

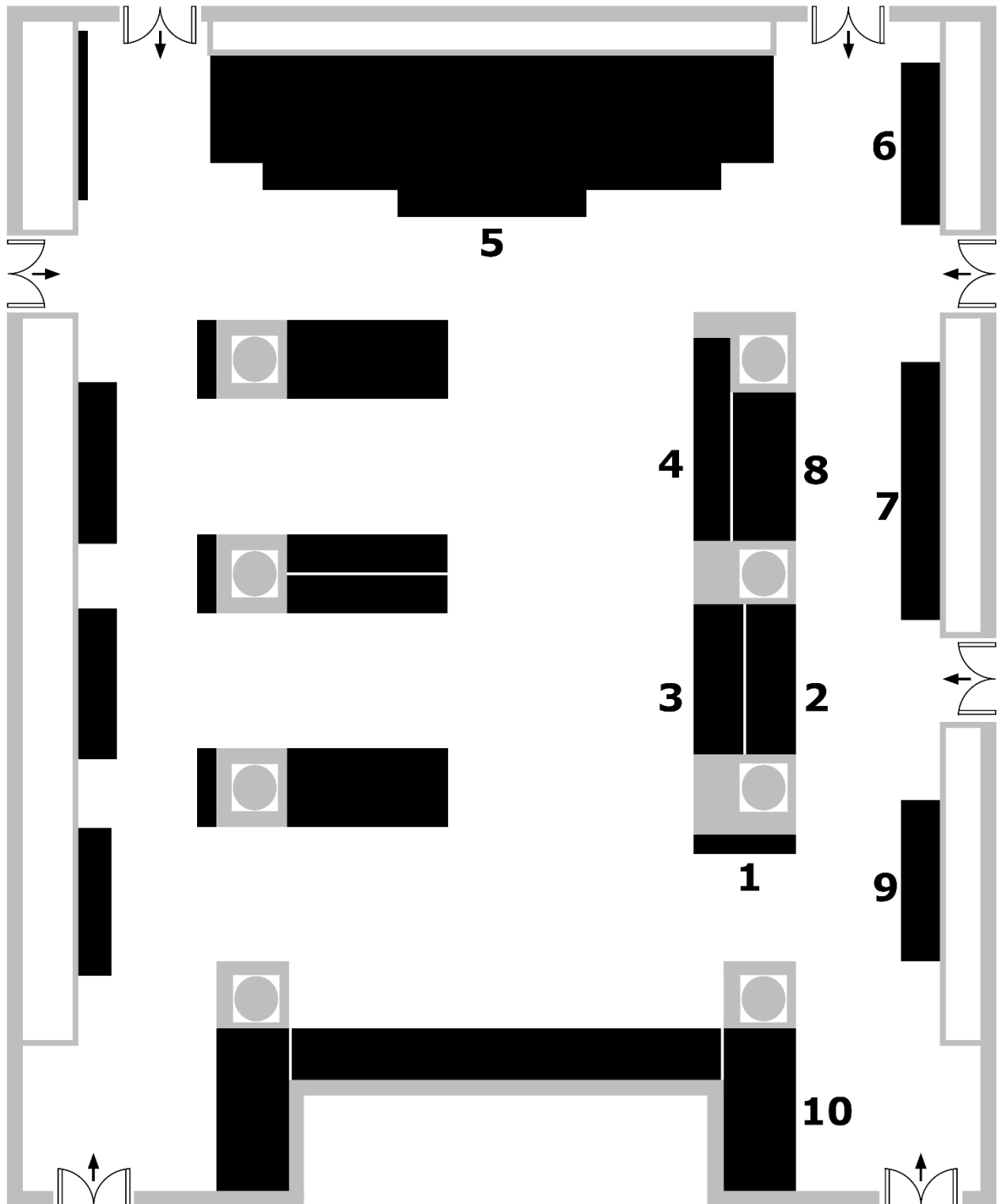
Large Print Guide  
Please return after use

The letters 'ACM' are rendered in a large, white, serif font against a solid black rectangular background. The 'A' is a simple, slightly wide character. The 'C' is a large, open circle. The 'M' is a classic serif 'M' with a small loop at the top of the right vertical stroke.

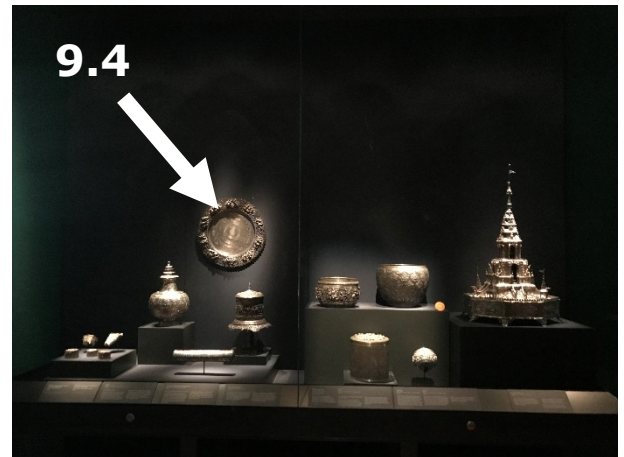
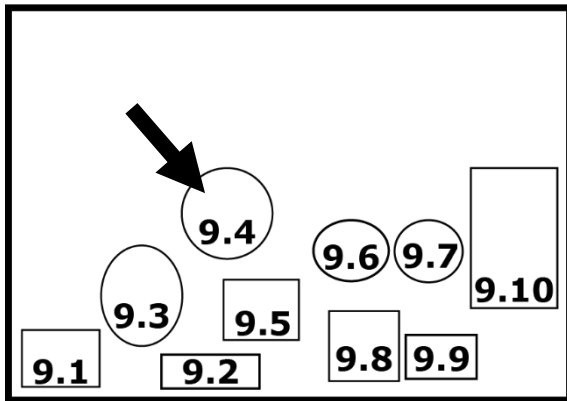
# Ancestors & Rituals Book 2

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 9.4 to 9.4,  
then 9.5 to 9.5, and so on.**

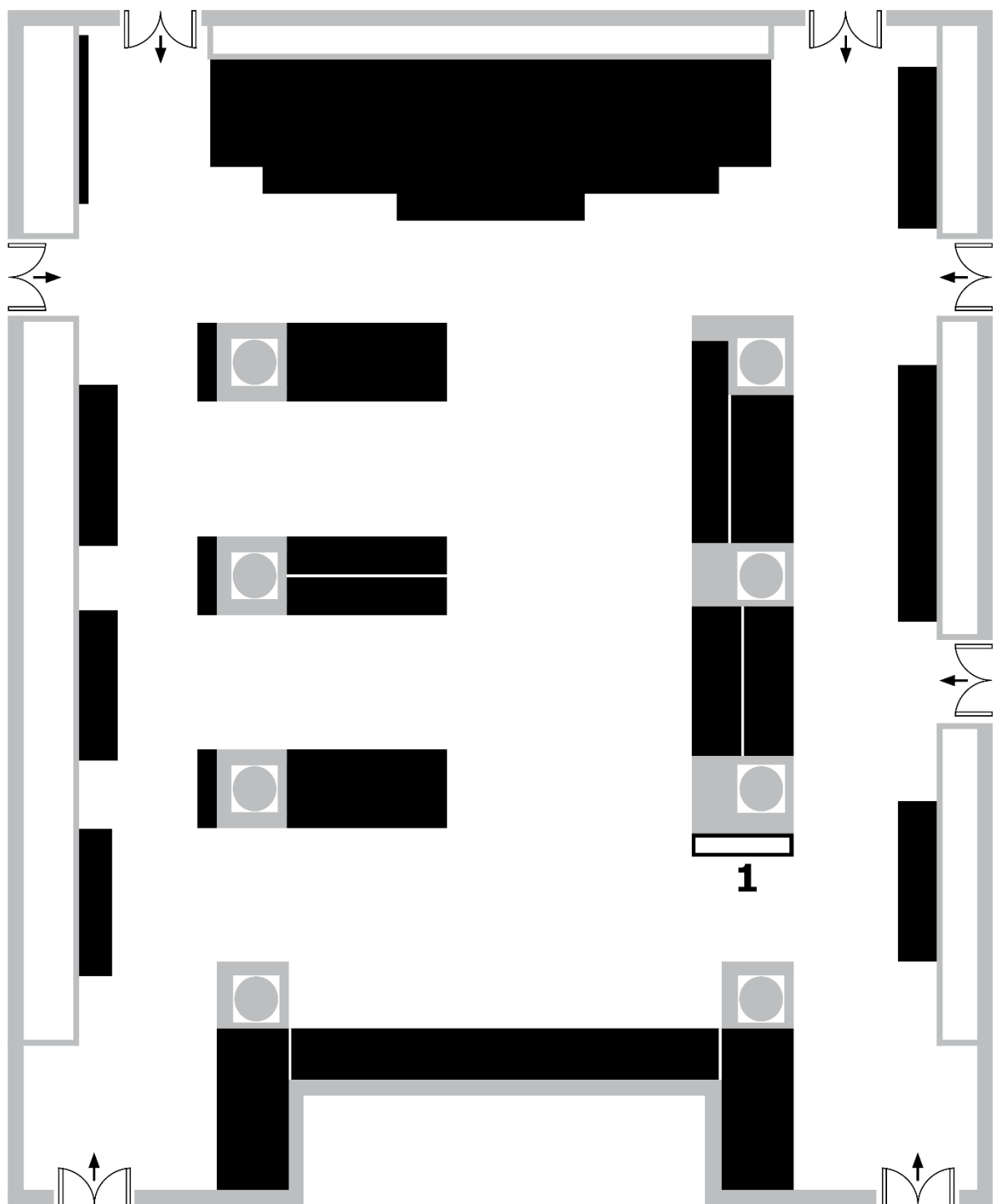
**9.4**

**Dish with scenes from the  
Ramayana**

Myanmar, Yangon, dated 1914

Silver

2011-00021



# 1

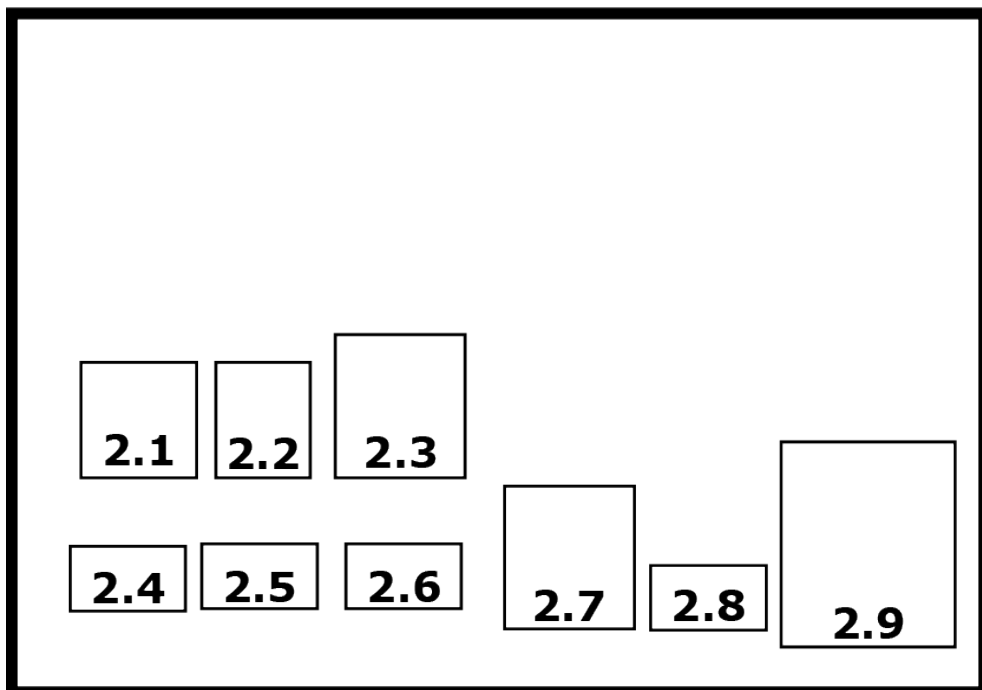
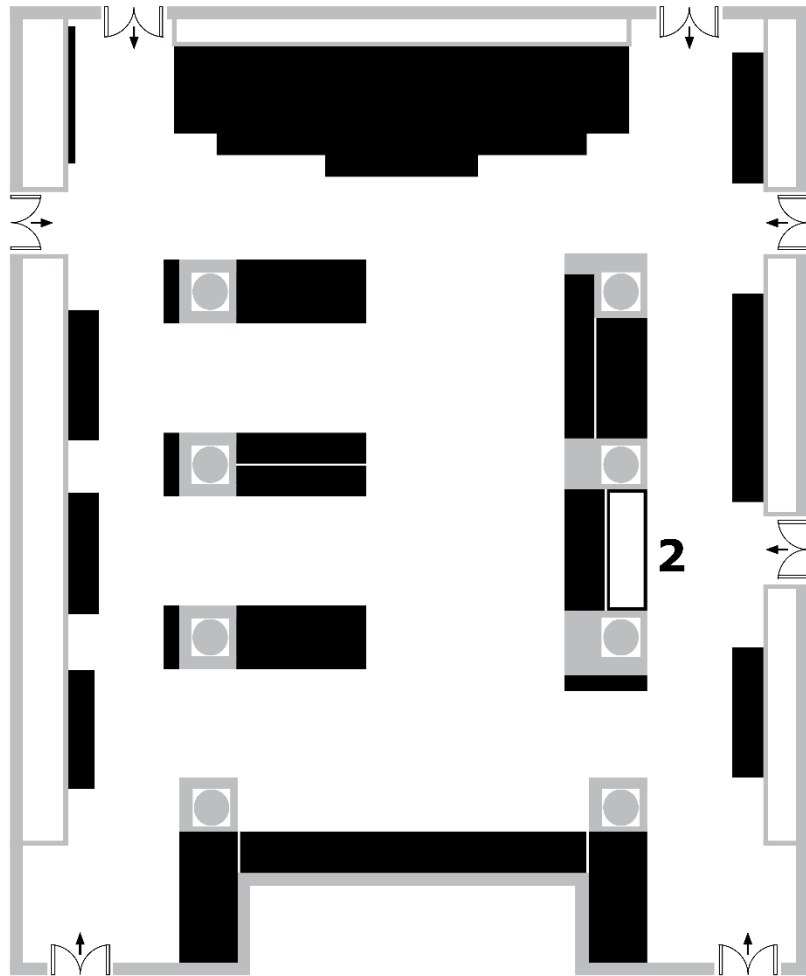
## Plaque

### Tile with dragons

Northern Vietnam,  
11th century (Ly dynasty)  
Earthenware  
2014-00577

The sinuous dragons, in vigorous movement amidst scrolling clouds, on this large tile are typical of Ly dynasty art. Dragons have always had important symbolic and ritual meaning in Southeast Asia.

During the Ly dynasty (1009–1225), the dragons adorned temples and palaces frequented by the king. Similar architectural elements in this style have been found at the ancient royal capital in Hanoi, formerly known as Thang Long (literally “rising dragon”).



## **2**

### **Early Southeast Asia**

#### **Early Pottery from Thailand**

These vessels, with their swirling red painted designs or cord-marking motifs, reflect the pottery traditions of prehistoric Thailand. They are usually made with coils of clay, which were paddle-beaten for added strength. They are often found in burial contexts arranged around the body of the dead. Grave goods can act as indicators of the wealth of a community and the social hierarchies within it. "Carinated" describes a pot with a shoulder below the neck, breaking the curve of the form.

## **2.1**

### **Dish with pedestal**

Thailand, Lopburi, Dong Marum, around 1100 BC

Earthenware

1996-00866

## **2.2**

### **Cylindrical pot**

Thailand, Lopburi, Dong Marum, around 1100 BC

Earthenware

1996-00860

## **2.3**

### **Jar**

Thailand, Ban Chiang, 300 BC to AD 300

Earthenware

Gift of Mr K. T. Goh

C-0765



## **2.4**

### **Vessel in the shape of a water buffalo**

Thailand, Lopburi, Dong Marum, 300 BC to AD  
200

Earthenware

1996-00120

## **2.5**

### **Bowl**

Thailand, Ban Chiang, around 1100 BC

Earthenware

C-0495

## **2.6**

### **Carinated pot**

Thailand, Ban Chansen, around 1100 BC

Earthenware

1996-00865

“Carinated” describes a pot with a shoulder below the neck, breaking the curve of the form.

## **2.7**

### **Cylindrical pot**

Thailand, Lopburi, Dong Marum, around 1100 BC

Earthenware

1996-00863

## **2.8**

### **Axe heads**

Thailand, Ban Chiang, 1500 BC to 200 AD

Bronze

A-1549, BA-0034-A

These axe heads belong to a tradition of bronze working that began to develop in central and northeast Thailand around 1500 BC. Ban Chiang, in the northeast, was the first archaeological site to provide evidence for this. Since its excavation in the 1960s, many similar sites have been discovered.

## 2.9

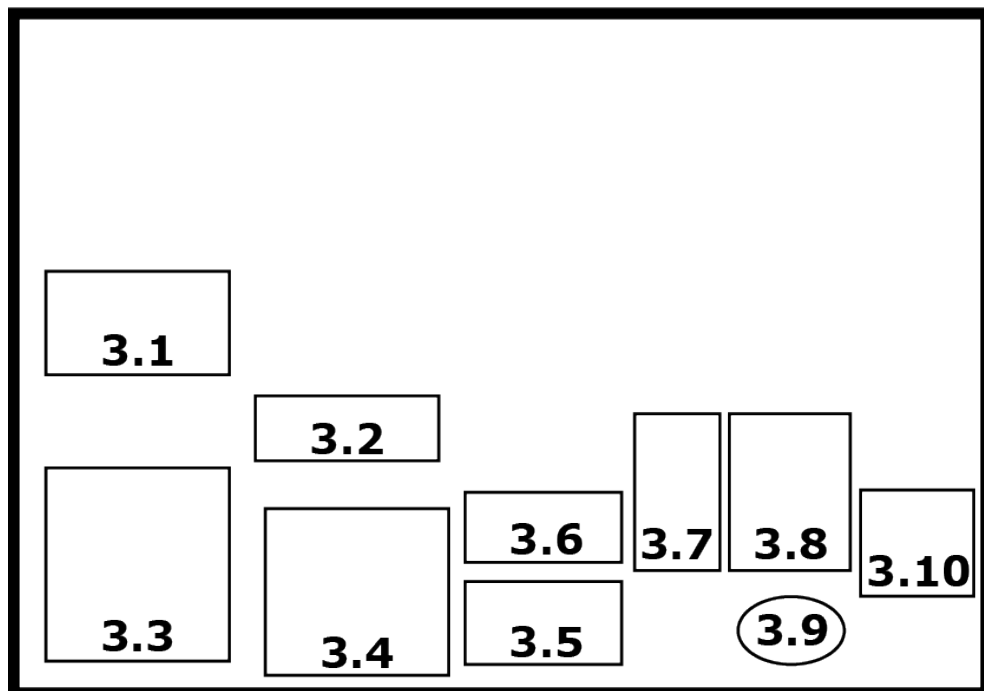
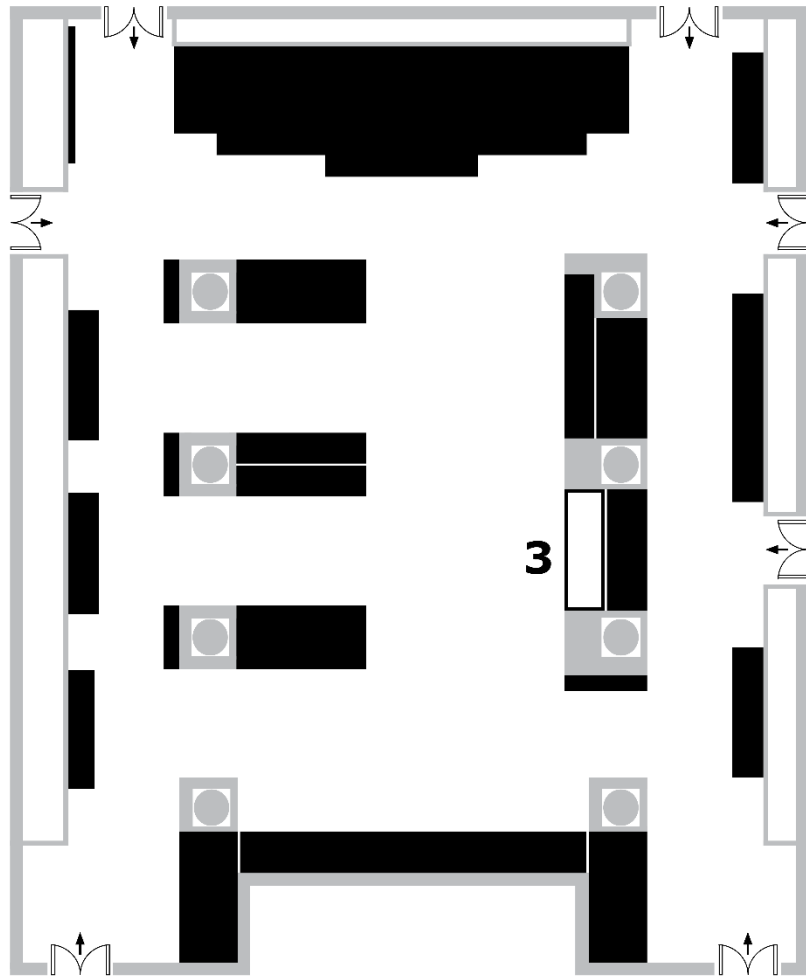
### **Frog drum**

Myanmar, Karen State, 19th or early 20th century

Bronze

On loan from a private collection

Dong Son-style drums like this one continued to be made and used by Southeast Asian hill tribes into the 20th century. Birds and fish amidst concentric rings surround the star on the tympanum (top). Four frogs are placed at each corner. During festivals, the drum was carried around the village on a pole connected by ropes slung through the side handles.



### **3**

## **Dong Son culture**

### **3.1**

#### **Fragment of drum tympanum**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, around 2nd century BC

Bronze

BA-0039

This fragment of the top of a drum was discovered at the Tembeling River, northeast of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, during a flood in 1926. It has the characteristic Dong Son central sun motif surrounded by flying water birds. The workmanship indicates it was most likely manufactured in the Dong Son region of northern Vietnam and exported to the Malay Peninsula.

## **3.2**

### **Ladle**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, 6th century BC to 2nd century AD

Bronze

2002-01151

The elaborate, curved handle of this ladle is similar to the prow of boats depicted on Dong Son drums. A bird sits on the handle with a fish in its mouth.

## **3.3**

### **Covered tripod vessel**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, 1st to 3rd century BC

Bronze

1999-00051

Purchased with funds from the Shaw Foundation

The form of this vessel probably originated in Chinese bronzes of the Shang dynasty (around 1600–1027 BC). The ring handles attach to monster mask reliefs reminiscent of the Chinese taotie masks, a common motif on Shang bronzes.

The elaborate decoration includes registers of interlocking lozenge pattern, pairs of entwined scaly dragons, and a variety of lively animals – elephants, monkey, long-horned deer, birds, horses, tortoise – depicted as if chasing each other around the vessel.

### **3.4**

#### **Drum**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, around 2nd century BC

Bronze

1999-00246

The flying water birds around the central sun motif on this Dong Son drum are a symbol of the Lac Viet ancestors of the Red River Delta, and hint at the use of these drums in rain-calling rituals.

Motifs of ancestral boats with figures wearing tall feather headdresses, perhaps travelling to the next world, can be seen on the sides. These and the buffaloes below reflect the wealth of the deceased whose burials would have included a drum like this.



### **3.5**

#### **Three lime containers**

Eastern Java, AD 100 to 300

Bronze

1995-01796, 1995-01797, 1995-01798

### **3.6**

#### **Axe blade**

Eastern Java or Bali, AD 100 to 300

Bronze

1995-01834

These containers – to hold lime for betel chewing – are shaped like miniature Dong Son drums. The geometric lozenge, spiral, and concentric motifs on the axe blade are also Dong Son in inspiration.

These objects are evidence for the transmission of bronze technology and forms from northern Vietnam to island Southeast Asia. This occurred

through a network of ancient coastal and overland trade routes in the region.

### **3.7**

#### **Sword handle**

Eastern Java, AD 100 to 300

Bronze

1995-01795

### **3.8**

#### **Three daggers**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, 2nd century BC

to AD 2nd century

Bronze

1999-00121, 1996-00844, 1996-00845

Dong Son culture is well known for its technologically sophisticated bronzes. In addition to drums, they also made weapons and other lavish burial goods. These daggers probably

fulfilled both purposes. One handle is in the form of a figure, wearing a garment with patterned front and back panels and extra fabric hanging in front, high hairdo, an earring and bracelets.

### **3.9**

#### **Elephant-shaped vessel**

Dong Son culture

Northern Vietnam, 2nd century BC to 2nd century AD

Bronze

2007-56439

Elephants like this have been found in Dong Son graves. They also appear on Dong Son drums (see the covered tripod vessel in this case) and daggers. Elephants were important symbols, and used in warfare, during this period.

### **3.10**

#### **Plaque**

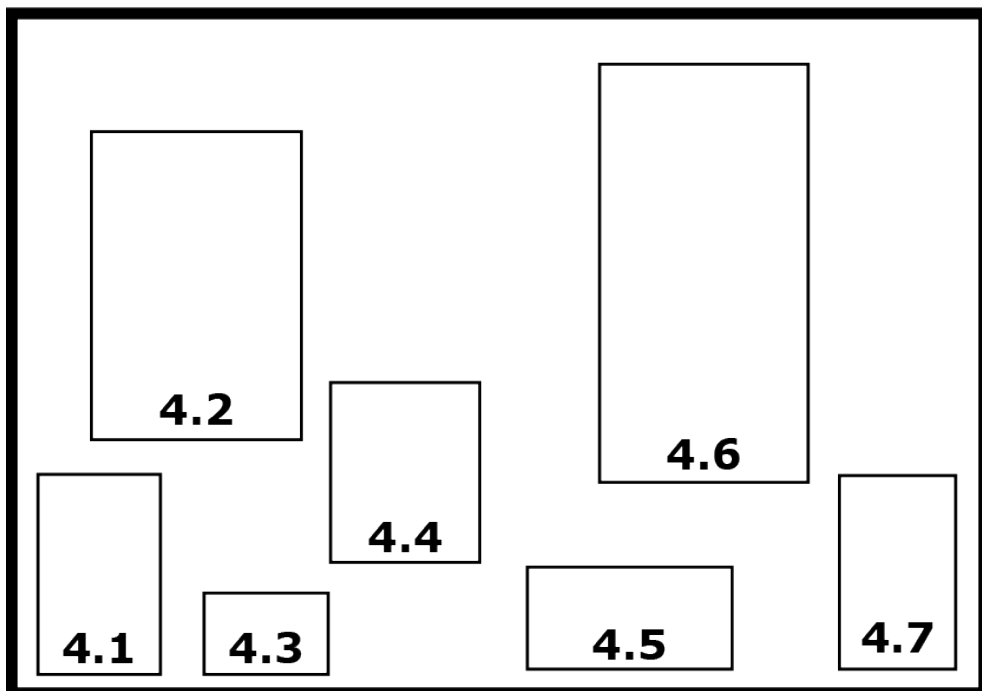
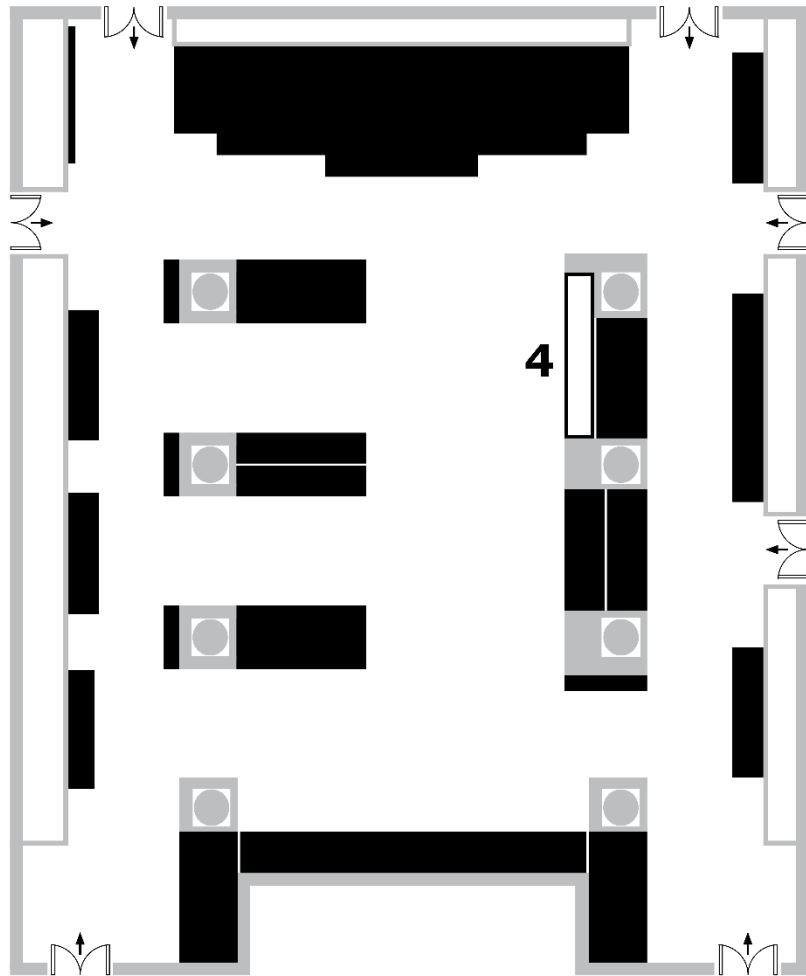
Dong Son culture

North Vietnam, 6th century BC

Bronze

2007-56438

This plaque is a form unique to the Dong Son burial tradition. They may have been used for symbolic protection, and probably reflect high social status. Paired spiral motifs are framed by canoes with bird-like prows, carrying figures with feathered headdresses.



## 4

### Philippines to Timor

#### 4.1

##### Pouch belt

Philippines, Luzon, Central Cordillera, late 19th to early 20th century

Shell, glass beads, cotton

2011-01713

This tubular belt, called akosan, was used by women to carry jewellery. It was worn either above or beneath the skirt. The jewellery is held within the cotton tube, and the shells serve as the lock; they have to be removed before taking out the jewellery.

Akosan became family heirlooms, and were prominently displayed at funerals. The large shells used were highly prized by the tribal peoples of the northern part of the Central

Cordillera, particularly the Tinguian and Bontoc. The shells were acquired through trade with coastal peoples.

## **4.2**

### **Skirt cloth**

Southern Sulawesi, Toraja, 16th or 17th century

Cotton (ikat), natural dyes

2009-02235

Very few Southeast Asian textiles this old are known to exist in collections worldwide.

Radiocarbon testing has dated it to between 1530 and 1610. Given its age, this locally produced cloth is in extraordinarily good condition.

The Toraja highlands on Sulawesi were at the end of the trade routes stretching across Southeast Asia. Indian trade cloth arrived here, probably, via Bugis traders. Textiles indicated

wealth and prestige, and were brought out for the life sustaining Rites of the East.

### **4.3**

#### **Warrior's headdress**

Philippines, North-eastern Luzon, Cagayan

Valley, Nueva Vizcaya, 19th century

Monkey skull, rattan, gold, metal, cloth

2011-01523

This type of headdress was given to warriors who were successful in headhunting, and had taken at least two heads. The idealised strong personality – the “Big Man” – and his female counterpart, are at the centre of traditional societies across Southeast Asia. Societies required success in an important accomplishment, such as headhunting for men and textile weaving for women. Once proven, they could be considered a full and adult member of the community.



## 4.4

### **Door**

Western Sulawesi, Mamasa, Toraja, 19th century

Wood, shell, glass beads

2009-03614

Doors like this one were placed at the entrance to shrines carved into limestone cliffs. These shrines hold the remains of aristocratic families.

The door handle in the form of a figure riding a horse probably represents an ancestor guardian there to protect the tomb. The people of Toraja believe that ancestors bring blessings to the living if they are undisturbed in their tombs. The curved patterns on the background are protective symbols. The shapes at the top represent trailing water weeds, which denote fertility and well-being.

## 4.5

### **Betel bag**

Timor Island, early 20th century

Cotton, natural dyes, shells, glass beads

1993-00262

This bag It would have been used by a man to hold betel nut. Lizard motifs, images of protection, are worked in the cloth with brightly coloured yarn. Tightly wrapped yarn in the red and orange forms the stiff, long tassels at the bottom of the bag. The addition of glass beads and shells means it belonged to a wealthy person.

## 4.6

### **Tubular skirt**

Savu Island, 20th century

Cotton (ikat), natural dyes

National Museum of Singapore

T-0548

This complex geometric patterns on this cloth were made with the ikat technique (threads tie-dyed before the weaving). The quality and good condition indicate that it must have been an heirloom, highly prized and carefully stored and passed down.

The red, white, and deep indigo blue are a common colour combination in cloths of this type. The patterns would have related to a particular family, and could not be copied. The number and clarity of the white “teeth” motifs at the edge indicate the high status of the weaver.

## 4.7

### Drum

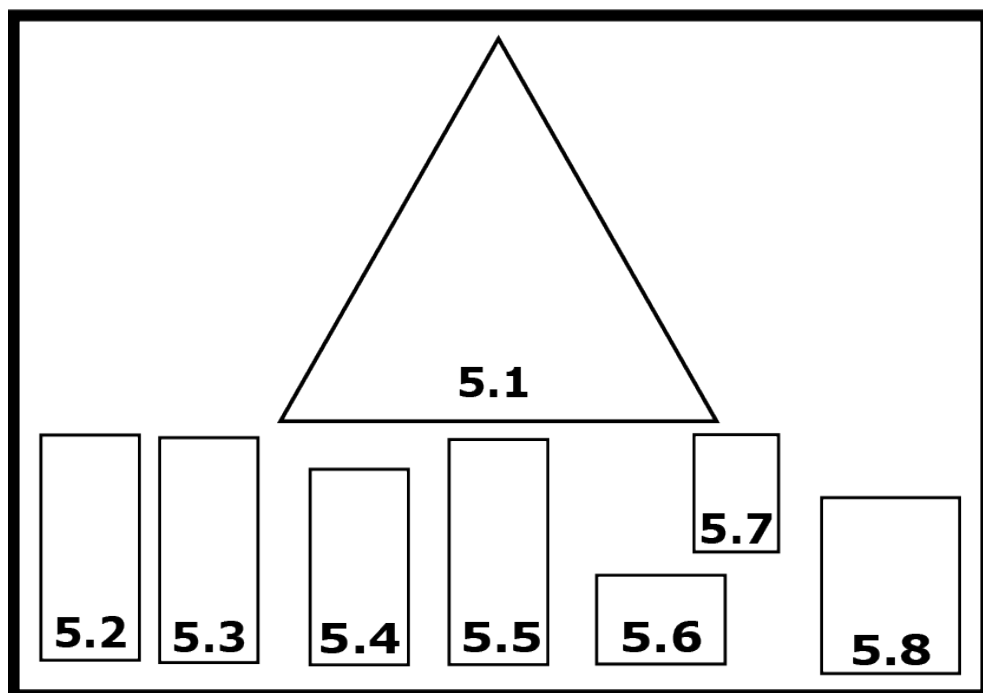
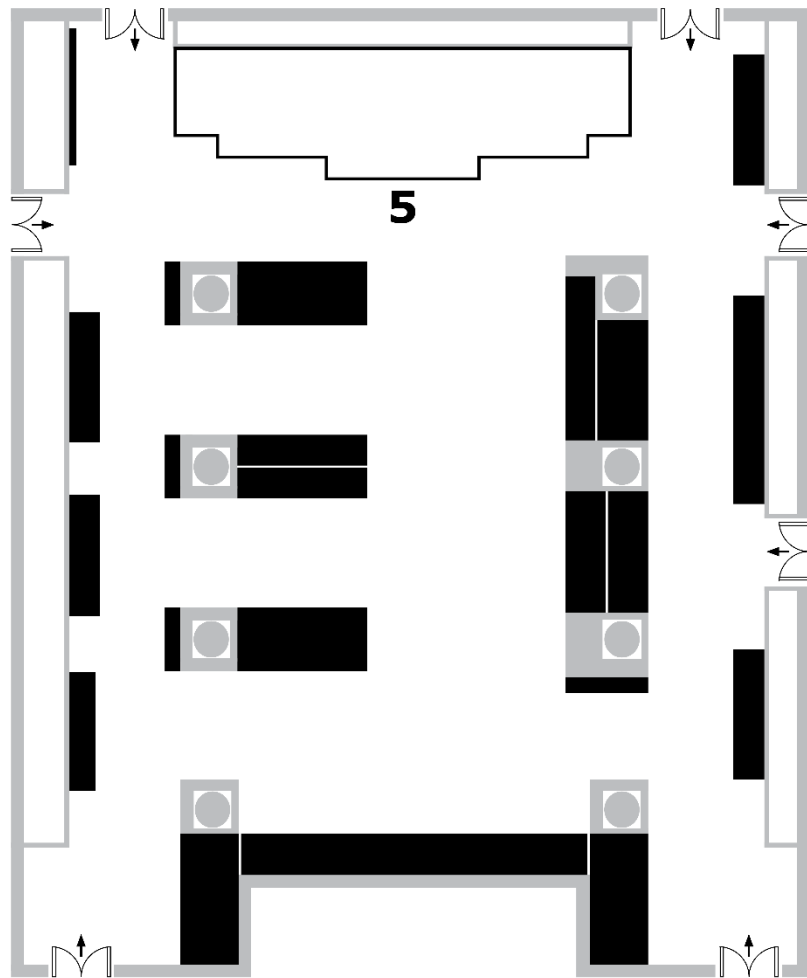
Alor Island, 19th century

Bronze

1998-01383

Drums like this, called moko, were made in eastern Java and traded to Alor Island. The hourglass shape derives from drums of the Dong Son period (500 BC–AD 500). The diamond-shaped cartouches contain kirtimukha monster faces similar to those found on 9th-century Hindu and Buddhist temples in Java.

Traditionally, these drums were the main form of currency on Alor, and a vital inclusion in bride prices. In 1914, the Dutch government collected and destroyed 1600 moko on Alor in a bid to make silver and copper coins the accepted currency.



## 5

### **Ancestor figures and house gable**

#### **5.1.1**

##### **Beam from a chief's longhouse**

Borneo, probably Kayan, 19th century

Wood, pigments

W-0859

This rare, carved panel would have been part of a chief's house. Two undulating dragons, always depicted side view with one eye, frame a squatting figure, possibly a slave. The figure's face has a frightening expression to ward off evil. Many symbols in Borneo have dual meanings, but here dragons indicate rank and prestige, and depicting a full human figure, and especially that of a slave is only the right of high-ranking individuals. Dragons are also associated with protection and fertility.

Traditional painting extensively uses black soot and white lime highlighted with red ochre pigments. White can be associated with the upper world.

Ancestor figures on platform [left to right]

### **5.1.2**

#### **Granary façade: Outer gable panels**

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

2001-01776, 2000-05575

A steep, gabled roof that extends beyond the substructure is typical of Toba Batak architecture. They were fond of richly decorated facades, with the use of carved, lion-like singa heads, horizontal panels, and roof supports.

### 5.1.3

#### **Façade panel**

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

2013-00956

Long carved panels known as pandilati, or sometimes dila paung, were placed in the roof gable of the ancestral house. The term dila means “tongue”, and so pandilati represented the tongue of the living house. The Batak believed that an extended tongue could ward off evil spirits. This type of pandilati panel would have been hung on the inner part of the house gable.



### 5.1.4

#### **Façade panel**

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

2013-00957

Intricately carved and painted, this panel, known as a "tomboman", would have been placed as a support between the main gable panels of the clan house. While the decorative elements were symbolic, they also show the fierce rivalry between clans, as they strove to outshine their neighbours with more impressive decoration.

### 5.1.5

#### **Façade panel**

Toba Batak

Northern Sumatra, early 20th century

Wood, pigments

2013-00955

Decorative carvings placed high in the house gable of large Batak clan houses are called jenggar. This one is carved in the form of a singa with elaborate horns.

The ancestral house was the centre of family life for the entire clan, and needed to be protected from both real and spirit attacks. Lion images were thought to frighten off both pests and spirits.

## 5.2

### **Ancestor guardian figure**

Dayak

Borneo, Sarawak, around 1900s

Wood

2001-01763

This sculpture shows the prestige and power of the ancestor, indicated by the dragons flanking it, and the highly valued heirloom jar that the figure stands on. The spirit of the ancestor would have inhabited the sculpture before making its journey to the afterlife. The dragons protect the spirit on this journey. Such carvings, called hampatong, would have been placed at village entrances to ward off evil spirits.

## 5.3

### **Grave marker**

Sumba Island, 19th century

Stone

1995-02420

A stone grave marker indicates status, and would have been placed next to the tomb of a high ranking individual. They are called a "penji", which means "banner". The carved human figures represent slaves and personal attendants whose spirits are believed to accompany the deceased at the funeral. The marine animals symbolise the noble birth of the deceased. They also speak of the maritime links to imported wealth and goods. The stone has been eroded on one side more than the other; it stood in the open air for a long time.

## 5.4

### **Hampatong Guardian figure dressed in Western military uniform**

Ngaju Dayak

Borneo, Central Kalimantan, early 20th century

Ironwood

2009-01797

This figure carved in a Dayak community in central Borneo almost certainly represents a Dutch colonial-era soldier. Hampatong figures were believed to be protective; placed along footpaths or in front of dwellings they stood guard and drove away dangerous spirits. This one is evidence that the Dayaks attempted to enlist the power and prestige of the modern, outside world in their ongoing efforts to ward off spirit intruders.

## 5.5

### **Ancestor figures**

Eastern Timor Island, 19th century

Wood

2012-00525

Matched pairs of male and female figures in wood, called aitos (meaning "hardwood") are made to represent the founding ancestors. They can also be carved in stone. They are placed in and around the village, and at gravesites.

Offerings and prayers are made to them when a decision, guidance, or blessing is needed.

## 5.6

### **Osa' osa**

Central Nias

Nias Island, early 20th century

Stone

2011-02049

Osa' osa is a seat for a noble man or woman when hosting a feast of merit (owasa). Feasts were lavish affairs, and those who gave them were highly revered. These seats are unique to Central Nias, and take the form of a mythical creature with beak, crest, and tail of the sacred hornbill, together with the legs and teeth of a crocodile. It wears a warrior's necklace, and has a protective role as guardian of the sitter.

## **5.7**

### **Funerary urn**

Philippines, Mindanao, Kulman Plateau, 8th or 9th century

Stone

2014-00231

Large limestone burial jars were used for secondary burial, in which the remains of the deceased were collected and reinterred. Such jars were usually placed inside caves. Personal items such as gold jewellery or other ornaments are usually found inside as well. The lid has the upper body of a figure probably representing an ancestor.



## 5.8

### **Penji stele**

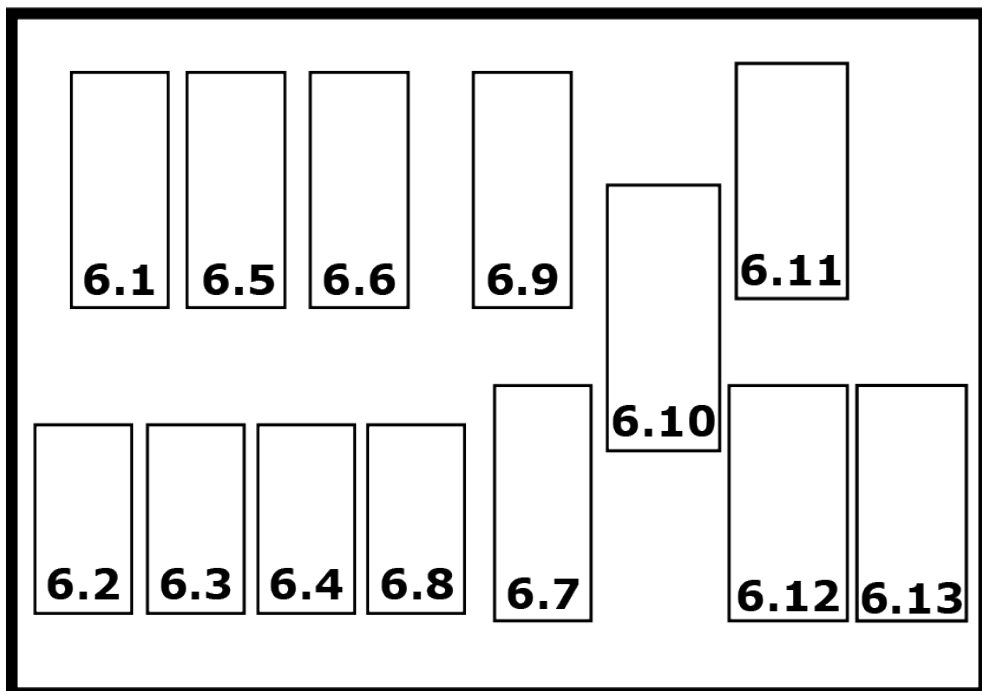
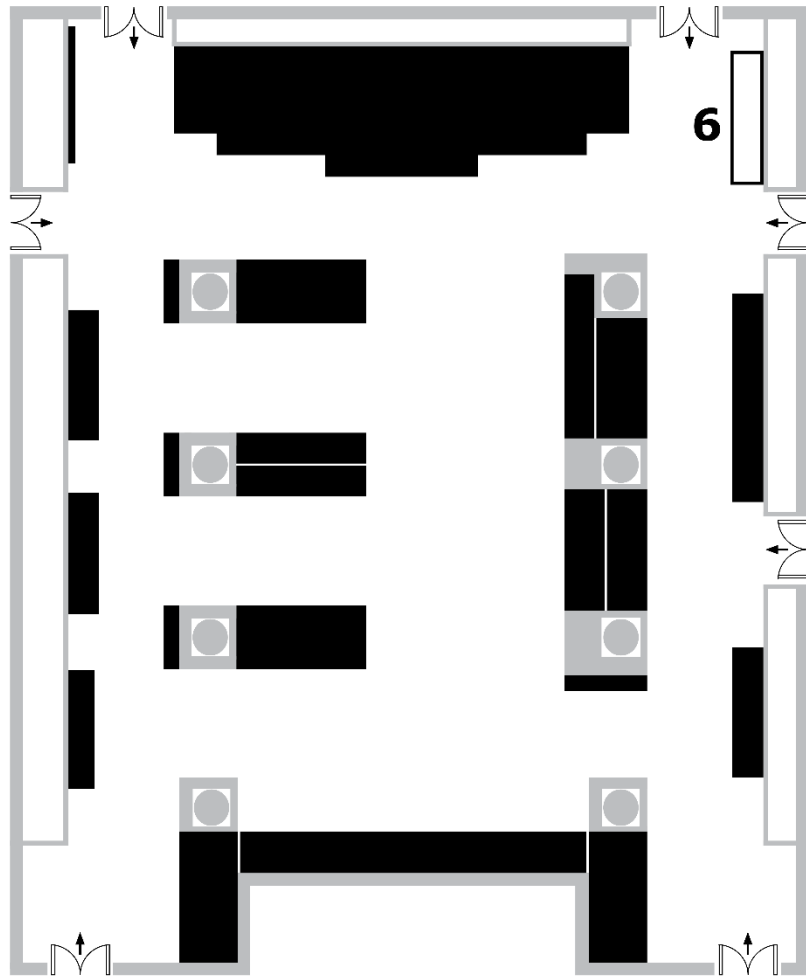
Sumba Island, 19th century

Stone

2011-01617

In East Sumba in the Lesser Sunda Islands, a tall stone marker known as a penji identifies a grave of a person of high status. This enigmatic example is hard to interpret. It could represent a bird, or perhaps a crocodile. However, given the strong Austronesian association of ships with passage, and their penchant for using ship imagery in objects associated with death rites, the resemblance to a traditional boat prow is perhaps not accidental.

The people of Sumba practise secondary burial, and these sites often were built years after the death of the individual.



## 6

### Weapons

#### 6.1

##### **Sword and scabbard**

Northern Sumatra, Aceh, second half of the 19th century

Iron, buffalo horn, gilding

2011-02270

This type of sword, called a sikin panjang, is distinguished by the straight, even width of the blade. It is the most popular weapon in northern Sumatra, especially Aceh. It was extensively produced during the Aceh war against the Dutch in 1873. The gilded, petal-shaped stem ring of the hilt indicates the sword belonged to a high-ranking individual. The scabbard is incised with floral patterns and an inscription (meaning unknown). The earliest Islamic kingdom in the region was established in Aceh, leading to the

adoption of the Arabic script to write their own language.

## **6.2**

### **Kris**

Sumatra, Palembang, 19th century

Suasa, wood, copper, gold

XXXX-04620

Acquired by the Raffles Museum and Library in 1912

The wavy blade, symbolising the movement of a snake, is made from suasa, an alloy of copper, silver, and gold. This metal was believed to have magical powers and bring good luck. The blade is decorated with gilded floral motifs and an image of a lion near the hilt, a symbol of power and royalty. The hilt and copper finger guard are probably slightly later additions. Raffles Museum and Library recorded this kris as once belonging to Sultan Pengeran Syed Ali of Palembang.

## 6.3

### **Kris and scabbard**

Bali, late 19th or early 20th century

Iron, trembalo, silver, semi-precious stones

2014-00943

This kris has an intricate damascene pattern on the blade, a time-consuming and therefore expensive and highly prized technique. The pattern was thought to act as a poison. The sheath is carved from a rare hardwood known as trembalo. The simple design is offset by the refined workmanship and the quality of the materials used to make it. It would have belonged to a very wealthy person.

## 6.4

### **Kris and scabbard**

Bali, 19th or 20th century

Iron, ivory, gold

XXXX-04683

Balinese royal courts all had regalia that symbolised ruling power. Krises like this were an important part of such regalia. The hilt is in the form of a demonic protective figure holding a trident. It has an intricate damascene pattern on the blade, and it was believed that this pattern could poison a victim. The technique was time-consuming and expensive, and the resulting objects were highly prized. The ivory scabbard alludes to the wealth of the original owner.

## **6.5**

### **Machete**

Borneo, Kalimantan, late 19th or early 20th century

Iron, deer horn, wood, plaited rattan, trade beads, shell, hair

XXXX-05013

## **6.6**

### **Machete and scabbard**

Borneo, Kalimantan, late 19th or early 20th century

Iron, deer horn, wood, feathers, animal skin, plaited rattan

XXXX-05022

## 6.7

### **Machete and scabbard**

Borneo, Kalimantan, late 19th or early 20th century

Iron, horn, wood, feathers, animal skin, plaited rattan

XXXX-05011

These weapons, called mandau or ihlang, were widely used in Kalimantan for head-hunting. The iron blade can be carved and pierced. The deer horn hilt and decorative elements on the scabbard are intricately carved with motifs that include the protective mythical creature called Aso baring its teeth. The beaded girdle enables it to be worn around the body, and indicates that it belonged to an important person.

The sheath is made from two pieces of wood bound together, a typical form in the region. A



small knife would be fitted into the back of the sheath of each machete.

## **6.8**

### **Dagger and scabbard**

Northern Sumatra, Aceh, early or mid-19th century

Iron, bone, gold, ivory, black coral, semi-precious stones

2011-01616

The rich materials used on the hilt and scabbard indicate royal or aristocratic ownership. The tiered triangular-shaped motifs at the base of the hilt possibly represent bamboo shoots.

Aceh was an important, independent sultanate prior to the arrival of the Dutch in 1873. It was a substantial centre of trade, and immense wealth was amassed, displayed in fine objects such as this.

### **6.9.1**

#### **Knife**

Mentawai Islands, 20th century

Steel, wood

XXXX-04768

### **6.9.2**

#### **Knife**

Mentawai Islands, 20th century

Steel, wood

XXXX-04858

The steel for this type of double-edged knife, called a palitai, would have been imported from Sumatra, and finished in Mentawai to local specifications.

These knives are worn tucked into the loin cloth, and were carried on headhunting expeditions. They are prized enough to form part of a bride price.

## 6.10

### Sword

Philippines, southern Mindanao, Maranao or  
Maguindanao, late 18th century

Iron, steel, bone, rattan, wood

2009-03159

In the Philippines, this type of sword is called a kampilan. The shapes of the blade and hilt (handle) are unusual and distinctive. The hilt represents the head of an animal or mythical beast, with an open jaw and large, round eye. The iron loops on the guard of the hilt protect the hand.

This one might have belonged to a chief. The kampilan features in ancient Philippine epics, and the style became popular in other parts of island Southeast Asia.

## **6.11**

### **Sword and scabbard**

Nias, late 19th or early 20th century

Iron, wood, plaited rattan

XXXX-04909

## **6.12**

### **Sword**

Nias, 19th century

Iron, wood, brass

XXXX-04610

This type of sword is called belato. The blade broadens towards the tip, the hilt is in the forms of a lasara, a mythical creature. The lasara is related to the Nias god of death and darkness. It would give talismanic powers to the owner. Hilts of this type vary from ornately carved and detailed to simpler representations of the creature, both examples seen here.

## 6.13

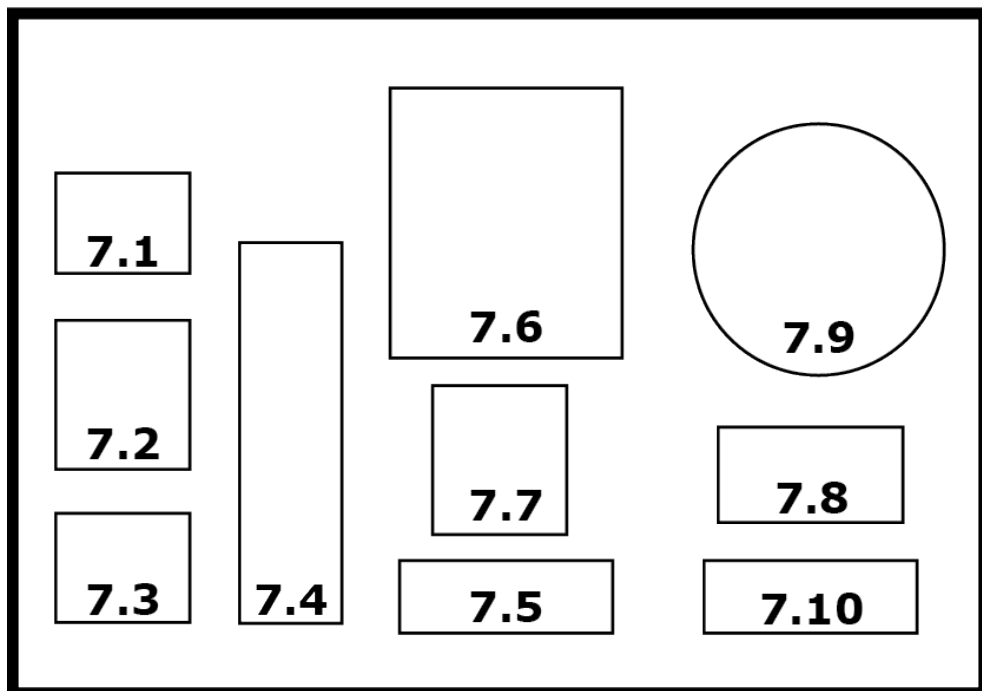
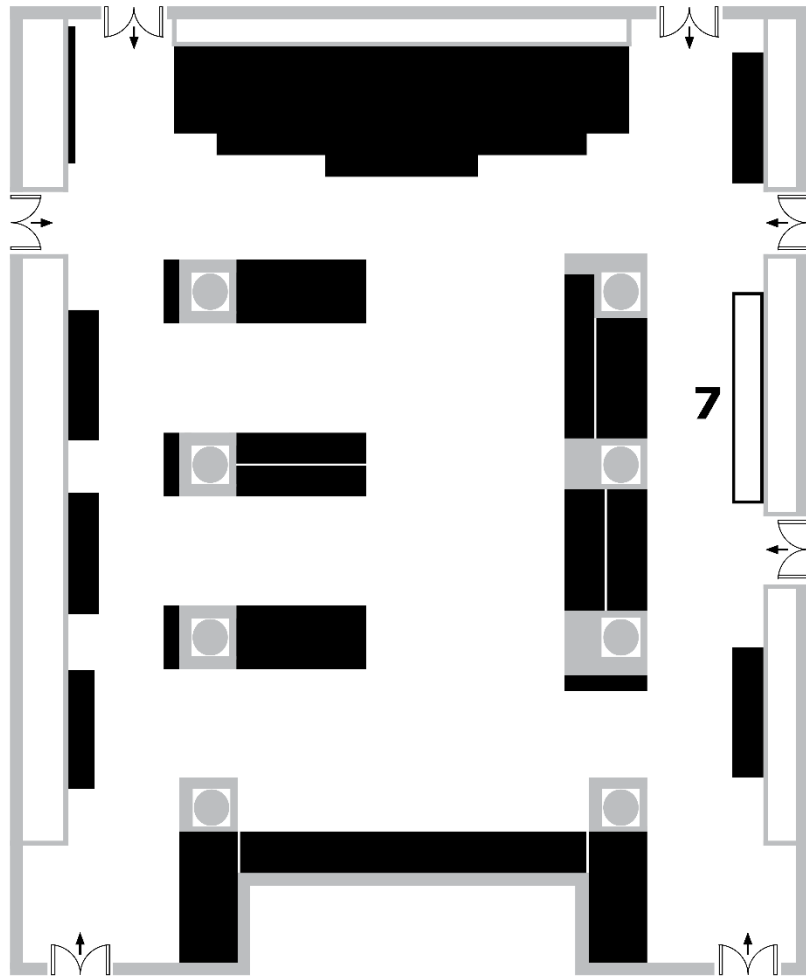
### **Sword and scabbard**

Batak

Northern Sumatra, late 19th or early 20th  
century

XXXX-04807

This type of sword is called a piso ni datu ("priest's knife"). Only datu (priests) could wield these knives with gently curving blade and hilt carved in the shape of a human figure seated on a gold ring.



## **7**

### **Hilltribes**

#### **Akha garments**

Akha women make dark indigo-dyed hemp garments decorated with colourful embroidery and applied objects – glass beads, silver balls and discs, coins, wool pompons, gibbon fur, dyed chicken feathers, tassels, seeds, and other things. Perhaps the most distinctive decorations used are the shells of green beetles, whose bright green iridescent quality give them great appeal (look for them on the bag displayed here).

## **7.1**

### **Headdress**

Northern Thailand, 1960s

Bamboo, rattan, cotton, silver balls, shell, glass  
and bone beads, porcupine quills

1993-01313

Akha women wear ornate and intricately  
fashioned headdresses, even while working in  
the fields. The more elaborate ones indicate  
greater age and status, while different shapes  
indicate clan identity.

## **7.2**

### **Skirt ornament**

Northern Thailand, 1960s

Cotton, wool applique, gibbon's fur, shell beads,  
plastic buttons, silver coins

1993-01621



## **7.3**

### **Bag**

Northern Thailand, 1960s

Cotton, wool tassels, plastic buttons, beetle shell,  
Job's tears seeds

1993-01308

## **7.4**

### **Hmong baby carrier**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Cotton, hemp, silk thread, flattened silver wire,  
metallic sequins

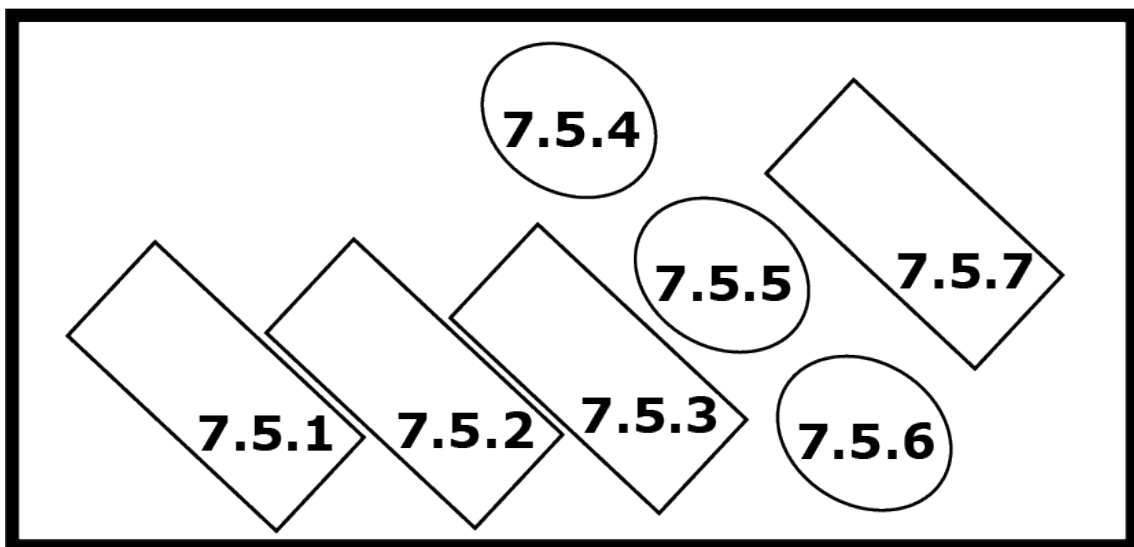
2003-00005

This magnificent baby carrier shows the influence of China on Hilltribe culture. It features auspicious motifs borrowed directly from Chinese designs. Bats, symbols of good fortune, and butterflies, joy and longevity, seem highly appropriate decorations for something meant to carry and shield a young child.

## **Hilltribe silver**

Because it was valuable, jewellery and accessories made from silver were seen as an important family investment. Silver increased a family's social status. It was a portable store of wealth, passed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. Both men and women wore and used silver, particularly for ceremonial occasions.

Antique silver coins were highly prized, particularly because of their reliably high silver content. French and British coins, as well as silver coins from China, are often incorporated into belts, necklaces, and bracelets, or even applied to boxes and other objects as decorations.



### **7.5.1**

#### **Knife with sheath**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Steel, silver, tiger tooth, cotton

1993-00863

### **7.5.2**

#### **Hairpin**

Northern Thailand,

early 20th century

Silver

1993-00852

### **7.5.3**

#### **Pipe**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00862

#### **7.5.4**

##### **Lime box**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00864

#### **7.5.5**

##### **Lime box**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Silver

1993-00231

#### **7.5.6**

##### **Tobacco box**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00798

### **7.5.7**

#### **Pipe**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00627

### **7.6**

#### **Jacket**

Northern Thailand, 1960s

Indigo-dyed hemp, cotton and wool thread embroidery, cloth applique, glass beads, plastic buttons

1993-01300

### **7.7**

#### **Hmong apron**

Northern Thailand or Laos, mid-20th century

Cotton, silk thread embroidery, silver chains, glass beads

2010-00565

## **7.8**

### **Hmong collars**

Northern Thailand, mid-20th century

Cotton

1993-01165, 1993-01113, 1993-01142, 1993-01143, 2010-00554, 2010-00558

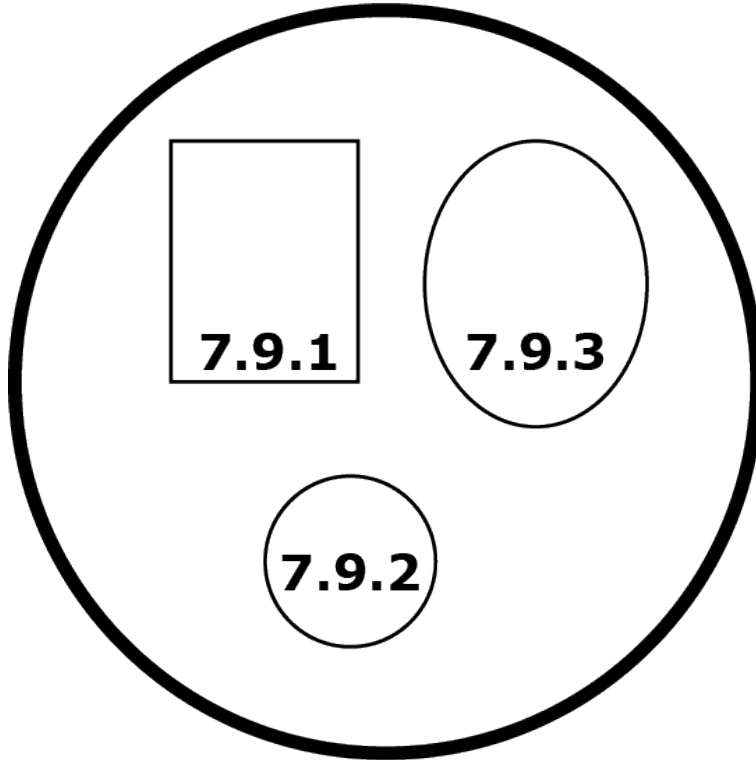
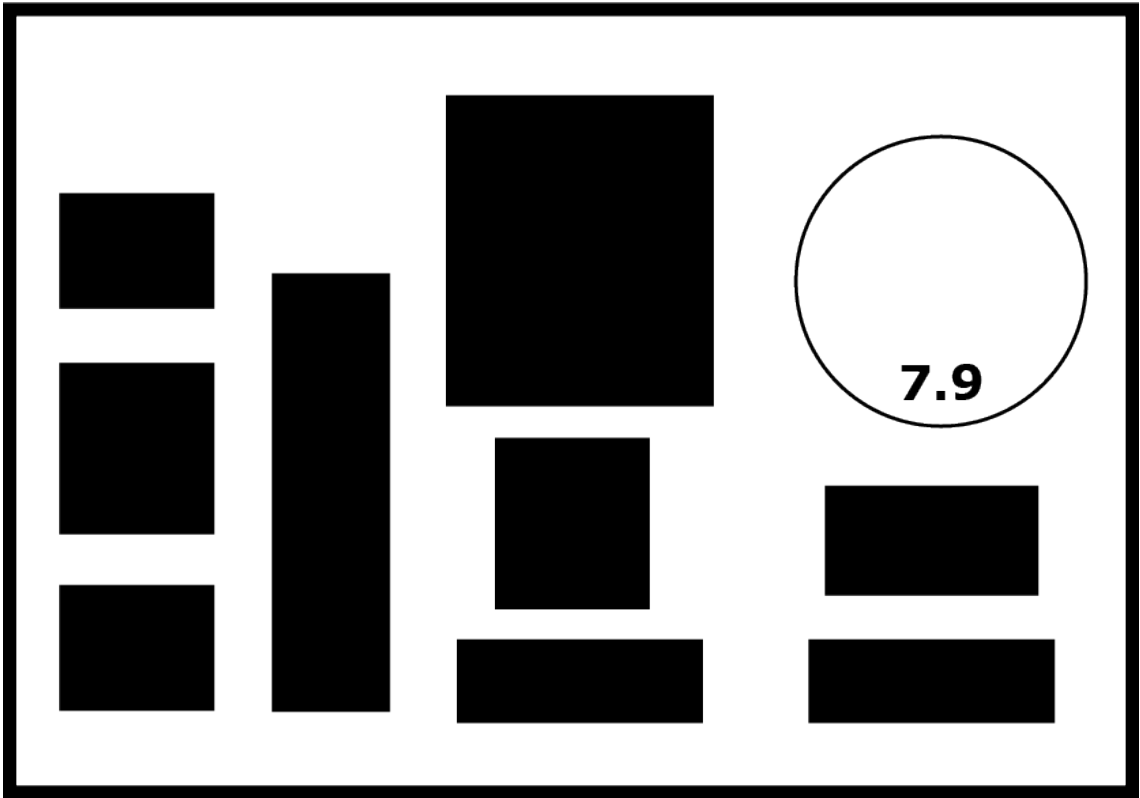
These intricately embroidered and appliqued cotton panels were sewn onto the back of the neckline of Hmong women's jackets. They are an important marker of Hmong identity, and girls were encouraged from an early age to become proficient at making them. The cross motifs are thought to keep away evil.

## **Hilltribe jewellery**

Hmong girls were given silver jewellery by their parents as bride wealth (phij cuab). This helped ensure they had some independence and status in their new family after marriage.

Silver was thought to have protective properties. A silver neck-ring with a pendant called a “soul lock” was frequently worn to protect against illness.





### **7.9.1**

#### **Necklace**

Northern Thailand,  
early 20th century

Silver

1993-00784

### **7.9.2**

#### **Earrings**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00736

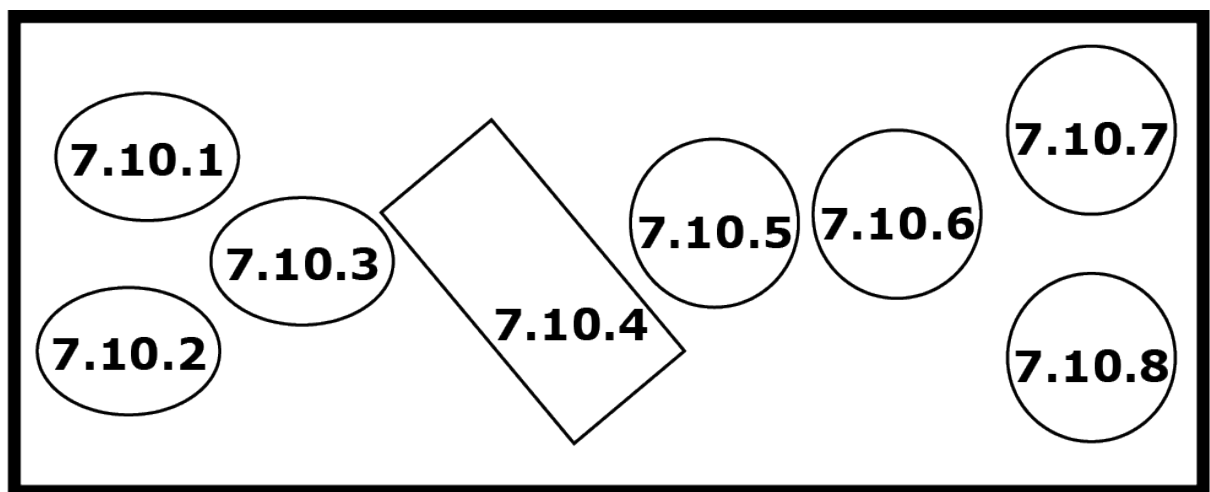
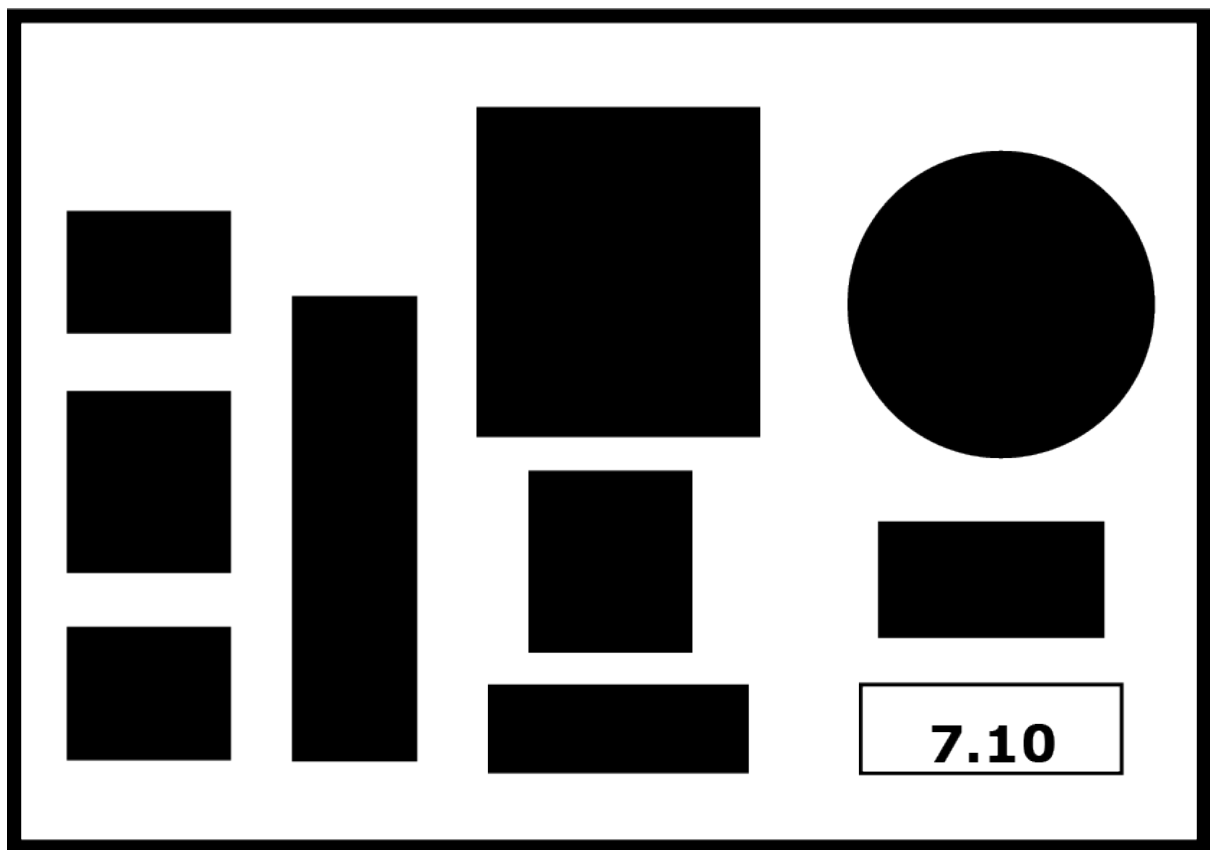
### **7.9.3**

#### **Necklace**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00660



### **7.10.1**

#### **Bracelet with engraved design**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00646

### **7.10.2**

#### **Twisted wire bracelet**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00549

### **7.10.3**

#### **Hollow twisted bracelet**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00554

#### **7.10.4**

##### **Neck ring, chain, and soul lock**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00773

#### **7.10.5**

##### **Ring**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00661

#### **7.10.6**

##### **Ring**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00715

### **7.10.7**

#### **Earplugs**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00782

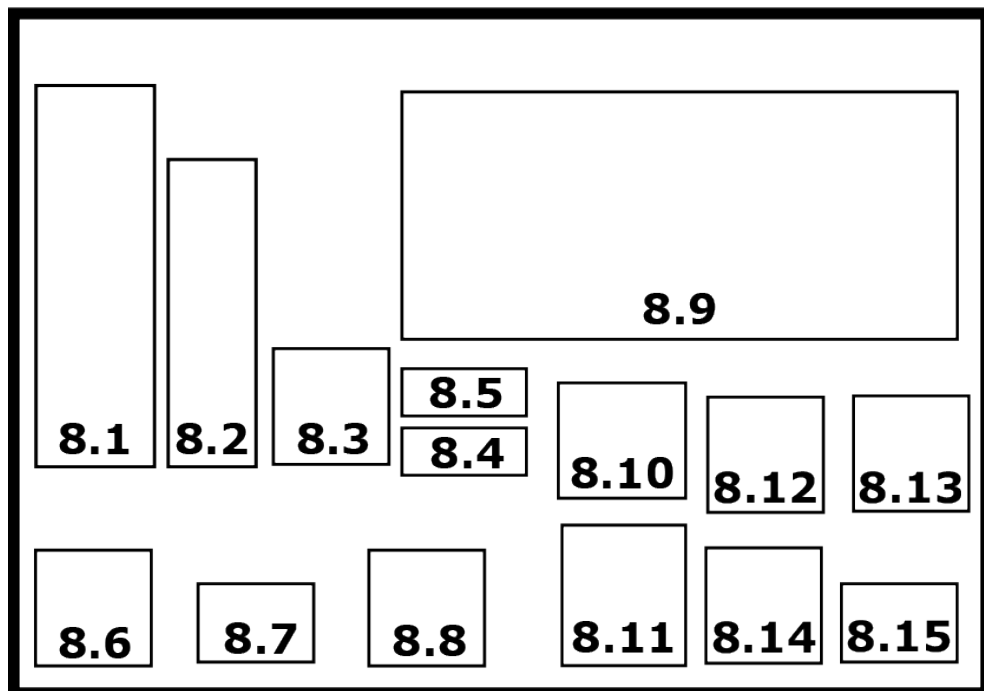
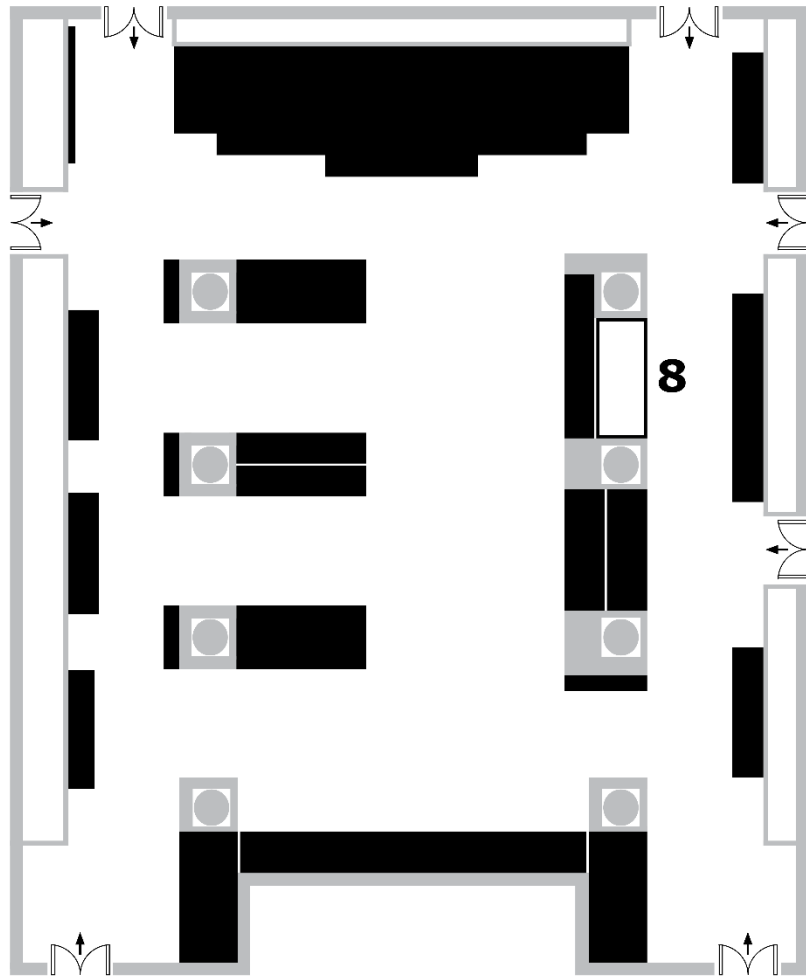
### **7.10.8**

#### **Earrings**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

1993-00724



## **8**

### **Hilltribes – Yao people**

#### **The Yao People**

Everything in this case comes from Yao communities in northern Thailand. The Yao are thought to have migrated south from central China. The Opium Wars and civil unrest of the 19th century increased Yao migration into Southeast Asia.

Today Yao communities still live in southern Chinese provinces, as well as in Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos.

They speak languages from the Sino-Tibetan group, practice a mix of Daoist and animist religions, and use the Chinese writing system.



## **8.1**

### **Priest's belt**

Northern Thailand, 1960s

Cotton, embroidered

1993-01195

## **8.2**

### **Shaman's staff**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood, soft metal inlay

1994-00073

## **8.3**

### **Bell**

Northern Thailand, early 20th century

Brass

1994-00005

## **8.4**

### **Divination tools**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood, metal fittings, coin

1994-00064, 1994-00065

## **8.5**

### **Horn**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Bone

1994-0007

## **8.6**

### **Drum**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood, leather, rattan

1994-00007

## **8.7**

### **Cymbals**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Brass

1994-00003

## **8.8**

### **Oboe**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood, brass fittings

1994-00006

## **8.9**

### **Pantheon paintings**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Paper, water-based pigments

1994-00079, 1994-00081, 1994-00082

Yao priests commissioned paintings known as mien fang ("god pictures") for use in ceremonies.

Complete sets contain 17 images of the

pantheon of celestial beings, nature spirits, and gods, headed by the Three Pure Ones (fam t'sing).

## **8.10**

### **Deity figures**

Northern Thailand, around 1890

Wood

2005-00321, 2005-00322

Wooden sculptures like this are placed on the village priest's altar along with other sacred objects. The figure on the left is a god known as Nyut Hung, the Jade Emperor, also sometimes referred to as the Prince of the Mediums. He originally held a court tablet, now missing. The figure on the right is a general, Khong Zhao, riding a cockerel. He is considered a messenger to the gods.

## **8.11**

### **Shaman's book**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Paper, ink, string

2005-01614

This book contains instructions for performing a variety of rituals, including instructions for “opening” the eyes of an image of a deity, and building a new house. It is written in Chinese script interspersed with ritual symbols and other marks in purple ink.

## **8.12**

### **Ceremonial rattle**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Steel, cotton cloth

1994-00072

## **8.13**

### **Ceremonial knife**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Steel

1994-00066

## **8.14**

### **Charm block and stamp**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood

1994-00057, 1994-00058

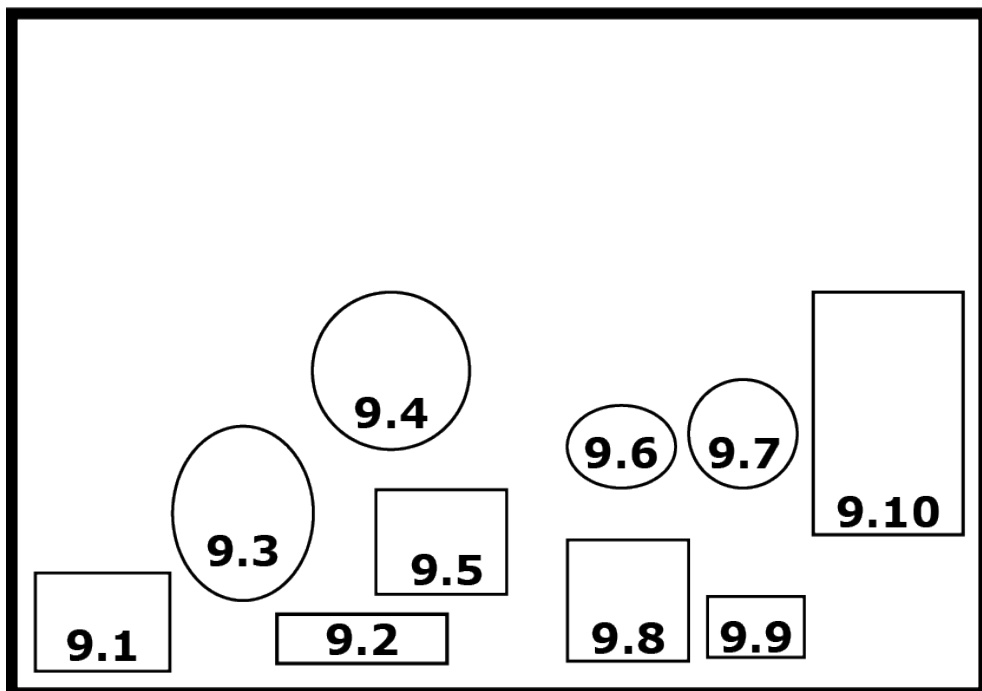
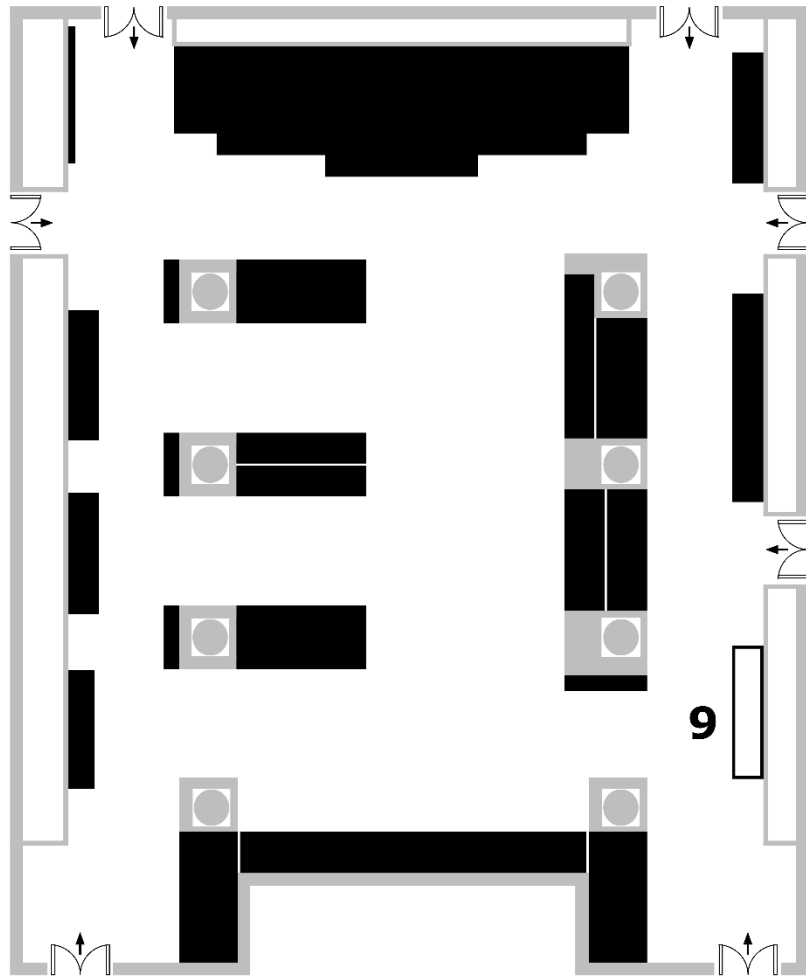
## **8.15**

### **Divination block**

Northern Thailand, early or mid-20th century

Wood

1994-00055



## 9

### Silver

#### 9.1

##### **Betel set objects: three boxes, cup, betel leaf holder**

China, 19th century

Silver

Anonymous gift, (boxes) 2011-00786, -00787, -00788; (cup) 2011-00789; (betel leaf holder) 2011-00785

#### 9.2

##### **Document holder (sa chor thor bu)**

Myanmar, Shan State, late 19th or early 20th century

Silver

Anonymous gift, 2011-00829



## 9.3

### **Bottle**

China or Thailand, early 20th century

Silver

Mark: 南興 (Nam Heng)

2014-00221

This bottle has an unusual design of insects amongst rice stalks rendered in repoussé work (beaten into the sheet silver). The bulbous form, with stupa-like finial and symbolic motifs of abundance and wealth, is fitting for what is likely a ritual water bottle.

The maker's mark appears twice on the base. It references the "southern region" (Nanyang – Southeast Asia), and is seen on wares made by Chinese metalsmiths based in the region. Vessels like this in sheet silver were likely made by Chinese artists in Thailand for royal or other wealthy clients.

## 9.4

### **Dish with scenes from the Ramayana**

Myanmar, Yangon, dated 1914

Silver

2011-00021

Mark: Maung Shwe Yon (in the form of a deer)

Several different techniques of decoration were employed on this dish to create a rich, multilayered object, probably for a European buyer. The rim has sculpted panels illustrating scenes from the Ramayana. The flat central section is deeply engraved with floral motifs surrounded by bands of scrolling vines and zodiac signs.

During the late 19th century, European forms including teapots, tankards, spoons, and platters were made for export. Burmese silver was regularly displayed at colonial exhibitions in

Myanmar and India, where silversmiths won prizes for their work.

## **9.5**

### **Betel box on stand**

Myanmar, late 19th century

Silver

2009-03582

This box is a traditional type of vessel used for presenting betel on a ceremonial occasion. The high-relief designs with fine engraving, typical of Burmese silver, depict stories of the Buddha's past lives set amidst scrolling foliage and mythical serpents.

Designs were produced by beating the silver from the reverse, a technique known as repoussé. Finer details were then chased or engraved on the surface. The elaborate cover and stand with an openwork flange around the

top suggest the influence of European art of the late 19th century.

## **9.6**

### **Ceremonial bowl**

Myanmar, late 19th or early 20th century

Silver (repoussé)

2010-00474

Anonymous gift

This bowl was handcrafted using a combination of high relief and open work techniques. It is decorated with scenes from the Ramayana (Yama Zatdaw in Burmese). The shape was inspired by a monk's alms bowl.

## 9.7

### **Bowl**

Myanmar, Shan State, dated 1908

Silver

2014-00714

Inscribed on base: “ME 1270 [AD 1908] U Kyan Lay’s silver bowl”

The decoration in dense, low relief is exemplary of Shan State silverware. The creatures amidst the leafy scrolls are drawn from various traditional sources – the tiger, rat, and naga are part of the Eight Planets, which correspond with days of the week; the ram, bull, and lion are zodiac signs. The mythical goose (hintha) is the emblem of the Mon people, while the peacock is the symbol of the sun and of the Konbaung kings of Myanmar.

## 9.8

### **Betel box**

Myanmar, Shan State, dated 1895

Silver

On loan from a private collection

Inside this box are five small containers and a tray, to hold and present ingredients for betel chewing. The sides show the 12 symbols of the Burmese zodiac. Tortoises decorate the cover. The inscription, "ME 1257 Mr Po Ke Yee's Big Betel Nut Box", gives the date (using Myanmar Era) and name of the owner. Betel chewing remains popular in Myanmar today.

## 9.9

### **Bowl**

Myanmar, Mandalay, dated 1915

Silver

On loan from a private collection

The inscription, "Presented to Maung Te Pe Headman of Deikpyat Village Bassein District for Good Service Durbar 1915", indicates this bowl was a gift. "Durbar" originally referred to the place where Indian rulers held meetings. In colonial times, they became ceremonial gatherings to demonstrate loyalty to the British. This bowl – modelled on the traditional monk's alms bowl – shows how traditional Myanmar crafts could take on new roles and meanings under colonialism.

## 9.10

### **Model of a temple**

Myanmar, Yangon, dated 1914

Silver

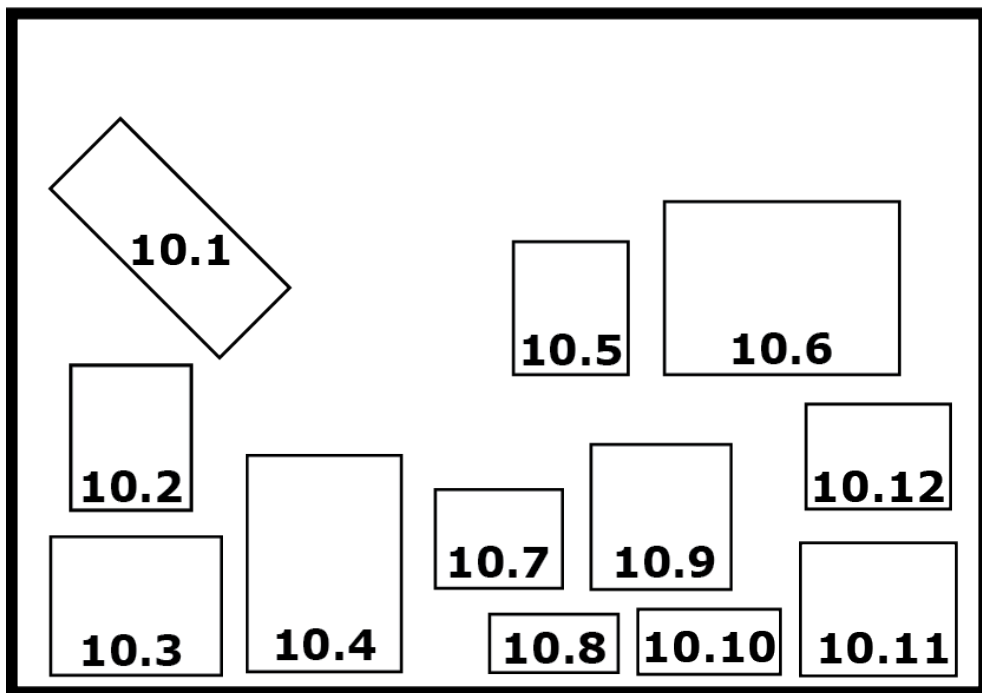
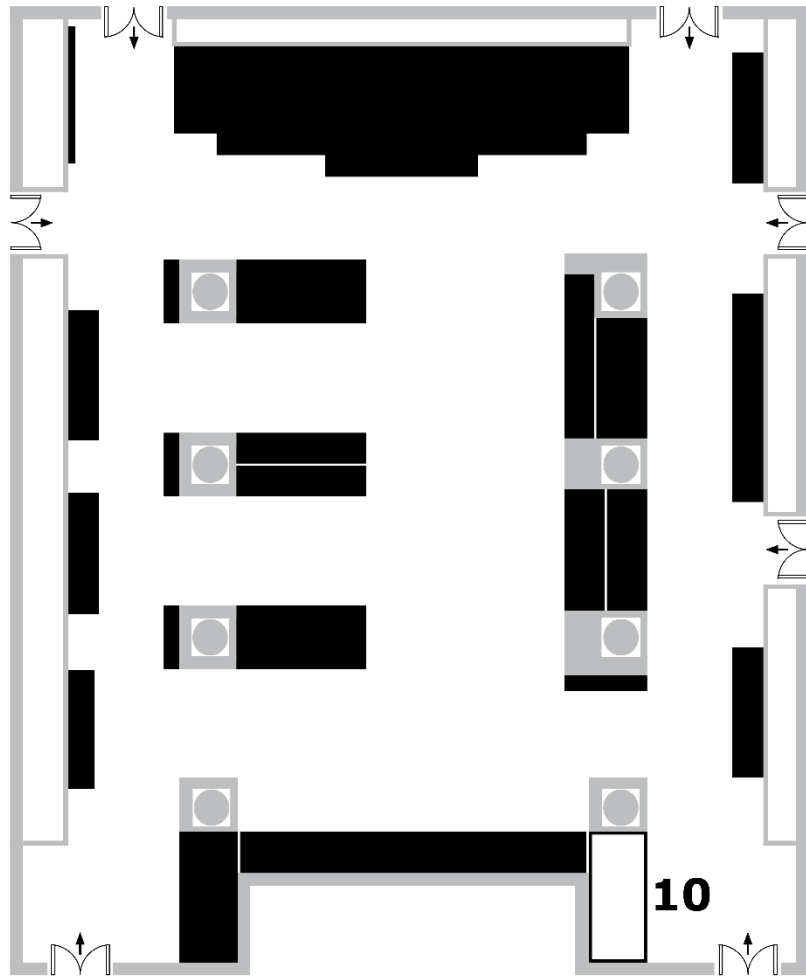
2014-00579

This model takes the form of a Burmese temple, showing how the British appropriated traditional forms to suit their own purposes. The base is decorated with scenes of logging and trading company buildings. The front plaque is inscribed:

“Presented to Berkeley John Byng Stephens Esquire by employees of the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Limited Rangoon on his retirement, December 1914”

At the time, the company was one of the largest in the region, with the concessions in colonial Burma, Java, Siam, and southern India.





## **10**

### **Lacquer**

#### **Palembang lacquerware**

Palembang lacquerware from southern Sumatra combines Malay and Chinese traditions. The vessels were crafted by Malay woodworkers, and then lacquered and decorated by local Chinese artisans. The gold-coloured stencilled motifs are actually fine silver flakes with a layer of lacquer on top.

## **10.1**

### **Paddle**

Sumatra, Palembang, early 20th century

Lacquered wood

XXXX-09674

Paddles like this were supposedly used by young, unmarried court women on ceremonial boat trips down the Musi river. Palembang, where this was made, has long been an important centre for trade and migration. Chinese immigrants intermarried with the local population, contributing to a hybrid culture.

The famed lacquerware of Palembang is similarly cross-cultural – objects were built by Malay craftsmen, then lacquered by those of Chinese descent. Black lacquer under a transparent red-tinted lacquer is one of the distinctive techniques used in Palembang lacquerware.

## **10.2**

### **Container box**

Sumatra, Palembang, early 20th century

Lacquered wood, gold

XXXX-09686

## **10.3**

### **Container box**

Sumatra, Palembang, early 20th century

Lacquered wood, gold

XXXX-09705

This box might have been used by a young bride to store her clothing.

## **Gilded forms**

These gilded objects illustrate a range of decorative techniques, including high relief work made with lacquer putty, gold leaf work, and inlaid decoration.

Gold leaf adds value not only to gifts made to a monastery, but also to merit or good karma of those who give the gifts. Examples of gifts include vessels for making offerings of food, and ceremonial alms bowls.

## 10.4

### **Offering vessel (hsun ok) in the form of a hintha bird**

Myanmar, Mandalay, late 19th or early 20th century

Lacquered and gilded wood, inlaid glass and mirrors

1999-00795

Burmese lacquer makers excelled in applied decoration, as seen on this rare, bird-shaped offering vessel. A lacquer putty mixture called thayo (literally “flesh and bones”) was freely modelled or moulded, then stuck onto the surface and embellished with gold leaf. Inlaid semi-precious stones, glass, and mirror pieces add value.

The hintha is the symbol of the Mon people of lower Myanmar. Upon seeing two hinthas

perched on a rock, the Buddha foretold that the city of Bago would one day develop on that spot.

## **10.5**

### **Water vessel**

Myanmar, Shan State,

early 20th century

Bamboo, lacquer, thayo, glass, gold leaf

On loan from a private collection

## **10.6.1**

### **Offering vessel**

Myanmar, early 20th century

Lacquered and gilded wood, inlaid glass and mirrors

2010-00489

Anonymous gift

## **10.6.2**

### **Offering vessel (hsun ok)**

Myanmar, Bagan, early 20th century

Lacquered bamboo

Anonymous gift

2010-00496

## **10.7**

### **Monk's alms bowl**

Reportedly found in Cambodia, late 19th or early 20th century

Lacquered wood with inlaid mother-of-pearl

2010-00503

Anonymous gift

This bowl is decorated with the animals associated with the Chinese zodiac, set amidst floral vegetation. The lid has a large Buddhist lion while the base has the mark of a crown, perhaps to indicate that this bowl was intended for a monk of aristocratic standing.



Mother-of-pearl, which was inlaid into lacquerware as well as carved wood, was widely traded across the region. In Thailand the opalescent shells were used as early as the Dvaravati period (9th century) for architectural decoration. It became prominent during the Ayutthaya period when laws decreed it was to be exclusively used for royal utensils and a department for the production of mother-of-pearl work was set up. The best quality mother-of-pearl was sourced from the Gulf of Thailand. It added value to the meritorious donations that were made to temples, including austere monastic items such as this alms bowl.

## **10.8**

### **Pair of loom pulleys**

Cambodia, late 19th or early 20th century

Wood, mother-of-pearl, lacquer

2010-00467

Anonymous gift

This pair of carved, wooden pulleys is finished in lacquer and decorated with fine motifs created by mother-of-pearl inlay. Pairs of pulleys were suspended from the loom beams to hold up the heddles, which hold and control tension in the warp (vertical) threads.

Beautifully carved pulleys were made by husbands for their new brides. The high quality of workmanship on this pair suggests they were used by a weaver for the royal court or for a rich client. Weaving tools with mother-of-pearl inlay work are rare.

## 10.9

### **Covered box (hsun ok)**

Myanmar, Kyaukka, early 20th century

Lacquered bamboo

1992-00731

Inscription on lid: "hsun ok of Ko San Nyunt and Ma Thaung Mya, Kyundeit Village / Made at the Kyaukkadaik, Ma Chit Oun"

This offering vessel has several trays that fit atop each other. The ribbed base was formed by building up layers of a lacquer putty called thayo (lacquer with sawdust, clay, or ash) over a bamboo structure. Containers like this were used to donate food to monks.

## **10.10**

### **Animal-shaped container box**

Cambodia, late 19th or  
early 20th century

Lacquered wood, mother-of-pearl

On loan from a private collection

## **10.10**

### **Betel box**

Myanmar, Bagan, 1898

Lacquered bamboo

On loan from a private collection

The scenes on this box come from Burmese tales of the king and court life (nan-dwin). This box shows the story of Prince Wee-Ta-Na-Pa and his astrologer, Ah-Nu-Ya.

## **10.11**

### **Clock box**

Myanmar, Bagan, early 20th century

Lacquered wood

1995-01027

Inscribed in Burmese: "This clock-house is for the Venerable Lord U Cetatha, senior monk of the Anaukban Monastery in Bagan township."

Clocks were, and still are, commonly donated to religious institutions in Myanmar, Thailand, and other Theravada Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. The inscription on this box makes this intention explicit. European presence brought new ideas and art styles, not to mention household goods such as clocks. These inevitably became gifts of value. A lacquerware clock box such as this signals the inventiveness of the lacquer artists in Bagan, one of the most prolific

centres of production during the early 20th century.