

# PASSAGE

Friends of the Museums Singapore

November / December 2020



art  
history  
culture  
people



# President's Letter

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of the year, we are ready to put 2020 behind us and move on. Yet this unusual year has forced us to step out of our comfort zone to learn new ways of connecting with each other and the world around us. FOM docents, volunteers and members have shown remarkable resilience by adjusting to the changed circumstances and adapting to new technology with ease.

Our docents have resumed limited guiding at the Asian Civilisations Museum, National Museum of Singapore, Malay Heritage Centre, Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and STPI. Docents from all museums continue to research topics of interest and share their knowledge with fellow guides at Docent Ongoing Training sessions (DOT) held via Zoom.

The FOM docent community has come together to support the Asian Art & History for Museum Enthusiasts (AAHME) programme by creating special activities and delivering lectures related to their museums and institutions. A total of 151 museum enthusiasts from 27 countries have signed up for this unique, online course designed specifically for our members during this year of social distancing.

With the multitude of FOM programmes currently being offered online, we are spoilt for choice. On Mondays we can participate in the Monday Morning Lectures, on Tuesdays the Asian Film Study Group, on Wednesdays the Study Group, on Thursdays the Virtual Theatre sessions, and on Fridays we have the Textile Enthusiasts Group. The various Asian Book Groups meet virtually at various times during the month while the Friday with Friends event is hosted online on a Friday evening. The AAHME series keeps those who have signed up busy on Tuesdays and Fridays. FOM Members Care offers opportunities to get involved throughout the week. These are just some of the activities available to our members. I have joined several activity groups for the first time myself since I can log in from my computer at home rather than having to travel to various locations. I would encourage you to visit the FOM website regularly for a comprehensive list of offerings and to sign up for activities that appeal to you.

Have you heard of FOM's photo competition for members? To participate, simply post a picture you have taken during this year of COVID on Instagram or Facebook with the hashtag #FOMCOVID. Alternatively, you may send in your photos to communications@fom.sg to be posted online. The most "liked" photo wins. There is no limit on the number of submissions. The #FOMCOVID Photo Competition runs until 30 November 2020.

Another fun competition coming up in December is the FOM *Mask-erade* competition. Decorate a mask you have, buy an FOM mask from the office to decorate or make your own mask and decorate it to participate in this competition that runs from 1 December until 15 January. Photos of the decorated mask have to be either posted on Instagram with the hashtag #FOMaskerade or submitted to FOMaskerade@gmail.com. The winner of the competition will be announced in FOM's *PASSAGE* magazine.

*PASSAGE* magazine contains information about upcoming exhibitions, FOM events, and well-researched articles written especially for our members. If you are interested in contributing an article, please get in touch with the managing editor, Andra Leo, at passage@fom.sg. Did you know that even with the circuit-breaker measures, there was no break in the production and delivery of FOM's *PASSAGE* magazine thanks to the dedicated team of *PASSAGE* magazine's volunteers?

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their generosity with their time, their efforts, and their unstinting support. We started the year amidst concerns over the cancellation of in-person activities as social distancing rules came into place and museums shut their doors. Over the last few months, we have not only managed to keep most of our existing members but have added new ones, some from lands far away. This would not have been possible without the extra efforts of our volunteers who sign up, show up and deliver! FOM volunteers are truly priceless.

FOM's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is fast approaching. It will be held on Wednesday 2 December. Because of the current social distancing requirements and venue limitations, this year's AGM will be held via Zoom. Please remember to mail in your votes and register online to attend the AGM. I look forward to seeing you on Zoom.

I wish all our members who celebrate, a Prosperous Deepavali, Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas. May the New Year bring good health and happiness to all!



Garima G Lalwani  
FOM President 2020





## PASSAGE

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President's Letter

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**On the Cover:** A small selection of artefacts from the Asian Civilisations Museum's Fashion and Jewellery galleries. The background photo of the ACM building and the headdress photo are by Andra Leo. The other artefact photos are courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

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

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

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

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

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

# Some Singapore Miscellanea

By Yusoff Abdul Latiff



On 19 November 2001, businessman Jack Sim founded the World Toilet Organisation (WTO) and later successfully lobbied the United Nations to declare an annual World Toilet Day on 19 November. Having no academic qualifications, he first worked as a salesman, then at age 24, he started his own business. By the time he was 40, Jack had founded 16 enterprises. He retired and thereafter devoted himself to a unique kind of social work, as a global advocate of the toilet. In 1998, he established the Restroom Association of Singapore to raise the standard of public toilets here. He then focused on the 2.4 billion people worldwide who have no access to proper toilets or sanitation. He and his organisation are on a mission to convince world governments that improvements in toilets and sanitation will improve the well-being of the family, community and nation.

The WTO has brought together governments, academia, civil society, multi-lateral agencies and the private sector to explore innovative and sustainable solutions to solve the global sanitation problem. It organises the World Toilet Summit, bringing sanitation stakeholders together to share, learn and collaborate in the global sanitation challenge. The WTO promotes Urgent Run to publicise awareness; supports the Rainbow School Toilet Project in China; has established World Toilet Colleges in India and Northern Ireland to train toilet cleaners; has initiated the Floating Community Toilet Project in Cambodia, and has also created SaniShop, a social enterprise that improves sanitation conditions by empowering local entrepreneurs to train masons to build new toilets and end open defecation, while spreading the message of good hygiene and sanitary practices.

Jack is an inspiration in other ways. At 56 he obtained a Master's in Public Administration from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and several years ago he returned from Silicon Valley's Singularity University, ready to impart soft skills not taught in conventional institutions but required in today's world of fast-changing technology. Jack was the 2001 recipient of the Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneurship award and was one of Time magazine's Heroes of the Environment in 2008.



The Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, at the junction of Victoria and Queen Streets, is in a small area of about one square kilometre where, in close proximity to each other, you can find what is probably the largest cluster of different houses of worship in the world. In Queen Street there is the Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul, the Kum Yau Methodist Church and the Singapore Chinese Christian Church. In Waterloo Street you can see the Hindu Sri Krishnan Temple next to the Kuan Im Thong Hood Cho Buddhist Temple. They are so neighbourly that their devotees worship in each other's premises. Also in Waterloo Street, you find the Maghain Aboth Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in Southeast Asia, with the Bencoolen Mosque just one street away.

Queen Street extends into Armenian Street, where you find Singapore's oldest Christian house of worship, the Armenian Church, established in 1835. In Hill Street, tucked almost unnoticed between two high-rise buildings, is the Al-Burhani (Shia) Mosque and just a five-minute walk away in North Bridge Road, is Saint Andrew's Cathedral. Masjid Sultan, Singapore's premier mosque and the heart of the Muslim quarter, is also in North Bridge Road. About 300 metres away in Victoria Street, is the Saint Joseph Church. Fort Canning Road has the Wesley Methodist Church just a shout away from the Presbyterian Church in Penang Road. Walking around this 'Kampong Bencoolen' is indeed a journey across faiths, symbolic of Singapore's dynamic, multi-religious community.



This tembusu tree (*Fagraea fragrans*), an icon of the Botanic Gardens, is more than a century old and is featured on the Singapore \$5 note. I consider the tembusu an aristocrat among trees because when fully grown, it looks really majestic with its huge perpendicular branches and highly fissured bark, although its canopy is not very bushy. When it flowers, a sweet and pleasant fragrance permeates the air. In my boyhood days we used to hunt for young tembusu trees in the *belukar* (secondary forest) for its U-shaped branches, ideal for making catapults, which are considered weapons today. Currently there is global movement to grow more trees. Among world cities, Singapore ranks second (with 29% canopy coverage) while Tampa, Florida, has a 36.1% canopy coverage.

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

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# The Bezoar: A Fabled Calculus

Blending the Histories of Medicine, Art and Trade in Europe

By Caroline Carfantan

The bezoar stone is nothing more than a *calculus* (a hard mass formed by minerals within the body, especially in the kidney or gall bladder). Its name is derived from the Persian word *bâd-sahr*, which means poison antidote. Originally, bezoar referred to concretions found in the intestines of goats. Over time, the term would also be used for calculi from mammals such as oxen, horses, hogs (wild boars), monkeys, porcupines and camelids (such as llamas, alpacas, vicuñas, and guanacos) as well as concretions found in birds, reptiles, sea creatures and even plants.

Mention of its healing properties can be traced back to Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) and the Greek pharmacologist Dioscorides (40-90 CE). The medical properties of the bezoar entered the medieval European realm with the crusades. *Liber de Venenis*, a 1402 treatise on toxicology by Pietro d'Abano, mentions how a bezoar procured by the Grand Master of the Templars, healed the English king Edward I, wounded by a poisoned dagger.

In the Middle Ages and early modern times, the bezoar was believed to have medicinal properties, as a remedy for poison, epilepsy, plague and melancholia. It was either grated and added in small amounts to a liquid, or immersed whole. At the height of its fame, its value (like that of a diamond) grew in proportion to its size. But why were people willing to pay such high prices for a calculus? It has to be seen within the context of the time



Bezoar mounted on a ring (third century CE), © C Letertre / Musée Dobrée – Grand Patrimoine de Loire-Atlantique

when the fear of being poisoned was a key concern. Arsenic was a dreaded substance and the preferred chemical weapon of any assassin – undetectable, lacking colour, odour and taste when added to food and drinks, while at the same time it was easy to procure as it was an effective rat killer.

Both Queen Elizabeth I of England and King Eric XIV of Sweden wore bezoars inlaid in rings. The stone was so fashionable that the pale beige colour of some of Queen



Bezoar stone with case, India, mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

Elizabeth I's garments was known as "bezoar colour". For those who could not afford them, there was always the option to rent one for a day or an event. These rented bezoars were often set in elaborate 'cages' and worn as pendants. According to some historians, they were fulfilling two purposes – showing a potential assassin that you had the appropriate protection and adding the extra bling by showing that you not only had the means to possess a bezoar, but were also worth killing.

Despite the empirical trial in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the French physician of King Charles IX (Ambroise Paré) proving the inefficacy of the bezoar, the stone remained a costly sought-after product. High demand linked with high prices and returns created a thriving business in fakes. In his *History of the "Charitable Works"*, Philibert Guybert writes that when Pope Clement VIII (1592 to 1605) was diagnosed with poisoning, his physicians asked for the donation of a bezoar to treat him. The wealthy and princes sent in the requested antidote. However, out of 40, only one appears to have been genuine.

While the bezoar disappeared from European pharmacies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in Eastern medicine, the belief in its healing properties remains unshaken. In Southeast Asia, owing to demand driven predominantly by China, porcupines are at risk of becoming endangered. Prices of this under-the-counter substance have "increased exponentially during the past few years, following recent claims of their cancer-curing properties," according to a 2015 report by the wildlife trade monitoring organisation, Traffic.

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**Caroline Carfantan** is an FOM guide who believes that objects are more than mere commodities, but also fabulous storytellers of regional and international interactions and beliefs.

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# Armoured Vehicle Museum, Hanoi

By Linda Mazur

One of the most famous photos of the American/Vietnam war was of the tank that crashed through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon on 30 April 1975. At last, the war was over.

Unbeknownst to the western viewers watching prime-time news, there were in fact two tanks. Tank 843 reached the left-hand gate but got snagged on the pillar, while Tank 390 stormed the main gate and entered the compound, and history.

The courtyard of the Armoured Vehicle Museum (AVM) hosts Tank 843. "Original!" states the soldier on guard. There is also a K63 Armoured Personnel Carrier, which looks exactly like a steel box on tracks, and an American tank 'liberated' during the last days of the Ho Chi Minh campaign to free Saigon, then used by the northern forces.



President Ho Chi Minh visiting the first Armoured Vehicle museum. Image courtesy of Bao Moi

The ground floor of the AVM includes photos of the first students at a Chinese tank course in 1955, but the armoured vehicles really came into play during the final attack on the south in early 1975. They moved undetected down the Ho Chi Minh Trail – known to the Vietnamese as the Truong Son Strategic Supply Route – to lie in wait for the signal that the offensive had started. The maquette showing the movement of materiel along this jungle trail includes a black bear with teeth bared, just one of numerous dangers en route to the south. Although by this time the trail included over 12,000 kilometres of road, moving hundreds of tanks in secrecy was a masterful stroke of engineering logistics. Buon Me Thuot in



The workhorse of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Image courtesy of Armoured Vehicle Museum

the Central Highlands was acknowledged to be the perfect staging area for the final push to free Saigon and was heavily guarded. Stealthily encircling the town, the attack started at 1:55 am on 10 March and the infantry, supported by armour, had the area under control by 11 March. It was indeed the lynchpin that forced the southern generals to order the armed forces to pull back. The withdrawal became a disorderly rout and the ensuing panic culminated in the fall of Saigon 20 days later.

The room dedicated to the attack on Saigon includes a map of the city and surrounding countryside with tank routes designated by tiny flashing lights. Their orderly attack may be wishful thinking on the part of the historians. The story, confirmed by other, equally lost soldiers, goes that the tank commanders, mostly from Hanoi, had to ask directions to the Presidential Palace from street vendors. However, it was certainly a tank commander who raced up the steps and raised the flag over the Presidential Palace.



A tank entering the grounds of the Presidential Palace in 1975 Saigon. Image courtesy of the Army Logistics Museum

Another infantry commander drafted the surrender for Duong Van Minh to read into a cassette player. "Big Minh" – at six feet he dwarfed his compatriots – had a career as a military officer with, at times, the support of the American leaders. His final position as president of the south lasted only two days, from 28 to 30 April. In a twist of fate, his brother was a general in the northern army. His speech was broadcast at 11:00 am on 30 April and heralded the end of the country's division. The draft, protected by plexiglass, can be seen at the museum.

The wonder of this museum is that this modern, mechanised force contrasts sharply with the general view of a guerilla army trudging through the jungle, wearing Ho Chi Minh sandals and carrying all their supplies on their backs. It's a must-see for anyone interested in the military history of Vietnam.

Armoured Vehicle Museum, Hanoi  
Bao Tang Luc Luong Tang Thiet Giap  
108 Hoang Quoc Viet  
Cau Giay, Hanoi

**Linda Mazur** has lived in Hanoi since 1998 and is still unravelling its mysteries.

# Handwoven Textiles of Flores

By Noor Azlina Yunus

Some of the world's most finely detailed warp ikat textiles are woven on the island of Flores, part of the Lesser Sunda Islands located in the eastern half of Indonesia. Unlike most islands in the Indonesia archipelago, the name Flores (flower) was given by the Portuguese traders and missionaries who arrived in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today, Flores' population of nearly two million remains predominantly Catholic, with small communities of Muslims in coastal areas.

The mountainous, heavily forested island of Flores is divided by a string of active and dormant volcanoes into several regions with their own languages and traditions. It is this topography, combined with the island's colonial and maritime history, that has created three distinct textile areas on Flores: the west, home of the Manggarai people; the centre, where the Ngada people are found; and the eastern half of the island, where the peoples of Ende, Lio, Siak and Larantuka reside.



Fig 1. An old woman sits at her simple continuous warp body-tension loom behind her house near Moni, inserting weft threads into warp threads that have been resist-dyed with bright chemical dyes. She is chewing a betel quid. Photo by the author

These three textile-producing regions have three things in common: first, the predominant textile, the long, narrow, tubular sarong composed of two or three handwoven panels stitched together, an integral part of everyday clothing for many as well as for cultural occasions such as births, weddings and death ceremonies; second, the simple, comparatively short back-tension loom with a carefully assembled continuous circulating warp on which bands are created in appropriate widths, many bearing identifiable images (Fig 1); and third, natural dyes, such as indigo and *kombu* (also called *mengkudu*, a red-brown dye from the roots

of *Morinda citrifolia*). One significant difference is that the loom-woven sarongs in the western areas are surface-decorated using a variety of techniques, in particular supplementary weft designs, whereas in the centre and east of the island sarongs are patterned into bands almost entirely by the warp ikat resist tying and dyeing of the loom warp threads into patterns before insertion of the weft threads.

The sarongs of the Manggarai region in the west of Flores, which are worn by women knotted over the breast, nowadays with a Western-style blouse underneath, are the most distinctly different on the island because of their surface decoration. There are at least four main types of sarong, but the predominant one is a deep indigo blue cotton cloth woven on a body-tension loom with a discontinuous warp, decorated with geometric motifs formed from multicoloured imported fibres using the supplementary weft technique. The motifs are clustered in adjacent bands to create a heavily patterned *kepala* (head, or design centre), while simple geometric motifs are scattered across the *badan* (body) (Fig 2). The finest examples have a row of *tumpal* (triangles) along the top and bottom of the sarong executed in a tapestry (extra weft) weave.

The warp ikat textiles in the more geographically isolated central region of Flores demonstrate little outside influence. They traditionally employ hand-spun yarns and natural dyes and are modest in design. The woman's sarong is a deeply saturated blue-black tube, worn knotted over one shoulder. The Ngada around Bajawa decorate their sarongs with bands of simply organised geometric figures, such as



Fig 2. The kepala (head) of an indigo-dyed sarong from the Manggarai region of west Flores decorated with colourful geometrical supplementary weft motifs. The row of tumpal that lines the top/bottom of the sarong is worked in a tapestry weave. Collection of Sim Tan



Fig 3. Hooked rhombs enclosing eight-pointed stars and narrow bands of small patola motifs on a light red background are typical imported features on this half of a two-panel, mirror-image sarong from the south-central coast of Flores. Collection of the author

*tumpal*, squares and zigzag lines. A textile called *kain kuda*, named after the faint images of horses arranged in narrow warp bands, is highly valued. In the past, these sombre sarongs were decorated with beadwork set in lozenge patterns, but nowadays usually feature either an ancestral boat or a series of ancestral figures.

In the eastern half of Flores, the textiles of Ende on the south-central coast of Flores, settled by Muslim traders, reveal a range of non-figural Islamic influences. These include design elements and compositional arrangements derived from Indian double ikat *patola* textiles, which reached Flores in the holds of spice-trading ships. Turkey red dye from the Indian madder plant (*Rubia cordifolia*) and single motifs from other islands in the archipelago, such as S spirals, scrolls, rhombs, triangles, hatches and eight-pointed stars, are used in narrow bands (Fig 3). The non-figurative tripartite ikats produced in neighbouring Ndonga and its surroundings often have a central panel with a diagonally slanted *patola* design, the colours being predominantly black and *kombu*, sometimes with indigo blue accents (Fig 4).



Fig 4. A diagonally slanted *patola* design on the central panel of a non-figurative tripartite black and *kombu*-dyed ikat from the Muslim Ndonga area. Collection of the author

The finest Flores ikat is produced in the Lio district, which lies at the foot of the extinct volcano, Mount Kelimutu,



Fig 5. Woven in Nggela, this ikat sarong displays complex figurative and *patola*-inspired eight-petaled patterns. Collection of the author

between the towns of Ende and Maumere. Production is centred on villages around Woloworo, where *patola*-influenced designs are worked, mostly in natural colours. The best ikat sarongs, woven in Nggela, display both complex figurative and *patola*-inspired designs in lateral stripes (Fig 5).

In Sikka district, near the northern coastal city of Maumere, which has a long history of Catholicism, sarongs are produced with European-style figurative designs of birds and animals in lateral stripes against an indigo or red-brown *kombu* background (Fig 6). To the east towards Larantuka, ikat sarongs of much simpler geometric designs are woven.

Warp ikat weaving remains an important part of village life on Flores. Sarongs and other items such as shoulder cloths are produced for domestic use and for the commercial market in the main coastal towns and weaving villages. However, the laborious dyeing with natural substances is quickly being replaced by the use of faster synthetic dyes, and textured hand-spun cotton has given way to finer commercially spun yarns. These modern materials have

undoubtedly facilitated the continuation of handwoven textiles by making the work easier and less time-consuming. Fortunately, many of the traditional design compositions and figurative and *patola*-inspired patterns and motifs passed down from generation to generation are still being used.

In various villages throughout Flores, especially Sikka, Nggela and Watublapi in the Maumere area, visitors can observe the complex processes of hand-spinning, ginning and spooling raw cotton, tying the cotton warp threads into patterns on a frame, preparing dyes from natural ingredients, successively dyeing the cotton hanks, undoing the bindings and sorting the threads, assembling the dried warp threads on the body-tension loom and creating sheds, and weaving in the weft threads (Fig 7).



Fig 6. Bands of European bird and floral motifs on one half of a two-panel, mirror-image sarong from the Sikka district. Collection of the author



Fig 7. An elderly Sikka woman at Watublapi village, near the northern coastal city of Maumere, untying the ikat bindings on hanks of indigo-dyed cotton. Photo by the author

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**Noor Azlina Yunus** has lived and worked in Malaysia for 50 years. She has a deep interest in the art and craft of the Malay World and has written books on Malaysian songket and batik.

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# Lao Khrang Weavers of Uthai Thani

By Ruth Gerson



Antique blanket, part of Thap Klai's village collection



Left: Ginning the cotton (removing the seeds) Right: Fluffing the cotton getting it ready to be spun into thread

In the Thai heartland of Uthai Thani Province, in a small valley with an idyllic landscape, lie several villages of weavers. The people who live in these villages originated in Laos and are known generally as Lao Khrang.

It may seem strange to find Laotians settled far from their homeland. However, historical circumstances created this interesting niche within Thai society. These people were brought to Siam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by General Chakri, the chief officer in the army of King Taksin of Thonburi (r 1767-1782). He brought from Laos the most important and valuable war booty – the people who were taken captive. They provided the much-needed workforce for the victorious nation. Among the approximately 6,000 captives were people from many regions in Laos – from the mountains of Xieng Khuang to the ancient cultural capital of Luang Prabang to Vientiane on the Mekong River and to Sam Nua in the far north. They settled in Siam in nearby Nakorn Phanom, just across the Mekong River from Laos, and farther afield in eastern Pichit, and in centrally located Suphanburi and Uthai Thani. The Lao who live today near Uthai Thani call themselves Lao Vieng, indicating that they originated in or around Vientiane.

The second wave of Lao migration arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Rama II (r 1809-1824). At that time people from Laos joined relatives who were already residing in Siam. The third wave, later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was another forced migration, this time under King Rama III (r 1824-1851) when 80,000 to 100,000 people were brought to the Chao Phraya River basin. With this massive resettlement of people came many weavers, Lao Khrang and others, bringing with them traditions and skills



Antique banner

that have survived to the present day. The Lao Khrang, like many groups of people in Southeast Asia, are named after the dominant colour in their garments. The Lao Khrang dye their skirts red, the colour that is derived from the sap of the lac tree (a variety of the sumac tree). The word for lac in the Lao language is Khrang, hence the name of the people, Lao Khrang.

There are two villages in Uthai Thani Province in central Thailand where the people still actively engage in weaving: Baan Thap Klai and Baan Rai. These villages boast some of the most skilled weavers in the area. Baan Thap Klai is identified by its expertly woven *tung* (banners) with animal designs. Villages generally concentrate on producing one or two items using weaving styles with which they are ultimately identified. The banners of Baan Thap Klai are traditionally woven in cotton, mostly on a natural cream-coloured background, but with some bright new colours that are finding their way in. The small animal patterns and geometric designs that decorate the banners are woven in supplementary weft, using a separate shuttle for each colour included in the weave. These extra weft threads create a design reminiscent of embroidery. It is remarkable how the weavers keep the patterns and all the paraphernalia straight to create such artistic work.

Banners are important items in Lao tradition. They are given to the temple on Songkran, the Thai and Lao New Year, by people who pay their respects to the temple and to their ancestors, thereby gaining merit for their acts. In the past, the large wooden village temple at Baan Thap Klai displayed its wonderful collection of banners year-round, some of which bear water stains where the colours have run owing to the respectful and sometimes overzealous ritual of Songkran water-pouring. To preserve the banners and other woven items, the weavers keep these packed away nowadays, but display them when requested.

Pillows are woven items customarily presented to the temple and are part of its existing collection. Traditionally rectangular or triangular in shape, they are given by family members to the temple during a monk's ordination. Today, pillows are fashioned into new functional shapes such as a flat, square pillow that makes a comfortable seat.

Particularly treasured in the temple are manuscript covers.



Left: Rolling cotton on a stick Right: Spinning raw cotton into thread

These relatively small pieces of tightly woven cloths, about 25 centimetres wide, are used to cover and protect the narrow Buddhist manuscripts that are traditionally inscribed on palm leaves. Some of the manuscript covers incorporate narrow strips of bamboo in the weft, giving it a slightly stiff texture. Animal patterns and geometric designs that are unique to this village have been worked into the weave of the manuscript covers and appear on all other textiles, old and new alike.

When the women are not needed in the fields they weave on wooden looms that are kept under their homes. It is interesting to observe the weaving process. Skilled weavers do not follow a drawn design. They work from memory using traditional patterns they have seen at home or at the temple. Therefore, each piece has its own signature, and no two handwoven textiles are the same. The fortunate visitor may be able to see the cotton ginning, a simple procedure of removing the seeds from the cotton by hand. The older women often tend to this task, as well as the related work of fluffing and rolling the seedless cotton and preparing it to be spun into thread.

Not far from Baan Thap Klai lies the village of Baan Rai. Here too, people sit under their houses weaving, spinning yarn or sorting silk cocoons. It is the home of the National Artist Pa Champi who is well into her 70s. She entered the weaving competition at the National Commission for



Top: Woven square that covers a monk's head during ordination  
Bottom: Pha hoe Kampee, manuscript cover

Culture in Bangkok about 30 years ago when she won a prize and became acknowledged for her skill. A few years ago, in recognition of her work, she was awarded a medal by Princess Sirindhorn Maha Chakri. Pa Champi specialises in weaving blankets with intricate geometric designs that are large at the centre with smaller designs at the border, and colourful, heavyweight *pha-sins* (tube skirts). She has skillfully woven banners that tell the story of her village and others with poetry lines written by famous Thai poets, illustrated with subject-related figures. She runs her hand along these woven lines reciting them audibly, even faintly humming a tune. Pa Champi continues to experiment with new designs while also rearranging traditional patterns. To keep the craft alive, she has been teaching weaving to younger women in the village.

Pa Champi's collection of antique weavings is kept in her compound, in a small Thai house on high stilts, which serves as a modest museum. The textiles hanging on display, mostly *pha-sins*, are old and a bit shabby with a few newer pieces hanging alongside. These *pha-sins* represent the work of three generations of weavers: Pa Champi herself, her mother and grandmother. Stacked on a table are small remnants of traditional weaving placed between sheets of plexiglass, which serve as samplers for studying the weavings of the Lao Khrang.



Pa Champi, National Artist, reciting her village's history, which she had woven into a banner

The Thai government recognises Baan Rai for its importance in preserving the heritage of weaving. A new centre offers Lao Khrang weavings for sale, with one section housing an array of traditional weaving for viewing only. This exhibition of items woven by villagers for their own domestic use includes mattress covers, sheets, blankets, mosquito nets and curtains.

In Thai society, women are regarded as the upholders of its traditions. The many customs, beliefs and crafts are handed down by the females of a household, especially when specific skills are concerned. The Lao Khrang women take pride in their craft, but the lure of easier work and more affluent lifestyles pose a danger to this age-old practice. The establishment of new centres in villages to market local wares, as well as the increased public awareness and interest in the craft of weaving, may help to secure this tradition for years to come.

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**Ruth Gerson** is a long-time resident of Thailand who lectures and writes on Asian art, culture and religion.

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All photos by the author

# Unravelling the Gujarati Influence in Malay Textiles

By John Ang

The state of Gujarat in northwest India has a long coastline (1,600 km) and numerous harbours that facilitated extensive trade with the rest of the world. Its trade with the Malay world was no exception, and over several centuries their influence on the region's local textiles has been documented. The 'Malay world' in this article includes South Vietnam, South Cambodia, South Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Borneo and the southern Philippines. Through textiles, this article will examine the intimate connections and stories between Gujarat and the Malay world and hopefully will provide a clearer understanding of Malay textiles from a broader perspective.

## Patola Patterns in Malay Fabrics

An excellent example of Gujarat's influence on local Malay textiles is the *malong andong*, a long tube skirt of silk weft ikat patterns and supplementary silk weft decoration, woven by the Maranao people of Mindanao, in the southern Philippines. Its repeat geometric floral pattern is clearly inspired by the *chhabdi bhat*, an eight-petal flower, often used in *patola*, plural for *patolu*, a double ikat silk handwoven fabric from Patan, Gujarat.

*Patola* are extremely difficult to produce as their complex patterns are created by warps and wefts that are resist-dyed (*ikated*) before weaving. This makes them extremely expensive and in the past, their exclusivity created high demand and reverence, which gave rise to the many myths of their magical powers of healing and protection (See Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia*, pp. 214-218. 2014).

*Patola* most likely found their way to the Philippines in 1648. This was when the Dutch signed a treaty with



A very rare 19<sup>th</sup> century kiet, Chinese silk shawl with stitched-dyed patterns on purple ground bordering an empty yellow centre. Chemical dyes. Cham people, South Cambodia

the Spanish agreeing not to trade in the Philippines. However, as that trade was too attractive to ignore, the Dutch secretly engaged Gujarati merchants to take their goods to the Spanish colony. Consequently, in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Gujarati ships frequented the Philippines, infiltrating its market not only with Dutch goods but also Gujarati products that included textiles. (See: Jawaid Akhtar, *Gujarati Merchants and the VOC...* p. 416. Proceedings IHC: 56<sup>th</sup> Session 1995).

Over time these highly valued imported *patola* from India were lost, damaged or consumed by the demands of rituals and ceremonies, causing an urgent need to replace them. Local textiles in other material and techniques both with patterns inspired by those found on imported *patola* were created. The *malong andong*, which clearly followed the traditional *patola* pattern of *chhabdi bhat*, or flower basket pattern, is a good example.

The well-known tie-dye fabrics of the Malay world, such as the *pelangi* of Palembang, *sasiragan* of Banjarmasin and *kiet* of Cambodia, are all believed to have been influenced by the famous *bandhani* textiles from Kutch and Saurashtra of Gujarat. This is because many compositions of their patterns are similar to the Indian examples and old Gujarati *bandhani* have been found in various Malay kingdoms. (See: Ruth Barnes, ed., *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies*, p 136. 2012)

A *kiet*, made by the Malay Cham people of Cambodia, with intricate stitched-dyed patterns bordering an empty yellow centre, is reminiscent of two types of Gujarati textiles. One is *bandhani* and the other is a category of Patan *patola* called *patola panetar* or *patola gala vaal bhat*, meaning *patola* with an empty centre. Such *patola* are exclusive and used only by Nagar Brahmin brides of Gujarat. It is not known if the Gujaratis traded directly with Cambodia, but many Gujarati ships were recorded to have sailed to Patani in South Thailand where the Champa traders of Cambodia and Vietnam would have seen *bandhani* textiles. (See: Monika Sharma, *Socio-Cultural Life of Merchants in Mughal Gujarat*. 2014).

## Gujarati-Persian Aesthetics in Batiks for Jambi

A batik found in Jambi, South Sumatra, locally known

as *kudhung* or woman's head shawl, is fascinating because it looks more Persian than Sumatran. Its overall composition and uncommon colour scheme of red leaves on a white ground in the centre field, surrounded by a dark blue on white floral border, reminds us of the beautiful hand-embroidered, quilted Mughal carpet from Gujarat, in the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. (Accession number: 1997.4826). This early 18<sup>th</sup> century museum piece is entirely embroidered with the chain or *aari* stitch, probably from the famous workshop in Barabanki in Gujarat known to have been patronised by the Mughal court. (See: Gujarat – Aari embroidery – Origins of the Timeless Chain Stitch/strandofsilk.com).



1920-40s kudhung batik tulis, woman's head shawl with hand-drawn wax-resist pattern of repeat leaf and scrolling tendril pattern. Java for the Jambi Malay market

The Persian aesthetic on this batik comes from batik producers who knew of the Jambi people's penchant for all things Persian. For example, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the prominent Hadhramaut Arab Al Jufri family, who migrated to Jambi, seemed to have favoured Persian-style batiks ordered from Lasem or Cirebon. (See: Rudolf Smed, *Batik*. P. 100 Fig. 47. 2015). During this time, Dutch and English traders also brought Mughal textiles from Gujarat to Jambi. (See Fiona Kerlogue, *Textiles of Jambi and the Indian Ocean Trade in Textiles in the Indian Ocean Societies*, p 133.) As the Mughals were very much influenced by the Persians, these Gujarati Mughal textiles must have carried Persian elements that influenced the tastes of the people of Jambi.

#### Gujarati-Ottoman Influence in Aceh Clothing



1880-1920 sikap, man's long sleeve jacket, silk with cotton lining and couched gold thread. Chemical dyes. Malay people, Aceh, North Sumatra, Indonesia

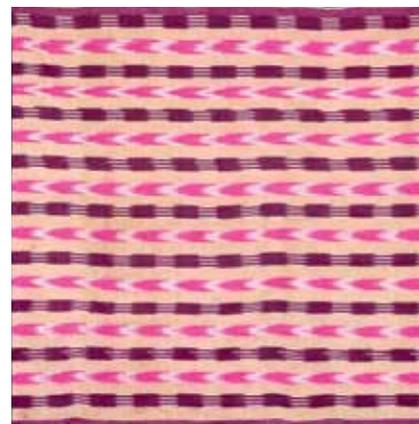
When looking at some of the clothing in Aceh, one cannot help but feel they are related to the fashion of Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India. Since many Gujarati traders resided in Aceh, such fashions must have been introduced by them. For example the Mughal *sadri*, or vest, is derived from the Turkish *yelek*, resembles the Malay *rompi* and the Mughal *shaluka*, long-sleeve jacket, derived from the Turkish *cepken*, resembles the Malay *sikap*. (See: B N Goswamy, *Indian Costumes in the Collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles* p 124, acc. No. 228 and p. 128 acc. No1092. 2010).

#### Gujarati Mashru From Turkey to Kelantan

Another textile that shows a Gujarati connection is a sarong woven with warp ikat chevron patterns. Such warp ikats may have been derived from a Gujarati fabric called *mashru*, which means permitted. The reason for this name is that Muslim men were permitted to use *mashru* since it

was a silk warped-face and cotton weft fabric. According to the *Hadith* (additional sayings of Muhammad) it is not permitted for Muslim men to use pure silk. Originally from either Turkey or Persia, *mashru* was later introduced to Gujarat, where the weavers of Patan and Mandvi produced them so efficiently that they became the main producers and exporters of such cloths.

Later, the Acehese produced *kain Aceh rosak* which was probably inspired by Indian *mashru* patterns with ikated chevrons. However, this type of warp ikat was either cotton or silk and not of mixed threads as was *mashru*. Like many *mashru* patterns, it has horizontal stripes filled with repeat chevrons and was used mainly for pants and sarongs



1900-1920 sarong ikat loseng, silk warp ikat with alternating horizontal bands filled with repeat chevron pattern. Chemical dyes. Malay people, Kelantan, Northeast Malaysia

for important ceremonies throughout the Malay Peninsula. Eventually areas such as Patani in South Thailand, Kelantan and Terengganu started creating their own warp ikats based on these Aceh cloths. An example of this is the beautiful Kelantanese silk sarong with a pattern of horizontal bands filled with repeat chevrons created by warp ikat alternating with horizontal bands filled with intervals of striped ikat pattern.

The Gujarati influence has been clearly revealed in the examination of these five textiles from the Malay world. We can also see the great diversity and numerous layers of other cultural aspects that have come together to make up what we call Malay textiles. The nature of Malay textiles can therefore be seen as an amalgamation of these numerous different cultural influences.

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**John Ang** lives in Kuala Lumpur and is an avid collector of textiles from the Malay world. He is writing a book about their history and how they reveal the connections between the many distant kingdoms of the Malay world and the rest of the world.

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Photos by Farid Anwar and Lin Sheng Wang. All textiles are from the author's collection

# Khonoma – India’s First Green Village

## This Village in the Indian State of Nagaland is Spearheading Community-led Conservation in the Nation

By Anne Pinto-Rodrigues

(This article was originally published by Ensia.com on 29 March 2019 as, *How a small community in the northeastern corner of India became the country’s first Green Village*)

“I’ve not hunted since 1998,” says Cayievi Zhünyü. Now in his late-70s, Zhünyü lives in Khonoma village, in the Indian state of Nagaland, near the Indo-Myanmar border. In December 1998, hunting was banned in Khonoma’s forests after a 20-square-kilometre (8-square-mile) area was demarcated by the village council as the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS). For Zhünyü and other members of the Angami tribe that call Khonoma home, hunting was not a source of income – it was a sacred cultural practice. “As the hunter, I can never eat what I’ve hunted,” Zhünyü says. “It’s bad luck. Instead, I feed my family and friends with it. Those occasions were some of the happiest moments of my life.” The hunting ban called for a huge shift in the lifestyle of the Khonoma people.



The Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary provides a safe haven for the Blyth’s tragopan, which is the state bird of Nagaland. Photo courtesy of Rejaul Karim from Wikimedia, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

The inflection point came in the early-1990s, when villagers killed as many as 300 endangered Blyth’s tragopan (*Tragopan blythii*) in one week as part of a hunting competition. For some conservation-minded village elders such as Tsilie Sakhrie, this was alarming news. “Even with an airgun, the cheapest gun available, an expert marksman can kill nearly 300 to 400 [common] birds in one day. It would’ve been a very short while before our forests were devoid of any wildlife,” Sakhrie says.

Under the guidance of Thepfulhouvi Angami, then the principal chief conservator of forests in Nagaland, and

community leader Niketu Iralu, Sakhrie began to campaign for the creation of a protected area within the 125-square-kilometre (48-square-mile) village, as well as a simultaneous ban on hunting and logging. But convincing the villagers wasn’t easy.

“First, we needed to sensitise the hunters,” says Khriekhoto Mor, another village elder who served as KNCTS chairman from 2014 to 2018. “Angami folklore, an important aspect of our tribe’s culture, is replete with stories of animals, birds and forests. So we had to get [the hunters] to understand that if the hunting continued, their children may never get to see these majestic creatures.”

Still, a mindset change this drastic required outside intervention. The village council invited experts from various conservation organisations in India to speak to Khonoma’s residents and conduct educational workshops. Sakhrie, Mor and their peers spent more than five years in dialogue with the villagers, which eventually led to the creation of the Khonoma sanctuary, the first ever community-led conservation project in India.

International recognition soon followed, when the sanctuary received a grant of US\$5,000 from the Gerald Durrell Memorial Fund. “With the grant money, we were able to recruit the hunters to serve as forest wardens for a period of three years, and pay them a good salary,” says Mor. For the cash-strapped, agriculture-dependent hunters of Khonoma, this regular income was a great incentive to turn from hunting to conservation. “When resistant villagers had accepted the new initiatives, any remaining opposition faded away.” Today, the sanctuary provides a safe haven not only for the Blyth’s tragopan, which is the state bird of Nagaland, but also for several other vulnerable species such as the leopard, the clouded leopard and the Asiatic black bear.

Two decades of existence have not been without challenges for the sanctuary. In the early years, some young people pushed for lifting the hunting ban. Their persistent requests were met with a week of permitted hunting every year. However, in the past four years, there has been no easing of the hunting ban. More recently, people from outside the village have made occasional attempts at hunting and logging, but have been thwarted by the Khonoma Youth Organisation, responsible for monitoring the sanctuary. “The quickest way to achieve our conservation goals is to educate and involve our youth,” says Sakhrie, who now serves as the KNCTS advisor.

“To me, conservation is not limited to animals and birds. It extends to even the tiniest insect, invisible to the human eye,” Sakhrie says.

### Sustainable Agriculture

This all-encompassing attitude toward conservation is also reflected in the way Khonoma’s other natural resources have been managed over the centuries. The hillslopes surrounding the village are dense with Himalayan alder (*Alnus Nepalensis*), a tree capable of fixing atmospheric nitrogen into the soil. “Our village ancestors noticed that farming on a

site interspersed with these trees produced a much richer harvest compared to farming on a site with other tree species," says Sakhrie. To this day, villagers still grow vegetables at the foot of alder trees. To ensure the ability of this practice to continue, a site with alder trees is cleared of underbrush to grow vegetables for a couple of years and then left fallow for four to six years to allow the soil to rejuvenate.

This rotation of farming sites is crucial in preventing the destruction of new forestland for agriculture. "This understanding of the benefits of the alder tree has allowed Khonoma to stay self-sufficient since ancient times," says Mor. The trees are never cut down; instead they are pollarded at a height of about six feet (two metres), so that trimmed branches can be used as firewood or for making furniture. These practices have enabled some of the alder trees in the village to live well beyond 200 years. In 1998, the village council banned logging of all trees on community land.

Traditional wisdom also dictates that paddy terraces be positioned at the base of nearby hills, a practice that is followed to this day. Rice is planted in June to coincide with the start of the southwest monsoon. The fields are irrigated by rainwater that flows down the hillslopes, past alder trees, gathering nutrients. Because of this nutrient-rich water, farmers in Khonoma don't need to use synthetic fertilisers.

### India's First Green Village

These age-old, sustainable agricultural practices along with the conservation success of Khonoma, drew the attention of the tourism ministry of the Indian government, which, in 2005, named the village India's first "green village," accompanied by a grant of 30 million rupees (equivalent to about US\$700,000 in 2005 dollars), which was used to improve village infrastructure. "Some tourists came to Khonoma even before the green village designation, due to its history of resisting British colonisation in the 1800s," Sakhrie says. "But most visitors today are those interested in Khonoma's biodiversity and its conservation success." The village receives birdwatchers, journalists and researchers all year round, despite its fairly remote location. It has benefited



*Himalayan alder, a tree capable of fixing atmospheric nitrogen into the soil, is an important part of Khonoma's traditional agricultural practices. Rotational farming between sites rich in alder trees allows for the continued benefit that they provide to food crops. In the top photo, a site that has been farmed is being allowed to rejuvenate. In the photo above, a site is being readied for farming among the trees. Photos by Anne Pinto-Rodrigues*

greatly from the additional revenue generated by tourist entry fees, while several of the 600 households in the village earn income by providing homestay facilities, guides, taxis and other tourism-related services.

According to Sakhrie, people in other districts in Nagaland, in neighbouring states such as Meghalaya, and as far away as Yunnan province in China, have studied Khonoma's efforts with an interest in replicating those efforts in their own areas. Despite external threats of hunting and logging, the villagers are determined to protect the wildlife, forests and other natural resources with which their lives are so closely intertwined.

Special thanks to Visa Kuotsu for coordinating the interviews and for translating from English to Tenyidie (the Angami language) and vice versa, when required.

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# The Legacy of Nias in the ACM

By Patricia Bjaaland Welch



A gold headband that would have been worn by a female Nias aristocrat, late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, ACM accession #2002-00653

Although customs, language and architecture vary with a village's geography on Nias (a small island off the western coast of Sumatra), we can make the assertion that all the aristocrats of Nias (who are referred to locally as *si ulu*, which means 'those who are on high') took that designation literally. At feasts and other ceremonial events, they sat elevated from commoners on special seats ripe in symbolism (the famous *osa'osa*), which were often raised on platforms in front of their homes for additional elevation. Even their houses were by right the tallest and most ornate, built on the highest mounds in the village with a megalith or two in front to indicate the occupant's rank. Their very garments, insignia, jewellery and headgear also designated their high status. For example, noblemen were permitted to wear sashes that reached to their feet while commoners were only permitted knee-length waist cloths. *Si ulu* women were allowed to cover their breasts; commoners were permitted only a cloth that wrapped around their sides.

In Nias society, the aristocrats, descended from a divine ancestor, came first, followed by a warrior class of proven headhunters. At the bottom of the Nias social hierarchy were the slaves, which included prisoners of war. At the very top of every village reigned a chief (known as a *balö si ulu* or 'great among those who are on high'), whose role was to oversee the village's activities, receive offerings and services, and host a series of ritual feasts known as *owasa* (or *tawila*), which established and maintained their position.

That said, it was the responsibility of every adult male, regardless of rank, upon marrying and starting a family to "start collecting gold and pigs in an effort to hold an *owasa*. The feast was held when sufficient gold had been collected to make a piece of jewellery (normally an earring) ... [that conformed] to a pre-determined standard of quality in terms of purity and weight."<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the *owasa* was to mark the consecration of the newly-acquired piece of jewellery by hosting a feast for the village. As one ascended the social hierarchy and acquired additional pieces of gold jewellery, one had to sponsor more and more *owasa*. The order and

selection of jewellery was not left entirely to the sponsor; there was a set schedule by which the pieces were to be acquired: first a single earring, then a bracelet, followed by three different types of necklaces. Aspiring to high status required not only acquiring gold jewellery of increasing weight (ranging from a single earring to a hefty necklace that could weigh a full kilo (2.2 lbs) or more, but also distributing large amounts of rice and pork.

In case you are wondering how many pigs had to be slaughtered in order to supply enough pork for these community feasts, the requirement was roughly fifty at one's first *owasa*, with the numbers required thereafter between 50 and 100. To attain true high status, a noble had to sponsor two cycles of feasts (the first cycle numbering six feasts, and the second cycle an additional five feasts, which would take years to accomplish, but was the road to legitimising a chief's appointment). The third component of a successful *owasa* was severed human heads. These were collected during the frequent battles (and raids and ambushes) that existed between competing villages of non-related lineages. These



A Nias priestess in all her finery

ritual killings were mandatory on the three occasions of the construction of a chief's house, his eventual burial, and the community's *owasa* feasts.

Both men and women wore their jewellery to these feasts. Gold was not indigenous to Nias, so in pre-trade days, these ornaments were constructed of natural materials and baser metals, but with the introduction of regional maritime trade, gold (acquired through the trading of commodities, including slaves) became a potent status symbol.

According to Nias scholar Maggie de Moor, the Nias people saw themselves as, "ultimately connected with the gods through their genealogies .... Therefore they were associated with gold, the colour yellow, silk, wisdom, birds and other [elements] ... of the upper world." Commoners were associated with the colour red, cotton, ignorance and so forth. At death, nobles ascended to a golden upper world and became hornbills (*gogowayu*) while commoners remained in the lower world and were transformed into snakes.

Because of gold's power, goldsmiths had to take special precautions when working with it, and it was believed that anyone "who wore new gold ornaments without having them purified was doomed to die."<sup>ii</sup> Purifying it required a slave to wear it first in order to absorb the potentially malevolent powers, then cutting off the slave's head and burying it to prevent it from harming the owner.

Women did not sponsor feasts but could attain high status as priestesses, hence the ACM's Nias priestess's gold headdress (known as a *doroho*) from the South Nias village of Bawomataluo, with its soaring leaves and rosettes rising from the headband towards the heavens (the home of the ancestors), with a protruding rod with five disks on either side. (For more information on this outstanding headdress and other gold jewellery from Nias in the ACM's collection, please see Sarah Lever's article on the next page.)



One of a pair of gold-sheathed armbands (see photograph on previous page). ACM accession #2002-00683

The inspiration for the jewellery of Nias came from nature itself and most of the motifs had specific meanings. For example, it was believed that "evil spirits adorned themselves with the branches of the lagene tree, [so] when a person wore such a branch the spirits would be misled and would regard the person as one of theirs, leaving him or her alone."

The bracelet on display in the ACM would have been one of a pair worn by the women of South Nias known as a



A pair of 19<sup>th</sup> century, fruit-shaped ear ornaments that would have been worn by a noblewoman. ACM accession #2002-00696.

*tola jaga*. It is constructed of wood with a raised central rim covered in thin gold sheets with a strip of red cotton cloth attached at both ends, symbolizing earthly connections.

Look closely at the *osa'osa* in the ACM gallery and you'll notice a necklace around its neck. This is made of polished coconut shell discs strung together on a brass wire, typically worn by successful headhunters. It represented the world snake from its origin myths. When covered in gold leaf, it became a prestigious neckpiece worn by noblemen.

Men typically wore only one bracelet (on their right arm) and one dangling earring (in their right ear) so the ACM's pair of earrings could have been owned by a woman, except for the fact that most women's earrings were configured horizontally. Earrings typically mimicked nature, resembling leaves, flowers or fruit.

The scarcity of gold meant that few pieces were what we would call 'Cartier quality'; brass and gilded brass extended many pieces, while some were worked in a more basic material such as wood and then covered in thin sheets of gold. "Gold dust was alloyed with silver and copper; depending on their composition, six sorts of gold could be distinguished, ranging from 100 per cent pure gold down to thirty per cent, which was still considered to be 'good' gold by the Nias people."

We are told that we cannot speak of 'heirloom' jewellery from Nias because of the requirement that new pieces of gold be offered at the *owasa*. As a result, "the melting and re-treatment of gold played an essential part in the manufacture of gold jewellery [in Nias]." Today, few pieces of such traditional jewellery remain in Nias for a variety of reasons ranging from the end of the slave trade to the tsunami of 2004. Visit Nias today and one is more likely to see gilded cardboard than the pieces we are privileged to have in the ACM collection.

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**Patricia Bjaaland Welch** is a long-term ACM docent who wants to thank the donor of these pieces, Mr Edmond Chin, for his many generous donations to the museum's galleries.

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

i Pietro Scarduelli, "Accumulation of Heads, Distribution of Food: The Image of Power in Nias." *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 146 (4), p. 459.

ii Unless otherwise noted, all referenced material is from Maggie de Moor, "Gold Jewellery in Nias Culture", *Arts of Asia*, July-August 1989, pp. 77-89.

# Symbols of Power and Prestige

## The Jewellery of Island Southeast Asia

By Sarah Lever

As the circuit breaker loomed, curators at the Asian Civilisations Museum were frantically putting the finishing touches to their highly anticipated new galleries, focusing on materials and design. Delighted as they were to finish, to be unable to welcome visitors because of the pandemic must have been disheartening. As we begin to welcome visitors back into our museums, albeit in a COVID-friendly manner, it has been our great pleasure to showcase these new galleries. The new Jewellery Gallery will whisk you to faraway places, not just to view beautiful jewellery but to experience how the pieces would have been worn by the people for whom they held meaning.

Jewellery was desired for many reasons, including power, wealth and magic. This led to the creation of beautiful works of ornamental art. Using life-sized photographs to model some of the more impressive ensembles, the curator has built a bridge of understanding to the past that FOM members and all museum enthusiasts will appreciate.



*The Nias priestess's headdress, image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum, ACM accession #2002-00684*

One of my favourite ensembles showcases ceremonial jewellery from the island of Nias where lavish gold jewellery would be worn at great celebrations. The importance of gold in Nias cannot be underestimated. Gold meant power, wealth and status and held supernatural powers capable of bringing harm as well as protection. This priestess's headdress is made of a thin gold sheet with repoussé patterns and consists of three parts attached to each other at the back. It is decorated with a geometric triangle design symbolizing spear tips that represent courage and greatness. The central flower motif is associated with nobility and has magic powers, reminding the spirits of the dead not to trespass into the world of the living. The same magical flower is repeated on the golden



*View of the Jewellery Gallery at the ACM, photo by Andra Leo*

discs along the horizontal bar. This would face behind the wearers, shielding them from dangerous forces they cannot see. From the comb at the top we see gold branches and leaves reminiscent of the tree of life and the messenger to the gods, the great hornbill.

The necklace is made with thick twisted gold wire. The more important you were, the heavier the necklace and the higher the gold content. The arm bands (see page 15) made with a wooden core wrapped with gold foil were worn by both men and women, but men would only wear one on their right arm. Nature is unpredictable and dangerous and evil spirits can cause mischief. Flowers and leaves were used to placate evil spirits. Plant decorations are popular on jewellery, as can be seen with the impressive earrings made in the shape of a fruit or seed pod, which may represent fertility and the hope for abundance. We can also see a spiral fern design thought to represent fertility; an ancient decoration seen throughout Southeast Asia.

One of the most outstanding examples of this spiral form is from the Karo Batak people on the island of Sumatra. The *Padung Padung* earrings (seen on the cover of this issue) are made from silver and gold and can weigh between 1 to 1.5 kilos per piece. Inserted through the ear, they are attached to a cloth headdress for support. Worn by high-ranking women, they are a statement of their traditional ethnic identity, wealth and savings. The earrings were worn facing different directions representing the ups and downs of a marriage in which husband and wife vie for the upper hand.

You will be sure to find something of interest in the magical splendour of the Jewellery Gallery: the impressive wedding necklace of the Chettiars of South India, the iconic headdresses of the Akha of Northern Thailand or the Peranakan peacock belt with 75 carats of diamonds. Time your visit for 2:00 pm and you will have a docent on hand to show you around.

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**Sarah Lever** has lived in Singapore for almost 10 years and is a docent at the ACM.

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# The Evolution of the Qipao:

## Reinventions of the Female Identity

By Debbie Tay

A well-known adage proclaims that “clothes maketh the man”. The construction and reconstruction of the female identity is the same. Consider Cinderella with her gown and glass slippers, and who can forget Elsa in that daring wintry number? Closer to reality, Princess Diana’s black “revenge” dress and the public transformation of Eva Peron are instructive. Clothes are a tool, even a weapon, for personal rebranding, for projecting identities, and for communication by evoking and eliciting responses. These transformations reveal inner metamorphoses as one’s identity evolves throughout one’s lifetime.



A lilac banner gown, an example of the Manchu qipao. Auspicious animal and plant themes were common in its surface design

*Qipao* literally means banner gown. *Qi* refers to a flag or banner and has its origins from the eight banners of the Qing dynasty’s military and administrative divisions, a framework used to organise Manchu society. The Manchus, a nomadic ethnic minority, had established the Qing dynasty and, like all the other Chinese dynasties before, accompanied this transition with a transformation in dress. While the enforcement of the dress code was stricter for the Han Chinese male, Han and Manchu forms of female dress were allowed to coexist. The *qipao* was thus what the Manchu women wore, while the Han Chinese women kept their *aoqun* (jacket and skirt) and *aoku* (jacket and trousers), two- or three-piece ensembles reminiscent of the earlier Ming dynasty.

In its original form, the Manchu *qipao* is a loose, floor-length, one-piece dress with side slits and a curved asymmetrical closure extending from the neckline to the



Close-up of blue lace qipao, China, Tianjin, 1950, synthetic machine-made lace (schiiffli)

underarm on the right side. Though it was proposed as a form of national identity for Chinese women during the Republican era, the Cantonese name for the *qipao*, the *cheongsam*, reveals another origin. *Cheongsam* means long gown, referencing a similar garment worn by Han Chinese men, especially scholars. As modernisation offered greater educational opportunities for women, wearing the garment became an equalising symbol between the two genders, and the female response to societal change.

In Shanghai and Hong Kong, where modernisation’s effects were more keenly felt, the abolition of foot-binding also enabled access to new spaces, whether for work or play. Accordingly, the adaptive *qipao* can be constructed for all of these spaces depending on the needs and whims of the wearer.

Collars and hemlines rose and fell, side slits got longer, and western fabrics, accessories and construction techniques were incorporated to make it even more form-fitting and stylish. With home sewing machines, women became both cultural producers and consumers. The liberty to construct one’s identity is as much a mental and emotional experience as it is a physical exercise.

Yet with all that modernity, some things never change. Frog buttons (or *huanuu*), which are stitched on *qipaos* to fasten the collar and lapel, are distinctively Chinese and said to represent the soul of the *qipao*. The knotted head is regarded as male and the pair with an eye, female. *Huanuu* bears witness to the thousands of years of Chinese knotting techniques, while designs and compositions vary from the plain to complex. Traditional designs include floral, animal and insect motifs, auspicious symbols such as pomegranates, and the Chinese character *shou*, signifying fertility and longevity. Most *huanuu* on *qipaos* are designed to match the pattern of the fabric and the colour of the braided trim on the collar cuff and hem<sup>i</sup>.

The evolution of the *qipao* is probably best summed up by Irene Sharaff, costumer and winner of multiple Academy and Tony awards, “Clothes are not just the whim and fancy of the designer who sits down and conjures them forth from his brain, but fashion really is the manifestation and reflection of the political, economic and social development of its day.”

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**Debbie Tay** is an ACM docent and avid home ‘sewist’ who, inspired by research for this article, immediately bought some fabric for a qipao. Her wallet is thankful she wasn’t assigned the jewellery gallery.

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Items on loan from the Chris Hall Collection. Images courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

<sup>i</sup> *Evolution and Revolution : Chinese Dress, 1700s-1990s*. Editor: Claire Roberts, Powerhouse Publishing (1 January 1997)

# A Journey through History

## FOM's 2019 Study Tour to Israel and Jordan

By Andra Leo

When two experienced and knowledgeable Israeli guides put their heads together, you can be sure the resulting trip will be one to remember. We had a 'taste' of everything Israel has to offer: its street food; its five-star restaurant cuisine; its architecture; its museums; its mix of multi-ethnic people and cultures; its Bohemian areas and its history, both ancient and modern. With tour leader Sarah Lev and our on-site guide Bena Mantel, we were treated to a dizzying range of experiences as we journeyed not only through contemporary times but also ancient history, to sites where dramatic events occurred over 3,000 years ago. We travelled in the "Rami-mobile", a large bus so expertly steered by Rami Meir that even the most tortuously winding and narrow roads were navigated with consummate skill.



Tasting hummus with pita bread during the street food walking tour

Contemporary Israel is best exemplified by its vibrant capital city, Tel Aviv, the first stop on our time-travelling odyssey. The first day was an introduction to this young city's history, its world-renowned start-ups and its street cuisine, an eclectic mix of foods that we sampled during a walking tour through the Carmel Market area. We began with a huge mouthful of goodness – a *sabich*, a pita bread sandwich created by Iraqi Jews and filled to bursting with fresh vegetables and boiled eggs, flavoured with pickled mango sauce. The day's culinary adventure continued with a variety of other dishes and ended with *lachuch* pancakes in



The remains of Herod's infinity pool in Caesarea



The huge refectory, aka the Pillared Hall, in the Hospitaller fortress in Akko

the city's Yemenite quarter. Food was to feature throughout the trip, not only street food, but also gourmet meals in top restaurants in Tel Aviv, Tiberias and Jerusalem. Every evening was a taste treat as we indulged in gargantuan feasts comprising delicious food accompanied by plentiful wine. One highlight was dinner in a Druze home where the group participated in the food preparation and cooking. Another was dinner accompanied by wine-tasting at the Katlav Winery. Bottles of their excellent wines followed us home.

A fascinating feature of Tel Aviv is its street art, an assortment of graffiti. Some represent the city's considerable artistic flair while others express political or social criticism. A street walk is a visual adventure since you never know when a colourful or thought-provoking mural will catch your eye. The art pops up mostly where decaying and dilapidated buildings are slated for demolition, especially in Bohemian Florentin. We explored this suburb before heading to Jaffa, the world's oldest seaport. In just one day we had travelled from the modern era to a port constructed 4,000 years ago. Our two days in Tel Aviv also included a stroll through the "White City" with its Bauhaus style architecture and, in the Museum of Art, we were introduced to art that explores the meaning of Jewish identity. Other museum visits followed, including Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum. This was an experience not easily forgotten.



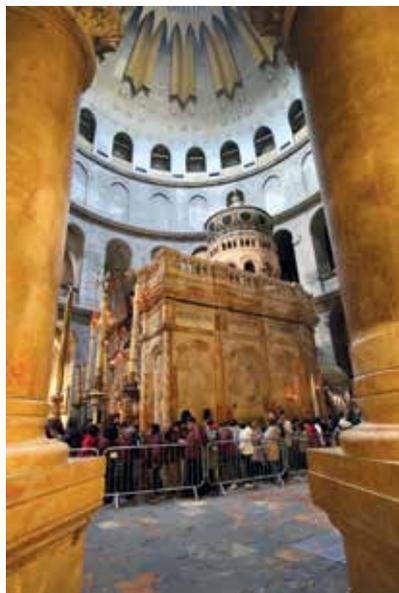
Group photo at the border with Syria

Our time-travelling continued when we left Tel Aviv for Tiberias, with stops at several sites en route. The first was Caesarea, a grand city built by Herod the Great in the late first century BCE. Not only did it boast a lavish seaside palace with its own private pool, but it also had the world's largest harbour, a Roman theatre that could seat 4,000, a hippodrome where chariot races were held, multiple public bathhouses with sophisticated heating systems and a 16-kilometre-long, raised aqueduct that brought water to the city.

Herod was a master builder with grandiose plans, which he carried out not only here but also in Jerusalem where he built another ostentatious palace and the huge edifice known as "the Second Temple", destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and still mourned today at the Western Wall. In Masada, the mountaintop fortress famous for holding out against the Romans during the first Jewish-Roman war of 73-74 CE, he built two holiday palaces. One consisted of three levels constructed on natural terraces down the mountain's northern side. Despite being on a waterless rock, both palaces had pools and bathhouses filled with water brought to the mountaintop by convoys of animals, then poured into channels leading to storage cisterns. Another archaeological site we visited was Beit She'an, one of ancient Palestine's oldest inhabited cities, complete with large bathhouses and Israel's best-preserved Roman theatre. This theatre had box seats with private entrances for those who either could afford it or perhaps wished for anonymity when attending a performance.

Ancient cities with their palaces and theatres were not the only archaeological sites we went to; there were also synagogues with intricately designed mosaic floors and Crusader sites consisting of stupefyingly large structures such as in Akko's Hospitaller complex, all unearthed in the recent past. The great halls' grandiose proportions were impressive enough, but there was more – a system of tunnels that provided an escape route to the harbour.

At the Sea of Galilee, we embarked on a "Jesus Boat" called the *Noah*. for a short cruise, then



*The aedicule in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre*



*The Siq in Petra*

over the next two days visited various Christian sites. Among them was the Church of the Primacy of St Peter, where tourist groups gathered water from the lake to take home. Nearby was Capernaum where a modern octagonal church was built atop the ruins of a first century one. Capernaum is also home to an ancient synagogue with an unusual layout. In Safed, we sat in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Sephardic HaAri Synagogue while Bena unravelled the mysteries of Judaism's holy texts. After a visit to the Church of the Beatitudes the next day, we went to a very different destination, the Golan Heights, from where we overlooked the battle site of the 1973 war with Syria.

The most spectacular church we visited was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – a vast structure that dates from 1810. Its many previous incarnations, between 336 CE and 1810, were either destroyed by invaders or burned down. Exploring its multiple ornate chapels requires time, but we had to make do with an hour. Its counterpart is Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, whose use is divided among three Christian denominations who take turns for services and have specific tasks allotted to each faction.

A stroll through Old Jerusalem took the group to the Via Dolorosa, which stretches from the city's Christian to its Muslim quarter. We also explored the tunnels under the Western Wall where archaeological excavations are ongoing. Also in Jerusalem, we visited the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea scrolls are exhibited. Qumran, the site of their discovery, had been included during our drive to Jerusalem.



*Wadi Rum's red sands*

After a side trip to the Dead Sea, we crossed into Jordan and an overnight stay in Aqaba. Fabled Petra was our next destination – a three-hour drive away. You begin in Wadi Mousa and walk almost two kilometres to reach Petra via a sandy path, then the Siq, the narrow 1.2-kilometre-long ravine that kept Petra's entrance a secret for decades. This magnificent site receives so much publicity nowadays that the appearance of the Treasury, Petra's most famous structure, is hardly a surprise or as overwhelming as it must once have been. Nevertheless, Petra is worth a much longer stay; our afternoon was just a 'taster'. The study tour ended with a jeep drive through part of the famous Wadi Rum, a wide desert valley where red sand and forbiddingly high cliffs predominate. Wadi Rum means Valley of the Moon in Arabic and was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011 because of its numerous prehistoric petroglyphs.

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**Andra Leo** is an avid traveller and an enthusiastic fan of FOM's study tours.

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*All photos by the author*

# On the Coromandel Coast in the Year of COVID-19

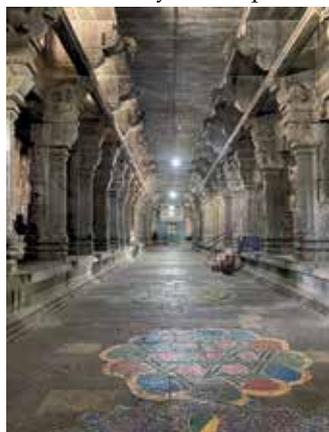
By Sukanya Pushkarna



*Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram*

2020 has been a year in which COVID-19 has underscored every experience around the world in ways that we could not have imagined. Naturally, our much-anticipated trip to the Coromandel Coast of India in February, was also tinged with some uncertainty as the virus had spread out of China into Singapore and we were unsure if the trip would actually happen. Nevertheless, after weeks of preparation, presentations, discussions and meticulous planning, 15 fellow FOM travellers and I took the morning flight from Changi to Chennai airport on 5 February. We had scrambled to get special health and travel declaration forms printed and filled in, in the hope of a smoother passage through immigration since our friends had reported long and chaotic lines the day before. Fortunately, things went more smoothly than expected and we were quickly united with four other members of our team who had flown in earlier from various parts of the world, and our Indian tour guide. With veteran FOM docent and my favorite study tour leader, Abha Kaul, in charge, there was little doubt that this trip would be a great learning experience and would also include shopping, great local guides, good food and boutique hotel stays!

Over the next 12 days, we would be driving down the Coromandel Coast,



*Pillared hall of Ekambareswara with Kolam artwork in the foreground, Kanchipuram*

exploring the realm of the Cholas (*Chola Mandalam*) who had dominated the region between the ninth and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were mighty kings with grand ambitions; they built majestic temples as both religious and economic centres. They expanded on the artistic traditions and cultural movements of the Pallavas who had ruled before them and left behind a legacy that was rich in art, architecture, religion and literature. The historical towns on our itinerary, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Madurai, had all been important political and cultural centres in medieval times and it is from here that the Chola kings reached across the oceans, leaving lasting cultural influences over much of Southeast Asia.

What better way to start the tour than at Mahabalipuram, where the Pallava kings had laid out the earliest design elements of South Indian Dravidian temple architecture in the seventh and eighth centuries. Here we viewed the unfinished and unconsecrated Five Chariots (*Pancha Ratha*) group of huge rock-cut boulders hewn into chariot-like structures, each with a different roof and structure and decorated with intricate bas-relief carvings. The *vihara* and the *chaitya* influences remind the visitor of the region's Jain



*Muslim visitors at the Basilica of Our Lady of Vailankanni*

and Buddhist past. Close by is *Arjuna's Penance*, the largest open-air rock relief here, carved into two massive boulders. Also known as the *Descent of the Ganges*, the exquisite tableau has more than 100 carvings, including of the river Ganga, which is ingeniously placed in the niche between the boulders. A short bus ride away is the earliest free-standing Dravidian temple structure – the Shore Temple. As the name suggests, the temple stands at the ocean's edge and has withstood the ravages of nature because it was cut from gigantic boulders. This seventh century temple, with its two towers dedicated to Shiva, beautiful carvings and sculptures including a series of unfinished Nandi bulls, looked especially beautiful in the setting sun as the waves rolled gently onto the shore.



Colossal Nandi outside the temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram

Kanchipuram boasts its fair share of architectural magnificence. Kailashnath is the oldest and most complete temple complex built by the Pallavas, with exquisite sculptures of Shiva. The Varadaraja Perumal temple is dedicated to Vishnu and the majestic Ekambareshwara temple was built by the Cholas to venerate Shiva as the Earth element. Its massive gateways (*Raj Gopuras*) were built by the Vijaynagar Kings.

The more modest Pallava temples grew progressively grander and more complex as we headed farther south along the coast. In Chidambaram, the important Nataraja Temple honours Shiva as the Lord of the Dance (*Nataraja*). This is where he is said to have done the cosmic dance and where we had the good luck to witness the ritual worshipping of the crystal Shivalinga (*Sphatik Lingam*), as well as get a good look at the stunning Nataraja idol in the inner sanctum. This is a superb example of the grandeur of Chola temple architecture.



Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

The Chola dynasty reached its zenith during the reigns of Rajaraja Chola and his son Rajendra Chola in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most breathtaking temples built by these kings are called "Great Living Chola Temples" and are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They include the Brihadishwara temple in Thanjavur, the temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram and the Airavateshwara temple in Darasuram. Built by Rajaraja Chola I in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Brihadishwara is the best example of fully realised Dravidian architecture. The temple's soaring tower (*vimana*) is the tallest in South India and also boasts amazing inscriptions in beautiful calligraphy, frescoes and sculptures. The temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram and the Airavateshwara temple in Darasuram are equally impressive, although smaller in scale.

The Meenakshi temple in Madurai was the jewel in the crown of the temples we visited. Dedicated to the fish-eyed goddess *Meenakashi Amman*, this temple is awe-inspiring in its grandeur with its 15-storey-high *vimana* replete with

over 1,500 carvings. We were fascinated by the beautiful murals that depicted the many legends of Meenakshi Amman's devotion to Lord Shiva, and marvelled at both the scale and exquisite workmanship in these outstanding examples of Dravidian architecture.

Our many temple visits had been punctuated by restful visits to sites such as Tranquebar with its Danish fort and Tamil Nadu's oldest Protestant church, as well as the beautiful town of Pondicherry with its French and Tamil influences, its many churches and basilicas, bakeries and beautiful waterfront promenade. We had also found time to visit museums and libraries in Chennai, Thanjavur and Pondicherry, delighting in the Amravati artefacts in the first, the amazing bronze Natarajas in the second, and treasures from the Arikamedu archaeological site in the third. We had watched Kanchipuram's artisans painstakingly weave beautiful silk and cotton saris and had also had the opportunity to watch sculptors in Thanjavur create beautiful bronzes using the traditional lost-wax method. We had strolled through several Chettinad mansions, with their beautiful Burmese teak columns, Belgian mirrors and glass tiles, then watched such tiles being created in the Athangudi workshop. So many wonderful experiences packed into a 12-day trip.

On another front, the news out of Singapore regarding the spread of COVID-19 was getting worse and as we drove from Chidambaram past Karaikal, we stopped at the 16<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Shrine of Nagore Dargah in Nagapattinam and then at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Vailankanni, a popular Roman Catholic pilgrimage site originally built by Portuguese sailors, to pray for the safety and protection of the frontline workers and those suffering from the virus. We had even stocked up on masks and sanitisers before leaving Chennai for Singapore. Little did we realise that our world would be changing quite drastically because of the virus. The study tour to the Coromandel Coast in February 2020 was the last FOM trip before the lockdown of seven months ago. I wonder when we will travel in a group like this again.



Tile-making at Athangudi, Chettinad



FOM travellers at the Brihadishwara Temple, Thanjavur

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**Sukanya Pushkarna** is an avid traveller, enthusiastic museumgoer and active FOM docent. She guides at the IHC and ACM. She moved to Singapore from the USA in 2010.

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All photos by the author

# Shaping Visions – STPI’s Annual Special Exhibition

27 September – 15 November 2020

By Sabine Gebele-Pham

Five Singaporean artists, five extraordinary masters, each of whom shaped and expanded the conventions of their respective fields of art-making, exhibit together: Chinese ink painter Chua Ek Kay, collage artist Goh Beng Kwan, sculptor Han Sai Por, performance artist Amanda Heng and watercolourist Ong Kim Seng. This show brings together existing signature pieces as well as print-based works produced during the artists’ residencies at STPI.

Singapore’s art scene at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be divided into three areas of practice: traditional Chinese ink-painting, British watercolours and the Nanyang, a local post-impressionist style. This period’s artists are often referred to as “first-generation” artists, while the group of artists exhibiting at STPI belong to Singapore’s “second and third generations”. The latter were born around World War II and most received formal art training from established artists at Singapore’s art institutions or from masters of Chinese ink painting. Ong was largely self-taught; the others pursued additional art education abroad. As recipients of Singapore’s highest artistic award, the Cultural Medallion, each artist in STPI’s group show has made contributions to shaping the visions of their areas of art practice and expanded on the three main practices of the previous artists’ generation. Ong advanced watercolour paintings, while Goh mainly works as an abstract painter who broadened boundaries by introducing the technique of collage and the use of a wide range of mixed materials such as tea-wrappings, strings and nails within his work.

Well-known for her marble sculptures of organic, minimalistic shapes resembling fruit and seeds, Han is one of the few female Asian sculptors working large-scale in stone. In STPI’s exhibition, smaller marble sculptures are set into context with her delicate wood-block prints produced during her residency in STPI. Her works often comment on the region’s changing landscape and deforestation.



Routed 4, 2013. Produced at STPI, Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore © Han Sai Por /STPI

In the late 80s, the artist collective The Artist Village (TAV) was formed. Its members included Heng and Han. In this colony, numerous artists shared studio space, exchanged ideas and organised exhibitions and performances. TAV’s emergence marked the beginning of contemporary art in Singapore. Its members advanced art-making practices by introducing new forms, including installation, video and performance art.

In her *Let’s Chat* performance, Heng invited participants to chat with her while she cleaned bean sprouts. During her STPI residency, she expanded on the theme of sharing and storytelling and invited 12 participants to share treasured



K C Poh - Sharing and Giving, 2016. Produced at STPI, Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore © Amanda Heng /STPI

objects and family stories. Heng facilitated the creation of artworks that reflect on the individual’s identity formed within a family, the community and the nation. Through a QR-Code, viewers can immerse themselves more deeply into the stories.

Chua, one of Singapore’s leading ink painters, was trained in the classic Chinese art forms of poetry, calligraphy, seal cutting and ink painting. Classic ink paintings follow a largely fixed canon of topics: the mountain-water genre, with landscapes of snowy mountains and the plant and bird genre with fauna found in



Dance with the Morning Breeze, 2002. Produced at STPI, Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore © Chua Ek Kay /STPI

China. Over time, each object acquired a complex symbolic meaning, representing eternal values such as endurance, strength or loyalty. Ink paintings comprise well-placed brush strokes, which require great contemplation, and are followed by an impulsive gesture. Chua, fascinated by the gestures of Western abstract expressionists, expanded on this impulsive mark-making and advanced the canon of topics to Singapore’s city views and its fauna.

STPI’s Annual Special Exhibition this year celebrates these artists’ contributions to Singapore’s cultural growth and their visionary and forward-looking advancements through *Shaping Visions*.

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**Sabine Gebele-Pham** is a docent at STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery and has a deep interest in contemporary art.

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Photos courtesy of the artists and STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery

# Monday Morning Lectures

All the following lectures are being held online. Please download the Zoom app in order to attend. Lectures are open to FOM members only. Visit the Community Events page on the FOM website to sign up: registration opens at 1:00 pm one week before the event. The lectures will begin promptly at 11:00 am.



**2 November • A Window into Singapore's Past: Fascinating Incidents of the Haj by Sea**  
*Speaker: Anthony Green*

When Muslim Haj pilgrims from Southeast Asia travelled by sea to Jeddah and Mecca, Singapore was a major centre of transit and departure. Thousands travelled, but the pilgrims left almost no accounts. Our speaker researched and co-wrote the book *Kapal Haji: Singapore and the Hajj Journey by Sea*. That work revealed many human stories and perspectives. The lecture will outline Singapore's link to the sea-borne Haj, but will step beyond that Haj story to look at some of the many small details, what Anthony is calling "fascinating diversions" that invite other insights into Singapore's past.



**23 November • A Clean, Green and Sustainable Singapore – the Journey Continues**  
*Speaker: Liak Teng Lit*

At independence in 1965, Singapore was a polluted third world city. 55 years on, Singapore is now a clean, green and sustainable first world city. Yet much remains to be done. The speaker will share his personal 'green' encounters with some of the key drivers of the Singapore sustainability journey including Lee Kuan Yew, Tan Gee Paw, Leo Tan, Tan Wee Kiat, Khoo Teng Chye and Ho Hua Chew.



**9 November • Private Passion: Introducing the Photographs of Liu Kang**  
*Speaker: Gretchen Liu*

Liu Kang (1911-2004) is celebrated as a Singapore pioneer artist and one of the founders of the Nanyang Style of art. Less well-known is his life-long devotion to photography. The full depth and breadth of his

photographic work came to light when his personal papers were sorted in 2017. What emerged is a rich and engaging collection of images that illuminate not only Liu Kang's own artistic practice, but also the art worlds of Shanghai and Paris in the 1920s and 1930s and the nascent Singapore art scene of the 1940s and 1950s.



**30 November • Beautifying the Cloth: Talk on Indian Textile Arts**  
*Speaker: Sangeeta Roy*

Sangeeta will talk about handcrafted textiles from India with a special focus on the crafts

meant for beautifying the cloth after it comes off the loom. She will offer an overview of the post-loom textile crafts in India, such as embroidery and block printing, and discuss the stories of specific textile crafts. She will trace the evolution of the textile industry during changing times and aesthetics.



**7 December • Ethnography and Animism in East Timor**  
*Speaker: Christopher Shepherd*

This talk concerns the history of Western

ethnography of animism in East Timor during the final century of Portuguese colonial rule. It will address different ethnographic experiences, the nature of animism itself, and a new theory of animism as an encounter with colonialism.

**16 November**

**NO LECTURE OWING TO DEEPAVALI PUBLIC HOLIDAY.**

Happy Deepavali to all who celebrate.

**The MMLs will take a break and resume on Monday 11 January 2021.  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all who celebrate!**

# Explore Singapore!

**Hooray! Things are opening up and we can start our tours in November! We are unable to confirm dates at press time but are working on them. Please do look out for announcements in What's Trending and the FOM website.**



## Exploring Bailestier Road – A Heritage Trail off the Beaten Track

Date: To be announced  
10:00 am – 12:00 noon  
Fee: \$25

Few people have heard of Bailestier Road or know that it is part of a heritage trail. Singaporeans shop here for lighting, bathroom equipment, as well as good food. Bailestier has a rich history with links to the first American Consul to Singapore and Dr Sun Yat Sen. It is also home to one of the earliest Malay film studios and various temples including one with a permanent *wayang* (opera) stage. Join us on this heritage walk and discover another facet of Singapore and its history.



## Little India Heritage Walk

Date: To be announced  
10:00 am – 12:00 noon  
Fee: \$25

Join us on a guided walking tour of Little India; wander along its shophouse-lined streets and experience the hustle and bustle of an organic, evolving neighbourhood. Among colourful stores and landmarks, learn about its rich history. We will walk its vibrant streets, stopping at points of interest, including commercial establishments, places of worship and the Indian Heritage Centre. This will give you fascinating glimpses into early and contemporary Singapore and help you gain new insights into our island state's diverse Indian communities



## An Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

Date: To be announced  
11:00 am – 1:00 pm  
Fee: \$25

For more than 2,000 years the Chinese have used a system of medicine known as Traditional Chinese Medicine or TCM. The underlying concepts and theories of TCM treat the body, mind and emotions (or spirit) as a single entity and its practices take a holistic approach to prevention and cure. TCM often includes nutritional therapies, treatments such as acupuncture, cupping, massage or *tuina*, and exercises such as *taiqi*. Join us and learn about TCM's basic principles and practices, followed by a visit to a traditional Chinese medical shop.



## The Joy and Fun of Gamelan – a Workshop

Date: To be announced  
10:00 am – 12:30 pm  
Fee: \$30

Those who have travelled to Indonesia must have heard melodic tinkling music welcoming guests to hotels and restaurants. It is often played live, so you may have seen the musicians with their instruments – the gamelan. This is a unique opportunity to learn about the differences between Javanese and Balinese gamelan orchestras, about the instruments and also how to play them. You will learn about the gamelan's history, traditions and related cultural activities such as *wayang kulit* (Indonesian shadow puppetry) and Javanese dance.



## Kampongs in the Sky

Date: To be announced  
10:00 am – 12:00 noon  
Fee: \$30

Singapore's government housing programme is one of the nation's great success stories.

Housing Development Board (HDB) estates are all around us, but we often know very little about them. How did the population of Singapore go from living in rural villages (*kampongs*) to high-rise apartments while still keeping the community spirit intact? We will tour one of the earliest town centres on foot, Toa Payoh, built in 1966. You will see what makes this a lively, self-contained hub, the nucleus of every HDB estate. An optional local lunch will follow.



## Ethnobotany Garden Tour

Date: To be announced  
Time: 10 am – 12:00 noon  
Fee: \$30

Tucked away into a corner of the Botanic Gardens is a special Ethnobotany Garden, featuring a large variety of ordinary, as well as unusual plants, most of which are native to Southeast Asia and have been used for centuries in this part of the world, and other regions, for food, medicine, cultural practices and material crafts. Join us on this specially organised tour and gain an understanding of another aspect of the history of this region – its plants and their historical, economic and anthropological roles.

# FOM COVID-19 Photo Competition



**#FOMCOVID**  
Talk to us and tell us  
your story during  
COVID-19

and stand a chance to  
win a \$50 Takashimaya  
voucher



## How it works:

Post your best COVID photos on social media (Instagram or Facebook) with the hashtag #FOMCOVID or send them to communications@fom.sg to be posted.

You can post as many photos as you would like! Please feel free to post a comment with your photo, such as when, where and why you took it.

## Who will be the judge?

The photo with the most 'likes' will be the winner.

**The deadline is 30 November 2020**

## What is the prize?

A \$50 Takashimaya voucher

Photos courtesy of Andra Leo and Carol Hamcke-Onstwedder

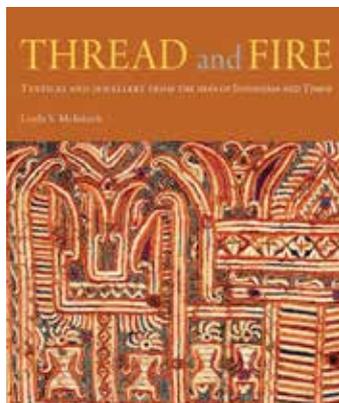
## Textile Enthusiasts Group

### A Morning of Indonesian Treasures

Friday 20 November  
10:00 am via Zoom

Dr Linda McIntosh will take us around Indonesia in this two-part presentation.

1: *Thread and Fire: Textiles and Jewellery from the Isles of Indonesia and Timor*, an introduction to Dr McIntosh's book about Francisco Capelo's collection and the publication's themes.



2: *Discovering the Textiles of Alor Regency, East Indonesia*. Indonesia's textiles have inspired research and exhibitions for many years.

Dr McIntosh will introduce hers and Yulianti Peni's research on Alurung, Taruamang, Kiramang and Kui textiles.

Dr Linda McIntosh is a curator and the author of several publications on Southeast Asia's textile culture. She is also a contributing editor to *Textiles Asia*.

### Understanding Indonesian Textiles: Seeing Culture in Cloth

Friday 4 December  
10:00 am via Zoom

Author and social entrepreneur William Ingram will help us step out of our cultural framework and start seeing indigenous textiles on their own terms. Many aspects of Indonesia's indigenous material culture, particularly the textile arts, embody social and spiritual information and meaning in their motifs, visual structures, making and uses.

William Ingram is co-founder of *Threads of Life*, a Bali-based social enterprise that has worked with over 1,000 traditional weavers in 50 communities on 12 Indonesian islands. Born in the UK, he has lived most of his life in Japan and Indonesia.



Photo by Jean Howe

## Docent Graduates 2019-20

Docent training this year took an unexpected turn in March; some had cancelled lectures or field trips, others shifted to Zoom mentor tours, and all had unique End of Training Celebrations. Although it was delayed by six months, we offer our heartfelt congratulations to all of FOM's new docents who completed training during the 2019/20 season despite the COVID-19 challenges! You did so with an adaptable spirit and much aplomb.



ACM

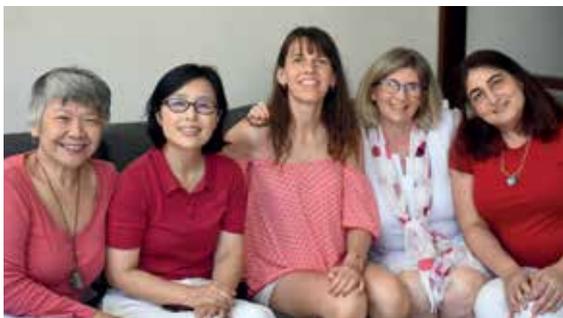


*The ACM docent programme is an extremely rewarding journey – a journey that does not end once you graduate but continues to be an enriching and learning experience. Steeped in history and art, it is awe-inspiring and tremendously exciting to be given the opportunity to completely immerse yourself in the ACM treasure trove and to delve deep into the stories, legends and facts behind the precious artefacts in the museum.*

*The lectures are incredible, the reading and research is vast, and the private tours given to trainees are eye-opening. Apart from the learning experience, a wonderful spin-off is the camaraderie among trainees and docents and the friendships that are made. If I had to do it all again, I'd do it in a heartbeat! (Heike Bredenkamp)*



NMS



*What I enjoyed the most about this course was the opportunity to meet friends of diverse nationalities twice a week. We had a great time; not only did we talk about the artefacts and study together, but we also shared our daily lives. Before I started this training course, I had no idea how much I would change and develop. There are a lot of things to study and paperwork was really intensive; presentations were scary at the beginning. However, as time went by, I felt a sense of accomplishment in my progress and it became easier.*

*Especially, I thank my group leaders for filling up my deficiencies with great advice. With their help, I was able to finish this training course. Thank you very much, Estelle and Ini. (Lee Eunju)*

STPI



*Learning to guide contemporary art was a big challenge for me. I was well outside my comfort zone when I started training, but the support I received from the co-heads, group leaders, mentor, gallery talk evaluators and my fellow trainees gave me the confidence to spread my wings and fly! It opened up a whole new world for me and I am forever grateful for the opportunity.*  
(Angie Ng)

*The docent training has been one of the most enriching experiences I have ever been part of, not only for what I learned, but more for how I learned it. For the first time, I built a wealth of knowledge by myself without following a pre-imposed curriculum. I also remember the feeling every time we worked in group and someone brought to the other's attention new key points. Learning from my classmates was amusing and when I was the one who offered a new link it was really rewarding and made me eager to move ahead.* (Carlotta Palma)



SYSNMH

URA



*From the very first session, I knew that this course was right for me – I found myself with a diverse group of like-minded people with a deep interest in history and conservation and a passion for sharing stories. The training was quite intense, with lectures and field trips, as well as presenting our own research every week. We needed to cover both the history of Chinatown and a number of more specific topics that made this area unique. The course leaders, mentors and lecturers, from both FOM and the URA, were all very supportive and inspirational. I am so happy that I challenged myself to do the Chinatown heritage trail training and fulfilled a dream to be a guide.*  
(Annika Larsson)



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## Island Notes

# Rosh Hashanah

By Darly Furlong



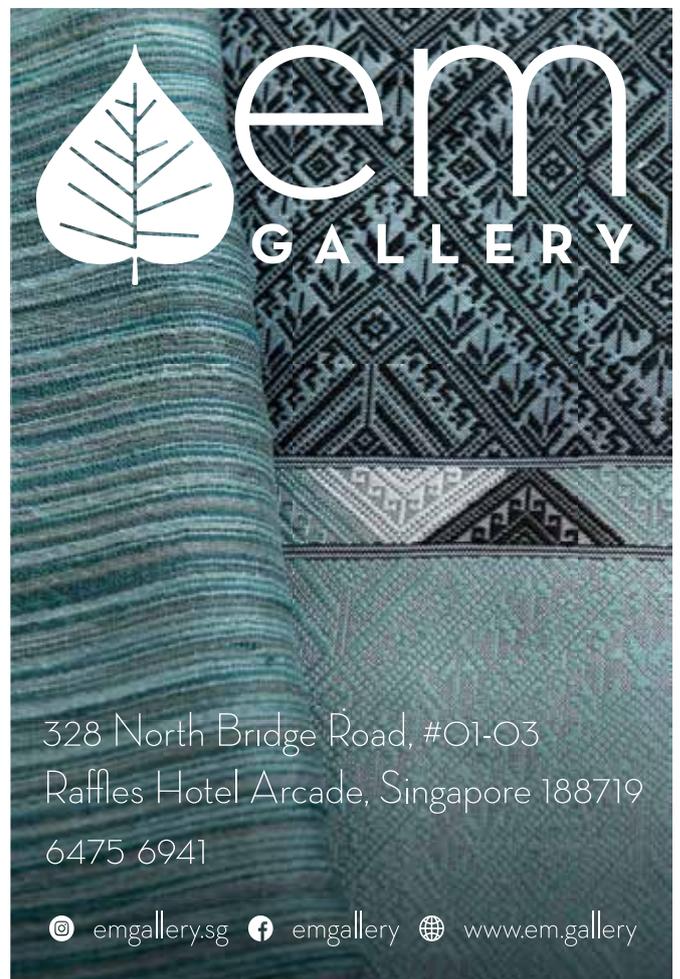
*Shanah Tovah* (Happy New Year) to all our Jewish friends who celebrated Rosh Hashanah in September. This was the beginning of their civil new year leading to the holiday of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The event is a time for introspection, prayer and celebration.

Singapore has a long history of Jewish immigration and entrepreneurship since the late 1800s, mostly consisting of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews of Iraqi and European ancestry. Rosh Hashanah is commemorated by attending special services at the synagogue, adhering to customs such as sounding the *shofar* (ram's horn) followed by a *seder* (ceremonial meal) of symbolic foods – sweet and sour brisket, matzo ball soup, dates, pomegranates and apples dipped in honey etc, eaten with delicious challah bread, symbolizing the cycle of the year. Maybe it's time for me to head to a Jewish deli...



Interior of the Maghain Aboth Synagogue in Waterloo Street, photo by the author

**Darly Furlong** is a passionate volunteer of museum-based learning for children and leads other causes in Singapore that facilitate social justice.



# Japanese Docents

Coronavirus has been spreading very rapidly all over the world since the beginning of 2020. I had never thought about the need to keep a distance from others and have never felt so distant from my home country. I was also surprised by the speed at which this invisible virus can spread; people move around the world so much.

In the past, I saw my family off to school or work every morning, enjoyed having an occasional lunch with my friends and guided tourists in our beautiful museum. Now, it has become very hard to do what I would normally have been doing and I feel the value of everyday life, once spent so casually. Initially I was surprised and disappointed by the changes in my surroundings, but people can adapt to new situations. Now I don't feel uncomfortable wearing a mask when I go out and automatically keep a safe distance when I line up at a cash register.

I watched the 55<sup>th</sup> National Day ceremony on TV at home. It was very impressive to see all the people in the Padang wearing masks (except for the brass band members) and marching while social distancing. It was a totally new style. The routes for the national flag, fighter planes and military parades were also new and unusual, specially prepared so that everyone could see them from their own homes and neighbourhoods.

The expression "new normal" may have been used before the Coronavirus, but this is probably the first time that all businesses are looking for ways to develop and return to a "new normal". New standards, new steps; now there are a



lot of new things around us. I have to make an effort and not miss out on IT changes. Our guiding activities at the museum are also about to change to the "new normal".

I hope that this "new normal" will be well-established one day, and that day will come as soon as possible so that we, guides and visitors, can enjoy the museum safely without stress.

**Maki Nakamura, Japanese Docent**

**FOM Maskerade**

Grab your markers, your glue, glitter and style!  
Find inspiration from nature, lit, museums ... to compile.

Use a face mask, maybe an FOM one, or make your own. Decorate it! Dazzle us all with your talents unknown.

Get the creative juices flowing, the sky's the limit!  
The FOM Maskerade Contest - you must enter submissions to win it!

Contest runs:  
1 December to 15 January  
Winners announced in Passage

Submit Photos of your Mask\* to:

#FOMaskerade  
 FOMaskerade@gmail.com  
\*unlimited submissions allowed

Friends of the Museums Singapore

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# Museum Information and Exhibitions

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

## Asian Civilisations Museum

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

**Opening hours:**  
Daily 10:00 am - 7:00 pm  
Fri 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

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

### Understanding Asia through Singapore

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

### New Gallery: Material and Design

Visit the museum's newest galleries. They mark the completion of the museum's multi-year refresh as Singapore's museum of Asian antiquities and decorative art. The third-floor galleries are focused on decorative art and are collectively themed Materials and Design. The two new galleries, Fashion and Textiles, and Jewellery, together with the refreshed Ceramics gallery, comprise a display of over 300 precious and finely crafted masterpieces, telling stories of Asian identities, histories and cultures.

## Gillman Barracks

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

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

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

**FOM guided tours:**  
Sat 4:00 pm: Art & History Tour  
Sat. 5:00 pm: History and Heritage Tour  
To register please visit [www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com](http://www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com)

## NTU CCA

**Trinh T. Minh-ha. Films.**  
(through Feb 2021)

This exhibition features works by the world-renowned independent filmmaker, writer, composer, and post-colonial theorist Trinh T Minh-ha, as well as a new commission by the NTU CCA Singapore. The spatial display of the films evokes Trinh's 2001 exhibition at the Secession in Vienna, one of the first instances where full-length films were presented in an art gallery context. Taking this specific cue, which also involved Trinh's writings and publications, five films were selected to be in the exhibition hall, enquiring about modes of viewing the cinematic, and how to inhabit the physical and temporal spaces in between her works.

## Indian Heritage Centre

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

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



### FOM guided tours: Tues-Fri

12:00 pm for the permanent galleries  
11:00 am on Wed and Fri for the special exhibitions  
Tamil tours (FOM) 11:30am on the first Friday of each month for the special exhibition

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) celebrates the history and heritage of the Indian diaspora in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. From early contacts between the Indian subcontinent and this region, the culture and social history of the community after the arrival of the British, through to the early stirrings of nationalism and political identity, and the contributions of Singapore's Indian community – the five galleries take visitors on a fascinating journey through the Indian diaspora. Located in Singapore's colourful and vibrant Little India precinct, the centre opened in May 2015 and is our only purpose-built museum.

## Malay Heritage Centre

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

### Opening hours:

Tues to Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (last admission 5:30 pm), closed on Mondays  
FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 11:00 am; Sat: 2:00 pm (Subject to availability. Please call ahead to confirm the availability of a docent).

The Malay Heritage Centre (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 10:00 am – 7:00 pm

### FOM guided tours:

Mon to Fri 11:00 am and 2:00 pm (English)  
Mon to Fri 10:30 am and every first Saturday 1:30 pm (Japanese)

### The Singapore History Gallery

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

## NUS Museum, NUS Centre for the Arts

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

Free admission

### Opening hours:

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



# Museum Information and Exhibitions

## **Wishful Images: When Microhistories Take Form** (through Dec 2021)

The exhibition explores the impact of contemporary geopolitical realities recapitulated under the Asian Cold War through a re-historicisation of the past into the present.

Together with five artists whose artistic practices question the governmentality between the lived and the non-living – Lucy Davis, Kao Chung-Li, Kuniyoshi Kazuo, Nguyễn Trinh Thi, and Aya Rodriguez-Izumi – *Wishful Images* resembles a collective attempt to relate lesser-known historical events through the persistent efforts of artists, recounted and re-articulated in various forms and mediums.

## **NUS Baba House**

157 Neil Road, Singapore 088883  
Tel: 6227 5731

[www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg](http://www.babahouse.nus.edu.sg)

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

**Self-Guided Visits: Every Sat, 1.30pm/2.15pm/3.15pm/4.00pm**

**To register, please visit [babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit](http://babahouse.nus.edu.sg/visit/plan-your-visit)  
For enquiries, please email [babahouse@nus.edu.sg](mailto:babahouse@nus.edu.sg)**

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

## **The Peranakan Museum**

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

This intimate museum possesses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Peranakan objects.

Galleries on three floors illustrate the cultural traditions and the distinctive visual arts of the Peranakans. The museum is currently closed to prepare for its next phase of development.

## **Singapore Art Museum**

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

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

## **Time Passes**

(through 21 Feb 2021)

**On view at City Hall Wing, Level 3, Singtel Special Exhibition Gallery B, National Gallery Singapore**

*Time Passes* is conceived as a corridor of time that reflects on the passage of our days as we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. The works of 13 local artists are presented in the exhibition, most of which are new commissions or adaptations of existing works, touch on modes of caring, living and relating, especially in a time that begets difficulties and uncertainties. The exhibition is part of *Proposals for Novel Ways of Being*, an initiative by the Singapore Art Museum and the National Gallery Singapore in partnership with 10 other local art institutions, independent art spaces and art collectives.

## **STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery**

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

## **Opening hours:**

**Mon to Fri: 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, Sat: 9:00 am – 6:00**

**pm, Sun: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm**

**Closed Public Holidays**

**FOM guided tours: Thurs 11:30 am, Sat & Sun 2:00 pm**

**Please refer to STPI's website at [www.stpi.com.sg](http://www.stpi.com.sg) for STPI's public programmes and Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, French and special evening tours.**



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

## **Annual Special Exhibition: Shaping Visions** (through 15 Nov)

This year's annual exhibition looks close to home with its selection of five extraordinary artists in Singapore: the late master of Chinese ink Chua Ek Kay; pioneering collage artist Goh Beng Kwan; leading sculptor Han Sai Por; seminal performance artist Amanda Heng; and renowned watercolour painter Ong Kim Seng. *Shaping Visions* marks the first time these distinguished practitioners – who have each been awarded The Cultural Medallion, the nation's highest honour for arts and culture practitioners – exhibit together, in an ode to their immense artistic contributions.

*Shaping Visions* unites each artist's distinct depictions of natural and built environments, shedding light on personal reflections of and postures towards an evolving society. By bringing together existing, signature pieces as well as print-based works produced during their respective residencies at STPI, the comprehensive exhibition showcases each artist's trail-blazing style and expert command of media and materials.

## **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 to Sun 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Closed on Mondays**

**FOM guided tours: Tues to Fri 2:00 pm (English)**

**FOM Special exhibition guided tours: 10:30am on Fridays in English**

Built in 1902, this double-storey villa was the nerve centre of Dr Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. 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.*



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**School of Art, Design  
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College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

# MA in Museum Studies & Curatorial Practices

Intake in August 2021

Young and research-intensive, Nanyang Technological University (NTU Singapore) is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> globally. It is also placed 1<sup>st</sup> among the world's best young universities. The School of Art, Design and Media (established in 2005) is already ranked 30<sup>th</sup> globally and 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 2021 for August 2021 intake

Visit [blogs.ntu.edu.sg/mscp](https://blogs.ntu.edu.sg/mscp) & [www.adm.ntu.edu.sg/MA](https://www.adm.ntu.edu.sg/MA) for more information.



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