
TAMPINES:
AWARD-WINNING
TOWN

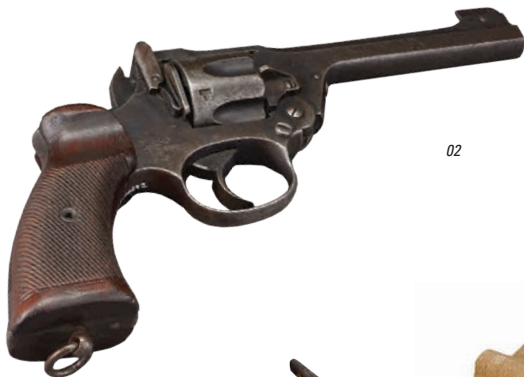
WITNESS TO WAR:
REMEMBERING
1942

**BEHIND THE
SCENES AT THE
HERITAGE
CONSERVATION
CENTRE**





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Front Cover

Watermelon playground at Tampines, 2017.

Read more about the heritage of Tampines on page 8.

Inside Front Cover

01. *Australian Army canteen, c. 1942.* Metal, wool, leather and cotton. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.
02. *Enfield No. 2 Mk. 1 revolver used by the British and Commonwealth troops, 1940.* Metal. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.
03. *Australian Army wire cutter with pouch, c. 1942.* Metal and cotton. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.

Read more about the fall of Singapore in 1942 on page 4.

FOREWORD

Singapore's rapid development as a successful multicultural society has been oft quoted as being unique in the world, but our rich heritage goes far beyond the last century.

In this issue we explore Singapore's past all the way back to the Neolithic era. In *In Search of Prehistoric Singapore* (page 39), learn how, despite the lack of documented history, there is compelling evidence that points to civilisations existing in Singapore and around the region some 3,000 years ago.

From prehistoric times, we jump into the 19th century to explore the *Tales of the Malay World* (page 33). This feature examines how colonial history affected the way that Malay literary texts were reproduced and kept. This article is presented in conjunction with the National Library's latest exhibition of the same name, which brings into Southeast Asia, for the first time, Malay manuscripts which have been kept in European museums over the past 200 years.

Moving further forward, we focus on the sombre period of World War II in Singapore through *Witness to War: Remembering 1942* (page 4). Working with overseas museums to bring in new artefacts, this exhibition elicits a fresh storyline revealing a shared history with our neighbours.

Arriving into present times, we look at how Singapore's subsequent development

is mirrored by the story of Tampines. Once a remote rural area, it has today grown into a bustling town that has received international acclaim. Our cover story (page 8) provides the full details behind this impressive turnaround, as well as information about NHB's newly-launched Tampines Heritage Trail.

Having covered the past and present, we chart future directions in *A Heritage Plan for Singapore* (page 17). This heritage plan traces strategies to conserve and promote our places, culture and stories – the success of which relies heavily on partnerships within the community.

Indeed, the work of preserving our heritage is something that all Singaporeans can be involved in. Be inspired by our features on the relatively unknown Parsi community in *The Parsis of Singapore* book (page 29), the "national service" undertaken by Mr Roland Goh of audio-visual solutions company E&E to bring the wow factor to our heritage (page 24), and also how Changi Airport is playing the role of national ambassador to 58 million visitors in *A First-Class Singapore Experience* (page 27).

As a reader of MUSE SG we hope that you too will see a role for yourself in Our SG Heritage Plan, to bring our heritage to all Singaporeans.

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WITNESS TO WAR



REMEMBERING 1942

Text by Priscilla Chua

Curator (Exhibitions, Research & Publications), National Museum of Singapore

Photo on this page
A light and sound installation in the exhibition featuring a 25-pounder field gun, 1941–1945. Metal and wood. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.



01

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore in 2017, the National Museum of Singapore launched an international exhibition Witness to War: Remembering 1942 in September 2017. This exhibition seeks to explore the fall of Singapore within a larger geopolitical context, and to complement the existing World War II narrative at the National Museum which focuses primarily on the Battle of Singapore and the Japanese Occupation. It also provides a platform for a micro-history version of the war to be told through the personal stories of war survivors and veterans.



02

For the first time, the National Museum is leading an international, blockbuster exhibition that sees the museum collaborating with 10 overseas museums and institutions such as the Australian War Memorial, the National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. *Witness to War* features more than 130 artefacts, including objects from the National Collection and artefacts on loan from individuals as well as overseas museum partners.

Many of these artefacts, which have never been displayed in Southeast Asia before, reveal a shared history with our neighbours in the wider region.

The exhibition opens with a film montage that introduces visitors to the world from the 1910s to the late 1930s, before the war began. Through footages extracted from popular films of the 20th century, visitors emerge from this time tunnel with a better understanding of the regional and international context in which World War II broke out.

01. A 4-metre wide map table provides a visual reference of the battles that were fought in Southeast Asia during World War II.

02. Japanese Army bugle, 1940s. Metal and cotton. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.



03. Xu Beihong.
*Portrait of Sir Shenton
 Whitelegge Thomas,
 Governor of the
 Straits Settlements
 from 1934 to 1946,
 1939. Oil on canvas.
 Collection of the
 National Museum of
 Singapore.*

Visitors then enter the first zone of the exhibition, which showcases the defence preparations that the British had in place for Singapore as war clouds gathered over the region during the late 1930s. This zone provides a glimpse into the Chinese and Japanese communities in Singapore at that time, as well as the troops who had arrived from Australia and New Zealand to reinforce the defences of Singapore.

Having understood the context behind the outbreak of hostilities, the second zone begins with a dramatic display of one of the star artefacts of this exhibition – the 25-pounder field gun, which was the standard field artillery weapon used by both the British and Australian troops against the Japanese Army in Malaya and Singapore during World War II. Surrounded by sandbags specially made for this display, the gun is set against the graphical backdrop of troops in battle. The theatrical setting is made complete with a two-and-a-half minute light and sound installation that starts off with the popular World War II song “The White Cliffs of Dover”, before the emotive sounds of battle begin.

Within this zone, visitors will also find a visual narrative of the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, as well as an explanation of the international significance of the fall of Singapore on 15 February, 1942. A four-metre wide map table marks out the military campaigns

in Southeast Asia, while other displays depict the British surrender to the Japanese Army and the reverberations that were felt across the region, all the way to Australia and New Zealand. Also on display are personal items belonging to soldiers, which provide yet another perspective to the battles that were fought.

It is at this halfway point of *Witness to War* that the visitor's attention is turned towards war survivors and veterans whose personal stories are told within the intimate setting of four story pods. Titled *Destruction, Displacement, Love & Loss*, and *Fortitude*, each pod contains an anchor story that is brought to life by a large-screen animation – three of these anchor stories are narrated by the war survivors themselves. On display are 11 stories that are rarely seen or heard, providing diverse accounts of the fall of Singapore, and the impact it had on the lives of these people in the weeks following the war. Different treatments and illustration styles offer varied experiences across the different pods.

As part of the National Museum's efforts to reach out to more students, the Student Archivist Project was also developed, allowing secondary and tertiary level students to be involved in the exhibition-making process. As part of the project, students went out to interview war survivors and came back with a total of 47 submissions, six of which were selected for the exhibition. One is included as part of the main exhibition story pod, while the

other five stories are presented in two video booths in the third and final zone of the exhibition.

This last zone of the exhibition is a space dedicated to reflection and contemplation. Here, visitors get to pen their thoughts after experiencing *Witness to War*. They are also invited to write to the war survivors and veterans – whose stories they had just experienced – on the letter postcards provided. These will then be handed over to the survivors and their families to keep the inter-generational dialogue going.

Seventy-five years may have passed since the fall of Singapore, but we have not forgotten the ordeal that the war survivors and veterans have gone through. It is hoped that through these different accounts of war – found within the artefacts and stories – we will not forget this watershed event in our history.

Visit Witness to War: Remembering 1942 at the National Museum of Singapore from now until 25 March, 2018. Featuring artefacts from 10 overseas museums and institutions, this exhibition presents the complexities of the events that led to the fall of Singapore, paying homage to the extraordinary tenacity with which these men and women bore their circumstances. For more information, please visit <http://nationalmuseum.sg/exhibitions/exhibition-list/witness-to-war-remembering-1942>.



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04. *Lim Bo Seng's personal diary offers a glimpse of what he was like as a husband and a father. Having had to leave his family behind upon his evacuation from Singapore on 11 February, 1942, he wrote about his worry for the dear ones he sorely missed, February-April 1942. Paper and ink. On loan from Dr Lim Whye Geok.*

05. *This silk pincushion belonged to Corporal James Colin Clark of the 8 Australian Division, who had it sent home from Singapore when the city fell to the Japanese, 1941. Silk. On loan from the Australian War Memorial.*

TAMPINES



AWARD-WINNING TOWN

Text by Stefanie Tham

Manager, Education & Community Outreach

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*Photo on this page
Tampines Round
Market and surrounding
neighbourhood, 1980s.
Courtesy of Housing &
Development Board.*



01

Encountering the sheer number of people at Tampines today can sometimes leave one overwhelmed. From its multiple shopping malls and offices to Our Tampines Hub, the estate's newest community and lifestyle destination, Tampines is often crowded with throngs of people going about their daily routines. According to a 2016 survey by the Department of Statistics, Singapore, Tampines is home to around 250,000 residents and is the third most populous residential town in Singapore after Bedok and Jurong West. It is evident from the loads of passengers constantly spilling out from Tampines Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Station that Tampines is a town bustling with activity.

Yet, long-time residents who have lived in Tampines since the town was built in the 1980s recall a different picture of the area. Anwar Bin Haji Mawardee, who first moved into

Tampines in 1985, remembers it as a desolate and empty new town: "At that time there weren't as many flats [as there are today]. It wasn't as crowded as it is now... When we met our friends from other parts of the island, they would say, 'Wah you live in Tampines, you *ulu* type ah.'"

Clarice Teoh, another resident who moved into the town in the early 1980s, echoes similar sentiments: "When we selected a flat here, we were a bit hesitant. It was a bit like an 'end of the earth' feeling. Bedok was popular, and it was already built up, and most people didn't think beyond Bedok in the east."

Before the MRT line extended into Tampines, residents had to alight at Tanah Merah to take a feeder bus. There was also no proper bus interchange, save for a makeshift interchange along Tampines Avenue 5.

01. *Construction of Tampines Town in progress, 1982.*
Courtesy of Housing & Development Board.



02. A village in Tampines, 1970s. Courtesy of Tampines GRC Community Sports Clubs.

Tampines resident, Wendy Oh, recalls that the streets were barely lit at night: “When we moved here during the early 1980s, it was very remote and really dark at night. You wouldn’t dare to go out at night as there were no street lights, and many of the HDB blocks were still under construction. I recalled asking myself then, why did I

move to such an *ulu* area with no amenities?”

These experiences of living in Tampines Town in its nascent years seem to mirror that of village life in the district before the 1980s. *Ulu*, which means “remote” in Malay, was a term often used to define Tampines even before the residential town was built. Due to the fact that until the 1970s, old Tampines Road was the only thoroughfare that traversed across north-eastern Singapore towards Changi, the district was relatively isolated from other parts of the island.

Tampines Road began in 1847 as a bridle path accommodating horses and pedestrians. The road spanned from the 6th milestone of Serangoon Road to Changi Road near the eastern tip of Singapore. Many early kampong (village) dwellers settled along this road, and some of the villages here included Kampong Teban, Teck Hock Village, Hun Yeang Village and Kampong Tampines.

Travelling into and out of the district was often a challenge for the villagers living in Tampines. Back then, bus services from town terminated at the 6th milestone of Serangoon Road (known as Kovan today), and commuters had to continue their journey into Tampines on pirate taxis and privately-owned buses.

Yvonne Siow, a former teacher at Tampines Primary School in the 1960s, recalls: “[The drivers] would wait to get as many people into their taxis as possible and not all the pirate taxis would... travel deep into the kampong, as they would



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have trouble finding a customer on the way back. So some people resorted to hitching a ride from cars or lorries going in.”

The area was so withdrawn that even in the late 1970s, when other parts of Singapore were being modernised, smaller streets located further down from Tampines Road remained unknown and difficult to locate. Jimmy Ong, who formerly lived in a Tampines kampong, shares: “We could give visitors our address, but there was no way to tell them exactly where we stayed. What usually happened was that we would go out to the [nearby] school to wait for them and bring them in.”

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Tampines was also associated with the sand quarrying and

waste disposal industry, which not only damaged the surrounding environment, but also made living there an unpleasant experience. Sand from Tampines was used for the building of Housing & Development Board (HDB) towns in the 1960s, and demand for the material was so high that at its peak, there were 26 sand quarries operating in Tampines. Quarrying left gaping holes in the ground, and runoff from the quarries often resulted in floods and choked drains. In addition, the nearby Lorong Halus landfill, sometimes referred to as the “Tampines dumping ground”, emitted foul stenches that could reach as far as MacPherson on the occasions when its garbage mounds – as tall as 10 storeys – caught fire.

03. *Wayang stage at Ti Kong Tua in Tampines, 1970s.*
Courtesy of Tampines GRC Community Sports Clubs.

04. *Kampong Teban, 1986.* Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

05. *Transport terminus for Tampines bus services at the 6th milestone of Tampines Road, 1955.* F W York Collection. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

06. *A sand quarry in Tampines, 1970s.* Courtesy of Tampines GRC Community Sports Clubs.



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07. Aerial view of sand quarries in Tampines, 1990. Courtesy of Housing & Development Board.

08. The landfill at Lorong Halus, 1980s. Courtesy of National Environment Agency.

09. A photograph of Albert Peh and his siblings at Kampong Teban. From left: Troy, Albert (on the tricycle), Patrick (hidden), Roger and Eddie, 1960s. Courtesy of Albert Peh.

10. A child drawing water from a kampong well in Tampines, 1955. Courtesy of Tampines GRC Community Sports Clubs.

Nevertheless, despite these inconveniences, former kampong dwellers also fondly reminisce about the close-knit relationships fostered with their neighbours and friends, as well as the community-centric spirit that was part of daily life.

Florence Neo, who grew up near Hun Yeang Village, elaborates: “To me, kampong spirit means that whenever there is a need, everybody chips in to help. When my mum gave birth to me and my siblings, her neighbours came over and taught her what to cook and advised her what to eat.”

Villagers also bonded over simple entertainment such as catching insects or watching *wayang* (“street opera” in Malay) shows that were organised by the Chinese temples in the vicinity. Albert Peh, who lived in Kampong Teban, remembers the large crowds of villagers who would gather at the Tua Pek Kong temple during a *wayang* show. He shares: “For us kids, we were most excited by the pushcarts that came with food, sweets and flavoured ice balls. There were also *tikam tikam* (“games of chance” in Malay) stalls, some with roulette wheels, [where] you could win toys or money.”



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These images described by former kampong villagers and early residents of Tampines Town are a stark contrast to the modern and bustling residential town we see today. It was highly unlikely that anyone living here in the 1980s could imagine that Tampines would receive the World Habitat Award from the Building and Social Housing Foundation and UN-Habitat just a decade later in 1991, even beating out contending entries from Vancouver, Canada and Boston, USA. Overnight, Tampines Town became recognised as an exemplar of “high-quality, high-density and affordable housing”, and was touted as a model that cities around the world could replicate.

The award was a historic moment for Singapore as the achievements of the country’s public housing was finally being recognised on

an international level. By the time HDB started designing Tampines Town in the 1970s, Singapore’s post-war housing shortage had been largely resolved, allowing the Board to channel its resources into improving its town planning models.

The award was an affirmation of the many town planning innovations that the HDB pioneered in Tampines, which sought to foster community bonds and encourage neighbourly interaction. The innovations included the introduction of integrated green corridors – a precursor to today’s ubiquitous park connectors, as well as the precinct concept, which brought amenities closer to residents and encouraged greater social interaction between residents from different socio-economic backgrounds.

11. *Tampines Town, 1983.*
Courtesy of Housing
& Development
Board.



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12. *The watermelon playground at Tampines Central Park, 2017.*

13. *Tampines Central, 1990s.*
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority.

14. *The former DBS Tampines Centre, which housed Japanese retailer Sogo, 1990s.*
Courtesy of Urban Redevelopment Authority.

The HDB also sought to capture the unique identity and heritage of Tampines in its architecture. HDB architect Lee-Loy Kwee Wah wanted to reflect the fruit farms of rural Tampines in her designs of the town's public playgrounds. After briefly experimenting with different fruit designs (including a durian playground that was later deemed too risky due to the fruit's spikes), she produced three playgrounds that were installed in Tampines: the watermelon, mangosteen and pineapple playgrounds. The former two playgrounds can still be found in Tampines Central Park, and have become iconic symbols of Tampines.

Other town planning innovations included blocks of varied designs and heights, open spaces for communal activities, and a well-integrated transport network system

consisting of the MRT and Pan-Island Expressway.

In 1991, the town entered yet another phase of its development when it was designated Singapore's first Regional Centre, a concept spearheaded by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) to grow commercial centres in suburban areas. Major corporations soon established themselves in Tampines, including the former Pavilion Cineplex and DBS Tampines Centre, which housed Japanese retailer Sogo. The concept also paved the way for the construction of large shopping malls in Tampines, starting with Century Square in 1995 and Tampines Mall the following year.

For the generation that grew up in Tampines in the 1990s, these malls were the setting for many outings with friends and families.



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Former Tampines resident Bryne Leong shares: “[I remember going to] Pavilion and watching Disney movies and Titanic. There was a Burger King downstairs where a schoolmate and I would share a meal and fight over French fries.”

Although Pavilion and Tampines Centre have since been demolished, Tampines Mall, Century Square and the town’s latest shopping mall, Tampines One, have taken over as popular hangouts for Tampines residents.

As the town gradually matured, stories of *ulu* kampongs and a dark, desolate town also began to fade into history. Nevertheless, aspects of Tampines’ heritage can still be found at some sites today, especially in its religious institutions.

For example, hidden inside the grand Tampines Chinese Temple

at Tampines Street 21 is a temple plaque that dates to 1851. The plaque belongs to the Soon Hin Ancient Temple, a Taoist village temple that was first set up in an attap hut at Jalan Ang Siang Kong at the 11th milestone of Tampines Road. Similarly, Masjid Darul Ghufuran at Tampines Avenue 5, had its origins in the multiple *surau* (“prayer houses” in Malay) which served Muslim villagers in the east. These *surau* raised funds for the building of the mosque, which was completed in 1990.

Finally, while almost all of Tampines’ former quarries have been filled in, two quarry pits still remain – one has been converted into Bedok Reservoir, while another lies abandoned and hidden behind a row of trees along Tampines Avenue 10.

15. Tampines Chinese Temple, 2017.

16. An 1851 plaque belonging to Soon Hin Ancient Temple, 2017.

17. Masjid Darul Ghufuran’s distinctive azure blue façade which was installed in the late 1990s. The mosque is currently undergoing renovations and will reopen in late 2018, 2007. Courtesy of Masjid Darul Ghufuran.



18. The newly launched Our Tampines Hub, 2017.

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TAMPINES HERITAGE TRAIL

Many of the heritage sites in Tampines can be explored through the Tampines Heritage Trail that was launched in September 2017. It chronicles the history of Tampines from the 19th century to the present day, piecing a layered narrative of the town through archival records, social memories, photographs and maps.

Trail goers can embark on any of the three specially curated thematic short trails that explore different aspects of Tampines' heritage. The Tampines Town Trail explores some of the town planning innovations

and sites of everyday heritage in the town; the Religious Institutions Trail explores the diverse houses of faith found in the area and highlights its unique architecture and practices; and the Green Spaces Trail is NHB's first cycling trail, taking cyclists to heritage and scenic locales in Tampines, including former kampong locations, and a former landfill turned wetland.

The launch of Tampines Heritage Trail follows the August 2017 opening of Our Tampines Gallery, a gallery that showcases the heritage of Tampines with a focus on community-contributed stories and collections. Our Tampines Gallery is located within the Tampines Regional

Library at Our Tampines Hub, the first integrated community and lifestyle hub in Singapore. Presented by NHB, the gallery is developed together with the community, and aims to make heritage more accessible and inclusive for everyone. Its inaugural exhibition is titled *Tampines: A History*, and presents an overview of the history of Tampines through maps, photographs and objects.

Download the trail booklet and map at NHB's portal at roots.sg/visit/trails.

You can also catch a glimpse of the Tampines Heritage Trail before you set off at roots.sg/learn/resources/videos.

A HERITAGE PLAN FOR SINGAPORE



Text by Norsaleen Salleh

Deputy Director, Education & Community Outreach, National Heritage Board



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01. *Our SG Heritage Plan engagement session with youths at the Malay Heritage Centre.*

02 & 03. *Our SG Heritage Plan focus group discussion on tangible heritage at The Peranakan Museum.*

In 2018, the National Heritage Board (NHB) will be rolling out a roadmap for the heritage landscape leading up to 2030, with strategies and initiatives that will be reviewed every five years. Through this article, MUSE SG provides an introduction to the plan and explores what it will mean for the future of Singapore's heritage, as well as how it will affect Singaporeans.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF HERITAGE?

In our transient world today, we face economic, social and environmental pressures, as well as numerous other matters that compete for our attention. What, then, is the role of heritage in all of this? How can we ensure that what we hold dear will survive and remain relevant?

Historical buildings and sites, museums and exhibitions, food

and festive celebrations – they all tell stories of where we come from, and who we are today. Because they shape our identity as individuals, members of our communities and Singaporeans, they also help us to navigate an uncertain future, and serve as a legacy that we can leave for future generations. Hence, it is important that we protect and promote our heritage and ensure that it is kept alive for future generations.

NHB will be releasing *Our SG Heritage Plan* in 2018, which will outline the broad strategies for the next five years (2018 – 2022) for the heritage sector in Singapore. The plan has been formulated in close consultation with various heritage stakeholders. It builds on the efforts of past and current cultural plans to support the growing aspirations of Singaporeans to protect and connect to our cherished heritage. Additionally, it seeks to leverage

our heritage and culture to reinforce social bonds, strengthen our identity and inspire the future, as well as to ensure that heritage is made accessible to everyone.

In developing this plan, NHB had engaged more than 730 stakeholders comprising of practitioners, educators, students, academics, volunteers, donors and other members of the public through dialogue sessions held over one year. As a result, qualitative insights and views on matters related to safeguarding, documentation, research, inclusivity, education, promotion and accessibility of heritage were garnered. These ranged across the areas of archaeology, intangible and tangible cultural heritage, museums and collection, and community engagement in heritage. This plan will be shared with Singaporeans through an exhibition that will travel across different parts of the island in January 2018.



04. National Monuments (clockwise from top left): Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall, Former Hill Street Police Station, Central Fire Station, and Former Empress Place Building (now Asian Civilisations Museum), 2015.



04

Some of the key highlights of the Our SG Heritage Plan to look forward to include:

OUR PLACES

Our tangible heritage – buildings and sites in Singapore – have borne witness to the growth of the nation. While we already have 72 National Monuments, and over 7,000 conserved buildings and areas, there is still a need to take heritage into account during urban and social planning and development. This will ensure that our tangible heritage, and the shared memories and stories behind them, will be retained as our country continues to grow and develop in the future.

OUR CULTURE

Intangible cultural heritage refers to our traditions, food and practices, which help us understand our heritage and identity. They are also what make us a uniquely multicultural society. As we keep our cultural heritage alive and acknowledge how it brings us together as a people, we safeguard it for future generations, ensuring that it remains just as relevant to them as it is to us.

OUR TREASURES

Through the display of artefacts, objects and artworks, our museums and cultural institutions provide an important platform for the sharing of Singapore’s history and heritage. By creating greater accessibility to museums and their programmes, we create social spaces where everyone can experience meaningful and diverse perspectives of our history.

OUR COMMUNITY

Our shared heritage is the common thread that binds us as a community. Our partners such as heritage groups, interest groups and volunteers, are critical components in the transmission of our heritage and history. Partnerships and the support of community-driven projects help to encourage ownership of our heritage, and ensure greater sustainability in the promotion and preservation of our heritage. We also hope to nurture a love for heritage at a young age, and encourage future generations to discover their own roots and take pride in their heritage.

We will continue to explore ways to empower our partners through the co-curation of heritage content, providing resources to support more ground-up projects, and working with volunteers and donors to give back to the community through heritage.

Visit the Our SG Heritage Plan travelling exhibition at the following venues –
 8 January to 14 January: Raffles City
 15 January to 21 January: HDB Hub Mall @ Toa Payoh
 22 January to 28 January: Lot One Shoppers’ Mall
 29 January to 4 February: Our Tampines Hub

This exhibition introduces Our SG Heritage Plan, which charts the direction of Singapore’s heritage for the next five years and beyond. At the exhibition, members of the public will get to join the conversation on heritage by sharing their thoughts and suggestions.

Find out more at oursgheritage.sg and connect with us at [#OurSGHeritage](https://twitter.com/OurSGHeritage). For feedback or queries on Our SG Heritage Plan, please drop us a line at oursgheritage@nhb.gov.sg.

THE HERITAGE EXPLORERS PROGRAMME



SPARKING INTEREST IN MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE FROM A YOUNG AGE

Text by Asmah Alias

Deputy Director, Education and Community Outreach, National Heritage Board

Nurliyana Halid

Manager, Education and Community Outreach, National Heritage Board



01. Heritage Explorers Badges.
02. A resource developed with funds from MCCY.

01

The International Council of Museums Committee for Education and Cultural Action (ICOM CECA) Best Practice Award is conferred to the best practice museum education projects around the world. The Heritage Explorers Programme by the National Heritage Board (NHB) has been awarded the 2017 ICOM CECA Best Practice Award alongside international museums such as the Musée du Louvre and the National Maritime Museum (Amsterdam).

This programme encourages the exploration and discovery of Singapore’s history and heritage, beyond the museums’ walls and school textbooks in fun and immersive ways.

Targeted at primary school students from the ages of 7 to 12, the programme aims to raise awareness of personal, community and national heritage through creative role-play.

Students can choose from five heritage professions: curator, historian, designer, educator and ambassador. Each profession is fleshed out through a set of five tasks, bringing students beyond the classroom to explore their neighbourhoods, national museums, heritage institutions, historic sites and cultural precincts. By completing this series of fun and engaging activities, students are able to earn Heritage Explorers Badges.

Using role-play as a mediation tool encourages empathy and encourages students to think in creative ways. It is also an excellent engagement tool, which allows them to interact with their peers and family members. By completing the tasks in real-world settings, students engage in higher order thinking.

CONCEPTION AND PLANNING OF THE PROGRAMME

As museums broadened their missions and evolved over the last decade, learning became a new and central focus for the various NHB museums. To accomplish this, our museums now have a range of offerings for all ages, including interactive exhibits, lectures, guided tours, school visits, training courses and teacher guides. The complementary Heritage Explorers Programme extends the learning of culture and heritage beyond the museum walls and serves as a teaser to spark students’ curiosity about our museums and heritage sites.

In conceptualising the Heritage Explorers Programme, NHB had to ensure that it was relevant to students’ educational needs, and that it complemented the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) existing efforts in providing a holistic education. Thus tasks given to students were aligned to MOE’s Desired Outcomes of Education, including developing students who



02

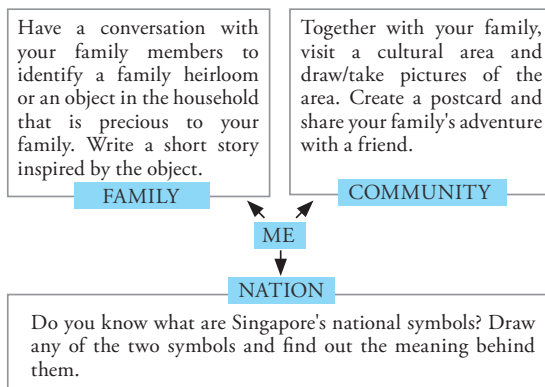
are “concerned citizens rooted to Singapore, proud to be Singaporeans and understand Singapore in relation to the world”.

With funding received from the Arts and Culture Strategic Review grant, administered by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), we developed resources such as:

- Heritage Explorers Programme booklets which contain instructions, tasks and design templates for students
- Educator’s guides providing useful heritage-related links for teachers
- Introductory presentation slides for teachers and students



03



04

The various tasks were designed with a three-tier focus, namely Personal and Family Heritage, Community Heritage and National Heritage.

EXECUTING THE PROGRAMME

The programme was piloted with two primary school schools in 2015. Publicity for the programme then began towards the end of 2015 via calls and direct e-mailers to teachers. We also leveraged on MOE's communication platforms such as the teachers' education portal, newsletters and educational roadshows. For the first run in 2016, more than 40 primary schools with a total of 17,000 students participated in the programme.

EVALUATION AND REMEDIAL PROCESS

During the pilot phase, we worked closely with teachers from the pilot schools to refine the tasks, as well as sought feedback from students and parents. Based on feedback received, the following additional resources were added:

- Samples of past students' works
- A list of heritage-related videos and resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process
- A teacher's resource guide which highlights the linkages to school's curriculum to help teachers map and complement their lesson plans

Students' and teachers' surveys showed that more than 90% of students enjoyed completing the activities. One student shared that he enjoyed role-playing a "Young Designer" because he was able to include his personality and creativity into his design planning.



05



06

03. The three-tier focus of Heritage Explorers Programme.

04. Examples of tasks in relation to the three-tier focus.

05. Incorporation of fun heritage activities into an existing classroom lesson.

06. Family bonding through a parent-child activity at the museum.

The programme's basic framework includes:

- Introduction to the museums and heritage landscape in Singapore, and the heritage professions available
- Opportunities for students to role-play a heritage profession as they go about completing assigned tasks
- Incorporation of fun activities into existing classroom subjects such as Social Studies and National Education
- Opportunities for family bonding through parent-child activities
- Awarding of heritage explorers badges for students who complete the assigned tasks

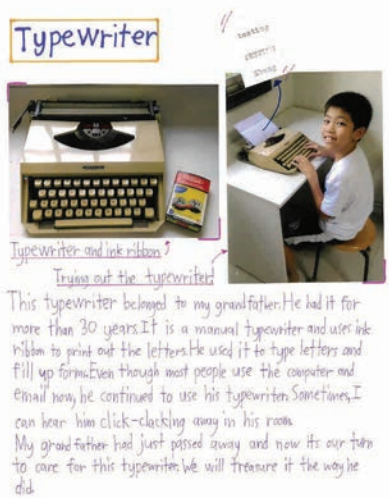
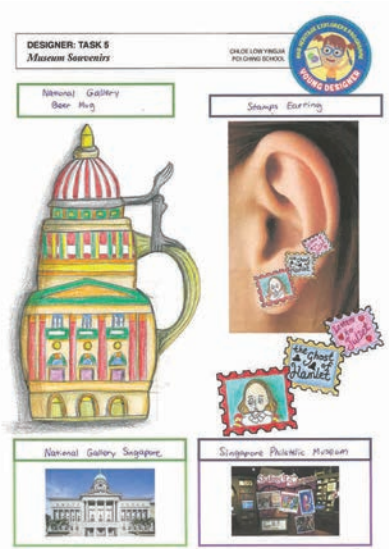
A similar percentage of students also expressed greater awareness of heritage professions through the programme and expressed interest to find out more about their family, community and nation's history and heritage. They said that the activities gave them opportunities to interact with their classmates, learn about different cultures, as well as bond with their family as they "got to find out more about how their parents and grandparents grew up".

98% of the teachers surveyed indicated that the students benefitted from the programme and that they would continue to participate in the programme in coming years. Teachers also said that the programme was aligned to school and MOE goals in developing self-directed learning and awareness of the world around them through heritage, and that it provided students with a platform to exercise "21st century skills".

NHB's aim with all the positive feedback is to reach all 190 primary schools by 2020. We are also currently working to include more professions in the list for future runs and are planning to develop a similar programme tailored for older students aged 13 to 16 years.

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Evaluation criteria for publication: Originality and relevance of the text proposed; theoretical consistency with the thematic areas of the collection, methodology and appropriateness of the research tools; language correctness and impact of analyses.



08



09

07. Samples of students' works.

08 & 09. Students playing traditional games that their parents and grandparents used to play.

LIGHTS, SOUND, ACTION!



Text by Jeanne Tai
Freelance writer

Photo on this page
Broadcast Professional Pte Ltd is the official system integration partner of Story of the Forest, on display at the National Museum of Singapore. Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore.

Mr Ronald Goh shares why he considers it his national duty to ensure that centuries-old heritage buildings stay relevant and maintain their wow factor.



01. *Mr Ronald Goh at the National Museum of Singapore. Courtesy of Broadcast Professional Pte Ltd.*

Mr Ronald Goh makes a bold statement during his interview. “Those born in my era, after the war, lived in the best time of all humankind,” declares the 73-year-old managing director of Broadcast Professional. Baby boomers, he explains, experienced modernisation, but also the “old world charm” of the past.

In Mr Goh's books, this was when life meandered at a gentler pace, when kids climbed trees for fun, and when Singapore's kampong spirit thrived. “Old world charm” is a phrase he mentions repeatedly when discussing heritage, a topic he's passionate about – and which runs in his blood.

Mr Goh's father was a self-made man who started audio-visual solutions provider firm, Electronics & Engineering Pte Ltd, in 1951. It is the mother company of Broadcast Professional. Even as a teen, it was expected that Mr Goh would join the business. “Being the eldest son, you had no choice,” he shares. “My dad told me, ‘The company will be your university. You will learn and excel just as well if you work hard.’”

Over the years, the Goh family established themselves by providing turnkey audio-visual solutions to iconic buildings in Singapore. These included titans in the local arts and heritage scene, such as the National Theatre, the Esplanade, Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, and the National Museum of Singapore.

Mr Goh's experience has given him a unique vantage point between engineering and the arts. He is both a technical expert and a cultural commentator; able to dive into the intricacies of projection systems, yet, in the same breath, discuss how century-old heritage buildings can retain their relevance.

"A building comes alive with what you put inside of it – the lights, the sounds," he explains. "When that happens, people don't feel that it's a dead structure and will start to appreciate what is inside, be it the art or the history."

THE WOW FACTOR

If walls and pillars represent the skin of a building, then visual and audio systems are its lifeblood. These elements animate a place, giving it a living, breathing pulse, able to strike visitors' emotional touch points – ensuring that they come back again.

Mr Goh is serious about providing this pulse to local heritage buildings, even if it means going beyond the boundaries of work. "The National Museum is part of our history, our heritage," he says. "The facilities must complement what we stand for as Singaporeans. I treat this as my national service."

This national service was activated for the stunning digital art installation, "Story of the Forest" by Japanese art collective TeamLab that opened in December 2016 at the National Museum. The installation draws inspiration from the museum's prized William Farquhar Collection of Natural

History Drawings, using art and technology to immerse visitors in the landscape of 19th century Malaya.

Broadcast Professional's role was to bring TeamLab's ideas to life – to design, install and supply technologies that would support a spectacular show. It was a complex job requiring the installation of 59 projectors, motion sensors, servers and sound systems, all functioning in perfect synchronicity.

Not only did Broadcast Professional successfully integrate these systems, Mr Goh even underwrote part of the project. It constituted one of the many in-kind gifts Mr Goh has made to the National Museum over the years. Earlier this year, he also made a cash donation to commemorate the National Museum of Singapore's 130th anniversary.

The result today is a stunning visual and aural landscape that unfurls over a 170-metre passageway showing a mesmerising meteor shower in a jungle, as well as lush scenes of animals cavorting in a tropical rainstorm. This is the wow factor that Mr Goh speaks of.

OLD-WORLD CHARM

Mr Goh's office abounds with motivational quotes. One of his favourites is: "Seek joy in what you give, not in what you get" – an insight into the businessman's attitude towards philanthropy. Local companies, he feels, can also do their part for Singapore's cultural legacy by adding value to heritage buildings.

Drawing an analogy of a good car needing a good road, Mr Goh believes that the physical hardware of buildings too must accommodate the evolving software of its systems. "If not, the building becomes a white elephant," he says. "If a building remains static, it goes out of fashion. Its facilities become limited. The important thing is to keep them relevant," he reflects.

Mourning the demise of buildings such as the Jubilee Hall, Odeon Theatre, and King's Theatre, Mr Goh believes that heritage buildings have a certain glow about them: "You feel connected to them and they bring good memories. Sometimes, that feeling can even bring tears to a person's eyes."

For those who can, it is almost a moral duty to help preserve the collective memories and legacies that live within heritage buildings. As Mr Goh puts it: "We have to maintain the building's functionality to the highest level, so patrons can continue to enjoy that glow, that warmth... that old-world charm."

A FIRST-CLASS SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE



Text by Jeanne Tai
Freelance writer

Photo on this page
*NHB's advertisement
featured at CAG's in-
airport media spaces at
Arrival precinct.*

01. Ms Teo Chew Hoon receiving the Patron of Heritage Award from Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Ms Grace Fu, at the 2016 Patron of Heritage Awards Ceremony.



01

What does the world's most awarded airport have in common with the heritage sector? A commitment to telling the Singapore story.

The best airport in the world is also a big advocate of the arts and heritage. Last year, Changi Airport Group (CAG) inked a deal with the National Heritage Board (NHB) to provide complimentary media spaces across its terminals until the year 2018.

In effect, CAG gifted prime advertising spots worth a six-figure price tag – enabling NHB to reach out to the more than 58 million visitors who pass through Changi Airport each year.

DELIVERING THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

On the surface, Changi Airport and NHB may not seem to have much in common. But dig deeper and you'll find that both have a commitment to telling the Singapore story.

“Changi Airport is an integral part of the Singapore experience and a perfect place for visitors to learn more about Singapore,” says Teo Chew Hoon, Group Senior Vice President of CAG's Airside Concessions. “With NHB championing Singapore's arts, heritage and cultural sector, the partnership was a natural fit.”

Every visitor to Singapore passes through Changi Airport's plush, carpeted terminals – giving it an outsized role as a national ambassador. No stranger to this role, Changi Airport renewed its partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board and Singapore Airlines in April 2017 to promote inbound tourism. It has also supported the National Gallery Singapore in various initiatives including the wildly popular Yayoi Kusama exhibition.

Says Teo: “I believe that it's important to understand, appreciate and treasure our roots. From our history, culture to its arts... all these have shaped our nation and its identity. The challenge for us now is, ‘how do we pass these values on to future generations in innovative ways that will resonate with them?’”

A SHOWCASE OF HERITAGE

Responding to the challenge, Changi Airport has recently taken a bold step forward in this direction. The newly-opened Terminal 4 is home to its first permanent showcase of local heritage.

The terminal's much-vaunted Heritage Zone features retail units with Peranakan shophouse-inspired facades. These are further layered with interactive displays, including LED screens that project a cultural mini-theatre show set in 1930s Singapore. There is also a Peranakan Gallery in the transit area featuring artefacts on long-term loan from NHB.

Reflecting on these initiatives, Teo says: “Ultimately, we want to start and end every visit to Singapore in a memorable way.”

THE BUSINESS OF HERITAGE

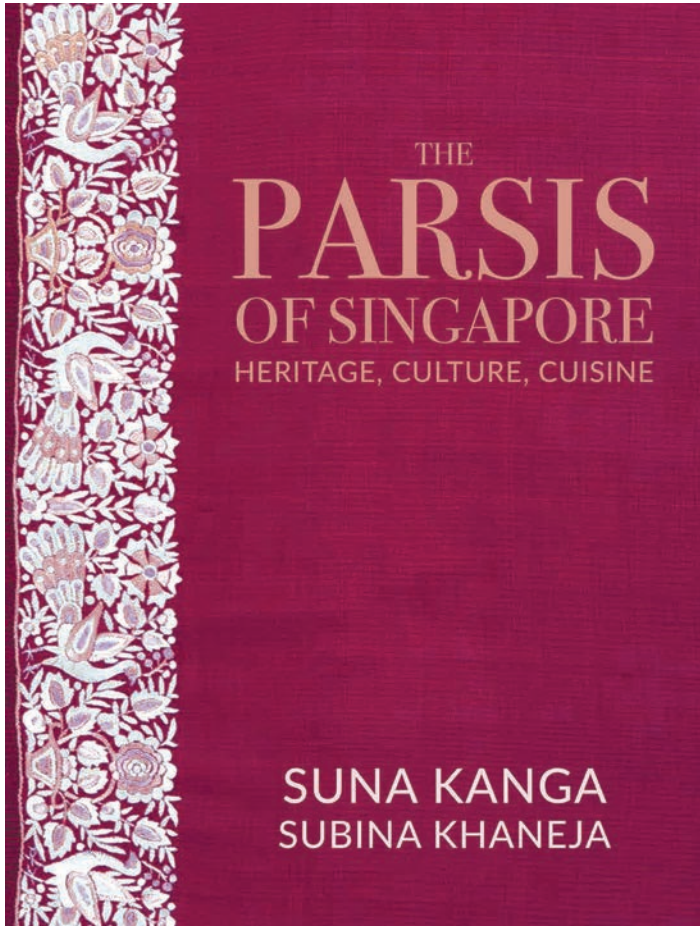
It works out well that curating such experiences sits naturally with CAG's mission of being a first-class brand that continually delights its passengers.

Changi Airport is famously customer-centric. “Passengers have always been at the heart of all that we do. And we believe that delivering the best experience goes beyond state-of-the-art facilities and efficient operations,” shares Teo.

Indeed, while facilities and workflow can be somewhat easier to replicate, creating unique experiences is much more challenging.

Nevertheless, CAG is determined to enrich the passenger's journey through the airport using art installations and retail experiences that “inspire, entertain and educate visitors”. And through its new Terminal 4, CAG has deftly demonstrated how local heritage can be effectively used to deliver such experiences. Furthermore, it also proves that heritage and business needs are not mutually exclusive. They can, in fact, enjoy mutual synergies.

THE PARSIS OF SINGAPORE



HISTORY, CULTURE & CUISINE

Images courtesy of Rustom Kanga and family

Interview by **Matthew Lim**

Assistant Manager, Education & Community Outreach, National Heritage Board

*Images on this page
Book cover of The Parsis of Singapore: Heritage, Culture, Cuisine (left) and dhansak – an all-time favourite Parsi dish, featured on page 197 of the book (right).*



01



02



03

The idea for The Parsis of Singapore: Heritage, Culture, Cuisine germinated with Suna Kanga. After her sad demise, her husband Rustom Kanga took it upon himself to try and complete the book. Subsequently, he was introduced to Subina Aurora Khaneja, who then assisted to complete the book with additional research, writing and photography. MUSE SG speaks to Rustom Kanga and Subina Aurora Khaneja to learn more about the project.

01. Asheesh, Subina, Rustom, Nazneen and Cyrus posing with their copy of *The Parsis of Singapore* during the book's launch, 2017.

02. Decorated Saces (prayer tray) are used for important occasions such as wedding ceremonies, as above, 2016.

03. Suna Kanga and Roshan Mistri in traditional Gara saris, with Singapore's then Ambassador to France, David Marshall, at a Minorities of Singapore workshop conducted as part of the Singapore Heritage Society Conference, 1988.

How did Suna Kanga come to be interested in the heritage of the Parsi community?

The Parsis are a small diminishing community worldwide, with a reputation for hard work, entrepreneurship and philanthropy. The book, *The Parsis of Singapore*, was conceptualised by the late Suna Kanga. Like most Parsis growing up, Suna was told of her glorious heritage, and how her forefathers came by boat from Pars, Persia, and ended up in India. The stories tell how despite difficult conditions,

they managed to preserve their religion and distinctive culture, and set up farms and businesses that flourished over the centuries.

Suna first arrived in Singapore around 40 years ago with her husband. There were then only around 40 Parsis in a total population of about 2.5 million here. Nevertheless, they received a warm welcome by the small Parsi community. Members of the community helped them to settle in, and told them stories about the pioneers who had been



04



05

04. Roosters and peonies are a common motif on garas.

05. Fish are a symbol of good luck in Zoroastrianism, and are commonly seen motifs during auspicious occasions.

in Singapore since the time of Sir Stamford Raffles, the businesses they owned, and the charity work they had done. Their contributions were significant enough for the Singapore Government to even name two roads after them, namely Parsi Road and Mistri Road. These stories instilled in Suna a deep sense of pride and sparked her interest in the heritage of the Parsis of Singapore. As a writer, Suna felt an obligation to capture and record these stories for posterity.

Why did Suna Kanga choose publication as the form to promote this heritage?

The Parsi faith is one of the ten major religions of Singapore represented by the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO). It is also recognised as an official race in Singapore. The Parsis have contributed to Singapore since the early 1800s as professionals, doctors, business owners, and through philanthropy and charity. Yet there is very little awareness of

this community and their distinctive culture, and even less about their contributions to the nation.

Even though a number of papers have been written and speeches given about the history of Parsis in Singapore, these are normally delivered only within the community or to small interest groups. Suna wanted to introduce the rich cultural history, religion, tradition, cuisine and unique way of life of the Parsis to a broader Singaporean audience. She felt that this was best showcased through the book form where it could be properly documented and made available at bookstores and libraries throughout the country.

What was the most memorable part of producing this publication?

It was the ready involvement of members of the community who willingly contributed their stories, newspaper clippings, anecdotes and old family photographs. The enthusiasm of the community could

be felt as we were preparing for our feature on garas, which is the traditional dress of Parsi women.

Essentially a sari adapted from the local women of Gujarat, these were traditionally handed down from mother to daughter during weddings and considered prized possessions. To keep the book firmly rooted in the Singaporean context, we decided to use only garas and furniture from the families here. We were pleasantly surprised to be shown a remarkable collection, and even more thrilled that the families were willing to pose with them for the book's photoshoot.

Other memorable moments included uncovering how Parsi theatre mavericks were involved with the Southeast Asian craft of *wayang* (shadow puppet theatre), discovering advertisements from the 1800s in *The Straits Times* by Parsi companies, as well as the unearthing of the site plans of the Parsee Victoria Theatrical Company at Beach Road inside the National Archives.



06



07

Apart from capturing personal stories from the active community, we also located many previously unknown Parsis in the process, as well as old photographs from families and libraries around the world – all of which provided us with plenty of interesting material to work with.

What would you tell other heritage enthusiasts about documenting and preserving history?

We would urge them to question: “Why is it necessary to preserve our history and document the stories of the past?”, “What would happen and would it matter if we didn’t know any of it?”, and “Which stories are worth preserving and how should we do it?”

As nations develop and new cultures emerge, we need to capture the essence of who we are, where we come from and what the truth is behind our land. It is important to realise that what we do today, affects our history tomorrow. Without

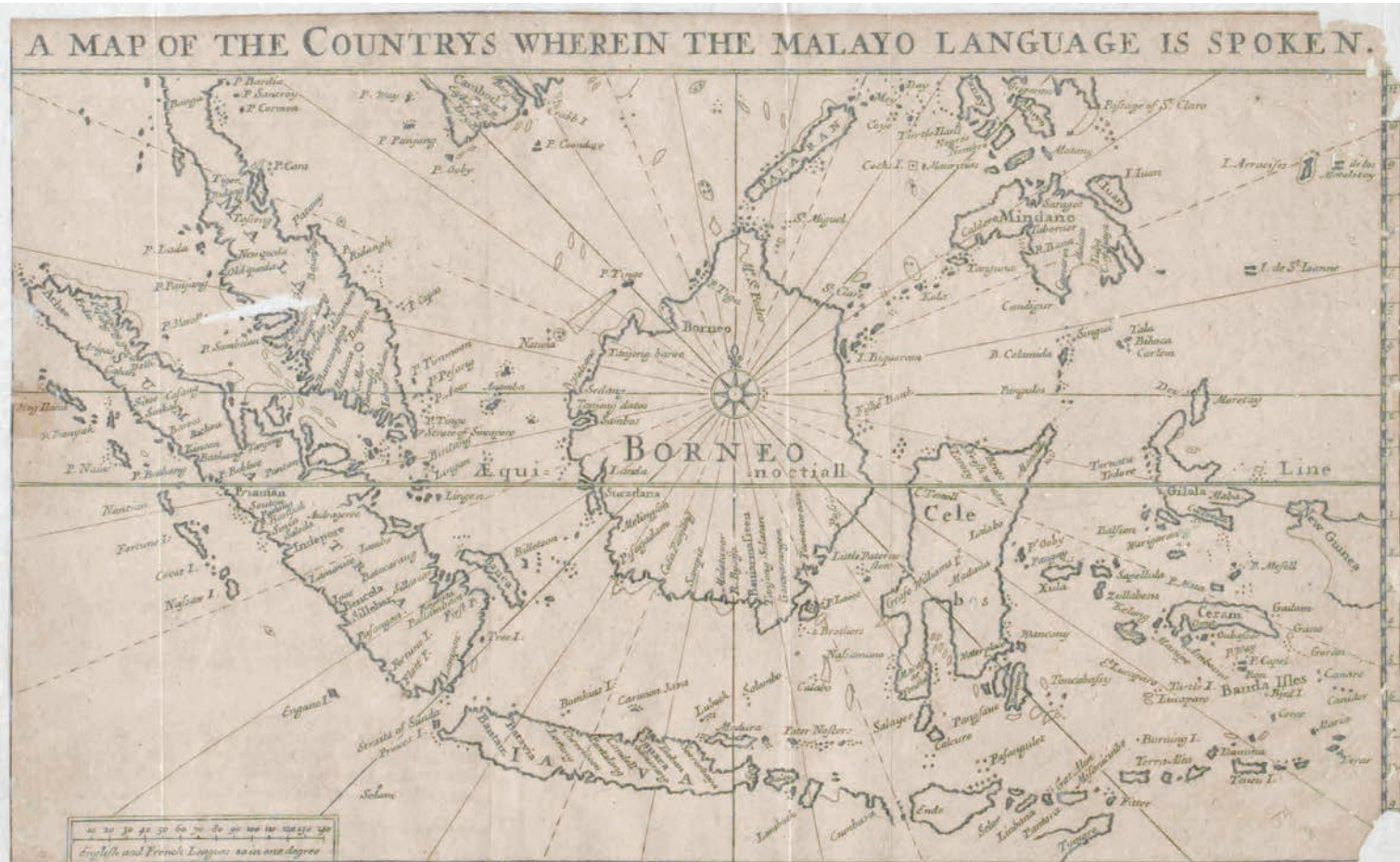
understanding who we are, it is difficult to chart the way forward with any real sense of purpose and conviction.

Through libraries, personal records and anecdotes, and with the online availability of many resources today, it is easier than ever to trace the stories that capture not just the factual, but also the social history of the past. It is important to tell the story from the perspective and point of view of every community to avoid the danger of there being only a single story of the past.

In documenting the history of the Parsis of Singapore, we realise that we have a unique opportunity as a culturally rich country to weave together the different cultural perspectives of Singapore’s past to tell a story of how this land was shaped, and how interactions between the different ethnic groups have contributed to the overall development of the nation.

06 & 07. Parsi recipes such as the Lagan Nu Stew (left) and Ravo semolina pudding (right) are found in the book.

TALES OF THE MALAY WORLD



MANUSCRIPTS AND EARLY BOOKS

Text by Tan Huism

Deputy Director, Content and Services

(Singapore, Southeast Asia and Exhibitions), National Library

*Image on this page
Map from Thomas
Bowrey's 1701 Malay-
English dictionary.
Collection of National
Library of Singapore,
B03061459F.*



01



02

“One day a clerk named Ibrahim came to my house and mentioned in conversation that Mr Raffles was looking for Malay clerks with a good hand, and he wanted to buy Malay documents and romances of olden times.”

- *Hikayat Abdullah*, 1849. Translated by Ian Proudfoot.

01. *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah*, 29
Jamadilakhir 1220
(22 September, 1805). Copied by Muhammad Kasim. Collection of the British Library, MSS Malay B.6.

02. *Hikayat Perang Pandawa Jaya*,
22 Syaaban, 1219
(25 November, 1804). Copied by Muhammad Kasim. Collection of the British Library, MSS Malay B 12.

In some of the European libraries today, you will find Malay manuscripts which were brought there by scholars, missionaries and administrators from colonial times. In the National Library’s latest exhibition, *Tales of the Malay World: Manuscripts and Early Books*, visitors have the opportunity to view rare books from the holdings of three important European institutions: the British Library; the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland; and Leiden University Library. For the first time, many of these manuscripts are returning to the region in which they were originally written. Together with the National Library’s Rare Materials Collection, these artefacts tell fascinating stories of the societies that wrote and read them.

While people today tend to perceive reading as primarily a

visual act, written Malay works were traditionally experienced orally and aurally. The reading of manuscripts aloud to an audience is mentioned in various old Malay manuscripts. A well-known episode in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (Genealogy of Kings) relates how the nobles of Melaka requested for the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah* (image 01) to be read to them on the eve of their battle with the invading Portuguese. Intended to spur valour, the *hikayat* (narrative tale) relates the romanticised exploits of the Islamic warrior Muhammad Hanafiah, half-brother of Prophet Muhammad’s grandsons. To emphasise the oral-aural experience of Malay manuscripts, this exhibition features a recitation of this episode from the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, as well as the singing of two works of *syair* (poetry).



03

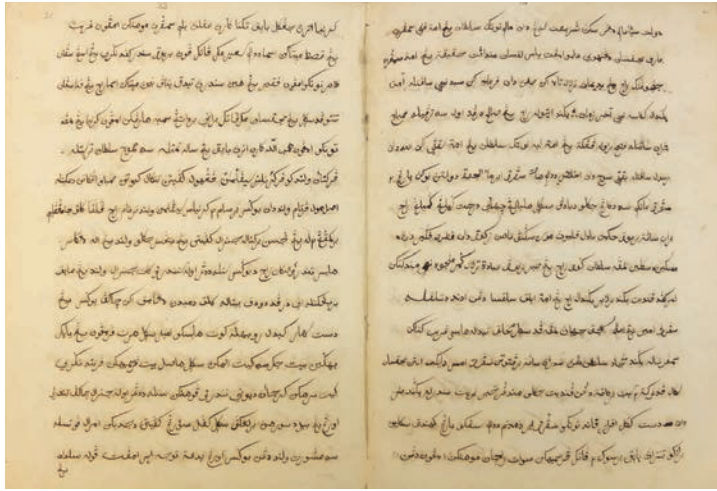
03. *Daftar Sejarah Cirebon*, AH 1230 (1814-15). Probably Java. Collection of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Raffles Malay 30.

WORLD OF MALAY LITERARY MANUSCRIPTS

Our understanding of traditional Malay written literature depends largely on what has survived. Except for a few written in southern Sumatran scripts, almost all extant Malay manuscripts are written in Jawi (modified Arabic script). Islam played a prominent role in the development of the Malay written literary tradition. The earliest literary works are believed to have been created in the 14th

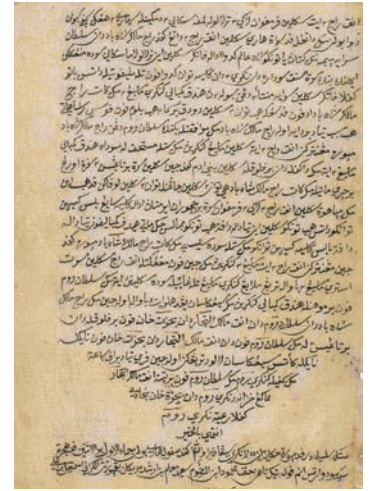
century, after the arrival of Islam in the region, and they even include stories with Hindu-Buddhist influences like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (image 02). This exhibition introduces visitors to various kinds of literary works such as court chronicles that trace the genealogy of ruling families (image 03), romantic and historical poetry (image 04), fantastical adventure stories and Sufi tales (image 05). Generally, the terms referring to these literary works include *salasilah* (genealogy), *hikayat* and *syair*.

04. *Syair Perang Mengkasar*, 1710. Copied by Cornelia Valentijn. Ambon. Collection of the Leiden University Library, Cod. Or 1626.



04

05. *Cetra Empat Orang Faqir*, AH 1263 (1846-47). Copied by Ismail bin Ali. Singapore. Collection of the National Library of Singapore, B162833801.



05

06. *Hikayat Nabi Yusuf*, 5 Ramadan, 1216 (9 January, 1802). Copied by Lebai Muhammad with illuminations by Cik Mak Tuk Muda. Collection of The British Library, MSS Malay D 4.



06

The majority of these works are anonymous and undated, which makes it difficult for scholars to trace the development of Malay traditional literature. Those that contain additional information provide rare glimpses into the production of manuscripts and their readers. For example, the only

known manuscript that contains an inscription of the artist's name – Cik Mat (Muhammad) Tuk Muda, son of Raja Jendra Wangsa, from Kayangan, Perlis (image 06) – also has a note in which the owner Cik Candra implores readers to take good care of the manuscript. Lending libraries were established

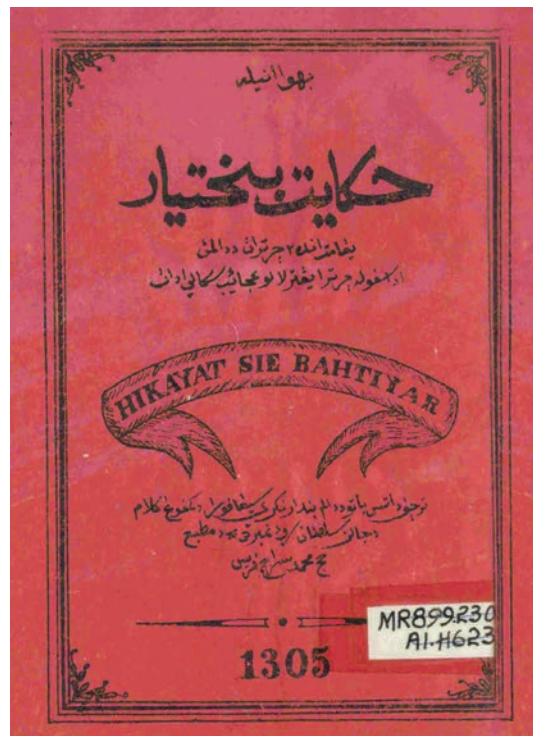
in various urban centres in the 19th century. This exhibition features a few examples of such manuscripts for loan, such as the popular *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati*, a Panji tale copied by Muhammad Bakir, whose family ran a lending library in Batavia (Jakarta) from the mid to late 19th century.

07. *Hikayat Parang Puting*, 29 Syawal, 1220 (20 January, 1806). Copied by Ibrahim Kandu for Stamford Raffles. Penang. Collection of the British Library, MSS Malay D 3.



07

08. *Hikayat Bakhtiar*, 25 Rabiulakhir, 1305 (9 January, 1888). Printed by Haji Muhammad Siraj. Collection of the National Library of Singapore, B03013464J.



08

MARKET FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Traditionally, access to manuscripts was limited, as they were held at the courts, by feudal chiefs or storytellers. Scholars have mostly credited Stamford Raffles (1781-1826) for creating a public market for Malay written texts. He started buying manuscripts in a way similar to how he collected natural history specimens, and even hired a team of six scribes to copy texts that he had borrowed. In this exhibition, there is a *hikayat* (image 07) that was copied by one of Raffles’s scribes, Ibrahim Kandu, a Chulia who lived on the Prince of Wales Island (Penang). The British were not the only Europeans actively collecting; the Dutch were also collecting in earnest. European administrators and scholars collected Malay manuscripts to learn the language and understand the culture, so as

to better administer the region or to fulfil missionary purposes.

FROM WRITTEN TO PRINTED

The adoption of the lithographic press by Malay/Muslim printers from the mid-19th century onwards had a dramatic effect on the manuscript tradition. Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (c. 1797-1854), better known as Munshi Abdullah, is considered a pioneer of Malay printing. He had learnt printing from the English missionary, Walter Medhurst (1796-1857) while in Melaka, and was involved in various mission publications as either translator or editor. Abdullah even composed new works to be printed, becoming the first non-European to have his work printed in Malay.

From the mid-19th century, Singapore, or more specifically

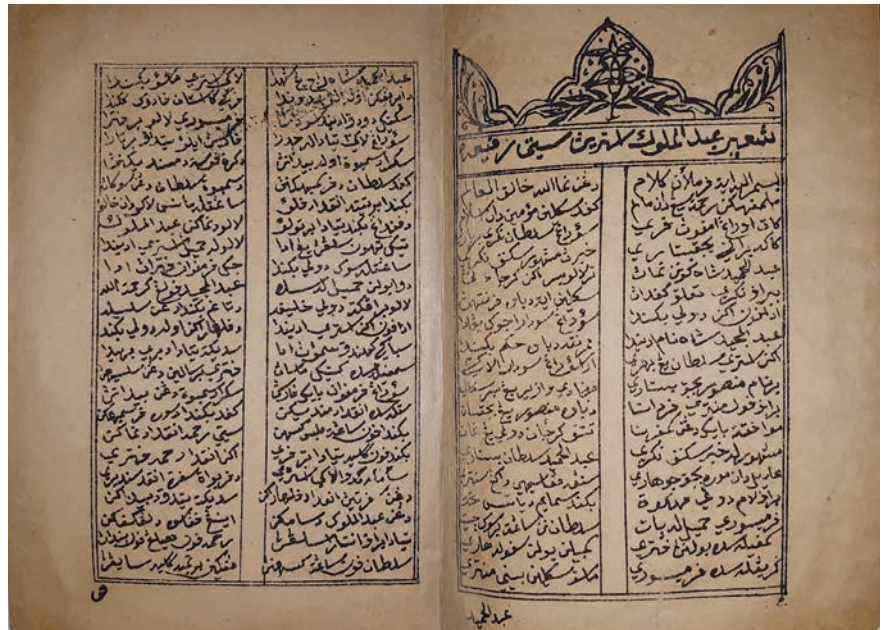
Kampong Gelam, grew to become an important printing hub for Malay/Islamic books that were distributed throughout the Malay world. Lithography basically reproduced the manuscript format, but enabled multiple copies to be produced economically. Like their manuscript counterparts, these early mass-produced printed *hikayat* and *syair* were also recited or sung for an audience. However, one important difference is that these printed texts were now widely available for sale. By the turn of the 20th century, however, Singapore printers had begun to decline as the local and regional markets saw an influx of Malay books from Bombay, Cairo, Mecca and Istanbul. In this exhibition, visitors will discover prominent printers (image 08), their marketing tactics, and their bestselling titles (image 09).

ENDURING STORIES

While many of us in Singapore may not be familiar with traditional Malay literature, there are some stories that have endured through the centuries. This exhibition explores three such literary works: *Sulalat al-Salatin* (Genealogy of Kings; popularly known as the *Sejarah Melayu*), *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Tale of Hang Tuah) and *Hikayat Pelanduk Jenaka* (Tale of the Wily Mousedeer). All three works have been adapted as novels, comics, plays or films. Of interest to Singaporeans will be the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, which contains a legend about early Singapore and how it got its name. The popular tale about the attack of the garfish can also be found in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. Visitors will be able to view the earliest manuscripts of *Sulalat al-Salatin* (known to scholars as “Raffles 18”; image 10) and the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* in physical form, as well as through a retelling on the silver screen.



Visit Tales of the Malay World: Manuscripts and Early Books at the National Library until 25 February, 2018. For more information, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg/exhibitions/.



09

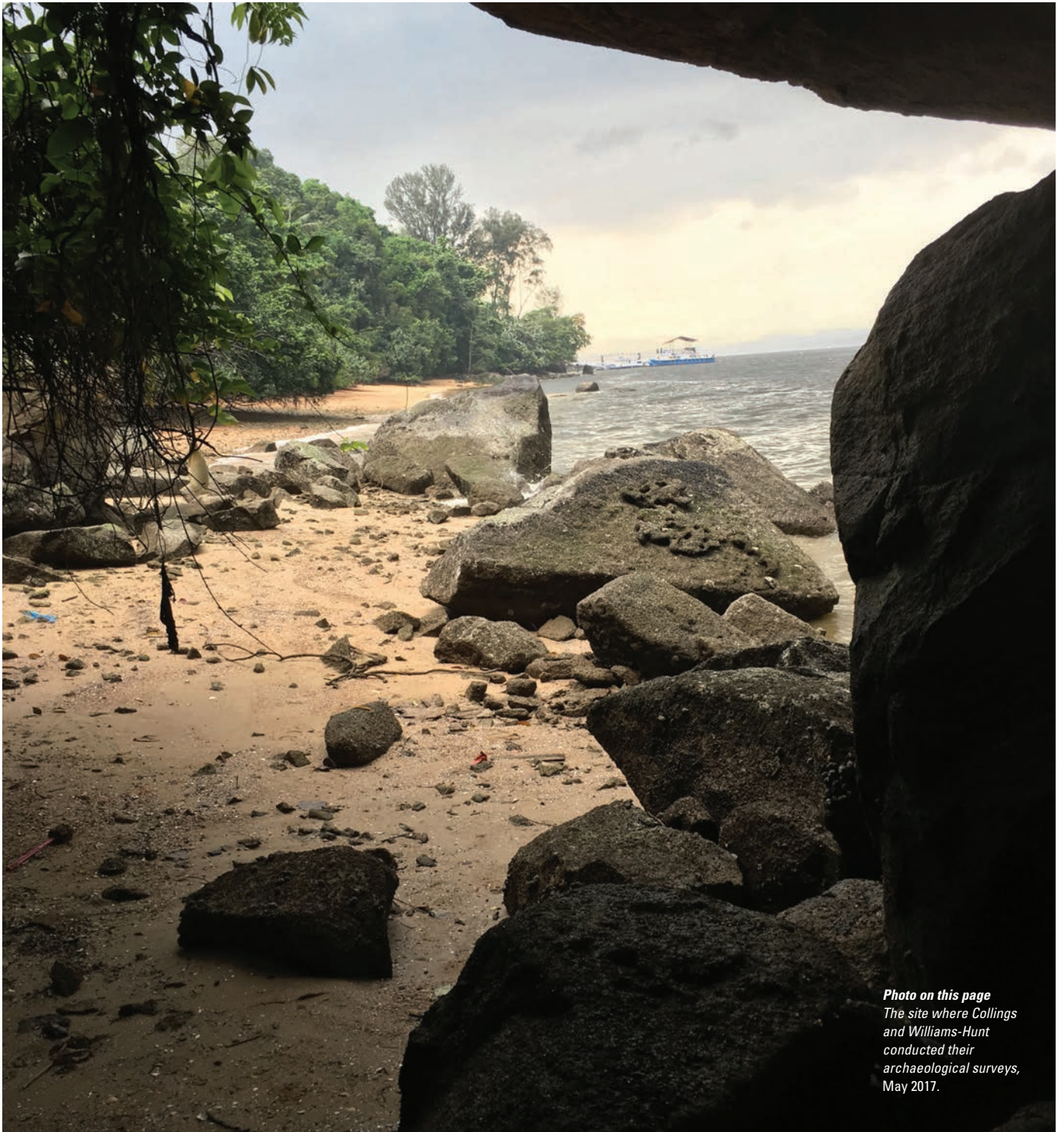


10

- 09. *Syair Abdul Muluk Isterinya Siti Rafi'ah*, 5 Zulkaedah, 1311 (9 May, 1894). Printed by Haji Muhammad Amin. Singapore. Collection of National Library of Singapore, B29362100A.
- 10. *Sulalat al-Salatin*, probably 17th century. Collection of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Raffles M18.

IN SEARCH OF PREHISTORIC SINGAPORE

Images courtesy of Sharon Lim and Dr David Clinnick



*Photo on this page
The site where Collings
and Williams-Hunt
conducted their
archaeological surveys,
May 2017.*

Dr David Clinnick was a recipient of the 2016 George Hicks Fellowship at the National Library. His research looks at prehistoric materials from the Malay Peninsula collected by the Raffles Museum (predecessor of the National Museum of Singapore). *Sharon Lim* is an Assistant Curator at the National Museum of Singapore. Her research interest lies in the National Museum's institutional and collections history.

As part of Dr Clinnick's research, Sharon facilitated access to the National Museum's archaeological collection at the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC). At HCC, Dr Clinnick and Sharon came across stone tools from Pulau Ubin collected by the Raffles Museum curators in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which inspired them to trace the original survey area at Pulau Ubin.

Many people would be familiar with the Singapore Stone, a fragment of a large sandstone slab that once stood at the mouth of the Singapore River. While no one has been able to decipher the inscriptions on this stone, this artefact provides a tangible link which connects Singaporeans with a history that began in the 14th century. Archaeologists have since uncovered more artefacts that tell us more about life in the Temasek period prior to the arrival of the British in the 19th century – but are we able to stretch Singapore's history even further back to the prehistoric era?

In the late 1940s, curators from the Raffles Museum (now the National Museum of Singapore) embarked on archaeological research in Singapore to paint a comprehensive picture of prehistoric Malaya. Aware that the main island of Singapore itself was a highly disturbed area unsuitable for archaeological purposes, they turned their focus to Pulau Ubin, a small island situated northeast of Singapore in the Straits of Johor. Their efforts paid off, as stone tools were recovered from Pulau Ubin. Records show that these archaeological materials were later accessioned into the Raffles Museum collection in 1948 and 1952.

NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT ON PULAU UBIN

In prehistoric societies, making tools from stone was an important human activity. These tools were used for subsistence activities, food preparation and turning materials such as wood, bark, vegetable fibres and animal skins into useful objects. Interestingly, archaeological material collected from Pulau Ubin included the adze, which is a type of cutting tool similar to an axe. Even today, adzes form part of a woodworking toolkit, although they are now made of steel rather than stone.

Based on comparative analysis, it seems that the stone tools are Neolithic – a term used by archaeologists to denote the earliest period of farming and animal husbandry. This time period differs across the world. For example, the Neolithic period began over 10,000 years ago in the Middle East, whereas for Southeast Asia, it only began around 6,000 years ago.

The adzes recovered from Pulau Ubin were mostly flaked with ground edges, and are believed to be either from the late Hoabinian (an ancient hunter-gatherer group) or early Neolithic culture, since stone tools from the late Neolithic period would have evolved into well-



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02

01 & 02. Ground edges of the adzes found on Pulau Ubin, May 2017. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore.



03. Neolithic stone tools collected by the Raffles Museum in 1948 and 1952.

03

finished symmetrical objects with smooth surfaces. Given the physical features of the tools discovered and the fact that the stone adze was the most characteristic tool of the Southeast Asian Neolithic period, the site at Pulau Ubin is estimated to be at least 3,000 years old.

With the number of adzes recovered from the beach, it also appears that the final stages of manufacture were completed at this site, and that it may have served as a residential location during the Neolithic period.

Similar stone tools have also been found near Tanjung Bunga, on the west coast of the Straits of Johor. This site was discovered in 1919 by Engku Abdul-Aziz, then Dato Menteri (Minister) of Johor. Based on a comparison of the finds in Pulau Ubin and Tanjung Bunga, curators concluded that there were indeed prehistoric sites in the south of Johor. So far though, these two sites are the only places where implements belonging to the Neolithic period have been recovered.

One problem of being in the tropics is that the settlement sites and organic material used by our ancient ancestors in Pulau Ubin would have decomposed quickly over time. The wood houses that they lived in would also not have been able to survive the corrosive action of tropical soils. Nevertheless, a careful and systematic excavation of the site on Pulau Ubin may enable archaeologists to determine the outline of potential structures and houses through the observation of subtle changes in soil colour and texture. So, while the surviving stone tools may not paint a complete picture of the Neolithic lifestyle, they certainly point to the likelihood of prehistoric occupation in Singapore and its surroundings.

1949 EXCAVATION OF PULAU UBIN

Following the discovery of Neolithic materials on Pulau Ubin in 1948, the Raffles Museum worked quickly to begin on-site investigations. These were conducted by Hubert Dennis Collings, Assistant Curator at the Raffles Museum, and Major

Peter Darrel Rider Williams-Hunt, who was responsible for bringing the site to the attention of the Raffles Museum.

Cambridge-educated Collings' training in anthropology provided the Raffles Museum with subject expertise in the field of archaeological research. It is recorded that while serving his earlier appointment as the first Advisor to the Aborigines in Malaya, Williams-Hunt continued to pursue his archaeological interests with shoreline surveys of Singapore and Johor.

Unfortunately though, this small-scale excavation attempt in 1949 by Collings and Williams-Hunt did not yield any artefacts, while the field notes which may have included information on the exact location of any test units are lost at present. It is believed that the Pulau Ubin field notes could have been part of the auction lot of the Collings collection that was sold by Bonhams in 2009, along with George Orwell's love letters to Mrs Collings.

Since Collings and Williams-Hunt's survey of Ubin in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there have been no further archaeological studies conducted in Ubin. The 1950s was a period of decolonisation, sweeping the Raffles Museum up in winds of socio-political change. This resulted in a curatorial shift for the museum as it could no longer function as an apparatus that only conducted scientific research on colonial territories. Its renaming from Raffles Museum to the National Museum in 1960 also heralded the start of a new era, where the institution began to serve nation-building purposes. Consequently, archaeological activities and acquisitions by the museum collection decreased significantly from its peak in the 1930s and 1940s.

A RETURN VISIT

Close to seven decades later, archaeologist Dr David Clinnick and I decided to retrace the steps of our Raffles Museum predecessors. Referring to the curator's notes that came with the Neolithic stone tools, we managed to trace the rough location of the recovery site to the far western end of Pulau Ubin.

On 5 May, 2017, Dr Clinnick and I headed to the beach that was surveyed by Collings and Williams-Hunt. A survey was conducted on foot along the beach, where natural rock formations were abundant, but no artefacts were noted. We then crossed over onto a level stretch of elevated land above the beach, which had been cleared of vegetation by a wildfire in 2014. As we were leaving the area, Dr Clinnick noticed several pieces of cracked angular basalt eroding out of the surface and collected two pieces for observation. At least

one of the collected basalt samples appeared to have been chipped and flaked by humans into what looked like a roughout of an adze.

Based on visual observation, the sample collected by Dr Clinnick appears to be of the same material as the Neolithic stone tools collected by the Raffles Museum in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The raw material is dark in colour and fine-grained with some striations, and may therefore be basalt or dacite. While we are unaware of any basalt sources on Pulau Ubin, the material could have come from a basalt source in Java or further up the Malay Peninsula.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Given the close proximity of the earlier Neolithic finds by the Raffles Museum, along with the similarities in materials of our recent findings, Dr Clinnick is of the view that our exploration site was the same archaeological site that Collings and Williams-Hunt searched for, but could not locate. It is likely that the Neolithic stone tools collected

by the Raffles Museum had eroded out of the land surface above the beach where the recent samples were collected from. This explains why no below-ground finds were reported if Collings and Williams-Hunt had only excavated along the beach in 1949.

Pulau Ubin is known today for its greenery and rustic charm, with its preserved 1960s kampong (village) houses. However, the island offers more than just a nostalgic throwback. There is great potential in conducting further archaeological research on the island based on the work that the Raffles Museum started more than half a century ago. Not only would it shed light on the prospect of an earlier prehistoric settlement on Singapore, it could also prove to be highly important in helping us understand the spread of the Neolithic to the Malay Peninsula. Simply put, archaeological finds on Pulau Ubin could potentially extend the history of Singapore much further back in time than the Singapore Stone, by 3,000 years or more.



04. Archaeologist David Clinnick studying the raw material of two samples collected from Pulau Ubin, May 2017.

04

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION CENTRE



Images courtesy of Alex Soo & Heritage Conservation Centre

*Photo on this page
HCC's Textiles
Conservation section
preparing an artefact
for exhibition, 2016.*



01. Inspecting the 19th-century coral red kamcheng.

01

Tan Xue Miao is an Assistant Manager for Collections Management based at the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC), a state-of-the-art storage facility for our National Collection, and home to more than 200,000 pieces of priceless heritage and cultural treasures. As a collections officer, she is responsible for the care of the long-term storage of our National Collection, and ensures the maintenance of a safe and efficient collection storage environment. MUSE SG speaks to Xue Miao to learn more about this unique role that she plays.

What is the day-to-day life of a collections officer like?

One of the things I love most about my role is that no two days are the same – every day is different, yet equally challenging and exciting. I can be sitting at my desk keying information into the collection database in the day, and then working on artefact storage in the stores in the afternoon. On some days, I might also be spotted in museums providing support for exhibitions, or assisting with the de-installation of works. There are also days where I would be working on the ground with art handlers, or working alongside conservators and curators. There is no standard routine for me, but this is what keeps me motivated and charged for work.

What was your most memorable day in HCC?

That was the day when I had the chance to handle an artefact for the very first time! I have always been an avid museum goer, and I always make it a point to visit museums whenever I travel. To be able to switch from the usual museum visitor point of view to that of someone physically handling artefacts felt pretty surreal. I remember feeling a mixture of nervousness and excitement while grasping a 19th century ceramic teapot. It was a new feeling being able to admire its intricate motifs and detailing up-close. I guess this is the part of my job where the feeling of unbelievable wonder still occasionally sets in – being in such close proximity with artefacts that offer a sneak peek into history and culture.

Was there any particular artefact that really stood out for you?

It was this beautiful 19th-century coral red kamcheng. A kamcheng is a storage jar, and is a prominent porcelain ware found in most Peranakan households. It is used to store food items, and is also commonly used in Peranakan wedding ceremonies. I have always been captivated by the intricacy of Peranakan craftsmanship – whether beadwork embroidery or tiles or clothing – their lavishness is perpetuated in almost everything that they use. This particular kamcheng caught my attention because of its vivid colours and its decorative motifs, with its rim being lined with the auspicious Eight Buddhist Emblems, and its lid bearing a crouching Buddhist lion-dog.

What do you think defines the values of HCC?

Three words: integrity, passion and detail-oriented.

Integrity – As guardians of the National Collection of Singapore, it is important to have accountability in everything we do, and it's also important to stick to standard work procedures to ensure that everything is accounted for properly and accurately. HCC also encourages open communication between co-workers, which ensures transparency.

Passion – I find that with passion, we push ourselves to do the best that we can. Everyone here is very willing to teach and share knowledge with one another, making it a continuous learning journey every day. With passion also comes positivity, which makes our days so much more enjoyable doing what we love.

Detail-oriented – Ever since I joined HCC, I've gained a whole new perspective of how much work is put into caring for our National Collection. Every aspect of the artefact is taken into consideration, down to the smallest detail. For instance, we may spend hours preparing a newly acquired object for storage. For garments, we create interleaves using unbuffered acid-free tissue paper for surfaces that come into contact with one another, to prevent abrasion between the textile surfaces and to allow the garment to retain its 3D structure. We also do careful inspection of the garment's condition, taking note of any creases, weakened spots, embellishments or stains.

Could you share the importance of conserving and collecting Singapore's history and heritage?

I feel that in this fast-changing world where cultural transformation is taking place faster than ever before, it is of utmost importance to conserve and collect Singapore's history and heritage. This will help to ground Singaporeans in a sense of identity and belonging as we move into the future. Singapore's rich and diverse multi-cultural

heritage allows us to distinguish ourselves, by being united in the midst of diversity. By collecting these stories and memories from our past, we are able to catch a glimpse of Singapore's history, a reminder of who we are. It is therefore very heartwarming to see that there are increasing efforts to preserve Singapore's history, to maintain the delicate balance between heritage and modernity.

PROMISES TO THE ARTEFACT**By Vanessa Liew***Assistant Conservator, Heritage Conservation Centre, National Heritage Board*

*Across the white table you lay
Stained by history, wrinkled with age
You have faith in me to smooth your creases and patch your losses
Make you stable
And display you as you are meant to be seen by adoring masses*

*Try as I may
I promise to do my very best
To let you tell me how you want to be treated
To be patient, even when you are not the easiest to handle
To envision where every stitch will go before the needle ever pierces you
I do not want to inflict more pain than you have already suffered*

*Most of all, I promise to never give you more than you require
If ever more skilful hands come across you
My work can be undone, its traces only to be found in the written word*

*Dear artefact, lastly I promise to remember:
You do not belong to me, but to an entire nation
Your existence is the reason I am here
To care for you is to earn my daily bread
To treat you as you deserve to be treated is my conservator's creed*

*Dedicated to the HCC Textiles Conservation Section, especially Miki Komatsu.
Because of all they have taught me, so I am.*

Special thanks to Esther Ng.

CALDECOTT THROUGH THE YEARS



Text by Elizabeth Tang

Manager, Strategic Communications & Digital, National Heritage Board

Marshall Penafort

Manager, Heritage Research and Assessment, National Heritage Board

Dr John Kwok

Assistant Director, Heritage Research and Assessment, National Heritage Board

*Photo on this page
Caldecott Hill, 2017.*

For the past 80 years, you have known it as the stomping ground of Singapore's best-loved television and radio stars, and where television classics such as *Under One Roof*, *The Unbeatables* and *The Little Nyonya* were created.

What is lesser known is Caldecott Hill's long history that predates the arrival of radio and television to our shores. The hill was named after Sir Andrew Caldecott, the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements in the 1930s, and its surrounding roads, named after members of his family, namely Lady Olive, and their children, Joan and John.

THOMSON'S ROADS

In the 1800s, long before the arrival of the Housing & Development Board and modern urban planners, Caldecott was part of the larger Toa Payoh district, where it was largely an undeveloped marshland.

All that changed when Englishman John Turnbull Thomson arrived in Singapore in 1841 as Government Surveyor. Thomson put together the very first maps of Singapore's town centre and engineered the building of Thomson Road amongst his several important contributions during his 12 years in Singapore.

Under Thomson's charge, proper roads were built through the Toa Payoh district, which changed the composition of the area entirely. The roads enabled access to areas that were previously impassable, and allowed the surrounding rural lands to be developed.

SEAH'S LEGACY

Seah Eu Chin, also popularly known as "the king of pepper and gambier", was a Chinese immigrant who made a fortune from trading in pepper and gambier during the 19th century. Back then, the Thomson and Caldecott area was a place where rich businessmen

set up plantation houses and grew crops. Among them was Seah Eu Chin. Legal documents show that his family owned much of the Caldecott district at different points in history, and lived in the area. In fact, the Seah family had built two large bungalows there, one of which was called E Choon, where a grand ball was held for prominent Europeans and Chinese guests. This attracted much attention because it was the first time a large gathering of Europeans and Chinese participated in a grand ball within a Chinese setting.

There is an interesting story of how Seah Eu Chin's son, Seah Liang Seah, reportedly shot and killed an eight-foot long alligator, which had been taking swims in the family pool and feasting on the fish in their pond. During this time, tiger sightings in plantations along Thomson Road were also common, and livestock and coolies were known to be carried away by these felines.



01

01. Caldecott Hill, 2017.

REVAMPING PUBLIC HOUSING

In 1935, there was increased confidence in the real estate business in Singapore, boosted by a demand for cheap modern houses. Local based firm, Fogden, Brisbane and Co. Ltd. mooted the idea of building a large number of suburban houses on Caldecott Hill, to be rented out as affordable housing. Fogden and Brisbane were at this time one of the four biggest development firms in Malaya, and they had the resources to invest in the undertaking.

When completed in 1937, the local newspapers reported that Caldecott Hill Estate had the latest in “modern homes”, replete with perks such as electricity, piped water and modern sanitation facilities. The last item, in particular, was still a novelty for most houses in Singapore, which were still using the night soil bucket system.

RADIO THROUGH THE WAR

Caldecott Hill saw further transformation with the launch of Singapore’s first permanent radio broadcasting station in 1937. During its first broadcast, the Governor at the time, Sir Shenton Thomas, described the interior of the broadcasting station, as consisting of sound proof studios with air-conditioning, with rooms for performers, an announcer and a control engineer. In the years following its opening, the Government established the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). However, the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945 disrupted any further development plans.

When the war came in 1942, it was said that the battle lines stopped right at the edge of Caldecott Hill Estate. The broadcasting station survived the battle and was used by the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore in World War II.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

After the war, only 41 houses in Caldecott Hill Estate were left. Nevertheless, the area continued as a residential estate, and by the 1990s had become a premier private housing estate, as well as home to Caldecott Broadcast Centre.

From radio to TV, the broadcast station at Caldecott Hill was inextricably linked to the blossoming of Singapore’s media scene. Radio-Television Singapore, the predecessor to today’s Mediacorp, opened its new Television Studio Centre in 1966, an event graced by then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. 63 years later in December 2015, Mediacorp moved from the Caldecott Broadcast Centre to its new home at Mediapolis in One-North.



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