped, shields like this, called salawako, were used together with long swords in ceremonial dances as a prelude to battle or a head-hunting expedition. The geometric patterns are carved and inlaid with mother of pearl. The raised central medallion

inlaid with porcelain symbolises the sun. It also indicates the important status of the owner.

These shields are common throughout the Maluku Islands (Moluccas), and are found in many early ethnographic collections. This one was produced in Halmahera, one of two powerful centres in Maluku before the Dutch arrived in 1599; the other was the Sultanate of Tidore.



8

8.1

Rice Pestle

Toba Batak

North Sumatra, 19th century

Wood

XXXX-03715

Acquired through Mr P. Pohlig in 1911

The pestle has a rattle incorporated into the shaft, which would make a sound when pounding the rice. This is to attract the rice gods and bring good fortune.

8.2

Book (pustaka)

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, late 19th century

Wood, bast (inner bark), rattan, ink

XXXX-03509

Presented around 1905 by Rev. W. Murray to the Raffles Library and Museum

Pustaka contain various magic spells (tabas), oracles, recipes for medicines, and instructions for driving away evil spirits. These magico-religious texts were written by datu (ritual specialists) in an archaic script that can only be read by specialists. Such knowledge was carefully guarded to keep it from being misused.

8.3

Magic staff

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, 19th century

Wood, fibre, cotton

XXXX-03713

Acquired through Mr P. Pohlig in 1911

A staff (tunggal panaluan or tungkot malehat) carved with figures and anointed with magic substances was an important priest's tool. It was a supernatural weapon, and a priest would always carry his staff with him. He could use it to fight off evil spirits as well as attacks from rival priests. The sharp metal tip allows it to be driven into the ground during ceremonies, and they are often caked with dried blood, egg, and pupuk, all of which were used as offerings meant to ensure their power.

8.4

Oracle sticks

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, around 1930s

Bamboo

XXXX-11261

8.5

Gunpowder holders (*salempang*)

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, 19th century

Water buffalo horn

XXXX-11135, XXXX-11136

Delicately carved gunpowder and bullet holders like these were probably more for ceremonial use than for use in combat. One depicts a seated ancestor, another a bird. Such images were thought to have magical powers for protection as well as destruction of the enemy.

8.6

Bullet holder (paru-paru)

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Wood

XXXX-11130

The object was sold to the Raffles Library and Museum by G. B. Gardner, an early explorer Southeast Asian, collector, and donor.

8.7

Oracle bones

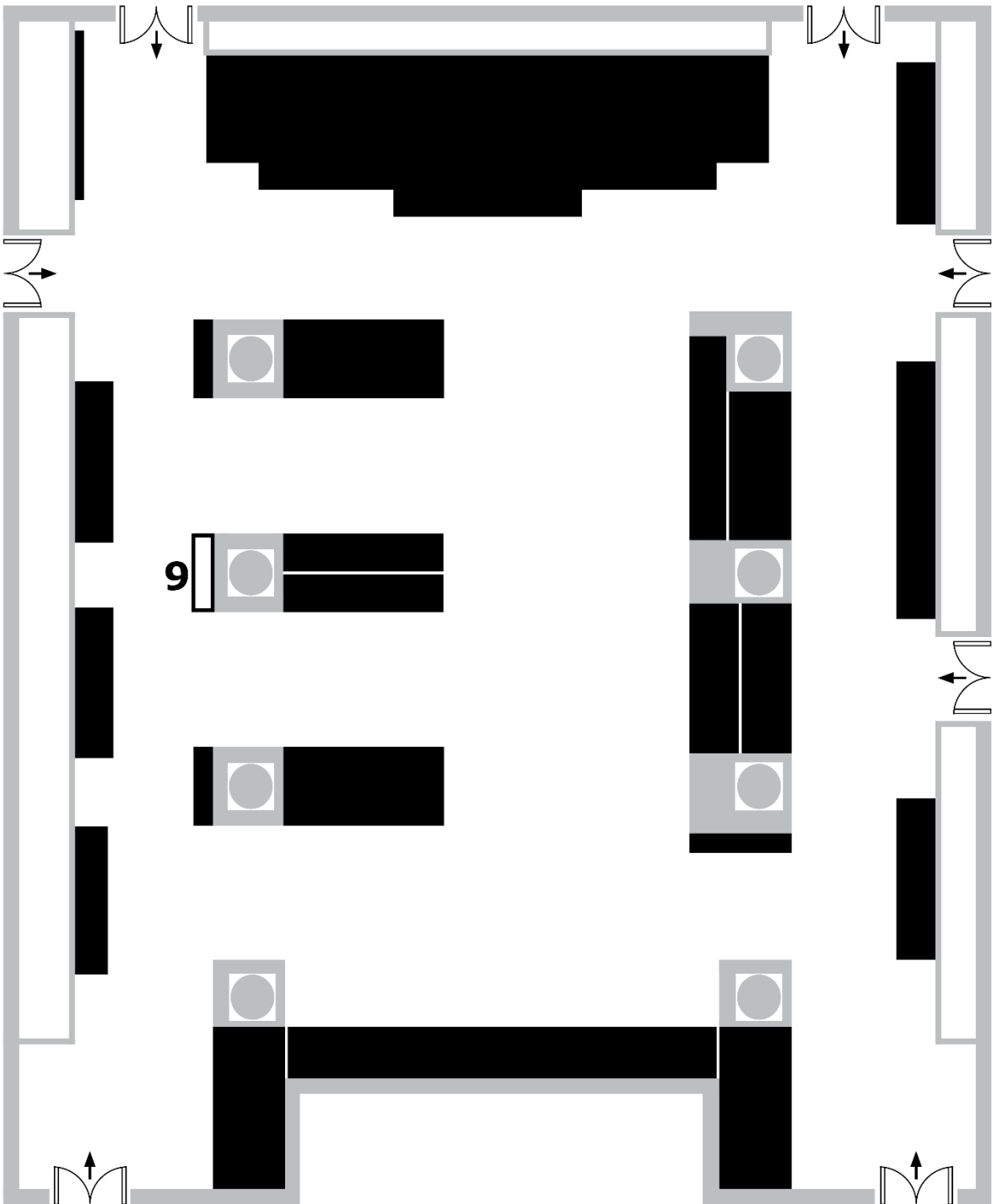
Probably Karo Batak (acquired in Aceh province, Kutacane)

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Water buffalo bone

1992-00087.002–008

Donated by W. Frost around 1938 to the Raffles Library and Museum



9

Shoulder cloth

Toba Batak

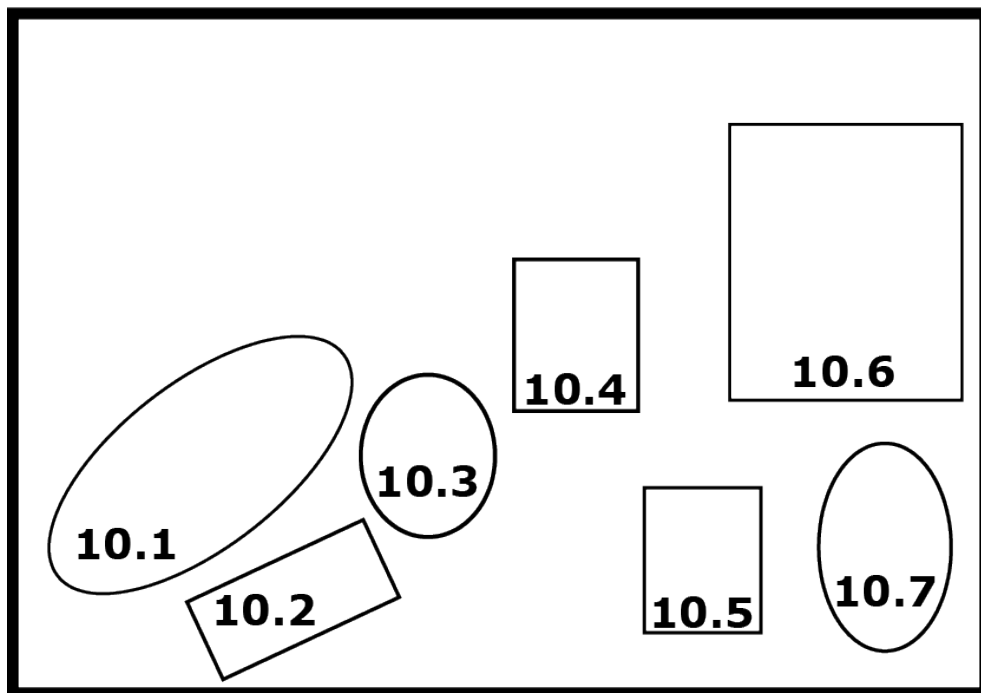
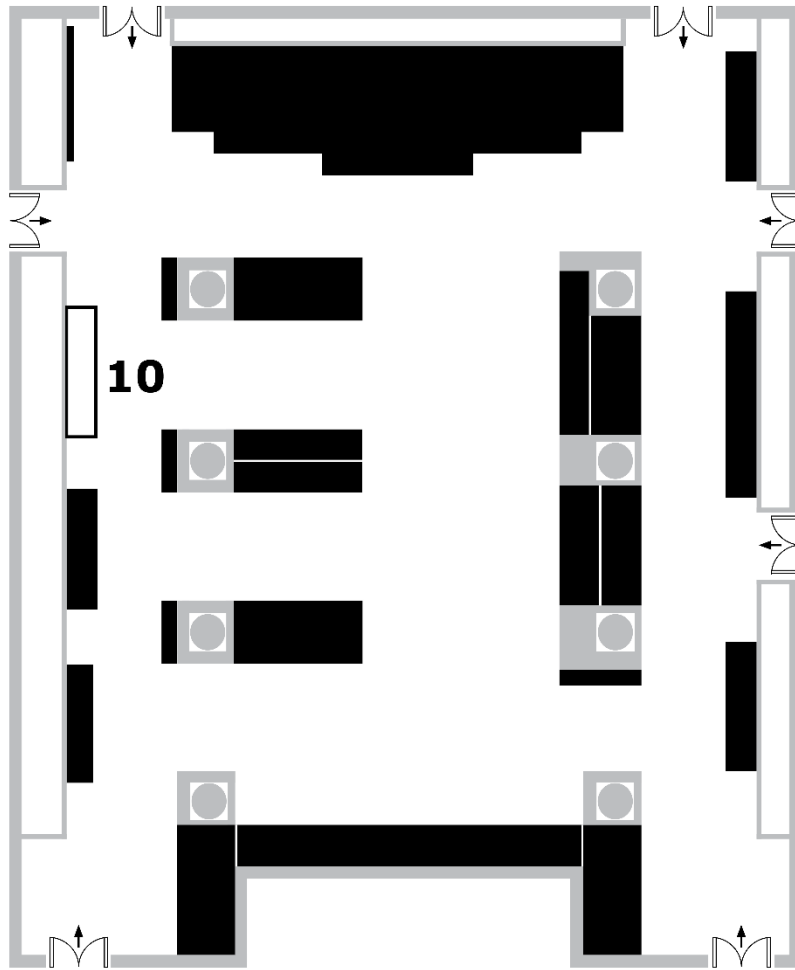
Northern Sumatra, first half of the 20th century

Cotton, glass beads, natural dyes

2018-00974

Gift of the City of Delft, Netherlands

Dark, indigo blue cloths with simple striping are known by the Toba as sibolang. It is a most ancient of Batak designs, and these cloths were worn for important rituals and ceremonies. While plain to the eye, the use of imported glass beads and yellow and red threads in the fringe mark this cloth as exemplary.



10

Nias Island

10.1

Ancestor figures

Nias Island, around 1900

Wood, rattan

XXXX-11146

Formerly in the Raffles Library and Museum;
acquired from the Perak Museum in 1909;
collected in Nias by Giovanni Battista Cerruti in
1887.

XXXX-11069, XXXX-11430, W-0093

Ancestor carvings (adu zatus) like these were once found in households throughout Nias. They served as reminders of deceased relatives, and as charms to protect the household. The people of Nias believed that by trapping the last breath of a dying person, the soul could be transferred

to the carving. Often the images were tied together, a new one added when a person died.

10.2

Sword and sheath

Nias Island, late 19th century

Iron, wood, tiger teeth, brass, rattan

XXXX-04729

Attached to the sheath is a magical amulet (balatu) made from a cluster of tiger teeth over a woven rattan ball. The ball would have originally contained amulets meant to protect the bearer in war or in a head-hunting expedition. The hilt is carved as a dragon-like head (lasara) for extra protection. The original owner must have been a village chief. Only swords belonging to him could be decorated with tiger teeth.

10.3

Ancestor figure

Nias, late 19th century

Wood, stone, rattan

XXXX-11120

Formerly in the Raffles Library and Museum,
acquired from the Perak Museum around 1909.

The stone attached to this figure was believed to have magical properties, which enhanced the protective power of the figure.

10.4

Ancestor figure

Indonesia, Nias, 19th century

Wood, fabric, pigment

2014-00307

Large figures that represent an illustrious village founder, or the most ancient ancestor, are called siraha salawa. They sit or squat, and always hold

a cup. The large pointed crown is another distinguishing feature, here decorated with red ribbons.

While a house might have many smaller ancestor figures like the ones in this case (adu zatua), there would be only one siraha salawa. Sacrificial offerings to it secured protection for the household. Before the Christian era (until about 1916), every home would have possessed one, usually passed down from previous generations.

10.5

Shaman's apron (sabo)

Mentawai Island, 19th or early 20th century

Cloth, wood, glass beads, buttons, cut nautilus shell

2018-01033

Gift of the City of Delft, Netherlands

A shaman performs healing ceremonies where they expel supernatural powers that cause disease. During rituals the shaman wears an apron like this one, as well as an elaborate headdress and other ornaments, to perform a dance. This apron, called a sabo, is of a typical style, and is made with textiles imported from Sumatra. The Mentawai do not produce their own textiles.

10.6

Spirit birds

Mentawai, Siberut Island, early 20th century

Wood

XXXX-10916, XXXX-10914

Formerly in the Raffles Library and Museum,
acquired 1924

These birds were made during ceremonies and suspended from roof beams as objects of beauty to adorn the community house (uma). They attract the souls of the present inhabitants, as well as those of the ancestors, to keep them close to the house. They also attract the souls of livestock and game animals to secure success in hunting.

Mentawai is a group of islands off Sumatra, south of Nias. The people have long fished, hunted, farmed, and gathered food. Now most profess to

be Christian, but animism is also practised, with the belief that spirits exist in all things.

10.7

Basket

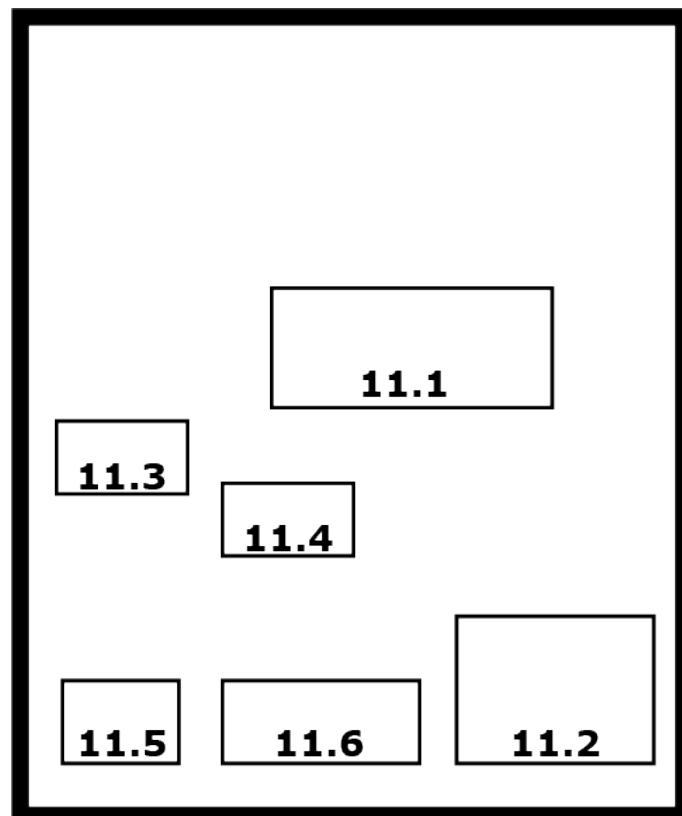
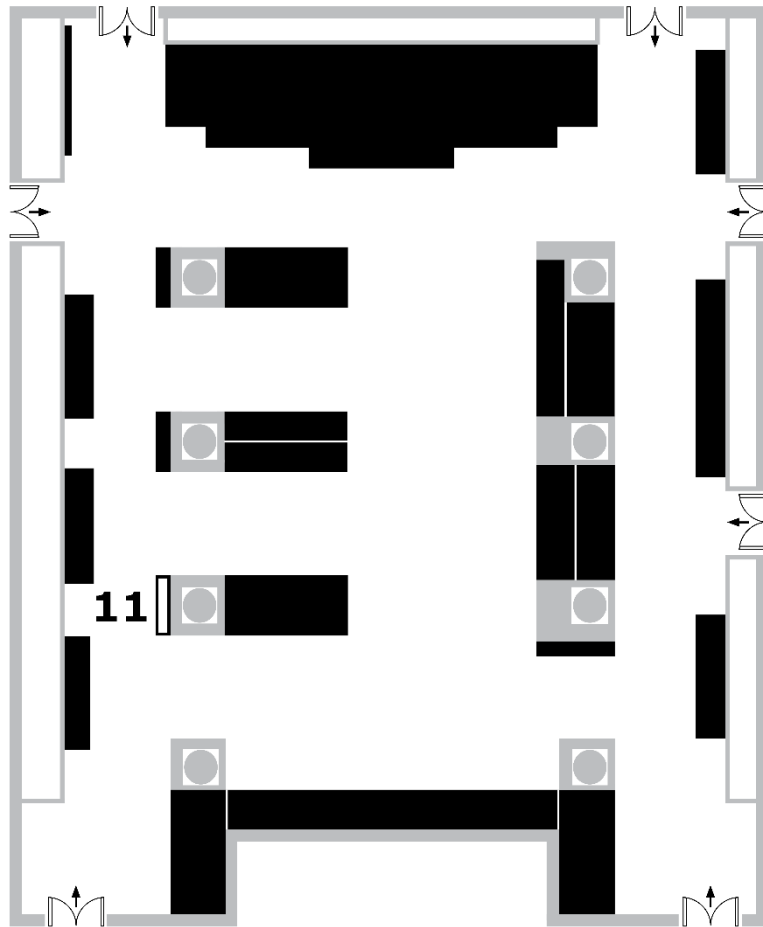
Mentawai, Siberut Island, early 20th century

Rattan

Formerly in the Raffles Library and Museum,
acquired 1924

XXXX-10609

This handmade basket was worn like a backpack and used by both men and women to transport bananas and tubers.



11

Lampung

Lampung is at the southern tip of Sumatra, overlooking the Sunda Straits. Like other places on the island, early Lampung society was organised along genealogical clan lines (known as suku or marga in Malay) into chiefdoms.

Lampung's strategic location and natural resources attracted constant attacks from its neighbours in both Sumatra and Java.

In the 8th century, the Buddhist kingdom of Sriwijaya conquered Lampung. In the 16th century, as Lampung established itself as a source for pepper, the Banten Sultanate from West Java annexed it to control the pepper trade in Sumatra, and also to control the Sunda Straits. As a result, Lampung culture is a mix of influences – indigenous clan-based society, Sriwijayan Buddhism, Javanese Islam, and even Chinese and European elements.

11.1

Headdress

Sumatra, Lampung, late 19th or 20th century
Silk velvet, cardboard, gilded silver, sequins,
gilded thread

2008-06068

This headdress, called a kanduk liling, is worn only by married women affiliated with the Maju Tuho clan while attending a bride. A cardboard core, wrapped in deep purplish velvet, gives a boxy structure. The opening at the centre allows for a headcloth to be threaded through. The repoussé (pounded from the back) decoration on the panel features a pair of birds as the central motif, flanked by a lattice design of a four-petalled flower motif (bunga pecah empat) and more birds.

11.2

Container for teeth blackening agent

Sumatra, Lampung, 19th century

Iron

2018-00955

Gift of the City of Delft, Netherlands

This container (called a pesihungan) was made to hold a teeth-blackening substance. It was commonly believed that only savages, wild animals, and demons sported long white teeth. No longer practised, teeth blackening was a coming-of-age ritual for both boys and girls. The practice was thought to preserve teeth and gums, and was shared among many cultures in island Southeast Asia and Indochina (and also Japan and parts of China).

In Lampung, the container often takes the shape of a bird or boat. The blackening substance it holds is mainly composed of charcoal from the kemuning tree.

11.3

Comb

Sumatra, Lampung, late 19th or early 20th century

Wood, paint

2002-00551

Gift of Mr Edmond Chin

The shape of the handle of this comb could represent either an ancestral home or a ship. The use of it here reflects respect for ancestors, and also belief in a supernatural realm of ancestral spirits and deities capable of exercising power over the living.

11.4

Comb

Sumatra, Lampung, 19th or 20th century

Gilded silver

National Museum of Singapore

G-0675

The scrolling leafy sprays and five-petalled flower motifs were executed in granulation (small spheres) and filigree (tiny beads and threads) techniques. The three movable, bird-shaped ornaments perched atop the handle are similar to ornaments on Chinese headdresses made by itinerant Chinese artisans in Sumatra. So this comb could have also been made by one of them. This comb form is also found in neighbouring Bengkulu.

11.5

Box and ear ornaments

Sumatra, Lampung, 19th or 20th century

Wood, silver

G-0673

11.6

Box

Sumatra, Lampung, 19th or 20th century

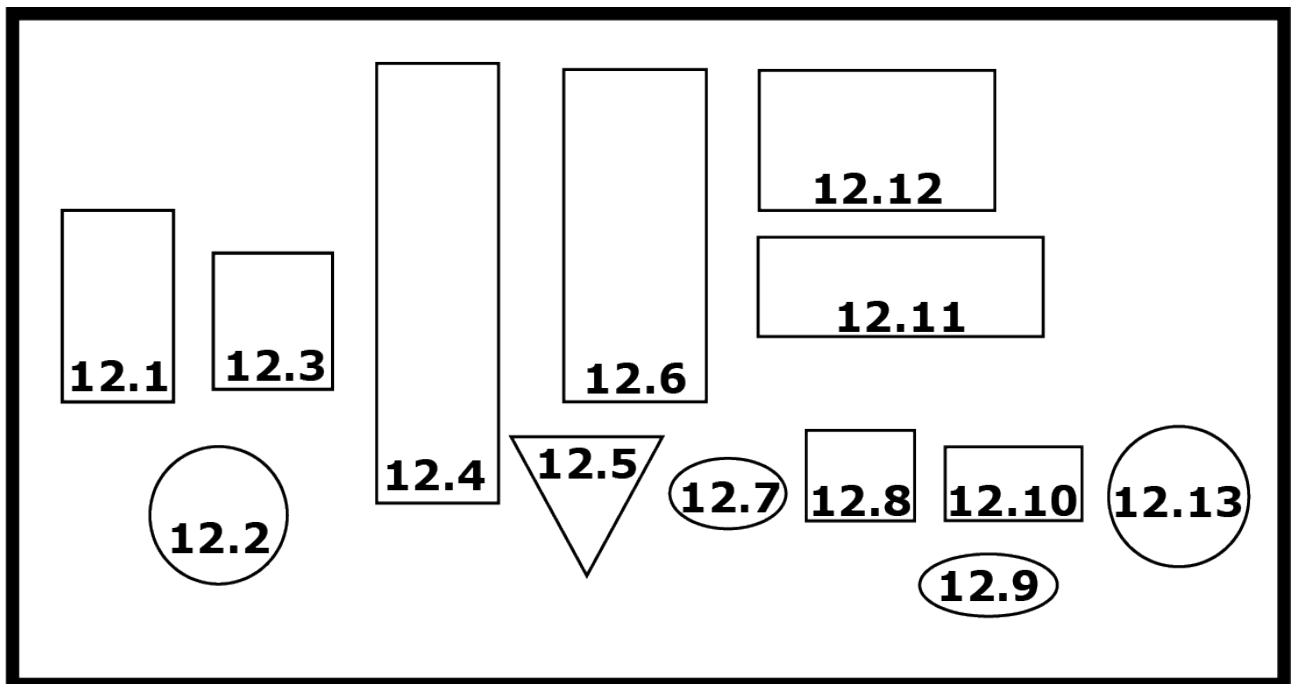
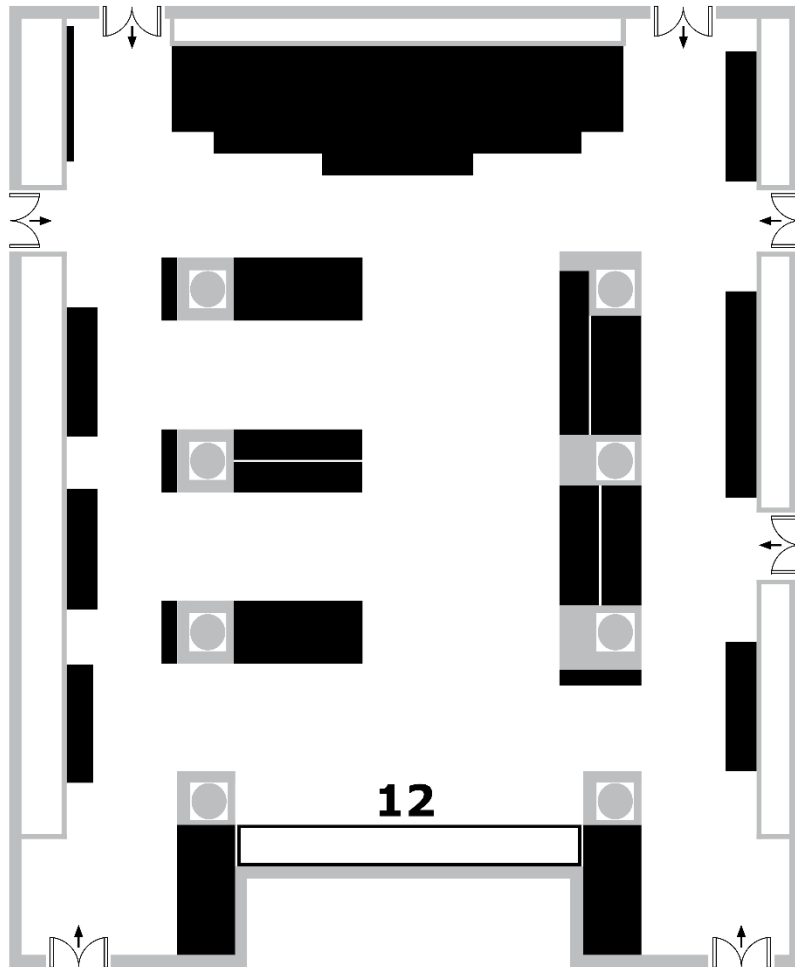
Wood

National Museum of Singapore

G-0674

These boxes were made to keep ornaments of a ceremonial headdress. The two silver, seahorse-shaped ornaments are incised with abstract patterns, including the sawtooth-like band that resembles the bamboo shoots motif (pucuk rebung), symbolising strength in unity. The geometric designs on the exteriors of the boxes recall the elaborate ikat patterns found on

ceremonial cloths of Lampung, such as the palepai (ship cloth) or the square tampan.



12

Textiles

12.1

Tube skirt

Lembata Island, 19th or early 20th century

Handspun cotton and silk, natural dyes

1999-00438

Exquisite textiles like this one were made for the Kedang region of Lembata Island by neighbouring tribes. They are mostly blue, a colour considered auspicious in Kedang. They were primarily used as marriage gifts, and were highly sought after. Luxurious indigo dye was used to create the deep blue bands, interspersed with bands of coloured ikat.

12.2

Spinning wheel

East Sumba Island, Rindi, 19th century

Wood, rattan

2016-00116

This spinning wheel was an heirloom, inherited by a woman of noble rank named Tamu Rambu Yuliana. She would spin cotton thread to make mantles (hinggi) worn by men and tube skirts (lau) worn by women prior to their marriage.

The tall figure supporting the wheel has both male and female characteristics. This, together with the prominent male element on an instrument used solely by women, shows the complimentary and inseparable nature of male and female in Sumba society.

12.3

Woman's sarong

Northwest Sumbawa, Desa Utang, around 1900

Cotton, silver thread

T-0980

This brocade (textile enhanced with raised threads) is decorated with trees, birds, flowers, and human figures. A supplementary weft (horizontal threads) of silver yarn has been woven into the hand-spun cotton to make the decoration.

12.4

Shoulder cloth

Sumatra, Lampung, 17th century

Silk, gold wrapped thread

2018-01015

Gift of the City of Delft, Netherlands

This cloth is woven in a pattern of horizontal stripes, the colours bleeding into each other like a rainbow. This elegant technique, and the edging at the top and bottom with leaf motifs in gold-wrapped threads, suggests it belonged to a wealthy person. It would have been an important element of a man's ceremonial dress.

12.5

Ceremonial war coat

Borneo, early 20th century

Wild boar skin, shell, hornbill and argus feathers,
beads, cloth

1992-00561

This war coat is decorated with shells, feathers, and beads to resemble a face. The shell eyes were given multi-coloured eyebrows, and the mouth sharp teeth and fangs. Most of these costumes were ceremonial, used in dances to prepare for warfare. A variety of materials were used for ceremonial costumes in Borneo, but extant animal skin clothes are rare.

12.6

Ceremonial shoulder cloth

Sumatra, early 20th century

Silk (ikat), natural dyes, metallic thread

T-0768

This cloth was made with the ikat technique. This is a single ikat, only the horizontal threads (weft) were dyed in bundles before weaving. They were then woven into the vertical (warp) threads on the loom, carefully aligning them to create the pattern. The finished cloth was then embroidered with metal threads. The design of foliate motifs shows the influence of Indian patola (double ikat) trade cloths from Gujarat.

12.7.1

Bark cloth beater

Malay peninsula, 20th century

Wood

XXXX-11917, previously in Raffles Library and
Museum collection since 1952

12.7.2

Bark cloth beater

Unknown origin, 20th century

Wood

1991-00056

12.8

Jacket

Kenyah tribe

Sarawak, 20th century

Bark, cotton (European), beads

G-0101

Bark cloth, called tapa, was made by many ancient civilisations before the time of woven textiles. In Southeast Asia some tribes continued to make bark cloth into the 20th century. The bark, of trees such as pandanus and mulberry, is boiled or fermented to make a pulp. This is then beaten with wooden tools, like the ones in this case, to make a soft cloth.

This jacket is of an extinct style and has scrolling design (featuring an Aso-like creature) embroidered onto it. It is lined and edged with European textiles, and decorated with beads, which had been traded into the region.

12.9

Manuscript binding ribbon (sazigyo)

Myanmar, dated 1896

Cotton (tablet weave)

2012-00769

This finely woven manuscript binding cloth (sazigyo) has a long text with motifs of a stupa and royal umbrellas at the end.

Sazigyo have traditionally been woven by women as acts of merit. The Burmese word sazigyo literally means “cord for tying manuscript leaves into bundles”. Women were traditionally barred from entering monastic life (common way for men to make merit), and so donations of sazigyo provided an alternative means. The makers, who were commissioned to produce these cords, often inserted their own names, as well as the donor’s, into the weaving.

The technique used to make these – tablet weaving – is complex and time-consuming. A wooden beater used in the process is also in this case.

12.10

Beater

Myanmar, mid-20th century

Wood

2009-02991

This beautifully shaped and polished beater, made of solid wood, is used for beating back the weft threads on a tablet weaving loom. This piece was given to the ACM as part of the documentation of sazigyo weaving in Yangon in 2009. The threads have made indentations in the end of the beater over time.

The method of tablet weaving has ancient roots in various parts of the world, including Myanmar.

It is still practised today for weaving of monk's girdles and manuscript binding ribbons (sazigyo).

12.11

Waist cloth

Cambodia, early 20th century

Silk, natural dyes

1993-00246

Images on this textile of nagas, birds, and ship-like and candelabra-like motifs refer to a water festival. The scene is an event called “launching of the lights”: candles and food are floated down the river on boats. They are conveying ancestor spirits to the underworld.

12.12

Ritual cloth

Bali, Tenganan, 19th century

Cotton (double ikat)

2018-01008

Gift of the City of Delft, Netherlands

This cloth is a rare double ikat ritual textile called a geringsing. To make double ikat, bundles threads are first tie-dyed with patterns of colour. They are then woven together to form an overall design for the cloth. Care must be taken to align each thread correctly. It is an extremely complicated and time-consuming technique.

These cloths are thought to protect against evil, and are used at many religious ceremonies. The central motifs are Hindu-Buddhist mandalas. They are surrounded by human figures that resemble wayang kulit shadow puppets.

12.13

Spinning wheel

Cambodia, 19th century

Wood, lacquer

1995-03445

Used for spinning cotton yarn, this wheel is decorated with floral motifs using traditional carving techniques.