



Chest Ornament

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Dong

Medium

Silver

Description

Silver adornments are an indicator of status within Dong culture. Dong children wear silver ornaments from an early age and women continue to wear silver jewelry at festivals and special occasions. Dong communities are established in Guizhou, Guangxi and Hunan provinces. The shapes and styles of adornments vary in these different locations. This breastplate is likely from Guizhou.

It features two lions with spinning heads. These lions are Chinese symbols known as shishi. It is not uncommon for the ethnic minorities of China to incorporate traditional Chinese symbols or their meanings within their jewelry designs. This form represents the “Dog of Fo,” a mythical beast that was half lion and half dog. Scholarship suggests that this symbol was first used in Han Dynasty China around the late 3rd Century A.D.

Dimensions

Flexible: 18 × 6 × 1 1/2 in. (45.7 × 15.2 × 3.8 cm)