Museum of Ancient Wonders
Cathedral Gateway Plaza
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**ALL UNDER HEAVEN**  
Earth, Heaven, the Afterlife

*Tianxia (天下)* or, *All Under Heaven* defines the ideal of a perfect and harmonious empire in the eyes of the people.

This diverse collection of 50 Asian antiquities (3,600 BCE to the mid-1800 CE) is divided into three sections: Earthly possessions, objects used by the living, the temple icons of Buddha and Shiva (Heaven), and funerary goods, objects found in the tombs of the elite (the Afterlife). Representing China, Japan, and the nations of Southeast Asia, these artifacts are seen together for the first time as a comprehensive collection of artifacts from the ancient world.

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Earth
The concept, which originated and became popular in Chinese Buddhism and features a pair of highly stylized lions — often one male with a ball and one female with a cub — which were thought to protect the building from harmful spiritual influences and harmful people that might be a threat. Used in imperial Chinese palaces and tombs, the lions subsequently spread to other parts of Asia including Japan, Korea, Philippines, Tibet, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia. Though they are actually lions they are traditionally referred to as Foo Dogs or Fu Dogs.

The lions are usually depicted in pairs. When used as statuary, the pair would consist of a male leaning his paw upon an embroidered ball (in imperial contexts, representing supremacy over the world) and a female embracing a playful cub (representing nurture).
During the Song Dynasty, ceramics such as dishes and vessels for household use were produced in abundance, in both ordinary homes and the imperial palace. They were also increasingly made for export throughout Asia. Cups, bowls, and containers characteristically carry the simplicity and elegance dictated by Song dynasty esthetic.
Temmuko Stoneware Bowl
China, Song Dynasty (960-1279)
Glazed Pottery

Jian ware, temmoku or tenmoku, is dark brown or blackish Chinese stoneware made for domestic use chiefly during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and into the early 14th century.

The clay used for Jian ware was of a very hard, coarse grain. The inside and about two-thirds of the outside of the ware were covered with a thick, very dark glaze colored with iron oxide. This glaze usually stopped short of the outer base in a thick welt; it also tended to pool thickly on the inside of the vessel. Within a limited palette dominated by a purplish or bluish black or reddish brown, Jian ware had a range of variations. The most prized glazes resembled the streaking of a hare’s fur, the mottling of partridge markings, or the silvery splattering of oil spots. Tea bowls are by far the most common form of Jian ware that survives. Used by Buddhist monks in the Fujian region, the highly esteemed tea bowls were carried back to Japan by Japanese monks. Until the late 16th century temmoku ware was the type of tea bowl preferred for the Japanese tea ceremony.
Chinese Mark and Period Covered Dish with Emperor Tongzhi
China, 1857-1875
Paint and Ceramic

Chinese Tongzhi (1862–1874) porcelain marks the reconstruction of the Jingdezhen official kilns after the Taiping Rebellion which completely devastated the area. Already by 1853 Nanking had fallen and was made the capital by the rebel forces. Eventually the Imperial forces defeated the rebels and restored imperial rule. The period was one of continued unrest.

In 1856 the English had attacked Guantong. They invaded the capital, looting and burning the celebrated Yanming Palace. It was against the background of these events and others that the Tongzhi Emperor took to the throne and palace functions were partially restored.

The official palace ceramic wares of this period are thought to reflect this general historical unrest and decline. The Jingdezhen area itself was liberated in 1864. After completion of the new Imperial kilns, a list of ceramics was forwarded to the Emperor. The wares consisted of round wares and vases.
Cosmetic Box and Ear Cup
China, Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE)
Radiocarbon dated at 2127 – 2233 years old
Lacquer

An extensive and complex system of production for painted lacquer existed in imperial China. Its earliest flowering was in the late Warring States (476-221 BCE) and Han (206 BCE-220 CE) periods. The state of Chu produced finely made, painted lacquerware in state-sponsored factories dedicated to the manufacture of household items for use by the nobility.

**Cosmetic Box**

A cosmetic box of this quality of manufacture and design was surely a highly prized item in an upper-class Han-period household. A box with similar appliqued decoration amid scrolling designs can be seen in the British Museum.

This lacquered box was made using the dry lacquer technique. First a core of wood was formed and covered in hemp and then with many layers of lacquer, each of which had to dry before the next could be painted on. When the object was
finished it was possible to strip away the original core so that the finished item would be incredibly light and also impervious to the insects which might have attacked a wooden interior.

This style of decoration is associated with the south of China, which is sub-tropical and geographically very different from the more arid north.

**Ear Cup**

Lacquer cups like this one, called an ear cup due to the handles resembling ears on either side, were sometimes given by the emperor to an official as a gift in lieu of salary. Lacquer objects were expensive, this cup is said to be worth 10 bronze cups. Lacquer objects were valued because they were time consuming to create.
Bangles
Khmer, Angkor Wat Period
11th-12th Century
Bronze

The Khmer Empire, or the Angkorian Empire, are the terms used to refer to Cambodia from the 9th century to the 15th century when the nation was a Hindu-Buddhist empire. The empire at times ruled over most of mainland Southeast Asia and parts of Southern China, stretching from the tip of the Indochinese Peninsula northward to modern Yunnan province, China, and from Vietnam westward to Myanmar. At its peak, the Khmer Empire was larger than the Byzantine Empire which existed around the same time.

Perhaps its most notable legacy is the site of Angkor, in present-day Cambodia, the Khmer capital during the empire’s zenith. The majestic monuments of Angkor, such as Angkor Wat and Bayon, bear testimony to the Khmer Empire's immense power and wealth, impressive art and culture, architectural technique, aesthetic achievements, and the variety of belief systems that it patronized over time. Satellite imaging has revealed that Angkor, during its peak in the 11th to 13th centuries, was the largest pre-industrial urban center in the world.
Edo Emperor Doll
Japan, Edo-period
(1615-1867)
Mixed Media

The Edo period began in about 1615 and continued for about 270 years until 1868. Many different kinds of dolls were made over this long period of time. Dolls that are standing up are called tachi bina, or “standing dolls.” Dolls that are sitting down are called suwari bina, or “sitting dolls.” Sitting dolls evolved during the Edo period. There are many different categories of sitting dolls based on differences in form, face shape and clothing.
This textile cover is called a fukusa. Traditionally in Japan, gifts were placed in a box on a tray, over which a fukusa was draped. The choice of a fukusa appropriate to the occasion was an important part of the gift-giving ritual. The richness of the decoration was an indication of the donor’s wealth, and the quality of the design evidence of his or her taste and sensibility. This silk fukusa is embroidered with gold threads forming cranes and turtles. The cranes are a symbol of longevity and are believed to live for 1000 years. The turtles are a symbol of luck and longevity with the tails, actually seaweed, the result of a long life at sea.
In 1868 the restoration of imperial rule in Japan brought the Edo shogunate to an end and marked the start of the Meiji era, which would last until the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912. During this period the country experienced radical social and political shifts and a host of reforms which propelled Japan, closed to international trade for more than 200 years, from feudalism into modernity.

The profound impact of the country’s new engagement with foreign cultures is evident in many areas of Meiji-period art, which reflected a new era for the nation and its developing relationship with the wider world. With the disappearance of the samurai class, metalworkers began to create objects for the sole purpose of display. The government encouraged innovation and attention to artistry. The fine detail in these works was beyond the capability of their Western counterparts and is hardly matched in present-day Japan. Exhibitions in both Japan and Europe brought Meiji-period metalworkers high praise, and their creations were soon highly sought after by collectors around the world.
Figure of Jimmu
Japan, Late 19th Century
Meiji Period (1868-1912)
Bronze

Jimmu is the legendary first emperor of Japan.

During the Meiji Period, when this sculpture was cast, veneration of the first emperors became a central component of the imperial cult. One aspect of this was the creation of Kigensetsu (“Era Day”), a holiday to celebrate Jimmu’s ascension to the throne 2,532 years earlier. Shortly thereafter, a shrine was established near Mount Unebi, the supposed site of Jimmu’s tomb, in Nara, where Jimmu is said to have ascended the throne. Worship of Jimmu at the Kashihara shrine in Nara continues even to this day.

This sculpture is the unsurprising product of the Meiji emperors’ antiquarian interests. Associating one’s reign with the earlier reign of a godly ancestor strengthened their power and claim to the throne. Even today, the current Japanese Emperor Naruhito can claim direct descent from Jimmu.
China is one of the original producers of sugarcane. Bamboo Cane (Saccharum sinense) and wild species (S. spontaneum) are widely distributed, from the North Qinling Mountains to the South Hainan Island. Sugarcane cultivation has a long history; since the late 4th-century BCE, China has used sugarcane to produce syrup.
Baskets
Japan, 20th Century
Bamboo

During the 18th century, a shift back to the admiration for things Chinese catalyzed by a preference among the Japanese literati and merchant class for the Chinese-style sencha, or steeped green-leaf tea ceremony (vs. the matcha or powdered green tea ceremony known as chanoyu) led to a new demand for Chinese-style flower baskets. These baskets served as inspiration for many modern Japanese basket makers who, beginning in the Meiji period (1838-1912), gradually transformed traditional ikebana baskets from utilitarian containers into sculptural masterpieces crafted in a variety of shapes, weaves, and knots.

Chkiubosai I (1872-1941)
Wagami Shape (thin, medium sized basket)
Dated 1941

Madea Chikubasai I was one of the most important bamboo artists working in the first half of the 20th century. Late in the Taisho era he made presentation baskets for the imperial family, for which he became famous.
Singas are the most important decorative element seen in Batak Toba houses. The word singa comes from Sanskrit and means “lion.” There are innumerable representations, but mostly they just depict the head, which is significant for two reasons. The Toba believe that it keeps misfortune, diseases and evil influences from the house and its inhabitants, and that it can release positive beneficial powers for the good of the inhabitants.
Wooden Bell
Philippines, unknown age
Wood and Rope

A large wooden bell beautifully formed and carved from a single piece of wood.
Heaven
Pair of Wooden Temple Figures, Nio
Japan
Late Muromachi to Early Edo Period
(1467-1652)
Wood

The Japanese Nio, or “benevolent kings,” are figures that were placed outside Buddhist temples on each side of the entrance to ward off evil spirits, demons, and thieves from the late Muromachi to Early Edo periods, or roughly 1467-1652.

Each figure is named after a cosmic sound. The closed-mouth figure is Ungyo, who utters “un” or “om” meaning death. He is also called Nareen Kongo and is said to be a form of the Indian god Vishnu. With his tightly closed mouth and tensed arms, he represents latent might. The open-mouthed partner is Misshaku Kongo (Agyo), who sounds “ah,” meaning birth. He is equated to the Indian deity Vajrapani, whose name means “thunderbolt holder.”

He bares his teeth, raises his fist, and holds a Kongosho, which is a symbol of the power he represents.

The Nio statues are constructed in the traditional multi-block design. Old works were conventionally repaired bit by bit, over time, as individual blocks shrunk at different rates or were damaged by insects. Damaged blocks were removed, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and replaced with exact copies of the piece. It is common to find figures with repairs spanning many years, as is the case with these particular pieces. This pair was originally lacquered. Though none of the lacquer survives, there is evidence of the gesso-like layer on the surface of each figure.
Pair of Temple Guardian Tiles
China, Song Dynasty (960-1279)
Stone Tile
Menshen, “Door Gods” or “Door Spirits” are divine guardians of temple doors and gates in Chinese folk religions, used to protect against evil people, spirits and influences and to encourage the entrance of positive ones.
Maitreya, the “happy Buddha” of the future, represents the harbinger of a new age and will be reborn in a period of decline to renew the doctrine of Buddhism. The name Maitreya comes from the Sanskrit word Maitri, which means “loving kindness.” This Buddha-to-be from China’s Ming dynasty sits in vajrasana, the left hand in varadamudra and the right hand in vitarkamudra, with his feet crossed at the ankles. The position represents reasoning, argumentation, or explanation of a teaching.

A major sculpture from a Buddhist temple, this figure is approximately 650 years old, according to carbon-14 dating conducted on the object. Dressed in the clothes of either Bhiksu or Indian royalty and adorned with jewelry and high tiara, Maitreya exudes majesty and limitless tolerance and generosity. His images appear in Gandhara, possibly predating those of the Buddha.
Head of Buddha
Burma, Shan Period (17th / 18th century)
Wood and Pigments

Two traditional crafts at which the Burmese excel are wood carving and lacquer work. They used their skills in these areas to create images of the Buddha, as part of their devotion to Theravada Buddhism. The use of woodcarving for religious and secular purposes has been confirmed in Burma since Pyu times (200-900 CE) and may have begun earlier. As evidenced by this particular piece, the Burmese had an innate understanding of the properties of wood, working with the grain of the wood to best utilize its properties.
The Khmer kings considered the venerated Hindu deity Shiva as the supreme guardian of their empire. The formalist facial style in this 10th century sandstone head of Shiva is specific to the Bakheng style and gives its statuary a geometrically hierarchal appearance. In this example with the faint smile, the effect conveys a benevolent expression.

The Bakheng style is based on formalism, geometric and linear abstraction. The faces have eyebrows that are unusual in that they are a continuous sharp line. The diadem consists of a band decorated with lozenges and half-lozenges and crowned by a row of florets. Generally, the Bakheng style of sculpture has a severity in comparison to the more naturalistic treatment of pre-Angkorian statues.
The Romanian artist Demetre Chiparus, who studied and worked in Paris, produced most of his important Art Deco-style bronze and ivory sculptures in the 1920s.

Civa (Shiva) is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. In this work, Chiparus represents the exoticism of the East, as the elegant figure meditates in the lotus position. The work recalls the dances of the Ballets Russes, one of the artist’s primary inspirations, and embodies the essence of the age, particularly the rediscovery of ancient Egyptian art, as Tutankhamun’s tomb was excavated in 1922.

Chiparus depicted most of his figures in sensual, curvilinear fashion. His subjects always look beautiful and at ease. Civa is an excellent example of the artist’s impeccable casting, particularly the detail work in the bronze body and the expressively carved ivory face.
The bulul were used in numerous harvest ceremonies and were an important and cherished object by their owners. Bulul figures were inherited by the first child in a family and were held in high esteem. At harvest held at the home of the rice field's owner, bulul deities, along with many other deities are invoked by the priests, urged to join in the festivities, and asked to make the rice continue to grow as it had grown in the fields. During these ceremonies carved bulul, jars of rice wine, and ritual boxes are placed alongside the presiding priests.
This large mask was fashioned from a single piece of wood, depicted with mouth open, large eyes, sharply defined cheeks, large ears, helmet form where mask covers the entire head. This is used in the “patortorhon ugas ni tondi,” or mens’ funerary dance. Located in the mountainous highland of northern Sumatra, the Batak are one of the largest indigenous groups in Indonesia. The Batak are divided into six groups, the Toba, Pak Pak/Dairi, Karo, Angkola, Mandailing and Simalungun, and have an estimated total population of 3 million.
After Life
**Ox**
Chinese, Han Dynasty
(202 BCE-220 CE)
Stone

In Chinese culture, oxen are symbols of wealth, prosperity, diligence, and perseverance. All things needed for the next life. This specimen was once more anatomically detailed, with horns and genitals carved and fitted into holes in the appropriate anatomical locations and with a tail made of horsehair. Unfortunately, these have been lost through the ages.
Lady in Coach Drawn by 2 Horses
Chinese, Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE)
Pottery

Early animal-drawn carts had standing room only. Wooden boards on all four sides protected passenger safety and also provided a surface against which to lean. There was usually a canopy on top for decoration and shelter from bad weather. The higher the canopy, the more beautiful the cart was considered to be. Carts for carrying warriors or criminals had no canopy.
Burial figurines of graceful dancers, mystical beasts, and everyday objects reveal both how people in early China approached death and how they lived. Since people viewed the afterlife as an extension of worldly life, these figurines, called mingqi or “spirit goods,” disclose details of routine existence and provide insights into belief systems over a thousand-year period.

By the Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE), human sacrifice had stopped. Instead, pottery figures representing the attendants, servants and entertainers of the deceased were buried with the corpse.
Funerary sculpture and vessels continued to be produced in great quantity and variety during the Tang dynasty (618-907), including attendants, musicians, grooms, horses, camels, and spirit guardians. The particular forms, as well as the scale of the objects, reflected the position and rank of the deceased. Representations of horses were placed in the tombs of important people.

During the Han and Tang dynasties, Chinese ceramic tomb figurines were often mass-produced using molds, but they could be given individual personality through glazing and painting. The most distinctive decorative technique of the period was the use of sancai, or three-color glazing - cream, amber and green glaze. The use of the rare color blue would sometimes appear on such works but was apparently rare and sparingly used.
Pair of Stone Horses
China, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)
Stone

The custom of burying grave goods (mingqi) with the dead lasted a long time, ranging from Neolithic times (about 5000 BCE) to the end of the Ming dynasty (1644 CE). Inevitably, most of them come from the graves of the few with wealth and power; the lives of most people passed into history unrecorded. According to the law, those who had attained a governmental office rank five or six can have thirty objects; those with rank seven or eight offices, twenty objects; and those who have not reached court posts, fifteen objects.
Relatively unknown, Thailand is on the map as a place of early prehistoric development. A much-researched site is the Ban Chiang area, close to Udon Thani, Northern Thailand. Prehistoric settlements in Thailand before Ban Chiang were found mostly along the great rivers. These rock shelter and cave dwellers were hunter-gatherers.

About 5600 years ago prehistoric settlements emerged in the vicinity of Ban Chiang. Located on mounds, the early settlements there were relatively small, with wooden houses built on stilts. Later, about 3000 years ago, larger villages were settled on flood plains and on the tracts of land between the flood plain and low terrace. Shards of painted ceramic ware were discovered by chance by villages around 1957 and displayed at the village school. In 1960, some of these shards were presented to the department of Fine Arts, but a serious study was only attempted from 1966. It confirmed that they indeed belonged to a distinctive prehistoric culture. Subsequently, public interest in Ban Chiang antiquities gained momentum.
Painted Pottery
Thailand, Circa 1000 BCE
Ban Chiang Culture
Pottery (Orange and White)

The prehistoric site of Ban Chiang in northeast Thailand, first excavated in 1967, brought to light one of the earliest Bronze Age cultures in Southeast Asia. Archaeological remains from different levels in the soil indicate that the site has been inhabited for thousands of years.

Ban Chiang is best known for red-on-buff painted pottery vessels, which were found only in the uppermost (least ancient) layers of soil. Lower layers revealed a great variety of equally distinctive pottery. The oldest are probably the black or dark gray burnished and incised pieces. In burials, more than twenty types of vessels of various sizes were placed on top of the skeletons, below the legs, or above the head. In some rituals, the vessels were intentionally broken over the graves of the deceased to guarantee the release of their spirits into the afterlife; in others they had been left intact. Artifacts uncovered from burial sites suggest a highly developed metal industry. Both male and female adult skeletons were adorned with bronze and iron jewelry such as bracelets and anklets.
In the Toraja culture a tau-tau is an effigy of the dead carved upon the death of a wealthy family member. In the past, these sculptures were placed near the dead during the long and elaborate funeral that sometimes lasted up to a week. These effigies inspected the funeral festival grounds for approval; a favorable inspection resulted in the transition of the soul into the spirit realm. After the funeral, the tau-tau was taken to a rock cliff balcony where it was placed with other ancestor effigies to oversee the well-being of the village.
Diyu, or “earth prison,” is the realm of the dead or hell in Chinese mythology. It is loosely based on a combination of the Buddhist concept of Naraka, traditional Chinese beliefs about the afterlife, and a variety of popular expansions and reinterpretations of these two traditions.

Diyu is typically depicted as a subterranean maze with various levels and chambers, to which souls are taken after death to atone for the sins they committed when they were alive. The exact number of levels in Diyu and their associated deities differ between Buddhist and Taoist interpretations. Some speak of three to four “courts”; others mention “Ten Courts of Hell,” each of which is ruled by a judge (collectively known as the Ten Yama Kings); other Chinese legends speak of the “Eighteen Levels of Hell”. Each court deals with a different aspect of atonement and different punishments; most legends claim that sinners are subjected to gruesome tortures until their “deaths,” after which they are restored to their original state for the torture to be repeated.
MUSEUM OF ANCIENT WONDERS

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Artifact Literature and Exhibition History:

Cosmetic Box and Ear Cup
China, Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE)
Radiocarbon dated at 2127 – 2233 years old
Lacquer

Literature:
J. White (ed.), Masterpieces of Chinese Lacquer from the Mike Healy Collection, Honolulu, 2003

Exhibited:
Honolulu, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Masterpieces of Chinese Lacquer from the Mike Healy Collection, December 2002 – April 2003, Hawaii
New York, China Institute of America, September – December 2005, New York City
Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, January – April 2006, California

Pair of Wooden Temple Figures, Nio
Japan
Late Muromachi to Early Edo Period (1467-1652)
Wood

Exhibited:
San Antonio Museum of Art, “Heaven and Hell; Salvation and Retribution in Pure Land Buddhism” May 2017 – September 2017, San Antonio, Texas

Research Sources

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Exhibition Requirements
2,500 to 3,000 square feet for display
Lighting and temperature control
Inbound shipping insured
On-site insurance
Security while open to the public
Curator available for installation and dismantle

Exhibition Elements
50 artifacts
31 display pedestals
9 vitrines
Exhibition layout
Narrated catalogue and soundtrack

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