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Function and Aesthetic Value: an Analysis of the Milwaukee Public Museum's Thai Royal Silver Collection

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FUNCTION AND AESTHETIC VALUE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC
MUSEUM'S THAI ROYAL SILVER COLLECTION

by

Aislinn Sanders

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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December 2022

ABSTRACT

FUNCTION AND AESTHETIC VALUE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC MUSEUM'S THAI ROYAL SILVER COLLECTION

by

Aislinn Sanders

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022
Under the Direction of Dr. William W. Wood

This thesis analyzes 45 objects from the Thai Royal Silver collection currently housed at the Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM). Of these, 41 were donated by a single donor, Dr. Louis Schapiro, who collected the objects during his time working as Medical Advisor for the King of Siam in 1931-1932. Following his death, his son Mark held onto the objects until 1969, when they became a part of the MPM's collection. The chosen objects include boxes, bowls, and other types of vessels.

Through researching this collection, the following questions guided the direction for this thesis: How did the silver industry begin in Siam (Thailand) and how has it evolved throughout the years? How and why are certain decorative and symbolic motifs used on Thai silver vessels? Where did the motifs originate and how have they evolved? Through object analysis, the creation of an object biography and inventory (including photography), reaching out to institutions and anthropologists for additional information, and researching past and present changes to the industry, these methods helped to provide context and conclusions for the stated thesis questions.

Silver from Thailand remains an elusive topic within both anthropology and art history lenses. The royal courts commissioned silversmiths to create exclusive goods in exchange for housing and all other necessities. Little is known about the history of the industry, gift giving practices, and purpose of the objects created. Each of the aesthetic motifs studied here provide

different meanings for the objects, most of which pertain to fertility, wealth, health, or luck.

Many of the objects provided different functions throughout their object lives, from useable items to keepsakes or status symbols. Others served exclusively religious functions. It is the aim of this paper to provide conclusions that will help to facilitate further knowledge and interest in the broader Thai silver history, industry, and practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAMG – Association of Academic Museum and Galleries

HM – His/Her Majesty

HRH – His Royal Highness

HSH – His Serene Highness

MPM – Milwaukee Public Museum

UMAIE – Upper Midwest Association for International Education

UW – University of Wisconsin

UWM – University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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I would like to thank the many institutions who have become involved in some way. Without the Milwaukee Public Museum, of course, this research would have never happened. The staff at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Penn Museum, Trout Gallery, George Washington University Special Collections Research Center, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives, the Marquette University Special Collections and University Archives, and the Milwaukee County Zoo libraries all answered my seemingly random questions.

Finally, I would like to show gratitude to my family and friends for keeping me sane during this process, providing me encouragement, listening to me rant and ramble, and showing interest in my research.



Map of Thailand including all 77 provinces and surrounding regions. Source: ASEAN UP

Chapter 1: Introduction

Prior to 2017, I lacked deep knowledge about Thai culture, history, or customs. One of my two undergraduate majors at Elmhurst University, Intercultural Studies, was one of the larger programs at the institution and allowed students to pick from almost any special focus they could think of. Potential areas of study were grouped into four overarching topics: gender studies, global studies, ethnic studies, and social justice studies.

This major was one that required working closely with your advisor to create an individualized program. During my sophomore year (2015-2016), after I declared my major in the spring of 2015, it became obvious to me that the classes for my area of study, Asian studies, were not being offered frequently enough for me to complete the focus in time to graduate. I had to take the classes as they were offered or switch to a different area of study.

During my time there, I was only able to complete two classes for the focus (*Non-European Art and Religions of India*) and needed to take another class that was not offered on campus. I did not know it yet, but these courses would shape my interests in further academic studies. Enrolling in a short-term study abroad course would complete my area of study requirements as well as an experiential learning credit I needed to fulfill; it was also something that I really wanted to do during my undergraduate years. At the Study Abroad Fair only two courses met the requirements of my program: a January-term course taught in Japan and South Korea, and one taught in Vietnam and Thailand. I submitted my application to join the Upper

Midwest Association for International Education (UMAIE) Consortium class *City as Text: Vietnam and Thailand*.

Just after the turn of the new year in 2017, I was off to learn the history of Southeast Asia. We toured five cities over the span of four weeks, including a quick stop to see Angkor Wat in Cambodia, a destination that was not on the original itinerary. In Thailand, we traversed the cities of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. We saw the Grand Palace and the Emerald Buddha. We went to a myriad of temples and museums as well as culture centers, shopping districts, and restaurants.

In Chiang Mai, we attended classes at Chiang Mai University. The topics we discussed ranged from Thai history, culture, and family values, to language, bamboo weaving, and dancing. We took field trips to Doi Suthep, Bhubing Palace, the Lanna Folklife Museum, and an elephant sanctuary. We met with Buddhist monks, played games at an elderly home, and taught English to the Hmong community in the mountains. After our daily classes were complete, we had free reign over evening activities and filled this time with going to restaurants, getting massages and other beauty treatments, shopping in the local bazaars, and hanging out with the Thai students we befriended.

When the weekend came, students were grouped into pairs of two and lived with host families for part of our stay in Chiang Mai. My *Khun Mae* (a polite form of “mother”) and *Khun Pa* (literally translating to “Mr. Dad”) took my roommate and me to an umbrella factory, a cave

with fossils still in the walls, a hot spring, even more temples, and the Chiang Mai Night Safari. My host parents planned to attend a funeral that happened to fall during our stay, so we also joined the procession.

The time frame of my study abroad followed an immensely difficult time for the people of Thailand. King Bhumibol (Rama IX) passed away in October of 2016 and the country was still in its three-month long mourning period. Rama IX had reigned for 70 years and nearly all of Thailand's citizens had never known any other ruler. It was an unprecedented time for the country.

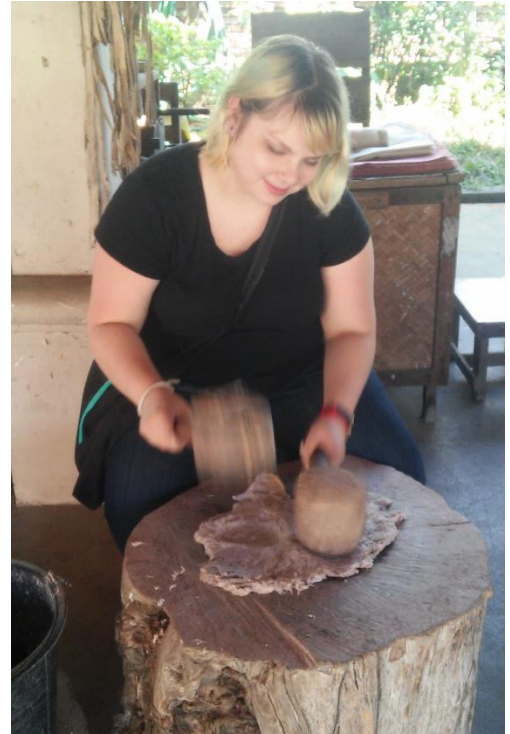


Figure 1.1: Me pounding the pulp that will be made into paper umbrellas.

While my friends, who attended different study abroad trips, complained about the immense amount of reading and assignments they were tasked with, my class felt like a vacation that included learning local history. My only written assignment was to complete daily journal entries on any topic I wished to write about and submit a research paper following the completion of the course. Though journaling was not an exercise I regularly performed, it was something that could hardly be considered difficult or time-consuming work. Overall, my study abroad trip was a nice mix of work and play, allowing us enough time to soak in the culture gradually and on our own terms.

All of these details helped to shape the profound experience I had in Thailand. The culture, the food, and the history piqued my interests, both academically and on a more personal

level. I immensely enjoyed my time on this trip, both in Thailand and in the other cities we visited in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Fast forward to 2021. I had completed my first semester as a graduate student at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with coursework in Anthropology and Museum Studies. It was my professor and project advisor, Milwaukee Public Museum Curator of Anthropology Collections Dawn Scher Thomae, who had me first thinking about researching these Thai artifacts. My initial research interests did not pan out and I needed to find something that could be completed locally, thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused countries to close their borders and made major travel nearly impossible. Working with museum collections interested me because it was an avenue that brought me more into the museum world, a career path I hoped to enter.

After many long video calls and emails with my advisors during winter break, I chose to focus on material from a specific geographic region. Scher Thomae knew I was interested in jewelry, clothing, and weapons, and that I had experience in East and Southeast Asian cultures. She suggested two potential collections from Thailand, and we later found out that both were attributed to the same donor. One was a collection of ceramics, and the other was the Thai Royal Silver collection. The latter became the basis for this thesis.

The fact that there are few published works discussing Thai silver in depth was a challenge I was willing to take on and I was intrigued by the beautiful pieces in the collection. I immediately started analyzing some of the more unique items and it became clear that trying to understand their iconography was a path I wanted to make the focus of my research.

I received a scholarship, the Ritzenthaler Museum Research Internship Award, through University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM) to begin my research for on the collection. The

summer of 2021 was spent measuring, drawing and photography of objects, combing through various texts and documents, sending emails to institutions and anthropologists for clarification and identification and I began to learn about similar objects at the MPM and other museums. These activities would be the steppingstones that shaped this project.

Purpose and Goals

The Thai Niello & Silver Ware Association defines Thai silverware as “silver ware in the shape of ornamental receptacles, niello ware, and colored enamelled [sic] ware manufactured in Thailand” (Thai Niello & Silver Ware Association 1982, 44). The purpose of my thesis is to try to understand and record what is known about the Thai Royal Silverware, vessels that are relatively undocumented, by examining the MPM collection. I explore their historical background and aesthetic value as well as the initial function they once served and their various functions through time. Here, I am referring to “function” as both an object’s actual use and its symbolic use as a status identifier for the people who possessed it. Of the 73 objects described as Thai silver in the Museum documentation, I analyzed 45 from this collection. Additionally, N9261/24913, a large Burmese-style bowl not labeled in this category, was analyzed. I decided to exclude 11 objects from Dr. Schapiro’s collection, including jewelry, tiny trinkets, a nail grooming kit, and a set of jadeite dice in this analysis as they were outside the scope of this project. With a focus on predominantly boxes and bowls, including these pieces would expand my research beyond what I would be able to complete in a timely fashion; additionally, as this research is focused on silver, it would be irrelevant to include other materials (such as the jadeite dice). As far as the other objects which I did not include, these were not considered of royal quality and, in keeping a narrow but manageable focus, I did not want to include everyday

objects, including knives, textiles, and coasters. It is my hope that others will be able to expand upon my research and open this topic to a wider audience.

Branching off from these two main points, there is a myriad of questions which could be explored. To limit the scope of this thesis, the following questions are where I focus my efforts:

1. How did the Thai silver industry begin and how has it evolved throughout the years?
2. How and why are certain decorative and symbolic motifs used on Thai silver vessels?
 - a. Are motifs reserved for specific functions? Is there a correlation between the motif used and the function of the object?
3. Where did the motifs originate and how have they evolved?

These three questions (and sub-questions) will be used to guide my research as well as my exploration of the topic. Though there is much more that could be learned from these objects, other questions fall outside the range I have set for myself in an effort to create a thesis that is manageable in length and does not span too many diverse subjects.

Donor Records

Of the 45 total objects I will be reviewing for this thesis project, 41 are associated with the same donors: Dr. Louis Schapiro, and his son Dr. Mark M. Schapiro. Mrs. Guido C. Vogel, Mrs. William M. J. Vogel, and Miss Elizabeth M. Black each donated one object to the Thai silver collection. Additionally, one object was found in storage and lacked identifying paperwork.

Drs. Louis and Mark M. Schapiro

Born in 1886 in Russia, Dr. Louis Schapiro lived a life of globetrotting and studying diseases. His family immigrated to the United States during his childhood and settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Monroe 2018). After completing high school, Schapiro attended George Washington University Medical School in Washington D.C., and graduated in 1907 (Ibid.).

Following graduation, he worked in the Philippines as Assistant Surgeon of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1908 (Ibid.). Aboard the Fathomer ship, Dr. Schapiro likely treated passengers and other US government employees during the Philippine-American War (Ibid.). In 1910, he was appointed Medical Inspector for the US Health Department in Manila (Ibid.).

Dr. Schapiro worked briefly as a Marquette University professor teaching tropical diseases during 1913 following his return from his assignment in the Philippines (“Dr. Louis Schapiro Obituary” 1932). At Marquette, he taught tropical diseases (Ibid.). During his time in Milwaukee, Schapiro sold, loaned, and donated nearly 200 Philippine objects to the MPM. He worked as a professor for only one year before returning to fieldwork in tropical regions.

Following his one semester teaching stint, Dr. Schapiro moved to Costa Rica to continue his work in tropical diseases. On behalf of the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, Schapiro studied and fought hookworm disease (Ibid.). He worked in Costa Rica until 1921, when he moved to Panama to serve as Director of Public Health (Ibid.). During his time in South and Central America, he amassed a collection of lava stone sculptures and pottery, which is now in the possession of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at John Hopkins University (Monroe 2018; “Late Dr. Schapiro’s Collection Goes to Johns Hopkins” 1933). He received his Doctor of Public Health from Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health

(now called the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health) in 1923 (“Late Dr. Schapiro’s Collection Goes to Johns Hopkins” 1933).

Dr. Schapiro made another brief visit to Milwaukee in 1931 before moving abroad again, this time to Thailand (referred to as ‘Siam’ until 1939) (“Dr. Louis Schapiro Obituary” 1932). Allegedly, during this brief time back in Milwaukee, Schapiro donated a Costa Rican squirrel to the Milwaukee County Zoo, but there is not enough evidence to support or refute this claim; records of the donation do exist but do not clearly state the associated donor. In Thailand, Dr. Schapiro took the position of Medical Advisor of Public Health for the Siamese government. He lived in Thailand for only one year before he passed away from an unnamed tropical disease in 1932 (Ibid.; “Siam Honors Dr. Louis Schapiro in State Funeral” 1932). As gratitude for his contribution to the field of medical science in Thailand, the Siamese government organized a state funeral for him in which his body was adorned with gold and left in a gold casket (“Siam Honors Dr. Louis Schapiro in State Funeral”). The funeral was attended by state officials, the crown prince, and the royal family (Ibid.). The Siamese government posthumously declared him a prince for his contributions, as anyone with the necessary qualifications could be raised to this position (Monroe 2018; Döhring 1999, 28). Later, his body was brought back to the United States for family visitation and a traditional funeral. The Thai collection donated in his honor to the MPM were most likely gifts from the royal court for his services.

Surviving Dr. Schapiro at the time of his death on February 3rd, 1932, was his wife Mrs. Matilde Meyre Schapiro, his parents Mr. and Mrs. I. M. Schapiro, his sister Mrs. A. J. Lewis, his brothers Dr. Saul Schapiro and Alfred Schapiro, and his son Mark (“Siam Honors Dr. Louis Schapiro in State Funeral”).

The collection of Royal Thai that is the focus of this thesis did not become part of the MPM collections until 1969 when Dr. Mark Schapiro donated the set on behalf of his parents who were gifted the objects during their short stay in Thailand. Though there are other objects from this collection (including pieces from other countries), I have chosen to focus solely on the Thai silver boxes and bowls; silver jewelry, gold and jadeite trinkets, and silver belts make up the items I have refrained from studying. During the time of the donation, Dr. Mark Schapiro was also studying and practicing medicine in Costa Rica like his father had done years before . Dr. Louis Schapiro is also credited with donations to the Milwaukee Art Museum and John Hopkins University, among other institutions.

Mrs. Guido C. Vogel and Mrs. William M. J. Vogel

In 1848, Fred Vogel and Guido Pfister, two cousins who learned the tanning trade in Germany, started Milwaukee's first tanning businesses (Woods 1921, 1-2). Vogel began his business on the banks of the Menominee River while Pfister opened his factory on West Water Street (Ibid.). In 1872, the cousins merged their businesses under the new name Pfister & Vogel (Ibid.). By 1921, they had five tanneries across southeastern Wisconsin (Ibid., 2).

Mr. Guido C. Vogel, the son of Fred Vogel, was also related to William Darwin Sawyer, president of the Fred Kraus Company, a grain distribution business in Milwaukee (Tanzilo 2020). Vogel worked for the family tanning business and married Grace Dickerman Vogel, daughter of the prominent banker Charles H. Dickerman (Ibid.; Pisano 2007, 226). The couple enjoyed life in the upper echelon of Milwaukee society, moving into the Upper East Side neighborhood amidst other high-class families (Tanzilo 2020). Vogel died in 1913, leaving behind his wife Grace and their son William (Ibid.).

In 1931, William married Virginia Kingswood Booth Vogel, daughter of Ralph Harmon Booth, the American Minister to Denmark and cofounder of Booth Newspapers based in Grand Rapids, Michigan (“Virginia Kingswood Booth Vogel (1908-1998)”, 2). The two wed in Copenhagen, Denmark, a wedding attended by the children of the Chilean and Norwegian ambassadors to Denmark (Ibid.). They lived in Massachusetts while William attended Harvard Business School before moving to Milwaukee (Ibid.).

In Milwaukee, Virginia began working in civic and social affairs for the city, with volunteer positions at the Junior League of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Blood Center (Ibid.). She was a purveyor of fine art and acquired a large collection after her father’s death in 1931 (Ibid.). Virginia was a benefactor for many institutions, including the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Milwaukee Public Library, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. (Ibid.).

Mrs. Grace Vogel and her daughter-in-law Mrs. Virginia Vogel donated several decorative art objects to the MPM. Their donations include a silver Bidri footed bowl (N8071/11184), a large Burmese-style repoussé bowl (N9261/24913), and many other objects outside this thesis collection including porcelain bowls and ivory carvings from China, Korea, and Japan. There is, however, no available records regarding their travel to Thailand or how they acquired these objects.

Miss Elizabeth M. Black

There are two possible women who could be associated with the donation of the silver handled vase (N9213/13909). The first is Elizabeth “Libby” M. Black, who was the daughter of John Black, Democratic politician and Milwaukee mayor from 1878-1880 (Weisiger et al.; Wisconsin Historical Society). She was born in 1856 in New York and died in 1939 in

Milwaukee. Black became an important social figure in Milwaukee for hosting political and civic functions on behalf of her father (Weisiger et al.) Beyond this, I have been unable to find out additional information about this Elizabeth Black and cannot find any record of how she may have obtained the vase.

The second possible woman associated with this accession is Elizabeth “Lizzie” Black Kander. She was the daughter of John and Mary Black, German-Jewish immigrants who owned a dry goods store in Milwaukee. She was born in 1858 in Green Bay and died in 1940 in Milwaukee. Though the documentation surrounding this Elizabeth Black does not contain a middle initial, I find it reasonable to assume that her middle name may have been Mary after her mother, thus also giving her the same middle initial and worth discussing for the sake of possibility.

Kander graduated valedictorian from Milwaukee East High School and later began establishing services for Milwaukee’s Jewish immigrant community through a volunteer position with the Ladies Relief Sewing Society (Fritz). In 1900, Kander became the president to Milwaukee’s first Jewish settlement house, The Settlement (Fritz 2004, 40-43). The Settlement provided cooking, sewing, and English classes to newly arrived Eastern European immigrants (Ibid., 43). She also wrote a cookbook, *The Settlement Cookbook: The Way to a Man’s Heart*, with the intent of helping to Americanize ethnic European foods (Gershon 2017).

In 1907, Kander served on the Board of School Directors and was pivotal in forming Milwaukee’s Trade School for Girls (Fritz 2004, 49). During World War I, she led the Food Conservation Committee of the Milwaukee County Council of Defense (Ibid.). Later in life, she also wrote a food column for the Milwaukee Newspaper *Milwaukee Journal* (Ibid.). Like the

previous donors, the other Miss Black and Mrs. and Mrs. Vogel, there is no available information regarding her potential travel to Thailand.

Organization

The organization of my thesis will be as follows:

Chapter 2: Theory, Key Literature, and Methods will be the foundation for my findings.

In researching theory, several theorists fit the parameters that I wanted to expand upon, including Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff. The scope of my research has made it impossible to pinpoint just one major theory to base my writing upon. Theories articulating ideas of commodities, gift giving, and value will all be touched upon and evaluated as part of the question pertaining to function. I will, additionally, be discussing the primary authoritative account focused on Thai silver, Paul Bromberg's book *Thai Silver and Nielloware*, and how this book has pointed me to additional readings from other authors. Finally, the methods section will discuss my approach for this thesis: an object biography.

The next chapters, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 build a contextual understanding of both the broader topic and the collection. *Chapter 3: Donor Records* will provide a basis for when and how the collection items were acquired, both by those who purchased or acquired them from Thailand and how they eventually made it to the MPM. One major donor provided nearly the entire collection I am analyzing, with three additional donors recorded in the accession records.

In *Chapter 4: History and Context*, I expand the narrow history that I constructed in the previous chapter. This chapter brings in Thai historical and political elements such as mass immigration, trading, and contested kingdoms that coalesced to explain Thailand's history and

ethnic diversities. These influences, as well as other factors, are responsible for the distinct artistic styles found in Thai woodworking and silverwork.

Chapter 5 explores the production process and the artistic styles seen throughout Thailand as well as those that are represented in the MPM collection. What regions still produce Thai silver by hand and how do they do it? How is each style created? Who keeps the trade alive? These questions will be addressed in *Chapter 5: Production Processes and Techniques*.

In the next chapter, *Chapter 6: MPM's Royal Thai Silver Collection*, I subsequently bring all the previous elements together to analyze the collection in question. I discuss gift giving, artistic styles seen in the collection, defining marks, common motifs, and the intended purposes of the individual objects.

Finally, my thesis closes on *Chapter 7: Conclusion*. In these sections, I will discuss my findings and summarize my work. Additionally, there were myriad questions which I was not able to find definitive answers for, and I will be discussing these here.

There are two following appendices. *Appendix A: Object Inventory* provides all the information from museum documentation as well as photos of each available object. *Appendix B: Citations, Spelling, and Pronunciation Guide* covers a brief explanation for why the citations of Thai authors are different than other authors, spelling inconsistencies in Thai names and cities, and a pronunciation guide for Romanized Thai names.

Chapter 2: Theory, Key Literature, and Methods

The scope of research required for this topic quickly became much wider than I initially anticipated. Rather than focusing on information strictly regarding the Thai silver industry, my research trails led me to deep dives into Thai culture and history as well as aspects of aesthetics, culture, and tradition from China, Burma, Laos, and Malaysia.

One central resource was extremely beneficial for creating a knowledge base focused on Thai silver: *Thai Silver and Nielloware* by Paul Bromberg. Written from the perspective of a collector, Bromberg provides valuable information on the history of silver, common motifs, dating and makers mark practices, and typical forms and functions for silver pieces. Beyond the usefulness of the research itself, Bromberg's bibliography provided more in-depth explanations and specific details in other sources that the publication did not fully cover.

Searching for answers to my many questions led me to some interesting places. I contacted archivists from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, the Milwaukee County Zoo, the Jewish Museum Milwaukee, and George Washington University to attempt to paint a comprehensive picture of this collection. Additionally, I have had the pleasure of receiving assistance from experts at the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and The Trout Gallery in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, as well as professors at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand.

Throughout the following pages will be the word “royal,” used to discuss the MPM Thai Royal silver collection. But what does “royal” mean in this context? Within the context of Dr. Schapiro’s collection, royal refers to objects which were gifted from members of the royal court, including princes, wives of princes, generals, and the king himself. The MPM documentation surrounding these pieces provide some information on the person or institution who was the gift giver in this action. For the pieces which fall outside of Dr. Schapiro’s collection, their royalty status is unknown since the proper documentation chronicling their lives as they moved from Thailand to the United States to the possession of the Milwaukee Public Museum. However, it is apparent that these objects were created for someone wealthy or powerful because of their high silver content, the lack of patina and other signs of apparent care for the pieces, and, in the case of N9261/24913, a large insignia showcasing royal Burmese origin. Royal pieces were also more ornate and displayed a greater mastery of the skills required for fine works of silver.

Theory

Arjun Appadurai’s essay “Commodities and Politics as Value” was a primary resource for this thesis. In his essay, Appadurai distinguishes “commodities” from “objects,” “artifacts,” and other types of distinctions of material culture while also arguing for the commodity potential of all things. The objects in the collection fall somewhere between “commodity” and “gift” based on his distinction. At the beginning of their object lives, the vessels were likely created as commission pieces for someone of high society in Thailand. In Dr. Schapiro’s case, the objects became gifts before joining museum collections. For the case of the other donors, there is no clear documentation confirming how they received these objects, but being purchased (either in

Thailand, from a personal collection, or from an art dealer) is a possibility. Broadly, he defines “commodities” as the following:

Commodities, and things in general, are of independent interest to several kinds of anthropology. They constitute the first principles and the last resort of archaeologists. They are the stuff of ‘material culture,’ which unites archaeologists with several kinds of cultural anthropologists. As valuables, they are at the heart of economic anthropology and, not least, as the medium of gifting, they are at the heart of exchange theory and social anthropology generally. (Appadurai 1986, 5)

For objects to be considered “commodities,” Appadurai also leans on the definition provided in an addition written by Frederick Engels in Karl Marx’s *Capital*. “To become a commodity,” Engels states, “a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as a use-value, by means of an exchange” (Ibid., 8). A “use-value,” as defined by Marx, is an object’s “usefulness in satisfying human needs” (Mehrotra 1991, 72). Of course, an object’s ability to satisfy human needs goes beyond purely functional purposes. Their “use-value” could have been for practical functions (such as eating and drinking from or for storing other, smaller goods), or their purpose could have been for aesthetic and/or ceremonial purposes. A human desire may simply be to obtain and keep a collection of objects from one’s travels, and even then, the use-value of these objects would have been achieved.

Most of the objects in the thesis collection (if not all) were once created for the purpose of gifting and only many years later did they become a part of a museum collection. As Appadurai states, this gifting process makes the objects an ideal candidate for study by social anthropologists. Social anthropology spans a wide range of topics such as sociocultural,

economic, and politics, and thusly, I can analyze these objects from many different angles all under the vast umbrella of anthropology.

Because many of the objects were allegedly given as gifts, however, their original purpose is slightly different than the purpose of a commodity. Where gifts are mediated by sociality and social relations, commodities do not require this element of relationship building and are often driven solely by the exchange of money for goods or services (Appadurai 1986, 11-12). It is my aim to provide context for both types of object exchange because of the lack of documentation regarding the collecting processes the object donors went through to obtain the pieces in the first place. While I can reasonably conclude that most of the objects in the collection were acquired through some sort of gift exchange (particularly in the case of Dr. Louis Schapiro and his services to King Prajadhipok), there exists a grey area surrounding objects in the collection from other donors.

In Appadurai's analysis, too, he finds the need for distinction between "commodity" and "gift" an unnecessary game of semantics. He states, "let us approach commodities as things in a certain situation, a situation that can characterize many different kinds of things, at different points in their social lives. This means looking at the commodity potential of all things rather than searching fruitlessly for the magic distinction between commodities and other sorts of things" (Ibid, 13). By his logic, gifts and commodities can undergo the same processes. With these objects, though many of them were created to be gifts, it is very possible that they were sold and resold before they eventually reached the people who would later gift them to Dr. Schapiro. Equally likely, these pieces could have been commissioned or purchased and then gifted several times before they eventually were given to Dr. Schapiro and his wife, Matilde.

An exploration of Appadurai's division of commodities into different types would be helpful to move this thesis forward. He describes these four types (as originally created by Jacques Maquet regarding aesthetic productions and modified for his own purposes) as:

1. Commodities of destination: objects intended by their producers principally for exchange
2. Commodities by metamorphosis: things intended for other uses that are placed into the commodity state
3. Commodities by division: A form of metamorphosis in which objects are placed in a commodity state though originally specifically protected from said commodity state
4. Ex-commodities: things removed, either temporarily or permanently, from the commodity state and placed in some other state (Ibid., 16)

As exemplified in these four types, the "commodity phase" of objects can fluctuate. "Things can move in and out of the commodity state," and their movement can be "slow or fast, reversible or terminal, normative or deviant" (Ibid., 13). The MPM Royal Thai silver collection, once a form of a commodity, now rests outside the commodity phase and will likely stay that way as ex-commodities. However, this distinction is useful when we are considering the provenance of the collection pieces and ethical collection procedures.

When considering the original owner of these objects too, the idea of patronage of the arts comes into play. According to Gell's *Art Nexus*, the role of the patron in the artworld is twofold. The patron's role is to "commission artists to produce works of arts and whose agency, as patrons, is [to be] consequently indexed in the works of art they have caused to be come into existence" (Gell 1998, 47). In other words, patrons are both agents, who cause art to be created, and patients (a Gell term), who are affected by the resulting art. While this does not apply to the

Schapiros (and potentially the other donors) the patronage of Thai and foreign elites to local artists is the reason why many (if not all) of these objects were created in the first place.

The value of these objects (and virtually all commodities) through time is dictated by the political climate of buyers, sellers, and collectors. The initial value put in by the creators is only the beginning of a potentially long history of changing value. Politics, Appadurai states, unites “value and exchange in the social life of commodities” (Ibid., 57). As objects created with a political purpose in mind (largely as gifts to foreign dignitaries), the Thai silver collection would be nothing without its tie to Thai politics and customs.

Moreover, the demand for commodities is based largely on tastes decided upon by high society. “Taste makers” and “experts who dwell at the top of society” are responsible for instilling “ever-shifting rules” that inevitably sway the preference of consumers of all class levels (Ibid., 32). Traders, too, are responsible for the shift in supply and demand of certain commodities over others (Ibid., 33). As I will be discussing in more detail in the following chapters, European “taste makers” played a role in what is now a lack of understanding and associated research on Thai silver since colonization never took hold here. Chinese art dealers have also contributed to this dip in knowledge and perceived value of Thai silver. A great depression in the 1930s following a change in governing style (from absolute to constitutional monarchy, following a 1932 coup d’état) and general inability to afford luxury goods contributed locally to the demand for silverware.

Though the objects I am studying are largely of royal quality, the difference between luxury good and everyday object is slim. “The line between luxury and everyday commodities is not only a historically shifting one,” but its consumption and distribution has changed over time, causing a change in value (Ibid., 40). These objects are only more valuable

than average bowls and boxes because they were created from imported silver by the hands of expert silversmiths employed by the royal courts. These silversmiths created commissioned goods in exchange for housing, food, a decent burial (upon their death), and other necessities; they were not paid monetarily for their services. Silver objects today lack this historical context, shifting the provenance, and making them of lesser value. Historical pieces made of lesser metals and materials and at a lower level of craftsmanship likely fall into this category of “everyday commodities” due to their affordability.

Finally, in doing this research and writing this thesis, I am attempting to begin the process of weaving aspects of knowledge for this topic together. Appadurai describes the commodifying of knowledge as both the fragmentation of knowledge between the various hands within in the production and trade processes (such as makers, dealers, spectators, and consumers) and as the fragmentation of knowledge between experts, scholars, and members of the high-society and the everyday person (Ibid., 54). A large part of my thesis work has been attempting to string related and disparate concepts and information together. My aim, of course, is for my research on the MPM Royal Thai silver to become applicable in a broader sense for others interested in the larger Thai silver material culture story.

In his essay “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” Kopytoff states several questions I will explore in my thesis:

“In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its “status” and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized “ages” or

periods in the thing's "life," and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens when it reaches the end of its usefulness?" (Kopytoff 1986, 66-67)

The creation of an object biography "can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure" (Ibid., 67). While all the information may not be available to me, an incomplete object biography which tells a major part of its history serves a better purpose than none at all.

A key point to keep in mind when considering the aesthetics of objects is where their artistic influences originated. Not only are individual artists inspired by the creations of other cultures, but they are influenced by other individual artists as well. As Svasek reminds us, "the focus on specific artists should not lead to generalization but, rather, to a more complex analysis of art in society," and can be used to explain differences in each individual design (Svasek 2007, 34). Because I cannot study individual artists (as most of the pieces in the collection have little to no maker information), I can attempt to eliminate this bias altogether. Even quite similar pieces have unique aspects, and I cannot say with certainty which pieces might have been created by the same maker or in the same shop. While some pieces display the same makers marks (or defining marks in general), this is a small percentage of the collection and leaves us in the dark for a large majority of them.

As a key component in this thesis, the idea of "value" must be addressed. In anthropology, "value" is a subjective term with multiple meanings. "Value" goes beyond the monetary worth of objects and services. Cultural and historical elements, too, meld to create an amorphous idea of what makes up "value" (Sahlins 2013).

For my purposes, it is best to understand "value" as subjective, depending on a multitude of factors, including societal, historical, economic, and symbolic context (Sturdy Colls and

Ehrenreich 2021). There are both *overt* aspects of value (the material the objects were made from, a stamp indicating a specific maker, or who previously owned them, for example) and *obscured* aspects of value (such as imagery symbolizing good luck or fertility) that were present and documented in this collection.

As we discuss the gifts and other commodities and their value related to each other, Kopytoff's "spheres of exchange" theory comes into play. Spheres of exchange refer to the ways in which societies group like commodities to create value equivalence (Kopytoff 1968). In his example, Kopytoff explains the Tiv of Nigeria's different spheres of exchange for subsistence items, prestige items, and rights-in-people (Ibid., 71). For each sphere, objects can be exchanged for each other easily (for example, a certain number of yams may be exchanged for one chicken since both come from the same category). However, the conundrum comes in when commodities from different spheres are to be exchanged. In the situation of gifts given to Dr. Schapiro during his stay in Thailand, how did the gift givers decide value equivalence between his medical services and their decided upon gifts (silver vessels)? Would his medical services, too, be considered within the prestige category? For this case, I believe considering both silver and medical care in the same sphere of exchange, making them more easily traded, best explains this choice in gift (even if this exchange did not come in a formal setting which may be implied here).

As most of these items were given as gifts, what rules dictate gift giving in Thai culture? Many anthropologists have concluded that gift giving is a form of power. Belshaw goes so far as to say that exchange may be considered the network which holds society together (Belshaw 1965). According to Mauss, not only is gift giving an obligation, but there are rules associated with the action (Mauss 1990, 3).

Gift giving is a way to create debt to the receiver, and the gift giver is usually regarded as superior to the gift receiver (Strathern 1971, 10). It is important to note the exchange of power in this action. For Dr. Louis Schapiro, his role as medical advisor to the kingdom (an intangible gift) dictated his individual and group value, which required “payment” created for this purpose. In this case, those in power (the King and his court) maintained their obligation and status by completing this transaction through the giving of these royal silver pieces. Dr. Schapiro’s medical expertise and use by the kingdom, in Mauss’s terms a service, was met with the counter-service of fine silver and, eventually, an honorary funeral (Mauss 1990).

The act of giving is more than a single action determined by one single actor to another single actor. Instead, it is a process to be understood. It is “not individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract” (Ibid., 5). Moreover, exchanges are “acts of politeness” where the exchange of wealth only acts as one element in the process (Ibid.). Physical gifts, acts of service, improved relations between groups, and festivals all act as different forms of gifts.

There is also a need of repayment, or reciprocation, in the process. According to Mauss, the initial gift from the gift giver and the reciprocation from the gift receiver make up the two essential elements in this process (Ibid., 8). Indeed, there is both an obligation to give gifts and an obligation to receive them (Ibid., 13). In this way, one who has entered into the gift giving process will remain indebted forever, as gifts are given and received endlessly, until the relationship ceases to exist.

Methods

The primary focus for this research project was contextual object-level creation of biographies for the Royal Thai silver objects. I spent an inordinate amount of time trying to understand who created the objects, their personal journey, what materials they were made from, where those materials came from, how they were made, and why these objects remain important today. These questions, and those I highlighted in my introduction, are the goals for this research. In doing this work, I honor both the life of the objects and the human lives that have come into contact with the objects during their long history. In answering these questions, I contribute to a fuller understanding of this aspect of Thai material culture, which has become increasingly obscure through time, and be able to share it with others through my work.

After gathering my initial thoughts on the collection items, I began researching topics that were found in the catalog information, such as donor information and the tonsure ceremony. My advisors gave me book recommendations (namely Bromberg's piece) and potential routes to take in my research. The idea to include woodworking as a potential prior evolution to silversmithing came from my advisor Dawn Scher Thomae.

A simple yet time consuming activity I undertook to provide a more comprehensive history of these objects was viewing the objects' similarities against those in other museum collections across the globe. Through posting inquiries on the Association of Academic Museum and Galleries (AAMG) listserv and searching the online collections of museums (such as the Royal Ontario Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore), I was able to create a small pool of similar pieces to compare against those in the MPM collection. While not all the museums I reached out to for further information got back to me, the information that I received from those who did was immensely helpful.

Additional photos of similar pieces (housed at the Penn Museum and the Trout Gallery at Dickinson College), book recommendations (such as *Delight in Design*, *The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, and publications by Wynyard Wilkinson, all for additional information on N9213/13909), and more topics to research (such as Indian silverware) that came through these correspondences all contributed to my knowledge of the topic.

In addition to utilizing literature recommended to me by museum professionals and used in Bromberg's own research, I spent a considerable amount of time searching for resources online. Many of the books I consulted came from the UWM library system and through interlibrary loans from other universities in the UW system. I also used books found in the MPM's library. Like Bromberg's bibliography, I pulled additional sources from the bibliographies of the books I found most helpful in my research.

To add to what I could find in books and articles, I reached out to anthropologists in Thailand to add depth to my research. Using the *Database of Sociologist and Anthropologist of Thailand*, I narrowed down my list of who I would reach out to by their area of study, whether they had publications in English (an easy marker for whether or not we might share a common language to communicate in), and if their contact information was readily available or easy to find ("Database of Sociologist and Anthropologist of Thailand"). I sent out emails to at least five anthropologists who I identified, resulting in two strong connections (Ms. Udomluck Hoontrakul and Mr. Pipad Krajaejun, both professors at the Thammasat University) who provided me with information I could not have found through researching texts alone.

It was imperative for me to spend time with each object, examining and photographing them. While nearly all the pieces from Dr. Schapiro's donation were readily available to me, I needed to remove 11 objects from exhibit (seven from Dr. Schapiro's donation and four from the

other donors). Photographing each object was a full day's project. For every object, I took at least three photos: a view of the top of the object, a view of the bottom, and the motif of the object setting on a flat surface (if the design was repeating and the same all the way around). If the design changed around the piece, I took up to four photos, one for each side, which can be viewed in Appendix: Object Inventory. After I began writing, I realized that some of the photos were blurrier than I would have liked, I forgot to photograph an object, or I wanted to highlight something I hadn't photographed, so I took more photos. Additional photos were taken of close-ups of motifs, maker's marks, and unusual details that I knew I wanted to point out in further discussions.

Chapter 3: History and Context

This chapter provides an abridged history of Thailand and its surrounding regions. It also serves as context for discussions on the time period of the objects in the collection I am studying, as well as explains the difference in the regional styles, influence from internal and external sources, and the history of silversmithing as a profession in Thailand.

General History

Siam's first capital city was located in what is now modern-day northeastern Thailand (Wiener 2018). Sukhothai was originally founded as a Khmer city and its Khmer influence can be seen throughout the ancient city's architecture (Ibid.). In 1238 C.E., King Si Inthrathit united several smaller polities in the region, forming the kingdom of Sukhothai (Ibid.). The kingdom lasted for 150 years and thrived as a place of commerce and as a midway point between the Khmer Empire in Cambodia and the Burmese Kingdom of Pagan; here, a unique form of ceramic stoneware developed (Ibid.).

In 1350 C.E., Siam's capital city moved to Ayutthaya in southern Thailand (Bacon 1892, 17). At that time, the first Ayutthaya dynasty began (Ibid., 23). In 1556, the Pagan king Chamna-dischop attacked the city of Ayutthaya, resulting in a three-month long siege of the kingdom (Ibid., 21-22). He captured the royal family, holding them hostage in the city of Pegu, and chose Mahá-thamma rájá to govern the city; additionally, he took Mahá-thamma rájá's son, Phra Náret, as a hostage (Ibid.). Soon after this event, King Chamna-dischop died and the royal family

escaped back to Ayutthaya (Ibid.). This led to another war, eventually ending in Ayutthaya's return to independence, with Phra Náret taking the throne (Ibid., 22).

From the beginning, leaders of Ayutthaya were concerned with expanding their kingdom and controlling seaports for trade (Villiers). The kingdom was largely self-sufficient when it came to feeding its people, and it even had enough surplus to export rice, fruits, vegetables, and other food products (Ibid.). The city, built on an island between three rivers, had an advanced hydraulic system complete with roads, canals, and moats laid out in a grid pattern (UNESCO). Ayutthaya became one of the "world's largest and most cosmopolitan urban areas and a center of global diplomacy and commerce" (Ibid.).

Ayutthaya was a multicultural hub. Portuguese explorer Fernao Mendes Pinto (1509-1583) estimated that up to 25% of the kingdom's 400,000 inhabitants were of foreign descent (Jeerawat 2017). Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Japanese, Portuguese, and Persian were just some of the ethnicities represented here (Ibid.).

Ayutthaya's second dynasty lasted only 28 years, from 1602 to 1630 (Bacon 1892). This dynasty was headed by a celebrated religious teacher with no royal lineage; he ruled as king but gave his authority in decision making to a descendent of the royal family (Ibid., 25-26). After the king's death, the regent raised the king's eldest son to become the new king and had his second son assassinated under suspicion of rebellion (Ibid., 27). Eventually, the oldest son was dethroned, leaving behind an eleven-year-old brother to rule the kingdom (Ibid.). The regent dethroned the boy and took the throne himself, becoming King Phra Chau Pra Sath-thong in 1630 (Ibid.).

King Phra Chau Pra Sath-thong's coronation brought with it the beginning of a new dynasty (Ibid.). During the third dynasty, ten kings reigned in royal succession with the

interruption of a usurper between the fourth and fifth kings (Ibid.). European merchants began settling in the kingdom, including the Greek adventurer Constantine Phaulkon (1647-1688) (Ibid.). He was so liked by the ruling king at the time, King Nárái, that he was given the honorary title Chau Phyá Wicha-yentrá-thé-bodi and became the overseer of governance in all northern Siamese provinces (Ibid.).

In 1759, Pagan armies came again to siege the city (Ibid., 29-30). The siege took two years and, due to a lack of unifying leadership, Siam lost their kingdom once again (Ibid., 30). With the Pagan king's appointment of King Phrá Nái Kong to govern the city came the end of the third Ayutthaya dynasty (Ibid.). Following this end, the Thonburi period lasted only 15 years, and had only one king, King Taksin (Wyatt 2003, 313).

In 1782, the current period of Thailand began: the Chakri period (Ibid.). General Chaophraya Chakri proclaimed himself king following Taksin's death and reigned as King Phutthayotfa (Rama I) ("Chakri Dynasty" 2013; Wyatt 2003, 313). He moved the capital city from Thonburi to Bangkok ("Chakri Dynasty" 2013). Here, he built Wat Phra Kaew, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Ibid.).

During Siam's long history, western forces tried many times to establish relations. The Portuguese explorer Alphonso d'Albuquerque (1453-1515) opened diplomatic relations between the two countries; for almost a century, Portugal had largely exclusive rights to Siam's commercial and diplomatic relations before other countries successfully set up correspondence (Bacon 1892, 2). Portuguese missionaries established Catholic churches, but local people did not convert to Catholicism (Ibid., 3). French diplomats, too, failed in converting Siam's kings to Christianity from Buddhism (Ibid., 4). The Dutch East India Company tried, and failed, to

establish a new Amsterdam near the Meinam (Chao Phraya) River between 1672 and 1725 (Ibid., 2-3).

Following Rama I's reign, Phra Phutthaloetla (Rama II) began taking European relations more seriously ("Chakri Dynasty" 2013). In 1826, British merchants were afforded limited trading rights inside the kingdom; a similar agreement was signed with the United States in 1833 (Ibid.). King Mongkut (Rama IV) was credited with furthering foreign relations (Ibid.). Though the country was never colonized, Siam received considerable pressure from British and French powers during the latter half of the 19th century (McGill 2009, 5). King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) changed the country's ruling system in 1932 from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, following a coup d'état (Ibid.). This change in government meant that the king no longer had absolute power, but instead became head of state while an elected prime minister headed government. The change would eventually cause a fall in domestic demand of silver and other luxury goods as extended royal family lost their claim to authority in the kingdom. Much later, beginning in the 1970s, a middle class began to emerge in Thailand to further diversify cultural interests, values, and norms (Funatsu and Kagoya 2003).

Europeans called the region "Siam" meaning "brown"; the word was derived from the Malay word "Sayam" (Bacon 1892, 10). Native Thai people, however, called themselves "Thai" and their country "Muang Thai," meaning "free" and "kingdom of the free," respectively (Ibid.). In 1939, the Thai government officially changed the name of the country to Thailand from Siam (Schliesinger 2000, 5).

Dr. Louis Schapiro spent time in Thailand from 1931 until his death the following year. He served under King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) and his court, based on the available timeline. Just a few months after Schapiro's death, on June 24, 1932, a coup d'état took place in which

King Prajadhipok's reign as an absolute monarch came to an end; on December 10, 1932, the Permanent Constitution was completed and gave King Prajadhipok limited powers as the country's ruler (Ferrara 2012, 4).

The Silver Industry

There is archaeological evidence of metalsmithing in Southeast Asia that dates to at least 2000 BCE (Reid 1993, 114). It is believed that metalsmithing, too, was invented by the people in that region independently, rather than being brought in by other populations or through contact (Ibid.). Other forms of art, such as woodworking, possess related motifs but serve unique purposes from metalsmithing and date back even further.

Thailand does not have any active silver mines today (Bromberg 2019, 19). Historically, much of Thailand's silver material came from outside the country due to their lack of naturally occurring silver. Instead, Thailand had an abundance of other naturally occurring minerals including gold, lead, zinc, and iron (Smith et al. 1968, 343). Silver deposits have been found in Laos, Burma, Indonesia, and Vietnam, thus the mineral was imported into Thailand (Bromberg 2019, 19; Fraser-Lu 1989, 1). Despite the lack of this resource occurring naturally in Thailand, silver was the most common currency in Southeast Asia and China from the 16th to the mid-19th century (Bromberg 2019, 19).

Silver in the form of coins and other pre-made goods came into the country through the Philippines following European contact and colonization in the 18th century (Ibid.). This silver movement created a boom of silver goods production due to the increased supply (Ibid., 13).

The Silver Road, as it was called, involved silver mined in modern-day Bolivia and took place from the 16th to the 18th centuries (Ibid., 19). After it was mined in Spanish-controlled

regions of South America, silver was pressed into galleons and used in the Manila (also controlled by the Spanish at this time) galleon trade; the coins then moved through Asia by way of Portuguese, Dutch, British, and Chinese ships (Ibid.). Mexican coins were also repurposed

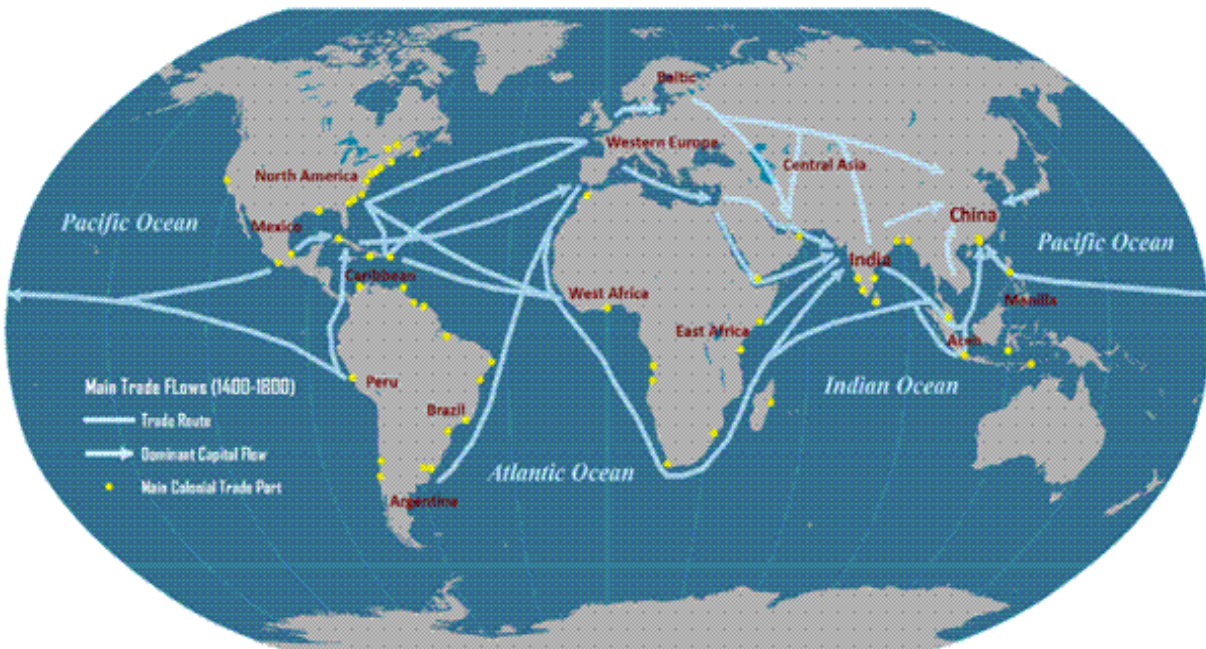


Figure 3.1: Silver trade flows from 1400-1800. The yellow dots represent major colonial trading ports.

Source: Korean Minjok Leadership Academy

into crafts and local currency (Gerini 1912, 174). During trade, merchants sometimes stamped a seal, called a chop mark, on coins as a means of a signature (von Ferscht 2015). Over time, coins received more and more chop marks, gradually losing their value (Ibid.). Highly devalued coins were taken out of circulation and melted down for other purposes (Ibid.)

Prior to the Silver Road and to western influence, the use of silver was in full swing using the deposits of silver available in the region (Fraser-Lu, 1989, 3). In fact, there is evidence of the use of precious metals for object creation in Southeast Asia from as early as 2000 years ago (Ibid.). These techniques likely came from trade with Indian polities (Ibid., 1).

Because of the soft nature of pure silver, it cannot be used to create durable goods by itself. Instead, silversmiths must melt down unalloyed (pure) silver and blend it with copper or

other stronger materials to make a product that is strong enough to be malleable without breakage and cracking (Bromberg 2019, 25; Fraser-Lue 1989, 9). Due to the addition of copper, silver goods will eventually tarnish over time with exposure to sulfur from the atmosphere (Fraser-Lu, 1989, 9).

Thai silver work is not a well-studied or understood topic. Due to a lack of colonization by European forces, few Thai silver objects were exported to Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries (Bromberg 2019, 11). Thai silver, too, has been overshadowed by the vastly more popular Chinese Export Silver trade and sometimes gets mislabeled as such (Ibid.). There are three main reasons for this overshadowing and attribution: China was more open to trade with foreign polities than Thailand, the Chinese characters on the base of some silver objects can be misleading to the untrained eye, and traders sometimes intentionally passed off Thai silver as Chinese to raise the market price (Ibid.). Today, there is high demand for Chinese Export Silver within China which drives up its value (Ibid.). Likewise, the attitude of some art dealers selling in China is that high quality silver products can only come from China rather than external (hence inferior) markets (Ibid.).

Additionally, much of the silver products that were created in the last several centuries may no longer exist. Silver goods which date to pre-18th century are hard to come by due to Thailand's wars with Burmese forces; objects were looted, sold, and melted down (Ibid., 24). Silver goods were also melted down and reformed into new objects as tastes changed (Fraser-Lu 1989, 7).

It is difficult to pinpoint an exact provenance to surviving Thai silver pieces. Makers marks, either stating the individual artist's name or shop name, and silver purity information was not commonly recorded or even considered appropriate by Thai silversmiths (Ibid., 8). Thai

makers marks are different from the European hallmarks, which were required marks punched into silver that conveyed specific information for buyers and sellers (von Ferscht 2015). Almost no pieces produced prior to the late 18th century are stamped with any defining marks (Ibid.). This practice may have been influenced by Malaysian silversmiths, who likewise did not provide maker information on objects (Choo 1984, 55). Since there was not an active trade industry, they did not have to prove silver purity to buyers for sellable objects (Ibid.). It may have also been influenced by Muslim silversmiths, who did not sign their name on their art to remain humble under Allah's presence (Ibrahim 2015, 265). It wasn't until the late 19th century when Thai silversmiths became inspired by European works that they began to themselves on their own pieces (Fraser-Lue 1989, 8). Even after they began providing maker information on their goods, artists often went by pseudonyms that few experts have had any success in tracking.

Within the MPM collection, there are only three makers that have been identified. Additionally, one marking in Thai and four in Chinese can be observed and are yet to be deciphered, so they may indicate additional makers. Even if these were to be deciphered as names of craftsmen, information about these hypothetical makers may not exist.

The silver industry saw a decline in the 20th century. Western tastes led to changes in traditional Thai behaviors, habits, and tastes (Bromberg 2019, 40). In 1929, the country fell into an economic depression (like the rest of the world), and Thai purchasing power was diminished (Ibid., 41). As mentioned earlier, the country's political system was changed to a constitutional monarchy and Thailand was cut off from foreign trading due to World War II some years later (Ibid.; Panarat 2020). An economic recession and new preferences for western imported goods caused a decline in Thailand's handicraft industries (Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 200). Demand for royal regalia and luxury goods overall decreased in response (Bromberg 2019, 41).

Today, silversmithing in Thailand is a dying industry. Though some silversmiths still exist, it is not a popular career choice for Thai youth compared to jobs with higher salaries and better working conditions (Ibid.). Additionally, automation and machine-made goods has caused a dent in the demand for skilled silversmiths and other handicraft workers (Smith et al. 1968, 352). Decorative arts once created for nobility are now produced for the tourist trade (Ibid.).

The Minor Arts and Thai Styles

In Thailand, the arts are defined as either major or minor arts. Major arts include architecture and painting. Decorative crafts, such as metalworking, fall into the minor arts category (Bromberg 2019, 12). Master silversmiths were often employed by the royal family or by royal advisors. They were not paid but all their needs were met, including housing and food, by their sponsor (Fraser-Lu 1989, 3). While they worked for the royal families, they were only allowed to make objects for their employer (Bromberg 2019, 145). In addition, Thai royalty sometimes had objects commissioned by their silversmiths to honor visiting dignitaries, lesser nobility, and government officials (Ibid., 13).

Three main hubs for silversmithing emerged in Thailand: Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, Bangkok in central Thailand, and Nakhon Sri Thammarat in southern Thailand (Ibid., 23). Each of these hubs have unique styles due to variation found in the ethnic Thai communities and to foreign influence.

Chiang Mai silversmiths were heavily influenced by Burmese silversmiths after a mass migration to the region following the 1284 Mongol conquest of Pagan (Ibid.). These designs feature heavy repoussé, a method in metalwork in which designs are hammered on the reverse side of the piece to provide depth, with some designs raised as much as 25.4 millimeters (one

inch) from the background base (Warren and Invernizzi Tettoni 1994, 18). Repoussé designs cover much of the surface area and commonly feature floral patterns (Ibid.). Burmese style silver crafts may also include human or animal figures, a distinction from Chiang Mai style silver (Ibid.). There are at least nine examples of Chiang Mai or Burmese style works in the MPM collection (N9213/13903, N9261/24913, N16692 A-B/21707, N16696/21707, N16697/21707, N16707/21707, N16711/21707, N16714 A-B/21707, and N16715 A-B/21707). Interestingly, in Burmese culture, the use of silver and gold in religious ceremonies was banned; this meant that silversmiths were not involved in the creation of prayer wheels, incense burners, or other goods used in these ceremonies (Tilly 1902, 1). Additionally, until around the 1850s, nonroyal citizens were barred from using vessels made of gold or silver (Ibid.).

Bangkok style silver, on the other hand, is relatively flat and features large areas of undesignated polished surface (Warren and Invernizzi Tettoni 1994, 18). There are at least 19 examples of low relief objects which may be considered Bangkok style in the MPM collection (N16685/21707, N16686/21707, N16687 A-B/21707, N16688/21707, N16689/21707, N16690/21707, N16691/21707, N16695/21707, N16699/21707, N16700 A-B/21707, N16701/21707, N16702/21707, N16703/21707, N16705/21707, N16708/21707, N16712/21707, and N16720/21707)

The southern style of silver has more noticeable differences from the other two main styles. Nakhon Sri Thammarat is known for nielloware (Bromberg 2019, 23). Nielloware techniques were brought to Thailand through Malaysian silversmiths (Ibid.) Nielloware, niello (an amalgam consisting of silver, copper, and lead) is heated, mixed with sulfur, and poured over designed objects; the black substance fills in the engraved or incised designs, resulting in a

product with both silver and black designs (Ibid., 31). There are two objects in the MPM collection that are nielloware (N16716 A-D/21707).

Ethnic Groups of Thailand

There are at least 38 known ethnic minority groups in Thailand, and elements from these groups combined with Chinese influence have created what is known as the Thai art style (Schliesinger 2000; Gosling 2004). Due to the amount of ethnic minorities present in Thailand, I cannot feature them all but would like to highlight a few which have well-documented artistic styles.

The Mon people descended from lower Burma and settled in parts of western Thailand (Staff and Associates of the Human Relations Area Files 1960, 7). They were one of the oldest ethnic groups to settle in Thailand and founded the city of Haripunjaya (modern-day Lamphun) as an extension of the Dvaravati kingdom (Schliesinger 2000, 30). Though the origin of the Mon people is unknown, they are responsible for bringing early Indian influence into the region (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). The Mon were said to have provided the kingdom of Pagan with its writing system, literature, art, religion, and architecture, as well as its cultural and technological achievements (Aung-Thwin 2005, 154). Mon art style utilized simple and standard motifs in a symmetrical pattern (Piriya 1979, 32). In 1281, the Dvaravati kingdom was conquered by the ethnic Tai group, and the region became controlled by the Lanna kingdom (Schliesinger 2000, 31).

Thailand has also seen influence from the Lao ethnic group. In the 17th century, the first Lao kingdom, Lan Xang, controlled parts of northeastern Thailand and the Yunnan region in China but slowly declined following attacks from Burmese, Siamese, and Annamese armies

(Staff and Associates of the Human Relations Area Files 1960, 1). Laos later became an officially recognized country in 1949 (Staff and Associates of the Human Relations Area Files 1960, 1). Much of Thailand's eastern border touches Laos' western border.

South of this border is Thailand's border with Cambodia. The Angkor kingdom oversaw an empire spanning parts of modern-day Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and China as early as 944 C.E. (Mabbett and Chandler 1995, 100). Wars between the Angkor and Thai kingdoms began as early as the 14th century (Mabbett and Chandler 1995). Khmer art expresses "Thai sentiment through Khmer idioms," such as a diadem, almond shaped eyes, and a smile adorning Buddha sculptures, which are indicative to the Bayon tradition, according to Thai art scholar Dr. Piriya Krairiksh (Piriya 1979, 45-50).

Ethnic Malay hail from regions south of Thailand, including Malaysia and Indonesia (Seidenfaden 1963, 116). In fact, "Malay" refers to a specific group of people whose first language is Malay and who practice Islam (Milner and Drakard 2008, 5). The Malay are responsible for bringing the nielloware technique to southern Thailand.

In addition to ethnic minorities, there are about 6.1 million (9.68% of the Thai population) Indigenous people living in Thailand as of 2017 (Kittisak 2022). These groups are split primarily into fishing and hunter-gatherer communities in the south, small communities living on the Khorat plateau to the northeast, and various communities living in the highlands¹ of north and northwest Thailand (Ibid.). Among those in the highlands, there are nine recognized groups in Thailand: The Mien, Hmong, Lisu, Karen, Akha, Thin, Lua, and Khamu (Ibid.). These

¹ The highland groups are often referred to as hill tribes or *chao khao*. These terms are derogatory and characterize the communities as nonnative Thais who are responsible for the region's deforestation and opium trafficking problems.

groups may be treated as other, different from the Thai citizens who are “full-fledged citizens of the nation-state in terms of race, language, customs, and culture” (Krisadawan 2000, 2).

Thailand & the Silver Industry Today

Today, Thailand is a constitutional monarchy and is divided into 76 provinces. Theravada Buddhism is the main religion practiced, but Islam, Brahminic-Hindu, Sikh, and Christianity are other officially recognized religions. Thailand is bordered by Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia. The country continues to have a large agricultural sector and is extremely popular with international tourists.

Silversmithing still exists today, but the number of expert silversmiths is greatly diminished compared to the previous several centuries. While some traditional silversmithing families continue the trade which has been passed down for generations, silver manufacturing factories also exist for mass production of goods. Silver goods are largely created for tourist trade and do not serve the same purpose they once did. Additionally, there has been a push to keep traditional arts alive by craft organizations such as the Ancient Lanna Arts Center, an organization which teaches the art to monks and other interested individuals.

Many young people no longer wish to learn the silversmithing trade. Poor working conditions and availability of higher paying professions in other fields are two main reasons for this trend.

While the silverware practice has all but diminished, Thai silver jewelry remains a popular and profitable artform. According to the Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand, a government organization under the supervision of the Minister of Commerce, the import value of silver from January to May 2022 was USD 367.04 million (GIT Information Center 2022).

Thailand's silver jewelry export was valued at USD 706.73 million (Ibid.). They attributed this value to both a thriving global manufacturing sector and an increase in tourism following the reopening of borders after the Covid-19 outbreak subsided to safer levels (Ibid.).

There may be many explanations for the changing demand from large decorative home goods to jewelry. Jewelry is smaller and more transportable and reflects the desire for personal adornment over home decoration. Jewelry requires less silver; silver purity may also matter less to the purchaser. Additionally, it may be more common for the average tourist to purchase items which they can wear than for keepsakes with solely aesthetic value. Jewelry, unlike decorative silverware, treads the line of aesthetic and functional value, as it is a piece of personal adornment which may see use over and over. I include the information regarding Thai silver jewelry not to imply that tastes have fully moved away from other works of silver but rather to showcase how the silver industry functions today.

Chapter 4: Production Processes and Techniques

“In the old days, there was a clear separation between craftsmen who worked for the royal court and those who worked for ordinary people. The former were known as *chang sib mu* or the ten specialized groups of craftsmen. Their responsibilities comprised construction and all aspects of craftsmanship.” (Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 197)

Communities in Southeast Asia, apart from those in Laos and Burma, had little interest in silver prior to the 16th century (Reid 1993, 99). Since silver was so uncommon for the region, it makes sense that people did not feel the need to import a precious metal when they had other more common metals that were more readily available. By 1912, silver was “one of the scarcest metals” in Thailand (Gerini 1912). Silver deposits were said to have existed near the modern-day city of Vientiane, Laos, but these dried up prior to the 20th century (Ibid.). However, Colonel G.E Gerini, who worked as Secretary for the Minister in the northern region of Thailand, doubted the existence of these mines during his survey of the country in 1912 (Ibid.). There are no other historical accounts of silver deposits in or near Thailand that I was able to locate.

Woodworking

Woodcarving in Thailand features similar designs to those found in works of silver. It is likely that woodworking predates that of silversmithing. What similarities do the two arts possess?

Early works of wood, apart from those housed in buildings, have all but disappeared in Thai landscapes due to the fragile nature of the material. The earliest surviving woodworking era was the Sukhothai period, which lasted during the 14th to 15th century² (Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 8). Woodcarving experienced its height in popularity during the Ayutthaya period, lasting from the 17th to early 19th centuries (Sirinya 2015). The current period in woodworking is the Ratanakosin period, which began after the end of the Ayutthaya period (Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 9).

Most of the objects in the MPM collection overlap with the end of the Ayutthaya period into the Ratanakosin period. The only exception to this is an object which blends metalsmithing and fruit carving. The bowl N16684 A/21707 is comprised of a silver coated copper bowl interior with a carved coconut shell exterior. Like



Figure 4.1: Object N16684 A/21707 is a coconut shell bowl lined with copper. N16684 B/21707 was not available for analysis. Photo taken by author with permission.

² These dates are an estimate. The Sukhothai period actually occurred during the 19th and 20th centuries of the Buddhist Era. These dates come from the Thai Buddhist calendar which is 543 years ahead of the Gregorian calendar following the death of Siddhartha Gautama.

other objects in the collection, the coconut shell has been carved to display various motifs.

Works of wood and silver display many of the same motifs. One such example is the kranok, or flame pattern. The kranok pattern appears frequently as a background to other motifs (Bromberg 2019, 134). It is a symbol of Buddhism and one of the most important basic motifs in traditional decorative arts (Ibid.; Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 12). In woodworking, the basic kranok pattern forms a right triangle with three main sections:

1. *Tue ngao*: the downward facing bottom structure
2. *Tua prakob*: the middle structure bridging the bottom and top structures
3. *Pleiw*: the top part of the design most closely resembling flames (Ibid., 13).



Figure 4.2 (left): The basic kranok pattern. Source: Nutthanon and Sunisa

Figure 4.3 (middle): A stylized kranok pattern can be seen on the tips of the rooftop of this building at Doi Suthep. Photo taken by author.

Figure 4.4 (right): A silver nielloware bowl with a stylized kranok pattern surrounding the seated figure. There are no examples of the kranok pattern from the collection. Source: Backman

In silversmithing, the flames also follow a triangular pattern, but they are less rigidly presented than in some traditional wood carvings. In these carvings, more ornate forms of the kranok exist that also do not follow such a strict format.

The other basic universal design in Thai crafts is the krachang. The krachang is a lotus-bud shape and is used to “give a sense of rhythmic pattern” in architecture, as a border in

decoration for objects, and to “complete the harmony” of designs (Naengnoi and Somchai 1992, 15).

Like the kranok pattern, there are many variations of the basic design.



Figure 4.5: Close up of the krachang design on Object N16701/21707. This bowl is the only one in the MPM collection which features the krachang design. Photo taken by author with permission.

Today, contemporary woodworkers in Thailand are placed in three groups: traditional crafters who continue using traditional skillsets, commercial crafters who produce for external markets (including tourists), and famous contemporary artists who create works for aesthetic value (Ibid., 197). Woodcarvers are one of the ten specialized craftsmen (Ibid., 200). The others are:

- Draftsmen and gilders
- Carvers who specialized in emblem carving, pattern, and figure carving, and sculpture
- Carpenters
- Modelers, such as those who use wax-modelling
- Plasterers
- Lacquerers
- Wood turners
- Carvers specializing in fretting, paper tracing, and fruit and vegetable carving; and molders (Ibid.)

The products of these skills are still essential to the preservation of these art forms and for use in traditional ceremonies including cremation and temple restorations (Ibid.).

While the motifs and purposes of wood carved sculptures and structures share many similarities with silversmithing, I'm not certain that the craftspeople themselves (or their shops) switched mediums to metal. Woodcarving and silversmithing require a different set of skills and tools. Additionally, wood workers and silversmiths are both categories in the ten specialized craftspeople, indicating that metalsmithing did not overtake woodcarving in popularity. Unfortunately, many of the books written on the topic either discuss them in separate sections or focus on one or the other; I have not found works that relate the two skills. However, it is also possible that woodworkers who proved their skills may have transitioned into wood, especially if silversmithing was a more profitable venture or if they were looking for a new creative challenge.

From Raw Silver to Finished Product

As mentioned previously, silver deposits in Thailand were rare, so few local workers were involved in the mining process. Instead, imported silver came from countries like Laos, Burma, and Vietnam (Fraser-Lu 1989, 1). It also came in the form of prefabricated silver coins and goods made from silver mined in South America (Bromberg 2019, 13). This process allowed silversmiths to work with silver that was already ready to be formed into new objects rather than from a raw state. Silver needed to be melted from its original form (as ingots, coins, or



Figure 4.6: A Spanish silver dollar circa 1537-1869. The silver for these coins was mined in Bolivia and used for trade with China. They eventually made their way to places like Thailand, where they were melted down to create new objects. Source: Arranz and Hernandez

already finished products) into sheets. In its raw form, the temperature to melt silver is 961.8°C (1763°F) and requires additional changes before it can be used in silver product production.

In the 1980s, the Thai Niello & Silver Ware Association mandated that Thai silver objects must be at least 92.5% pure to be considered Thai silverware, with the remainder being comprised of copper for that needed pliancy (Ibid.). However, this would not stop silversmiths from creating their own ratios before and after this mandate was put in place (Ibid.). These other ratios, however, were not specifically mentioned.

The purity of silver described here, 92.5%, corresponds to that of sterling silver, a silver alloy comprised of silver and copper. Sterling silver melts at a cooler temperature (893°C or 1640°F) and allows the object more durability during the design process and as a finished product.

As I will go into further depth in the following chapter, some of the pieces in the MPM are marked with Chinese characters signifying their purity. Makers used stamps on the bottom of their vessels which indicated “pure silver” or “original silver.”

After the silver is hammered into a flat sheet, it is time to add the design. Using a chisel and hammer or mallet, the silversmith beats the desired designs into the flat sheet by pressing the chisel into the sheet and hitting the other end with the hammer or mallet. For three-dimensional objects, the shape is formed using the undesigned sheets and the cavity is filled with a mix of resin and wax prior to adding decoration to maintain the shape’s integrity; the resin-wax mixture is later heated and poured out after completion (Bock 1986). Due to the dissimilar skillsets required for certain techniques and final products, it was common for silversmiths to master a single design or object rather than creating several different ones (Bromberg 2019, 23).

Historically, silversmiths across Southeast Asia did not keep a large inventory of silver goods. Craftsmen would fill orders as they were commissioned but did not create ready-made goods (Reid 1993, 101-102). The risk of using precious metals without up-front payment was the reason for this practice (Ibid., 103).

Workshop Organization

No sources in English provided me with a well-rounded explanation of the setup of the 18th-19th century silversmith workshops in Thailand. However, it is my hope that explaining the workshops from neighboring regions and from different time periods may help to paint a picture of what the Thai workshops could have been like. Likely, Thai workshops were influenced by the workshops of neighboring countries, by immigrant artisans living in Thailand, and by workshops of other crafts.

In early 20th century Burmese workshops, multiple people were responsible for the decoration portion of the silversmithing process. After the bowl was formed into its proper size, the master silversmith would “[draw] a small portion” of a repeating pattern, leaving the rest to be drawn in by his pupils (Tilly 1902, 8). The master would also sketch the figures to be added to the piece “unless he [had] a skilled pupil” who could do it on their own (Ibid.).

For these silversmiths, the practice was often a family business. In each generation, one or two members of the family with an “especial aptitude for the work” took up the craft (Ibid., 13). Master silversmiths sometimes took on an apprentice or pupil (a local boy from the village) but criticized him for “[deserting] his teacher before he has learnt his trade,” selling vessels of “inferior work” to art dealers and tourists (Ibid., 13-14).

In the past, family workshops in Thailand divided the labor by gender. Men (husbands and sons) would form the silver into the final shape (Udomluck 2022). Women (wives and daughters) were responsible for the decorating portion of the process (Ibid.). Though today, this division has changed and most of the remaining silversmiths are men (Ibid.). Typically, smaller pieces are completed by one silversmith, but larger or more complicated ones may require assistance from other silversmiths (Ibid.).

Present-Day Silversmithing Hubs

Today, silver goods have been highly commercialized in Thailand. Many stores claim to produce silver by hand using years of silver expertise, marketing to a largely tourist population. A quick internet search yields dozens of shops ranging from rural huts to commercial showrooms across the country where people can purchase and learn about handmade silver goods, mostly specializing in jewelry. While there are many options for purchasing silver in Thailand, it is unclear how the objects are produced or by who. Silversmithing classes targeting tourists are available in Chiang Mai, one of the major regions of silver production.

While the silversmithing industry has died out across most of the country, Chiang Mai has kept the trade alive. There are two primary areas where silversmithing workshops can be



Figure 4.7: The regions where significant silversmithing industries still exist today. From left to right: Chiang Mai (in red), Chiang Rai (in blue), Phayao (in yellow). Created with www.paintmaps.com

found, as well as one ethnic group in the region who specializes in the craft. Smaller schools of silversmithing also exist in Sukhothai, Surin, and Nakhon Sri Thammarat (Udomluck 2022).

Wualai Silversmiths Village

Wualai was originally built by the Burmese King Kawila (1742-1816) as a silversmithing village with the mass migration of silversmiths into the region (Weerachai). This village resides south of the southern walls of Chiang Mai's Old City. Today, the silversmithing tradition lives on through these makers. Unfortunately, the only information available about this region is through travel blogs. This region, once part of Burma, explains the overlap in the techniques found in Chiang Mai and Burmese style silverware.



Figure 4.8: Wualai Silversmiths Village doubles as the Saturday Walking Market.

Source: Thai2Siam

Wat Sri Suphan

Wat Sri Suphan, nicknamed the Silver Temple, continues to honor and continue the silversmithing legacy. The temple was first founded in 1501 and has undergone many aesthetic

changes (Cavanagh). It can be found in Chiang Mai off a side street in the Wualai Silversmithing Village. At this temple, entire buildings are covered in intricately designed aluminum or zinc alloy sheets, with “silver being reserved for the holiest images” (Ibid.).

Efforts through this temple have helped to keep the tradition of silversmithing alive in Chiang Mai (Cavanagh). Here, an organization called the Ancient Lanna Arts Study Center works with monks and other interested individuals to teach silver



Figure 4.9: The ordination hall at Wat Sri Suphan. The building is locally known as the “silver ubosot.” Source: Popp

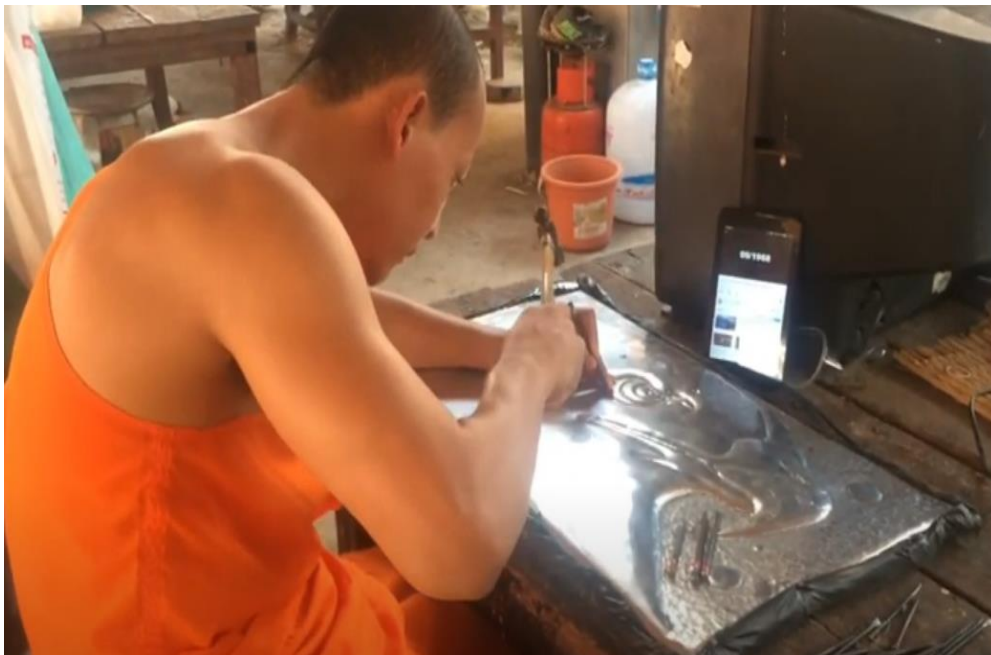


Figure 4.10: A monk at Wat Sri Suphan engraving a design into a flat sheet of silver. Source: Asia 361

smithing to new generations, according to the temple’s website (“Wat Sri Suphan”).

Mien People

The Mien (the name they use for themselves) or Yao (the name used by foreign parties) Indigenous group still practices silversmithing techniques passed down through the centuries today. This ethnic community primarily resides in the Chiang Rai and Phayao provinces, with small communities found in other northern Thai provinces. Their first recorded mass migration into Thailand occurred in the 19th century, and they mostly migrated from Laos (Lewis and Lewis 1984, 136).

Typical adornments for special occasions in Mien culture include a variety of silver objects. Women and children wear silver necklaces, which are sometimes multi-tiered, with attached silver bells, balls, and additional adornments (Ibid., 148). Women also wear silver rings and heavy silver bracelets on their left arm alongside a silver chain worn at the waist (Ibid.). Mien silversmiths are known for their bells, birds, butterflies, flowers, and miniature grooming tools (Ibid.).



Figure 4.11 (left): A silver Mien necklace worn for New Year's festivals. The multi-tiered necklace features floral etchings along the band as well as fish and swords hung from the silver threads. Source: Bowman



Figure 4.12 (right): This miniature grooming set, Object N16713/21707, may have come from Mien craftsmen. Grooming kits were also sometimes attached to silver necklaces or hooked onto belts. Photo taken by author with permission.

While traditional folk arts, especially textiles, were originally created for use within the

Indigenous group, these industries have become increasingly commodified with an influx of demand from predominantly foreign groups, including tourists and Thai people outside the ethnic group (Cohen 2000, 50). Interestingly, the crafts of the Mien and Hmong (Meo) ethnic groups have become more commercialized than crafts from neighboring ethnic groups (Ibid., 58). This increase in the sale of ethnic goods from the two groups is primarily due to political events which forced the groups to move to lowland areas and government and private efforts to promote the sale of these goods as a supplementary income for the ethnic groups (Ibid.).

Artistic Techniques

There are a variety of techniques which are used to create the intricate designs and patterns found on Thai silver. Usually, multiple techniques are used to form one cohesive product. Because of the intricately handmade nature of fine silver products, imperfections do exist and can sometimes be viewed on the objects. It is believed that these techniques reached Thailand through interactions with Chinese, Indian, Persian, and Muslim craftspeople (Bromberg 2019, 25). Additionally, some techniques, such as the heavy repoussé found in Chiang Mai and Burmese styles, came from interaction through immigration.

Chasing/Embossing

Chasing or embossing is created by hammering the frontside of sheets of thin silver to “lower the background of the design on the outer surface of the object (Ibid.). It is used to make the main themes on the object stand out further from the background. At least 13 objects in the MPM collection display this artistic technique (N9213/13903, N9261/24913, N16688/21707, N16689/21707, N16690/21707, N16691/21707, N16703/21707, N16709/21707, N16710/21707, N16711/21707, N16718/21707, N16719/21707, and N16720/21707).



Figure 4.13: Object N16707/21707 displays both chasing/embossing and repoussé. The background has been hammered to increase the depth of Thotsakan, the figure which appears on the lid of the container. Photo taken by author with permission.

Repoussé

Repoussé is the opposite of chasing or embossing. Artists hammer the backside of thin sheets of silver to make designs on the frontside protrude further. According to Sylvia Fraser-Lu, East and Southeast Asian researcher and curator, repoussé objects may be hammered up to sixteen times before the object is considered complete (Fraser-Lu 1989, 16). Repoussé is most commonly found in Northern Thailand and Burmese-styled objects. The MPM Thai silver collection has at least 10 objects that display strong examples of Chiang Mai/Burmese style repoussé and chase/emboss work (N9213/13903, N9261/24913, N16692/21707, N16696/21707,

N16697/21707, N16707/21707, N16714 A-D/21707, and N16715 A & B/21707). There are at least 14 examples of low relief repoussé found in the collection (N16685/21707, N16686/21707, N16687 A & B /21707, N16688/21707, N16689/21707, N16690/21707, N16690/21707, N16695/21707, N16699/21707, N16702/21707, N16708/21707, N16712/21707, and N16720/21707).



Figure 4.14: Object N9261/24913 is an example of Burmese repoussé. Both repoussé and embossing are used to create an object of high relief. Photo taken by author with permission.



Figure 4.15: Object N16697/21707 is an example of low relief repoussé. Photo taken by author with permission.

Nielloware

As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, nielloware is both a distinctive style and a technique in silversmithing. Nielloware came from Malaysian silversmiths and is prominent in southern-style objects (Bromberg 2019, 23). A black amalgam is heated to become a liquid and poured over objects with engraved or incised designs (Ibid., 31). The amalgam is heated further so that it “[melts] into the incised patterns” before being cooled (Ibid.). After it has cooled, the excess amalgam is smoothed with sandpaper and buffed away (Ibid.). The remaining amalgam serves as high contrast against the silver or silver gilt pieces. Only two objects, a set of pumpkin-shaped boxes (N16716 A-D/21707), in the MPM collection showcase the nielloware style.



Figure 4.16: Objects N16716 A-D/21707 display a variety of silversmithing techniques, including niello, enamel, repoussé, and inlay. Photo taken by author with permission.

Inlay/Damascening

Inlay or damascene is not a common form used in the production of small objects such as boxes and bowls. Instead, this technique can be found on sword hilts, knives, and other weapons (Bromberg 2019, 27). Meaning “relating to Damascus steel³ or its manufacture,” damascene is the process of hammering thin silver or gold wire into patterns atop a “darkened iron or steel surface” (Ibid.). Like nielloware, the high contrast effect of silver against a dark background is a desirable trait to this technique. The two nielloware boxes, N16716 A-D/21707, display inlay on the stems of the lids.



Figure 4.17: The stem on the pumpkin box's lid, N16716 A/21707, is an example of the inlay technique. Photo taken by author with permission.

³ Damascus steel, Indian steel, or wootz, are objects, typically blades, are created through the forging of steel (Durand-Charre 2014). During the forging process, patterns are welded into the face of the blade (Durand-Charre 2014).

Openwork

Openwork objects have intentionally punched out holes in the decoration. Incense burners and boxes were some of the objects created using this technique (Bromberg 2019, 32). Bowls, on the other hand, were not made using this technique. This style originated in China and likely was integrated into Thai-style silverwork through Chinese immigrants (Bromberg 2019, 32). Only one container, N16704/21707, shows openwork in its design.



Figure 4.18: Object N16704 21707 features an openwork lid. Photo taken by author with permission.

Enameling

Like the process of nielloware, enameling is used to decorate objects with additional colors. Colored amalgams are heated from a paste to a liquid and fused with the silver object (Bromberg 2019, 28). Originally, blue, green, and turquoise were the colors used for this process, but today other common colors include white, yellow, and red (Ibid., 28-29). This technique was originally developed in China and, like openwork, likely became popularized through Chinese immigrants (Ibid., 28). The nielloware pumpkin set pictured previously (Figures 4.16 and 4.17) and N16694/21707, a small betel box, are the only objects which utilize this technique.



Figure 4.19: This pendant, N16643/21707, is an example within the MPM's broader collection of Thai silver featuring red and blue enamelwork. Photo taken by author with permission.

Engraving

Engraving is used to create lines and patterns on the flat sheet of silver. Using a hammer “to hit a fine chisel into the surface of the silver object,” the silversmith may also enhance details on flowers or other vegetation, animals, or people (Bromberg 2019, 30). Additionally, this method may be used to inscribe information about the piece, such as the silver purity or maker's mark, onto the bottom of the object (Ibid.). There are at least eight objects show engraved features (either in the design or on the bottom as a defining mark) (N16685/21707,



Figure 4.20: A close-up of the engraving features on N16700/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

N16686/21707, N16696/21707, N16697/21707, N16700 A & B/21707, N16701/21707, and N16702/21707).

Gilding

Gilding is created to make objects appear more expensive than they actually are, usually through the application of gold (Bromberg 2019, 30). Like nielloware and enamel, gold was ground into a powder and mixed to create a liquid amalgam, painted onto the silver object, and heated to secure the gold in place (Ibid.). At least three objects in this collection showcase a gold gilding overlay (N16705/21707, N16711/21707, and N16720/21707).



Figure 4.21: Object N16720/21707 is one of several gold gilded objects in the collection. Photo taken by author with permission.

Filigree

Filigree produces one of the more fragile final products of the techniques listed here. To create a filigree object, the silversmith solders curled, twisted, or plaited metal threads to each other and to the base object if possible (Evans 2003, 131). Filigree is less common in Thai silver than it is in silver and metal objects from Indonesia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean (Bromberg 2019, 30). The technique eventually became more popular as a jewelry technique beginning in the mid-19th century (Bromberg 2019, 30). While no objects within my scope of the collection features this technique, at least three bracelets and a belt from Dr. Schapiro's other collection items were made in this technique.



Figure 4.22: This belt, Object N16641/21707, is an excellent example of filigree. Photo taken by author with permission.

Bidri

Thai silversmiths may have received inspiration from the Indian style of Bidri. Like nielloware, Bidri consists of the usage of black substances and silver to make certain designs of the object stand out more than others. However, Bidri wares are cast using an alloy of 95% zinc and 5% copper compared to the nielloware amalgam made of silver, copper, and lead (Craddock 2005, 333). Then, the silver is inlaid to produce contrasting designs (Ibid.). The technique is used for a variety of goods, but vessels, plates, and boxes are the most commonly created items (Ibid.).

The origin of the technique, however, remains shrouded in mystery. Zinc production in the Rajasthan region of India took place at least 1000 years ago, but it does not fully explain the roots of Bidri (Ibid.). The technique was predominantly created by Muslim craftspeople, yet the Rajasthan region was a “staunchly Hindu” area (Ibid.). Likewise, Bidri craftspeople themselves claim to have learned the technique from Iranian craftspeople despite the lack of Bidri wares or early zinc production from that region (Ibid., 333-334).

Of the objects I viewed from the MPM collection, N8071/11184 is the only Bidri item. N8072 A & B/11184 are also described as Bidri by the catalog book, but these bowls were not available for analysis during my time of research. As you can see, the overall look is very similar to the nielloware items also found in the collection.



Figure 4.23: N8071/11184 is the only object in the collection labeled as Bidri.
Photo taken by author with permission.

Conclusion

Common themes found in Thai silver are also present in other artistic mediums. Many of the artistic techniques described here were used in tandem to create fine works of silver, and some groups and regions continue to create works by hand. These techniques continue to be used today by the few remaining artisans. In tourism-centered areas, mass-production facilities have replaced traditional silversmithing shops. Additionally, many online retailers taut “handmade” silver pieces available for international shipping, thus eliminating the need for traditionally made goods for some consumers.

Chapter 5: MPM's Royal Thai Silver Collection

The previous chapters have been used to provide a solid foundation for exploring Thai silverware. As I have mentioned, this is not a well-studied area or practice in Asian material culture, so I felt it was imperative to provide as much contextual information as possible leading up to the culminating discussion of the collection objects, their function, and their meaning. The following chapter will provide more information about the specific objects in the MPM collection as well as my analysis of themes and functions.

Gift Giving

“Giving (*dana*) is one of the essential preliminary steps of Buddhist practice. When practiced in itself, it is a basis of merit or wholesome karma. When coupled with morality, concentration, and insight, it leads ultimately to liberation from *samsara*, the cycle of repeated existence. Even those well-established on the path to emancipation continue to practice giving as it is conducive to wealth, beauty, and pleasure in their remaining lifetimes.” (Susan Elbaum Jootla, 1990)

Though I wished to secure a more theoretical grasp on the historic importance of gift giving in Thailand, I unfortunately was not able to find a comprehensive analysis of practices

and etiquette. Instead, many websites and books provided sparse information for current practices and customs especially pertaining to gifts from one Thai person to another and from foreigners to Thai people. They did not touch upon gift giving from Thai people to foreigners, since many were meant as a guide for foreigners to follow in Thailand. While the collection I have studied was gifted ethically, purpose and intent are important topics to discuss in relationship to the MPM collection.

In Thailand, giving gifts is “a gesture of respect as often as affection” (Rothsack 2021, 95-96). It is customary, but not necessarily required, for gifts to be reciprocated and for services to be met with gifts in return. I believe, however, that gift giving is far more than a nicety performed. Gifts are “given and reciprocated obligatorily” (Mauss 1990, 3).

As a predominantly Theravada Buddhist country, gift giving may take on a religious aspect as well as a social one. To put it simply, followers of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand seek to gain good karma through two predominant acts, “mental purification” and “meritorious giving,” to achieve a higher existence in the next life, eventually leading to the end of the cycle of rebirth, called nirvana (Egge 2013, 5). Karma, both good and bad, follows a person from life to life (Jellison 2017). For some followers of Buddhism, the goal is to balance out both good and bad karma so that there is no karma left, but it is common for Thai people to work toward accruing good karma instead (Ibid.). It is possible, I believe, that the selfless act of giving precious Thai silver objects may have attributed to the accumulation of karma for the royal family members who were credited with these gifts.

Additionally, the people associated with these gifts all had wealth and status. They were either born into or married into the royal family. As members of upper class society, they had the ability to give such extravagant gifts.

One final note on this collection is the idea of re-gifting. Analyzing the estimated creation date of the objects provided in museum documentation against the known birth and death dates of the people who were responsible for giving the gifts to the Schapiros, these royal members could not have been the original owner of many of the pieces. This fact indicates the idea of re-gifting within the royal family. The original commissioners (and commissioners' intent) of these pieces remain unknown, and we do not know how many times they were re-gifted before ultimately leaving the country via Dr. Schapiro's widow.

The catalog information for some of the objects within the collection trace an "original" gift giver. For that "original" gift giver, I have provided the information I could find and the objects they donated. The 21707-accession number pertains to those objects donated by Dr. Louis or his son, Dr. Mark Schapiro. For Dr. Louis Schapiro, these objects were given in gratitude for the work he conducted as a doctor for the royal court.

Royal Siamese Archaeological Museum

Objects donated: N16684/21707, N16685/21707, N16686/21707, N16687 A & B/21707, N16688/21707, N16689/21707, N16690/21707, N16691/21707, N16694 A & B/21707, N16695/21707, N16696/21707, N16697/21707, N16699/21707, N16700 A & B/21707, N16701/21707, N16702/21707, N16703/21707

Search results for this institution have come back empty. I have no reason to believe this institution still exists, but I believe it could have been associated with the Siam Society.

According to their website:

"The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage is a Thai cultural organisation with an international scope. It promotes the study and knowledge-sharing about the cultures,

history, arts, and heritage conservation of Thailand and its neighbouring countries in South-East Asia. The Society's activities are guided by its motto: "Knowledge Gives Rise to Friendship" and it welcomes visitors of all nationalities, including non-members, to visit its facilities and join in its activities." (The Siam Society)

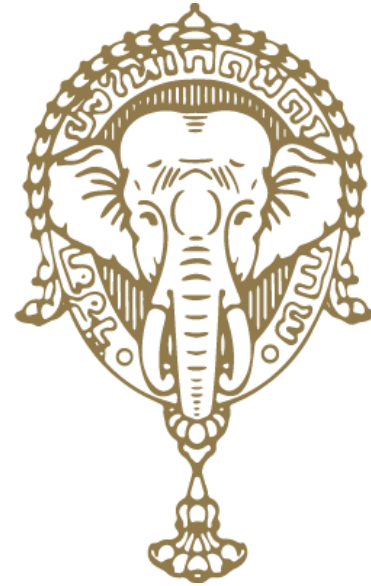


Figure 5.1: The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage's emblem. The Society's motto is incorporated around the elephant's head. Source: The Siam Society

The Siam Society was founded in 1904 by "a group of Siamese and international scholars in history and archaeology" (The Siam Society). In 1933, the Royal Society opened its permanent location in Bangkok, Thailand (Ibid.). Today, the Society heralds itself as "the most active international society in Southeast Asia for knowledge-sharing of cultural heritage and advocacy of cultural heritage" (Ibid.).

The museum documentation for this entry simply states that the objects were collected from the Royal Siamese Archaeological Museum. They could have been objects gifted to Dr. Schapiro, or these objects could have been purchased from this institution.

Prince Chakrabongse Bhudvanath of Phitsanulok

Objects donated: N16692 A & B/21707, N16712 A-D/21707

Prince Chakrabongse Bhudvanath was the 40th child of HM King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) and HM Queen Sri Bajarinda (British Library). He studied military science in Russia upon the invitation of Tzar Nicholas II of Russia (Ibid.). Following his return to Thailand, Prince

Chakrabongse established the Thai Army's first aviation unit and was a commander in World War I (Ibid.). He is credited as the "Father of the Royal Thai Air Force" (Ibid.). The city he reigned over as prince, Phitsanulok, is located in northern Thailand and is the capital of Phitsanulok Province.

N16692 A-B/21707, a high relief repoussé container, is made in the Chiang Mai or Burmese style. The other object which he gifted to Dr. Schapiro, N16712/21707 (a low relief scent box), was likely created elsewhere or by silversmiths specializing in other techniques.

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab

Objects donated: N16693/21707

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab was the son of King Mongkut (Rama IV) and half-brother to King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) (British Museum). In 1892, after he worked for multiple palace offices and completed a tour of Europe and South Asia on behalf of the king, Prince Damrong was appointed Minister of the Interior, a role where he dealt with the country's internal affairs, transformed the way the in which provinces were governed, and worked for social change (Ibid.). He was credited for becoming the first director of the National Library and National Museum, served as Vice Patron to the Siam Society, and has since been revered as the "father of history in Thailand" (Ibid.; The Siam Society). Additionally, the Prince donated goods to the National Museum Bangkok.

Prince Varavan

Objects donated: N16704/21707

I believe this entry is a misspelling of either Prince Vodhyakara Varavarn or HRH Prince Sakol Varavarn. Since the latter was confirmed in the catalog book with other entries, I will be using this section to discuss the former.

Little is publicly available about HSH Prince Vodhyakara Varavarn. Prince Vodhyakara was considered a pioneer of Thai architecture (Chomchon 2011). He, like other members of the royal family during this time, attended school internationally at Cambridge University (Ibid.).

Ma. Gen. PLE Warring, Advisor Ministry Interior

Objects donated: N16705 A & B/21707

No additional information regarding this entry was discovered. I am not entirely sure that this title is correct due to the penmanship associated with this handwritten catalog entry.

HRH Prince Sakol Varavarn

Objects donated: N16707/21707

HRH (also referred to as HSH) Prince Sakol Varavarn was the Director General of Public Health for the Royal Siamese Government (Sakol 1930). Due to the timeframe in which he was serving as a government official, it is possible that Prince Sakol worked alongside Dr. Louis Schapiro.

Prince Sakol was also a representative of the League of Nations Health Organization (Ibid.). Formed in 1920, this organization was composed of doctors, politicians, researchers, and statisticians whose primary purpose was to create an internationally utilized sanitary system

(Sealey 2011, 2). Together, they worked to make information on sanitary and health practices more widely available and believed in the importance of global health literacy to fight infectious diseases (Ibid.).

HRH Prince Paribatra of Nakhon Sawan

Objects donated: N16716 A & B/21707, N16717/21707, N16718/21707, N16719/21707

Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand, like many other royal family members, went abroad for his education (Prabook). He joined the Prussian Cadet Corps at the Prussian Military Academy at Groß-Lichterfelde (Prabook). Prior to the 1932 coup d'état, he served as prince over the lower northern city of Nakhon Sawan. After the end of the absolute monarchy, Prince Paribatra was exiled to Bandung, Indonesia (Ibid.).

Madam Johanna Sakol Varavarn

Objects donated: N16711 A & B/21707, N16712 A & B/21707, N16714 A-D/21707

Madam Johanna Sakol Varavarn was married to Prince Sakol Varavarn. Originally from Germany, she travelled through Ellis Island in 1928, before heading to her final destination of Bangkok, Thailand, according to Ancestry.com records.

HRH King Prajadhipok

Objects donated: N16720 A & B/21707

King Prajadhipok, the 76th child of King Chulalongkorn, began his royal career as the Prince of Sukhothai, a northern province directly west of Phitsanulok (Soravij). In 1926, he ascended to the throne, becoming Rama VII (Ibid.). He was the last king to reign under the

absolute monarchy and the first to reign under the new government system prior to his resignation in 1935 (Ibid.). Rama VII was noted for supporting local businesses such as the country's first brewery, Singha Beer (Ibid.).

Defining Marks

Defining marks are not commonly found on antique Thai silver. While it is not known for sure, maker's marks may have been implemented after growing accustomed to Chinese chop marks or European maker's marks on traded goods (Bromberg 2019, 190). Makers marks found on Thai silver could be the name of the single silversmith who created the object, the factory they worked in, the firm they worked for, or the shop which sold it (Ibid., 191). I have identified three potential makers associated with the objects in this collection. These makers are Gen Xing, Yue He, and Mei He.

Though nothing is known about Gen Xing (根興), several betel boxes featuring agate set into the lid have been found with this mark (Ibid., 196). Gen Xing may, therefore, refer to an individual maker, a craftsmen's shop name, a retailer, or an unknown fourth option. The Gen Xing mark can be viewed on N16718/21707.



Figure 5.2 (left): Object N16718/21707 was created by Gen Xing. Photo taken by author with permission.

Figure 5.3 (middle): A close-up of the maker's mark visible on the bottom of the box. The characters on the left are yet to be deciphered and the ones on the right are for Gen Xing. Photo taken by author with permission.

Figure 5.4 (right): Object N16719/21707 does not display a maker's mark but is very similar to N16718/21707 and may be related in some way. These are the only objects in the collection featuring stone inset lids. Photo taken by author with permission.

Yue He (粤和) is visible on the bottom of N16703/21707. I believe this could refer to the firm Tan Yue He (譚粤和), but a fictional character in the Chinese traditional literature *Water Margin* bearing the same name (though spelled 樂和) also exists. Tan Yue He was a silversmithing firm that was formed by at least the 1870s to fill commissions for the royal family (Ibid., 202). Objects made from Tan Yue He were of “outstanding quality” (Ibid.). However, this time period and the proposed time period of the object do not match up (the bowl is estimated 1733-1809 MPM documentation) and the stamp is missing the first character in the firm’s name, so this mark could refer to a different Yue He. Alternatively, as the mark is slightly altered from the firm’s mark, it could have been earlier form of the mark, perhaps used prior to the store’s largescale success. Additionally, the estimated date provided in the museum documentation may very well be inaccurate, further building the case for an early version of the Tan Yue He maker’s mark.



Figure 5.5: Close-up of the maker’s mark found on N16703/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

Like Gen Xing, nothing is known about Mei He (美和) (Ibid., 200). Like Gen Xing, Mei He may refer to an individual, a craftsmen’s shop, or a retailer. It could also refer to something else entirely. Only one object in the collection bares this mark. The Mei He mark appears on 16708/21707.



Figure 5.6: Close-up of the markers on the scent box N16708/21707. The character on the left reads *zu yin* and the one on the right is for Mei He. There is another stamp above the two that is not a Chinese character. Photo taken by author with permission.

In addition to maker’s marks, some objects display stamps which claim silver purity. Three objects in the collection bare the *zu yin* (足银) stamp and one

bears the *yuan yin* (原銀) stamp. These stamps translate to “pure silver” and “original silver,” respectively (Ibid., 189). Thai-Chinese silversmiths are believed to have begun using these stamps around the end of the 19th century, but they do not guarantee silver purity (Ibid.).

A large peacock insignia can be seen on the bottom of MPM object N9261/24913. In Burma, the peacock remains an important symbol. During the Konbaung dynasty, which ended in 1885 after colonial expansion from British forces, Burmese kings wore the bird on their robes and sat upon the Peacock Throne (Easey 2016). The best works of Burmese silversmiths utilized the peacock symbol (Dehejia 2008, 202). I believe this piece most likely originated from Burma or the northern regions of Thailand once ruled by Burma.



Figure 5.7: Close-up on the stamps found on N16714 A/21707. The stamp on the left is yet to be deciphered and the one on the right reads *yuan yin*. Photo taken by author with permission.

In addition to these maker's marks and insignias, many of the bowls display similar markings on the bottom which are not letters or insignias⁴. Some of these designs appear to be identical or similar to each other. Due to their similarities, I believe these markers may have indicated a set. Possible sets are: N16686/21707, N16690/21707, N16691/21707, and N16697/21707; N16689/21707 and N16696/21707; and N16687 A/21707 and N16687 B/21707. Other



Figure 5.8: Peacock insignia found on the bottom of N9261/24913. Photo taken by author with permission.

⁴ See Appendix: Object Inventory for photos of each bottom insignia.

objects (N16685/21707, N16692 A/21707, N16719/21707) display unique designs on the bottoms as well, but their designs do not correspond with others. While I hoped the associated names and institutions with each object could shed some light on these potential pairs, all objects I've listed as being part of a set came from the Siam Royal Siamese Archaeological Museum and lack further provenance records. It cannot be confirmed whether this museum received these pieces from one or several donors, so their viability as pairs cannot be proven.

Motifs and Their Meanings

For some of the following motifs, the literature did not exist regarding definitive meanings within Thai culture. It is for this reason that I studied other regions, including Burma and China, who have had a proven history of interaction and cooperation with Thailand and its people. For one, an influx of Chinese influence on Thai arts occurred during the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) (Bromberg 2019, 128). During this time, an increase of Chinese workers to Bangkok caused a demand for Chinese inspired goods (Ibid.).

These motifs do not exist solely on Thai silver, but information on other types of arts (aside from textiles and wood carving) have been difficult to locate. Unfortunately, I will not be able to shed light on each of the following motifs in these art styles but can confirm their existence across mediums.

Animals

Animals appear regularly on Thai silver vessels. Within this collection, there are 15 instances of animal motifs. These include elephants, birds, roosters, peacocks, and snakes. In some instances, zodiac animals appear together on the objects, and I will be grouping those together.

Elephants appear as the main motif on three objects within the collection (N16686/21707, N16696/21707, and N16697/21707). The elephant is the official national animal of Thailand (Ibid., 134).

Elephants were used for transportation, religious ceremonies, in battle, and for logging (Schmidt-Burbch, Ronfot, and Rossukon 2015). They continue to be used for tourism today, especially in “ethical” elephant camps where tourists can feed and bathe them (the ethics of these camps can be unpredictable since many of these camps have received complaints regarding abuse of the animals). The elephant is a symbol for wisdom, strength, leadership, and the accumulation of wealth or status (Banks Findly 2014, 140).

In Thai art, the bird, or *nok*, motif is common. Birds are typically depicted in flight or perched on branches and often come in pairs for “double happiness” (Bromberg 2019, 131). The most commonly appearing bird is thought to be the magpie, a symbol of happiness and good fortune in China (Ibid.). Magpies also represent



Figure 5.9: N16697/21707 is one of the objects which features elephants. Photo taken by author with permission.



Figure 5.10: Object 16703/21707 features a floral and bird-themed border. Photo taken by author with permission.

marriage, fidelity, are “messengers of good news” (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 77). Birds appear on two objects (N16703/21707 and N16717/21707).

Snakes, on the other hand, are depicted as the opposite of birds (Banks Findly 2014, 111). While birds take flight, serpents represent life on the mortal plane (Ibid.). In Thai literature, the Naga, a mythical snakelike creature, is the sworn enemy of the Garuda, a mythical birdlike creature (Bromberg 2019, 139). The only object featuring snakes is N16698/21707.

In Thai prehistory, snakes were feared and revered as gods which required sacrifice (Mettha, Arkom, and Vuthipong 2014, 58). They were believed to possess mystical power because they could live on land or in water (Ibid., 65). After the rise of Buddhism in Thailand, the Naga became a Buddhist symbol (Ibid., 59).

Today, snake imagery has several meanings. Snakes represent the earth, life, and femininity (Banks Findly 2014, 111). The Naga Fireball Festival is an event held in the Nong Khai province to signify the end of Buddhist lent (Thirachaya 2014, 734). At the festival, an unexplained phenomenon has been recorded where fireballs appear to shoot out of the water into the sky; locals believe this can be attributed to a Naga which lives in the river (Ibid.).

The Thai zodiac is based on the Chinese 12-year cycle (Bromberg 2019, 129). In order, the animals are as follows: the rat, the ox, the tiger, the rabbit, the dragon, the snake, the horse, the goat, the monkey, the rooster, the dog, and the pig. In Thai iterations, the dragon is replaced



Figure 5.11: A Naga sculpture at Wat Baan Den near Chiang Mai. The Naga controls water and is the enemy of Garuda, a demi-god found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Source: MyThailand.blog

by the Naga (Ibid., 139). The Burmese zodiac system, on the other hand, represents the eight directions (northeast, east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, and north) and eight days of the week (Wednesday is split into morning and afternoon to achieve this eighth day) (Jiang 2021). Starting on Sunday and northeast, the corresponding animals are the Garuda, the tiger, the lion, the tusked elephant, the tuskless elephant, the rat, the Guinea pig, and the dragon (Ibid.).

Bowls which feature all 12 animals of the zodiac are not common (Bromberg 2019, 129). Within this collection, there are four zodiac or zodiac-adjacent bowls (N16688/21707, N16689/21707, N16690/21707, and N16691/21707). There are also two scent boxes, N16709/21707 and N16712/21707, which feature a rooster, the tenth animal in the zodiac. Each of the bowls feature eight animals in panels surrounding the bowl; however, only two (N16689/21707 and N16690/21707) follow the correct ordering. The third bowl, N16688/21707, displays the goat and the horse in reverse order. I believe this variation likely does not have a deeper meaning and was perhaps a decision made by the artisan.



Figure 5.12 (left): An example of the eight-paneled bowls. In this photo of N16689/21707, the visible animal is the snake. Photo taken by author with permission.

Figure 5.13 (right): The visible animal on this portion of N16688/21707 is the Naga, which is position to the right of the snake in the previous image. Photo taken by author with permission.

The fourth bowl, N16691/21707, is the most interesting of the four. The animals displayed are the rat, the crab, the tiger, the rabbit, the horse, the ox, the monkey, and the (tuskless) elephant. While the monkey is part of the Thai zodiac, it is the ninth animal, and one that does not regularly appear on these zodiac-related bowls. The crab and the elephant, however, do not fit into the Thai zodiac. I have not uncovered a reason for the crab's appearance on this bowl, but as for the elephant, I have considered it a nod to the Burmese zodiac calendar or possibly a filler animal. Since the other six animals on the bowl are part of the zodiac, it is my assumption that this piece was supposed to represent the zodiac in some way.



Figure 5.14: Close-up of the crab featured on N16691/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

Flowers, Plants, Fruits, and Vegetables

There are over 20 objects in the collection that feature floral patterns. Nearly every other object has floral borders or scrolling behind the focal point. Buddhism, which originated in India, carried floral motifs in art across Asia via the Silk Road (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 17). While most of the objects in the collection are described vaguely as having a “floral” motif or pattern, several mention specific plants which are depicted on the objects. These specified flowers, plants, and foods are grapes/grapevines, chrysanthemums, lotuses/lotus pads/palm lotuses, bamboo, acanthus leaves, peonies, sunflowers, and pumpkins.

Grapes and grapevines are a common motif seen in several cultures. This motif came from western cultures (presumably places like Rome and Egypt) and arrived in Asia much later due to a lack of viticultural activity in the region (Kim 2018, 107-108). In fact, the thirteen-

century Korean Confucian scholar Yi Kyu-Bo referred to grapes as “hanging jewels,” a symbol of the exotic culture unlike that in Asia (Ibid., 120-121). Grapes and grapevines became widely popular as an artistic motif following the introduction of grapes and grape-based wines in the region. Two objects display grape or grapevine motifs (N16718/21707 and N16720/21707).



Figure 5.15 (left): Grapes on a vine. Source: Pokorný

Figure 5.16 (right): A close-up of the grape and grapevine motif on object N16720/21707.
Photo taken by author with permission.

One meaning of this motif is abundance, much like in Greek and Roman cultures (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 53). This correlation may have originally come from depictions of the Greek deity Dionysus. Wine, in the ancient Greek world, was seen as a blessing a “divine gift of major importance” (Lissarrague 2014, 4). Dionysus was believed to be the first to create wine from grapes, making him the God of Wine. In Thailand, however, I doubt these ancient western beliefs have much to do with the theme’s prominence through history. As it came through the Silk Road, it is possible that the design’s popularity across the region is responsible for it appearing on Thai silver.

Grapes and grapevines serve a second purpose in these objects. When paired with other motifs, grapes and grapevines sometimes are used to fill in background space, acting as an enhancement to more important motifs (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 40). Knowing how some felt

about the imagery of grapes, it is unsurprising that the “hanging jewels” would later become included in other more symbolic motifs. Alternatively, grapevines could be a highly stylized form of the kranok pattern or correlated in some way.

Chrysanthemums are a popular flower all over Asia. Chrysanthemums, also called “mums,” are native to the Eurasian region, with 40 species that span across eastern Asia (Li et al. 2013). The plants grow in drier climates, such as “on mountain slopes or at the edge of forests” (Ibid.). They are said to have been cultivated in China for the last 3,000 years (Valder 1999, 281). It is possible that these flowers grew in popularity due to their abundance and ease of access for people across the region.

The flowers have many meanings, including life, rebirth, intellectual achievement, old age, retirement, and “a life of happy middle” (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 24-25). They were also considered the “gentleman of flowers,” heartier and less fragile than other flowers (Ibid., 24). They are associated with the sun due to their shape and color (Ibid., 25). Combined, there is a



Figure 5.17 (left): Chrysanthemums grown at the Mueng Pichai Chrysanthemum Farm in Thailand. Source: TheNationThailand.com

Figure 5.18 (right): Close-up of the chrysanthemums on the lid of container N16711/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

myriad of possibilities that could explain why chrysanthemums were used in Thai silver.

N16711/21707 is the only object in the collection displaying this motif.

Chrysanthemums also serve a practical purpose in Thailand. The dried flowers have been used for “various herbal remedies” and as a tea in Thailand and other regions in Asia (Varangrat et al. 2019). Non-native Hmong communities in Thailand have been studied for their use of exotic plants, such as the chrysanthemum, in their medicinal and food cultures (Ibid.). One such use of the chrysanthemum that has been recorded is in the creation of a clear soup tonic (Ibid.). For this tonic, herbs and chicken are boiled together and drunk to “[balance] elements, [enhance] immunity, and [boost] rapid recovery (Halberstein 2005).

Lotuses are a common motif throughout Southeast Asia. The plants can grow in a variety of climates and are native to Southern Asia, New Guinea, and Australia. Lotuses have a long history in East Asian motifs thanks to the migration of Buddhism along the Silk Road and are the national flower of India and Vietnam (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 17). In countries such as Thailand,



Figure 5.19 (left): Object N8071/11184 is both lotus-shaped and displays a lotus motif. Photo taken by author with permission.

Figure 5.20 (middle): A lotus flower growing in a pond. Source: Kruu

Figure 5.21 (right): Object N16715 A (as well as B, not pictured here) is described as having a lotus pod and animal head finial on the top as well as a fish and lotus pod motif along the sides. Photo taken by author with permission.

where Buddhism has played an important role in history and continues to be practiced today, the motif has become extremely popular. They can be seen on five objects (N8071/11184, N16696/21707, N16697/21707, and N16715 A-B/21707).

Lotuses, like other popular plants, have many meanings as an artistic motif. They represent the Buddha, Buddhism, and qualities associated with Buddhism. Other meanings include longevity, summer, marriage, purity, and elegance (Ibid., 27). Lotuses grow from muddy water into a “defiled” flower, representing purity and perfection; in Buddhism, this growth cycle is an analogy of the devout Buddhist who “[tries] to live a life of integrity and purity while living in a mundane world” (Ibid.). In addition, stylized eight-petaled lotuses represent the Eightfold Path found in the teachings of Buddha (Ibid.).

Like the chrysanthemum, lotuses also serve a medicinal purpose. The plant is believed to have curative powers (Ibid., 30). Lotuses are prescribed for a variety of poisonings, including alcohol and mushroom poisoning (Ibid.).

Bamboo is “one of the most socioeconomically important [plant] species” for Thailand (Rungnapur 1999). The area of Thailand forested by bamboo was estimated at approximately 100,855,598 rai⁵ in 2011 (over 1.7 billion square kilometers or 1 billion square miles) (Varaphan et al. 2021, 16). All parts of the bamboo are used in Thai culture. The stems (or culms) are used as a building material in huts and furniture as well as for basketry and paper (Samart 2014). The whole plant is used for creating fences and windbreaking or as landscaping decoration (Ibid.). Bamboo shoots are eaten in many different traditional foods (Ibid.). Bamboo leaves can be used as fodder for dairy cattle (Andriarimalala et al. 2019).

⁵ Rai is a land area measurement used in Thailand for measuring boundaries or ownership of land. One rai corresponds to 1,600 square meters or 16 acres.



Figure 5.22 (left): A small bamboo plant. Source: Cainta Plant Nursery



Figure 5.23 (right): Object N16702/21707 is the only object in the collection which features bamboo. The patina on this object makes it difficult to discern the iconography. Photo taken by author with permission.

While a symbolic meaning likely exists, I find it probable that bamboo is a popular motif because of its ubiquity in Thailand. For the object within this collection, bamboo is used alongside other florals. In Thailand, bamboo is not an uncommon site, and those wanting to fill in the background likely chose plants they were familiar with. Bamboo has found its way into a multitude of industries within Thailand and continues to be an important plant for building, eating, and farming. N16702/21707 is the only object from this collection which showcases bamboo.

All five of the objects which include acanthus leaf iconography in the collection are boxes (N16692/21707, N16705/21707, N16709/21707, N16710/21707, and N16712/21707). Four of



Figure 5.24 (left): Acanthus leaves growing along a fence. Source: Fine Gardening



Figure 5.25 (right): This scent box, N16710/21707, features acanthus leaves. Photo taken by author with permission.

these boxes (N16705/21707, N16709/21707, N16710/21707, and N16712/21707) are quite small in size and labeled as either betel nut or scent boxes (for exact measurements, see Appendix: Object Inventory). Likewise, all scent boxes in this collection feature floral motifs.

Though I have not found any specific meaning behind the acanthus motif across Asian cultures, I believe a meaning does not need to exist for the use of this imagery. In Roman culture, the motif symbolizes rebirth, immortality, and resurrection (Blazey 2020). It is also extremely common on architecture built in classic European styles (Ibid.).

Instead, the beauty of the flower itself may be the purpose of this motif. These scent boxes belonged to Thailand's royal court and only the best silversmiths were employed for this role. And like bamboo, acanthus is a common plant which grows across Thailand. It was a plant that people were familiar with and saw regularly.

The peony motif almost certainly came from Chinese influence. According to Bromberg, the peony is “a common Chinese flower symbolizing wealth and honor or the spring season” (Bromberg 2019, 136). Additionally, the peony is popular in China for its “bold size and colors”



Figure 5.26 (left): Peonies in a vase. Source: Cardillo

Figure 5.27 (right): Close-up of the peonies featured on Object 16708 A/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

(Bjaaland Welch 2008, 34). Peonies also symbolized wealth and the tree peony variety (*Paeonia arborea*) were considered the “king of flowers” (Ibid.). Only one object within the collection, N16708/21707, features the peony motif.

Sunflowers are considered a common motif for Thai silver objects (Bromberg 2019, 136). Despite this, I could not find a specific meaning for the use of this flower. Today, the Lop Buri Sunflower Fields, Pak Chong Sunflower Fields, the Jim Thompson Farm Sunflower Fields, and the Muak Lek Sunflower Fields, all sunflower farms in central Thailand, are famous for growing the flower (Juanillo).



Figure 5.28: Sunflowers at the Jim Thompson Sunflower Fields in Nakhon Ratchasima. Source: Juanillo

Figure 5.29: Close up of the sunflowers on Object N16709/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

I believe the object in the collection associated with sunflowers, N16709/21707, would be considered low relief (this box is the only object in the collection relating to sunflowers). Though the relief featured on this object is more three-dimensional than many of the other Bangkok style objects in the collection, it is still much flatter than the way Chiang Mai and Burmese styles are described. Objects created in low relief were common to the Bangkok style of silversmithing. Like other flowers I have already mentioned, if the sunflower was native to the areas around Bangkok, it is likely that these were used because they were simply familiar and well-liked.

In addition to grapes, the other food displayed in this collection is the pumpkin. Objects N16716 A-D/21707 are two pumpkin-shaped nielloware containers with vine motifs, enamel, and stem inlays. There is also a bowl, 16700 A/21707, which appears to display pumpkins. Due to the large number of seeds contained in the gourd, pumpkins are a symbol for fertility (Bjaaland Welch 2008, 52). In fact, the motif is quite ancient in Chinese artwork. Some folk-art scholars believe that a combination of the two original ancestors, a husband and wife in Chinese mythology responsible for creating mankind, and gourd worship “formed the two main traditional themes in Chinese folk art” (Xianrang and Yang 2000, 16).

In Thailand, pumpkins remain a popular food. The Thai or crookneck pumpkin (*Cucurbita moschata*) grows in tropical and subtropical climates (Ara et al. 2015). Pumpkins are used in both sweet and savory dishes. Their use as an artistic motif may relate to fertility, their abundance in Thailand, or a combination of the two.



Figure 5.30: Objects N16716 A-D/21707 are pumpkin shaped boxes. Photo taken by author with permission.



Figure 5.31: Object N16700 is an octagonal bowl that features pumpkins and vines. Photo taken by author with permission.

Storytelling

Storytelling designs serve as both artistic motifs and as a function for objects. In this collection, I consider pieces that display people to be potential storytelling objects. These items are N9213/13903, N9261/24913, N16698/21707, and N16707/21707.

N9213/13903 is an hourglass-shaped basket complete with six large panels on the bottom half of the hourglass and six small panels on the top half of the hourglass, each containing a seated figure with four arms in various positions. Though no definitive information exists on this piece, I believe the figure could be a deity from Buddhist or Hindu stories.

Both N9261/24913 and N16707/21707 depict scenes and characters from the *Ramakien*, the Thai version of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. The *Ramakien* is considered the most important piece of Thai literature (Cadet 1971, 19). It was originally written by the Indian poet Valmiki to perpetuate the monarch's origins and prove the Indian king's divinity (Ibid., 31).

To summarize, the story follows Phra Ram, an earthly incarnation of Phra Narai (an incarnation of the god Vishnu), as he attempts to defeat Thotsakan, the lord of the demons (and Thai version of the Hindu character Ravana), who has kidnapped his wife Nang



Figure 5.32: One of the six sides of N9213/13903. Photo taken by author with permission.



Figure 5.33: Close-up of N9261/24913. I believe the figure on the left is Nang Seeda and the figure on the right is Thotsakan. Photo taken by author with permission.

Seeda, an earthly incarnation of Lakshimi.

The epic is divided into three parts. The first part explains the origin of each main character, the second part follows the main drama of the story, and the third part acts as a sort of epilogue following the demise of Thotsakan.



Figure 5.34: Close-up of the lid of N16707/21707 featuring Phra Ram. Photo taken by author with permission.

In N9261/24913, I believe the scene depicted is of Thotsakan's abduction of Nang

Seeda. The bowl depicts what appears to be a demonic figure riding a horse into a group of people on one side. On the other side, the figure has picked up a woman from the group of people in the first scene and is riding in the opposite direction. This scene occurs early in the second part of the story and triggers the start of the main adventure of Phra Ram and his allies. N16707/21707, on the other hand, displays the epic battle between Phra Ram and Thotsakan during the finale of the second act. Thotsakan (wielding an axe) and Phra Ram (wielding a sword) are depicted along the walls of the container, as well as the latter appearing on the lid of the container.

As for Object N16698/21707, I believe this piece may showcase the age-old battle between snakes and birds, or the Naga and the Garuda⁶. In the catalog book, this box is described as displaying "Krut astride two water snakes." Upon further research, I discovered that Phra Krut is the name of Thailand's Garuda deity but was unable to find academic research on the figure.

⁶ This object was not available for analysis.

As I mentioned earlier, birds may represent the heavens while snakes the earthly realm. If this object is truly as described, it may be depicting the clash of heaven and earth. Unfortunately, this was one of the objects which could not be found in collections while I was doing this research.

Function

Each object in this collection served a function, even if that function was purely ornamental in nature. As mentioned earlier, some object functions corresponded to their artistic motifs. Below, I have identified the three main initial purposes that I believe these silver bowls and containers in the MPM collection were used for.

As Useable Objects

I believe many of these objects served practical purposes when they were originally created. Within this collection, there are clearly identified water or food bowls, betel nut containers, and scent boxes. There are many potential avenues for these objects but it is far easier to speculate rather than actually confirm through documentation (that may not exist) about other uses.

Bowls had multiple purposes in both ceremonial and everyday occurrences. In the household, they were used for drinking water, holding rice or other foods, or holding water for cleaning the fingertips (Bromberg 2019, 101). In this way, they functioned in much the same way bowls are used today in the average Thai household. For religious ceremonies, they were used to pour holy water over sacred images (Ibid.). In some cases, monks also used them for

their daily almsgiving. I believe that just about every bowl (except for N9261/24913) was used for one of these described purposes early in its life.

Common motifs that accompanied these bowls included vegetation, traditional Thai motifs (such as the kranok or krachong patterns), flora, fauna, and characters from the *Ramakien* (Ibid.). Often, these bowls did not have maker's marks, but sometimes depicted other inscriptions (such as indicating the celebration of a ceremony of wedding) (Ibid.). These two facts explain the overall lack of maker's marks on objects from this collection and may explain the matching sets I identified earlier.

Betel nut use was a popular habit for Thai people until the mid-20th century when it was banned by Thai government (Ibid., 75). Though the habit further lost popularity as people began to view the practice as unhygienic, populations across Asia continue chewing betel nut today (Ibid., Sui and Lacey 2015). Betel nut is a mind-altering substance that gives off a buzz “equivalent to six cups of coffee” and can be consumed in a variety of ways (Sui and Lacey 2015). While preparations of the substance vary across cultures, one form is to pack a mixture of lime paste (calcium hydroxide mixed with water), shaved areca nut, and flavorings into a betel leaf; this form is called a quid (Ibid.).



Figure 5.35: Betel leaves (left), areca nuts (middle), and lime paste (right) are the primary ingredients for the basic quid.

Source: Abdurajak

Betel sets were a common display of rank for the Thai upper class. The sets included lidded containers for shaved areca (betel) nuts, a round bowl for mixing ingredients, a lidded container for the lime paste, a cone-shaped holder to hold rolled betel quid, a cutter, and a footed

tray which housed the other containers (Bromberg 2019, 77). At its height of popularity, it was customary for betel set-owners to offer betel to their guests (Ibid., 75).

In a similar vein, scent boxes also belonged, primarily, to the upper class. In France, scent boxes, or “smelling boxes,” held a sponge or fabric soaked in an alcohol or vinegar-based fragrance and replaced 17th and 18th century pomanders (Oatman-Stanford 2016). The scents were sniffed for medicinal purposes and to temporarily relieve the odor of dirty public areas (Ibid.). While I cannot confirm with certainty that Thai royalty used these boxes in the same way, it is likely that the scent boxes served a similar purpose. In other parts of Southeast Asia, namely Laos and Vietnam, France was a colonial presence, so even if they did not colonize Thailand, their influence could have taken hold there.



Figure 5.36 (left): A 17th century French pomander. Source: Victoria & Albert Museum

Figure 5.37 (right): Object N16705/21707 is a scent box featuring acanthus leaves. Photo taken by author with permission.

As Ceremonial Pieces

There are a few pieces within the collection which served known (and unknown) ceremonial purposes. These objects were not used for everyday actions and were likely made

specifically for this purpose. The objects which certainly had ceremonial purposes include N16692/21707, N16693/21707, and N16716 A-D/21707. I believe the relic box N16698/21707, may have also served a ceremonial purpose, but no additional information is available for this piece.

The box N16692/21707 provides the least ceremonial information of the three. The catalog book describes this container as being a part of the *fo yuan* (“holy man”) sacrifice fire. Sacrificial fire may refer to Vedic New Year’s rituals which stress the dependence between gods and humans (Priyawat 1990, 35). In these Thai Brahmanic rites, fire is used in the form of lit candles (Ibid., 36). The Hindu god Agni, “the fire into which the oblations are poured” whom the other gods sit around to receive their share of the sacrifice, is not a dominant figure in Thai iterations of these ceremonies (Ibid.). Unfortunately, I could not locate research about other interpretations of the sacrifice fire box.

N16693/21707 is described as a libation cup used for the consecration of holy water in various festivals and ceremonies. Holy water, also called lustral or mantra water, is used in many Thai Buddhist rituals (Olson 1991, 75). To prepare holy water, a monk will light candles (usually yellow or



Figure 5.38: Object N16692/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.



Figure 5.39: N16693/21707 is a libation cup. Photo taken by author with permission.

orange-colored) and stick them to the rim or lid of a water vessel (Ibid., 76). Consecration occurs through a chant before wax from one of the candles is dropped into the water and the candle is snuffed out in the water (Ibid.). Holy water can be used to consecrate new temples or dispel happiness and good fortune during Songkran, the Thai New Year's celebration. It is also used during cremation ceremonies.

The nielloware pumpkin boxes (N16716 A-D/21707; see Figure 5.30) also initially served a ceremonial purpose. According to the MPM's documentation, the pumpkin boxes were formerly used in Tonsura (Tonsure) ceremonies before being repurposed as scent boxes. This ceremony once served as a child's initiation to monkhood and was the second most expensive ceremony (after funerals) in Thai culture (Van Esterik and Van Esterik 1980, 63-64). It was once part of the ten rites, or auspicious ceremonies, important in each person's life (Gerini 1895, 2-3). Tonsure ceremonies were thought to shield children from harm (Pichaya 2014). During the ceremony, the child's hair, twisted into a topknot on top of their head, was cut in the presence of a monk (Gerini 1895, 17). Both Buddhist monks and Hindu Brahmans had roles in the ceremony (McGill 2009, 30).

There were all kinds of supernatural beliefs surrounding the Tonsure ritual. First, it was thought best to perform this ceremony while the child was 9, 11, 13, or 15 (9 or 11 were the preferred ages) and performing the ceremony on girls who had already reached puberty was thought to be inauspicious, plaguing both the child and her parents with evil (Gerini 1895, 30-32). After the child reached the "proper age," an expert in divination was called to select an auspicious date and time for the ceremony to be held based on the child's birth chart; it was better for the actual haircutting part of the ceremony to be performed on an odd day of the week and each day had specific meanings attached to it (Ibid., 20-35).

This ceremony was so important, in fact, that families who could not afford extravagant private ceremonies could opt for government-performed events instead (Ibid., 83). These ceremonies were set on a pre-fixed date and all children in the region (both boys and girls) would undergo the ceremony with appointed government-appointed Brahmans and receive “khuán money,” a silver coin given to raise the child’s prosperity and good fortune in lieu of the gifts received from grandiose ceremonies (Ibid., 44-83).

The first record of this ceremony in Thailand was that of Prince Phra Ong in 1632 C.E. (Pichaya 2014). The last royal Tonsure ceremony was for Princess Sudasirj Sodbha, a daughter of Prince Chudadhuj Dharadilok (son of Rama V) and occurred prior to the country’s 1932 revolution (Ibid.). Today, this ceremony is a dying tradition. It is still performed for some boys in rural towns, but does not carry the same weight it once held (World Trade Press 2010).

As Keepsakes or Status & Identity Symbols

For many of these objects, they eventually transitioned from their initial purpose to become keepsakes. This change in purpose is demonstrated through the difference in the proposed time period of the object and the date of acquisition by Dr. Schapiro, as well as the additional provenance information attached to some of the objects. For example, the libation cup, N16693/21707, is documented as being created sometime during the mid-18th century. It did not become a keepsake for Schapiro until at least 1931 and was given to him by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab. There is at least an 80-year age gap between the proposed date of creation and the time it came into Schapiro’s possession.

Thailand had many royal court members and they employed silversmiths to produce specially made goods. Additionally, it was not uncommon for non-Thai people to become honorary princes, as was the case with Schapiro. As I explained with dating differences, I think these goods originally had a purpose for which they were created but became keepsakes, family heirlooms, or status symbols over time. While the pieces may have lost their original intent, owning a piece of royal silver was nonetheless a show of status, if not outright royal ties.

Had these objects not come under the possession of Dr. Schapiro and his widowed wife and son, their “social lives” could have been completely different. Following the decrease in demand for royal goods almost immediately after Schapiro’s death, these objects could have sharply lost value, becoming everyday goods to be used in the average household. In this scenario, they likely would have been retired to their shelves, kept as mementos of a previous era, or become family heirlooms, stored away in a box hidden from view. On the other hand, these objects could have been sold as decoration, perhaps falsely labeled as Chinese Export Silver, and eventually ended up in private collections. Alternatively, the pieces may have never seen the light of day in their current form again, eventually being melted down to form new pieces with the changing trends.

Mystery Objects

N9213/13903 may be the most mysterious object within this collection. The shape, a handled basket, is something I have not seen in any other object from museums, collectors, or archival images. During my early days of research, I sent emails to various Thai anthropologists to see if anyone may have any better answers for me than those I was finding in western literature. After many unsuccessful emails, I came in contact with Udomluck Hoontrakul and Pipad Krajaejun, two professors at Thammasat University in Thailand. They assisted me by providing additional information on this object by reaching out to contacts of their own; a family of silversmith artisans and a shop owner specializing in goods for tourists.



Figure 5.40: N9213/13903, viewed from a different angle than Figure 5.32. Photo taken by author with permission.

The object may not, in fact, be of Thai or Burmese origin, as the catalog book suggests. Rather, this object is likely from Laos based on the style and motif displayed (Udomluck 2021). It is an object which was probably made as a souvenir for a tourist, served no obvious function, and was not common in Thai (or Southeast Asian in general) culture (Ibid.). Like many of the objects in this collection, this basket was likely of a high percentage of silver (90% or more) and was probably owned by someone who was rich or influential (Ibid.). Unfortunately, I was unable to gain additional information explaining how the motif appeared to be of Lao origin. Even in my own research on Lao silver, also a little-studied area, nothing was found to shed light on the origin of this piece. It is truly quite a unique piece was probably commissioned by the original owner (whether this was Miss Rebecca Black or if it was owned by someone before coming into

her possession is unknown). In Gell's terms, the originally commissioner would be considered a patron (Gell 1998).

I also asked Ms. Udomluck and Mr. Pipad about the crab imagery found on the unusual zodiac bowl, N16691/21707 (see Figure 5.14). Like the silver basket, this object may have been created by Lao craftsmen since crabs are not common in Thai imagery and Lao styles appeared to be present on the bowl (Udomluck 2021). In Lao textiles, crabs represent a "rich harvest," so this likely carries over to other forms of art (Tran 2014). As mentioned earlier, I identified this object as potentially being part of a set including N16686/21707, N16690/21707, and N16697/21707. If these can be considered a set, it could potentially mean that none of these objects listed previously are from Thai silversmiths, but from Lao silversmiths instead. Their origin could be from Laos, but they could also be from Lao silversmiths living in Thailand. They could have been gifts officially received from Lao government or pieces which wealthy Thai people commissioned personally.

Another mystery object is likely the oldest piece in the collection. This object is the coconut shell bowl, N16684 A/21707. It is estimated to have been created in the 16th century and its inner lining bowl is described as "silver coated copper." This piece, like the basket, is a unique bowl which I have not seen from other institutions. However, its function is far less mysterious, as its use was likely similar to that of other bowls in the collection.



Figure 5.41: N16684 A/21707. Photo taken by author with permission.

Bowls like these were also created during the 19th century in China, according to online antiquity sellers such as Oriental Antiques and 1st

Dibs (“Chinese Carved Coconut Bowl”; “Chinese Carved Coconut Bowl”). These bowls also featured metal linings, though only some appear to have used silver. However, because the Thai bowl was created three centuries earlier than the Chinese ones, it is unlikely that the Chinese ones were the original influence, but may, in fact, have been influenced by Thai craftsmen. Alternatively, the museum documentation surrounding this bowl may be incorrect and it may be of Chinese origin. Due to the biodegradable nature of a material such as coconut shell, it is likely that many of these early bowls no longer exist or are vastly deteriorated from their original form. Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, the estimated date may be inaccurate. Because of these factors, it is difficult to say with certainty which region utilized the method first.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Future Research, and Summary

Over the past year, my research into the history, methods, motifs, and functions of Thai royal silver has brought me closer to understanding the Thai Royal silver collection which is housed at the MPM. Throughout the scope of this thesis, I searched for answers to the following questions:

1. How did the silver industry begin and how has it evolved throughout the years?
2. How and why are certain decorative and symbolic motifs used on Thai silver vessels?
 - a. Are motifs reserved for specific functions? Is there a correlation between the motif used and the function of the object?
3. Where did the motifs originate and how have they evolved?

My research has also led me to further questions and considerations that I will be discussing in this chapter. By and large, what I have presented is by no means a complete narrative of the royal silver industry in Thailand, but it is a robust attempt that will hopefully inspire future projects.

Conclusion

One immediate conclusion I have come to accept at the close of this research is that it may be impossible to discover the true function of each object within the MPM's collection. I have outlined a variety of uses I believe the objects had (with plenty of research to validate my

own thoughts) but uncovering the use of each individual vessel through its life would be an impossible task.

Though I do not believe the imagery on each object was necessarily related to the use of the object, I do believe this is the case with the scent boxes. Each scent box in the collection displays floral imagery. These scent boxes were probably used in a similar fashion to the way they were used by the upper echelons in France: to temporarily relieve the undesirable smells of public city dwellings. I have not come across any research speculating what the scents might have been in these Thai scent boxes, but could they not be the flowers represented on the outside of the boxes and other sweet-smelling flora? To answer this question, a research study into the popular scents of 19th and 20th century Thai elites would need to be conducted (perhaps a future research topic for another eager researcher).

In the case of why certain motifs were utilized over others, I think the availability of source material was a big factor for this choice. It would seem illogical for silversmiths, people who probably could not afford far away travels, to choose subject matter that they did not have regular contact with. To replicate motifs across vessels, having an in-depth knowledge of how to represent elephants, peonies, or birds, for example, would require having seen the subjects regularly and to be able to recall them from memory (or have anatomically accurate illustrations available) if need be. Of course, there would be the exception where wealthy people might want commissions featuring a specific motif that the silversmith might not have been familiar with, resulting in imagery featuring plants or animals that were rare or completely absent in the Thai landscape. While this probably happened, foreign motifs (nothing reaching beyond other Southeast Asian countries) are not featured in this collection, so there is no use in speculating how these symbols could have been achieved.

On a more general scale, the process of mastering this skill seems no easy feat. What I do know about today's silversmiths is that few remain using these traditional methods outlined in Chapter 4. Factories to mass-produce silver goods for tourists (and other buyers) have largely replaced these traditional artisans who cannot keep large stocks for shoppers to browse. Today, clean storefronts in major cities offer "contemporary handcrafted" goods from artisans with no information on ethical business practices. The skill is dying because of poor working conditions and low wages; young people no longer wish to follow this path when they can find better jobs in more modern industries (Bromberg 2019, 41).

This research also serves as a useable document for the MPM as they move forward with the creation of a new building and changing vision for the space: the intersection of nature and culture. With this idea in mind, many aspects of my research touch upon this intersection. It is fascinating how Thai society through time has chosen to interact with silver, a material which comes from the natural world but in places outside of Thailand.

This collection is overwhelmingly dominated by floral and vegetal motifs. Each of these plants holds a special meaning within Thai history and culture and were deliberately chosen for their related symbolism of luck, wealth, health, or fertility. Additionally, it is likely that the silversmiths involved may have turned down pieces which utilized motifs symbolizing bad luck, death, or other unpleasant occurrences. As a superstitious society, I find this idea likely but have not found any supporting or negating evidence.

If nothing else, my research serves as some much-needed context for a collection which is currently on display in a limited fashion. The pieces on exhibit were chosen for their aesthetic value and almost no other information can be gleaned from their labels. Other ethnographic materials in the MPM are displayed in situ, showing the ways that they may have been used in

their original contexts. To contrast, the current Thai exhibit is merely a large brightly colored case with stands of different heights on which the objects have been placed. My contextual research here can assist the MPM in adding additional information to the labels of a future exhibit, should they choose to develop another Thai exhibit in the new museum.

As I mentioned previously, some of these objects did not originate in Thailand, yet they are displayed alongside

silver, wood, and ceramic works from the country. This information provides distinction between silver objects from countries in Southeast Asia. If the choice is to keep cases from each country separate, the miscategorized objects should be placed with their appropriate countries. However, I think it is a good idea to display them together, as artistic influence moved in and out of Thailand, and across other parts of Southeast, South, and East Asia. Objects from the different silversmithing hubs could be displayed together with adjoining labels explaining the visual differences of each.

Finally, the royal history of these pieces should be told. Their royal provenance remains an important part of their associated object biographies, adds value to the collection, and explains significance to the public. Not only were these pieces once owned by royalty, but Dr. Schapiro



Figure 6.1: Me working with the silver collection on exhibit. The background showcases how the exhibit is currently displayed. Photo used with MPM permission.

(and the other donors) make these relevant to Milwaukee and Wisconsin's history as a cultural center.

Unanswered Questions, Future Research Potential, and Difficulties

This thesis did not come without its fair share of questions that surfaced during the research and writing phases. Below, I've listed the questions that I was not able to answer throughout this process:

- How did the donors other than Dr. Schapiro come into possession of the objects they are credited with donating?
- Who became silversmiths? What was the process of becoming a silversmith?
- How were silversmithing facilities organized? Are they organized the same way today?
- Did woodworkers switch mediums to silver and other metalsmithing, or were these smiths independent of each other?
- What happened to the Royal Siamese Archaeological Museum? Who was Ma. Gen. PLE Warring, Advisor Ministry Interior?

At the close of this research, I do not feel as though I was able to thoroughly answer one of the questions which I originally outlined. I had originally envisioned discussing the evolution of designs by comparing pieces from different time periods against each other. However, I could not find enough pieces from other institutions with clearly defined dates and of comparable skill to be able to accomplish this task. I believe this task would be better suited for someone with the ability to travel to Thailand, visit the museums, and talk to the silversmiths, gaining that hands-on approach which I could not fulfill here.

I also ran into problems where the only available sources for information were not academic sources; they may have been nonprofit organizations, blog posts, or passion-project websites from single authors. While the information from these sources may have answered my questions, I cannot assume they are 100% correct or without fault. This problem included information about Lao silver objects, their motifs, and how to tell them apart from Thai silver goods. I really hoped to gain insights on some of the mystery objects I covered in the previous chapter, but enough information to make conclusions does not exist (or at least is not readily available or in English).

As I considered all the potential meanings for all the flowers and animals portrayed in these objects, it was clear that no answer was as straight forward as it seemed. I felt many times that I had come to some sort of epiphany over one topic or another only for there to be no evidence to support or refute my ideas. Instead, many of my thoughts sat in a grey area of neither correct nor incorrect.

When I tried to find some information to fill in the gap of the organization of workshops, including their division of labor and who was involved with the workshop, the results that came back to me were slim. I could not find almost any historical information about the producers, only the products they were involved with. Ms. Udomluck provided me with a book PDF (เครื่องเงิน เครื่องทอง เครื่องถม เครื่องลงยา และเครื่องถมปัทม์ which I think translates to something like *Silverware, Goldware, and Nielloware*), a 1994 work published by the Mit Siam Publishing House on behalf of the Ministry of Culture's Fine Arts Department. Unfortunately, since the book was fully in Thai, there was little I could glean from its contents; for future researchers, having this book translated may be of great help in filling in the gaps.

One thing that I have not fully explored in this thesis, but which has been weighing on my mind, is in regard to the donations from the other donors. We know that a majority of the collection I have examined here was collected by Dr. Louis Schapiro during his stint as Medical Advisor of Public Health for the Siamese government with some accompanying provenance information. However, how the three objects fell into the hands of Grace C. Vogel (Mrs. Guido Vogel), her daughter in law Virginia Kingswood Booth Vogel (Mrs. William Vogel), and Elizabeth M. Black was a mystery that I could not solve. These families were collectors of decorative arts who helped to establish the Museum's collections, but I could find no record of their (assumed) time in Thailand.

Despite the niche nature of this topic, the research completed here can be a very valuable resource for people who wish to explain Thai silverware further. It stands alone as a project on a topic that sadly does not have enough academic research available to English-speaking audiences. This research, likewise, can integrate into other types of studies, such as gift giving practices in royal courts; royal courts more generally; silver in Thailand, Southeast Asia, or Asia; nonwestern art history; minor arts of Thailand; and silver goods as commodities.

As I have mentioned numerous times, the research on this topic is lacking, both in English and in other languages. Some books I initially planned on utilizing were only available in Thai, their contents lost to me. Had the time and resources been available, I could have potentially hired someone to translate these books for me. In the future, it would be helpful for anyone interested in exploring this topic further to be proficient in the Thai language, both to read additional texts, and to talk to silversmiths, professors, and others in Thailand. Unfortunately, a global pandemic did not allow me to travel to Thailand for personal interviews, and even if it did, I would have needed a translator during my travels.

I additionally ran into several dead ends. For example, proving Dr. Schapiro's Costa Rican squirrel donation to the Milwaukee County Zoo was something I hoped to do, both as a fun aside and for the archival team at George Washington University who first told me this information. I followed what I could and ended up reviewing records from the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, but the yearly report did not provide a donor name to the Costa Rican squirrel. Also, after sending out dozens of emails to view museum collections at other institutions and to anthropologists in Thailand, my efforts were in vain, my emails unanswered. I do not find this event surprising, as emails get lost often and I sincerely doubt I am the only one who has experienced this, but it was disappointing all the same.

Summary

Thai silver, and other forms of Thai art, was heavily influenced by people and arts outside of Thailand. Throughout Thailand's tumultuous history, there were landgrabs by Burmese armies, attempts at colonization by western forces, and waves of immigrants from China, Laos, and Burma. With each event, artistic influence flowed back and forth between the foreign region and Thai people. While Thailand was never colonized by western forces, foreign influence is abundant in Thai culture and history. Silver brought in from South and Central America was utilized to create objects for royalty and foreign dignitaries since naturally occurring silver was hard to come by in the region.

Royal silver, and expensive luxury goods overall, became less popular during the early to mid-20th century. A 1929 economic depression in Thailand, a 1932 coup d'état ending the absolute monarchy, and being cut off from the rest of the world during World War II were some of the factors affecting the shift in demand.

During Dr. Schapiro's brief stay in Thailand (1931-1932), he worked as a medical advisor for Thailand's royal family. Though his time was cut short by his untimely death, Schapiro was heralded as an honorary prince. He received many gifts during his months of service which would later be brought to the United States by his widow.

Today, silversmithing is a dying art in Thailand. Some of the only remaining areas that keep the tradition alive are located in the northern region of the country. In Chiang Mai, a shopping district and temple exist to show fascinated onlookers the old way of creating Thai silver by hand. In the Chiang Rai and Phayao provinces, ethnic Mien communities continue to create their own form of Thai silver items

There are nine main techniques for creating works of art on silver sheets and vessels. Additionally, the Indian style of Bidri was an influence for at least one object within the MPM collection. Due to the difficulty involved in creating these unique works, it was common for a silversmith to master one technique or motif style and create many objects in this likeness rather than mastering different motifs and styles. Other mediums that display some of the same motifs in Thai crafts include woodwork and textiles.

The pieces from the MPM collection I chose to study totaled 45 objects. These vessels were made up of bowls and containers predominantly with the outlier N9213/13909. Of the 45 vessels, 41 were associated with donations by Drs. Louis and Mark Schapiro, one from Mrs. Guido C. Vogel, one from Mrs. William M. J. Vogel, one from Miss Elizabeth M. Black, and one which was found in storage without an associated accession number. Other objects from Dr. Schapiro's collection, including jewelry and other personal adornments, were used to provide supplemental information on artistic techniques and ethnic groups.

Of these objects, three main motifs were represented: floral/vegetal motifs, animal motifs, and storytelling motifs. The most popular of these motifs was the floral/vegetal category. Some of these plants, such as grapes and peonies, served purely symbolic purposes. Others, including chrysanthemums, had both symbolic and practical purposes in Thai culture. On the other hand, some plants, such as bamboo and acanthus, did not seem to have a symbolic meaning at all. In all cases, these plants were not uncommon sights in Thailand and were probably used because many examples of the plants grew organically throughout Thailand, whether they were native or non-native species.

The animals featured in this collection, with the exception of the crab and peacock, had obvious ties to Thai culture. Within this collection, bowls featuring elephants and featuring zodiac animals were the most common animal motifs. Elephants served a myriad of symbolic and practical purposes throughout Thai culture and history, including as transportation and for warfare, as well as representing wisdom, strength, and leadership, among other positive traits. Elephants are the official animal of Thailand and continue to be used to drive tourism.

Snakes and birds were other common animal motifs, two animals which were at odds with each other in Thai mythology. Snakes and the Naga, a snakelike creature in mythology, represent all things occurring on the earthly realm. Birds and the Garuda, a bird birdlike creature in mythology, represent the skies and the heavens. The battle of the two figures, the Naga and the Garuda, is a common story in Thai mythology. Only one of the objects in the collection, N16698/21707, depicted the battle of the two creatures, but since it could not be located in the Museum, I chose to refrain from including this from the storytelling motif section.

The final motif I discussed was the storytelling motif. The remaining objects which did not fall into one of the other two categories were grouped here. These objects included depictions

of people. The one definitive story I was able to uncover related depictions of was the *Ramakien*, Thailand's version of the Indian *Ramayana*. The objects, N9261/24913 and N16707/21707, featured characters and events during the second act of the epic. The other object categorized in this motif, N9213/13903, could depict a story of a deity, but I was unable to uncover the meaning.

For defining functions of these pieces, it was best to speculate based on similar pieces rather than attempt to find exact functions for each piece. These were useable objects, objects used in ceremonial or religious purposes, and keepsakes or status symbols. For most of the collection, these objects began as useable objects. They were scent boxes, betel containers, and bowls used for eating, drinking, pouring holy water, and almsgiving. Ceremonial pieces, too, had their own function. They played roles in marriages, funerals, and holidays. Often, they were owned by monks and were only used for the specific purpose they were designated for, such as pouring holy water of the Buddha. Over time, these objects, which were initially commissioned by the royal family and their associates, became keepsakes and status symbols for new generations of the royal family and foreign dignitaries, but over time, this tradition has changed.

The time between the objects' speculated creation date and the time they came into the hands of Dr. Schapiro (and the other associated donors) can be quite long (in some case 50 to 100 or more years), so they were not made specifically for Dr. Schapiro, but rather were gifted to him, likely for his medical services. This history from formation to recorded provenance in Thailand to museum collection in Wisconsin is not well documented but very similar to many objects that reside in museums.

Though I have highlighted what I could through the scope of this research, there is still much to be learned about Thai silverware through history. These collection objects largely

represent what is considered royal silver, but in painting a complete picture of Thai silver, other questions would need to be considered. For example, was it common for lower class families to own silver? How did they use it? It is my hope that the research and avenues provided here can inspire others to study these niche topics even when absolutes are not assured.

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Appendix A: Object Inventory

H17435/21870

Bowl



Time Period: 1870-1900

Method of Accession: Found in storage

Name Associated: N/A

Date of Entry: N/A

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: 5.5 cm ht.; 11.0 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Deep repousse, flower + vine pattern”

Maker: N/A

N8071/11184

Footed Bowl



Time Period: N/A

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Mrs. Guido C. Vogel

Date of Entry: N/A

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: 12.5 cm ht.; 20.0 cm dia. at top; 12.5 cm dia. at foot

Catalog Description of Object: “Silver dish, repousse + lacquer, lotus flower motif

Bidri work, damascened silver”

Maker: N/A

N9213/13903

Vase of Basket



Time Period: N/A

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Miss Elizabeth M. Black

Date of Entry: N/A

Reported Provenience: Burma

Size: 11.0 cm ht. (excluding handle); 16.5 cm ht. (including handle); 9.1 cm max. dia.; 5.6 cm
dia. at foot

Catalog Description of Object: "Silver handled vase"

Maker: N/A

N9261/24913

Bowl





Time Period: 1875-1900

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Mrs. William M. J. Vogel

Date of Entry: N/A

Reported Provenience: Burma

Size: 17.0 cm ht.; 26.6 cm dia. at top; 20.1 cm dia. at bottom

Catalog Description of Object: N/A

Maker: N/A

Comment: Large insignia depicts a peacock with open feathers on bottom; item also labelled as N24787; catalog book refers to this item as N24788

N16684/21707

Two Bowls



Time Period: 16th Century

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A: 5.7 cm ht.; 11.4 cm dia. at top; 6.0 cm dia. at foot

Catalog Description of Object: “Floral relief carved coconut shell with inset bottoms- silver coated copper liners”

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16684 B not available for analysis

N16685/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha⁷, Thailand

Size: 5.8 cm ht.; 11.2 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with repousse floral design, sawtooth design around rim and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

⁷ The commonly used spelling of this city is “Ayutthaya,” but the MPM catalog books spell it as “Ayuddha.”

N16686/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.8 cm ht.; 11.2 cm. dia.

Catalog Description of Object: "Round bowl with repousse elephant and floral design with floral border design around rim + base

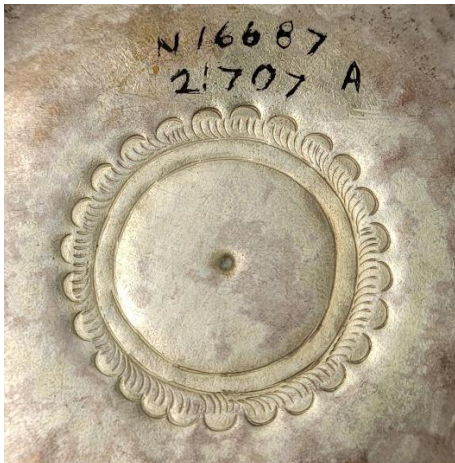
Period mark underfoot"

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

N16687/21707

Two Bowls



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: *A & B*: 5.7 cm ht.; 11.0 cm dia.

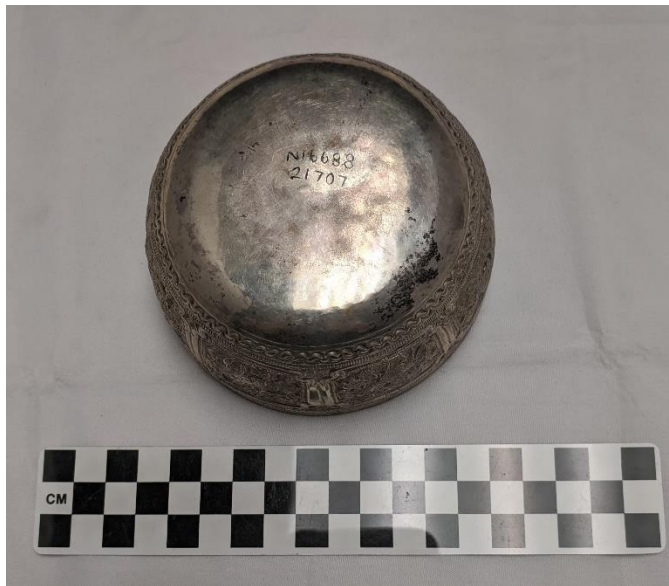
Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowls with repousse stylized floral design, with floral scroll border around rim (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16687 A and B display matching engraved insignias on bottom

N16688/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.7 cm ht.; 11.0 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with eight repousse decorative panels of animated zodiac designs with leaf pattern border around rim and wave pattern around base”

Maker: N/A

N16689/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.6 cm ht.; 10.1 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with eight repousse decorative panels of animated zodiac designs, with leaf pattern border around rim and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

N16690/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.4 cm ht.; 10.2 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with eight repousse decorative panels of animated zodiac design with wave border around rime and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

N16691/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.3 cm ht.; 10.9 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with eight repousse decorative panels of animated zodiac design with wave pattern border around rim and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

N16692/21707

Box



Time Period: 1758-1762

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: A (base): 6.7 cm ht.; 10.0 cm dia. at top; 11.7 cm dia. at flared bottom

B (lid): 8.0 cm ht.; Approx. 12.6 cm dia. at flared top; 10.5 cm dia. at bottom

Total height: 10.3 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Round silver ceremonial covered box with massive repousse design of acanthus leaves, religious motives etc. Used for "fo'an" sacrifice fire"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16692 A has a large, engraved insignia on bottom; "fo'an" is the phonetic spelling of "fo yuan" meaning "holy man"

N16693/21707

Libation Cup



Time Period: Middle 18th Century

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 8.6 cm ht.; 8.4 cm dia. at top; 5.7 cm dia. at bottom

Catalog Description of Object: “Hand crafted hexagonal form with floral and butterfly repousse decorative panels - used for consecration of Holy Water in Coronation, Cremation, New Year's festivals and Con Parion”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Sticker on bottom reads "MOA 13"; "Con Parion" is the phonetic spelling of "sala kan parian" referring to the largest part of a Thai temple – this may be referring to the consecration of a temple

N16694/21707

Betel Box



Time Period: 18th Century

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: A (base): 3.3 cm ht.; 6.0 cm max. dia.; 2.6 cm min. dia.

B (lid): 2.8 cm ht.; 6.2 cm max. dia.; 3.0 cm min. dia.

Total height: 5.6 cm

Catalog Description of Object: “Heavy silver with domed top - Body blackened with dull enamel design on dome”

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16694 A has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SBI 15;"

I believe "MMS" refers to Mark M. Schapiro or Matilde Meye Schapiro but have yet to uncover the meaning of "SBI" in these stickers. These were probably used as some form of private inventory.

N16695/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.4 cm ht.; 10.8 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with repousse floral design, with scalloped border design around rim and base”

Maker: N/A

N16696/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.3 cm ht.; 10.9 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with repousse elephant design with feather palm leaves and floral and lotus pads - beaded border design around rime and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Sticker on bottom reads "MOA 14"; engraved insignia on bottom

N16697/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 5.7 cm ht.; 11.0 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Round bowl with repousse elephant design with palm and lotus leaves, beaded border design around rim and base (period mark underfoot)”

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

N16698/21707

Relic Box

Time Period: Middle 18th Century

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: N/A

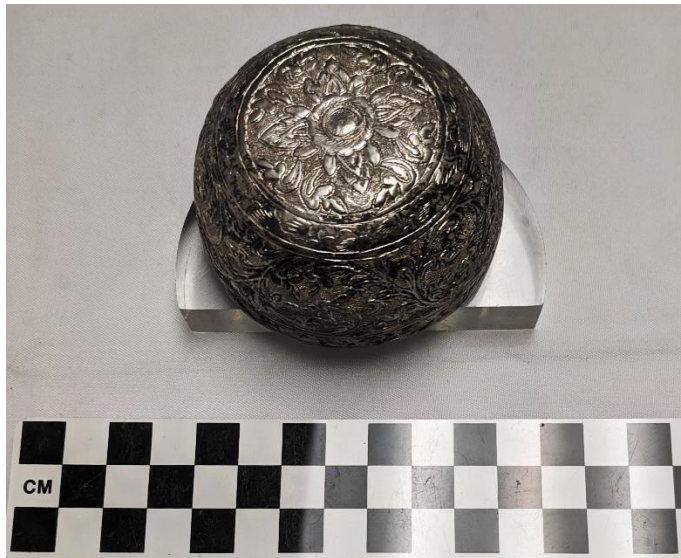
Catalog Description of Object: "Remodeled into humidior-carved with design of Krut astride two water snakes- sides flowers and leaves"

Maker: N/A

Comment: Phaya Krut is the name of the Garuda deity in Thai folklore; object not available for analysis

N16699/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 3.7 cm ht.; 7.0 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Repousse floral and leaf scroll design around bowl and underfoot- with floral scroll banded border around rim and base”

Maker: N/A

N16700/21707

Two Bowls



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: N/A

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: *A* (smaller bowl): 3.0 cm ht.; 6.1 cm dia.

B (larger bowl): 3.2 cm ht.; 6.5 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: “Nest of 2 octagon form bowls with repousse floral decorated panels, with character marks underfoot”

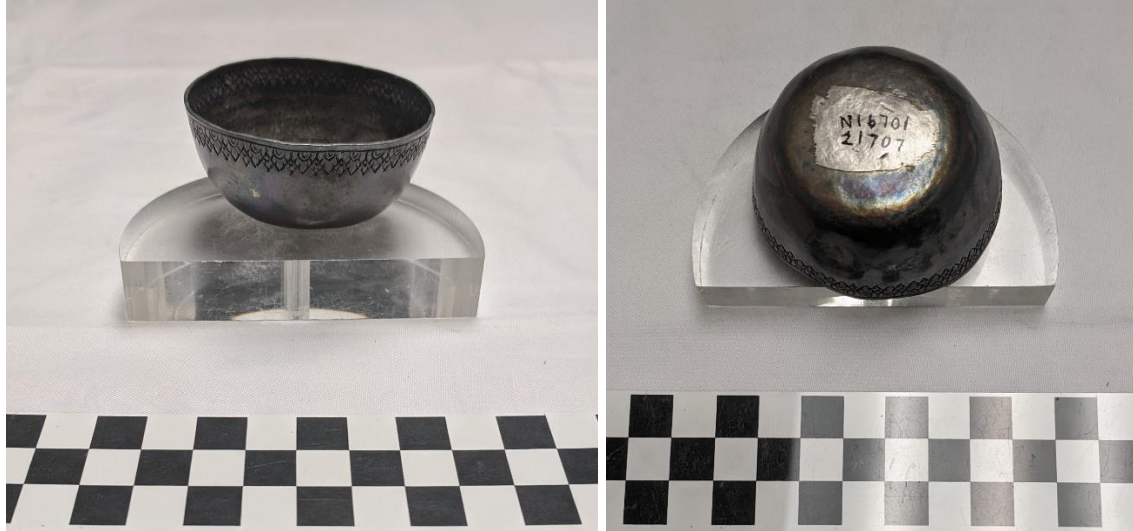
Maker: N/A

Comment: N16700 *A* has one Chinese stamp on bottom which is unreadable; sticker on bottom reads "MOA 15"

N16700 *B* has two Chinese stamps on bottom which are unreadable

N16701/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

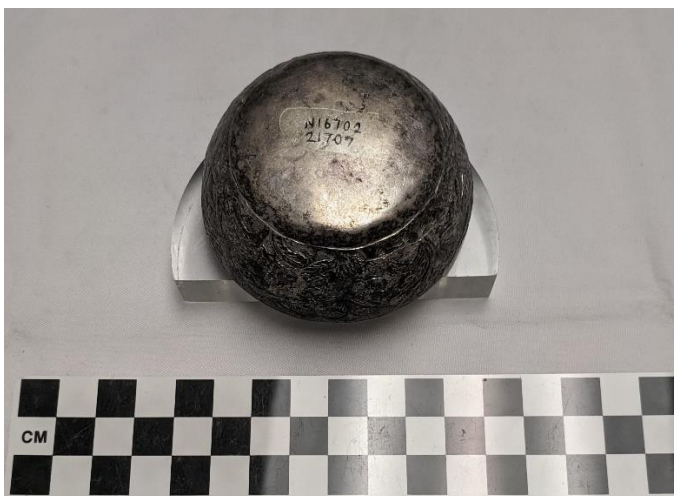
Size: 2.7 cm ht.; 5.8 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: "Round bowl with repousse stylized floral border around rim"

Maker: N/A

N16702/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

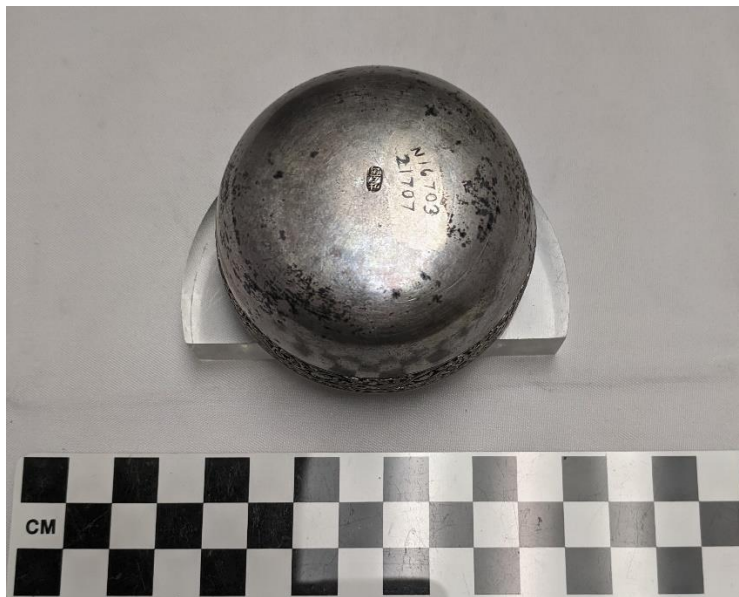
Size: 3.2 cm ht.; 7.0 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: "Round bowl with landscape of oriental trees, bamboo shoots, flowers, leaves, etc."

Maker: N/A

N16703/21707

Bowl



Time Period: 1733-1809

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Ayuddha, Thailand

Size: 3.3 cm ht.; 6.6 cm dia.

Catalog Description of Object: "Round bowl with floral scroll and bird design band- and flower and leaf border rim

Character mark underfoot"

Maker: Yue He

Comment: One Chinese stamp on bottom indicating the maker

N16704/21707

Box



Time Period: 1830's

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience:

Size: A (base): 3.8 cm ht.; 12.4 cm max. dia.; 7.1 cm min. dia.

B (lid): 2.7 cm ht.; 12.8 cm max. dia.; 7.7 cm min. dia.

Total height: 5.6 cm

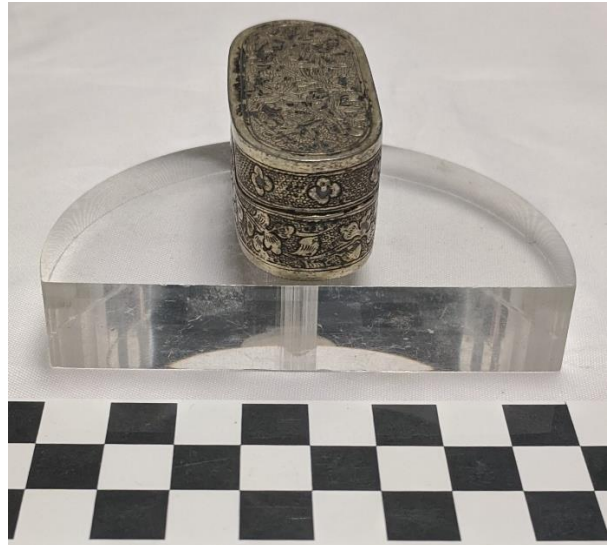
Catalog Description of Object: "Oval repousse work box with floral and other Thai decorative designed sides- floral openwork designed cover"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16704 B has a sticker on the bottom which is unreadable

N16705/21707

Scent Box



Time Period: 1830's

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (base): 1.5 cm ht.; 5.4 cm max. dia.; 2.1 cm min. dia.

B (lid): 0.9 cm ht.; 6.0 cm max. dia.; 2.3 cm min. dia.

Total height: 2.0 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Oblong gilt or gold scent box with curved ends having an overall design of acanthus leaves in low relief"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16705 A sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SB-I 8"

N16707/21707

Box





Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (base): 7.3 cm ht.; 7.4 dia.

B (lid): 1.5 cm ht.; 7.6 dia.

Total height: 9.2 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Silver box with design in high relief - Tosacan appears on cover and sides over intertwined leaves. Has identifying seal on bottom

Apparently Chinese"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16707 A has five stamps on bottom; two for 'zu yin' meaning 'pure silver' in Chinese, two in Chinese which are identical and yet to be deciphered, and one in Thai which is yet to be deciphered. "Tosacan" refers to the ten-faced demon king, Thotsakan, a character in the Ramakien.

N16708/21707

Box



Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (lid): 1.2 cm ht.; 6.2 cm dia.

B (base): 3.2 cm ht.; 6.3 cm dia.

Total height: 3.6 cm

Catalog Description of Object: “Round silver sweet box with overall raised design in repousse of peonies”

Maker: Mei He

Comment: N16708 B has three stamps on bottom: one for maker (see maker column) in Chinese, one for 'zu yin' meaning 'pure silver' in Chinese, and one which resembles a flower; sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 24"

N16709/21707

Box



Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (lid): 0.8 cm ht.; 6.5 cm max. dia.; 4.5 cm min. dia.

B (base): 2.5 cm ht.; 6.2 cm. max. dia.; 4.4 cm min dia.

Total height: 3.2 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Oval silver betel nut box with embossed design of acanthus leaves and sunflowers - rooster on cover"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16709 B has two Chinese stamps on bottom which are identical and yet to be deciphered; sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 10"

N16710/21707

Box



Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (lid): 0.9 cm ht.; 5.3 cm dia.

B (base): 2.6 cm ht.; 5.1 cm dia.

Total height: 3.1 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Nak gold scent box heavily embossed with acanthus leaves"

Maker: N/A

Comment: A slip of paper reading "23" is placed inside the box; N16710 B has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SB-I 23"

N16711/21707

Box





Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (lid): 0.9 cm ht.; 4.7 cm max. dia.; 4.0 cm min. dia.

B (base): 2.2 cm ht.; 4.6 cm max. dia.; 3.7 cm min. dia.

Catalog Description of Object: "Oval scent box heavily embossed in gilt with design of chrysanthemums- Top has a central panel of a single raven among plum blossoms"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16711 B has two Chinese stamps on bottom: one for 'zu yin' meaning 'pure silver' and one which is yet to be deciphered; sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 7"

N16712/21707

Box



Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: *A* (base): 2.7 cm ht.; 6.6 cm max. dia.; 4.6 cm min. dia.

B (lid): 0.9 cm ht.; 6.7 cm max. dia.; 4.8 cm min. dia.

Total height: 3.5 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Oval scent box in repousse silver with overall design of acanthus leaves top has delicately worked rooster in the center of a field of leaves"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16712 *A* has a sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB 25" and is partially torn off

N16714/21707

Two Boxes



Time Period: 1858-1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience:

Size: *A* (smaller box): 4.2 cm ht. (lid on); 6.1 cm dia. at top; 4.1 cm dia. at foot

B (larger box): 5.0 cm ht. (lid on); 5.4 cm dia. at top; 4.5 cm dia. at foot

Catalog Description of Object: "Round repousse work pyre shaped boxes, in Ancient Con Han

Shape -one with ringed design cover and body with small Ha 'ncut spire in center of cover

Other with similar type cover, but with vertical ribbed sides"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16714 *A* has two Chinese stamps on bottom: one for 'yuan yin' meaning 'full silver' and one which is yet to be deciphered; sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 9"

N16714 *B* has a sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 9"

"Ha 'ncut" is the phonetic spelling of the monastery Wat Pa Ban Don Han Kut Chok located in the northeastern city of Nakhon Ratchasima

N16715/21707

Two Boxes



Time Period: 1860

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: *A* (larger box): 6.0 cm ht. (lid on); 7.6 cm dia. at flared top; 6.5 cm min. dia.; 7.4 cm dia. at flared bottom

B (smaller box): 5.6 cm ht. (lid on); 7.1 cm dia. at flared top; 6.2 cm min. dia.; 6.9 cm dia. at flared bottom

Catalog Description of Object: "Round repousse work scent boxes, ringed designed cover with lotus pod and animal head finial-fish + lotus pod designed sides. Circular flame design medallion on the base"

Maker: N/A

Comment: Matching engraved insignias on both N16715 A and B

N16715 A has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SBI 12"

N16715 B has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SB-I 12"

N16716/21707

Two Boxes



Time Period: 1875

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: *A* (smaller box lid): Approx. 2.1 cm ht. with stem; 5.2 cm dia.

B (smaller box base: 2.7 cm ht.; 4.1 cm dia.

Total height: 4.0 cm

C (larger box lid): Approx. 2.2 cm ht. with stem; 5.9 cm dia.

D (larger box base): 3.0 cm ht.; 5.3 cm dia.

Total height: 4.7 cm

Catalog Description of Object: “Gilt over silver repousse pumpkin form covered scent boxes-
black and green enamel leaves and stems inlays

Formerly used in Tonsure ceremony”

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16716 B has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SBI 2"

N16716 D has a sticker on bottom which reads "MMS SB-I 4"

N16717/21707

Footed Dish



Time Period: 1875-1912

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: 1.6 cm ht.; 14.8 cm max. dia. at top; 13.4 cm min. dia. at top; 8.7 cm dia. at foot

Catalog Description of Object: "Round silver bowl with pointed scalloped edge, repousse decoration birds and design - tripod ball feet"

Maker: N/A

Comment: Sticker on bottom reads "17017 71N16718/21707"

N16718/21707

Snuff Box



Time Period: 1875-1912

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: 2.4 cm ht. (lid closed); 9.0 cm length; 5.4 cm width

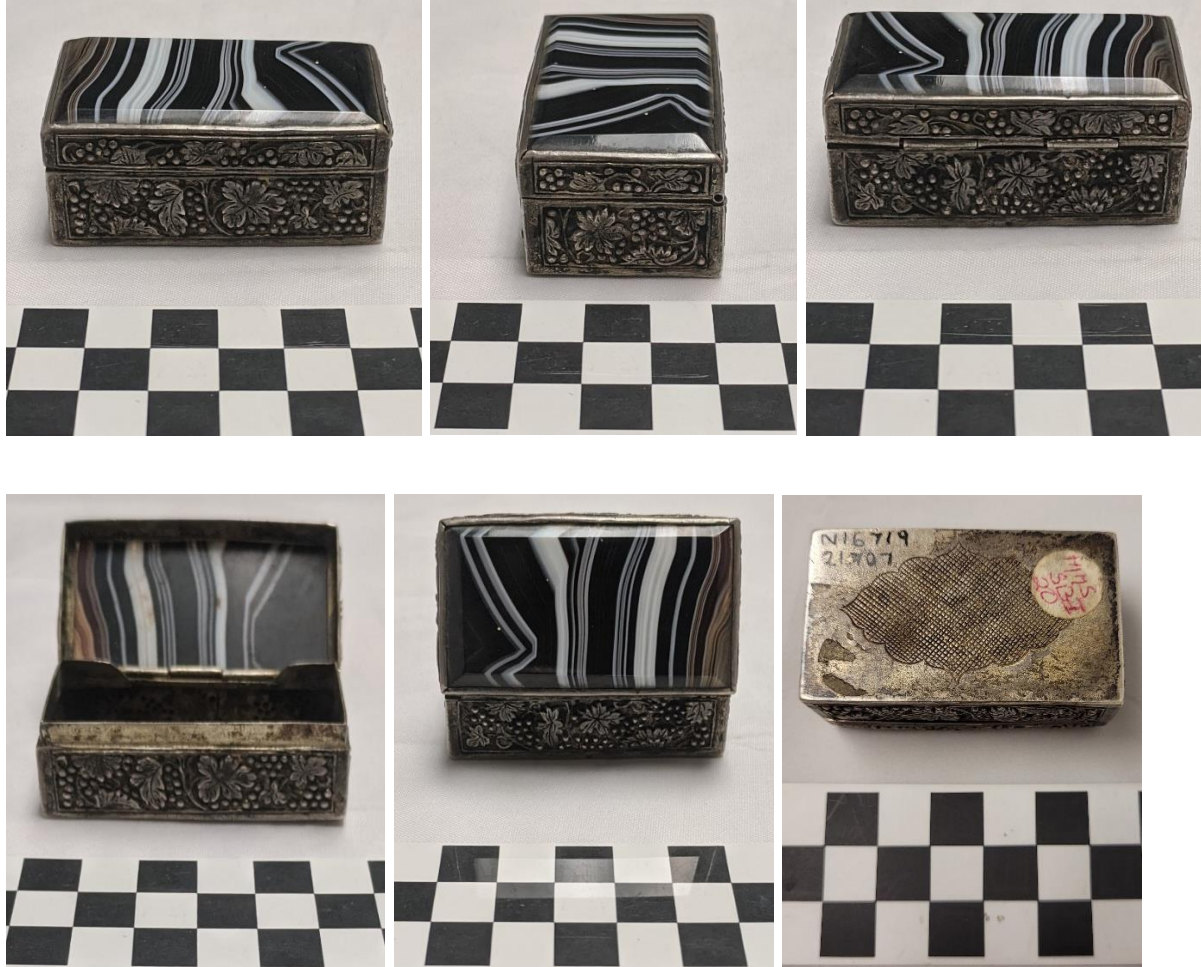
Catalog Description of Object: "Oblong scent box with top of black and white onyx - sides embossed with grapes and leaves- mark on back"

Maker: Gen Xing

Comment: Two Chinese stamps on bottom: one for maker and one which is yet to be deciphered

N16719/21707

Box



Time Period: 1875-1912

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: 2.4 cm ht. (lid closed); 5.6 cm length; 3.2 cm width

Catalog Description of Object: "Oblong scent box of gold with top inset of black and white onyx"

Maker: N/A

Comment: Engraved insignia on bottom

Sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 20"; based on the similarities between this object and object N16718, both may have been created by the same maker

N16720/21707

Box



Time Period: 1875-1912

Method of Accession: Gift

Name Associated: Dr. Mark M. Schapiro

Date of Entry: April 3rd, 1969

Reported Provenience: Thailand

Size: A (base): 2.1 cm ht.; 4.1 cm dia.

B (lid): 0.7 cm ht.; 4.2 cm dia.

Total height: 3.0 cm

Catalog Description of Object: "Small gilded (gold) round scent box heavily chased and embossed with grape and leaf pattern

Typical Nak"

Maker: N/A

Comment: N16720 A has two Chinese stamps on bottom which are yet to be deciphered; sticker on bottom reads "MMS SB-I 5"

Appendix B: Citations, Spelling, and Pronunciation Guide

The proper way to cite authors of Thai and Malay descent are as follows: [Given name] [Family name], followed by date, title, and any other regular information required by the citation format (as compared to [Family name], [Given name] for authors of other ethnicities). There is no comma between the names. For in-text citations, only the first name is used followed by other regular information, such as date and page number.

In the process of Romanizing Thai names, not all sources do so in the same way. While I have tried to keep the spellings consistent with how they're found on maps or in books, these sources do not even agree on a common spelling in some cases. Spellings have also changed over time.

The following guide to pronunciation is adapted from Van Beek and Invernizzi Tettoni's *The Arts of Thailand*.

CONSONANT/CONSONANT COMBINATION	PRONUNCIATION
BH	Aspirated, pronounced like the B in “boom”
DH	Aspirated, pronounced like the D in “dye”
DV	Pronounced “dawa” (example: <i>Dvaravati</i> is pronounced "dawa ra va ti")
K	Pronounced like the G in “gum”
KH	Aspirated, pronounced like the C in “cook”
NG	Pronounced like the NG in “singer”
P	Hard, pronounced like the P in “peak”
PH	Aspirated, pronounced like the P in “pit”
SR	Pronounced like an S, the R is silent (example: <i>Sri</i> is pronounced “seeh”)
SV	Pronounced “sawa” (see DV)
T	Hard, pronounced like “tea”
TH	Aspirated T, pronounced like “tie”
V	Pronounced as a W, such as the W in “we”