

# Mother-of-pearl inlaid box

Southeast Asian Collection

Accession Nr.: 80.29.1-3 

Type: object for daily use; lacquers

Date of production: 19th century- first half of the 20th century

Place of production: Vietnam, Southeast Asia

Materials/Technique: wood, lacquer, mother of pearl inlay, tin  
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Dimensions: height: 24cm  
diameter: 10 cm

Round wooden box with five compartments. The rich mother-of-pearl decoration on both sides and the lid depicts a dragon (symbol of good fortune and emperorship), a Chinese or Vietnamese unicorn (called "qi lin"), a phoenix (virtue, noble qualities), and a turtle (spiritual power, extraterrestrial wisdom) among floral motifs, in a European tin mounting. In Vietnamese culture, these four 'sacred' animals together symbolise the power of the universe and often appear in the representation of cemeteries, pagodas, and shrines.

