KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

NATION RELIGION KING

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

PRESS RELEASE

Cambodia Announces the Return of 18 Khmer Cultural Objects Recovered in London

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia is pleased to announce the public about the return of 18 Khmer cultural objects recovered in London by the Art and Antiques Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service, with support from the OSCE-led Heritage Crime Task Force of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The objects were formally received today by the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in London at a handover ceremony hosted by the Embassy, marking an important step towards their return to Cambodia.

The objects were recovered in November 2025. Following expert examination, the objects were identified as being of Cambodian origin, and in September 2026 the Ministry submitted a formal claim for their return. The collection comprises stone sculptures, bronze ritual objects and jewellery fragments dating from approximately the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Among them are stone heads in the Baphuon style, second half of the eleventh century, and heads in the Bayon style, dating to the late twelfth century. The collection also includes a Buddhist bell, or ghanta, with a vajra handle; dancing figures on pedestal (Dancing Yokinis); decorative plaques with pendant; and a bronze lamp once used in ceremonial practices. Together, these objects reflect the artistic achievements, religious traditions and cultural life of Khmer civilization across several centuries.

For the Cambodian people, these works hold significance far beyond their artistic value. In Khmer tradition, a consecrated image may be understood as a living presence and a dwelling place of the divine. When sacred objects are removed from their original settings, communities lose not only material heritage but also important connections to their history, spiritual traditions and collective memory.

Following their return to Cambodia, specialists from the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the National Museum of Cambodia will study the objects and compare them with the Ministry's existing field research, site records and first-hand testimony. This work will contribute to a better understanding of the objects' histories and origins and support Cambodia's continuing efforts to identify and recover cultural property unlawfully removed from its territory.

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts expresses its sincere appreciation to the officers of the Art and Antiques Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service and to the OSCE-led Heritage Crime Task Force for their efforts and commitment to combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property. The Ministry also extends its deep gratitude to Mr. Bradley J. Gordon and Ms. Melina Antoniadis, Legal Advisors to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, for their dedicated work in securing the return of these objects to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The return of these 18 cultural objects represents another important achievement in Cambodia's ongoing efforts to recover its displaced heritage. The Kingdom remains committed to pursuing the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from its territory and welcomes continued cooperation from governments, law enforcement agencies, museums, researchers and private collectors.

Phnom Penh , 30 October 2026

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វត្ថុសិល្បៈខ្មែរ - Khmer Cultural Objects



ព្រះសិរ្សព្រះពុទ្ធរូប
ថ្មភក់
សម័យអង្គរ, រចនាបថបាយ័ន្ត ចុងស.វ.ទី១២-ដើមស.វ.១៣គ.ស.

Head of Buddha
Sandstone
Angkor period, Bayon style, late 12th-early 13th Century



ទេពរាំលើបល្ល័ង្ក (យោគីនីរាំ)
សំរិទ្ធ
សម័យអង្គរ, រចនាបថបាយ័ន្ត ចុងស.វ.ទី១២-ដើម១៣គ.ស.

Dancing figures on pedestal
Bronze
Angkor period, Bayon style late12th-early 13th Century



គ្រឿងលម្អមានបន្ទោង
ប្រាក់លាបទឹកមាសជាំត្បូង
សម័យអង្គរ, រចនាបថបាភួន, ស.វ.ទី១១ គ.ស.

Decorative plaque with pendant
Silver gilded with stone inlay
Angkor period, Bayon style late12th-early 13th Century



កណ្តឹងវជ្រ
សំរិទ្ធ
សម័យអង្គរ, រចនាបថបាយ័ន្ត ចុងស.វ.ទី១២-ដើម១៣គ.ស.

Buddhist bell (ghanta) with a vajra handle
Bronze
Angkor period, Bayon style late12th-early 13th Century