Roberts Gallery
of the Himalayas, South Asia and Southeast Asia

Large Print In-depth guide

The text panels and labels in this gallery are designed for visitors who want an introduction to the histories and cultures of the Himalayas, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

This detailed guide provides more extensive information for those visitors who wish to know more.

Roberts Gallery of the Himalayas, South Asia and Southeast Asia

'South Asian history has no one beginning, no one chronology, no single plot or narrative. It is not a singular history, but rather many histories with indefinite, contested origins and with countless separate trajectories that multiply as we learn more about the past.'

This is how Prof David Ludden of New York University begins his book on the history of India and South Asia. The same thing could be said about the Himalayas and Southeast Asia. The history and culture of this part of the world is so rich and diverse that any survey can only scratch the surface.

This gallery showcases some of the highlights from the Oriental Museum collection. It provides an introduction to some of the important themes in the history, culture and art of the region. We hope it will act as a starting point and inspire you to learn more about this incredible part of the world.

Acknowledgements

This gallery has been named for Dr JT and Mrs DW Roberts. Dr and Mrs Roberts had a deep love for Southeast Asia, and Bali in particular, visiting many times from their home in Northumberland. In 1999 they generously donated their collection of more than 50 pieces of 20th century Southeast Asian art to the Oriental Museum together with funds to support the care of the collections. Their generous gift has contributed to the creation of this gallery.

We would also like to thank the Arts Council England and the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund for their support in the redevelopment of the gallery and all of our donors and lenders for supporting the acquisition and display of the objects it holds.

Find out more

In this gallery we showcase some of the highlights of the museum's Himalayan, South Asia and Southeast Asian collections. A single object can tell many different stories. A museum gallery can only ever hint at the almost overwhelming richness of the history and culture of this region.

Museum also have a duty to protect fragile objects from damage caused by light, heat and handling. As a university museum we also have a responsibility to ensure that collections are available for teaching and research. For all of these reasons, we can only display a proportion of our collections at any one time.

You can find out more about our collections and find out more about booking a research visit by look at our website at

www.durham.ac.uk/oriental.museum

All of our collections are listed in our online database at

www.durham.ac.uk/oriental.museum/whatshere/discover

Amulets, talismans and charms

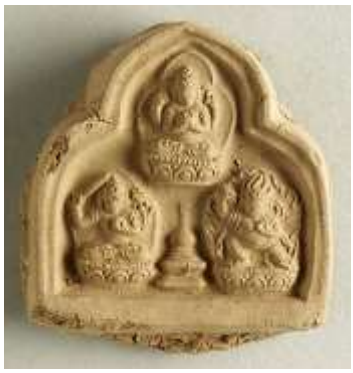
Throughout history and across cultures, people have worn and carried objects that they believed would protect them from harm or bring them good fortune. Almost any object can be used as a charm or amulet, as long as its owner believes that it has the power to affect their life and the world around them.

Amulets, talismans and charms are used across the cultures of the Himalayas, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Amulets are worn to remind the wearer of their faith, to protect from harm or bring healing, to bring good luck, or as a reminder of a sacred journey or pilgrimage.

In Thailand, there is a long tradition of purchasing amulets created by monks in Buddhist monasteries. The amulets remind followers of the Buddha's teachings and commemorate deceased monks. They are also believed to protect the wearer from harm, and their sale provides an important source of in come for many monasteries. Amulets made by particularly revered monks can fetch very high prices in China, Hong Kong and Singapore as well as Thailand itself.

Tibetan Ga'u, often known as amulet boxes, are in effect small portable shrines and are used to bring protection to travellers. Usually made from highly decorated metal, they may contain sacred texts, consecrated medicine or other relics.

Hindus may carry small images of the deity with whom they feel a particularly close connection. In recent years in it has also become common for an image of a deity to be placed on the dashboard of a car to provide protection while driving.



Two amuletic plaques (tsha tsha)
Dried, unfired clay
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE
Gift from

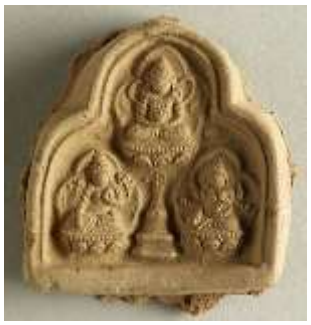
Mrs E Hopkinson
DUROM.1964.5.3

These plaques are stamped with a design showing three deities. Avalokitesvara is depicted at the top, Manjusri is bottom left and Vajrapani is bottom right. All are shown seated in the lotus position. Together these three deities are known as the 'Three Lords of the World'.

Manjusri is regarded as the bodhisattva of wisdom.

Vajrapani is represented on this amulet in his wrathful form known as Guhyapati, 'The Lord of Secrets', who is the protector of the Buddhist texts and teachings.

The bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is seen as the embodiment of compassion and can be represented as male or female in different cultures. In Tibet and India Avalokitesvara is male but in China and Japan Avalokitesvara is represented as female and is known as Guanyin or Kannon respectively.

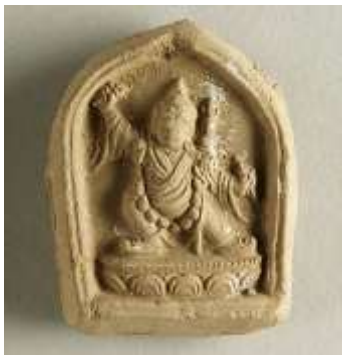


Four Amuletic plaques (tsha tsha)
Dried, unfired clay
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE

Gift from
Mrs E Hopkinson
DUROM.1964.5.7

These plaques are stamped with a design showing three deities. Amitayus is at the top, White Tara bottom left and Usnisavijaya bottom right. This triad of deities is known as the 'Three deities of Long Life'.

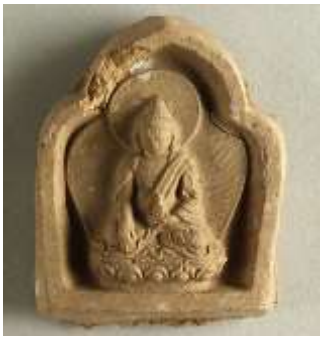
Amitayus is known as the 'Buddha of boundless life' and is often shown holding a vessel containing the nectar of eternal life. White Tara is a female deity associated with compassion and enlightenment. Usnisavijaya is often depicted with three faces and eight arms, holding a small Buddha figure.



Amuletic plaque (tsha tsha)
Dried, unfired clay
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE

Gift from
Mrs E Hopkinson
DUROM.1964.5.15

This plaque is stamped with a design showing Hayagriva, a wrathful manifestation of Avalokitesvara. Hayagriva is known as one of the 'Wisdom Kings'. They are often depicted with blue skin, can have many arms, faces and legs, and usually carry weapons.

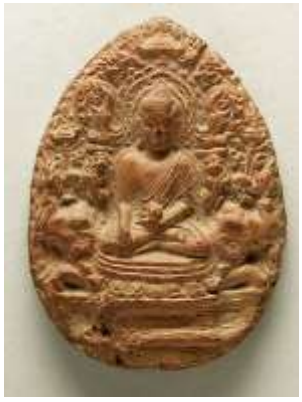


Amuletic plaque (tsha tsha)
Dried, unfired clay
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE

Gift from
Mrs E Hopkinson
DUROM.1964.5.4

This plaque is stamped with a design showing Akshobhya, the second of the transcendental Buddhas. Akshobhya, 'the Immovable One', is one of the five wisdom Buddhas who are associated with consciousness and enlightenment.

Akshobhya is associated with Vajrayana, one of the three main branches of Buddhism.
Vajrayana can be translated as 'diamond way' or thunderbolt way' referencing the indestructability of the followers faith and also the flash of attaining enlightenment.



Moulded clay image of Buddha
Dried, unfired clay
Myanmar, Pagan
1100-1200 CE

Gift from Mrs Daw Then Mya
DUROM.1979.67

Clay impressions from moulds showing deities, symbols and spells were produced in great numbers at Buddhist monasteries and pilgrimage sites in India as pilgrim's mementos, votive offerings and talismans.

As Buddhism spread into Burma, so did this tradition of making clay images. This early example is still very Indian in style, indicated by the highly decorated background behind the image of the Buddha.

Amulet box
Bronze, turquoise
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Gift from Miss Enid Lenox-Gonyngham
DUROM.1960.Len-con9

Boxes like this would have contained a small, probably clay, amulet similar to those on display here. The amulets themselves can be quite plain but the boxes they are housed in can be elaborately decorated.

This example is embellished with turquoise which could have come from modern day Iran or Afghanistan.

Tortoise amulet
Brass
Thailand, Chiangmai
Date unknown

Gift from
Rev Terence Oliver
DUROM.1978.43

In Himalayan Buddhism the tortoise is an aspect of the bodhisattva Manjushri. The Sanskrit name Manjushri can be interpreted as ‘wonderfully auspicious’, or ‘sweetly glorious’. However, in Tibet he is called Jampel-yang meaning ‘gentle friend’.

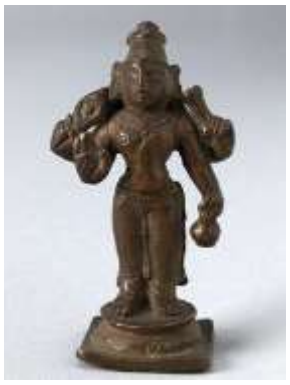
Mandala amulet
Brass
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from
Lady Fermor
DUROM.1983.6

This amulet is shaped like a mandala. Mandalas are diagrams that represents the universe and are often used as meditation aids.

The design on this amulet includes the 12 zodiac animals and the eight trigrams.

Trigrams are sets of three broken and unbroken lines which represent the power of yin and yang in Daoist cosmology.



Vishnu
Bronze
India
1900-1950 CE

Bequest from Mr
Wilfred C M Dodds
DUROM.1986.D20

This small Vishnu figurine is shown holding his hand facing forward in the abhaya-mudra position which is a welcoming gesture to his devotees.

Small deity figures like this can be carried on the person, in a pocket or handbag.

Saraswati
Bronze
India
1800-1912 CE

Bequest from Mr Wilfred C M Dodds

DUROM.1986.D26 and DUROM.1986.D27

Small figures like these are designed to be carried on the person.

These figures are thought to represent the deity Saraswati but the features have been rubbed away after years of devotion.

Saraswati is the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, art and wisdom. She is also revered in the Jain religion and in some Buddhist sects.









Buddhist Amulets
Metal, enamel
Thailand
2010 CE
Purchase
DUROM.2011.28,
DUROM.2011.29,
DUROM.2011.30,
DUROM.2011.31,
DUROM.2011.33,
DUROM.2011.34,
DUROM.2011.34,
DUROM.2011.39 and
DUROM.2011.40

Many Buddhist temples in Thailand raise funds through the manufacture of amulets. Buddhist devotees visiting the temple can leave a monetary or food donation and in return they will be given an amulet in thanks.

Amulets decorated with an image of the Buddha are meant to remind the wearer of Buddha's path and his or her own commitment to following in his footsteps. Devotees also believe that amulets will offer them protection and enhance their luck.

Amulets can be made from a range of materials including metal, wood, clay or bone. Some clay amulets can include the ash from incense or the hair from an important monk, increasing their protective powers. After each amulet is made it will be blessed by a monk with a prayer or a chant.

It is tradition to place an amulet in the foundation of a stupa or temple during its construction in order to bless and protect the new structure.

There are a number of rules which Buddhists must adhere to when wearing these amulets. All amulets must be removed before bathing, they must not be worn below the waist and the devotee must pray before putting on the amulet and again after they remove it. Additionally, while it is not a rule, it is often the case that they will be worn in odd numbers, such as one, three or five.

It is also frowned upon to discuss selling or buying amulets as it is said that the wearer is only ‘renting’ the amulet as no person can own the image of the Buddha.

However, older amulets, those made by revered monks or those linked to events where the wearer has survived a disaster such as a car crash can sell for large sums of money.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

This Bronze Age civilisation extended over an area covering what is today northeast Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwest India. It was one of the oldest civilisations in the world and one of the most widespread. Early sites date back to around 3300 BCE. The classic 'mature' phase dates between 2600 and 1900 BCE, with later phases dating up to 300 CE.

At its peak the Indus civilisation may have had a population of over five million inhabitants and covered an area of more than 1.25 million kilometres. Indus cities are noted for their sophisticated urban planning, with baked brick houses benefiting from elaborate drainage and water supply systems.

There is growing evidence for contact between the Indus Valley civilisation and Mesopotamia, via the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. Recent archaeological discoveries along what is now the Oman coast suggest that this area was a stopping point along this route.

One continuing source of frustration for archaeologists is that the writing of the Indus Valley has so far resisted all attempts at decipherment and the underlying language has not been identified. Most inscriptions are very short and no bilingual inscription has yet been found.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

Core
Chert
Pakistan, Sind,
Shikarpur
2500-2000 BCE

On loan from the
British Museum
1866,1009.1

Blade
Chert
Pakistan, Sind,
Mohenjo-daro
2500-2000 BCE

On loan from the
British Museum
1939,0619.260

Sharp stone blades were used for many purposes. These were flaked from a central core, which sat comfortably in the maker's hand. This large core was discovered in the bed of the Indus River itself.

The blade was transferred to the British Museum from the Archaeological Survey of India in 1939. It still bears its original excavation number from the excavations at Mohenjo-daro - E2257.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

Ceramics
Oman or Indus Valley
3300-1300 BCE

The Glendenning
Collection
DUROM.2014.113, 123 and 116

These ceramics are part of a collection of ceramics acquired in Oman. Despite their provenance they are very clearly examples of ceramics linked with the Indus Valley civilisation.

There is mounting evidence for trade between the Indus Valley and ancient Mesopotamia by traders travelling by boat up the Persian Gulf via the area that is now Oman. It is not yet known if these ceramics were made in Oman to very closely match the style of Indus Valley vessels, or if they were made in the Indus Valley region and were brought to Oman. It is hoped that scientific analysis of minute samples of the ceramics will help to answer this question.

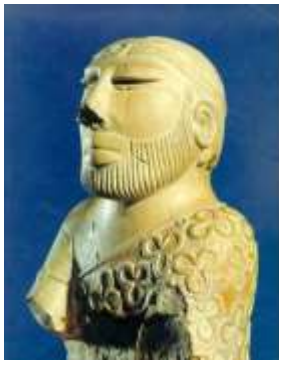
What is not in doubt is the quality of the workmanship.
The pieces are very finely potted and beautifully decorated.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

Excavations at Mohenjo-daro
Reproduction of original photograph
Pakistan, Larkhana District, Mohenjo-daro
Photograph taken 1925-26 CE

Sir John Marshall Collection
given by
Dr & Mrs Spalding
DUROM.1957.1.768

The site of Mohenjo-Daro in modern day Pakistan was one of the largest settlements of the Indus Valley civilisation. It was first excavated by Sir John Marshall, the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India. This photograph was taken looking east along the road that Sir John called South Lane. It clearly shows the height of the brickwork structures surviving from the ancient city when it was excavated in the 1920s.



The 'priest king'
Modern replica
Pakistan, Larkhana District,
Mohenjo-daro

Gift of Prof Robin Coningham

The statue is a replica of the most famous object excavated at Mohenjo-daro. It has come to be known as the 'priest-king' and is one of the finest examples of Indus valley sculpture found to date. The original piece was made from steatite. There is evidence that the designs on the man's cloak were originally coloured with red pigment. When it was found one of the eyes still contained a shell inlay. Holes beneath the ears suggest that a necklace or head ornament may also have been attached to the piece.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

Seal impressions
Plaster
Pakistan,
Mohenjo-daro
20th century
impressions of
ancient seals

Gift of
Dr David J Smith
DUROM.1960.64,
68, 70 & 72

These impressions were taken from seals found at Mohenjo-daro. Seals are one of the most important sources for what is known as the Indus script. Most of the seal inscriptions are very short. This has made it difficult for scholars to judge whether or not the symbols are in fact a writing system or not. Attempts to decipher the 'script' are ongoing.

Thousands of these seals have been found in sites as far from the Indus Valley as Mesopotamia. Thus, although the inscriptions cannot be read, these seals still provide a huge amount of information for archaeologists on Indus Valley art, the spread of Indus influence and possible trade routes.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

Conch shell
Pakistan, Mohenjo-daro
2500-2000 BCE

On loan from the British Museum
1939,0619.375

Bracelet
Pottery
Pakistan, Mohenjo-daro
2500-2000 BCE

On loan from the British Museum
1939,0619.126

Bracelets made of conch shell have been found at Mohenjo-daro. Shells of this type were used to make jewellery in a similar style to the pottery bracelet. Beads made from stones such as cornelian and onyx have also been found at Indus Valley sites. These are sometimes etched with patterns for additional decorative effect.

Models of a ram and a bull
Terracotta

On loan from the British Museum

Ram—1939,0619.221
Pakistan, Mohenjo-Daro, 2500-2000 BCE

Bull—1986,1018.2020
Pakistan, Harappa, 2500-1900 BCE

Animal firgues of this kind have been found at a number of Indus Valley sites.

It has been speculated that they have religious significance, but to date there is not sufficient evidence to prove this.

The Indus Valley Civilisation


Female figures

Terracotta


On loan from the British Museum

1936,0613.280
Pakistan, 200 BCE–100 CE

1951,1210.1
Pakistan, Sar Dheri, 300 BCE–300 CE

1951,1210.3
Pakistan, Sar Dheri, 100 BCE–300 CE

1956,1210.1
Pakistan, about 500 BCE

1967,0221.20 (7)
India, Mathura

Many examples of small terracotta figurines of women have been found in the excavations of Indus Valley sites. It has been theorised that they are representations of a mother or fertility goddess.

It may be that these figures are early representations of *yakshis*, female nature spirits, which are found right across north India in later periods.

The central house

Reproduction of original photograph

Pakistan, Larkhana District, Mohenjo-daro

Photograph taken 1925-27 CE

Sir John Marshall Collection given by Dr & Mrs Spalding
DUROM.1957.1.779

The mudbrick structure in this photograph was named the ‘central house’ by its excavator, Sir John Marshall. The passage on the left hand side includes a drainage channel and a well preserved mudbrick platform can be seen in the foreground.

The Himalayas

The Himalayan mountain range is home to more than 100 mountains exceeding 7,200 metres (23,600 ft) and all of the planet's peaks exceeding 8,000 m, including the world's highest mountain, Everest. Many of these peaks are sacred in both Buddhism and Hinduism.

Three of the world's major rivers rise in the Himalayas: the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra. More than 600 million people rely on the water from these rivers.

The huge range of climate conditions within the region has created a unique wealth of flora and fauna. The geography of the region has had a profound effect on the culture of the peoples who live here.

Life in the Himalayas

The word Himalaya comes from Sanskrit: *hima* (snow) and *ālaya* (dwelling) – home of the snow. The mountains have a profound impact on every aspect of life in this region. The climate varies from tropical at the base of the mountains to permanent ice and snow at the highest elevations, while rainfall increases from west to east. This huge variation in altitude, rainfall and soil conditions has given rise to wide variation in plant and animal life. The diverse groups of people living in the region have also developed distinctive cultures.

Yaks are central to life at higher altitudes serving both as beasts of burden and as a source of meat, milk and wool. Even their dung is used as a fuel for fires. Wild goats are found in the west and sheep in the east. Barley is the most widely grown crop, but low lying areas also support orchards.

Today the Himalayas are divided between India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Pakistan. One of the most important cultures in the region is that of Tibet. The heartland of this culture lies in the Tibetan plateau, to the north of the mountain range, but the sphere of Tibetan cultural influence stretches from Ladakh in the west to China in the east, Mongolia.

Traditional Tibetan jewellery served many functions aside from simple adornment. Jewellery was a sign of status. Many pieces were designed to have protective, amuletic properties.

For women, jewellery was also a way of storing their personal wealth.

Necklaces
Silver, turquoise, coral
China, Tibet

Date Unknown

DUROM.1978.21
DUROM.1978.23

Buckle
Silver, turquoise
Bhutan
Date unknown

Gift of
Mrs Jane Manley
DUROM.2015.83

Shoulder brooches (*koma*)
Silver and gilt brass, turquoise
Bhutan
1900-1950 CE

Gift of Her Majesty, the Queen of Bhutan
DUROM.1968.43.d-e

Traditionally the Bhutanese people have not worn a lot of jewellery. However, the jewellery they wear tends to consist of elaborately hammered metalwork in gold or silver inlaid with coral or turquoise.

This buckle is designed to hold together the two sections of a heavy shawl or cloak.

Pairs of brooches like this are used by Bhutanse women to suspend a long chain (*jabtha*) which then hangs like a necklace across the chest. They are decorated with Buddhist symbols.

Life in the Himalayas

Mirror
Bronze
China, Tibet, Lhasa
After 1650 CE
Wellcome Collection
DUROM.W179

Traditional mirrors from the Himalayas are made in the same style as Chinese and other East Asian mirrors. Archaeological evidence suggests that circular bronze mirrors like this have been made in China since Neolithic times.
One side of the bronze disc was brightly polished to provide a reflective surface while the reverse (shown here) was decorated. The knob in the centre of the back of the mirror allowed it to be hung up. The decoration on the back of this mirror includes a Sanskrit inscription.

***Tsampa* storage vessel**
Brass, copper
China, Tibet
Date unknown
Gift of
Mr & Mrs W.R & Ade-line
Gourlay
DUROM.1965.64

Barley is the staple grain used in Himalayan cooking. Barley does not make good bread so it is used to make *tsampa*. The barley is hulled and then heated and tossed until it forms a mash-like flour. Mixed with butter tea, water or beer to form either a porridge or dumplings, it creates a quick, easy to prepare food which is high in nutrients.
Monks living in unheated monasteries might consume up to 40 cups a day of tsampa to keep warm in winter. Cheese or dried fruits could also be added.
Traditionally tsampa formed a substantial part of the Himalayan diet and vessels like this were used for storing it.

Teabowl with stand and cover
Silver, porcelain, coral
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE
Purchase
DUROM.1969.379.1-3

This type of silver and porcelain tea bowl set was used to serve tea to honoured guests. The lid kept the tea warm and clean.

The lotus flower shape and the auspicious symbols decorating the lid were intended to bring the drinker good fortune.

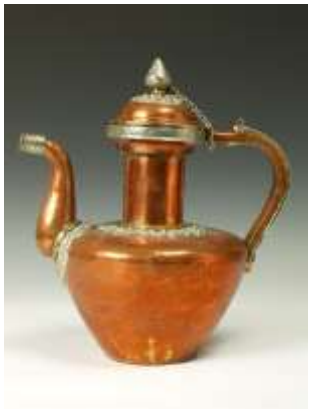
Life in the Himalayas

Tiger bells
Bronze
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE

Wellcome Collection
DUROM.W134.a-b

Bells of this type are sometimes called ‘tiger bells’ because of the design which recalls a tiger or monster face. They are found right across East and Southeast Asia. In Tibet they are frequently used on yak harnesses in order to protect these precious animals from harm. In other regions they are associated with other special animals but they always seem to perform a protective function.

You can see another tiger bell of a very similar design at the other end of this gallery in the case containing Southeast Asian metalwork.



Teapot
Brass, copper, silver
China, Tibet
1800-1899 CE

Gift of Mr W.R & Mrs Adeline Gourlay

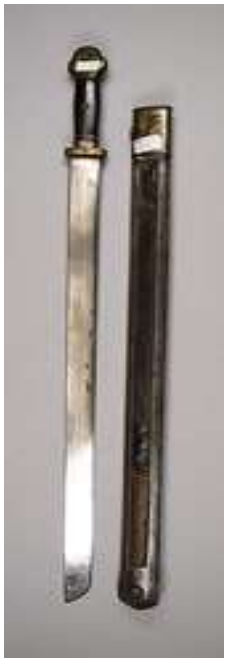
DUROM.1965.64

Butter tea, made with tea, yak butter and salt, is a staple of the traditional Himalayan diet. Because butter is the main ingredient, it is high in calories , providing lots of energy needed to live in the harsh environment. The butter is also said to help prevent chapped lips.

Kukri and knives
Steel, copper, leather, wood
Nepal
1900-1950 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D161

The Nepalese *kukri* is a sharp, curved knife used as both a tool and a weapon. It is most closely associated with the Nepalese Gurkhas. This is a military version of the type used by Gurkhas with a simple leather sheath and two additional small knives in side pouches. These small blades are used for sharpening and maintaining the kukri.



Sword
Steel, brass, silver, leather, turquoise, coral, carnelian
China, Tibet
1800-1899 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D12

The elaborately decorated scabbard of this Tibetan sword implies that it was designed primarily for ceremonial use. The swirling pattern of the blade is the result of using mixed steels in the forging process. This suggests that the blade was made for someone of high status. As in China, a straight blade was viewed as being more prestigious than the more practical, curved *dao*.

Dagger and scabbard
Steel, brass, iron, wood, horn, bone
China, Tibet
1800-1899 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O1011

Tibet had a strong military tradition and the Tibetans developed their own significant tradition of sword manufacture, based loosely on Chinese models. Weapons were also an expression of status and were often highly decorative. The scabbard of this weapon is carved with images of deer and dragons.

***Ram dao* sword**
Steel, copper, wood
Nepal
1800-1899 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O172

The *ram dao* is a sacrificial sword. It is used in Nepal and India for religious rituals and is not normally used for fighting.

Designed for making animal sacrifices, the sword has a single, heavy blade with most of the weight at the end in order to behead the animal with a single blow and is often decorated with an engraving of a guarding eye.

The ram dao is closely associated with the Hindu goddess Kali, who is often depicted carrying one.

Religion in the Himalayas

Hinduism and Buddhism are the two most important religions in the Himalayan region today, coexisting and merging with traditional sprit beliefs and small communities following other faiths.

There is a predominantly Hindu population in Nepal.
The Pashupatinath Temple, dedicated to Shiva, is an important pilgrimage destination. Hindus also make pilgrimages to the mountains which are viewed as the abode of God.
Worship of *Kumari* is unique to Nepal. A Kumari is a young girl who is believed to embody the spirit of the Hindu deity Durga. Kumari are selected through a series of tests and once announced are workshopped as a living embodiment of the goddess.

Nepal is also important to Buddhists from around the world as Lumbini, near the southern border, is the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the historic Buddha. It is one of Buddhism's most sacred pilgrimage sites. Bhutan and the Tibetan region are dominated by Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism has absorbed many ritual elements from pre-existing spirit beliefs to create a unique interpretation of Buddhism.

There are also sites within the region of significance to Jains and Sikhs, while Islam is the dominant religion within areas now within the borders of Pakistan at the very western end of the mountain range. Small communities of Christians also call the region home.

Tibetan Buddhism

Buddhism arrived in Tibet during the 7th century CE. Over time it assimilated elements of the existing religious traditions of the region. These included the need to appease both benevolent and angry deities who could ensure good health, abundant harvest and healthy livestock.

Tibetan Buddhism today is divided into four great schools, which in their turn are divided into smaller branches.
The differences between the schools are minor and focus in the main on the particular way in which complex texts are interpreted through the oral teachings of spiritual masters. Only those who have received this teaching can pass it on to their disciples. This places the teacher or *lama,* at the heart of Tibetan society. While lamas are not always monks, monasticism is also an important feature of Tibetan Buddhism.

Traditionally 10-15% of the male population in Tibet became monks. These men renounce materialism and family and make a commitment to devote their lives to the pursuit of Buddhist teachings, including a vow of celibacy. Monks live under the authority of an abbot (*Khenpo*).

In 1642 the 5th Dalai Lama assumed political power in Tibet, intertwining political and religious power. In 1951 there were 2,500 monasteries with 115,000 monks in Tibet.

Tension between some Tibetan Buddhists and the Chinese government since this time and the spread of the Tibetan diaspora has led to increasing interest in this form of Buddhism in the West.

Today estimates of the number of adherents vary from 10 to 20 million worldwide.

Religion in the Himalayas

Food storage vessel
Copper
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from
Mr and Mrs W.R. and Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.44

Food is scarce in the Tibetan highlands and so it has to be carefully stored and rationed out.

This large copper container would have been used to store rice, barley or other grains such as buckwheat. Barley is the staple food of Tibet as it is the only cereal grain that will grow reliably at high altitudes. It is eaten at most meals.

Monks' bowls
Wood, silver
China, Tibet
Dates unknown

Bequest of
Dr Helen Muir
DUROM.2006.67,69,72, 73

Buddhist monks have no personal possessions.

Every day they will go out into the local community and use bowls like this to collect the food and alms upon which they depend for their everyday existence.

In return the lay people gain merit. This is the beneficial force that accumulates when a person does good deeds, helping them achieve a better rebirth as part of their path towards enlightenment.

Religion in the Himalayas

Nepalese inhaler
Brass
Nepal
1800-1950CE

Purchase
DUROM.1962.228

Vessels in the form of skulls and horrific faces represent a continuation of pre-Buddhist shamanic traditions of appeasing dangerous spirits.

Meditation is a central Buddhist practice and correct and clear breathing is essential in effective meditation.

This vessel would have been used as an inhaler and a blend of herbs would have been placed within to act as a decongestant before meditating.

Religion in the Himalayas

Tibetan beer pitcher
Brass, copper
China, Tibet
1700-1900 CE

Gift from
Mr and Mrs WR &
Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.48

The Himalayans use barley to make beer and also an alcoholic drink only found in this region called *chhaang*.
Large round pitchers like this one are used for serving the drink on special occasions. The alcohol content is quite low but it provides a warming feeling against the cold weather. Drinking and offering chhaang is part of many social and religious occasions in the Himalayas.

Tibetan monastery teapot
Copper
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from
Miss Bourdillon
DUROM.1969.548

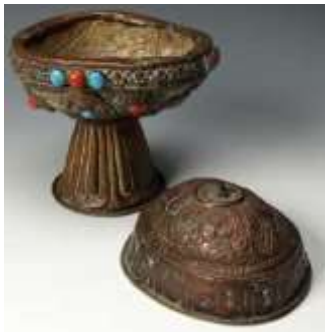
Tibeten tea is a mix of strongly brewed black tea, salt and yak butter. It looks more like soup than the tea we might drink. This large monastic teapot would have been used to serve tea for many monks. A tea kettle would have been kept boiling in the monastery kitchen all the time in order to ensure a constant supply. Keeping warm in the cold climate meant drinking many cups a day.

The majority of Tibetans have traditionally been vegetarian Buddhists. For this reason, butter was a vital part of the Himalayan diet as it provided essential calories. Today cow's milk butter is sometimes substituted for yak butter as it is now easier to obtain. However, the fat content is not as high so it does not deliver as much energy. The black tea comes from China in the form of tea blocks, rather than from closer neighbour India, due to the nature of traditional trade routes.

Religion in the Himalayas

Skull-shaped altar vessel
Brass, imitation turquoise
Nepal
1800-1900 CE

Purchased with funds from the Sir Charles Hardinge Bequest
DUROM.1969.413



Human skull cup (*kapala)*
Bone, metal, stone
China, Tibet / Nepal
1800-1900 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1962.226

The *kapala* or skull cup is a ritual vessel used in both Hindu and Tibetan tantric rituals.

The brass vessel shown here has been cast as a pair of skulls, with a *vajra*-shaped handle. The other cup is formed from a human skull with a metal lid and stand. Hindu deities often associated with the kapala are Durga, Kali and Shiva.

In Tibetan Buddhist rituals the kapala is used to make offerings used to appease angry or ferocious deities such as Dharmapala. These offerings may take the form of dough-cakes and wine in place of flesh and blood. The dough may be formed into the shapes of eyes, ears or tongues.

The skulls used for kapala are specially selected and prepared. Once consecrated for use in the rituals they are sensitively cared for.

Religion in the Himalayas

Ritual storage box DUROM.1973.17
Copper, brass, wood
China, Tibet
1900-1950 CE

This copper-panelled wooden box is decorated with eight images of the Buddha in the lotus position. Eight is an extremely important number in Buddhism. There are eight paths to enlightenment and these are represented by the eight spokes of the *dharma* wheel. The symbolism of this box and the use of copper panels suggests that it was used to house an object of ritual significance.

Bone apron DUROM.Gq156
Bone, textile, glass, peach stones
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

On special festival days Tibetan monasteries have monastic dance performances in which monk dancers dress in fantastic costumes to simulate the appearance of deities. Bone aprons like this would be worn by a monk dancer dressed as the wrathful deity Mahakala.

Tibetans cremate their dead and the plaques are intricately carved from human bone collected from cremation sites.

Extendable trumpet *(radung or dung-chen)*
Brass and copper
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Gift of
Mr and Mrs Gourlay
DUROM.1965.60

Trumpet (*kang-ling)*
Brass, gold, enamel
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

Gift in memory of
Mr G Arnhold
DUROM.2017.x67

Cymbals (*sil-nyan)*
Brass
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Gift of
Mr and Mrs Gourlay
DUROM.1965.63

Chanting, trumpets, drums and bells are all used as sound offerings. Trumpets are used to call upon spirits at ceremonies.

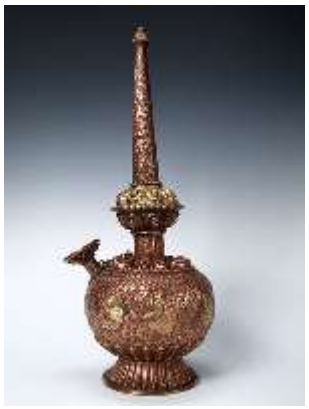
Radung (also known as *dung-chen* in Tibetan) are extendable trumpets which can be up to 10 to 12 foot long. They make a deep roar audible over vast distances in the mountains and are usually played in pairs.

The short horn (*kang-ling*) is often highly decorated, as here. The mouth is shaped in the form of the mythical creature Makara.

They are used in both peaceful and wrathful ceremonies and again, are usually played in pairs.

Two types of cymbals are used in Tibetan Buddhist ritual, small cymbals like the ones shown here are held vertically for playing. The larger style are held horizontally and are usually reserved for rituals for wrathful deities. Both types can be played by clashing, rolling, muting or rotating.

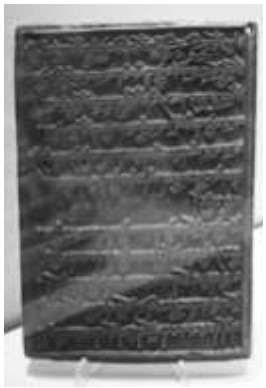
Religion in the Himalayas



Ritual ablution vessel (bhumpa)
Copper, gilding and semi -precious stones
China, Tibet
1600-1900 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1962.225

In Tibet a special vessel called a bumpa is used to perform the ritual cleansing of the body or ablution. Purification is often performed symbolically by sprinkling with water and is only required before certain rituals or ceremonies. There was no set place for the bumpa to be kept, but it might be kept on the shrine so that a single monk could symbolically sprinkle all the participants at the beginning of the ceremony.



Wooblock for prayer flag
Wood
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Bequest from
Gordon Reece
DUROM.1986.9

Prayer flags are one of the most iconic elements of Tibetan Buddhism. It is believed that when the wind blows, the prayers printed onto the surface are dispersed and bless the area with positive energy.

This woodblock would be used to print hundreds of prayer flags and is inscribed with Tibetan mantras and auspicious sentences that refer to the bodhisattvas Manjusri (the deity of wisdom), Avalokitesvara (the deity of compassion) and Vajrapani (the protector).

Religion in the Himalayas

Book cover
Wood
China, Tibet
Date unknown

DUROM.GQ129

The texts of Buddhism are held in the highest of esteem as they reveal the teachings of the Buddha.

This elaborately carved cover would have held Buddhist scriptures and is carved with three enlightened beings or *bodhi-sattvas*. These are Amitayus on the left, Avalokitsvara in the centre and Akshobya on the right.

All three of these bodhisattvas are associated with happiness and compassion.

Mandala
Copper
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

Purchased with funds from the Sir Charles Hardinge Bequest.
DUROM.1969.409

Mandalas are diagrams that represent the universe and are often used as meditation aids. The central mandala on this panel shows the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac. *Mantras* and texts engraved into the copper plate are used to enhance the image and can either be explanatory passages or sacred inscriptions.

Religion in the Himalayas

Mani stone
Stone
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D5

Mani stones are carved and deposited as votive objects all over the sacred landscape of Tibet, especially at the summits of mountain passes or at the entrances of settlements. This mani stone is carved with the Tibetan mantra '*Om mani padme hum'*. This mantra is said to have fallen down from heaven at the dawn of Buddhist civilisation in Tibet.

Ink bottle
Brass, copper, wood
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from the collection of the late Mr and Mrs W.R. and Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.33

Seals
Iron
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from Lady Fermor
DUROM.1983.2,3,4

Pencases
Brass
China Tibet
1700-1800 CE

Gift from the collection of the late Mr and Mrs W.R. and Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.49.1 & 2

The tools used for writing are also important tools to enable a Buddhist monk to practice their faith. Buddhist teachings are transmitted to future generations by the copying of sacred texts. These texts are objects of learning but because they contain the word of Buddha they are also considered sacred in their own right. Writing has therefore become central to both knowledge transfer and worship.

Round seals like the ones shown here are associated with private individuals in Tibet. They contrast with larger, square seals used by officials. These personal seals would function like a signature on formal documents such as contracts or receipts for payments.

Prayer wheels
Metal, wood
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

Gift of Dr HN Spalding
DUROM.1954.Spalding52;

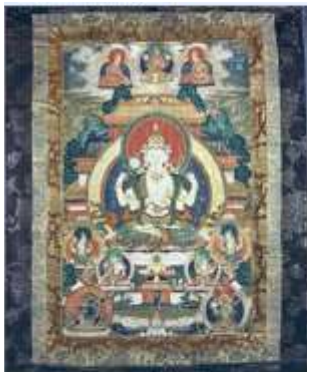
Gift of Miss E Lenox-Conyngham
DUROM.1960.Len-Con8;

Mr & Mrs WR and Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.45;

Gift of Miss M Bourdillion
DUROM.1969.549

Tibetan prayer wheels vary in size; from huge barrels in monasteries which are sometimes turned by water-power, to smaller hand-held ones. A prayer sheet or *mantra* is held inside the cylinder, whilst a heavy ball or bell attached to the side of the cylinder acts as a weight to propel the prayer wheel as it is turning. When the wheel is turned clockwise, the prayer is sent forth.
The user accumulates wisdom and merit and negative energies are neutralised. Prayer wheels are made from a variety of metals and are often decorated with lotus flower petals or the inscription, '*Om mani padme hum*' – 'Praise to the jewel in the lotus'.

Religion in the Himalayas



Thangka
Silk, cotton
China, Tibet
Dates vary

Thangka paintings are used as teaching tools, devotional images for rituals and as a medium through which to offer prayers.

In order to help to preserve our thangkas, the example on display is changed every six months. This minimises their exposure to light and helps to prolong the life of the textile backings and the vibrancy of the colours used for the painting.

Information on each of the thangkas can be found by looking at the information on the touch screen computers on the other side of the staircase in this gallery.

Phurba (kila)
Bronze
China, Tibet
1700-1799 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1967.33

These three edged stakes are used in consecration rituals. They are designed to hold something in place, embedded in the ground or other ritual surface and symbolising stability. Guru Dorje Drolo, who is a fierce manifestation of Vajrakilaya, is represented on this phurba. Vajrakilya is known for being powerful for removing obstacles and overcoming forces hostile to compassion. He is a destroyer of hatred and violence. The negative forces becoming attached to the tip of the phurba and are transformed into blessings flowing from the pommel.

Religion in the Himalayas

Statue of Avalokitesvara
Bronze and gold
China, Tibet
1573-1619 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1972.30

Avalokitesvara is a principal bodhisattva in Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is thought to be a human incarnation of this compassionate being.

This image of Avalokitsvara holds important Buddhist symbols.

In his upper right hand, the wheel signifies the teachings of Buddhism. In the upper left hand, the *vajra* symbolises concentrated energy. The lower hands are arranged in a *mudra*, a gesture used by Buddha when preaching the doctrine.

Statue of Dharmapala
Wood, gold
China, Tibet
1800-1900 CE

Colonel A H Burn
Collection
DUROM.1952.1.67

Dharmapala translates as 'Defender of Dharma'.

Dharma is the sacred duty of every person, the 'right way of living'. This Dharmapala is shown with a fierce gaze and sharp teeth.

Religion in the Himalayas

Statue of Amitayus
Earthenware, gilt, paint
China, Tibet
1900-1950 CE

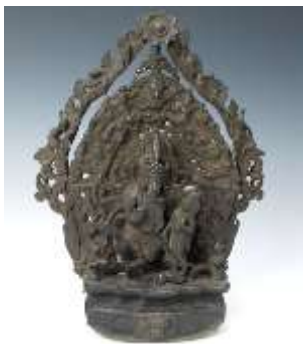
Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D6

Amitayus (also known as Amitābha) is associated with long life. Here, Amitayus holds the sacred vessel called the *bhumpa* which contains the elixir of eternal life.

Ritual spoons
Brass
China, Tibet
1800-1950 CE

Gift from
Lady Fermor
DUROM.1983.8 & 9

Ritual spoons are used for ceremonies such as *tsog.* This is a ritual meal where offerings of wine and food and given to the deities.



Statue of Ganesh
Bronze
Nepal
1700-1900 CE

Colonel A H Burn
Collection
DUROM.1952.1.65

The Hindu deity Ganesh is revered in Himalayan Buddhism and is believed to bring wealth and fortune. In this statue, Ganesh sits with his feet resting on his vehicle, the rat. His female aspect, Shakti, sits on his knees.

Religion in the Himalayas

Incense burners
Brass
Nepal
1800-1950 CE

Gift from Mr Henry Dawson
DUROM.1979.3.a-b

In Indian tradition, the lion is a royal beast. The Buddha, a prince by birth, was called the lion of the Shakyas, his clan.

This is one of a pair of lions that would have guarded a Nepalese Buddhist altar. Censers such as these are used both on temple and domestic altars during sacrifices to the spirits and to personal ancestors.

Buddhist offering bowl
Aluminium
India, Ladakh
2006-2007 CE

Gift of Dr K. McLoughlin
DUROM.2009.7

In Tibetan Buddhist traditions, offering bowls such as this are placed in front of altars and filled with water which is replaced daily. Ideally there should be seven bowls to symbolise seven different offerings: water for washing, water for drinking, flowers, incense, light, food and music.

On a small altar without space for all seven bowls, one bowl can stand in for all of these.

Domestic altar
Wood, pigment
China, Tibet
1850-1899 CE

Bequeathed by
Dr H Muir
DUROM.2006.80

The altar is where the worshipper can focus their mind on Buddha and his teachings. The items placed on the altar are chosen to suit this aim.

On the centre of the altar is placed an image of Buddha, icons of spiritual teachers or items imbued with a blessing. In addition to this, Buddhists give offerings of flowers, incense, a lamp for light, water and food. These are placed in front of the altar. To fully worship, all of the five senses are to be engaged and this is done through the lighting of lamps and incense and ringing bells or cymbals. This altar is painted with dragons and would have been used in a domestic setting. However, the items surrounding are for both home and temple use.

Statue of the Buddha
Jade, copper alloy, turquoise
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Bequeathed by
Dr H Muir
DUROM.2006.62

This jade statue of the Buddha forms the central focus on this altar.
The decorative surround is inlaid with turquoise.

Vajra
Brass
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Purchase from the
Tibet Relief Fund of
the UK
DUROM.1979.38.a-b

Bell *(dribu)*
Brass
China, Tibet
Date unknown

Gift from the Rt Hon
Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1979.37

The *vajra* (also known as *dorje*) and *dribu* are strongly linked with the practice of Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist tantric practice and are almost always seen together.

The word vajra is Sanskrit and can be translated as ‘diamond’ or ‘thunderbolt’. The vajra signifies both the lightening bolt of enlightenment and the absolute and indestructible (diamond-hard) reality of emptiness (*shunyata*).

Together the vajra and bell are powerful ritual symbols and aids for meditation. The vajra in the left hand represents the male principle and action. The bell in the right hand stands for the female and wisdom. Together they complement and enhance each other.

Prayer wheel
Silver, turquoise, wood, paper
China, Tibet
20th century CE

Purchase
DUROM.1991.5

Prayer wheels are a particular feature of Tibetan Buddhism. No other Buddhist culture uses this kind of tool to generate prayers, but Tibetans of every social rank use hand wheels like this one.

Rolls of written prayers, or *mantras*, are sealed inside the cylinder, which is spun with a flick of the wrist. Spinning the wheel brings the same benefits as reading the prayers and each cycle counts as one repetition of the prayer. As many as forty thousand prayers can be tightly rolled up in the wheel. This means that within a few minutes millions of prayers can be 'sent out'.

Phurba
Brass and copper
Nepal
1900-1950 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D4

Phurba (also know as *kila*) are often called daggers in English but are actually used as stakes or pegs to hold objects in place as part of rituals or in making of complex mandalas. As a ritual implement phurba signify stability. They can also be seen as fierce, wrathful, piercing and transfixing. Embodied as a phurba the deity Vajrakilaya is a destroyer of violence and hatred. As such it is a spiritual, rather than a physical weapon.

Religion in the Himalayas

Standing Buddha
Brass
Nepal
Date unknown

Purchase
DUROM.1970.48

Buddha can be depicted in a number of poses, each of which has a particular meaning.
The gesture of one raised hand is for imparting fearlessness.

Butter lamp
Brass
Nepal
1800-1899

Purchase
DUROM.1962.227

Butter lamps are a common feature of Buddhist temples and monasteries in the Himalayas. Traditionally they burn clarified yak butter but today ghee or vegetable oil are often used. The light of the lamp is used to focus the mind and aid Meditation.

Tsong Kha Pa
Bronze, gold
China, Tibet
Date unknown

DUROM.U11061

Tsong-Kha-Pa was a Buddhist monk who lived in the late 1300s CE. He founded the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism, also known as the 'Yellow Hat' School.

This denomination is perhaps best known for introducing the spiritual rule of the Dalai Lamas.

Early Buddhist art

Siddhartha Gautama lived during the 6th-5th century BCE and taught his philosophy (*dharma*) that right action (*karma*) can eliminate suffering and lead to enlightenment (*nirvana*).
He became known as the Buddha—the Enlightened One—and his teachings gave rise to Buddhism.

Although northern India has a rich sculptural tradition, for around 500 years after the Buddha's death he was not depicted in human form. Instead, a series of symbols were used to represent Buddha and his teachings.

Some of the earliest representation of the Buddha in human form are found on rare coins from the kingdom of Gandhara. Gandhara was situated in the area of modern day northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, an intersection of ancient trade routes which was known as the 'Crossroads of Asia'. Lasting from the 1st century CE until the 11th century, the kingdom was at its peak between the 1st and 4th centuries, under the rule of the Kushan kings.

It was here that Graeco-Roman artistic techniques mingled with India Buddhist iconography to create a distinctive Gandharan artistic style seen most clearly in the sculpture of the time. Classical themes and motifs were mixed with those from India in a style that emphasises naturalistic modelling of the human form and detailed rendering of clothing ad other details.

In Mathura, in northern India, this artistic style developed with heightened Indian influences and Buddha and bodhisattvas were shown with rounder faces and wearing Indian clothes. India Buddhist art continued to evolve during the Gupta period from the 4th to 6th centuries CE.

These early styles spread throughout Asia along with Buddhism to be further shaped and adapted by the cultures that received them. Buddhist art has now evolved into a range of distinct regional styles.

Early Buddhist Art

Birth of the Buddha
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1952.1.1

This relief fragment depicts the birth of the Buddha. Queen Maya Devi is the central figure of the relief and is depicted holding onto the branch of a tree. Beside her can be seen the head of her sister Mahaprajipati.
The haloed infant Siddhartha Gautama (the future Buddha) emerges from this mother's side and is received and bathed by the attending gods, Indra and Brahma.

Bathing of the Buddha
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1952.1.9

Although some might interpret this scene as the first steps of the Buddha, similar pieces have been interpreted as representing the bathing of the infant Buddha. On this fragment, the naked Siddhartha is depicted as muscular with a broad chest and legs. He is standing on a stool with legs carved to look like humans and he is flanked by two attendants.

Early Buddhist art

Buddha preaching beneath a tree
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1952.1.10

The haloed Buddha is shown seated on a throne beneath the branches of a tree. His hands are in the *abhayamudra*, the 'gesture of fearlessness'. He is surrounded by four haloed figures, two on each side.

It is unusual for so many haloed figures to appear in one scene and a number of alternative interpretations have been offered to explain the event depicted. One possibility is that this represents the Buddha preaching to his disciples in the Deer Park at Sarnath.

Carved fragment of a hand
Sandstone
India, Sarnath
500-599 CE

Gift of the V&A
DUROM.1963.33

The deer park at Sarnath is where Buddha first taught the *Dharma* (right way of living). It developed into an important pilgrimage site and became home to a large community of monks, but later most of the ancient structures were destroyed. This fragment is thought to come from this site and possibly depicts the hand of the Buddha raised in the gesture of charity and compassion.

Early Buddhist art

Head of a bodhisattva
Sandstone
India, North
Pala Period, 800-899 CE

Traces of red pigment remain on this fragment of a carving of a bodhisattva. She has a calm expression on her face and wears a large head ornament.

This pieces dates from early in the Pala Period when the Pala Empire was at its height and was the dominant power in northern India.

Buddha attains enlightenment
Sandstone
India, Bodh Gaya
1100-1099 CE

DUROM.GQ21

This fragment of a panel shows the Buddha sitting touching his lotus throne in the gesture of enlightenment.

An incised background depicts the Mahabodhi Temple at the scene of Buddha's enlightenment at Bodh Gaya. It is thought that this piece may have been created at this site. When complete, the panel would have shown the Buddha surrounded by smaller figures, each representing a scene from his life. On the lower right as you look at the panel, there is a scene showing the Buddha's birth.

Early Buddhist art

Coins of Kanishka
Copper
Kushan Empire
127-150 CE

Gift of the Rev HR Scott
DUROM.1971.scott1B.50

DUROM.2015.62, 2015.63

The earliest coins to bear images of the Buddha were issued by the great Kushan king Kanishka I. As well as striking coins bearing the image of the Buddha and the Maitreya Bodhisattva, he is famed for having convened the 4th Buddhist Council.

Buddha
Schist
India, Bihar
Pala Period,
900-1099 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1963.30

Buddha is shown here seated in a preaching position. He touches his lotus seat in a gesture of enlightenment. Supporting the Buddha is the earth goddess who has witnessed his previous lives and striving for enlightenment.

On each side of the Buddha is a stupa. The branches and parasol above indicate royal status and Buddha is shown crowned. The style of this piece suggests it dates to the 10th or 11th century and that it comes from the Pala Empire, a kingdom which centred on the area of modern day Bangladesh and eastern India. The Pala were followers of Buddhism and so Buddhist sculpture flourished in this region at that time. The Pala were the last major Buddhist dynasty to rule South Asia.

Early Buddhist art

Buddha Figure
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1952.1.23

A halo encircles the head of this finely carved Buddha. The heavily draped robes show clear Hellenistic influence. He wears a serene facial expression with well-defined features. The Buddha's left hand was originally raised in *abhayamudra*, representing protection, peace, benevolence, and dispelling of fear. The damage to the section of the halo above the left shoulder indicates where the raised hand would have been.

Head of a Bodhisattva
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-399 CE

Gift of Rt Hon Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1969.346

Bodhisattvas are mortals who have attained enlightenment, but have renounced their right to nirvana in order to help others. As such, they are the personification of compassion. This finely carved Bodhisattva head would originally have formed part of a statue that is likely to have been a key icon in a major shrine. His elaborate hairstyle is thought to reflect a fashion worn by the nobility of the Gandharan region at the time the piece was carved. The piece is now known as the 'Durham Bodhisattva'.

Early Buddhist art

Portable Shrine with Seated Buddha
Schist
Kingdom of Ghandara
100-499 CE

DUROM.U92 & U10258

The Buddha figure is seated in the centre of this portable shrine sitting on a lotus throne, which is supported by elephant figures. Above him in a niche is his alms bowl and the shrine is topped with a stupa.

Mixed with these iconic Buddhist depictions are strong classical elements such as Corinthian capitals at the top of the pillars, narrow Persopolitan (Persian) columns, arches and a saw-tooth cornice. The base comprises cupids supporting a garland.

South Asia

The term South Asia is used to describe the area of the Asian continent south of the Himalayas. Different authorities vary in their definition of which countries at the edges of the region should be incorporated but the core modern states included are Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

If countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and the Maldives are also counted, South Asia is home to well over 20% of the world's population, making it the most densely populated region of the world.

Geographically the region is enormously varied encompassing glaciers, deserts, rainforests and grasslands.

Climate varies from tropical monsoon in the south to extreme cold in the north with the plains below the Himalayas enjoying a temperate climate as the mountains block the bitter cold north-Asian winds.

Hinduism

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world and more than 800 million people in India identify themselves as Hindu.

Hinduism is an extremely personal religion and God is viewed as a central part of life. This normally begins at a very young age, when children are drawn to one or several deities who meet their individual needs. As all Hindu deities are part of the one God, it is quite commonplace for several members of a family to worship different deities and there may be several household shrines in one home.

Many people make personal pacts with God to demonstrate their commitment and loyalty. These may include vowing to repeat the deity's name a significant number of times, fasting on the deity's preferred day of the week, celebrating festivals that worship a particular deity, or travelling to a place of pilgrimage.

Most Hindus also worship in temples. Hindu temples are usually designed as a home or palace for God, decorated with stone or wooden carvings. Inside, God is worshipped through the media of statues, images or natural features.
When worshipped, these idols are believed to house the spirit of the deity and are treated with great reverence. They are called *murtis.*

Different deities may be worshipped in each temple, depending on the preferences of the congregation or the significance of the site. Some temples are devoted to a single deity while others may be dedicated to many.

Worship takes place in many forms, from personal prayer to *puja*s – a combination of blessings, prayers and offerings - to meet and connect with the divine.

Hinduism

Rama, Vishnu and Sita
Metal
India
Date unknown

Loan from Penrith Public Library and Museum
DUROM.L.1960.62.1-4

The Ramayana is an Indian epic tale which tells the story of Rama, an incarnation of the deity Vishnu.

The figures are of Rama on the left, his wife Sita on the right, and the deity Vishnu in the centre. Figures like this could be used for worship at Diwali.

Figure of Kali
Brass
India
1800-1900 CE

Loan from Penrith Public Library and Museum
DUROM.L1960.49

The female deity Kali is viewed as the ‘destroyer’ but because of her immense power, she is also seen as a protective deity and who bestows *moksha* or liberation. She can be a Divine Mother or Mother of the Universe, a goddess of time and change. She is shown here with eight arms each holding a sacred object.

Hinduism

Indra
Brass
India
1900-1950 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1979.81

Indra is the deity of war and is often shown with a lightening bolt. He was one of the principal deities in Vedic times but has since been superseded by the modern day Trimurti: Brahma the creator; Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.

Hanuman
Brass
India
1800-1900 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1978.11

A devotee of Vishnu, Hanuman helps Rama on his journey to rescue his wife Sita in the Indian epic tale of the Ramayana. As an example of loyalty and devotion Hanuman is worshipped as a deity in his own right. He is associated with strength, knowledge and victory and is also known as the Lord of Celibacy.

Hinduism

Shrine to Shiva
Bronze
India, Gujarat
Date unknown

Purchase
DUROM.1978.9

Shiva, also known as Mahadeva (great god) is one of the three principal deities of Hinduism today together with Brahma and Vishnu. A small, personal shrine like this would be used by devotees offer food and flowers as part of daily worship.

Kamadhenu and calf
Stone, paint
India
Date unknown

Gift from
Dr. H.N. Spalding
DUROM.1954.Spalding76

As early as the 1st millennium CE there are Indian texts referring to the veneration of cows and the adoption of a vegetarian diet by all Hindus. Kamadhenu, or Surabhi, is the divine goddess known as the 'Mother of all Cows'. She is honoured by the veneration of all cows by Hindus.

Ganesh
Metal
India
21st century

Purchase
DUROM.2017.311

Ganesh is a son of Shiva and Parvati. He is one of the best known and most widely worshipped Hindu deities. Devotion to Ganesh also extends to some Jains and Buddhists. Ganesh is widely revered as the 'remover of obstacles'. He is a god of new beginnings and is honoured at the start of rituals and ceremonies. He is also a patron of the arts and sciences, associated with wisdom and intellect. His elephant head makes him easy to identify.

Hinduism

Nandi
Brass
India
1800-1900 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D25

The bull, Nandi is Shiva's most devoted follower, Shiva's vehicle (*vahana*) and also the gatekeeper of Kailasa, the home of Shiva and Parvarti. Nandi is shown here adorned with necklaces and finery. He is represented as a white bull symbolising purity and justice.

Saraswati
Wood
India
1900-1950 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D21

As the deity of knowledge, learning, art and music, Saraswati is worshipped by students of all ages seeking help with their studies. She is shown here holding a sitar. She is part of the *tridevi* (trinity) with Lakshmi and Parvarti who support the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to create, maintain and regenerate the Universe.

Images of Vishnu
Silver, copper
India
1800-1900 CE

Gift from m Stobbs
DUROM.1998.1.2

Images of Hindu deities are used as decoration on a variety of household objects. The ten Avatars of the deity Vishnu embellish this small pot. Vishnu is the 'preserver' in the Hindu *trimurti* (triad) with Brahma as creator and Shiva as destroyer and regenerator.

Hinduism

Yantra
Copper
India, Rajasthan
1800-1900 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1977.100

Yantras are made up of geometric shapes radiating from a centre point. They are mystical diagrams used for worship and as a focus for meditation. They are usually associated with a particular deity and are used for particular benefits such as meditation, protection, attraction of wealth or success etc.

Lamp with image of Lakshmi
Brass
India
1800-1900 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D36

Lamps are an important part of Hindu worship. Light is offered to the deities to welcome them into the home. This lamp bears the popular image of Lakshmi being bathed by elephants.

Lakshmi is a deity associated with wealth, fortune and prosperity. The elephants symbolise strength and hard work as well as water and thus rain and fertility.

Hinduism

Water vessels
Brass
India
1800-1900 CE

Gift from
Miss Enid Lenox-Conyngham
DUROM.1960.Len-con1

Gift in memory of
Dr Martyn W Beatty
DUROM.1975.54

Water is believed to wash away spiritual and physical impurities of both the devotee and the deities, and so forms an important part of Hindu worship, called *puja*. Because of their importance, water vessels are often decorated.

These examples have been engraved with floral designs as well as with images of the deities including Shiva, Ganesh, Durga and Hayagriva.

Selfie Queens 2
By Siri Devi Khandavilli
Bronze
Bangalore, India
2017 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2019.737

This contemporary sculpture by Bangalore based artist Siri Devi Khandavilli forms part of her series ‘Selfie Queens’, which draws inspiration from traditional cast bronze Indian figures. She uses religious imagery often associated with Hindu and Jain statues in order to comment on the 21st century’s obsession with the worship of oneself and one’s image, often through the lens of social media and the pervasive selfie culture.

Khandavilli is fascinated rather than judgemental; in fact, she sees in the rise of the selfie a poignant search for meaning. Selfie photos, remarks Khandavilli, are "in a way, strangely beautiful - people seen as they see themselves or as they want to be seen. This self-consciousness, this vulnerability, talks about the human need for love and approval...a desire to life a life worthy of documentation."

Hindu shrine of Ardhanarishvara

This is a shrine to Ardhanarishvara, a half male, half female deity. This name Ardhanarishvara means ‘the Lord who is half woman’ and this androgynous deity is usually composed of Shiva and his wife, Parvati.

Shiva is normally depicted on the dominant right-hand side and is shown with the river Ganges emerging from the top of his hair along with his traditional trident and his faithful devotee, Nandi, the cow. Parvati is typically shown carrying lotus flowers and with her *vahana* (vehicle), a tiger, behind her.

Hindus worship Shiva and Parvati in this form as it shows the unity between man and woman and emphasises the idea that spiritual power is magnified when the female and male elements are combined.

There are few temples in India devoted to Ardhanarishvara but home shrines like this will include symbols and offerings associated with both Shiva and Parvati.

Wood, plastic
India
2001 CE

Hindu shrine of Ganesh

Ganesh is worshipped as the 'Remover of Obstacles' as well as the deity of wisdom and learning. Consequently, many Hindus pray to Ganesh to bring them good fortune in all aspects of their lives.

Ganesh is viewed as the son of Shiva and Parvati and is traditionally part of the Shaivism denomination of Hinduism, where Shiva is worshipped as the Supreme Deity. However, Hindus of all denominations may invoke him at the beginning of prayers, before embarking on important undertakings, and at religious ceremonies. As a result, Ganesh is a pan-Hindu deity.

Household shrines like this allow Ganesh to be worshiped every day and they include many images of Ganesh so that the worshippers can experience *darshan*—a personal meeting with the divine. In addition to a household shrine, Hindus may also carry a small statue or image of Ganesh with them to protect them as they carry out their daily business. It is also common for Hindus to visit temples, where many will have a certain day set aside for worship of Ganesh.

Wood, ceramic, plastic
India
2001 CE

Hindu shrine to Shakti

In Hinduism, the Supreme Reality manifests itself in both male and female form; for every male deity, there is an equally powerful female counterpart. The female energy is called Shakti, which translates as ‘Goddess’, ‘Power’ and ‘Energy’.

Shakti is the personification of divine feminine creative power and is present in all Hindu divine beings, but is only dominant in the female. Therefore, all the female deities in Hinduism are manifestations of Shakti and shrines like this often include statues and images of many different aspects of the divinity who are worshipped together.

The female power is shown to be caring, creative, strong and fierce in these different incarnations, from the destructive Kali and Durga to the caring, maternal Parvati. Depending on the need of the worshipper, a particular deity can be invoked to lend the devotee their strengths and assist them in overcoming their struggles.

Wood, plastic
India 2001 CE

Hindu shrine to Santoshi-Maa

Santoshi-maa is the mother of contentment, and a relatively recent Hindu female deity. She emerged during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and was particularly worshipped by women in North India.

In the early 1960s, Santoshi-Maa became popular when she featured in a Hindi-language film, *Jai Santoshi-Maa*. With the spectacular success of the film, Santoshi-Maa became a major religious figure practically overnight. Today, she is thoroughly integrated into the pantheon of Hindu deities.

It is believed that fasting and praying to Santoshi-Maa for 16 consecutive Fridays brings peace and prosperity to ones family. Devotees offer her flowers, incense and a bowl of raw sugar and roasted chickpeas. It has been suggested that these inexpensive requirements associated with the worship of Santoshi-Maa are the reason she has become popular with devotees throughout India.

Wood, plastic
India
2001 CE

Temples in South Asia

South Asian temples represent one of the world's great architectural traditions. Distinctive styles developed in different regions as a result of climate, natural resources, ethnic, racial and religious diversity. Perhaps the most important unifying element of South Asian temple construction is the emphasis on decoration.

Whether built for Hindu, Buddhist or Jain worship, South Asian religious buildings combine highly formal and complex structures with intricate and often sensuous carving on walls, roofs, doorways and gates.

Stupas formed the focal point of early Buddhist monasteries. These solid mounds enshrined a portion of the relics of the Buddha. The tradition of carving narrative reliefs depicting key events in the life of the Buddha onto the buildings around the stupa helped to make the new faith more accessible within a widely illiterate society.

The oldest surviving Hindu temples date from the Gupta Period (around 320-647 CE). Early temples were built from brick and surviving inscriptions indicate that images were carved in wood. The earliest stone temples date from around 500 CE. Temples were laid out to a plan based on a mandala, a geometric map of the cosmos, with the most sacred space at the
centre. Once built the walls of temples were carved with a multitude of decorative and figural themes.

Over time different styles in Hindu temple building emerged in the north (Nagara) and south (Dravida), coupled with distinct differences in the subject matter of the sculptural decoration. A third type of temple (Vesara) mixes these two styles.
is the absence of the erotic imagery showing couples.

Temples in South Asia

The architectural style of early Jain temples differs little from Hindu counterparts. In the sculptural decoration the major difference is the absence of the erotic imagery showing couples.

Temples acted as the economic and social centre of their communities. People gathered to enjoy music and dance or to admire the art of the temple, as much as to worship. In many places in India temples continue to play this wider role in the lives of those who live around them.

Dancing Shiva *(Shiva Nataraja)* DUROM.U10326
Bronze
India
1800-1900 CE

Statues are the central focus of a devotee's worship in Hindu temples. Traditionally, *puja* is performed in temples several times a day by Brahmin priests; these rituals welcome the spirit of the deity into the statue. As the actual deity is present in these worshipped statues, this allows the devotee to have a personal encounter with the divine. This is the most important part of Hindu temple worship and is called *darshan*.

This statue is of the deity Shiva in his Nataraja pose. Nataraja means "Lord of Dance" and here, Shiva dances to destroy the universe. Although Shiva is the destroyer, he is also seen as a force for good as the destruction of the universe allows the deity Brahma to create it anew; free of anger, ignorance or evil.

Temples in South Asia

Trident *(trishula)*
Steel
India
1800-1900 CE

Loan from The Keep
DUROM.L.1961.1.5

The trident has a rich symbolism in Hinduism. It is a weapon associated with the deities Shiva and Durga. It is thought that the trident cut off the original human head of the deity Ganesh. The three points can represent a number of trinities such as past, present and future or compassion, joy and love.

Ceremonial lamp
Brass
Southern India
1800-1900 CE

Loan from Penrith Public Library and Museum
DUROM.L.1960.70

Oil lamps are used in both Hindu temples and in home shrines. In Hinduism fire, as well as being one of the five natural elements, also symbolises heat, transforming energy, creation and destruction. This large lamp would have been made for a shrine or temple.

Temples in South Asia

Hindu temple model
Brass
India, Gjuaret
1480 CE

Gift of Mrs Ann Ritson
DUROM.1967.16

This model depicts the northern style of Hindu temple (*Nagara*). It has a peaked dome which reaches towards the sky emulating the mythical Mount Meru. This is where the temple's deities would be housed and is the central focus of the devotee's attention. The model is inscribed with a Sanskrit inscription.

Temple lamp on a chain
Brass
India, Gujarat
1800-1900 CE

Gift in memory of Dr Martyn W Beatty
DUROM.1975.56

Lights are used to great effect in Hindu temples and are important in welcoming the deity into the sacred space. This lamp includes a depiction of Lakshmi, deity of wealth and happiness.

There is also an elephant, often associated with Lakshmi and symbolising the hard work and water/rain needed for abundant prosperity. The bird most often associated with Lakshmi is the owl. It is reputed to be blinded by daylight it serves as a reminder to refrain from blindness and greed after wealth and knowledge have been acquired. However, the bird shown here more closely resembles Garuda, also sometimes associated with Lakshmi. Garuda is the legendary King of the Birds, a powerful protector.

Buddhist oil lamp
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A

Lighting an oil lamp is one of the three traditional gifts to the Buddha. The lamp symbolises the Buddha's knowledge as well as awakening. Often such lamps are very simple. This elaborate oil lamp was perhaps made for use in a temple or shrine. It is made in the shape of a leaf, perhaps recalling the leaves of the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

The decoration on the upper surface has been interpreted as a lotus pod with three empty seed containers with the scrolling design around the rim representing the lotus plant.

Architectural fragment depicting a *Yaksi* figure
Schist
Kingdom of Gandhara
100-499 CE

Colonel A H Burn Collection, gifted through the V&A
DUROM.1952.1.5

This early Buddhist carving from the Kingdom of Gandhara depicts a *Yaksi*, a mythical being found in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu mythology. They are usually benevolent, bestowing fortune and fulfilling wishes.

Temples in South Asia

Finial of a *stupa*
Sandstone
India, Bihar
Date unknown

Gift from the
V&A Museum
DUROM.1963.29

Votive *stupa*
Schist
India, Bihar
Pala Period, 1000-1099 CE

Gift from the
V&A Museum
DUROM.1963.27

In early Buddhism a tradition grew of burying important relics inside dome-shaped mounds of earth (stupas). These developed into sites of pilgrimage and were embellished with stone elements. Here part of the top section of a stupa is shown alongside a model votive stupa which is missing its top section.

This votive stupa dates from the 11th century. Such monuments were often commissioned to commemorate a visit to the site of a famous monumental stupa or to gain spiritual benefits. The damaged top would originally have been formed by a pinnacle surrounded by a ring of umbrellas, symbolising the dominion of the Buddha. The Buddha is shown seated in a niche on each side, representing the four cardinal points– north, east south and west. The drum panel style of decoration is clearly visible around the sides together with a badly eroded inscription.

Jainism

Jainism is a religion characterised by its principled of non-violence, called *ahimsa*. Jains believed that all living things have souls and aim to eliminate the suffering of all creatures.

Jainism does not have one single founder, but a series of 24 teachers known as the Tirthankaras - 'Ford-Crossers'. After achieving enlightenment themselves, the Tirthankaras taught others the right path and are worshipped as godly figures in their own right. The last Tirthankara was Mahavira, or 'Great Hero', who gave Jainism its present-day form. Mahavira lived around the 6th century BCE and was a contemporary of Buddha. Although they did not meet, they both challenged the religious practices of the day including animal sacrifice and the privileged position of the Brahmin group.

Mahavira taught that anyone can escape the cycle of death and rebirth and achieve enlightenment if they follow the right code of behaviour throughout their life. Jainism emphasises non-violence, truthfulness , and self-control, particularly in limiting possessions. This has led to ascetism becoming an important aspect of Jian faith.

Jains today can be split into two main denominations: *Digambara* 'Sky Clad', and *Shvetambara* 'White Clad'. Sky clad Jain monks renounce all worldly possessions including clothing in their pursuit of enlightenment. However, around 80% of all Jain monks and nuns today are white clad. Both sky clad and white clad monks and nuns are supported by the Jain lay-people A lay-person also follows the Jain code of conduct but the rules are less restrictive than those for monastic Jains.

Above all, Jainism is seen as a way of life and Jains aim to be constantly mindful of their action in implementing ahimsa.

Jianism

Sculpture of a Tirthankara DUROM.Gq22
Brass, silver
India
1400-1599 CE

In the Jain religion a Tirthankara is a rare person who has conquered *samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth and provides a bridge or path for others to follow them. They are saviours and spiritual teachers of the right path (*dharma*).

Jain manuscript Purchase
Paper, ink DUROM.1978.19
India
1600-1900 CE

Jains have a rich tradition of scholarship and manuscript writing, making significant contributions to Indian literature. This is a leaf from a Jain cosmological treatise known as *Samgrahanī-sūtra*, written in Prakrit. It describes the Jain universe and the beings that live within it, their *karma*, lifespan and spiritual progress.

Relief showing Parsvanath Purchase
Sandstone DUROM.1970.23.a
India, Mathura
100-299 CE

Parsvanath (Pārśva) was the 23rd Tirthankara of Jainism. Born a nobleman, he is said to have renounced the world to become a monk in order to follow his path to enlightenment. He is always shown beneath a hood made of *nāga* (serpent deities). Here he is depicted sitting next to a stupa which may represent the famous Jain stupa at Mathura in Uttar Pradesh in India.

Carved door and frame

Carved Door and Frame
Teak, copper alloy
India, Mumbai (Bombay)
Before 1918 CE

Gift of Major HF Homray in memory of Sir T Mansel Franklen
DUROM.1979.11

Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen was born in Swansea in 1840. Educated at Harrow and Oxford, he became a barrister in South Wales. In 1878 he was appointed Clerk of the Peace in Glamorgan and then in 1889 became Clerk of Glamorgan County Council, a post he held until his death in 1928.

Franklen is known to have been interested in British archaeology and to have been a keen photographer. His collection of photography of British historic buildings is now held by the National Museum of Wales.

None of this explains why in 1918 he donated this impressive carved Indian door to the National Museum of Wales. According to the National Museum's records it came from a house in Bombay (now Mumbai) that had been demolished in 1913 or before. Nothing else is known about it.

The National Museum does not have an Indian collection and so transferred the door to the Oriental Museum in the 1970s. It is currently being researched, but for the time being it remains one of the museum's largest but least understood objects.

The arts and crafts of India

Indian history is a story of successive waves of invasion and counter invasion from central Asia and the rise and fall of many regional kingdoms. Four of the world's major religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism – originated here. Traders and invaders bringing Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam have also helped to shape the political and cultural as well as religious landscape. The rich diversity of the arts and crafts of India draws on all of these many influences.

Whether working with textile, metal, jade or glass, Indian craftsmen have sought to embellish and decorate even everyday objects and surfaces that are not normally seen. Painting, inlays, jewels, embroidery and carving techniques were all used to enliven every kind of object. Two strands of decorative craft are particularly highlighted here: metalworking and textiles.

India has never had a strong ceramic tradition. Metalwork has largely taken the place of pottery and is of fundamental importance. Indian artisans have used gold, silver, copper, tin, lead and many alloys to make domestic and religious objects of great beauty as well as arms and armour. Metal ware was often melted down and reworked as fashions changed so metalwork from before the Mughal Period (1526-1858) does not survive in significant quantities.

Indian textiles are world famous. Centuries of experience in growing, handling and processing cotton allowed Indian artisans to develop techniques that produced stunning patterned and embellished, wall hangings, floor coverings, canopies, tents and clothing. When they first encountered these fabrics Europeans were astonished to discover that they were not only coloured and patterned but also washable.

The arts and crafts of India

Sari
Date and material varies

In order to help to preserve our sari, the example on display is changed every six months.

The Sanskrit work sari means ‘strip of cloth’. Sari can be anywhere between 4.5 and 8 meters in length and are usually worn wrapped around the waist with one end draped over the shoulder. They are paired with a fitted top known as a *choli* and an undershirt called a *parkar*.

Awaiting image

Bow
Wood, rawhide, horn
India
1800-1899 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O199

This bow is not a finely decorated court bow, but a practical weapon. This style of bow is most closely associated with minority peoples living in hilly or mountainous areas of India. The double string has a pouch indicating that this bow may have been used for shooting stones rather than arrows.

Elephant goad
(hendova)
Wood, silver, gilt, iron, quartz
India
Date unknown

Loan from Penrith Public Library and Museum
DUROM.L.1960.30

The goad is used to control elephants. This example, embellished with rock crystal and decorative metalwork, would have been very heavy to wield and is more about display than practical use.

South Asian Arts and Crafts

Bracelets
Gold, rubies
India
Date unknown

Bequeathed by
Dr Helen Muir
DUROM.2006.64

Silver
India
Date unknown

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O611

For thousands of years jewellery in India has not only been important as decoration but also as a source of financial security. The quantity and style of jewellery owned by a women were signals of status. Here very similar designs for bracelets terminated in snake heads have been executed in silver and in gold with rubies for the eyes.

Milk or ghee pot
Wood
India
21st century

Purchase
DUROM.2017.312

While not decorated to the same extent as other pieces in this display, the creator of this piece of kitchen equipment has still taken the time to add simple incised lines around the body of the pot. Everyday pieces like this do not survive well in India's climate and they are discarded when they reach the end of their useful life. As such, the museum has set out to collect modern examples of objects like this to support our teaching.

South Asian Arts and Crafts

Chapatti board and roller
Wood
India
21st century

Purchase
DUROM.2017.303 and 304

This board and rolling pin are practical every day objects designed for heavy use. The small bowl on the side of the board would have held flour to prepare the rolling surface for use.

Textile stamp
Wood
India
21st century

Purchase
DUROM.2017.309

Carved wooden stamps like this are used to print designs onto fabric such as cotton, linen and silk. It is one of the oldest and simplest methods of textile printing but is capable of producing highly artistic results. Today old stamps are also exported to places like the UK for sale as decorative items.

South Asian Arts and Crafts

Ivory carvings
Ivory
India
1800-1900 CE

Presented in the name of
Marjorie Burroughs
DUROM.2014.21 and
DUROM.2014.20

During the British colonial era in India, traditional techniques such as ivory carving were adapted to create pieces specifically designed to meet European tastes. Small-scale models like these were popular items for British visitors to bring back to the UK.

The scenes depicted are often drawn from ‘daily life’ including animals, modes of transport and people in traditional dress.

Indian metalworking

Ironworking dates back to around 1800 BCE in the Indian Subcontinent and high quality steel, called wootz, was developed around 300 BCE.

Indian metalworking techniques were greatly admired throughout the Middle East and Europe and owning Indian steel was viewed as a status symbol.

Indian artisans also excelled in decorative metalwork and used intricate silver and gold decorative techniques to embellish weapons, household goods and jewellery with images of animals, texts and floral motifs.

Perhaps the most recognisable of Indian decorative metalwork techniques is bidriware, which contrasts a blackened base metal body with bright silver inlay decoration. This style evolved to suit Islamic tastes, often incorporating text from the Qu'ran in the decorations.

During the British Colonial Era, Indian metalworking was restricted and faced a subsequent decline in the face of global competition. During the early 20th century traditional techniques were revived and the steel industry reinvigorated with the establishment of Tata Steel in 1907 CE

South Asian Arts and Crafts

Decorative arm guard
Steel, gold
India, Rajasthan, Deccan
1800-1900 CE

Gift from the Friends of the Oriental Museum
DUROM.1997.171

This type of arm guard known as a *dastana* is found across West and Central Asia as well as in India. It protects the outside of the forearm. They can be highly decorated. This example is decorated with text written in gold in a mixture of Hindi and Sanskrit. It gives a royal lineage, *rajavamsa*, which traces the original owner's family back to a god.

Hookah pipe base
Pewter, silver
India
Date unknown

DUROM.U10363

One of the most distinctive Indian metalworking techniques—bidriware—is used to decorate this pipe stand. A blackened metal body is decorated with bright silver inlay. Following the European introduction of tobacco to India, water pipes first became popular in the Mughal court as the water was thought to purify the smoke and reduce health concerns. Over time the popularity of smoking among nobles led to it becoming a symbol of status.

South Asian Arts and Crafts

Punch dagger
(katar)
Steel, gold
India
1600-1799 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D185

This distinctively shaped Indian dagger has been embellished with gold decoration of elephants facing tigers. Both animals are associated with strength. This style of dagger is unique to the Indian subcontinent. Ornamental versions like this were worn as symbols of status

Water vessel
Pewter, silver
India
Date unknown

Gift of
Lady SN Lennard
DUROM.1955.Lennard9

This decorative water vessel has been made in pewter and then decorated with intricate silver inlay.

Sikhism

The word ‘Sikh’ means ‘disciple’, specifically, the disciple of the Guru. There have been ten Gurus who lived between 1469 and 1708 CE. The Gurus have led and instructed the Sikhs, each adding to the previous Guru's teachings, and have guided the development of Sikh texts, a Sikh script, and the building of temples called Gurdwaras dedicated to Sikh worship.

The first Guru, Guru Nanak, was inspired by God (Waheguru) to preach the truth—that there is only one God who is without image, without fear and eternal. Guru Nanak stated that Hinduism and Islam were alternative paths to God. He and the following Gurus placed emphasis on equality of all people at a time when the caste system was prevalent in India.

The lives of the ten Gurus coincided with the Muslim Mughal Dynasty in India. Despite many Mughal leaders allowing Sikhs to practice their religion freely, both the fifth and the ninth Gurus were martyred by the Mughals. This time of tension resulted in Sikhs becoming militarised in order to protect their freedom to practice their faith. Even now, Sikh are committed to protecting the defenceless regardless of their background.

In 1699, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, permanently transferred the power of the human Guru to the sacred book, the Guru Granth Sahib, and the council of Sikhs, the Khalsa. The Khalsa are a group of men and women who defend their faith and others under persecution. In each Gurdwara there is a group of five members of the Khalsa. Together with the teachings in the Guru Granth Sahib, it is to the Khalsa that Sikhs turn for spiritual guidance.

Sikhism

Shield (dhal)
Buffalo hide,
copper, iron, wood
India
Date unknown

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O259

Sikh warriors used shields like these in combination with a *tulwar* sword. The curved blade of the sword is ideal for delivering slashing, sweeping strokes. However, its defensive capabilities are limited. The shield provided essential additional defence.

Two chakram (throwing disc)
Steel, silver
India
1700-1799 CE,
1800-1900 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D96
and D97

The chakram is a throwing weapon closely associated with Sikh Nihang warriors.

The Nihang Sikhs would wear many discs on their tall turbans and use them as a weapon while riding on horseback.

The chakram's shape also references the Sikh symbol, the Khanda, as the circle symbolises the Sikh belief 'Ik Onkar' - the oneness of god.

Sikhism

Miniature painting
Paper, ink (reproduction)
India
1606-1837 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1965.18

This equestrian painting is of the first ruler of the Sikh Empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 - 1839). The Sikh Empire was based in the Punjab region of India and unified the Sikh kingdoms called *misls*. The Sikh Empire existed from 1799-1849 until the conquest of the British at the second Anglo-Sikh War.

***Khanda* sword**
Steel
India
1700-1820 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O167

The *Khanda* is the central object in the symbol of Sikhism, with which it shares the same name. The sword was used by Guru Gobind Singh to stir *Amrit* (divine syrup) in the first Sikh baptisms and thus has profound religious significance for Sikhs.

The double-edged sword was also used in battle as a weapon of last resort. Once all hope had been extinguished, Sikh warriors would use the reinforced Khanda to strike as many of the enemy as they could in their final moments. The notch marks in the blade indicate that this sword has been used in combat.

Due to the immense spiritual associations of this sword and other Sikh weapons, Sikhs place them on material called *Rumala* as a sign of respect. Rumala cloths are also used to wrap and protect the *Guru Granth Sahib.*

Sikhism

The Five Articles of Sikh Faith

When Sikhs are baptised they vow to take on the appearance of a Sikh and wear the five articles of faith, often called 'The 5 K's'. Wearing these items makes a Sikh instantly recognisable and so they cannot shirk their duty of protecting those who cannot defend themselves and they must always act appropriately. The five articles of faith may also be adopted by Sikhs who are not initiated into the *Khalsa* but it is not mandatory for them to do so.

The 5 K's are:

- *Kesh* - Uncut hair. Sikhs see hair as a gift from god and protect it by wearing a turban.
- *Kangha* - Comb. Guru Gobind Singh instructed all Sikhs to comb their hair at least twice a day and to keep it clean.
- *Kara* - A Steel Band. The circle of the Kara is to remind Sikhs of their never-ending relationship with god.
- *Kacchera* - Underwear. The Kacchera were designed so that Sikhs could easily move about in them. This was particularly useful when Sikh's had to fight to defend their faith. The garment also symbolises self respect and wearing it mentally dissuades the person from lust.
- *Kirpan* - Dagger. The Kirpan symbolises the Sikh's duty to protect others and is carried by all Sikhs, both men and women.

The objects are kindly loaned by members of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Newcasle Upon Tyne

Sikhism

Images from Newcastle *Gurdwara*

Sikhs worship in a temple called a *Gurdwara*. The Gurdwara is a place where the Sikhs can worship and learn from the *Guru Granth Sahib* - the Sikh holy text. It is also a place where the Sikh community can gather to share knowledge and support each other.

A key principle of Sikhism is altruism and many Sikhs donate money or their time to charity. In each Gurdwara there is a kitchen (*Langar*) where food donated by members of the community is served as free meals to anyone regardless of background.

The images displayed here show (from the top) children at a ‘Sikhi Camp’ learning about Sikhism; Worship of the Guru Granth Sahib; a group of charity workers before they set out to give free meals to the homeless.

Images generously donated by members of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Newcasle Upon Tyne

Sikhism

The Mughals

Islam began to spread into India from the 8th century CE onwards. Early Muslim campaigns led to the decline of Buddhism in northwest South Asia and the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi in 1206 CE

In 1526 Babur, who traced his ancestors back to the great Central Asian warriors Tamerlane (Timur) and Chingis (Ghengis) Khan, conquered Delhi and founded the Mughal dynasty. After a shaky start, the Mughals built up an Islamic empire that ruled over much of northern and central India for almost 350 years until the British seized official control in 1858.

The Empire was at its height during the 16th and 17th centuries under Emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, all famous for their patronage of the arts, architecture and literature. The Mughal court looked to Persia for its artistic inspiration and Mughal art interwove local India traditions with Persian court style to create jewellery, metalwork, painting, illustrated books and architecture suited to the needs of Islam and reflecting a creative fusion of influences.

Important independent Hindu kingdoms continued to thrive during the period, particularly in Rajasthan and in the south, but these were heavily influenced by Mughal court style.

The rise of the Mughal Empire marks a significant turning point in the history of India. The Mughal emperors established a model of rule that continued to have huge influence long after its emperors had ceased to wield any real power.

The Mughals




Mughal jades
Jade, gold,
semi-precious stones
India
1700-1899 CE

All other pieces—gift in memory of
Gerard Arnhold
DUROM.2002.7,8,12, 13,14

Pendant—Gift from the V&A Museum
DUROM.1969

Hardstone carving is a very ancient art form in India. However, it was only during the Mughal period that jade carving came into fashion. The jade (nephrite) was imported from the K'un-lun mountains and Khotan in Central Asia. Unlike the Chinese who prized variations in colour and pattern in jade, the Mughal rulers preferred stone of uniform colour, especially white and green.

Legend has it that a Khotanese jade merchant introduced jade to Akbar's court, enabling the Mughals to indulge a taste for jade they had inherited from their Central Asian ancestors. However, up to this point scholars have been unable to definitely attribute any Indian jades to Akbar's reign (1556-1605CE).

Under his successor Jahangir (1605-27) there is definite evidence for jade carving drawing heavily on Chinese and Timurid designs. Late in Jahangir's reign this gives way to distinctively Mughal designs, often based on naturalistic forms and embellished with jewels and gold.

It was under Shah Jahan (r.1628-58) that jade working in India reached its greatest heights and later pieces continued to draw inspiration from these works with a focus on the use of white jade, floral and vegetal forms, great elegance and technical perfection.

The Mughals

Taj Mahal souvenir tile
Marble, quartz, malachite, lapis lazuli, mother of pearl
India, Agra
Around 1945 CE

Gift from
Miss MWM Glass
DUROM.1969.701

The Taj Mahal is regarded by many as the finest example of Mughal architecture. It combines elements from Islamic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and Indian architectural styles.

While it is most famous for the white domed mausoleum at the centre, it is actually a complex of many structures and gardens. Begun in 1632, it took thousands of workers 22 years to complete. Colourful stone inlays like this decorate the surface of some elements, while other sections are painted or carved. In line with the Islamic tradition, the emphasis in the decoration is on calligraphy, geometric forms and floral decoration as shown here.

This souvenir is dated on the back to May 1945. Today UNESCO estimate that around 2 million people visit the site every year.

The Mughals



Mughal rupees
Silver
India
1606-1837 CE

Gift of Rev HR Scott
DUROM.1971.scott1B.5, 20, 23

The Mughals imposed uniformity upon the coinage used throughout their empire, creating a system that survived long after the empire itself collapsed. Central to the Mughal coinage system was a silver coin called the rupee.

Portrait of the Emperor Aurangzeb
Animal skin, pencil, ink
India
19th century CE

Gift from collection from the late Mr and Mrs W.R. and Adeline Gourlay
DUROM.1965.62.d

In order to help to preserve our miniatures, the example on display is changed every six months.

This fine portrait of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707 CE) is accompanied by an inscription written in Persian which reads "In the name of Allah the most beneficent, the most merciful".

The Mughals

Leaf shaped dish
Jade
India
1700-1799 CE

Gift from the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum
DUROM.W21

According to central Asian beliefs, a jade cup or plate could detect poison. Along with many other central Asian practices, during the Mughal Period this belief seems to have spread to India. When this dish was purchased in the Agra region for Sir Henry Wellcome's medical museum in London, it was noted that its owner had used it to protect against poisoned food.

***Khanjar* dagger hilt**
Jade with cloisonné enamel
India and China
1675-1725 CE

Gift of Sir Charles Hardinge
DUROM.1960.3599

A hilt such as this was designed to adorn a ceremonial weapon used as a symbol of status within the Mughal Empire. Such weapons were often given as gifts from a ruler in return of political allegiance and support.

The hilt also demonstrates the importance of trade between India and China at this time. The handle's brass and blue enamel inlay are Chinese. It is likely that the blank handle was made in India before being sent to China for decoration and then returned to be set with a blade.

The Mughals

***Khanjar* dagger**
Steel
India
1700-1899 CE

Bequest of
Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.1986.D177

Indian weaponry under the Mughals has become famous for its combination of high quality metalwork, beautiful decoration and ornamentation and distinctive forms. The khanjar dagger is most closely associated with Oman. Mughal weaponry mixed imported Islamic elements like this, with native Indian forms. Notice that the pommel of this dagger has been shaped like a parrot. There is a sprung door in the hilt that gives access to a hidden compartment.

Britain in India

The Honourable East India Company (HEIC) was formed in England in 1600 and traded right across South and Southeast Asia until 1874. At its height the HEIC is estimated to have been responsible for half of the world's total international trade, particularly in commodities such as cotton, spices, silk, indigo dye, salt, tea and opium.

Having obtained an early foothold in India following a British diplomatic mission to the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, the Company rapidly expanded their operations in India. In time it came to rule large areas of India with its own private armies, exercising military power and assuming administrative functions. This only ended in 1858 when the British government assumed direct control of India, establishing the British Raj in the aftermath of the conflict of 1857 known both as the Indian Mutiny and the First Indian War of Independence.

The British Raj ruled India between 1858 and 1947. Some areas were directly administered by the British while in others princely states continued to exist under the authority of the British Crown. The 1920s saw the growth of the independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi urged his follower to use non-violent protest such as sit-down strikes and refusal to work or pay taxes.
World War Two temporarily postponed the struggle for independence as the Indians provided valuable military support in Burma, the Middle East and East Africa.

Early in 1947, British Prime Minister Clement Atlee announced that Britain would leave India. Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India and tasked to make this possible. He concluded that peace could only be maintained if partition was introduced. Thus in August 1947, the Indian Independence Act was signed, which also separated the Muslim majority areas from India to create the independent state of Pakistan.

Gandhi
By **S D Sathe**
Bronze
India
1995 CE

Gift of the High Commissioner for India
DUROM.U10538

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) led the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India. His advocacy of non-violent civil disobedience in pursuit of Indian self-rule coupled with his campaigning on issues of poverty, women's rights, ending the caste system and building religious and ethnic tolerance, led to him becoming a role model for civil rights movements worldwide.

The honorific Mahatma, Sanskrit for 'high-souled' or venerable', was first applied to him in South Africa in 1914; it is now used worldwide. In India he is often referred to as *Bapu*, the Gujarati term for father.

Scroll case
Silver
India, Bihar
1928 CE

Gift of the Dowager Marchioness of Reading
DUROM.1967.26

The Indian Statutory Commission was dispatched to India in 1928 to make recommendations for the reform of government in India. There was outrage when the Commission membership was announced and it did not have one Indian member. Groups such as the Indian National Congress resolved to boycott. An All-India Committee for Cooperation with the Commission was established by the Council of India to address these concerns.

This case contains a scroll signed by members of the *Sabhā* (Council) of Bihar Province, 'representing the Orthodox Hindu community of the Province'.

They express 'deep regret that Orthodox Hindus are not given their due share in the Reformed Councils and Central Legislatures' with the consequence that 'several un-Hindu bills have been allowed to be introduced.' They ask the Commission to address this issue.

Britain in India

European style jewellery
Gold, rubies, pearls, diamonds, emeralds, enamel
India
1800-1900 CE

Necklaces:
Bequest of Professor Helen Muir
DUROM.2006.65 and 66

Brooch
DUROM.1972.60

Diamonds were first discovered in India more than 2000 years ago and India led the world in diamond production until the mid 18th century. The area is also rich in other precious and semi-precious stones such as sapphires, rubies and garnets.

British people living in India commissioned jewellery using Indian gold, precious stones and pearls. These pieces often mix features of Indian style with European elements.

Central Provinces bar brooches
Gold
India
1900-1925 CE

Gift of Ms H Armstrong
DUROM.2015.67 and 68

Comprising a landscape of mountain ranges, plateaus, and river valleys seized from Mughal and Marathan rulers in central India, the Central Provinces were established by the British as an administrative region in 1861. These brooches belonged to members of the family of Sir Frank Sly, Governor of the Central Provinces from 1920 to 1925.

Britain in India

Seringapatam medal
Silver
India
1807 CE

Gift of Dr C P Barclay
DUROM.2015.92

The capture of Seringapatam and the death of Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, ended the influence of the French in India. The medals given by the East India Company to the British and Indian troops who had participated in the capture of Seringapatam in 1799 bore an image of the British lion defeating Tipu's favoured animal - the tiger.

Fort William College prize medal
Gold
India, Kolkata (Calcutta)
1800 CE

Bequest of Dr Helen Muir
DUROM.2015.91

Fort William College was founded in 1800. Although initially intended simply to serve as a centre for training British officials in Indian languages, it quickly developed into a centre for advanced scholarship. Its researchers translated thousands of books from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Bengali, Hindi and Urdu into English.

Britain in India

***Firangi* sword**
Steel, gold, velvet
India
Date unknown

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O163

Firangi, from the Arabic word *al-faranji* for a Western European (Frank), is a type of Indian sword made using imported European blades set into Indian mounts. Most firangi swords were long cavalry weapons. This blade is shorter than usual. Firangi are most closely associated with the Maratha warriors of western India, who were famous horsemen. However, they were also widely worn by the Mughals and those under their rule, becoming a symbol of martial power.

Flintlock musket and bayonet
Wood, metal
India
After 1797 CE

DUROM.U11118

The growth of British dominance in India during the 18th and 19th centuries was greatly aided by the use of firearms. The simple, robust nature of the flintlock mechanism made for a highly reliable firearm. Manufactured in their hundreds of thousands, muskets revolutionised warfare in South Asia. Despite the growing use of rifles in the early 19th century modified flintlock muskets made for the East India Company and British Army remained in use in India until the 1840s.

Powder horn DUROM.U10617
Shell, mother of pearl, textile
India, Gujarat
1800-1850 CE

Powder flasks hold and dispense gunpowder for firearms. Elaborately decorated flasks like this were designed as signs of wealth and status and were worn for hunting parties, rather than for military use. By the 1860s horns of this type had given way to flasks which incorporated a dispenser to more accurately measure the amount of gun-powder required.

The spice trade

Archaeological evidence from Ancient Egypt and the Near East suggest that spices like cinnamon and cloves were already being traded over huge distances in ancient times. Spices were used for medical purposes and as part of the ancient Egyptian embalming process. However, they were most important for flavouring food. Spices help to preserve food and also helped to disguise the flavour of poorly preserved food. Long, cold European winters were made more bearable by the addition of some pepper to the salted meat.

Spices such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg grow in Southeast Asia, in the Maluku Island, commonly referred to as the 'Spice Islands'.

Passing through many hands on their journey from Southeast Asia, via India or Sri Lanka to Europe, spices have often commanded high prices, comparable even to gold and silver. In order to call off their siege of Rome in 408CE the Visigoths demanded gold, silver and pepper. In the Middle Ages a 'peppercorn rent' was far more valuable than the term implies today.

For much of history Arab traders controlled the flow of spices between India and Europe. The desire to circumvent the middle man was the motivation behind the search for a sea route around Africa, achieved by Vasco da Gama in 1498. It was what prompted the Spaniards to send Christopher Columbus to find a route to India via the west.

Increased contact with India and Southeast Asia led the European powers to move from trade into colonisation. The resulting violence and destruction is well documented. Spice plants were transplanted to new countries and production expanded. The price of spices fell and today these once exotic, expensive delicacies are available in any supermarket.

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is bounded by China to the north, India to the west and New Guinea and Australia to the east and south. The region lies at the intersection of geological plates and is subject to considerable seismic activity. The Malay archipelago is one of the most volcanically active places in the world.

The climate is mainly tropical – hot and humid with abundant rainfall. Seasonal monsoon rains and shifting winds mean that most areas alternate between wet and dry seasons. However, mountainous regions, such as the highlands of Vietnam and Myanmar, experience drier, colder weather.

The Southeast Asian rainforest is second only in size to the Amazon and marine life in the region is among the most diverse in the world. Much of the rich flora and fauna of forests and coral reefs is now under threat by deforestation, industrialisation, tourism and overfishing.

Diversity in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is an incredibly diverse region—ethnically, culturally and linguistically. Archaeological and historic evidence suggests that this diversity extends back thousands of years into the past

The earliest inhabitants of the region were hunter-gatherers. Rice-based agriculture is believed to have spread from what is now southern China during the third millennium BCE. The spread of agriculture was slow. Hunting and foraging in the abundant forests, rivers and seas has continued to be central to the lives of many communities up to the present day.

For much of Southeast Asia there are strong distinction between life in the lowland and mountain life, between farmers and forest dwellers, and between those living inland and those inhabiting the coastal regions. These distinctions tend to be not just geographical or economic but also ethnic. People living in highland forests or on boats along the coast tend to come from ethnic minorities, while the majority in many countries today tend to be lowland farmers. Even within these groups there is much diversity. By way of example, today Vietnam alone recognises more than 50 distinct ethnic groups.

The displays in this gallery can only begin to hint at this rich mixture of cultures.

Arts and crafts in Southeast Asia

Little is known about the early indigenous cultures of Southeast Asia. It is unclear how and when pottery production and metalworking were first discovered in the region. Archaeological finds such as Ban Chiang in Thailand and Đông Sơn in Vietnam suggest that prehistoric cultures in the region already possessed sophisticated skills in ceramic and metal production.

The richly decorated arts and crafts of India and elegant forms of Chinese art were brought to Southeast Asia by traders and travellers as Southeast Asia became part of a trade network that stretched from Han dynasty China to the Roman Empire.
As Hinduism and Buddhism spread through the region, they brought their distinctive artistic styles with them. However, the arts and crafts of Southeast Asia did not simply become reflections of Indian or Chinese art as some Western art historians have suggested in the past. While India and China did have a significant influence, strong local beliefs and practices mingled with these foreign influences to evolve distinct new forms.

The rise of medieval kingdoms, such as the Khmer Empire (9th to 13th century CE), saw a flowering in the arts. The Khmer capitial at Angkor became a vast city of palaces, canals and temples, the most famous being Angkor Wat. We know from surviving temple reliefs that the arts and crafts of these kingdoms were rich and varied. However, very little has withstood the tropical climate of the region from this period and the vast majority of what survives is stone or metal. Wood, textiles, manuscripts, lacquer and paintings have all perished.

In later periods Southeast Asia came under increasing Arab and then European influence. The spread of Islam through the region brought with it an interest in Islamic artistic style with a focus on geometry, calligraphy and floral designs which, like earlier influences, mixed with existing forms to create something uniquely Southeast Asian.

Southeast Asian wood carving

Wood carving has been an important art form in Southeast Asia for millennia. Unfortunately, it survives much less well than sculpture in stone or metal as it is vulnerable to fire, insect damage and other forms of decay.

Carving of a mythical bird
Wood
Myanmar (Burma)
1800-1912 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.D124

The historic temples and palaces of Burma were magnificently decorated with intricate wooden carving. This carving of a mythical *hintha* bird, was probably made as a piece of temple decoration.

The hintha was the symbol of the Mon Kingdoms which ruled over much of the area that is now Myanmar between the 9th and 18th centuries CE.

One legend tells that two hintha birds were trying to find a place to rest during a great flood. They saw a small hillock and the male landed upon it and he allowed the female to settle on his back. As they perched there, the Buddha and his followers appeared, seeming to walk on the water. Buddha told the birds that a great city would arise in that place. This is one of the foundation myths of the Mon kingdoms.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Carving of a guardian spirit
Mahogony
Myanmar (Burma)
1900-1950 CE

Gift from Mr Trevor Andrews
DUROM.1980.38

This carving was probably made for sale to tourists rather than for use in Burma. Traditional woodcarving techniques continue to be handed down through families but low wages are driving many young carvers to move to China in search of higher incomes.

Bowl
Wood
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak
Around 1950 CE

Gift of the Rt Hon Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.126

This well-made wooden bowl was probably designed for the urban, domestic market in Borneo around 1950. The motif of the *aso* or dog/dragon features on the handles is associated with the Kayan and Kenyah peoples of Sarawak.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Xylophone

Bamboo
Indonesia, Bali/ Java
1980-1999 CE

Gift of Dr JT and Mrs Roberts
DUROM.1999.96

This small bamboo xylophone (*tingklik*) was probably made in Java or Bali for sale to the international market. The original versions are usually much larger and are used as part of a gamelan orchestra.. This is the traditional musical ensemble of Java and Bali, made up of mainly percussion instruments.

Ceremonial paddle

Wood
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak
1975 CE

Gift of Anne Wright–Hussey
DUROM.2014.9

Traditional longhouses in Sarawak were almost always near water courses since rivers were the easiest way to travel. Everyone owned their own small dugout or canoe with their own paddle. Carved paddles were used in ceremonies and as signs of status.

Ajat basket

Rattan
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak
1900-1975 CE

Gift of Anne Wright–Hussey
DUROM.2014.5

This basket is made from rattan, a type of climbing palm. Basketry is an important craft throughout Southeast Asia, producing a range of items for everyday use. However, it does not survive well in the hot, humid climate so development over time is difficult to trace.

This type of patterned rattan weaving is closely associated with the Penan people. In recent years Penan weavers have begun to use plastic straps in place of rattan to make bags for sale in cities such as Kuala Lumpur. These modern versions of traditional baskets have become fashionable, providing much needed income for poor communities in Sarawak and demonstrates how ancient crafts evolve to suit changing environments and demand.

Drum *(ozi)*
Wood, leather, lacquer
Myanmar (Burma)
Before 1979 CE

Gift of Mrs Saw Khin Daw
DUROM.1979.60

Traditional Burmese music is heavily based on percussion. Different drums are used for different kinds of music. This type of small drum might be used for informal village celebrations. It is sometimes called a goblet drum reflecting its shape.

Long-stemmed goblet drums were popular in Myanmar during the reign of King Mindon (1853–78 CE). The shorter stem on this drum may indicate a later date of manufacture. The body of the drum is carved from wood and then fitted with a skin head, often made of deerskin. This has a central *pa'sa,* a circle of coloured paste which helps tune the drum. *Ozi* drums are found in a variety of sizes. They are usually suspended either diagonally across the player's chest or hanging to the left side.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Blowpipe
Wood, metal, rattan
Borneo
1800-1899 CE

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O340

The blowpipe or blow gun is strongly associated with the island of Borneo. It appears to be a very ancient weapon which evolved from simple reed or bamboo forms into different forms including double tube bamboo pipes, split-and-grooved wooden pipes and solid-bored wooden pipes.

This example is of the later type, made from wood which is drilled using a long metal rod with a chisel-shaped bit. The interior is then polished by pulling pieces of rattan through it. A metal spear blade is lashed to the end. The use of blow pipes spread through Southeast Asia to southern India and Japan but this type of solid-bored pipe is most strongly associated with technological developments in manufacture in Borneo.

Ban Chiang ceramic
Pottery
Thailand
1500 BCE to 200 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1974.133

Ban Chiang in Thailand is considered the most important prehistoric settlement so far discovered in Southeast Asia. This pot probably dates from 1500 BCE to 200 CE.

The shape, size and decoration of Ban Chiang ceramics shows a sophisticated understanding of pottery making.

Architectural element
Ceramic
Thailand
Before 1979 CE

Gift from Dr & Mrs J.T. Roberts
DUROM.1999.94

This elaborate dragon head would once have formed part of the decoration of a building. Brightly coloured ceramic tiles and other sculptural elements such as this were used to embellish important buildings.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Sawankhalok lime jar
Steel, brass, iron, wood, horn, bone
China, Tibet
1800-1899

Bequest of Mr Wilfred Dodds
DUROM.O1011

Swankhalok figures
Glazed ceramic
Thailand, Sawankhalok
1400-1600 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1976.19.A and DUROM.1976.19.B

Gift from
Jozef K Skwirzynski
DUROM.1985.10

Thai Sawankhalok celadon

Celadon glazed wares were first made at Sawankhalok in central Thailand around 1400 CE. The kilns expanded and by the 15th century these ceramics were being widely exported.

Sawankhalok lime jar

This jar was designed to store slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) used to prepare betel chew.

Sawankhalok figurines

These small figurines are thought to have been made for local Thais, rather than for export. They may have been used as votive offerings to household spirits.

Swankhalok jarlet
Glazed ceramic
Thailand, Sawankhalok
1400-1600 CE

gift from the National Art Collections Fund from the bequest of F.W. Pierce.
DUROM.1978.97

Sawankhalok Jarlet
This small jar is not typical of Sawankhalok ware but shows strong influence from Chinese ceramics.
It has been suggested that it is a very early example of

***Bencharong* ware**
Porcelain
Thailand
1950-1970 CE

Gift from Miss E. Humphreys-Owen
DUROM.1970.90

Bencharong literally means ‘five colours’.

The method was introduced to Thailand from China and until the second half of the 20th century its use was confined to members of the royal family and some of the aristocracy.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Bencharong ware tea-pot
Porcelain
Thailand
1850-1900 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1979.32

This five-colour (*bencharong*) style was originally used by the royal court of Thailand. This particular tea pot was given as a personal gift by the Thai royal family to their Cambodian royal counterparts.

Later this piece was gifted a second time by King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia to the Right Honourable Malcolm MacDonald.

This ensured the survival of the teapot, as objects like this associated with the royal family were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge when they took control of Cambodia in 1975. Consequently, there are very few items relating to the Cambodian royal family left in existence.

Karen rain drum
Bronze
Myanmar (Burma)
1900-1950 CE

Gift from
Mr. J. Fleming
DUROM.1971.35

The tradition of high quality bronze casting dates back over 2000 years in Southeast Asia. Drums like this were made by the Karen people of Burma. They were high prestige objects, displayed to establish status and played on special occasions.





Vietnamese ceramics

Ceramic
Vietnam
Date Unknown

Purchase
DUROM.1976.13

Purchase
DUROM.1976.18.a-b

Purchase
DUROM.1976.22

Purchase
DUROM.1976.23

Gift of Dr G. H. Manley
DUROM.2010.44

Pottery making has a very long history in the area that is now Vietnam. China ruled over the area that is now northern Vietnam for long periods of time during the first millennium CE. Chinese ceramic styles were introduced into the region during this time and had a lasting impact on some types of Vietnamese ceramic production.

At the end of the 14th century the Chinese Ming dynasty adopted an inward-looking policy and greatly restricted exports for Chinese porcelain. These ceramics were in great demand in markets in Europe and the Islamic world. Vietnamese potters responded by dramatically expanding their own export trade, particularly in the blue and white wares that were highly fashionable at the time.

While these ceramics make use of Chinese techniques and styles, they also include distinctive indigenous elements and features incorporated from other cultures including Cambodia, India and the historic Champa Kingdom which existed in the area that is now central and southern Vietnam.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Shipwreck ceramics
Ceramic
Indonesia, Java
1075-1130 CE

Gift from Mrs Jarmila Stemson
DUROM.1997.69 and DUROM.1997.100

Both of these pieces show evidence of having come from a shipwreck. In recent years underwater archaeology has become increasingly important in helping researchers understand the extent of historic trade in Southeast Asian ceramics and establishing dating for different types of vessel.

Khmer lidded jar
Ceramic
Thailand/Cambodia, Khmer Empire
Around 12th century CE

Gift from Mrs Jarmila Stemson
DUROM.1997.120

This warm dark brown glaze is typical of 12th century CE Khmer ceramics from the area that is now Thailand and Cambodia. This shape has been associated with storing honey.

Khmer bowl
Ceramic
Cambodia, Khmer Empire
Around 1100-1199 CE

Gift from the National Art Collections Fund from the bequest of F.W. Pierce.
DUROM.1978.90

This 12th century Khmer bowl shows clear influence from Chinese ceramics in both shape and surface decoration. Ceramics formed an essential part of the trade between the Khmer Empire and China as well as other neighbours in Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Ceramics from the Philippines
Ceramic
Philippines
Date Unknown

Purchase
DUROM.1978.113

Gift from Mrs Jarmila Stemson
DUROM.1997.134

Chinese ceramics have been found in the Philippines from as early as the 9th century. By the 14th century ceramics from Thailand and Vietnam begin to appear in the archaeological record. These imports had a significant impact on local pottery making. For example, the small jar shown here shows clear Chinese influence in it's over all shape, blue and white glaze and floral design.

Malaysian ceramic bottle
Ceramic
Malaysia
Date unknown

Gift from the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum
DUROM.W143

The surface effect seen on this lidded bottle is created by the ash in a wood-burning kiln.

This shape is associated with water vessels and variations of the form with a bulbous body and long neck have been made in the region for hundreds of years.

Southeast Asian Lacquerware

Lacquer is a natural plastic refined from the sap of the *Gluta Usitata*, a tree common in much of Southeast Asia.
Thin coats of lacquer can be applied to a base article to create a heatproof and waterproof surface.

Burmese lacquer

Container
Lacquer, gold
Myanmar (Burma)
1934 CE

Gift from
Mrs. E. Hanson
DUROM.1983.17

Box
Lacquer, gold
Myanmar (Burma)
1800-1900 CE

DUROM.u11055

Gilding, the process of applying gold-leaf, is closely associated with Burmese lacquerwares. The use of gilt has very positive associations in Buddhism and many objects intended for religious or royal use were gilded. These vessels are decorated in a distinctive black and gold style known as *shwezawa*.

The vessels are usually made from coiled or woven strips of bamboo, often mixed with horsehair to create the base. The lacquer may then be mixed with ashes or sawdust to create a putty-like substance called *thayo* which can be sculpted to create raised designs. Layer upon layer is built up and then polished or engraved with intricate designs filled with coloured pigments and/or gold before a final clear layer is applied.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Figure of Sariputta
Wood, lacquer, gold, glass
Myanmar (Burma)
1800-1899 CE

Gift from
Dr & Mrs J.T. Roberts
DUROM.1999.92

Sariputta (Sanskrit: Sariputra) was one of the two chief male disciples of the Buddha. He is renowned for his teaching. On altars statues like this are usually seated with his fellow disciple, facing a statue of the Buddha at the centre.
The use of mirrors and glass inlays would cause the decoration to sparkle in the lights on or around the altar.

***Kammavacha* manu-script**
Wood, paint, lacquer
Myanmar (Burma)
1700-1900 century CE

Purchase
DUROM.1983.14

The words of this Buddhist text have been painted in black lacquer onto thin wooden boards decorated with red and gold paint. It is written in the ancient Pali language using square Burmese characters. The long rectangular shape of the pages recalls manuscripts written on palm leaves.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Betel box *(kun it)* and betel cutters

Bamboo, lacquer
Myanmar (Burma)
1800-1899 CE

Gift from Mrs D. Aubrey,
DUROM.1979.62

Iron
Myanmar (Burma)
Date Unknown

Gift from
Mrs D. Aubrey
DUROM.1979.63.1

Betel chewing is a tradition that can be traced back for thousands of years in South and Southeast Asia. Boxes such as this, which include inner trays stacked on each other, are used to hold all of the ingredients.

The areca nuts used in the chew are sliced using cutters such as the ones shown here. Betel chewing is an important part of rituals and festivals in much of Southeast Asia and boxes were often highly decorated to be presented to guests.

Kachin bag
Textiles, beads
Myanmar
Date Unknown

Gift from
Mrs. E. Hanson
DUROM.1980.6

Kachin is the name used for a number of ethnic groups who live in the Kachin Hills of northern Myanmar (Burma). Textiles are an important traditional craft. Bags are designed in distinct styles for men and women, and different patterns are used according to the occasion. This particular bag would have been used by a bride on her wedding day.

Southeast Asian Arts and Crafts

Pua kumba
Cotton
Sarawak State
Dates vary

Pua kumba are woven by women of the Iban ethnic group in Borneo. They are used for important life rituals such as birth, coming of age or to screen a body being laid out before burial.

A woman who creates her own unique design is believed to be a mystic with a connection to an ancestral weaver. The woman is visited by the ancestor in a dream who instructs her in how to weave the design. A woman can raise her status in the community by creating complex and skilful designs.

Today Iban woven textiles serve not just as ceremonial blankets but are also worn as shawls and or made into clothes. However, only selected motifs and designs can be worn. Other more powerful designs remain only as sacred ceremonial blankets.

In order to help to preserve our Pua Kumba, the example on display is changed every six months.

Metalworking in Southeast Asia

The earliest surviving metalworking from Southeast Asia is associated with the Đông Sơn culture of the Red River Valley in what is now northern Vietnam (7th century BCE to 2nd century CE). Particularly famous are the beautiful Đông Sơn drums which display a sophisticated grasp of the lost-wax bronze casting process. The role of these highly decorated drums is still debated but the influence of the Đông Sơn style can be seen in early metalworking across the region. Examples have been found from southern China to Bali.

Over time, successive waves of traders, travellers and invaders from India, China - and later the Arab world and Europe - imported new ideas that helped to shape metalworking as it did other arts and crafts. Buddhism and Hinduism influenced sculpture and representations of the human form. Later the spread of Islam led to an interest in geometric and calligraphic designs in decoration.

Metalworking was particularly important in three areas: religious imagery, weaponry and jewellery making. Hoards of jewellery and ritual vessels have been found in Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam. These include objects of bronze, silver and gold including vessels for religious and court ceremonies, weapons, lamps, bells and ritual objects. However, these finds represent only a fraction of what was produced. Objects made in metal were frequently melted down and recycled to reflect changes in tastes and fashions, making it difficult to trace developments in style over time with great accuracy.

Metalworking in Southeast Asia

‘Opium’ weights
Bronze
Burma
1600-1899 CE

Anonymous gift
DUROM.1969.679

Weights like these have been used in Burma since at least the 16th century for weighing food and trade goods. As well as their practical purpose, they have a symbolic role, calling to mind the Buddhist teaching to use fair weights and measures. While the name may suggest that they were used in the opium trade in some way this was never the case, but was in fact a name given to them by Western tourists who did not understand their history or use.

Cannon
Bronze, wood
Brunei
1800-1900 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon. Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.117

Brunei Bay was a haven for pirates and guns like this were used for protection on ships at sea and forts on land. As well as being weapons, such cannons were signs of wealth and were often decorated. This example has a crocodile and the Islamic double sword (*zulfakar*) as decoration along the barrel.

Metalworking in Southeast Asia

Burmese silver box
Silver
Myanmar (Burma)
1800-1899 CE

Gift from
Mrs Daw Saw Yin
DUROM.1979.52

The decoration on this boxes is very typical of Burmese style *repousse* work. The silver is hammered from the inside to create raised decoration on the outer surface. Pieces like this are popular with both Burmese and tourists.

Southeast Asian Metalwork

Matchbox cover
Silver
Malaysia, Kelantan
1900-1970 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon
Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1980.62

A traditional shadow puppet is depicted on the front of this box cover. Puppet theatre is an important art form throughout Southeast Asia. In recent years there has been a resurgence in the popularity of puppet theatre with some theatres recreating famous films such as Star Wars.

Cigar or cigarette holder
Silver
Brunei
1950-1975 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon.
Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.139

This holder is made to hold enormous cigarettes of fragrant tobacco rolled in a *nipah* palm leaf. The length of the cigarette offered, from six inches to over a foot, indicated the status accorded to the guest. The butterflies on the top fluttered in the smoke. This example was presented to the British diplomat Malcolm MacDonald who had the legs added so he could use it as a table decoration.

Southeast Asian Metalwork

Thai Niello work box
Niello inlaid silver
Thailand
Date unknown

Gift from the Rt Hon Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1980.61

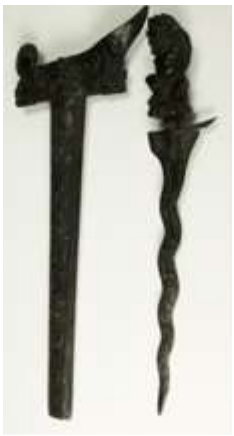
Niello is a mixture of copper, silver and lead sulphides used to create black inlay decoration on metalwork. Thailand has become a centre for niello-ware, creating distinctive products, often for export.

Malaysian silver box
Silver
Malaysia
1800-1899 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1979.35

Containers like this (*chimbuls*) are used to store small amounts of the ingredients used to make betel chew, a mild stimulant common across Southeast Asia. The tradition of chewing was an integral part of festivals, rituals and family celebrations and so the containers for ingredients were often highly decorated.

Southeast Asian Metalwork



Kris sword and scabbard
Steel, wood
Indonesia
20th century CE

Gift from
Victoria Bagshaw
DUROM.2014.52

Kris have become a symbol of ethnic pride across the Malay Archipelago and often form part of ceremonial dress at the royal courts and for important festivals and celebrations.

Kris are famous for having a distinctive wavy blade with a rippled patina achieved through the lamination of different types of metals. They are formed of three parts, the blade (*bilah* or *wilah*), hilt (*hulu*), and sheath (*warangka*).

Both a weapon and a spiritual object, kris are believed to have magical powers which can bestow either good or bad luck.

Southeast Asian Metalwork

Decorated safely helmet
Aluminium
UK and Indonesia, Java
1959-2014 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2015.25

Metalworking in Southeast Asia continues to evolve.
In Indonesia, particularly in Java, during the second half of the 20th century a tradition of decorating work helmets has grown up.

This UK-made fire safety helmet has been decorated with traditional Islamic motifs including floral scrolls, birds and animals. There are also images of the Ali Qapu Palace and Imam Mosque, both in Isfahan, Iran and the two men depicted appear to be Nadir Shah (1736-47) founder of the Persian Afsharid dynasty and the ancient Persian king Darius the Great (550-487 BCE). This would suggest that the helmet was decorated for an Iranian working in Java.

Buckle (pěnding)
Silver
Malaysia
1850-1920 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1975.26

Belt buckles like this example were common features of traditional dress across Malaysia across all classes of people. They fell out of fashion with the arrival of Western clothing in the early 1900s and are now only used as part of official court dress.

The silver used in their production would have been imported from Burma, Loas or Thailand and the overall shape is inspired by Islamic artistic traditions, especially tilework.

Southeast Asian Metalwork

Earrings
Brass
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak, Miri
1950-2008 CE

The Glendenning Collection
DUROM.2014.232 and
DUROM.2014.233

Heavy metal earrings designed to stretch the earlobes are worn by some ethnic groups in Southeast Asia.
These examples from Borneo include a set for a child and a heavier set for an adult.

The drawing in this case shows how they would be worn.

Beadwork headdress
Plant fibre, textile, glass
Malaysia, Borneo, Sarawak
1940-1970 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon. Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.150

Beadwork purse
Plant fibre, textile, glass
Malaysia, Borneo, Sarawak
1940-1970 CE

Gift from the Rt Hon. Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.158

The tribes of Sarawak are famed for their intricate beadwork. Jewellery is a sign of social status and wealth. This headdress would have been made for a girl from the Kayan people. Today the craft continues to flourish, creating pieces, such as this purse, which are aimed at tourists.

Southeast Asian Metalwork and Beadwork

Necklace and Bracelet
Glass, textile, metal
Sarawak State
Date Unknown

Gift from the Rt Hon. Malcolm MacDonald
DUROM.1976.154.b
and
DUROM.1976.153.c

Both of these pieces include a mixture of glass beads and a ‘tiger bell’. This distinctive style of bell is found in many cultures across Asia. They are often linked to shamanism and magic, mostly commonly as a form of protection for people or important domesticated animals.

Tea caddy
Pewter, silk, wood
Malaysia
2018 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2018.200

This tea caddy is in the form of a Japanese *inro*, a traditional container which would hang from an obi belt worn around a kimono. However, this inro is actually a tea caddy manufactured in Malaysia to appeal to the Japanese tourist market.

This container was manufactured by the Malaysian pewter company Royal Selangor. The company was founded in 1885 by Chinese immigrant, Yong Koon, who arrived in Malaysia with only his metal working tools.

Royal Highness Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the late Sultan of Selangor was a great supporter of the company, often giving pieces as gifts to visiting dignitaries. In 1979 he conferred the royal warrant on the company and in 1992 the company officially changed it’s name to Royal Selangor.

Religion in Southeast Asia

The great diversity of ethnic groups and cultures in Southeast Asia is reflected in the broad range of religious beliefs.

Belief in sprits (animism) was central to early faiths in the region. In some places natural features such as mountains, rivers, trees or caves were believed to be the homes of powerful spirits. In other areas guardian spirits protected the household, village or district if given the appropriate offerings. Across most of the region the spirits of the ancestors demanded respect and often also needed offerings to ensure their co-operation.

Over time, successive waves of traders, settlers and missionaries have introduced all of the worlds' major religions. First Hinduism and Buddhism, and later Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have all spread through the region. However, these newer religions have not eradicated older beliefs. Instead these religions have tended to mingle with existing faiths, absorbing rituals, festivals and stories to create something unique to each area.

Today Islam is the majority religion in Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world, and yet Hinduism remains dominant in parts of the country such as Bali. Buddhism is followed by the majority in Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos and Thailand and yet Garuda, the *vahana* (vehicle) of the Hindu god Vishnu is the national symbol of both Thailand and Indonesia. Christianity dominates in the Philippines and East Timor. Countries like Singapore and Vietnam are among the most religiously diverse in the world and in more remote areas such as parts of Vietnam, northern Laos, central Borneo and northern Myanmar traditional animism still dominates.

These faiths do not always co-exist peacefully. Sectarian violence continues to threaten minority communities in many countries across the region.

Religion in Southeast Asia

Offerings to the ancestors
Paper
Vietnam
2013 CE

Purchase

In many countries in East and Southeast Asia, paper offerings are burned to honour the ancestors and ensure they have all they need in the afterlife. Sets of offerings can be purchased for male or female ancestors and increasingly they include modern luxuries as well as traditional items such as paper money. Paper clothing, shoes and jewellery are popular as well as paper items as varied as mobile phones, cars and even paper houses. In return it is hoped that the wishes and requests of the living will be answered.

Prayer beads *(misbaha)*
Tamarind wood
Indonesia
2014 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2015.24

Islamic prayer beads, known as Misbaha, Tasbih or Sibha, usually contain 99 beads representing the names of Allah. Beads like this can be used to aid concentration when praying. Many Muslim men also carry them as worry beads or as a sign of status.

Religion in Southeast Asia

Models of a Mingangkabau village
Brass
Indonesia, Sumatra
Late 19th/early 20th century CE

Gift from Mr. W.S.Spinney
DUROM.1966.6.1 and DUROM.1966.6.4

The Minangkabau are an ethnic minority native to the high-lands of West Sumatra. They are devout Muslims but combine this with traditional Malay-style matrilineal society. The smaller model is a *surau* (prayer house) where the males prayed and held Koran classes and where unmarried and widowed men slept. The larger model is a rumah gadang (great house) which was the women's house. Married Minangkabau men ate and worked with their mothers and sisters but slept in their wife's family house. Upon her marriage a girl was allocated a room in the great house. If space ran out, extra rooms were added, leading to the many roofs shown on the model.

Hat *(songkok)*
Velvet
Malaysia
2000-2013 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2015.22

Developed from the Ottoman fez, this style of hat is now widely worn across Southeast Asia. It is worn by Muslims in Malaysia and the Philippines but in Indonesia is strongly linked to the secular nationalist movement.

Religion in Southeast Asia

Khmer statue of Buddha
Limestone
Thailand/Cambodia, Khmer Empire
800-1299 CE

Gift from Mrs Juliane von Hessert from the De Laszlo Collection.
DUROM.1992.181

This style of sculpture of Buddha was created between the 9th and 12th centuries CE in what is now Cambodia and Thailand. The many headed serpent may represent the snake deity (*nāga*) Muchalinda, who protected Buddha while he meditated.

Buddha from Ayutthaya
Bronze
Thailand, Kingdom of Ayutthaya
About 1600 CE

Purchase
DUROM.1962.205

The central Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya arose from a region that had been under Khmer domination. It quickly developed its own characteristic artistic style of which this statue of Buddha is typical. Distinctive styles of Buddhist art are seen right across Southeast Asia.

Religion in Southeast Asia

Statue of the Virgin Mary
Wood, paint
Philippines
2000-2016 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2017.289

Following centuries of Spanish colonial rule, today around 80% of the population of the Philippines is Catholic. The Spanish influence is clear in Christian art from the islands such as this statue of the Virgin Mary dressed in a style influenced by historic Spanish court dress.

Religion in Southeast Asia

Rosary
Jasper, agate, silver
Italy & USA
2014 CE

Purchase
DUROM.2015.30

The medal on this rosary is for St Pedro Calungsod, a Filipino Catholic martyr, reflecting the growth of distinctively Filipino Christian customs and practices in recent years.

Few details are known about Calungsod's early life. He seems to have received an education at a Jesuit school and learned to speak Spanish as a boy. In 1668, aged around 14, he was chosen to accompany Spanish Jesuit missionaries to an island known as 'The Isle of Thieves' to preach to the locals. At first they had some success but were eventually killed by suspicious villagers in 1672.

In 1673, San Vitores, the Spanish Jesuit missionary killed with Calungsod was beatified (the first step towards being declared a saint within the Catholic Church) but Calungsod was not. In the 1980s the local church took up the cause after the rediscovery of old manuscripts. In 2000 Pope John Paul II approved the decree for Calungsod's beatification and in 2011 he was recognised as a saint.

No records survive of Calungsod's appearance but many modern artists and sculptors in the Philippines have now imagined how he might have looked to create object such as this rosary highlighting a native Filipino saint.

Impact of Tourism on Southeast Asia

Tourism has been one of the major causes of cultural change in Southeast Asia over the last century. These changes have been both positive and negative and have varied from country to country.

As tourists, we want to meet people living lives very different to our own. We want to witness traditional rituals, theatre and storytelling and then take home a souvenir. This has impacted on the ways in which some minority communities are portrayed and treated both within their own country and in promotional and travel literature used worldwide. It has led to changes in traditional arts and crafts to meet the new demand for souvenirs. In some areas people have been displaced to make way for new tourist resorts and traditional ways of life and income generation have been destroyed.

Tourists want to visit important historic sites and exotic locations. Tourism can be a significant source of income for countries struggling to build their economics but it can also cause damage to fragile, unique environments and irreplaceable historic monuments. In some areas tourism has also become a major cause of child and sexual exploitation amongst the poorest sections of society.

In recent years there have been increasing calls for Southeast Asian countries to work together to promote sustainable, responsible tourism that conserves the natural environment and biodiversity; respects and supports local communities; conserve energy; reduces waste and pollutants; and educates and informs tourists about local environments and cultures. However, achieving these goals lies not just with the governments of these countries, it also requires our cooperation as responsible tourists.

Impact of Tourism on Southeast Asia

Scene from the Ramayana
Wood
Indonesia, Bali
1900-1950 CE

Gift, the Dr & Mrs J.T. Roberts Balinese collection
DUROM.1999.91

This carving depicts a scene from the great Hindu epic poem, Ramayana. More than 80% of the Balinese people are Hindus. Carvings of scenes like this were traditionally made to decorate temples or shrines. As the tourist market in Bali expanded during the 20th century, these traditional themes have been used to create pieces aimed at the tourist market as well. This piece shows the demon King Ravanna (centre) carrying off Sita, the wife of Rama. At the base Hanuman tries to grab Ravanna.

Burmese plate
Ceramic
Myanmar (Burma)
Before 1979 CE

Gift from Bishop and Mrs. G.A. West
DUROM.1979.45

This plate was designed to be wall-hung, rather than used, and shows an idealised view of rural Burma for visitors to take home.

Impact of Tourism on Southeast Asia

Carving of a hornbill
Wood
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak, Bintulu
Late 20th century CE

The Glendenning Collection
DUROM.2014.318

There are eight species of hornbill in Borneo. They are important birds in the culture of the different native peoples of the island. The rhinoceros hornbill (depicted here) is the state bird of Sarawak, reflecting its importance in many legends, rituals and beliefs. Wooden carvings of rhinoceros hornbills have been created for many centuries to be used in traditional spiritual ceremonies. Today they are also popular souvenirs with visitors to the islands.

Vase showing man with blowpipe
Porcelain
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak, Miri
Late 20th century CE

The Glendenning Collection
DUROM.2014.317

This vase was made at a pottery located close to the Shell Oil company offices in the Borneo town of Miri. It is obviously aimed at visitors looking for a souvenir. The image shows a man squatting in front of a traditional long house, holding a blow pipe to his mouth with a basket on his back, head hunting sword at his hip and a container for blow pipe darts near the sword. The man has the elongated earlobes and short cropped hair style traditional associated with the hill tribes of Sarawak. As such the piece attempts to represent as many elements of traditional life as possible that might appeal to a modern tourist audience.

Impact of Tourism on Southeast Asia

Figure of Burmese man DUROM.U10341
Metal, wood
Myanmar (Burma)
Mid-20th century CE

This cast metal figure is intended to represent a young Burmese man dressed as a warrior with traditional weapons and armour. This type of small-scale sculpture of local peoples has long been popular with Western travellers and tourists but many local people feel that they present stereotyped and often outdated images of local people.

Hornbill carving The Glendenning Collection
Organic material DUROM.2014.304
Borneo, East Malaysia, Sarawak, Miri
1990-1999 CE

Carving hornbill skull and casque (decorative growth on the top of the bill) is a traditional craft in Borneo. Today these carvings are made for the tourist market as well.

Overhunting and loss of habitat are leading to serious declines in the populations of all species. As with ivory, tourists have an important role to play in ensuring the future preservation of these species by thinking carefully about all of the souvenir purchases they make.

Impact of Tourism on Southeast Asia

Carving of a bird
Wood, paint
Sarawak State
1933–1960 CE

Gift from
Rev. Terence Oliver
DUROM.1978.39

Carved and painted bird models like this are made by the Kenyah ethnic group in Borneo.

Traditionally local carvers would create large, brightly coloured replica hornbills for religious ceremonies but they adapted these skills in order to produce smaller, colourful and more portable examples for the tourist market.

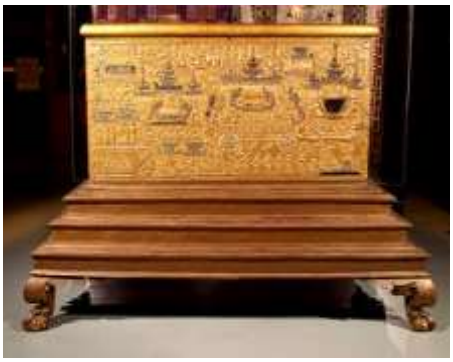
Bamboo root carving
Bamboo root
Brunei
1985-1988 CE

The Glendenning Collection
DUROM.2014.315

Bamboo roots are cheap and easy to obtain but hard and very difficult to work. Modern tools has made the carving process much faster. Carvers make use of the roots natural features in their designs.

As a fast growing, natural and easily regenerated material, bamboo is ideal for the creation of tourist souvenirs without causing lasting harm to the local environment or wildlife.

Manuscript Chest



Manuscript chests (sadaik in Burmese) such as this were used as repositories of cultural knowledge in Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand. They stored texts on subjects such as Buddhism, history and astrology.

The stepped base of this chest is typical of those found in Buddhist monasteries rather than private homes and the front is decorated with scenes from the life and death of the Buddha. Buddha is shown surrounded by different types of worshippers, mourners and celestial beings.

The panel designs are made in *thayo* clay relief. This involves kneading wood or cow dung ashes with lacquer to form malleable strings which are then sculptured or stamped into patterns. Once the thayo has hardened it is lacquered and then overlaid with gold leaf. Pieces of mirror glass have also been set into the decoration.

Wood, gold leaf, lacquer and glass
Myanmar (Burma)
19th century CE

Purchase
DUROM.GQ155

‘Venus of Pasagoean’

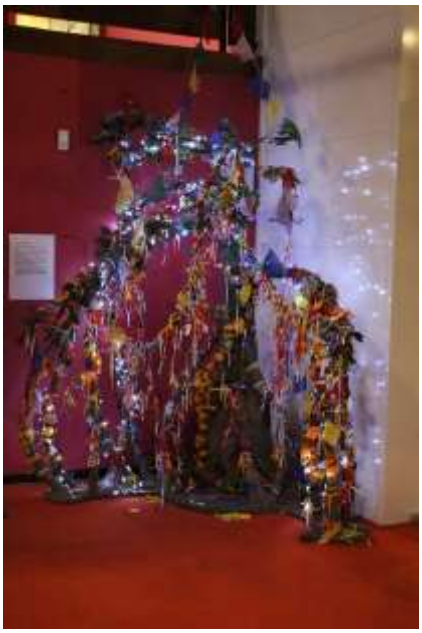
This statue is said to have been carved in the *kampong* (village) Maria Gunung which stood on an old trade route from the east coast of Sumatra to the mountains of the interior.

According to local legend, the statue was carved by a man who died of a broken heart, having been rejected as a suitor by a girl’s father. However, this story is likely to have grown up relatively recently. The statue, which was one of a group of four, is more likely to have been a fertility symbol at a shrine inhabited by a powerful forest spirit. Locals still leave offerings of fruit, rice, cigarettes and flowers at these shrines today.

Stone
Kampong Maria Gunung, Sumatra, Indonesia
14-16th century CE

On loan from a private collection

Tree Shrine



This tree is a replica of a Hindu banyan tree shrine. It was made by Middlesbrough-based artist, Bub Bacon.

Many Hindus believe that the God Brahma created everything in the world, and so it is common for rivers, mountains or trees to be revered. In some villages in India, people believe that forms of God reside in trees and when these are worshipped, they become known as *Gramadevata* — a term which means 'village deity'.

The Gramadevata is treated with great respect and worshipped through weekly *pujas* (acts of devotion) where the tree is washed, dressed and given offerings of flowers and clay animal statues. Some people pray to the Gramadevata for good fortune by tying pieces of material onto its branches—please feel free to do this with our tree using the ribbon provided.

The Gramadevata is a key part of the community, embodying not only the village deity but also the spirits of those who have lived in the village previously. If the tree dies, it is common for the villagers to build a permanent shrine on the spot where it once stood and continue to revere this hallowed ground and worship the deity that once lived there.