

# PASSAGE

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUMS SINGAPORE

2 0 2 2  
ISSUE II

*Celebrating the Year of the*  
**TIGER**



## TIPU'S TIGER

REBEL SULTAN'S  
MACABRE MASCOT

## TIGER TALES

BIG CAT FABLES  
FROM ASIA

## TIGERS GET A ROYAL RECEPTION

PRINCE ENCHANTS KINGS  
WITH TIGERS



art  
history  
culture  
people

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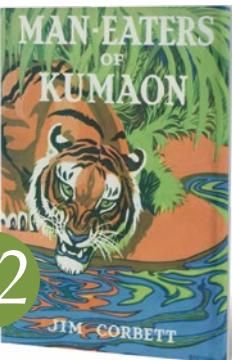
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(Boschbrand) Forest Fire by Raden Saleh, 1849. Read about the Javanese prince who became the "King's Painter" on page 2. Image courtesy of the National Gallery Singapore.

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### PASSAGE

A publication of Friends of the Museums Singapore

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MCI (P) 086/12/2021 ISSN 1793-8619



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## President's Blog

**V**olunteerism is a strange thing. It grows on you. And it's that spirit, I like to call it the FOM spirit of passion and generous sharing, that keeps us going and sets us apart from the rest.

FOM was once again honoured by the National Heritage Board (NHB) at the annual Patron of Heritage Awards (POHA) 2020 as a Supporter in November last year. Out of the over 42 Supporter awardees, FOM was the only society so-recognised for contributions that have, in the words of the NHB, "helped ensure that important heritage and cultural work - the glue which binds us together - continues to flourish in these unprecedented times". Thank you NHB. This gesture warms our collective heart.

In February, it was time again to welcome our new members. With the restrictions of the last two years, we found that we had a backlog of members to meet! Our first in-person New Member Welcome was held at SYSNMH, albeit with mandatory reduced attendance numbers. I must say it is a pleasure to be able to meet and greet our newest members and induct them so-to-speak into the FOM family. More about this in Darlene's story on page 38. To all new members, a warm welcome; may you find expression for your passion and many lifelong friends from the FOM community.

A note to all volunteers, mark your diaries – Volunteer Appreciation Morning (VAM) happens on 12 April and do we have something special in store for you! **Batik & Bling** is just the stuff to get us all excited. I'll keep the venue a secret for now. Keep a look-out for more information. We'll also be preparing long-service pins again so if you'll be getting one, we hope to see you then.



From left: Office Administrator Katherine Lim, Vice-President Susan Fong, past President Garima Lalwani and former Advertising Manager Michelle Foo, with the award.

As we marked the coming of "spring" on 1 February and the beginning of the Lunar New Year of the Water Tiger, I do hope you enjoy this tiger-themed bumper issue of PASSAGE and the fascinating and endearing stories around tigers. They remind us of just how magnificent an animal the tiger is and whose positives and qualities will help us navigate the year.



Millie Phuah  
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SAVE THE DATE  
FOR A BATIK AND BLING VAM  
ON 12 APRIL 2022.

# Tigers get a royal reception

**TIM CLARK** TELLS THE TALE  
OF THE JAVANESE PRINCE WHO  
BECAME THE KING'S PAINTER

Boschbrand (Forest Fire) by Raden Saleh, 1849.  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore.  
Adopted by Yong Hon Kong Foundation

**I**t seems appropriate as we celebrate the passage of time from Year of the Ox to Year of the Tiger that we lead with a painting that features both creatures. *Forest Fire* was painted in 1849 by Raden Saleh and presented to Willem III, King of the Netherlands. This was the largest canvas he had ever painted, measuring 3m by 3.96m. It earned him the title 'King's Painter', and marked the zenith of his remarkable career.

#### THE PRINCE FROM ASIA

Born in 1811 into an aristocratic Javanese family (his cousin was Regent of Semarang), Raden Saleh showed promise as an artist and was tutored in his early teens by Antoine Payen, a Belgian artist, who was commissioned to paint the landscapes of Java. At the age of 18, Raden Saleh managed to work his passage on a ship to Antwerp by teaching Malay to an official along the way.

Soon after his arrival in the Netherlands in 1829, he was introduced to King Willem I, who granted him a generous allowance to pursue his studies. With the appellation Prince from Asia, he was admitted to the highest social circles and gained commissions to paint the portraits of three successive Governor Generals of the Dutch East Indies.

He made seascapes come to life on canvas, drawing on his experience of the rough seas he must have experienced on his voyage around Africa. He also painted Dutch landscapes, including the novelty of snow scenes. Then he arrived at a pivotal moment in his development as an artist when he met and befriended the zoo director and animal trainer Henri Martin in 1836.



(top)  
*Wounded Lion* by Raden Saleh, circa 1838.  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

(bottom left)  
*Portrait of Raden Saleh dressed as a Javanese Prince*,  
by Karl Bahr, 1841. Courtesy of Latvian National  
Museum of Art.

(bottom right)  
*Isaac van Amburgh and his Animals* by  
Edwin Landseer, 1839. Courtesy of the Royal Collection  
Trust ©Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2022.

#### DRAWN TO FEROCIOUS FELINES

Through this connection, Raden Saleh was able to study lions and tigers up close and learn how to convey their ferocity on canvas. These studies could then be applied to exotic compositions dramatising animals hunting or being hunted. To pander to the popularity of Orientalism in art, he depicted lions in African and the Middle Eastern settings, despite never having visited these regions. Tigers he depicted in Javanese settings, which he was uniquely qualified to do, recalling and spicing up the landscapes of his youth.

Being regarded as an exotic Prince opened doors for Raden Saleh wherever he went. He became a lifelong friend of Ernst II, Duke of Coburg whose brother was Prince Albert. Consequently, in 1845 he was presented to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, along with her uncle King Leopold of the Belgians. And we may speculate that the conversation Raden Saleh might have had with Queen Victoria would likely have turned to the subject of tigers.

Queen Victoria, though a dog lover, was also a big fan of big cats. Before her marriage she forsook the opera house (much to the dismay of Covent Garden) in favour of the Drury Lane Theatre where a lion and tiger tamer performed daring feats on stage. The young queen (then aged 19) saw the performance seven times and insisted on going backstage to meet Isaac van Amburgh the Brute Tamer extraordinaire. So enthralled was she by the spectacle that she ordered her favourite artist, Edwin Landseer, to immortalise this marvel of man and beast. The two large paintings he produced featuring lions and tigers can still be seen in the Royal Collection.



## TEMPTING KINGS WITH TIGERS

After meeting Queen Victoria, Raden Saleh returned to Paris where his friend Horace Vernet, the king's appointed history painter, encouraged him to paint more Orientalist animal fights and hunts set in Java. Two of his paintings featuring tigers were purchased by the French King Louis Philippe. And in 1847 he presented the Dutch King Willem II with a painting entitled *Attack of Hungry Tigers* for which he received a knighthood. When this king died in 1849, he was succeeded by his son, Willem III, and the following year Raden Saleh presented him with a painting of African buffalo being attacked by lions, as well as his grandest masterpiece *Forest Fire*, featuring tigers torn between their fiercest instincts, to fight or to flee.

After 23 years in Europe, Raden Saleh returned to his native Java in 1852. He spent the following 23 years in his homeland painting portraits of important people and reverted to his first love of capturing the Javanese landscape. Two such examples are the dramatic views of Mount Merapi erupting in 1865, which can be seen at Singapore's National Gallery.

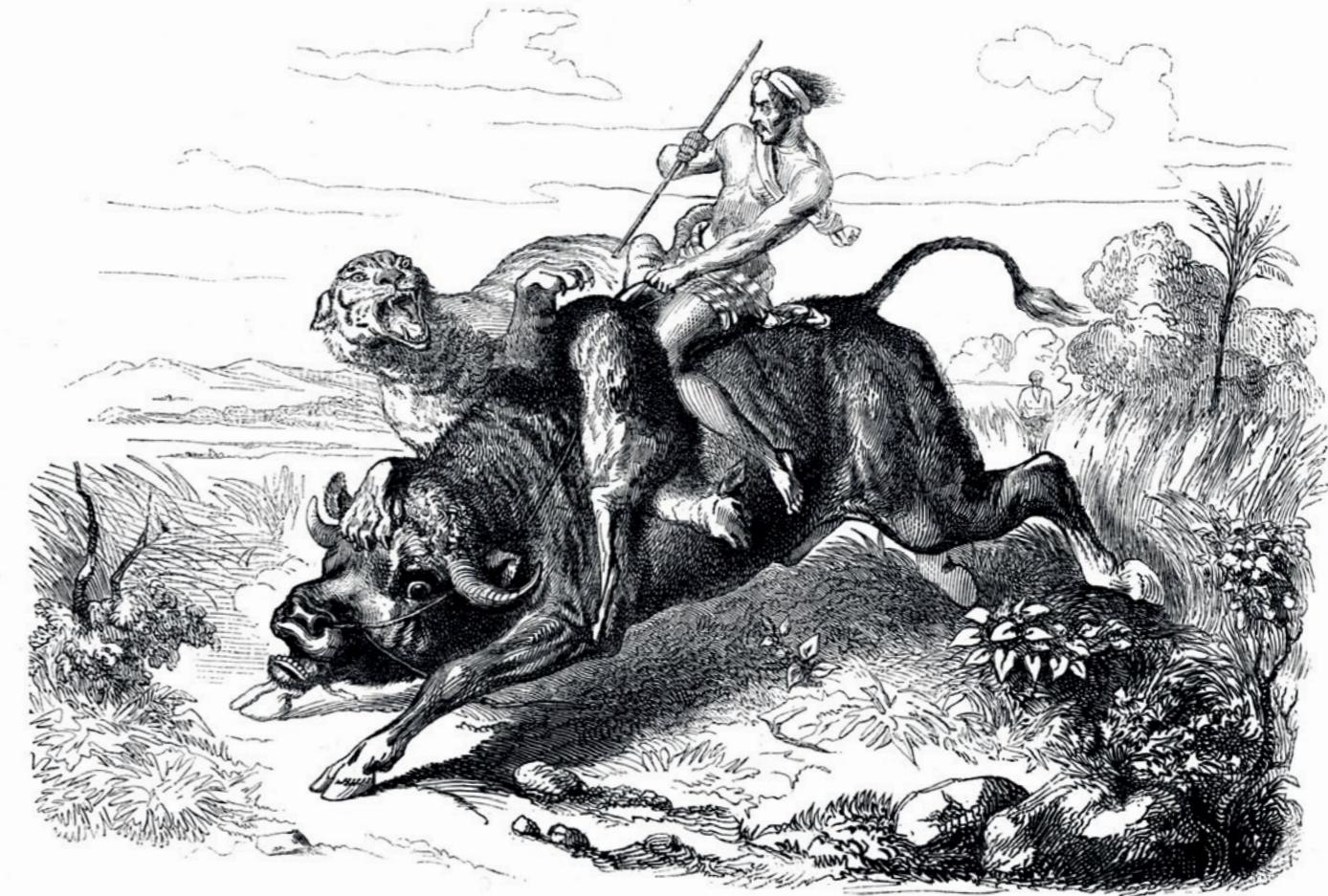
## KEEPING ROYAL CONNECTIONS

During this time Raden Saleh kept in touch with his friends in Europe, including Ernst, Duke of Coburg, and he continued to send paintings to his admirers there. In 1869 three emperors: Napoleon III Emperor of France, Wilhelm I

Emperor of Germany and Franz Joseph Emperor of Austria acquired Raden Saleh's paintings featuring lions and tigers. A year later the Emperors of Germany and France were at war, leading to the capture of Napoleon III who was deposed and, like his predecessor King Louis Philippe, eventually died in exile in England.

In 1875 Raden Saleh and his wife (whom he married eight years earlier) arrived in Marseilles and spent the next three years touring France, Italy and Germany. Their voyage was made shorter and more comfortable by the opening of the Suez Canal. And they were warmly welcomed by royal friends in the Netherlands and Germany. But the genre of painting Romantic Orientalist scenes, for which Raden Saleh was once so admired, was no longer in vogue. Two years after returning to Java, Raden Saleh died, followed a few months later by the death of his wife in 1880.

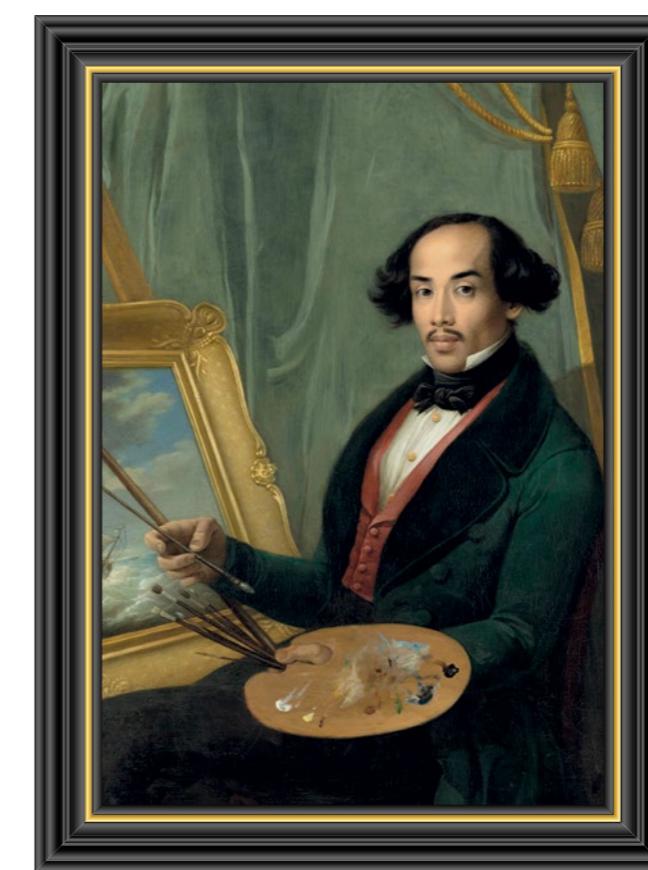
When President Sukarno's government felt the need for national heroes to celebrate the new republic, Raden Saleh appeared to be a deserving candidate. An inauguration ceremony was held at his tomb in 1953, and the Minister of Education gave a speech lauding him, not just as an artist but also as a nationalist, citing a very questionable symbolic interpretation of his paintings to support the claim that he sympathised with the struggle against colonial rule. Understandably, an observer with a political agenda might be tempted to insinuate that his painting of a lion, the national animal of the Netherlands, depicted with a broken



Wood engraving based on a painting Deer hunt on Isle of Java by Raden Saleh, purchased by King Louis Philippe for 3,000 francs in 1847. From L'illustration, published by ANU Press.



Fighting Tigers by Raden Saleh, presented to Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria in 1870. Courtesy of ©Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Photo: Johannes Stoll.



Portrait of Raden Saleh by Friedrich Carl Albert Schreuel. Courtesy of Rijksmuseum, The Netherlands.

spear in its side, was an attack on the colonising Dutch. However, that would seem to ignore the more convincing evidence, that Raden Saleh was forever grateful to the Netherlands and felt as at home in Europe as he did in Java. As he himself wrote:

*"Between these two worlds my heart is split. And I feel urged to offer both sides my loving thanks".*

The last word on tigers and their symbolic meaning belongs to Raffles, who wrote the following extracts about royal entertainment in his History of Java. "A favourite and national spectacle is the combat between the buffalo and the tiger. It seldom fails that the buffalo is triumphant, and one buffalo has been known to destroy several full-grown tigers in succession. In these entertainments the Javans accustomed to compare the buffalo to the Javan and the tiger to the European, and it may be readily imagined with what eagerness they look to the success of the former."

Given the choice, surely Raden Saleh would have identified with the tiger, rather than the buffalo. After all, like the tiger, this princely artist was always very well-received by royalty. P

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**TIM CLARK** is a semi-retired NTU lecturer. He is a docent at the National Gallery Singapore.

# Tigers about the House

**DARLENE KASTEN** HUNTS FOR ELUSIVE TIGERS IN THE GALLERIES OF THE ACM

Photos courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

The title of Ang Lee's masterpiece "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" is a literal translation of the Chinese idiom "臥虎藏龍" which describes a place or situation that is full of unnoticed masters. Much like the film's idiomatic subjects, tigers prowling the galleries at the Asian Civilisations Museum are easily unnoticed and overlooked. But if you examine the artefacts carefully, you'll spot them crouching or hiding on every floor.

## Guangong

For starters, see the rare 17<sup>th</sup> century Dehua porcelain figure of a Daoist deity in the Ceramics gallery on the museum's top floor. The figure, dressed as a Chinese scholar holding a tablet in his hands, is seated on a horse-shoe armchair. And do you see the tiger's visage poking out beneath the scholar's two flat-headed shoes? He is sitting on a tiger skin that's draped over the armchair and footstool with scrolled feet. Thought to represent Wen Chang, the Daoist God of Literature, an alternative theory is that he is Guangong, the God of War.

Guangong is more frequently shown standing on a tiger, or with a tiger's face emblazoned on his chest like the one on the larger than life-sized painted wooden figure in the Ancient Religions gallery downstairs. Before being deified as a guardian in the Ming Dynasty, a living Guangong swore brotherhood to the famous Five Tiger Generals of the Kingdom of Shu during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 CE) in China and gained literary fame as one of the heroes in the classic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

As the God of War, he stands against evil and is the ultimate symbol for military power. Representing unquestioned loyalty, mutual support, and social solidarity, Guangong is often found guarding shrines, temples, homes and even police stations. Because of the peace he ensures, Guangong is also one of the Five Wealth Gods in China. As the symbol of honesty and integrity, he is often displayed by businesses as a sign of trustworthiness and as a defender of their good name. And you'll usually find tigers in his proximity.



Seated figure of Guangong with a tiger's face emblazoned on his chest. Gift of Mr Seah Kim Joo.



Javanese Necklace

Along with the amulet with a real tiger's tooth (read Tim Clark's story 'Tiger Power' on page 22) in the museum's Jewellery gallery, there is another covert tiger-related artefact nearby. It is a magnificent Javanese gold necklace with mango-shaped pendants resembling tiger claws. Tiger claws - whether real or fashioned from gold - belonging to noble and upper class men in the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit period (11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century CE) on Java were worn for protection and to instill courage by granting the wearer the defensive attributes of the ferocious tiger.

The use of tiger claws as symbols of power and protection is an ancient motif found on amulets and jewellery in India. The design resembles a child's *vyaghcharanakha* necklace described in early Sanskrit literature as "a row of crooked tiger claws fitted with gold and appearing to proclaim his natural glory of warrior birth." The tiger claw form was introduced centuries ago to the region through trade with India, along with Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hindu culture, tigers are sacred.

Lord Shiva is often seen clad in tiger skin or sitting on a slain tiger, signifying his victory over every force. Gold became emblematic of divine power and status, playing a central role in religious and social rites. Since Majapahit kings were considered divinely descended, they were decked from head to toe with gold and jewels like temple gods.

Javanese gold necklace with tiger claw motif pendants. Gift of Mr and Mrs Andy Ng.



Shiva wearing a tiger skin and dancing before Parvati, surrounded by Devas, (not currently on display).

## Knife with Silver Sheath

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century knife with silver sheath in the Ancestors and Rituals gallery on the museum's second floor has a real tiger canine tooth as a handle. A powerful amulet, the tiger tooth is believed to have protective qualities for its owner, acting as a talisman against seen and unseen evils. The knife was made by Chinese, Shan or other hilltribe craftsmen living in the highlands of southwest China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma where the tiger is native although today, severely endangered and in some areas even functionally extinct.

Silver is the most valued currency for the hilltribes in northern Thailand, making possessions of silver important status symbols as well as displays of wealth. Silver known as "baw", was traditionally mined from the northern Shan states, but later silver was obtained through trade in the form of Indian and Burmese coins. Tribal Yao and Hmong metalsmiths were known to melt these coins down to make silver jewellery and other adornments. The Karen people, who live in Burma and northern Thailand, are also known for their silver work especially in their antique silver swords. They used a range of Shan silver items too including knives which they sometimes traded with other hilltribe communities.



Silver knife with a tiger tooth handle.

## Tibetan Cabinet

Look closely at one of the doors on the Tibetan Cabinet in the Ancient Religions gallery and you'll spot a tiger skin draped over a white equine among flaming skulls, skeletons, and eyeballs belonging to destroyed demons. This chest was used in the worship of wrathful deities and is literally covered with horrific decorations. The flayed skins and body parts, as well as the other offerings, are highly symbolic in nature and require extensive training and meditation to fully appreciate.

Many deities, particularly those of wrathful or warlike nature, are often depicted riding the tiger, which symbolises fearlessness and an indomitable will. In Tantric Buddhism, the tiger skin represents the transmutation of anger into wisdom and insight. In particular, the tiger skin symbolizes the transmuted "vajra-anger" of the wrathful deity, offering protection to the meditator from outside harm or spiritual interference. But beware: it was understood that the ordinary person would be filled with erroneous thoughts if they were to encounter objects such as this cabinet outside their proper ritual context. That is the reason they were intended for the eyes of trained Tibetan Buddhist initiates only.

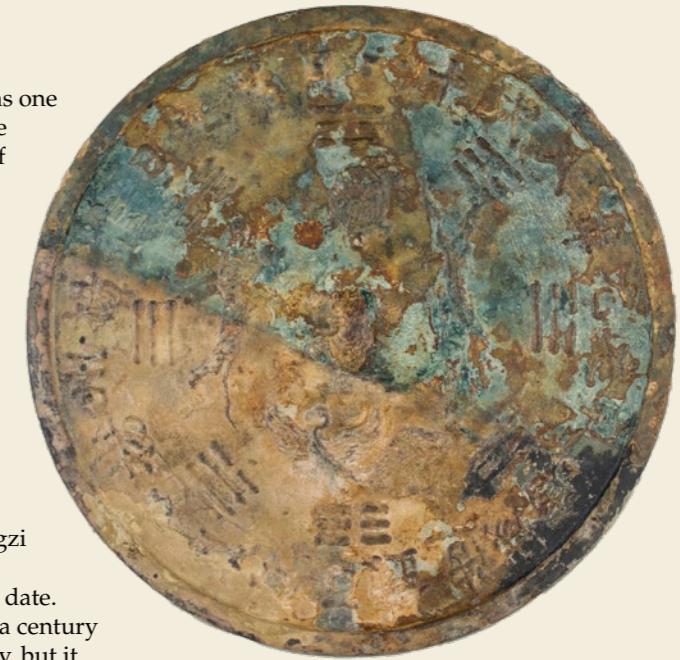


A cabinet shrine from Tibet with symbolic tiger skin.

## Tang Bronze Mirror

The White Tiger of the West is hiding behind centuries of patina as one of the four mythical creatures on a celebrated bronze mirror in the Tang Shipwreck gallery on the ground floor. The Azure Dragon of the East, Vermillion Bird of the South, White Tiger of the West, and Black Turtle of the North signify the four cardinal directions and were believed to offer protection from evil spirits and other dangers. They are connected with various forms of Chinese mysticism, including astrology, Daoism, *feng shui* and Wu Xing (the Theory of the Five Elements). The White Tiger represents the element of metal, the season autumn, the planet Venus and the virtue of righteousness.

The bronze mirror, the largest of several found in the shipwreck, is the only known example of a legendary type of mirror called "Heart of the Yangzi River", which prior to the ship's discovery was only recorded in texts. These mirrors were said to be cast aboard boats moored in the middle of China's Yangzi River on auspicious days divined by Daoist priests, such as the summer solstice. The mirror in our gallery gives us its auspicious date. An inscription states that it was cast on 3 January 759 CE, almost a century before the ship sailed. It's not often that a legend becomes a reality, but it certainly did with this amazing discovery.



Heart of the Yangzi River bronze mirror with cosmological decorations including the White Tiger of the West. Tang Shipwreck Collection.



Namban lacquer chest with tiger decoration.

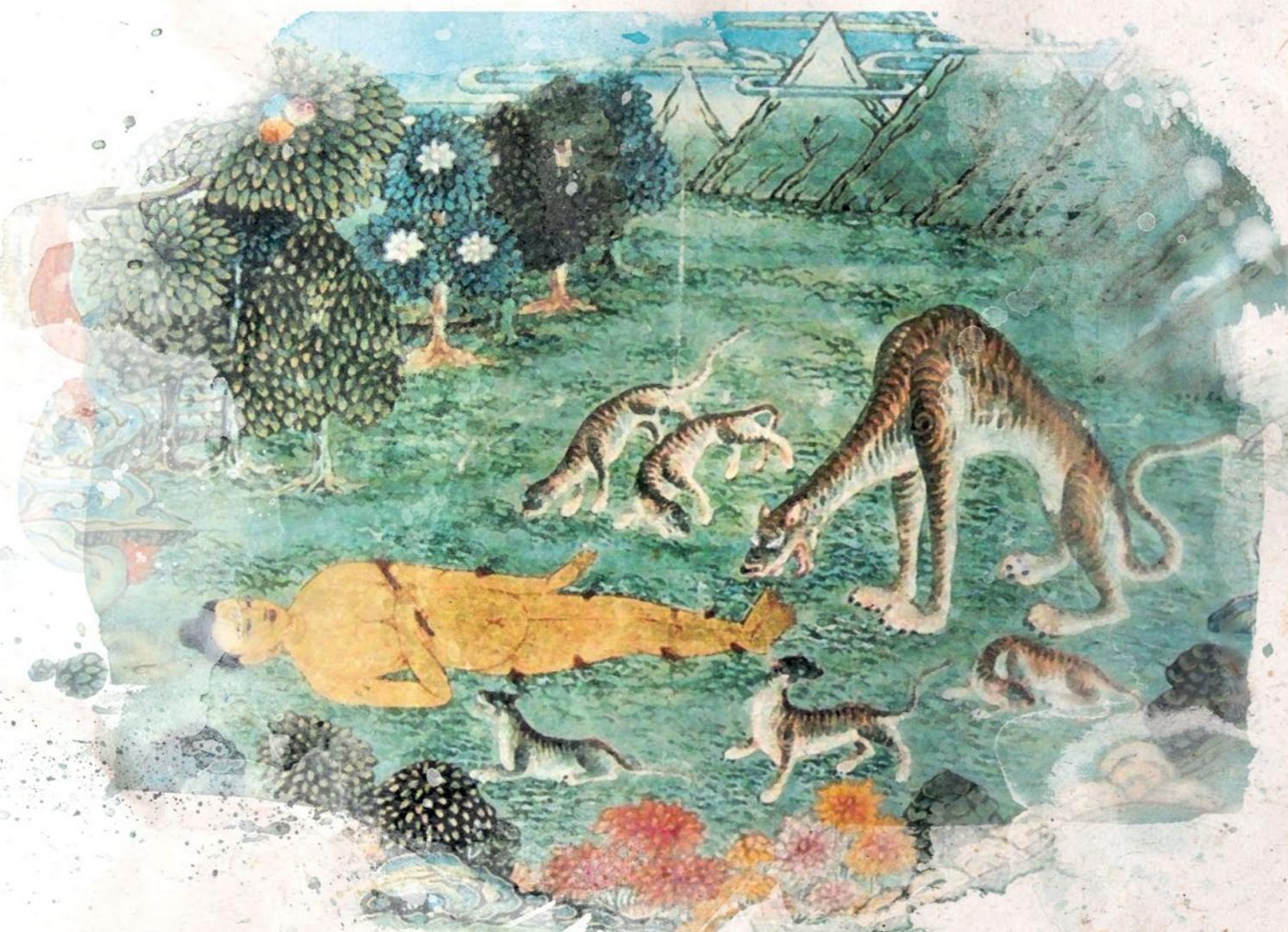
## Japanese Chest

Crouching tigers are up front in the large 17th century rectangular lacquer chest in the Maritime Trade gallery. The chest is an example of *namban* furniture made in Japan for export to Europe during the Edo period, a 250 year period that spans the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Namban* means "southern Barbarians" and it was a term used by the Japanese to refer to foreigners who came to Japan by sea from the south. The chest's lacquer exterior makes it watertight and impenetrable, perfectly suited to hold clothing and bedding aboard Portuguese trade ships.

Cartouche decorations feature landscapes with real and mythological animals, including a family of three tigers, made using inlaid wood, mother of pearl and *maki-e*, lacquer decoration sprinkled with metallic powders such as gold and silver. The cartouches are surrounded by lacquer decorated with another unusual material, shaved ray denticles.

Although not native to the islands of Japan, tigers are frequently depicted in Japanese arts as a symbol of courage and personal strength. In medieval Japan the tiger was an emblem of the samurai and can be found on their armour as frightening war masks, or cast on iron helmets or sword fittings. Tigers are also commonly used as tattoo designs, emblazoned on the bodies of the Japan's infamous criminal sect, the Yakuza. They in turn were inspired by Kabuki actors featured in Edo woodblock prints by masters such as Utagawa Kunisada. In one of Kunisada's print series, *A Modern Water Margin*, he shows the celebrated actor Takemon no Torazo demonstrating his strength by hefting a heavy weight with bulging tiger-tattooed arms. The design is a reference to the word "tiger" (*tora*) in his personal name.

There may be other tigers in the ACM crouching and hiding among the artefacts, and I invite you to track them down yourself to commemorate the Year of the Tiger. Enjoy the hunt! P



*Scene from the Mahasattva Jataka; Prince Mahasattva offering himself to the tigress and her cubs; source unknown.*

# Once upon a time there was a tiger...

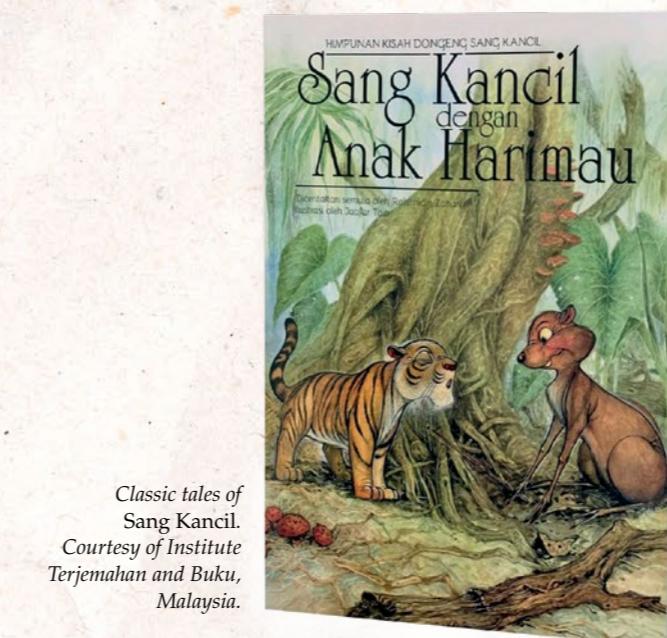
PATRICIA BJAALAND WELCH

REGALES TIGER FOLK TALES AND FABLES

**D**id a dream about tigers cause William Blake to pen the famous lines “Tyger, tyger, burning bright, in the forests of the night” or sipping a cup of tea inspire Judith Kerr to write the children’s classic *The Tiger who came to Tea*? Why is it that tigers star in so many stories, folk tales, poems, and proverbs? And why do tigers figure in so many roles ranging from a man-eater to the jungle fool easily gulled by smart little hares, foxes, or mouse-deer? Let me share some of my favourite tiger tales with you.

## CRUCHING TIGER, CRAFTY MOUSE-DEER

The Sumatran mouse-deer is a tiny little creature who lives in tropical forests or mangrove thickets. In twenty-odd Malay folk tales, he is known as Sang Kancil and is quite a trickster. In one story, he decides to teach a ruffian tiger a lesson and sends a messenger to tell him that Sang Kancil wants to challenge him to a fight and to meet him under a certain big tree in the forest later that afternoon. Tiger willingly accepts, confident that the mouse-deer will be no challenge for him at all. But when he arrives at the tree, he finds Sang Kancil at its base staring up into the branches. “What are you looking at?” he asks Sang Kancil. “Quiet! Last night I had a dream that an owl told me that the big round thing up there can give me power, but it’s too high and I can’t reach it.” “Out of my way,” roars the tiger, at which the little mouse-deer pretends to be scared and runs away. Meanwhile, the tiger races up the tree and stabs the ‘big round thing’ with its sharp claws. Down tumble both the tiger and the ball, which is, of course, a beehive! And you’d better believe that those were some very angry bees when they realised their home had been destroyed.



*Classic tales of Sang Kancil.  
Courtesy of Institute Terjemahan and Buku, Malaysia.*

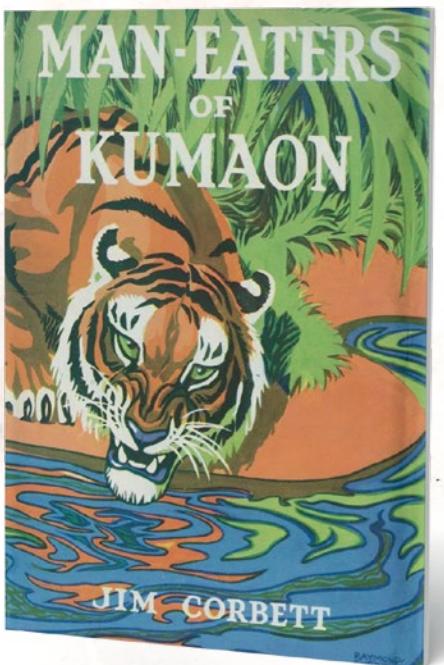
*(right)  
Kashiwade no Omi Hatebe (膳臣巴提便), usually known as Hadesu, fighting the tiger that killed his daughter, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi.*





(top left)  
One of the most popular puppets of Burma: the tiger; author's collection.

(top right)  
Ink painting of a Zen monk and a tiger, by artist Shi Ko.



*Man-eaters of Kumaon* by Jim Corbett.

### TRUSTING TIGER, CRAFTY RABBIT

In Burma, the mouse-deer is replaced with a naughty but clever rabbit who plays some very mean tricks on the tiger, who is depicted as a good-natured, trusting old fool. First the rabbit invites him to go reap straw for thatch, but spends the morning sleeping in the sun and eating the tiger's lunch while the tiger works in the field. When it's time to return home, the rabbit complains that he is feverish from sleeping in the sun and can't walk so the good-natured tiger agrees to carry him on his back, but after a few miles, the rabbit sets fire to the thatch also riding on the tiger's back. Now the tiger's back is badly burnt and covered with blisters. Rabbit tells him the best thing for burns is to rub against an old tree stump. The tiger, being a trusting old fool does just that, with the result that his blisters tear open and bleed. "You treacherous rabbit," he growls, "Now I'm going to kill you!" "Why I've never seen you before," says the rabbit to the tiger, who being a trusting old thing, thought that it was another rabbit and apologises for his mistake. "No problem," says the rabbit. "I have lots of brothers and sisters and cousins who all look like me." And he takes off. Tiger stumbles towards home along the path but finds Rabbit sitting innocently by the wayside. "You can't escape me this time!" roars Tiger. "I don't know you," says Rabbit. "You must be mistaking me for one of my many relations." Tiger apologises again and turns to continue home, but Rabbit stops him. "Poor you," he says, "I see your back is covered with sores. Best thing for that is to go to the wishing well over there and wish them away." "Please take me to the well," begs Tiger. Once there, Rabbit instructs the tiger, "Look down, and wish aloud." As Tiger leans forward and looks down, Rabbit gives him a hard push. Tiger falls into the well and is drowned.

It's hard to figure out the moral lesson this tale teaches aside from not letting your better judgment make a fool of you. My Burmese acquaintances find it hilarious. Given that tigers are often associated with military prowess, I suspect its recent popularity might be politically founded.

### PRINCELY TIGER FOOD

Tigers also fare poorly in Japanese folk tales, where they are often slain by warriors. The best known is the tale of Hadesu (Kashiwade no Omi) who is sent to Korea in 545 CE with his family to discover, after a night spent on a stormy beach in a snow storm, that one of his children has disappeared. When the snow finally melts, Hadesu follows the tiger's tracks and thrusts his sword through the tiger's tongue, killing him.

We have to turn to a different world to find a tiger tale that teaches compassion, not revenge. One of the most popular *jātaka* tales (stories of the Buddha's previous lives) is the *Mahasattva Jātaka*. The story relates how three princely brothers spot a starving tigress with her cubs in the forest where they have gone on a hunting expedition. Prince Mahasattva sends his brothers to search for food for the family although he knows there is no game in the forest, so he can offer himself as their meal without his brothers stopping him. When the tigress refuses to kill him, he climbs a cliff, cuts open his own neck and throws himself off the cliff. The tiger family is saved.

My final story is both Buddhist and Japanese in origin. A Buddhist monk stumbles upon a very hungry and aggressive tiger while out on a walk. Terrified, he flees, but the tiger races after him. Coming to the edge of a steep cliff that drops into a rocky ravine, the monk sees no escape other than inching himself over the edge while clinging onto a vine trailing from the rocks. But just as he begins to believe that he is safe, he notices two small mice, one black and one white, gnawing on the vine. He turns his head and

there, within reach, is a beautiful, perfect red strawberry. Unable to resist, he holds onto the vine with one hand, while reaching for the strawberry with the other. As he bites into it, he is heard to exclaim, "How sweet this beautiful strawberry is." And in that moment, he thought life was bliss. Now, is the moral of this Zen Buddhist tale about seizing happiness no matter what the circumstances are, or about how we foolishly keep grasping for momentary pleasures whatever the cost?

### RIDDLE ME THIS

Far less intellectually challenging is the tiger version of a riddle that seems to exist in most cultures by the simple exchange of key players (the usual being a bag of grain, a chicken and a fox). The tiger version asks how a mother tiger with three cubs, two gentle but one very aggressive, can transfer them across a deep stream (being able to carry only one cub at a time by the scruff of its neck) without leaving the aggressive one alone with a gentler sibling. P

**PATRICIA BJAALAND WELCH** is a long-time ACM docent and story-collector. The answer to the riddle is to carry the naughty cub over first, return for a second cub, but once deposited take the naughty cub back over the river, leaving it alone while the second gentle cub is ferried over to join its sibling. Then mom can return in peace of mind to fetch the last cub.

# TIGER BALM KING

**DAWN MARIE LEE** MARVELS AT THE  
TRAILBLAZING TYCOON, AW BOON HAW AND  
HIS EMPIRE BUILT ON "TIGER OIL"



A portrait of the Tiger Balm King, Aw Boon Haw. His name means "gentle tiger". 1920s-1930s. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

**O**n a hot, sultry afternoon in a sleepy village, a loud animal roar sent alarmed villagers scurrying out of their homes. Wild tigers were rare in Singapore by the 1920s, but they still made the occasional appearance.

Out of nowhere, hurtling down the dusty dirt road, a metal monster appeared. It had the head of a fierce tiger with fangs bared, attached to a bright orange body painted with bold stripes. When it came to a halt, a well-dressed, bespectacled gentleman emerged, his shiny sharkskin suit gleaming in the sunshine. Without any airs, he excitedly gestured for the startled villagers to gather round and handed out free jars of his "magic" potion - Tiger Balm.

#### THE GENTLE TIGER'S ROCKY START

Born in 1882 in colonial Burma, Aw Boon Haw was the second of three sons. His father, a Chinese herbalist of Hakka descent, founded a medicinal shop in Rangoon called Eng Aun Tong (Hall of Everlasting Peace) in 1870. He named his second son Boon Haw, which means "gentle tiger".

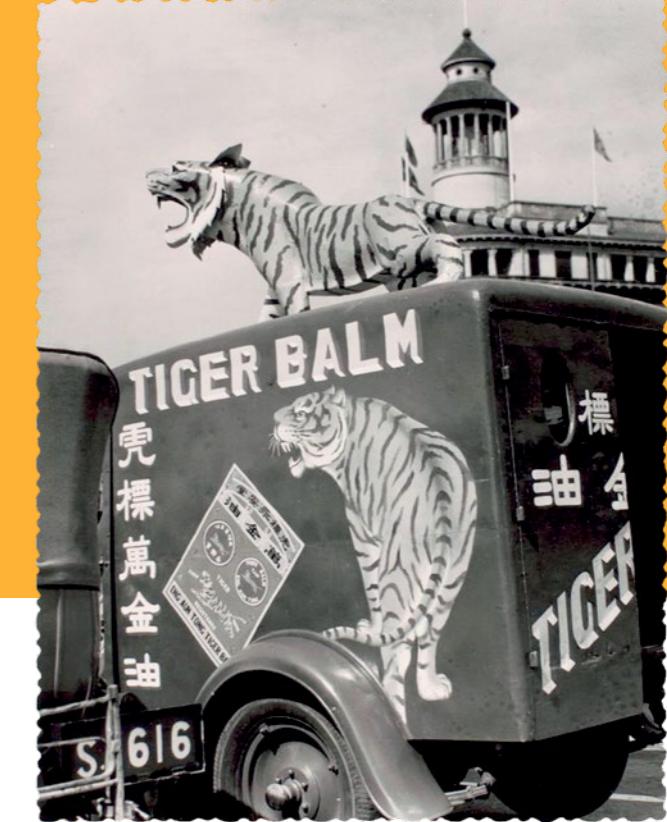
The "gentle tiger" proved to be quite the opposite in his youth. He skipped school, roamed the streets and got into fights. The last straw came when he was expelled for beating up a teacher, so his father packed him off to his ancestral village in China to be raised by an uncle. In 1908, when his father passed away, Aw returned to Rangoon to run the family business with his younger brother Boon Par, the "gentle leopard", who had trained as a herbalist.

#### A PIONEER OF MASS MEDICINE

In those days, medicine was unaffordable for the masses, especially for labourers who did hard, manual work for a pittance. They visited doctors only when they were seriously ill or dying. There was no cheap remedy to soothe their daily aches and pains. Aw realised this and



A 1920s ad for Tiger Balm. Aw was a marketing genius who used clever and widespread advertising. In this poster, cherubic infants of various skin tones cuddle up to a tiger.



A Tiger Balm van, 1937. Photo from the collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

genuinely wanted to make an impact on the lives of the poor – a belief he continued to act on throughout his life.

The Aw brothers concocted a herbal ointment based on their father's recipe for Ban Kim Ewe (Ten Thousand Golden Oil). It eased everything from muscle sprains to migraines. Aw was the first to use mass production to manufacture and distribute his balm as widely as possible at a very low price so that it would be within the reach of the poor.

He gave out free samples to customers who visited the medicinal hall. He went door to door, leaving samples with shop owners, telling them to pay him half of the profits only if his products sold.

Aw's biographer, Sam King writes in his book, *Tiger Balm King*, "He was ahead of his time. No one was doing what he did. He created colourful posters and display racks to market his product. This was unheard of."

#### MARKETING MAVERICK CREATES TIGER BALM

While Ten Thousand Golden Oil became popular and successful, Aw quickly realised that he had to differentiate his product from others.

He was a pioneer in branding and creative advertising. Drawing inspiration from his own name, he re-named his ointment "Tiger Balm". He made his product labels visually striking with a leaping tiger against a crimson background. He packaged his balm in pocket-sized glass jars and coin-sized metal tins, making them easy to carry around.

The distinctive brand icon of the tiger made Aw's balm stand out. The brand image he created is so strong that even today, over a century later, Tiger Balm's core livery has barely changed.

Aw was an early advocate of consumer research and demand creation. He drove around villages in his distinctive Tiger Car and gave out free samples. He asked for feedback, and had the Tiger Balm logo painted on the walls of the villages he visited.

By 1918, just ten years after his father's death, Aw was among the wealthiest men in Rangoon. But the gentle tiger was restless and went on the hunt for new business.

#### THE TIGER MAKES HIS MARK IN SINGAPORE

In 1926, Aw moved his business headquarters to Singapore and set up shop at 87 Neil Road. His business flourished. By 1927, his company had a turnover of \$10 million. His empire reached its peak in the mid-1930s, covering Thailand, Burma, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Hong Kong and a dozen cities in China.

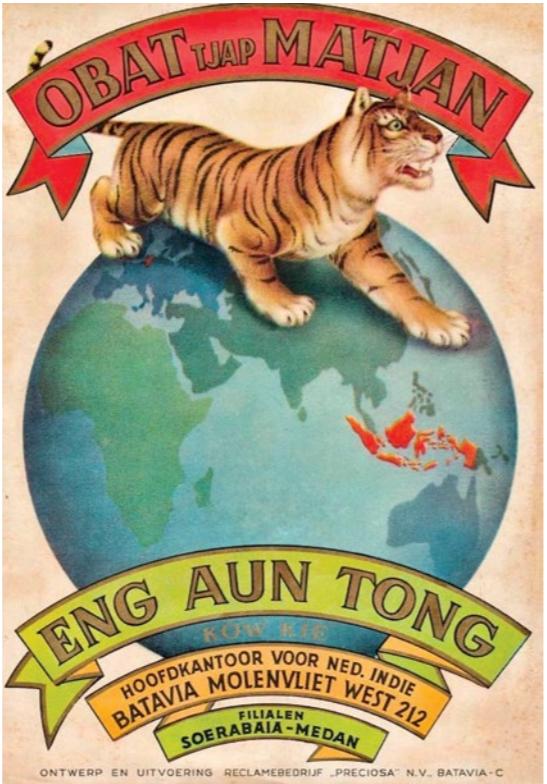
#### THE NEWSPAPER TYCOON

He founded 12 newspapers across the region including the Chinese daily, Sin Chew Jit Poh in Singapore to rival Tan Kah Kee's Nanyang Siang Pau. Aw's daughter, Sally Aw Sian, shared that he paid so much for advertising that he felt it was cheaper to start his own newspapers to promote Tiger Balm. He even "took liberties with re-telling classic stories" to promote his product.

His newspapers ran serialised comic strips featuring Chinese classics such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In one strip, soldiers on their way to battle are seasick as their ship is tossed by turbulent waves. Their leader, a famous general, whips out jars of Tiger Balm to soothe his men. Immediately, they are cured and emerge victorious from battle.



A 1930s poster for Eng Aun Tong Medical Hall and its famous Tiger Balm. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.



A 1930s Tiger Balm ad for the Dutch East Indies where there were branches of Eng Aun Tong in Batavia, Surabaya and Medan.

## SOLID GOLD GLASSES, SPRAWLING VILLAS AND MANSIONS

Aw Boon Haw was the king of promotion and publicity. He often said, "Before you can sell anything, you have to sell yourself." Indeed, his larger-than-life personality helped lay the foundation to make Tiger Balm a remarkable global success. Today, the Haw Par Group's net worth is \$200 million, with Tiger Balm sold in 100 countries.

Sam King shared, "He liked to present the best of himself, always immaculately dressed in the latest fashions. He didn't need glasses, but wore them to look distinguished." Flush with wealth at the height of his success, Aw ordered a pair of glasses in 24 carat gold. The goldsmith explained that pure gold was too soft to fashion into spectacles, so he settled for 18 carat gold instead.



Aw Boon Haw in the 1940s with wide array of Tiger Balm products. Photo courtesy of Journeys Pte Ltd/ Singapore History Consultants.

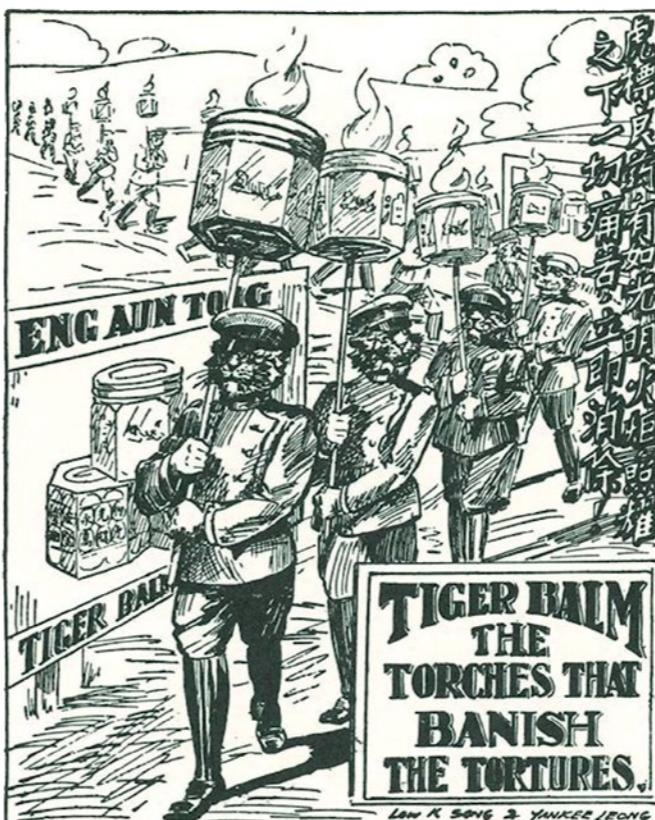
Aw had a large family of four wives, seven sons and two daughters. He built several mansions, including Jade House at 2 Nassim Road, Haw Par Villa in Pasir Panjang for his brother and Haw Par Mansion in Hong Kong. Jade House became his primary residence. Ever the brand promoter, Aw had the words "Tiger Oil House of Jade" emblazoned across the façade and adorned it with a huge tiger's head. Tiger statues flanked the entrance. Jade House was so named because Aw had a massive collection of rare jade, which he allowed the public to view daily despite the fact that it was in his family home. Today, part of the collection can be viewed at the National Museum of Singapore.

In spite of his enormous success and flashes of flamboyance he never forgot his humble beginnings. He often said,

*"I built my empire on five cents and ten cents."*

## THE DOHY WHO INCURRED THE TIGER'S WRATH

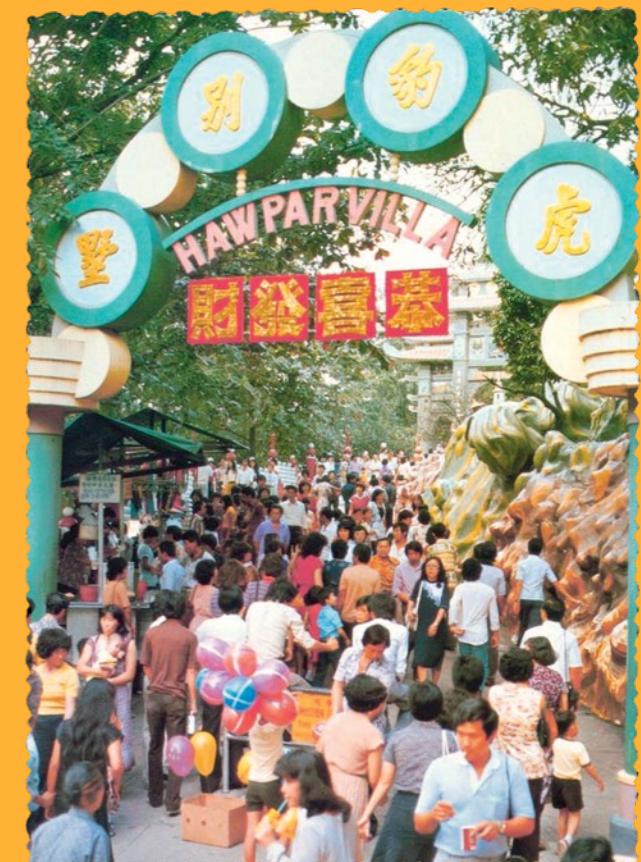
Aw was kind and trusting, but had a certain ruthlessness when people took advantage of his trust. Sally Aw Sian recounted how her father dealt with Ah Weng, a *dhoxy* (laundry man) who had cheated him. The family sent their laundry to a nearby *dhoxy* who dried clothes on a vacant plot of land next to their home. When Aw discovered that the man had been charging him more than other customers, he confronted him. Ah Weng coolly replied that since Aw was so rich, surely, a few cents more meant nothing to him. Greatly angered, Aw took revenge by buying the plot of land and fenced it up so that the *dhoxy* could no longer use it. It was here that Jade House was built.



A 1930s/40s Tiger Balm ad illustrated by famous political cartoonists Low Kah Seng and Yan Kee Leong. One can't help but admire how deftly Aw Boon Haw tailored his ads to adapt to the wartime political climate.



One of the many scenes at Haw Par Villa inspired by Chinese legends. The Monkey God battles the mischievous child deity, Ne Zha. Photo by Alvin Oon.



Large crowds thronged Haw Par Villa in the 1980s. Photo from the collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

## HAW PAR VILLA – A LABOUR OF LOVE

In 1937, Aw built an Art Deco villa with large grounds for his younger brother Boon Par in Pasir Panjang, overlooking the Singapore Strait. Sadly, the villa was badly damaged during World War II and was demolished.

The site was turned into a park and opened to the public. The colourful but strange statues, including bare-chested nymphs and animals with human bodies, enthralled visitors. Vivid dioramas depicted scenes from Chinese folklore and legends such as *Journey to the West*, *Legend of the White Snake* and the *Twenty-Four Filial Pieties*. The scenes reminded visitors of moral values and showed the consequences of doing good and evil. Naturally, the park was also used to promote Tiger Balm and was known as Tiger Balm Gardens.

From 1946 to 1954, Aw spent the last nine years of his life working closely with artisans and contractors to rebuild the park. It was during this period that the infamous Ten Courts of Hell were added. Set in a 60-meter long dragon's tail, it featured ghoulish scenes of sinners being tortured in the afterlife. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Tiger Balm Gardens was a popular attraction, especially for parents who wanted to scare their children into being good!

# TIGER CAR ROARS BACK TO LIFE

**KEVIN WHITE SHARES HIS STORY ABOUT RESTORING THE ICONIC CAR**

**A**w Boon Haw's Tiger Car reflected its owner's flamboyant personality. It had a fierce tiger's head that covered the radiator, two red bulbs placed in its eye sockets and a horn that sounded like a tiger's roar.

The Tiger Car you see at Haw Par Villa today is a 1925 Buick California Hardtop, which to the untrained eye, looks very similar to Aw's original car, a 1927 German NSU.

It was acquired by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) to present a 'faithful re-creation' of the original Tiger Car. And my neighbour Jeya (CEO of Journeys Pte Ltd that manages Haw Par Villa) asked if I could help to restore it.

When I first saw it, the car couldn't move an inch. The wooden-rimmed tyres had completely decayed. The engine seemed seized and the back brakes were locked. A major overhaul was done including installing a modified Land Rover carburetor that offered more reliability and less smoke on starting.

The Tiger Car is now up and running. The next step is for STB to work with the Land Transport Authority to get the car fully registered and roadworthy. It would be great fun to drive this iconic car on the road. I'm sure it will be very popular, especially in the Year of the Tiger!

**KEVIN WHITE** collects vintage items including cars and motorbikes. Check out his collection on Instagram @singaporegarajmahan

Teo Veoh Seng, an artisan who worked at Haw Par Villa for 50 years from 1946 recalled his encounters with Aw. "He didn't act like a big boss but was very friendly and caring, even adorable. If he saw female workers carrying bricks under the hot sun, he would ask them if they wanted to work in his home instead."

## HEART OF GOLD

Aw Boon Haw cared for others up till the very end of his life. When he incorporated his business into Haw Par Brothers in 1932, he built into the company charter that up to 50% of the annual net profits would be donated to charity. The Aw brothers gave US\$55 million to medical facilities and US\$20 million to schools and universities. In 1950, he established the Chung Khiaw Bank to help small businesses with loans. On his birthdays, Aw would invite the poor and elderly to his home for a grand celebration. The "gentle tiger" drew his last breath at the age of 72, but his legacy lives on. □

**DAWN MARIE LEE** is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *PASSAGE*. Like many of her generation, the Ten Courts of Hell gave her childhood nightmares. But she brought her son there anyway.



*Aw's Tiger car was faithfully re-created with a 1925 Buick. Photo courtesy of Journeys Pte Ltd/ Singapore History Consultants.*



*One of Aw's four wives with his Tiger Car in the 1920s.*

## FEATURE

### ISLAND NOTES

# Tiger, tiger, blooming bright

**DARLY FURLONG AND YUSOFF ABDUL LATIFF PAY HOMAGE TO SINGAPORE'S TIGER ORCHIDS**

**W**elcome to the Year of the Tiger! While the fearsome, furry felines no longer roam the island's jungles, there are large "tigers" that still exist here.



*Painting by Yusoff Abdul Latiff.*

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



*Tiger orchid commemorative coin released by the Monetary Authority of Singapore in 2011.*

The Tiger orchid, (*Grammatophyllum speciosum* Blume) the world's largest species of orchid, is native to Singapore and Southeast Asia. These orchids are wild, rambling and grow in large clumps to an impressive height of up to seven meters tall. Tiger orchids are so named because of their striking yellow blooms with maroon spots that remind us of tiger coats. They grow both on the ground (terrestrial) and on trees (epiphytic).

The world's oldest Tiger orchid, well over five meters in diameter, is located at the Singapore Botanical Gardens. It was planted in 1861 by Lawrence Niven, a local nutmeg planter of Scottish descent. He was one of the early designers of the Gardens and was given an Anglo-Malay style bungalow on a hill overlooking the entire site. That bungalow is today known as Burkhill Hall.

*Photo by Ray Chong.*

Tiger orchids bloom only once every two to four years, but they put up an impressive display lasting two to three months each time. Mature plants can weigh more than two tonnes with flowering stalks up to two meters long, each carrying about 40 flowers. Flowers are palm-sized at 10cm wide.

Although native to Singapore, Tiger orchids were presumed nationally extinct by the National Parks Board due to urban development. Luckily, they were re-introduced here in 1999 in an effort to propagate and re-introduce rare and endangered species of native orchids. Thanks to this effort, the first blooms appeared in 2013, more than ten years after they were planted.

You may view Tiger orchids along roads, parks, and in gardens including Holland Road, Sungei Buloh Wetlands, Geylang Park Connector, Pasir Ris Park, Jurong Lake Gardens and Punggol Park. Today, more than 1,000 Tiger orchid plants exist in Singapore.

These orchids are so well-loved that even the Monetary Authority of Singapore issued a commemorative silver coin with its image in 2011.

So let's hope we see more bees in our environment, pollinating these beauties for the future generations to enjoy. □



*Photo by Ray Chong.*

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

# TIGER POWER

**TIM CLARK** DISCOVERS WHY THE PERANAKANS BELIEVED IN TIGERS LONG BEFORE ESSO



A late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of Peranakan children wearing protective amulets. Collection of the Peranakan Museum.

**A**s a child I was aware of the attractive image of the tiger as a metaphor for energy and excitement. Tony the Tiger greeted me each morning on my Frosties cereal box. And the tiger sign enticed motorists into every Esso petrol station. On a family holiday driving across northern Europe in the 1960s I insisted that my father only refuel with Esso, and I learned how to say, "Put a tiger in your tank" in seven languages, including Finnish, which I can still remember: "Pankaa tiikeri tankiin". The world famous slogan was created by a young American copywriter in Chicago in 1959.

This advertising campaign ran worldwide and included, not surprisingly, the new republic and tiger-cub economy of Singapore. Here the tiger held special significance as a (once) native

species. It has long been revered and feared and regarded as an ambivalent symbol of defense as well as danger. And as a defense against evil, the Peranakans certainly believed in its power to protect their families.

## TIGER CLAWS FOR PERANAKAN TOTS

The Chinese Peranakans are a hybrid community descended from Chinese merchants who took local Malay-speaking women as wives. They adhered to many Chinese traditions and spiritual beliefs while embracing local customs, delighting in vibrant colours and spicy food.

The community was mainly involved in commerce and as loyal subjects under British rule they thrived in tandem with Singapore's success as a free port.

However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Singapore grew wealthier, it didn't become healthier. Tropical disease was rife, and children were particularly vulnerable. Being wealthy and privileged did not prevent mortality from diseases whose causes and treatments were as yet unknown.

Raffles himself had five children, four of whom died as infants in the tropics. Plaques on the walls of St Andrew's Cathedral commemorate the premature death of other colonial children. At a time when the role of a mosquito in transmitting disease was a mystery, it is not surprising that evil spirits became the main suspects. So, the Peranakans responded with all the forces they had at their disposal.

It was believed that within the house the family's guardian deities would provide adequate protection. But when leaving home, it was considered prudent, especially for children, to be protected by wearing an amulet. This could take the form of an image of a deity such as Guan Yin or Guang Gong. Or, for those who felt that attack was the best defense, what more ferocious and effective talisman could there be than the claws of a tiger?

The tiger claw amulet or *kuku arimo tangkal* in Baba Malay was previously on display at the Peranakan Museum (TPM) and can now be seen on the top floor of the Asian Civilisations Museum. Tiger claws were believed to ward off black magic and 'unclean' spirits (*barang kotor*) associated with disease. This example is encased in gilt filigree and fashioned into the form of Makaras, mythical sea creatures in Hindu and Buddhist lore believed to ward off evil. When it came to religion, the Peranakans adopted hybrid practices, possibly for "maximum protection".

When I trained as a docent at TPM I was told that one should not describe the Peranakans as superstitious.

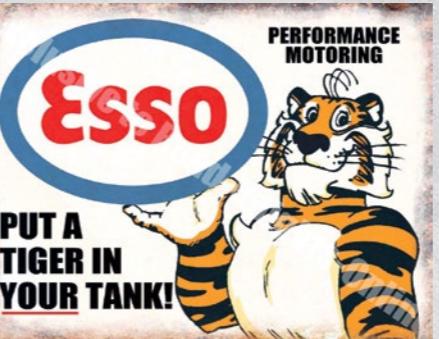
Therefore, I won't. But it is interesting to ponder why some people at some times are more superstitious than others.

Why, for example, were sailors historically more superstitious than soldiers? A life at sea was perilous enough so never whistle lest you invite a gale, and avoid leaving port on a Friday. Why are actors more superstitious than, say, accountants? Never wish an actor luck or mention the Scottish play by name. Why do women tend to be more superstitious than men? Ask any fortune teller who her best customers are. What do these groups have in common? Clearly, they all feel relatively less in control of their destiny and therefore more exposed to the whims of fickle fortune.

I knew a surfer in Africa who risked life and limb every time he went surfing in notoriously shark-infested waters. He wore a shark's tooth pendant around his neck. He didn't regard himself as superstitious. But because it was a gift from his girlfriend who did believe in it, he dared not enter the water without it.

The Peranakans were calculators of risk and they liked to hedge their bets. Perhaps that's why it was not uncommon for a Peranakan family to be multi-faith. Giving offerings to their ancestors and to their chosen Taoist deity at home, while maintaining Buddhist sympathies and attending a Catholic church on Sundays.

Small wonder that they also believed in the power of symbols. You couldn't have a traditional wedding without a *sireh* set to sanctify the marital bed. And if you could afford to send your child out to play wearing a tiger's claws, even if it didn't give protection, it would certainly earn respect. So why not? □



A vintage Esso advertisement.



A tiger claw amulet worn by the Peranakans. The claws are encased in gilt filigree and worked into the form of Makaras, mythical creatures believed to ward off evil. Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum. Gift of Mr. Edmond Chin.

**TIM CLARK** is a docent at the Peranakan Museum.

# TIPU'S TIGER

THE TALE OF A REBEL SULTAN'S 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY MASCOT  
IMMORTALISED IN WOOD AND CLAY

*All images courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, unless otherwise stated.*

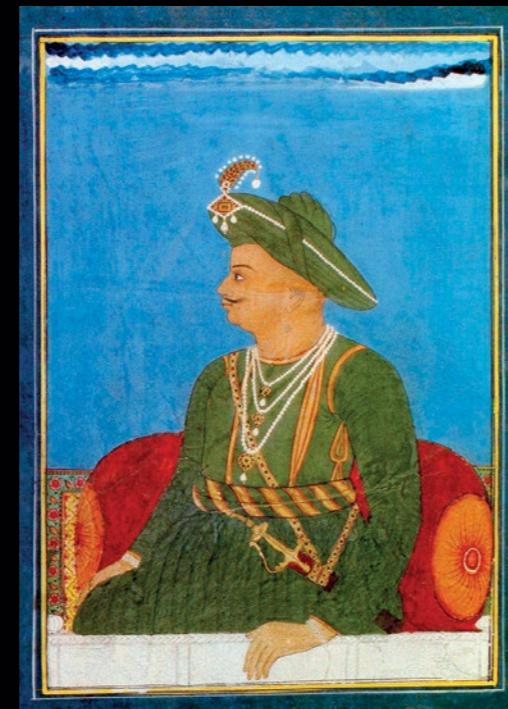
The story begins in the 1790s in India where the 'Honourable' British East India Company (EIC) was struggling to maintain control of the entire sub-continent. Sultan Tipu (1751-1799), ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore, was a particular thorn in the British side. He was a pioneer of rocket artillery and deployed them against the British in the Anglo-Mysore Wars. The British updated Tipu's iron-clad rockets and later used them in the Napoleonic Wars from 1803-1815.

Tipu's resistance to British rule was emboldened by support from the French. Such temerity earned him the nickname "The Tiger of Mysore". And the tiger became his proud emblem, enhancing his image and winning him admiration from far and wide, much to the alarm of the British.

Imagine the rebellious Sultan's delight when he heard the news that a British officer had been killed by a tiger. The symbolism of this event was not lost on Tipu.

Here's what happened. In 1792 Lieutenant Hector Monroe was having a picnic with friends when the call of nature obliged him to retire to some undergrowth. While his natural sense of caution was diverted, he was pounced upon by a tiger and killed before anyone could intervene.

The victim was not very important (though his father was a general) so the incident was not destined to appear in history books. However, for the Sultan, it was such a cause for celebration that he commemorated the event by commissioning a life-sized replica of the attack.



Sultan Tipu, the Tiger of Mysore, 1790.



Tipu's Tiger automaton, 1792.



Seringapatam medal showing the British lion defeating the Bengali tiger, 1799.

## ROBOT TIGER REPEATEDLY DEVOURS FLAILING BRITISH OFFICER

Carved out of local jackwood, the tiger is depicted *in flagrante delicto* atop the helpless Hector, who is splendidly attired in redcoat uniform for the occasion of his death. Housed inside the tiger is the latest automation technology from Europe (supplied no doubt by Tipu's French allies). It includes an organ designed to emit the sounds of roaring and screaming to simulate a re-enactment of the attack. And the mechanism even animates the arms of the officer in futile self-defense.



Staffordshire earthenware figure by Sherratt, 1815. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

This contraption was originally displayed in Tipu's palace music room, where it provided entertainment and amusement for guests. But the sultan's defiance was not to last. In 1799, in the last of four wars fought against the rebellious state of Mysore, Tipu's fortress of Seringapatam was stormed, he was killed, and his palace was looted.

Initially the tiger automaton was overlooked because it did not appear to be of intrinsic value. But when its significance was realised, it was brought back to London and exhibited at the EIC HQ as a war trophy and object of fascination. It certainly drew crowds and made the news, which is how it came to the attention of a potter in Staffordshire named Obadiah Sherratt.

## POTTER POUNCES ON PROFIT

Sherratt was renowned for producing grizzly spectacles in clay to cater to a taste for the macabre that was prevalent at the time. His ceramic depictions of bull and bear baiting were already popular. So, it made good business sense to recreate the *The Death of Munrow* (forgive the spelling, Sherratt was illiterate, like most of his profession in those days).

This pearlware figure, decorated with overglaze enamels, is just over ten inches long and was made in 1815, the same year that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo. It is a very rare and desirable piece and can be seen to its best advantage at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Alternatively, you can see an example on the top floor of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, though it is poorly displayed there, and you'll have to hunt for it.

A better reason for visiting the V&A would be to see the one and only Tipu's Tiger automaton, magnificently exhibited on the ground floor. Though if you wish to see it in action you need to turn to YouTube.

Contributed by **TIM CLARK** from the **SOUTH EAST ASIAN CERAMIC SOCIETY** website. <https://www.seaceramic.org.sg>

# THE TIGER SACRIFICED FOR THE WAR



Apay's story is a heart-wrenching one.

He was the pet Bengal tiger of 20<sup>th</sup> century Singapore's affectionately-called "Animal Man", William Lawrence Soma Basapa. Basapa's personal menagerie of animals grew so large that he started Singapore's first zoo.

Basapa inherited his father's house at 317 Serangoon Road. That's where he began collecting animals. The collection soon grew so large and the stench so overpowering that it had to be relocated. So he acquired 11 hectares of seafront land at Punggol in

northern Singapore. It was there that Basapa opened the Singapore Zoological Gardens and Bird Park in 1928. Turning the swampy land into a zoo was a labour of love which he personally funded. It soon became a crowd-puller and a nominal 40-cent entrance fee was charged to defray the daily operational costs of \$35, a princely sum in those days.

Basapa was quite a pioneer in zoo management, forming relationships with foreign zoos and even bringing in a black leopard on an exchange programme with Sydney's Taronga Zoo in 1937. He was honoured by being inducted into the Zoological Society of London & Dublin where he



Orang Utans out for a drive at the Punggol Zoo owned by Basapa.

**MILLIE PHUAH** SHARES THE POIGNANT TALE OF THE PUNGGOL ZOO

*Photos courtesy of Lawrence Basapa.*

was curatorial member, one of the first Asians so recognised. Whenever animals died in his care, Basapa would send the specimens to the Raffles Museum (in Singapore) in the name of science and research. In all, he made 80 donations.

Few people in those days would even think of crossing Basapa as he loved bringing Apay around with him. Apay was tame and could be led around by the leash.

## A CASUALTY OF WAR

And then World War II finally arrived in Singapore in 1942.

Predicting that the Japanese would invade from the north of Singapore, British forces took over the zoo premises. They gave Basapa just 24 hours to relocate his animals. This proved impossible and painful decisions had to be made. Birds and other harmless creatures were set free. The more dangerous ones were culled by the British. Though we have no definitive information if Apay was among them, it is assumed he met the same fate. Basapa was heartbroken. His beloved animals sacrificed for no good reason. He died soon after in 1943.

Some of the animals were sent to a taxidermist, and then made their way to the Raffles Museum, whose collections now reside in the care of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore. However, Apay's remains are not there.

So the question as to where Apay's remains are is still unanswered. Lost perhaps, but the tiger is still very much alive in our social memory. **P**

**MILLIE PHUAH** is president of FOM. She guides at the Indian Heritage Centre, where William Basapa's story is kept alive. She has a soft spot for cats, those of the domesticated variety.

# IN MEMORY OF THE HUMAN SACRIFICE

Passage editors mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Singapore

With only two divisions General Yamashita, nicknamed the 'Tiger of Malaya', conquered the Malay peninsula in just two months. By early February 1942 the Japanese had reached Johor Bahru and were preparing to invade Singapore. The only question was where would they land? The British were convinced that the landing would be on the northeast coast around Punggol. But they were deceived.

The Japanese tricked the British by driving processions of trucks, with headlights on, throughout the night to the Johor coast opposite Punggol. They then drove them back again with lights off to give the impression that they were concentrating their forces there. At this time the British had no aerial reconnaissance, so the ruse could not be detected. Aware that an invasion was imminent the British massed their best troops around Punggol and built defences hurriedly to withstand the expected attack, sweeping Singapore's zoo aside in the frantic process.

## BLACK SUNDAY

On 7 February, as a diversion, and to confirm the expectation that the invasion would be directed at the northeast coast of Singapore, the Japanese occupied Pulau Ubin and began shelling British defences around Changi.

The next day the main invasion force landed by night on the north-western shore around Kranji. The defenders the Japanese encountered were poorly armed and mostly inexperienced, so they were quickly overwhelmed.

Having gained a foothold, on the following days, the Japanese tanks were able to cross the rapidly repaired causeway. By 13 February, the Japanese had reached the Ford Factory on Bukit Timur Road. And it was here that the British were invited to surrender on 15 February on the first day of



Japanese troops crossing the causeway. Photo courtesy of the National Archives Singapore.

the Chinese New Year of the Horse. Supposedly impregnable, 'Fortress Singapore' had fallen in a week.

## MASSACRE OF CIVILIANS

The civilian population had been suffering from aerial bombing since 8 December 1941, but once the Japanese had taken control, worse was to come. A ruthless campaign to eradicate anti-Japanese elements was conducted known as *Sook Ching*, meaning "purge through cleansing". Screening centres were set up and men aged 18 to 50 had to present themselves and be interrogated. Those suspected of being anti-Japanese were loaded into lorries and transported to various beaches where they were massacred. The exact number killed will never be known, but estimates range from 5,000 to 40,000. Punggol Beach, which escaped invasion, was not spared the scene of such bloodshed. Here, the animals of the zoo were not the only sacrificial victims of war.

## LEST WE FORGET

A short distance inland from the coast where Japanese forces landed between the causeway and the Kranji river stands the war cemetery and memorials commemorating 24,000 names of casualties of the Commonwealth land, air and sea forces who lost their lives defending Singapore and Malaya. As the words on the memorial proclaim:

**"They died for all free men".**

The National Museum of Singapore (NMS) is holding a special exhibition entitled Dislocations to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Singapore through personal reflections. From 29 Jan to 29 May 2022. See the Museums Directory on page 44 for details.

See also the New Light On An Old Tale exhibition about the Japanese Occupation at Level 3 of the National Archives Building, from Feb 15 to June 30 2022.



British shore defenses. Photo taken at Dislocations, a commemorating exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore.



Kranji War Memorial and Cemetery. Photo by Banej from Wikimedia Commons.



Interrupted Road Surveying in Singapore. Wood engraving by H Leutemann, 1865. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF TIGER TALES IN SINGAPORE

**TIM CLARK RECOUNTS STORIES OF BIG CAT ENCOUNTERS**



Tigers terrorising the settlers in Singapore? Surely not! Well, not while Raffles was here anyway.

In fact, there are no records of tigers rampaging here until 1831 when the Singapore Chronicle reported that two Chinese were killed in tiger attacks in the area between today's Singapore General Hospital and Keppel Harbour. That's not to say that tigers did not always reside here, but while Singapore remained a coastal settlement, with the rest of the island covered with thick jungle, there was no reason why tigers would need to seek prey beyond their normal diet of plentiful wild pigs and deer.

In 1835 the architect G. Coleman was supervising Indian convicts in the construction of a road through the jungle a few miles from town when a tiger appeared in their midst and promptly fled, knocking over a theodolite. This surveying device was the only casualty, and the incident would probably not have been reported had it not featured a prominent member of the colonial community.

## FANTASY OR FACT?

When the German artist H. Leutemann visited Singapore 30 years later, his imagination was captivated by a recollection of the incident, and he dramatised the scene in a woodblock print which is now on display in Singapore's National Gallery. Naturally, he used some artistic license to exaggerate the size and action of the tiger. The Malayan tiger is in reality smaller and more timid than the Bengal tiger, but to an audience back in Europe a tiger had to appear huge and menacing.

Of course, all tigers are dangerous, but their habit is to catch a solitary prey (human or otherwise) unawares, not to charge into a group. I once met a *kampong* (village) dweller in a remote part of Malaysia who described coming face to face with a tiger on a jungle path. "What did you do?" I asked. "Oh, I just clapped my hands, and it ran away."

Then there is the story of the Roman Catholic priest who encountered a tiger one Sunday in 1856 on his way to perform mass at a village in Penang. He managed to fend off the tiger with just his umbrella and survived with only a few scratches. Sadly, he died later from tetanus caused by the infected wounds.

## PLANTERS PLAGUED BY TIGER MENACE

In the 1840s, as the settlement expanded inland with roads and plantations of gambier, pepper and sugar cane, people fell increasingly victim to tiger attacks. The coolies who worked on plantations were particularly vulnerable.

General Butterworth, who was Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1843 till 1855, reported an average of 200 deaths a year from tiger attacks. In 1857 alone 300 humans were believed to have been killed by tigers, though only seven instances were officially reported to the police. This is because such news was bad for business. Plantation owners

deliberately played down the death rate so as not to scare away workers.

Once there was awareness of the frequency of tiger attacks, the value of plantations plummeted, at one point falling in value from \$300 to \$25, and some were simply abandoned. If tigers were left unchecked, there was also the fear of the social unrest that might result from thousands of coolies being deprived of their livelihood. They might turn instead to crime and rob the townsfolk.

The effect of tiger attacks on the agrarian economy was dire, so the government was forced to act by offering a reward of initially \$20 for every tiger killed. However, when this was found to be insufficient incentive, it was increased to \$50 and eventually raised to \$100 in 1860. A further \$70 could be recouped from selling the carcass for pelt and parts.

## HUNTERS BECOME THE HUNTED

The promise of prize money and adventure encouraged a few hunters to turn professional. A Eurasian named Carnie forsook his desk job and became quite successful as a tiger hunter. He teamed up with a Malay police officer who found the reward for killing tigers easier earned than his pay.

Despite the brave efforts of a few desperados, hunting for tiger with a rifle in the dense jungle of Singapore was found



The last wild tiger to be shot in Choa Chu Kang, Singapore, 1930. Tan Tuan Khoon Collection. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

to be difficult and dangerous and not as effective as laying traps. So, plantation owners were urged to dig very deep holes in which tigers could be caught and shot. The problem was that the hole would need to be at least 15 feet deep, and the entire operation required a lot of manpower. Consequently, the reward didn't appeal as much when it had to be divided among many. Then there was the risk. On two occasions the men who went to inspect the traps were taken by tigers. Digging the pit itself could also be dangerous. It might take one man a month's work and a lone worker was tempting prey.

In 1843 the following report appeared in the press: "On Tuesday evening, a Chinaman, while engaged in constructing a tiger pit at the back of Mr. Balestier's sugar plantation was pounced upon by a tiger. After killing him, the tiger took this opportunity of giving a striking manifestation of his profound disapproval of all such latent and unfair methods of taking an enemy at disadvantage."

#### TIDE TURNS AGAINST THE TIGER

The battle between man and beast was an unequal one and the tiger population inevitably dwindled towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by which time the number of tigers killed began to outnumber human victims. Those that were not killed may have escaped to the jungle of Johore because tigers are competent swimmers. It is also possible that a tiger could return from there. This might explain the discovery of a tiger that was shot as late as 1930 near the village of Choa Chu Kang.

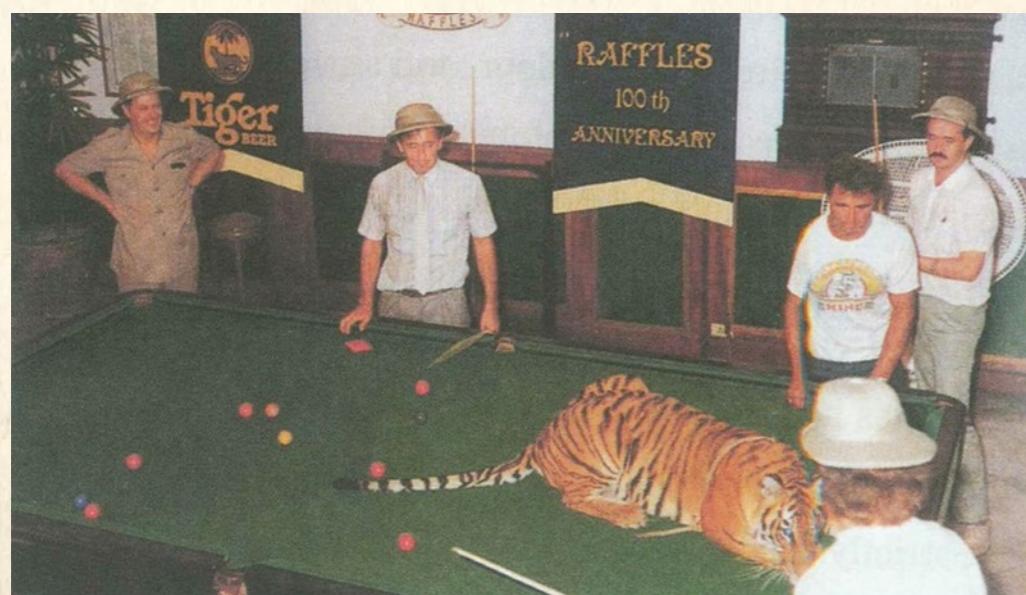
That marked the end of the tiger's reign of terror in Singapore. Or did it? As recently as 1991 the army was summoned to investigate reports of a tiger's roars heard by inhabitants of Pulau Ubin. It caused great alarm among the island's 200 residents until elephant footprints were found, and the reported roars were put down to the trumpeting of an elephant, which must have swum over from Johore. Like tigers, elephants are good swimmers. The transgressor was

eventually caught, transported by truck across the Causeway, and released in the Malaysian jungle where he belonged.

#### THE TALLEST TALE

Perhaps the most notorious tale of tigers in 20<sup>th</sup> century Singapore occurred in 1902. A tiger entered the Raffles Hotel and sought refuge beneath the hotel's Bar & Billiard Room, which was a raised structure in those days. The poor creature was shot by the principal of nearby Raffles Institution. This was no manly feat as the tiger was an escapee from a nearby travelling circus who simply craved a taste of freedom, rather than the taste of human flesh. (Presumably tranquiliser darts were not available then.) What an ignoble end for such a noble beast! And yet, when this story was retold, with an increasing flair for the dramatic, it became the tallest tale in town. □

**TIM CLARK** is a docent at the ACM, TPM and National Gallery Singapore.



In 1986, to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Raffles Hotel, a tame tiger was invited to the party. This one was only shot with a camera. Photo contributed to Wikimedia Commons by Dayana Rizal.



The Raffles Hotel's Bar and Billiard Room of 1902, the year a circus tiger sought a night's rest here after a swim in the sea. Image contributed to Wikimedia Commons by Dayana Rizal.

# Who truly is the king of the jungle?

**HEIKE BREDENKAMP** PONDERS ABOUT THE KING OF ALL BIG CATS



Illustration of an African Lion, Jaguar, Bengal Tiger, Lioness with cubs, 1889. Contributed by Smithsonian Libraries to Wikimedia Commons.

Most cats are terrified of water. But tigers, well tigers, they swim! And they are terrific at it. The Bengal tiger, depicted above, glides through the mangrove ecosystem as easily as he travels great distances on land.

Unlike the African lion, the Bengal tiger is a solitary big cat who hunts alone and unaided. When he roars, he shows off the largest canine teeth of any feline. He is longer and heavier than a lion. Even the tiger's brain is larger than the lion's – although there is no proof that this makes him smarter.

Larger in size, fantastic fangs and an athletic all-rounder? Why then do we call the lion the King of the Jungle? The lion doesn't even inhabit the jungle, let alone rule it.

Although the lion, in a regal manner, roams over the *bushveld* (the African bush), the true resident and ruler of the rainforests is the tiger. Isn't the tiger therefore the genuine monarch of the lush, green jungle?

The confusion may derive from the word *jungle*, a Hindi word meaning 'uninhabitable space' which seems to equate the *bushveld* with the rainforest. Call it what you will, space needs to be saved to preserve the natural habitat of these magnificent creatures. Poaching, with its violent snares and greedy sales to the highest bidders, needs to end, so that the striped monarchs of Asia can rise again and claim the crown they truly deserve.

**HEIKE BREDENKAMP** is an ACM docent. She is a South African who lived next to a nature reserve (not a jungle) where the mighty roars of lions travelled kilometres to let her know their presence and power. There are no tigers in Africa.

# THE MIGHTY PARTNERS



Reproduced with the permission of NHB.

**MILLIE PHUAH** LOOKS AT THE MAJESTIC BEASTS ON THE SINGAPORE COAT OF ARMS

The “kings of the jungle”, the lion and his trusty partner, the no less strong and majestic tiger flank either side of Singapore’s national crest. They stand supporting in reverence the state shield. The crest heralded the independence of the new nation, trumpeting our motto “Majulah Singapura” (Onward Singapore).

The lion embodies Singapore. The tiger is an acknowledgement of the historically close economic and political ties we had with the then Federation of Malaya. The Malaysian crest today has two Malayan tigers supporting a shield. But why the lion for Singapore?

Our very name Singapore, or Singapura in Malay explains. “Singa” means lion and “pura” means city in Sanskrit. It was written in the Malay Annals that Sang Nila Utama, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Srivijayan prince from Palembang spotted a lion when he first landed on the white sandy shores of Temasek, the ancient name of Singapore. Sang Nila Utama declared Singapura to be the name of this new land. Although it’s still disputed whether he had indeed seen a lion, which is not an

animal found in Malaya, the name was accepted. And so we are the Lion City.

In 1959 when we had just achieved self-governing status from the British, the task of creating national symbols for the nation fell on the then-deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye. Dr Toh and his committee had already conceived the state flag. When it came to the coat of arms, there was more to consider.

“Now in the case of the State Crest, again we got the five stars and the new moon. The ideas were mine. A lion next to a tiger. Tiger, of course, is a more local animal than the lion. What we did not have of course was a crown. You’d find that with the British national crest they have a crown, because they have a history of monarchy. We were a republic, no crown. So it looks empty. That, from the artistic point of view, something is missing. But what can we replace? Well, the old City Council had the Raffles Crest, I think it was a castle or something like that. And a lion. It did merge with our own ideas of self-governing Singapore.”

Dr Toh shared his ideas with Joseph Teo, a young artist with the Ministry of Culture, who was also called upon to design the state flag. The state flag and crest were launched at the installation of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, our Head of State, Mr Yusof Ishak, on the 3 December 1959.

The state crest still adorns government buildings in Singapore today, its use strictly regulated by the authorities. ■

**MILLIE PHUAH** guides at the National Museum, where the Singapore crest and other symbols of nationhood are displayed as part of the Singapore history narrative.

## WHY HAVE A COAT OF ARMS?

PASSAGE EDITORS LOOK AT THE COAT OF ARMS IN SINGAPORE’S HISTORY

### THE MAKING OF A CITY

A coat of arms is a medieval European concept. An emblem of a noble family based on the shield taken into battle. Raffles had one. Crawford and Butterworth had them too. You can see them displayed in the stained glass lancet windows of St Andrew’s Cathedral. So why does a city need one?

The simple answer is that, according to British tradition, you can’t be a city without one. *Pura* may mean city in Sanskrit, but under colonial rule, Singapore did not become a city until after it was issued with a royal warrant, supported by a coat of arms, designed by the College of Arms in London.

This honour was heaped on Singapore in 1948. Three years later Singapore was proclaimed a city by royal charter issued by King George VI. This meant that from 1951, the Municipal Building, built in 1929 to control the town’s utilities, could be called City Hall (or ‘Former City Hall’, as National Gallery refers to it today).



The coat of arms designed by the College of Arms in London characterising Singapore as a sea and air port city.

### THE PRESERVATION OF DESECRATION

So what coat of arms did Singapore display before 1948? As a crown colony it was the royal coat of arms, with the lion and the unicorn, representing England and Scotland vying for the crown. It was this crest that was carved in stone and placed on the façade of the Supreme Court when it was built in 1939.



The defaced royal coat of arms on the façade of the former Supreme Court.

When the Japanese invaded in 1942 they found this symbol offensive so they desecrated it. And when the building was renovated to become the National Gallery there was a debate as to whether the coat of arms should be restored. It was decided that the defacing was an historical act and it should therefore be preserved for posterity.



The cock-eyed coat of arms inside the Victoria Concert Hall next to the site of Singapore’s original Town Hall. Installed during renovations from 1952-58.

# KUEH Reimagined

**DAWN MARIE LEE** LOOKS AT AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN PROJECT INSPIRED BY ARTEFACTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

*A museum is not a place of artefacts. It is a place of ideas.*

- JEANIE KAHNKE

**H**ow often have you admired, even coveted, artefacts when you visit museums? I must confess that my heart flutters whenever I spy an exquisite item on display. Yet, how many of us have ever thought about re-inventing that object? A group of students have done just that.

Inspired by a visit to the NUS Baba House, the students embarked on a project that marries heritage, culture, design and cuisine. *Kueh Reimagined* is a collaboration between the NUS Baba House, NUS Division of Industrial Design (DID) and the Culinary Institute of America, Singapore (CIA). Baba House curator, Karen Lim proposed the idea, together with Hans Tan and Stacey Yip from DID.

Students were asked to re-invent well-loved *kuehs* by using mould casting techniques to create new forms. In total, the students created seven new types of *kueh*.

They drew inspiration from artefacts and motifs in the Baba House, a 19<sup>th</sup> century townhouse that has been restored and curated to the 1920s. The Baba House was once the home of a Peranakan Chinese family. The ornate interior is richly decorated with symbolic motifs.

*Kuehs* are an integral part of Singapore's cultural landscape. They are sweet or savoury snacks created in many variations and enjoyed by all of Singapore's diverse communities. Preparing them can be laborious, which is one reason why many have shied away from learning to make them.

Food writer Christopher Tan pens in his award-winning book, *The Way of Kueh*, that he dreams "of classrooms full of students learning to wield banana leaves as blithely as they pen sonnets and code software".



*A famille verte kamcheng. The rose pink central medallion features a phoenix in flight over a peony and moss covered rocks. This combination of phoenix with peony frequently appears on Peranakan porcelain. It symbolises happiness, wealth, rank and honour. Collection of the NUS Baba House, National University of Singapore.*

## FROM KAMCHENG TO KUEH

Industrial Design students Chantel Loh, 26, and Kwa Li Ying, 23, not only learnt to make traditional *kueh* but went a step further to re-invent the form.

"Before our visit to the Baba House, we thought that the Peranakans used colourful ceramics on a daily basis for food. But the docent informed us that those were kept mostly for festive occasions. For daily use, they preferred the less ornate blue and white porcelain. We were

intrigued that the colourful porcelains were considered so precious and wanted to create a *kueh* that was just as vibrant and celebratory."

Inspired by the *kamcheng*, a ceramic vessel closely associated with the Peranakans, Chantel and Li Ying studied casting techniques to create their new *kueh* – Porcelain *Kueh*.

Together with CIA culinary student Jozef Lee, 25, they adapted a recipe for *ang ku kueh*. Instead of *ang ku kueh*'s traditional tortoise shell shape, Porcelain *Kueh* comes in two parts, with a body and a lid that can be lifted, just like a real *kamcheng*.

*Ang ku kueh* has a glutinous rice flour skin and a sweet mung bean or peanut filling. It is used in ritual offerings



*Carved wooden moulds used to make ang ku kueh (standing upright) and kueh koya (foreground). Collection of the NUS Baba House, National University of Singapore. Photo by Dawn Marie Lee.*

for Chinese deities. It is cast from a carved wooden mould that resembles a tortoise shell (to represent longevity) and is coloured red to symbolise good fortune and prosperity.

A *kamcheng* is a tub-like ceramic container with wide mouth and a low collar. It has a domed lid with a flat rim, usually topped with a Lion Dog finial. The term means "covered jar" in Hokkien. *Kamchengs* were used to serve soup or to store boiled water, which is why they are thickly potted. It was also one of the three important wares in Peranakan wedding ceremonies. It was used to bring food to the wedding chamber for the bride and groom throughout the twelve-day celebration.

## BRINGING CULTURE FORWARD

Inspired by heritage and tradition, the seven new *kuehs* created in this project are a wonderful example of how culture does not need to stagnate or cling to an ideal. The new techniques, textures and flavour combinations create excitement about heritage and may just inspire a new generation of *kueh* makers. □

**DAWN MARIE LEE** is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *PASSAGE* and a docent at the NUS Baba House.

## The Magnificent Seven



1 Porcelain *Kueh* is shaped like a *kamcheng* and has a sticky rice flour skin and a peanut filling.

2 Beaded *Kueh*, inspired by Peranakan beadwork, is a harmonious blend of sweet potato, red bean and ginger.

3 Inspired by the Nyonya *kueh*, lapis sagu, *Xiang Kueh* is a tactile delight with layers that can be peeled off to reveal different blessings.

4 The modular design of *Kueh Batu* allows pieces to join together or be stacked atop one another, symbolising building communities as a foundation of society.

5 *Tou Kueh* is inspired by tiles favoured by the Peranakans and is coloured with the blue butterfly pea, which is also used in Nyonya *kueh*.

6 *Shan Jian* (Mountain Peak) *Kueh* comes with osmanthus syrup that flows like liquid gold into the well in its centre.

7 *Kueh Zi* is inspired by *kueh mohor*, which is better known as *huat kueh* or "prosperity cake". The stretch marks on the surface represent fertility.

Photos courtesy of Stacey Yip and Clarissa Yu.

# Malay Heritage Centre puts on a show before closing for revamp

**ABHA KAUL** TELLS US STORIES ABOUT THE STAR EXHIBITS

The historic Istana in Kampong Gelam closes this year for another round of renovations. Launched as the Malay Heritage Centre in 2005 and refurbished in 2012, this small museum and heritage institution has been telling stories of the Malay community in Singapore and our port-city's place in the *Nusantara*, or maritime Malay World.



*Words In The Winds*, painted by contemporary artist Khairulddin Wahab, inspired by stories from the Malay Annals and Nusantara map. Photo by Abha Kaul.

## THE SEAL OF A SINGAPORE SULTAN

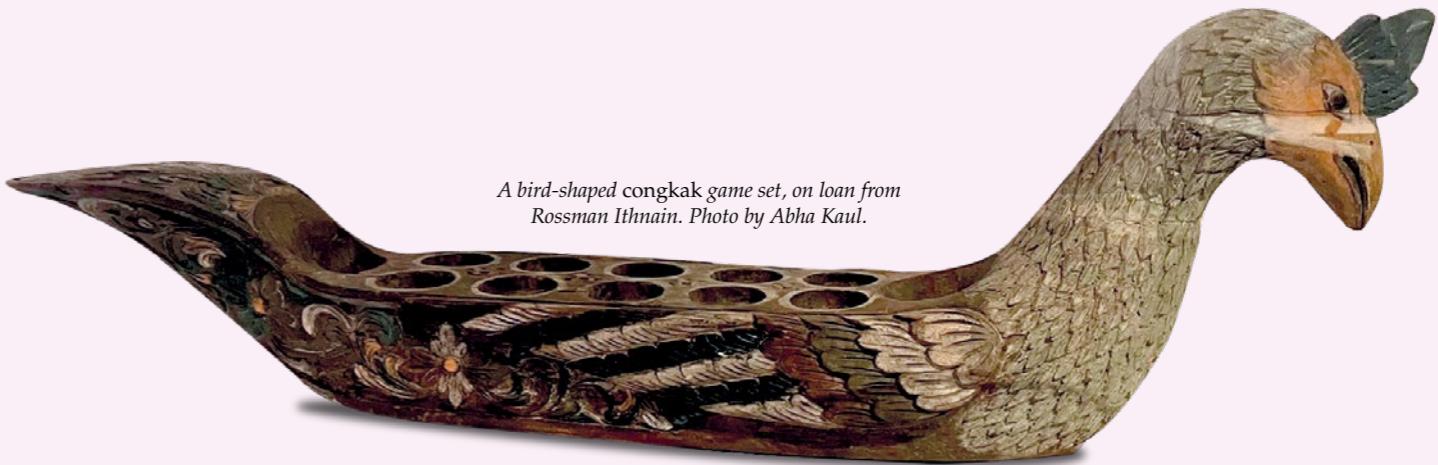
In the galleries, an immediate highlight is the inscribed silver seal of Sultan Hussein, dated 1809 and on loan from a descendant, Tengku Sri Indra. A powerful visual reminder of the fascinating history of a royal family that once resided in this very Istana. Now it is a prized family heirloom and priceless artefact from the last of the Malay kingdoms and the Johor-Riau-Lingga Sultanate that Singapore was once part of.

Opposite the seal is a stunning throne-like low seat in red, black and gold – a beautifully carved wooden and woven rattan circumcision chair for Javanese royalty, on loan from Malay collector par excellence, Khir Johari. Young boys would have sat on it for the ceremony and been paraded around proudly, like bridegrooms, carried by their uncles on shoulders, to celebrate an important rite of passage.



Ceremonial circumcision chair, on loan from Khir Johari. Photo by Abha Kaul.

Before closing, the Centre has mounted a new special exhibition *Cerita*, which means 'stories' in Malay. It opened on January 29 and runs till July 31. The theme is simply sharing more stories on Malay customs, practices and cultural encounters through intriguing artefacts spread over two bright galleries. A novel idea is to introduce a colourful painting standing bravely outdoors against a luminous purple map of the Malay Archipelago. *Words In The Winds*, is the work of contemporary artist Khairulddin Wahab, whose creative medley is inspired by nature, the sea and the *Sejarah Melayu* or Malay Annals.



A bird-shaped congkak game set, on loan from Rossman Ithnain. Photo by Abha Kaul.

## TRADITIONAL GAMES AND CUSTOMS

Recreational objects invoking memories of childhood playtime are simple wooden spinning tops and a beautiful bird-shaped *congkak* set, the latter a popular game throughout the archipelago, played with saga or longan seeds in rows of holes where the winner gathers the most seeds in his "storehouse". Lent by another local collector Rossman Ithnain, these delightful play items reveal superb woodcarving skills of East Coast Malaysia craftsmen while stimulating conversations around more ordinary items familiar to most Malays.

A neighbourly sharing spirit is emphasised by Ithnain's aunt's name 'Hanim' marked on an everyday aluminium *kendi* or water vessel set, which would be lent for community events and meals so hands could be washed before and after eating, and items returned to rightful owners. These common metal articles used in Malay households came from India in the recent past, just as Indian ideas and art drifted over the ocean to Southeast Asia centuries earlier, along with Chinese and other regional influences.

## A MYTHICAL BIRD FLIES IN FROM JAVA

This rich cross-cultural exchange and local adaptation is most striking in a dazzling pink *Garuda* costume, made of real chicken and bird feathers, on loan from a troupe in Yogyakarta, to be used in elaborate puppet dances. India's ancient celestial bird is firmly entrenched in the archipelago's ethos, as are its epics and classical language Sanskrit.

The word *antara* in *Nusantara* is Sanskrit for "in between" the islands of the archipelago. Like the *Garuda* motif, the *swastika* or *banji* pattern on the Javanese circumcision chair, and the 'Sri Indra' part in Sultan Hussein's descendant's name, are recognizable traces of Indian heritage.

*Cerita* itself is one of several Sanskrit loan words in Malay, from *charita* for stories, exploits, lives. P



A dazzling pink Garuda costume with a wingspan of 3.4m. Photo by Rossman Ithnain.

**ABHA KAUL** is a docent at MHC, ACM and IHC. A retired lawyer and Sanskrit scholar, Abha enjoys discovering the points of synergy and exchange between Indian and Malay cultures and languages.

The 10th Edition 14—23 Jan 2022 artweek.sg

# Art Takes Over Singapore Art Week

**SAW** SINGAPORE ART WEEK

## Singapore Artists @ Gillman Barracks Take On Singapore Art Week 2022

For the last ten years, January was the time to indulge in a smorgasbord of visual arts during Singapore Art Week (SAW). This year marks its tenth edition with over 130 events held across the country over ten days. Since its inception, Gillman Barracks, a contemporary arts precinct, has been a key player in SAW. Here are some takeaways through the eyes of five local artists as they navigate the diverse landscape of art-making in their journeys from past to present.

Alvin Ong (b 1988) has a unique style which is playful and dream-like, with a slow, languorous touch. Featured in SAW were works from his exhibition *Binge Watch*. Home to Alvin is both Singapore and London. Since the pandemic began, he's not been out of Singapore for the last 2 ½ years and his paintings reflect his mood of restlessness, longing and displacement. They portray poses we can instantly relate to and identify with living under our present-day conditions.

His works show the everyman or everywoman in the throes of a limbic state - hooked to a screen as an extension of self, bingeing, obsessing, existing between lucid spurts of focussed activity as the days become indistinguishable.

*Roads Around A Mountain* by Ivan David Ng (b 1991) takes us on a search for rest, respite and satisfaction which still remains out of reach. Traversing the paving roads translates into a personal pilgrimage of discovery and breakthrough.



Alvin Ong, *Desktop*, 2021, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery.

The works are a melange of layered collages comprising materials picked up from Ivan's travels over the years including soil, flowers, paper, anything that would trigger a return to the provenance of things. Some of the layers have been intentionally scratched out, revealing fresh layers underneath which look quite different from what they were before. From a philosophical perspective, there is clarity after peeling away the excess.

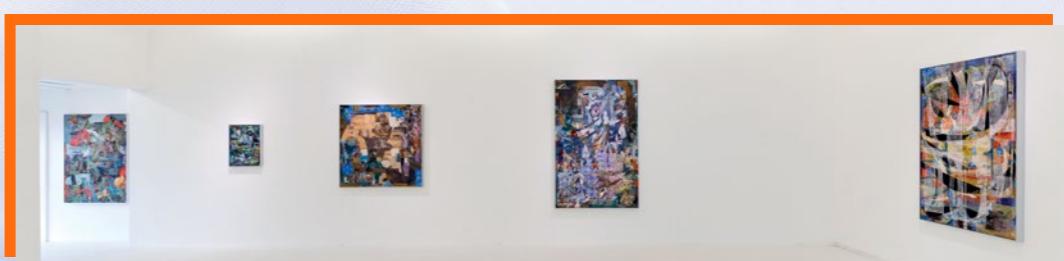
*Somewhere Else: The Forest Imagined* by Donna Ong (b 1978) takes us to the timeless and lyrical re-creations of an idealized tropical forest. It represents a world that is familiar yet idyllic, as if inviting its viewers to be transported into a different realm, at least momentarily. When I asked Donna how the past two years have affected her, she said that it had little impact because her work was about escaping into her imagination, of seeing beyond what's before us, and to be absorbed into that space which is sublime.



Alvin Ong, *Studio*, 2021, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery.

Alvin Ong, *Studio*, 2021, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery.

**YVONNE SIM**  
TAKES US ON A TOUR OF ART INSTALLATIONS DURING SAW



A soulful journey through scrap-booking with Ivan David Ng. Photo courtesy of the artist, Darrell Loh and Chan & Hori Contemporary.

Moving from one forest to another, multi-disciplinary artist Rizman Putra (b 1977) takes us into his three-dimensional drawing room called *IMMEMORIAL*. Visitors are invited to step into a doorway to add happy colours to the constantly changing landscape with eyes that beckon and call out to you. Coming from a theatre background, Rizman explains that the myriad of lines and patterns plays out like the dialogue between performers in an interactive show. As more colours are added over the duration of the exhibition,



Ivan David Ng, *Mountain Sickness*, collage. Photo courtesy of the artist, Darrell Loh and Chan & Hori Contemporary.



Donna Ong surrounded by her National Geographic reference materials. Photo courtesy of the artist and Fost Gallery.

the installation slowly transforms into an enchanted forest coming alive with a burst of many different strokes by different participants. He also reflected with poignancy that as he approached his mid-forties, he wants to make beautiful art with positive vibes. I am looking forward to more.

A commissioned work by Anthony Chin (b 1969) pays homage to the fallen heroes of the Loyal Regiment stationed in Gillman Barracks. These men fought one of the last battles before the surrendering to invading forces.



*Tropical Shads* - four panels of Donna's magical touch, each featuring a different decade of the forest from the 80s to the 2010s. Would there be a fifth one for our time? Photo courtesy of the artist and Fost Gallery.



The multi-hyphenate artist Ritzman Putra. Photo courtesy of the artist, Colin Wan and Art Outreach Singapore.

Titled *The incomplete Momotaro Sacred Sailors (II)*, it features 180 glass jars in total, some neatly stacked in a manner reminiscent of an enshrinement in a columbarium, and others scattered in various locations around Gillman Barracks. Each jar contains five litres of black paint which translates to the level of blood in a human body and a military tag numbered from 1 to 180. The title makes reference to the first black-and-white feature-length animated film made in 1945 as propaganda aimed at children. The soundtrack from the film is replayed in the installation.

It is a pity that this installation had to be de-installed at the end of SAW 2022. But at the very least, it brought to remembrance that there once were heroes on foreign soil who sacrificed everything to give us our liberty and a future, art transcending life, even if only for a fleeting ten days. Those who saw it will not forget.

In the last two years, we have all lived under the shadow of the pandemic. How do you continue to find meaning and fulfilment when you can't do the things you once did? We all gave up some degree of social life, felt left behind in a "waiting room" of imposed isolation. These artists have shown us a silver lining. They did what mattered to them, living fully in the moment, dwelling on what they had, instead of what was lost, and moved on. We should just do the same.



Through the eyes of a child. Photo by Yvonne Sim.



Momotaro jars enshrined. Photo courtesy of the artist.



They once were soldiers. Photo courtesy of the artist.

**YVONNE SIM** is a docent at Gillman Barracks. She enjoys art, theatre, books, travel, good food, and hanging out with other FOM docents with similar foibles.



FOM's first New Member Welcome of 2022 was held at the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall.

## DARLENE KASTEN REPORTS ON THE FIRST FOM NEW MEMBER WELCOME HELD IN THE YEAR OF THE TIGER

*Photos by Angela Echanove.*

**F**OM's new Lunar Year of the Tiger came in with a heartfelt albeit tiny roar when we held our first New Member Welcome on Wednesday 9 February 2022 at Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH). It was heartfelt because it was the first in-person new member event produced by FOM since the last New Member Coffee in 2019, and only tiny in order to comply with Singapore's safe gathering restrictions. Truth be told, we would've loved to have welcomed more as an amazing 593 new members joined FOM in late 2019, 2020 and 2021! Instead, we had to settle for an equally heartfelt email of welcome sent by FOM President Millie Phuah.

The festive SYSNMH was decorated with red banners, spring couplets, paper cuttings, and Chinese zodiac decorations to welcome the year of the tiger. A highlight were the lawn installations by Hong Kong artist Ng Tik Ka of familiar pop cult figures illustrated in the traditional style of New Year prints. This installation represents the Hall's wish for protection against the trials and tribulations brought about by the pandemic and their continued



*Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the gathering was kept small but meaningful.*



*Docent Karen Ng giving new members a short tour of the galleries.*



*New members were given a brief introduction to FOM by Charlotte Dawson, Kim Arnold, Millie Phuah, and Darlene Kasten.*

hopes for more healthy and prosperous years to come for Singapore. *Huat ah!*

Inside, new members were welcomed by Millie, along with Membership Activities Council Representative Kim Arnold, and Museums Council Representative Charlotte Dawson who presented the many benefits of membership in FOM. Presentations were followed by short "taster" tours of the galleries led by FOM's SYSNMH docent Karen Ng and Shirley Kan. Guests were encouraged to stay afterwards and delve into the world of *nian hua*, woodblock prints used to decorate Chinese homes for the Lunar New Year, at the Hall's special exhibition *Nian Hua: Of Deities, Guardians and Auspicious Art*. As all Lunar New Year family gatherings go, the time simply flew by.

This was the first of three in-person, new member events planned for 2022. The next is scheduled at the Malay Heritage Centre in May followed by a third at the Indian Heritage Centre in October. If we're lucky and safety measurements allow, we may even be able to hold our informative all-member FOM Open Morning again in-person in late August.

# REMEMBERING BROOKS GOODYEAR

**MARGARET WHITE** FONDLY REMEMBERS  
A FORMER FOM PRESIDENT WHO PASSED IN  
FEBRUARY 2022

*Photos courtesy of Gisella Harrold.*

**I**t is with great sadness that we say farewell to FOM stalwart and volunteer, Brooks Goodyear, after a short illness. Brooks' quiet and modest demeanour hid a smart, kind and considerate friend with a cheeky sense of humour. After meeting Brooks some 25 years ago as part of FOM's 'Dream Team' of docent trainers, she became the Singapore Art Museum representative and in 2001-2002, FOM President, and later, Advisor.



*Brooks with some of her FOM book group friends in November 2016.*



*Margaret and Brooks on a study tour of Turkmenistan in 2011.*



*Brooks Goodyear was president of FOM from 2001-2002.*

As a keen Study Group participant and Book Group enthusiast, we shared much but probably the highlight of our friendship was our many Study Tour sojourns together. Beginning in 1998, we ventured to Cambodia with some trepidation, especially travelling to recently cleared land mine areas along shockingly potholed roads in our quest to see those marvellous temples. Of course, with our appetites whetted, we ventured to other destinations, including Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Sikkim, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

From 2010-2018, Brooks and Vatsala Mohandas, were inspiring coordinators for Monday Morning Lectures, sourcing and supporting many wonderful presenters to the public. Brooks could always be relied on to complete any task asked of her with efficiency and reliability.

Outside FOM, Brooks embarked on new challenges such as learning the piano, teaching English as a Second Language and assisting with the Anglo- American Association, once telling me that she preferred 'structure' in her life.

Brooks, you gave much of your precious time to FOM and we thank you. You have left an indelible legacy and you will be much missed and remembered fondly.

## ASIAN STUDY GROUP

# Join us to learn more about Asian culture

Want to learn more about Asia in a friendly, relaxed way? Join our group. A study group consists of 10 to 20 members who meet weekly to improve their knowledge of a specific theme. Each week, we have two 40-minute presentations; each one researched and given by a member of the study group. Members choose their own topic within the theme.

The FOM Study Group provides a wonderful opportunity to meet and enjoy the diverse nationalities of FOM members. We meet on Wednesday morning from 10am to noon. Our sessions are currently conducted on the Zoom platform; if regulations change, we may go back to meeting in person.

Do not worry if your first language is not English; we are patient and appreciate the viewpoints of members from all over the world. We can also support you if you are new to making presentations and need some help with PowerPoint or Google slides. Our next theme is:



## HATCH, MATCH & DISPATCH: BIRTH, MARRIAGE & DEATH CUSTOMS IN ASIA

The major milestones of a person's life – birth, marriage and death – are celebrated in all cultures. The traditions and ceremonies surrounding these milestone events differ throughout Asia. Join us as we explore these customs, both traditional and modern, in this Study Group.

Introductory session on 6 April and eight sessions will be held from 20 April to 8 June. Sign up will be available on 16 March 2022. Please see the FOM website for more information and a list of potential topics. Cost \$25. A few suggested topics are below.

- Chinese funerary art – The Terracotta Army & Beyond
- Asian Marriage Food Customs
- Toraja Death Rituals
- Ancient & Modern Asian Wedding Customs
- Balinese Child Ceremonies & Customs
- Ghost Weddings

Coordinators: Kim Arnold and Priti Sanghavi, fomstudygroup@gmail.com



## JAPANESE DOCENTS

# Aika Ozawa welcomes new members to the JD



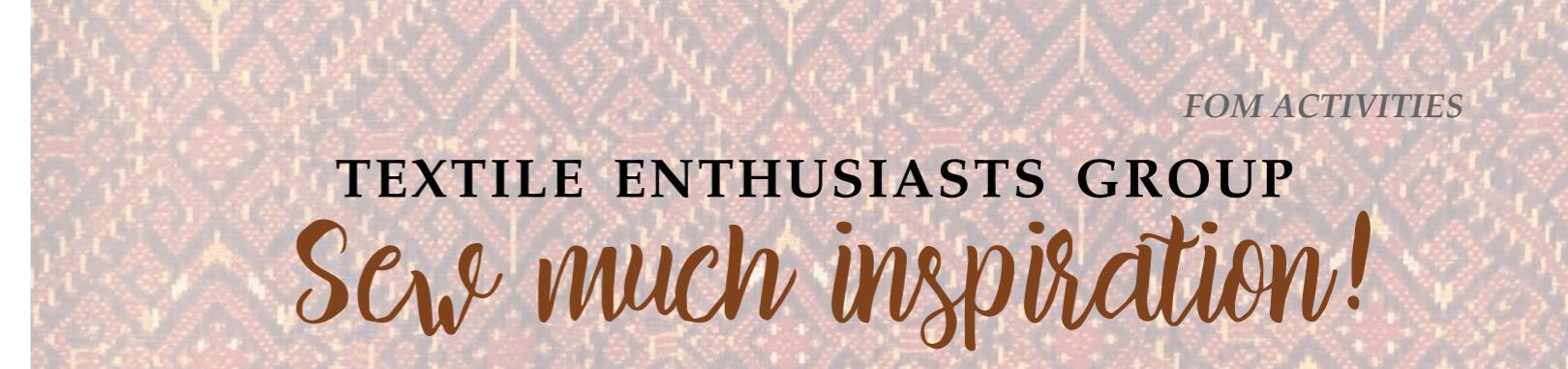
The Japanese Docents group welcomed eight new members in October 2021.

It's been two years since COVID-19 changed the world. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions under this situation. Also, we try to cope with the stress by stretching, walking, eating, etc., to take care of our mental health and well-being.

Museums and art can also be a big part of this to help us to alleviate depression and reduce stress. They can let us embark on an exciting time-travelling experience and explore and connect to our imagination and feelings in a creative way and help us to spread our "wings of heart".

FOM's docents can help people to appreciate museums and art in a deeper way. Japanese Docents (JD) was originally initiated 40 years ago with just two Japanese women. I truly respect the past impressive effort JD have made, and proud to be part of this.

In October 2021, eight newcomers with diverse background have joined JD. Some are still new to Singapore, some have been in Singapore for a long time, some have lived in other countries, and some have time to explore new things as their children are all grown. Every one of us has strong interest in Singapore culture, history, and arts. We will learn about them deeply over the next six months. After finishing intense training, we're really looking forward to helping people to spread their "wings of heart".



# TEXTILE ENTHUSIASTS GROUP Sew much inspiration!

## BOJAGI – KOREAN TEXTILE ART

8 APRIL 2022 | 3pm Singapore time (on Zoom)

*Bojagi* (also written as *pojagi*) is a traditional Korean folk art consisting of patchwork cloths made from scrap fabrics such as cotton, silk, ramie, and hemp. These practical cloths of varying sizes were present in Korea as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were used to cover and contain items such as gifts, beds, tables, and foods. The handmade textile covers embodied personal sentiments 'stitched' into each design. Commonly, *bojagi* is made from a minimalist design of squares and rectangles recalling images similar to modern-era European paintings by the likes of Paul Klee and Piet Mondrian. (Info sourced from Association for Asian studies)

**Speaker:**

Sara Cook is an author, textile artist, and tutor. Her book *Bojagi: Design and techniques in Korean textile art* has brought the appreciation of wrapping cloths to a wider audience and celebrates contemporary interpretations of this ancient tradition. Sara has exhibited her work internationally. In 2019 she curated a gallery at the UK Festival of Quilts of works by international textile artists inspired by bojagi. In her own practice, Sara is inspired by the changing of light on landscape and is currently developing work around the effects of moonlight on water.



## VISIT TO HERITAGE CONSERVATION CENTRE

9 MAY AND 11 MAY 2022 | 10am  
(Maximum of 15 per group)

We are excited to have tours to the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) back on our calendar. HCC is the repository and conservation facility for the management and preservation of Singapore's National Collection. The HCC building in Jurong is a purpose-built facility that houses the centralised conservation laboratories for the treatment of object, painting and textile artefacts, as well as a laboratory designed to cater for scientific analysis, material testing and research.

Please note the tour depends on COVID-19 regulations in place on those days.

The above events are for TEG members. To join TEG, please sign up on the FOM website. The TEG annual membership fee of \$30 is in addition to annual FOM membership fee and runs from September to May of the following year. All TEG events will be held via Zoom unless expressly mentioned.

Coordinators: Aditi Mann and Jyoti Ramesh, fomtegsingapore@gmail.com



# Shang Antique

Established Since 1984



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



Shang Antique Pte Ltd  
296 River Valley Road, Singapore 238337  
T: (65) 6388 8838 M: (65) 9616 6661

E: shangantique@singnet.com.sg  
www.shangantique.com.sg

# Explore Singapore!

MARCH – APRIL 2022

**10 MARCH**  
**TOUR OF SHUANG LIN MONASTERY**  
*9:30am – 12:00pm*  
**Fee: \$35.00**

Tucked away in Toa Payoh is Singapore's oldest Buddhist monument. The Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery (Lotus Hill Twin Grove Monastery) was built in 1898 with land donated by a wealthy Chinese migrant and support from the Chinese communities in Singapore, Malaya and Indonesia. Apart from monetary donations, the communities helped by sourcing for the best craftsmen from their various regions of origin. As a result, the monastery shows a mix of architectural styles, testimony to their various hometowns in China.

Throughout its long history, the monastery has undergone many restorations. It was gazetted as a National Monument in 1980. Most people know the monastery as a Buddhist place of worship, but few are aware that it was used for a non-religious purpose during the Sino-Japanese War.

During our tour of the monastery, our historian guide will trace its history and enlighten us about its use during the Sino-Japanese War. He will also explain the monastery's architecture and talk about the development of Buddhism in general.

**24 MARCH**  
**FORT CANNING DISCOVERY**  
*9:00am – 12:00pm*  
**Fee: \$45**

In recent years Fort Canning has been renovated and now has nine historical gardens. It is a green oasis in the heart of Singapore with a very important role in our history. Join us for a guided tour to learn about the time when Singapore was known as 'Temasek' and the hill was known as 'Bukit Larangan' or 'Forbidden Hill'. Marvel at the ancient relics dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which have been unearthed there.

Visit the site where Sir Stamford Raffles and his successors made their residences, and remnants of the fortress built in the 1860s. Hear some juicy stories about the famous folks of yesteryear and enjoy the wonderful flora and fauna of this very historical hill. You will get to taste and smell a wonderful array of herbs and spices along the way. We will end the tour near Clarke Quay, where you can enjoy a meal and drinks before heading home.



**7 APRIL**  
**TIGERS THAT FUEL THE LEGENDS – TRACING PAWSTEPS IN PASIR PANJANG**  
*9:00am – 11:30am*  
**Fee: \$35**



Bricks, coal, pepper and opium. These products were part of the foundation that helped to build the robust economy we have today. The hills and valleys at the junction of Alexandra and Pasir Panjang Roads were settings to various monumental structures and events in the early half of Singapore's modern history. Drastic changes to the area have obscured many of these sites. During this tour our guide will uncover them to recount the rise and decline of agriculture, military prowess, leisure and industries in Singapore for over a century.

Join Explore Singapore for another interesting and informative tour to learn the history of another part of Singapore.

**21 APRIL**  
**CITY TREES WALK**  
*9:00am – 12:00pm*  
**Fee: \$35**



Singapore is known as a City in a Garden. From the first national tree-planting campaign launched by the then Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in 1963, to the present green and lush landscape, thousands of trees have been planted and transplanted. The government's Garden City vision was officially formulated in 1967. The aim was to turn Singapore into a city with abundant greenery and a clean environment for all to enjoy. Today we see the results of that vision all around us.

Would you like to learn more about the trees in the heart of the city from Empress Place to Chijmes? Walk with Explore Singapore! and appreciate the work behind planning and maintaining the treescape along the riverbank and around the Esplanade Park. By the end of the walk you will be able to identify, and know something about the trees that you have passed many times but may not have really have noticed before.

Please visit the FOM website to register for all Explore Singapore! tours. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, only FOM members may register for these tours.

Coordinator:  
*Lim Chey Cheng - fomexploresingapore@gmail.com*

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## Friends of the Museums Singapore

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.

## Call for nominations for the Salome De Decker Award

It is that time of year where we seek nominations from membership for FOM's most prestigious volunteer award named after Salome De Decker, an extraordinary FOM volunteer who worked hard purely for the joy of giving and did not seek any acknowledgement or return.

To celebrate the inspirational Salome De Decker's contributions to volunteerism, an award in her name is presented each year to an FOM volunteer who has quietly and positively given time and skills to FOM and models the values to which we all aspire - teamwork, respect, giving freely and growing through service to others. Is there someone deserving whose name you may be able to put forward?

For more information on Salome De Decker, examples of past recipients, award qualifications, and how to nominate someone, please see the FOM website, under 'About Us'. Deadline for nominations is 15 March 2022. For questions, please email Darlene Kasten, [appreciation@fom.sg](mailto:appreciation@fom.sg)



Photo by Katherine Lim.

# MUSEUM DIRECTORY AND EXHIBITIONS

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

COMPILED BY DURRIYA DOHADWALA

## ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM

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



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

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

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

**Russel Wong in Kyoto - Continue the exploration (Until 10 April 2022)**

ACM's expanded Russel Wong in Kyoto exhibition displays 37 additional black and white prints and several new colour images from the photographer's ongoing personal project to document the geisha community of Kyoto. This new selection sheds further light on rarely seen and lesser-known traditions of this private community. The images tell stories of traditional and contemporary Japan, revealing how one often merges into the other.

Over 70 black-and-white photographs illustrate customs and traditions of geishas – called "geiko" in Kyoto. The tea ceremony, dance, dressing up, and the lesser known Erikae ceremony, a two-week process where a maiko (geiko in training) transitions to become a geiko, are explored. The extension of this special exhibition allows visitors another chance to dive deeper into Kyoto's culture, and celebrates Russel Wong's gift of all the photographs in the show to ACM and the Singapore National Collection.

## CHANGI CHAPEL AND MUSEUM



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

**Opening Hours:**  
**Closed on Mon except Public Holidays**  
Tues – Sun: 9:30 am - 5:30 pm

FOM guided tours: Fri, 11am

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

## GILLMAN BARRACKS

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



**Opening hours:** Tues – Sun – Refer to individual gallery pages online for opening hours.  
**Closed on Mon and Public Holidays.**

## FOM guided tours:

For the tour schedule and to register, please consult the Gillman Barracks' website at [www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.com](http://www.fom-gillman-barracks.eventbrite.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.

## INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

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



**Closed on Mon**  
**Opening Hours:**  
Tues – Thurs 10:00 am to 7:00 pm  
Fri and Sat 10:00 am to 8:00 pm  
Sun and Public Holidays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

**FOM guided tours:** Tues to Fri  
Please consult the centre's website at [https://www.indianheritage.gov.sg/en/visit/guided-tours](http://www.indianheritage.gov.sg/en/visit/guided-tours).

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

## MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

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



**Opening hours:**  
Tues – Sun 10:00 am to 6:00 pm (last admission 5:30 pm).  
**Closed on Mon**

## FOM guided tours:

Please consult the centre's website at [www.malayheritage.gov.sg/en/visit#Free-Guided-Tours](http://www.malayheritage.gov.sg/en/visit#Free-Guided-Tours).

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.

## Cerita (Stories) Special Exhibition (Until 31 July 2022)

Envisioned more as a pit-stop on a journey that will continue after the planned museum revamp, this exhibition is a timely occasion for all of us to reflect on the past and imagine the future together. Cerita shines the spotlight on the shared stories as well as the role of the storyteller via a survey of selected artefacts and signature collaborations that MHC has presented over the past decade.

## 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  
Sun and Public Holidays 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

## FOM guided tours:

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

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

## Dislocations: Memory & Meaning of the Fall of Singapore, 1942 (Until 29 May 2022)

Dislocations: Memory and Meaning of the Fall of Singapore, 1942 is a commemorative exhibition to mark the 80th anniversary of

the British Surrender to the Imperial Japanese Army in Singapore on 15 February 1942.

It features a blend of physical objects, documents and oral histories woven into specially designed spaces meant to evoke reflections and conversations among visitors, as they explore the notion of "war memory" and the different ways it can be remembered and retold.

## NUS MUSEUM

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

home in a 1920s setting, furnished with heirlooms from its previous owners and other donors.

## THE PERANAKAN MUSEUM

(Closed until 2023)  
39 Armenian Street, Singapore 179941  
Tel: 6332 7591  
[www.peranakanmuseum.sg](http://www.peranakanmuseum.sg)



This intimate museum possesses one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Peranakan objects. Galleries on three floors illustrate the cultural traditions and the distinctive visual arts of the Peranakans. 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 (SAM) focuses on international contemporary art practices, specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The main building of the museum (located along 71 Bras Basah Road) is currently closed to prepare it for its next phase of development. While we wait, SAM is not missing in action but a Museum In Action: bringing art experiences into everyday spaces around Singapore and actively collaborating with partners and communities.

## NUS BABA HOUSE

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



**Guided tours Mon – Fri, 10:00am, online registration required**

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

Conceived as a heritage house facilitating research, appreciation and reflection of Straits Chinese history and culture, the NUS Baba House was built around 1895 and was once the ancestral home of a Peranakan Chinese family. During the one-hour guided tour, guests will be introduced to the history and architectural features of the house, and experience visiting a Straits Chinese family

## SAM AT TANJONG PAGAR DISTripARK

**Opening hours:**  
Daily 10:00 am – 7:00 pm.  
SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark is the museum's new contemporary art space with opening exhibitions by The Observatory, Korakrit Arunonndchai and Gan Siong King. Find out more at <https://www.bit.ly/SAM-MuseumInAction>.

## STPI CREATIVE WORKSHOP AND GALLERY

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



**Opening hours:**  
Mon – Fri: 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:

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

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

## Notations in Space (Until 26 March 2022)

Showcasing 10 artists, this group show at STPI will include the works of Ryan Gander, Do Ho Suh, Teppei Kaneiji, Yim Ja-Hyun, Hong Zhu An, Melati Suryodarmo, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Goh Beng Kwan, Rirkrit Tiravijaya, and Genevieve Chua.

The exhibition is an exploration of the book *Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, which interrogates how our built environments shape our dreams and imagination.

## SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL

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



**Opening hours:**  
Tues – Sun 10:00 am – 5:00 pm, Closed on Mon

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

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

## Nian Hua: Of Deities, Guardians and Auspicious Art (Until 25 September 2022)

In collaboration with the Chongqing China Three Gorges Museum, this exhibition showcases New Year prints produced in China from the Qing dynasty to the 1980s. A close examination of the iconography of these prints, which are deeply rooted in popular beliefs and folk customs, provides insights into the rarely documented attitudes and values of the common people in China.

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

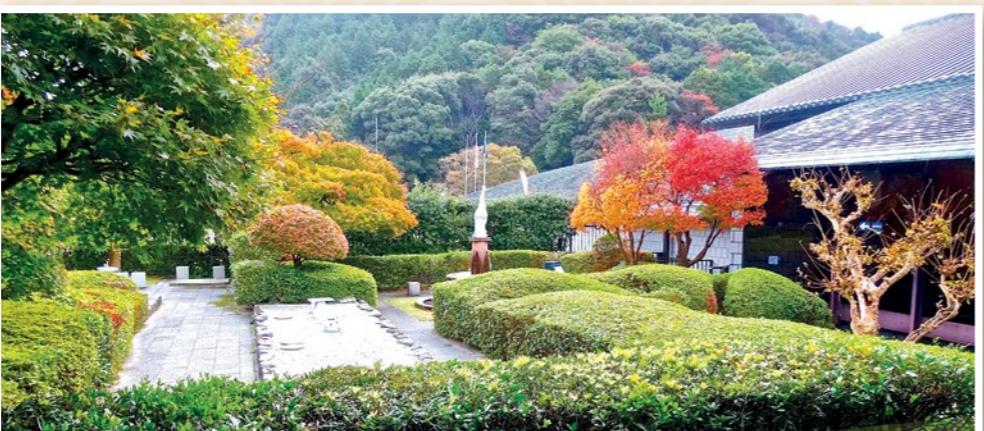
# Kakiemon Tiger

**W**ith only a 24-hour stopover in Nagasaki allotted on the cruise ship's schedule, we knew we had to prioritise and top of the list was a visit to Arita's famous Kyushu Ceramic Museum. The Museum is located on the top of a small hill at Tosyaku Otsu, off Route 35 in Arita, not far from the Arita College of Ceramics. It is open 9am-5pm from Tuesday to Sunday, and admission is free unless there is a special exhibition.

Porcelain production in Japan dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when kaolin was discovered in Arita at Izumiyama on the island of Kyushu. From the Arita kilns, the ceramics were exported from the port at Nagasaki, via the Dutch trading post built on the artificial island of Dejima, which we visited on the same trip on our way back to our docked cruise ship.

We began in the lower exhibition hall with the Shibata Collection, 1000+ pieces of Arita porcelain, primarily from the Edo Period (1603-1867), meticulously arranged in chronological order in knee-to-ceiling-high wall cases. For porcelain lovers, to walk amongst these cases is akin to being in paradise. All these beautiful porcelains, produced at the request of the Dutch VOC to fill their ships when Ming Dynasty China suddenly banned private trade in an effort to concentrate wealth in the court, are there for collectors and connoisseurs to study alongside their predecessors and successors. Such an opportunity to study these porcelains in depth is a rare gift as few museums have such complete and extensive collections.

Upstairs, Exhibit Room Number 3 introduced us to the ancient ceramics produced in Kyushu's kilns, such as Kogaratsu made in Hizen Province, early Imari, and other porcelains produced in the Kakiemon style or at the Nabeshima clan kiln. Another room detailed the history of ceramics across Asia, and included such details as maps of ancient trade routes, VOC trade ports, displays of the various types of kilns and kiln furniture, and drawers of representative shards.



The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Arita, Kyushu, Japan.



Our modern kakiemon tiger.

After a short stop in the museum shop, we drove to the main shopping mall known as the 'greatest shopping mall of Arita ceramics in the world', the Arita Toji no Sato Plaza, located by the Hasami-Arita interchange (a 20-minute walk from the JR Arita Station). We were so overwhelmed by the selection, we were paralysed with indecision and bought nothing. However, having found our taxi driver and driven off for twenty minutes or so, we both realized that we had seen one artefact that we couldn't get out of our minds. A modern Kakiemon (in Japanese: 柿右衛門) tiger.

The name comes from Sakaida Kakiemon (1615-1653), the potter who pioneered this particular style of overglazed enamel Japanese porcelain in Arita, now known the world over, for its elegant coloured overglaze designs on a milky-white porcelain body (*nigoshide*). Sakaida had so wonderfully perfected the representation of persimmons (*kaki*) and the associated colour palette, that his lord bestowed the name 'Kakiemon' upon him.

Our tiger cost us roughly US\$600 but has brought us many times that value in pleasure over the years.

Contributed by **MATHEW & PATRICIA WELCH**. Courtesy of South East Asian Ceramic Society's website where one of their pages is devoted to collectors' stories. <https://www.seaceramic.org.sg>

Friends of the Museums (FOM) presents

## MONDAY MORNING LECTURES March – April 2022

Currently all Monday Morning Lectures (MMLs) are held on the Zoom platform. Lectures are open to FOM members only. Visit the Community Events page at [www.fom.sg](http://www.fom.sg) to sign up. Registration opens one week before the event.

7 MARCH

### TARA, THE BUDDHIST SAVIOURESS

Speaker: Pia Rampal



Tara, "star" in Sanskrit, is deeply revered throughout the Indo-Himalayas. Her name derives from the verb "taar" meaning to cross, just as a star crosses the night sky. This morning we trace the dramatic evolution of Tara from her beginnings as an attendant figure in India to becoming the "Mother of the Tibet" by the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

14 MARCH

### 200 YEARS OF NATURE STUDY AND NATURE CONSERVATION IN SINGAPORE

Speaker: Lum Shawn Kaihekulani Yamauchi



The transformation of urban Singapore, as well as a rapid shift to a green economy and an environmentally friendly society, are the latest developments in a long history of nature appreciation and environmental management in Singapore. The relationship between people and the wilderness in Singapore will be explored, as well as the role the museum has played in laying the foundations for our City in Nature.

21 MARCH

### ALTERNATIVE SITES OF MALAY HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE TOWN

Speaker: Imran bin Tajudeen



This talk reviews 10 urban neighbourhoods that are of historical significance to the Singapore Malay community beyond Kampong Glam. They are connected to communities, organisations/clubs, businesses, and religious or other institutions. Their buildings and even streets have been mostly erased. Combining research done since 2009 and recent findings, the talk suggests ways to recover and safeguard fragments that survive.

28 MARCH

### POMP, PRESENTS AND POWER: THE PERRY EXPEDITION

Speaker: Vidya Schalk



For over two centuries, 18 previous expeditions from various countries failed to crack the Japanese wall of isolation (*sakoku*). This talk traces the arrival of US Commodore Matthew Perry's squadron of steam ships (via Singapore) into the Tokyo Bay in 1853. Considered to be one of the great watershed moments of modern history resulting in a collision of contrasting worlds, confusion, subterfuge, power play, and diplomacy; forever altering the balance of power around the world.

4 APRIL

### CAVE PAINTINGS AND ROCK ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Speaker: D. Kyle Latinis



Recent dating of cave paintings in Indonesia have pushed time scales of artistic inception back to the dawn of human history in Southeast Asia – over 40,000 years ago. This discussion will focus on how we can document, analyse, appreciate and protect various examples of regional rock art, and how we can better understand the artisans and people they impacted.

11 APRIL

### CAPTURING THE MOMENTS IN TIME: EXPERIENCES FROM THE SG50 TIME CAPSULE PROJECT

Speaker: Siew Wah



A team of conservators and collection managers from Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) were involved in the preservation aspects of the SG50 (Singapore's 50th Anniversary) time capsule items. This talk focuses on the preservation of the items under unique environmental conditions of time capsules such as rainwater, soil, pollution, and more. Documenting, locating and matching the items after unearthing of the time capsule, will also be discussed.

18 APRIL

### MELAKA: A SOUTHEAST ASIAN COSMOPOLITAN CITY IN DANGER

Speaker: Johannes Widodo



Melaka is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Southeast Asia. The speaker will show its layering and hybridisation process, and manifestations in tangible and intangible culture along its long historical timeline. The current state of conservation, especially the urban heritage of Melaka, has however been under severe pressure. This talk aims to change the mindset and promote the correct attitude and action to keep Melaka as Melaka for future generations.

25 APRIL

### FROM PEPPERED SCALLOPS TO APHRODISIACS: INDIAN SPICES AND DRUGS IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

Speaker: Suresh Kumar



This talk focuses on the burgeoning demand for South Asian spices, condiments and drugs in the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the two centuries after Alexander the Great's conquest of the Achaemenid Persian empire. The speaker will consider the manifold uses for these spices, as well as the political conditions and infrastructural investments that allowed for the regularisation of long-distance trade.



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# TRAIN AS A VOLUNTEER MUSEUM GUIDE

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