



Dear Visitor

Welcome to the Hull Museum of Southeast Asian Craft and Belief. We hope that you will find this booklet useful in exploring the museum. It contains information about the objects displayed in the 87 cases in the museum. You will also find 12 large panels in the museum, covering wider cross-cutting themes relating to craft and belief in Southeast Asia. Suggestions of cases and panels that you may wish to go on to are provided for each case and each panel. We hope that these will provide useful. But there is no 'right' path through the museum. Please wander and discover following your own interests.

Please return this booklet to the stand where you found it when you have finished visiting the museum.

Enjoy the museum!

Dr. Monica Janowski
Curator

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Acknowledgements

The museum as you see it now is the result of work done between 2024 and 2026 to transform the museum from a teaching collection to a public-facing museum. This has involved a thorough reorganization of the cases, including the creation of 28 new cases.

The production of this booklet and of the themed panels has been made possible through a grant from the Humberside Museums Partnership funded by Arts Council England. We are very grateful for this grant, which inspired the reorganization of our cases. Our hope is that this new interpretation helps the beautiful objects on display connect with, and be enjoyed by, as many visitors as possible.

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Case 1. Wayang Golek Puppets made by Asep Sunandar Sunarya

This set of puppets was made by the famous Javanese puppeteer Asep Sunandar Sunarya (1954–2014) for a tour in the UK in 2006–7. Asep Sunandar Sunarya revolutionized West Java's *wayang golek* theatre, transforming the traditional art by engineering innovative mechanical puppets that could somersault or change expressions.

These puppets, which represent a range of characters from the Javanese adaptation of the Hindu Mahabharata epic, were donated to the museum after their tour, and were used in the Yorkshire 'Precious Cargo' projects 'Breath of Life' and 'Power of Story' as part of the museum's contribution to the Cultural Olympiad in 2012.

1. **Dewi Permani.** She thinks she loves Batara Guru, but so offends him that he makes her into a *raksasa* (ogre). *Humus* 2011.3.1.
2. **Citrasoma.** One of the hundred Kaurava brothers. In performance he is depicted as a boastful, stuttering, foolish prince who provides comic relief. *Humus* 2011.3.3.
3. **Dewi Arimbi.** Sister of Prabu Arimba, King of the *raksasa* (giant)'s country of Pringgandani and has magical powers. *Humus* 2011.3.5.
4. **Raden Buriswara.** Son of King Salya of Mandraka and Setyawati, a demon's daughter. *Humus* 2011.3.6.
5. **A buta (ogre).** *Humus* 2011.3.2.
6. **Dewi Subadra.** An incarnation of Dewi Sri, the Rice Goddess (see Case 38). *Humus* 2011.3.4.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; The Cosmic Duo; Cooking the Cosmos

Case 2. The Golden Deer

This case relates to an episode in the Ramayana epic, which derives from the Indian sub-continent. Southeast Asian versions of the Indian Ramayana epic are well known throughout the region.

In this episode, the evil Rawana captures the hero Prince Rama's wife Princess Sita using a cunning ruse. He forces his servant Marika to become a beautiful golden deer in the forest. While Rama chases after the deer, his wife is kidnapped. This key event, the abduction of Sita, triggers a long search and ultimately a fierce war.

1. **Carved wooden deer.** Bali. With caste mark in coloured glass and mirror decoration on gold grounds. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.21.
2. **Wayang golek puppet of a hero.** West Java. *Humus* 2010.4.

Also see Cases 1, 21 and 22 for more *wayang golek* puppets.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; Harvest of the Wild





Case 3. Performance: Face and Fingers

Dance-drama is a key performance style in Southeast Asia. This case displays two of the key accoutrements used in dance-drama: fingernail extensions and masks.

The metal fingernail extensions in this case are from Laos. The masks are ones used in a dance-drama style in Java and Bali, which is called *topeng*. In Java, *topeng* performances depict Javanese legends centred on the adventures of Prince Panji and Princess Candra Kirana, set in the 12th-century kingdoms of East Java. Facial colours indicate qualities of character and mood. In Bali, *topeng* is used to perform historical dramas about the kingdoms of Gelgel and Klungkung.

Both fingernail extensions and masks like the ones shown here are still used in performances in the region in local lifecycle and ritual events. They are now also used in performances staged for tourists.

1. **Blue Javanese mask.** Probably Prince Panji. The blue colour represents his refined, cool and calm temperament. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.46.
2. **Javanese mask of a minister, Patih Nambi.** Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.44.
3. **Balinese mask representing an uncouth, coarse character.** Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.43.
4. **Balinese monkey mask.** Coll. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.17.
5. **Pink Javanese mask of a young princess.** The pink colour represents her youth, beauty and refined grace. Panji cycle. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.94.
6. **White Javanese mask of a prince.** Possibly Raden Gubung Sari, Prince of Kediri. The white colour represents his refined temperament. Panji cycle. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.93.
7. **Yellow Javanese mask of a young prince.** The yellow colour represents majesty, glory and nobility. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1965. *Humus* 1975.L29.
8. **Blue Javanese mask of an elderly man.** The blue colour represents his refined, cool and calm temperament. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1965. *Humus* 1975.L30.
9. **White Balinese mask of a *raja* (king).** The white colour represents his refined temperament. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1965. *Humus* 1975.L28.
10. **Brown Balinese mask of a minister.** The brown colour represents his stable, earthy temperament. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.95.
11. **Metal fingernails used in classical dance.** Laos. Coll E. Aitken 1969. *Humus* 1978.35.1–10.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Threads of Meaning

Case 4. Iban Textile from Sarawak: Selampai

This silk shawl (*selampai*) was presented to the University of Hull in 2023 by Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Leonard Linggi Jugah, a prominent lawyer and politician from Sarawak, Malaysia, and a Hull University alumnus. The gift reflects Datuk Linggi Jugah's heritage as a Sarawakian and a member of the Iban community. In his own words, it was presented 'with the intention of sharing a textile that reflects Sarawak's rich Iban weaving heritage, while symbolising friendship and cultural exchange between our communities and in recognition of the fond memories of my time reading law in the University'.

The *selampai* was made on a backstrap loom using the *ikat* method of dyeing the tied threads before weaving, using natural dyes from morinda root and indigo leaves. It is an adaptation of traditional Iban design motifs and carries the aesthetic language of a *pua kumbu*, the sacred traditional blanket used in ritual ceremonies. The design on this piece is entitled 'Ulu Lungga Indai Cherengga Muda' which means 'Knife Handle of Cherengga Muda's mother'. It was woven by Madu anak Buda, one of the senior weavers at the Tun Jugah Foundation in Kuching in Sarawak, which includes a training centre for *ikat*-weaving. This was set up by Datuk Linggi in memory of his father Tun Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Jugah Barieng, a seminal Sarawakian statesman who was the last Paramount Chief (Temenggong) of all Ibans in Sarawak and a prime mover in the formation of Malaysia in 1963.

Gift from Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Leonard Linggi Juga 2023. *Humus* 2023.1

See Cases 27, 31, 33 and 83 for other examples of Iban *ikat* and Case 32 for the backstrap loom upon which *ikat* is woven.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes





Case 5. Nyonya Clothing

This case contains clothes worn by ladies of the Peranakan or Straits Chinese group, of mixed Chinese and Malay heritage, until about the 1980s. These ladies were known as *nyonya*, while the men of the community were known as *baba*. The Straits Chinese group developed from the 14th century onwards in Singapore, Malacca and Penang on the Malay Peninsula and were prosperous communities with high status. While most were absorbed into the wider Chinese community in the 20th century, memories of Peranakan ancestry are still treasured. These items were all given to the museum by Annabel Gallop in 2025. Some of the clothing, including the shoes, was worn by her mother and some she has worn herself.

1. **Kebaya blouse.** Singapore or Malaya. Embroidered cotton. *Humus 2026.1.1.*
2. **Sarong or kain (wrapped skirt).** Singapore or Malaya. Cotton dyed using *batik* method. *Humus 2026.1.2.*
3. **Kerongsang pin made of silver.** Singapore or Malaya. Holds the *kebaya* edges together, in place of buttons. *Humus 2026.1.3.*
4. **Silver belt.** Singapore or Malaya. To be worn around the top of the *sarong* to hold it in place. Probably made in the very early 20th century as part of a bridal trousseau. The buckle incorporates a bird, perhaps a phoenix, which symbolizes high virtue and the Chinese Empress. *Humus 2026.1.4.*
5. **Embroidered shoes.** Singapore or Malaya. Known as *kasut kodok* ('frog shoes') or *kasut tongkang* ('boathead shoes'), reflecting their shape. Probably made in the very early 20th century as part of a bridal trousseau. Embroidered with the mythical *qilin* 麒麟, symbolising prosperity and many children. *Humus 2026.1.5.*

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; A Cultural Melting Pot

Case 6. Akha Women's Clothing

These are clothes worn by the women of the Akha group, who live in a wide region covering parts of Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and China. They formed part of a larger collection that was exhibited in the major exhibition that toured the Humber region in 1987–89, 'Costumes of the Golden Triangle'.

1. **Akha woman's sash.** *Humus 1976.44.*
2. **Pair of Akha woman's leggings.** Black hemp cloth with decorations of applique cloth, seeds and buttons. *Humus 1976.41.*
3. **Akha woman's 'Shan' bag.** Geometric decorations of applique cloth, embroidery, buttons, feathers and aluminium discs. *Humus 1976.45.*
4. **Akha woman's skirt.** Dark blue cloth with knife pleats. *Humus 1976.39.*

All collected by R. Cooper in the village of Mae Sai, Chiang Rai province, Thailand in 1975.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning





Case 7. The Inseparable Couple I

This case and Case 11 highlight the profound importance of the union between male and female principles in the region.

In Java, this sacred duality is exemplified by large carvings like those in the case, of the Loro Blonyo, which means 'inseparable couple' in Javanese. Representing the goddess of fertility or rice mother, Dewi Sri (see Case 38) and her consort, Raden Sadono, such carvings were once a mark of high social standing, found primarily in the homes of the Javanese aristocracy (*ningrat*). Kept in the sacred central chamber of a noble *joglo* residence, they served as spiritual vessels for ancestral blessings and domestic harmony. Today, Loro Blonyo have transitioned into prominent symbols of cultural identity.

This same focus on complementarity and unity of male and female is expressed through the Balinese *cili* figure displayed here made of palm leaf. While most *cili* represent only Dewi Sri, some incorporate her spouse, Sedana, as does this one, which joins Dewi Sri and Sedana at the bottom, underlining their unity. Combining male and female in one figure echoes the importance of transgender people in the region, who often act as shaman-healers or spirit mediums (see Case 72).

Cili are made at the rice harvest to carry the spirit of Dewi Sri and to ensure abundance, and they are also used in temple offerings. In recent years they have evolved from a temporary ritual object into a permanent icon of Balinese cultural identity and the silhouette of the *cili* is widely integrated into contemporary architecture, temple decorations and fine art.

1. **Female member of Loro Blonyo couple.** Java, Indonesia. Carved and painted wood. Represents the rice goddess, Dewi Sri. 19th century. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.1
2. **Male member of a Loro Blonyo couple.** Java, Indonesia. Carved and painted wood. Represents Dewi Sri's consort, Raden Sadono. 19th century. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.2.
3. **Pair of *cili* figures.** Bali, Indonesia. Made of palm leaf, attached at the bottom, representing the rice goddess, Dewi Sri, and her spouse and male counterpart, Sedana. Second half of 20th century. *Humus* 2011.2.3.

Also see Case 11.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State; Shadows, Water and Wood

Case 8. Betel and Areca Chewing

This case focuses on the ancient Southeast Asian practice of chewing a 'quid' of areca nut (*Areca catechu*), betel leaf (*Piper betle*) and slaked lime. This releases a red juice and historically stained teeth a prestigious, refined black. Tobacco, cloves, cardamom or gambier extract are sometimes added to the chew in island Southeast Asia, while turmeric is often mixed with the slaked lime in the mainland parts of the region.

Areca nut serves as a mild stimulant. The chewing of the quid has over many centuries, perhaps millennia, been a vital social catalyst, central to hospitality and to marriage negotiations. One of the photographs in the case shows the presentation of 'ancient betel' as a formal act of hospitality among the Rejang people in Sumatra. Betel leaf is associated with female and areca nut with male, and their union symbolizes cosmological harmony and the marital bond. The cosmological importance of the quid is expressed in the forms of the tools used in preparing it, which often incorporate powerful spiritual entities.

Throughout Southeast Asia, shaman-healers have utilized the betel plant for healing, applying the leaf as a heated poultice to soothe physical pains and blowing the masticated red juice of the betel and areca chew over the patient to restore spiritual harmony and vital energy to the body.

While in cities and towns betel and areca chewing has declined in recent years, it remains an important symbol of communal identity in many rural areas.

1. **Copper box for betel and areca set.** Maranao. Mindanao, Philippines. With internal compartments for lime paste, betel and areca. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. in the 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.74.
2. **Box for slaked lime.** Maguindanao. Mindanao, Philippines. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. in the 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.78.5.
3. **Gourd container for slaked lime.** Probably Eastern Indonesia. Philla Davis collection. *Humus* 1990.14.170.
4. **Bamboo container for slaked lime.** Timor, Indonesia. With incised decorations. Coll. V.T. King and S. Jay in Singapore 1995. *Humus* 1995.13.1–2.
5. **Bamboo container for slaked lime with attached spatula.** Iban. Rejang river, Sarawak, Malaysia. Incised and coloured red. Bettison Collection. Coll. 1940s/1950s. *Humus* 1980.2.1–2.
6. **Lacquerware betel and areca set.** Chiang Mai, Thailand. Its flowered design is called *zin-me*, which is the old name for Chiang Mai. One bowl contains areca nut slices and another contains packets of slaked lime mixed with turmeric for chewing with the betel and areca. Coll. T. North and R. Carter 1985 as part of the Hull University Betel Expedition. *Humus* 1985.2.11.1–8.
7. **Brass betel and areca set.** Probably Trengganu, Malaya. Including holder for betel leaves and small containers to hold sliced areca nut and spices. Coll. R. Carter 1985. *Humus* 1985.2.25.1–7.
8. **Brass betel and areca set.** Trengganu, Malaya. Including tongs, areca cutter and containers for sliced areca nut and spices. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.154.
9. **Round lacquer box for betel and areca set.** Myanmar. With internal tray. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.32.
10. **Round lacquer box for betel and areca set.** Myanmar. With internal tray. Collected in Hull by M. Poprdan 1990. *Humus* 1990.19.10.
11. **Octagonal lacquer box for betel and areca set.** Laos. Displayed with strung areca nuts, prepared using a method traditionally used to air-dry the crop and formally present it for chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973.





Box *Humus* 1973.30. Strung areca nuts *Humus* 1985.2.12.

12. **Two areca nut chopper handles in the form of demons.** Bali, Indonesia. Painted wood. The demons (*bhuta* or *leyak*) are believed to ward off malevolent spirits and neutralize impurities during the ritual preparation of the betel and areca chew. Coll. L. Hill 1982. *Humus* 1982.14.9–10.
13. **Areca nut cutter.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Shaped as the monkey deity Hanuman, acting as a protective charm and referencing the Ramayana epic. Coll. J. Glanville 1999. *Humus* 1999.7.2.
14. **Areca nut cutter.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Featuring a horse head motif, symbolizing masculine strength and prestige in traditional courtship ceremonies. Coll. J. Glanville 1999. *Humus* 1999.7.3.
15. **Areca nut cutter.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Shaped as a peacock, serving as a prestige luxury object used for elite hospitality or wedding gifts. Coll. J. Glanville 1999. *Humus* 1999.7.4.
16. **Brass betel and areca set.** Probably Maguindanao. Mindanao, Philippines. Tray and three boxes for sliced areca nut and aromatic spices. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. in the 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.78.1–4.

Also see the betel and areca chewing items in Cases 33 and 83, and Case 72 on Healing and the Spirit World.

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes

Case 9. The Lontar Palm in Rote

On Rote Island in Eastern Indonesia, the lontar palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) is spoken of as a mother. Its sweet, life-giving sap (*nira*) is compared directly to breast milk. It is a nutritional staple harvested twice a day that sustains the population during the long dry season, when other crops may fail. As well as being consumed fresh, it is boiled into a thick syrup (*gula air*) and processed into solid sugar blocks. It is also fermented and made into *tua*, which is sometimes distilled to make *sopi*.

Beyond nutrition, every part of the palm is utilized for construction and craftsmanship. The trunks provide timber for housing, while the leaf stalks are often used to make fences to protect gardens from livestock. The leaves are woven into baskets, mats, betel boxes and the fan-shaped hats signifying male dignity known as *ti'i langga*. They are even made into resonators for the *sasandu*. Examples of all of these are displayed here.

1. **Sasandu musical instrument.** The lontar palm leaf hemisphere acts as a resonator. This one has 28 strings and was made by the Pah family of Rotenese musicians. *Humus* 1993.3.1.
2. **Ti'i langga hat.** Made of lontar palm. The Rotenese have at least 14 different forms of these men's hats, which are based on 16th century Portuguese hats. Lontar is used to make the entire hat, including the feathers. *Humus* 1993.3.3.
3. **Box for betel and areca (ndunak).** Made of lontar palm. A woman's box with a secret drawer inside for a gold ring. This is part of a ceremonial gift from a man's family to the family of his desired bride. *Humus* 1993.3.4.

All made in the early 1990s and collected by D. Patty and M. Patty-Noach in 1993.

Relevant thematic panels: Crafting the Cosmos; Altered States; Emerald Horizons; Shadows, Water and Wood; Threads of Meaning





Case 10. Rice Alcohol in Sarawak

Rice is central in the region (see Cases 38 and 39), and in Sarawak rice beer, known as *tuak* or *borak*, is important socially and ritually, as it is throughout the region. Traditionally, rice beer was brewed and drunk from jars (*tajau*) like the one shown here, often much bigger than this.

Distilled, rice beer becomes a spirit locally called *langkau* in Sarawak. Spirits distilled from rice made in China have also been imported into Sarawak, such as the bottle in the case, which includes male silkworm moths in the distillate, believed to impart health.

Southeast Asia has a growing craft rice beer scene, making beers like those shown here. Craft gin based on rice is also being produced, by further distilling *langkau* and adding Borneo botanicals. Examples of both craft rice beer and craft rice gin are displayed here.

Commercially-produced beer in the region, which is usually made partly and sometimes wholly from rice, markets itself as rooted in local place, as can be seen in the beer tin shown here, made for sale in Sarawak in a Sarawakian-themed tin.

Alcohol is also made in the region from the sap from palm trees (see Case 9) and from sugar cane (the blue-and-white Chinese jar on open display was almost certainly used for this), and also from millet, Job's tears, yams, taro and cassava.

1. **Atelier 'Serai' craft rice beer.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.9.
2. **Bujang Senang craft rice beer.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.10.
3. **Tuak Dayak craft rice beer.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.11.
4. **Ringin craft rice gin.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.12.
5. **Silkworm moth rice spirit (蛾酒 蒸).** China. Known as *langkau* in Sarawak. Exported to Sarawak. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.13.
6. **Carlsberg beer tin with Sarawakian design.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Made from a mix of rice and barley. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.14.
7. **Ragi (yeast for making rice beer).** Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.15.
8. **Sample of glutinous rice.** As used to make rice beer. *Humus* 2026.23.16.
9. **Stoneware jar (tajau).** Sarawak, Malaysia. Jars like this are used for brewing and drinking rice beer (*tuak*). Relatively small jars like this one, which are called *guri*, are used for serving rice beer rather than fermentation. Gift of Tuson Chong. *Humus* 2026.6.
10. **Publicity materials and labels for Bad Cat beers (tuak).** Bad Cat is a small craft beer (*tuak*) producer in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, making *tuak* not only from rice but also from various types of fruit. Included here are Bad Cat posters, a leaflet and labels. The brewery is owned by Maynard Keyne Langet, a Bidayuh from Serian, Sarawak. Gifts from Maynard Keyne Langet 2026. *Humus* 2026.12.1–11.
11. **Bad Cat 'Original' craft rice beer bottle.** Gift from Maynard Keyne Langet 2026. *Humus* 2026.12.2.
12. **Bad Cat 'Premium' craft rice beer.** This is made from rice from Maynard Keyne Langet's family rice field, and is aged in ancestral Bidayuh ceramic jars. Gift from Maynard Keyne Langet 2026. *Humus* 2026.12.3. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.10.

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; Cooking the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons

Case 11. The Inseparable Couple II

This case contains expressions of the profound importance of the union between male and female principles in the region. This includes a Javanese Loro Blonyo couple like that in Case 7. See the text for Case 7.

Also in this case is a palm leaf *cili* figure from Bali, which combines male and female in one hermaphroditic figure. This echoes the importance of transgender people in the region, who often act as shaman healers or spirit mediums. See Case 72.

1. **Female member of Loro Blonyo couple.** Java, Indonesia. Represents the rice goddess, Dewi Sri. Carved and painted wooden statue. 19th century. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.79.
2. **Male member of a Loro Blonyo couple.** Java, Indonesia. Represents Dewi Sri's consort, Raden Sadono. Carved and painted wooden statue. 19th century. Coll M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.80.
3. **Cili figure.** Bali. Made of palm, with eyes and mouth made of Chinese coins. Representing Dewi Sri, the Rice Goddess. *Humus* 2026.2.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State; Shadows, Water and Wood





Case 12. Vietnamese Water Puppets

These puppets were made by the Đồng Ngư Water Puppetry Troupe from Vietnam. They are replicas of puppets made in 2022 by the same troupe for a British Academy-funded research project led by Professor Lisa Jones from the University of Hull alongside Vietnamese partners, which explored youth-led perspectives on regional climate change adaptation. This led to a water puppetry performance that debuted at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi in December 2022.

That performance drew on a centuries-old art form native to the wet-rice agricultural landscape of northern Vietnam's Red River Delta. Water puppetry takes place in a pool of water, with puppeteers standing waist-deep behind a screen to manipulate the wooden figures using underwater rods and strings. The recent project adapted the medium to share a contemporary narrative. The innovative production blended age-old indigenous crafting techniques, such as hand-carving wooden puppets and using traditional pigments, with modern themes and research. Rather than focusing solely on historical delta life, the performance included upland ethnic minorities such as Hmong and Dao, and local youth wearing their blue Youth Union uniforms. The aim was to stimulate dialogue between grassroots communities and policymakers on environmental resilience.

1. **Hmong woman.** *Humus 2026.57.*
2. **Member of Youth Union.** *Humus 2026.58.*
3. **Dao woman.** *Humus 2026.59.*

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Sentient Landscapes; Emerald Horizons; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 13. Myanmar String Puppets

String puppets (*yote thé ရုပ်သင်း*) like the two in this case dominate Myanmar puppet theatre, which is regarded as superior to theatre with human actors, as puppets can perform feats impossible for humans. A set usually includes 28 puppets, including gods, royalty and mythical animals like the *garuda* and *naga*.

The puppets displayed here are of a minister, recognisable by his moustache and court cap, and a prince, who has a white face and royal costume. The puppets are dressed in garments adorned with *shwe chi htoe* (ရွှေချည်ထိုး), a traditional embroidery technique using metallic threads and glass sequins to catch the stage lights. (Another example of *shwe chi htoe* is the framed embroidered dragon from Myanmar on open display.) Each performance is a spiritual event, beginning with a ritual dance to appease the forest spirits and accompanied by a live *hsaing waing* ဆိုင်းဝိုင်း: percussion orchestra. While the art form faced a decline in the 20th century, it is currently experiencing a revival through dedicated puppet theatres in Mandalay and Yangon.

1. **Minister.** (*wungyi ဝန်ကြီး*). Identified through court cap and mustache. A standard troupe includes four ministers, representing the four cardinal directions/departments of state. Probably first half of 20th century. *Humus* 1992.3.23.
2. **Prince.** (*mintha*). Probably first half of 20th century. *Humus* 1992.3.24.

Both from the Mathieson collection.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo; A Cultural Melting Pot





Case 14. Thai and Cambodian Shadow Puppets

One of the two shadow puppets in this case is from Thailand and the other is from Cambodia. They represent characters from the Hindu Ramayana, grounded in the Hindu-Buddhist heritage of the region. Traditionally used for popular village storytelling, performances blend classical episodes from the Hindu Ramayana epic with local folklore, humour and social commentary.

1. ***Nang talung (shadow puppet) of the demon king, Thotsakan.*** Thailand. Cow or buffalo hide. From the Thai version of the Ramayana, the Ramakien. Coll. A. Crowther 1978. *Humus* 1978.6.
2. ***Sbek touch (shadow puppet) of Prince Rama.*** Cambodia. Cow or buffalo hide. From the Cambodian version of the Ramayana, the Reamker. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1975.L6.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; The Cosmic Duo

Case 15. Balinese Shadow Puppets

Balinese shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*) preserves a more naturalistic, human proportion and iconographic style than its Javanese counterpart. Puppets are made of buffalo hide. Guided by a master puppeteer (*dalang*), performances adapt episodes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The narrative relies on sacred retainer-clowns (*parekan*) who translate the archaic *kawi* (Old Javanese) text spoken by noble heroes into regional Balinese, delivering moral discourse, social commentary and comic relief.

1. **Noble hero figure.** *Humus 2008.1.1.*
2. **Sacred retainer-clown (*parekan*).** *Humus 2008.1.2.*

Both collected by Kathie Jenkins in 1979 in Denpasar, Bali.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; The Cosmic Duo





Case 16. Malay Shadow Puppets

These puppets are from the *wayang kulit Siam*, the most popular form of shadow puppetry in the Malay Peninsula. Two represent the traditions of Kelantan, where the art form is most celebrated, and the third originates from Pahang. Made from cow hide and painted in vibrant colours, two of these figures are distinguished by their single movable arm and profiles influenced by Thai aesthetics. Performances by a master puppeteer (*tok dalang*) adapt episodes from the Hindu Ramayana epic into the local Malay dialect. Although Malays are Muslim, they have a deeply-rooted memory of Hindu epics from a time in the past when their ancestors were Hindu-Buddhist.

1. **Prince Sri Rama, husband of Siti Dewi.** Kelantan, Malaya. *Humus* 1969.81.
2. **Princess Siti Dewi, wife of Sri Rama.** Kelantan, Malaya. *Humus* 1969.82.
3. **Rural commoner or comedic servant.** Pahang, Malaya. *Humus* 1969.149.

All collected by M.A. Jaspan in 1969.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; The Cosmic Duo

Case 17. Central Java Shadow Puppets

These *wayang kulit* shadow puppets, from Central Java, made of buffalo hide, portray Kresna and Arjuna, two of the most significant figures in Javanese theatre. Although most Javanese are Muslim, they have a deeply-rooted memory of Hindu epics brought to life through puppetry, from a time when their ancestors were Hindu-Buddhist. In the Hindu Mahabharata epic, the refined warrior prince Arjuna is guided by the wisdom of Kresna, who serves as his divine mentor and charioteer. Both have black faces indicating his calmness, humility and great physical and mental strength. The figures are made of buffalo hide and represent the peak of the Javanese tradition, characterized by their gold-leaf detailing and highly stylized, elongated limbs. A Javanese performance is led by a master puppeteer (*dalang*), who brings complex philosophical dialogues to life.

1. **Kresna.** *Humus* 1968.2.
2. **Arjuna.** *Humus* 1968.1.

Both gifts from Kartini Sabekti in 1968.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Threads of Meaning; The Cosmic Duo





Case 18. Gunungan: The Sacred Mountain-Tree

The sacred mountain-tree, the *gunungan*, is a central figure in Indonesian shadow puppetry, representing both a sacred mountain and the 'Tree of Life'. It acts as a map of the universe, featuring a gateway flanked by animals that symbolises the transition between the earthly and spiritual realms. In performance, the *dalang* (puppeteer) uses a shadow puppet of a *gunungan* like this one, made of buffalo hide, to mark the beginning and end of the play, or to represent elemental forces like wind, fire and water. When placed at the centre of the screen, it signifies a world in perfect balance before the drama of the story unfolds.

Collected. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.23.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; Shadows, Water and Wood; From Headhunting to Head of State; Cooking the Cosmos

Case 19. Brotoseno

This is a buffalo hide shadow puppet of Brotoseno, the youthful name for the legendary hero Bima, who is a central figure in *wayang kulit* in East Java. This is distinguished by its vigorous, earthy style compared to the more formal traditions of Central Java. The puppets in East Java are more robust and less stylised, reflecting a local preference for directness and energy. Brotoseno is known for his immense physical strength, bravery and unwavering honesty. He refuses to use refined language, even when speaking to gods. In East Javanese tradition, Brotoseno represents the ideal of the 'rough' hero: a protector whose raw power and blunt integrity are used to defend the community and uphold justice.

Made by Pak Bari of Tulungagung in 1994. Gift from Gatut Bintoro of Hasanuddin University in 1996. *Humus* 1996.3.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State





Case 20. East Java Shadow Puppets

This case contains two shadow puppets from East Java: the divine clown-servant Semar and a figure of an uncouth youth. Semar is a *wayang kulit* puppet, made of buffalo hide, while the youth belongs to the *wayang krucil* tradition – figures carved from flat wood with leather arms. While *wayang kulit* often tells stories from the Hindu Mahabharata, wooden *wayang krucil* puppets were specifically used to perform the Damarwulan legends, a cycle of stories unique to East Javanese history.

The youth's *kasar* (coarse) features signify a bold and impulsive temperament. In contrast, Semar is a supreme deity in disguise whose androgynous form symbolizes his role as an all-encompassing spiritual guide. He originates in ancient Javanese theatre, and was later incorporated into the Hindu Mahabharata during the period when Java was Hindu-Buddhist. He is a representative of 'the People' and the enduring wisdom of the Javanese soul.

1. **Quick-tempered noble youth.** *Humus 1980.24.*
2. **Semar.** Divine companion and spiritual guide. *Humus 1980.23.*

Both collected by L. Goh in 1979.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; A Cultural Melting Pot

Case 21. Coastal West Java Wayang Golek Puppets

The two *wayang golek* puppets in this case are from the coastal area of West Java. The figures probably represent an Arab merchant and a European official, demonstrating contact with the outside world along the coast. They demonstrate how the local puppetry tradition was adapted to reflect the social landscape of colonial-era Indonesia. The puppets are dressed in tailored jackets and traditional *batik* sarongs, highlighting the fusion of local and foreign styles. While traditional *wayang golek* often performs the Hindu Mahabharata or the Islamic *menak* cycles, characters like these were used in more secular or satirical plays. Their distinct costumes and facial features allowed the audience to immediately identify them as foreign figures, who often served as comic or bureaucratic foils to local heroes.

Nowadays, *wayang golek* continues to be adapted to the changing world, as is shown by the puppet of President Megawati in the photograph in the case.

1. **Foreign character, perhaps an Arab merchant.** 19th or early 20th century.
Humus 1969.132.
2. **Foreign character, perhaps a European official.** 19th or early 20th century.
Humus 1969.133.

Both collected by M.A. Jaspan in 1969.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Threads of Meaning; A Cultural Melting Pot





Case 22. Sundanese Wayang Golek Puppets

These *wayang golek* puppets bring to life the Hindu epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, building on the Hindu-Buddhist past of the island. Every detail, from the tilt of a puppet's head to the colour of its face, serves as a visual code for its character's temperament and social status. Characterized by intricate *batik* costumes and expressive features, *wayang golek* remains a cornerstone of storytelling, traditionally brought to life by a master puppeteer (*dalang*) and the rhythmic resonance of a gamelan orchestra.

Included in this case is a *punokawan*, a sacred retainer and moral guardian. While the royal figures handle the grand, divine battles of the story, their jester-servant provides the grounded wisdom and humour that connects these ancient myths to the everyday lives of the audience. *Punokawan* are both of low status and are the most ancient of deities. They are led by Semar (see Case 20). The photograph in the case shows a puppeteer demonstrating the antics of Cepot, a *punokawan* who is the son of Semar.

1. **Male court official.** *Humus* 1969.97.
2. **Princess.** *Humus* 1969.130.
3. **Punokawan.** *Humus* 1969.98.

All collected by M.A. Jaspan in 1969.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; A Cultural Melting Pot

Case 23. Barkcloth Tunic from Borneo

Barkcloth is an ancient textile tradition in Southeast Asia, predating weaving. It is produced from trees in the Moraceae family, primarily wild fig and *Artocarpus* species. To make barkcloth, the inner bark of the tree is soaked and pounded with mallets until the fibres fuse into sheets.

This man's sleeveless tunic (*upak nyamu*) comes from the Ngaju Dayak in the interior of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. While lowland coastal populations adopted woven fabrics and stitched garments centuries earlier through trade and religious influences, many interior communities continued to use barkcloth for some purposes until late in the 20th century, though it is no longer used for clothing now and this tunic was made for sale as a souvenir.

In interior areas, daily dress historically consisted of barkcloth loincloths for men and skirts for women, leaving the torso bare. Tunics like this male version were reserved for highland cold, travel or ceremonies. Daily upper-body clothing only became common in the interior during the mid-to-late twentieth century.

Gift from Yustina Ngampar. *Humus* 1995.1.7.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; Harvest of the Wild





Case 24. Dayak Benuaq Textile: Ulap Doyo

Although cotton has been produced in Southeast Asia, and also imported from India, for many centuries, people in some areas of Southeast Asia used other fibres to produce cloth. This *ulap doyo* (*doyo* cloth) made by the Dayak Benuaq of East Kalimantan (Indonesia) on the island of Borneo is an example of the use of the leaves of *Curculigo latifolia*, a low-growing forest plant. Across maritime Southeast Asia, fibres from this leaf, known as *doyo* or *lemba*, were used in the past to make clothing, straps and fibres. The Dayak Benuaq of Kalimantan stopped using *doyo* in the 1980s for everyday clothing and objects, but still use it today to make cloth for ceremonial uses. This textile was made on a backstrap loom (see Case 32), probably in the 1960s or 1970s.

While a piece like this would traditionally have been a skirt cloth, this has been made for sale. The iconography on it represents protective ancestral spirits, but their sideways layout reflects their apparent intended use as a horizontal decorative runner. It has been dyed and woven using warp *ikat* (resist-dye), and features a repeating procession of stylized human silhouettes.

The fabric is dyed using both traditional and modern materials. The charcoal black ground is derived from an indigenous process using iron-rich river mud, possibly combined with water boiled from soot or local *kebau* leaves. The dusty-mauve background is dyed using traditional plant extracts from boiled *mengkudu* roots, *secang* heartwood, or native *uar* bark. In contrast, the vibrant teal and magenta pinstripes have been dyed using commercial, imported aniline powders.

Gift from F. Kerlogue 2026. *Humus* 2026.22.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; Cultural Melting Pot; Emerald Horizons

Case 25. Sumatran Formal Textiles: Songket

This case highlights *songket*, a prestigious supplementary weft weaving technique used throughout island Southeast Asia. The maker inserts gold threads into the weave to create shimmering, raised geometric patterns. Historically, these textiles served as a visible marker of high social status and a form of family heirloom wealth across the Indonesian archipelago.

The long textile is from the historic city of Palembang in South Sumatra. It is a *kain selendang songket*, a ceremonial woman's shoulder shawl or scarf made of silk. Beside it is a piece of cotton *songket* folded into a ceremonial man's headcloth, also from Sumatra. A headcloth like this is an essential part of formal male traditional dress within Minangkabau society, where the arrangement of the folds historically indicated a man's lineage, authority and role within the community.

1. ***Kain selendang songket (woman's shawl)***. Silk and gold thread. Palembang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Coll. U. Megumi 2006. *Humus* 2006.1.2.
2. ***Piece of songket folded into a man's headcloth***. Cotton. Selongkang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1972. *Humus* 1973.51.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; The Cosmic Duo





Case 26. Toba Batak Ceremonial Textile: Ulos Ragidup

This cotton cloth is known as an *ulos ragidup* ('pattern of life') and is the most ritually significant cloth woven by the Toba Batak people of North Sumatra. *Ulos ragidup* are still made and used. It has been made on a backstrap loom (see Case 32), and highly engineered in three distinct sections – two dark, indigo-dyed side panels and a complex white central field. These are stitched together along vertical seams.

The intricate geometric blocks at each end are woven using a supplementary weft technique, where an extra set of decorative threads is woven directly into the loom at the same time as the fabric is being built, creating a raised, pattern-on-top effect. The block at one end is symbolically female and that at the other end is symbolically male; together they convey a message of wholeness, fertility and the continuum of life.

In Batak custom (*adat*), a cloth like this acts as a tangible blessing. *Ulos ragidup* are traditionally presented to members of the groom's side by the bride's side during a wedding ceremony to formalize the marriage alliance, reciprocating the male gifts (money and sometimes jewellery or livestock) that have come to the bride's side from the groom's side. Believed to possess a protective soul (*tondi*), an *ulos ragidup* serves as a spiritual shield for the family. It is brought out to mark major life-cycle thresholds, lineage councils and elite community events. An *ulos ragidup* is also given to a mother by her parents on the birth of a child, as a 'soul-cloth' that accompanies the child through life.

Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.

Humus 1969.59.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; The Porous Vessel; From Headhunting to Head of State

Case 27. Iban Ceremonial Textile: Pua Kumbu

This cotton *pua kumbu* was made by a weaver belonging to Iban people of Sarawak, Malaysia on the island of Borneo, using the *kebat* (warp-*ikat*) resist-dyeing technique, where patterns are bound and dyed onto warp threads prior to weaving (also see Cases 4, 31 and 83). The weaver has woven her name into the side of the cloth, reading 'Made by Dayang'. It has been made on a backstrap loom (see Case 32).

The *pua kumbu* is a sacred object used to mark ritual boundaries, communicate with spirits, and shield the longhouse from danger. It serves as a protective canopy during weddings, a covering for harvest festival offerings, and a funeral shroud. The two central figures with diamond-shaped heads and exposed ribs probably represent *engkaramba* – ancestral spirit guardians. Each holds a trophy head dangling from their hand. In Iban culture, only certain women of high social standing and advanced ritual knowledge possess the spiritual authority to safely weave powerful supernatural motifs like these. Positioned beneath the guardians are segmented columns representing centipedes (*kemebai*), which serve as defensive talismans to ward off malevolent forces.

Thwaites collection. Probably collected in the 1950s. *Humus* 2003.6.102.

See Cases 4, 31, 33 and 83 for other examples of Iban *ikat* and Case 32 for the backstrap loom upon which *ikat* is woven; and Cases 51-54 for the significance of headhunting.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Porous Vessel; Sentient Landscapes





Case 28. Javanese Batik

This case shows examples of Javanese *batik*, a dyeing technique that uses a wax-resist method. Batik is used all over the region. While there are various techniques for applying wax, the most prized technique is *batik tulis* ('written *batik*'), where an artisan uses a *canting* – the copper-spouted tools with bamboo handles displayed here – to hand-draw liquid wax onto cloth. The fabric samples displayed here illustrate this labour-intensive process, showing how patterns emerge sequentially through repeated cycles of waxing, dyeing and boiling away the resist layers.

The two completed textiles shown here, both made of cotton and dyed using natural dyes, demonstrate two local applications of the *batik tulis* technique within Java. The cream and brown cloth features *batik kawung*, an ancient geometric pattern from the royal courts of Central Java. Its intersecting circles resemble sacred palm fruits, historically serving as an explicit political symbol of justice, cosmic balance and royal authority. The blue cloth is a carrying sash (*sayut putihan*) and is made from *batik gedog*, a traditional textile from coastal Kerek, East Java. Unlike the fine, imported Indian cotton used for *batik kawung*, this sash is crafted from handspun cotton. It carries protective, talismanic motifs, including triangular *tumpal* panels and facing winged birds.

1. **Samples of *batik* showing the stages of the process of dyeing.** Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.75.1–9.
2. **Two *canting* pens.** For applying wax using the *batik tulis* method. Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. *Humus* 1969.72 & 1969.74.
3. ***Batik kawung* cloth.** Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. Cotton. Coll. Fiona Kerlogue 1995. *Humus* 1995.32.15.
4. ***Batik gedog nila* carrying sash (*sayut putihan*).** Kerek, East Java. Handloomed cotton. Coll. Fiona Kerlogue 1995. *Humus* 1995.32.5.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 29. Lahu Shi Women's Clothing

These are the clothes worn by women of the Lahu Shi (Yellow Lahu), who live in a wide region covering parts of Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and China. They formed part of a larger collection that was exhibited in the major exhibition that toured the Humber region in 1987–89, 'Costumes of the Golden Triangle'.

1. **Lahu Shi women's shoulder bag.** *Humus* 1976.61.
2. **Lahu Shi woman's *phat hung* (wrapped skirt).** *Humus* 1976.60.
3. **Lahu Shi woman's jacket.** *Humus* 1976.59.

All collected in Pha Pu Chorn near Chiang Mai, Thailand by R. Cooper in 1976.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Harvest of the Wild





Case 30. Hmong Women's Clothing and Jewellery

The Hmong live in the mountainous border regions of China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. They are renowned for their intricate textile arts, particularly *batik* and embroidery, and for their silverwork.

The skirt shown here displays the distinctive 'razor-pleated' skirts, which combine *batik* and embroidery, made and worn by the Hmong Ngua (Green Hmong). A sample of *batik* and a tool used to apply wax are also displayed. Some of the high-quality silver jewellery made by the Hmong is also presented in the case. This traditionally represents a family's wealth and is also a spiritual shield intended to protect the wearer's soul.

1. **Sample of Hmong batik.** Chiang Mai province, Thailand. Coll. Dr. Robert Cooper, 1975. *Humus* 1976.88.
2. **Hmong Ngua girl's skirt.** Chiang Mai province, Thailand. Razor-pleated *batik* with appliqued and embroidered bands. Coll. Dr. Robert Cooper, 1975. *Humus* 1976.51.
3. **Hmong Ngua batik waxing tool.** Chiang Mai province, Thailand. Coll. Dr. Robert Cooper, 1975. *Humus* 1976.83.
4. **Hmong silver necklet.** Laos. Coll. Dr. Martin Barber, 1969. *Humus* 1970.37.
5. **Hmong silver earrings.** Laos. Coll. Dr. Martin Barber, 1969. *Humus* 1970.L4.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Porous Vessel; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 31. Borneo Craft and Belief

This case explores the way in which spiritual life and material culture intertwine on the island of Borneo, evolving to incorporate modern inventions. The centrepiece is a hat that originally belonged to a Kayan or Kenyah warrior of high status. The Kayan and Kenyah are traditionally hierarchical and some motifs, such as the *kalong kepala* (the face with botanical motifs growing out of it), rendered in beadwork on this hat, were restricted to those of highest rank. The use of the feathers of the rhinoceros hornbill, also part of this hat (the black and white feathers at the back) was restricted to men of the highest rank who had taken a head (see Cases 53 and 54).

The second piece in the case is a carving made in the 1950s that was probably made for sale to a foreign collector. It combines symbolic motifs from different Borneo groups: the Iban and the Kayan/Kenyah. The rosettes on the shoulders and arms are an Iban motif, the *bunga terung* (aubergine flower) traditionally tattooed on warriors' shoulders. The dog appears to represent the dragon-dog or *aso'*, which is a Kayan/Kenyah cosmological motif. The extensions at the sides of the head are characteristic of Kayan *huduq* masks used to represent spirits. Their meaning is unclear but such head extensions appear to have deep significance in the wider region, as they are present in ancient stone carvings like that shown in the photograph accompanying this case, which occur in Borneo, Sulawesi and Sumatra.

An Iban *pua* cloth is the third piece in the case. This includes both what are probably protective *engkaramba* figures as well as helicopters and aeroplanes. It was made in the 1960s, when the people of Sarawak and Kalimantan, both on the island of Borneo, were caught up in a cross-border war involving soldiers from Indonesia, Malaysia and the UK, called 'Confrontation'. The *pua* was made using the *ikat* method, with a backstrap loom.

1. **Kayan or Kenyah ceremonial male hat (*lavong*).** Sarawak, Malaysia. Made of bamboo and rattan, with a beaded panel across the front and with rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) feathers, a pheasant feather, goat's hair and chicken feathers decorating the hat at the sides and on top. Coll. 1950s. Thwaites collection. *Humus* 2003.6.44.
2. **Woodcarving of a male figure with dragon-dog (*aso'*), lizard and fish.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. 1950s. Thwaites collection. *Humus* 2003.6.1.
3. **Iban *ikat*-woven *pua* cloth with airplanes and helicopters.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. 1970s by V.T. King. *Humus* 2013.2.1.

See Cases 4, 27, 33 and 83 for other examples of Iban *ikat* and Case 32 for the backstrap loom upon which *ikat* is woven.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning





Case 32. Looms

This case explores the technology used to weave spun thread, contrasting two regional loom types shaped by ancient migration and lifestyles: the backstrap loom and the frame loom.

The components of a portable body-tension backstrap loom from an Ifugao community in the highlands of Luzon, Philippines are displayed here. This ancient technology spread across island Southeast Asia via early Austronesian migrations and remains dominant among interior highland communities. The weaver controls tension entirely through body posture - leaning back while strapped into the backstrap, which pulls against the warp beam. A wooden heddle rod lifts alternating threads to create a gap, a lease stick maintains thread order, wooden shuttles carry the cross-threads, and a hardwood weaving 'sword' packs each row tight.

In contrast, the model from Luang Prabang, Laos represents a stationary frame loom. Brought southward into mainland Southeast Asia by migrating Tai-Kadai groups, this became standard across lowland, sedentary river-valley societies. Permanently set up under stilted houses, its heavy frame supports complex mechanisms that allow larger pieces of fabric to be woven.

Backstrap loom parts. Ifugao. Chaya, Mayaoyao, Luzon, Philippines.

Coll. G. Nettleton, 1977.

1. **Backstrap.** Leather. *Humus* 1978.13.1.
2. **Warp beam.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.5.
3. **Weaving sword.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.2.
4. **Shuttle.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.4.
5. **Shuttle.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.3.
6. **Heddle rod.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.7.
7. **Lease stick.** Wooden. *Humus* 1978.13.6.

8. **Model frame loom.** Luang Prabang. Laos. Coll. Martin Barber 1968. *Humus* 1970.28.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Living Landscape

Case 33: The Water Dragon

The objects in this case highlight the shared belief across Southeast Asia in the water dragon, a sentient embodiment of the power flowing through water. They are the result of a process of cultural fusion grounded in a mix of ancient indigenous beliefs (some shared with New Guinea and Australia), Hindu-Buddhist beliefs in the serpent deities of India, and the celestial, rain-bringing dragons of East Asia. These beings, known to the Chinese as *lung* (龍), are often known in the region as *naga*, using a Sanskrit term from India, but also by a range of local names, such as *neak* នេក among the Khmer, *nagar* (နဂါး) in Myanmar and *nabau* among the Iban of Sarawak.

1. **Buddha shielded by the *nagar* (နဂါး) king Mucalinda.** Burma. During a violent post-enlightenment storm, Mucalinda coiled his body beneath the Buddha to lift him above the floods and spread his multi-headed hood like an umbrella to shield him from the rain. Once the storm passed, the dragon king bowed in reverence to the Buddha's spiritual victory. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.20.
2. **Two gold armlets in the form of a *naga*.** Bali, Indonesia. Dragon or serpent forms in jewellery protect the wearer, mark rank and connect the body to cosmic energy. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.93.1 and 1992.11.93.2.
3. **Silver spoon and fork with *naga* head finials.** Malaya. The maker's mark is on the handle in Malay *jawi* script. Bateson collection 1940. *Humus* 1989.9.1–2.
4. **Chinese tobacco pipe.** With incised water dragon (*lung* 龍), Malaysia. Early 1950s. Christie collection. *Humus* 2026.5.
5. **Areca nut slicer in the form of a *naga* head.** Thailand. Coll. R. Carter & T. North 1985. *Humus* 1985.2.6.
6. ***Besihung*.** Lampung, Sumatra, Indonesia. Vessel used for the mineral-and-sap mixture used for ritual tooth-blackening. *Humus* 2026.3.
7. **Pair of carved wooden *naga*.** Probably Sarawak, Malaysia. Possibly an architectural finial or shrine decoration. Gift from I. Chou 1991. *Humus* 1992.1.6.1 and *Humus* 1992.1.6.2.
8. **Carving of *nagar* (နဂါး).** Myanmar. Decorated with small pieces of mirror to represent scales. Broken into two halves. Coll. A. Crowther 1978. *Humus* 1970.22.1–2.
9. **Labong Bungai Nu'ing *ikat* strip.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. *Ikat* strip (*labong*) with *nabau* water dragon woven into it, used as protection by travellers. Bungai Nu'ing is a culture hero believed to have become a protective spirit on his death and to appear as a water dragon. Made by Ejah Jepon in the early 2020s. Coll. M Janowski 2023. *Humus* 2026.L1.
10. **End-blown flute (*suling bangsi*) with *naga* in pyrography.** Bali, Indonesia. With a rattan loop to hold a piece of rattan or rubber over the intake hole to help direct the player's breath. The long, winding body of the *naga* reflects the flow of human breath travelling down the length of the bamboo tube to create music. Crowther-Cole collection. Collected 1979. *Humus* 1989.2.4.
11. **Blowpipe gun in the shape of a *naga*.** Probably Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo. The dragon's long body forms the barrel, transforming the projectile into a channel for its breath. Possibly coll. Clive Christie. *Humus* 2026.4.

Also see the framed embroidered water dragon from Myanmar on open display.

Relevant thematic panels: Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo; A Cultural Melting Pot; From Headhunting to Head of State; Altered States





Case 34. Cotton Pod to Spun Thread

This case shows some of the implements used to produce cotton thread. Makers pass cotton pods through a cotton gin, like the example from Cambodia shown here, to extract the seeds from the fibres. Once cleared of seeds, the loose cotton fibres must be carded to straighten them. The artisan then spins the prepared fibres into a continuous thread using a traditional spinning wheel, represented here by a model from Luang Prabang, Laos.

The finished women's ceremonial wrapped skirt-cloth (*hoba*) from Flores, Indonesia, demonstrates the final result of this handspun cotton thread production. To create its geometric warp-*ikat* patterns, the weaver binds sections of these raw yarn strands with plant fibres to resist colour and dyes these before weaving them. Achieving the deep blue-black bands requires fermentation of indigo leaves over several days, while the contrasting rich, reddish-brown stripes are derived from the root bark of the *engkudu* tree.

1. **Hoba skirt cloth.** Flores, Indonesia. Philla Davis collection. Coll. 1970s. *Humus* 1990.14.11.
2. **Model spinning wheel.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Coll. Martin Barber 1968. *Humus* 1970.32.
3. **Cotton gin.** Cambodia. Coll. F. Kerlogue 1999. *Humus* 1999.L1.

Also see Cases 4, 27 and 31, and case 32 for the backstrap loom upon which a *hoba* like this was woven.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Living Landscape; Emerald Horizons

Case 35. Borneo Wood Carvings

A Kenyah carving of a brahminy kite, an *aso'* (dragon-dog) and a crocodile provides a visual map of the cosmos. Within this object, the brahminy kite represents the Upper World of celestial deities, the *aso'* guards the Middle World of humans, and the crocodile serves as a messenger for the Under World. The carving of the bird with a snake in its beak illustrates the essential unity of the upper and lower realms, symbolizing the balance between the masculine Upper World and the feminine Under World. The Melanau *belum* is a carving of a spirit causing disease (also see Case 72). Finally, the Iban hornbill carvings represent a sacred intermediary believed to carry human prayers and messages to the supreme god of the Upper World.

1. **Seated man.** Kayan. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 71.41.
2. **Bust of man.** Possibly Kayan. Probably made in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Note extended ear lobes (see Case 80). Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971 in Kuching, Sarawak. *Humus* 1971.39.
3. **Bust of woman.** Possibly Kayan. Probably made in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Note extended ear lobes (see Case 80). Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971 in Kuching, Sarawak. *Humus* 1971.40.
4. **Warrior's head.** Kayan. Coll. M.A. Jaspan. *Humus* 1972.10.
5. **Stylised carving of a rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) (kenyalang).** Iban. Painted in bright colours. Bettison collection. Coll 1940s/50s. *Humus* 1980.10.
6. **Tortoise.** Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1968.L3.
7. **Sickness image (*belum*).** Melanau. Sarawak, Malaysia. *Humus* 2003.6.49.
8. **Bird with a snake in its beak.** Probably Kenyah. Thwaites collection. Coll. 1950s. *Humus* 2003.6.48.
9. **Brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*).** Kenyah. It has in its talons a mythical *aso'* (dragon-dog) and holds a crocodile in its beak. Thwaites collection. Coll. 1950s. *Humus* 2003.6.21.
10. **Stylised carving of a rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) (kenyalang).** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Thwaites collection. Coll. 1950s. *Humus* 2003.6.20.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Crafting the Cosmos; Threads of Meaning; Sentient Landscapes





Case 36. Performance: Countenance and Crown

In this case are objects from Thai, Javanese and Chinese traditions, which all serve to bridge the physical world and the spiritual realm. From the Thai *khon* tradition, a demon mask and a royal princess headdress represent opposing forces in the epic *Ramakien*, the Thai version of the Indian Ramayana.

Three Indonesian *topeng* masks are included. Two are from Bali: a green monkey mask and a *topeng klana* mask, representing a wild 'wandering' character who cannot control his emotions and passions. One is from Java: a character with blackened teeth, which signify inner calm and the mastery of animal passions - the opposite of the *topeng klana* character.

Finally, the case also contains a lion dance mask, used by Chinese communities in Southeast Asia to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune.

1. **Topeng klana mask.** Bali, Indonesia. Gift from A. Kirk-Spriggs 1994. *Humus* 1996.14.3.
2. **Royal crown for a female character.** Thailand. Probably for a princess. Used in Thai *khon* dance-dramas with stories from the epic *Ramakien*. Gosling collection. *Humus* 1984.L1.9.
3. **Chinese lion dance mask.** Java or Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.39.
4. **Topeng mask with blackened teeth.** Java, Indonesia. *Humus* 1992.11.45.
5. **Topeng mask of monkey.** Bali, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.96.
6. **Mask of a demon.** Thailand. Used in *khon* dance-dramas with stories from the epic *Ramakien*. *Humus* 2026.16.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo; Altered States

Case 37. Orang Asli Spirit Carvings

These carvings represent the *bes*, or forest spirits, which, for the Jah Hut people, one of the Orang Asli people of the Malay Peninsula, inhabit the landscape. In traditional healing rituals, a shaman-healer (*pyang*) identifies a disease spirit while in trance, and describes its form to a carver, who brings these visions to life using light palmwood. The carvings serve as physical vessels that are then used by the *pyang* to 'trap' the spirits causing ailments, and are later cast away, removing the disease from the patient and restoring his or her health. Treatment of disease is now largely through modern medicine, and *sepili* are no longer carved for this purpose.

In 1958, Anthony Ratos, an Indian-Malaysian who was Deputy Commissioner for the Orang Asli, began supplying Orang Asli craftspeople with fine steel tools and commissioning carvings from tropical hardwoods from them. In doing this, he catalysed a communal village collective, and craftsmen like Yaman Hijau and Tok Ngah, whose carvings are included in this case, began signing their names on their carvings and immortalizing their oral cosmology into permanent works of fine art that gave physical form to Jah Hut oral folklore, dreamscapes and invisible forest spirits (*bes*). In 1959 Ratos organized an exhibition of their work at the National Gallery in Kuala Lumpur and then touring exhibitions in European cities. Most of the carvings now reside in a dedicated museum in Kuala Lumpur, the Orang Asli Craft Museum, and the museum in Hull is very fortunate to have this collection. In 2006 Ratos published a book about the carvings, *Orang Asli and their Wood Art*.

For the Jah Hut, the red-bearded bee-eater pictured in the photograph in the case, which they know as *biau*, is believed to be the carrier of human souls. When someone dies it is believed that their soul leaves the body in the form of the bird, and when a pregnant woman hears the cry of the bird she knows that the baby's soul has entered its body.

1. **Bes Dlogong. Spirit that causes bloating or organ distension.** Made by Yaman Hijau. *Humus* 1969.115.
2. **Bes. Forest spirit.** Made by unknown Jah Hut carver. *Humus* 1969.112.
3. **Bes. Forest spirit.** Made by unknown Jah Hut carver. *Humus* 1969.113.
4. **Bes Musang. Shape-shifting predatory spirit.** Made by Yaman Hijau. *Humus* 1969.116.
5. **Bes. Forest spirit.** Made by unknown Jah Hut carver. *Humus* 1997.8.1.
6. **Bes. Forest spirit.** Made by unknown Jah Hut carver. *Humus* 1969.119.
7. **Bes Mati Beranak. 'Spirit causing death in childbirth'.** Made by Yaman Hijau. *Humus* 1969.117.
8. **Bes Nihem. 'Lurking Spirit'.** Made by Tok Ngah. *Humus* 1969.114.
9. **Bes. Forest spirit.** Made by unknown Jah Hut carver. *Humus* 1969.108.
10. **Bes Cema. 'Spitting Spirit'.** Made by Asan. *Humus* 1969.118.

All collected by M.A. Jaspan in 1969.

Also see Cases 35 and 72 for similar carvings made by the Melanau of Sarawak.

Relevant thematic panels: Sentient Landscapes; The Porous Vessel; Crafting the Cosmos





Case 38. The Rice Goddess

This case focuses on the Rice Goddess or Rice Mother, a deity revered across Southeast Asia as the divine source of life and fertility. She is known as Dewi Sri in Indonesia and Malaysia, Mae Phosop in Thailand, Nang Khosop in Laos, Po Ino Nogar among the Cham people of Vietnam and Cambodia, and by many other local terms in other parts of the region.

The objects in this case are from the veneration of the goddess in Bali, where they are used to propitiate her as she oversees the agricultural cycle. Several palm leaf *cili* figures are shown here, which represent the goddess and are traditionally placed in rice fields to protect the crop. They are then used during harvest to 'carry' the spirit of the goddess from the field to the family rice barn. A mask used in the Janger dance is also featured, which dramatizes the myth of Dewi Sri's creation from a single tear of the god Antaboga. In the case we also have a figure representing the goddess made from Chinese coins, known locally as *kepeng*. These coins are central to Balinese ritual, with their round shape and square holes symbolizing the balance of the universe and the metal of which they are made signifying the presence of divine wealth. Their use underlines the close connections between Chinese and local culture in the region.

1. **Cili figure of Dewi Sri.** Philla Davis collection. *Humus* 1990.14.144.
2. **Cili figure of Dewi Sri.** Probably Philla Davis collection. *Humus* 2011.3.
3. **Cili figure of Dewi Sri.** Philla Davis collection. *Humus* 1990.14.145.
4. **Cili figure of Dewi Sri.** Gift from H. Jaspan 2010. Pre-1960s. *Humus* 2026.17.
5. **Figure of Dewi Sri made of Chinese coins.** Gift from K. Sabekti 1968. *Humus* 1968.3.
6. **Mask of Dewi Sri.** Used in Janger dance. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.53.

Also see Case 39.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; Shadows, Water and Wood; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 39. Rice

Across Southeast Asia, rice is the central crop and the Rice Goddess is a key deity (see Case 38). It is grown both in flooded wet fields and in dry shifting cultivation. Souvenir matchbooks displayed here illustrate the twelve phases of cultivation in wet fields. Traditionally, each community grew a range of rice varieties such as that shown here, (see no. 13 below) grown by the Maloh of Kalimantan. These were grown for different uses and to guard against crop failure.

The sacred nature of rice has shaped traditional farming practices. The social and spiritual importance of the rice harvest is highlighted by the model of a Toraja rice barn (*alang*) from Sulawesi. Its dramatically curved, boat-shaped roof honours the seafaring vessels of the community's ancestors and aligns with cosmic axes to channel blessings into the stored crop. The display features a range of small hand rice-cutters from across the region. Only the ear of the rice is traditionally harvested with these. It is traditionally considered important to harvest gently so as not to startle the 'rice soul'. In the past, some cultures even used a sliver of bamboo, such as the Lun Bawang cutter shown here, rather than metal, to avoid offending this spirit. Today, modern shifts towards greater efficiency mean that the use of sickles is increasingly common, and two of these are displayed here.

Glutinous rice – 'sticky rice' – is the preferred form of rice used for regional ritual offerings and in making rice beer in most areas, (see Case 10) and in highland mainland Southeast Asia it is eaten at daily meals. Its dense, adhesive properties symbolise social unity, with traditional baskets like those displayed here crafted to carry it on journeys or to weddings.

1. **Twelve books of matches showing the phases of the wet rice cultivation cycle.** Malaysia. Souvenir pack brought out for an agricultural conference in 1970. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1974.25.
2. **Iban hand rice-cutter.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Wood, metal and bark string. Coll. J. Morrison 1993. *Humus* 1993.2.1.
3. **Lun Bawang hand rice-cutter.** Temburong, Brunei. Made of a sliver of bamboo. Coll. Dayang Donnaliza Abdullah 1996. *Humus* 1996.6.6.2.
4. **Dusun hand rice-cutter.** Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia. Iron. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus* 1989.6.6.1.
5. **Iban hand rice-cutter.** Entawau, Baleh, Sarawak, Malaysia. Wood and bamboo. Coll. T. Gavin 1994. *Humus* 1994.4.1.
6. **Iban hand rice-cutter.** Sri Aman, Sarawak, Malaysia. Wood, bamboo and metal. Coll. Rashid Abdullah 1992. *Humus* 1993.8.
7. **Sasak hand rice-cutter.** Lombok, Indonesia. Bone and metal with ancestor figure and bird incised into bone. Christie collection. *Humus* 1982.10.
8. **Bontoc hand rice-cutter.** Luzon, Philippines. Wood and iron. Coll. M.A. Jaspan, 1974. *Humus* 1974.45.
9. **Hand rice-cutter.** Bali, Indonesia. Wood and iron. Coll. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.11.
10. **Sickle for cutting rice.** Cambodia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.14.
11. **Minangkabau sickle for cutting rice.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan, 1972. *Humus* 1973.9.
12. **Rice barn.** Toraja. Sulawesi, Indonesia. Wooden model. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.1.
13. **Reed grass cutout showing girls pounding padi.** Bandung, Java, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.26.
14. **Collection of traditional lowland rice varieties.** Maloh. West Kalimantan, Indonesia. As cultivated in dry shifting rice fields in 1973. Coll. V.T. King. *Humus* 2026.6.
15. **Container for cooked glutinous rice.** Thailand. Bamboo. For token gift.





Coll. R. Cooper 1975. *Humus* 1977.L5.

16. **Container for cooked glutinous rice.** Thailand. Bamboo. For token gift.

Coll. R. Cooper 1975. *Humus* 1977.L7.

17. **Khmer container (*eip khao*) for cooked glutinous rice.** Probably Cambodia. For carrying rice to work, on journeys or to weddings. Gift from E. Aitken 1969.

Humus 1969.36.

18. **Container for cooked glutinous rice.** Laos. Bamboo. Gift from E. Aitken 1969.

Humus 1978.27.

19. **Rice sheaf beater.** Bali, Indonesia. Coll. F. Kerlogue. *Humus* 2026.7.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; Emerald Horizons; Altered States; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 40. Barong and Rangda in Bali

This display illustrates the Balinese concept of *rwa bhineda*, a cornerstone of Hindu cosmology that views the universe as a perpetual struggle for balance between opposing forces. Central to this cosmic drama is the encounter between Rangda, the fearsome Queen of supernatural forces, and the Barong, the King of the Spirits. These figures represent the cyclical nature of destruction and creation, mirroring the roles of Hindu Shiva and Vishnu, where neither side can ever truly be defeated.

When the Barong is engaged in battle with Rangda, it appears as a lion, paralleling the lion in the Chinese lion dance (see Cases 36 and 78) – a good example of the melting pot that is Southeast Asia. The lion Barong (known as Barong Ket) can be seen battling with Rangda in a ritualised dance in the painting adjacent to this case (no. 4 below).

The Barong also takes many other forms, which have the function of cleansing the village and its environs of spirits and disease. In the case we have two of these forms: the Barong Landung ('tall Barong') and the Barong Bangkal ('wild boar Barong'). The Barong Landung is also known as Jero Gede, and is regarded in some accounts as the embodiment of a 12th century Balinese king, Sri Jaya Pangus, who was transformed into a powerful demon by a mountain spirit (hence his bulging eyes). He always appears together with his Chinese queen, Kang Ching Wie, who is also known as Jero Nyoman, and together they roam the streets seeking out high-flying spirits and chasing them away.

1. **Mask of Rangda.** Gianyar, Bali, Indonesia. With long hair. Coll. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.16.
2. **Mask of wild boar Barong (Barong Bangkal).** Bali, Indonesia. This takes the form of a wild boar. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.51.
3. **Mask of Barong Landung.** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.52.

Outside the case:

4. **Painting of the lion Barong (Barong Ket)** in a ritualised dance-battle with Rangda. Artist: Astawa. Unknown date.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State



Case 41. Buddhism

This display brings together a collection of objects used in the daily lives and rituals of Theravada Buddhist practitioners in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma). Central to the case are a Thai figure of the Buddha and a figure of his disciple Moggallana (ရှင်မဟာမဇ္ဇဂ္ဂလာန) from Myanmar, with a Thai copy of the Bhikkhupatimokkhapali ဝိနည်းစာတော် (monastic regulations), two *talapat* ตาลปัตร (monk's fans) from Thailand and a *kyi-zi* ကြိုးစည် (spinning triangle gong) from Myanmar, which marks the rhythm of monastery life. A close bond connects the monastic community and lay devotees. Some of the offerings made by devotees are presented in this case. Many young men spend time as monks, while laypeople routinely support the monks, earning spiritual 'merit' through regular offerings. Alms bowls like the one on display here symbolize the monks' humility and reliance on the community.

1. **Bhikkhupatimokkhapali** ဝိနည်းစာတော် (Regulations for Buddhist Monks). Thailand. *Humus* 2026.8.
2. **Lacquered and gilded wooden figure of Moggallana** (ရှင်မဟာမဇ္ဇဂ္ဂလာန). Myanmar. Moggallana was the second of the Buddha Shakyamuni's disciples. This figure is usually placed on the left of the Buddha in shrines in Myanmar. Coll. H. Thompson, 1973. *Humus* 1973.L3.
3. **Gilded brass figure of seated Buddha**. Thailand. Made in 1982 to commemorate the bicentenary of the founding of Bangkok. Gosling collection. *Humus* 1984.L1.19.
4. **'Floral garland' offering of jasmine-scented soap** (*phuang malai* พวงมาลัย). Thailand. Gift from Munlika Hansakui 1994. *Humus* 1994.10.
5. **Model offering stand** (*phu to mu bucha* โต๊ะหมู่บูชา). Thailand. Coll. F. Kerlogue 2001. *Humus* 2001.5.16.
6. **Spinning triangle gong** (*kyi-zi* ကြိုးစည်). Myanmar. Struck to signal prayer times in Buddhist monasteries. *Humus* 2026.9.
7. **Spired offering vessel**. (*Hsun ok* ဆွမ်းအုတ်) Rangoon, Myanmar. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1970.20.3
8. **Alms bowl used by monks** (*bat* บาตร). Thailand. With lid, stand and straps. Coll. F. Kerlogue 2001. *Humus* 2001.5.2.
9. **Pair of model seven-tiered ceremonial umbrellas**. (*chat thong* ฉัตรเงิน ฉัตรทอง). Thailand. One silver and the other gold. Coll. F. Kerlogue. *Humus* 2001.5.14 and 15.
10. **Buddhist monk's ceremonial fan** (*talapat* ตาลปัตร). Thailand. Written on it in Thai is: 'Remembering the Kathina Ceremony'. This is the annual offering of new robes held after the three-month annual retreat during the monsoon period. Gosling collection. *Humus* 1984.L1.28.
11. **Buddhist monk's ceremonial fan** (*talapat* ตาลปัตร). Thailand. Written on it in Thai is 'Training in Ordination Work'. Gosling collection. *Humus* 2026.10.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; Altered States; From Headhunting to Head of State; Shadows, Water and Wood

Case 42. Hinduism

While ancient Hindu empires across Southeast Asia have long since faded, Hinduism remains a vibrant living tradition today in parts of the region, and many cultural, aesthetic and cosmological traces of Hinduism remain. Bali and its neighbouring islands, including Nusa Penida and western Lombok, are the primary heartland of Hinduism nowadays, but there are pockets of Hinduism elsewhere too, such as in the Tengger highlands of East Java and among the Cham people of Vietnam.

The old carvings in this case represent a long heritage of temple craftsmanship in Bali. Protective figures such as *raksasa* (ogres), *dvarapala* (gate guardians) and the deity Vishnu riding his celestial bird mount Garuda are traditionally placed at temple gates to ward off negative energy.

The two wooden wall plaques in the case show the enduring heritage of Hinduism in Java. They illustrate a profoundly important cosmological balance: the contrast between the still, composed female and the active, expressive male. This uses a visual vocabulary – the bulging eyes and the fierce expression of the coarse (*kasar*) male compared to the calm, refined (*halus*) woman – that stems directly from ancient Indian Hindu traditions.

1. **Carving of *raksasa* (ogre).** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.55.
2. **Carving of Vishnu riding Garuda.** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.54.
3. **Carving of dancing figure with headdress.** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.60.
4. **Carving of a *dvarapala* or door guardian.** Bali, Indonesia. These are placed at temple gates to protect against negative spirits. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.57.
5. **Pair of small carved figures.** Bali, Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.11.1–2.
6. **Wooden panel depicting a refined (*halus*) woman on horseback.** Probably Java, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan in Kuala Lumpur 1969. *Humus* 1970.54.
7. **Wooden panel depicting a coarse (*kasar*) man on horseback.** Probably Java, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan in Kuala Lumpur 1969. *Humus* 1970.53.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; Crafting the Cosmos; Shadows, Water and Wood





Case 43. From Human to Spirit

This display features Burmese *nat* (နတ်) and Chinese *shen* (神). In both traditions, human beings who are outstanding in life can become powerful supernatural beings after death. Devotees petition them to grant wishes, ensure prosperity and provide protection. The collection includes a standing female *nat* and male *nat*, and the buffalo-horned Bago Medaw of lower Myanmar, petitioned for household harmony and good fortune in business. Seated below is a Chinese *shen*, probably the Earth God, Tu Di Kong (土地公), a cosmic landlord whose permission and favour humans must seek in relation to agriculture, building and burials.

1. **Female *nat*** (နတ်). Myanmar. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.19.
2. **Male *nat*** (နတ်). Myanmar. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.18.
3. **Bago Medaw** (ပဲခူးမယ်တင်) **the 'Royal Mother of Bago'**. Myanmar. With buffalo headdress; also called the 'Buffalo Mother'. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.12.
4. **Chinese *shen*** (神), **probably Tu Di Kong** (土地公).
Gift from H. Hunt 1969. *Humus* 1969.60.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State

Case 44. Bronze and Brass Musical Instruments

This display highlights the technical mastery and spiritual significance of metalwork in Southeast Asian ceremonial life. Both bronze and brass are cast in the region to make gongs, cymbals and bells. In many areas, bronze, the traditional 'bell metal', which produces deep, warm vibrations, is used to make gongs that are used in communal and sacred life to mark time and to anchor the rhythms of local festivals, as it is regarded as carrying spiritual potency.

However, brass was also used to make gongs in the region. In some places, such as Borneo and parts of the Philippines, it was preferred for its brighter sound. The souvenir set of gongs from Brunei displayed here, which replicates the *gulingtangan*, Brunei's premier traditional musical ensemble, represents its heritage as the centre of Bornean brass-casting. The brassware made in Brunei was not only valued locally but was distributed widely on the island and became heirlooms (*pusaka*) for many local people. It included gongs, ceremonial kettles and cannons, often carrying raised motifs of water dragons, crocodiles and sea creatures and believed to be inhabited by spirits.

Also see Case 65.

1. **Hmong festival cymbals (*chas*)**. Northern Laos. Brass. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.35.
2. **Pair of small bossed gongs (*maung yit မောင်းရစ်*)**. Rangoon, Myanmar. Bronze. Used in theatrical and ritual percussion ensembles. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.143.
3. **Bells used in Buddhist rituals (*chuzi ခုဒ္ဒါ*)**. Rangoon, Myanmar. Bronze. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.142.
4. **Large bossed gong (*gong mhu*)**. Hmong. Luang Prabang. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.33.
5. **Medium-sized bossed gong (*maung မောင်း*)**. Rangoon, Myanmar. Bronze. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1970.10.
6. **Souvenir set of gongs (*gulingtangan*)**. Brunei. Brass. Approx. 1/3 scale. Gift from Apsah binti Haji Kamaluddin 1989. *Humus* 2026.64.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Porous Vessel; Sentient Landscapes





Case 45. Bamboo Musical Instruments

This case celebrates the musical versatility of bamboo, a material synonymous with the resilience and ingenuity of Southeast Asian cultures. From the flutes of Bali and Thailand to the complex mouth organs of the Kadazan-Dusun and Hmong, these instruments transform a common forest resource into a sophisticated medium for music and ritual. The hollow nature of bamboo is viewed as a vessel for the breath of the player, creating a voice that bridges the gap between the earthly landscape and the spirit world.

1. **Man playing an end-blown flute (*suling*).** Bali, Indonesia. Sculpture from the famous woodcarving village of Mas. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969, Jakarta. *Humus* 1969.11.
2. **Bamboo buzzer (*bungkaka*).** Central Cordillera, Luzon, Philippines. Played by striking the bamboo tongues with the hand to create a buzzing sound. Also used to frighten spirits when walking along mountain paths. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.66.
3. **Set of 5 bamboo gongs (*togunggak*).** Kadazan. Sabah, Malaysia. Gift from C. Malakun, 1980. *Humus* 1980.22.
4. **Bamboo flute (*khlui* ขลุ่ย).** Thailand. Gift from P. Wilkinson 1984. *Humus* 1985.1.1.
5. **Gourd and bamboo mouth organ (*sompoton*).** Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Coll. R. Cooper 1976. *Humus* 1990.10.22.
6. **Wood and bamboo mouth organ (*qeej*).** Hmong Njua. Thailand. Coll. A. Crowther 1994. *Humus* 1976.75.
7. **Bamboo tube zither (*kerenting*).** Orang Asli. Pahang, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.56.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Crafting the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons

Case 46. Model Gamelan Orchestra

The gamelan is a traditional musical ensemble composed of a range of tuned percussion, stringed and sometimes wind instruments. It is made and played in Java and Bali. This model gamelan is from Jogjakarta in Java. The structural core of the orchestra is established by a foundational layer of heavy bronze gongs and horizontal kettle-gongs (*kempul*, *kenong*, *bonang*), which punctuate the musical cycle. This framework is elaborated upon by an intricate, flowing melodic layer featuring the *rebab* (a bowed stringed instrument), the *gambang* (a wooden xylophone), and a range of bronze metallophones, including the *saron*, *slenthem* and *gender*.

While acoustic balance is achieved through complementary paired tuning, the entire ensemble is dynamically directed by the *kendhang* (drum), which regulates tempo, cueing and structural transitions. Together, these interlocking parts create a complex, shimmering texture that reflects the cultural pursuit of universal harmony. This is expressed through the union of male and female. While Balinese instruments are themselves built and tuned in pairs to express male and female energies, in Javanese gamelan the male–female union is accomplished when the instrumental music merges with the human voice: the *pesindhen* (female solo vocalist) singing with the *gerong* (all-male chorus).

1. **Kempul (hanging gongs).** Humus 1992.4.1.
2. **Kempul (hanging gongs) with tabuh (mallet).** Humus 1992.4.2
3. **Set of bonang (small kettle gongs).** Humus 1992.4.3.
4. **Set of bonang (small kettle gongs) with pair of tabuh (mallets).**
Humus 1992.4.4.
5. **Kenong (large kettle gong).** Humus 1992.4.5.
6. **Kenong (large kettle gong).** Humus 1992.4.6.
7. **Kenong (large kettle gong).** Humus 1992.4.7.
8. **Kenong (large kettle gong).** Humus 1992.4.8.
9. **Kendhang (double-headed drum).** Humus 1992.4.9.
10. **Double kenong (kettle gongs) with pair of tabuh (mallets).** Humus 1992.4.10.
11. **Saron (metallophones) with tabuh (mallet).** Humus 1992.4.11.
12. **Saron (metallophones) with pair of tabuh (mallets).** Humus 1992.4.12.
13. **Kendhang (double-headed drum).** Humus 1992.4.13.
14. **Slenthem (low-pitched metallophone) with pair of tabuh (mallets).**
Humus 1992.4.14.
15. **Gambang (wooden xylophone) with tabuh (mallet).** Humus 1992.4.15.
16. **Gender (high-pitched metallophone) with pair of tabuh (mallets).**
Humus 1992.4.17.
17. **Gender panerus (high-pitched metallophone) with pair of tabuh (mallets).**
Humus 1992.4.18.
18. **Gender panerus (high-pitched metallophone).** Humus 1992.4.19.
19. **Rebab (spike lute) with kosok (bow).** Humus 1992.4.21.
20. **Celempung (plucked zither).** Humus 1992.4.22.

Gift from S. Jay 1990.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; Crafting the Cosmos; The Cosmic Duo





Case 47. River Boats

This case features model watercraft, highlighting the essential role of inland waterways in Southeast Asia. While practical vessels like the Mekong pirogue represent the daily rhythms of trade and village travel, ceremonial craft reflect a deeper spiritual landscape. The ornate Royal Thai barge *Suphannahongse* (Golden Swan) serves as a bridge between realms; its bird-like form represents the Upper World, gliding across the water, which embodies the Lower World. Together, these models illustrate how rivers serve as vital corridors for everything from routine travel to the grand processions that maintain cosmic balance and royal authority.

1. **Model of Mekong pirogue.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Gift from M. Barber. *Humus* 1972.7.
2. **Model of the Royal Thai barge, Suphannahongse ('Golden Swan').** Thailand. *Humus* 2026.14.
3. **Model of Brunei Darussalam regatta boat.** Brunei. Painted in Brunei national colours. Gift from Apsah binti Haji Kamaluddin, 1987. *Humus* 1987.1.1.

Also see the ceremonial paddle from Palembang on open display.

Relevant thematic panels: Emerald Horizons; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State

Case 48. Altar to Guanyin 观音

This case recreates the arrangement of a traditional domestic altar in Sarawak honouring Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Although originating in early Indian Buddhism as the male figure Avalokitesvara, Guanyin underwent a profound transformation in East and Southeast Asia. Her veneration in female form underlines the cosmological importance of the union of male and female. Among Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, religious practice is deeply syncretic, blending elements of Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion (*shen* 神 worship). Within this living tradition, Guanyin is venerated not only as a Buddhist figure but as a universally accessible Mother Goddess who offers protection, healing and solace.

Guanyin is framed by white flowers representing her purity. The incense serves as a bridge, carrying prayers toward the sacred. The water contained in the cups is believed to be blessed by Guanyin and is later often drunk. The lotus candles represent purity and the light of wisdom. Also featured is a 'Tray of Togetherness' containing realistic ceramic seeds and nuts – symbolic 'everlasting' offerings that represent family harmony and longevity. Paper gold ingots are included to request spiritual blessings, while the red *jiaobei* (筊杯) (divination blocks) are used to seek guidance.

Before a statue of Guanyin is placed on an altar, it is brought to life by having its eyes 'dotted' with cinnabar paste in a ritual called 'eye-dotting' (*dian yan*) (点眼) - or 'opening the light' - *kai guang* (开光). However, this statue of Guanyin has never had its eyes dotted. This is therefore not a consecrated altar.

1. **Statue of Guanyin (观音).** Sarawak, Malaysia. Probably made 1960s. Gift from Tuson Chang 2026. *Humus* 2026.15.1.
2. **Green vases containing white flowers.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Gift from Tuson Chang 2026. *Humus* 2026.15.2.1–2.
3. **Incense sticks in bowl of sand.** Sarawak, Malaysia. With spare incense sticks in packet below. Coll. M. Janowski, 2026. *Humus* 2026.15.3 and *Humus* 2026.23.5.
4. **Pair of lotus candles.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski, 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.1–2.
5. **'Tray of togetherness' (chuen hup 全盒) made of Yixing zisha clay (紫砂).** Sarawak, Malaysia but made in China. Includes peanut, walnut, chestnut, almond, water caltrop, sunflower seed and lotus seed. Gift from Tuson Chang 2026. *Humus* 2026.15.4.1–8.
6. **Three cups with lotus blossom decoration containing water.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski, 2026. *Humus* 2026.68.
7. **Divination blocks (jiaobei 筊杯).** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.3.1–2.
8. **Paper 'gold' ingots (jin tiao 金条).** Coll. M. Janowski via online purchase from China 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.4.1–8.
9. **Incense sticks.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.9.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; Crafting the Cosmos





Case 49. The Magical Keris I

This case and Case 50 display the *keris*, a Southeast Asian dagger. Today, the *keris* is recognized as a UNESCO Masterpiece. Once spread by local empires as a symbol of authority, it is revered as a magical talisman and a manifestation of the *naga* (serpent-dragon). Some *keris* are wavy, while others are straight; a wavy blade evokes a *naga* in active motion, and a straight blade depicts it at rest or in meditation.

The *keris* originates in Java but became important in Bali too, and among Muslim Malay kingdoms throughout the region (an example is the Moro *kalis* - see Case 55). In Java, the weapon's magic is defensive, with its steel representing an earth dragon guarding the home. The ancient *keris* Majapahit forms were originally forged from nickel-rich meteoric iron, layered with steel, creating patterned, shimmering blades (*pamor*). Because genuine originals are scarce, artisans have crafted replicas, like those shown in Case 50, for centuries, and even modern versions are treasured as powerful heirlooms.

In Bali, *keris* handles signal social rank. You can see in this case the clear contrast between simple *ceceban* handles, reserved for the *sudra* (commoner) caste, and ornate noble hilts. Carved as kings or demonic guardians, these complex hilts ensure that the weapon's protection is as visually formidable as it is spiritually potent.

1. **Wooden *keris* handle on stand.** Bali, Indonesia. Carved figure of king on handle. Hill collection. Coll. L. Hill 1982. *Humus* 1982.14.24.
2. **Wooden *keris* handle on stand.** Bali, Indonesia. Carved figure of demonic guardian on handle. Coll. L. Hill 1982. *Humus* 1982.14.7.
3. **Four *keris* handles of *ceceban* type.** Bali, Indonesia. Worn by members of the *sudra* ('commoner') caste. Coll. L. Hill 1982. *Humus* 1982.14.2,3,4,5.
4. ***Keris* in metal sheath.** Java, Indonesia. *Humus* 1969.32.1–2.
5. **Small *keris* and sheath.** Java, Indonesia. Varnished wood. *Humus* 2026.17.1–2.
6. **Malay *keris* and wooden sheath.** Malaysia or Indonesia. Coll. A. Wynne 1938. Bateson collection. *Humus* 1969.38.1–2.
7. ***Keris* in wooden sheath.** Java, Indonesia. Gift from V.T. King. *Humus* 2012.6.4.1–2.
8. ***Keris* in sheath.** Bali, Indonesia. Ornately carved wooden handle and sheath, including *raksasa* demon-guardian figure on handle. Coll. L. Hill at Beverley arms fair, 1990. *Humus* 1990.2.1.
9. **Metal paper-knife in the shape of a straight *keris* and sheath.** Probably Java, Indonesia. Bateson collection. *Humus* 1969.39.1–2.
10. **Malay metal paper-knife in the shape of a *keris*.** Kelantan, Malaya. Bateson collection. *Humus* 1971.1.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning

Case 50. The Magical Keris II

See text for Case 49.

1. **Straight keris and sheath.** Probably Java or Sumatra, Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.24.1–2.
2. **Wavy keris in sheath.** Probably from Madura, Indonesia. Ornately carved wooden handle and with inlaid red stones. *Humus* 2026.25.1–2.
3. **Wavy keris with wooden and silver handle.** Probably Java or Sumatra, Indonesia. Jawi writing engraved on the scabbard. *Humus* 2026.26.1–2.
4. **Straight keris without sheath.** Probably Java or Sumatra. *Humus* 2026.7.
5. **Malay replica of keris Majapahit with five curves (*luk* 5).** Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill, Kuala Lumpur, 1975. *Humus* 1975.28.
6. **Malay replica of keris Majapahit with straight blade (*lurus*).** Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill, Kuala Lumpur, 1975. *Humus* 1975.29.
7. **Malay replica of keris Majapahit with seven curves (*luk* 7).** Malaysia. *Humus* 1975.L33.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning





Case 51. Headhunting in Luzon

This display showcases the warrior traditions of the Kalinga and Bontoc peoples of the northern Luzon highlands in the Philippines. Central to these cultures were headhunting raids, which were regarded as essential for community justice, ancestral honour and spiritual vitality. The axes and shield were tools of engagement, while the boar's tusk armlet (*tangkil*) served as a ritual talisman intended to imbue the wearer with the strength of a wild boar. While these practices were largely suppressed and phased out by colonial administrations and local peace pacts (*bodong*) in the early 20th century, these artefacts remain powerful symbols of a complex martial history and a deep-seated warrior identity.

- 1,2&3. Three Kalinga headhunting axes (*sinawit/aliwa*).** Luzon, Philippines. Ifor Powell collection. 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.1/2/3.
- 4. Bontoc Igorot headhunting axe (*wasay*).** Sagada, Luzon, Philippines. Gift from Isidoro Agayo of Sagada. Said to be family heirloom. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1975.3.1.
- 5. Bontoc Igorot shield (*kalasag*).** Sagada, Luzon, Philippines. Gift from Isidoro Agayo of Sagada. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1975.3.2.
- 6. Bontoc Igorot boar's tusk armlet (*tangkil*).** Luzon, Philippines. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1975.L22.

Also see Cases 52, 53 and 54.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; The Porous Vessel; Harvest of the Wild; Sentient Landscapes

Case 52. Headhunting in the Naga Hills

This case explores the martial and spiritual life of the Naga of Assam and Myanmar. Historically, headhunting was a sacred ritual practiced to capture an enemy's 'life force' (known as *aren* among the Ao Naga) to ensure village fertility. The war axe and decorated spear were primary tools of this tradition, while the child's bow highlights the lifelong training of boys, who were taught to hunt and fight from an early age. Used for both hunting and headhunting raids, the bow was essential for both survival and communal defence. The Tangkhul blanket illustrates the evolution of this identity; while its patterns were once a 'merit-based' resumé, earned through combat, they transitioned into symbols of cultural pride as headhunting was phased out by the 1960s due to Christianity and modern governance.

1. **Part of Naga spear.** Dyed hair decoration. *Humus 1983.L2.*
2. **Naga war axe (*dao*).** *Humus 1983.L1.*
3. **Tangkhul Naga blanket.** Traditional style. *Humus 1983.L4.*
4. **Naga child's bow.** *Humus 1983.L3.*

All early-mid 20th century and from the Christie collection.

Also see Cases 51, 53 and 54.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; Threads of Meaning; Harvest of the Wild





Case 53. Headhunting in Borneo I

This case and Case 54 examine the profound cultural and spiritual significance of headhunting among the Iban and Kayan peoples of Borneo. In these societies, the practice was not merely an act of warfare but a vital ritual necessary to ensure the fertility of the land and the health of the community. Central to this tradition was the *mandau*, a beautifully crafted sword. Less decorated *mandau* are used for hunting and everyday forest craft, right up to the present. The *mandau* is often accompanied by a small whittling knife (*pisau raut*) used for intricate carving. *Mandau* used in headhunting, along with ritual shields, were more than weapons; they were sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) that embodied the prestige of a warrior. As in other parts of Southeast Asia, Bornean headhunting was largely phased out between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century under the influence of European colonial rule and the famous 'White Rajahs' of Sarawak, the Brooke dynasty, who replaced traditional raids with administrative law and peace treaties.

1. **Mandau in sheath.** Iban, Rejang river, Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. J. Hodgkinson 1957. *Humus* 1998.14.5.1-2.
2. **Mandau in sheath.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Bettison collection. Coll. 1940s/50s. *Humus* 1980.13.1-2
3. **Mandau and sheath with separate sheath attached containing pisau raut (small knife).** Kayan. Upper Kapuas, Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. V.T. King. 1973. *Humus* 2012.6.2.1-3.
4. **Mandau in sheath.** Probably Lubok Antu, Sarawak, Malaysia. Probably coll. M.A. Jaspán 1969. *Humus* 1975.L23.
5. **Mandau in sheath.** Iban. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. V.T. King 1973. *Humus* 2012.6.2.4.

Also see Cases 51 and 52.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes

Case 54. Headhunting in Borneo II

See notes for case 53.

1. **Mandau in sheath with attached sheath for pisau raut small knife.** Kayan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.4.1-3.
2. **Pisau raut (small knife).** Kayan or Iban. Probably Sarawak, Malaysia. *Humus* 2026.60.
3. **Model of wooden shield.** Kayan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.16.
4. **Mandau in sheath** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.3.1-2.

Also see Cases 51 and 52.

Relevant thematic panels: From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos, Sentient Landscapes





Case 55: Blades of Mindanao and Sulu

This display presents the metalwork and martial heritage of the southern Philippines (Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago). Three forms are displayed: the leaf-shaped *barong*, a chopping sword of the Tausug and Yakan peoples; the double-edged *kalis*, a formidable battlefield sword evolved from the maritime Southeast Asian *keris* (see Cases 49 and 50); and the *bayadau* (horned knife), a traditional weapon of the non-Muslim Mandaya people of eastern Mindanao, recognizable by its distinctive 'horned' pommel and scabbard.

While the Indonesian *keris* developed primarily into a personal thrusting dagger, metalsmiths in this region adapted the form into the *kalis* – a larger, heavier slash-and-thrust sword used for cutting and thrusting. The two weapons share a spiritual inheritance: an association with the Under World *naga* (water dragon) (Case 33), expressed through the serpentine curves of some blades. On the *barong*, this symbolism is balanced by the carved bird-crest hilt (*kakatua*), which reaches toward the Upper World. Kept as sacred ancestral heirlooms, these blades are worn or displayed during traditional weddings, community festivals, and family lifecycle rituals to honour lineage and status.

1. **Barong sword and separate sheath.** Tausug or Yakan. Sulu Archipelago/SW Mindanao, Philippines. *Humus* 1986.2.5.1–2.
2. **Single-edged knife with filigree silver handle, in sheath.** Mindanao. *Humus* 1986.2.9.1–2.
3. **Double-edged horned knife (*bayadau*) in sheath.** Mandaya. Eastern Mindanao. *Humus* 1986.2.10.1–2.
4. **Single-edged knife in sheath.** Mindanao, *Humus* 1986.2.11.1–2.
5. **Barong sword in sheath.** Tausug or Yakan. Sulu Archipelago/SW Mindanao, *Humus* 1986.2.6.1–2.
6. **Kalis sword.** Maranao, Maguindanao, or Tausug. Mindanao or Sulu Archipelago. *Humus* 1986.2.8.1–2.
7. **Panel with miniature replicas of blades.** Sabah/Sulu trade region, Coll. L. Hill 1990, Tamparuli, Sabah, Malaysia. *Humus* 1990.10.23.

All full-sized blades from Ifor Powell collection made in the 1920s.

Relevant thematic panels: The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 56. Games of Spirit and Skill

A number of traditional Southeast Asian pastimes have spiritual significance. This includes kite-flying and top-spinning. On the east coast of Malaya, a kite (*wau*) like the model displayed in the case has 'eyes' (*mata*) – the two patches on the sides of the kite – that are 'opened' by the kite-maker, bringing it to life and giving it life-force (*semangat*), enabling it to act as a bridge between the sky in which it travels and humans down on the earth. This parallels the eye-dotting that brings to life statues of Chinese deities like Guanyin (see Case 48). The stable rotation of tops (*gasing*) like the one in this case, also from the east coast of Malaya, is a metaphor for cosmic balance.

Cockfighting is a popular competitive activity in the region. It provides an opportunity for building male status and for gambling, but it also has spiritual meaning. In Bali, where the spurs in the case are from, it is conducted during temple festivals as a sacred ritual, in which spilling blood onto the earth restores cosmic balance.

Finally, traditional kickball, originally played in a cooperative circle within which participants used only their feet, knees, chest and head to keep a woven rattan ball aloft, expressed a belief that collective harmony among people was vital to maintaining the balance of the wider cosmos. Today, the game survives as *sepak takraw*, a highly competitive regional sport.

1. **Basketwork rattan ball for *kataw* (kickball).** Laos. Coll. E. Aitken 1969. *Humus* 1969.35.
2. **Ballpoint drawings of how to play kickball.** Probably Laos. *Humus* 2026.19.
3. **Spinning top (*gasing*) with base.** Kelantan, Malaya. Coll. T. Cox. *Humus* 1974.1–2.
4. **Borneo card game.** Sarawak. With scenes of local life. Published by Borneo Literature Bureau, Kuching. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.24.
5. **Model of Malay moon kite (*wau bulan*).** Kelantan, Malaya. Made by Ismail bin Yusof. Coll. R. Vokes, 1978. *Humus* 1978.1.
6. **Set of cock-fighting spurs (*taji*).** Bali, Indonesia. Coll. L. Hill, 1975. *Humus* 1975.15.
7. **Cockfight safety matches.** Made in Indonesia, licensed by A.B. Jonkoping-Vulcan, Sweden. Gift from A. Crowther, 1979. *Humus* 1979.7.

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; Shadows, Water and Wood; The Cosmic Duo; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State





Case 57. From Sea to Market

This case focuses on traditional fishing methods and coastal livelihoods across Southeast Asia. A model fishing boat from Pahang illustrates the vessels used to harvest the catch. While subsistence fishing is still central, the harvest also drives market trade and regional commerce. This economic side is represented here by market weighing scales from Sarawak and a Philippine pearl oyster shell, a high-value commodity sought after in international trade networks.

As in many other parts of the world, boats are regarded as being in some 'alive', and often have 'eyes' painted on their hulls, as in the photograph included in the case.

1. **Model fishing boat.** Kuantan, Pahang, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.103.3.
2. **Scales used to weigh fish for sale.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Loan from T. North, coll. by his father in 1970s/80s. *Humus* 1984.L2.2.
3. ***Pinctada maxima* oyster shell.** Philippines. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1971.18.

Also see the fishing spears from New Guinea on open display mounted on the end of a case near this one.

Relevant thematic panels: Harvest of the Wild; Emerald Horizons; Crafting the Cosmos; Cooking the Cosmos

Case 58. Borneo Baskets

Among people living in forested areas throughout the region, baskets serve a range of roles in daily life, ranging from heavy-duty work to carrying personal belongings. Examples from Borneo on display in this case include a rugged basket for hauling wood or game and several baskets for personal items. Woven from rattan, many feature complex geometric or figurative patterns created by interlacing natural and black-dyed strands. One basket features a written blessing in Malay, paired with a human motif morphing into a plant. In stratified Bornean societies like the Kayan and Kenyah, depicting the human form was strictly restricted to high-status individuals, as use by others was believed to cause spiritual illness.

Three of the five rattan baskets displayed here were probably made by Penan. The Penan people, until recently hunter-gatherers who did not grow rice, specialise in making the finer baskets and often trade or sell these to other groups, who value Penan craftsmanship highly.

1. **Man's basket for carrying wood or game.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Used for wood or game. Thwaites collection. Coll. 1950s. *Humus* 2003.6.6.
2. **Basket for personal items (gaweng).** Kelabit but probably made by Penan. Sarawak, Malaysia. For personal items. Gift from M. Janowski. approx. 2010. *Humus* 2026.L2.
3. **Basket for personal items (gaweng).** Kelabit, but probably made by Penan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Gift from M. Janowski. approx. 2010. *Humus* 2026.L3.
4. **Basket for personal items (uyut).** Kelabit, but probably made by Penan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Gift from M. Janowski. approx. 2010. *Humus* 2026.L4.
5. **Basket for personal items.** Probably Iban. Kapit, Sarawak, Malaysia. With human figure growing into a plant and SELAMAT PAKAI BEKAS TAN ('Good Luck When You Wear this Basket') around the top. Gift from Traude Gavin 2025. *Humus* 2026.20.

Relevant thematic panels: Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State; Threads of Meaning; Emerald Horizons; Harvest of the Wild





Case 59. Fish and Frog Traps

Traps for fish and frogs, usually made of bamboo and rattan like these, are used in streams, rivers and ponds across the region. They vary from long, thin funnels to compact, rounded baskets, as demonstrated here. A Myanmar (Burma) one *kyat* banknote featuring a traditional fisherman underlines the deep economic and cultural importance of traditional fish traps.

1. **Fish trap (*sai xai*).** Laos. Coll. E. Aitken 1969. *Humus* 1969.16.
2. **Fish trap (*sai xai*).** Laos. Coll. R. Cooper 1975. *Humus* 1977.L17.
3. **Fish trap (*bubu*).** Pahang, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.30.
4. **Fish trap (*bubo*).** Philippines. Gift from E. Graham 1988. Bought in UK. *Humus* 1988.1.
5. **Fish trap (*ta-un*).** Bontoc. Philippines. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1974.67.
6. **Frog trap (*dakkob*).** Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand. Gift from Wathana Wongseklarttirat 1975. *Humus* 1977.3.
7. **Two eel-traps (*bubu lindung*).** Tabanan, Bali, Indonesia. Made by I Gusti Wayan Puja. Gift from nephew of maker to A. Crowther 1978, who donated them to the museum. *Humus* 1979.8.1-2.
8. **One *kyat* (ကျပ်)note.** Myanmar. With picture of fisherman operating a fish trap on one side. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1970.51.3.

Relevant thematic panels: Harvest of the Wild; Emerald Horizons; Crafting the Cosmos; Cooking the Cosmos

Case 60. Voyaging on the Sea

This case explores the dual networks of maritime commerce in the region: inter-island trade within Southeast Asia and long-distance trade connecting the region to global markets. The double-outrigger canoe from Mindanau in the Philippines and the Indonesian Bugis *perahu* represent the agile vessels used by these legendary seafaring merchant communities to move goods across regional archipelagos. The outrigger canoe was also used by voyagers from island Southeast Asia to travel out of the region and to settle far away in Polynesia and New Zealand.

The Chinese model junk and Chinese wooden-cased compass highlight the link between Southeast Asian ports and China. Reflecting this complex cross-cultural history, the very term 'junk' is a European adaptation of the Old Javanese word *jong*, which originally described the massive indigenous merchant ships navigating regional waters centuries before becoming synonymous with Chinese vessels.

1. **Compass.** Hong Kong. In wooden case. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1970.19.
2. **Model Bugis *perahu*.** Sulawesi, Indonesia. Silver. Probably given to M. Parnwell, director of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hull, in Ujong Panjang in the early 1990s. *Humus* 2005.12.
3. **Model of double outrigger canoe.** Manila, Philippines. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1971.33.
4. **Model of Chinese junk.** Coll. L. Hill in Beverley, Yorkshire 1978. *Humus* 1978.L4.

Relevant thematic panels: Emerald Horizons; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes





Case 61. Houses I

The house is central to Southeast Asian society and cosmology. The main traditional (and ancient) form of the house in this region is raised on piles and has a steeply pitched roof. These characteristics mean that the house is well-ventilated in the humid climate and that it is protected from floods, but they also have a deep cosmological significance. The three levels of the traditional house are associated with the Upper World, the Middle (human) World and the Under World. The dramatic roofs of the model Toraja rice barn and of the model Minangkabau 'big house', rice granary and mosque shown in this case are also linked to cosmological beliefs and ritual practice. Among the Toraja, where sacred 'origin houses' also have this type of roof, its use for rice barns expresses the fact that they are seen as a sacred domestic sanctuary for the Rice Goddess (see Case 38). Among the Minangkabau, this type of roof is seen as 'horn-shaped', linking it to buffalo legends and the matrilineal clan lines that inherit property. The fact that it is used for mosques as well as rice barns expresses a syncretic melding of earlier belief systems and Islam.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the rapid growth of towns and cities, more permanent settlement, and access to new materials began to transform living spaces. Historically, urban centres were dominated by Chinese courtyard shop-houses and European colonial dwellings, but with high levels of rural-urban migration suburban houses like that in Case 62 are becoming common. In rural areas as well as in towns and cities, houses are often now built at ground level and are made of wood, brick or concrete rather than bamboo, with corrugated iron roofing rather than thatch, *atap* or tile. A mixture of modern and traditional materials is often used, as in the photograph included in this case.

In rural areas cosmological principles remain important but they are increasingly being abandoned in house-building in towns and cities – except among the Chinese, who continue to be most concerned to adhere to cosmological principles, with many following ancient *feng shui* principles in laying out their urban houses.

1. **Toraja rice barn.** Ujong Panjang, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Painted wooden model. Coll. by student of I. Chou, 1970. *Humus* 2001.10.
2. **Minangkabau rice granary.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Bronze model. Bought by M.A. Jaspan in antique shop in Beverley, 1968. *Humus* 1968–21.
3. **Minangkabau mosque.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Bronze model. Bought by M.A. Jaspan in antique shop in Beverley, 1968. *Humus* 1968.20.
4. **Minangkabau traditional 'big house', rumah gadang.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Bronze model. Bought by M.A. Jaspan in antique shop in Beverley, 1968. Sumatra. *Humus* 1968.19.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo

Case 62. Houses II

See text for case 61.

1. **Thai house.** Thailand. Wooden model. Made for the Thai Embassy in London and used in an exhibition there in 1970s. Gift from Thai Embassy 1988. *Humus* 1988.5.
2. **Traditional middle class urban house.** Thailand. Wooden model. Gift from Patama Kanjanachusuk 1970. *Humus* 1971.4.
3. **Nias house.** Nias, Indonesia. Paper model made by Lewis Hill from UNICEF kit. *Humus* 2001.3.
4. **Malay village house.** Malaysia. Paper model. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.2.
5. **Bugis house.** South Sulawesi. Paper model from UNICEF kit. Coll. K. Teague 1990. Kit assembled by L. Hill. *Humus* 2001.1.
6. **Semi-detached urban house.** Malaysia. Paper model of proposed housing in Penang airport district. Made 1981 by Lean Hoe Yap, architecture student at Hull university. *Humus* 1981.8.
7. **Batak house.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Paper model from UNICEF kit. Coll. K. Teague 1990. Kit assembled by L. Hill. *Humus* 1990.15.
8. **Javanese house.** Paper model from UNICEF kit. Coll. K. Teague 1990. Kit assembled by L. Hill. *Humus* 2001.2.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo





Case 63. Food and Drink in Luzon

Traditionally, gourds like those in this case were essential tools for food security and preservation in the humid mountain climate where the Ifugao and Bontoc peoples live in Luzon in the Philippines. They were used for water, rice beer, seeds, meat and salt. Hung over the fire, they kept salt dry and meat for smoking to preserve it.

The carved wooden tableware reflects both daily life and social status. Daily meals were served in simple bowls and basketry plates, while the raised pedestal bowl and spoons carved with full human figures were reserved for high-status individuals and ceremonial feasts.

1. **Bontoc gourd container.** Probably used for salt. *Humus 1974.68.*
2. **Ifugao wooden plate.** *Humus 1974.71*
3. **Small Ifugao or Bontoc wooden bowl.** *Humus 1974.92.*
4. **Ifugao wooden bowl on pedestal.** *Humus 1974.65.*
5. **Ifugao wooden spoon.** Carved figure of man on handle. *Humus 1974.66.*
6. **Ifugao wooden spoon.** Carved figure of man on handle. *Humus 1974.47.*
7. **Bontoc basketry plate.** *Humus 1974.70.*
8. **Large Ifugao gourd in rattan framework.** Probably used to store rice seed. *Humus 1974.72.*

All collected by M.A. Jaspan in Bontoc, Mountain Province, Northern Luzon, Philippines in 1974.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Harvest of the Wild; Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons

Case 64. Philla Davis: Craft and Collection

Philla Davis is one of the many people who have contributed to the collection in this museum. She was an accomplished British basketry craftswoman, teacher and traveller. She spent much of her life working on the study and preservation of traditional basketry plaiting in the UK and around the world, and was also interested in weaving and dyeing textiles. In the United Kingdom, she taught and revived endangered straw-work techniques and was highly regarded for her publications on this and other forms of basketry.

This case displays a selection of basketry objects she collected during extensive fieldwork across Southeast Asia in the 1970s. After her death in 1989, her collection of Southeast Asian material, which also included many woven textiles (such as that shown in Case 34), was donated to the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hull. As a maker herself, Davis had a profound technical appreciation for local weaving styles and cottage industries. She purposefully selected items to highlight diverse regional variations, ranging from family-crafted samples from Rote to intricate *anyam gila* ('mad weave') from Sumba.

1. **Basket and lid.** Bugis. South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Made in 1950s–60s, possibly acquired from antique dealer in Den Haag between 1969–73. Type of basket used in Netherlands at this time for storing knitting wool, thread passing through central lid. *Humus* 1990.14.55.
2. **Three human figures.** Bugis. Sulawesi, Indonesia. Collected in 1973 or 1974. *Humus* 1990.14.139–41.
3. **Bag for betel and areca.** Sumatra, Indonesia. Made between 1900–1940. Patterning style used in Minangkabau highlands, Aceh, Bataklands. Possibly acquired from antique dealer in Den Haag between 1969–73. *Humus* 1990.14.70.
4. **Square sample basket.** Rote, Indonesia. Made by Markus family in 1973. *Humus* 1990.14.115.
5. **Sample basket.** Rote, Indonesia. Made by Markus family in 1973. *Humus* 1990.14.114.
6. **Unfinished sample to illustrate *anyam gila* ('mad weave').** Sumba, Indonesia. Collected in 1973. *Humus* 1990.14.113.
7. **Basket for traditional pre-packed rice for travellers.** Denpasar, Bali. *Humus* 1990.14.117.
8. **Sample basket.** Rote, Indonesia. Made by Markus family in 1973. *Humus* 1990.14.119.
9. **Back basket.** Jarai, Vietnam. Probably collected in 1971. *Humus* 1990.14.80.
10. **Basket with lid.** Bali. *Humus* 1990.14.78.
11. **Basketry figure on lid.** Sumba, Indonesia, but probably acquired in Bali. *Humus* 1990.14.106.
12. **Hat, basketry with Chinese printed paper lining.** Southern China or Vietnam. Collected 1978. *Humus* 1990.14.84.
13. **Basket and lid.** Malay. Malaysia. In style known as *anyam gila* ('mad weave'). Possibly acquired from handicraft shop in Malaysia in early 1970s. *Humus* 1990.14.51.
14. **Box for betel and areca with lid.** T'boli. Mindanao, Philippines. Collected 1974, possibly from the Santa Cruz Mission, Lake Sebu, Koto Batu, Mindanao. *Humus* 1990.14.39.
15. **Birdcage.** Philippines. Probably collected 1974. *Humus* 1990.14.81.
16. **Back basket.** Philippines. Probably collected 1974. *Humus* 1990.14.32.
17. **Basketry rattle for a child.** Made by Philla Davis for Alit Djajasoebrata's child, 1970s. *Humus* 1995.16.1.
18. **Lampshade/ritual food cover.** Vietnam. Probably collected in 1971. *Humus* 1990.14.82.

All collected by Philla Davis and donated to Hull University in 1990.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Living Landscape; Harvest of the Wild





Case 65. Bronze and Brass

This case focuses on the deep historical significance of metalworking across both mainland and maritime Southeast Asia.

The ancient cast-metal tradition of the region is represented by the 19th-century bronze *moko* drum from Alor Island, Indonesia. Historically descended from the ancient Dong Son kettledrum traditions of mainland Southeast Asia, these hour-glass-shaped *moko* drums developed a highly specialized role in the Alor-Pantar archipelago. Rather than simple musical instruments, they evolved into a vital form of local currency, serving as prized family heirlooms and mandatory dowry payments during traditional bride-price marriage negotiations.

The historical transition to sophisticated brass alloy casting is illustrated by the *gadur* container from the Maranao people of Lake Lanao in Mindanao, Philippines. Created using the ancient lost-wax casting method, these heavy vessels were traditionally exchanged as heirloom dowry gifts during aristocratic marriage ceremonies. They represent wealth, prestige, and enduring family alliances.

The three brass owls (*zee kwet* ဇီးကျွတ်) from Myanmar reflect a tradition in which owl figures are associated with luck and prosperity. They are commonly made as male and female pairs, with a small owl representing their offspring, forming a family group. Such figures may be kept in the home and displayed at entrances, where they are associated with bringing prosperity and good fortune to the household.

Also see Case 44.

1. **Bronze drum (*moko*).** Alor, Indonesia. 19th century. Purchased in the UK by L. Hill 1990 *Humus* 1990.20.
2. **Maranao brass *gadur* container.** Lake Lanao, Mindanao, Philippines. Ifor Powell collection, 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.27.1.
3. **Set of three brass owls (*zee kwet* ဇီးကျွတ်).** Myanmar. Probably pre 1970s. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.1–3.

Relevant thematic panels: Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; The Cosmic Duo; A Cultural Melting Pot; Threads of Meaning

Case 66. Earthenware from Lombok

This case features traditional earthenware pottery from the village of Rungkang, Masbagik, East Lombok, Indonesia, made in 1992. Rather than being put into a kiln, pottery in the region is often fired in a bonfire, as these jars, dishes, cooking pot and incense burner have been. The firing procedure is shown in the series of three photographs by Malinda van Gaauw, who collected the vessels that accompany the case. Another photograph in the case shows earthenware pots made in 1987 in Sarawak, Malaysia, on the island of Borneo, being dried over the fire before they are fired in a bonfire similar to the one in which the Sasak vessels in this case were fired.

Hand-building rather than the pottery wheel is the traditional method of making pottery in Southeast Asia, and these Sasak vessels, as well as the Kelabit ones in the photograph in the case, were hand-built using the paddle-and-anvil technique, in which a stone is held inside the pot and a paddle on the exterior of the vessel is patted against the stone. The dark colour of the Sasak pots is achieved by applying a liquid made from tamarind bark boiled in water, and the shiny surface by polishing with coconut husk, stone or a traditional polishing tool known as *leladikan*. Kelabit pots are finished with a glaze made of tree resin, rubbed over the hot pots immediately after removing them from the bonfire.

1. **Storage jar with lid (*kaling*).** *Humus* 1993.1.6.1–2.
2. **Storage jar with lid (*kaling*).** *Humus* 1993.1.7.1–2.
3. **Large storage jar.** *Humus* 1993.1.5.
4. **Incense burner.** *Humus* 1993.1.11.
5. **Small serving dish with lid (*mangku*).** *Humus* 1993.1.10.1–2.
6. **Medium serving dish with lid (*mangku*).** *Humus* 1993.1.9.1–2.
7. **Large serving dish with lid.** *Humus* 1993.1.8.1–2.
8. **Large cooking pot.** *Humus* 1993.1.2.

All collected by Malinka van der Gaauw in 1992.

Relevant thematic panels: Crafting the Cosmos; Cooking the Cosmos; Emerald Horizons; Sentient Landscapes; A Cultural Melting Pot





Case 67. Crossbow Hunting

This case focuses on the use of crossbows across the forested highlands of mainland Southeast Asia. It contains full-sized crossbows, quivers and poison-tipped bolts from the Kachin and Hmong Njua peoples, alongside a model of a Khmer design from Cambodia.

Crossbows have thousands of years of history in this region, where they may have originally been invented. They provide a silent, high-impact tool for stealth hunting in dense forests, relying on lethal botanical poisons to down game. This effective design endured as a practical combat weapon during the Vietnam War (1955–1975), utilized by indigenous guerrilla forces for covert forest operations.

1. **Kachin cross-bow with one dart.** Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1970.24 & 1970.25.9.
2. **Kachin quiver for crossbow darts.** Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. Containing darts and spare string. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1970.25.1–9.
3. **Set of Kachin crossbow darts with poison on tips.** Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1970. *Humus* 1970.25.2.4, 5 & 8.
4. **Hmong Njua crossbow quiver and darts.** Chiang Mai, Thailand. Made by Song Jeu Ser Yang. Coll. R. Cooper 1976. *Humus* 1976.80 & 1976.81.1–5.
5. **Model of Khmer crossbow.** Siem Reap, Cambodia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan, 1969. *Humus* 1969.21.

Relevant thematic panels: Harvest of the Wild; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Emerald Horizons; Sentient Landscapes

Case 68. Trapping and Blowpipe Hunting

This case covers two forest methods to bring in game: blowpipe hunting and bird-lime trapping. Blowpipes are a traditional weapon used on the islands of Borneo, Sumatra, Mindanao, Luzon, Sulawesi and Palawan, as well as in the Malay Peninsula and southern Thailand. They are used with darts tipped with botanically-derived poisons. Blowpipes are still in use by some hunter-gatherer groups.

Blowpipes are made in various ways, sometimes using bamboo and sometimes wood. Some, made of hardwood, serve both as a blowpipe for hunting and have an iron blade bound to the end, so that the blowpipe is also a spear. This type of blowpipe is made throughout Borneo and also by the Minangkabau and Batak in Sumatra, the Toraja and Toala in Sulawesi, the Pala'wan of Palawan and in the Mentawai Islands. An example of a hardwood blowpipe with a spear attached, is mounted on the wall next to this case (no. 9 below).

The case also includes resin-coated bird-lime sticks used by the Hmong Njua of Thailand. This method of passive foraging has a long history in Sumatra, Java and Borneo, and on the mainland of Southeast Asia. By coating twigs in sticky, boiled-down tree sap, small birds could be silently snared without wasting ammunition or alerting larger jungle game. The method is still used in some parts of the region, although it is now illegal.

1. **Orang Asli blowpipe quiver with darts.** Malaya. Coll. A. Wynne late 1930s. Bateson collection. *Humus* 1969.69.
2. **Blowpipe quiver with darts.** Orang Asli. Malaya. *Humus* 2026.21.
3. **Two Semai Orang Asli blowpipe darts.** Malaya. One tipped with poison. *Humus* 1976.100.1–2.
4. **Carved figure from Borneo of man with blowpipe.** Kalimantan, Indonesia or Sarawak, Malaysia. *Humus* 2026.56.
5. **Temuan Orang Asli blowpipe quiver with darts.** Ulu Berangan, Negeri, Sembilan, Malaya. Coll. R. Cooper 1971. *Humus* 1977.L16.
6. **Blowpipe quiver.** Iban. Sarawak. Incised and coloured decoration. *Humus* 1980.3.1.
7. **Orang Asli blowpipe quiver with darts.** Johore or Pahang, Malaya. Coll. A. Wynne 1940. Gift from G. Jones, sister of A. Wynne. *Humus* 1969.65.
8. **Hmong Njua bird-lime sticks.** Chiang Mai, Thailand. With bird-lime, in bamboo quiver. Made by Song Jeu Ser Yang. Coll. R. Cooper, 1976. *Humus* 1976.82.

Outside the case:

9. **Blowpipe with spear (*sumpitan*).** Probably Dayak. Probably Kalimantan, Indonesia. Bored from a single piece of hardwood. *Humus* 2026.53.

Relevant thematic panels: Harvest of the Wild; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Emerald Horizons; Sentient Landscapes





Case 69. Balinese Rice Pouches

Pouches like these, plaited from palm leaf, are made across Southeast Asia, serving religious, ritual, and festive purposes within Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. They underline the centrality of rice in culture and belief in the region. Local Chinese communities also use palm leaf to make rice pouches, *zongzi*, for the annual Dragon Boat Festival.

The pouches in this case are from Bali, where they are called *tipat*. They are used as sacred offerings representing fertility in Hindu rituals, and also serve as a compressed rice staple in daily local cuisine. These *tipat* are empty and were made in the late 1970s for a Hull University researcher, Kathy Jenkins, to demonstrate the range of shapes made.

Lis. Stylized human body made up of a series of *tipat*, used in temple purifications and cleansing ceremonies. Its androgynous nature, bringing together female and male energies, makes it a powerful channel for cosmic life force, known as *prana* in Bali. The elements of a *lis* are bound together in a bundle around palm ribs and used to sprinkle blessed water.

1. *Ribel* (bottom)
2. *Pe-e* (hips)
3. *Pungsed* (navel)
4. *Ige* (rib-bones)
5. *Lengen* (upper arms)
6. *Nyo-nyo* (breasts)
7. *Kekelongan* (throat)
8. *Mata* (eyes)
9. *Ulu* (head)

Tipat representing cosmic elements. These are presented at family temple shrines at important points in the lunar calendar, such as full and new moons, to harmonise environmental forces and protect crops from severe weather or blight.

10. *Akase* (sky)
11. *Mata hari* (sun)
12. *Bulan* (moon)
13. *Teje* (daylight)
14. *Apah* (earth)

Tipat representing sea creatures. They are used in baby lifecycle rites, agricultural rituals and ocean offerings to symbolically represent the marine ecosystem and bless participants with resilience, fertility, and cosmic balance.

15. Crab (*yuyu*)
16. Octopus (*gerita*)
17. Fish (*be*)
18. Prawn (*urang*)

Humus 2023.2.55, 56 & 2023.2.1-9, 33, 35, 37, 45, 60, 85, 86.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Crafting the Cosmos; A Cultural Melting Pot; Emerald Horizons; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo

Case 70. Scenes from Thai Life

This case contains miniature clay figurines, known as *tukata chao wang* ('palace dolls'), made in 1996 to depict the daily, spiritual and leisure rhythms of traditional Thailand.

1. **Cockfighting.** *Humus 1997.16.1.*
2. **Grandmother rocking baby in cradle.** *Humus 1997.16.2.*
3. **Preparing tobacco.** *Humus 1997.16.3.*
4. **Offering of flowers.** *Humus 1997.16.4.*
5. **Chess players.** *Humus 1997.16.5.*
6. **Monk eating ceremonial meal.** *Humus 1997.16.6.*
7. **Monk reading to worshippers.** *Humus 1997.16.7.*
8. **Girl selling fruit.** *Humus 1997.16.8.*
9. **Four musicians and singer.** *Humus 1997.16.9.*
10. **Preparing a boy to enter the monastery.** *Humus 1997.16.10.*
11. **Thai boxing.** *Humus 1997.16.11.*
12. **Catching fish in irrigated rice field.** *Humus 1997.16.12.*
13. **Traditional orchestra.** *Humus 1997.16.13.*
14. **Pounding maize.** *Humus 1997.16.14.*
15. **Playing the skipping game with bamboo rods.** *Humus 1997.16.15.*
16. **Procession with novice and gifts for monks.** *Humus 1997.16.16.*
17. **Female orchestra.** *Humus 1997.16.17.*
18. **Fruit seller in boat.** *Humus 1997.16.18.*
19. **Preparing a betel quid.** *Humus 1997.16.19.*

All collected by D. Aghiros and J. Moller in Ang Tong province in Thailand in 1996.

Relevant thematic panels: Cooking the Cosmos; Harvest of the Wild; Altered States; Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State; Threads of Meaning





Case 71. Predicting the Future

Rather than simply recording linear dates, the calendars in this case were used to calculate auspicious days for major life events, determine spiritual taboos and chart personal destiny. They reflect a convergence of indigenous beliefs with imported astrological traditions, including Hindu-Buddhist cosmology deriving from India and the Chinese zodiac. Thus, traditional Lao calendars like the two here, for the years of the Fire Horse and Metal Pig, are shared with the Chinese but are also influenced by Indian Hindu-Buddhist cosmology. Traditional calendars in Myanmar are also influenced by Indian cosmology, and this is also the case in Bali, which is still Hindu. Among the Batak of Sumatra, as among other inland peoples, calendars are indigenous but also show the influence of Hindu-Buddhist beliefs.

1. **Lao calendar (*patithin* ປະຕິທິນ) for 1966.** Vientiane, Laos. Incised bamboo with metal ends, ornately worked at one end. Traditional calendar for the Tai-Lao year of Rai Sanga (ປີຮາຍສະງາ), corresponding to the Chinese Year of the Fire Horse. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1975.L1.
2. **Lao calendar (*patithin* ປະຕິທິນ) for 1971.** Laos. Incised bamboo. Traditional calendar for the Tai-Lao year of Ruang Khai (ປີຮວງໄຄ້), corresponding to the Chinese Year of the Metal Pig. Coll. Clive Christie 1973. *Humus* 1976.37.
3. **Batak divining calendar (*porhalaan*).** Samosir, Sumatra, Indonesia. Carved water buffalo bone. This is a copy of a traditional *porhalaan* matrix incised with 12 months and 30 days. Traditionally a calendar like this would have been used by a *datu* (shaman-healer) to diagnose auspicious and inauspicious days. Coll. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.26.
4. **Balinese calendar.** Bali, Indonesia. Painted cloth. A traditional *palalintangan* (star calendar), combining five- and seven-day cycles into a 35-day grid to determine personal astrology, character traits and ritual offerings. Coll. L. Hill 1975. *Humus* 1975.18.
5. & 6. **Two Burmese (Myanmar) *zata* horoscopes (ဇာတာ).** Myanmar (Burma). Incised palm leaf and charcoal pigment. A *zata* is a personalized life document featuring a natal chart, mathematical grids, and protective Buddhist and solar iconography. No 5: *Humus* 1992.3.60 (Mathieson collection) and No 6: *Humus* 2000.11.8 (coll. D. Aghiros 2000).

Relevant thematic panels: Sentient Landscapes; The Porous Vessel; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 72. Healing and the Spirit World

Across Southeast Asia, healing often involves communication with unseen beings and forces believed to influence health, fortune and wellbeing. This requires high levels of cosmic power and proximity to the spirit world. Shaman-healers and spirit mediums in the region are often transgender or are women beyond the menopause. Being neither purely male nor purely female, they are regarded as bringing together the two genders to form a perfect, and very powerful, union.

Most ritual knowledge in Southeast Asia has been transmitted orally from teacher to apprentice. Batak shaman-priests (*datu*) in Sumatra were unusual in recording divinatory systems, medicinal formulas and ritual instructions in folded bark books known as *pustaha* such as those displayed here.

Across much of the region, ritual specialists, including shaman-healers who journey to retrieve the lost soul, use staffs like the two Maloh-Taman staffs in this case, which once belonged to the shaman-healer Sabina (whose photograph is included in this case) and the Batak staff displayed adjacent to it (no. 11 below) to engage with the spirit world. These may serve as cosmic ladders, weapons against malevolent forces, instruments for diagnosing illness and percussion instruments used to accompany ritual chants.

The transfer by shaman-healers of diseases into an object has been common historically in the region. These were later discarded, in the belief that this would heal the patient. The Melanau of Sarawak carved sickness images called *belum* out of soft palmwood. In recent years *belum* are no longer used to heal sickness, but have become cultural symbols of identity, and are made from harder woods, as are those displayed in this case and in Case 35. This is also true of the Orang Asli sickness images displayed in Case 37.

Many spirit healing practices reflect long histories of cultural interaction and exchange. The Hmong divination blocks displayed here, used to divine the source of illness, share an ancient ancestry with Chinese divinatory moon blocks (displayed in Case 48).

1. **Beaded *tungkat balian* (shaman-healer's staff).** Maloh. Kalimantan, Indonesia. This once belonged to a shaman-healer (*balian*) called Sabina. It was a gift from Sabina to V.T. King in 1973, who donated it to the museum. *Humus* 2012.6.5.
2. **Divination blocks shaped like a split water buffalo horn (*kuam neeb*).** Mae Sai, Chiang Rai province, Thailand. These once belonged to a Green Hmong shaman (*txiv neeb*), Sa Khua ser Shong, who gave them to R. Cooper in 1974, who in turn donated them to the museum. *Humus* 1976.76s.1–2.
- 3.&4. **Bark books of divination (*pustaha*).** Batak Simalungan. Sumatra, Indonesia. Made from folded tree bark. These once belonged to *datu* (shaman-healers). Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1965. *Humus* 1975.L24 and L25.
5. **Carved horn medicine box.** Batak Simalungan. Sumatra, Indonesia. Copy of a box used by a *datu* (shaman-healer). It features protective human figures, a wooden stopper, and a horn locking pin. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.140.1.
6. **Shaman-healer's beaded necklace.** Bidayuh. Sarawak, Malaysia. A ritual necklace traditionally worn by a female shaman-healer (*dayung borih*) during healing rituals and harvest ceremonies. Adorned with protective charms. Coll. Tuson Chong early 21st century and donated to the museum 2026. *Humus* 2026.28.
- 7,8&9. **Three small sickness images (*belum*).** Melanau. Sarawak, Malaysia. Copies of traditional anthropomorphic figures used in traditional healing ceremonies.





Humus 1972.8-9 coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971; *Humus* 1992.1.4 coll. I. Chou 1991.

10. **Large sickness image (*belum*).** Melanau. Sarawak, Malaysia. Copy of traditional anthropomorphic figure used in traditional healing ceremonies. This *belum* has a snake around its waist, indicating that the spirit causing disease was a water spirit. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.7.

Displayed next to the case:

11. **Shaman-healer's staff.** Batak. Sumatra, Indonesia. Carved with ancestral figure and horse. Probably made for sale. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1968.12.

Relevant thematic panels: The Porous Vessel; Sentient Landscapes; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State; Threads of Meaning

Case 73. The Spice Islands

This case focuses on the spice trade in Southeast Asia. The Maluku Islands, known as the Spice Islands, are the centre of this trade, as this is the native home of cloves, nutmeg, and mace. Pepper is an important spice crop in western parts of island Southeast Asia, cultivated across Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Malaya.

It was a desire to control the import of valuable spices that prompted European interest in Southeast Asia in the early modern period. In Europe, the elite used rare imports like cloves and nutmeg to flaunt wealth at feasts and mask salted (and sometimes rotten) meat in winter, and (as in the photograph in the case) would carry pomanders containing spices to mask bad odours and ward off the 'bad air' believed to spread the Black Death. Pepper was considered 'black gold' and was used to pay taxes and rents. The Chinese, too, imported spices from Southeast Asia. In Imperial China, spices were burnt as sacred temple incense, used to balance body *qi*, chewed by officials to freshen their breath for the Emperor, and even distributed by the government as currency to pay military salaries.

While most spices are picked by hand, a specialised tool like the one in the case is used to harvest nutmegs.

The model boat in the case, made by threading dried clove buds together, was made on the island of Ambon in the early 1990s. Boats like this were first made in the European colonial era, for sale to foreign travellers as souvenirs.

1. **Tool for gathering nutmegs (*gai*).** Banda Islands, Indonesia. *Humus* 1996.14.7.
2. **Model boat made of cloves.** Ambon, Indonesia. *Humus* 1995.17.

Relevant thematic panels: Emerald Horizons; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes





Case 74. Ancestors and Spirits of Place

Throughout Southeast Asia relationships with the dead and ancestors, and with spirits of place, are both vital to the lives of the living. This case focuses on funerary rituals and on commemoration and invocation of ancestors and spirits among the Ngaju people of Kalimantan, Borneo. It includes model *hampatong* posts and model 'ships of the dead', made of latex from the rubber tree. These were made for sale in the 1990s, to commemorate Ngaju traditions for collectors.

Hampatong were temporary repositories for lingering souls or acted as village guardians, who might be either ancestors or spirits of place. Two full-size *hampatong* on display either side of this case (nos. 6 and 7 below).

Model boats were made for funerals and were believed to transport souls to the afterlife. One of the two boats featured here is in the shape of a rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) and the other is in the shape of a *naga* or watersnake/water dragon (see Case 33). The rhinoceros hornbill (*tingang*) traditionally symbolizes the male Upper World and the *naga* the female Under World, but the spirit world is widely associated with reversals in the region, and some anthropologists have reported that in the past a Ngaju woman would be placed in a hornbill coffin and a man in a watersnake coffin. This logic would imply that the hornbill ship may have been for a woman and the *naga* ship for a man.

The tree of life, included on the two boats, is of significance across the region. See Case 18.

1. **Model of *hampatong*.** Ngaju. Palangkaraya, Kalimantan, Indonesia. Rubber. Surmounted by warrior figure. Damaged – bent at bottom. *Humus* 1995.1.1.
2. **Model of *hampatong*.** Ngaju. Palangkaraya, Kalimantan, Indonesia. Rubber. Surmounted by warrior figure. Kapuas, Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Humus* 1995.1.2.
3. **Model of *hampatong*.** Ngaju. Palangkaraya, Kalimantan, Indonesia. Rubber. Surmounted by figure of woman of high status. Kapuas, Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Humus* 1995.1.3.
4. **Model of *banama tingang* ('hornbill boat').** Ngaju. Rubber. Prow in the form of a hornbill head and stern in the form of hornbill tail. Contains crew of 16 figures, beaded decoration with snakes along the side, funeral house, orchestra, tree of life and 5 masts, each with a flag. Kapuas, Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Humus* 1995.1.4.
5. **Model of *banama bulau* ('gold boat').** Ngaju. Rubber. Prow in the form of a *naga* ('dragon') head and stern in the form of a *naga* tail. Contains a boat coffin, death house, six-piece orchestra, man at the prow and another at helm. Damaged – originally included a tree of life, now missing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan in The Hague, Netherlands 1974. *Humus* 1974.18.

Displayed outside the case on either side:

- 6 & 7. Two full-size *hampatong*.** Dayak, probably Ngaju. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Ironwood. Gifts from Philip Goldman to V.T. King in 1975, who donated them to the museum in 2024. *Humus* 2026.62–63.

Humus 1995.1.1-4 were made by members of a Ngaju cooperative. Gift from Yustina Ngampar 1994.

Relevant thematic panels: Sentient Landscapes; The Porous Vessel; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 75. Islam

From the 13th century, Islam spread into Southeast Asia via maritime trade routes. Rather than replacing existing cultures and belief systems, it initially integrated with them. In the latter part of the 20th century stricter forms of Islam arrived, which have attempted to exclude earlier beliefs.

The syncretisation of Islam with earlier beliefs can be seen in the incense burner and ewer in the case. In Hindu-Buddhist ritual, burners like this, shaped like stupas, were used to burn incense to 'feed' the spirits, who were believed to consume the essence of what was burnt; in an Islamic context incense was re-cast as cleansing and purifying. Ewers of this shape, now used in Islamic ritual ablution, are derived from vessels used for holy water in the Hindu-Buddhist context. The material of which the ewer and incense burner are cast, *tembaga putih* ('white brass'), is a copper-zinc-nickel alloy whose bright, silvery lustre allows for the visual verification of ritual cleanliness (*taharah*) within Islam and at the same time links the burner and ewer to both to the Hindu-Buddhist concept of *sattva* – the quality of purity, cosmic clarity and spiritual detachment – and to an ancient, pre-Islamic design language that identifies white materials as intrinsically 'cool' and spiritually protective. Also see Cases 44 and 65.

The photograph in the case of the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, includes the Mahligai royal barge in front of the mosque, used for ceremonial occasions. The double-headed shape of the barge is an ancient shape that is pre-Islamic and even pre-Hindu-Buddhist.

1. **Ewer (*kendi*).** Kuala Trengganu, Peninsular Malaysia. 'White brass' (*tembaga putih*). Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.153.2.
2. **Incense burner (*pedupaan*).** Kuala Trengganu, Malaya. 'White brass' (*tembaga putih*). Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.153.3.
3. **Frankincense.** *Humus* 2026.29.1–4.
4. **Holy Quran.** Probably Indonesia. *Humus* 1978.26.
5. **Muslim man's hat (*deta*).** Minangkabau. Sumatra, Indonesia. *Humus* 1973.15.
6. **Muslim man's hat (*songkok*).** Kelantan, Malaya. *Humus* 1971.43.
7. **Tasbih (Islamic prayer beads).** Malaya. or Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.18.
8. **Kain tekat Meka ('Mecca cloth').** Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. Islamic calligraphy applied with metal thread stitched on to the surface, a method also used for ceremonial women's skirts. This would have served as a protective household hanging or as a funeral shroud. *Humus* 1996.20.4.

Also see Cases 44 and 65.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State





Case 76. Christianity

Catholicism arrived in the region in the 16th century and integrated in many respects with local beliefs. This has continued in many parts of the region, encouraged by the 'inculturation' approach adopted after the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s, which aimed to incorporate local practices and beliefs into local Catholic practice. For example, the *naga* or water dragon (see Case 33) has been incorporated into Catholic cosmology in some areas, though local bishops have varied in their stance on this. Protestant churches from Holland and the UK, which arrived in the 17th century, were less willing to integrate local beliefs, and evangelical churches that arrived in the 20th century, such as the New Tribes Mission, have aimed to exclude local beliefs from Christian belief and practice, labelling local spirits demons, *saitan*.

1. **Statuette of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz.** Manila, Philippines. Martyred in Japan in 1637. Coll. G. Pattison 1989. *Humus* 1989.1.4.
2. **Christian cross on leather cord.** Probably Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.30.
3. **White plastic rosary.** Probably Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.31.
4. **Document about the New Tribes Mission of Indonesia.** Produced in the USA. In English and Bahasa Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.32.
5. **May 1974 issue of 'Brown Gold'.** Periodical of the New Tribes Mission. Produced in the USA. Photograph of Bitako, a Ilongot man from Luzon, Philippines, on the front. *Humus* 2026.33.
6. **Christian book in Lao language.** Gospel Publishing House, Vietnam. *Humus* 2026.34.
7. **Letter from Ron and Nita Berglund of the New Tribes Mission.** Addressed to members of their church in Indonesia, about their missionary plans among tribal people in different parts of Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.35.
8. **Pair of small shields.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Behind one of them is written 'To Dr. Ivy Chou. We wish you the best of health and a prosperous life. May God bless you always. From Iban Dept., M.T.S. Sibu, Sarawak'. M.T.S. is the Methodist Theological School, where Ivy Chou was Principal in the 1950s. Gift from I. Chou 1991. *Humus* 1992.1.5.1–2.
9. **Bible (*Alkitab*) in the Indonesian language.** Lembaga Alkitab, Jakarta Indonesia 1993. *Humus* 2026.34.

Relevant thematic panels: A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 77. Fans

In Southeast Asia, keeping the air cool through using a fan is not just a matter of comfort, but has a cosmological function. Throughout the region, heat is seen as a dangerous condition linked to illness, anger and bad luck, while coolness represents health, peace and safety. Coolness is also associated with royalty and power, so fans are used particularly in high-status households and royal courts. Some of the fans in the case are made of fragrant materials – vetiver roots and sandalwood – and the reason for this is that these good smells are in themselves seen as cooling.

1. **Kipas kulit (leather fan).** Java, Indonesia. A piece of court regalia made of pierced buffalo hide and horn struts, featuring a painted peacock design used to signal aristocratic status during palace rituals. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.110.
2. **Fan made of aromatic roots.** Indonesia. Made of the roots of the vetiver grass. Coll. M.A. Jaspan in The Hague 1974. *Humus* 1974.14.
3. **Basketry fan.** Bidayuh. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus* 1989.6.4.
4. **Sandalwood fan.** Kupang, Timor, Indonesia. Pierced sandalwood slats with a lace-like pattern and 'Indonesia' worked into it. Coll. D. Patty and M.A. Patty-Noach 1996 *Humus* 1996.9.3.
5. **Basketry spade-shaped fan.** Dayak. Sarawak, Malaysia. Thwaites collection. Probably 1950s or 1960s. *Humus* 2003.6.36.
6. **Paper fan.** Vietnam. Made as a gift for spectators at a show by the Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre, Hanoi. Coll. F. Kerlogue 1999. *Humus* 1999.17.
7. **Silk fan.** Bugis. Kota Madya, Makassar, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Patterned purple and green silk. Coll. D. Patty 1995. *Humus* 1996.9.2.
8. **Batik fan.** Java, Indonesia. With black horn struts. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1974.84.

As well as the photograph in this case, one of the photographs in Case 86 also shows a fan in use.

Relevant thematic panels: Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Shadows, Water and Wood; Threads of Meaning; Sentient Landscapes; A Cultural Melting Pot





Case 78. Objects of Power

This case brings together objects from indigenous, traditional Javanese, Islamic, Buddhist, Christian and Chinese folk traditions. These draw on spiritual power to provide protection, support political and social endeavours, protect against jealousy and generate wealth.

The use of objects of power remains widespread in the region. A contemporary urban driver is almost certain to have some kind of amulet – whether Christian, Islamic or Chinese – hanging from his mirror or attached to his gearstick, to ensure that he navigates the traffic safely. The internet has dramatically widened where and how people source objects of power. In the past, for example, people often drew on natural objects immediately around them, gathering and displaying animal parts and strangely-shaped stones found in the forest. The photograph in the case of amulets from the community of Long Puti in Kalimantan shows one that is a bezoar stone, formed inside the digestive tract of an animal; such amulets were known locally as *geliga*. Today, the focus on natural objects of power continues, with rare animal parts and crystals and stones from far away being purchased online.

One of the objects from Long Puti shown in the photograph is a stone to mark the fact that heads have been taken by men in the community (see Cases 53 and 54).

1. **Plastic statuette of St. Christopher.** Manila, Philippines. Hung in cars and taxis as a protective talisman to safeguard against road accidents in heavy traffic. *Humus* 1989.1.5.
2. **Chinese *bagua* mirror.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Such a mirror is placed above the entrance to a household to deflect negative energy. It is surrounded by a *bagua* (八卦) or 'eight trigrams', which represents the fundamental principles of reality, interconnectedness and the flow of nature. Silver amulets with *bagua* are also displayed as no. 12 in this case. *Humus* 1970.17.
3. **Protective 'crocodile' necklace (*boaya*).** Bontoc Igorot. Luzon, Philippines. Made up of a pig tusk and fourteen carabao teeth. *Boaya* means 'crocodile', and such a necklace would once have been made of crocodile teeth. Its shape mimics the jaw of the crocodile. Worn by male high-status elders (*lacay*), warriors and shaman-healers (*datu*) until the 1970s during rituals and celebrations after headhunting, agricultural rituals and peace-making ceremonies. Such necklaces are now treasured as sacred heirlooms (*akón*) and worn at major ritual and social events as a mark of status and identity by both men and women. Coll. M.A. Jaspan, 1974. *Humus* 1974.46.
4. **Protective *tsuli* necklace.** Bontoc. Luzon, Philippines. Made of bamboo, rattan, bone and teeth. Represents the shape of a crocodile's jaw, like the *boaya* (see no. 3 in this case). Worn by women during communal rituals and celebrations to project status and ward off jealousy. Such necklaces have now become sacred heirlooms (*akón*). Philla Davis collection. *Humus* 1990.14.100.
5. **Protective *tsuli* necklace made of a snake backbone.** Bontoc. Luzon, Philippines. A protective amulet worn by women that used sympathetic magic to ease child birth and to avoid lightning strikes when working away from the village. Such necklaces have now become sacred heirlooms (*akón*). Coll. M.A. Jaspan, 1974. *Humus* 1975.L14.
6. **Chinese six-emperor lucky coin tassel (*liù dì qián* 六帝钱).** Bought in Sarawak, Malaysia, probably made in China. A *feng shui* charm used for spiritual defence and to invoke spiritual luck. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.6.
7. **Chinese miniature 'awakened lion' (*xǐng shī* 醒狮) amulet.** Bought in Sarawak, Malaysia, probably made in China. A small replica of a 'lion dance' performance mask. Used as a protective talisman to frighten away malevolent forces and attract good fortune. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.7.

8. **Chinese *wu lou* (葫芦) gourd.** Bought in Sarawak, Malaysia, probably made in China. A small natural dried calabash gourd bound with a red cord and a hanging tassel. Associated with the Daoist immortals, it is used as an amulet to absorb sickness and avoid potential accidents. Coll. M. Janowski 2026. *Humus* 2026.23.8.
9. ***Cupu* amulet.** Jogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. Silver and glass amulet grounded in Javanese mysticism (*kejaman*). Designed to house a sacred, protective medicinal paste. Its spiritual power is ritually 'breathed' into the interior by a traditional healer. The swirling stripes in the glass 'eye' (*mata*) at one end act as a hypnotic spiritual shield to trap and neutralize the 'evil eye' of jealous rivals. *Cupu* are still in active use in Java but ones like this were only made until the Second World War. The glass 'eye' may be much older than the silver body, possibly 1000 years old or more. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1960. *Humus* 1975.L32.
10. **Islamic coin amulet (*duit yasin bahtera*).** Penang, Malaysia. Depicts Nabi (Prophet) Noah on one side and the Ark on the other. Carried as an amulet to invoke the safety of Noah's Ark for safe travels over water. *Humus* 2026.36.
11. **Islamic coin amulet (*duit yasin bahtera*).** Penang, Malaysia. Depicts the Companions of the Cave (known in Western Christian tradition as the Seven Sleepers). Carried as an amulet invoking these righteous *Aṣḥāb al-Kahf* youths, whom God protected from persecution by sealing them in a miraculous 300-year sleep, to guard physical property against theft and protect the body against illness. *Humus* 2026.37.
12. **Two Chinese silver amulets (*yat sing* 日星).** Sarawak, Malaysia. Amulets like this are pinned to babies' clothing or tucked into their bedding to protect them. Silver is believed to absorb toxins and negative power from the environment. Both include a *bagua* (八卦) or 'eight trigrams', which represents the fundamental principles of reality, interconnectedness and the flow of nature. One of the amulets is in the form of a bottle gourd, *wu lou* 葫芦, which is a symbol of longevity and good health. No. 8 in this case is also a bottle gourd. *Humus* 2026.52 & 2026.61.
13. **Three Buddhist amulets (*phra rien*).** Thailand. These feature images of revered monks or the Buddha alongside protective *yantra* magic grids and Pali-script inscriptions. *Humus* 1977.L18, L19 and L20.
14. **Muslim amulet (*jimat*).** Medan, Sumatra, Indonesia. Inscribed with sacred Islamic verses. One is the Ayat al-Kursi, which is revered as providing divine protection against harm, the evil eye and negative spirits. Small amulets like this are sewn into clothing, kept in pockets and hung in houses. Nowadays, silver and gold versions of amulets like this are often made to be worn as jewellery. Christie collection. *Humus* 1995.L3.
15. **Iban 'tiger's claw' (*kuku remaung*).** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Actually a sun bear claw, which stands for a tiger's claw. There are no tigers in Borneo but there are believed to be spirit tigers, known as *remaung* among the Iban. This is used to ward off evil spirits, protect vulnerable infants, grant warriors courage and invulnerability and heal spiritual illnesses. Bettison collection. Coll. 1940s/50s. *Humus* 1980.19.
16. **Barking deer (*muntjac*) antler.** Bidayuh. Sarawak, Malaysia. The tip of the antler tip has been micro-shaved. Shavings from antlers like this are considered extremely powerful and were, in the past, used as an antidote to poison, to expel possessioning spirits, and as an invulnerability amulet in battle. Gift from Tuson Chong 2026. *Humus* 2026.15.5.
17. **Aso' (dragon-dog) charm.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Kayan or Kenyah. Bone. This charm would have been used to ward off malevolent spirits and safeguard vulnerable individuals. Gift from Annabel Gallop 2025. *Humus* 2026.1.7.
18. **Five fishing net charms (*suk*).** Melanau. Sarawak, Malaysia. Bone. These were



in the past attached to nets to pacify water spirits and guarantee a plentiful catch. They are now a cultural artefact representative of Melanau identity.
Gift from Annabel Gallop 2026. *Humus* 2026.1.6.1-5.

Relevant thematic panels: The Porous Vessel; Sentient Landscapes; A Cultural Melting Pot; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Threads of Meaning



Case 79. Borneo Beads

Imported glass and stone beads have been valued throughout Southeast Asia for centuries, perhaps millennia, serving as heirlooms, ritual valuables and markers of status. Borneo is distinctive both for the importance attached to old beads and for the exceptional development of intricate beadwork made from tiny imported seed beads.

Many old beads reached Borneo through long-distance trade networks linking the island to India, China and other parts of Asia. Among many communities in the interior, their manmade origins were unknown and they were regarded as being a form of stone. Ancient glass beads and stone beads such as carnelian were highly valued as heirlooms, worn in prestigious necklaces and head ornaments, and were sometimes believed to possess spiritual power. Certain types were used in ritual contexts. Red beads such as carnelians, for example, are widely used in ritual and are placed on the wrists of the dead among many groups in the region; this is linked to the fact that the colour red is associated with potency and life-force. Today, modern copies of heirloom beads, like those in the case, are worn as markers of cultural identity. One of the photographs in the case shows a group of Kelabit girls wearing copies of heirloom beads at a celebration in the town of Miri in Sarawak, Malaysia.

Some communities have focused on beadwork using tiny beads. The Iban of Sarawak, the Maloh of Kalimantan and the Rungus Dusun of Sabah developed distinctive beadworking traditions, creating necklaces, ceremonial collars, bracelets and decorated garments from thousands of small beads. Today these traditions continue in both ceremonial and commercial forms, producing items ranging from traditional ornaments to modern bags, pencil covers and keyrings.

1. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1965. *Humus* 1968.L1.
2. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Kelabit. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski. *Humus* 2026.L5.
3. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1972.12.
4. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1972.14.
5. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Kelabit. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski. *Humus* 2026.L6.
6. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Dayak. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1968. *Humus* 1972.13.
7. **Necklace of beading beads and long beads.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus* 1989.6.3.3.
8. **Carnelian heirloom bead.** Maloh. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Used by shamans and in other ritual contexts. Coll. V.T. King 1973. *Humus* 1978.11.1.
9. **Carnelian heirloom bead.** Maloh. Sarawak, Malaysia. Used by shamans and in other ritual contexts. Coll. V.T. King 1973. *Humus* 1978.11.3.
10. **Necklace of heirloom beads.** Probably Lun Bawang or Lundayeh. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2018. *Humus* 2026.L7.
11. **Necklace of copies of heirloom beads.** Kelabit. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski approx. 2020. *Humus* 2026.L8.
12. **Beaded necklace.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Gift from M. Parkin 1985. *Humus* 1990.8.2.
13. **Beaded necklace.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Gift from R.B. Kouju 1977. *Humus* 1977.14.
14. **Beaded necklace.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill 1989.





Humus 1989.6.3.2.

15. **Beaded necklace.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Gift from M. Parkin 1985. *Humus 1990.8.1.*
16. **Beaded necklace.** Dayak, possibly Ma'anyan Dayak. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Gift from Y. Ngampar 1996. *Humus 1996.1.3.*
17. **Beaded bangle.** Dayak. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M. Janowski 2000s. *Humus 2026.L9.*
18. **Beaded bracelet.** Maloh. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus 1989.6.3.10.*
19. **Beaded bracelet.** Maloh. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus 1989.6.3.9.*
20. **Beaded bag with Dayak design.** Sarawak, Malaysia. *Humus 2026.39.*
21. **Girl's beaded collar.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Thwaites collection. *Humus 2003.6.81.*
22. **Beaded pencil cover.** Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Humus 1994.16.3.*
23. **Beaded pencil cover.** Probably Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Humus 2026.40.*
24. **Beaded bracelet.** Rungus Dusun. Sabah, Malaysia. Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus 1989.6.3.7.*
25. **Beaded keyring.** Dayak. Kalimantan, Indonesia. Coll. Y. Ngampar 1994. *Humus 1995.11.2.*

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Sentient Landscapes; A Cultural Melting Pot

Case 80. Jewellery

Some of the pieces of jewellery in this case mimic real gold or are made of silver; both silver and gold denote status and wealth. Artisans in Southeast Asia processed locally mined gold and silver, and in some areas they melted down imported foreign trade currencies made of silver. More silver jewellery can be seen in Case 85.

There are a number of ornaments for stretched ears in the case. Earlobe stretching has been widespread historically in Southeast Asia, among both men and women. In different societies, elongated earlobes have been associated with beauty, social status and bodily adornment. In Buddhist traditions, the elongated earlobes of the Buddha recall the heavy earrings he wore as a prince and his renunciation of worldly possessions. Stretching was achieved through different methods, including the progressive enlargement of the ear opening with plugs and the use of heavy ornaments that gradually elongated the lobe. In Borneo, for example, large and heavy ear ornaments were worn by peoples including the Kenyah, Kayan, Kelabit and Penan. Materials included brass and the casque of the helmeted hornbill, *Rhinoplax vigil*, as shown in the photograph of Pun Nibu in the case.

1. **Belt.** Northern Thailand. Possibly Akha. Cord, cowrie shells and silver coins. *Humus* 1984.11.
2. **Chinese lacquer buckles.** Straits Chinese/Peranakan. Probably made in China. Purchased in Melaka, Malay Peninsula. Lacquered wood. Bateson collection. *Humus* 1969.37.
3. **Pair of Balinese combs.** Bali, Indonesia. Wood or horn. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.96–97.
4. **Balinese hairpins.** Bali, Indonesia. Metal with gold leaves. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.89, 90, 91.
5. **Balinese hairpins.** Bali, Indonesia. Metal with gold leaves. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.300.1–2.
6. **Pair of palm leaf ear plugs (suweng rontal).** Java, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.102.
7. **Pair of brass and rhinestone ear plugs (suweng).** Java, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.103.
8. **Pair of brass and rhinestone ear plugs (suweng).** Java, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.104.
9. **Pair of tortoise shell ear plugs (suweng penyu).** Java, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.106.
10. **Pair of ear studs (subeng).** Bali, Indonesia. Metal, shaped like stylized leaves. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.105.
11. **Pair of metal and red rhinestone ear plugs (subeng).** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.98.
12. **Pair of metal ear plugs (subeng).** Bali, Indonesia. Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.99.
13. **Pair of silver ear plugs (subang).** Simanggung, Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 171. *Humus* 1972.17.
14. **Pair of long silver ear plugs.** Southeast Asia, probably Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.41.
15. **Woman's hat.** Akha. Chiang Mai, Thailand. Fabric, silver, beads and shells. Part of a costume collected by R. Cooper in 1975. *Humus* 1976.42.
16. **Rattan bracelets.** Penan. Long Kupang, Ulu Baram, Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. D. Khwaja and P. Mundy 1991. *Humus* 1991.6.11.
17. **Rattan anklets.** Penan. Long Kupang, Ulu Baram, Sarawak, Malaysia. Worn tightly around the lower legs to provide physical and spiritual protection. Coll. D. Khwaja and P. Mundy 1991. *Humus* 1991.6.12.
18. **Conch shell bangle.** Kayan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Sourced from coastal waters





and traded deep upriver, ocean shells held massive prestige due to their scarcity. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1991.6.11.

19. **Bone bangle.** Kayan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971.. *Humus* 1972.22
20. **Dancer's anklet.** Cambodia. White metal. Worn by court dancers to create visual flash and soft audio rhythm during precise, stylized stage movements. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1967. *Humus* 1968.11.
21. **Heavy bangle.** Maloh. Kapuas, Kalimantan, Indonesia. White calcite. Maloh artisans were expert in carving dense, heavy minerals into prized trade assets for inland networks. Coll. V.T. King 1973. *Humus* 1978.L9.
22. **Girl's belt made of coils of rattan and silver.** Bidayuh. Budu, Sarawak, Malaysia. Bettison collection. Collected in 1955. *Humus* 1980.12.
23. **Heavy brass anklets.** Kayan. Sarawak, Malaysia. Worn by young girls to represent family prestige and announce their presence through movement. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.20.1-2.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes

Case 81. Opium

Papaver somniferum, the opium poppy, is native to Anatolia. Processed opium first arrived in Southeast Asia as a medicinal substance around the 8th-10th centuries CE. From the 16th century CE, with the arrival of European colonial powers, large amounts began to be imported, grown in India and Persia (Iran).

In the early 19th century highland peoples living in an area later called the 'Golden Triangle', on the borders of what is now Thailand, Myanmar and Laos, began growing opium poppies. Around 10% of the opium they produced was used in the highlands in rituals and social contexts, but most was sold downriver, where it was processed and consumed, mainly by workers in plantations and mines owned by Europeans. At this time a new method of consuming opium was developed in Southeast Asia and China, the *chandu* method, which involved the refining of opium into a water-soluble paste that was vaporized in a special pipe with a vapourizing chamber. In this case we display both pipes used for *chandu* and one that was probably used to smoke opium mixed with tobacco. A sample of commercial aspirin is displayed in the case; this was sometimes cooked directly into the opium paste to enhance its medicinal pain-relieving effects.

Opium production continues in mainland Southeast Asia, but is now concentrated overwhelmingly in Myanmar, particularly Shan State, with much smaller production in northern Laos. Governments pursue eradication, law enforcement and alternative livelihoods, while trafficking increasingly overlaps with the region's much larger synthetic-drug economy.

1. **Dotchin scales with separate wooden case.** Hmong Njua. Chiang Dao, Thailand. Wood and metal. Coll. R. Cooper 1976. *Humus* 1976.78.1-2.
2. **Thai satang coin used as weight.** Hmong Njua. Thailand. Bronze. Coll. R. Cooper 1976. *Humus* 1976.95
3. **Dotchin scales in wooden case.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Wood and metal. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.28.1-3.
4. **Dotchin scales with ivory balance rod in wooden case.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Ivory and wood. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1975.L7.1-2.
5. **Chinese opium pipe with vaporizing bowl (烟枪 yānqiāng), for inhaling opium as chandu.** Yunnan, China. With a greenstone mouthpiece and stamped pottery smoking piece. Coll. P. Wells 1993. *Humus* 1993.13.2.
6. **Vietnamese opium pipe with vaporizing bowl for inhaling opium as chandu.** Chinese style, with good luck symbols and stylised dragon and peacock decorations. Gift from M.A. Jaspan. Bought in Hanoi 1993. *Humus* 1993.7.1.
7. **Hmong pipe for smoking opium, probably mixed with tobacco.** Vietnam. Silver. Fashioned from melted silver Indochinese piastre coins bought in a refugee camp. Christie collection. *Humus* 2026.42.
8. **Spatula made from an iron nail.** Hmong Njua. Chieng Dao, Thailand. For preparing opium mixtures. Coll. R. Cooper 1974. *Humus* 1976.L1.6.
9. **Long iron spatula.** Hmong Njua. Chieng Dao, Thailand. For preparing opium mixtures. Coll. R. Cooper 1974. *Humus* 1976.L1.4.
10. **Three-bladed knife.** Hmong Njua. Chieng Dao, Thailand. For tapping poppy pods to extract latex containing raw opium. Coll. R. Cooper 1974. *Humus* 1976.L2.
11. **Opium heating bowl with cover.** Hmong Njua. Chieng Dao, Thailand. Ceramic and metallic vessel used to heat substance before inhalation, with domed cover to control heat and airflow. Coll. R. Cooper 1974. *Humus* 1976.L1.2-3.
12. **Packet of aspirin for mixing with opium.** Thailand. Coll. R. Cooper 1974. *Humus* 1976.L1.7.
13. **Set of four Burmese weights in the form of the sacred goose, hinthā (ဟင်္သာ).**





Myanmar. Cast bronze. Probably made unofficially in the 1930s. They resemble the royal weights of earlier times, when the Burmese Empire had a standardised system of weights in various animal shapes. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.

Humus 2009.4.1–4.

14. **Opium poppies (*Papaver somniferum*).** *Humus* 2026.4.1–2.

15. **Educational anti-narcotics chart detailing the biology harvesting and smoking paraphernalia of opium.** Thailand. Published by Siam Sarn Limited Partnership, Bangkok. *Humus* 2026.70.

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Sentient Landscapes

Case 82. Tobacco and Fire-Making

Following the introduction of tobacco, *Nicotiana tabacum*, to Southeast Asia by Spanish and Portuguese traders in the late 16th century, it was rapidly integrated into local social and also ritual life – for example, it was incorporated into the betel and areca chew (see Case 8). It was smoked in dry pipes and water pipes and rolled into cigars and cigarettes.

Before the coming of modern matches, many people carried tinder-boxes like those shown here from Sumatra and Sarawak, containing flints, steel strikers and tinder for making fire. Another widespread (and sophisticated) fire-making technology was the fire piston, exemplified by the Tinguian example displayed here, which generates enough heat through the rapid compression of air to ignite tinder.

1. **Long tobacco pipe.** Penang, Malaysia. Bamboo and metal. Christie collection. *Humus* 2026.45.
2. **Long tobacco pipe.** Laos. Bamboo and metal. Christie collection. *Humus* 2026.46.
3. **Tobacco Pipe (hànyān-gān 旱烟杆).** Guizhou, China. Wood and engraved brass. Coll. P. Wells 1993. *Humus* 1995.13.5.
4. **Tobacco pipe (hànyān-gān 旱烟杆).** Yunnan, China. Wood and metal, with jade mouthpiece and hanging bead. Coll. P. Wells 1993. *Humus* 1993.13.3.
5. **Tobacco pipe (kuwako).** Ifugao. Luzon, Philippines. Carved wood. In the form of an agonized human figure. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.37.
6. **Tobacco pipe (kuwako).** Ifugao. Luzon, Philippines. Carved wood. In the form of a crouching man. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.36.
7. **Tobacco pipe (hànyān-gān 旱烟杆).** Hani. Yunnan, China. Bamboo, with curved stem. Coll. P. Wells. *Humus* 1993.13.4.
8. **Tobacco pipe.** China or mainland Southeast Asia. Carved wooden bowl. *Humus* 2026.44.
9. **Tobacco pipe.** China or mainland Southeast Asia. Bamboo stem and wooden bowl. *Humus* 2026.65.
10. **Tobacco pipe.** Lao Theung. Laos. Bamboo. As used by upland Mon-Khmer communities. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.36.
11. **Water pipe for tobacco.** Hmong Njua. Thailand. Bamboo. Large water-filtration pipe used for smoking tobacco in highland villages. Coll. R. Cooper, 1976. *Humus* 1976.77s.
12. **Incised bamboo container for tobacco (lakub).** Maranao. Mindanao, Philippines. Coll. M. Turner 1976. *Humus* 1977.12.
13. **Case for homemade cigarettes.** Mindanao, Philippines. Ifor Powell collection. Coll. 1920s. *Humus* 1986.2.39
14. **Cigars (cerutu).** Sumatra, Indonesia. Made from Sumatran leaf in Germany and purchased in Hull in 1978 by L. Hill. *Humus* 1978.41.
15. **Scott's Imperial no. 2 Burma cheroots.** Myanmar. A type of hand-rolled cigar. Coll. L. Hill 1978. *Humus* 1978.42.
16. **Kretek.** Indonesia. Cigarettes flavoured with cloves. Coll. J. Christie 1993. *Humus* 1994.1.2.
17. **Cheroots (hse-baw-leik ဆေးပုၤလိၣ်).** Myanmar. A type of hand-rolled cigar. Coll. J. Richards 1992. *Humus* 1992.17.
18. **Tinder box.** Rejang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1961. *Humus* 1975.L19.
19. **Tinder box.** Probably Rejang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Probably coll. M.A. Jaspan 1961. *Humus* 2026.66.
20. **Tinder box.** Rejang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Containing tinder. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1961. *Humus* 1975.L8.





21. **Tinder box.** Southeast Asia. *Humus* 2026.67.
22. **Tinder box.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. With original flint and iron. Bettison collection. Coll. 1955. *Humus* 1980.1–2.
23. **Fire piston.** Tinguian. Luzon, Philippines. Coll. G. Nettleton 1977. *Humus* 1977.9.1–2.
24. **Tinder box.** Tinguian. Luzon, Philippines. Container for tallow, leaves and other tinder for use with fire piston. Coll. G. Nettleton 1977. *Humus* 1977.10.
25. **Steel from tinder box.** Rejang, Sumatra, Indonesia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1975. *Humus* 1970.L6(4)

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; Crafting the Cosmos; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes

Case 83. A Jacket with a Story

This jacket once belonged to a young man called Joseph Salang. In the mid-1960s, another slightly older young man, Peter Abrahams, was teaching upriver in an Iban area in Sarawak, Malaysia as a VSO volunteer from the UK. One of his students was Joseph Salang. One day, Joseph was wearing this jacket and Peter admired it. Joseph then offered it to him as a present. Peter decided that he would give Joseph in exchange a tweed jacket that he had with him, brought from the UK. Joseph accepted this, despite the fact that it was not really suitable for the tropical climate! They both went on to have distinguished careers, with Joseph becoming a prominent politician in Sarawak and Peter a clinical anatomist in the UK. They remained in touch over the years.

The jacket is made of cotton fabric dyed and woven using the *ikat* method. It was woven by Joseph's grandmother and his mother made the jacket for him. See Cases 4, 27, 31 and 33 for other examples of Iban *ikat* and Case 32 for the backstrap loom upon which *ikat* is woven.

Gift of Peter Abrahams 2024. *Humus* 2024.1.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State





Case 84. Hats from the Mountains of Luzon

Hats made of split rattan and bamboo are worn by Bontoc Igorot and Kalinga men living in the Cordillera Central mountains in Northern Luzon in the Philippines. They are known as *suklang* among the Bontoc Igorot and *kug-ong* among the Kalinga. Worn on the back of the head, they used to be worn on an everyday basis. Today they are still worn at ceremonial and cultural events.

Over a man's life, his hat served as a public canvas reflecting his personal achievements and societal rank. Young, unmarried men sleeping in the communal youth dormitories (*ato* or *fawi*) wore undecorated styles with geometric weave patterns. As a man successfully engaged in tribal defence, married or attained leadership status, he altered his hat to display valued animal materials and trade commodities, most notably wild boar tusks and teeth, mother-of-pearl discs and buttons, and decorative bird plumage. The hollow, structured dome of the hat served as a weather-resistant built-in pocket to store daily personal items like tobacco, pipes and flints.

Most of the hats in this case were collected in 1927–8. They had changed little by 1974, when the remaining two were collected, though by that time they had become popular tourist purchases.

1. **Hat with wild boar tusks and teeth, and mother-of-pearl button.** Bontoc Igorot. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.15.
2. **Hat with geometric pattern.** Kalinga. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.11.
3. **Hat with geometric pattern.** Kalinga. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.17.
4. **Hat with wild boar tusks and mother-of-pearl button.** Bontoc Igorot. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.13.
5. **Hat with dark bird feathers and pig jawbones.** Bontoc Igorot. Coll. T. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1994.5.
6. **Hat with wild boar tusks.** Bontoc Igorot. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1974. *Humus* 1974.64
7. **Hat with wild boar tusks and teeth, dark bird feathers and mother-of-pearl buttons.** Bontoc Igorot. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.14.
8. **Hat with geometric pattern.** Bontoc Igorot. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.16.
9. **Hat with geometric pattern.** Bontoc Igorot. Ifor Powell collection. *Humus* 1986.2.18.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; From Headhunting to Head of State; Crafting the Cosmos; Sentient Landscapes

Case 85. Silver

This case brings together silver objects from across Southeast Asia, including jewellery, containers for ingredients used in betel chewing, and grooming implements. In decentralised tribal areas, the shapes of such objects often helped to distinguish one ethnic group or village from another. In stratified lowland kingdoms, and within tribal communities too, silver possessions communicated status.

The shapes and decorative motifs of many of these objects reflect ideas that spread through Southeast Asia with Hindu-Buddhist traditions. Forms derived from temples, stupas and sacred geometric designs appear on jewellery, betel containers and other personal possessions. Such motifs were often associated with order, protection and well-being.

To find out more about betel-chewing and more betel-related items, see Case 8. For more about jewellery, see Case 80.

1. **Pair of earrings.** Hmong (Miao). Luang Prabang, Laos. With pointed terminal hooks functioning as protective personal amulets
Coll. M. Barber 1970. *Humus* 1970.L4.1–2.
2. **Hairpin.** Lao Theung. Luang Prabang, Laos. The silver cone-shaped top mimics Mount Meru, the sacred axis of the Hindu-Buddhist universe. Coll. M.A.
Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.34.
3. **Woman's belt.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Formed of nine silver leaf-shaped plates mounted onto a peach and silver brocade fabric backing. Coll. M. Barber, 1970.
Humus 1970.34.
4. **Woman's belt.** Java, Indonesia. Part of a traditional bridal costume. Coll. M.A.
Jaspan in The Hague, 1974. *Humus* 1974.16.
5. **Woman's belt.** Chiang Mai, Thailand. Formal female attire. Coll. F. Kerlogue 2001.
Humus 2001.5.7.
6. **Finger ring.** Bali. With the face of Rangda, the traditional witch queen. Acts as a protective amulet against malevolent spirits. See Case 40 and the painting of Rangda and Barong adjacent to that case. Coll. M.A. Jaspan in The Hague 1974.
Humus 1974.22.
7. **Pair of finger rings.** Hmong (Miao). Luang Prabang, Laos. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973.
Humus 1973.23 and 24.
8. **Pair of filigree earrings.** Malay. Kelantan, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.
Humus 1969.187.1–2.
9. **Filigree brooch.** Malay. Kelantan, Malaya. In the form of a kite (*wau*), See Case 56.
Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.91.
10. **Filigree butterfly brooch.** Malay. Kelantan, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.
Humus 1969.87.
11. **Filigree flower brooch.** Malay. Kelantan, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.
Humus 1969.88.
12. **Filigree bar brooch.** Malay. Kelantan, Malaya. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.
Humus 1969.188.
13. **Filigree bracelet.** Malay. Probably Kelantan, Malaya. *Humus* 2026.48.
14. **Bangle.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. Decorated with stamped geometric patterns. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1971. *Humus* 1972.19.
15. **Hair pin.** Southeast Asia, probably Indonesia. *Humus* 2026.49.
16. **Mesh necklace.** Ndao, Indonesia. Silver wire-mesh chain with a central hanging disk medallion (*belak*). Coll. D. Patty and M.A. Patty-Noach 1993.
Humus 1993.3.6.
17. **Two circular clip-on earrings.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Set with translucent stones,





- crafted to match a chain bracelet (no. 23). Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus* 1990.1.24.
18. **Chain bracelet.** Sarawak, Malaysia. Set with translucent stones, crafted to match a pair of clip-on earrings (no. 22). Coll. L. Hill 1989. *Humus* 1990.1.20.
 19. **Pair of open-ended bracelets.** Lue. Luang Prabang, Laos. Made from thick, twisted silver wire with solid ends. Coll. M. Barber 1970. *Humus* 1970.L2.1–2.
 20. **Horseshoe-shaped neck ornament.** Hmong (Miao). Luang Prabang, Laos. Smooth, heavy silver neck torque formed from melted silver coins. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.40.
 21. **Crescent-shaped filigree pendant with clear stones.** Yogyakarta, Java. Gift from H. Jaspan 1987. Bought 1956. *Humus* 1987.4.1.
 22. **Crescent-shaped filigree pendant with clear stones.** Yogyakarta, Java. Gift from H. Jaspan 1987. Bought 1956. *Humus* 1987.4.2.
 23. **Round pendant set with clear and pink stones.** Yogyakarta, Java. Gift from H. Jaspan 1987. Bought 1956. *Humus* 1987.4.3
 24. **Round filigree pendant with clear stones.** Yogyakarta, Java. Gift from H. Jaspan 1987. *Humus* 1995.29.
 25. **Filigree belt buckle and carrier with semi-precious stones.** Yogyakarta, Java. *Humus* 1969.29.2.
 26. **Decorated silver betel-leaf container.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Ornate metal holder in the shape of a flattened tulip or lotus bud. Part of an areca and betel set. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.193.
 27. **Box for areca and betel chewing set.** Lue. Luang Prabang, Laos. With concentric chased shapes on the lid. With inner tray. Coll. M. Barber 1970. *Humus* 1970.L1.
 28. **Box for areca and betel chewing set.** Lue. Luang Prabang, Laos. With concentric chased shapes on the lid. Mathieson collection. *Humus* 1992.3.7.
 29. **Box for lime paste.** Lue. Luang Prabang, Laos. For chewing with areca nut and betel leaf. Lid joined to base with chain. Featuring a dome-and-spire silhouette reminiscent of Mount Meru, the sacred centre of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology. Mathieson collection. Coll. M. Barber 1970. *Humus* 1970.L3.
 30. **Box for lime paste.** Luang Prabang, Laos. For chewing with areca nut and betel leaf. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.31.
 31. **Container with areca nuts.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.196.
 32. **Box for areca nuts.** Probably Laos or Cambodia. *Humus* 2026.50.
 33. **Box for areca nuts.** Khmer. Probably Cambodia. Part of an areca and betel set. Displaying a repoussé figure of Macchanu, the mermaid-monkey deity from the Ramayana epic. *Humus* 2026.51.
 34. **Container in the shape of a rabbit.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts, tobacco or aromatic flavouring spices for areca and betel chewing. *Humus* 1969.125.1.
 35. **Container in the shape of a chicken.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts, tobacco or aromatic flavouring spices for areca and betel chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.125.2.
 36. **Container in the shape of an elephant.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts, tobacco or aromatic flavouring spices for areca and betel chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.125.3.
 37. **Container in the shape of a bird.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In the shape of a bird. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts or aromatic flavouring spices for areca, tobacco and betel chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.125.4.
 38. **Container in the shape of a bird.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In the shape of a bird. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts or aromatic

flavouring spices for areca and betel chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969.

Humus 1969.125.5.

39. **Container in the shape of a rat.** Khmer. Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Part of a set (nos. 34–38) used to hold sliced areca nuts or aromatic flavouring spices for areca and betel chewing. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1969. *Humus* 1969.125.6.
40. **Betel-leaf holder.** Luang Prabang, Laos. Horn-shaped receptacle for betel leaves for areca and betel chewing, made of decorated silver sheets. Coll. M.A. Jaspan 1973. *Humus* 1973.74.

Relevant thematic panels: Altered States; A Cultural Melting Pot; Crafting the Cosmos; From Headhunting to Head of State; Sentient Landscapes; Threads of Meaning





Case 86. Bridal Headdresses

This case presents a selection of ceremonial bridal headdresses from maritime Southeast Asia, made of brass, gilded copper and silver filigree.

In stratified lowland societies like the Bugis and Minangkabau, the scale and luxury of headdresses have asserted relative status and lineage prestige within aristocratic hierarchies. In much more egalitarian Iban longhouse culture, headdresses have been worn to display ritual prestige and community identity.

Their physical shapes express cosmological principles, incorporating radiating solar rays, celestial tiers and sacred botanical motifs. Worn during the liminal transition of the marriage ceremony, these elaborate structures serve both as protective ceremonial adornment and as visual anchors of ancestral tradition.

1. **Bridal headdress.** Minangkabau. Sumatra, Indonesia. This massive, tiered silver crown, called a *suntiang perak*, is composed of elaborate rows of layered silver-coloured metal floral plaques and leaves attached to a crescent frame, complete with intricate cascading side pendants (*kote-kote*) meant to frame the bride's face. Coll. Hull University Minangkabau Filigree Expedition 1989. *Humus* 1989.8.1.
2. **Bridal headdress.** Bugis. Sulawesi, Indonesia. This smaller, crescent-shaped silver tiara, known as a *saloko* or *pariama*, features a curved metallic band topped with small radiating decorative spires, designed to wrap around the base of an exceptionally high, traditional bridal hair bun (*teppung*). Coll. A.M.B. Masri 1995. *Humus* 1995.34.7.
3. **Bridal headdress.** Iban. Sarawak, Malaysia. This fan-shaped bridal comb, known as a *sugu tinggi*, is constructed from silver-coloured metal openwork featuring fluidly scrolled filigree designs that mimic bamboo shoots (*pucuk rebung*) and fern frond (*paku*) motifs. *Humus* 1993.2.5.
4. **Bridal headdress.** Iban. Balingian, Sarawak, Malaysia. This variant of the *sugu tinggi* features a silver-coloured fan-like structure accentuated along its upper crest by a border of red and yellow pom-poms, with long dangling metal ornaments at the sides. Coll. J Morrison 1993. *Humus* 2003.6.47.

Relevant thematic panels: Threads of Meaning; The Cosmic Duo; From Headhunting to Head of State; Sentient Landscapes; Crafting the Cosmos

Case 87: Ider-Ider from Bali

An *ider-ider* is a traditional Balinese ritual textile used as a decorative valance or drapery to hang horizontally under the eaves of sacred pavilions (*bale*), shrines and temple buildings during religious ceremonies. The term derives from the Balinese *ider* ('to encircle'), referencing its role in physically and symbolically enclosing a sacred space during temple anniversaries (*odalan*). Executed in the traditional classical Kamasan narrative style (originating from Klungkung, East Bali), these textiles function as visual storyboards read from left to right. This example contains a series of scenes from the *Kakawin Bharatayuddha*, the 12th century Old Javanese version of the central part of the Sanskrit Mahabharata epic, which chronicles the war between the Pandawa and Kaurava lineages.

The visible section illustrates a council for war on the left, transitioning into a battlefield scene on the right. In the combat scene, a high-ranking noble figure stands brandishing a *keris* (sword) (see Cases 49 and 50) against four opposing nobles or princes, two of whom have been decapitated, with their severed heads airborne – a classic Kamasan iconographic convention representing the instantaneous release of life-force in sacred combat.

Dartington Hall collection. Probably collected in 1927. *Humus* 1992.11.23.

Relevant thematic panels: Shadows, Water and Wood; A Cultural Melting Pot; Sentient Landscapes; From Headhunting to Head of State; Threads of Meaning

