

Large Print Guide

ACM

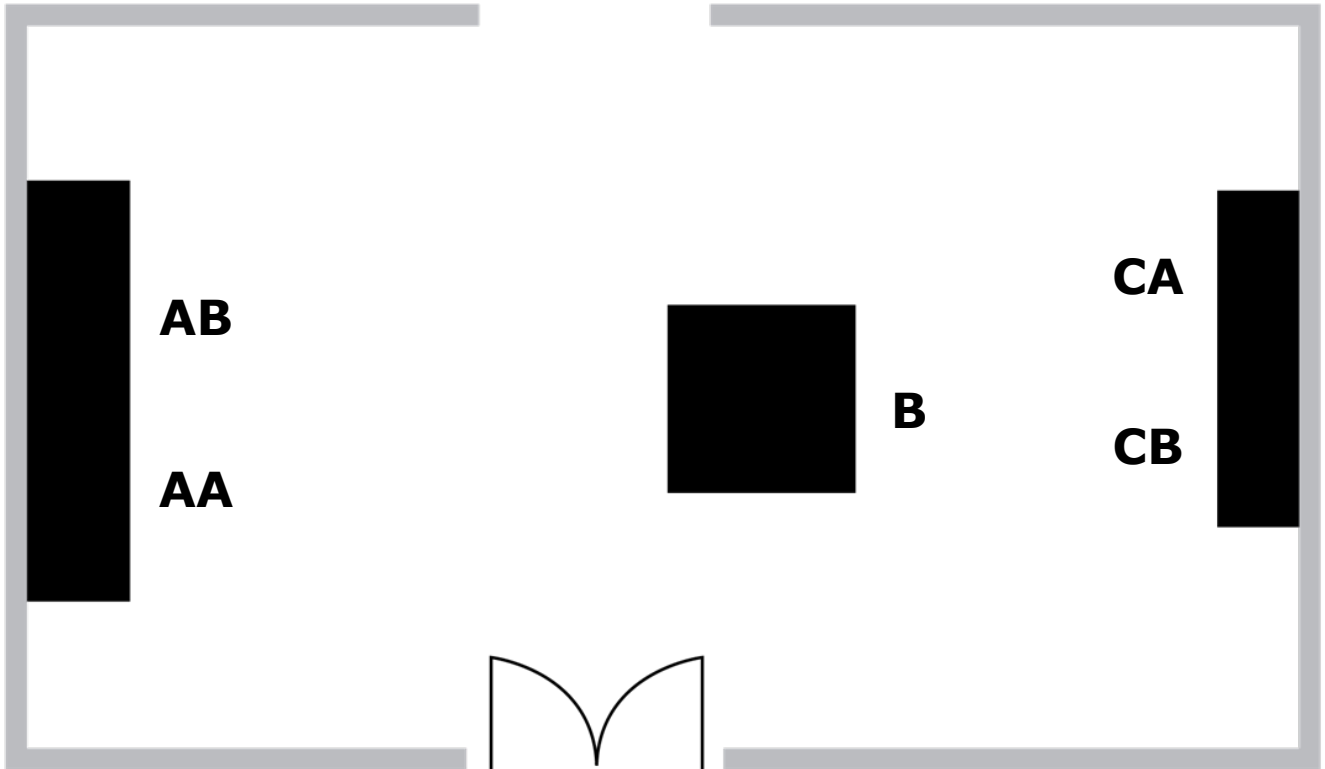
# Singapore Archaeology

Level 1

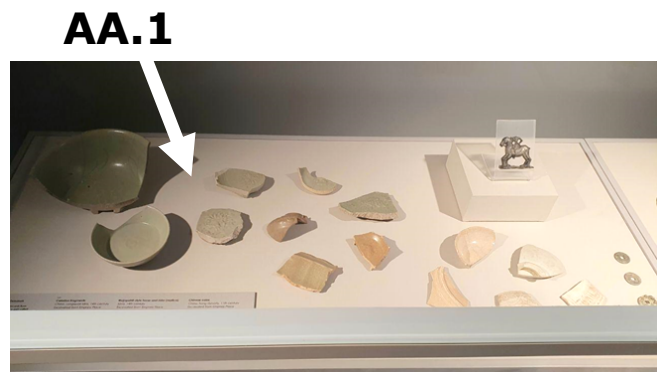
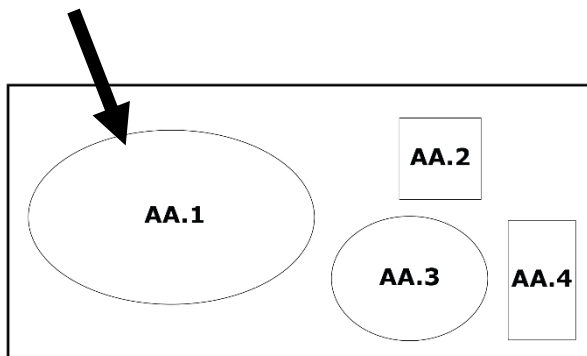
Permanent Galleries

Trade and Maritime Silk Route

# Floorplan of Gallery and User Guide



## How to read display case and floorplans



To find object label text, match AA.1 to  
AA.1, then

AA.2 to AA.2 and so on.

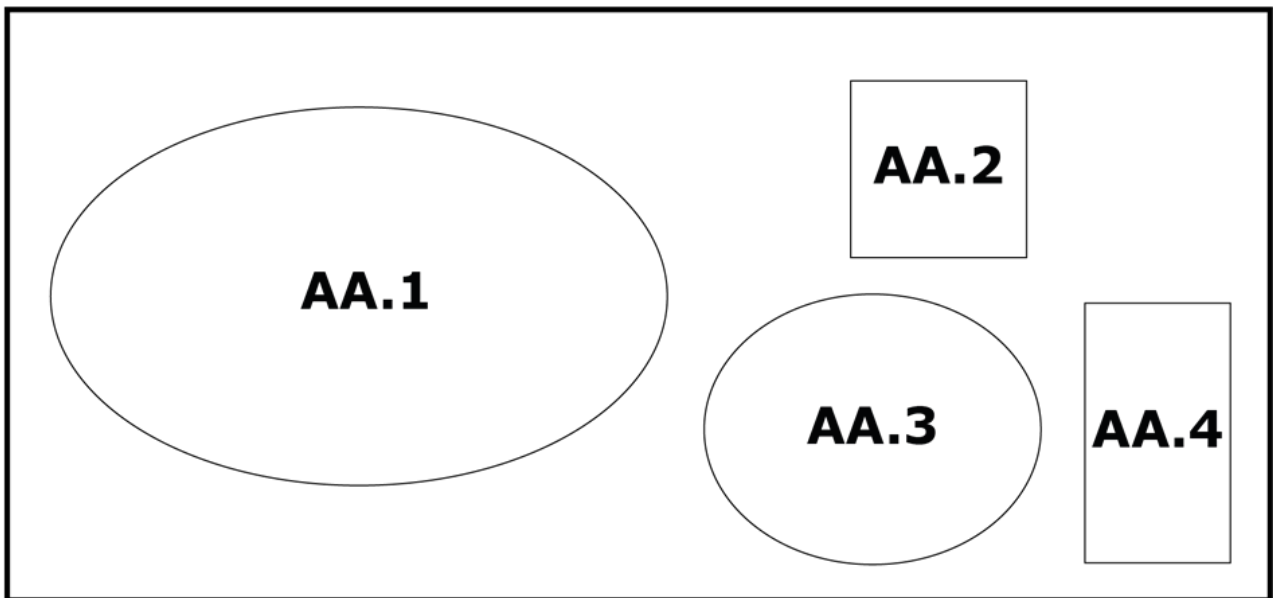
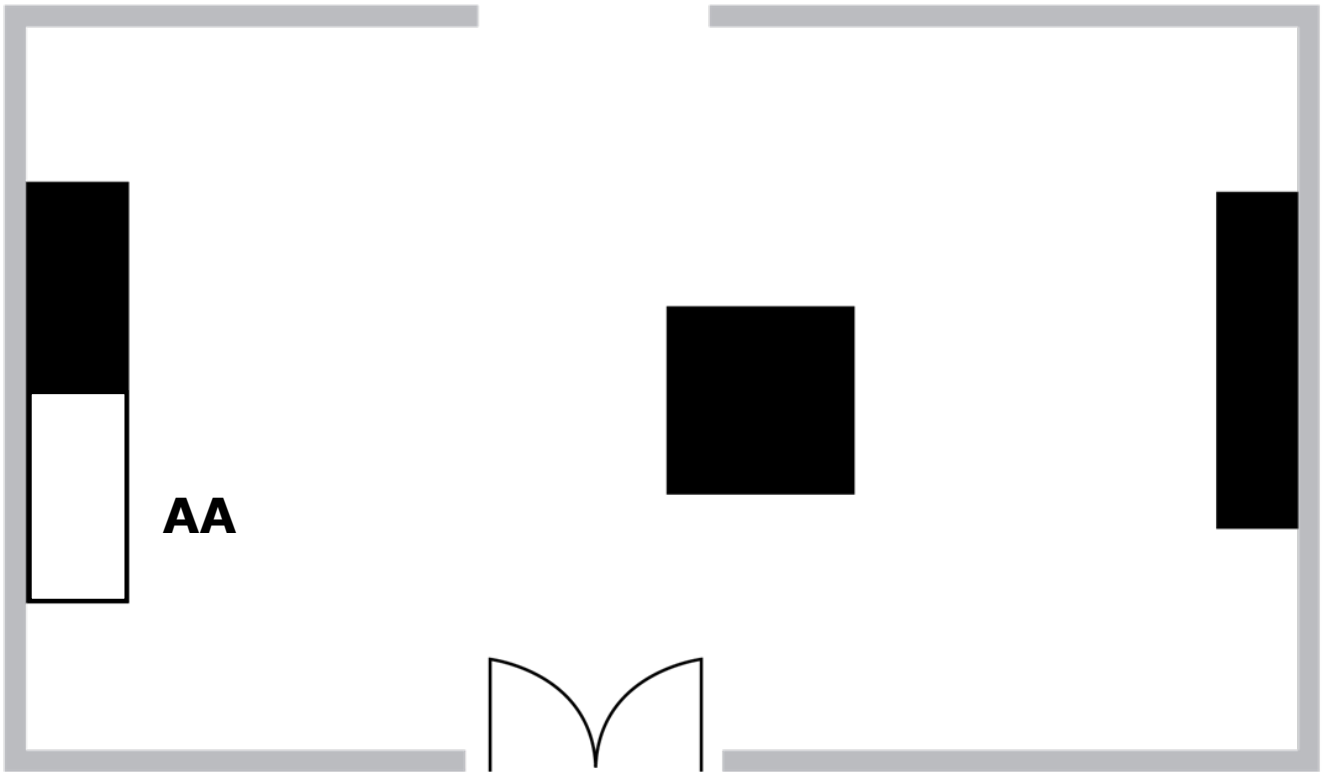
**AA.1**

**Celadon fragments**

China, Longquan kilns, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Stoneware



## **A**

### **Trade and profit in ancient Singapore**

Singapore lies on the tip of the Malay Peninsula, at the entrance to the Straits of Malacca. Such a pivotal position between East and West led to the flourishing of a port beginning in the 13th century.

At different times China allowed or prevented overseas trade. Periods of long-distance shipping in the 9th and 11th centuries were followed by periods when the ports were closed. In the 13th century, Chinese merchants began arriving in Singapore to buy wood, cotton, and hornbill casques. In return they sold ceramics and foodstuffs.

**Temasek,**

**a bustling port of the 14th century**

Ancient Singapore was called Temasek, which means “sea port” in Old Javanese. Founded in the late 13th century, it flourished in the following century, in part because China’s Yuan dynasty encouraged overseas shipping.

**Revealing 14th-century Singapore**

**An international trading hub**

While some may think that Singapore’s history began with the arrival of the British in 1819, it actually started much earlier. Archaeological excavations show that there was a busy port on the island as early as the 13th century.

Excavations at Fort Canning in 1984 revealed that a palace was located on the hill in the 14th century. Construction of a new wing of the Asian Civilisations Museum in 1998 led to the discovery of a dense layer of artefacts connected

with a port. Further excavations at Old Parliament House and St Andrew's Cathedral added more information. In 2015, landscape redevelopment in front of Victoria Theatre allowed the largest archaeological investigation to date in Singapore, carried out between January and April. The discoveries displayed here reveal a lively commercial centre in 14th century Temasek.

## **AA.1**

### **Celadon fragments**

China, Longquan kilns, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Stoneware

## **AA.2**

### **Majapahit-style horse and rider (replica)**

Java, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Metal

This statue, the only one of its kind found in the region, bears stylistic similarities to Javanese art under the Majapahit Empire (1293–1527).

## **AA.3**

### **Dehua fragments**

China, Dehua kilns, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Porcelain



## **AA.4**

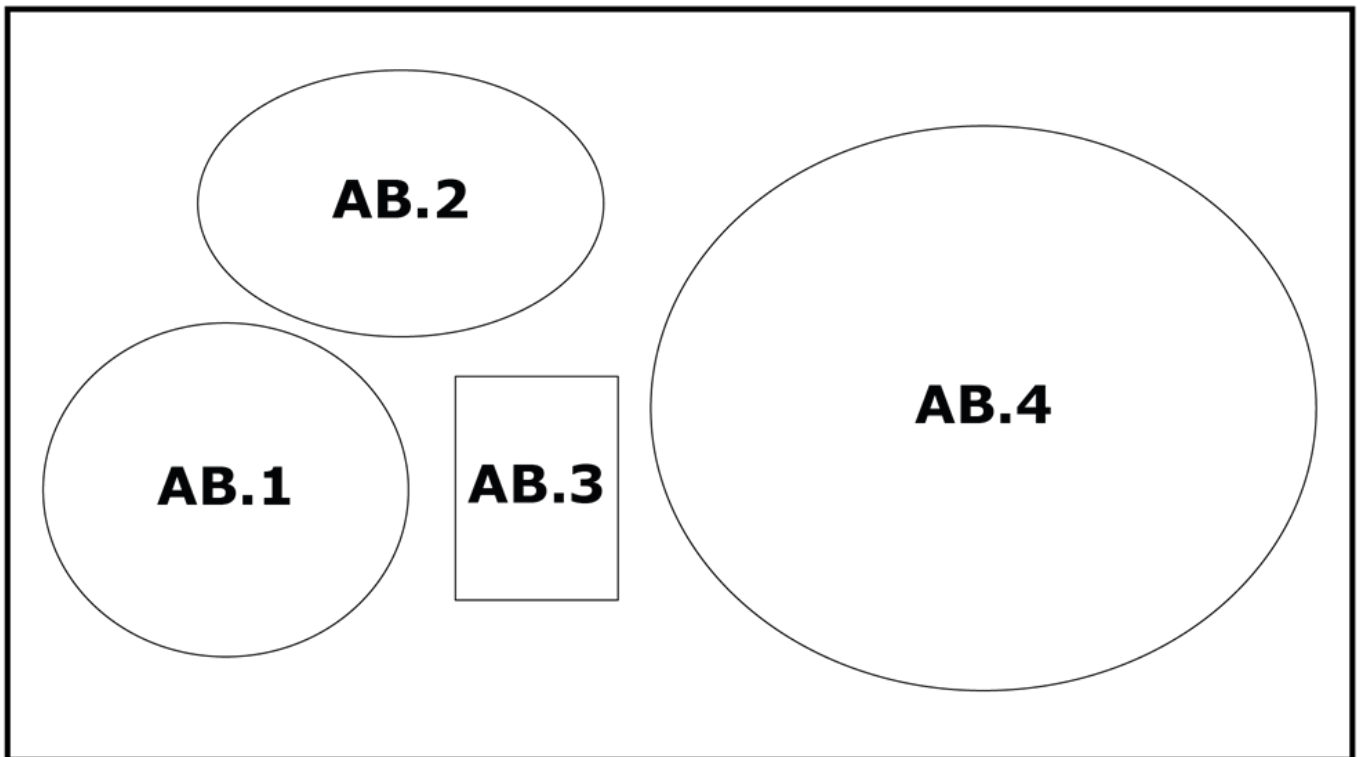
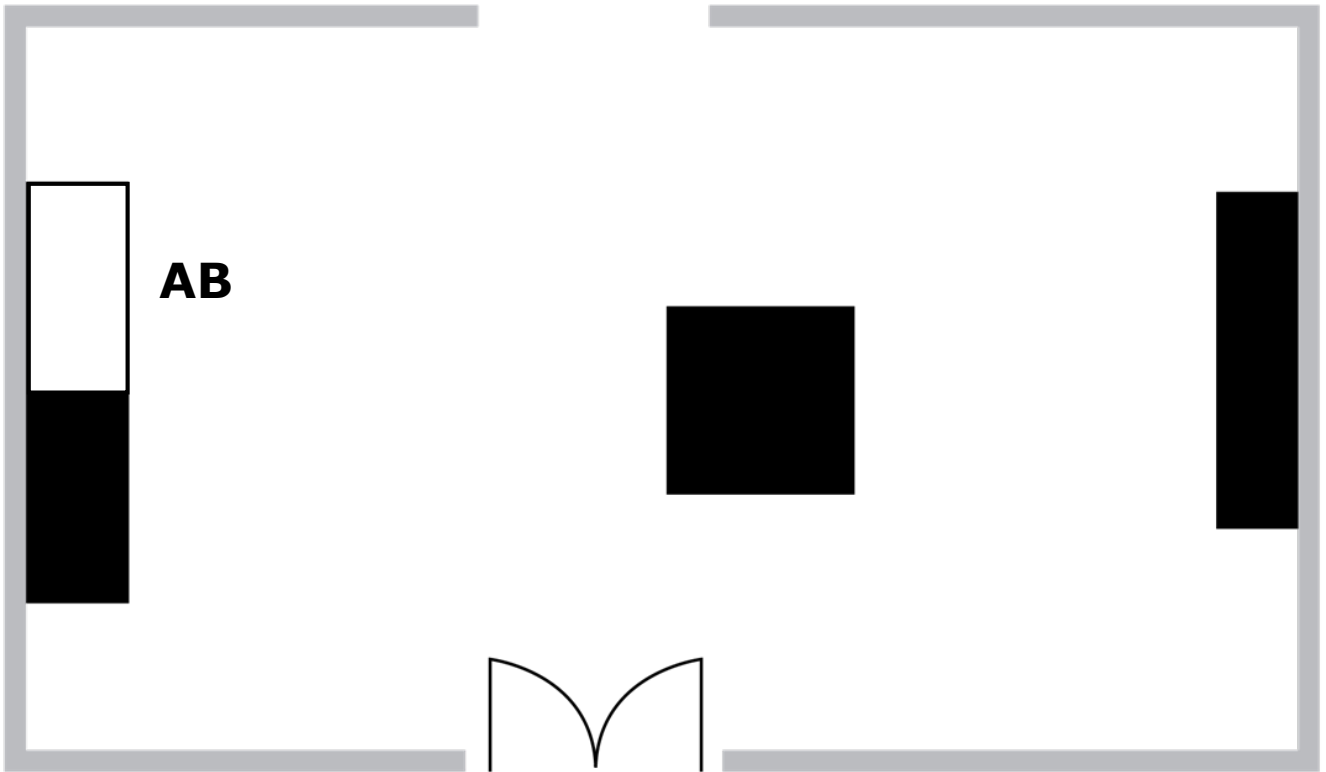
### **Chinese coins**

China, Song dynasty, 11th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Bronze

Chinese coins of the Song dynasty circulated long after they were minted. These examples date from the Zhenzong 真宗 (997–1022) and Yingzong 英宗 (1063–67) reigns.



## **AB.1**

### **Fragments of blue-and-white ware**

China, Jingdezhen kilns, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Porcelain

## **AB.2**

### **Fragments of Shufu ware 枢府瓷**

China, Dehua kilns, 14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Porcelain

## **AB.3**

### **Fragment of a mercury jar**

China, 14th century

Stoneware

## **AB.4**

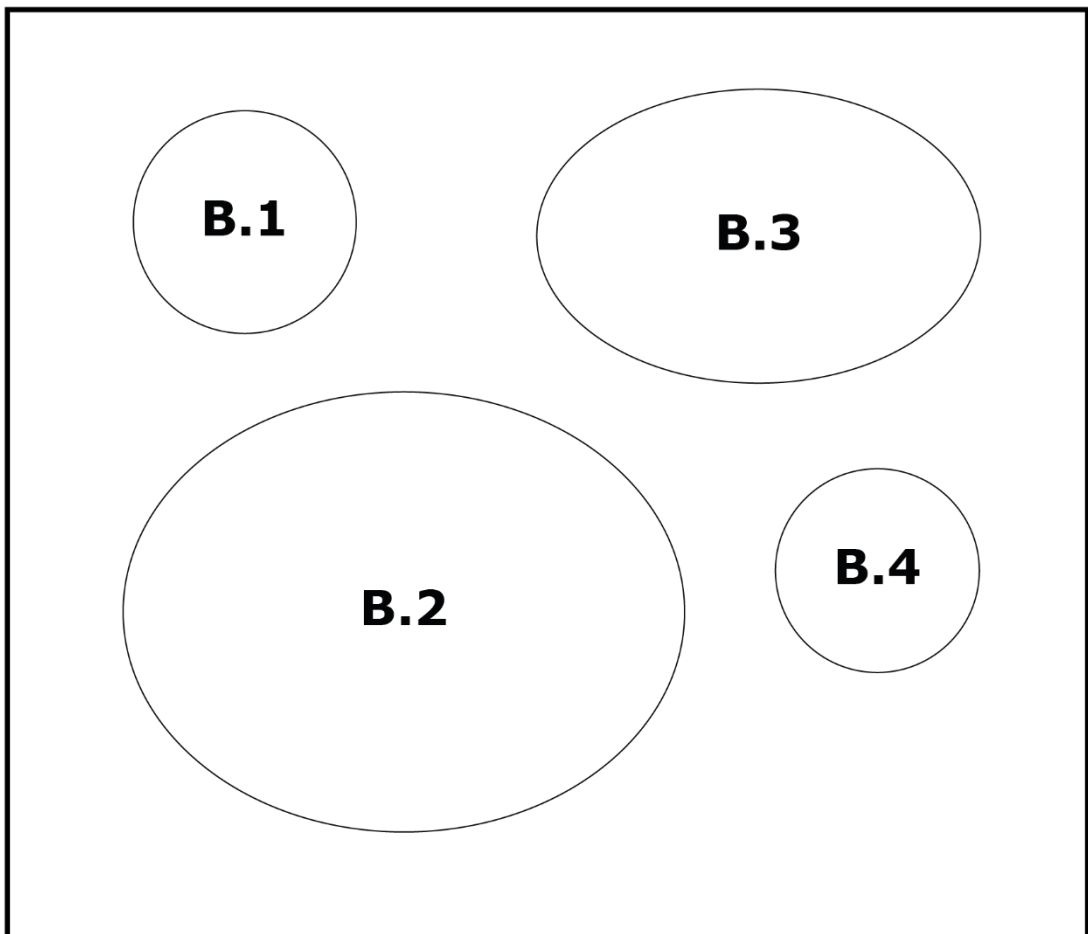
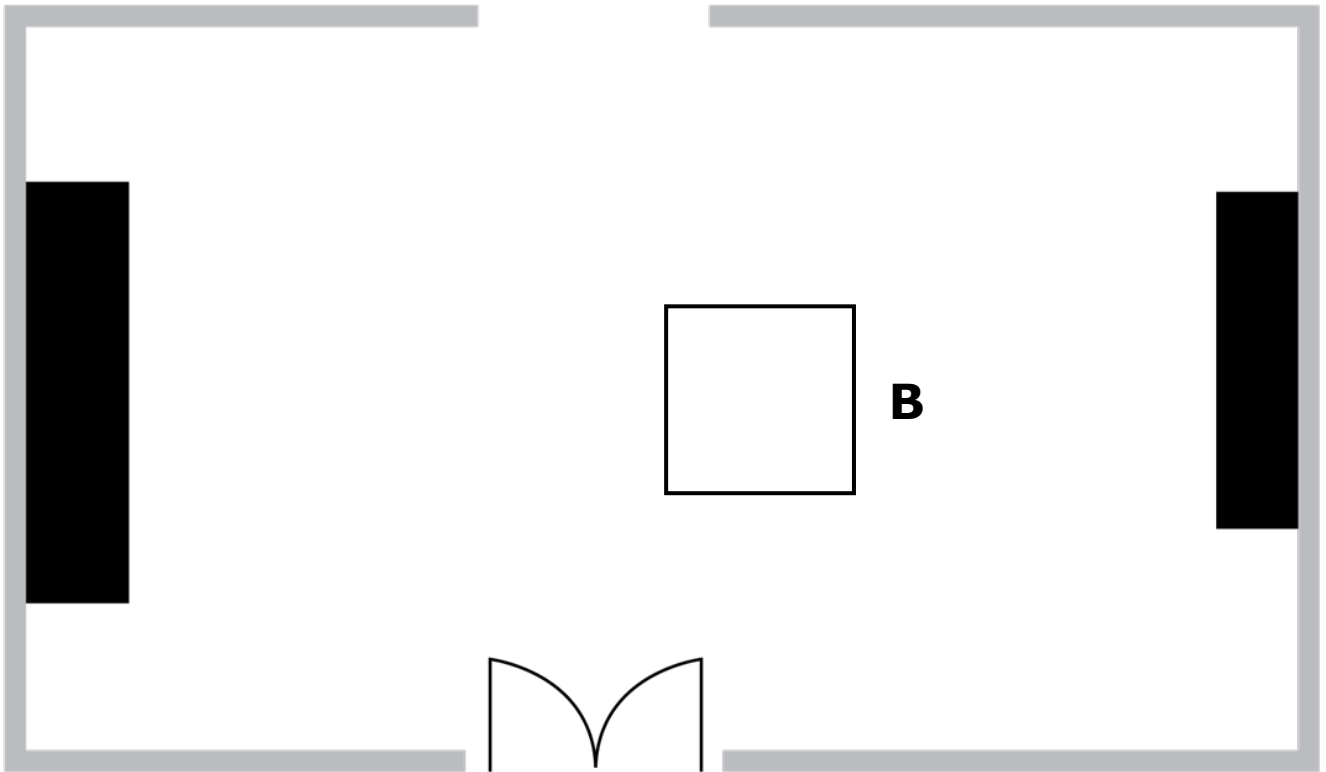
### **Ceramic fragments and organic material**

Southeast Asia, 14th century

Earthenware and bone

These items reflect some aspects of the diet and daily life of the people of 14th-century Temasek.

The earthenware was most likely made on the island or in the region, and would have been used to store food or water.



## **B**

### **14th-century maritime trade in the Singapore Straits**

Remains of a 14th-century shipwreck were discovered at Nipah Island, near the Raffles Lighthouse. Jars found there reportedly contained over 2000 Chinese coins, mainly dating to the Song and Yuan dynasties, but some as old as the Tang dynasty. Chinese coins were used as currency in the region for many centuries.

## **B.1**

### **Bowl**

China, 14th century

Stoneware

## **B.2**

### **Coins**

China, 10th to 14th century

## **B.3**

### **Celadon plates**

China, 14th century

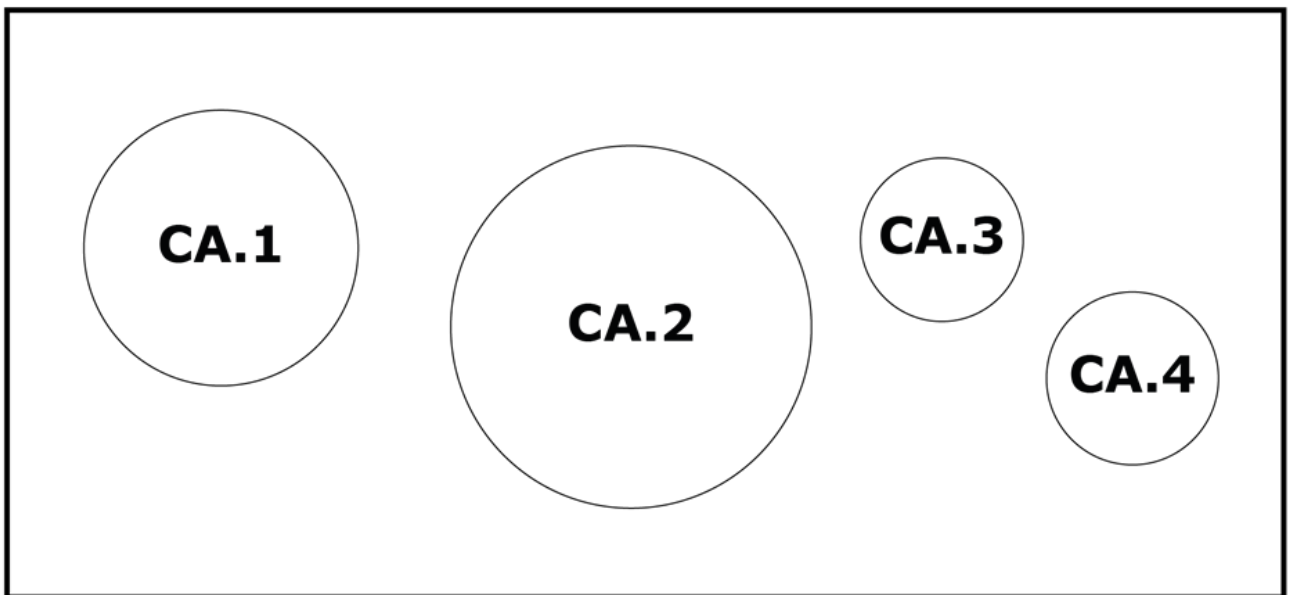
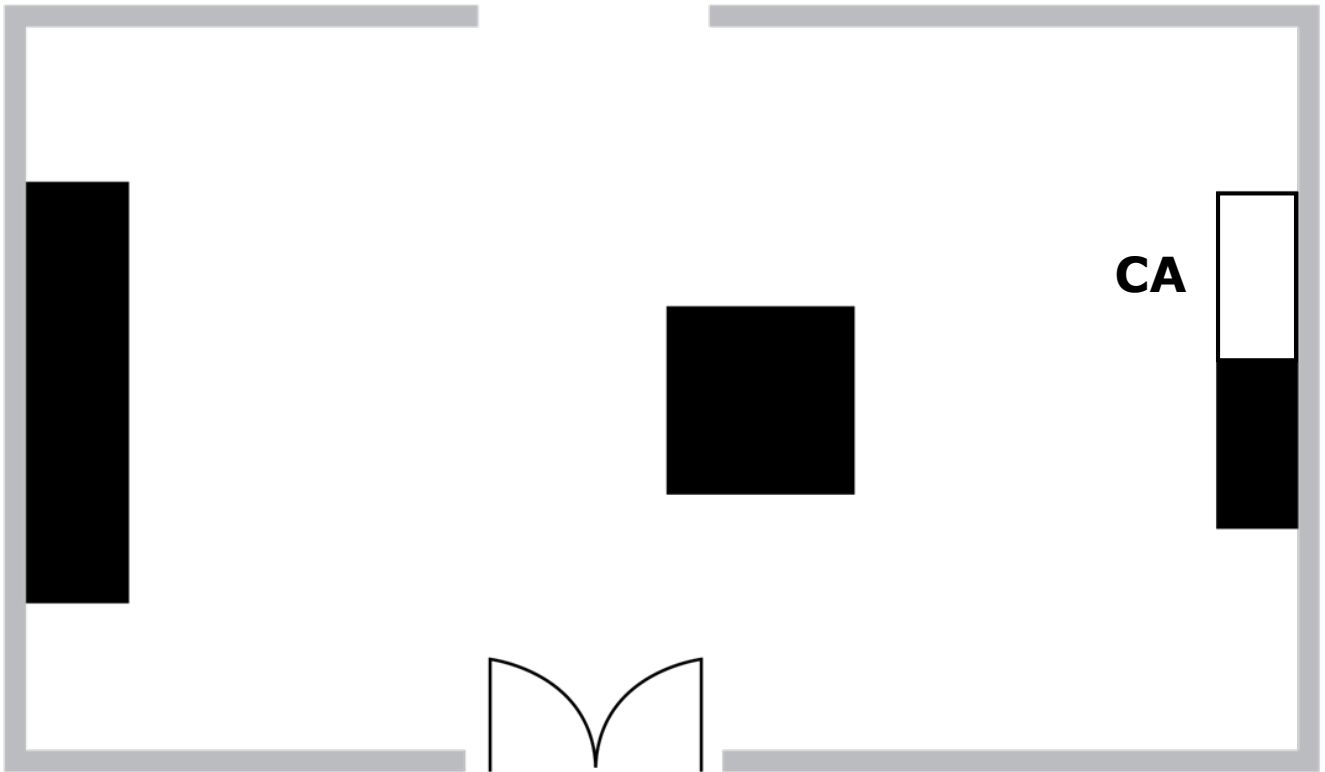
Stoneware

## **B.4**

### **Jars**

China, Guangdong province, 14th century

Stoneware





## **C**

### **Temasek in the 14th century**

Chinese, Javanese, and Vietnamese records from the 14th and 15th centuries all mention a port called Temasek, where Singapore is today. A palace stood on Fort Canning Hill, while trade was conducted on the banks of the Singapore River, where the museum is now located.

Chinese ceramics – celadons, blue-and-white wares, and white vessels from Dehua – have been found in Singapore. These highly desirable commodities were traded for products brought from the Malay Peninsula and the Riau Islands, such as wood and cotton.

### **The bazaar of Temasek**

The area around the museum was the centre of commercial activity in the 14th century, as it would be in the 19th and 20th centuries. Just beyond the river wharfs was probably a bazaar

or trading square. Simple storage ceramics were found here, along with more expensive ceramics and religious objects.

## **CA.1**

### **Glazed jar**

China, perhaps Fujian province, late 14th or early 15th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Stoneware

## **CA.2**

### **Celadon dish**

China, Longquan kilns, early to mid-14th century

Excavated from Empress Place

Stoneware

Inscribed with a lotus in the centre, this dish was made at the kilns in Longquan. Celadon was popular with elites throughout Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

### **CA.3**

#### **Shard of a censer**

China, Longquan kilns, late 14th or early 15th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Stoneware

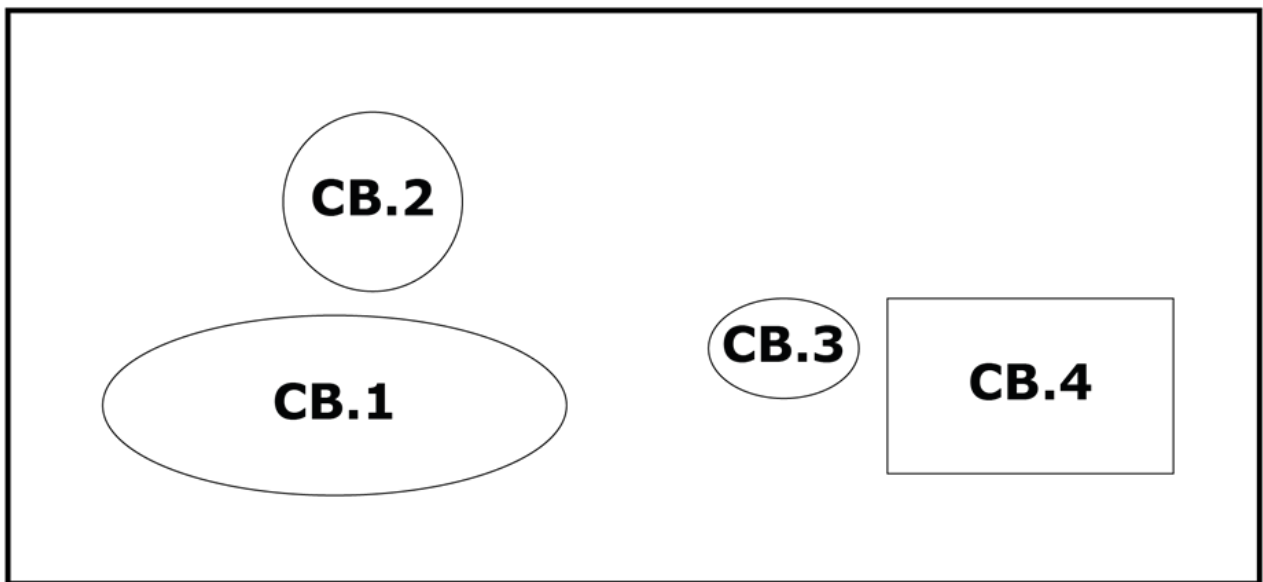
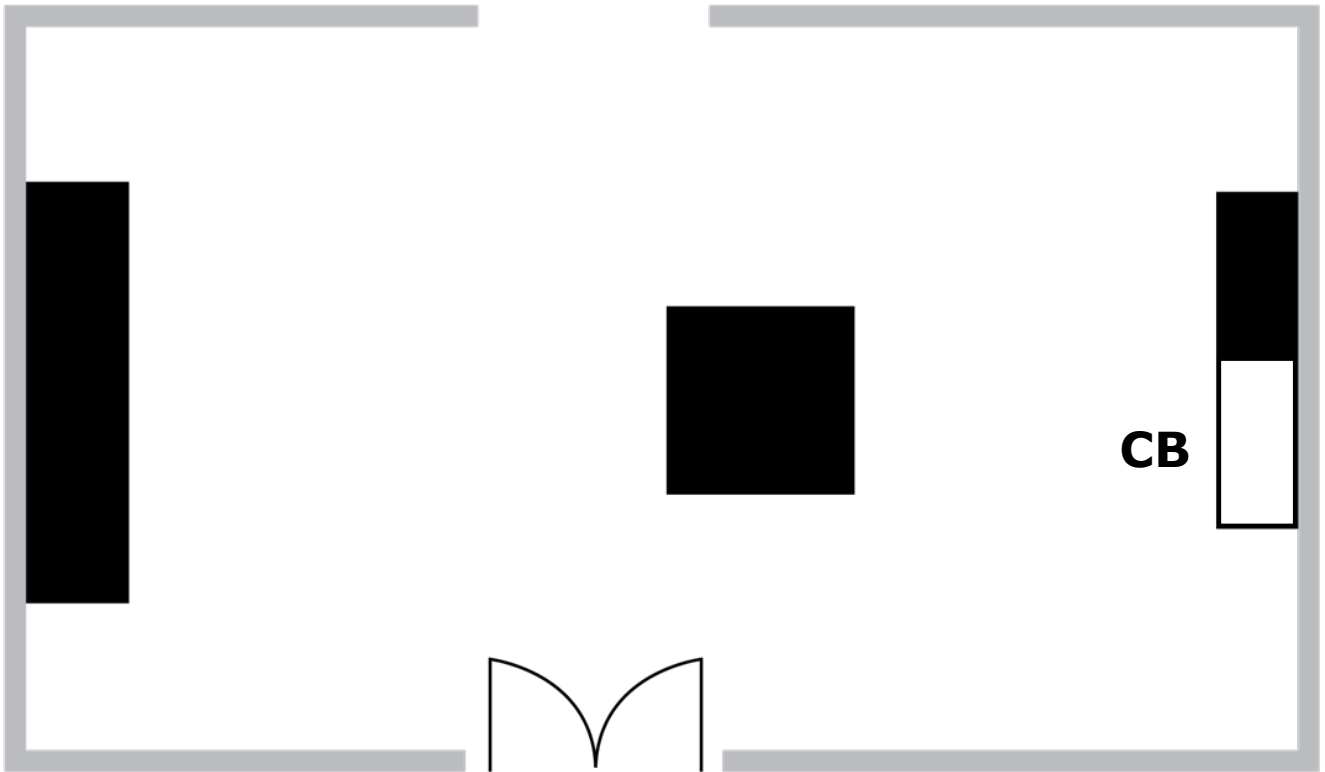
### **CA.4**

#### **Celadon jar**

China, Longquan kilns, late 14th or early 15th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Stoneware



## **CB.1**

### **Two brown-glazed jars**

China, perhaps Fujian province, around 14th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Stoneware

## **CB.2**

### **Bowl**

China, Fujian province, around 14th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Stoneware

## **CB.3**

### **Covered box with erotic couple**

China, 14th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Earthenware

## **CB.4**

### **Five figurines**

China, Jingdezhen kilns, around 14th century

Excavated at Empress Place

Porcelain with bluish glaze (qingbai ware 青白瓷)

Figurines such as these usually represent the

Buddha, Guanyin, or possibly Sudhana

(an acolyte of the latter) holding a lotus leaf.

They may have been arranged together as part of an altar or grotto.