

FOM Study Group

A list of past themes and topics

September 2019

Theme: **Myths, Legends and Folktales**

Topics included:

- ❖ Protectors & Saviors of SE Asia
- ❖ The Palace of Illusions – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
- ❖ Kumano Kodo Trail and Japanese Creation Myths
- ❖ Superstitions of the Philippines
- ❖ Singapore Places & Streets
- ❖ Singapore Ghost Stories
- ❖ Japanese Myths
- ❖ Myths & Legends associated with Indian temples
- ❖ Chinese Cosmology
- ❖ Animism in Borneo
- ❖ Vietnamese Myths and Legends
- ❖ The Legend of White Snake – a Chinese folk tale
- ❖ Contemporary Art inspired by Asian Mythology
- ❖ Japanese Ghosts
- ❖ Zodiacs of Asia – how they are alike and different
- ❖ Journey to the West
- ❖ Feng Shui and Vastu Shastra
- ❖ Uzbeki Myths

April 2019

Theme: **Asian Crimes & Courts**

Topics included:

- ❖ Van Trong Nguyen
- ❖ Sharia Law
- ❖ Prostitution in Singapore & Asia
- ❖ *Midnight in Peking* – a murder in 1937 Beijing
- ❖ The Mumbai Blasts
- ❖ Ponzi Schemes in Asia
- ❖ Opium in Singapore
- ❖ Art Crime in China & Indonesia
- ❖ Ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asia
- ❖ Comfort Women
- ❖ Yakuza

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- ❖ Guilty as charged: Crimes that have shaken Singapore since 1965
- ❖ Cyber heist
- ❖ Animals and Crime in Asia
- ❖ Single Child Policy in China

January 2019

Theme: **Great Journeys of Asia: Road, River, Rail, Religious & Personal**

Topics included:

- ❖ Travel in Japan prior to the Shinkansen
- ❖ The Journey of the Red Pepper
- ❖ Caravanserai on the Silk Road
- ❖ Luxury Train Journeys
- ❖ Biology enables; Culture forbids
- ❖ Admiral Zheng He
- ❖ Islam's Journey into the Far East & South Asia
- ❖ The Hajj
- ❖ Kailash Mansarovar
- ❖ Journey of Buddhism Eastwards
- ❖ Kumbh Mela
- ❖ Yoga and meditation journey to the West

September 2018

Theme: **Singapore and Asia in 1978** (in honor of FOM, founded 1978, turning 40)

Topics included:

- ❖ Singapore Visual Arts - Second Generation Nanyang Artists
- ❖ The Singapore Floods of 1978
- ❖ China's Open-Door Policy 1978
- ❖ Air India and Jahangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata
- ❖ Fashion and lifestyle in Singapore in 1978
- ❖ Sentosa and land reclamation
- ❖ A history of Sony Corporation
- ❖ The Hippie Trail
- ❖ HDB Apartment Buildings
- ❖ Singapore - then and now
- ❖ Hanae Mori: a history of this iconic Japanese fashion designer

FOM Study Group

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- ❖ Games We Play - the start of video games in 1978
- ❖ Kuo Pao Kun; Singapore playwright
- ❖ Sachin & India: how far both have come since 1978
- ❖ The Vietnamese / Cambodian War
- ❖ Singapore Government Social Campaigns

April 2018

Theme: **The Arts in Asia since 1950**

Topics included:

- ❖ The Inkstone & Oil: Crossroads in Art of SEA 1950-1970
- ❖ Paik Nam June: Korean Founder of Video Art
- ❖ Revival of Traditional Craft & its application to the modern world
- ❖ Art under Communism
- ❖ M.F. Husain: Modern Indian Painter
- ❖ Indochina Diaspora Artists & the Legacy of the Vietnam War
- ❖ Condo Architecture from HDB to Contemporary Design
- ❖ Black & White Houses to modern single-family houses in Singapore
- ❖ The Theft of Pavarti
- ❖ Japanese Anime & Manga
- ❖ How Bollywood evolved over time
- ❖ Zaha Hadid
- ❖ Creativity in Captivity: Htein Lin
- ❖ Female leads & sexuality in Bollywood films
- ❖ Contemporary Chinese Art

January 2018

Theme: **Asian Empires: *Tycoons, Dynasties & Monarchies***

Topics included:

- ❖ Joseon Dynasty
- ❖ Tragic tales of Korean Dynasties & Korean TV Drama
- ❖ The Mongols
- ❖ Timur (Tamerlane) & the Timurid Empire
- ❖ Alibaba & Jack Ma: Chinese e-commerce empire
- ❖ The Last Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty & Empress Ki

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- ❖ Tata Group
- ❖ Japanese Emperors
- ❖ Tang Dynasty
- ❖ Angkor Wat; when civilisation stops & nature takes over
- ❖ Maratha Empire
- ❖ Persian Empire
- ❖ Vijayanagara: Almost forgotten kingdom
- ❖ The role of women in Asian family business empires
- ❖ Kim Dynasty / North Korea
- ❖ Female Dynasts in the Indian subcontinent
- ❖ Nehru / Gandhi Empire
- ❖ Dalai Lama

October 2017

Theme: **Tribes of Asia**

Topics included:

- ❖ Laos Tribes & Textiles
- ❖ The Journey of the Chinese Script in East Asia
- ❖ The Hmong
- ❖ Headhunters
- ❖ The Nias Islanders of Indonesia
- ❖ The Ainu of Japan
- ❖ Tribes of Papua New Guinea
- ❖ The Dani Tribe of PNG
- ❖ Port City Immigrants
- ❖ Geography & Migration - why some stay put
- ❖ The Rohingya

April 2017

Theme: **Asian Women Who Inspire**

Topics included:

- ❖ Amma vs. Amma
- ❖ Badass Mongal Queens
- ❖ Datin Seri Endon (Malaysian batiks & kebaya)
- ❖ Aung San Suu Kyi

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A list of past themes and topics

- ❖ Warrior Women
- ❖ Kiran Bedi
- ❖ Priyanka Chopra

January 2017

Theme: **Hatch, Match & Dispatch: *Birth, Marriage & Death Customs***

Topics included:

- ❖ Asian Marriage Food Customs
- ❖ Toraja Death Rituals
- ❖ East Timorese Animist Traditions
- ❖ Mummy-to-be Taboos
- ❖ Minangkabau Traditions
- ❖ Singapore Cemeteries & Burial Customs
- ❖ Chinese Marriage
- ❖ Chitti Melakan Style Weddings
- ❖ Initiation Rites for Myanmar Boys
- ❖ Hindu "Saat Phera"
- ❖ China One Child Policy
- ❖ Shinto Wedding Customs
- ❖ Marriage Drinks
- ❖ Filial Piety Traditions
- ❖ Balinese Child Ceremonies & Customs
- ❖ Hindu Rituals of Hatch, Match & Dispatch

September 2016

Theme: **The Silk Road**

Topics included:

- ❖ Pre-Islamic Sogdiana
- ❖ Karez of Xinjiang
- ❖ Travelling the Silk Road
- ❖ Marco Polo
- ❖ Caravanserai & Caravans
- ❖ Ship Building
- ❖ Geography of the Silk Road

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- ❖ New Silk Road
- ❖ Wealth & Power of City States
- ❖ Mongols
- ❖ Religions Along the Silk Road
- ❖ An Indian City Along the Silk Road
- ❖ Rice & Rummi
- ❖ Dumplings & Noodles
- ❖ Visit to Port Cities at ACM

Theme: **SG50**

Topics included:

- ❖ SG50 through contemporary art
- ❖ Landmark Buildings
- ❖ HDBs
- ❖ Underground Singapore
- ❖ Nature Reserves
- ❖ Historic Sites
- ❖ Changi Airport
- ❖ Theatres of Old Singapore
- ❖ Water Management
- ❖ Land Reclamation

Some previous study group themes:

- Costumes and fashions of Asia
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Asia
- Arts and Architecture of Asia
- Migration: The quest for a better life
- Mountains of Asia
- Rivers of Asia
- Spices