

# PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

November / December 2019



art  
history  
culture  
people



# President's Letter

**Dear Friends,**

The year 2019 has been a special one for Singapore as it marks 200 years since the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in Singapore. FOM docents have stayed busy, guiding not only the regular exhibitions but also the various special exhibitions held to commemorate this bicentennial year.

Many FOM docents volunteered to guide the *Singapore to Singaporean: The Bicentennial Experience* exhibition at Fort Canning Park. The exhibition proved to be a mega success and has now been extended until the end of the year. If you have not had a chance to see it, do use this opportunity to do so with your family and friends. During the school holidays, do go with your children to the National Museum of Singapore's (NMS) recently opened exhibition, *An Old New World* and let our docents take you on a journey, one that explores the 200 years leading up to the establishment of an entrepôt in Singapore in 1819. At the Indian Heritage Centre, docents are conducting research and getting ready to guide the *From the Coromandel Coast to the Straits – Revisiting Our Tamil Heritage* exhibition, which opens on 23 November.

The Peranakan Museum and the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) may have closed for renovations, but these museums' docent communities remain close-knit. They meet often for ongoing training sessions and stay active by participating in guiding special exhibitions at other museums. The Japanese docents have found unique ways of keeping their passion for art going by guiding art-related works at NMS. Gillman Barracks, SAM and STPI docents are looking forward to guiding the upcoming Biennale titled *Every Step in the Right Direction*. It will be on show from 22 November to 22 March 2020.

The Monday Morning Lectures and Fridays with Friends lecture series has resumed. At these lectures, check out the membership table for new and older editions of *PASSAGE* magazine. Led by Andra Leo, the editorial team works hard to create the magazine that is not only worth reading, but also worth collecting. With the *FOM Outreach with PASSAGE Magazine* initiative, which was launched during the Open Morning and made possible by an NHB grant, we hope to use the magazine to increase awareness for both the work FOM does and the places where we guide.

FOM's Open Morning was a well-attended event. Membership and hospitality teams made the attendees feel welcome. Visitors arrived early and stayed late to learn about the various FOM-run activities. Team leaders were on hand with their volunteers to answer any questions. Organised by FOM's Asian Book Group, the book swap was a big hit, with requests to make this a regular event. Read more about the Open Morning on pages 24 and 25.

Docent training for the Asian Civilisations Museum, NMS and STPI has begun. My best wishes go to all the new trainees for whom this will be an enriching learning journey. Lastly, FOM's Annual General Meeting is fast approaching. It will be held on 4 December in the NMS Seminar Room. I look forward to seeing you on that day, but if you can't join us, please remember to send your vote via the post.

As the year draws to a close, I want to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their dedicated service to FOM throughout the year.

I wish all the members who celebrate a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a Happy New Year to all!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garima". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Garima G Lalwani  
FOM President 2019



## PASSAGE

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**On the Cover:** Liu Kang (1911–2004), *Sunflowers* 1930. Oil on canvas, National Gallery Singapore, Liu Kang Family Donation [2003-14134]. This painting is one of the artworks on display in the *Living with Ink* exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum



FOM is a volunteer, non-profit society dedicated to providing volunteer guides and financial support to Singapore's museums and cultural institutions and to delivering programmes to enhance the community's knowledge of Asia's history, culture and art.

FOM is an Associate Member of the World Federation of Friends of the Museums.

FOM member privileges include free admission to NHB museums (excluding special exhibitions); access to FOM programmes including docent training, lectures, study tours, volunteer opportunities; a subscription to the FOM magazine, *PASSAGE*, and discounts at selected retail outlets, theatres and restaurants. Membership in FOM ranges from \$30 (senior) - \$120 (family) depending on category of membership.

For more information about FOM, visit our website [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg) or contact the FOM office.

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FOM is not responsible for statements expressed in the signed articles and interviews.

# Little India – a Scintillating Potpourri of Experiences

*By Yusoff Abdul Latiff*



A back lane off Maude Road, on the Jalan Besar side of Little India, is almost spotlessly clean. Gone are the days in Singapore when garbage was thrown out through a slitted hole in the back wall; when the back door was open every morning so the night-soil man could come in to collect the household's faecal deposits; and when the drain was used as a handy urinal. Also gone are the days when almost all the back lanes and many minor roads in Little India were dyed maroon red by betel leaf chewers who spat the residue and reddened saliva from their mouths, shooting it like a missile onto the ground. Even the heaviest rain could not clear it away; it took the next layering of asphalt to make the road's surface carbon black once again.

Betel-leaf chewing is addictive, acts as a stimulant and is supposed to have a psycho-active effect. Its use is common among the older generations of the Indian sub-continent, Southeast Asia and East Asia (Taiwan). The betel quid or paan consists of the betel leaf wrapped tightly around shavings of areca (betel nut), slaked lime, gambier, and also a few strands of tobacco. Today the betel-leaf-chewing generation has largely passed on or has abandoned the habit because it causes oral cancer and has other detrimental health effects. However, you can still spot a solitary betel seller in one of the sundry shops just across the road from Tekka Market, in Little India.



This sketch shows the junction of Rowell and Serangoon Roads. The Serangoon Road area, also known as Little India, was never designated an area for Indians, as were Kampong Gelam for the Malay/Muslim community and Chinatown for the Chinese. Nevertheless, since the early 1900s it has grown to become the heart of Singapore's Indian community.

Most of the century-old shophouses have been given conservation status since 1989. Today traditional businesses such as groceries, goldsmiths, sari shops, textile and garment shops, shops selling garlands, flowers and sweets, all co-exist alongside Indian restaurants, boutiques and souvenir shops. There is always a large crowd here: Indians, locals, tourists and migrant workers, as most of the shops stay open till late

into the night and some remain open for 24 hours, as does the iconic superstore Mustafa's.

Singapore has always depended a great deal on migrant workers from India and Bangladesh, especially in the construction sector and increasingly also in the IT sector. On the second level of 1C Rowell Road there is a safe haven for migrant workers who can no longer work because of injury or while waiting for salary claims. Here they can get meal vouchers, medical attention and also spend recreational time. It's run by the voluntary organisation Migrant Workers Count Too.

Little India is a wonderful place to paint *en plein air* or to simply wander around because the appetising aroma of curry constantly floats in the air.



The annual Deepavali light-up is always something to look forward to. It's been 31 years since the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association organised the first light-up and in addition to the glittering and wonderful archway of colourful lights, cultural performances, festival bazaars and street parades, there is the grand animal mascot that stands majestically greeting you at the entrance to

Serangoon Road, as you enter from Selegie Road. In recent years (including 2019) the graceful and beautiful peacock was the popular choice. However, for a change, in the 2017 light-up, two 12-metre-tall elephants were chosen, in line with the theme of royalty. Elephant or peacock or any other animal, each one certainly adds to the joyous atmosphere and festival buzz that Little India is noted for.

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**Yusoff Abdul Latiff** is a retired teacher who now indulges in painting watercolours with a focus on intricate Peranakan houses, colourful landscapes and detailed portraits.

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# Birdwatching

By Catalina



Blue-winged pitta (*Pitta moluccensis*)



Crimson sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*)



Straw-headed bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*)



Yellow-rumped



Barred eagle-owl (*Bubo sumatranus*)



Spotted wood owl (*Strix seloputo*)

Covered with lush, tropical, lowland forests and mangrove swamps at the time of Singapore's founding in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles, our environment has undergone a tremendous change in the past two centuries. Therefore, when one thinks of going birdwatching, Singapore is not a country that comes immediately to mind.

However, despite being a highly urbanised and heavily populated city-state, Singapore has many pockets of nature in Pulau Ubin, the Kranji Marshes, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, the Central Catchment Nature Reserve and Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, all of which deserve a visit. These green spots are home to approximately 400-odd resident and migratory bird species. Most of them can be found in our rainforests and mangroves, but quite a few can be seen in gardens and parks such as Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, Pasir Ris Park and the Southern Ridges.

If you drop by the rainforest areas, you will see birds such as the Red-crowned barbet, Blue-rumped parrot, Chestnut-bellied malkoha, Asian fairy bluebirds and Orange-bellied flowerpeckers.

In the mangroves of Pulau Ubin or Sungei Buloh, you will get to see the Mangrove pitta, Oriental pied hornbill, Ashy tailorbird, Copper-throated sunbird and the Black-backed kingfisher.

One can also appreciate the passing of the year while watching birds. Resident birds start to sing and nest in February through July. From August to April, migratory species, some of which have flown thousands of kilometres from as far away as Siberia and China, start visiting our small island.

With over 400 species of birds found in an area of just 720 square kilometres, Singapore is a surprisingly good place to discover the beautiful birds of Asia. Some elusive species such as the Spotted wood owl, Red-legged crakes, and Copper-throated sunbirds, are in fact easier to see here than in other countries in the region. Overseas birdwatchers on their way to birding hotspots in Southeast Asia, often stop by to see these rare birds.

One of the most wanted birds is none other than the Straw-headed bulbul. Highly sought after by bird hobbyists



# in Singapore

Tong



flycatcher (*Ficedula zanthopygia*)



Chestnut-bellied malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus sumatranus*)



Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)



Blue-tailed bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*)

for its powerful and rich song, the Straw-headed bulbul is one of the world's most endangered songbirds, owing to soaring demand in the pet trade. Hunted to extinction in Thailand and large parts of Indonesia, this avian songster is in danger of disappearing forever. However, there is one small haven where its status isn't just stable but is actually growing – Singapore! Globally, the wild population of this species is now estimated at 600-1,700 individuals. Singapore is thought to have at least 200 and counting, easily 12-34% of the world's remaining wild Straw-headed bulbuls, making our tiny island a stronghold for this bird.

To enjoy birdwatching and our natural heritage, all you need is a pair of binoculars and patience. However, if you are new to birdwatching, one of the best ways is to join citizen scientist programmes organised by the National Parks Board.

Programmes such as Heron Watch and Garden Bird Watch are great for learning about birds and for participating in surveys. Training workshops for the identification of birds and bird survey techniques are provided. Data derived from these projects provide crucial information for conservation strategies. Citizen scientists help with the collection of large amounts of data and in return, they get to learn more about Singapore's biodiversity. For more details go to: [www.nparks.gov.sg/biodiversity/community-in-nature-initiative/citizen-science-programmes](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/biodiversity/community-in-nature-initiative/citizen-science-programmes).

So, why not escape the hustle and bustle of the city for a walk in the park to admire these beauties and contribute to science?



Oriental dwarf kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*)



Blue-rumped parrot (*Psittinus cyanurus*)

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**Catalina Tong** is a docent at both the Asian Civilisations Museum and the National Museum of Singapore. She also guides at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. She is an avid bird-watcher, photographer and traveller.

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All photos by the author

# The Virgin of Mount Carmel

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

At the far end of the first-floor corridor with display cases of Canton export ceramics in the Asian Civilisations Museum's Trade Gallery, there are two statuesque 55-centimetre-tall figurines – one male, the other female. Both have bodies made of wood and beautifully crafted faces of ivory with hair and eyelashes that appear to be human. Their clothing is distinctively elegant, encompassing embroidery, lace and ornate textiles. The silver halo above the male figure holding a bouquet of lilies and a small infant, makes him immediately identifiable as Saint Joseph. The female figurine at his side holds a bouquet of yellow flowers and may once have also held a figure of the Christ Child, now missing.

What makes these figurines unusual is the scapulars, the monastic tunics they are holding, identifying them as Carmelite figurines. What makes these figurines so uncommon is that the Carmelites were the sole order founded in the Holy Land during the crusades of the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The order's origin is attributed to the period's Christian hermits who had taken up residence on Mount Carmel. In 1263, they are said to have dedicated their chapel to the individual closest to their saviour, Jesus Christ. That person was the Virgin Mary, thereafter known by the Carmelites as Our Lady of Mount Carmel or the Virgin of Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel's importance is recorded in the Old Testament as the mountain on which the Prophet Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:21-37) in order to prove to them who the True Lord was. Elijah's prayers were answered and the God of Abraham prevailed.

The Carmelite Order was formally approved at the Second Council of Lyon, France, held by Pope Gregory X in 1274. (It was at the First Council of Lyon in 1245 under Pope Innocent IV that the first Franciscan missionary to China, Friar John of Plano de Carpine, was sent off to beg the Mongols to stop attacking Christians and accept Christianity as their one true faith. We know how that mission ended.

During the early years of Christian orders, it was important that the different orders be identified by their clothing. The Franciscans tied three knots in their rope belts for their three vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. The Dominicans wore a distinctive black cape over their white



*Carmelite figurines in the Asian Civilisations Museum, photo by the author*

robes. The Jesuits, founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wore a long black gown with distinctive 'wings' believed to have been modelled on the French academic gowns of the era. Over their robes, as a sign of their faith and devotion to Mary, the Carmelites wore the scapular, which consisted of pieces of cloth worn on the back and chest.

The original Mount Carmel Monastery was overtaken and destroyed in 1291, but the Carmelite Order survived owing to one of its followers, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Englishman, Saint Simon Stock. He is credited with having had a vision in which the Virgin of Mount Carmel promised those wearing the scapular (whether brothers or lay followers) special protection, and if worn at the time of death, eternal salvation.

The two figurines are believed to have been made in the Philippines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and our curators note that they may not have been the original pair since "old labels on their cases describe both figures as holding figures of the Christ Child, which would be a highly unusual arrangement for a Holy Family group."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ACM, *Christianity in Asia: Sacred Art and Visual Splendour*, 2016, p. 238.

Patricia Bjaaland Welch is an ACM docent and frequent contributor to *PASSAGE* magazine.



# The Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Oldest Museum in the City

By Anne Pinto-Rodrigues

For Mumbai, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (King Shivaji Museum), formerly known as The Prince of Wales Museum, has always held pride of place although it is not the first museum built in the city. That credit goes to a much smaller, lesser known museum – the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum.

The idea of a museum in Bombay (as the city was known then), was advanced in 1850 when arrangements were underway for the first *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, to be held in London in 1851. Via this exhibition, Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, wanted to promote the rich industrial arts and crafts of the British colonies. The new museum planned for Bombay would display copies of India's finest decorative arts, sent to this exhibition and subsequent exhibitions as well.

Initially established in 1855, the museum reopened in its present building in 1872 as the Victoria and Albert Museum. In addition to industrial arts, it also showcased the history and cultural heritage of Bombay.

The museum building itself is a landmark as it was the first colonial building in the city to be constructed specifically for housing a museum. It has a grand Palladian exterior while the inside is designed in the



The celadon-green building of the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Photo courtesy of Janice D'Souza Barrett

High Victorian style, a rarity in India. In 1975, the museum was renamed the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, in honour of the first Indian Sheriff of Bombay. Dr Lad also played an instrumental role in the museum's establishment.

Beginning in 2003, the museum underwent an extensive five-year restoration, which earned it UNESCO's 2005 Award of Excellence in the field of Cultural Conservation. The building now boasts celadon-green walls with intricate stucco work, floors paved with heritage Minton tiles, and Doric pillars with 24-carat gold detailing. There are other interesting touches in the museum's decor, including the V&A symbol set in the wrought iron railings of the museum and the Star of David patterned into the curved ceiling, a tribute to the museum's Jewish sponsor, David Sassoon.

The museum's permanent collection is displayed in five galleries. The Origins of Mumbai Gallery has colonial-era maps and plans that trace the evolution of the city from a group of seven marshy islands known to the Romans as Heptanesia, to the elegant Bombay of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (the *Urbs Prima in Indis* – first city in India), to the bustling metropolis it is today.

Delightful dioramas and miniature clay models are



The opulent Victorian interior of the museum, with the Star of David patterned into the ceiling. Photo courtesy of the author

displayed in another permanent gallery. These document the varied cultures, occupations and lifestyles of the city's people, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The prohibitive costs of photography in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led the museum to make these terracotta models to depict the diversity of the communities that lived in the city.

The Industrial Arts Gallery displays Indian *objets d'art*, the very reason behind the creation of this museum. Local designs were modified to suit western tastes, creating a huge demand around the world for Indian craftsmanship. These Indian fine and decorative arts became very popular in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The V&A symbol set in the wrought iron railings of the museum. Photo courtesy of Marina Thayil

The Founders' Gallery and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Paintings Gallery are two other galleries in the museum's permanent collection. There is also a dynamic space where special exhibitions are held, with themes that link the city's present to its glorious past.

The story of the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum is inextricably linked to the history of Mumbai. In the midst of the city's frenetic bustle, the museum provides a serene space to learn about the history and evolution of the metropolis.

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**Anne Pinto-Rodrigues** is an Amsterdam-based writer and photographer. She documents subjects of interest to her. More about Anne on her website [www.annepintorodrigues.com](http://www.annepintorodrigues.com)

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# Christian Art in Asia: A Gallery of Wonder

By Darlene D Kasten

It is said that the Christian Art in Asia Gallery housed on the Faith and Belief floor in the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) is the only gallery of its kind anywhere in the world. It is wholly dedicated to historical sacred Christian art from across Asia, with imagery derived from a western tradition but executed and in many cases interpreted by Asian craftsmen using Asian materials and techniques. I believe that. As an avid museumgoer, I have never seen anything like it anywhere else. Most of the collection was part of a special exhibition mounted by the museum shortly after I moved from South Africa to Singapore in 2016. The exhibition, *Christianity in Asia: Sacred Art and Visual Splendour*, was a first as well.

During the process of researching the art and artefacts in the new gallery in order to guide there, I began to wonder, "What was responsible for the proliferation of sacred Christian art, primarily Roman Catholic, that made the establishment of this gallery and the special exhibition that preceded it even possible?" I would give the credit to a German Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546).

If it wasn't for Martin Luther, we may not have had the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And



Entrance to the Christian Art in Asia gallery at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Photo by the author

if we didn't have the Protestant Reformation, Pope Paul III would not have convened multiple sessions of the Council of Trent between 1545 and 1563. Without the Council of Trent, we would not have had the resulting Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation during which the Church sent thousands of missionaries out into the world and encouraged the creation of so much sacred Catholic art.

No one disputes that the medieval Roman Catholic

Church in Europe had significant issues before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, including rampant corruption. A prime example was the practice of selling 'indulgences' for money. These papal documents were sold to penitents by the clergy in exchange for the remission of sins. Sometimes these sins were extremely grave, such as murder. To add insult to injury, the Pope enthusiastically supported this practice in order to raise money for his own massive capital project, the construction of St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

To Luther and other critics, it appeared that salvation was for sale. In protest, Luther nailed 95 theses, or grievances, to the door of the Wittenberg Castle's church, and thus began the Protestant Reformation.



Martin Luther teacup and saucer, enamel and gold on porcelain, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jingdezhen, China. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum



Luther was declared a heretic by the Pope and excommunicated, western Christianity divided into Roman Catholics and Protestants, and a significant number of Roman Catholics either joined or formed new Protestant denominations in Europe.

The Pope convened the Council of Trent in response to the challenges of the Protestant Reformation. The council sought to redefine Catholic dogma, reaffirm the importance of core doctrines and rituals, and reform corrupt practices in order to revitalise the Roman Catholic Church in the face of Protestant expansion in Europe.

One of the biggest post-Reformation challenges was how and where to get new Catholics to replace those who had left to join the Protestants. The political climate meant evangelisation in Europe was out, but other very attractive options had recently arisen. Spain and Portugal had discovered a maritime trade route around the world, opening new opportunities for expansion outside Europe. Eager to spread Catholicism to these new worlds, zealous new religious orders were formed: orders such as the Carmelites, the Capuchins, and most importantly for Asia, the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, founded by St Ignatius of Loyola. Evangelical missions were launched by the Pope to accompany secular trade with South America, Africa and Asia. The rallying cry of these maritime trade missions became "God, Glory and Gold". God stood for the desire



*A Saint Ignatius of Loyola teacup and saucer, enamel and gold on porcelain, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jingdezhen, China. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum*



*A 19<sup>th</sup> century mother-of-pearl and wood tray from Vietnam with an image of St Peter's Basilica. Its construction was funded in part by the sale of indulgences. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum*

to spread and expand Christianity. Glory stood for the acquisition of greater power and larger empire. Finally, gold stood for the attainment of greater wealth.

But there was another papal directive that came out of the Council of Trent, one that was equally significant. In the 25<sup>th</sup> and final session of the Council of Trent in 1563, Pope Pius IV gave a direct call for an increase in the creation of sacred Catholic art, "by paintings and other representations."

This was the answer for which I was searching! With this directive, the Church actively encouraged the commission of works of art bearing images of saints and the life of Jesus: to teach doctrine, for personal veneration, to glorify God, and to generate profits. Asia offered fine

craftsmanship, cheap labour and unusual new materials. Add a new source of Spanish wealth from silver mines in the Americas and the result was a luxury trade network that circled the globe, and the production of sacred Catholic art to meet market demand.

Much, but not all, of the art in the Christian Art in Asia Gallery is Catholic art of the Counter-Reformation. Also on display are works commissioned by other Christian denominations, both before and after the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, works representing the St Thomas Christian Church, the Armenian Church, the Nestorians or Church of the East, the Lutherans and others.

All this musing about the gallery also had me wondering, "Why here? Why the ACM?" For that, I credit the museum's devotion to exploring the rich artistic heritage of all of Asia, making the ACM uniquely poised to present a pan-Asian gallery such as Christian Art in Asia.

In my view, it was downright visionary to dedicate a gallery to Christian Art in Asia. The galleries on the museum's second floor include art and artefacts pertaining to many expressions of faith and belief originating in Asia. Among them are the classic religions that spread through trade in Asia, religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Also represented are spiritual artefacts from ancestral and ritualistic societies native to Southeast Asia. Even the ancient Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Daoism are introduced in the Chinese Scholars Gallery. By ignoring Christianity, the museum would effectively be denying its considerable effect on the history and civilisations in the region.

I lived and travelled extensively around Africa before moving to Singapore and this past summer I took a course at the SOAS University of London on *The Arts of Christianity: East Africa to East Asia*. Afterwards I wondered, "Is there a single gallery in a museum somewhere in Africa similarly dedicated to Christian sacred art on that continent?" I don't think so, but if someone is considering it, the ACM's Christian Art in Asia Gallery might serve as a great model.

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**Darlene D Kasten** is a docent at the Asian Civilisations Museum and recently completed a SOAS University of London summer art course on *The Arts of Christianity: East Africa to East Asia*.

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*Except as noted, all photos courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum*

# When God Became Man

## Understanding Christmas Through Art

By Rachel Choo

As December draws near one might ask, "What lies beyond the simple assertion that Christmas marks the birth of Christ?" This article explores the meaning of that birth through the Asian Civilisations Museum's collection and shows how art embodies some key issues in the Christian, particularly Catholic, understanding of God.

Mainstream Christian belief is that the historical figure known as Jesus Christ was not just a man, but at the same time God himself who had become man, in order to save his people from sin. Christ was and *is* fully human and fully divine. Salvation is enacted through Christ's teachings and his healing of the sick, but fully realised in his suffering and death, and subsequent resurrection, itself the ultimate healing from death. Christ's incarnation, therefore, signifies God's choosing to share in his people's humanity, including their capacity for pain, suffering and even death, rather than clinging to his own divinity. No wonder that much Christian art concerns itself with Christ's birth and infancy. One's early years are their most observable introduction into the human condition.

Images depicting Christ's infancy are often joyous and serene. Note the regal composure of the Sri Lankan Virgin (Fig 1) holding up her child. As its saviour, the baby is believed to rule the world, which he grasps as an orb in his hand. His reign is joyous and because of their relationship, his mother is concomitantly crowned Queen of Heaven. Consider also the batik portrayal of the domestic bliss of a mother whose baby sits at the centre of a constellation of wondrous symbols (Fig 2). In a Japanese shrine (Fig 3), one sees the Christ-child's parents' tender adoration of their sleeping infant. These apparently earthly relationships point to the more complex, sublime relationship between man and God.

Children arrive in this world via their mothers. That too was how God entered into his humanity. Images of the Christ-child often include his mother, the Virgin Mary. Her abundant presence in Orthodox and Catholic art hails the humanity of her son, from whom she draws importance.



Fig 1. Virgin and Child, Sri Lanka, mid-16<sup>th</sup> century

This importance is not to be mistaken for an independence from, or competition with, Christ. Mary's paradoxical condition as a virgin-mother signals the uniqueness of Jesus' conception in her womb. Christians believe that Christ was conceived through the power of God's Holy Spirit, not by human intercourse, hence the possibility of a virgin bearing a child – the supreme child, like man in all things except for not having man's sinful nature, a child who in his perfection would rule the nations.

One can recognise the paradox of the supremely fruitful virgin in the batik baby-carrier cloth made by artisans in Java (Fig 2). The piece lends itself to various interpretations. It was created in Pekalongan, where the population included Chinese and Europeans, among others. The carrier's design could have been intended for either Buddhists or Christians, the woman and child representing Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion who often appears with one or more children, or the Virgin Mary with Christ. The latter pairing is suggested



Fig 2. Batik baby-carrier with image of mother and child, Pekalongan, Java, Indonesia, circa 1910

by a Pop Art-esque reference to Huntley and Palmers' Marie (spelt *Marii* on the batik) biscuits. Butterflies surround the central twosome. In Chinese symbolism, butterflies represent romantic love because they often appear in pairs. That the carrier has nine butterflies might be explained by that number's association with male energy, here accompanying the male child, identifiable by his hairstyle. The stags may also be European symbols for Christ.

Today, an even more profound Catholic interpretation might impute further meaning. Three European chandeliers around the mother's head, perhaps intended as domestic ornaments in the eclectic ensemble, become references to Christ, the light of the world. Nor is the allusion to romantic love necessarily misplaced. The Virgin Mary is sometimes termed the Bride of Christ. She is not his bride in the literal sense of being his mother. She is metaphorically and





Fig 3. Shrine with painting of Holy Family and John the Baptist, Japan, 17<sup>th</sup> century

mystically his bride in that her own sinlessness (according to Catholic tradition) has her conflated with what the Bible calls “the chaste virgin” to be presented to Christ in marriage, “the church . . . without . . . spot or wrinkle,” whom Christ “present[s] . . . to himself in splendour”. The devotion of Christ to his people (the church) and vice versa is often compared to marriage. For Christ to save his church, Mary had first to be the prototype Bride of Christ by virtue of her sinlessness, so as to contain in her womb the perfection that is God. Being pure enough to bear Christ, she also became the model for the church, which will ultimately become perfect through Christ’s salvation.

Mary personifying the church is also suggested in the Timorese Virgin (Fig 4), who protectively clasps her child. The church, the living body of Christ’s disciples, is where one finds him. Just as God saves man through his actions as Christ, the church in turn safeguards the treasure who is Christ. And while the severity of both Christ’s and Mary’s faces might startle us, a Timorese Catholic, accustomed to pre-Christian ancestral figures carved in very similar style, would have found the visual inculturation of Catholic beliefs into his material culture adding one more layer to the safeguarding of a valued tradition.

Although joyous, Christ’s birth also bore the seeds of graver events necessary to enact salvation.

The sleeping Christ-child watched over by the Virgin and her husband Joseph in the elaborately decorated Japanese shrine (Fig 3), recalls Luke’s



Fig 4. Virgin and Child, Timor-Leste, 19<sup>th</sup> century

gospel. Her crown and clothing, Joseph’s hair and beard, and Christ’s halo and coverlet are sumptuously depicted. Yet the reflective believer knows that this regal scene is based on the reality of a poor couple finding no room at the inn and being forced to lay the baby in a manger. This valuing of what is profound and hidden, speaks to the Japanese aesthetic quality of *yugen*, through which mystery (as with the humble circumstances surrounding Christ’s birth) is maintained even as revelation (of the Christ-child’s glory) unfolds. In Christianity, glory is undergirded by humility. This principle informs the triumph of Christ’s resurrection, which only becomes possible after he experiences death on the cross.

The convention of including Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist in infancy scenes (Figs 3, 5) ostensibly enhances their childlike innocence. However, John already wears a coarse camel-hair garment in which, as an adult, he foretells the coming of his cousin the saviour. John’s

cross-staff alludes to Christ’s death on the cross, which is also foreshadowed by John’s martyrdom in adulthood. John’s ‘pet lamb’ in Muhammad Zaman’s pastoral scene is

actually Christ, the obedient Lamb of God (or *Agnus Dei*, mentioned on John’s banner in the shrine) who sacrifices himself for mankind’s salvation. In religious art, such symbols customarily accompanying a religious figure, called attributes, demonstrate the figure’s individual powers (a lightning bolt, for example, could be hurled against enemies). In Catholic art, attributes often refer to personal suffering. This is because suffering has the power to save and transform the lives of believers, as exemplified by Christ’s death and resurrection.

In these artworks, innocence pairs with responsibility, and suffering partners triumph, as God reaches out to man through the birth of Christ.



Fig 5. Virgin and Child with John the Baptist, Muhammad Zaman, Iran, 1682-83

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**Rachel Choo** was formerly Coordinator of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore’s Records and Archives, including its collection of decommissioned liturgical artefacts. She has a master’s degree in art history and a research interest in Christian art.

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All images courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Heritage Board

# Paper Trails

## On Paper: Singapore Before 1867

By Vidya Schalk

When we seek to understand our past, one of the first places we look is our collection of books and documents. Historically, paper has been the material of choice for recording our histories and to document the events that have shaped our history.

Over 150 paper-based documents including maps, letters, manuscripts, photographs, treaties, archival records and paintings, are on display at the National Library as part of the *On Paper: Singapore Before 1867* exhibition. Divided into four sections (Earliest Maps and Charts, 1819-1824, Life in Early Singapore, 1867) this exhibition gives us a rich sense of Singapore's early history till 1867, when the Straits Settlements became a Crown Colony. Rare documents originating from 14 institutions both from Singapore and abroad are also on display; many of them are being shown to the public in Singapore for the first time. For many historians and history buffs, these documents help fill in gaps and seeing some of the documents and maps that up to now we have only read or heard about, is a real treat.

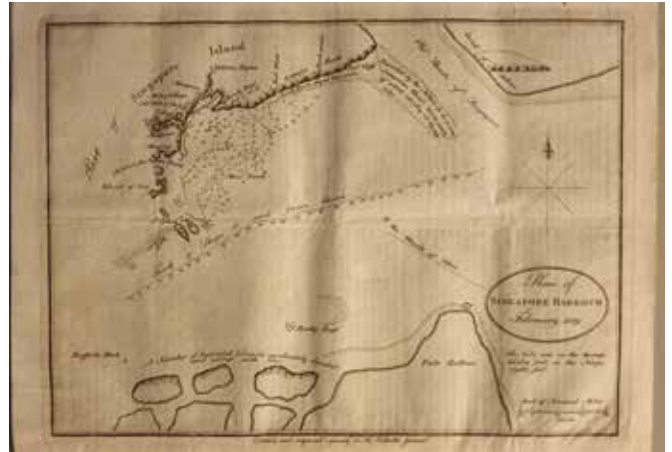
As we enter the exhibition, we encounter a huge map on display called the *Selden Map of China from the early 17th C*, on loan from the Bodleian Library, Oxford (one of the Treasures of the Bodleian). It is a remarkable map, not just because of its immense size and elaborately decorated landscapes and plants, but also because of its historical significance. It was one of the first Chinese maps to reach Europe after being acquired by a London lawyer named John Selden, hence the name. We do not know how he came to own the map, but it was only in 2008 that its historical importance was realised.



The Selden Map of China and Southeast Asia, c early 1600s, the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

The Selden map is unique because it identifies more than 60 ports radiating from the port of Quanzhou in Fujian province into Southeast Asia all the way to India, indicative of the extent of China's interaction with the world during a period when it was presumed to be isolated. Also on display is the Mao Kun map (compiled in 1612) and the 1604 Eredia map. The Mao Kun map is the only known cartographical work that mentions Temasek. The 1604 Eredia map depicts the name 'Sincapura' and he is one of only two cartographers to place 'Xabandaria' (*Shahbandaria*) on the island. *Shahbandar* means Port or Harbour Master.

Moving from Singapore before the 1800s, we enter the section called *Singapura/ Singapore: 1819-1824* which houses the historical Bute map (late 1819), on loan to Singapore for the very first time. This is the earliest known map of the town of Singapore and depicts where the British acquired the rights to establish a settlement. It is a visually attractive representation of an aerial view of Singapore focusing on



Calcutta Journal (showing the Ross map and survey report), India, 6 April and 1 May 1819, Collection of the National Library, Singapore

the south of the island and charts out in detail the proposed locations of key defence installations, bridges, forts, gun battery installations, sepoy tents, military cantonments, parade grounds etc. We can also see Rocky Point clearly marked, the spot where the Singapore Stone once stood and where Fort Fullerton was eventually built, the 'Ancient Lines of Singapore' encircling the northern foot of Singapore Hill (*Bukit Larangan*, today's Fort Canning Hill) and other interesting details. Various town maps and cadastral maps of Singapore track the transformation of Singapore over time and these are truly fascinating. One can spend hours looking at the changes as well as the parts that are still identifiable even after 200 years.

One intriguing and fascinating piece of information is the publication of a leaked survey map published in the *Calcutta Journal* and dated 6 April and 1 May 1819. Captain Daniel Ross, a hydrographer, performed a detailed survey to establish the feasibility of situating a trading post that commanded the southern end of the Malay Peninsula. Ross proposed surveying the mouth of the Singapore River and confirmed the suitability of Singapore as a site for the factory. The Ross map uses the name Singapore for the very first time. Even though this very first survey map was officially



The Bute Map (the earliest known map of Singapore town), c late 1819, The Bute Archive at Mount Stuart, Scotland, UK





Muslim Mosque in Campong Glam, Singapore (*Masjid Sultan or Sultan Mosque in its first iteration between 1824-26 is represented here*). John Turnbull Thomson, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka O Hākena, University of Otago, NZ



Chinese Temple to the Queen of Heaven (*Thian Hock Keng Temple*), 1847. Hocken Collections

secret, it somehow ended up being published in the *Calcutta Journal* and it is open to speculation as to who leaked this top-secret map – perhaps to drum up public support for the establishment of Singapore.

Just beneath the surface of everyday life were simmering tensions, many carried over from faraway lands and also over the control of trade in the island. This manifested itself on 5 May 1854. For almost 12 days Singapore was engulfed in island-wide riots that resulted in the deaths of 500 people and the destruction of 300 homes. A hand-coloured map documents the Great Riots of 1854, also known as the Hokkien-Teochew Riots or the Five Catties of Rice Riots. They are considered to be among the worst incidents of domestic conflict within the Chinese community in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The riots began as a simple dispute over how rice was weighed between a Hokkien shopkeeper and his Teochew customer, but when the bystanders took sides according to their dialect groups, the dispute escalated into rioting.

Seven original handwritten letters to William Farquhar, written between 1818 and 1822, are on loan from the US Library of Congress (LOC), Asian Division. Having lived in Melaka for 18 years prior to coming to Singapore, Farquhar was held in high esteem and was addressed as “*Tuan Besar*” meaning big boss. Twenty regional leaders including those from Riau, Siak and Brunei, sent letters in Jawi (Malay written in modified Arabic script) to Farquhar and are collectively called *MS Jawi 12*. Almost all of them relate to the establishment of friendly relations with the British and how Farquhar nurtured relationships with Malay rulers.

Of particular interest is a letter to Farquhar from Sultanah Siti Fatimah from Pamanah (South Sulawesi) informing him of the death of Sultan Ali Dato and her ascendance to the



Hindoo Pagoda and Jamae Mosque, 1846. Hocken Collections

throne. As the reigning monarch, she was sending a request to purchase weapons, gunpowder and bullets. It is the only extant letter from a reigning female monarch from the Malay world and evidence not only of elite women’s literacy, but also of their involvement in trade and administration. How these letters made their way to the LOC is a fascinating story unto itself. It involves the visit of the United States Exploring Expedition led by Lt Wilkes and his stop in Singapore in 1842. Wilkes met with Joseph Balestier and also Alfred North, an American missionary and printer who procured these letters and other manuscripts, which then made their way to the Smithsonian Institution and eventually to the LOC in 1865. Alfred North also encouraged Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (Munshi Abdullah) to write a memoir which was published as the *Hikayat Abdullah* and became one of the most read literary works in the Malay world. It was subsequently translated into various languages.

Singapore has been an important and fascinating port of call for centuries, not just because of its strategic location at the tip of the Malay Peninsula and perennial source of fresh water, but also because it was nurtured carefully 200 years ago to attract commerce and trade from across the world. The Wilkes Expedition of 1842 described Singapore as the “Babel of the East” – an amazingly diverse place with a rich confluence of races, languages and cultures in peaceful coexistence. The hustle and bustle of people and goods must have been a sight to behold and this exhibition attempts to capture the history of how it all came to be in a tangible way via one of the enduring materials man invented and on which he recorded his history – paper.

The *On Paper: Singapore Before 1867* exhibition can be seen at the National Library Singapore through 22 March 2020.



Letter from Sultanah Siti Fatimah binti Jamaluddin Abdul Rahman (Pamanah, South Sulawesi), 13 Zulkaedah 1237 (1 August 1822), Library of Congress, Washington DC, Farquhar Collection, Asian Division, MS Jawi 12

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**Dr Vidya Schalk** is a research scientist and currently teaches a module in Materials Science at NTU. She is also a docent at various museums and at the National Gallery in Singapore.

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# My Grandfather's Road: The Eurasian Story

By Jane Ong

Ask any Eurasian Singaporean and they will tell you stories of mistaken identity. With names such as Stewart, Oehlers or Pereira and a face that you can't quite place, you would not be the only one to think they are foreigners. However, this person may very well be a fourth-generation Singaporean able to trace his/her ancestry to the Portuguese occupation of Melaka from 1511 to 1641.

The newly revamped Eurasian Heritage Gallery (EHG) showcases and preserves the rich Eurasian culture and heritage. Located on the fourth floor of the Eurasian Community House (ECH) at 139 Ceylon Road, you will be welcomed by a video of Joseph Schooling, Singapore's first Olympic gold medallist and Euylyth Philips, a pioneer docent at the EHG. Immediately, both young and old can make a connection with Singapore's Eurasian community.

Who are the Eurasians? The first panel and a 'Roots' video answer the question from a historical perspective. The Portuguese, who came in search of spices, to expand their empire and spread Christianity, married local women – the mixed-race Eurasians are their descendants. Later they were also of Dutch, British and other European descent, coming from Melaka, Penang, the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia) and other colonies. After World War II they made up 2.2% of the population, however, this number dwindled to 1% during the 1960s. Today, owing to the influx of expatriates seeking work in Singapore and intermarrying here, there has been an uptick in the number of first-generation Eurasians.

If you would like to know how to recognise a Eurasian, an entire wall is filled with photos of Eurasian faces captioned with their ethnic origins, as complex and multi-layered as the different races and nationalities that have occupied Singapore over the centuries. In the instances when families were able to trace them, flappable panels trace their family trees. An adjacent panel shows the history of the Eurasian Association (EA) and its role as a voice for the community, building bonds and lending support within the community as a self-help group. Established in 1919, the EA is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, with great fanfare.

The last section in this room, Home Ground, displays photos of buildings, streets and *kampungs* where Eurasians lived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s. Unlike other racial groups, the Eurasians were not segregated by the colonial government and the earliest enclave sprang up around Queen Street, which was referred to as Eurasian Street because of its location next to the government and commercial offices where they were employed, and the Catholic schools and churches they attended.

Continuing on along a corridor, *My Grandfather's Road* is a display highlighting several roads named after pioneer



*Faces of Eurasians*

Eurasians who served and contributed in various ways. Here you will find many stories in the road names, especially if you join a guided tour. Many of the docents are Eurasians themselves and even those who are not, will relate the personal anecdotes of some of these pioneers.

The second gallery houses what is jokingly referred to as "the Famous Five", life-size figures of Eurasians who have made significant contributions to Singapore: Benjamin Sheares, Edmund Barker, Stanley Stewart, Judith Prakash and Noeleen Heyzer. Alongside them are many other prominent Eurasians, the professions they excelled in and the part they played in the development of a fledgling nation. Eurasians were in a privileged position; having been educated in English, they were the preferred candidates for jobs such as in the civil service, education, healthcare, law and the media. This prepared them to take on leading roles in the 1960s right up to independence, a baton of contribution and excellence handed on through the generations.



*Five Eurasians who contributed to a young nation, pre- and post-independence*





The panel about Halford Boudewyn in the war section



Recipes in which East meets West

My family's contribution to the gallery is a medal belonging to my grandfather Dr Benjamin Sheares, the second president of Singapore. This highest civilian honour is the Order of Temasek, instituted in 1962 by then Deputy Prime Minister S Rajaratnam. Recipients include Dr Goh Keng Swee our 'economic architect' and S Rajaratnam himself, both key players in Singapore's post-independence success story. Non-Singaporeans can also be awarded the Order of Temasek, as was Queen Elizabeth II during her state visit in 1972. In fact, my grandfather officiated at the ceremony, since the medal is customarily bestowed by the president.



A typical dining set with European influence

Interestingly, when the medal was received on permanent loan, the curators at the EHG could not find Benjamin Sheares on the list of recipients, of whom there are 18 to date. To solve this mystery, they made inquiries at the Prime Minister's Office and discovered that he had been conferred the honour posthumously during his state funeral in 1981. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had called on him to serve a third term, but halfway through it he succumbed to lung cancer. His only regret was that he had been unable to serve out his final term to the high standards he had set for himself.

Personal anecdotes aside and returning to the narrative of the gallery, the story of World War II begins with a showcase of pioneers in the armed forces and those who defended our shores both past and present. The *Shadow of War* tells the story of the Japanese occupation through the eyes of the Eurasians. Because of food shortages in Singapore, the Japanese persuaded the Eurasians to move to Bahau

in Negeri Sembilan, Malaya, promising houses, land and relative freedom. The 3D model of the Bahau settlement is one of the few artefacts that has been preserved from the old gallery and tells the story of their struggle for survival. One of the highlights in this section is the story of Halford Boudewyn, a war hero whose acts of bravery were uncovered after extensive research for a book about him. Published this year, it will be for sale at the ECH.

The third and last gallery encapsulates the Eurasian way of life through religion, language, dress, recreation and cuisine. As true Singaporeans, Eurasians take their food very seriously and it is said that family recipes were lost when they were not passed down. This was also the case with Kristang, the Portuguese-Eurasian language, which is experiencing a revival with the formation of *Kodrah Kristang* (meaning Awaken, Kristang) set up in 2016 to save the language from extinction.

Whilst Eurasians are known to work hard, they also enjoy their recreation and have produced many pioneers in music, dance, theatre and sports. You will see photos, clothing, ceremonies, décor, dining-ware recipes and all things held dear in a typical Eurasian household. The artefacts have been generously donated by the Eurasian community, from grandma's wedding dress to the swimming cap worn by Joseph Schooling. These everyday items represent the Eurasians' cultural melting pot, drawn from the diverse heritage of inter-marriage, evident throughout the gallery.

Having been closed since October 2018 for renovations and officially opened by President Halimah Yacob on 21 September 2019, the EHG is a gem of a gallery about Eurasian culture and community. For a guided tour, contact [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org) to arrange a group booking. While you're there, have lunch at Quentin's, a restaurant curated by Eurasian chef Quentin Pereira. Try some quintessential Eurasian dishes such as devil's curry and sugée cake and taste the fusion between East and West – more East than West, judging by the spices!

NB – The story of the Bahau settlement appeared in the 2015 July/August issue of *PASSAGE* magazine.

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**Jane Ong** is Singaporean and has been a docent at NMS for the past two years. Her grandfather and mother were among Singapore's pioneer Eurasians.

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All photos by the author

# Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch

Visitors to the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) have been enjoying Dr Tan Tsze Chor's collection (identified by its studio name, *Xiang Xue Zhuang*) for many years, but it is unlikely many will have realised that they were all the gift of one self-made entrepreneurial businessman who became famous in Singapore as the 'Pepper King', who was also a passionate collector of Chinese art. Nor was the ACM the only beneficiary of his collecting passion and sponsorships. In addition to bequeathing items from his collection over the years to the ACM and other museums, Dr Tan also organised charity sales, helped set up art funds and was a generous supporter of many artists and art associations.

Moreover, it is clear from his collection that he knew and loved Chinese history; many of the additions to his collection are rich in motifs taken from Chinese folklore or are enveloped in Chinese history. One of the best examples was a scroll that was recently displayed in the ACM's second floor Scholar's Gallery by Pu Ru (1896-1963), a member of China's last ruling imperial family, which was one of three copies inspired by an original painting (now lost) by Zhuang Xuan (714-742) depicting a Tang Dynasty courtesan and her entourage riding magnificent steeds on their way to a spring picnic. The painting, when seen in the light of a poem written by Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu (712-770) reveals the painting's hidden message of disappointment and the moral frustration felt by those who saw the country's resources being squandered by a love-struck emperor (Emperor Xuanzong) on his concubine (Yang Guifei) and members of her family.

The ceramic examples in the ACM's *Living with Ink* exhibition are another example. While Dr Tan collected a variety of Chinese ceramics, rather than collecting the smaller Song monochromes that feature in many collectors-of-means' showcases (one of the exceptions is included in the exhibition – a Song dynasty Yaozhou vase), he was particularly fond of the ceramics known as 'Transitional Ware' because they appeared during the period marking the transition from the Han Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), roughly designated as being between 1620-1683, or from the death of the Emperor Wanli in 1620 to 1683, when Cang Yingxuan was appointed superintendent of the newly reorganised imperial factories in Jingdezhen by the Emperor Kangxi.

These are, for the most part, large stately blue and white



Pan Tianshou (1897–1971) and various artists, *The Five Prosperities, Bingyin year (1926), Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 111.5 x 46.8 cm*

ceramics featuring new designs, many directly inspired by the popular woodblock prints of the day showing pivotal scenes from classic Chinese novels. One featured vase shows a scene from the *Water Margin* (*Shuihuzhuan*), the lively tale of 108 'righteous outlaws'. One of the important features of this vase, in addition to the scene showing three companions of the heroic leader (Song Jiang), is the stylised tulip on the vase's narrow neck, just below the everted lip. Tulips are not indigenous to China, but began appearing on Chinese ceramics in the 1640s (post-1635), most likely inspired by European or Central Asian imports. The appearance of these flowers is a trusty aid in helping us date mid-17<sup>th</sup> century blue and white Chinese ceramics.

But if the ceramics are the exhibition's appetiser, the main entrée is the 68 Chinese paintings, 35 examples of calligraphy, together with a dozen seals and ink stones, which include pieces on loan from other museums and collections.

In many ways, Dr Tan is representative of that thoughtful group of educated early Singaporeans who, because of certain socio-political factors, made it possible for rich overseas Chinese to collect Chinese art. Because many of the Chinese artists who left China in the troubled years of the 1930s, either stopped or settled temporarily

in Singapore, local Singaporeans were introduced to some of the new schools of art, if not some of the emerging artists themselves. One example is the Shanghai School, which referred over time to those artists who congregated in Shanghai as a result of its multicultural and bustling commercial environment. Ren Yi (aka Ren Bonian, 1840-1895) is one of the best-known artists identified with the Shanghai School, and was one of the artists Dr Tan admired the most. Ren Yi's oversize paintings of four of the group known as the 'Eight Immortals' were so cherished by Dr. Tan that we have learned from Dr Tan's eldest son that he buried them in his father's rubber plantation to safeguard them during the Japanese occupation. At one point, it was believed that Dr Tan had 100 of Ren Yi's works in his collection.

The artist Xu Beihong (1895-1953), who spent many years in Singapore during the Japanese occupation, was a close friend of Dr Tan's and painted hundreds of paintings in order to raise money for the war effort in China. Dr Tan was fortunate to acquire many of his paintings, including the iconic *Pair of Horses* (1940), believed to represent the



spirit of a young China, standing strong, pawing the ground, “to represent China’s indomitable spirit in the face of the Japanese invasion”.

One of your author’s favourite paintings in the collection is an informal still-life known as *The Five Prosperities* (*Wurui 五瑞*), painted by Pan Tianshou (1898-1971) and four close friends, each fruit or vegetable shown having a symbolic meaning. The *pipa* fruit (Chinese or Japanese plum, the loquat in English) representing wealth because of its gold colour; pomegranates representing an extended family/clan because of their many seeds; spring onions (*cong*) employ a word pun, another *cong* being a homophone that means ‘clever or intelligent’; garlic (*suan*) also employs a word pun as another *suan* sounds like ‘calculating’, as in accumulating wealth (garlic is also understood to be an antidote for poison); and the serrated artemisia (mugwort) leaves embody medicinal and curative properties so represent good health and longevity. Several of these herbs/fruits are employed during the 5/5 (*Duanwu*) Festival, traditionally the most dangerous day of the year, to combat any encroaching dangers. But then there are so many wonderful paintings by Qi Baishi, Chen Wenhsi and others, visitors will have a hard time choosing a favourite.

Dr Tan was himself a calligrapher and one not afraid to stir traditional waters. While most calligraphers stick to one of the five standard styles, Dr Tan often chose to mix different styles on a single sheet (most often Regular, Running and Cursive). Be sure to visit the exhibition on a guided tour so FOM docents can help you identify each of the various scripts and enjoy the characteristics of each.

Completing the ink theme is a small collection of inkstones, many of which have auspicious motifs or lineage such as the *duan* inkstone with the theme of ‘100 Antiquities’, represented by a collection of nine auspicious symbols popular during the Qing dynasty.

Dr Tan’s collection also included 48 seals carved by one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most prolific and loved artists, Qi Baishi (1864-1957), who was a masterful carver of ‘chops’ as well as a painter. He was so well-regarded as a carver of seals that one of his sobriquets (nicknames) was *Sanbai Shiyin Fuweng* (Wealthy Man of 300 Ink Seals). Qi Baishi was said to have mastered the art of spatial balance. One of Dr Tan’s favourite gifts for special friends was a sheet with all 48 of Qi Baishi’s seals stamped on it in red ink.

The exhibition will be on display in the ACM’s special exhibitions gallery from 7 November 2019 through 22 March 2020 and has been curated by ACM curator



Vase with characters from *Water Margin*, Mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, porcelain. Asian Civilisations Museum, Note the stylised tulip on the vase’s neck



One of a set of four hanging scrolls, Chinese ink and colour on paper by Ren Yi (1840-1895) depicting the Eight Immortals. This painting depicts the sole female of the group, He Xiangu holding her long-stemmed lotus, together with Li Tiegua, bent over his iron crutch and wearing the ragged clothes of a beggar

Conan Cheong, who notes that “This new exhibition of the works of art in Dr Tan’s collection invites visitors to revisit it as one would an old friend. It re-unites them for the first time with paintings that Dr Tan donated in his lifetime to museums in Singapore and Taipei. We are also putting on display loans of artworks by local artists and calligraphers active in the 1930s to 1980s, when Tan was building his collection, to give visitors a glimpse into the Singapore art world in this exciting period of history.”

An earlier catalogue of this collection was published in 2006: *The Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection: Donations to the Asian Civilisations Museum*. Singapore: ACM, 2006. We await a new catalogue in honour of this newly curated exhibition.

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**Patricia Bjaaland Welch** is a long-tenured ACM docent who describes her own calligraphy (after two years of lessons) as resembling the footprints of drunken birds on a beach.

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All images courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum, from the *Xiang Xue Zhuang Collection* in memory of Dr Tan Tsze Chor



# Kain Pelangi: Rainbow Cloth of Southeast Asia

By Noor Azlina Yunus

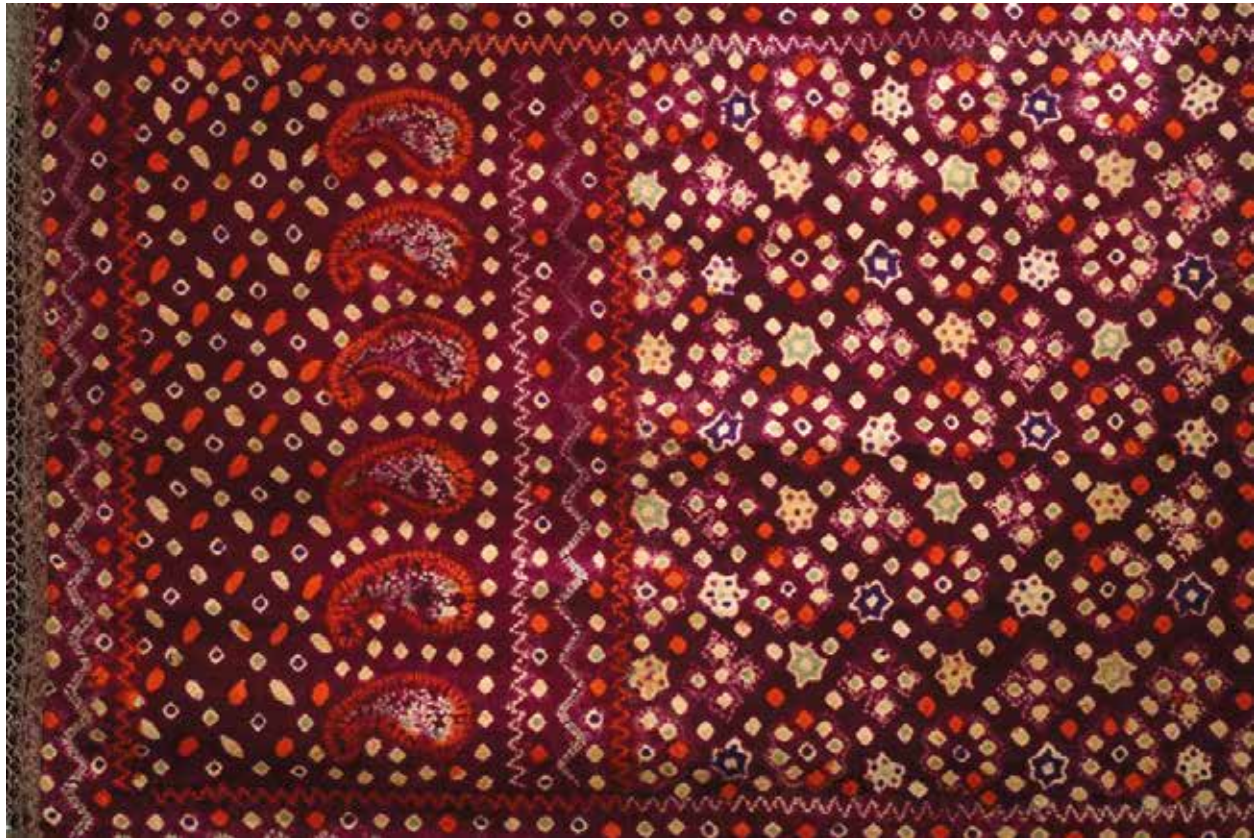


Fig 1. Detail of one end of a tie-dye shawl (selendang), part of a sarong and shawl set. Worked on imported Chinese silk, it illustrates the Indian-influenced, geometrically patterned spatial arrangement common to Southeast Asian untailored apparel. The central field (badan) contains stylized stars and rosettes enclosed by borders consisting of simple spots, zigzags and meanders. A row of bold, teardrop-shaped paisley motifs (bunga botoh) lies across the end, which is finished with a band of metallic-thread bobbin lace. Palembang region, south Sumatra, Indonesia. Collection of the author. Photo courtesy of Yayasan Budi Penyayang

*Pelangi* or *plangi* (tie-dyeing) and *tritik* (stitch-resist) are among the earliest attempts to apply surface decoration on plain, finely woven cloth in the Malay-speaking countries and territories of Southeast Asia to produce what is known as *kain pelangi* (rainbow cloth). The areas of production extend in an arc from southern Thailand along the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, the coast of Brunei and the east coast of Sumatra to Java, Sulawesi and the southern Philippines. *Pelangi* and *tritik* are considered rudimentary and thus relatively minor surface-decorative techniques in the rich inventory of Southeast Asian textile production, best known for its exquisite handwoven weft ikat, gold brocade and gold-stamped cloths. However, their use was widespread in coastal cultures where Islam was dominant and there was a preference for geometric and denaturalised stylization. They were also methods that could be used to decorate the attire of rulers and commoners alike and on cloths both rich and simple, large and small (Fig 1).

Both *pelangi* and *tritik* are dye-resist processes that do not use wax. *Pelangi*, which means rainbow, is the name of both the tie-dye technique and the



Fig 2. The bright colours of Indian textiles are apparent in this shawl as are some of the patterns, including rows of tie-dye bunga botoh highlighted in black pigment with a fine brush. Small wooden blocks (sarang bunga) dipped in mud have been used to apply the outlines of motifs on the purple badan prior to stitching and dyeing. East coast, Malaysia. Collection of the author. Photo courtesy of Yayasan Budi Penyayang



colourful rainbow-like end result. Small pockets of plain white cloth with a firm, smooth surface are tightly bound by cord, palm strips or pineapple thread to prevent the dye from penetrating the area. Patterns are generally built up from small circular forms and laid out in a formal, grid-like manner. In the *tritik* technique (*tritik* means 'drops of water'), linear designs are created by stitching and tightly gathering the cloth with thread prior to dyeing. Sometimes the outlines of certain motifs are applied to the cloth prior to stitching with small mud-impregnated wooden blocks (Fig 2). To achieve an overlapping multi-coloured rainbow effect, the *pelangi* and *tritik* processes are repeated using a different set of bindings and a different dye each time, starting with the lighter colours and ending up with the darkest. Both techniques usually complement each other on the same cloth and are sometimes accompanied by a third technique – daubing additional dyes as highlights. The techniques were particularly suited to imported lightweight, machine-woven Indian cotton and Chinese silk, and to bright chemical dyes, and were mostly used to decorate softer, smaller items of clothing, such as head cloths and sashes for men and bodice wraps for women. Larger items such as women's sarongs and shawls (*selendang*) are among the most ornate *kain pelangi* and are primarily the work of Malay women of the Palembang region of south Sumatra, Indonesia, who possibly made them for ceremonial purposes (see Fig 1).

The *pelangi* tie-dyeing technique is generally considered to have been introduced to Southeast Asia by Muslim Gujarati traders from northwest India in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and locally assimilated and adapted. In India, where *pelangi* is known as *bandhani*, from the Hindi word 'to tie', tie-dyeing is not only one of the country's oldest textile techniques but is also associated with Islam (Fig 3). *Bandhani* continues to be crafted in remote villages in Gujarat and Rajasthan for saris and turbans. Further evidence of an Indian origin for *pelangi* and *tritik* lies in the enormous influence that certain types of Indian textiles, initially Indian double-ikat *patola* silks and later block-printed and painted cotton cloths from Gujarat, have had on the textiles of Southeast Asia. This is most obvious in the spatial arrangement, schematic designs, motifs and bright colours of sarongs and shawls.

In Southeast Asia, the format of sarongs traditionally comprises a main decorative head panel or *kepala* flanked by the main body or *badan*, with the ends sewn to form a tube or left free in the form of a long cloth. In contrast, the format of shawls is composed of a large central area, the *badan*, while the two loose ends have an identical *kepala*-like



Fig 3. An elderly Indian man wearing a bandhani-decorated turban, characterised by pelangi spots and multiple hues. Photo by Hiteshe Ghate from Pexels



Fig 4. This sarong is decorated almost entirely in tritik stitching on designs stamped with sarang bunga. A double row of opposing isosceles triangles (*pucuk rebung*) dominates the *kepala* while the *badan* is filled with regular rows of small stylized *bunga boteh*. A creeping vine border separates the main design areas. East coast, Malaysia. Collection of Muzium Seni Asia, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Photo courtesy of Yayasan Budi Penyayang

format. The main components are demarcated by borders of various widths. The most common motif for the *kepala* and ends is the triangular *pucuk rebung* (bamboo shoot) motif (Fig 4), although the well-known teardrop-shaped Persian *boteh*/Kashmiri *buta*, known in the West as paisley and locally as *bunga boteh*, found much favour on *kain pelangi* (see Figs 1, 2 and 5). Stylized repeat-patterned motifs comprising a variety of shapes derived from circles decorate the *badan*.

It may well be that the simple technique of tie-dyeing developed independently in parts of Southeast Asia. This is evidenced by the use of this basic technique among non-Islamic communities in inland regions, such as the Karo Batak of North Sumatra, who use it to decorate head and shoulder cloths with simple, stark designs, and the Toraja of central Sulawesi, who include bold *pelangi* motifs on cotton hangings and banners. *Kain pelangi* continues to be produced today in various coastal centres, aimed mostly at the tourist trade. Worked on flimsy silk, the patterns are often crude and the colours muted. Palembang is the only centre today producing fine, albeit costly, *kain pelangi* with complex Indian-inspired patterns, often embellished with gold stamping.



Fig 5. A contemporary *pelangi* scarf (left) and shawl (right), purchased in Bali and Kuala Lumpur. Collection of the author

**Noor Azlina Yunus** has lived and worked in Malaysia for fifty years. She has a deep interest in the art and craft of the Malay World and has written books on Malaysian songket and batik.



# Boro: From Frugality to Fashion

By Seema Shah

The Japanese refer to mended or patched textiles as *boro* or rags. Derived from the native *boro-boro*, meaning something tattered or repaired, it is associated with the indigo-dyed hemp cloth that was traditional in Japan before the introduction of cotton.

*Boro* first emerged in 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan as a means for farmers and peasants to extend the life of tattered kimonos, linen and other textiles. It was common in those times to own just a few pieces of clothing and to mend as needed, with the end result resembling a patchwork quilt. This raw style soon became a genre of its own as its technique echoed the philosophies of *mottainai*, or 'too-good-to-waste', and *wabi-sabi*, the acceptance of imperfection, both of which have long influenced Japanese culture.

Although beautiful, these folk textiles came about from sheer necessity. "Poverty was the root cause of the *boro* tradition of recycling in Japan", states David Sorgato, a Milan-based gallerist and author of the definitive book



*A varicoloured, padded jacket made from boro scraps*

titled *Boro*. Country women in 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan had few choices of fabric – wool was virtually unknown and silk was used only for ceremonial purposes. They used locally produced, labour-intensive bast fibre materials such as hemp, wisteria and nettle. These plant-based fibres had to be foraged by men and transformed into yarn by women, a long and laborious process. The woven garment, coarse and unforgiving, did not provide enough warmth or comfort in the long harsh winters.

The grim reality of these impoverished rural people was witnessed and recorded in the travel diary of Isabella Lucy Bird, an intrepid explorer who sailed into Yokohama Harbour in 1878. "I was entirely unprepared for the apparent poverty and real dirt and discomfort I have seen. These people wear no linen (underwear), and their clothes, seldom washed, are worn constantly, night and day. They are economic and thrifty, and turn everything to useful account..."

Any scraps of old cloth were useful and coveted commodities to the poor rural folk of Japan. They soaked worn-out old clothes in rice-rinsing water, stitching over ripped areas or layered with ragged cloth. Textiles, particularly cottons, were valuable and not to be wasted.

Cotton cultivation came late to Japan. It arrived sometime in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by way of Korea and China (where it was introduced in the seventh century from India) following the same path as Buddhism. It was cultivated in the warmer western regions and by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century cotton had become a fixture of everyday life, though still out of reach to most Japanese commoners. This was particularly true in the rural north where the cold climate did not facilitate the growing of cotton. The peasantry was quick to exchange their own prickly bast fibre clothing for this innovative cloth when they came to learn of the warmth, comfort and washable qualities of cotton.

This they did by trading with rag peddlers who could be found in every small town and village. Cotton rags were often transported by merchants from large urban cities in the warmer western regions and sold to folks in the rural areas of the north. They bundled these fragments onto ships called *Kitamae-sen*, literally 'ship-heading-to-the-north' ferrying cotton to places where it could not grow and to remote fishing and mountain communities that had for generations not had any contact with outsiders or other cultures. These 'floating markets' traded the cotton and silk rags from central Japan in exchange for seaweed, fish, oil, etc.



*An interesting wall hanging composed of pieces of boro, one with a striking design on it*





Examples of sashiko stitching. This was once just a functional running stitch, but is now considered decorative embroidery

So, when a kimono or sleeping futon cover started to fray, the industrious womenfolk would patch them with these rags using their hemp yarn to reinforce the cloth. And this recycling process was a constant one. Each cloth spoke of its journey, often starting off as a kimono then transforming into a work coat before being recycled as futon covers, carrying cloths, nappies and finally dust cloths. In some cases, when a family elder passed away, a few items of their clothing would be worn by later generations, thereby honouring their memory.

The cultural practices of the Akita people from northern Honshu reflect these traditions even today, as they welcome the souls of their ancestors back to earth during the Bon festival, celebrated in late summer. The women of Akita clad themselves in patchworked kimonos, whose fabrics are pieced together from fragments saved from robes of departed relatives, and as they dance deep into the night, they believe the souls of their ancestors meet the living as they sway in unison.

*Boro*, therefore, is a reflection of the basic principles of the Japanese people – love of frugality and respect for family. Embedded within its layers of *kasuri*, hemp thread and cotton rags, is a history of survival and creative ingenuity. This purposeful hoarding of cloth is the main reason why these *boro* textiles can still be seen today.

Integral to the lexicon of *boro* is *sashiko*, a traditional form of Japanese sewing that employs a simple running stitch to pierce and hold together layers of fabric. Rural seamstresses found that homemade hemp layered with cotton rags and held together by *sashiko* stitching, provided better protection from the elements and strengthened the garment. Worn by all members of the working class, *sashiko* clothing carried with it an inferior social status, so it never became fashionable amongst the middle and upper classes. However, what started off as a functional running stitch for mending and reinforcing *boro* has today developed into decorative embroidery. *Sashiko* thread colours range from white to blue-black, with white *sashiko* used more often as a contrast to the indigo-dyed fabric.

Organic indigo dye was widely used throughout Japan as a colouring agent for cotton textiles. When cotton became widely available, the production of indigo also rose. A valued commodity, it is believed to have come to Japan sometime in the fifth century from China. So precious was indigo to commerce that Jenny Balfour-Paul writes in her book *Indigo* that Japanese farmers who were suspected of giving away “the secrets of production to outsiders were apparently beheaded”.

However, by about the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its use had spread and various household items were being dyed with indigo and the common man, restricted from wearing bright colors, donned indigo blue and brown clothes. Furthermore, cultural beliefs likening their blue textiles to the blue oceans surrounding their lands, or that the dye contained properties that naturally repelled snakes and insects, ensured the popularity of this hue amongst the masses.

The journey of *boro* from the fields to a collectible art commodity is credited to Imagawasan, an influential antique dealer from Kyoto. Highly respected for his collection of *wabi-sabi* textiles and objects, Kodai-jin, as he is popularly known, was the first to show *boro* textiles almost 20 years ago at an exhibition in a Kyoto tearoom. This was the beginning of the fascination with the *boro*, which continues to date.

Today both Japanese and international collectors value these folk textiles as articles that represent the passage of time. They are cherished and collected for the message of survival and hope that shines through their rough beauty. Tadashi Morita, a highly respected dealer and authority on Japanese textiles, maintains that age and the shade of indigo are important considerations in assessing the quality of a *boro*. Sorgato, who assembled 50 pieces of *boro* and introduced them to the European market, claims, “My personal criteria are that the more layers the *boro* has, the more beautiful it is. It is as if these *boro*, witnesses of times past, were being woven while waiting for someone to discover them – much like flowers to be picked before they disappear”.



This jacket consists of pieces of *boro* laboriously stitched together

Carrying the tradition forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century are renowned Japanese clothing brands such as Kapital, Visvim and Junya Watanabe who are producing collections inspired by Japanese folk textiles and *boro*, not out of necessity as was the case in the past, but more so to honour that history. Through their work they hope to remind consumers to reassess the concept of value and consider mending and recycling in the current throwaway culture.

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**Seema Shah** is a textile enthusiast and collects traditional Indian cloths that are repositories of cultural beliefs.

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All photos by Stephen Szczepanek of Sri Threads, Brooklyn, New York

# Four Lesser Known Types of Malay Textiles

By John Ang

To many, the Malay world is Malaysia and some parts of Indonesia. However, its extent is far wider. Areas in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines, were settled by Malay communities with Malay traditions and culture. Several were former kingdoms with thriving port cities, connected through trade. However, wars, diminishing natural resources and changes in trade routes caused many to lose their lustre and so were forgotten. Thus, little attention has been paid to their development, allowing for the continuation of old traditions and the maintenance of their cultural heritage.

Before these lesser known areas jump on the bandwagon of economic advancement and lose their cultural identity, I hope to collect their textiles and unravel many of their undocumented histories and cultures. Fortunately, I have managed to find several interesting and rare cloths, never before documented and more surprisingly, unknown to many locals themselves. I have chosen four textiles to highlight, namely: *air guci* from Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan; *cipo cila* from northwest Sumbawa; *batik pelangi* from Ketapang, West Kalimantan, and *parada getah* from Jambi, South Sumatra.

## Air guci of Banjarmasin



1940s Air Guci, wedding platform backdrop curtain, blue and red satin with silver-like metal sequins, 125 x 225 cm

When I visited the Lambung Mangkurat Museum in Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, I noticed a large, glittering hanging above the textile gallery's entrance. Its pattern, composed of couched sequins, was a large pineapple flower surrounded by scrolling flowering plants. According to Mr Dwi Sulaksono, the museum's director, such cloths are known as *air guci*. In the local dialect *air* means flow while *guci* is abbreviated from *laguci* meaning to couch with sequins. These hangings are also called *hati tabir*, the central backdrop for a *pelamin* (wedding dais). In the Banjarmasin Malay tradition, the pineapple flower is a symbol reminding the bride and groom that marriage is like the pineapple's taste – both sweet and sour. Many other places in the Malay world feature pineapples on their wedding cloths, but no longer remember its symbolism because of a lack of documentation or a lost oral tradition. If the pineapple on other Malay wedding cloths has the same meaning, this interpretation may be pertinent in re-establishing forgotten Malay traditions.

These hangings, which are extremely heavy from the hundreds of couched sequins, were used by wealthy Banjarese for weddings. Perhaps choosing glittering sequins for decoration was meant to reflect the wealth of those who became rich from trading in locally sourced diamonds and rubies. The Banjarese are a mix of indigenous people, Dayaks and Malays. Many migrated to South Kalimantan from Sumatra.

Although *air guci* originated in Banjarmasin, similar hangings have been found along the west coast of Kalimantan, from Banjarmasin in the south to Sambas in the north. This demonstrates that there were close relations among these port cities. Unfortunately, with numerous wars and reduced trade, the once-popular *air guci* cloths were virtually forgotten. Kept in cupboards or boxes over an extended period, the delicate threads that held the heavy sequins have disintegrated, so very few complete examples remain. These large, dramatically patterned and precious cloths should be preserved as a reminder of the once thriving port cities of South and West Kalimantan.

## Cipo cila of Sumbawa

Another never-before-described cloth is the *cipo cila* or women's head shawl from Sumbawa, once famed for its sappan wood, honey, sandalwood and horses, attracting many traders, including Malay Muslim merchants from Palembang. The island was divided into several kingdoms, but the two main ones were Samawa (now Sumbawa Besar) in the northwest and Bima in the northeast. Their people seldom had contact, so their languages are very different; Samawan is related to the Sasak language, spoken in Lombok, west of Samawa. The Bima language is related to that of its northern neighbor Gowa, in South Sulawesi. The Malay culture and customs of Samawa, unlike Bima's, probably came from the Banjarese Malays of Banjarmasin.

Sumbawans practise a form of Islam that incorporates local folk tales, remnants of their animist past. This is reflected in the *cipo cila* pattern of a woman's head shawl.



1930-40s Cipo cila jit tahan uji, woman's head shawl, red cotton with kelingkam or silver ribbon embroidery depicting human figures, birds, dragons among meandering plants, 85 x 93 cm



*Kelingkam*, or metal ribbon embroidery, is used to depict dramatic giant birds and swirling dragons. The dragons, representing *lipan api* or the fire centipede, symbolize the power and protective energy of the local ruler, while the bird represents the *piyo beri*, a mythical creature.

On another head shawl, we see two male figures juxtaposed on a giant *piyo beri*. The bird, according to local folklore, was sent by Allah to fly Gaffar, a Samawa farmer's son, to Mecca to study Islam. After his graduation, the bird flew Gaffar back to Sumbawa to spread the Islamic faith. Decorating the space between and around the *piyo beri* and *lipan api* are beautiful curvilinear tendrils that symbolize the endurance and continuity of the Samawa people. These tendrils depict an endemic plant species called *lontor engal*, which thrives during the dry conditions of Sumbawa's drought season. Local people claim that this is recorded in their history book, *Sejarah Gaffar*.

In Samawa, *kelingkam* embroidery is very popular and is used not only on women's head shawls but is also often found on *kre alang* (sarongs), *sapu alang* (*tanjak* or men's headcloths) and *kre pasabu* (men's sashes). However, it is on the head shawls that the pattern is the most dramatic and eye-catching.

### **Batik pelangi of Ketapang**

In 2016, I attended the *Kerajaan Nusantara* or festival of Indonesia's royal courts, held in Pangkalan Bun, Central Kalimantan. There, I met the sister of Sultan Gusti Kamboja of the Kingdom of Matan in Ketapang Regency. She had a booth displaying her new *batik pelangi* fabrics, formerly reserved for Ketapang royalty. Not having seen such cloths before, I was intrigued and asked if I could see older samples. In her home, she showed me several pieces made by her mother. They were brightly coloured, tie-dyed cloths with hand-painted floral designs, using mordant dyes. These visually striking cloths looked nothing like what I knew of Malay textiles. Their floral patterns reminded me of Mughal architectural decorations.



Ceremonial body wrapper wound around the bride's upper body as part of her wedding attire. Ketapang, West Kalimantan, 140 x 205 cm

Matan is the name of the former kingdom of Tanjungpura, the oldest kingdom in West Kalimantan. Formerly, it was under the jurisdiction of the Srivijaya empire until taken over by the Majapahit rulers. In 1630, Sultan Tengah of Brunei arrived in Matan and married a royal princess who gave birth to a son who later became the first sultan of Matan. As Sultan Tengah has roots in the Brunei court and family connections with the Johor-Riau-Lingga kingdom, much trade occurred between them, resulting in Malay culture influencing Matan. This explains

the Malay style of clothing in Ketapang, although the decorations and manufacturing technique seem foreign.

*Batik pelangi* is a new technique used today. It includes both tie-dye and wax resist. After tie-dyeing, patterns are drawn with wax and dyed again. In the olden days, after tie-dyeing, patterns were drawn directly onto the cloth and no wax resist was used. The textile is unusual for the juxtapositioning of its bright, striking colours and the floral patterns that look Middle Eastern or Indian. It could have come from the Arabs or Muslim Indian traders of Mughal India, but this has to be further investigated.

### **Parada getah of Jambi**

When I first discovered *parada getah*, with its Mughal-like floral patterns, I thought it was a textile from India. However, my Palembang friends confirmed that such textiles originate in Jambi. These white cotton hangings are hand-painted with coloured latex and were probably once used for a *pelamin*.

I own three pieces of *parada getah* – each with different patterns, but I have yet to find any definitive written information about them. A Malay friend from Palembang mentioned that they were used as room dividers in sacred places. However, the accuracy of any information has to be researched and verified.

It would be interesting to know if these cloths were actually produced in Jambi or were imported from India. Hopefully, in the near future I can find out more about these unusual and beautiful cloths.



Large *parada getah* hanging. Jambi 260 x 156 cm. Date unknown

While collecting textiles of the Malay world, I have constantly found new information about their history and culture because a great part of their tradition is handed down orally, resulting in many details being lost over time. Malay textiles play an important role in providing clues that reveal a more accurate and better understanding of the history of Malay civilisation. Even if there is little definitive information available, the very existence of these rare and interesting textiles has great value as they continually haunt us and spike our curiosity to question, search and discover the missing passages in time.

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**John Ang** resides in Kuala Lumpur. In the last five years he has concentrated on collecting textiles of the Malay world and is writing a book about them.

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All photos by the author



# FOM's Open

By Jyoti



On Monday 2 September, FOM held its annual Open Morning in the Asian Civilisations Museum's (ACM) Ngee Ann Auditorium and the adjoining rooms. Traditionally the Open Morning kicks off the popular Monday Morning Lecture series after the summer break. It is also when the museums and activity groups come together to introduce new members to the season's slew of activities as well as to encourage seasoned members to sign up for a new activity or docent training. For many FOM members, it's also an opportunity to meet and catch up after the two-month break. The turnout for the first FOM-wide event of the season was great.

This year, FOM docent-art historian-author Patricia Bjaaland Welch spoke on *Propaganda and Dissent in Chinese Art* to a packed auditorium. As FOM Council Representative (Museums) Laura Socha put it, "We discovered what at first glance was a lovely image, only to find out it was protest art aimed at the emperor. It whetted our appetite for ACM's forthcoming exhibition on Dr Tan Tsze Chor's fabulous collection."

Before the lecture began, FOM had cause to celebrate. The *FOM Outreach with PASSAGE Magazine* initiative, made possible by an NHB grant, was announced by FOM president Garima Lalwani, in the presence of Karen Goh, Assistant Director, NHB (ECO). This grant to FOM will facilitate the wider dissemination of our popular bimonthly magazine,





# Morning 2019

Ramesh



*PASSAGE*, throughout Singapore, raising awareness of the work FOM does and the institutions where we guide.

Yet another celebratory announcement was from FOM's Instagram campaign, featuring the FOM40 cyan bag that travelled all over the world this summer. Winner Antonia Harrold's photo had the maximum number of likes and she received a voucher for the next *Foodies after Dark* event.

Volunteers at the tables for activity groups and museums were rushed off their feet, outlining their activities and docent training programmes. And our hospitality team was kept busy managing the F&B table, which featured a cake covered with icing composed of book covers, to mark the Book Club's book swap. Based on its enthusiastic reception, coordinator Cecile Collineau hopes to make the book swap a regular event.

Many new members came to explore, discuss and sign up for the various activities; many yet-to-be members came to explore just what it is that FOM does, and signed up on the spot. FOM's website [fom.sg](http://fom.sg) is regularly updated with activities and events, so do check in on us regularly and sign up online.



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**Jyoti Ramesh** guides at IHC and NMS. This year she is also on the FOM Council, taking care of Volunteer Appreciation & Membership.

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# Explore Singapore!

## The Joy and Fun of Gamelan – a Workshop

Thursday 7 November  
10:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Fee: \$30

Have you ever wondered how a full set of authentic Javanese gamelan orchestral instruments is played and what a gamelan sounds like?



Here is a unique opportunity for you to find out! In this workshop you will get to play on the actual instruments. In the process, you will also learn about the gamelan's history, traditions and related cultural activities such as *wayang kulit* (Indonesian shadow puppetry) and Javanese dance. You will also find out that the Javanese gamelan is different from the Balinese gamelan. Our instructors will open your eyes and ears to the delight of gamelan music and teach you to play at least two traditional gamelan songs. Listening to gamelan music after this workshop will never be the same for you.

## Living with the Dead – The Story of Bishan

Thursday 14 November  
10:00 am – 12 noon  
Fee: \$25

The area of Bishan, located in the northern-most part of the Central Region of Singapore, consists of government-built HDB housing



estates and private residences, retail/shopping malls and some light industries. Not known to many young Singaporeans or most foreigners, the area has a fascinating history of almost 200 years.

All of Bishan today sits on what was once a huge cemetery of nearly 400 acres, established by the Cantonese and Hakka immigrants in the 1820s. Within the cemetery was a village with a thriving community with its own school, market and cinema. During WWII a fierce battle between the British and Japanese was fought in the cemetery. In the late 1970s the government acquired the land for development, the graves were exhumed and the remains moved to a new columbarium specially built for that purpose.

Join our Explore Singapore! tour for a visit to the columbarium and its temples as well as its heritage gallery where you will learn about the history of Bishan and see this unique 'condo for the dead'.

## Singapore River Heritage Walk

Thursday 28 November  
10:00 am – 12 noon  
Fee: \$25



Since 1819, when modern Singapore was founded, the Singapore River has served as an artery of international commerce that drew people from

all over the region to work, trade and seek their fortunes on this island. Today, after a major clean-up that ended in 1983, the river continues to bustle with life, flowing past modern skyscrapers and historical buildings alike.

Join our guides as they take you on a walk along its banks to see the quays, bridges and other conserved landmarks that remind us of the communities that once lived and worked beside this river.

## Traditional Chinese Craft Workshops – Joss Sticks, Figurines and Funeral Paper Objects

Thursday 5 December  
10:00 am – 12 noon  
Fee: \$25

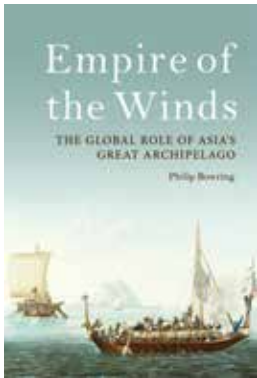


Chinese people pray to gods and deities with lighted joss (incense) sticks. Have you ever wondered why? And do you want to know how they are made? The same powder used for making joss sticks can also be fashioned into an array of figurines. Join us for a visit to a fascinating craft shop to find out the answers. A few doors away is another wonderful shop where a family makes objects for the dead to ensure they have a comfortable life in the next world. Be it large mansions with up-to-date amenities, the latest electronic gadgets – iPads, an Xbox and smart phones – luxury cars or even maids to serve them. You can order anything you want for your dearly departed.



# Monday Morning Lectures

The first two lectures of November 2019 will be held at the URA Function Hall, level 5 in the URA Centre, (Urban Redevelopment Authority), 45 Maxwell Road, 069118. Refreshments will not be provided at the URA. Otherwise, lectures are held either in the Ngee Ann Auditorium (in the basement) or in the River Room (level 2) at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), 1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555 and will begin promptly at 11:00 am. Refreshments will be provided. Latecomers are asked to enter via the rear door.



**4 November • Nusantara: This Island Realm**  
*Speaker: Philip Bowring*  
*Venue: the URA Function Hall, level 5, the URA Centre*

A long and broad look at more than two millennia of the history of Asian Austronesia, islands, seas, sailors and the traders who have been the key link between East Asia, the Indian Ocean and points west. The author of *Empire*

*of the Winds: The Global Role of Asia's Great Archipelago* ignores modern state boundaries to define the identity and usually ignored history of this maritime region, now home to over 400 million people.



**11 November • Read Between the Rhymes: Pantun, the Traditional Malay Poetry**  
*Speaker: Aisyah Lyana*  
*Venue: URA Function Hall, level 5, URA Centre*

*Read Between the Rhymes: Pantun* aims to understand the intended meanings portrayed in traditional *pantun* and traditional Malay

songs, thus exploring the socio-cultural aspects of *pantun*. The Malays were very observant and knowledgeable about nature to the extent that the behaviours of nature have been cleverly used as imagery to imply subtle meanings in *pantun*. Participants will get to learn the basic structure and rhyming scheme in a *pantun* as well as the extended *pantun berkait*. This lecture will wrap up with the challenges of preserving *pantun* today as a cultural tool for identity preservation of Malay society.



**18 November • Vietnam and China: 2000 Years of a Complex Relationship**  
*Speaker: Bruce Lockhart*  
*Venue: River Room (level 2), ACM*

Vietnam and China have had what might be described as a love-hate relationship for more than a thousand years. China has been both the most important political and cultural influence on Vietnam and also its most frequent enemy. This talk will attempt to provide a historical perspective on the relationship between the two countries to help explain the context for current tensions



**25 November • The Eight Aesthetics of Chinese Classical Furniture**  
*Speaker: John Ang*  
*Venue: Ngee Ann Auditorium (basement), ACM*

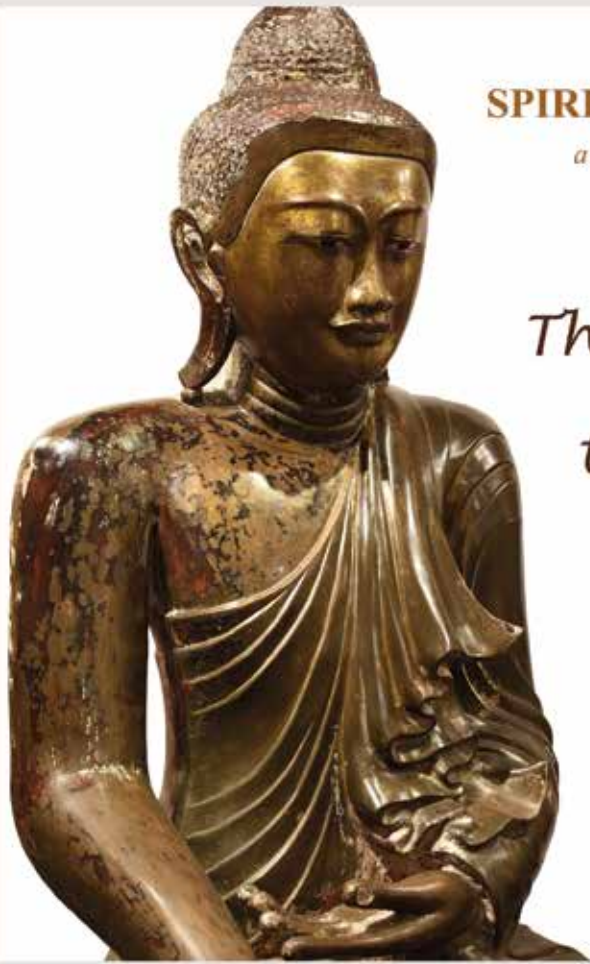
Using photos of furniture collected when travelling through the remote provinces of China during the 1980-90s, John will tell us how he began to view Chinese furniture as works of art rather than mere carpentry or craft. John discovered eight aesthetics to consistently exist in all the pieces he considered beautiful. He will take us beyond the outward form of Chinese furniture to discover its inner beauty or what he calls its soul. This, John believes, can help one gain a new way of accessing not just what makes a beautiful piece of Chinese furniture but what makes a great work of art in any category of the arts.



**2 December 2019 • Deccan Heritage: Hyderabad & Karnataka**  
*Speaker: Abha Kaul*  
*Venue: Ngee Ann Auditorium (basement), ACM*

The southern half of India houses astonishing remains of the mighty Deccan sultanates that flourished there in the late medieval period. Hyderabad, in today's Telangana state, is home to the ruins of Golconda, once one of India's greatest and wealthiest cities, and later of the famed Nizams. The iconic cities of Gulbarga, Bidar and Bijapur, now in the state of Karnataka, were erstwhile capitals of powerful Deccan sultans who controlled vital trade routes, ruled over lands of plenty and created amazing art. This talk will take you on a virtual journey to classic forts and tombs and an exciting, newly excavated Buddhist stupa and Emperor Ashoka's original inscription. Finally, you will 'visit' magnificent early cave and temple art and the architecture of the Chalukyas in Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal; the grand buildings of the ruined city of Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire; the delicate, lacelike stone-carved temples of the Hoysalas at Halebid and Belur and finally, Shravanbelagola, the holiest Jain site. Come share the discoveries of a group of travellers who went on a recent FOM Study Tour to these heritage sites.

**The MMLs will take a break and resume on Monday 13 January 2020. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all who celebrate!**



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## Textile Enthusiasts Group

**Programme:** Secrets of the Woven Art

**Speaker:** Mr Suliman Hamid

**Date:** Thursday 14 November

**Time:** 10:00 am arrival for 10:30 start

**Venue:** Hassan's Carpets, Tan Boon Liat Building, 315 Outram Rd #02-06

**Registration:** Please sign up on the FOM website

### **Learn about the art of carpet weaving and the centuries of stories and secrets behind it.**

Discover the treasured woven art and the secrets of carpet weaving with Mr Suliman Hamid as he shares his vast knowledge about the history of carpet weaving, the origins of designs and the various weaving techniques that distinguish city from village and tribal carpets. Suliman will also touch upon the historical, political, social and commercial influences that have shaped the carpet industry over the years. He will even show you a few museum-quality pieces from his own personal collection.



### **About the speaker:**

Mr. Suliman Hamid is a connoisseur of carpets who has been in the carpet trade since the 1970s. Coming from a family of carpet merchants spanning over 100 years, Mr. Suliman has been successfully running a three-generation carpet business, Hassan's Carpets, for the last 50 years in Singapore.

**Programme:** Drinks and Dresses

**Date:** Friday 6 December

**Time:** 7:00 pm

**Host:** Janet Stride

**Registration:** For TEG members and their guests. Please sign up on the FOM website.

Celebrate the festive season with textiles and style. Dress up in your favourite ethnic or handcrafted textiles and join TEG at the gorgeous art-filled home of TEG committee member, Janet Stride. Spouses/partners are welcome and are encouraged to participate in the 'textile spirit'.





## Island Notes

# The Mid-Autumn Festival

By Darly Furlong



*A scenic fishing village installation*

Traditionally, the mid-autumn festival has marked the end of the harvest. Since it falls on a full moon day, in the eighth lunar month of the Chinese calendar, it has inspired folkloric tales of romance and sacrifice by Houyi and Chang'e, wherein Chang'e is deified into the moon goddess. This festival is marked by savouring delicious mooncakes, lantern carrying and moon watching.

In Singapore, the mid-autumn festival is commemorated in several places, so on 14 September this year, I went to Gardens by the Bay to experience it. The gardens were ablaze with impressive thematic light installations on water, giant lanterns (lovely photo opportunities), concerts and performances, which drew families from across the island.



*Gigantic zodiac lanterns*

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**Darly Furlong** is a passionate volunteer of museum-based learning for children and leads other causes in Singapore that facilitate social justice. She is also interested in the myths and legends of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilisations.

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## Japanese Docents

It has been one and a half years since I started as a Japanese guide. Meeting visitors makes me excited and happy every time even though I am not very experienced yet. There have been lots of new galleries opened recently at the Asian Civilisations Museum, and some of them opened after I became a docent. For each one, I researched the topics that the galleries are about with other docent group members to create our guiding plan in Japanese. It requires us to go through the steps of finding resources and reading them thoroughly in a short time, which is quite hard. Though it is fun to make a guiding plan that is clear and simple enough for visitors to understand, sometimes it also becomes hard to accomplish. I learned the importance of doing so without using professional terms after I was recently in charge of guiding children.

The Christian Art gallery is my special favourite. I studied a wooden panel, which is actually the decorated gable of a house of the Toba Batak people of Sumatra, so different from the Christian Art in the West. It is not a masterpiece; it is just part of an ordinary Toba Batak house, used in their daily lives. But it represents their respect for and attachment to their adopted religion, Christianity. We can see their passion for their new religion through the panel's design. The figure of two angels getting down on their knees to pray to a small cross is my favourite. I'm always thinking about how many stories I can tell visitors about each exhibit within a limited period of time.

**Mikiko Hanasaki, Japanese Docent**



## F♥M Members Care

*By Darlene D Kasten, FOM Members Care Coordinator*

FOM members care. We care about preserving the heritage of Singapore. We care about our history and culture. We care about our friends and neighbors. We care about our environment and the health of our planet. And to prove it, F♥M Members Care will be organising a variety of opportunities for all FOM members to gather in the spirit of fun, friendship and philanthropy and combine our energies towards a common goal. You do not need special training or previous experience to participate. All you need is an open heart and a willingness to share it.

We will be following the lead of the FOM docent community from our affiliated museums and heritage centres. They already provide guiding services for the lesser-served communities of Singapore, including people with disabilities, seniors and the underprivileged. FOM docents care.

We will be challenging the individual activity groups within FOM to initiate their own events to show they care. For example, FOM Asian Book Groups organised an eco-friendly book swap as part of the FOM Open House morning in September, with leftover books donated to charity. FOM Asian Book Groups Care.



Our inaugural F♥M Members Care event will be held on Saturday 23 November at the East Coast Park. It is a FairPrice Walk for Rice @ South East to earn rice and instant oatmeal for the needy families living in the southeast district of Singapore. Every 200 metres



walked by just one participant will earn one bowl of brown rice and one bowl of white rice for a needy resident and every 400 metres walked will earn another bowl of oatmeal.

We just walk. That's it! What could be easier? Bring your family. Bring your friends. Bring your neighbors. Bring your pets. To participate or for more information, please email [FOMMembersCare@gmail.com](mailto:FOMMembersCare@gmail.com). Give me your name and anticipated group size. I will follow up with more details such as start time, starting point, proposed route, what to bring and what to wear.

Show you care by joining us!



# Coordinators Contact List



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& Alka Kapoor**  
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**MHF/FOM Heritage Trails –  
Susan Chong & Heather Muirhead**  
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## JDs

jdcoordinator1@yahoo.co.jp and jdcoordinator2@yahoo.co.jp

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# Museum Information and Exhibitions

## Asian Civilisations Museum

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555  
Tel: 6332 7798  
[www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg)



### Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am - 7:00 pm  
Fri 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

### FOM guided tours:

Mon to Fri 11:00 am, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm, Fri 7:00 pm (English)  
Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every second Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)  
First Wednesday of the month 11:30am (Korean)  
Second Thursday of the month 11:30 (Spanish)  
Third Thursday of the month 11:30 (French)

### Understanding Asia through Singapore

The new and renovated galleries at the ACM use Singapore's history as a port city as a means of understanding the interconnections among Asian cultures and between Asia and the world.

### Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor (8 November 2019 to 22 March 2020)

*Living with Ink: The Collection of Dr Tan Tsze Chor* at the Asian Civilisations Museum presents highlights from the collection of Singapore's renowned art collector Dr Tan Tsze Chor. Since 2000, the Tan family has donated to the museum over 130 treasured Chinese paintings, porcelains, and scholars' objects from this collection. The exhibition includes paintings by modern Chinese masters Ren Bonian, Xu Beihong, and Qi Bashi and explores how Chinese art was appreciated by networks of overseas Chinese collectors and philanthropists, giving you a glimpse into the Singapore art world in the turbulent 20th century.

## Gillman Barracks

9 Lock Road, Singapore 108937  
[www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)



A cluster of 11 contemporary art galleries and the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Gillman Barracks features an ever-changing selection of contemporary art exhibitions.

**Opening hours:** Tues to Sun – Refer to individual gallery pages on-line for opening hours  
Closed Mondays & Public Holidays

### FOM guided tours:

Sat 4:00 pm: Art & History Tour

Sat 5:00 pm: History and Heritage Tour

To register please visit [www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com](http://www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com)

## NTU CCA

**The Posthuman City. Climates. Habitats. Environments.**  
(through 23 February 2020)

Taking NTU CCA Singapore's overarching research topic *Climates. Habitats. Environments.* as the departure point, the exhibition examines the urban fabric as a habitat for a diversity of species and engages these topics through imaginative options offered by artists and architects. The featured projects, at the intersection of art, design and architecture, range from installations to time-based media, address questions of sustainability, quality and quantity of air, water and food, nature as a form of culture, and the implementation of lived indigenous knowledge.

## Indian Heritage Centre

5 Campbell Lane, Singapore 209924  
[www.indianheritage.org.sg](http://www.indianheritage.org.sg)



Open Tuesday to Sunday & public holidays.  
Closed on Mondays.  
Tues to Thurs 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, Fri & Sat 10:00 am to 8:00 pm  
Sundays & public holidays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

### FOM guided tours: Tues-Fri

12:00 pm for the permanent galleries

2:00 pm on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions

Tamil tours 11:30am on the first Friday of each month for the special exhibition

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) celebrates the history and heritage of the Indian diaspora in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. From early contacts between the Indian subcontinent and this region, the culture and social history of the community after the arrival of the British, through to the early stirrings of nationalism and political identity, and the

contributions of Singapore's Indian community – the five galleries take visitors on a fascinating journey through the Indian diaspora. Located in Singapore's colourful and vibrant Little India precinct, the centre opened in May 2015 and is our only purpose-built museum.

## Malay Heritage Centre

85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501  
Tel: 6391 0450  
[www.malayheritage.org.sg](http://www.malayheritage.org.sg)



### Opening hours:

Tues to Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (last admission 5:30 pm), closed on Mondays

FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 11:00 am; Sat: 2:00 pm (Subject to availability. Please call ahead to confirm the availability of a docent).

The Malay Heritage Centre provides wonderful cultural exposure and learning opportunities for visitors of all ages and interests. Situated amidst the Istana Kampong Gelam, Gedung Kuning and the surrounding Kampong Gelam precinct, the Centre acts as a vital heritage institution for the Malay community in Singapore. Through its exhibits, programmes and activities, the Centre hopes to honour the past while providing a means for present-day expression.

## National Museum of Singapore

93 Stamford Road, Singapore 178897  
Tel: 6332 3659  
[www.nationalmuseum.sg](http://www.nationalmuseum.sg)



### Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am – 7:00 pm

### FOM guided tours:

Mon to Fri 11:00 am and 2:00 pm (English)

Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every first Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)

### The Singapore History Gallery

In celebration of 50 years of independence, this gallery has been refreshed with updated stories and content on Singapore's history, capturing the nation's defining moments, challenges and achievements from its earliest beginnings 700 years ago to the independent, modern city-state it is today.

### An Old New World: From the East Indies to the Founding of Singapore, 1600-1819 (through 29 March 2020)

Explore the 200 years leading up to the establishment of an entrepôt in Singapore in 1819, beginning with the bustling world of trade in the East Indies that attracted the Dutch and British East India Companies from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The European entry into the region, for better or worse, was only part of its longer history. This exhibition is a telling of that story and a reflection of the broader forces at play that culminated in the events of 1819.

## NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts

University Cultural Centre  
50 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119279  
Tel: 6516 8817  
[www.museum.nus.edu.sg](http://www.museum.nus.edu.sg)



Free admission

### Opening hours:

Tues to Sat 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays,  
Monday: Visits by appointment for schools/faculties only.

### "... You Have To Lose Your Way To Find Yourself In The Right Place" (through 15 December 2019)

This exhibition presents the works of Singapore-based French artist, Gilles Massot. It includes a selection of photographs, videos, sketches and writings from the 1980s to the present and explores the artist's evolving negotiations with place and the shaping of self-identity through his work as a photo-journalist travelling across Asia, his involvement in a changing contemporary art scene, and his expatriate status.

## NUS Baba House

157 Neil Road, Singapore 088883  
Tel: 6227 5731  
[www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg](http://www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg)

English heritage tours: Tues - Fri, 10:00 am; Mandarin Heritage Tour: First Monday of each month, 10am;



# Museum Information and Exhibitions

**Self-Guided Visits: Every Sat, 1.30pm/2.15pm/3.15pm/4.00pm**  
To register, please visit [babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit](http://babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit)  
For enquiries, please email [babahouse@nus.edu.sg](mailto:babahouse@nus.edu.sg)

Now conceived as a heritage house facilitating research, appreciation and reflection of Straits Chinese history and culture, the NUS Baba House was built around 1895 and was once the ancestral home of a Peranakan Chinese family. During the one-hour tour, guests will be introduced to the history and architectural features of the house, and experience visiting a Straits Chinese family home in a 1920s setting, furnished with heirlooms from its previous owners and other donors.

## The Peranakan Museum

39 Armenian Street, Singapore 179941  
Tel: 6332 7591  
[www.peranakanmuseum.sg](http://www.peranakanmuseum.sg)

This intimate museum possesses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Peranakan objects. Galleries on three floors illustrate the cultural traditions and the distinctive visual arts of the Peranakans. The museum is currently closed to prepare for its next phase of development.



## Singapore Art Museum

71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555  
Tel: 6332 3222  
[www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg)

The Singapore Art Museum focuses on international contemporary art practices, specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The main building of the Singapore Art Museum (located along 71 Bras Basah Road) is currently closed to prepare it for its next phase of development.



**Singapore Biennale 2019 - Every Step in the Right Direction**  
(22 November – 22 March 2020)  
<https://www.singaporebiennale.org>

**FOM guided English tours:**  
National Gallery Singapore: Mon -Wed 2:00 pm  
Gillman Barracks: Thur - Fri 2:00 pm

This international contemporary art exhibition focuses on making choices and taking steps to consider current conditions and the human endeavour for change and betterment. Singapore Biennale 2019 is showing at various historical and public spaces in Singapore, including museums and galleries. With over 70 artists and art collectives from around the world and a strong focus on Southeast Asia, the sixth edition welcomes over 150 works across a breadth of diverse mediums including film, installation, sound art and performance art.

## STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery

41 Robertson Quay, Singapore 238236  
Tel: 6336 3663  
[www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg)

**Opening hours:**  
Mon to Fri: 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, Sat: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm, Sun: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

**Closed Public Holidays**

**FOM guided tours: Thurs 11:30 am, Sat & Sun 2:00 pm**  
Please refer to STPI's website at [www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg) for STPI's public programmes and Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, French and special evening tours.

STPI is a dynamic creative workshop and contemporary art gallery based in Singapore. Established in 2002, STPI is a not-for-profit organisation committed to promoting artistic experimentation in the mediums of print and paper and has become one of the most cutting-edge destinations for contemporary art in Asia.



## Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

12 Tai Gin Road, Singapore 327874  
Tel: 6256 7377  
[www.sysnmh.org.sg](http://www.sysnmh.org.sg)

**Opening hours:**  
Tues to Sun 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Closed on Mondays

**FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 2:00 pm (English)**  
**FOM Special exhibition guided tours: 10:30am on Fridays in English**

Built in 1902, this double-storey villa was the nerve centre of Dr Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. Focusing on the contributions of Dr. Sun Yat Sen's key supporters in Singapore, the refurbished museum sheds light on the lesser-known details of Singapore and Nanyang's involvement in the 1911 Revolution.



**From Brush to Lens: Early Chinese Photography Studios in Singapore**  
(through 3 May 2020)

This exhibition showcases over 90 artefacts from the late 19th to early 20th century, including carte de visites and photographs by European, Chinese and Japanese studios. These photographs provide an important visual record of the diverse groups of inhabitants in colonial Singapore.

*Free general admission to all NHB museums for FOM members and one guest.*

## Study Tours

FOM study tours is currently taking online registrations for the following interesting trips:

**Classic South India: Tamil Nadu's Coromandel Coast, with Abha Kaul** (Sign up for the waitlist)

This classic study tour takes us on a historical journey down the eastern seaboard into India's deep south – along the fabled Coromandel Coast, with its renowned UNESCO World Heritage sites. Come, learn and be amazed by a variety of celebrated centres of awe-inspiring architecture and sculpture, traditional arts and crafts, and colonial history and trade, including with Southeast Asia. *(This tour is full, but you can still sign up for the waitlist for travel between 5-16 February 2020)*

**Road Trip - Cultural Johor Bahru, with Susan Chong**

You will find JB to be a quaint city with an abundance of breath-taking sights and rich heritage, a blend of customs, traditions, food and lifestyle. Johoreans live with a mix of old and new with historical buildings standing side by side with ultra-modern shopping centres. Visits will include the Chingay Festival, the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque, the KTMB Museum Johor Bahru, the Figure Museum, the Grand Palace

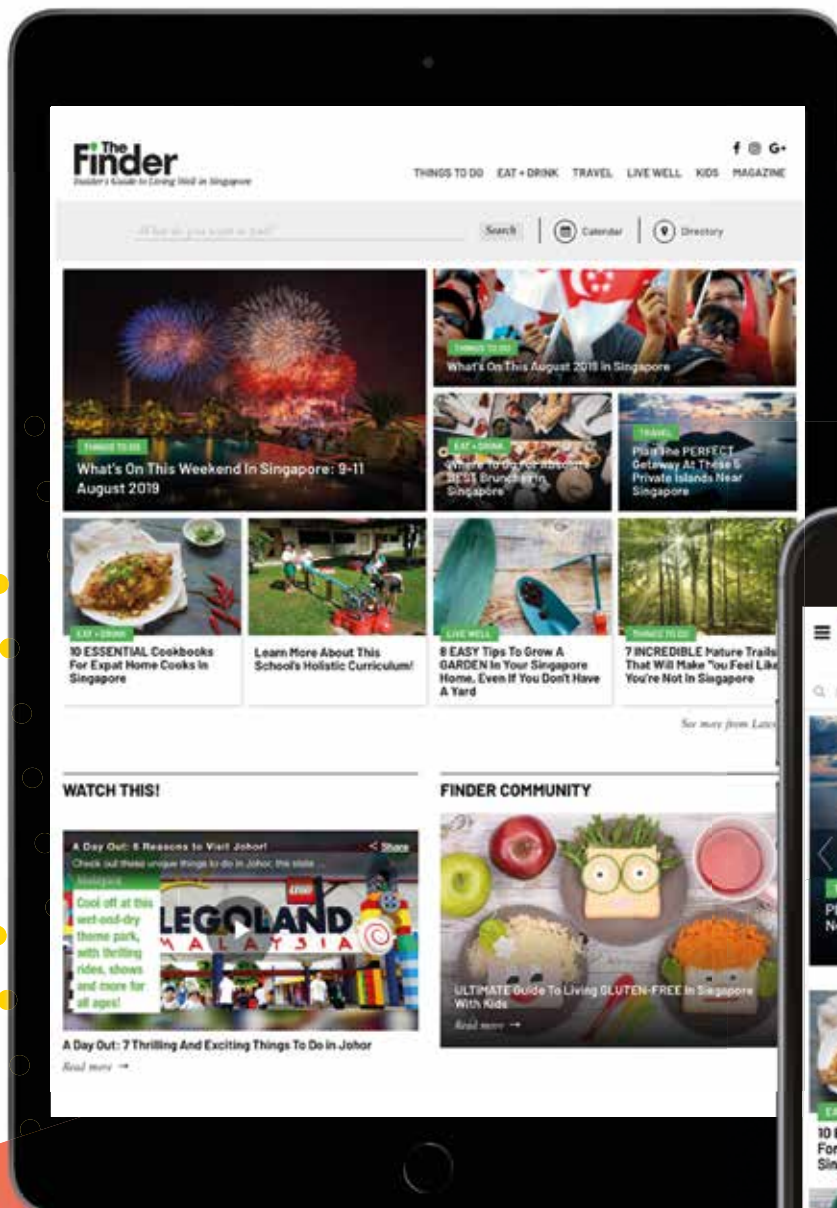
JB, and much more. *(Register now for travel during 14-17 February, 2020)*

**Southwest China: Guizhou Minority Tour, with Rosalie Kwok**

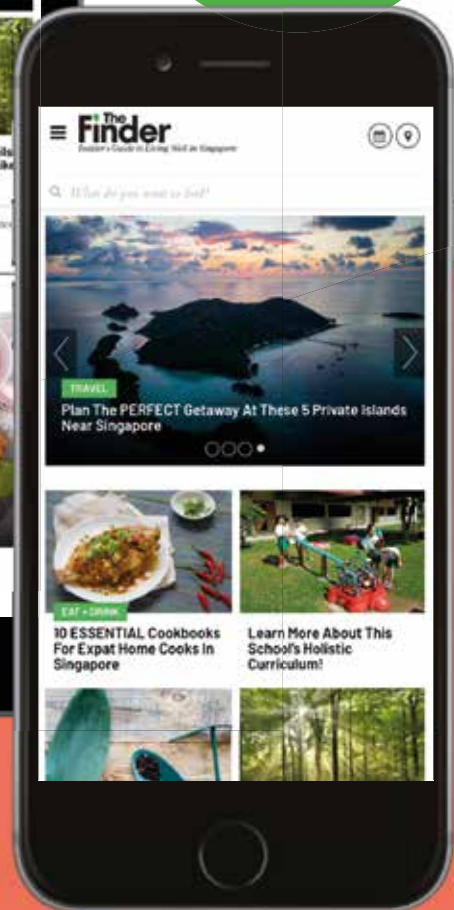
This is truly a rare opportunity to travel to an unusual part of China, and to witness the Miao's mysterious ethnic traditions, rich culture and unique embroidery set in the breath-taking natural scenery of their valleys. We will visit the Black Dragon Cave Temple Complex in the ancient water town of Zhenyuan surrounded by gorgeous mountains and rivers. We will experience the culture of the Gejia people, known for their batik with indigo and honey wax, and we will hike to the ethnic Dong villages of Tang'an at 1,000 metres. *(Register now for travel from 2-12 April, 2020).*



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