

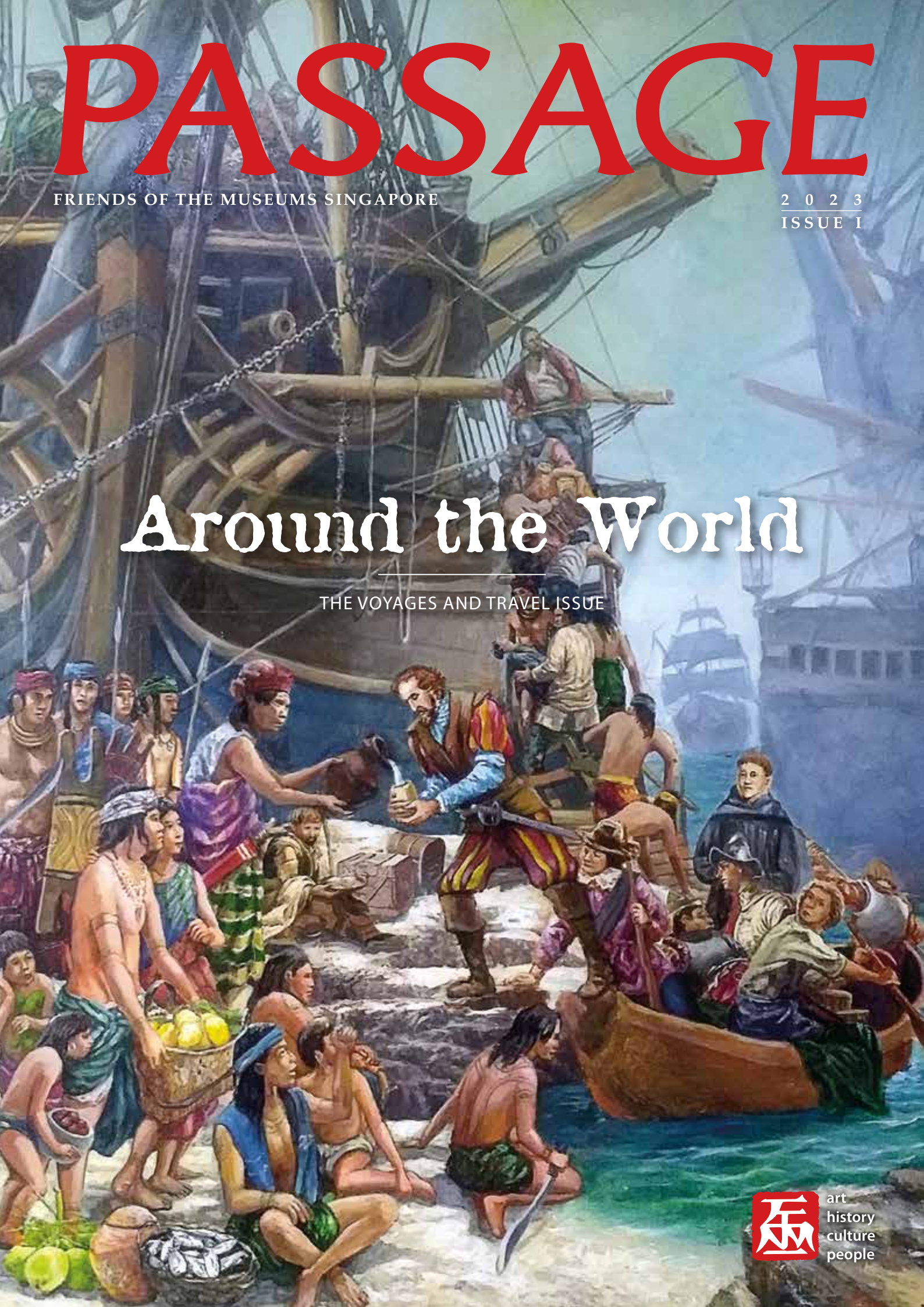
# PASSAGE

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUMS SINGAPORE

2 0 2 3  
ISSUE 1

## Around the World

THE VOYAGES AND TRAVEL ISSUE



art  
history  
culture  
people

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*The Essence of Goodwill*, an award-winning painting by Filipino artist Teody Boyle R. Perez depicting natives offering water and food to Magellan and his travel-weary crew, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist. Collection of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. Read about Magellan's epic voyage on page 3.



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## PASSAGE

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FOM STUDIO  
45

Save the Date

Party like it's 1978 at our

**VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION NIGHT**  
**(VAN)**

TUESDAY, 25 APRIL 2023

5-8pm

Details to follow.

# President's Blog

**H**ello everyone,  
A very happy 2023 to all and a Prosperous and Healthy Year of the Water Rabbit.  
2023 is also FOM's 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We'll be marking it with a different sort of Volunteer Appreciation Morning (VAM) because it's going to be a VAN (Volunteer Appreciation Night) this year. Mark your diaries for 25 April for a retro disco boogie night, circa 1978, the year FOM was founded. Time to bring out the glitter and start practicing your best dance moves.

As you know, that's when we show our appreciation for volunteers with FOM service pins so please update your profile online; make sure we know all the contributions you've made to FOM and that our emails always reach you. You can also check if your membership is valid at least a month before the event so our system will send you an invitation.

Over the last few months, Council was excited and no doubt a little anxious as we prepared for the first ever use of electronic voting for the elections and approval of resolutions for the AGM on 7 December 2022. It was a big step forward for FOM as we embrace more efficient technology and environment-friendly ways.

At the AGM, we bade farewell to some outgoing members of the FOM Council. Our deepest thanks go out to Susan Fong, Irina Grishaeva, Darlene Kasten, Kim Arnold, Gisella Harrold and Aditi Kaul for their selfless service rendered. Special heartfelt thanks also go to Immediate Past President Garima Lalwani.

At the same time, may I welcome our new VP Karen Ng, Treasurer Linda Lim, Membership and Appreciation Rep Oksana Kokhno, Activities Rep Robyn Lloyd, Communications Rep Michelle Lim and Marketing Rep Rupa Tamsitt. I am also grateful to have the continued support of Secretary Lee Hong Leng and Museums Rep Charlotte Dawson, not forgetting our two co-opted Council reps – Co-Overall Head of Docent Training Leong Lee Chiew and Volunteer Data Management Officer Jyoti Ramesh.

FOM is for the members, by the members and I'm so glad to have you all on board.

Full steam ahead for FOM 2023.

  
**Millie Phuah**  
FOM President  
president@fom.sg



*Susan Fong and I attended the MHC's Closing Festival before it closed its doors for a revamp at the end of October 2022. We'll catch you later MHC.*

## From The Editors

**A**fter enduring two years of travel restrictions, it seems appropriate to celebrate our freedom to roam with an issue of *PASSAGE* dedicated to the theme of Voyage and Travel. In this issue, we cover the adventures and misadventures of merchants and explorers who risked their lives on voyages for Gold, Glory and God. They were not always successful. There were ships that left port full of confidence and expectation of glory, only to end up on the seabed. And there they remained for centuries until modern technology was able to bring them to the surface and give them a new lease of life as museum exhibits.

Fleets, like Magellan's, encountered giants and cannibals, faced mutiny and lost ships and men in uncharted waters, all in the quest for cloves. Christian conquerors enforced Catholic orthodoxy in India and established "Rome of the East" in Goa, while Jesuits voyaged to China to spread their faith using science and mathematics.

In the age of sailing ships, seafaring was fraught with danger. The chance of a sailor dying from disease, injury or drowning was high. In fact, up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was considered unnecessary, and even unlucky, to be able to swim. If you fell overboard, swimming would only prolong your inevitable death. The sole consolation available to a sailor was a gold earring, worn in the hope that, if his body were washed up on a Christian shore, it might pay for a Christian burial.

Before there was an internationally accepted currency, goods such as Chinese silk, Indian textiles, spices and opium could be bartered or exchanged for gold and silver. A collection of gold vessels could have been part of the lifesavings of an Arab merchant who longed to return home and retire, but whose dreams were shattered when his dhow sank close to Belitung Island.

Gold was not always the most precious commodity. Frankincense was once worth twice its weight in gold. And cities were built in the desert from the wealth derived from trading such rare and desirable perfumes.

Chinese coins started to have purchasing power in this region towards the end of the Tang Dynasty but the first currency to gain worldwide acceptance was the Spanish silver dollar. The British East India Company purchased the island of Singapore in 1824 for 33,200 Spanish dollars.



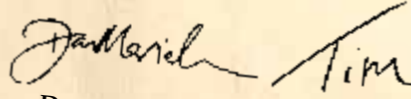
*Photo by Darlene Kasten.*

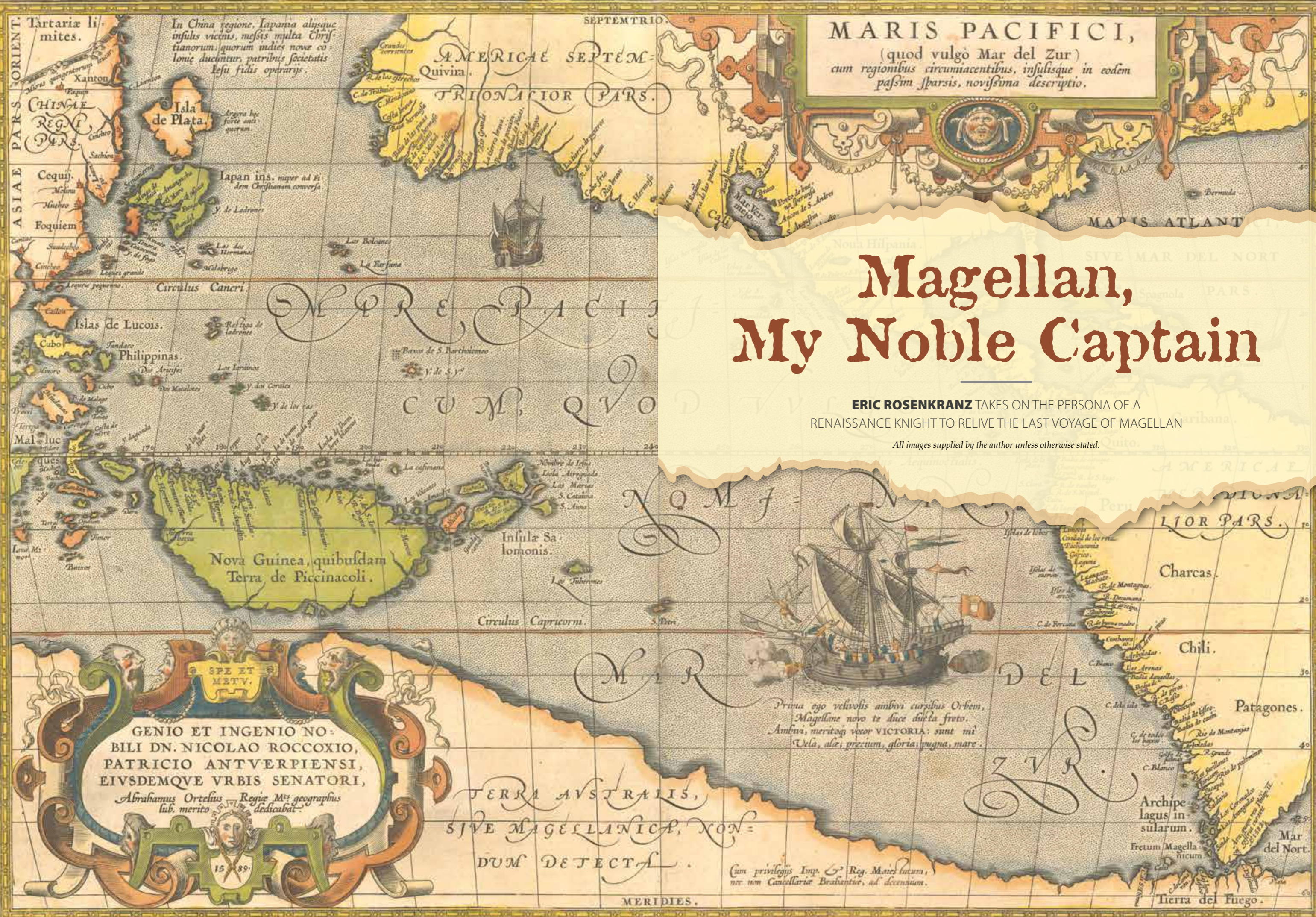
Before the arrival of Raffles in 1819, the Bugis, seafarers from Celebes, had already established a settlement in Singapore. Their powerful presence bolstered Singapore's security and added to its credentials as a regional trading base.

The Bugis enjoyed the freedom to travel, but prisoners of war were forced to do so. After reaching Burma they toiled, suffered and perished while constructing the infamous Death Railway. It was faith focused on a golden cross, fashioned from a brass munition shell case, that sustained them. As swords could be beaten into ploughshares, so could a weapon of war be turned into a symbol of hope and salvation.

Why, one might ask, should one need an incentive to travel, or even a destination? Travel can be a means to an end when it unveils endless new vistas. This might be the contention of travelling artist Wu Guanzhong who captured scenery that inspired him wherever he went.

The theme for the next issue is Remarkable Women. If you are keen to contribute a story, we would love to discover lesser-known tales of women who have made a difference and left their mark on world history, art and culture. Do write in to us to pitch your stories before you start writing.

  
**Dawn Marie Lee and Tim Clark**  
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MARE PACIFICUM,  
(quod vulgò Mar del Zur)  
cum regionibus circumiacentibus, insulisque in eodem  
passim sparsis, novissima descriptio.

# Magellan, My Noble Captain

ERIC ROSENKRANZ TAKES ON THE PERSONA OF A  
RENAISSANCE KNIGHT TO RELIVE THE LAST VOYAGE OF MAGELLAN

All images supplied by the author unless otherwise stated.

GENIO ET INGENIO NO-  
BILI DN. NICOLAO ROCCOXIO,  
PATRICIO ANTVERPIENSI,  
EIVSDEMQUE VRBIS SENATORI,

Abrahamus Ortelius Regie M<sup>te</sup> geographus  
lub. merito dedicabat.

1589

TERRA AUSTRALIS,  
SIVE MAGELLANICA, NON-  
DUM DETECTA.

Cum privilegijs Imp. & Reg. M<sup>tes</sup> latum,  
nec non Cancellarie Brabantie, ad decennium.

Prima ego velivolis ambivi curibus Orbem,  
Magellane novo te duce ducta fredo.  
Ambiva, meritoq; vocor VICTORIA: sunt mi  
Vela, aliz, praezum, gloria; pugna, mare.

MERIDIES.

**G**racious Lords and Ladies of the celebrated House of FOM, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Antonio Pigafetta, a Patrician from Vincenza, and a member of the Knights of Rhodes. You may have heard of my account of the *Voyage of Magellan Navigation and discovery of Upper India and the Isles of Molucca, where the cloves grow*, originally prepared for the very illustrious and excellent Lord Philip de Villiers l'Isle Adam, Grand Master of Rhodes.

There are many misconceptions about this famous voyage, but since I was one of the very few surviving members, it is I who know the truth. The voyage was not a success. Magellan did not circumnavigate the globe as he was killed halfway through the attempt. The voyage was barely profitable. Only 18 of the original crew of 270 returned, and only one of five ships.

Most importantly, the voyage proved that travelling around the world westwards though the famous Strait was too long and dangerous and was rarely repeated. In fact, seven expeditions were launched following our route and all were failures. It became much simpler and easier to sail from Europe to Mexico or Panama, travel overland and board a different ship for the on-going westward voyage. But I digress. What of our Captain General?



An engraving of Magellan from *Academie des Sciences et des Arts* by Isaac Bullart, 1682. Image from Wellcome Images.

**WHO WAS MAGELLAN?**

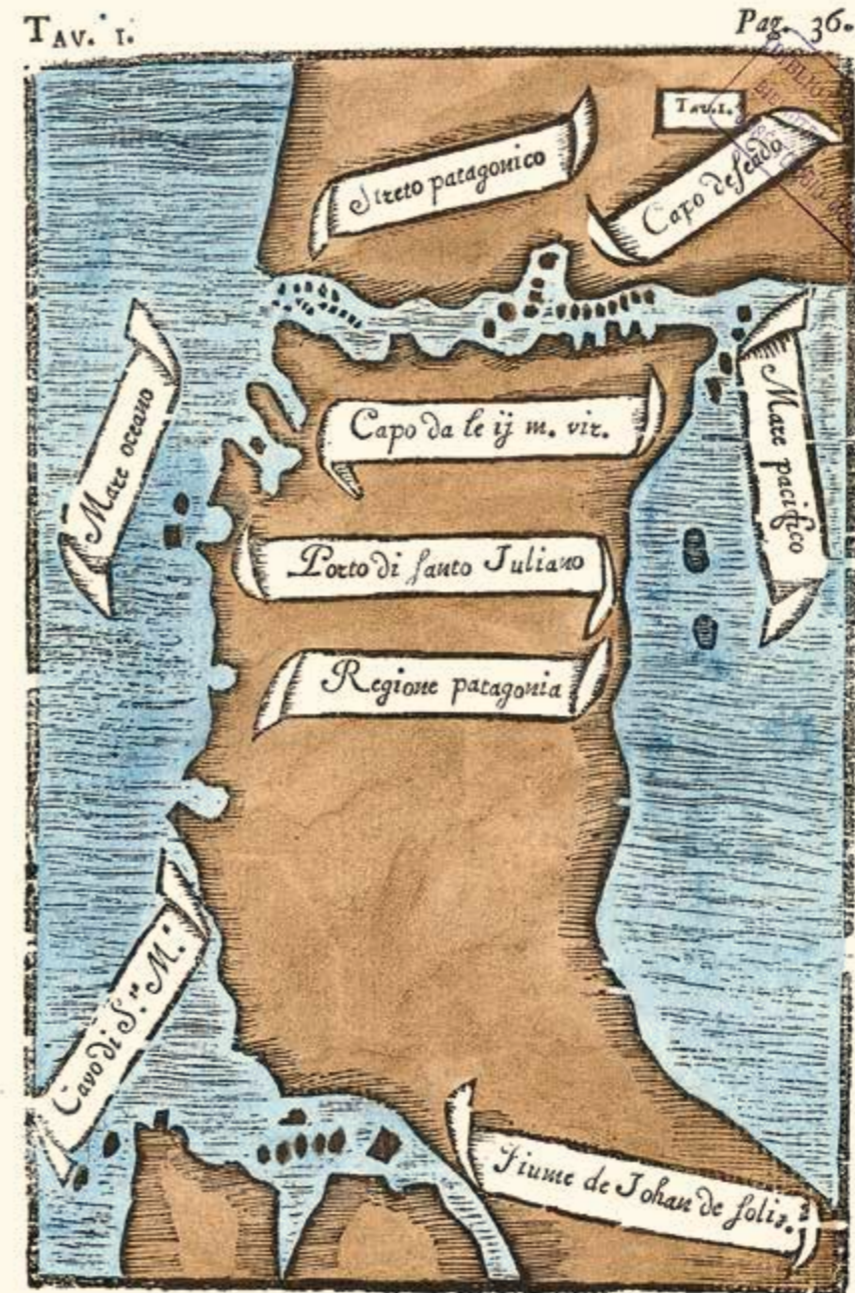
Fernão de Magalhães was Portuguese. It is most important to know this as the voyage was financed by the Spanish, and the kings of these two countries hated each other. Magellan (to use his more commonly known name) was considered a traitor by the Portuguese and never trusted by the Spanish for whom he sailed. He had previously been to the East in service of the Portuguese King Manuel, who refused to endorse Magellan's new plan to sail westward, so he took it to Manuel's arch rival, Charles of Spain.

Why was Magellan's plan rejected by the Portuguese? The time-honoured route to bring spices and silks from the Orient was overland across China and Persia to Constantinople, thence to Venice and by sea or river to Europe.



(above) Patagonian Giants. Frontispiece to John Byron's *A Voyage Round the World*, 1767.

(previous spread) *Maris Pacifici*, the first dedicated map of the Pacific Ocean by Abraham Ortelius, published in 1589. It shows the yet undiscovered Terra Australis.



The Strait of Magellan depicted in Antonio Pigafetta's *A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation*, 1520. It is a navigable sea route in southern Chile separating mainland South America to the north (bottom of map) and Tierra del Fuego to the south (top of map). It is considered the most important natural passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

This changed in 1453 when Mehmet II conquered Constantinople and shut down the trade. Portugal found a way to the Orient going east around the southern tip of Africa, while Spain, following the discoveries of Cristóbal Colón (Columbus) went west across the Ocean Sea (often called the Atlantic).

In 1494, the Spanish Pope drew a line down the centre of the Ocean Sea, proclaiming all lands to the east to belong to Portugal and to the west to Spain. The land of Verzin, now called Brazil, was later discovered on the Portuguese side of the line. Hence, when Magellan proposed sailing west, King Manuel could not break the Treaty proclaimed by the Pope.

**THE VOYAGE BEGINS AND MUTINY BREWS**

In 1519 Magellan was given five ships and 240 men and began his voyage westward. I signed on as a supernumerary with few official duties but my key role was to keep a diary of all events. The plan was to sail west to Verzin, then southward down the eastern coast of the Americas until the Strait was found to the Southern Sea.

Three of the five ships were captured by Spaniards, men unfriendly to the point of mutiny with the Captain General Magellan. After stopping to resupply in the Canaries, the Spaniard Cartagena, second in command of the Fleet, challenged Magellan and was thrown in the stocks. He was replaced by the fleet's accountant, another Spaniard.

In Verzin the Canibali, lovely people despite their reputation for eating their foes, taught us how to make boats called *canoe* from a single tree trunk. We made our way down the coast to an evil place we called Port St Julian where the mutiny happened that winter.

One night, two ships captured by Spaniards, decided to take matters into their own hands. By morning, the men and many other mutineers were in irons and Magellan was in command once again. Juan Sebastian Elcano, Master of one of the ships, was at first on the side of the mutineers, but later refused to take sides. Despite the fact that he spent the next few months in irons, he saved his life and, much later, mine also.

The mutiny quelled, the expedition sailed on southwards into the cold. One ship was lost searching for the Strait. Four ships pressed on. We entered a most barren region where we found massively tall inhabitants with huge feet like dogs. We called these people "dog feet" or *pata cana* and the region afterwards became known as Patagonia.

**FINDING THE STRAIT**

Finally, on the day of Saint Ursula and Her Blessed 11,000 Virgins, one of the crewmen saw whale bones at a small waterway. What was unusual was that the skeletons faced east. With caution and not much hope we entered the narrow inlet and eventually, weeks later, realised this was the Strait we had been searching for. Magellan named it the Strait of All Saints. Sadly, one captain decided that he had had enough and left us without notice to head back to Spain.

After many long weeks the three remaining ships burst out into the Southern Sea, now renamed by the Captain General as the Peaceful, or Pacific Sea. Actually, it was too peaceful. For we now had to suffer three months at sea with no winds and no lands to get water or forage. We boiled the leather hides that covered the sails and ate those. We ate biscuits moistened with rat urine. We drank water so foul that we could barely choke it down. We longingly looked at our own urine and thought how it might taste.

The Patagonian men who had volunteered most graciously (while in irons) to accompany us died, and many of us died also. The scurvy began, but



The Essence of Goodwill, an award-winning, contemporary painting by Filipino artist Teody Boylie R. Perez showing an imagined scene of Cebu natives offering food and water to Magellan and his travel-weary crew, 2020. Collection of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. Image courtesy of the artist.

the Captain General shared his dried quince jam (we called it *marmalade* after the Portuguese word for quince) with the officers which helped greatly.

Finally we spotted an island where the natives attempted to rob us of all we had. We called this the Island of Thieves. But today it is also called Guam. We sailed southwards into a mass of islands we called the Archipelago of Lazarus although others called these islands after Phillip, the new King of Spain. After meeting a good many natives we ended up at the place they called Zzubu, or Cebu, which I swear on my life I wished I had never heard of.

### MAGELLAN'S DEMISE

The Captain General had decided to convert the natives to the one True Faith. The main chieftain of the area, Humabon, welcomed us and along with 2,000 of his people agreed to accept our faith. But one minor chieftain named Silapulapu refused and in the battle that ensued (force and weapons being the proper way to install beliefs) our most illustrious Commander was lost to us forever, wounded in the leg and drowned in the surf.

In the bedlam that followed we elected one leader then another. Humabon invited us to a dinner where we were ambushed and lost many more men. (I stayed aboard nursing a wound I had received in the battle and thus my life was spared). Enrique, Magellan's long time slave and the only one

of our expedition who could speak the local languages, disappeared, never to be seen again, and there were those who say he betrayed us to Humabon.

A word about Enrique, fine fellow of Melaka. He is called that, although in my talks with him I came to believe he was from the large island now called Sumatera. I am often asked what it is like to be among the first to sail around the world. I demur. Enrique was the first, I respond. How, I am asked? Since Magellan found Enrique in Melaka and brought him west to Spain, and then years later sailed from Spain, again west, wasn't Enrique, an Asian, the first man to travel around the world?

As we now had not enough men to crew three ships we scuttled one and made our way onwards with two, determined to focus only on obtaining the goods we had been sent for and returning home as quickly as possible.

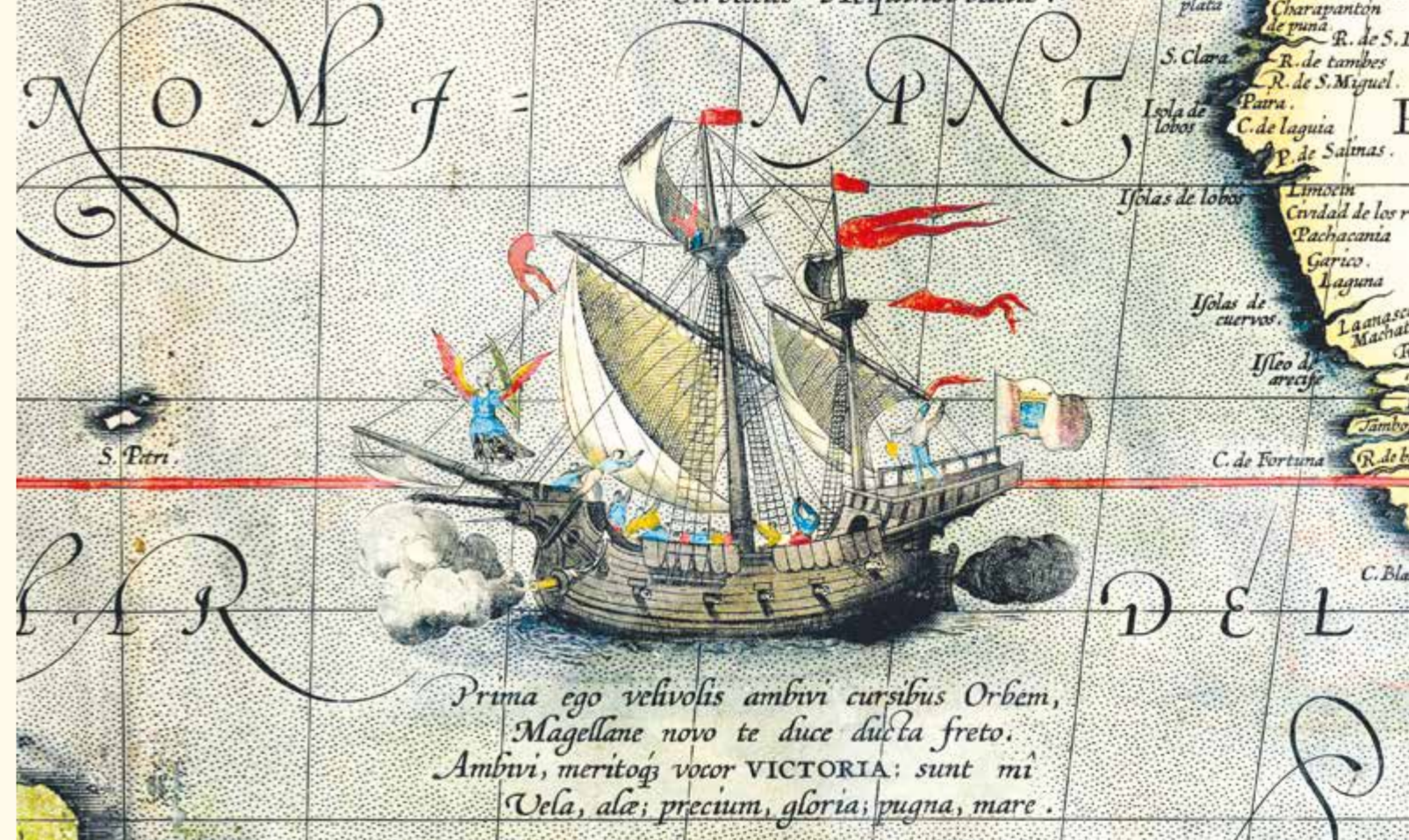
### FINALLY FINDING THE CLOVES

We finally reached the Moluccas where the cloves grew (cloves look like nails so were named after the Spanish word for nail: *clavo*.) We stuffed the two ships full until they could hold no more and just as we were about to leave the lead ship, the *Trinidad*, sprang a leak. We knew, if we waited, the winds would turn against us and we would no longer be able to sail westwards. So we left the *Trinidad* to be repaired after which it could sail east back to America with half our men. It never made it.

The remaining half, about forty five Europeans and a few local natives to be used as guides, took the smaller ship, the *Victoria*, captained by the mutinous coward Elcano (and with me onboard still writing my diary) and sailed west.



The Clove, *Carophyllus aromaticus*, by Elizabeth Blackwell, 1739. Cloves were so valuable that the 381 sacks that returned on one ship paid for the entire voyage.



The *Victoria*, the only ship to return from the expedition, continued to sail for another 50 years after Magellan's voyage until she was lost in the Atlantic.

### GOING HOME

Despite our guides, we got lost many times. We passed the islands of Ambon and Banda where there was nutmeg and mace but having no room in our hold we sailed on. We stopped in Timor to get goats and pigs.

We heard of, but did not visit, the Hindu land called Bali, and the island called Java the Great where women became pregnant by the wind, and another island where giant birds called *garuda* could carry elephants. We heard of an island named Komodo where dragons lived and I have seen with

my own eyes a map showing that island with the phrase "Here be Dragons". We did stop in the Kingdom of Brunei where we were treated most graciously until we were not, and lost more men.

We passed under the bottom of Africa at Cape Tormentosa, where the winds converge and the seas were rough. In the Cape Verde islands we stopped to provision but the Portuguese discovered we had been trading and so more men were lost.

At the end of our three-year voyage, our ship, the *Victoria*, returned with 26 tons of cloves which barely covered the cost of the entire expedition. Elcano was pardoned for his role in the mutiny, knighted and died four years later on another expedition to the East.

I traveled to meet the King of Spain to give my report, after which I travelled to Portugal to give the same report to their King. I then travelled home (overland, never wanting to set foot aboard a ship again) where I received permission to publish and a copyright of twenty years. I struggle to find the funds to have my diary printed although there are several manuscript copies available. Maybe I shall go to Tunis to fight the Turks, or to Malta, but I doubt I will ever get back to the East so will more than likely never visit the fair island you call Singapore.

Written in the Year of Our Lord 1524, in Vicenza, by Antonio Pigafetta, Knight of Rhodes. 📖

A 1992 reconstruction of the *Victoria* that successfully recreated the original voyage. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.



**ERIC ROSENKRANZ** is a map collector and student of the Age of Exploration. His unpublished novel of the exploits of Antonio Pigafetta, *Great and Terrible Things*, is available in ebook form to FOM members.

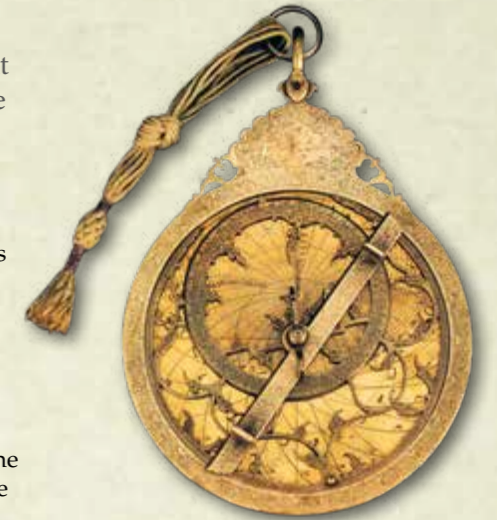
# When Science Travelled With Faith

**DARLENE KASTEN** EXAMINES THE INFLUENCE OF JESUIT VOYAGES TO CHINA

Christianity has often been seen at odds with science but the Jesuit missionaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries who embraced science used its power to propel the spread of their faith to China.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, scientific technologies associated with nautical navigation, astronomy and cartography that enabled the great global navigations of da Gama, Dias and Magellan were developed in Portugal. The voyages forced the Portuguese to consider the natural laws behind winds and ocean currents and to develop nautical skills to know the approximate position of ships on the high seas. For this purpose, instruments for astronomical observation were used, such as the quadrant and astrolabe.

Lisbon in Portugal became the centre of scientific exchange between the European colleges and the Eastern missions. Almost all the missionaries who passed through Lisbon studied at the Colégio Romano, the school established in Italy by founder of the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits, St. Ignatius Loyola, in 1551. The Roman College was the centre of western academia in its time, hosting many learned debates including those between astronomer Galileo Galilei and Orazio Grassi, a professor of mathematics. The Jesuits were particularly drawn to astronomy and had a large observatory tower and scientific laboratories constructed on the roof of an annexed church.



A 19<sup>th</sup> century copper alloy planispheric astrolabe, Isfahan, Iran. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum.



(above)  
Unbound illustration of Matthäus Ricci, Adam Schall, and Ferdinand Verbiest with various instruments. Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste, *Ausführliche Beschreibung Des Chinesischen Reichs Und Der Grossen Tartarey*, Rostock, 1747-1749. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Library Special Collections.

(opposite page)  
Tapestry: *Les Astronomes*, from *L'Histoire de l'empereur de la Chine* series about 1697-1705, Beauvais Manufactory, France. In the centre stands the Emperor (probably Kangxi) among a group of scholars led by the German Jesuit priest Father Schall von Bell and surrounded by astronomical instruments. Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



The Jesuits understood that mathematics was the key subject through which they could reach their aims of evangelisation in China. Until about the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese were scientifically and technically more advanced than Europe but by the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were lagging well behind. An important criteria for the selection of missionaries for the China mission became their knowledge of the mathematics of arithmetic, geometry and astronomy and the door to this movement of knowledge was opened by Matteo Ricci.

### RICCI AND CARTOGRAPHY

Italian Matteo Ricci entered the Jesuit order in 1571 and studied mathematics, astronomy and cartography at the Colégio Romano. After graduation in 1577 he applied and was accepted to serve in the Jesuit mission to India. He was first sent to Portugal to prepare for his Asian service and then in 1578, he sailed to the Jesuit mission in Goa. From there Ricci was sent to Macao in China and in 1583, was invited by the Chinese governor to settle in Zhaoqing.

During his time in Zhaoqing, Ricci used his skills in mathematics and cartography to produce the first modern Chinese map of the world based on the world map of Abraham Ortelius, thereby introducing the Chinese to America for the first time. Later he went on to produce the first modern map of the Far East. With the help of his Chinese Christian converts Ricci produced a translation in Classical Chinese of the first six books of the *Elements of Euclid*, thus introducing the Chinese to western mathematics.

It was the mathematical abilities that Ricci acquired in Rome that made it possible for him to be the first European in the early modern period to penetrate Chinese society and to build a bridgehead for the Jesuit mission to China. His appointment as advisor to the Emperor would also bring the Chinese up to date on the newest developments in western mathematics, astronomy and cartography.

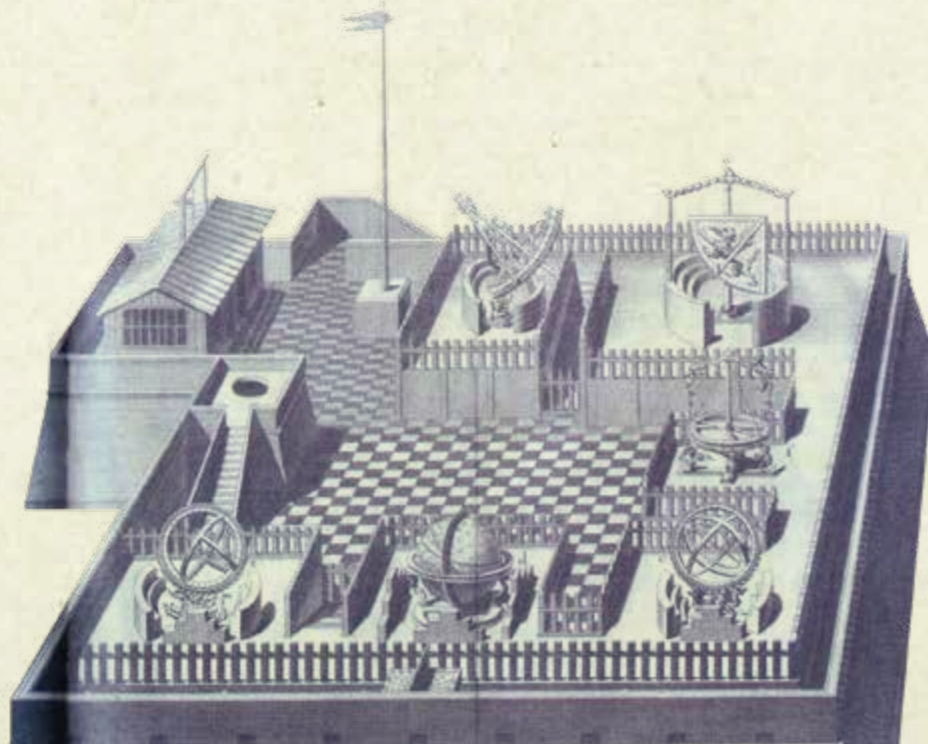
### SCHALL VON BELL AND THE BOARD OF MATHEMATICS

Father Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666), born to noble parents in Cologne, studied mathematics and astronomy in Rome and entered the Jesuits in 1611. In 1618 he left for China on a Portuguese ship and was called to Beijing in 1630 to work as an astronomer and train the 200 members of the Chinese Board of Mathematics in astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and other parts of mathematics.



A portrait of German Jesuit Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666) holding an astrolabe. Hand-coloured engraving, artist unknown. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674-1743)  
Representation of the Astronomical Observatory  
of Peking included in the work *Description  
geographique, Historique, Chronologique  
[...] de l'Empire de la Chine*, vol.3. Paris, 1736.  
Collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal.



The Board of Mathematics was entrusted with the Chinese calendar and it was their duty to predict the astronomical situation for the whole year, the days of new and full moons, movements of the sun with the dates of its entrance into each of the twenty-eight constellations forming the Chinese zodiac, the times of the solstices and equinoxes, and the beginnings of seasons, the positions and conjunctions of planets, and especially, eclipses of the moon and the sun.

A reform of the Chinese calendar was felt to be needed even before the arrival of the Jesuits. The calendar had extreme political and symbolic importance in China: it validated the legitimacy of the dynasty and the emperor. More importantly, the exact explanation of astronomical regularity and the calendar were some of the effective symbolic tools that helped the Qing government to establish power in the country.

In China, all the nobles, including the emperors, were astonished at the new western ideas of the Jesuits, and in 1644 Schall von Bell was named as Director of the Board of Mathematics. His new position was problematic though. For one thing, the title was linked to the title of mandarin requiring civil service to the Emperor. Secondly, as the Chinese calendar was used to indicate lucky and unlucky days, the superstitions conflicted with the church's trust in God's divine providence. But since it was deemed that Father Schall and his office only gave the astronomical data and had no influence whatsoever on the final edition of the calendar, Pope Alexander VII declared that the Jesuits of China were allowed "to exercise the office and dignity of mandarin and imperial mathematician".

So on the first of August in the first year of Shun Zhi's reign (1644), the traditional Chinese calendar was declared inaccurate and Schall von Bell made the suggestion to the Emperor to calculate the calendar using new western astronomical instruments which were soon brought into the Qing Palace for the Chinese Imperial Observatory.

### VERBIEST AND THE BEIJING IMPERIAL OBSERVATORY

Our final Jesuit scholar, Ferdinand Verbiest, was born in 1623 in a village south of Bruges in the Spanish Netherlands. He studied at the Jesuit College in Kortrijk before entering the Society of Jesus in 1641. He continued his studies at the University of Leuven where he studied mathematics under Andrea Tacquet, an excellent Jesuit mathematics pedagogue. After several failed attempts to enter service as a missionary, he was finally sent to China in 1659. Verbiest was initially assigned to be a preacher in the Shaanxi province but in 1660 Schall von Bell, who was now president of the Imperial Astronomical Institute and personal adviser to the Emperor, called him to Beijing to become his personal assistant.

During his time at court, Verbiest tutored the Kangxi Emperor in geometry and being a skilled linguist, he translated the first six books of the *Element of Euclid*, this time into Manchu, for the Qing Emperor. His most lasting contribution though was on behalf of the Beijing Imperial Observatory, originally constructed in 1442 during the Ming dynasty. The Observatory was substantially reorganised by the Jesuits in 1644 under Schall von Bell but underwent its biggest restoration at the hands of Verbiest in 1674 when the Emperor requested the construction of scientific instruments like those of Europe.

Verbiest was able to present him with six instruments, made in China under his direction: a quadrant, six feet in



Frontispiece for Athanasius Kircher's 1667 *China Illustrata*, published at Amsterdam by Elisée or Elizaëus Weyerstraet and Jan Janszoon van Waesberghe, depicting Johann Adam Schall von Bell, an angel, and Matteo Ricci displaying a map of China below SS Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola venerating an IHS representing Jesus Christ surrounded by angels. Note the mandarin square on Schall's robe. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

radius; an azimuth compass, six feet in diameter; a sextant, eight feet in radius; a celestial globe, six feet in diameter; and two armillary spheres, zodiacal and equinoctial, each six feet in diameter. These large instruments, all of brass and with decorations which made them notable works of art as well, were, despite their weight, very easy to manipulate, and a credit to Verbiest's mechanical skill as well as to his knowledge of astronomy and mathematics. They are still in a perfect state of preservation.

Although the Jesuits were unable to achieve their ultimate goal to convert the Imperial court of the Ming and Qing to Christianity as they had hoped, it was the science that moved with their faith that left the most lasting impression in China. ■

**DARLENE KASTEN** is a docent at the Malay Heritage Centre, STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery and the Asian Civilisations Museum.



# Scent from Afar



The Adoration of the Magi, a tapestry designed by Pre-Raphaelite artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones. It shows the Three Wise Men offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus, 1904. Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

## DAWN MARIE LEE TRANSPORTS US ALONG THE INCENSE ROUTE TO REDISCOVER THE RICHES IT ONCE CONTROLLED

For many, frankincense and myrrh call to mind the story of Christ's birth. Central to that tale are the Magi, or the Three Wise Men, guided by a star to Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn king. They bore gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh which were said to be symbolic: gold for Jesus' royal status as the "king of kings"; frankincense for his divine status; and myrrh, which was used commonly in embalming, to foretell his sacrificial death.

The Bible never described the Magi as kings but as "visitors from the East" who studied the stars. So who were they? Their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh may indicate their origin. It may be possible that they were Nabataeans, pre-Islamic Arabian traders who had amassed enormous wealth and power by controlling the Incense Route for over 2,000 years.

### MASTERS OF THE INCENSE ROUTE

The Incense Route extended over 2,000 kilometres. It commenced in Hadhramaut, the easternmost region of South Arabia, and ended at Gaza, a port north of the Sinai Peninsula on the Mediterranean Sea. The Greek geographer Strabo compared the immense traffic along these desert routes to that of an army.

Jesus was born during an era when Nabataeans dominated the Arabian Peninsula. They established their capital, Petra, at a crossroads on the Incense Route and controlled



In the ancient world, frankincense was highly coveted. A single gram of frankincense was once worth two grams of gold. Photo from Unsplash.



Boswellia trees that produce frankincense flourish in arid, stony deserts. Cuts are made on the tree to tap the golden, liquid resin which is collected when it has dried and hardened. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.



An incense burner decorated with an openwork design and a lion which serves as the finial on the lid. 1910, Banjarmasin Southern Borneo. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum. The practice of using incense in purification rituals was likely to have been brought to the Malay World by Arab traders.

trade routes in all four cardinal directions, from Yemen to Gaza and from Egypt to Syria and beyond, covering over 2,000 kilometres. Dominating desert trade made them wealthy, and the greatest profit came from trading frankincense and myrrh.

### LIQUID GOLD FROM DESERT TREES

The name frankincense is derived from the old French term *franc encens*, which means 'pure lighting'. Both frankincense and myrrh are highly aromatic resins obtained from trees that flourish in arid, stony deserts. Cuts are made on the tree to tap the golden, liquid resin which is collected when it has dried and hardened.

Most frankincense comes from five species of *Boswellia*, gnarled and knotty trees that look like giant bonsai, while myrrh comes from the *Commiphora myrrha* tree whose branches are riddled with long, sharp thorns.

Although both trees grow in the same regions, frankincense is more valuable than myrrh. The best quality resins come from Oman, Yemen and Somalia while the

cheaper, commercial grade frankincense resins (mostly used in churches and temples) come from the Horn of Africa and India.

For thousands of years both aromatic gums have been treasured for their heady fragrance and health benefits including pain relief and anti-bacterial properties.

Ancient Persians used frankincense to treat diabetes and stomach ailments.

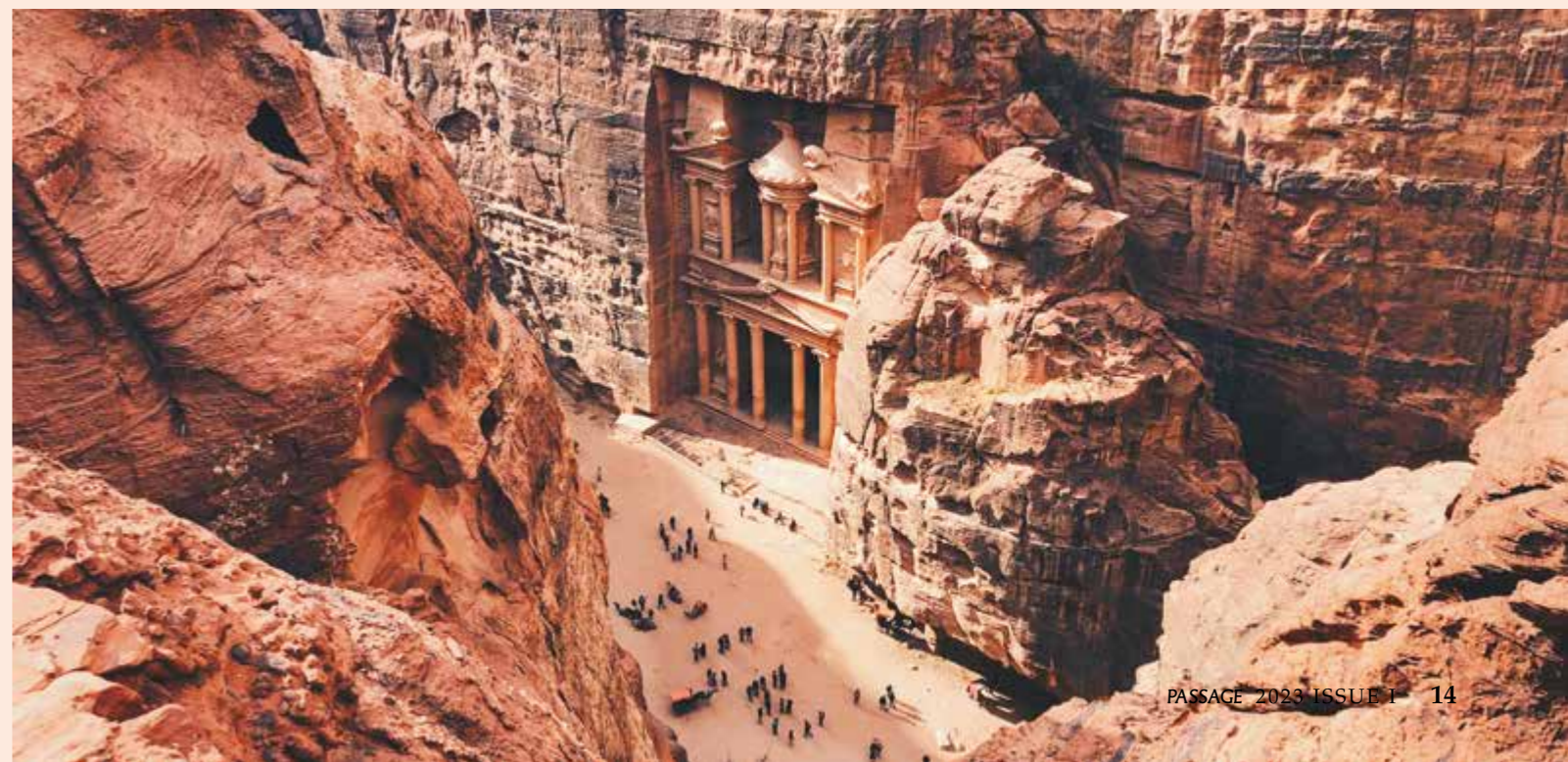
Egyptians cleansed body cavities during the mummification process with frankincense and embalmed the entire corpse with myrrh to slow down decay.

Frankincense was also widely used for spiritual purposes by Abrahamic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It was burned as incense and used to cleanse a space of bad or evil energy including during exorcisms.

In more recent times, people of the Malay World would *asap rumah* or smoke their homes once a week on Thursday nights (the eve of the Islamic holy day, Friday) to cleanse their homes of bad spirits. The Peranakan Chinese adopted this practice from the Malays.

(below)

Al-Khazneh (the Treasury) at Petra, the ancient city where the Nabataeans established their capital from which they controlled trade on the Incense Route. The metropolis of Petra once had over 3,000 buildings carved out of solid rock. Photo by Alex Vassey.





Heavily loaded camels could only walk a maximum of 40 kilometres a day, so caravanserai or rest stops were set up along the Incense Route to provide a safe refuge for travellers. *Les rois mages en voyage (The Magi Journeying)* by French artist Jacques Joseph Tissot, painted between 1886-1894. Gouache on paper. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum.

## THE FORGOTTEN KINGDOM BUILT ON INCENSE TRADE

In the ancient world, frankincense and myrrh were highly coveted and expensive, but were also considered necessities for worship and purification rituals. A single gram of frankincense was once worth two grams of gold.

The Nabataeans were originally a nomadic, desert-dwelling tribe who had mastered the secrets of survival in the often treacherous and barren terrain. Most importantly, they knew where to find water, vital to both man and beast. This knowledge gave them a huge advantage when navigating the Incense Route, most of which was desert.

Some historians have portrayed the Nabataeans as a nomadic and primitive people who got lucky with trade, given their proximity to the Incense Route. Their inscriptions are often neglected and not deemed as important as say, hieroglyphics, as they appear to be simple and repetitive scrawls. However, this couldn't be further from the truth.

Archaeo astronomers who have studied Petra in great depth have found evidence that the Nabataeans were a highly skilled and sophisticated people who used mathematics, science and astronomy to make strategic calculations for their architecture and voyages on the Incense Route.

They were talented stone masons who carved more than 3,000 monuments and buildings out of solid rock. 500 survive in Petra today. The metropolis of Petra itself covers 264 square kilometres and extends through canyons, up mountains and along riverbeds.

The Nabataeans were experts at finding food in the desert and harvesting rainwater, even storing it in rock-cut cisterns.

They were able to repel repeated attacks on Petra by using the mountainous terrain to their advantage.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, his empire was split among his generals. One of them, Antigonus I, arrived at the territory of Edom, just north of Petra. When he learned of the Nabataeans' immense wealth, he attempted to capture Petra but it ended in crushing defeat for the Greeks, mainly because they ran out of food and water.

Petra (once known as Raqmu, which means "coloured stone" in Arabic) sat strategically at the crossroads of several camel caravan trade routes that linked China and India to Southern Arabia and the Mediterranean.

Arabian traders used the Incense Route to transport not only frankincense and myrrh but also spices, gold, ivory, pearls, precious stones, and textiles, all of which they brought back from voyages to Africa, India, and the Far East.

The Roman writer Pliny the Elder stated that the journey from Yemen to Gaza on the Incense Route consisted of 65 stages divided by caravanserai or stops for camels.

## CARAVANSERAI

Caravanserai were rest stops along the Incense Route that provided a safe refuge for travellers. They also served as a marketplace for merchants to trade their goods. They were usually situated within one day's travel of each other as heavily loaded camels could only walk a maximum of 40 kilometres a day in harsh desert terrain.

A caravanserai was a two-storey building built around a large, open courtyard where horses and camels could rest and water. Rooms for travellers were on the second floor but few had windows. Many caravanserai had only one way in and out as well as fortified walls for security to protect against bandits who roamed the roads.

To control an important section of the Incense Route, the Nabataeans established four major towns in the Negev Desert: Haluza, Mamshit, Avdat and Shivta, as well as forts, caravanserai and agricultural land with efficient irrigation systems to grow food for the population.

## CREATING DEMAND AT HOME AND ABROAD

In ancient times, frankincense and myrrh could only be obtained from trees growing in South Arabia, Ethiopia, and Somalia. About 3,000 tons of frankincense were transported overland through the Incense Route each year to port cities where ships bound for the Egyptian and Roman markets awaited the precious cargo.

The Nabataeans were shrewd traders who knew how to create continual demand for their incense. Their biggest rivals were the Ptolemies based in Egypt and the Seleucids in Macedonia who tried to wrangle the incense trade from their control.

The Nabataeans cleverly used several strategies to help them keep a firm hold on the trade. On the Red Sea, their pirates prevented the Egyptians from sailing to Arabia and India. On the Mediterranean, traders hired privateers to rob back the goods they had sold to the Egyptians (who were transporting and selling frankincense to the Romans), thus allowing the Nabataeans to reap a double profit.

Their simplistic inscriptions on desert rocks which were largely ignored, were coded directions for fellow Nabataean traders on where to find a water source, shelter or a better route across dangerous terrain.

They also invented stories of how impossible it was to obtain their goods, including those of venomous, screeching, winged serpents that guarded the frankincense trees. These tales made customers believe that they were buying a truly exclusive, exotic product well worth the high prices that the Nabataeans were charging.

When Nabataean traders travelled to the Far East to sell their incense they returned with goods from India and China to sell in Arabia.

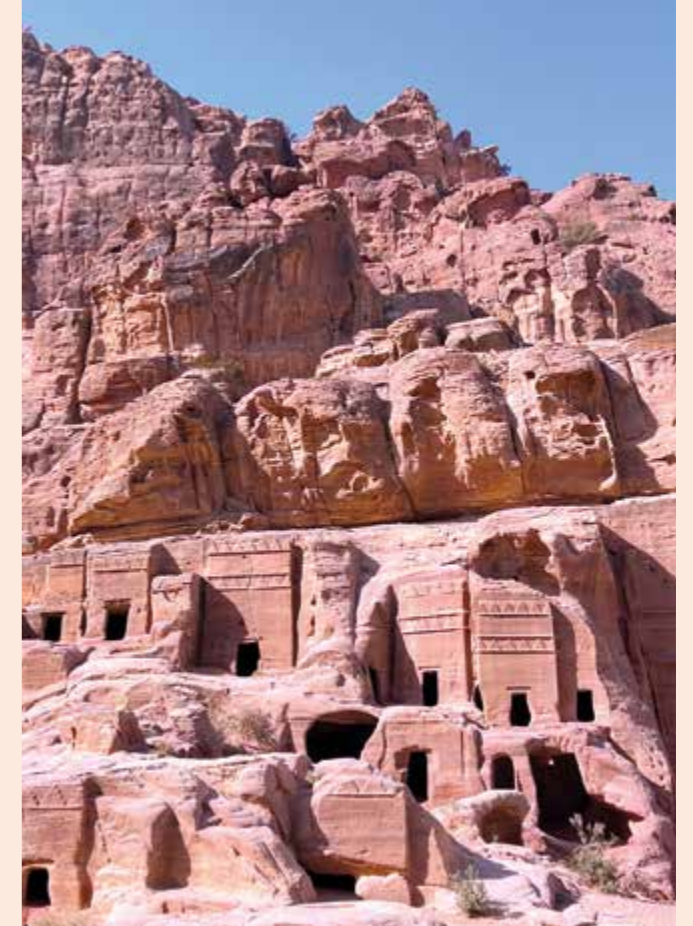
They travelled to Han Dynasty China, where Petra was known as Li-Kan (recorded in Zhang Qian's historical chronicles from his voyages as a Han diplomat in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).

Nabataean traders were so successful in introducing frankincense to China that it was quickly adopted by the royal court and put to medicinal use. In historical Chinese medicine books, frankincense was called *fan hun xiang* (calling back the soul fragrance), an allusion to the original use of frankincense in Arabia as incense for mourning.

Myrrh was known as *moyao*, the Chinese pronunciation of the Arabic name *murr*, meaning 'bitter'. In Chinese *Materia Medica*, both frankincense and myrrh are classified as herbs for treating traumatic injury, painful swellings and improving blood circulation.



A Nabataean betyl, or representation of a god. To keep demand for frankincense high, those in power convinced the masses that such gods demanded daily offerings of frankincense. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.



The Nabataean Kingdom lost its hold on the incense trade after Petra was annexed by the Romans and then felled by two powerful earthquakes. Today 500 rock-cut buildings are all that remain as a memory of the masters of the Incense Route. Photo by the author.

At home, in their own kingdom of Nabataea, those in power created a belief system that would make them even richer. They created gods and idols who supposedly could influence everything from crops to fertility. They placed figures of these gods in shrines and open-air altars along busy routes. They installed priests who convinced the masses that these gods demanded daily offerings of frankincense and other expensive items.

For over 2,000 years the Nabataeans controlled the Incense Route and wealth flowed. So how did it all end?

## LOST IN THE SANDS OF TIME

Around 106 CE, the Romans annexed Petra. Given the Nabataeans undiminished talent for trade, Petra remained one of the Roman empire's most important trading centres. It continued to be a significant political outpost in the Byzantine era, but the city fell into decline following two powerful earthquakes, one in 363 CE and another in 551 CE.

Under Roman rule, the Nabataeans steadily lost their hold over of the Incense Route and declined in wealth and prestige. The rise of Palmyra in Syria as a trade centre diverted camel caravans away from the once important Nabataean cities. By the time of the Muslim Arab conquest around 700 CE, the Nabataean Kingdom had been long forgotten, but their golden goose, frankincense, had travelled the world to distant lands thanks to their epic voyages. 📌

**DAWN MARIE LEE** is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *PASSAGE* and a docent at the NUS Baba House. She marvels at how the Nabataeans rode on camel-back for months on end when she could barely last an hour and clung on for dear life.

# UNDONE BY HER OWN GUNS

TIM CLARK INVESTIGATES TWO OF THE SHORTEST VOYAGES IN NAVAL HISTORY, NOW COMMEMORATED IN TWO SPECTACULAR MUSEUMS



The warships *Mary Rose* of England and *Vasa* of Sweden were born nearly a thousand miles apart and separated by just over a hundred years in time. They were both the pride of their respective kings and promised to be the latest, leading lights in naval warfare. Yet they both came to grief in very similar circumstances.

### THE MARY ROSE

Henry VIII (1491 – 1547) is often referred to as the father of the English navy. His dissolution of the monasteries yielded the wealth needed to invest in building his navy into a formidable fighting force to defend against, and to attack his main enemy, the French. The navy of just five ships he inherited at the start of his reign grew to 58 ships by the time of his death in 1547.



Portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

The *Mary Rose* was not a new ship. She was launched in 1511, two years after Henry VIII ascended to the throne at the age of 17. She may have been named after the king's sister, Mary, though it seems more likely that she was named after the Virgin Mary, combining the spiritual power of a saint with the secular power of the Tudor rose. She was designed as a troop ship, in keeping with the fact that naval warfare was initially more concerned with boarding and hand-to-

hand combat than artillery bombardment. Nevertheless, she was unusually well armed with six to eight heavy guns. These served her well as she fought several battles against the French, including one in which her gunnery alone managed to dismast and incapacitate the French flagship *Grand Louise* in 1512.

The *Mary Rose* was also fast. When Admiral Howard arranged a race along the coast of Kent, the *Mary Rose* finished half a mile ahead of the next fastest ship in the fleet. This led Howard to declare the *Mary Rose* to be "the noblest ship of sail in Christendom." And she was chosen as the flagship to serve three successive admirals.

### BATTLE OF THE SOLENT

By 1545 the *Mary Rose*, whose design was based on a Portuguese carrack, had been converted into a heavily armed gunship. She was strengthened and new gun ports were cut into her hull to accommodate more long-range bronze cannons, thus reflecting a shift in the strategy of naval warfare. Though this would inevitably have rendered her slower and less stable.

She was one of the leaders of the English fleet that emerged from Portsmouth harbour that fateful day on 15 July 1545. She was heading towards a much larger French fleet of 225 ships, carrying 30,000 men that was anchored less than ten miles away. The French dared not approach the shore batteries of Portsmouth, so instead they invaded the Isle of Wight and destroyed the village of Bembridge.

Because the wind was light the French sent four galleys (rowed boats with forward facing cannons) to meet the English fleet. It was upon these that the *Mary Rose* opened fire from her starboard side, then turned suddenly to starboard to engage the enemy from her port side. That was a fatal turn. According to the eye-witness account of one of the few survivors, that turn, driven perhaps by a gust of wind, caused her to heel over, and then keel over as her open gunports flooded.

She sank rapidly less than a mile from the shore, in full view of the king. It was said to be his favourite ship. Indeed it is likely that he was personally involved in



When she sank, the *Mary Rose* was bristling with 91 guns, excluding handguns. Of these, 39 were mounted on carriages and fired through openings in the ship's hull, comprising long-range bronze guns as well as short-range, quick-loading iron guns with removable powder chambers. Photo courtesy of The *Mary Rose* Trust, Portsmouth, UK.

making her such a formidable fighting vessel. Of the 500 men on board only 35 survived by clinging to the rigging above the surface as she came to rest at a depth of just 12 metres. And there she remained, her starboard side protected beneath a covering of oxygen-depleting silt, until she could be salvaged 437 years later.

### ROYAL RESURRECTION

It seems appropriate, while Henry VIII was forced to witness the sinking of his most beloved ship, that the future king Charles III was present in 1982 to witness her triumphant return to the surface, and installation in a dry dock, close to where she was originally built in Portsmouth.

A year later the *Mary Rose* could be viewed by the public, but only through a constant mist of fresh water to wash away the salts from her hull. This water spraying continued for twelve years and was followed by chemical treatment using polyethylene glycol to replace the moisture and strengthen her timbers. By 2016, visitors could breathe the same dry air as the vessel and view the cross section

of her hull from galleries on three levels. Alongside the hull are a host of display cabinets containing some of the 19,000 preserved items found onboard. These serve as time capsules, offering a deep insight into the lives of a whole spectrum of medieval society.

The *Mary Rose* was not just a battleship. She was home for around 500 men, including officers and noblemen who dined off pewter and spiced their food with pepper, and regular soldiers and mariners who ate and drank from wooden bowls.

As well as soldiers there would have been numerous archers on board (judging by the store of 250 reserve longbows found stowed below deck). Archers would have had an effective range of between 200 to 300 metres so they would have been on deck ready for action. They were a fearful fighting force as they could shoot between 12 and 20 arrows a minute. But it was the gunners who would have been the first open fire, and the first to realise that the ship was in peril, as the sea rushed in through the open gunports. She sank less than two miles into her final inglorious voyage.

### THE MARY ROSE MUSEUM

Portsmouth Historic Dockyard is a two-hour train ride from London and a six-minute walk from the station. What's more, your entry ticket to visit the *Mary Rose* will also entitle you go on board Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory* as well as the 1860 warship HMS *Warrior*. And if anyone in your party prefers shopping to naval history (surely not?) there's a huge shopping centre next door called Gunners Wharf.

Detail of the *Mary Rose* from the Anthony Roll, the only known fully illustrated inventory of English navy ships of the Tudor period in the 1540s. It originally consisted of three rolls of vellum, depicting 58 naval vessels along with information on their size, crew, armament, and basic equipment. Image from Wikimedia Commons.



(left) A contemporary oil painting of the *Mary Rose* sinking © Geoff Hunt. Image via Google Arts and Culture.

(previous spread) Detail from the Cowdray engraving of the Battle of the Solent by 18<sup>th</sup> century engraver, James Basire. The engraving shows the encampment of the English forces near Portsmouth with the English fleet on the right and French on the left. King Henry VIII can be seen on horseback near the fort. The sinking of his vice flagship, the *Mary Rose* is clearly shown. Image ©Kester Keighley, courtesy of The *Mary Rose* Trust, Portsmouth, UK.



# VASA: MAIDEN VOYAGE DISASTER

All images courtesy of Vasa Museum/Swedish National Maritime and Transport Museums unless otherwise stated.

**K**ing Gustavus Adolphus (1594 – 1632), also known as Gustav II Adolf, reigned over what is widely regarded as Sweden's golden age. He was the warrior king who led his troops into battle from the age of 17 and died leading a charge during Europe's Thirty Years War at the age of 38.



Portrait of Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus (r.1611 – 1632) attributed to Jacob Hoefnager, 1624. Collection of the Royal Armoury, Stockholm Palace. Image via Google Arts Project.

To make Sweden the dominant power in the Baltic region the king needed a superior navy. As a military tactician on land, he favoured the use of artillery, and he believed that the same emphasis on gunnery should apply to war at sea. So, Gustavus Adolphus took a personal interest in the design of his latest and greatest ship which was to be launched in 1628.

He insisted that it be the most magnificent and most heavily armed ship of its day. And, in honour of his grandfather Gustav I, who founded the Vasa dynasty, he named this ship *Vasa*.

The launch and departure of *Vasa* from Stockholm was delayed as she awaited the late arrival of the huge bronze cannons that would occupy her two main gun decks. Her total of 64 bronze cannons would have given her unsurpassed firepower. She was also a showpiece with over 700 carved sculptures emblazoned in bright colours to inspire her crew with pride and to intimidate her enemies.

The first leg of her maiden voyage would be in home waters so wives and even children were allowed on board. The plan was to replace these guests with soldiers at the next port of call before heading across the Baltic to join the king off the coast of Poland.

## A GLORIOUS SEND-OFF

There was much jubilation and fanfare as she began her voyage in light winds that could barely fill her four main sails. *Vasa* had all her gunports open to fire celebratory salutes. Then, after sailing no more than 1,300 metres, a gust of wind forced her to heel over to her port side allowing the sea to pour in through her open gunports. She sank immediately barely 120 metres from shore with her masts exposed for survivors to cling to until they could be rescued. Only 30 of her crew of 150 were drowned.

She sank to a depth of about 30 metres and although most of her valuable cannons could be salvaged (using a primitive cast iron diving bell) attempts to raise her failed. Fortunately, the very cold brackish waters of the



(above)  
*Vasa* viewed from her stern. Photo by Anneli Karlsson.

(left)  
Open gun ports. Photo by Ake Eason Lindman.

Baltic preserved the ship's timbers from marine worms that destroy ships in warmer, saltier waters. And 333 years later, after years of painstaking underwater preparation, an expert salvage team was able to bring *Vasa* to the surface and house her in a dry dock where the lengthy process of preservation and restoration could begin.

From 1961 till 1988 *Vasa* was sprayed with water followed by treatment with polyethylene glycol (a method pioneered by the Swedes and later used to preserve the *Mary Rose*). In 1990 she was brought to her final resting place in a purpose-built museum where a million visitors came to see her during the first 12 months.

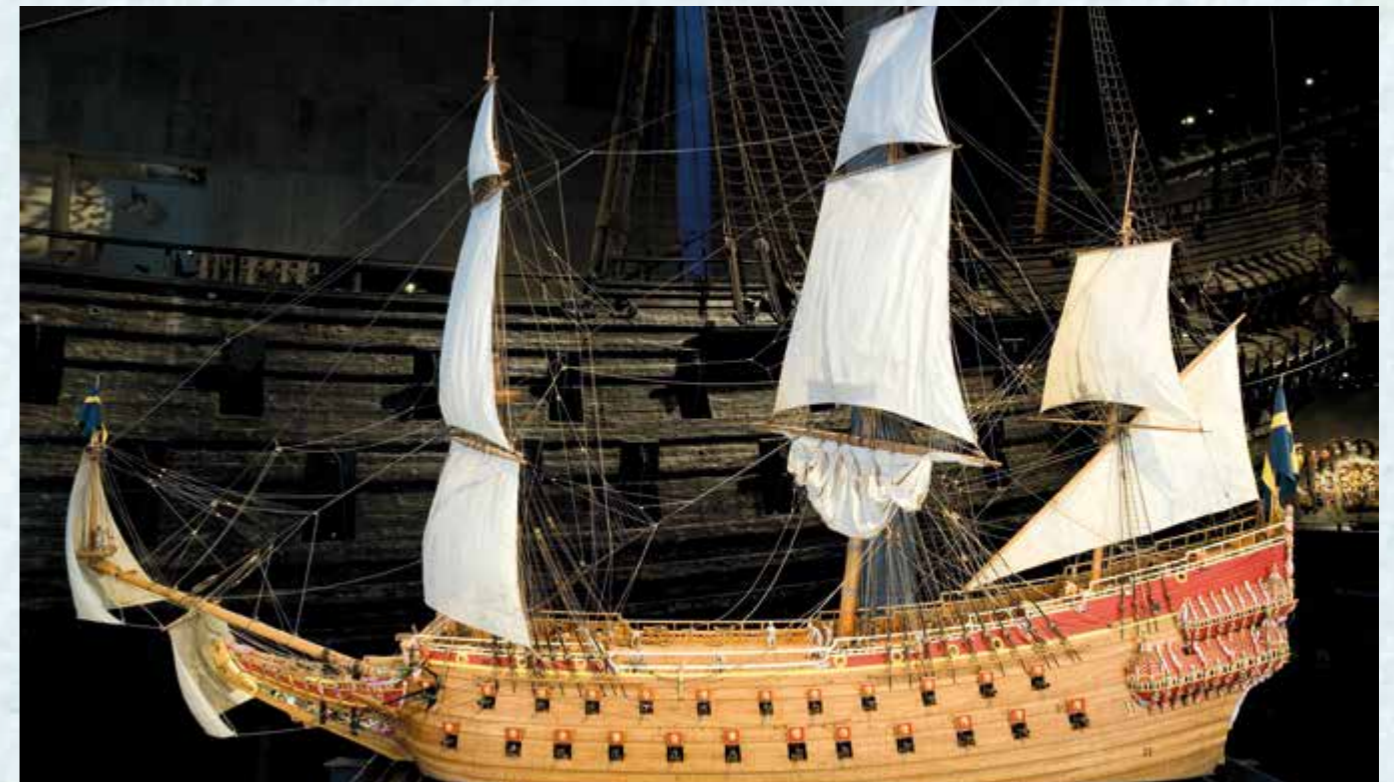
## VASA MUSEUM

A visitor's first glimpse of *Vasa* as you enter the museum is awe-inspiring – reminiscent of a scene from the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*, when a ghostly galleon emerges dramatically from the deep. Surrounding the vessel are exhibitions of the items found on board that tell so many tales about life in 17<sup>th</sup> century Sweden. Of all the many attractions that Stockholm has to offer, The Vasa Museum is surely number one. And it is just a 30-minute scenic walk from the central station that serves the airport. **P**

**TIM CLARK** is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *PASSAGE*. Writing this article gave him the excuse to delve deep and get an insider's view of these two fascinating museums.



An artist's impression of *Vasa* by Francis Smitherman.



*Vasa* Model 10:1 scale. Photo by Karolina Kristensson.

# Voyages for God, Gold and Glory

## TANG SIEW NGOH TAKES US ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH

Photos courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum and Indian Heritage Centre.

While it is often believed that Christianity was introduced to India by European powers through conquests in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, its introduction actually predates colonialism. In the first century Thomas the Apostle travelled from Israel to Kerala to minister to the Jewish diaspora there, signaling the first peaceful arrival of Christianity.

These Christian Jews, together with the natives who embraced the Christian faith, were known as Syrian Malabar Nasranis (named after Nazareth where Jesus Christ was born). They were also called Syrian Christians as they sang their prayers in Syriac, an Aramaic dialect spoken by the Jews during the time of Jesus.

Inculturation was very much a part of the Syrian Christian faith in India. They built places of worship and inscribed granite crosses in an ancient Persian language that have survived till now in Kottayam, Kerala and Mylapore, Tamil Nadu. They followed a unique Hebrew-Syriac Christian tradition along with rituals that echoed a Hindu form of worship. Their churches have architectural features that are similar to those found in Hindu temples.

### COLONIAL CHRISTIANITY CAPTURED ON BANNERS

Over a millennia later, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama made the first recorded European expedition to India round the Cape of Good Hope, with the aim of controlling the spice trade monopoly, starting with Kerala in 1498.

The Portuguese established their sway over the waters of India, Persia, and South China, setting the course for colonisation in pursuit of God, gold and glory. They were followed by the Dutch, the British and the French, making Kerala on the Malabar Coast a hot spot. The colonisers came



Traveller's Tales by Lavanya Mani. Hand-painted and embroidered textiles, 2019. Collection of IHC.

first to trade or obtain greater wealth (gold) and then to seize territories in the name of their monarchs (glory) and to spread their faith (in God).

Corresponding events at this historical juncture on the Coromandel Coast are aptly captured through the art installation by Lavanya Mani called *Traveller's Tales* commissioned by the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC). Mani fabricated her own visual narrative of God, gold and glory pursued by the four colonial powers and their acquisition of trade commodities at four port cities along the Coromandel Coast.

Using a centuries-old Indian textile painting technique called *kalamkari*, Mani produced four pairs of textile banners, with one banner representing a port city on the Coromandel Coast and the second, symbolising a textile that was key to trade.

The first pair of banners represents the influence of the Portuguese who made their base in Nagapattinam on the



Saint Francis Xavier preaching in Goa. Collection of Museu de São Roque, Lisbon. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

Coromandel Coast. The blue banner in this pair depicts a compass, cross and clove plant. The captain of a Portuguese ship would depend as much upon the Cross of the Order of Christ on the sails for protection, as he would count on his compass for navigation. The clove plant represents the spice trade that triggered the voyages of exploration in earnest. The second banner in this pair is inspired by Japanese textile sample trade books, showing the famous Indian textile techniques, such as *ikat*, *ajrakh*, *mashru*, and *chintz*. Indian textiles were important for they were the trade currency to barter for spices in the East Indies (Southeast Asia).

The Indian textile dyeing technique was so good that even Jesuit priests got involved in espionage to learn its secret formula, as depicted in the third pair of banners, a tribute to the French influence in Pondicherry. French Jesuits arrived in 1686 but they engaged in more than just religious duties, as documented in a banner which depicts a letter from one Jesuit priest (Pierre Poivre) to another (Father Coeurdoux) about the Indian dyeing method. Poivre was not only the Ambassador to Cochinchina but also a botanist who collected plants from India and the Dutch East Indies to cultivate them in French possessions like Mauritius.

### ROME OF THE EAST

In 1510, the infamous Afonso de Albuquerque invaded Goa and thousands of natives were killed. Convinced that 'whoever is lord of Melaka has his hand on the throat of Venice', he then sailed to Melaka, leaving another trail of destruction in 1511. He envisioned a colossal Asian empire united by Christianity, displacing Islam. This was the heavy-handed Portuguese strategy of integrating politics and missionary activity: God, gold and glory again.

Following the conquerors were the missionaries, including Francis Xavier. He was one of the principal Jesuit missionaries to Asia who arrived in Goa from Lisbon in 1542, when India was under Mughal rule. Xavier's primary mission for King John III was to restore Catholicism among the Portuguese settlers.

Under Portuguese rule, conversions to the Catholic faith and building of churches were so impressive that Goa was called "Rome of the East". The Goan Inquisition was established in 1560 to suppress heresy and punish Catholic heretics, as well as Jewish, Muslim and Hindu converts who had not completely relinquished practices from their former faiths. The Portuguese authorities also denounced Syrian Christians as heretical for not embracing Catholic veneration of images of saints and biblical figures. They imposed Western Catholic or Latin rituals and liturgy while systematically suppressing the indigenous Syrian rite churches. More religious orders such as Dominicans and the Augustinians arrived in Goa during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They brought paintings, sculptures and devotional objects to be copied by local artists who were mostly Hindus.

### USING ART TO INFLUENCE FAITH

Xavier employed a soft approach, incorporating local customs and beliefs into his preaching to both adults and children and used art to overcome the language barrier by developing a visual vocabulary to deliver catechism. The local population with their artistically receptive minds could easily assimilate the Western Christian symbols they were encountering for the first time. This heuristic approach adopted by later Jesuits is depicted in the painting displayed in a special exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum



A 17<sup>th</sup> century gilded ivory Madonna with gold earrings, Goa/Lisbon. Collection of IHC.



Carving of the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd, 17<sup>th</sup> century, India. Collection of ACM.



An early 17<sup>th</sup> century Indo-Portuguese Pietà carving. Collection of ACM.

Virgin Mary holding the body of Christ on her lap in the brief emotional moments after his death and before he is prepared for entombment. The polychrome *Pietà* wood sculpture currently on display at the ACM has a Syriac inscription at the base, indicating possible ownership by a St Thomas Christian.

### PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS ART

Unlike the Portuguese and the Spaniards, the Dutch and British Protestant missionaries who came to Asia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had only minimal support of their home countries. The Dutch and British trading companies feared over-zealous missionary activity might damage trade, and so did not promote Christianity until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Christian images were not used in Protestant religious practice, so artistic production was confined to Bible boxes and furniture. One example of Protestant art depicting Old Testament narratives is a cabinet covered with ivory panels on display in ACM.

It was made in Sri Lanka for the Dutch, who took control of the island from the Portuguese in 1656. The inner faces of the swinging doors depict Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, standing beneath the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil with a serpent representing the devil entwining it. The Garden of Eden theme allowed artists to depict rich vegetation, exotic animals such as camels and elephants, and even a mythical *makara* on the seven drawers and the exterior panels.

Christianity made a lasting impression on India, especially in Kerala and Goa where the colonials left their mark. And although Christians in India today constitute less than two and a half per cent of the total population, surprisingly, India has more Jesuits than any other country in the world. And Indian Christians are well represented in various influential spheres of society, including serving as Chief Ministers in several states. ■

(ACM) on Christianity in Asia which shows Xavier using visual aids.

In territories under Portuguese rule or influence in Asia, Africa and in Latin America, local artists of various faiths were taught to reproduce Western art and Catholic images. Foremost among these were intricate ivory images which were popular in Portugal and Spain and their Asian colonies. Non-Catholic artists found a ready export market for their ivory statues of saints for house altars and chapels for the rich in the colonies and in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the Americas. Some patrons of Christian art were even non-Christians such as the Chettiars, a subgroup of the Tamil community.

Displayed currently in IHC is one example of an Indo-Portuguese ivory image of the Madonna or Our Lady of Immaculate Conception. She appears European with her serene light eyes, aquiline nose and broad face framed by long blonde tresses, while her gold earrings reflect the Hindu practice of adorning their deities with gold. The many Virgin Mary statues produced rarely had any Indian facial features and were simply copies of the European model. But to know if an image has been carved by an Indian craftsman, simply observe how the garments have been rendered. The Indian craftsmen, accustomed to seeing the

dhoti, sari and other flowing garments, always carved them as if they were in motion.

On display at the ACM is a carving of the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd sitting atop a mountain decorated with lily stalks and lambs all around. It represents a fusion between Christian belief and Asian art form. Jesus used parables in his public ministry, referring to himself as the Good Shepherd and to his people as his flock. His meditative pose is reminiscent of the Indian shepherd Lord Krishna but the lambs also symbolise the Eucharist (Jesus as the sacrificial lamb). Birds drinking from a fountain allude to Jesus as the 'Fountain of Life'. Above the Jesus figure is God the Father with a thick beard.

The Good Shepherd imageries and rockeries served as the gospel for India in a nutshell, carved in ivory for devotion. They represent the confluence of two cultures, a bridge of contact. For the new converts, these representations of the gospel included the basic elements of the Christian belief without showing the crucifix which was hesitantly accepted in Asia.

However, the *Pietà* theme is commonly expressed in Indo-Christian art forms, using important Catholic iconography not found in the gospels but developed in northern Europe around the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It imagines the



Ivory cabinet depicting Adam and Eve, late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ivory, teak and silver, Sri Lanka, Collection of ACM.

**TANG SIEW NGOH** is a docent of the Malay Heritage Centre, the Indian Heritage Centre and the Peranakan Museum.

# THE RETURN OF THE CROSS

## ISABEL TELFORD PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE CHANGI CROSS AND THE SOLDIER WHO CRAFTED IT

*All photos and paintings from the book "The Changi Cross: A symbol of Hope in the Shadow of Death" by kind permission from Louise Cordingly.*

**D**uring World War II over 120 million soldiers were mobilised and many were sent on journeys of no return. Staff Sergeant Harry Stogden of the British 18<sup>th</sup> Division Royal Army Ordnance Corps was one of them.



*Staff Sergeant Harry Stogden. He drew on his expertise as a mechanical engineer to provide for his fellow POWs including a clever self-locking joint to be used in artificial limbs made in POW workshops.*

After fighting in France, and being evacuated from Dunkirk, Harry was redeployed and sent by ship in a convoy to Malaya. When he arrived in Singapore the island was ablaze and under constant Japanese bombardment. Just two weeks later 'Fortress Singapore' surrendered unconditionally, and Harry joined the procession of prisoners bound for Changi.

During his time at Changi prisoner-of-war (POW) camp Harry wrote letters in a notebook to his darling wife, Phyllis, telling her all about the long sea journey, his incarceration, the lack of food and medication, and how he somehow had become a better man. Later he learned that his wife had died of pneumonia aged 24, leaving his three children orphaned. His mother-in-law, who broke the news, added the quintessential British missive "keep your chin up".

Harry did not succumb to despair. He drew on his expertise as a mechanical engineer to provide for his fellows. He made sewing needles for machines the prisoners had managed to scavenge to fix their uniforms, and he designed a clever self-locking joint to be used in artificial limbs made in workshops set up by the POWs.

### HARRY'S LASTING LEGACY

However, as practical and ingenious as these were, Harry's most memorable contribution was a highly symbolic one: the Changi Cross. A symbol that took the POWs on a spiritual journey during their incarceration. It offered much needed comfort to these prisoners and saved many lives by bolstering faith and hope for better days to come.

At the end of each day of labour Harry would return to his hut and work into the night crafting the Cross. He used the shell of a 4.5' Howitzer gun to make the base and arms of the Cross. Army cap badges decorated the four ends as trefoils engraved using the sharpened stem of an umbrella. Thus, the remnants of war and destruction were transformed in Changi into a symbol of hope and redemption.



*Father Eric Cordingly standing by the Changi Cross (which he designed) in St. George's Chapel, Mark I. Harry Stogden had taken this photograph in secret using an illicit camera.*



*The Changi Cross was made with the shell of a 4.5' Howitzer gun and Army cap badges to decorate the four ends as trefoils engraved using the sharpened stem of an umbrella.*

The man who designed the Cross and entrusted his drawing to Harry for its manufacture was army Chaplain Father Eric Cordingly. A photograph taken by Harry, at great personal risk, using an illicit camera, records the chaplain with the Cross in the background at St George's Chapel, Mark I.

### PARTING COMPANY WITH THE CROSS

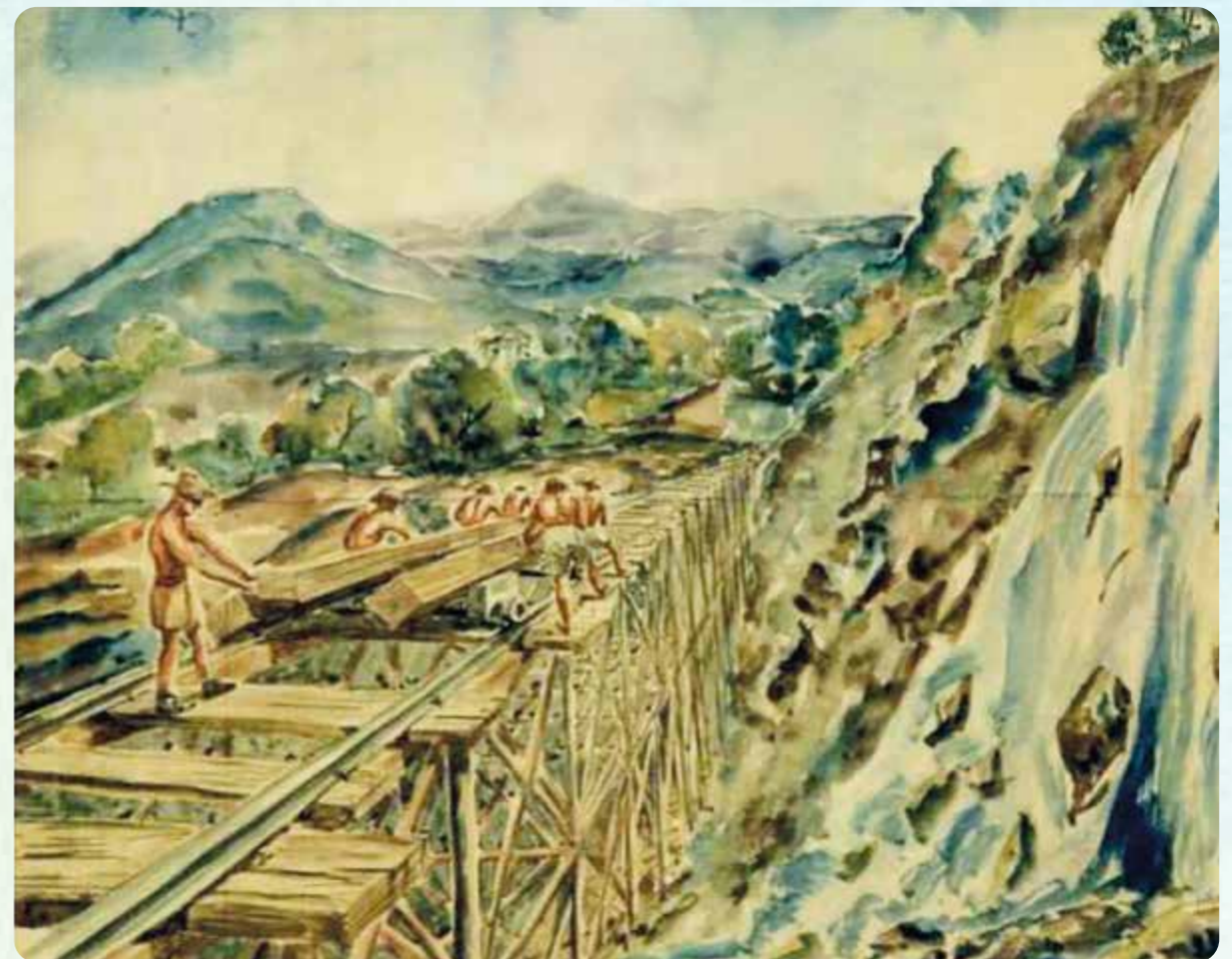
From Singapore both Harry and the Cross embarked on separate journeys. In May 1943 Harry was sent by sea to a coal mine work-camp in Fukuoka, Japan. Despite his debilitated state, he survived the harshness of the forced labour in the mines. He even enjoyed the thrill of liberation and expectation of returning home on a British aircraft carrier. But sadly, he died suddenly early into that homeward voyage and was buried at sea with full military honours, off the coast of Nagasaki, Japan.

The Cross meanwhile had gone on a very different journey. It travelled from St George's Chapel, Mark I in Changi with Father Cordingly and 7,000 fellow POWs to a Thai-Burma railway labour-camp where St George's Mark II was established.

The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) had decided on a grand plan, to construct a continuous railway track of 258 miles to connect Thailand to Burma to supply the Japanese troops stationed there using an overland route, since the waterways were frequently under attack from by Allied forces.

Six decades earlier British Engineers had the same idea but had dismissed such a plan as the construction of a railway line through mountains and thick jungle was deemed unsafe and too expensive. The IJA had a solution for this, using POWs and conscripted native workers whose lives were seen as simply expendable.

Many Churches of Captivity were built at this time. These places of worship were mostly outside spaces, with three walls and a covered



*A painting of POWs working on the Thai-Burma railway by Des Bettany.*





Watercolour of St George's Chapel Mark IV in Changi Prison by Eric Stacy.

altar, and they were built by the POWs themselves with whatever materials they could find. Most of the Army Chaplains were from the Church of England, but all denominations were welcome with open arms, and these churches became the focal point of the POW community life.

#### A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY THROUGH INCARCERATION


For the Army Chaplains, these were tragic times but at the same time somehow rewarding. Father Cordingly once described it as

*“The most wonderful time in my life, in spite of the grim and hungry times (...) For once, and for three and half years the thin veneer of civilisation, or reticence had been stripped from men...we were all down to bedrock. One saw people as they really were”.*

For those soldiers who found faith, and embarked on a spiritual journey, did so not following social conventions or traditions, but with the sheer, visceral need of the comfort of the word of God.

The Changi Cross itself continued to journey. For about a year it was placed in a simple altar of grass and bamboo in what was St. George's Chapel Mark II at the Thai-Burma railway, and it offered much needed comfort to Force F who were stationed there. It then returned to Changi with Cordingly and the remnants of Force F, less than half of whom survived. The Cross then sat on the altars of St. George's Chapel Mark III and IV, both within Changi prison. Finally, after liberation in September 1945, the Cross followed Father Cordingly to Norfolk, England.

In 1992 the Changi Cross made its ceremonious return to Singapore and is now permanently on loan from the Cordingly family to the Changi Chapel and Museum. When the museum moved to its current location, in 2001, Bernard Stogden, son of Harry, the father he never knew, was given the honour of placing his father's creation at the altar.

The Changi Cross now awaits your visit to the Changi Chapel Museum. There it stands as testimony to the triumph of hope even in the shadow of death. 

**ISABEL TELFORD** is a docent at Changi Chapel and Museum, National Museum of Singapore and Indian Heritage Centre.

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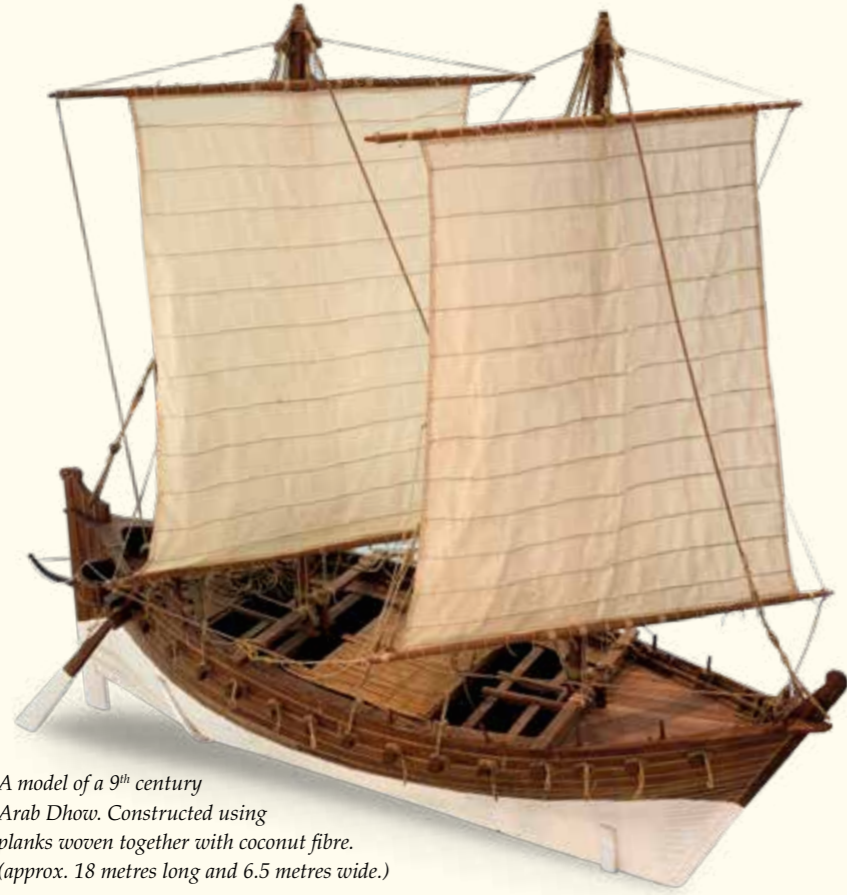
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# THE LAST HURRAH



A model of a 9<sup>th</sup> century Arab Dhow. Constructed using planks woven together with coconut fibre. (approx. 18 metres long and 6.5 metres wide.)

## TIM CLARK UNRAVELS THE MYSTERY OF THE BELITUNG WRECK

All photos taken by the author at Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

*And if you call for a song of the sea  
We'll heave the capstan round  
With a yo heave ho, for the wind is free  
Her anchor's a-trip and her helm's a-lee  
Hurrah for the homeward bound!*

- *The Mikado* by WS Gilbert

The beauty of the Belitung wreck, a sample of whose cargo is displayed in Asian Civilisation Museum's Tang Gallery, is its mystery. And the tantalising thing about mystery is that it invites speculation to answer so many intriguing questions.

Where was this strange Arab dhow heading when she came to grief just off the coast of Belitung Island, some 600 km southeast of Singapore? Why was she so overloaded with ceramics? Who was her captain? And what was the purpose of having so much gold and silver on board?

Even when we have hard evidence, different experts disagree about its interpretation. This leaves us free to reinterpret.

One thing that is not in doubt is where the ship was coming from. Judging by her cargo she was travelling south from China, probably Guangzhou, propelled by the force of the predictable NE Monsoon winds. We can take a reasonable guess at the time of year. It was probably sometime around January that she struck a reef just north of Belitung Island.

She would have been slow-moving with so much cargo on board. So, her voyage of around 1800 nautical miles would have taken well over a month.

### WHERE WAS SHE HEADING?

Another widely accepted assumption is her port of origin. From analysis of the few remnants of her wooden hull, and judging from her unique method of construction, she can only have come from the Persian Gulf. Probably the port of Basra, which served the ruling Abbasid Empire at that time. But where was she heading when she was wrecked? Here is where views diverge. Was she heading for the Palembang estuary, as some believe? If she was, she has missed the turning to approach from the north and would have been unable to approach from the south in a northerly breeze. Was



Monumental ornamental ewer. A ceramic conceit. Too fragile to use but a wonder to behold.



Gold bowl with repoussé design showing a pair of birds.



Gold octagonal cup with embossed images of eight members of a band comprising seven musicians and one dancer.

she heading for the Sunda Straits to cross the Indian Ocean? I think not. She was too heavily laden to contemplate an ocean crossing. She seems most likely to have been heading for one of the ports on the north coast of Java. There she could offload some of the heavy cargo of 57,000 Changsha bowls and exchange them for lighter, higher value goods such as spices. She would need time to make repairs and take on fresh supplies while waiting for the wind to change to a south westerly for her onward journey. But where to next?

The clues to her ultimate destination lie in her cargo of ceramics. In particular, the monumental ornamental ewer, shaped like an arabesque bronze vessel and covered with middle eastern motifs. Also, the sample set of three blue and white plates with palmette motifs, clearly designed to please the middle eastern market. These items along with the other finer ceramics would have fetched high prices in the Persian Gulf because no one in the world at that time could produce stoneware of the quality of the Chinese.

### INVESTING IN GOLD

And what of the gold and silver hoard found on board? Could it have been the dowry for a travelling princess? No. No room on this vessel for a royal guest. There would have been just enough space for the crew of about ten to sleep on deck. Could it have been a gift for a Buddhist ruler on Java? This voyage is reckoned to have happened at around 830AD, around the time that the Buddhist temple of Borobudur was being built. And although the two gold dishes with the swastika motif might have been well received as a Buddhist offering, the other gold and silver items have nothing in common with them. The two gold bowls, showing a pair



Gold dish with swastika motif.

of birds, might well have been intended as an extravagant wedding present. And the gold cup displaying members of a band could have been the prized party-piece of a wealthy host. This hotch-potch collection could have been bartered or bought second-hand, like the antique bronze mirrors that were also part of the cargo. Really, they seem to have but one thing in common: Gold.

The stash of Chinese coins that was found might have had purchasing power in Java. But not in the middle east. Whereas gold and silver would have value anywhere. In the absence of international banking, this was surely the best way to transfer wealth to the ends of the Earth. But where did this wealth come from?

Marine archaeologists have found evidence that the hull must have undergone a major refit because much of the original coconut fibre used to construct the vessel had been replaced by Hibiscus, a local material. This leads us to believe that our Arab dhow may have spent some years trading between China and the Indonesian archipelago. An Indonesian gold coin found on board lends credence to this notion. And it would explain the accumulation of wealth presumably belonging to the merchant captain. Perhaps he felt he had amassed enough wealth and yearned to retire to his native land.

### RISK VERSUS REWARD

So why did he overload his ship? Was it due to overconfidence based on his experience of years of successful trading in the region? Did he place too much faith in the strength of his ship and divine protection which had served him so well thus far? Or was he just pushing his luck because this was to be the first leg of his final homeward voyage?

A South African naturalist named Marais did a scientific study of white ants. It revealed that although ants would avoid a risky short cut on their outward-bound journey in search of sustenance, they would take it on the homeward-bound run, even when dangerously encumbered by carrying foodstuff.

Maybe humans are no different to ants. Our eagerness to return home may tempt us to take risks to satisfy our longings. And maybe that was the case with our imagined Arab merchant. This was to be his last triumphal homeward journey. His last hurrah. ■

**TIM CLARK** is a lifelong sailor who feels drawn to contemplate the human story that underlies a shipwreck.

# Money on the Move

**SOUMYA AYER** SIFTS THROUGH THE TOPIC OF COINS FOUND ON THE BELITUNG SHIPWRECK

**A**mong the plethora of ceramic objects found in the Belitung shipwreck there was a small stash of Chinese coins. At that time most purchases in foreign ports had to be bartered for with Chinese commodities. Therefore the presence of these coins on board warrants an investigation. Interestingly, these coins tell an intriguing tale of currency fluctuation, financial instability and monetary policy during the Tang reign (618 CE-907 CE).

208 bronze coins were found, their green patina indicating the presence of copper, a much valued resource in ancient China. Round with a distinctive square hole in the centre, there were two types: the *Kaiyuan tongbao* and the *Qianyuan zhongbao*. The bulk of the coins were the *tongbao*, the most important coin minted throughout the Tang reign. Larger and heavier, there were only nine *zhongbao*, which were first cast in the year 758 CE.

## QUANTITATIVE EASING DURING TUMULTUOUS TIMES

Three years earlier, in 755 CE, An Lushan, a military general led an internal rebellion to oust the emperor, bringing about two years of devastating war. The farms and looms went silent. Natural calamities followed, drastically reducing the output of silk, hemp and grain. Having spent heavily on military expenses, the government finances were in dire straits.

To deal with the budget deficit, the Tang court minted the *zhongbao* in large numbers. The value of one *zhongbao* was equal to ten *tongbao*, however, the amount of copper in them was not proportionately more. The issuing of higher denomination coins not worth their intrinsic value was equivalent to central banks printing cash as a way out of a financial crisis.

Within two years hyperinflation took root. The price of rice skyrocketed. It caused mass starvation. Counterfeiting flourished as it was easy to melt down utensils to make fake coins of iron. To deal with this scourge, harsh punishments were meted out. There is mention of 800 suspected counterfeiters being beaten to death.

Chinese coins from the shipwreck. Collection of the ACM. Photo by Tim Clark.



Copper alloy coin: Kaiyuan tongbao; first issued in 621 CE, ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Copper alloy coin: Qianyuan zhongbao; first issued in 758 CE, ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Eventually, the *zhongbao* was devalued and it was made equivalent to the *tongbao*. The *zhongbao* came to be used for its copper content rather than for its monetary value. Coins were melted and refashioned into Buddhist artefacts. This explains why only a few *zhongbao* survive today - including the nine coins on the Belitung shipwreck.

## CHANGES IN TAXATION RULES AND ITS EFFECTS

Up until 780 CE all taxes were paid for either in textiles or coinage. That year, the reigning emperor mandated that all taxes be paid for in coins. The surge in demand for coins could not be met. This coin famine lasted right to the end of the Tang dynasty.

Through policy changes over time, inflation was tackled, and by the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> century a bolt of silk that had formerly fetched four thousand coins could now be traded for just 800. Anticipating further rise in their purchasing power people began to hoard coins.

## BAN ON HOARDING

To get coins back in circulation the court proclaimed a ban on hoarding multiple times. People were forced to spend their cash within a stipulated time frame. Punishment for breaking the law was severe. In 829 CE, around the time the dhow embarked from China, the court instituted the death penalty for those who made Buddhist images with copper, including those sourced from coins.

Did the owner of the coins found on the wreck leave in too much of a hurry to spend them? Or did he keep them for their copper content or as a souvenir of his time in China? We shall never know. **P**

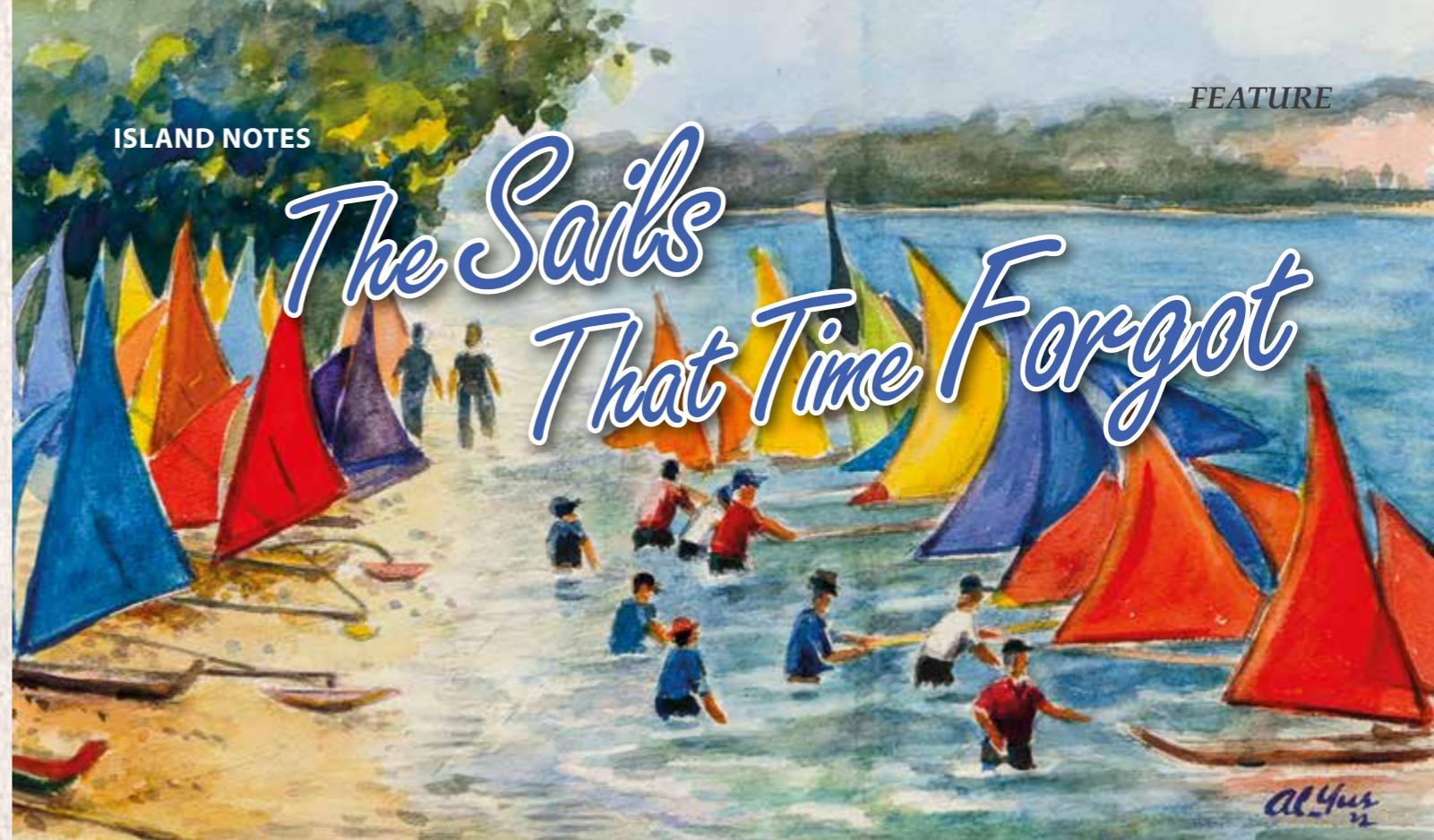
**SOUMYA AYER** has been a FOM volunteer since 2014. She guides at ACM and IHC. She is a published author of children's books.



Tang Dynasty bronze figure of Buddha, 618-906 CE. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

## ISLAND NOTES

# The Sails That Time Forgot



Singapore beaches took on a colourful, carnival-like atmosphere whenever jong races were held in the past.

## YUSOFF ABDUL LATIFF REMEMBERS KOLEK AND JONG RACING IN SINGAPORE

Paintings by the author.

**K**olek and jong races were popular traditional sea sports of the Singapore Malays in coastal areas like Pasir Panjang, Katong, Siglap, Telok Kurau and Bedok. *The Orang Laut* of the Southern Islands, Riau Islands and coastal Johor also held races from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s.

The kolek is a long, low canoe with oversized sails attached to its masts and steered by a paddle. A crew of about eight men would stand on the gunwale (the upper edge of the side



Kolek races were once part of Singapore's National Day celebrations.

of the boat), tightly holding on to ropes attached to the mast and lean precariously over the waves while balancing their bodyweight to keep the boat upright. Some have likened sailing a kolek to "wrestling a bull on water".

The jong is a miniature boat about 1.5 metres long. A jong is usually handmade with lightweight wood and has a mast and oversized sails to help it glide on the water. It is fitted with an outrigger, a long, weighted beam attached to the hull at one end and a float at the other end to prevent it from capsizing.

Jongs are sailed unmanned and by wind propulsion, so their speed depends entirely on the effectiveness of the design. During a race, jong owners will simultaneously launch them at the starting line and they can sail autonomously at a speed of 8-10 knots (15-18 kilometres per hour) in a straight line to the finish about 200 metres away.

Whenever jong races were held, the seaside took on a colourful, boisterous, carnival-like atmosphere as teams from various coastal villages competed in regattas. From the 1950s to the 1970s, kolek and jong races were held as part of Singapore's New Year and National Day celebrations.

While both jong and kolek races are still popular in the Riau Islands today, they have vanished in Singapore over time as coastal land was reclaimed and redeveloped. Many of the Southern islanders and coastal communities were rehoused in high-rise flats when their villages were demolished.

In 2016, several members of the Singapore Sailing Federation who used to live in the Southern Islands or had a family tradition in these sports tried to revive the races by holding a demonstration race off St John's Island. However since then, jong and kolek racing have not made a comeback in Singapore and sadly, the tradition has been swept away by the tides of time. **P**

**YUSOFF ABDUL LATIFF** is a watercolour artist based in Singapore. Check out his work on Instagram: @yusofflatiff

# Born to Roam

**PASSAGE EDITORS** EXAMINE THE HISTORY OF THE BUGIS AND DISCOVER THAT THEIR CULTURE STILL THRIVES IN MODERN SINGAPORE. WITH THANKS TO **SARAFIAN SALLEH** FOR HIS RESEARCH AND STUDY OF BUGIS HISTORY AND CULTURE.



Painting of Bugis pinisi ships by Singapore artist Yusoff Abdul Latiff. His Bugis paternal grandmother left home in Sulawesi with her sister around the early 1900s after a family dispute. The two intrepid young girls sailed to Singapore where they began a new life. In Singapore, Yusoff's grandmother met and married a young immigrant from Yunan, China.

**A** Bugis mother would recite traditional poems to her children to instill a love of sailing: to prepare for a life of hardship and adventure in pursuit of wealth across the seas. Unlike the *Orang Laut* (sea people) who seldom set foot on land, the Bugis formed coastal settlements at strategic points around the Indonesian Archipelago (known as Nusantara). Through this network of bases the Bugis were able to facilitate trade between the islands, including Singapore, long before the arrival of the Europeans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Being a hardy, mobile and cohesive community, they were often employed as mercenaries to strengthen the forces of rival warring factions such as the Vijayan and Majapahit Empires. After the fall of Melaka to the Portuguese in 1511, Bugis forces played a decisive role when taking sides in conflicts between the Portuguese, Dutch and Malay rulers.

The Dutch were especially ruthless in their pursuit of trade monopolies. One Dutch governor in Batavia (Jakarta) famously stated that “we cannot carry out trade without war, nor war without trade”. To secure a monopoly of the nutmeg trade they drove the British out of the Banda Islands. By the treaty of Breda in 1667, the British were obliged to accept the island of Manhattan in exchange for the spice island of Run, which was considered a bad deal for Britain at that time. The Dutch were already in control of the pepper trade from Banten. Next, they set their sights on the very profitable trade in cloves, the main centre for which was the free port of Makassar in the Celebes (Sulawesi).

## ALLIES AND ENEMIES OF THE DUTCH

The Celebes was the traditional homeland of the Bugis who were suffering from oppression under the rule of Sultan Hasanuddin of Makassar. So, the Dutch formed an alliance with the exiled Bugis Prince Arung Palakka and joined forces to defeat the Makassarese in a major battle in 1669. Victory allowed the Dutch to take over Makassar and the Bugis prince was made king of the adjoining province of Bone.

The relationship between the Dutch and the Bugis blew hot and cold over the next 150 years, alternating between wars and treaties.

When the Malay royal court moved from the Johor River to Riau, the Bugis accompanied them and

soon turned Riau into a major trade emporium by linking it to their trading network in the surrounding islands. The Bugis concentrated especially on the very profitable trade in tin, which they collected from sources such as Banka, Palembang and Selangor. But this brought them into conflict with the Dutch who tried to blockade Riau. In response in 1757 the Bugis besieged Melaka which was relieved in the nick of time by reinforcements from Batavia. In retaliation, the Dutch sacked the Bugis stronghold on Linggi. The treaty of 1758 brought peace, but at a heavy price for the Bugis, who were forced to relinquish the trade in tin and to cease trading with the Europeans and Chinese.

The peace lasted for 24 years and was broken by an incident that happened in 1782. By this time the French and Dutch were allies in Europe and when a British ship, the *Betsy*, was seized by a French privateer in the port of Riau, the Bugis leader Raja Haji demanded reparation from the Dutch. When the Dutch refused, the Bugis from Riau joined forces with the Bugis from Selangor to attack Melaka in 1784. Once again, the conquest of Melaka was averted by the timely arrival of a Dutch relief force and Raja Haji was killed in the battle. The treaty that followed granted a kingdom to the Malay Sultan comprising Johor, Pahang, Riau and all its dependent islands (including Singapore) to be overruled as a vassal state by the Dutch.



Engraving by Romeyn de Hooghe of the 1669 Dutch conquest of Makassar with the Dutch Admiral Speelman on the left and the Bugis King Arung Palakka on the right. In the middle are the Roman gods Mercury and Mars representing Trade and War. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

## PIRACY AND SLAVE TRADING

The Bugis had been trading with Arabs and Chinese for hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans upset the balance. The relationship with the European traders alternated between partnership and rivalry. The restrictions imposed on trade, particularly by the Dutch, are blamed for the Bugis resorting to piracy. However, they would prey on local as well as colonial shipping. The long sail boom of the Bugis *padewakang* could be lowered and used as a ladder for boarding another ship.

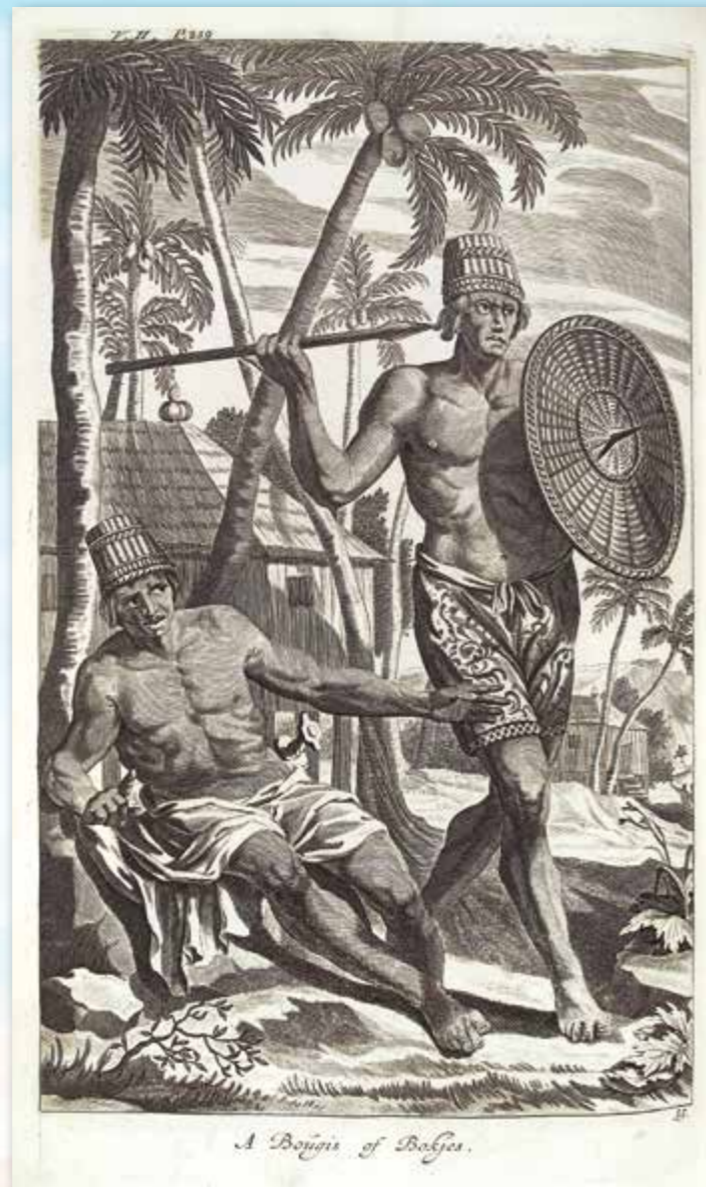
The Bugis also raided coastal villages to capture slaves. The slave trade remained a very profitable business from the 17<sup>th</sup> till the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. To put this in context, the British did not abolish the slave trade until 1807. The US followed in 1808. But the abolition of slavery from British territory was only officially enacted in Britain in 1834. While the Dutch followed as late as 1863 in the East Indies.

So, what did the Bugis do with the wealth they gained from such lucrative trade? Instead of hoarding gold they invested in land. And before Raffles set his sights on Singapore the Bugis had already established a small settlement there.

## BUGIS BASE IN SINGAPORE

In 1817, Crawford (who would later succeed Farquhar as the second Resident of Singapore) reported that the Chinese and Bugis were the main drivers of seaborne commerce across the region. He described the Bugis as “the enterprising navigators of Celebes” and claimed that “there is no country, from New Guinea to Mergui (in South Myanmar) in which their enterprise does not extend.” The fact that the Bugis already had a base in Singapore would surely have influenced Raffles when he chose Singapore over Karimun as a strategic trading port. Though he knew that this move by the British was likely to be regarded as a provocation by the Dutch and might invite retribution.

The Dutch had lost control of their East Indies territory to the British during the Napoleonic wars from 1810 till 1816, when they returned to Batavia. By 1818 they were intent on regaining their authority over the



Engraving of Bugis Warriors by Johan Nieuhof. Printed in 1669. Image from the Wellcome Collection.



Plan of Singapore dated 1820, showing Bugis Town. Courtesy of the National Archives, UK.

Riau Islands, so a treaty was signed with the Bugis Viceroy which was approved by the Sultan of Johor-Riau. And a Dutch Resident Commandant was installed at the fort in Riau (Tanjung Pinang) with a garrison of 150 men. This might have posed a threat to the newly established British base in Singapore in 1819, but for an incident that altered the balance of power.

It was caused by a misunderstanding that arose when a routine investigation by the Dutch authorities demanded that a group of distinguished Bugis should surrender their *keris*. This was regarded as an affront to their manhood and led to a fight in which one Dutch and three Bugis were killed. One of the slain Bugis was the cousin of the Bugis chieftain Arung Belawa. He was so incensed that he led a full-scale uprising that threatened to overrun the Dutch fort. The siege lasted for 15 days until Dutch reinforcements arrived from Melaka on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1820. The ensuing battle was one-sided, resulting in 80 Bugis killed against just seven dead on the Dutch side. The Bugis took to their boats and headed for the sanctuary of Singapore leaving behind a fortress in ruins and a once thriving kampong in ashes.

Farquhar recorded the arrival of around 500 Bugis who settled along the Rochor River in an area that became known as Kampong Bugis. This was the shot in the arm that Singapore needed to attract traders and end the Dutch domination of the Riau region. Raffles was delighted when news of this game-changing event reached him in Bencoolen. The Bugis were here to stay.




Bugis heritage activist, Sarafian Salleh (in the centre, wearing a green top and yellow and green samping) at the Malay Heritage Centre's Closing Festival in October 2022. To his left (in olive green, wearing a headdress) is Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health of Singapore. Photo courtesy of Sarafian Salleh.

## THE BUGIS COMMUNITY IN SINGAPORE TODAY

As a roving community the Bugis have always been good at assimilating and adapting to their environments.

Bugis culture was compatible and therefore easily absorbed into the general Malay culture. Nevertheless, it has preserved its distinctions. And recently there has been a revival of interest in Bugis identity, and a resurgence of pride in their heritage and traditions.

Sarafian Salleh is an activist engaged in reviving Bugis traditions. In 2008 he started a social media group called Bugis Temasek which has attracted a following of friends who wish to uphold Bugis culture and make it relevant to Singapore's national identity. With his support, in 2016, the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) hosted a grand exhibition of Bugis culture. And Sarafian continues to keep this movement alive on social media, through talks and heritage walks. He will be giving a Monday Morning Lecture for FOM on 27 February 2023 at the ACM auditorium. 



Replica of a padewakang which sailed from Makassar to Australia in 2019. Image from Wikimedia Commons.



A 1955 Singapore Malaya stamp showing the Bugis pinisi ship.

# Travelling Artist and Art Explorer



A Tibetan Buddha Wall, oil on board, 1961.

## TINA NIXON FOLLOWS WU GUANZHONG ON THE JOURNEY OF HIS LIFE

All images are of paintings by Wu Guanzhong in the Collection of National Gallery Singapore, gifted by the artist and his family, courtesy of National Heritage Board, Singapore.

The renowned Chinese artist Wu Guanzhong (1919 – 2010) was born into interesting times.

His life spanned the end of Republican China, the rise of communism, the Sino-Japanese War and the Second World War, the Cultural Revolution and then the subsequent relative liberalisation of the 1980s and 90s. You could be forgiven for thinking that he might have been constrained from venturing abroad, but in fact he was able to travel extensively during his life – first for education, then to escape the Sino-Japanese war and finally to explore other cultures.

Wu Guanzhong was born in Yixing, 130 miles west of Shanghai. His father was the head of the local primary

school and initially Wu started his path in life studying electrical engineering, but through a chance encounter he met art student Zhu Dequn who was then studying at the Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Without his parents' permission he transferred to this esteemed institution where his talent began to blossom and from the age of 17, Wu was completely devoted to the study of art. Under Lin Fengmian's tutelage he was exposed to the influence of French art of the 1920s and 1930s as many of the faculty had previously studied in France. So it was, that in 1947, he boarded a ship travelling from China to Naples, Italy and from there by train to Paris, France. It was on this journey, enroute to Europe, that Wu made his first stop in Singapore.

During his three years in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts he immersed himself in the European art scene and in the exploration of the technique of western oil painting, visiting Italy, Switzerland and England. He was drawn to the works of artists such as Pissarro, Cezanne, Utrillo and specially to works by Van Gogh whose raw energy and passion in his artwork he greatly admired.

### CONSTRAINED BY COMMUNIST CULTURE

Making an emotional decision to return to China in 1950, in part due to his sense of duty to his homeland, but also for a longing to return to his young wife and son, he began

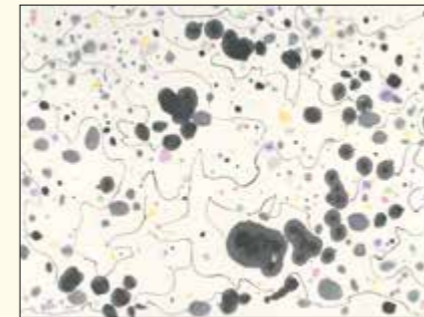
his teaching career at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Gradually though, he realised that his work did not fit into the communist party diktat of painting heroes and peasants in the Soviet Realist style. Whilst in France, he had mastered the art of the nude painting, but this work began to be criticised even before the Cultural Revolution because the subject matter did not comply with the political interests of the time.

It was at this point he chose to landscape painting as a safer subject matter. His attention turned to nature and painting from what he observed in the surrounding landscape. Together with a group of other artists, he travelled far and wide seeking artistic inspiration in what he saw before him, often travelling for six months at a time carrying all his equipment on his back, and enduring great hardship, poor roads, tough living conditions and often extreme weather. A good example of work from one of these trips is *A Tibetan Buddha Wall* dated 1961.

With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, he was sent to the countryside in Hebei province to work as a farm labourer, and forbidden to teach, write or paint for several years. It was not until 1972 that he was permitted to paint again and then only on Sundays using any bit of board he could find and using a dung basket as an easel to create some small intimate oil paintings of rural life, especially of plants and flowers.

In 1973 Wu was recalled to Beijing under the directive of Zhou Enlai and began painting large scale works for hotels, restaurants and public spaces. He also started to produce ink paintings and began to really modernise and innovate the Chinese brush and ink format.

His works from this time onwards are remarkably varied in style and he continued to explore new techniques and styles for the remainder of his life. He was able to alternate between East and West, the traditional and the modern, the figurative and the abstract. His expressive brushstrokes and vibrant colours in *Ongoing Years* encourage the mind to travel freely and unfettered.



Ongoing Years, Chinese ink and colour on paper, 1992.



The Louvre Palace, oil on canvas, 1989.

### FREE TO TRAVEL OVERSEAS AGAIN

From 1981 he began to travel abroad again – first as head of a delegation of Chinese Artists visiting Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Mali. In 1986 he exhibited in Hong Kong, followed by a trip to India the next year. A couple of years later, in 1988, the 69-year-old artist revisited Singapore to open the "*Wu Guanzhong's Painting Exhibition*" held at The National Museum Art Gallery, and returned again in 1990.

During this period from the 1980s onwards his work was being widely exhibited both at home and abroad including a prestigious show in 1992 held at the British Museum in London. It was the first time a living Chinese artist had exhibited at the British Museum and his work was recognised across the world for its originality and quality.

Wherever he went, he was well known for always having a sketchbook and a pen with him so that he was constantly putting pen to paper in some form or another on his travels, which we see in his delightful sketch of *An Indian Temple in Singapore*. There are numerous photographs of him working *en plein air* (outdoors) which gave his work an authentic and fresh quality.



An Indian Temple in Singapore, carbon ink and watercolour on paper, 1990.

Wu's ability to roam freely in the physical sense as well as the artistic sense resulted in tremendous variety in his work. Throughout his long and distinguished career, he was able to transcend artistic mores and was as comfortable with modern expressionist interpretations as he was with the more traditional landscapes. The ability to open eyes and minds, which travel is able to stimulate, is clear in his work. As we saw in the recent exhibition, physical travel also extended to imaginary travel and daydreaming in his more abstract pieces. He constantly inspires his viewers to travel with him, in all senses of the word. ■

TINA NIXON is a docent at SAM and NGS. With thanks to teammates QUEENIE CHOW, STELLA RONG and GERTRUDE TAN for their contributions to the article.

# A Trip Back in Time

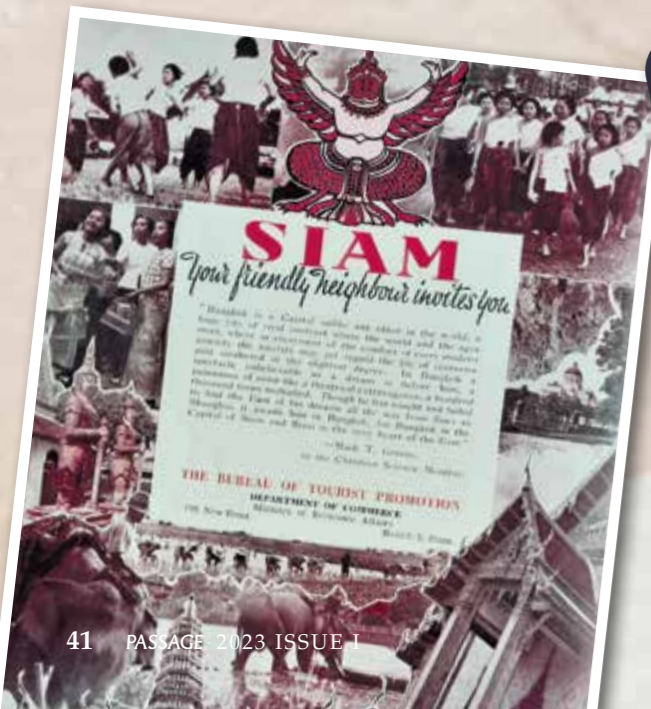
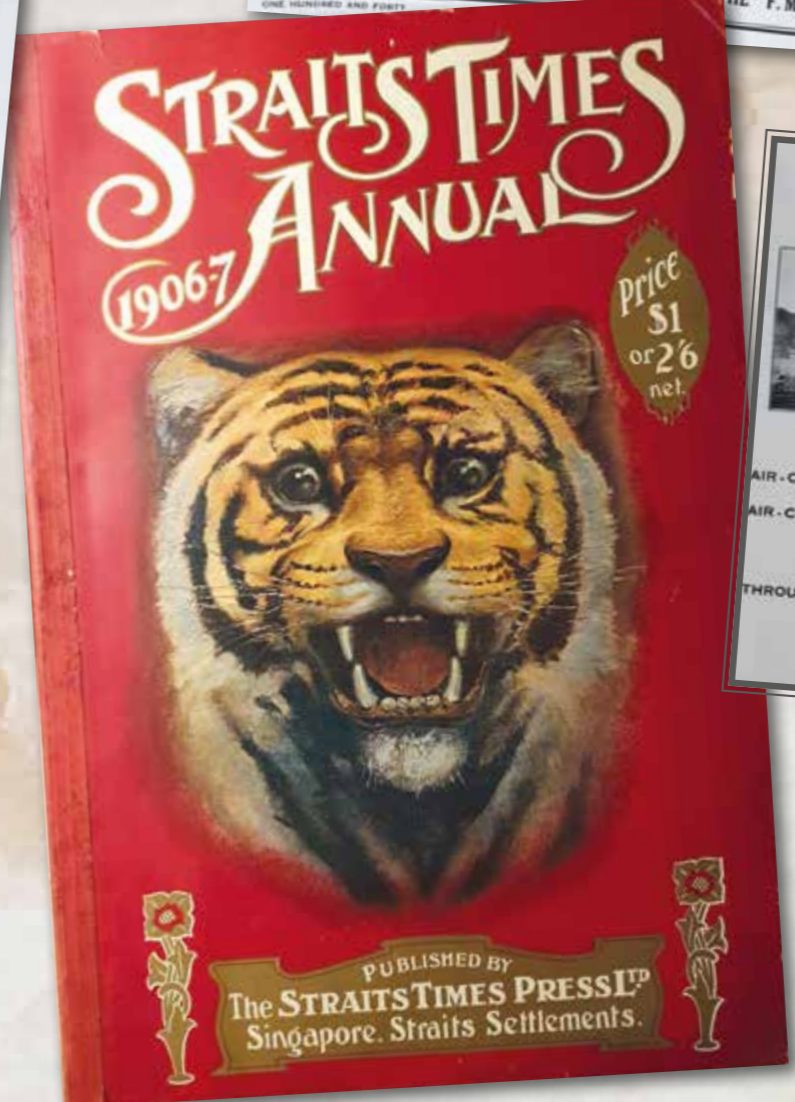
ALEX TEOH SHARES SOME VINTAGE TRAVEL ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE STRAITS TIMES ANNUAL.  
*All images courtesy of the author.*

Annuals were once very popular in the UK and US since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1905, the Straits Times Press published its inaugural annual to target the Christmas gift market. Priced at two English shillings or one Straits dollar, the Straits Times (ST) Annual soon became a collector's item, treasured for its attractive covers, interesting articles and appealing advertisements.

Its content covered noteworthy local events of the year, culture, history, nature, adventure and short stories contributed by colonial officers and community leaders. It also featured colour plates of beautiful photographs and illustrations printed on good quality paper that could be easily be removed and were ready for framing.

The most precious issues of the ST Annual are the pre-war ones published before 1941. These are extremely rare as few survived the ravages of the war. Furthermore, due to the warm and humid tropical weather, surviving copies are in poor condition and are rather fragile, suffering from torn covers, rusty metal staple corrosion, brown foxing stains, water damage, insect infestation and mould.

In keeping with this issue's theme of voyages and travel, I'd like to share some vintage travel advertisements from ST Annuals.



ALEX TEOH, a FOM member, is a paper and book conservator of rare manuscripts, collectible prints, antique maps and antiquarian books. His focus is the local material culture of written text in Southeast Asia. He has worked with local libraries, museums and heritage galleries.

# ACM AND ANIMA MUNDI

## DARLENE KASTEN REPORTS ON CHINESE CHRISTIAN ART FROM THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

All photos are from the collection of the Vatican Museums and courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

In October 2022 the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) received a Vatican infusion when 14 Chinese treasures from the *Anima Mundi* ethnological collection, were installed in the Christian Arts gallery, one of ACM's second-floor galleries dedicated to Faith and Belief in Asia.

*Anima Mundi*, Latin for 'Soul of the World', is unique among the Vatican Museums in that it brings together more than 80,000 works from diverse cultures and religions from Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa, the Americas as well as Christian art produced there, including approximately 5,000 objects made in China. All 14 of the Vatican treasures on display are Catholic works of art characterised by a combination of Chinese motifs, Christian elements and local European and Chinese iconography and are excellent examples of Chinese craftsmanship embodying Chinese aesthetics.

The majority of the objects were made using the cloisonné technique, a well-known traditional Chinese handicraft of enamel on copper. Cloisonné ware is famous for its elegant modeling, rich patterns, brilliant and dazzling colors, and graceful design. Although introduced from central Asia to China during the Yuan dynasty, the use of cloisonné in sacred art is linked to the Jesuit evangelisation of China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, with most Christian objects produced from the close of the Chinese Opium Wars in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the Republic of China in 1949.

Among the cloisonné pieces are liturgical objects and decorations used for the Roman Catholic Mass. Of particular interest is the pair of two monumental cloisonné vases decorated with Beijing panoramas of the most important religious and political buildings at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One vase includes an image of Beijing's gothic Northern Cathedral, also known as the Church of the Saviour, established in 1703 by French Jesuits. The second vase shows the oldest Catholic Church in Beijing, dated 1605, the baroque Southern Cathedral or Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Both cathedrals still operate in Beijing today.



Two cloisonné vases with Beijing panoramas. 1872, China, enamel on metal. Gift of the Catholic Community of Beijing to Pope Pio IX.

Non-cloisonné objects include a pair of 18<sup>th</sup> century four-clawed dragon enamel-on-porcelain vases; a 1924 wood-framed oil painting of our Lady of China with the Child Jesus, signed and dated by the workshop of Shanghai's Tushanwan Orphanage, famous for its production of religious art; and a faithful reproduction of the original altar at Beijing's Fu Jen Catholic University (which is now located in New Taipei City, Taiwan) dated around 1935. The wooden Catholic altar topped with a Taoist-style pagoda contains a mix of eastern and western imagery rendered in lacquer using gold and colour pigments.


ACM and *Anima Mundi*: Chinese Christian art from the Vatican Museums is part of a year-long series of programmes and gallery rotations in commemoration of ACM's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will be on display through October 2023.




Virgin Mary as Our Lady of China, with Child Jesus. Workshop of the Tushanwan Orphanage 土山灣, 1924, China, Shanghai, Xujiahui, oil on canvas. Gift of Tushanwan Orphanage for the 1925 Vatican Exhibition.

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*Hesajira - Angkor Wat period, 12<sup>th</sup> century. Ht. 79cm*



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# Exploring German Treasures

## GISELLA HARROLD REPORTS ON FOM'S STUDY TOUR TO MUNICH, DRESDEN AND BERLIN

Photos supplied by the author unless otherwise stated.

Over 12 days in October we visited three cities, five castles and nine museums filled with fascinating artefacts. Our itinerary was inspired by my interest in the *Kunstkammern* of Europe. *Kunstkammern* were early forms of museums in the 16<sup>th</sup> century which were filled with all sorts of curiosities.



Our group at the Brandenburg Gate. Tour participants: Alice Chua, Tai Ann Koh, Uta Weigelt, Claire Robinson, Pramila Chanrai, Ami Jobanputra, Andra Leo, Penny Morris Hardee, Mathangi Venkatesh, Sarah Beutelschies, Noelle Speers, Harman Deol and Gisella Harrold.

Our first stop was Munich, the capital of Bavaria, where the Wittelsbach dynasty had ruled for more than 700 years. Their close ties to other European nobility enabled them to create a wonderful collection of the finest chinoiserie. Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, was a passionate 16<sup>th</sup> century collector and art lover who had great influence in Munich's development as a city of the arts. His first *Kustkammer* had an astounding 6,000 exhibits. His son, Wilhelm V, expanded the collection. Much of their collection was donated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the then newly-founded Bavarian National Museum.

We also visited Schleissheim, Nymphenburg and the Residence with its fantastic collection of Asian porcelain, the oldest plate dating back to 16 CE. At Lustheim Palace, we viewed the extraordinary collection of over 2,000 early Meissen porcelain pieces donated by the industrialist Professor Ernst Schneider.

We were lucky that Uta Weigelt, a fellow ACM docent, was on the trip with us and



Detail of Dinglinger's masterpiece, Birthday of the Grand Mughal Aurangzeb at the Green Vault in Dresden. Photo by travel blogger Siddhartha Joshi.

gave us an exclusive tour through the extraordinary Burma collection of the Five Continent Museum.

Our next stop was Dresden, home to the incredible art collection of August the Strong of the Saxon Wettin dynasty. He had a passionate obsession with porcelain and by 1730, had amassed a collection of almost 60,000 porcelain objects from Asia and Europe.

Much of August the Strong's massive collection can be viewed at the Historic Green Vault in Dresden Castle. In my opinion, the absolute highlight of the Green Vault is the collection of Johann Melchior Dinglinger, one of the greatest European goldsmiths. His masterpiece, *Birthday of the Grand Mughal Aurangzeb*, has over 130 enamelled, jewel-encrusted figures and gives an intriguing insight into how Europe viewed the exotic East.

Our last stop was Berlin, once the capital of Prussia and today the capital of unified Germany. Here the House of Hohenzollern and particularly Friedrich the Great was the focus of our tour, as well as the newly opened Ethnological Collection and Asian Art at the Humboldt Forum.

Many of us on this tour had previously travelled with FOM on the Silk Road, and we were all looking forward to viewing artworks from Central Asia collected by Albert Grünwedel on his expeditions to Turfan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of all the displays at the Humboldt Forum, probably the most famous installation is the

*Cave of the Ring-bearing Doves*, which gives an accurate feel of a Buddhist cave of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

We also visited Potsdam, Castle Sanssouci, and Castle Charlottenburg. The Pergamon Museum was a must-visit as well as some places of recent history, like the Holocaust Memorial and the Brandenburg Gate, which is not only Berlin's only surviving historical city gate, but until 1989 also symbolised Berlin's Cold War division into East and West. Please go to FOM's Facebook page to view more photos of our tour.



Meissen teapot with chinoiserie scene, 1723-24, probably painted by J. G. Höroldt.



# A CONVIVIAL GATHERING OF FOM LEADERS

**DARLENE KASTEN** REPORTS ON FOM'S ANNUAL LEADERSHIP DINNER

*Photos by Gisella Harrold.*

The FOM Council welcomed fifty of their volunteer leaders on 22 November 2022 to celebrate their invaluable contributions to the greater FOM community. The Roman banquet-themed CONVIVIUM – from the Latin *con + vivo* meaning “being together” – was the first time in three years that FOM could gather in a traditional Annual Leadership Dinner format. The setting was Gary’s Restaurant in a heritage black-and-white colonial bungalow in Rochester Commons where guests feasted on four courses of Italian and Japanese specialties by Chef Gary Wu. We were grateful to be able to gather once again as an FOM family and we look forward to many more opportunities during FOM’s 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2023. Viva FOM!



*Michiyo Lim, Angela Kek and Kaoru Saito.*



*Kshama Joglekar, Gisella Harrold, Garima Lalwani, Kalyani Kausikan and Lee Hong Leng.*



*Darlene Kasten and Oksana Kokhno.*



*Jeffrey Tan, Yvonne Sim, Kalyani Kausikan and Magdalene Ho.*



*Rupa Tamsitt and Lee Hong Leng.*



*Susan Fong, Millie Phuah, Lee Hong Leng, Kalyani Kausikan, Darlene Kasten, and Oksana Kokhno.*



*Jyotsna Mishra, Priya Seshadri, Aditi Mann, Mathangi Venkatesh Babu, Sophia Rao and Irina Grishaeva.*



*Irina Grishaeva, Alka Kapoor and Jyotsna Mishra toasting in foreground. Susan Chong, Jutta Schutte, Michiyo Lim, Kaoru Saito chatting in background.*



*Aditi Kaul, Deena Goh, Robyn Lloyd, Dawn Marie Lee, Tim Clark, Shirley Kan, Karen Ng, Tina Sim, Tan Shook Fong, Lim Chey Cheng, Susan Fong and Leong Lee Chiew.*



# Open Morning

**DARLENE KASTEN** REPORTS ON THE FIRST IN-PERSON FOM OPEN MORNING IN THREE YEARS

*Photos by Kanika Bahl, Alex Xinyun Cheng, Mohamed Ismail, Carmen Kelly, and Kerstin Kiesselbach.*

Happy days were here again on Monday, 5 September 2022 when FOM held its first live and in-person FOM Open Morning since 2019. And just like old times, the lower level at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) was transformed into a colourful canyon of FOM opportunities for upcoming docent training, exhibitions and member activities. Old friends reunited and new friendships were made over coffee, tea, and delicious homemade treats donated by generous FOM volunteers.

As in the past, activity and museum coordinators were asked to thematically decorate their individual committee tables to generate interest and attract new participants. Three years of pent-up creativity resulted in outstanding displays. In the end though, our trio of impartial judges chose the combined Malay Heritage Centre and Kampong Gelam Heritage Trails table as “most creative” and for their efforts, each of the five creative team members received vouchers for complimentary spa treatments from Atos Wellness.

New initiatives at the FOM Open Morning this year included recruitment drives for new members and volunteers, and a charity drive for books. Along with free access to all National Heritage Board Museums and Cultural Institutions for a year, new members who signed up at the FOM New Member Drive received a welcome package, a new member sticker and a special gift. Current FOM members were encouraged to bring a friend. If they joined FOM, both received a special gift. The FOM Volunteer Drive highlighted opportunities to become more involved with FOM by joining committees or taking on leadership positions. Volunteer opportunities can be found on the FOM website. FOM Members Care partnered with FOM



*Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM) team.*



*FOM Members Care and Asian Book Clubs-sponsored FOM Book Drive benefitting Books Beyond Borders.*



*PASSAGE's Rupa Tamsitt, FOM New Members Coordinator Vanessa Spencer, and FOM Council members Susan Fong and Aditi Kaul sign up a brand new FOM member.*



*FOM president Millie Phuah greets a full auditorium for the first live MML in three years.*



*FOM Open Morning museum and activity displays.*



*FOM Council members Lee Hong Leng, Darlene Kasten and Garima Lakwani sign up a new FOM volunteer at the Volunteers table.*



*Hospitality team in charge of the Open Morning Café.*



*Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) team.*

Asian Book Groups to host a FOM Charity Book Drive to support Books Beyond Borders, a social enterprise dedicated to expanding educational opportunities in the developing world.

The FOM Open Morning was followed by the first Monday Morning Lecture (MML) after the summer break where Kenson Kwok, founding director of the ACM and the Peranakan Museum, presented *The Material Culture of the Peranakans: Representation, Identity & Taste* to a fully packed auditorium. Before the lecture began FOM president Millie Phuah welcomed FOM members and the general public. She introduced the Overall Heads of Training Jyoti Ramesh and Leong Lee Chiew who presented the Co-Heads of Docent Training for the January 2023 programmes at the Indian Heritage Centre, URA / FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails, and the Changi Chapel and Museum.

Interested in signing up for docent training or attending fascinating lectures? Visit the FOM page today.



*URA / FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails volunteers.*



*Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) and MHF/ FOM Kampong Gelam Heritage Trails teams.*



*MML Coordinators Olesya Belyanina and Priya Seshadri.*



*More museum and activity displays.*

# Explore Singapore!

JANUARY – MARCH 2023

## CHINESE NEW YEAR WALK IN CHINATOWN

Thursday, 12 January 2023  
10am – 12.30pm  
Fee: \$40

Of all festivals, Chinese New Year is the most important to Chinese people all over the world. In Singapore it is the most widely celebrated festival, and signs of it are always evident everywhere from the decorations and goods carried in shops and supermarkets.

Immersion in Singapore's multi-racial culture is not complete without an experience of Chinatown during this period. The area turns into a lively and colourful hub with shops and street stalls abundantly stocked with special goods.

This exciting walking tour will enlighten you about the customs associated with Chinese New Year. For example, why do people exchange mandarin oranges and give *hong baos* (red packets), what is the significance of all the decorations, and why is the colour red so dominant? You will also learn about the importance and symbolic meanings of the special foods and culinary delicacies, and have an opportunity to taste some of them.



## THE RIVER WE KNEW

Thursday, 26 January 2023  
9.30am – 12pm  
Fee: \$35

"For many years after the establishment of the British settlement in Singapore in 1819, to speak of Singapore was to speak of the river." (Stephen Dobbs,

*The Singapore River - A Social History 1819-2002*). It was the artery on whose waters, and by which banks were the bustle of boats and boatmen, coolies and cargo, merchants and merchandise. It was busy, noisy, and dirty and smelly too! And so it was for over 150 years, until 1977 to 1989 when the river was cleaned up. What was once the lifeblood of a nation, grew quieter and calmer. Today it is an entertainment and leisure hub. Join us for a walk along its banks as we take you back to the bustling Singapore River of old with stories of the people, the boats, the businesses, the buildings and the bridges that dotted this landscape from over 200 years ago.



## TOUR OF PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Thursday 9 February 2023  
10.30 am – 12pm  
Fee: \$30

Singapore is well known internationally for being one of the most orderly and law-abiding countries in the world. Its laws are passed by Parliament whose members meet in the Parliament House.



Parliament House sits impressively next to the river with its formal gardens adding a touch of green to its exterior. Unlike the late Victorian style of its predecessor, the old Parliament House (now the Arts House), the present one was designed "to represent a contemporary architectural expression of stateliness and authority". Its prism-shaped top is a modernist take on the traditional dome. What is it like inside and how does the Parliament of Singapore function? Join us on a private guided tour of the building to see its different areas – it was designed not only as a venue for parliamentary debates, but also a research centre and meeting place for the Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as a place of interest for students and the general public. You will learn about Singapore's unique parliamentary system, the different categories of Members of Parliament and the roles of officers in the system.

## PAINTED PRAYERS OF INDIA: THE ART OF KOLAMS

Thursday 23 February 2023  
9.30 am – 12pm  
Fee: \$35

Throughout the ages, Indian women have been drawing *kolams* (geometric designs) at their doorsteps or in their courtyards as a welcome sign every morning. Traditionally they use rice powder mixed with water. Nowadays many have switched to commercially available dry coarse powder.



This form of art from South India serves three main purposes: a religious ritual, a social activity, and a channel for artistic expression for the commoner. It is an ephemeral art that is kept alive not in galleries, but in the common

man's home. It is not meant to be permanent. Like life, it has to be constantly regenerated (the life of a *kolam* is usually just one day).

Join Explore Singapore! to learn about *kolams* and their variations throughout India like the Rangoli in the North and Alpana in the East. Experience the joy of learning how to create these geometric designs on paper and discover the benefits they bring such as improved concentration and creativity amongst others.

## FO GUANG SHAN BUDDHIST CENTRE

Thursday, 9 March 2023  
10am – 12pm (1 pm with optional vegetarian lunch)  
Fee: \$35

A newspaper report on the opening of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Centre in June 2008 said its modern design and zen-style décor "could raise the eyebrows of the traditionally inclined". Everything about the centre – from its concept and design to construction materials – is completely unlike conventional Buddhist temples. There are no red and gold pillars nor green-tiled roofs with colourful *qianci* (cut and paste ceramic) decorations. Instead, visitors are bound to admire the bright airy main hall with soaring ceilings and special lapis lazuli wall, the serene calligraphy room and ultra-modern columbarium. The entire centre exudes an ambience of calm and peace.



Join us for a guided tour of this unusual and modern temple and learn about this branch of Buddhism. We will end the tour with an optional lunch (at own cost) at the centre's teahouse with delicious and healthy vegetarian food prepared by the centre's own staff.

## ONLY HEALTHY CATCHES: ONE MAN'S DREAM

Thursday 23 March 2023  
9am – 12 noon  
Fee: \$75

This is an exciting new tour of a different kind. Come with us and board a boat to go out to sea. From the boat you will see a different perspective of Singapore and admire its coastline. Along the way we will pass several *kelongs* (traditional fish farms) which look like ramshackle floating huts on stilts before we arrive at our destination - a high tech fish farm in sharp contrast to the *kelongs*.

We will tour this farm and find out how one man's dream to provide Singapore with a reliable source of locally produced fish that are antibiotic, vaccine and micro-plastic



free materialised. Learn how the farm produces fish from eggs which it hatches on site and then rear to maturity using advanced, game-changing technology. You will be impressed by the eco-friendly, cost-effective and sustainable methods used. As a contrast, our guide will also enlighten us about *kelongs* and their traditional fishing methods.

When we end the tour back on land, you will have an opportunity to buy some fish from the farm's shop, if you wish.

Please note that the tour requires physical agility as it involves climbing flights of steep stairs in a marine vessel.

## RAMADAN WALK

Thursday 30 March 2023  
4 pm – 7 pm (Please note this is an evening walk.)  
Fee: \$45



The poet Rumi once wrote: "There's hidden sweetness in the stomach's emptiness. We are lutes, no more, no less. If the sound box is stuffed full of anything, no music." So goes a metaphor to the fourth pillar of Islam: Fasting in the month of Ramadan.

Join Khir Johari, Malay culture enthusiast, as he takes you to the heart of Ramadan celebration in Singapore's Kampong Gelam, where he grew up. Find out how Ramadan is observed, the various traditions related to this Islamic holy month and their significance. Khir will explain the custom and practice of fasting and what it means to him personally. Discover the foods associated with fasting, and the eventual preparations for the end of Ramadan festivities, that is the Hari Raya Puasa.

After his talk Khir will lead us through the bazaar to explain the various foods being sold. We conclude by experiencing breaking fast at a typical Muslim restaurant, the way many Muslims do (food included in fee).

For queries, please contact Lim Chey Cheng: [fomexploresingapore@gmail.com](mailto:fomexploresingapore@gmail.com)

# FOM ACTIVITY GROUPS

Please check the FOM website for more information and current events for these activities.

## ASIAN BOOK GROUPS

FOM Book Groups meet monthly and focus on books with Asian subjects, both fiction and non-fiction. The aim of our groups is to get to know the region better through its writing, to discuss our views and to get to know fellow members with similar interests in a smaller group setting.

Non-native English speakers should not consider language a barrier. Our members come from diverse backgrounds and ages. Though the topics are Asian, the viewpoints are global and our discussions are always very lively.

**Coordinator: Durriya Dohadwala**  
fombookgroups@gmail.com

## CURIO

Uncover the rare, unusual and intriguing with FOM members in Singapore.

Curio offers spontaneous opportunities from an evening at the theatre to sampling the best local cuisine with one of our Foodie Groups.

We also offer a variety of workshops to improve your photography, drawing or culinary skills.

Join us for one or as many activities as excite you.

Follow us on Instagram #fomcurio

**Coordinator: Gisella Harrold**  
fomcurio@gmail.com

## ASIAN FILM STUDY GROUP

We are a passionate group of 'MOVIEETTES' who watch films and discuss the various aspects of storytelling, cinematography, editing, scripting etc. We meet weekly to view and discuss both classic and new films with Asian themes or by legendary directors.

We are a fun group who go to movie nights and attend film festivals.

**Coordinators: Suvidha Bala and Priya Balasubramaniam Kakkar**  
fomafsg@gmail.com

## STUDY TOURS

FOM's study tours are educational by definition. They offer a wide range of travel experiences in order to expand members' understanding of Asian cultures.

While each itinerary is meticulously planned by an FOM member who leads the tour, all participants have a role to play. Each participant is expected to do a preparatory reading on a topic related to the country they are visiting, and to make a brief presentation to the group at the pre-trip meeting or on the trip itself.

**Coordinator: Abha Kaul**  
abhadkaul@gmail.com

## FOM MEMBERS CARE

FOM Members Care organises opportunities for all members of FOM to gather in the spirit of fun, friendship and philanthropy and combine our energies towards a common goal, whether it's to preserve the heritage of Singapore, help our friends and neighbours, or improve the health of our planet.

Join our first event for 2023:

**East Coast Beach Clean Up** on Saturday 23 February starting at 9am

**Coordinator: Nilofar Iyer**  
fommemberscare@gmail.com

## ASIAN STUDY GROUP

A Study Group consists of 10 to 16 members who meet weekly to enhance their knowledge of a specific theme. Each week, we have two 40-minute presentations; each one researched and given by a member of the study group. Members choose their own topic within the theme.

Do not fear if your first language is not English. We are patient and appreciate the viewpoints of our members from all over the world.

**Coordinators: Kim Arnold and Priti Sangavi**  
fomstudygroup@gmail.com

## FRIDAY WITH FRIENDS!

Join FOM for a series of free Friday evening talks offering fascinating insights into diverse topics. Fridays with Friends, organised with support from the Asian Civilisations Museum, is open to the public.

**Coordinator: Mathangi Venkatesh**  
fwfcoordinator@gmail.com

## TEXTILE ENTHUSIASTS GROUP

Do you enjoy looking at and learning about textiles? The Textile Enthusiasts Group (TEG) was formed to support and foster interest in Asian textiles. We invite specialist speakers and practitioners, visit textile-related locations, and offer 'hands-on' experiences and demonstrations. You don't need to be an expert to enjoy TEG activities; as our name suggests, we are enthusiasts. We welcome newcomers, so if you're new to Singapore or to FOM, do join one of FOM's most active interest groups.

**Coordinators: Aditi Mann & Jyoti Ramesh**  
fomtegsingapore@gmail.com

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## ABOUT FOM

**Friends of the Museums Singapore (FOM)** is a non-profit society that provides members with opportunities to learn, share and experience Asian art, history and culture through a myriad of activities organised by our volunteers.

As an FOM member, you will have the incredible opportunity to share your passion for museums with visitors by joining our docent training programmes that prepare volunteers to become guides and docents for Singapore's museums and heritage-related organisations.

You can also join a book club, attend an enlightening lecture series, participate in a charity event or immerse yourself in the world of Asian textiles. We even have a film club! Join a guided tour to explore Singapore or sign up for an overseas study tour for an unforgettable experience.

FOM members enjoy free access to NHB museums as well as discounts at selected retail outlets, theatres and restaurants along with a subscription to *PASSAGE* magazine.

Come and be a part of a truly vibrant, diverse community of like-minded people, form friendships and create memories that last a lifetime.

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



# MUSEUM DIRECTORY AND EXHIBITIONS

Please check individual museum websites for latest information on guided tours by FOM docents.

COMPILED BY DURRIYA DOHADWALA

## ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

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

**Opening hours:**  
Daily 10am - 7pm  
Fri 10am - 9pm



### FOM guided tours:

Please consult the museum's website at [www.nhb.gov.sg/acm/whats-on/tours/daily-guided-tours](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/acm/whats-on/tours/daily-guided-tours)

### 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.

### Body and Spirit: The Human Body in Thought and Practice

25 November 2022 - 26 March 2023  
Daily - 10am - 7pm  
Fridays - 10am - 9pm  
Special Exhibitions Gallery, Level 2 (Main Exhibition)  
Shaw Foyer, Level 2 (Buddha Relics)  
Contemporary Gallery, Level 1 (Vel Vel)

ACM explores wellness and the wholeness of body, spirit, and mind with this exhibition. Featuring over 100 objects from the National Collection, private collectors, and local communities, this special exhibition presents a stunning display of sacred and ritual art from Singapore and the region. Complementing the main exhibition are two special showcases. *Buddha Relics* displays gems and other precious offerings found together with bone relics of the Buddha in the Piprahwa Stupa in India in 1898. *In Vel Vel: The Burden Dance* (a project by Sistrum), learn more about kavadi — elaborate structures carried in Thaipusam, a yearly procession celebrated by Singapore's Tamil Hindu community.

### ACM and Anima Mundi: Chinese Christian Art from the Vatican Museums (Until October 2023)

ACM welcomes a selection of Chinese Christian art from the Vatican Museums in Rome, in its latest rotation of the Christian Art Gallery. Drawn from the *Anima Mundi* (meaning "Soul of the World"), these are little-known treasures of Christian art made in Asia.

The public will be able to view up-close how the Catholic Church was able to integrate traditional Asian elements into its art. These intricate objects reveal the ingenuity of Asian artisans and craftsmen, who were able to adapt their work to incorporate foreign aesthetics and ideas that made them more appealing to local audiences. The artistic and cultural exchanges expressed through these works demonstrate how art can foster meaningful dialogue among religions and cultures.

## CHANGI CHAPEL AND MUSEUM



1000 Upper Changi Road North, Singapore 507707  
Tel: 62142451 / 62426033  
[www.nhb.gov.sg/changichapelmuseum](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/changichapelmuseum)

### Opening Hours:

Closed on Mon except Public Holidays  
Tues - Sun: 9.30am - 5.30pm  
FOM guided tours: Fri, 11am

The newly revamped Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM) features new content and artefacts presented in an intimate and engaging format to tell the story of the prisoners of war and civilians interned in Changi prison camp during the Japanese Occupation. As part of the revamp, the National Museum of Singapore which manages CCM has been collecting stories and personal objects from families of former internees that emphasise their personal experiences. The museum's narrative is centred on remembrance and reflection, encouraging visitors to contemplate both the hardships that the internees underwent, as well as their courage and resilience in the face of difficulties.

## INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

5 Campbell Lane, Singapore 209924  
Tel: 6291 1601  
[www.indianheritage.org.sg](http://www.indianheritage.org.sg)

### Closed on Mon

**Opening Hours:**  
Tues - Thurs  
10am to 7pm  
Fri and Sat 10am to 8pm  
Sun and Public Holidays 10am to 4pm



**FOM guided tours:** Tues to Fri  
Please consult the centre's website at <https://www.indianheritage.gov.sg/en/visit/guided-tours>.

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



(Closed until 2025)  
85 Sultan Gate, Singapore 198501  
Tel: 6391 0450  
[www.malayheritage.org.sg](http://www.malayheritage.org.sg)

The Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) 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 10am - 7pm

**FOM guided tours:**  
Please consult the Museum's website at [www.nhb.gov.sg/nationalmuseum/visitor-information/nmsquicklinkretailvenuerental/guided-tour](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/nationalmuseum/visitor-information/nmsquicklinkretailvenuerental/guided-tour)

The National Museum of Singapore is the nation's oldest museum and seeks to inspire with stories of Singapore and the world. Its history dates to 1849, when it opened on Stamford Road as the Raffles Library and Museum.

### The Doraemon Exhibition Singapore 2022 (Until 5 February 2023)

The Doraemon Exhibition Singapore 2022 makes its overseas debut at the National Museum of Singapore since its 2002 premiere in Japan. Showcasing Doraemon through the lens of 28 leading contemporary Japanese artists and arts groups, the artworks on display respond to the theme of "Create Your Own Original Doraemon".

### Moving Memories (Until 31 March 2023)

Travel through time and scenes of Singapore, both past and present, in the museum new digital installation. Moving memories features local mural artist Yip Yew Chong's life-like murals.

## 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 - Sat 10am - 6pm, Closed on Sun and Public Holidays.  
Monday: Visits by appointment for schools/faculties only.

## NUS BABA HOUSE

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

**Guided tours Mon - Fri, 10am, online registration required**

For opening hours and guided tour information, visit the NUS Baba House website at [babahouse.nus.edu.sg/plan-your-visit](http://babahouse.nus.edu.sg/plan-your-visit). For enquiries, email: [babahouse@nus.edu.sg](mailto:babahouse@nus.edu.sg).



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 guided 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



(Reopens mid-February 2023)  
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.

## SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

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



The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) focuses on international contemporary art practices, specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The main building of the museum (located along 71 Bras Basah Road) is currently closed to prepare it for its next phase of development. While we wait, SAM is not missing in action but a Museum In Action: bringing art experiences into everyday spaces around Singapore and actively collaborating with partners and communities.

## SAM AT TANJONG PAGAR DISTRI PARK

**Opening hours:**  
Daily 10am - 7pm  
SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark is the museum's new contemporary art space. Find out more at <https://www.bit.ly/SAM-MuseumInAction>.

**Natasha - Singapore Biennale 2022 (Until 19 March 2023)**  
The 7<sup>th</sup> Singapore Biennale 2022 (SB2022) or Natasha, opens with an exceptional line-up of over 50 artists and collaborators. Audiences can look forward to projects that create spaces for interaction, reflection and which invite public participation.

## 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 - Fri: 10am - 7pm, Sat: 9am - 6pm,  
Sun: 10am - 5pm  
Closed Public Holidays

### FOM guided tours:

For the FOM guided tour schedule, to learn more about STPI's public programmes, special evening tours, and programmes in Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and French, please visit [stpi.com.sg](http://stpi.com.sg).



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.

### Genevieve Chua: grrrraanularrrrrr (Until 26 February 2023)

a solo exhibition by leading Singapore artist Genevieve Chua, of a texturally evocative new series of 46 works that creatively explores the multiple quirks and angles of materiality, reality and identity — a clever play on technology's role in the rhythms of contemporary human experience.

## SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

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

**Opening hours:**  
Tues - Sun 10am - 5pm, Closed on Mon

**FOM guided tours:**  
Please consult the Memorial Hall's website at <https://www.sysnmh.org.sg/en/visit/free-guided-tours>.

Built in 1902, this double-storey villa was the nerve centre of Dr Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. It re-opened to the public on 9 October 2011 and the revamped Memorial Hall pays tribute to the vital role played by Singapore and Nanyang in the 1911 Revolution. 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.



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

# THE TALES MAPS CAN TELL

**ERIC ROSENKRANZ** SHARES HIS LOVE OF ANCIENT MAPS

Years ago, ship captains had parchment or vellum maps to help guide them to their port of call, while businessmen in Amsterdam or Constantinople gazed at maps showing lands they would never visit, wondering if their ships would ever return.

In my wanderings through 100 countries during 40 years I have collected 50 antique maps. They are art, history, geography and dreams. It's impossible to choose a favourite, but here are a few that might interest you.

Heinrich Bünting was a pastor and a brewer. In his 16<sup>th</sup> century *Itinerarium* he had a figurative map showing Asia as the winged horse Pegasus. Pegasus' head represents Turkey and his wings Tartary; the forelegs are the Arabian Peninsula and the saddle Persia; his right hind leg is India, and the left is the Malay Peninsula. Beijing is depicted in the tail.

Kâtip Çelebi was born in Istanbul at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His *Cihânnümâ*, or *The Mirror of the World*, was the first atlas of maps to be printed in the Islamic world using the printing press. Çelebi began studying and collecting European maps and his work eventually became the first use of European atlases and sources in Ottoman literature.

I am lucky to own one of the maps in this work, titled *Hint ve Güney Çin denizi adalari* (Island(s) of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea) which uses four different scales (*fersah*, miles, stages and hours). The map was produced by Ibrahim Muteferrika, a Hungarian who converted to Islam, created his own fonts and became the first to print non-religious materials. This map of Southeast Asia is quite accurate (for its time).

In 1755 Nicholas Bellin, a French hydrographer (Chief Cartographer to the French Navy, a position he received when



A 16<sup>th</sup> century figurative map by Heinrich Bünting showing Asia as the mythical winged horse Pegasus.

18 years old), published this exquisitely detailed map titled *Carte Reduite Des Detroits De Malaca, Sincapour, Et Gouverneur...* (A Map of the Straits of Melaka, Singapore and Governor...)

For centuries, the waterways around our island were called the New and Old Straits of Singapore. This was long before the island itself appeared on any map. As the name "Singapore" was used to denote waterways well before the island appeared on maps, it is clear that the word "Singapore" does not mean "Lion City". Why would a body of water be called a city?

If you look closely you can see that, in 1755, the island was named *Pulo ou Isle Panjang*. In English...Long Island.

Antique maps are a pleasure to gaze upon, teach us history, and we learn things from them that challenge our way of thinking. While not a ship captain, I still enjoy collecting, reviewing, and studying these maps.

**ERIC ROSENKRANZ** is an amateur map collector and lecturer. Over the years he has given multiple talks at FOM on maps, the most recent being "Why Singapore is called Singapore: A story in Maps"



A 1755 map by French hydrographer Nicolas Bellin showing Singapore as Pulo ou Isle Panjang (Long Island).



A 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman map of Southeast Asia by Ibrahim Muteferrika, a Hungarian who converted to Islam.

## MONDAY MORNING LECTURES (MML)

January - March 2023

Currently as per FOM Council decision, Winter-Spring 2023 MML season will be held both in-person (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month) and on Zoom (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month). The in-person lectures at ACM are open to the public. Zoom Lectures are open to the FOM members only. Visit the Community Events page on the FOM website to sign up. Lectures will begin promptly at 11am.

**09 JANUARY**  
**GLOBAL CITY'S DHARMA: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN SINGAPORE**  
*In-Person & Zoom Lecture. Speaker: Chia Meng Tat Jack*

There are many different Buddhist traditions, including Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, coexisting and interacting with one another in Singapore. Singapore's Buddhism has its roots in a number of East, South, and Southeast Asian countries. In recent years, several transnational Buddhist organizations have established overseas branches in the global city-state. This lecture offers a brief history of the evolution of Buddhism in Singapore over the last century. It discusses the plurality of Buddhist traditions and practices in the only Buddhist-majority country in the maritime region of Southeast Asia.

**16 JANUARY**  
**THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Patricia Bjaaland Welch*

Historians believe the original zodiac came from Hellenised Egypt, possibly introduced to China from Bactria. As a result, one of its more charming four footed members has a longer and richer history of symbols and meanings than you might realize. Patricia will trace their appearance from the Temple of Dendera in ancient Egypt to coconut scrapers in today's Thailand, with stories from *The White Hare of Inaba* to the Throne of Maximianus and the *Madonna of the Rabbit* to China's mixer of elixirs of immortality.



**30 JANUARY**  
**PHANTASMAGORIC BORNEO: VISIONS OF APOCALYPSE AND UTOPIA**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Douglas Anton Kammen*

The island of Borneo has been the subject of starkly different portrayals. On the one hand, the devastation of the island's rainforests has prompted visions of environmental collapse. On the other hand, Indonesian President Joko Widodo's decision to move the national capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan prompted utopian dreams of a glorious future. This talk explores how these competing portrayals of Borneo emerged historically through Western fiction and are reflected and reproduced in Indonesian political thinking.

**6 FEBRUARY**  
**COLONIAL FANTASIES. SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA IN FRENCH LITERATURE OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**  
*Zoom Lecture. Speaker: Srilata Ravi*

The talk will explore French colonial presence at the peak of France's imperial glory in South and Southeast Asia through an examination of the lives and works of celebrated French travel writers/adventurers who had



conjured exotic visions of this region in European imagination, namely, André Malraux in French Indochina, Henri Fauconnier in Malaysia, and Henri Michaux in India.

**13 FEBRUARY**  
**THERAVADA COSMOLOGY IN AND OUT OF HISTORY**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Alastair Gornall*

European-language scholarship on Theravada Buddhism still needs a systematic study of cosmology. This neglect of cosmology contrasts with the interests of Theravada scholar-monks in history, who, over two thousand years, have produced a vast archive of thought about the world or *loka*. In this talk, I will discuss historical and methodological reasons why Buddhist studies has ignored this knowledge. I will also offer an interpretative sketch of Theravada cosmological literature and highlight some of the tradition's crucial yet overlooked concepts.

**20 FEBRUARY**  
**COLLAPSE OF THE QING DYNASTY**  
*Zoom Lecture. Speaker: Chan Ying-kit*

The Great Qing (1644-1912), China's last empire, collapsed within a few short months amid the nationalistic tide of 1911. For decades, the Chinese Republic that took its place remained in the throes of bitter conflicts between competing forces of change that would, somewhat counterintuitively, lay a new foundation for the modern Chinese nation-state. This talk will discuss how the 1911 Revolution erupted as a collective of provincial elites' defense of local enterprise and property rights against the imperial state's appropriation. It also explores how the spectre of imperial rule never really dissipated during the early Republican period, when attempts to restore Manchu and/or monarchical authority culminated in the founding of Manchukuo in the 1930s. Reforms in education, army organization, and constitutional government inadvertently unleashed new social and political movements, which ultimately undermined dynastic legitimacy as China struggled for national rejuvenation.

**27 FEBRUARY**  
**TUAH BUGIS - CHRONICLES OF THE SEAFARING PEOPLE OF SINGAPORE**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Sarafian Salleh*

Few Singaporeans are aware of who the Bugis are as a people and an ethnic identity. Even fewer would know that the Bugis were master seafarers from Sulawesi. Some might associate the Bugis with pirates and usurpers. Between not knowing anything and negative perceptions, a curious reality exists. The Bugis are a community of seafarers who once lived and traded in Singapore before the arrival of Raffles. All young Bugis men were encouraged to sail out in search of wealth and a better future. Their presence in Singapore goes back more than 700 years. Carried by monsoon winds, Bugis ships would arrive in the hundreds from July to November bringing coffee, sandalwood, tortoiseshell, nutmeg, camphor, frankincense, and cotton to Singapore in exchange for other goods like tin and linen. Largely assimilated into the Malay community today, their unique culture still thrives in Singapore.

**6 MARCH**  
**COLLECTING AND MUSEUMISING RELIGIOUS SCULPTURES: 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SOUTH ASIA**  
*Zoom Lecture. Speaker: Salila Kulshreshtha*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century is a significant interlude in the history of South Asia when European travellers and officers of the English East Indian company explored different parts of the subcontinent, documented its historical remains, carried out amateur archaeological excavations and made collections of archaeological artifacts. A particular focus was on collecting religious sculptures and architectural fragments. These colonial collections were later moved into museums and art galleries. The talk will focus upon how the process of colonial collecting of religious sculptures and their subsequent display in 19<sup>th</sup> century museums impact our present day understanding of the context and ritual purpose of these images as well as of the archaeological sites from which they were collected.

**13 MARCH**  
**DELAYED TRANSFER MARRIAGE: HUI'AN WOMEN IN FUJIAN**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Courtney Fu Rong*

The talk introduces the audience to a peculiar marriage pattern historically practiced in Hui'an, Fujian. It is marked by the brides' extended natal stay which only terminates with pregnancy ideally three years after marriage. Despite intense state intervention during the Mao era, the marriage practice lingers until market forces start to erode local traditions. Obscured by a small demographic and their peripheral location, the speaker believes that Hui'an women deserves more than historical oblivion.

**20 MARCH**  
**HISTORY OF FILM IN LAOS**  
*Zoom Lecture. Speaker: Anna Koscheeva*

In this talk, Anna will share some of the findings from her research at the National Film Archive of Laos. She will talk about the history of filmic production in Laos, starting from the 1950s until the contemporary period. Anna is a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, Department of Asian Studies. She researches the visual culture of Cold War Laos, including art, film, monuments, architecture, and photography. Currently, is working on her Ph.D. fieldwork based in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

**27 MARCH**  
**EATING HERITAGE THROUGH TIME: FOODWAYS, SENSORY ENCOUNTERS AND EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCES**  
*In-Person Lecture. Speaker: Kelvin E.Y. Low*

Drawing from previous and current research, this talk unpacks how foodways, the senses, and everyday life experiences unfold over time. Heritage-making and how it is sustained, are anchored upon a welding of both sensory relations and gastronomic practices. Together, food heritage reflects a combination of personal, familial, as well as political identities that speak of communal ties and group affiliation which are demonstrated through everyday practices of food and foodways.





**NANYANG  
TECHNOLOGICAL  
UNIVERSITY**  
SINGAPORE

School of Art, Design  
and Media

College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

# MA in Museum Studies & Curatorial Practices

Intake in August 2023

Young and research-intensive, Nanyang Technological University (NTU Singapore) is ranked 19<sup>th</sup> globally. It is also placed 2<sup>nd</sup> among the world's best young universities. The School of Art, Design and Media (established in 2005) is Singapore's first professional art school to offer a full suite of undergraduate and graduate programmes.

The School offers MA in Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices that prepares graduates for professional positions in the diverse museum landscape and expanding spaces of the curatorial, which require knowledge, experience and creativity. The MA places emphasis on theoretical and practical challenges of contemporary and historic art and culture, with a focus on South East Asia.

**Applications open till 15 March 2023  
for August 2023 intake**

Visit these sites for  
more information:



**MSCP Blog:**  
[blogs.ntu.edu.sg/mscp](https://blogs.ntu.edu.sg/mscp)



**NTU MSCP:**  
[bit.ly/3kGyet1](https://bit.ly/3kGyet1)



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