



## Baby Carrier

### Date

20th Century

### Primary Maker

Miao

### Medium

Silk, cotton and metal

### Description

This is a silk and cotton baby carrier panel from the Miao culture of China's Guizhou Province. Here, from birth until children are old enough to walk, new mothers carry infants in wrapped textile baby carriers. While relatively plain carriers might be used while mothers engage in manual labor, highly ornate carriers for festive and

ceremonial occasions—such as this object—are decorated with a wide selection of motifs and sometimes with inclusions of silver or coins. Based on similar examples, the coins used in this example are likely Qing dynasty and may span up to 200 years. Motifs vary from region to region, but almost always confer some good fortune upon the child. The butterflies reference the Mother Butterfly, a Miao guardian deity, and the dragons also serve as protection against evil spirits. Carriers are mostly created and embroidered by young, unmarried women, but among some Miao groups baby carriers are instead made by a new mother's family and presented to a her and her husband after a baby is one month old. A woman's ability to create fine embroidery and textile work is seen as valuable to the community and especially to potential husbands and in-laws. Baby carriers and other embroidered work becomes part of a woman's dowry. The reason why many carriers in museum collections are missing their straps is that the straps are believed to be repositories for the soul of the child the carrier held. They are generally kept and reused if a carrier is retired.

### Dimensions

20 1/2 x 27 15/16 in.