



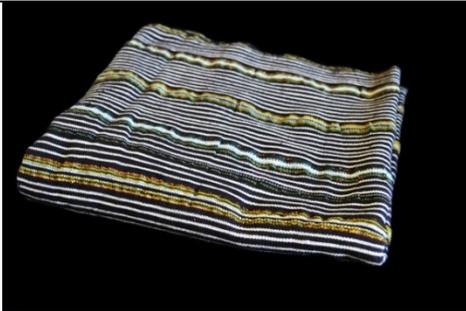
African Studies Program
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Sierra Leone Discovery Box

Items	Photos	Description
<i>Kissi Pennies</i>		<p>Made of iron rods, these <i>kissi</i> pennies were a common currency from the 1800s until the mid-1900s in the region of West Africa that includes modern day Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Even during the colonial period, <i>kissi</i> pennies circulated alongside French, British, and American currencies. They received the name “<i>kissi</i> pennies” because of their association with the Kissi ethno-linguistic group. Blacksmiths created <i>kissi</i> pennies by twisting and hammering iron rods. They were exchanged in bundles of 20 rods, since individual rods had limited purchasing power. In the early 1900s, for example, a cow typically cost 100 bundles (of 20 rods).</p>

<p>Wood Wall Carvings: Pair of Men's Profile Heads</p>		<p>This pair of men's head profiles, hand-carved in solid wood, was purchased in a Freetown sidewalk market stall. Each of the pointed caps on the carvings represents the traditional headgear of different ethnic groups in Sierra Leone.</p>
<p>Shangbai Musical Instruments (2).</p>		<p>Two hand-constructed wooden drums with animal-hide drum heads and natural decorations. During the precolonial period, drums were used to communicate messages between villages (called "talking drums"). Today they are popular musical instruments in music presentations in Sierra Leone.</p>
<p>Necklace and Bracelet Set</p>		<p>Jewelry set constructed in Sierra Leone from natural fibers, seeds, beads, and small fish bones. Colors are derived from natural dyes. They were purchased from a seller in a Freetown sidewalk market. (Note: At an ocean beach location, local fishermen drag to shore huge nets of fish for local consumption.)</p>

Sapo (2)		<p>The natural luffa plants in Sierra Leone produce numerous “pods,” which are harvested to be used as efficient and soothing wet bathing “sapo” sponges.</p>
Carved Utensils (3)		<p>These cooking and personal care utensils were hand-constructed. They include a natural wood hair comb (pick) and a long-handled spoon, each hand-carved of Abachoe wood, and a drinking cup, made from a dried natural gourd.</p>
Music Instruments		<p>A set of two small hand-made and hand-decorated musical rattles, constructed with natural fibers, seeds and beads. Instruments like these are widely used in Sierra Leone in musical performances for entertainment. A child used this musical set, while adult musicians and dancers perform with larger instruments of various styles and sizes.</p>
Musical Instrument		<p>This musical instrument is constructed from an empty calabash gourd and decorated with macramé strings, cowrie shells, seeds and beads. It is held in one hand by the bundle of long tied strings, and then shaken with the other hand, holding the gourd.</p>

<p>Assorted stamps, postcards, and coins from Sierra Leone</p>		<p>Coins, postcards, and stamps brought from Sierra Leone in 1985.</p>
<p>Three-Piece Dresses (3 Sets)</p>		<p>Each of these women's dress sets includes a <i>docket</i> (blouse), <i>lapa</i> (skirt), and <i>ghele</i> (headband). They were purchased in the fabric construction area of Meken, Sierra Leone. Vendors sell "<i>lapa</i> lengths" (slightly longer than one yard—a typical measurement to construct one <i>lapa</i> or wrap-around skirt) of various colors and designs. Shoppers select fabrics and then a tailor takes their measurements and prepares the clothing on a sewing machine. For men's clothes, typical colors are blue and brown, while women wear clothes made of a wide variety of colored fabrics.</p>
<p>Men's Woven Wrap</p>		<p>Produced with various shades of gray, black, and metallic threads, this is a typical wrap worn by men during cultural events and gatherings. The style of this hand-woven cloth is associated with the Mende ethnic group.</p>

Shuku Basket and Lid



A small jewelry basket with a fitted cover and thin strap. It is tightly hand-woven with natural fibers and decorated with natural dye colors. Coil weave baskets like this one are called “*shuku*” in Temne, one of Sierra Leone’s most widely spoken languages.